

Haass-O'Sullivan Talks: What Do Women Think?

Summary of roundtable discussions

**Saturday 1st March 2014
Europa Hotel Belfast**

**Written by:
Brigid Loughran
Consultant**



European Union
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Introduction of Overall Project

The Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA), the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland and the National Women's Council of Ireland are partners in a Peace 3 project that aims to capture the experiences of women living through conflict and through the subsequent period of conflict resolution and peace building.

The aim is to learn from the experience of women who have lived through these processes and to try to identify ways in which to make a positive impact. Over two years, the project has brought women together on a cross community and a cross border basis to exchange learning with women from other conflict areas through the Foundations for Peace Network.

Key issues have been highlighted in different workshops that have taken place throughout Northern Ireland and in border county areas. These are:

- Violence, safety and security
- Decision making and representation
- Women's rights are human rights – women and social justice
- Women and the legacies of the past
- Women and institutional change

The final part of the project is aimed at placing on an international stage all that has been learned through the discussions between women from different communities and regions. The project will have two important outcomes:

- The learning gathered will be used for the design of policy recommendations that will be disseminated through the production of a Policy Report on Gender and Peacebuilding which will be primarily focused on influencing institutional change in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland
- A Tool Kit on Women and Peacebuilding: Developing Practical Approaches will be produced. This will be circulated internationally with the intention of influencing governments and agencies responsible for providing grants and assistance to war-torn societies.

Format

Over 120 women attended a workshop entitled, 'Haass-O'Sullivan Talks: What Do Women Think?' The event was opened by the Director of WRDA, Anne McVicker. Introducing the context of the day, Dr Margaret Ward reinforced the importance of the voice of women to politicians, policy makers and influential bodies in a context when women are largely excluded in political and public life¹ Fionnuala O'Connor acted as MC for the event. The lead speaker, Dr Louise Mallinder, Reader in Human Rights and International Law at the Transitional Justice Institute, University of Ulster outlined the various aspects of the Haass/O'Sullivan recommendations. Kate Turner was unable to attend the event on behalf of Healing Through Remembering. Rev Dr Lesley Carroll focused on her ongoing commitment to ensuring the voices of the most marginalised are heard in order to contribute to a more genuinely equal society.

The discussion, questions and answers between the floor and panel provided triggers for further discussion within the workshops.

Facilitated discussions took place around ten workshop² tables and provided an opportunity to discuss the contributions from the panel with a scribe noting the issues that were raised. Participants were asked to focus their discussions around the following questions:

Question 1:

In relation to our speakers' input, what was positive or interesting for you?

Question 2:

What would you like to see happen to bring about positive change in each of these areas?

- (a) Parades, Select Commemorations, and Related Protests
- (b) Flags and Emblems
- (c) Contending with the Past

The recorder filtered the contributions so that general issues and those pertinent to the Haass/O'Sullivan proposals have been prioritised.

¹ Only 18% of the NI Executive are women. While a new strategy, *Together Building a United Community* mentions the existence of the Gender Equality Strategy, the reference to women is merely tokenism. The reality is that a recent conference held in Cardiff in the summer of 2013 in order to consider contentious issues like parading and flags had police, politicians and community representatives in attendance, and only 3 women out of more than 30 participants. Peace building is still seen as an activity that primarily involves men.

² Each workshop was facilitated by women trained up by WRDA from the Community Facilitators Programme.

Introduction

The legacy of the past continues to overshadow Northern Ireland's present and weighs upon us like the boulder of Sisyphus. What is present in our everyday experience is the reality of many different levels and layers of loss: loved ones, limbs, identity, culture, jobs, childhood, freedom, time, relationships, happiness, hopes, dreams and possibilities that can never be achieved. Civic society has been and remains torn, disrupted, not natural, and not fair. The legacy of our tragedies can be too much to bear and for many it is 'beyond the beyond' to be asked to explore the positive in the midst of trauma. There is no space that grief hasn't occupied. There is no space that is more sacred, sensitive, delicate, and needs respected. Haass occupies this space.

Some of our losses can never be regained, some can be reclaimed and attempts are being made to avoid, like the sword of Damocles, other potential losses. And we are well used to loss, having had a past that is full of it. We are much better at addressing loss than we are at celebrating success since we have known so little of it. In our history and psyche, our songs and our marches, we are well versed in the language of loss and our strong communities of connection support us through the various phases³ 'lest we forget'. We are not big on denial, we wear anger as an armour, do our best to bargain, and are very good at reaching out for support to help resolution. But, we are slow to accept, allow for change and to move on. Our culture is one where reality is 'in your face' / 'the writing is on the wall' – and from which it is inescapable. Loss is public, communal and deeply inclusive. No one gets left out. It is deeply personal, painful, scarring, traumatic, and deep and roots us to the end of the earth and into eternity. The older the scar, the deeper the wound, the greater the trauma, the harder the healing. Some can move on and some simply can't. How they are supported in the process is what makes the difference. Haass occupies this space.

We are also deeply embedded in the richness of the language and slogans which inform our culture, politics, ethos, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, many of which derive from our 'space' of origins. 'Deeds not words' riddle my own history which is reflected in the myriad of variation on that theme. We have an inherent dislike for the empty word or promise, and hate the 'plámás'⁴ of the manipulator. The language of engagement, how we are communicated with and spoken to, what processes are used to create an exchange, who is brought in or left out and what subjects are acceptable is often more important than what gets said. How themes and nuances are addressed and honoured is important. Haass occupies this space.

Context of the Haass/O'Sullivan Discussions

Dr Richard Haass, Professor Meghan O'Sullivan and their team from the United States were invited jointly by the five Executive parties of the NI Assembly⁵ to chair a process which would help put in place the foundations for addressing some of the most difficult and outstanding issues arising from the 30 years of conflict in Northern Ireland. The three issues that Haass/O'Sullivan set out to resolve include Parades and Protests; Flags and Emblems and Contending With The Past – i.e. support for victims and survivors, acknowledgement, historical investigations, independent commission for information retrieval, narratives and archives.

³ Elizabeth Kubler Ross highlights the phases of grief as Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Acceptance and Resolution.

⁴ Plámás is a Gaelic word used to describe false flattery and charm.

⁵ Democratic Unionist Party, Ulster Unionist Party, Social Democratic and Labour Party, Sinn Fein and Alliance Party.

The Loyalist protests which have been ongoing since November 2013 and the activities of dissident Republicans reflect a society which continues to struggle with issues and symbols of identity and nationality. Contention over the flying of flags and the holding of parades in disputed areas has made for increased instability over the past year.

The first two issues – Parades/Protests and Flags/Emblems – have resulted in a series of proposals which provide structures and processes for addressing these issues. Contending with the Past requires addressing the long-standing issue of different narratives of our past and the historical themes or patterns of deaths during the conflict on the basis of emerging and existing evidence.

Although it is almost 16 years since the Good Friday Agreement⁶, NI politicians have been unable to agree a joint way forward on these difficult issues on their own. The Haass/O'Sullivan discussions represent the latest in a series of efforts to 'pick up' unresolved issues arising from the Good Friday Agreement which was 'past facing' and provided no overarching mechanism to deal with the contentious issue. Three efforts to pull it all together have included 'Healing Through Remembering' (2006), 'The Consultative Group on the Past' (2007-2009) and the more recent initiative from NI politicians, 'The Panel of the Parties of the NI Executive' (2013). The Haass/O'Sullivan intervention is an attempt at providing frameworks and structures which have an overarching approach and create possibilities for moving the three most difficult and unresolved issues forward.

Haass and O'Sullivan gave freely of their time and effort throughout the six months of negotiations, which were completed in the early hours of New Year's Eve 2014 and their contribution has created a huge opportunity that we simply cannot afford to lose. The team came here with no agenda except to facilitate from an outside and objective point of view and attempt to bring the various positions as close to each other as they could. The Panel received over 600 submissions and held 100 meetings with 500 people; seven drafts of the document were produced and a final draft has been published by NI Executive.

Context of the 'What do Women Think' Event

Ambassador Haass noted that the need to reach out to civil society groups to maintain the momentum of the peace process is crucial. The 'What do Women Think?' event follows on from a major conference attended by grassroots women from across Belfast on 8th October 2013 entitled '**Women: Dealing with the Past**⁷' set up as part of a major Peace III initiative, to present women's views for consideration at government and policy levels.

Two years prior to the Haass/O'Sullivan initiative, there was strong recognition of the need to capture the experiences of women living through the conflict and through the subsequent period of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Northern Ireland. The contribution that women made to holding communities and families together throughout the conflict is informally recognised as is their contribution to peacebuilding. The Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA), the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI) and the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) developed a partnership to create a

⁶ The Good Friday Agreement (GFA) was agreed in Belfast on Good Friday, 10 April 1998. The Agreement was approved by voters across the island of Ireland in two referenda held on 22 May 1998. In Northern Ireland, voters were asked whether they supported the multi-party agreement. In the Republic of Ireland, voters were asked whether they would allow the state to sign the agreement and allow necessary constitutional changes to facilitate it. The people of both jurisdictions needed to approve the Agreement in order to give effect to it. The British-Irish Agreement came into force on 2 December 1999.

⁷ The report is available on the WRDA website.

significant project aimed at providing a voice for women to highlight a number of the key issues requiring redress.

The contextual framework for the Peace III⁸ project has been UN Security Council Resolution 1325⁹ and over the last two years over 700 women have been brought together on a cross-community and cross-border basis and have engaged in facilitated discussions. While many of the events attracted between 50 and 60 women, over 200 women registered to attend the last event addressing issues around women dealing with the legacies of the past. The partnership did not foresee the Haass/O'Sullivan initiative taking place when organising this conference (October 2013) and the findings were subsequently sent for consideration to the Haass/O'Sullivan 'NI Panel of Parties'.

The Conclusion of the Haass/O'Sullivan conference report noted:

Over the last while there has been a reassertion of male control in some communities (mostly Protestant/Loyalist/Unionist but also some Nationalist/Republican) and in these circumstances women are effectively silenced and live in fear which is maintained through intimidation and threat.

While the Haass/O'Sullivan talks are welcomed there was a perception that women were generally excluded from these. Peace building in NI is perceived as male territory. A clear message from the 'Women: Dealing with the Past' conference was that women have been and continue to be affected by these issues and they want to speak and have an opportunity to share their views. Such opportunities have decreased over the years of the Peace Process in Northern Ireland.

The full report of the '*Women Dealing with the Past*' event is available on the WRDA website at <http://www.wrda.net/Women-and-Peace-Building.aspx>

⁸ The Special European Union Programmes Body (SEUPB) PEACE III Programme is a distinctive programme part-funded by the European Union (€225 million from the EU) with further national contributions of €108 million through its Structural Funds Programme. The full title of the PEACE III Programme is the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland. The programme covers the period 2007-2013. The main aims of the PEACE III Programme are to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation by assisting operations and projects which help to reconcile communities and contribute towards a shared society for everyone.

⁹ The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 is a piece of international law binding on all 191 UN member states. Resolution 1325 calls for: participation of women in peace processes; gender training in peacekeeping operations; protection of women and girls and respect for their rights; gender mainstreaming in the reporting and implementation systems of the UN relating to conflict peace a security. The exclusion of Northern Ireland from the Resolution 1325 Action Plans by both British and Irish Governments means that women will continue to be under-represented in the institutions set up under the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement.

Question 1:

In relation to our speakers' input, what was positive or interesting for you?

All tables found the speaker presentations very valuable, identifying the background, context, information, clear overview of Haass/O'Sullivan talks, key issues, structures and areas as key.

Political Leadership

- All tables referenced the need to give leadership to the issues that are crucial in moving us further towards the kind of Shared Future the majority of us agreed we want. However, despite its aspirations, the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) institutionalised sectarianism and encouraged the DUP and Sinn Fein to split rather than share power and it is this split which continues to undermine the Peace. The power-sharing mindset has yet to be established at the highest levels of Government which in turn undermines any commitment to reform and transformation or the principles of equality and justice, inclusivity, 'jointness' in decision-making or community autonomy necessary to bring about lasting change. The current backtracking in relation to the flags issues, OTRs etc, could have been avoided if the Peace process was given proper strategic leadership involving planning, anticipation, facilitated discussions 'on the ground' with local communities at all levels and across the board. While politicians - whose job it is to implement the GFA - pander to those who never supported it, and encourage opposition to power sharing, then the Peace process is undermined at the highest levels and we are doomed to continue repeating history as conflict.
- All tables noted frustration and anger, many feeling that they are pawns in a hopeless political game. Some support those who oppose the GFA and all expressed a general lack of trust and questionable levels of integrity within the Assembly. Once elected, politicians seem to forget the platforms upon which they made promises and proceed to pursue their own agendas. Considerable resources are allocated to the convening of meetings and production of reports that are not being implemented or taken forward.

Civic Forums are mooted as a mechanism to provide greater accountability.

- To be effective and maximise participation, a community engagement strategy is needed, fostered upon a community development approach which would allow all the voices within our communities to be heard. Such an outcome – the creation of meaningful dialogue - is founded on principles of empowerment, the foundation of which is safety; the creation of safe spaces where individuals receive information in an accessible way and where discussion is facilitated to ensure inclusion and respect. For women, engagement at a political level requires workshops, such as those facilitated through Peace III funding, where opportunities are made available to understand Government documents and proposals. Already established women's groups and women's centres are well versed in facilitating such workshops and maximising engagement and participation opportunities. Creating change which affects all the people of NI requires a 'bottom up' process approach and cannot be driven 'top down'. Politicians cannot 'deliver' Peace. Their job is to assist the Peace process through the establishment of structures and mechanisms that bring people with them on a journey that is safe; not leave them on the side of the road as passive watchers-by. As one participant noted, "This last week has had a terrible impact. The tension today is worse than 10 years ago. Young people face more unsafe situations now. It used to be 1 in 4 young people felt unsafe. Research now shows 1 in 2 young people feel unsafe. It's the same for women. Many of us still feel unsafe in our communities and the pyjama culture

is one manifestation of this where poverty, fear and depression are combined and young women don't feel they have much of a future never mind a Shared Future."

Discussion groups hosted by women's centres/groups/organisations or women-only, facilitated information sharing sessions held in local community facilities are mooted as a mechanism to understand and disseminate Government proposal such as the Haass/O'Sullivan proposals.

- There is a lack of connectivity between various programmes, for example, the United Community Programme, the Peace Programmes, integrated education and housing, rural initiatives, small business programmes etc. There is a lack of an overall Peace Plan. Once participant commented, "...like little pieces of a jigsaw with no picture to work from."
- A strategic 'joined-up' Peace Plan needs to be developed which includes strategies, a timetable, resource plan and lead initiators for all outstanding issues arising from the Good Friday Agreement.
- There needs to be greater investment in the future. People need to see the advantages of Peace and where this is important for all sections of the community, it is particularly so in working class communities where there is weak community infrastructure or high levels of disaffection.
- Targetted, long-term, positive action initiatives are needed which will enable young, working class people into real employment.

Women / Lack of Representation / Engagement

- The lack of women in Government and in key positions of influence across all sectors has an impact on how the issues facing women are addressed. There are many competent and experienced women who apply to sit on Boards etc who are not shortlisted or provided with information as to why they were not shortlisted. We need inclusive, gender balanced processes, structures and forums for women to ensure our voices are heard and resources are made available to women's organisations who can facilitate the sharing of knowledge, information and proposals at grass-roots levels to avoid the continued exclusion of women.

There needs to be more accountability and monitoring to ensure there is equal representation of women on boards, committees, structures and forums across all levels of decision making.

- So much has happened to women in NI over the years. As one participant commentd, "We can't put what's happened in their shoes and just learn to live; we can't just move on and we can't put plasters on it" yet there is a very strong concensus that women have been written out of the history of the conflict and the role women have played over the last 40 years. The contribution of women to our history (particularly 1969 onwards) needs to be recorded as part of the Haass/O'Sullivan proposals.
- Readers of this report are particularly asked to refer to the document sent to the Haass/O'Sullivan team in relation to the issues identified by women at the October 'Women: Dealing with the Past' event.¹⁰

¹⁰ Refer to the WRDA website for the report

A plan needs to be drawn up outlining comprehensive and inclusive research needed and how best this can be recorded for the archives.

The Churches

- The Churches also need to step up to the plate on issues of equality and justice. They are not necessarily welcoming to women or diversity and they have no structures for empowering women.

Issues Pertinent to Haass/O’Sullivan Proposals

- “Haass-O’Sullivan wasn’t about ‘us’ – civic society – it was about political parties” as stated by a participant. The proposals, therefore, need to be further discussed and disseminated within the community to affect real change, continue the Peace Process and enable informed conversations to take place which will help NI move into a Shared Future. The ‘What do Women Think’ conference needs to be seen as the **start** of a process for engaging and empowering women to take forward and help resolve some of the outstanding contentious issues arising from the Troubles. Meaningful dialogue will require that all structures and forums established to take the proposals forward must include an equal gender balance to ensure that the voice of women is heard. Thanks to the work of the Women’s Coalition, the drafters of the Good Friday Agreement conceded, “the right of women to full and equal participation in political life”. The processes were not put in place to make this happen.

The proposals need to be ‘genderfied’ to ensure women’s full and equal participation in the design, development and implementation processes.

- At the conclusion of the peace negotiations, Senator Mitchell, the chairperson of the talks stated that, “the emergence of women as a political force was a significant factor in achieving the Agreement.” Without the contribution of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition, there would have been no proposals about victims, integrated education, mixed housing, children and young people, or the civic forum. Legal scholar Naomi Cahn and her colleagues have argued that if women are absent from peace negotiations, then much-needed “social services justice” (care for victims, education, health, and well-being) will also be absent in post-conflict societies. The Women’s Coalition showed that mainstreaming a gender analysis could lead to a more comprehensive understanding of the realities of conflict and the meaning of security. The Coalition also advocated maintaining a shared value base as a foundation for discussing potentially divisive issues. Alongside this, the Coalition recognised the need to proactively build relationships, actively listen to what people from other political positions were saying, constantly engage in collective analysis and reflection, and to be open to external expertise and examples from other peace processes.
- The Women’s Sector continues to play its role in the process of engagement and dialogue, using ‘tried and tested’ methodologies for effectively involving women throughout the Peace Process. Since the peace-building process is multi-layered, contextual, and at times formal or informal, women need to be seen and heard at all levels. The participatory and empowerment models used to encourage marginal and vulnerable groups in reconstruction and development programmes is also a useful analogy for the role of women - put simply, “there should be nothing about us, without us.” As Thelma Ekiyor, who has worked on peace building in West Africa, reminds us, the structural violence, discrimination, and exclusion that contribute to war must be

countered by a commitment to social justice and inclusive political structures, which are essential to peace.

Every new and major initiative must be seen as another opportunity to engage the population of NI in empowering and challenging peacebuilding/democracy building activity.

Question 2:

What would you like to see happen to bring about positive change in each of these areas?

(a) Parades, Select Commemorations, and Related Protests

This section should be read in conjunction with the WRDA Conference report, 'Women: Dealing with the Past' (October 2013).

- People have a right to celebrate their culture in a respectful way. Continued talking, negotiating, meetings and dialogue between local community workers, the establishment of structures, processes and effective, well monitored PSNI activity are essential components to maintaining public order in the resolution of these issues. So too is continued, ongoing work to challenge the stereotypes passed down through the generations. Schools and Parading/ Commemorating organisations have a specific role to play in raising awareness and tolerance on both sides and the teaching of a 'shared history' is crucial.
- Suggestions made include:
 - Fewer parades and combining some of them
 - No sectarian music or behavior
 - Sensitivity in relation to Victims
 - Introduction of regulation
- The economic impact of protests and parades needs to be constantly highlighted. The cost is enormous and removes money from other much needed services. We need to be more creative in the use of funding and 'front end' resources to prevent conflict arising e.g. fund the development of adequately resourced strategies to engage youth in alternative activities at the time of high risk events (e.g. during the twelfth of July parades).
- The criminalisation (particularly of young people) following disturbances needs greater analysis.

(b) Flags and Emblems

- Discussion ranged from the eventual complete removal of flags from the streets to the creation of a new flag for the island of Ireland. This is a long term goal for many and in the meantime, communities need to respect and tolerate the traditions and cultures of others; flags should be flown respectfully and not aggressively and designated people/groups need to be responsible for putting them up and taking them down within time limits.
- The root causes of dissatisfaction around the Flags issues needs further discussion and this needs to be built into peacebuilding activities (for which there is continued need).

Areas with most poverty are facing huge difficulties - no jobs, no economic development, 'bread and butter' issues that really matter. Flags are used as a distraction from the real issues and are not going to bring prosperity. More emphasis needs to be placed on tackling the big issues relating to poverty, quality of life, education, employment and the environment.

- A general consensus at the workshop tables seems to suggest great insensitivity in relation to how the recent flag dispute was handled. "The Flags issue was stirred up by the very politicians (DUP) at City Hall who knew it was in the GFA, did not consult with local communities or disseminate information effectively," as stated by a participant. The media added oil to the fire.

Contentious issues need to be addressed in a thoughtful, planned way with local leadership at a grass-roots level paving the way for change through consultation and involvement instead of imposition. Politicians need to act maturely, take time to develop strategies of bringing people with them through a change process instead of creating conflict on the streets. Pushing and forcing people to accept change does not work and the lack of sensitivity and political savvy shown demonstrates great weakness (or deliberate manipulation) on the part of the Politicians responsible.

- "While the Flags dispute was bringing Belfast trading to its knees, parallel events in Derry during the 'City of Culture' were a great success" as stated by a participant. No one in Derry felt excluded or that the activities or events benefited one side more than the other. Derry brought everyone round the table and achieved an inclusive success with people from all over, sitting at the same table, able to embrace both traditions. This is the example and a model we could follow.
- Gate keepers who speak on behalf of communities without asking people what they want don't necessarily reflect the views of people within the community. It was felt by some that the views of the majority of women are bypassed within their own communities. Many women go along with a situation because they/we are afraid of the consequences of dissent.

Funding needs to be made available to enable grassroots discussion to take place in Women's Centres so that communities can be part of the change process and can contribute their views to the process as it develops. How flags/emblems impact on women/families requires further research.

(c) Contending With The Past

- The conference recognises that contending with the issues relating to the past is a complex process requiring great sensitivity, skill, strategy and resources over time. There will be some for whom the aftermath never ends and their will be no resolution.

The Haass/O'Sullivan proposals provide hope that the contentious issues will be moved forward with the repeated proviso that women must be included in strategies, structures, processes and discussions at all levels and stages.

- How 'facts' are interpreted and situations 'acknowledged' will require skilled handling.
- Women and community groups could facilitate a narrative of the past.
- Archives are essential and an open archive and media exposure of experiences is needed.

- We continue to need more cross community opportunities and meeting places where people can hear about each other's past. It is only through sharing and creating common bonds and recognising all the things we have in common that we can create a shared future, a shared history and understanding of the past.
- Given our political history and in the interests of Justice there must be transparency across the board.

Civic Forums need to be established and facilitated to take points to the wider platform where Political representatives can answer questions from feeder groups on the outworkings of the various issues and structures arising from the proposals.

Other Comments:

Historical Investigations Unit (HIU) / Historical Enquiries Team (HET)

- The conference cautiously welcomed this change in the context of the current vacuum.
- Many Victims still have no idea why they were targeted and need a justice process, an acknowledgement of what happened to them and information as to who was involved and how they were involved. Many bereaved families share this pain and are also dealing with the slurring of the memory of their loved one through misinformation. More information is needed to assist resolution.
- Further clarity is needed in relation to how the HIU will work in practice – composition of members, accountability, transparency, how information will be shared, etc.

Independent Commission for Information Retrieval (ICIR)

- There is lack of clarity in relation to immunity granted for information sharing and the subsequent gathering of evidence in relation to information gained. The issue of support for Victims and Police investigation needs to be kept separate with assurances given to the information providers. (The Boston College interviews and the testimonies given during the Bloody Sunday Inquiry are cited as case examples).
- Advocacy and peer support is needed for people to go through ICIR.

Addressing the Needs of Victims and Survivors

- Trauma is not just medical and includes isolation and fear. With at least 6 new referrals relating to trauma being received every day, trauma remains a huge issue in NI and this is not recognised by the service providers. There are not enough therapeutic services available for sufferers. For 22 years funding has been on a year to year basis which has prevented the delivery of long term support.
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a particular and major trauma affecting Victims in NI, some of whom have waited 20-40 years for a diagnosis. Resources needed to address the level of PTSD are inadequate matched against demand.
- There is a wealth of information and expertise available across NI in relation to good practice in working with victims and survivors. New structures need to consider these resources in addressing need.
- Issues needing further analysis and consideration include:
 - The definition of what a 'victim' is remains unresolved. This needs to be clarified.
 - Victims need to decide the issues for resolution, not politicians. It's the job of the politicians to address how the issues will be resolved.

- Work and proposals in relation to victims and survivors needs to be gender sensitive and separate to address the specific and different needs of women.
- The Victims and Survivors Services (VSS) established last year, re-traumatised many victims by insisting on re-assessing them, losing paperwork etc. New structures and processes are asked to not make the same mistake and further re-traumatise people.

Concerns were raised as to how the proposals will be financed? Will this be coming from the block grant or will additional monies be made available via London, Brussels, or Washington?

Conclusion

Most of the participants at the event arrived with very little prior knowledge of the Haass/O'Sullivan proposals and were hearing the details for the first time.

The general consensus from the floor and the workshops suggest that **this needs to be seen as the start of a more inclusive process** and that more time is needed to consider the detail further and provide better informed comment. Across all the workshops, participants' comments reinforced our collective responsibility to find mechanisms that will sustain Peace and help overcome the wounds of the past.

There is strong support for the further dissemination of the information into the community, especially through the existing structures within the Women's Sector – through Women's Centres, Women's Groups and the Women's Regional Consortium which represents the views of women to Government and policy makers.

Executive Summary

The Haass/O'Sullivan process was flawed from the outset by minimising the contribution of women in the development of the proposals.

The meeting strongly supported the creation of local Civic Forums in all communities, as a mechanism to hear the views of local people which can then be presented to Government and policy makers. The Shared Future Consultation process provides a very good model of engagement which could form the basis for the establishment of Civic Fora.

The Conference unanimously supports the need for women to be engaged in all aspects of the working out of the proposals – from design to implementation and review.

The Women's Sector has extensive experience in targeting the hardest to reach, engaging women who face barriers to participation, facilitating discussion which cuts across and respects difference in class, race, gender and gender identity, religious affiliation, age, ability, and religious persuasion. Different fora are needed to incorporate the needs of the community in all its complexity.

All thematic areas within the report need to incorporate a gender perspective and a gender balance needs to be created within all Committees, processes and structures proposed within the Haass/O'Sullivan report.

Whether the proposals are agreed or not, there is a need for people to tell their stories and have these archived. Women have a particular and specific need and role in this process.

Gender based violence and Resolution 1325 need to be within the Agenda for consideration. Omission of these two areas is unacceptable.

The proposals are recognised as a way forward and require further work to incorporate the considerations noted.

Next Steps

This report will be circulated for consideration to key agencies such as the NI Executive and The Department of Taoiseach.

As part of the Peace III project a concluding event will be held at the Titanic Building on 20th March 2014.