

WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT

The Big Picture

In Canada

- Canada is concerned about the profound impact of military, political and social conflict around the world on civilian women and children, especially gender-based violence.
- Women play an important role in creating peaceful societies and in finding alternatives to conflict. To play a full and equal part in securing and maintaining peace, women must be politically and economically empowered and represented at all levels of decision-making.

Around the World

- War and armed conflict impact differently on women and men. While men account for the largest number of combatants, women and children are disproportionately represented among civilians affected by conflict. Women are subject to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, such as rape, forced marriage and forced pregnancy by opposing forces.
- Women and children also constitute the majority of refugees and internally displaced persons in the world.
- During armed conflict and the collapse of communities, women play a critical role in working to preserve social order.
- In many countries, expenditures on armaments, military equipment and armed conflict mean fewer resources for social spending, which disproportionately affect women and children.

- Canada played a strong role in establishing the International Criminal Court, which recognizes gender as a basis for persecution and includes rape, enforced prostitution and other forms of sexual violence as war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- Women are not only victims and survivors of wars, they also play a key role in both community reconciliation and reconstruction. This role is receiving more recognition and support from international aid agencies and national governments.

Facts and Figures

In Canada

- Since 1993 when the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) Guidelines recognizing gender-based persecution were introduced, 1,770 gender-related crimes were finalized, 954 (54%) were accepted, 556 (31%) were rejected and 260 (15%) were withdrawn, abandoned, discontinued or otherwise finalized.
- During the same period, the IRB dealt with approximately 157,000 refugee claims. Over 1/3 were women, with most basing their claims on grounds other than gender.

Around the World

- About 250,000 children, many of them girls are seized by various armies to serve as soldiers or sex slaves. (*State of the World's Children Report 2000*, UNICEF)
- Women and children make up approximately 80% of the world's 25.5 million refugees and 26 million displaced persons.

- A European Community fact-finding team estimated that more than 20,000 Muslim women were raped in Bosnia in 1992, and in Rwanda, an estimated 15,000 women were raped in one year.
- The Carnegie Foundation estimates that for every soldier killed in the last 15 years, 9 civilians died, the majority of whom were women and children

Towards Equality

In Canada

- In January 2000, Canada launched the *Urgent Protection pilot project* which allows for expedited resettlement in Canada of refugees who are in need of urgent protection because their life, liberty or physical well-being is under immediate credible threat. This pilot is a one year project and is not gender-specific.
- In April 1998, in cooperation with the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Canada hosted an international workshop on its *Women at Risk Program*. The conference examined new challenges facing governments and NGOs in the delivery of programs designed to protect refugee women in perilous situations, to identify new and effective approaches. Steps taken to improve the program include gender-sensitivity training for visa officers.
- In Canada, gay men and lesbian women have been found to be members of a "particular social group" in the meaning of the *1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*.
- In April 2000, the Government of Canada tabled a new *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* which contains provisions to expand the definition of spouse to include common-law and same-sex partners.

Around the World

- In partnership with the UK, Canada is developing a Gender Awareness Training Initiative for Civilian and Military Participants in Peace Operations. The training curriculum aims to enhance awareness of the gender

dimensions of peace operations, and provide participants with the ability to employ gender analysis when in the field, by providing concrete skills and tools.

- Canada has been very active in promoting women's involvement in peace-building activities and has consistently raised issues associated with the impact of conflict on women within the UN Security Council thematic and geographic discussions.
- Canada was instrumental in ensuring the successful inclusion of a detailed list of gender-based crimes in the International Criminal Court Statute, ensuring that staff and judges with expertise in violence against women will be included in the Court and that women would be fairly represented among the judiciary and staff. Legislation has been tabled in the House of Commons that will allow Canada to be among the first to ratify the International Criminal Court Statute.
- Canada has taken an active leadership role in supporting the international campaign to bring about a ban on anti-personnel mines. Canada was the first country to ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of the use, Stockpiling, Production and transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction.
- Canadian mine action programming ensures no barriers exist for the participation of women or girls in mine awareness education, that there is no gender discrimination in the provision of trauma care, rehabilitation and reintegration services for mine victims. The programming also ensures the opportunity for women to participate in the programming and decision-making of organizations and initiatives, as community leaders, caregivers and educators/trainers, that address demining, mine awareness and victim assistance.
- The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) supports a number of projects related to gender and peace building:
 - in Palestine, a public education project on conflict resolution and the advancement of women and youth focuses on the West Bank and Gaza. In addition, the Canada Fund for Dialogue and Development funded

a training program for 60 Arab and Jewish women to enhance their understanding of key issues and women's role in resolving them.

- in Burundi, training sessions on conflict resolution techniques are offered for civil society groups, including women's groups.
 - in Sierra Leone, CIDA's Democratic Development Fund has provided skills training for ex-combatants, including women, and education on human rights, the peace accords and non-violent conflict resolution and reconciliation.
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