

## Part 2: Working in solidarity to protect women's rights and promote peace\*

**\* Please note: This section is not meant to be an exhaustive review of all initiatives and actions related to women, human rights and peace, but rather a starting point for further exploration and information. Status of Women Canada does not accept responsibility for the content of the Web sites listed, although we have made every effort to ensure that these links were current when this document was prepared.**

**The tragic events of September 11, 2001 reinforced the need to work further in solidarity to address the abuse of women's rights and to replace the global culture of violence with a culture of peace. The following is a sample of what the United Nations (UN) and the Government of Canada have been doing to address the issue of women, human rights and peace. It also includes a listing of non-governmental organizations working in this area.**

### **NATIONS UNITED AGAINST DISCRIMINATION**

The United Nations is a voluntary association of sovereign independent states, which includes Canada, whose goal is to protect and promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as to maintain peace. For over 50 years, the United Nations has played a central role of leadership in respect of human rights, especially for the advancement of women's rights.

Several treaties recognizing the human rights of women were adopted by the General Assembly in the 1960s. The *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979 and came into force in 1981. The *Convention* is the most comprehensive treaty on women's human rights and is often described as the international bill of rights for women. It calls for equality between women and men in the enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. States that have ratified or acceded

to it commit to abolishing all forms of discrimination, in public and private life, and to realizing true equality between women and men. As of June 2001, 168 countries – more than two thirds of the members of the United Nations – are party to the *Convention*.

The *Convention* defines discrimination against women as any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex that has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their material status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

To monitor its implementation, states that are party to the *Convention* elect experts to form the *Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women*. The Committee meets regularly to review progress in countries that have ratified or acceded to the *Convention*. Governments report to the Committee on the measures they have taken to comply with the *Convention* one year after becoming party to it, and at least once every four years after that.

In October 1999, the General Assembly adopted an *Optional Protocol to the Convention*, which allows individual women and groups of women who have exhausted domestic remedies to petition the Committee about violations of the *Convention*. It also grants the Committee the authority to conduct inquiries into grave or systematic abuses of women's human rights in States that are party to the *Convention* and the *Protocol*.

**There are several other United Nations instruments and mechanisms used to promote gender equality and women's human rights as well as to promote peace.  
For more information, visit the following sites:**

### **United Nations Legal Instruments**

*Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948)

<http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/index.htm> (bilingual)

*International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966)

[http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a\\_ceschr.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ceschr.htm) (bilingual)

*International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966)

[http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a\\_ccpr.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm) (bilingual)

*Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict* (1974)

<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/24.htm> (bilingual)

*Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)* (1979)

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/index.html> (bilingual)

*Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* (1984)

[http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/h\\_cat39.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/h_cat39.htm) (bilingual)

*Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989)

<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/k2crc.htm> (bilingual)

*Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women* (1993)

<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm> (bilingual)

*Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)* (1999)

[http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/opt\\_cedaw.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/opt_cedaw.htm) (bilingual)

*Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security* (2000)

[http://www.un.org/events/res\\_1325e.pdf](http://www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf) (bilingual)

*Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children* (2000)

[http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final\\_documents\\_2/convention\\_%20traff\\_eng.pdf](http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final_documents_2/convention_%20traff_eng.pdf) (bilingual)

### **United Nations Political Declarations**

***Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993)***

[http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/A.CONF.157.23.En?OpenDocument](http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/A.CONF.157.23.En?OpenDocument)  
(bilingual)

***Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)***

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/index.html> (bilingual)

***Political Declaration & Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (2000)***

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/beijing+5.htm> (click on Documents)

### **United Nations Mechanisms**

***UN Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)***

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/> (English only)

***UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)***

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/> (English only)

***UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women***

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/committee.htm> (English only)

***UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)***

<http://www.unifem.undp.org/> (English only)

<http://www.unifem.undp.org/hrights.htm> (Promoting Women's Human rights)

[http://www.unifem.undp.org/gov\\_pax.htm](http://www.unifem.undp.org/gov_pax.htm) (Women, Peace and Security Program)

***UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)***

<http://www.unicef.org/> (bilingual)

***UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR)***

<http://www.unhchr.ch/> (bilingual)

<http://www.unhchr.ch/women/> (section on women's rights) (English only)

***UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women***

<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/7/b/mwom.htm> (bilingual)

***UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)***

<http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home> (bilingual)

***WomenWatch***

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/> (English only)

***Inter-Agency Meeting on Women and Gender Equality (IAMWGE)***

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/IAMWGE> (English only)

***World Health Organization (WHO)***

[http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/vaw/infopack.htm](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/vaw/infopack.htm) (violence against women) (English only)

<http://www.who.int/frh-whd/FGM/index.htm> (female genital mutilation) (English only)

## **CANADA'S CONTRIBUTIONS**

The Government of Canada is committed to advancing gender equality and women's human rights through our domestic and international activities. Canada's promotion of gender equality is based on a belief that equal rights for women are an essential component of progress on human rights and democratic development. Sustainable and equitable development will only be achieved if women are able to participate as equal decision-makers in, and beneficiaries of, that development.

Two of the most important domestic mechanisms through which women's equality and human rights are protected in Canada are those established by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and human rights legislation.

As part of the *Constitution*, the *Charter* is the supreme law of Canada in the sense that all laws passed by provincial and territorial legislatures, as well as by the Parliament of Canada, must comply with it. Section 15(1) of the *Charter* is the general equality rights provision and guarantees the right to equality without discrimination. It lists a number of grounds upon which discrimination is specifically prohibited, and one of these is "sex." Section 28 of the *Charter* clarifies that all of the rights and freedoms set out in the *Charter* are guaranteed to both men and women on an equal basis.

In addition to the *Charter*, other legislation in Canada assists in promoting women's equality. One of the most important of these is the *Canadian Human Rights Act* which is applied more broadly than the *Charter* since it covers private sector activities as well as actions by governments. In Canada, not only the federal government but every province and territory has human rights legislation.

While Justice Canada is responsible for the development of federal human rights policy, including the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, the Canadian Human Rights Commission actually administers the *Act*. It promotes knowledge of human rights in Canada, and helps reduce barriers to equality in employment and access to services. It resolves complaints of discrimination and consults with employers, unions and advocacy groups, to establish policy decisions and guidelines.

Other departments in the Government of Canada also have responsibility for human rights:

- Status of Women Canada (SWC) is the federal government department which promotes gender equality, and the full participation of women in the economic, social, cultural and political life of the country. SWC focuses its work in three areas: improving women's economic autonomy and well-being; eliminating systemic violence against women and children; and advancing women's human rights.
- The Department of Canadian Heritage, through its Human Rights Program, promotes the development, understanding, respect for and enjoyment of human rights in Canada. The program coordinates, with provincial and territorial governments, the domestic implementation of international human rights instruments and the preparation of Canada's reports to the United Nations.
- Through its Human Rights, Humanitarian Affairs, International Women's Equality Division, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) promotes strengthening of existing UN mechanisms; and integration of human rights and women's equality perspectives into overall UN operations.

- Gender equality and human rights are also two priorities of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) which supports sustainable development activities in order to reduce poverty and to contribute to a more secure, equitable and prosperous world. Increasingly, CIDA also focuses on governments and their responsibility to respect rights and govern well in an honest, effective and accountable manner. CIDA has also established an annual *Peacebuilding Fund* that supports projects related to conflict prevention, arms control and human rights.

On the broader issue of women, peace and security, over the past two years, the Government of Canada has committed to concrete action with partners in the G8 and the United Nations Security Council, among others. Canada was a member of the Security Council when it unanimously adopted *Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security* on October 31, 2000. The resolution sets out a substantive guide for the full and equal participation of women in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and the integration of a gender perspective into peace processes. It also mandates the provision of gender-sensitive training for personnel involved in peace-support operations.

In July 2001, G8 Foreign Ministers in Rome adopted an initiative on *Strengthening the Role of Women in Conflict Prevention*, which mirrors *UN Security Council Resolution 1325* and calls for the integration of a gender-sensitive approach in all phases of conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding.

Under the leadership of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), parliamentarians, government officials and representatives of civil society have established

the *Canadian Committee on Women, Peace and Security*. Chaired by Senator Lois Wilson, the Committee's primary objective is to help implement the commitments made in *UN Security Council Resolution 1325* through gender training, capacity building and advocacy.

On January 14, 2002, DFAIT, CIDA, the Canadian Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) launched a study on *Women Facing War*, which is the culmination of three years of extensive consultations by the ICRC on the conditions faced by women in situations of armed conflict.

Canada and the United Kingdom have developed a Gender Training Initiative (GTI) for military personnel and civilians involved in peace support operations. The GTI has received considerable international attention and praise, as it provides material for a three-day course on gender sensitization in the context of peace-support operations, complete with thematic overview and geographic case studies. The GTI is being transformed into an online interactive Web site and will eventually include a distance-learning component.

In February 1988, the Government of Canada (through Citizenship and Immigration Canada) formally established the *Women at Risk Program (AWR)* for refugee women seeking resettlement in Canada. The program offers resettlement opportunities that might not otherwise be available to women whose ability to start life anew is hampered by young dependant children, poor ability in either official language, weak job skills, or a combination of these factors. Since the introduction of this program, Canada has offered a safe haven and the opportunity for a better future to nearly 1,100 women and their dependants.

**For more information on the Government of Canada's initiatives,  
visit the following Web sites:**

**Canadian Heritage - Human Rights Program**

<http://www.pch.gc.ca/ddp-hrd> (bilingual)

**Canadian Human Rights Commission**

<http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca> (bilingual)

**Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)**

<http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/equality> (bilingual)

<http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/peace> (bilingual)

**Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC)**

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugee/women-e.html> (bilingual)

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/srr/pdf/res3fii.pdf> (bilingual)

**Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT)**

<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/menu-e.asp> (bilingual)

<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/human-rights/menu-e.asp> (bilingual)

<http://www.humansecuritynetwork.org> (bilingual)

**Justice Canada**

<http://canada.justice.gc.ca/> (bilingual)

[http://canada.justice.gc.ca/loireg/charte/const\\_en.html](http://canada.justice.gc.ca/loireg/charte/const_en.html) (bilingual)

**Status of Women Canada (SWC)**

<http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca> (bilingual)

## **THE CRUCIAL WORK OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOs)**

Canadian and international NGOs, women's organizations and feminist groups working to promote women's human rights through grass-roots activities, networking and advocacy are also active on the human rights and peace front. They are also increasingly interested in the role of women in conflict resolution and peace negotiation, and the need to replace the global culture of violence with a culture of peace.

For more information on their activities, please visit their Web sites\*.

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## **Canadian NGOs**

### *Amnesty International (AI) Canada*

<http://www.amnesty.ca/women/index.html>

(English)

<http://www.amnistie.qc.ca/>

(French Canadian section)

### *Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)*

<http://www.awid.org>

(bilingual)

### *Canadian Human Rights Foundation (CHRF)*

<http://www.chrf.ca/>

(bilingual)

### *Canadian Voice of Women for Peace (VOW)*

<http://www.interlog.com/~vow/>

(English only)

### *Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA)*

<http://www.fafia.org/>

(bilingual)

### *Human Rights Internet (HRI)*

<http://www.hri.ca/welcome.cfm>

(English only)

### *MATCH International Centre*

<http://www.web.net/~matchint/>

(bilingual)

### *Rights & Democracy – International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development*

<http://www.ichrdd.ca/>

(bilingual)

### *United Nations Association in Canada (UNA-Canada)*

<http://www.unac.org/index.html>

(bilingual)

### *World March of Women*

<http://www.ffq.qc.ca/marche2000/>

(bilingual)

<http://www.ffq.qc.ca/marche2000/en/3erencontre.html>

(bilingual)

## **Foreign NGOs**

### *Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE)*

<http://www.cohre.org>

(English only)

### *Cybersolidaires – Femmes du monde pour la paix*

<http://www.cybersolidaires.org/>

(French only)

### *Equality Now*

<http://www.equalitynow.org>

(bilingual)

### *Human Rights Watch – Women's Program*

<http://hrw.org/women/>

(English only)

### *International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)*

<http://www.icrc.org/>

(bilingual)

<http://www.icrc.org/eng/women>

(women and war – bilingual)

### *International Federation for Human Rights*

<http://www.fidh.org>

(bilingual)

### *International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC)*

<http://www.iwtc.org>

(English only)

### *Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children*

<http://www.womenscommission.org/>

(English only)

### *Women's Human Rights Net (whrNET)*

<http://www.whrnet.org/>

(bilingual)

### *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) – Peace Women Project*

<http://www.peacewomen.org/>

(English only)

### *Women Waging Peace*

<http://www.womenwagingpeace.net/index.asp>

(English only)