



Foundations for Peace

Volume 5 ♦ Issue 1 ♦ January - June 2014

Foundations for Peace meet Women in Black

Oct 2013, Belgrade, Serbia



Women in Black (WIB), defines itself, as a women's feminist anti-militarist peace organization. With antimilitarism and non-violence as its spiritual orientation and political choice,

WIB rejects military power and the production of arms for the killing of people, of human working nature, and for the domination of one sex, nation, or state over another.

"We speak out for recognition of difference, reciprocity, respect for nature, and for development in accordance with the needs of the civil population, and not the civil and military oligarchy and their national interests..."

Women have always defended their homelands through their work—the raising of children, giving emotional and material support to the elderly and powerless, all through their invisible and unpaid work in the home. Therefore, we think that our attachment to and love for our countries (homelands) in general does not require that we espouse the view held by the army. We do not want to attain equality with men in that way. On the contrary, men must achieve equality with women by not exerting violence over women and not making use of the army, but rather through participating in the

bringing up of children, in housework, to care for the elderly and powerless....

The participation of women in the army, military institutions, or arms training—whether voluntary or obligatory—displays neither sexual equality nor military democratization. We advocate not only for a society without soldiers (male or female), but also for a society without the militaristic (soldierly) values which produce war, discrimination, violence, and aggression."

The highlight of the 2013 Foundations for Peace meeting in Belgrade, Serbia from 4th to 6th October 2013 was its visit to the Women in Black premises to meet with a group of wonderful women activists. "They made us really welcome and it felt like we were at home meeting our sisters from another culture but with such similar feminist aims and aspirations. We spent hours talking about our experiences of conflict and peace building, sharing our stories and experiences. The showing of the DVD 'Not in our Name' was a truly powerful statement..."

"We met wonderful Serbian and Bosnian people who shared stories freely and openly—such sad and heart-breaking stories—they will stay with us forever. They also shared their songs and their laughter -

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and their food and beverages: such a feast had been prepared; it is true to say that we were blown away with their kindness and consideration. The passion and compassion of the wonderful women below say it all: meeting and sharing across borders; talking of the devastating past but looking forward with such positivity for their future generations.”



The work of Women in Black is an extraordinary effort to highlight the association of pacifism and feminism and emphasize the role of women in opposing militarism, as politically dynamic citizens of the globe. It was a magnificent opportunity for the Foundations for Peace to learn about their work and experiences that were part of their endeavour to establish the notion of non-violence based on feminist principles.

Empowering Vulnerable Communities in the Plantation Sector

News of an important and innovative Initiative of the Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust in Sri Lanka!

There are about one million plantation workers in Sri Lanka, the majority being Tamils of Indian origin. While they contribute to the economy as one of the largest earners of foreign exchange in the country, they live in deplorable conditions with little access to basic facilities, including health care and education.

There are no proper health facilities or doctors in the sector to treat the sick and elderly. Medical care is provided by the Estate Medical Assistants who at most would have taken the pharmacists' examinations and a test devised by the Sri Lanka Medical Council and, therefore, have very little formal medical training. Schools lack basic facilities; there is a shortage in the distribution of learning materials at schools compared to other parts of the country and many schools lack permanent teachers.

Due to poverty and poor education, the majority of the plantation children have no opportunities to obtain higher education. More than 40% of the youth are unemployed. Trade unions purportedly representing the workers often work against their interests. There is no pension scheme for the workers, therefore older people suffer when they stop working and lose even the little welfare support provided by the state and the tea company.

As part of its social justice programme, NTT is supporting Leo Marga Ashram in Bandarawela, a tea plantation area in south central Sri Lanka, to implement a project to empower the vulnerable and marginalised population in the plantation sector. The activities will cover the following districts where the plantation community lives, respectively Badulla, Monaragala, Nuwara Eliya, Kandy, Ratnapura, Kegalle, Matara, Galle and Kalutara.

The programme envisages the creation of a social animators' network to facilitate information flow between the communities and the stakeholders (various interest groups such as decision makers in the public/private sectors and law enforcement agencies). To do this, 200 persons will be selected to participate in 10 social animation training workshops. NGO activists and trade union representatives from the communities will also be present at these workshops which will be conducted in 5 locations.

Awareness will be created through poster campaigns and distribution of handbills on selected topics, which is expected to reach more than 6000 people in the proposed locations.

Art forms such as street theatre performances will be used as a tool to promote awareness among the plantation community of their rights, responsibilities and available remedies in selected areas on issues affecting the development of the community. Up to 15 street performances will be staged in public places in the selected districts.

The animators will also be the primary source of information for the research study conducted as part of the same programme which will look at issues such as land rights, rights to shelter, right to employment, indebtedness, human security, legal issues, health, education, culture and rights, representation in Pradeshiya Sabhas (divisional councils), Provincial Council and Parliament.

Research publications with quantitative data will be produced on the selected issues and will be used to influence further debates and discussions on the issues among the stakeholders.

A press conference will be organised in Colombo during the latter part of the project to garner public attention on the issues faced by the plantation community and to give an opportunity to community representatives to speak directly to the public via media in the hope that there will be increased engagement on the part of media and decision-makers on the problems facing the plantation community.

Jackie Netto-Lyman
Chief Executive,
Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust,
Colombo, Sri Lanka.

A Visit to the Roma Women's Project in Novi Becej in October 2013

by Foundations for Peace member, the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland.

The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI) is currently supporting the development of a Roma Family Support Centre in Belfast for a recently arrived Roma community of approximately thousand people. CFNI has long been interested in making contact with local Roma Women's Groups in Serbia to see what kind of support projects have been successful and how they might learn more about the cultural needs and the broader complexities facing Roma communities in regions where there are large Roma populations. To date, the work in Belfast has focused on service provision, including support to access health, education and welfare services, but CFNI is aware that more community development work is needed to enable Roma women to develop and own the kind of supports they feel most relevant to their needs.

Serbia has a large documented (officially recognised) Roma community but also has large numbers of undocumented Roma who have no access to services or state support. Many emigrate because of need, and meet very difficult and varied responses in the regions to which they travel. Once they emigrate, they have no access to papers or recognition by State on their return to Serbia-leaving the numbers of 'undocumented' Roma growing constantly, creating additional problems for the families that have no access to work, services or education. Women bear the brunt of this and very often are 'voiceless' in their male-dominated culture.

Reconstruction Women's Fund enabled the visit to the Novi Becej group and it was a hugely inspiring and interesting occasion. We were welcomed warmly and enjoyed several hours of talk with a large group of activist women-we shared stories but mainly listened- that was what we came to do. Their

enthusiasm for their work was clearly seen as they talked us through the many issues and barriers that they were faced with. Their determination to raise awareness and to challenge structural and widespread racism against the Roma and other minorities was huge as was their determination to challenge the norm of domestic violence and sexual abuse of Roma women and girls within their own communities.



We learned a lot from this visit and hope to develop a joint information and research project with the Group, relating to the provision of Information Packs for Roma who are considering emigration – they would need to know what to expect in other countries across Europe as the support systems vary enormously. We thank the women for their welcome and for being so forthcoming about their situation. Their energy and bravery in this complex situation were humbling. Their humour is clearly a great strength – they talk a lot and also laugh a lot together – there was very evident solidarity and a sharing of vision and aspiration. We thank them

and the Reconstruction Women's Fund for enabling this experience.

A bit of background context to the Novi Becej group: It is part of the Roma Women's Network of Banat – Banat region – Serbia.

The Network was established in 2007 with support from Reconstruction Women's Fund, Belgrade, Incest Trauma Centre and the Association of Roma in Novi Becej. The goal is to spread Roma Women's activism and initiate the fight against discrimination, racism and violence; and support women's right to their bodies and sexuality. The network consists of the following organisations that operate in Roma settlements in northern Serbia:

- Roma Women's Centre, Rromnajakoilu Zrenjanin;
- Association of Roma Danica Pancevo;
- The Association of Roma Novi Becej.

It functions on the basis of feminist principles and is project-oriented, with each organisation having the right to submit proposals to donors for local projects while having the opportunity to support mutual activity in the Banat territory. It operates in the territory of the Banat in the localities of the towns of Pancevo, Novi Becej and Zrenjanin. The network has joined hands with Women in Black and other organisations in protests and campaigns to further their cause, and has also received support and solidarity from them.

The network works in a context of discrimination and racial attacks against Roma communities, and campaigns to raise awareness within Roma communities as well as broader society. A recent example of prolonged racial attacks has created increased fear and distrust in the region. Protest walks began on the 10th of June after the murder of D.S. (17), a boy of Serbian ethnicity, committed by his peer, a boy of Roma ethnicity, B.J. This turned into violence and the spreading of racial hatred against Roma people that lasted unhindered for two days. State organs, the municipality and police only reacted on the third day. After such an experience of total insecurity, the fear of new violence and the distrust experienced by the Roma inhabitants of Jabuka are completely justified and understandable. The fact that, despite soothing

statements by state organs, the situation has not changed is frightening. Those that are supposed to protect the Roma population do not recognise its fear and deny the existence of any danger.

In June of this year, as a gesture of solidarity with Roma women, activists of the non-governmental organisations- Praxis, YUCOM [Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights], Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, Network of Roma Women of the Banat Region, Civil Rights Defenders, Reconstruction Women's Fund and Women in Black, the artists Rena Rädle and Vladan Jeremic and the independent human right activist Rastko Pocesta, visited the village of Jabuka near Pancevo on 30th July 2010, a village in which the Roma population lives in total isolation and has suffered racially based attacks regularly.

The network participated in the **March 21st, Belgrade - Rebel Racism - Resist!**; during the occasions of the International Day Against Racism, and a week of European Action Against Racism. In addition, during the month of Roma Women's Activism, Women in Black, together with Reconstruction Women's Fund organized anti-racism protests in front of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, highlighting the racism that is reflected primarily in relation to the Roma population and other minority communities in Serbia (ethnic, sexual and other minorities). This action was attended by dozens of women who carried banners of different colours on which was written "We will not be defeated!", "We will not let that intimidate us!", "Resist Racism" and "We say without doubt: Stop Racism".

On the same date, they organised the March 21st, Novi Becej - Women's anti-racism march: Women in Black, together with the Roma Women Network Banat, organized a march against racism in Novi Becej downtown, during the freezing rain and the wind. During the march, which was attended by a hundred Roma activists and the activists from other groups, the participants expressed solidarity with the slogans "We are all Roma", "Stop Racism, and stop discrimination", "Against racism, resist racism". After the march, Roma Women Network Serbia organized a theatre performance, created by RWNS activists, supported by the artists from Dah Theatre, as part of the campaign "All that I am". The

campaign aims to break down prejudices and stereotypes about Roma women and points to the richness of identity and diversity. The Performance was held at the local cultural centre, and was attended by over a hundred people.

Their work is essential and their energy will raise awareness and broader understanding but there is a long way to go: we wish them well with their work and will collaborate with them on the joint initiative to aid Roma intending to emigrate.

Avila Kilmurray and Monina O'Prey
Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace Program



This work was launched in 2011 as part of our partnership grant from Global Fund for Women and aimed to develop a draft law on philanthropy and promote the culture of philanthropy for social justice and peace in Georgia. This program is continuing with additional support from Open Society – Georgia Foundation (OSGF).

Background

Besides devastating people and bringing about humanitarian disaster and loss of territories, the 2008 war also attracted support from the West, a small portion of which was allocated to NGOs to work with internally displaced citizens. At the end of 2008, following advice from a Serbian colleague, Slavica Stojanovic, TF joined the Foundations for Peace (FFP) network and became familiar with the

Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace concept. In March 2009 we joined the Foundations' Cairo global gathering titled Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace, dedicated to its philosophy and practices.

It was evident that the perennial efforts of donors and civil society organizations did not bring about unwavering democratic development, or economic growth, or sustainable peace, or defeat of poverty or class discrimination, much like in many post-Soviet countries. As most of our citizens are in need and struggling for basic survival, there is no clear public demand for Human Rights, Social Justice and Peace in the country. This undermines civil society organizations ability to create social movements empowered by the population's support.

This created the need to develop and empower a responsible civil society using the existing resources in the country, such as citizens' conscious social engagement and the contribution of business to the cause of ensuring democratic development, social justice and peace.

Dissemination of Knowledge about the Essence of Philanthropy

The program was launched by widely and purposefully distributing a poster titled Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace with explanatory text; a letter explaining the essence, forms and principles of philanthropy was drawn and mailed to the foundation's partner, IDP and conflict-affected groups (16 communities, over 300 people). These groups discussed it at their meetings and shared it with their respective communities.

A training module was developed with a view to becoming familiar with the essence of philanthropy and how it differs with 'charity'. TF delivered 10 training sessions to groups of young volunteers in various villages and IDP settlements. As volunteers, these youth groups came to view themselves as philanthropists and, as part of the Philanthropy Needs of Your Community survey, unanimously and independently named a community library as their priority need.

Grant Program in Support of the Activities of Youth Groups

With a view to supporting the establishment of community libraries, introduction of the culture of reading, and other voluntary activities, Taso issued a small grant, financing projects developed by the youth. For the most part, library/office spaces were allocated to the youth by self-help groups and

community funds. The libraries operate and the youths strengthen their communities and civil society through their voluntary activities, including volunteer community service activities, sports events, exhibitions, and educational events/ evenings. TF continuously cooperates with the youth groups and supports their networking for mutual sharing and learning.

Draft Law: Law of Georgia on Philanthropy, Charity and Social Partnership

For this part of the program, TF sought support from civil society, mainly women's organizations, from the outset. On May 23rd 2012, TF presented the first draft version of this law to representatives of those organizations that had worked at various times on issues related to legislation promoting the activities of civil society organizations. In terms of obtaining support from civil society, the meeting at the conference hall of OSGF on June 8th 2012 proved to be decisive. At this meeting, Women's Fund in Georgia presented the results of its research-Legislative Basis for Civil Society Activism in Georgia and abroad, while TF offered its ongoing program Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace, which included the definition of terms introduced by the draft law in Georgian legislation for the first time.

The audience, representatives of 42 women's organizations, including 7 community funds, and Caucasian Institute for Economic and Social Research supported the legislative initiative. At the following meeting, a work group was established, and the process of development and refining of the draft law ensued, with the participation of NGOs, including financial managers, lawyers, and economists, and active engagement on the part of OSGF, a philanthropic organization that has been carrying out purposeful activities in Georgia since 1994. On July 25th 2013, our supporters, members of the parliament, Mr. Zviad Kvachantiradze and Ms. Guguli Maghradze, initiated the submission to the Georgian Parliament of the draft law authored by Taso and all organizations and experts involved in its development. We await the outcome. We have faced challenges along the way but are hopeful that this Legislation will be approved.



www.taso.org.ge

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/YoungGeorgianVolunteers/>

<https://www.facebook.com/TasoFoundation>

Giving Voice: Grass Roots Women in Northern Ireland Share Experiences.

The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland partnered with the Women's Resource and Development Agency (Belfast) and the National Women's Council of Ireland (Dublin) to deliver a project funded under Northern Ireland's Special European Union Peace programme. The focus of the funding was for a project that would contribute to a Shared Society through the development of key institutional capacities. The particular focus was on developing an understanding of how Resolution 1325, and related resolutions, might be applied by a range of institutions in the context of experience drawn from women across Northern Ireland and the six border counties of the Republic of Ireland.

The policy context for this project was the commitment in the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), signed in 1998, to promote the representation of women in decision-making. From the previous work of the three partners to the project, it was clear that institutional interest in the development of community-based women's work had diminished since the GFA, as had the allocation of resources. Any official attention to the GFA commitment was limited to the interpretation of the involvement of women being within formal representative democracy as elected representatives rather than building on the contribution made by women to broader participative democracy that was so crucial for communities during the years of the conflict and the follow-on transition from conflict. Compounding this was the fact that the official narrative of the British Government referred to the Northern

Ireland conflict as 'an aggravated crime wave' rather than a war meaning that they rejected the application of resolution 1325 to political developments in Northern Ireland. This position reflects an even deeper fault-line in the NI Peace Process as there was no discussion, let alone agreement, on the causes and nature of the conflict.

The project set out to examine levels of participation and knowledge within local grass-roots women's groups through a series of thematic seminars and conferences held on both sides of the border. A facilitated reflection process was used with keynote speakers from both jurisdictions as well as international speakers.

The seminars were grouped around the main pillars of Resolution 1325:

1. Increasing Women's Participation;
2. Protection against gender-based violence;
3. Relief and recovery as they impact on stability and development;
4. Prevention in terms of gender training and other needed measures

For practical purposes, these pillars were translated as:

- Violence: Safety and Security;
- Women's Rights are Human Rights – women and social justice;
- Decision-making and representation;
- Women and legacies of the past;
- Women and Institutional change

Some early findings:

Lack of awareness of Resolution 1325 /lack of voice

From the hundreds of grass-roots women in attendance at the seminars, very few had ever

heard of Resolution 1325, even those very active in local groups, and most felt strongly that they were even further removed from having any influence with or impact on institutions than in previous decades. Even within groups that had been very active during the conflict, there was a strong feeling of marginalisation and loss of voice.

The reality remains that women from disadvantaged and deprived communities-those areas most impacted by the conflict-have experienced very limited change for the better and this is particularly manifested in levels of participative democracy and decision-making.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, as president of Liberia, was noted as saying: 'Women's contribution to peace is remarkable, unparalleled – but most often overlooked'. It would appear that women in both Northern Ireland and the Republic have largely fallen beneath the radar in the official narratives of peace building-yet their contribution was and is enormous.

The challenge to this project is to have that Voice heard, to create the space for discussion and participation, to become part of the decision-making process when it comes to building the peace.

Concerns articulated about Safety and Security.

- Breakdown in social cohesion – better efforts were made during the conflict
- Greater feelings of insecurity even though there is a broader acceptance of policing
- Recruiting to paramilitary groups and the continued control of communities by those groups
- The armed campaigns of dissident republicans

- Parades and protests/flags and emblems
- Political manipulation of young people – rioting and interface trouble
- Speaking out endangers your home and your family
- Alienation and feelings of hopelessness of young people in deprived areas
- Rise in anti-social behaviour
- Building of more 'peace walls' (physical walls dividing communities in the name of security)
- Intergenerational fears – older people feeling insecure at home and on the streets
- Much increased levels of domestic violence
- High dependence on readily prescribed drugs/lack of appropriate mental health services
- Addictions and suicides – particularly among young people
- Debt, poverty, loan sharks, loss of work and homes
- Recognition that during the conflict, there was communal fear but now it is individualised in nature making it difficult to tackle
- Recognition that the legacy of the past has not been dealt with and continues to divide communities

The final phase of the project will work further to find safe spaces for women to articulate their fears and aspirations and to ensure that others listen.

Avila Kilmurray

Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

