



Cross-Learning Process on UN Security Council Resolution 1325

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DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AN ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
Conflict Resolution Unit

Voices of experience



“ Your greatest triumph is surviving conflict and surviving it with the strength to demand that things must change: that it is not good enough to target women and girls and make them weapons in war; that it is not good enough to run the world as if half of the human population did not count; that the leadership of men for men is not good enough and that women must take their rightful places at the table. ”

Ireland's Special Envoy on UNSCR 1325, Nuala O'Loan

**Voices of Experience:
An Exploration of the
Implementation of UNSCR 1325**

**A Report of the Cross-Learning
Process of Ireland/Northern Ireland,
Timor-Leste and Liberia on UN
Security Council Resolution 1325**

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Foreword



Ten years ago the United Nations came together to pass Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. It has been followed over the years by UNSCR 1820, 1888 and 1889. Despite the clear commitment of the United Nations to enhancing

and developing structures for the protection of women, for their enhanced participation in local and national life, and to the incorporation of a gender perspective in policy making and strategic development, progress on the ground has been limited. As the Government of Ireland contemplated the forthcoming 10th anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR 1325, it recognised that there was a need to hear the authentic voice of some of those affected by conflict across the world, and to identify their experience of the impact of UNSCR 1325. Deciding to bring together some of those who had experienced and survived conflict in Ireland/ Northern Ireland, Timor-Leste and Liberia, it established this Cross-Learning Process. It has been my privilege to be involved in, and to work with, all those who participated in the Process.

We came together in Belfast, Dili and Monrovia to explore what UNSCR 1325 meant and could mean to women caught in conflict. We learned much from each other. We explored how women survive conflict, how they have fought to prevent and deal with the terrible consequences of gender based violence during conflict – violence which, in some cases, involved the use of rape as a tool of war. We learned of their initiatives to help to secure a sustainable peace, and to build new structures in fragile post-conflict states, incorporating the women's perspective in the new policies and processes. We sought to identify what had worked for them, as they worked to achieve women's involvement in all aspects of life, national and local. We admired the self-sacrifice, determination and strategic processes which enabled women to develop and promote other women into elected office.

We recognised the contribution which the United Nations peace-keeping missions can make, giving effect to the commitments and requirements of UNSCR 1325. We acknowledged the support of so many donor countries and agencies to the work in which the participants were engaged. We identified the problems consequential upon the conduct of some members of peace-keeping missions and aid donor projects – problems of violence, exploitation and abuse and the resulting "UN baby" issues. We contemplated the inadequacies of justice and security processes in conflict and post-conflict areas, and the issue of truth and reconciliation processes. We articulated the issues, the problems, and the solutions which women had found as they walked the uncertain and rocky road towards long-term peace.

In sharing what we learned from each other, we hope to present ideas for those involved in the many conflicts across the world about how the aspirations of UNSCR 1325 might become a reality. Progress towards real implementation of the provisions of UNSCR 1325, 1820, 1888, and 1889 has been slow. Much has been written and said about the inadequacies and deficiencies of both the resolutions and the international response to them. This Report chronicles the experience and achievements of men and women from three countries which are coming out of conflict, and working to build democratic systems and processes in which men and women can play an equal part, and in which they are equally protected and respected. The work is slow, but it is the fundamental work of peace.

Baroness Nuala O'Loan

Ireland's Special Envoy for UNSCR 1325

Acronyms

BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRU	Conflict Resolution Unit (of the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs)
DFA	Irish Department of Foreign Affairs
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
GBV	Gender Based Violence.
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
JCGBV	Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence
JSMP	Judicial System Monitoring Programme
MLA	Member of Local Assembly, Northern Ireland
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAP	National Action Plan (on UNSCR 1325)
NIWC	Northern Ireland Women's Coalition
NIWEP	Northern Ireland Women's European Platform
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NWM	National Women's Machinery (e.g Ministry of Gender Equality)
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SEWODA	South Eastern Women's Development Agency
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary General
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR 1325	UN Security Council Resolution 1325
UNSCR 1820	UN Security Council Resolution 1820
UNSCR 1888	UN Security Council Resolution 1888
UNSCR 1889	UN Security Council Resolution 1889
VPU	Vulnerable Persons' Unit (of Timor-Leste Police)
WAVE	Women Against Violence Empowered
WiP	Women into Politics
WLC	Women's Legislative Caucus

Executive Summary

The adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in October 2000 succeeded in highlighting the distinct issues concerning women affected by conflict, and required all member states to take specific steps to address these. The Resolution represented a momentous break from traditional views of warfare and its consequences. It not only focused the world's attention on the very different effects that war has on men and women; it also recognised that women can and should be active participants in rebuilding their communities and countries following conflict. The central objectives of the resolution are for the full and equal participation of women in decision-making for addressing issues relating to peace and security; the implementation of gender perspectives in all peacemaking and peace-building strategies and for the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence. These demands are referred to as "the 3 Ps".

The Cross-Learning Process

The cross-learning process was an innovative initiative, developed in 2008 for implementation within a two-year time frame leading up to the tenth anniversary of UNSCR 1325. It was designed to enable understanding and learning from those directly affected by conflict about how best to promote women's leadership and protect their interests in conflict resolution and peace-building. Ireland worked in close partnership with Northern Ireland, Liberia and Timor-Leste in a tripartite cross-learning process. Through this collaboration, the aim was to ensure the achievement of real and immediate change for women who experience and have experienced the atrocities and realities of conflict. Currently, in all three settings, women form a minority of those in public positions and decision-making roles and are tireless advocates for the implementation of all aspects of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

The objectives of the process were to:

1. Offer the cross-learning model as a new approach in sharing experiences on different issues at the international level.
2. Promote increased linkages and learning in and between conflict-affected situations, and between conflict-affected situations and the donor community, thereby enhancing international efforts to implement UNSCR 1325.
3. Enlighten the production of a meaningful Irish NAP grounded in the voices and experiences of women affected by armed conflict which contributes to the full implementation of UNSCR 1325.



Bronagh Hinds, DemocraShe with Special Envoy O'Loan

The Structure of the Process

Each conference began with a high-level plenary session attended by conference delegates, UN representatives, government officials and local and international civil society. The substantive work of the each conference took place in closed sessions where delegates were divided into groups according to areas of expertise.¹ The focus of these workshops was to identify and share actions that are being taken to advance women's leadership and protection, as well as to mainstream gender across all policies and peace agreements. Workshops on the final day of the conferences were arranged into country groups and delegates discussed gaps which they had identified during the course of the conference, or had been considering prior to the conference and considered potential ways to implement the lessons learned. Delegates also participated in excursions to local women's centres and other areas of interest, such as the Peace Walls in Belfast, the Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in Dili and the Office of the Chief Prosecutor for Special Court 'E' in Monrovia².

¹ The models shared in these workshops can be found in annexes 4,5 and 6, available at <http://www.dfa.ie/home/index.aspx?id=40362>

² Special Court 'E' is a court that deals specifically with SGBV cases, with the objective of clearing the backlog of SGBV cases and to highlight rape as a crime and set the precedent for prosecution for the crime of rape.

Summary of Conference Conclusions

Conference 1 - Participation

- > Targets and quotas work. They should not be viewed as negative or promoting 'tokenistic' approaches, rather as key strategies to overcome the unequal basis from which women attempt to enter formal politics.
- > Political systems and structures need to change to work equally well for both men and women.
- > Structures to support women's political participation once elected, such as a Women's Caucus are useful and support women in their roles.
- > The establishment of 'Gender Champions' and Gender Action Plans work. Little can be gained without formal infrastructure to ensure gender is addressed from national to local levels.
- > The obstacles facing rural women are particularly challenging, and resources must be brought down to local levels to ensure women are supported towards leadership roles.
- > Completion of schooling for girls and access to formal and informal education for women are among the first essential steps to generating confidence and capacity to enter leadership roles.
- > Communication from grass roots to national levels is essential to ensure a comprehensive and coordinated approach is taken to advancing women's leadership and participation.
- > Engaging men in support of gender mainstreaming strategies, and in support of women's candidacies works. One of the biggest challenges is to convince men of the importance of female involvement.
- > Family friendly working arrangements are necessary in order for women to participate fully in decision making roles.

Conference 2 - Protection

- > Working with wide-ranging 'social guardians' such as churches to disseminate messages on GBV works.
- > The interface between formal and traditional justice, and the implications of this for women who experience violence, must be more readily and appropriately addressed and understood in the transition phase.
- > Forensic evidence is vital for the successful prosecution of incidents of sexual and other forms of violence. Capacity development for the provision of forensic science services, particularly DNA collection and testing, and the establishment of infrastructure to facilitate such services should be part of the creation of structures in the aftermath of conflict.

- > The collection of quantitative and qualitative data is essential to enhance understanding of and response to violence against women.
- > More attention is needed to the trauma that women experience as a result of violence.
- > Training of personnel and provision of resources is needed to ensure a medical response to violence is available to women. These should be in locations to which women have easy access.
- > Specialised units within judicial and policing services, including the creation and implementation of special measures, provide more appropriate and accessible services for women.
- > Existing guidelines on gender approaches to post-conflict security, and the management of IDP camps, need to be implemented, and implementation should be monitored.
- > It is imperative that those charged with monitoring violence, developing early warning signals or identifying patterns of conflict include GBV in their strategies.
- > There need to be more opportunities in the security sector for women. Police and military institutions should consider implementing gender quotas for all ranks throughout the structure so that women can participate in the management of these institutions of state.

Conference 3 – Gender Perspectives

- > In post-conflict processes, women are obliged to constantly and consistently establish specific strategies to ensure women's concerns are addressed within post-conflict programming. Otherwise women's concerns are excluded.
- > Women centres have played an important role in all three areas in ensuring that women have a space to collectively organise and have unity in voice.
- > Institutional and legislative reforms: Timor-Leste and Liberia noted the significance of legal reforms during the transition period, particularly over-turning traditional laws, and drafting legislation that enabled women to own property, and dealt with issues such as rape and domestic violence.
- > Recognition of women as mediators: women assess conflict with an eye on the future, and with a focus on what they want for their children and grandchildren and this must be recognised as beneficial.
- > Women's inclusion works: women are often able to pre-empt potential for violence because they know their communities and the dynamics within the communities. Therefore women need to be included in the development of early warning systems. Those systems need to be developed at the community level.

- > Thematic and tailored approaches within transitional justice mechanisms facilitate women's participation. Women will get more out of a systematic and thematic approach rather than individual. It needs to be across all communities and individuals.
- > Transitional justice processes that facilitate women's stories to emerge are also important and must be delivered in a safe way. The methodology needs to suit women's means of communication, particularly around sensitive issues such as sexual violence.
- > Accountability for past abuses is imperative. However, wider transitional processes must also be pursued, and structured to meet the needs and reality of women. Financial reparations need to be designed and applied in a timely manner in accordance with women's identified needs.

Messages and Recommendations

Specific recommendations were made to UN country missions, UN Member States and the UN as a whole on how to improve engagement with and implementation of UNSCR 1325. Those recommendations are detailed in this report. They include:

Wider Recommendations to the United Nations and Member States

1. Establish a formal mechanism at UN level to monitor implementation of UNSCR 1325. This should include a facility to allow organisations working on women's rights to query individual countries on their implementation record on UNSCR 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889.
2. Indicators for the assessment of the implementation of UNSCR 1325 should incorporate methods for capturing where and how and when change occurs. There is a need to move away from aspiration towards concrete actions and indicators if Resolution 1325 is to have an impact.
3. Within implementation strategies for NAPs, linkages should be created between the Women, Peace and Security Resolutions, CEDAW, the BPFA, and tools such as national poverty reduction strategies and national development plans, so that the structural challenges and obstacles that women face at all levels are addressed.
4. Reinvigorate efforts to implement gender mainstreaming in all aspects of security policy, and within peace-keeping and policing operations. A gender audit should be undertaken as part of the development of all polices and operations and particular attention should be paid to ensuring that there is an appropriate level of budget spent on the concerns and rights of women.
5. Data on inappropriate sexual behaviour and its consequences should be included in the Mission's report

to UN HQ and the national government. Staff members must comply with local laws and be held accountable for criminal actions in-country to the local population who can witness this (not when they return home and where actions may not occur).

6. Sanctions should be applied to personnel who break the code of conduct and undermine the values of the UN. This includes expulsion of the staff member from future involvement in UN missions. In addition, those countries which do not sanction their offenders should not be allowed to contribute troops to future missions. This should be included within MoUs agreed between receiving and sending countries.
7. Increase support for the production of quality National Action Plans (NAPS) which reflect and respond to the learning in this report. Establish a body to monitor the content of NAPs and to hold states accountable for their compliance with UNSCR 1325.
8. Ensure that UN Women operates as a powerful and positive advocate for gender equality at UN HQ.

UN Women should:

- > Provide adequate technical and financial support to international efforts to implement UNSCR 1325.
- > Provide technical support to UN Member States to enable them to develop comprehensive NAPs.
- > Develop methods and strategies for the provision of funding and technical support to women's organisations to reflect the recommendations in this report.

Conclusions

1. There is an urgent need for the implementation of the UN Women, Peace and Security Resolutions.
2. Implementation should be based on priorities identified by women, who are the experts on what it is to be a woman in a conflict or post-conflict zone.
3. Further progress in relation to UNSCR 1325 is required in Northern Ireland, Timor-Leste and Liberia.
4. Stronger political will to make the necessary changes to enable women is required.
5. Promoting equality is the responsibility of both men and women.

A prompt and tailored response by the UN and other international actors to the learning, key messages and recommendations identified by participants through this process will enable further implementation of UNSCR 1325.

1. Introduction and Background

*“No longer men in front
and the women at the back,
Together we will walk,
Side by side, side by side”*

(Liberian Delegation song)

1.1 Introduction

This vibrant refrain set the tone for a series of conferences in which representatives from Ireland/Northern Ireland, Timor-Leste and Liberia came together to discuss and consider the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).³

As part of a unique ‘cross-learning’ process, women and men shared experiences and lessons learned in their work on peace and security. At the heart of these discussions was an enduring expectation of the gains that could be made if their ideas and recommendations were pursued, and UNSCR 1325 was fully implemented. The anticipated outcome would be a situation in which women would indeed find themselves working side by side with men –working together toward a future of peace, security and equality.

The cross-learning process was a significant undertaking to which women and men from Ireland/Northern Ireland, Timor-Leste and Liberia devoted considerable time, resources and commitment. This report presents the outcome of their work. It aims to disseminate the

³ Note that the report largely focuses on UNSCR1325 as the design of the cross-learning process was based on this resolution. Where possible the other resolutions (UNSCRs 1820, 1888 and 1889) are drawn in or reference is made to ‘the Women, Peace and Security agenda’ to include all four resolutions in the discussion.



Timorese delegates in Monrovia

good practice and lessons learned on advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda that were shared by participants in the cross-learning conferences. Through the compilation of a set of key messages to the United Nations and to Member States, the report also makes a contribution to advancing the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security resolutions.

1.2 Background

(i) The evolution of the Women, Peace and Security agenda

There has been increasing recognition of the urgent need to promote women’s role within the realm of international peace and security. Beginning with the adoption of the ground-breaking UNSCR 1325 in 2000, the ‘Women, Peace and Security’ agenda has since expanded to include three additional and related resolutions. Increasing attention to the issue of sexual violence in armed conflict resulted in the adoption of UNSCR 1820 in 2008, and two additional related resolutions, UNSCR 1888 and UNSCR 1889 were passed in 2009.⁴ Implementation of the resolutions is now the most pressing need. The development of National Action Plans (NAPs) on UNSCR 1325 (as the principal resolution) by UN Member States has been proposed as a key means to advance and transform these resolutions into action.⁵

(ii) Ireland’s implementation of UNSCR 1325

Ireland’s White Paper on Irish Aid, published in 2006, sets out Ireland’s commitment to the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Ireland’s National Women’s Strategy 2007-2016 also includes a range of actions in fulfilment of this commitment. The Conflict Resolution Unit (CRU) of the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, established in 2007 to, *inter alia*, share lessons from Ireland’s involvement in the Northern Ireland peace process, has identified UNSCR 1325 as a key priority. The CRU has undertaken initiatives to implement Ireland’s commitments under UNSCR1325, including the appointment of former Northern Ireland Police Ombudsman, Nuala O’Loan, as Ireland’s ‘Special Envoy on UNSCR 1325’ in March 2009. This is a unique international leadership role on UNSCR 1325. The CRU has also led on the planning and development of Ireland’s NAP.

⁴ All four resolutions may be found in Annex 1 to this report, available at <http://www.dfa.ie/home/index.aspx?id=40362>

⁵ There are 21 NAPs in existence as of September 2010. See Uganda and Liberia for examples where UNSCR 1820 are included. See UNINSTRAW website for a list of existing NAPs: <http://www.un-instraw.org/en/gps/gps-homepage/national-action-plans-on-resolution-1325-8.html>

Table 1: Design of cross-learning conferences

	Conference 1	Conference 2	Conference 2
Location	Belfast, Northern Ireland	Dili, Timor-Leste	Monrovia, Liberia
Dates	29 June - 3rd July, 2009	1 - 4 of December, 2009	13 -16 April, 2010
Overall Conference Theme	Participation	Protection and Prevention	Gender Perspectives
Sub-Themes/ Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Electoral Politics > Local Government > Community Level Involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Health > Justice > Security Sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Post-conflict Recovery > Mediation > Transitional Justice

1.3 The 'cross-learning initiative on UNSCR 1325'

In 2008, the Irish Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence (JCGBV) submitted a paper to the CRU with recommendations for the process of developing an Irish NAP.⁶ One of the recommendations highlighted the need to ensure that NAPs are informed by and grounded in the reality of women’s concerns and interests. Ireland developed a project in which experts on issues of Women, Peace and Security were brought together for this purpose. Northern Ireland, Timor-Leste and Liberia were invited to participate, due to existing relationships and ongoing commitments with these countries.

The innovative initiative represented a unique approach with the potential to develop new benchmarks for international best practice in the formulation of NAPs. The project was developed in 2008 for implementation within a two-year time frame leading up to the tenth anniversary of UNSCR 1325.

The objectives of the process were to:

1. Offer the cross-learning model as a new approach in sharing experiences on different issues at the international level.
2. Promote increased linkages and learning in and between conflict-affected situations, and between conflict-affected situations and the donor community, thereby enhancing international efforts to implement UNSCR 1325.
3. Enlighten the production of a meaningful Irish NAP grounded in the voices and experiences of women affected by armed conflict which contributes to the full implementation of UNSCR 1325.

6 See recommendations section of a report by the Irish Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence: *Stepping Up Ireland’s Response to Women, Peace and Security: United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, 2008.*

1.4 The methodology of the cross-learning process

The cross-learning process involved a series of conferences which were planned according to the following steps:

(i) Preliminary planning

An exploratory preliminary meeting was held in Dublin in November 2008 with civil society representatives from Northern Ireland, Timor-Leste and Liberia.⁷ Participants delivered a number of recommendations which provided a basis from which to begin the planning process. Ireland established contact with the Northern Ireland Executive and the Liberian and Timor-Leste Governments and undertook scoping visits in all three locations to develop the project. As a result, a series of conferences was planned to take place in Belfast, Dili and Monrovia.

(ii) Design of the conferences

UNSCR 1325 was used as the basis for designing the cross-learning process. The additional United Nations resolutions were addressed as appropriate during the conferences.

The central demands of UNSCR 1325 are for the full participation of women in decision-making; for the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence and the implementation of gender perspectives in all peacemaking and peace-building strategies and actions undertaken by the UN and by Member States. These objectives are referred to as ‘the 3 Ps’ of UNSCR 1325 and were used to frame the over-arching theme of each conference. Each ‘P’ was further broken-down into three related sub-themes around which workshop streams were developed.

7 See Annex 2 for a list of the participants, available at <http://www.dfa.ie/home/index.aspx?id=40362>

(iii) Selection of Participants

The Irish Government teamed with a partner on the ground in each setting to plan the events. Representatives from both government and civil society groups were invited to present a 'model' or case study of their work, experience and expertise on the particular theme/sub-theme under discussion.⁸

(iv) Purpose and format of the conferences

The process involved three conferences held in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Dili, Timor-Leste, and Monrovia, Liberia. The purpose of each conference was to enable participants to share their experiences and exchange ideas based on the specific models which they presented, and to derive messages and recommendations for the United Nations and other international actors on improving approaches to the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The same format was followed in each conference:

- > An opening plenary combined high-level representation from the host country with a wide audience from each locality, which facilitated a broad overview of the issues under discussion.
- > Participants then broke into facilitated workshops centred on identified sub-themes. The workshops entailed detailed discussions in a secure environment based on the 'models' presented by each country. Key learning, messages for the UN and recommendations were facilitated within each workshop.
- > On the final day participants went into country-specific groups to identify the ideas they felt were most relevant to bring back to their own context.
- > A list of selected indicators that either had already proved useful, or were developed by participants in response to specific models during the conferences was created.
- > Finally, the participants came together again in plenary to agree key recommendations to be taken forward for this final report.
- > Delegates also participated in excursions to local women's centres and other areas of interest, such as the Peace Walls in Belfast, the Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in Dili and the Office of the Chief Prosecutor for Special Court 'E' in Monrovia.

(v) Conclusion of the process

A report of the conclusions and outcomes of process would be presented to the United Nations upon the tenth anniversary of UNSCR 1325.

(vi) Key learning from the organisation of the cross-learning process

The cross-learning process was unique in its function and methodology. It facilitated exchange and learning between sectors, between countries and between continents. The Governments of Ireland, Liberia and Timor-Leste recognise that there are a lot of lessons to be learned from the process and presents some of the lessons here for others who may be considering similar approaches:

- > The cross-learning process required a lot of time, commitment, resources and enthusiasm to organise. The '3Ps' framework was useful but it is important that the detailed messages are not lost within a wider approach. The sub-themes for each conference should be identified and researched well in advance so that a wider vision can inform planning of the entire process.
- > Different participants were invited to each conference depending on the theme and expertise required. Identification of participants with appropriate and corresponding skills was sometimes challenging. However, this was an important approach as it ensured that there was a broad spectrum of representation involved and that participants were suited to the themes of each conference.
- > Some participants felt that there was too much 'scheduled' time and more time for coffee breaks and informal networking would have been useful at the conferences. Participants suggested space for "storytelling" and time to hear more about the background to each conflict as there was so much similarity of experience to share.
- > A lot of preparation is needed by individual participants and the delegation as a whole to get as much as they can out of the process. Thought needs to be put into the follow-up in-country also.
- > Identification of a partner organisation that has contacts with the main stakeholders, knows the local issues of concern related to UNSCR 1325 and can help with organising the conference in each context is a key issue.
- > Advance planning and invitation to the conferences is important, particularly to give sufficient time to participants who need to cater for busy workloads and travel long distances.

⁸ See Annex 2 for a list of the participants, available at <http://www.dfa.ie/home/index.aspx?id=40362>. In respect of the contribution from Ireland, it is important to note that all of the participants presenting 'models' came from the Northern Ireland context. Specific reference is made where necessary to distinguish the models/participants from Northern Ireland.



Delegates at Belfast Conference

1.5 Why Northern Ireland, Timor-Leste and Liberia?

While diverse in history, politics and culture, all three countries have comparable experiences in dealing with political violence and the management and implementation of conflict resolution and peace processes. Each context presented a unique lens through which to view the relevance, applicability and instrumental value of UNSCR 1325.

Northern Ireland is located on Europe's western edge, Timor-Leste is situated in South East Asia and Liberia is situated in West Africa. All three areas have experienced cycles of conflict and political instability that have culminated in population displacement, destruction to infrastructure, and trauma as a result of widespread violence. In all three settings, there have been peace agreements and an end to most of the conflict within the last twelve years. All three have experienced violence that has primarily affected civilians. In all three settings, women have been subjected to egregious forms of gender-based abuses. These include, for example, strip searching in Northern Ireland, sexualised methods of torture in Timor-Leste and mass rape in Liberia. In all contexts, women played instrumental roles within the conflicts, and in efforts to create peace and stability. The conflicts have had devastating impacts on women and their families' lives. Currently, in all three areas, women form a minority of those in public positions and decision-making roles and are tireless advocates for the implementation of all aspects of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.⁹

⁹ See annex 3 for a more detailed overview of the socio-political history and background of Northern Ireland, Timor-Leste and Liberia.

2. Implementing the three 'Ps'

Learning from Strategies and Actions that have worked

“We need to demand the reasons for inaction and be prepared for the responses. We also need to have proposed solutions prepared and know what we want and know why they don't want us to have it.”

(Northern Ireland participant)



Workshop discussions in Monrovia

2.1 Introduction

This section outlines the information sharing on each context that took place at the conferences with a focus on the specific programming and strategies that participants have used in their work. Due to the international dimension of the project and the various cultural, social and political dynamics of each context, the different programmes, approaches, strategies and initiatives that were presented and shared by participants have been termed 'models.'

The discussion below is structured around the three themes and sub-themes/workshops of each conference.

Each thematic section begins with an overview of contextual issues relevant to each theme that was presented by participants. This is followed by an overview of some of the models and key issues that were presented during discussions. The main points drawn from each conference are then presented as a summary for the reader. A list of selected indicators that either have already proved useful or those that were developed by participants in response to specific models during the conferences is also included. Annex 4, 5 and 6 contain a detailed overview of each of the models that were presented at the conferences.¹⁰

¹⁰ Many of the participants highlighted that while the models they presented offered examples of the excellent ideas and strategies that have been used on the ground, many cautioned that there are many challenges and lessons learned that have informed ongoing review and reinvigoration to improve this work. These annexes are available at: <http://www.dfa.ie/home/index.aspx?id=40362>

Theme of Conferences		
Participation	Protection and Prevention	Gender Perspectives
Sub-themes / Workshops		
> Electoral Politics	> Health	> Post-conflict Recovery
> Local Government	> Justice	> Mediation
> Community Level Involvement	> Security Sector	> Transitional Justice

2.2 Conference 1 - Participation

The theme of the first conference was 'participation' and specifically focused on 'Advancing Women's Leadership.' National level (electoral) politics, local government, and community level involvement constituted the sub-themes of the conference.

Introduction

Women can and do demonstrate leadership at a variety of levels in community, regional and national level structures in all three areas. Yet they face many inherent structural obstacles to their participation at all levels. At times they have even faced hostility. The lack of recognition of women's roles during conflict extends to the post-conflict context where women struggle to be heard and included. Women have experienced marginalisation within and exclusion from the establishment of institutions and political processes after conflict. Participants noted that actions taken during conflict created the stage for activism in the aftermath of conflict.

Discussion of models

(i) Electoral Politics

The models presented by participants demonstrated the range of strategies that have been undertaken in each setting to advance women's participation and leadership in formal politics.

The participants from Timor-Leste viewed their current efforts to advance women's participation in electoral politics as rooted in the prominent role which women played in the struggle for independence. They described the range of strategies they have used. They firstly used their existing networks to lobby for and secure guarantees for the equality of women within the newly drafted Timor-Leste Constitution. They noted that this was an imperative strategy as it now provides a clear legal framework that establishes women's right to participation in political life. Following the 2005 election only 7 women were elected to fill over 100 vacant seats. Women lobbied for, and established, a quota system which now requires 30% female participation in parliament. A Women's Parliamentary Caucus has now been set up to support those women who are elected. The Caucus has developed a five-year Gender Strategic Action Plan; organised gender-responsive budgeting training for parliamentarians and government officials (men and

women); ensured the integration of a gender perspective into the State Budget; and established the Gender Resource Centre within Parliament.

The Liberian caucus is similar, and has also worked to support women (see Text Box 1) Participants from Timor-Leste also noted that lobbying for the ratification of CEDAW and the establishment of a national women's machinery were key accompanying strategies in support of women's formal participation and leadership.

Text Box 1:

The Liberian Women's Legislative Caucus (WLC)

The WLC was launched by President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in July 2007. Composed of the 14 sitting female legislators, the WLC is a non-partisan group working to increase women's influence in Parliament and society. The WLC's mission is to facilitate and ensure an empowered and peaceful Liberian society where the improvement and the promotion of the socio-economic welfare of women would be guaranteed and protected through appropriate legislation, policy and programmes of government. One of their first priorities is to adopt a minimum requirement of 30% female representation in Parliament.

A participant from Northern Ireland stated that some women, at both community and political levels in Northern Ireland, believe that men try to obstruct women's participation. She stressed that *"it is broke, it does need fixing and we need to move on"*. Women's participation in electoral politics increased following lobbying by the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP) in 1996, to 'gender-proof' the peace talks. The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) was established at this time to provide a platform from which women from all sides of the conflict could support the peace process and ensure the inclusion of women's issues in the process. Organisations in Northern Ireland such as DemocraShe have built on this work and support women within political life, through strategies such as: education and training on issues such as election procedures, strategic campaign management, fundraising, networking, media and public relations, social and economic issues and public policy forums. Training has been provided for some 242 women over three election cycles.

Participants also highlighted the fact that some political parties still experience difficulty in finding female candidates to run for election. Thus, there is a pressing need to address obstacles to women's participation,

encourage women to come forward in formal politics, and give them the confidence and skills they need to run for office.

(ii) Local Government

Northern Ireland, Timor-Leste and Liberia have different governance structures at decentralised levels. These vary from 'Local Councils' in Northern Ireland, to 'Sucos (villages)' in Timor-Leste and 'county level administrations' in Liberia. Discussions emphasised the need for the representation of women's interests by women at these levels, and identified this as a potential stepping-stone for women to access national electoral politics. Participants noted that the relationship between national and local structures could be either supportive or an obstacle to women's participation.

Northern Ireland presented a model called the 'Women in Local Councils' initiative. It was developed to promote women's participation in local politics and the achievement of gender parity at county council levels. During its first year, the initiative focussed on generating awareness of the under-representation of women in local politics in Northern Ireland. The key themes the initiative has identified include:

- > The need for cultural change (from the current patriarchal society).
- > The necessity for women to be able to strike a work-life balance.
- > The importance of local democracy training and development, which should increase interest in politics generally and encourage greater voter participation.
- > The need for capacity building of women and men to support the initiative.

An indicator of success has been the increased engagement in the initiative by men. A number of the gender champions in councils are male and there has also recently been recognition of the initiative by the male dominated Northern Ireland Assembly. Those who presented the model noted that the engagement of younger women is essential for future sustainability.

A Timor-Leste participant described how she went forward for and achieved election as 'Suco Chief' (Village Chief) in her district. She explained that traditionally this role was reserved for men but under new laws she had wanted to become elected because *"As a woman I have the right to stand like any man"* and *"I believe that*

women can be elected". She noted that becoming a candidate required "cooperation between groups on the ground". She took part in a capacity building programme which gave her the confidence to put herself forward for election. She identified combined support from both men and women as key to her election. Her community was tired of electing absentee male officials who had little or no contact with the people. As a local candidate with an in-depth knowledge of the problems and potential of her village, she appealed to male and female voters of all ages. Her greatest challenge now is meeting the high expectations of her rural community and implementing programmes and change without adequate resources. She identified a clear challenge in moving quickly from election campaigning to dealing with the practical issues that arose in the new role, whilst dealing with the scepticism of many people who doubted her capability to do the job.

The presentation of the Liberian model demonstrated the additional need for infrastructure to advance women's concerns and interests at regional levels. In Liberia, the Ministry of Gender and Development has established gender focal points across all ministries. They liaise with gender offices that have also been established in each county administration. The Ministry uses this structure to liaise with and ensure that rural women benefit from all new development projects at a decentralised level. Women are identified from local groups through this central structure for representational roles. The structures linking women's groups to state institutions have been very useful and were identified as a good model to replicate in other contexts.

(iii) Community Level

Participants in the community level workshop discussed the need for real reform to remove the barriers that prevent women from entering a public or leadership role. These barriers were identified as being horizontal (cultural issues, poverty etc.) at local levels and vertical from grass roots to wider national levels (access to information, bias against women etc.). Women's potential for leadership may begin at local levels but could, and should, have the potential to develop and influence what is happening at national levels.

Education was highlighted as a key tool. Guaranteeing education for girls will create wider possibilities as girls become women and have the potential to take on leadership roles in their homes and communities. A Liberian model demonstrated a useful strategy. Representatives of the South Eastern Women's

Development Agency (SEWODA) in Liberia explained that they disseminate information and provide education and literacy programmes to women at community levels. They have learned that education empowers women through generating knowledge and building self-esteem. Completion of schooling for girls and access to formal and informal education for women is one of the first essential steps.

A Northern Ireland model underlined that the mobilisation of women at grass roots, increasing women's confidence and devising strategies to create opportunity are also approaches that work. 'Women into Politics' (WiP) delivers skills-based workshops which are designed for women already active in their community, or women's organisations who wish to become more involved in decision making through community partnerships, trade unions, electoral politics or alternative politics. The presenter from Northern Ireland highlighted that there is a perception that people in public life 'were born for it' and not taught, however women who participate in the programme are taught that the required skills can be gained by anyone. This latter point is important – if women at grass roots levels are to come forward into wider decision-making roles, they must have self-belief and confidence as well as access to the systems and processes of formal politics.

Participants stated that if gains are to be made, women at grass roots need to know about what is happening at national levels. Structures are needed to enable communication of women's aspirations from grass roots to national levels, and for information to flow from national to community levels. They noted that the presence or absence of formal structures to promote women's interests at national levels can directly affect their own standing, and negatively or positively impact on the realisation of their goals and the success of their initiatives. In Timor-Leste and Liberia a specific entity on gender equality has been established. Northern Ireland does not have such a structure and women at the conference identified this as a huge gap. It has meant that there has been no specific space to direct their lobbying towards and no vehicle to ensure that their concerns are filtered into and across government policy.

As they looked upwards at women in local government or national politics, women working at community levels recognised the need for structures and systems to change. They noted that the other workshops on electoral politics and local government level had not identified this as an issue: *"From feedback from the other sessions on*

political representation, it was all about how women can fit into the structures and systems. However, nobody questioned the structures themselves. We are often told that gender is mainstreamed across government. Working culture, including working hours can be a disincentive for women." The structures themselves need to change to enable women to participate more fully and effectively.

Liberian participants shared a number of innovative strategies that have been used at community level to engage women and generate action in support of women's participation in formal electoral processes:

- > Empowering school girls to participate actively in the elections: women started a campaign to get school girls involved in the electoral process. They visited schools and talked to girls to inform, empower and encourage girls of voting age to register for voting. These girls were asked to bring the information to their friends and get them to participate actively in the elections as well.
- > Engaging women in public places: women who had access to information about the elections, informed women who worked at their local markets about the opportunity for women to vote. They in turn were asked to speak to women who visit their stalls at the market. The market women used their position behind the market stall to encourage the women who bought their products to register for, and to take part in, the elections.
- > Generating the resources to drive the agenda: in preparation for the 2011 elections women in rural communities have been donating 10 Liberian Dollars each to create an election fund.¹¹ This will be accessed by local women who want to run in the 2011 elections, to ensure that they receive the financial backing they need to work towards a successful campaign.

Liberian participants also shared a model that *does not work*. The exclusion of men can hamper efforts. A small community-based women's group attempted to build a community centre for their work. The men in the community had not been involved in the planning of this and as a result when the materials arrived the women had to hire and pay men to build the centre. The Liberian participant telling this story felt that if the men of the community had been involved from the start, they could have done the work without charging, in support of what women were doing.

11 One US dollar is equal to approximately seventy Liberian dollars.

Summary of main points from Conference One:

- > *Targets and quotas work.* They should not be viewed as negative or promoting 'tokenistic' approaches, rather as key strategies to overcome the unequal basis from which women attempt to enter formal politics.
- > *Political systems and structures need to change* to work equally well for both men and women.
- > *Structures to support women's political participation once elected*, such as a Women's Caucuses, are useful and support women in their roles.
- > *The establishment of 'Gender Champions' and Gender Action Plans works.* Little can be gained without formal infrastructure to ensure gender is addressed from national to local levels.
- > *The obstacles facing rural women are particularly challenging* and resources must be brought down to local levels to ensure women are supported towards leadership roles.
- > *Completion of schooling for girls and access to formal and informal education for women* are among the first essential steps to generating confidence and capacity to enter leadership roles.
- > *Communication from grass roots to national levels is essential* to ensure that a comprehensive and coordinated approach is taken to advancing women's leadership and participation.
- > *Engaging men in support of gender strategies, and in support of women's candidacies works.* One of the biggest challenges is to convince men of the importance of female involvement.
- > *Family friendly working arrangements are necessary* in order for women to participate fully in decision making roles.

Summary of main indicators developed in Conference One:

- > Quota systems, set out in legislation, with full support from the UN mission (if any) and national political parties.
- > Increased numbers of men electing to take 'Gender Champion' or similar roles to promote women's participation.
- > National women's machineries and gender focal point systems established within interim administrations overseen by the United Nations.
- > Parity in completion rates of schooling by boys and girls.

- > Availability of informal education schemes at rural levels targeted at women.
- > Capacity building and ongoing support programmes aimed at supporting women's political participation and access to leadership roles in place and fully funded.

2.3 Conference 2 - Protection and Prevention

The theme of the second conference was 'Protection from and Prevention of Gender Based Violence'. Women's access to justice, health and security were the three sub-themes.

Introduction

While participants from Timor-Leste and Liberia classified the violence women experienced during the conflicts as part of a wider tactic of the conflict, Northern Ireland participants noted that sexual violence was not used as a 'weapon of war' even though it was prevalent in other ways. All participants noted the lack of attention to the psychological effects of the conflict on women – with respect not only to their role in the conflict, but also to the impact of wider and gender-based abuses. In all cases, women are not receiving the assistance and services that they need, and there are significant barriers which inhibit women's access to the services that are available.

(i) Access to Justice

Discussion primarily focused on violence against women in the post-conflict context and the necessity for the judiciary to be appropriately responsive. Several forms of justice were discussed, and participants emphasised that all forms need to be considered during and after conflict in relation to women's access to formal justice, traditional justice and transitional justice (traditional justice was primarily discussed in the third conference and is covered below in section 2.3 (iii)).

Presentation of models by participants generated discussion about the need to raise awareness about women's rights and gender inequality between women and men. In particular, the need to engage with "social guardians" was underlined. These guardians include Church representatives, family members and community leaders/local law office-holders, as they may be the first people whom women experiencing violence approach. Strategies used in Northern Ireland were shared, in which women's groups engaged with church leaders to use the

church as a vehicle for disseminating messages against GBV. In Timor-Leste, pamphlets about domestic violence were produced in conjunction with the Catholic Church and distributed at Mass services. Strategies such as this were deemed to be very effective.

Access to justice is problematic on many levels. Traditional or customary legal systems exist in various forms in Liberia, Timor-Leste and Ireland/Northern Ireland and in general were deemed to be discriminatory towards women. Formal judicial systems also prove prohibitive, because of the complexities, structures and requirements of the systems. Women often get lost in the interface between formal and traditional systems.

In all settings, the implementation of special measures for women to access the justice system has worked. For example, in relation to the court process, participants have found that having separate entrances to courts and screens in front of victims/witnesses are crucial as these mechanisms prevent intimidation of women by the accused. In Northern Ireland, victims of abuse can opt for a video link into the court room which is hidden from the accused's view, and the use of 'Victim Testimony' and 'Victim Impact Assessments' allow women tell their story in their own way and explain the impact of the violence on them. This takes place regardless of whether there is a trial and ensures women are heard as well as providing qualitative data on violence. All participants felt that this was a positive example and should be replicated elsewhere.

Liberian participants also presented a notable wider model incorporating several comprehensive projects responding to sexual violence, which differed from the other two contexts. In Monrovia, a 24-hour hotline for victims of abuse has been established, with emergency response vehicles available to respond to these calls. A separate unit within the Prosecutor's Office and a Special Court 'E' have also been established to process cases of rape. During the court process, the victim sits in a separate room behind a one-way mirror and is accompanied by a member of the Prosecutor's special unit. There are also limited numbers of safe houses for victims who may be under further threat. While the system is new and faces many challenges, it has set in place a number of supportive and progressive structures that have the potential to meet the needs of women experiencing violence.

Monitoring how the justice system treats women was also seen as an effective oversight tool and one which

could help to improve services for women. The Judicial System Monitoring Programme (JSMP) in Timor-Leste is an NGO that reviews, monitors and reports on how the formal justice system treats women. A 'Victim Support Service' was set up within JSMP to provide legal support for women and children affected by sexual assault and domestic violence. It provides accompaniment to victims going through the system. A 'Women's Justice Unit' has also been established which assesses and reports on the status of women in the formal justice sector. JSMP produce a regular publication monitoring the court system and reviews laws and provisions affecting women. This 'watch-dog' role is important, particularly as it has a special aspect which focuses on women.

Central to the ability of women to achieve justice for sexualised abuses is the capacity to obtain and use forensic evidence. In Liberia, *"We see this as a priority for us because the whole issue of preserving evidence... has become a challenge for us. Sometimes... the police haven't any real evidence to present in court. There is no way of collecting a specimen to prove that a perpetrator was the real offender...the case fails because of lack of evidence. If we have this crime lab and police are trained to handle the evidence, this would help us as government to prosecute and both perpetrator and survivor would have some form of access to justice."* Timor-Leste and Liberia do not have forensic science facilities and participants noted that many cases are being thrown out of court due to lack of evidence, and children are 'abandoned' because paternity cannot be proved. It was acknowledged that DNA testing is important and that it is only the beginning of a longer process, however it was felt that the provision of these facilities would greatly improve women's opportunity for justice. Participants encouraged international organisations such as the UN to fund and technically support the provision of such services in countries like Timor-Leste and Liberia, especially where mass sexualized abuse was a feature of the conflicts. These are perceived as necessary measures in the immediate aftermath of conflict. The introduction of long-term funding approaches to enable the development of DNA testing would make a very significant difference.

The issue of women's poverty arose in each context. In Northern Ireland, women who are employed cannot access free legal aid, even where they have very minimal income. In Timor-Leste and Liberia, women are largely dependent on male partners and family members for social status and economic support. Women's advocates find it very difficult to encourage women to report issues such as domestic violence to the police when the first

question women ask is, 'but who will provide income for my children if I report my husband?' This dynamic has not been adequately dealt with and underlines the need for specific gender responsive poverty reduction strategies. Engaging with men who commit offences is also a challenge, and there was much discussion about strategies to engage men in addressing their behaviour. Text Box 2 outlines the pros and cons of strategies used in Northern Ireland and Timor-Leste.

Text Box 2:

Engaging with men in the context of violence against women

Timor-Leste shared the excellent work and experiences of the 'Association of Men Against Violence' that works with men at community level to change attitudes and behaviours that inform men's use of violence, although it was acknowledged that there are gaps here. Northern Ireland delegates had been involved in work which engages convicted sexual offenders on training programmes. They advised that there is a need to ensure that these programmes are creating real change, are measured in a manner that ensures men are taking responsibility for their actions and ultimately do not have harmful effects on women. They noted that short-term programmes may not be effective. Men often participate only because they have been ordered by a court to do so, or are in prison, and completion of the course may represent an opportunity to be released from prison. Women's Aid, a Northern Ireland organisation that delivers services to women affected by domestic violence, work with women whose partners are undergoing these programmes to monitor progress from the women's perspective and ensure her safety throughout. As noted by one participant, "It is imperative to ensure that men accept full responsibility for their actions."

(ii) Health

Discussion in relation to women's health needs following experiences of violence focused on both women's mental health as well as their physical health needs.

Examples emerged from each context of good practice. In Northern Ireland, WAVE (Widows against Violence Empowered) makes available peer support and individual services for those needing assistance to deal with trauma and grief as a result of the conflict. WAVE uses approaches such as psychotherapy, artwork and complementary therapies such as reflexology, massage and aromatherapy and facilitates access to information and job seeking

to assist people with overcoming trauma. Participants stated that the creative approach used by WAVE should be used elsewhere. In Timor-Leste PRADET provides comprehensive medical and psychosocial support to those experiencing trauma and mental illness, particularly targeted at women and children (see Text Box 3).

Text Box 3:

PRADET (Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor) – a Model from Timor-Leste

PRADET is a national NGO that was established in 2002 to provide psychosocial support and counselling to women, men and children who have experienced trauma and mental illness. PRADET has an MOU with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Services and works very closely with the Police (PNTL). All of PRADET's programmes pay particular attention to the needs of women. PRADET runs the *Fatin Hakmatek (Quiet Place)* which is a purpose built facility at the Dili National Hospital providing a safe space, counselling, medical treatment of injuries for children and women experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse. PRADET has also developed a Forensic Protocol for forensic documentation of reports by victims of sexual assault and domestic violence in conjunction with the Ministry of Health. The Forensic Protocol is necessarily limited because of the absence of forensic laboratory facilities.

As well as seeing people who are in crisis, follow up visits and training workshops and consultations are provided in every district. The Fatin Hakmatek is often the first point of call for police and victims and is an integral part of the Timor-Leste GBV Referral Network. It receives funding from Irish Aid.

Medical response issues were discussed in the context of 1) the need for referral systems that enable women to access such services and 2) the provision of adequate medical responses. A model presented from Liberia outlined four key pillars of its approach within a comprehensive referral system: 1) Health and psychosocial; 2) Legal and protection, 3) Justice and security, 4) Coordination. All pillars are part of Liberia's poverty reduction strategy.

In Liberia and Timor-Leste, women are not coming forward for health care due to the stigma associated with violence. In all three settings, blame for violence is sometimes apportioned to the victims rather than the perpetrators which is a further cause of trauma. In Timor-Leste, a

positive initiative has been to locate clinics specifically addressing GBV within hospitals to make attendance less conspicuous.

While it was acknowledged that gathering data, particularly quantitative data on GBV, is problematic, this data is essential in understanding and documenting the extent and seriousness of GBV. Data collection systems are needed and must be accompanied by training to improve the efficiency of data collection and analysis

(iii) The Security Sector

The security sector theme covered a variety of issues affecting the three areas. One of the main issues that arose was the needs of people residing in IDP camps. Participants from Liberia and Timor-Leste shared examples of engaging with traditional and community leaders to enhance awareness of the need for attention to women's personal security in IDP camps. Participants highlighted that it is important to get the design and construction of IDP camps right from the beginning. There were several examples of where this has not been done with a comment that *"it seems we are not learning our lessons from mission to mission."* The same mistakes are being made and women continue to suffer the consequences.

The Timor-Leste participants also highlighted the need to ensure women's concerns are addressed within programmes that monitor conflict. In Timor-Leste there is an Irish Government funded "early warning- early response" system to identify indicators of conflict and early warning signals at local levels. Importantly, GBV is included as an indicator of conflict, which was commended by participants, and recognised as a good strategy to be repeated elsewhere.

Concerns were expressed about the potential for security forces, in particular peacekeeping forces, to represent increased insecurity, rather than enhanced security for women. This discussion included reference to inappropriate sexual behaviour and sexual abuses perpetrated by peacekeepers and civilian personnel of international peace support operations.¹² Participants highlighted that within national and international security forces there should be a greater gender balance, and where possible there should be women on patrol. Women members of such forces should be identifiable to the population. There is also a need for enhanced data on why women are accepted or denied entry to security forces. Security sector reform strategies must, as a priority, include gender policies and target increased representation of women.



Delegates in Dili

Appropriate responses from the police services to women's reports of violence were identified as essential, but often problematic. Specific steps need to be taken. In Timor-Leste, the establishment in 2001 of the Vulnerable Persons Unit (VPU) of the Timor-Leste Police Services was regarded as a useful model. The VPU is a special unit mandated to investigate cases of GBV, child abuse and other crimes against vulnerable persons and exists at both the national level and district level, with an office in every district's police headquarters. The VPU receives approximately 5 to 6 reports/cases each day. The VPU provides an identifiable access point and designated police officers, for victims of GBV, and for the Timorese providers of services for these victims. However, these units require both resources and high level commitment if they are to function effectively. In Northern Ireland, where there are also special units to deal with allegations of GBV, an NGO, Women's Aid, took innovative steps to generate commitment from the police to the issue of domestic violence and created trust between communities and police services as outlined in Text Box 4. Discussion between participants also highlighted the fact that often there is a clash between theory and practice in relation to policing services. While officers may be trained and have the skills to address women's needs, often it may be difficult for police to respond for several reasons, including lack of means to travel to and from the scene of the reported crime, lack of means to communicate with the victim and lack of means to get victims to services that provide wider treatment options.

¹² There is more in-depth discussion of this topic in Section 4.

Text Box 4:

Partnership with Police to Respond to Domestic Violence

During the conflict in Northern Ireland, there were high rates of domestic violence but very low levels of reporting because the police service that did not have widespread community support. A policy to tackle domestic violence had limited success. Women's Aid, an organisation that responds to women seeking help with domestic violence, developed a unique 'Policing Partnership' to create links between their services and the policing services. The organisation first created awareness of the need for training on Domestic Violence among the police services and then delivered this training to the police. They then organised meetings between senior police officers and victims of domestic violence, including a succession of visits to their safe houses. The police learned first-hand the impact of the violence on women, breaking down some of the barriers that existed. They set up clinics within Women's Aid offices and police officers worked from there in plain clothes. Continued collaboration and consultation with victims created a positive impact for both women and the police and resulted in increased reporting. Statistics of reporting continued to rise and the police committed to the creation of a Domestic Violence Unit. Repeat crimes also decreased. They took part in inter-agency work and made joint media appearances which increased confidence within the community to report domestic violence, and enabled understanding that a professional police response was required even in a politically unstable environment where the police were often not welcome. To achieve maximum impact from this new development the main agencies (Women's Aid, police, social services, probation and report services) agreed to adopt inter-agency protocols committing themselves to standards and good practice in ensuring proactive response to victims. These protocols are now being updated and further partnership work is being progressed.

Summary of main points from Conference Two:

- > Working with wide-ranging 'social guardians' such as the church to disseminate messages on GBV has worked.
- > The interface between formal and traditional justice and the implications of this for women who experience violence must be more readily and appropriately addressed and understood in the transition phase.

- > Forensic evidence is vital for the successful prosecution of incidents of sexual and other forms of violence. Capacity development for the provision of such services, particularly DNA collection and testing, and the establishment of infrastructure to facilitate such services should be part of the creation of structures in the aftermath of conflict.
- > The collection of quantitative and qualitative data is essential to enhance understanding and response to violence against women.
- > More attention is needed to the trauma that women experience as a result of violence. Creative responses such as those outlined above are needed.
- > Training of personnel and provision of resources is needed to ensure a medical response to violence is available to women. These should be in locations to which women have easy access.
- > Specialised units within judicial and policing services, including the creation and implementation of special measures, provide more appropriate and easier to access services for women.
- > Existing guidelines on gender approaches to post-conflict security and the management of IDP camps need to be implemented, and implementation should be monitored.
- > It is imperative that those charged with monitoring violence, developing early warning signals or identifying patterns of conflict include GBV in their strategies.
- > There need to be more opportunities in the security sector for women. Police and military institutions should consider implementing gender quotas for all ranks throughout the structure so that women can participate in the management of these institutions of state.

Summary of main indicators developed in Conference Two:

- > The establishment of forensic facilities as part of multi-sectoral approaches to GBV.
- > Increasing the number of successful prosecutions for cases of violence against women.
- > Referral pathway for victims of GBV which are operating and reviewed on a regular basis.
- > Violence against women is included within national data collection systems.
- > Increased numbers of women in decision-making roles in governance structures within camps for the displaced.

- > Increased numbers of women in newly established/reformed police and military.
- > Increased numbers of women in peacekeeping operations and a gender balance used in peace keeping patrols.

Women's centres were also identified as key safe spaces for women to come together to discuss women's concerns, to provide training and skills development opportunities, to safely discuss, report and seek help for GBV, and to ensure there is a space for women to address women's concerns. UN and international donors support for such long-term strategies would facilitate the implementation of UNSCR 1325.

2.4 Conference 3 - Gender Perspectives

The theme of the third conference was 'Gender Perspectives' and through workshops the sub-themes of post-conflict recovery, mediation and transitional justice were examined.

Introduction

The period of transition from conflict presents many challenges and opportunities. For participants, the concept of "gender perspectives" did not simply mean adding women into conflict and post-conflict processes. Rather, an emphasis was on the inclusion of relevant gender equality considerations into legislation, policies, reform, and institutional strategies to foster the empowerment of women and the protection of their rights. Participants underlined that in most cases, gender is still not being implemented effectively and more support is needed to ensure women's concerns are not lost in the transition phase.

(i) Post-Conflict Recovery

Women continue to work towards more effective gender. Text Box 5 is an example from Timor-Leste where a clear strategy was introduced and maintained during the period of transition and state-building and served to keep women's concerns on the agenda. This kind of approach has worked both in influencing UN and government structures, and in ensuring a collective approach that reflects the concerns of women from different geographic, economic, social and political backgrounds. The Northern Ireland Equality Commission, established as an outcome of the Northern Ireland Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, was also presented as a model at the conference. The Equality Commission Northern Ireland is responsible for the implementation of the provisions for equality in the Agreement, which are given statutory effect in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. These include gender equality and its intersection with other equality considerations such as disability and geographic location.

Text Box 5:

Women in Timor-Leste moved from Strategy → Action → Funding → Real Outcomes for Women:

After the end of the Indonesian occupation and the establishment of an interim administration, Timorese women embarked on a nation-wide consultation process, from grass-roots to national levels, to identify collectively the key issues concerning women in the recovery and re-building of their society. This process culminated in a 'National Women's Congress' which was attended by women from rural and urban areas. The congress produced a 'Platform for Action' detailing strategic areas for action, set out against the priorities identified by participants. This was presented to the UN Transitional Administration with a request that it would direct and inform gender mainstreaming across the administration. The National Women's Congresses have taken place every four years, providing an up-dated platform for action to their established government. Women's key ally is of course the Office of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality, which, as an official government structure, can push for mainstreaming of these issues across government. As a Timor-Leste participant noted: *"We use it [the congress] to monitor and evaluate our progress. Changes in policy came as a result of the congress e.g. 30% quota in parliament. Donors support this financially."*

Even where small gains have been made, the struggle is not over, as activists have had to reinvent, reinvigorate and introduce new and innovative ways to keep women's concerns on the agenda. Another experience from Timor-Leste participants related to the situation in 2006 and 2007, during which Timor-Leste, and specifically its capital city, Dili, experienced a period of instability and conflict which resulted in the displacement of tens of thousands of people into IDP camps, where people lived in overcrowded spaces with poor health and sanitary conditions. Women were vulnerable to insecurity inside and outside the camps. REDE FETO (Women's Network) conducted an assessment which identified the different challenges men and women faced in dealing with the



Liberian and Timorese delegates at Dili conference

effects of the crisis. 'Women's Committees' were quickly established in the IDP camps and they liaised with camp managers and village councils to bring to their attention particular issues of concern to women. Members of the Committees attended regular meetings facilitated by the Ministry for Social Solidarity and international and UN agencies. The Women's Committee programme ensured that many of the specific needs and problems of women in the IDP camps were addressed. Without such a structure they may have continued to be ignored both by government and by the agencies supporting its work.

All participants acknowledged that the issue of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) had been very challenging. Participants stated that theoretical expertise brought in from overseas on these issues might not actually be particularly applicable or relevant to the host country. There continues to be an absence of recognition of the potential for local solutions to local issues – and in particular a lack of recognition of women's role and skills and ability to negotiate issues such as these. Participants offered some positive examples where women themselves had responded to the need for different approaches to DDR. For example, in Liberia women had directly intervened with ex-combatants to facilitate the handing over of weapons. In Timor-Leste, women were not recognised as combatants until significant lobbying took place, (as a consequence of which they were not entitled to DDR benefits), even though they had played roles within or in support of the combatant resistance. In Northern Ireland, one participant pointed out that *"the average age in our conflict was 17/18. Young men also get status and access to things during war that they would never have had ordinarily. How does normal life compete with that?"* Efforts to address the needs of former combatants and prevent future tensions were based on

local solutions: *"One of things we did was to set up a sports and outdoor pursuits centre where they were trained and rewarded if they stayed in school. They got a qualification through the programme in outdoor pursuits. The good thing with those programmes was that it gave them something physical to do as well as team building, personal confidence and self-esteem. We did this for young women as well and with other communities so they made friends across the divide. We also talked to local business and the private sector to find employment for them."* Liberian participants stated that in their experience *"the DDR process has left most of men in the streets and they need assistance. How do we incorporate them also into gender work?"* Such questions remain unanswered, and they will continue to remain unanswered unless DDR programmes are made to work for both men and women, and are implemented using women's local knowledge and expertise.

(ii) Mediation - the importance of involvement in peace processes, peace agreements and their outcomes

Women take action for peace on many levels, yet are largely absent from international formal peace mediation processes. Participants concluded in the discussions that women were largely invisible from formal processes, but played instrumental roles in informal mediations that take place at different levels in society during and after conflict. More recognition is needed of these roles and to enable women to participate in formal processes where the skills they have developed can make a real difference.

A model from Liberia demonstrates that during the war, women's work for peace, targeted at many different levels of society, was effective. Taking a strategic action approach, they targeted everyone from politicians to traditional and religious leaders. For each initiative they identified a different set of targeted actions. Their goal was to build up an effective and coordinated effort for peace. They explained what worked:

1. Decentralised action: Liberian women formed a delegation of 3-5 women to put pressure on different conflict parties to participate in peace talks.
2. Women in mass action: *"We got every woman participating in the action to tell her family and friends about it and get them as well involved. Some women are shy and although they want peace, they won't take action for it. But if you see your sister there or your mother or your friend you go and join. That way we were able to multiply our strength."*
3. Flexibility in women's activism: Sometimes women acted as pressure group and sometimes as mediators

during the peace talks. They were able to respond to whatever was needed in a particular situation.

The mobilisation of women across the different religions (Christian, Muslims and 'traditional' women) was also important in order to have a united women's movement for peace. *"We went and spoke to all the women... We were all united for peace: Christians, Muslims and Traditional women."* Creative approaches adopted by the Liberian women were also noted, *"Women were very strong and found new innovative ways of campaigning for peace: they denied their husbands sex and food in order to be taken seriously, they walked without shoes, which is very symbolic in Liberia."* Liberian women also took action during the negotiations, *"People were dying and the political will for peace was missing. So we had to change the strategy and lock them in until they signed. We didn't even let them go to the toilet. We also used the African language, if a woman takes up her cloths and you are an African man, ha, you will be horrified."*

The enduring stability of a peace agreement often rests on ongoing peace campaigning and mediation initiatives to quell future conflict, and to ensure that stability holds. With segregation, polarisation and social division continuing to present challenges in Northern Ireland, an organisation called 'Interaction Belfast' has developed successful models to minimise violence. The organisation engages with combatants to provide analysis of issues and models of non-violent action to resolve violence. Women have been an intrinsic part of this process. As noted by Ireland's Special Envoy on UNSCR 1325: *"The work of mediators such as [participant from Northern Ireland] is very important. She pushes people out of their comfort zone and brings men who used to kill each other together."*

The issue of 'rights' and the reform of legislation in the aftermath of conflict were debated. Women not only need access to resources, but also shared ownership and control of resources, which ultimately enhances opportunities for economic empowerment. In Liberia and Timor-Leste, women do not always have full access to or ownership of land for example. Land and legal reform commissions are trying to address this in both contexts. In Timor-Leste, the 'Ita Nia Rai' project undertakes specific measures to train women, and encourages them to act as mediators in land disputes and assert their rights over ownership of land.

(iii) Transitional justice

Participants noted the need to 'remember' loved ones, to acknowledge the needs of victims and to promote peace

and democracy in the aftermath of conflict. In all contexts, women feel largely excluded from transitional justice processes, and specific provisions targeted at women and their concerns are consistently necessary.

Both Timor-Leste and Liberia have had Truth Commissions. The Timor-Leste Commission for Reception Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) was presented as a model that has worked to include women. *"Because women weren't coming forward with their own stories, the Commission had another approach to women and visited the women in their own homes to know exactly what happened to the women."* The CAVR prioritised research on the experiences of women during the conflict. It also organised a national hearing on women and the conflict, at which 13 of the 853 women interviewed for the CAVR research, testified publicly about their experiences. The work of the CAVR highlighted the fact that the experience, knowledge and understanding of women in conflict and in peace-building are often ignored.

While the merits of Truth Commissions were discussed, it was noted that neither Timor-Leste nor Liberia has seen formal accountability for the violations women experienced during the conflicts. In Timor-Leste *"just two GBV cases went forward [to the courts]...During the process of transitional justice in Timor-Leste, 853 cases of sexual violence emerged. The rest are still pending because the process in our courts is so slow and also because the perpetrators are out of the country."* Women in Liberia got no justice: *"After the war, processing the trials is proving difficult since identifying perpetrators is not easy and women aren't prepared to speak out."* This situation sends problematic messages about impunity and worrying signals to those who perpetrate GBV in conflict and post-conflict periods.

Women compared and contrasted the different mechanisms available to them and concluded that while prosecutions are essential, there is often too much emphasis placed on them. They become politicised, while measures that may be of equal importance to women – in terms of accountability as well as survival – are ignored. *"Women suffer as the result of the imposition of men's conflict so it's not a matter of naming and shaming but it's a matter of identifying how that conflict filtered down to the women and how processes can be changed to re-empower them and to prevent it from happening again"* (Northern Ireland participant). Participants recommended that wider transitional justice options such as 'reparations' schemes should be more readily available and that women's socio-economic needs should be pursued on a par with their social and political rights, and accountability



Special Envoy O'Loan, Assistant Minister Kamara, Timorese Prime Minister Gusmao, Minister Rodrigues and CRU Director in Dili

for abuses suffered by them: *"We didn't necessarily want to reduce the importance of pursuing perpetrators but that it should be at the same level as other issues such as reparations."*

A participant from Northern Ireland noted that *"One of the difficulties [in Northern Ireland] is that domestic abuse and violence has never been seen by government or participants as part of the conflict"* and gave the example of the 'Eames-Bradley' process which had completely ignored gender issues.¹³ *"The Eames-Bradley process engaged in a wide consultation process with civil society, NGOs and especially with the Human Rights Commission. They produced a report that had the official sanction of the government as it was government led. The Eames-Bradley report advocated structures that were based on individual complaints. They made a provision for police informers to have anonymity and be protected and the women's sector asked that the same provisions would be given to women, because a lot of the women who were historically violated still have a lot of fear, but that wasn't reflected in the report."* Without such specific protection, women may elect not to participate in such processes, particularly in relation to sensitive issues such as sexual violence.

An important transitional mechanism in Northern Ireland has been the reform of the institutions of policing. The model of the establishment of the Northern Ireland

Policing Board was shared. The board has a wide range of statutory powers and duties, one of which is to promote engagement between communities and police to combat crime. A number of reference groups and community networks have been established to facilitate this. A key group is the 'Women's Reference Group' whose membership include leaders within the women's sector in Northern Ireland. District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) were also established in 2003 to provide local accountability. As a Northern Ireland participant commented: *'The district policing partnership project provides an example for real change. It has a 50-50% representation of men and women and of the two different groups. There is a real representation of women in local meetings and women are in a good position to vote on issues concerning the effectiveness of policing. The gender mix works well to get people on table; it's of value. If you are getting mix right you are more cost-efficient and you are getting range of opinion in. So from that perspective a focus on gender equality it is adding value.'* The Policing Board also has a statutory duty to publish a Gender Action Plan that monitors the number of women in the Police Service and within the Board's staff, with the aim of increasing that number if they are under-represented. When the PSNI was established in 2001, 13% of police officers were women and in 2009, 24% of police officers were women. A further initiative was the establishment of the office of Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. The Police Ombudsman has full legal powers to investigate criminality and misconduct by police officers, and to recommend prosecutions and disciplinary action against such officers. The Police Ombudsman also has powers to make recommendations for the improvement of policing policies and practices, and collects statistics in relation to complaints against the police.

Conference 3 – The gender perspective – summary of conclusions

- > *In post-conflict processes, women are obliged to constantly and consistently establish specific strategies to ensure women's concerns are addressed within post-conflict programming. Otherwise women's concerns are excluded.*
- > *Women's centres have played an important role in all three settings in ensuring that women have a space to organise collectively and have unity in voice.*
- > *Institutional and legislative reforms:* Participants from Timor-Leste and Liberia noted the significance of reforms during the transition period, particularly over-turning traditional laws and drafting legislation

¹³ 'Eames-Bradley' is used to describe a process of consultation on the past led by Lord Robin Eames and Denis Bradley. The 'Consultative Group on the Past' was established on 22nd June 2007 by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to "consult across the community on how Northern Ireland society can best approach the legacy of the events of the past 40 years". It developed a series of recommendations for 'dealing with the past'. The full report can be found at: www.cgpi.org

that enabled women to own property, and dealt with issues such as rape and domestic violence.

- > *Recognition of women as mediators:* Women assess conflict with an eye on the future, and with a focus on what they want for their children and grandchildren and this must be recognised as beneficial.
- > *Women's inclusion works:* "Women are often able to pre-empt potential for violence because they know their communities and the dynamics within the communities. Therefore women need to be included in the development of early warning systems. Those systems need to be developed at the community level."
- > *Thematic and tailored approaches* within transitional justice mechanisms facilitate women's participation. "Women will get more out of a systematic and thematic approach rather than individual. It needs to be across all communities and individuals."
- > *Transitional justice processes that facilitate women's stories to emerge* are also important and must be delivered in a safe way. The methodology needs to suit women's means of communication, particularly around sensitive issues such as sexual violence.
- > *Accountability for past abuses is imperative.* However, wider transitional processes must also be pursued and made to meet the needs and reality of women. Financial reparations need to be designed and applied in a timely manner in accordance with women's identified needs.

women's organisations).

- > Proportion of women who have lost confidence in the process vs. proportion who have confidence in the system.

Summary of main indicators developed in Conference Three:

- > Gender mainstreaming and women-specific policies visible in post-conflict recovery planning and fully implemented.
- > Women visible and in decision-making roles in peace negotiations.
- > Funding available to women's collective actions to promote peace building and women's inclusion.
- > Policies on DDR that incorporate gender mainstreaming and include consultations with women's organisations.
- > Increase in the numbers of successful prosecutions for sexual violence during conflict.
- > Transitional justice processes have victim and women friendly documentation and evidence gathering processes in place before, during and at end of process (verification provided through evaluations by

3. Key issues and lessons learned from implementing models

“Let’s fight with ideas. It’s about daily life – individual and community well-being. We should be clear about what we want and develop the strategy. We need to identify who has what we want and work with them. We should find a common ground.

It’s also good to celebrate – it helps to energise and move forward.

Also, let’s identify the cracks to let the grass come out”

(Liberian participant)

This section outlines the lessons learned that were identified during the discussions outlined in the previous section of this report. These ‘lessons learned’ have been organised into four sub-sections corresponding to the different issues and challenges that participants identified as critical to advancing or inhibiting the success of their work as follows: (1) Key personal and social issues and strategies. (2) Key technical approaches and strategies, (3) Key political and technical support (4) Underlying obstacles to be addressed. These are outlined below:



Workshop in Belfast

3.1 Key personal and social issues and strategies

Participants at the conferences discussed the difficulties facing those women who decided to do something ‘different’ and to push for change and how daunting this process may be. They highlighted key personal and social issues that must be considered and addressed if women are to be supported and are to be successful in their endeavours:

(i) Women’s empowerment must be enabled and promoted.

Participants at the conferences underlined that a combination of *confidence, leadership*, and drive are needed within those women who are willing to take up leadership roles. *“Women need to claim their positions, not waiting until someone gives them a position. That will never happen. It’s all about power.”*(Liberian participant) ‘Power’, both positive and negative, was identified and understood by participants to affect women’s lives in all spheres - from their homes to public spaces. Lack of power could, in many cases, block women from coming forward or making progress. Economic empowerment is a particular aspect of the ‘empowerment’ framework that emerged repeatedly across all three conferences. Without economic independence women could not, on an individual basis, take forward their ideas at community right up to national levels. On a collective basis, economic empowerment for women’s organisations and women’s centres was identified as key if longer-term strategies were to be taken forward. As one participant stated: *“We as women need to see ourselves as powerful, build up self-confidence, and change our own perceptions.”*(Ireland Participant)

(ii) Generate mobilisation among women to demand entitlements.

“Women must initiate – men will not invite” (Northern Ireland participant). There was a sense that women are *“too polite”* (Northern Ireland Participant) and need to be more outspoken and demanding in their aspirations. Delegates from Liberia believe that the most important thing that women in Liberia did in achieving progress on the peace process was to say ‘enough is enough.’ Women from Timor-Leste and Liberia took initiatives such as protesting, presenting their governments with ‘Platforms for Action’ (Timor-Leste) and organising ‘sit-ins’

to lock male members into peace talks until an outcome was reached (Liberia).

(iii) Family and community-level support is necessary.

Participants at the cross-learning conferences noted that family and community support is not always forthcoming. Engaging in public roles, and on issues that may in some cases go against traditional norms, can prompt ridicule from family, and isolation from the wider community. Negative attitudes of some women towards women who step forward and take up roles outside those traditionally assigned to women, can cause difficulty. Strategies may be used by those in power to sideline women as they gain power, and women need to be prepared and supported to deal with these.

(iv) Role models promote activism

The presence of role models sends clear signals about women’s status and role in society, and prompts other women into action. The election of a female President in Liberia presented a positive role model, and acts as an indicator of the improving position of women in society and encourages further participation of women in public life.

3.2 Key technical approaches and strategies

(i) Address gender equality from the outset.

Many participants had had experiences within conflict resolution and peace building processes where power-holders had determined that peace should be achieved first, and only at later stages should women’s concerns be addressed. Gender issues must be included in all aspects of conflict management, resolution and peace-building from the very beginning. It is harder to include them in a meaningful and substantive way later.

(ii) Establish formal structures to advance gender equality.

Participants noted that the establishment of National Women’s Machineries (NWM) sends a clear signal regarding formal commitment to the issue of gender equality. This boosts women’s confidence to take action, and these entities play a central role in channelling women’s work at the grass-roots into higher level government structures. The Timor-Leste Government has established the Office of the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality, and the Liberian Governments has established the Ministry of Gender and Development.

While there are ongoing challenges related to issues such as availability of expertise and funding, the importance of these structures was strongly underlined. Participants highlighted the importance of establishing NWMs (with sufficient resources) within the initial planning that takes place for transition phases.

(iii) Child care structures must be put in place.

Participants were struck by the provision of child care facilities at Women’s Centres in Northern Ireland. All of the participants who visited these centres felt this was a key strategy that enabled women to participate in public life. Family-friendly working arrangements are necessary in order for women to participate fully in leadership and decision-making roles.

(iv) Improve and enhance approaches to gender mainstreaming

The need for more effective approaches to gender mainstreaming was identified throughout all conferences, as participants shared examples of where international approaches to conflict resolution and management are still ineffective. If UNSCR 1325 is to be successfully implemented, more effective gender mainstreaming strategies must be developed. This includes the need for:

- > Policies within all aspects of conflict and post-conflict programming that set out concrete strategies to advance women’s empowerment and participation, with clear benchmarks;
- > Awareness raising on UNSCR 1325 among staff of organisations that work in countries affected by conflict;
- > Training for staff of these organisations - not just on gender equality and mainstreaming strategies - but also training that obliges individuals to examine their own positions and understanding of these issues, and that ultimately promotes behavioural and attitudinal change;
- > The generation and demonstration of political will to advance women’s interests;
- > Approaches that focus less on adding women’s concerns to the ‘business’ of international peace and security, and focus more on reforming the entire system, involving women and making it work for both women and men.

(v) Work with men on the achievement of gender equality.

Participants recognised that while there needs to be a space for women to work on women’s concerns, there is

also a need to engage with men. A common refrain was “When you talk about gender you need to make space for men”. There is however a ‘fear’ that engaging with men can result in the need to share space and funding with men. It was concluded that a twin-track approach is needed. The first track would be a space for women to work specifically on women’s concerns supported by long-term investment and funding; the second would involve engaging with men to work together on these issues. Sensitisation of men to women’s concerns and interests is important in going forward.

3.3 Key political and technical support

The ability to advance plans and strategies that enhance women’s empowerment and implementation of UNSCR 1325 often depends on access to both technical and funding support. Participants identified key steps that that could enhance the ways that resources could be accessed and used to advance women’s interests.

(i) Political support for women’s rights is needed.

Participants noted that international agencies and national institutions rarely work from a rights-based perspective and often work from ‘women as beneficiaries’ type approach. This does little to enable women to advance their own empowerment strategies and rights-based approaches. Participants also highlighted that such organisations should become vocal on supporting women’s rights, particularly as they often have access to national level structures that small organisations cannot get access to and influence. Through voicing political support, such organisations could lend legitimacy to work by existing women’s organisations in each context and have influence where it counts.

(ii) Tools should be used more strategically to advance women’s rights.

UNSCR 1325, CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) were identified as key tools and resources that could be used by women themselves to advance their agenda. Participants noted that legislation is an important tool and post-conflict strategies must address the need to set in place a legal framework that adequately addresses women’s concerns. For example, laws and policies that adequately capture the range of violence that women experience are important, but a change to the systems used to implement them is also required.

(iii) Funding strategies need to change to suit rights-based approaches.

Problems with accessing and utilising available funding arose repeatedly during the conferences. Current funding strategies by the UN and international donors and organisations do not suit the ways that women organisations work to promote women’s empowerment, and provide services and programmes that work for women. A Liberian participant commented that: “I think another reason why it [UNSCR 1325] is not taking root is that most of the women’s organisations are limited in terms of funding and power base. So in as much as you want to sustain certain aspects, there are limitations. We need to look at access to funding for women’s rights.” Funding is needed on a long-term basis so that longer-term change strategies can be employed to bring about the kinds of fundamental social and attitudinal change that is required to pursue equality. Such approaches are also needed to sustain rights-based strategies and prevent regression where gains have been made.

(iv) Training needs to be tailored more specifically to identified needs.

- > Technical support must also address both the needs of institutional development as well as programmatic development and implementation. It was noted that while training provided by international organisations is crucial, this kind of support needs to be refined to local contexts. Participants from Timor-Leste highlighted the fact that the language used in some training programmes and manuals used by UN organisations was perceived locally as very academic. This presented a major problem given the low literacy levels of many rural women. Additionally, the location of the training centres was problematic as they were in places which were difficult for women to access. Tailored training at local levels is therefore essential and must:
 - > Provide *appropriate* skills training that has been identified as necessary by women;
 - > Use *innovative approaches* – “it is not about doing traditional things, don’t stereotype women but use approaches that promote social change;”
 - > Organise more *cross-fertilised* training and learning such as that provided through the cross-learning conference;
 - > Ensure that technical resources to support women’s organisations are provided based on their own identified needs and priorities.

3.4 Key underlying obstacles to be addressed

All three groups identified key obstacles that inhibit and prevent women's participation, the protection of women from violence and the full incorporation of the gender perspective in policy making and state-building.

(i) Patriarchal society and traditions.

All three groups identified the patriarchal nature of their cultures as presenting specific constraints that inhibit women from advancing their interests. This includes attitudes that maintain women's role within the home, that result in women receiving less pay for equal work in relation to men and that inform the use of violence that ultimately serves to intimidate and control women. A change in political culture is needed to allow for increased participation of women. Specifically, political systems need to overcome history and traditions which are exclusive of women and prohibitive of their participation. This would pave the way for increased involvement of women into political life and ultimately to wider structural and societal reforms in favour of women's empowerment and equality.

(ii) Poverty.

Participants highlighted the fact that *"poverty underlies everything."* A deeper understanding is needed of the ways in which poverty is linked to women's inequality and lack of rights. Women's lack of economic independence means that they have little power within and outside the household. Without their own incomes and economic security women often remain trapped in violent relationships.

(iii) Violence.

Violence both in public and private spheres, and during and after conflict can be a source of enduring trauma and an obstacle on many levels. Participants made links between the sexual, mental, emotional and physical violence that women are subjected to, and how these adversely affect women's participation and empowerment. The need to ensure women's physical safety and security was underlined in relation to a wide range of arenas – from the home, to formal politics, to women who take action within IDP camps. Violence is both an ongoing phenomenon in many women's lives and a threat which may manifest against those who take steps to advance women's interests. Violence needs to be addressed so that women's voices can be heard.



Assistant Minister Kamara, Special Envoy O'Loan with delegates in Dili.

(iv) Lack of education.

Lack of education inhibits women's ability to participate and strive for their rights from national to grass roots levels. Investment in capacity building for girls and in schools and the education system is needed. Participants urged that these matters should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

(v) An Inhibitive Media.

The media has a key role in supporting campaigning on women's rights but the media can also be inhibitive. In all conferences, the role of the media was noted as hugely important in combating stereotypes that are harmful to women; however, it may not give enough attention to ongoing women's programmes or give the wrong messages about women and their status.

3.5 Conclusion

Sections two and three of this report have presented the main points from the discussions that took place at the three cross-learning conferences. Valuable insights and learning have been garnered from the expertise and experience offered by participants. These discussions were then used as a basis to generate and draw out key messages and recommendations to the UN and other relevant parties in support of the implementation of UNSCR 1325. These are presented in the following section.

4. Messages to the United Nations and international actors

“We engage the government and UN agencies just to talk about the negative things from the UN mission but sometimes the international agencies do not want to listen to us because it is in contrast to their mission.”

(Timor-Leste participant)

Based on the lessons learned and shared during the conferences, participants were asked to devise key messages that they would like to be delivered to the United Nations with the aim of influencing its work on UNSCR1325.¹⁴ This section presents these key messages which are structured around four themes:

- > How women engage – these messages aim to enhance understanding within the UN and its staff on the ways that women mobilise, are engaged in their work and how the UN should support this work.
- > How to improve UN engagement – these messages aim to provide guidance to the UN on how to improve the overall ethos of its work.

¹⁴ A note on context: The UN has played a major role in the transition from conflict in both Timor-Leste and Liberia, but has not had any role in Northern Ireland. Participants from the two contexts that have experienced UN missions were able to contribute to mission-specific issues and all participants presented ideas for wider policy level ideas. While the messages may be specifically directed towards the United Nations and its agencies, it must be noted that many of the points in this chapter are also applicable to governmental, donor and non-governmental agencies that operate in contexts affected by conflict.



Timorese delegates in Monrovia

- > How to improve UN Missions – these messages relate to ways to improve specific aspects of UN missions such as training, programming and peacekeeping.
- > Wider recommendations – these recommendations relate to wider UN policy, the UN institution and its member states.

4.1 Key messages on ‘How Women Engage’

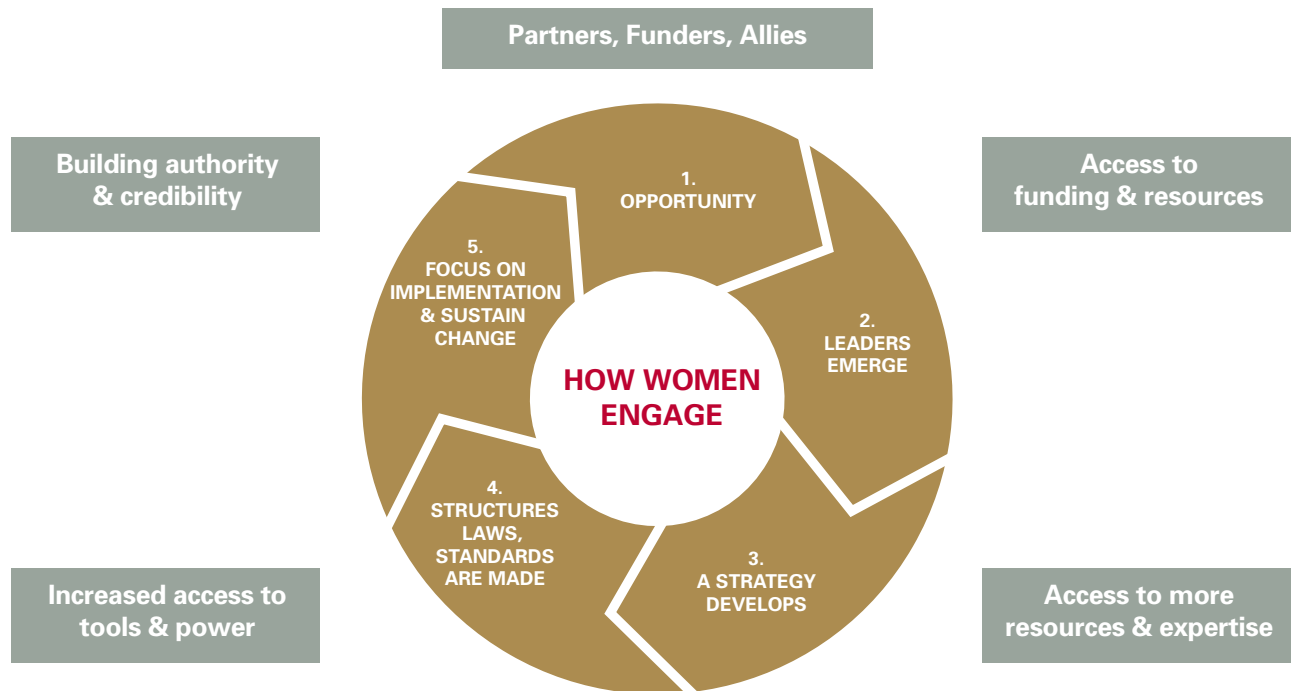
While both women and men attended the conferences, this sub-section represents the particular ideas of the female participants who have substantial experience and expertise in working on women’s issues and concerns within women’s organisations and movements. The main message for the UN and its counterparts was that in all settings - in times of peace or conflict - women organise, mobilise and engage on issues of concern to them. They will do this regardless of the personal, societal and political obstacles facing them. It is because of those obstacles that women creatively come together. Participants underlined that this basic premise needs to be understood by international entities entering contexts that are new to them.

During discussions at the conferences, participants identified the factors and strategies that are used to advance work by women’s organisations and organisations dealing with gender issues. Key patterns were also identified. These patterns and the key steps that women take were drawn together into a diagram during the Belfast conference (See Figure 2). It depicts the ways in which women mobilise, engage and act:

Explanation of the steps outlined inside the circular arrows:

- Opportunity: Participants highlighted that *“It is never a good idea to wait before demanding change”*. The identification of gaps, challenges and where action is needed may occur long before women’s participation is achieved;
- Leaders emerge: Leaders and champions are essential. They need to be recognised and supported to come forward. Participants noted that it is important that women take on leadership positions because they feel they are the best person for the job and not just because of being a woman;

How women engage in political & decision making processes in conflict/post conflict situations



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- (iii) A strategy develops: Participants described how creative strategies are generated by women to achieve their goals. The models in the previous chapter outline some of the very creative and innovative strategies women have used;
- (iv) Structures, laws, standards are made: Women will keep working until their goals are achieved;
- (v) Focus on implementation and sustain change: A focus must be maintained on implementing these laws, policies etc. so that sustained change can take place over the longer term;
- (vi) The cycle starts again with the identification of a new opportunity and a new round of action.

Key factors in this process include:

- > Support from partners and allies to engage in the identified opportunity;
- > Ongoing and renewed access to the kinds of resources needed to facilitate women's strategies;
- > Achievement leading to increased access to tools and power;
- > Achievement and implementation of goals leading to increased authority and credibility.

Participants felt that this diagram adequately represented the cycles of mobilisation, action, reflection and strategising that women's movements undertake. Participants from Timor-Leste and Liberia who have experienced UN missions reported that they had established women's movements and lobbying strategies before the UN came in. Their activism during conflict established a platform for activism after conflict. As the diagram portrays, this activism takes a circular and repetitive dynamic. In this case, new strategies emerge to lobby for women's concerns in the post-conflict context. These women emphasised that their ongoing efforts were rarely acknowledged by international organisations coming into their country. They noted that these bodies can either assist or hinder their work. Without recognition by these organisations of the dynamic that is represented in the figure above, they will hamper women's efforts and achievement of their goals. Women's movements need to be able to take advantage of the opportunity that the presence of the UN presents, the legitimacy it can lend to rights-based work and the political support, resources, tools and information that it can provide.

The diagram above provides a clear explanation of how women engage. It is presented as part of this report to encourage the UN and its staff to take notice and to use

this diagram as a means for approaching and planning its work. It provides unambiguous guidance on where the opportunities are for the UN to engage with and support work to advance women's interests.

4.2 Key messages for the UN:

- > Women's 'movements', groups, organisations and campaigns mobilise around collective identified concerns and interests, and are there before international actors arrive. They will be there after they leave and their work should be recognised.
- > There is a remarkable opportunity for international actors such as the UN or international donors to support these efforts rather than ignore or inadvertently block them.
- > For the most part, the systems used by international organisations to provide funding create more layers of work, rather than facilitating and expediting women's strategies.
- > The UN and international organisations need to ensure that they acknowledge and learn from the ways that women's organisations work, and support the achievement of the goals towards which women are working.
- > The UN and its counterparts need to "*change how you do things*" – the current structures and systems are exclusive of women. Organisations were urged not to fear change but embrace the possibilities that change can create.
- > "*Trust women*" (Liberian participant). The UN should take the lead from women who are experts on their own lives.
- > "*Women are not 'quick-impact' projects*" (Liberian participant) and it is time for the UN and international organisations to realise this. The UN and international organisations need to ask women what their priorities are, listen to their responses and support their priorities.
- > "*Women's empowerment takes a long time!*" Rights-based approaches are not about ticking boxes or gathering numbers. International organisations need to explore creative ways of measuring longer-term qualitative changes to accompany their funding.

4.3 Key messages on how to improve UN engagement

In relation to the establishment of UN missions and the entry of staff into conflict-affected contexts, participants had the following messages for the UN:

(i) Foster greater cultural sensitivity among UN staff.

Participants said that they understood that UN missions are made up of people from many nationalities with varied experience, cultures and social and religious belief systems that they bring with them while 'on mission'. More effort is needed, however, in raising awareness around cultural sensitivity. Participants highlighted specific cultural issues for UN staff to understand and be appropriately responsive to:

- > The fact that there is a *cultural prejudice and bias against women*. Women may not be in a position to safely challenge these discriminatory practices. By explicitly and appropriately challenging such practices, the UN can play a significant role in lending credibility to strategies by women to safely tackle their own cultural constraints;
- > Women highlighted that sometimes there is an 'overstatement' of culture: "*Cultural practices are ingrained in society. 1325 issues may be resisted by all as they are not 'African' or not 'Cultural'. How do you liberate the minds of these people who engage in these practices?*" (Liberian participant) This question did not just apply to power-holders in each context but also to staff of the UN. While participants did not want a complete overhaul or dilution of their culture, they wanted the aspects that are harmful to women to be recognised by international actors, and support to be provided to address them;
- > The need to understand *women's perceptions of themselves* and varying cultural perceptions of equality, and what that means. The ways in which international agencies deal with resistance to gender issues and equality is crucial in enabling women's organisations to take these processes forward in the longer term;
- > *Additional cultural issues were also identified* such as the need for respect for different religions and religious practices, the need to understand that there may

be different languages and terminology and ways of describing issues that make more sense contextually than the international jargon that is often brought in.

(ii) Take time to understand who ‘women’ are.

International organisations often treat ‘women’ as a ‘mass’ group. They urged international programme and policy makers to be clear that women are not a homogeneous group. In creating and implementing programmes, the UN needs to consider “*who the women are, what has happened to them, what age group they may be, their different social, political and economic circumstances*” (Liberian participant) and wider identities such as ethnicity, religion, race etc. As a participant from Liberia commented: “*We cannot assume that all women are the same, but need to respect and acknowledge the differences between them. We need to ensure that different roles and identities of women are representedthat all voices are being heard*”.

(iii) Develop local knowledge of women’s issues

- > In conjunction with a knowledgeable local partner, the UN develops country profiles to inform staff about the contexts in which they are working and living. These should contain specific information on cultural issues and practices. It should also identify the range of local work and expertise that may be addressing harmful cultural practices and attitudes, and underline appropriate ways to understand and approach these issues;
- > Prior to establishing conflict-related programming, the UN should undertake scoping and assessments to establish what has already been done locally and the local expertise that can be tapped into;
- > There is transparency and visibility of the ways in which women have been consulted in the planning, strategy, development of indicators and implementation of UN programmes with affected local populations.



Liberian delegates in Monrovia

4.4 Key messages for UN missions

(i) Improve the awareness training provided to international staff.

Participants were aware that the UN has pre-deployment training for all staff and three weeks of induction when they arrive. Instruction on UNSCR 1325 needs to include issues such as HIV and local cultural issues, prior to arrival in the mission area. Pre- deployment screening of peacekeeping contingents by DPKO should include testing on provisions relating to UNSCR 1325 – and peacekeepers should not be deployed if they fail. Participants emphasised that:

- > Gender Advisers and Gender Focal Points in all missions should be required to make appropriate contact through the correct channels with women’s groups who can offer other forms of information, intelligence and opinion;
- > Peacekeeping soldiers and UN civilian staff need to look beyond the labels of ‘refugees’ or ‘IDPs’ or ‘returnees’ and rather see the population they are serving as real people.

The need for awareness training illustrated in practice

One participant gave the example of an incident where he had received induction for UN peacekeepers upon arrival in an African country. The induction did not focus at all on gender issues. He asked the gender officer leading the induction training what the legal age of consent was for sex in that country. The instructor did not know. Upon hearing this story in the conference, a Timor-Leste participant relayed an (historical) incident that occurred in Timor-Leste where an international staff member of the UN took two underage girls to a hotel. The international staff member did not know the age of consent.

(ii) As a priority, create structures within UN Missions and transitional governments that promote gender equality.

Participants noted the increased presence of gender advisers and structures to promote gender equality within the work of the UN. Often however, it seems that ‘priority’ issues are dealt with first, and gender equality is placed outside the priority list to be addressed ‘later’. Gender advisers within the UN system itself are required from the highest to the lowest level of any peace-keeping

operation. A reporting mechanism to identify issues on the ground, and the measures to deal with those issues and to monitor implementation of those measures should also be instituted.

(iii) Reinvigorate the implementation of gender mainstreaming policies.

Participants emphasised that despite the existence of UNSCR 1325, issues such as 'gender' are often still ignored within programmes and policies relating to peace and security. While references to gender may be found, the issue is often included in a tokenistic way without meaningful application. It is important that the concepts of 'gender perspectives' and 'equality' are emphasised, and that there is not an assumption that UNSCR 1325 will be implemented simply by adding 'women' to texts such as policy documents. The UN should promote 1325 as a series of measures to which women are entitled, and a requirement on all UN staff and partners.

(iv) Use more rigorous and creative procedures to prevent harmful behaviour by UN staff.

Across all conferences, participants described, discussed and debated the prevalence of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse by staff of UN and other humanitarian and development organisations. Text Box 6 highlights the specific issues and messages that participants prioritised in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse. Participants also observed a number of additional behavioural concerns – the most prominent were alcohol abuse and dangerous driving by UN staff. These behaviours have an impact on women and their families. Participants from Timor-Leste strongly objected to dangerous driving which can bring physical harm to community members. The UN must improve its own accountability mechanisms with clear and unambiguous process for holding countries and commanders to account for violations by individual peacekeeping soldiers.



Workshop discussions

Text Box 6:

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) by UN Staff

While the UN 'Zero Tolerance Policy' on SEA¹⁵ was acknowledged, incidents of exploitation and abuse still occur. Participants were very angry about a policy which simply provides for the repatriation of soldiers accused of such abuses who, in their words, "*are free to do the same in another country*" (Ireland participant). Participants wanted accountability so that the SRS and Force Commanders are held responsible for the conduct of their mission and there is an end to the impunity for these perpetrators. They listed the following demands:

- > Data on inappropriate sexual behaviour and its consequences should be included in the Mission's report to the UN and the national Government. Staff members must comply with local laws and be held accountable in-country to the local population who can witness this (not when they return home and where actions may not occur).
- > Sanctions should be applied to personnel who break the code of conduct and undermine the values of the UN. This includes expulsion of the staff member from future involvement in UN missions. In addition, those countries which do not sanction their offenders should not be allowed to contribute troops to future missions. This should be included within MoUs agreed between receiving and sending countries.

In both Timor-Leste and Liberia, women who have either had relationships with or experienced sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by UN staff have been left without support to raise the resulting children alone. Participants recommended that:

- > Women and local NGOs should be able to discuss the matter of 'UN babies' with representatives of UN Missions in-country and should expect and receive a response, including investigation and specific and identified actions against offenders.
- > Participants want a UN policy relating to the 'UN babies' issue within 3 years.
- > In the case of peacekeepers, an obligation should be placed on the troop-contributing government to provide monetary support to the women and children affected by SEA.

¹⁵ Sexual Exploitation and Abuse is a form of gender based violence. The term has been widely used to describe the forms of sexual abuses perpetrated by international personnel serving in humanitarian and development settings. See "Women, Girls, Boys and Men: Different Needs, Equal Opportunities" published by the UN Inter Agency Standing Committee in December 2006 for a full reference to this issue and an explanation.

The Code of Conduct for UN staff should be strengthened with clear, strong and unambiguous messages. Participants recommended the following:

- > There is a need to explicitly tell staff what behaviour is required of them and what behaviour is prohibited.
- > The Code must make clear that the individual and the mission have an obligation to comply with local laws and customs.
- > A strategy should be developed for dissemination of information to inform local people about the Code of Conduct and make widely known within the country the standards which apply, how they will be enforced and how to report breaches.
- > The Code should include a process for investigation and sanction in the host country / Mission area. A mechanism for keeping victims informed and reporting back to the local community should also be implemented.

(v) Recognise the need for long-term strategies to implement UNSCRs 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889.

The UN should take comprehensive approaches that are based on the combined principles and content of the Women, Peace and Security resolutions, CEDAW and the BPFA. Such comprehensive approaches should be incorporated into the planning stages of UN missions and include the appointment of Gender Equality Advisers at all levels within the UN system. Each UN Mission should ensure that sex disaggregated statistics are collected and maintained and are used to inform planning and programming; that gender audits and impact assessments are conducted and that Mission reports contain substantive data on gender equality issues on all operations.

(vi) Establish accountability systems to ensure security sector reform reflects women and men's concerns.

The UN should encourage and assist national governments emerging from conflict to build effective independent monitoring and oversight bodies/ arrangements for security and police forces to ensure their accountability and adherence to the highest international standards of human rights and gender equality. The UN should encourage and support national governments to cascade these standards and approach down to local arrangements and 'traditional' authorities and work to adopt codes of conduct and harmonise local procedures to interface effectively with policing and justice in the protection of women from GBV.

(vii) Funding should reflect the reality of identified needs in the host country.

Rather than imposing structures that do not support the work already being done, methods of funding by UN agencies should be adapted to take into account longer-term, social change approaches used by women's organisations. UN funding should be based on the specific characteristics of each situation to ensure effective targeting, minimise duplication, and ensure value for money. Financial support is required to ensure that collective strategies initiated by women can achieve their aims. Responsive, quick and flexible funding works and is needed from international donors and organisations to assist women to pursue their concerns.

(viii) Pro-actively facilitate the transfer of capacity and knowledge.

While capacity development is often central to the mandate of UN missions, in practice this is often not happening and much opportunity is being wasted. Participants from Liberia highlighted that there are great human resources and capacity within the UN mission there. However, in many cases, there is often no government counterpart assigned to work with the UN staff. As a Liberian participant stated: *"Whether the national or local institutions are learning from the UN work is a fine question. It is a critical issue that has emerged.... For instance we have a few institutions that started in the UN that have moved to the government but the funding still comes from the UN. If the UN pulls out are they sustainable?"* Transfer of knowledge and facilitating 'on-the-job' learning should be made a specific component within job descriptions.

(ix) Support and facilitate the host country in moving forward.

Often when there is a large response to a humanitarian emergency, large numbers of agencies and staff arrive. *"Sometimes we can be swamped with NGOs"* (Liberian participant). One participant described how in her context some of the NGOs fought over who would manage IDP camps. This power play takes place between these agencies and often little power rests with government. Participants recommended that vetting of agencies takes place within each country to establish whether the services of that agency are needed and are of quality. This should include vetting of staff within these agencies in relation to child and vulnerable person protection issues. Participants saw the UN as a 'force for good' however noted *"the need for the UN not to run the country, but to support and facilitate the country moving forward."*



Caption

(x) The UN needs to have an exit strategy that institutionalises approaches to gender equality.

Participants have observed that the withdrawal of international organisations after the emergency phase has reduced has serious implications. As these organisations leave, with them go funding sources, technical expertise and the political support and status that they may have given to the issue of gender equality locally. Agencies need to work in a way that institutionalises support for gender equality and creates longer terms sources of funding for women's priorities.

4.5 Wider Recommendations to the United Nations

Wider Recommendations to the United Nations and Member States

- > Establish a formal mechanism at UN level to monitor implementation of UNSCR 1325. This should include a facility to allow organisations working on women's rights to query individual countries on their implementation record on UNSCR 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889.
- > Indicators for the assessment of the implementation of UNSCR 1325 should incorporate methods for capturing where and how and when change occurs. There is a need to move away from aspiration towards concrete actions and indicators if UNSCR 1325 is to have an impact.
- > Within implementation strategies for NAPs, linkages should be created between the Women, Peace and Security Resolutions, CEDAW, the BPFA, and tools

such as national poverty reduction strategies and national development plans, so that the structural challenges and obstacles that women face at all levels are addressed.

- > Reinvigorate efforts to implement gender mainstreaming in all aspects of security policy, and within peace-keeping and policing operations. A gender audit should be undertaken as part of the development of all polices and operations and particular attention should be paid to ensuring that there is an appropriate level of budget spent on the concerns and rights of women.
- > Data on inappropriate sexual behaviour and its consequences should be included in the Mission's report to the UN and the national Government. Staff members must comply with local laws and be held accountable for criminal actions in-country to the local population who can witness this (not when they return home and where actions may not occur).
- > Sanctions should be applied to personnel who break the code of conduct and undermine the values of the UN. This includes expulsion of the staff member from future involvement in UN missions. In addition, those countries which do not sanction their offenders should not be allowed to contribute troops to future missions. This should be included within MoUs agreed between receiving and sending countries.
- > Increase support for the production of quality National Action Plans (NAPS) which reflect and respond to the learning in this report. Establish a body to monitor the content of NAPs and to hold states accountable for their compliance with UNSCR 1325.
- > Increase support for the production of quality National Action Plans (NAPS) which reflect and respond to the learning in this report. Establish a body to monitor the content of NAPs and to hold states accountable for their compliance with UNSCR 1325.
- > Ensure that UN Women operates as a powerful and positive advocate for gender equality and UN HQ.
 - > UN Women should:
 - > Provide adequate technical and financial support to international efforts to implement UNSCR 1325.
 - > Provide technical support to UN Member States to enable them to develop comprehensive NAPs.
 - > Develop methods and strategies for the provision of funding and technical support to women's organisations to reflect the recommendations in this report.

5. Conclusions and Outcomes of the Cross-Learning Process

“What we want to do is to say to people in other conflict zones ‘you may be in a dreadful place now, but know this, there is a better place ahead of you, there is hope. With the right process, with determination and courage above all, you will be capable of achieving what the women of Timor-Leste and the women of Liberia and Northern Ireland have achieved.’”

(Ireland’s Special Envoy on UNSCR 1325)

The cross-learning project has demonstrated the potential that innovative and creative methods can have in enhancing learning and understanding around the implementation of UNSCR 1325. It created a space to draw women’s voices into the debate that is building around and towards the tenth anniversary of the Resolution. It demonstrated that innovative approaches can illuminate and enhance understanding of the implications and requirements of UNSCR 1325. Some of the key outcomes and conclusions of the process are presented as follows:

5.1 Key conclusions of the conferences:

The over-riding consensus in all conferences was the urgent need for the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security resolutions. Participants reaffirmed that implementation should be based on priorities identified by women - the experts on what it is to be a woman in a conflict or post-conflict zone.

As in many contexts around the world, further progress in relation to UNSCR 1325 is required in Northern Ireland, Timor-Leste and Liberia. Stronger political will to make the necessary changes to enable women, is required. The concept of “gender mainstreaming” requires an emphasis on the *equality* considerations, so that the empowerment of women and the protection of their rights are fostered as a key approach within international peace and security. In other words, participants promoted an innovative approach that not only includes women, but advances their rights. These strategies require technical, financial and political support which is specifically adapted to these approaches. However, participants also cautioned that while women require space to advance their concerns, there is a widespread misconception that ‘gender equality’ is a female issue only, and that women are its “caretakers”.



Delegates at Belfast Conference



Delegates in Dili

This myth needs to be dispelled without taking away from the important space there is for women to advance their own agenda. Promoting equality is the responsibility of both men and women.

A prompt and tailored response by the UN and other international actors to the learning, key messages and recommendations identified by participants through this process will enable further implementation of UNSCR 1325.

5.2 Key outcomes of the cross-learning process

The cross-learning project brought together experienced, skilled and innovative participants with specific expertise in their respective areas of work. Together, they created a unique dynamic in which their expertise was pooled, resulting in the rich and insightful learning that is presented throughout this report. Despite coming from diverse backgrounds, they found they had much in common:

- > Their similar experiences in working for women's rights and struggling against barriers created a space where issues of common concern could be discussed on a common basis.
- > The conferences created a sense of 'unity' among participants.
- > There was awareness that other countries were facing the same challenges and that women were facing the same discrimination and problems in all three countries. One participant highlighted that the conference helped her to realise that "we are not alone and by coming together we increase our strength."

The conferences also provided space for participants to reflect on their work. For one participant the conference "...served as a means of motivation to continue doing what I am doing" (Northern Ireland participant); and for another "The workshop served as a driving force and an eye opener that gives me the courage to fight for the rights of women in the areas of protection and equal opportunities." (Liberian participant)

Some of the greatest impressions which women took from the conferences came as a result of visiting projects in each country, a key element of the cross-learning. Participants placed great value in experiencing other environments, and in seeing what other countries are doing in relation to the similar issues which they face. A member of the Irish Defence Forces noted that the conferences provided a "wonderful opportunity" to listen to the other stakeholders involved in a conflict/post-conflict situation. "I think my former history would have been to be part of the conflict as a peace-keeper, but this was the first opportunity almost as a 'civilian' to sit with people and listen to them and to hear about the situations that as soldiers we wouldn't have the opportunity of seeing or hearing in the mission. As a result I would see the need for some of our overseas training and the requirements to be reviewed."

The conferences succeeded in informing a significant number of strategically placed people within the three post-conflict countries about the potential of UNSCR 1325 as a tool for the development of sustainable peace. One participant commented that she had learned more in the space of a week than she had in the entire process of developing the Liberian NAP (Liberian participant).

5.3 Follow-on actions arising from the cross-learning process

The cross-learning conferences prompted a number of follow-up actions which have been undertaken by participants. These include:

- > The Liberian delegation to the Belfast conference was inspired by the women's centres and the child care facilities at these centres that they saw in Northern Ireland. "What we saw has motivated us to include this idea in our 2010 – 2011 work-plan to construct

women's centres that will provide education and vocational training and a place for their children in the same centre. We brought that with us and in the 2010-2011 budget we put that in and the government is willing to support it." (Liberian participant)

- > On the instruction of the Minister, the Liberian delegation attending this conference made sure to include a participant from a rural area of the country. On return, this participant described how she had realised the need for rural women to be educated and to be exposed to the same ideas that she had during the conference. This woman made a request to the Ministry of Gender and Development for funding to share learning from the Belfast conference. She subsequently visited all 15 counties in Liberia talking to rural women about the conferences and UNSCR 1325. As the Minister noted: *"She used public transport, and you know what that means? It means that sometimes you must sleep on the road. She did not request a DSA¹⁶, she stayed in rural women's homes, she did not stay in a hotel but to be close and the same with the other rural women; she encouraged women to go back to school and now women have started going to literacy schools in these rural areas. The impact on rural women is that other women see that she went to Ireland and they think "if she can do it, I can do it." Now women are even thinking that with the upcoming elections that they can go forward"*.
- > A participant from Timor-Leste presented a report on his attendance at one of the conferences to the country's Council of Ministers, bringing clear messages on UNSCR 1325 to their attention. In Timor-Leste, UNSCR 1325 is now included in meetings at community levels organised by government and NGO representatives. This had not happened previously.
- > At the final conference, a Liberian participant was struck by how useful the Northern Ireland model of the Policing Board could be to the Liberia context (Pg. 21). A more detailed exchange was facilitated between the Northern Ireland and Liberian participants at this time. One Liberian participant noted that she would be *"taking the policing structures back to the Ministry of Justice to apply to our police reform. We can also use it put it into our military forces as well. The Liberians have lost trust from the police so we need to engage the police with the community to increase trust and security. Women need to be included in policing structure and reform."* Interest was also expressed by the Liberian President when the model was shared with her during a meeting

with delegates to the conference. As a follow-up, the Northern Ireland Policing Board has stated that they would welcome a visit by a Liberian delegation to Northern Ireland to learn more about the model.

5.4 Using cross-learning to develop National Action Plans

Gender and the attainment of gender equality are at the heart of UNSCR 1325. As emphasised many times during the cross-learning conferences, gender perspectives and equality need to be integral to international peace-building, peace-keeping and security. Rather than seeing women simply as 'beneficiaries' of programmes, or as pieces to be added to a peace-building puzzle, women's empowerment must be at the heart of efforts to implement the Resolutions. Efforts to implement UNSCR 1325 must, therefore, address both women's strategic and practical needs.¹⁷ The greatest challenge is to ensure that the strategic essence of the United Nations Women, Peace and Security Resolutions informs National Action Plans.

The content of NAPs must therefore take innovative approaches. Evident from the cross-learning process is that:

- > Each aspect of each Resolution is complex and individual aspects cannot be separated. For example, in relation to UNSCR 1325, addressing violence against women is linked to and cannot be separated from issues of women's participation within formal and informal spheres. Comprehensive approaches are needed.
- > Approaches that promote social change and enhance broader equality must underpin action plans. Adding "women" to actions already being undertaken by states may not have the desired effect.
- > National Action Plans, the actions contained within and the Resolutions themselves need to be contextualised and adapted to individual contexts.

¹⁷ Practical gender needs are short-term needs arising from men's and women's daily responsibilities; Strategic gender needs are arise out of women's subordinate position to men and as a result of gender inequalities. Meeting strategic needs requires strategies for challenging fundamental inequalities and attempt to transform unequal power relations in favour of the achievement of gender equality. Taken directly from the Irish Aid Gender Equality Policy sourced at http://www.irishaid.gov.ie/development_gender.asp. Accessed 16th June, 2010.

¹⁶ Daily Subsistence Allowance (a nominal fee to cover costs)

- > States and the UN should target their NAPs towards supporting actions that facilitate the *empowerment* of women, and support women's *entitlement* to access the skills and resources necessary to take the actions that they themselves identify.
 - > Within implementation strategies for NAPs, linkages should be created between the Women, Peace and Security Resolutions, CEDAW, the BPFA, and tools such as national poverty reduction strategies and national development plans, so that the structural challenges and obstacles that women face at all levels are addressed.
- and its Member States is to ensure that women can take their rightful place in, and make their full contribution to, the societies in which they live.

5.5 Concluding remarks

The urgency of the need to make meaningful progress on the implementation of UNSCRs 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889 was evident throughout all conferences. The gap between the required actions set out in the Resolutions and their practical application remains to be bridged. Member States can shape how the UN responds. Participants to the cross-learning process identified the fact that individual governments have a role to play in shaping the UN's responses to the recommendations made during the three conferences.

During the conferences, Ireland's Special Envoy on UNSCR 1325, noted that *"...progress will only be most effective when the skills, the talents and the competences of each person, each citizen, are utilised. For centuries, women have not been able to play their proper role in the process of peace negotiation and peace building. With the passing of UNSCR 1325, the UN recognised both the problem and the areas within which solutions could emerge."* She also emphasised that *"Peace is made first and foremost in the hearts and minds of men and women, and their engagement in many different strands of peacemaking all of which ultimately enable the greater peace.....When the war is over the business of post conflict recovery is long and challenging, but the rewards are inestimable. For each country the solution will be different, yet there is much to be learned from the experiences of others who have walked the long and terrible road of conflict, and recovery from the conflict."*

As Ireland's Special Envoy also said, *"The reality, as I have learned across the world, is that given the right support people have an extraordinary capacity to recover from the unthinkable and unspeakable horrors of war and to embrace peace."* The challenge for the United Nations

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