

Canadian Perspectives on Advancing the Women, Peace and Security and Children and Armed Conflict Agendas in the 21st Century

ROUNDTABLE REPORT - SEPTEMBER 2021



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About the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security

The Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace, and Security was founded by General Roméo Dallaire in 2007. General Dallaire first experienced the issue of child soldiers as the Force Commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda during the 1994 genocide. During this time, General Dallaire realized that he and his troops were ill-prepared to face them.

The Dallaire Institute wants to bring the perspective of the security sector to the issue of child soldiery, while equipping them with the training and tools to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers worldwide. Through this we hope to build a more holistic, prevention oriented approach to the issue of child soldiers that complements current efforts while providing innovative solutions.

For more information, visit. www.dallaireinstitute.org

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List of Acronyms

CAAC	Children and Armed Conflict
DCAF	Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance
GBA+	Gender Based Analysis Plus
MINDS	Mobilizing Insights in Defence and Security
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VPs	Vancouver Principles
WPS	Women, Peace and Security



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security believes that in order to progressively end the recruitment and use of children as soldiers, the world must focus on effective prevention. The Dallaire Institute focuses on filling gaps in knowledge and practice to amplify current efforts by international organizations, governments, academics, legal experts and child protection advocates to prevent the recruitment and use of children as soldiers in an overall effort to better protect children and prevent conflict. It is the Dallaire Institute's unique approach to affecting beliefs, attitudes and behavior change, through pedagogical approaches and strategic partnerships, that defines the organizational imperative and creates lasting impacts well beyond the immediate interventions.

In order to advance knowledge on conflict prevention, and particularly recruitment prevention, the Dallaire Institute hosted a Roundtable on the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) agendas on August 18, 2021. Over sixty (60) professionals from academia, government, and civil society organizations attended to share their expertise.

The event focused on the significant advances in research, policy, and practice in both the WPS and CAAC agendas, with the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the launch of the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers and the Elsie Initiative, and new research findings contributing to more transformative and empirically informed

approaches in policy in recent years. The intersection of these agendas further reinforces the need to address critiques about how the agendas approach gender and childhood and the implications for peace and security policy at the UN and national level. While the WPS agenda challenges the problem of “women and children” through emphasizing women’s participation in peace and security, it neglects children’s rights and capacities to participate in their own protection. Arguments about the “added value” that women bring to peacekeeping by virtue of their gender are being challenged and shifted towards a focus on gender diversity and ensuring a peacekeeping work environment that enables women to contribute to all aspects of peacekeeping.

OPENING REMARKS & PANEL PRESENTATIONS

The event opened with remarks from Clare Hutchinson, NATO Special Representative for Women Peace and Security. Ms. Hutchinson’s main points included: i) the recognition of the cross-cutting of both agendas and their tensions, tensions she described “as a friendly sibling rivalry” that on the one side highlights women are not children and on the other side, that an approach focused only on women overlooks men’s and boys’ situations in armed conflict; ii) the risk of essentializing women’s inclusion in peacekeeping and the necessity to be careful with the assumption that women are innately suited to the protection of children task; and iii) the lessons learned over the years from the implementation of both agendas. Ms. Hutchinson further argued we need to use strategic thinking to identify commonalities and differences among the agendas, that training is a success avenue

to inform militaries and civilians of important advances in both agendas, and that a holistic approach to address sexual violence is greatly needed.

Opening remarks were followed by a panel moderated by Dr. Catherine Baillie Abidi, Director of Research and Learning at the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security and which included three guest speakers: Dustin Johnson, Senior Research Advisor from the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security; Dr. Vanessa Brown from the Canadian Armed Forces Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security at the Canadian Defence Academy; and Dr. Jennifer Klot from Policy & Praxis for Social Change. The three speakers presented their research and experiences working within WPS and CAAC implementations.

Dustin Johnson presented early findings about gender perspectives in child protection in peacekeeping missions, findings coming from studying the UN’s and states’ training manuals and conducting interviews with military, police and civilians who were part of peace support missions. Mr. Johnson’s research provides empirical evidence of how gender perspectives are implemented and inform policies and programmes.

Dr. Vanessa Brown explained the fundamental conditions needed to develop gender and cultural competencies in the armed forces and described how institutional identity is shaped by social, political, economic, and historical factors that shift overtime in response to changing contexts. Research from feminist and critical race theorists argue military identity and purpose are influenced by mutually reinforcing systems of power

such as gender constructs, racialization, coloniality, empire, and historical struggles across diverse groups in societies. Members of armed forces, including that of Canada, go through intense institutional socialization to fit dominant conceptions of military identity and purpose. This socialization has implications for how military members perceive their roles and responsibilities in relation to peace and security. The work to include and develop gender perspectives and other social and political factors to implement the WPS and CAAC agendas, requires recognizing these enabling conditions and their impact on the whole structure, to introduce changes that shift the culture to be more equitable, diverse, and inclusive.

Dr. Jennifer Klot focused on the limitations of the development of the WPS and CAAC agendas, starting with a critique of the hegemonic and colonial foundations. From those limitations she identified tensions for WPS and CAAC implementation, including: i) the lack of WPS special representation at the state level; ii) tensions around agency and protection that portray women as victims; iii) tensions produced by reducing the inclusion of feminist perspectives to instead focus on numbers of women in the institutions as an indicator of gender equality without any evidence of its impact; and iv) the instrumentalization of women coming from the three previous limitations. As a conclusion, Dr. Klot identified that feminist perspectives offer an important critique of militarization and emphasize disarmament as essential to build peace and real protection for women and children. Dr. Klot also called for the diversification of the WPS and CAAC strategies to include operationally practical implementations.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

The Roundtable focused on participants' experiences and perspectives about the status of WPS 20 years since the creation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the status of the CAAC agenda 25 years after the publication of Graça Machel's report on the impact of armed conflict on children¹, and visualized the intersectionality between WPS and CAAC, including their tensions and complementarities. The Roundtable participants represented universities, government departments, NGOs and international organizations, all with experience working in the implementation of the WPS and CAAC agendas. They discussed the three questions below:

- **PREVENTION**

What are the main areas of tension, and of complementarity, between the WPS agenda, and improving the protection of children in peacekeeping and preventing violations of their rights?

- **PARTICIPATION**

How can increasing the meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping improve child protection, and how can this be done without instrumentalizing gender or neglecting men's contributions to child protection?

- **PROTECTION**

What lessons should be learned from the first 20 years of WPS for a more transformational and gender-responsive approach to child protection?

1 Graça Machel. *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*. A/51/306, United Nations, 1996, https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/51/306.

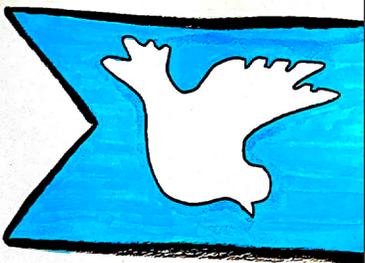
Highlights stemming from the Roundtable discussions include:

- The importance of recognizing inequities, inequalities and power structures and how they define and shape risk, vulnerability, and agency.
- The need to focus on practical strategies to advance the WPS and CAAC agendas, including a focus on training, education, and skills as integral to effective peacekeeping for practitioners of any gender.
- Challenge how we measure success and what our aims are. Consider if we are asking the right questions and if there is a place for the reintroduction of critical and antimilitarist feminists' approaches to prevention work.
- Decolonize approaches by challenging institutional racial biases, meaningfully engaging with children and youth from a gender responsive perspective, and contextualizing child protection while recognizing the uniqueness of different contexts.
- Further explore the tensions between agency and protection, asking if we are using the right language to describe what we want to do, such as shifting the focus from protection to safeguarding.

The conversation emphasized the importance of finding commonality and building collaboration across the agendas to learn from each other and support strategic and complementary advocacy in the very complex task of advancing peacekeeping in the 21st Century to improve its performance, respond to evolving challenges in armed conflict, and ensure peacekeepers and missions are better

prepared to fulfill their mandates.

August 18, 2021



ROUNDABLE: ADVANCING WPS + CAAC AGENDAS

★ DECOLONIZE APPROACHES

By: CHALLENGING INSTITUTIONAL BIASES

PREVENTION

WHAT ARE THE MAIN AREAS OF TENSION + COMPLEMENTARITY BETWEEN THE WPS AGENDA + IMPROVING PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN PEACEKEEPING + PREVENTING VIOLATIONS OF THEIR RIGHTS?



MEANINGFULLY ENGAGING WITH CHILDREN + YOUTH FROM A GENDER RESPONSIVE PERSPECTIVE

CONTEXTUALIZING CHILD PROTECTION WHILE RECOGNIZING THE UNIQUENESS OF EACH CONTEXT



PARTICIPATION

HOW CAN INCREASING THE MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PEACEKEEPING IMPROVE CHILD PROTECTION + HOW CAN THIS BE DONE WITHOUT INSTRUMENTALIZING GENDER OR NEGLECTING MEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS?



INTERSECTIONAL GENDER ANALYSIS

IMPROVE IN EVERYDAY PRACTICE ON THE GROUND

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROTECTION, PARTICIPATION + PREVENTION

PROTECTION / SAFE GUARDING NEEDS TO BE HOLISTIC + CLUSTERED IN CONTEXT SPECIFIC

IMPROVE PARTICIPATION IS VITAL TO IMPLEMENTING INTERSECTIONALITY

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PREVENTION?

BUILD COLLABORATION ACROSS AGENDAS

TO SUPPORT STRATEGIC COMPLIMENTARY ADVOCACY
TO MAKE USE OF RESOURCES WITHOUT COMPETITION

TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER



TRAINING + EDUCATION

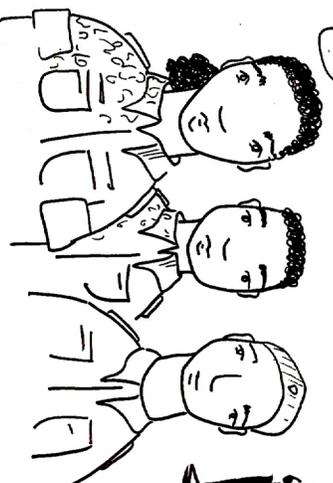
IS KEY FOR TRANSFORMATION

REFORM WARRIOR MENTALITY

CALLS FOR A TOTAL RE THINKING OF WHAT A MILITARY MEMBER IS IF THEN ARE GOING TO EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS SUCH ISSUES.

PROTECTION

WHAT LESSONS SHOULD BE LEARNED FROM THE LAST 20 YEARS OF WPS FOR A MORE TRANSFORMATIONAL + GENDER-RESPONSIVE APPROACH TO CHILD PROTECTION?



THE IMPORTANCE OF DISARMAMENT - THE MORE RADICAL ROOTS OF WPS AGENDA

REALLY CHALLENGING + LOOKING AT COLONIZATION - THE FOUNDATIONS, LEGACY, CONTINUED IMPACT

RECOGNIZE INEQUITIES + POWER STRUCTURES + HOW THEN DEFINE + SHARE RISK, VULNERABILITY + AGENCY

MEASURE SUCCESS

HOW WE CHALLENGE AND WHAT OUR AIMS ARE



PEACE & SECURITY FRAMEWORK

The Dallaire Institute Roundtable on Women Peace and Security (WPS) and Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) marked the 20-year anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, a landmark document that recognized the importance of gender equality in international peace and security contexts. A Roundtable on the intersections, complementarities and tensions between the WPS and CAAC agendas was created as an opportunity to inquire about the status of implementation and to analyze the present and future of both agendas through their correlations and differences.

In this context, three key documents can frame the analysis and inform the policies and discussion in Canada around WPS and CAAC: UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations, and the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers.

UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325

In October 2000, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325, a landmark document that represents an outcome of a long history of feminist groups' work advocating for gender equality and reflects the newly recognized characteristics of armed conflict after the end of the Cold War. The armed conflicts of the post-Cold War period marked a shift towards more wars fought within states with high levels of civilian casualties and fewer wars fought between

conventional militaries.² Those armed conflicts became especially predatory and extremely violent towards civilians, including the mass use of torture and sexual violence as war tactics.

Resolution 1325 was the result of a global women's movement that gained significant momentum after the UN Decade for Women (1975-1985) which concentrated efforts on combating violence against women in war and peace time. The Resolution was built on the blueprint of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action that recognizes the disproportional impact that armed conflict has on women and the importance of women's participation in the peace process beyond their status as victims. Gender perspectives influenced the UN Security Council's role of maintaining international peace and security through a state orientated approach and shifted it into a human perspective that focused its attention on violence against people. Thus, Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law became the frame of the UN Security Council's decisions and operations. However, the most distinguishing aspect of Resolution 1325 is the incorporation of a requirement of gender balance and gender perspectives in all policy and decision-making related to conflict prevention, management, and resolution, as well as post-conflict reconstruction. The inclusion of women goes beyond merely recognizing their protections needs as

² Chinkin Christine, *Adoption of 1325 Resolution*. The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security. Edited by Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True. 2018. (Pag.2)

a vulnerable group and allows them to define fundamental aspects of policies and operations.

It has been 20 years since the UN Security Council adopted gender perspectives as a fundamental part of its functions. Further, gender perspectives began to shape new standards for Member States and for the UN as a whole. Since 2000, the UN has initiated, promoted and developed research on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peacebuilding, and the gender dimensions of peace processes. The whole human rights agenda has been impacted by the declaration in Resolution 1325:

Recognizing that an understanding of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, effective institutional arrangements to guarantee their protection and full participation in the peace process can significantly contribute to the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security,³

However, the human security perspective and the positive peace approach— social justice to prevent, develop and maintain peace— and the gender perspectives brought by the participation of civilians to the peace and security agenda, was severely affected by the September 11, 2001 terror attacks in New York and Washington, DC. From that point on, the war against terrorism brought the focus back to the state-military security perspectives.

The institutions that write, adopt, implement,

³ Resolution 1325 (2000) Adopted by the Security Council at its 4213th meeting, on 31 October 2000. (Pag.2) [https://undocs.org/S/RES/1325\(2000\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/1325(2000))

and operate peace and security policies are strongly defined by the state-military perspective; however, both the peace and security agenda and the institutions are deeply influenced by the women's movement. The theory and practice of WPS to prevent, manage and develop sustainable peace became not only a policy requirement, but also a point of ethical reference that provides a dynamic assessment tool for the whole international peace and security agenda. The gender perspective has shown the relevance of a holistic peace approach and the effectiveness of the inclusion of feminist theory in the agenda's design, implementation and operations.

Since Resolution 1325, theoretical work on WPS and the feminist movement around its implementation have grown, impacting the conception of peace and the implementation of solutions. The inquiries about fundamental WPS gender concepts and how the pillars and practices of the agenda are being perceived and implemented create a more sophisticated comprehension and better identification of the spectrum of armed conflicts and their effects. The WPS agenda introduces a perspective that creates meaningful debate on gender inclusion, conceptions of peace in the international and local context, and the role of security institutions. This perspective is essential to achieving the goals of protection and to build sustainable peace. Furthermore, WPS studies have collected information and tested its concepts and implementation in practice. An important example is the evolution of the humanitarian protection of women, from seeing women as only a vulnerable group to a recognition of their agency and leadership. The latter highlights the importance of

women in leadership positions to prevent conflicts, develop agreement negotiations, and maintain peace.

However, there has been a lack of sufficient engagement with age in the WPS agenda. While it does maintain a focus on girls, in practice much of the development and practice of the agenda is focused on adults, leaving gendered dimensions of the recruitment and use of children as soldiers largely to the CAAC agenda. WPS-focused academic work has also tended to focus on women and women's organizations while neglecting children, in part due to the conflation of women and children in discourse as both being victims and lacking agency in war.

Resolution 1325 faces several challenges. As was mentioned above, the dominant military and state security perspective that re-emerged under the war on terror diminishes the implementation of the WPS agenda, despite the rich academic research that WPS has inspired. The studies and the work of women's organizations provide valuable information that dynamize the institutionalization of Resolution 1325 despite the war on terrorism's prevalence. WPS advocates have helped to develop indicators to monitor and report the application of Resolution 1325. Further, while Resolution 1325 has been criticized for being too broad with no definite concepts, WPS advocates have leveraged its open language to provide an important platform for a more inclusive and holistic approach to peacebuilding processes, operations and agreements. In that sense, Resolution 1325 can be seen as a dynamic agenda that informs policy makers' creation of specific monitoring and assessing

indicators for prevention, management and maintenance of peace which takes into consideration local needs.

ELSIE INITIATIVE FOR WOMEN IN PEACE OPERATIONS

In 2017, the Canadian government launched the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations with the purpose of developing new approaches to overcome barriers to increasing women's participation in peacekeeping operations.⁴ Launched at the UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial in Vancouver alongside the Vancouver Principles, the Elsie Initiative declares that "*increasing the meaningful participation of women in UN peace operations is both the right and smart thing to do*".

*Since October 2015, the overall percentage of women military and police peacekeepers has only increased from 4.2% to 7.1%, and barriers and biases remain in place that reduce women's ability to meaningfully participate in UN peace operations. For this reason, the Elsie Initiative is mandated and designed to help create change in this specific area.*⁵

The language used in the Elsie Initiative reflects the discussion that gender perspectives have been promoted through the WPS agenda and the implementation of Resolution 1325. The Canadian Government

4 Government of Canada, "Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations", accessed 6 December 2021, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/gender_equality-egalite_des_genres/elsie_initiative-initiative_elsie.aspx?lang=eng

5 Government of Canada, "Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations."

states that:

*[The] meaningful participation of [women] is demonstrated by the presence and leadership of women in UN peace operations, across all ranks and functions. Women are able to participate meaningfully when they contribute to, and are included in, all aspects of operational and mission planning, and decision-making processes; when they hold operational command and leadership positions, and non-traditional as well as non-stereotypical roles; when they have access to the same training, promotion and career advancement opportunities as their colleagues who are men; when they hold positions that are in line with their training, rank and area of expertise; and when their workplace is free from all forms of harassment, bullying and intimidation.*⁶

In addition, the Initiative recognizes the centrality of academic research in developing strategies of inclusion of gender equality in the armed forces and defining key questions.

The Elsie Initiative seeks to help answer the following key questions, and provide decision makers with the necessary evidence base for sustainable and transformational change:

- *What approaches are effective in the troop- and police-contributing context to address barriers and create greater opportunities for uniformed women personnel?*
- *How do financial incentives impact the meaningful participation of uniformed women in UN peace operations?*
- *What constitutes a receptive environment*

⁶ Government of Canada, “Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations.”

for uniformed women serving in UN mission environments?

- *How do female peacekeepers enhance the operational effectiveness of peace operations?*
- *How can UN deployment processes provide more equitable opportunities for uniformed women?*

Canada’s participation in peacekeeping operations has a history that grows in parallel with the international human rights agenda. It portrays Canada as a country that promotes global security and prosperity. For instance, the origin of peacekeeping is attributed to Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson and UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, who together organized the UN Emergency Force to solve the Suez Crisis in 1956. Nevertheless, this history that portrays Canada as peaceful, tolerant, and liberal obscures problematic episodes and veils ongoing histories of marginalization that occur along the lines of gender and race. These criticisms of Canada’s peacekeeping are in part advanced by gender perspectives and the WPS agenda.

Critics from academia, the human rights field, and women’s organizations point to the contradictions and inconsistencies created by the emphasis on the Canadian values of tolerance, neutrality, and respect for human rights when simultaneously Canada is implicated in their violation and marginalization nationally and internationally.⁷ One example that illustrates the contradictions is the case known as the “Somalia Affair” where members

⁷ Meaghan Shoemaker and Stéfanie von Hlatky, “A Feminist Account of Canadian Defence Policy,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Gender, Sexuality, and Canadian Politics*, eds. Manon Tremblay and Joanna Everitt, p. 421-438 (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

of the Canadian Airborne Regiment deployed to the UN mission in Somalia tortured and killed Shidane Arone, a Somali teenager, in 1993. Various academics have demonstrated how these events were enabled by the forms of militarized masculinity constructed in the Canadian military and their intersection with race.⁸ Women's participation in peacekeeping has often been advanced as an antidote to such behaviour; however, this places the burden on women to police men's behaviour, rather than on men to not commit abuses, and ignores the structural factors underpinning such abuses.⁹

The Elsie Initiative has been criticized in three ways related to its approach to gender. First, for oversimplifying the WPS agenda's aims to increase the number of women in uniform under the assumption that their inclusion is expected to improve the underlying gender issues within the peacekeeping project. And second, the reasons used by the Elsie Initiative to explain the importance of women's participation in peace missions essentializes women such that their participation is useful because of who they are as women, not because of what they do. Third, the inclusion of women with the aim of increasing mission effectiveness by better promoting peace assumes that women are more empathic and create better relationships with civilians. This approach to peacekeeping effectiveness oversimplifies

8 Sherene Razack, *Dark Threats and White Knights: The Somalia Affair, Peacekeeping, and the New Imperialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Sandra Whitworth, *Men, Militarism, and UN Peacekeeping: A Gendered Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007).

9 Nina Wilén, "Female Peacekeepers' Added Burden," *International Affairs* 96, no. 6 (November 2020): 1585–1602, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaa132>.

problems and shifts responsibility to women instead of taking the opportunity to inquire about the challenges that peacekeeping missions face due to structural barriers rooted in gendered or racialized stereotypes that affect, restrict, and increase the failure of the peacekeeping missions.¹⁰

The inclusion of women in peacekeeping operations, by itself, does not address the understanding of women's conditions in the places where the mission is deployed. That simplification assumes that women are a homogenous group that see gender as the principal source of oppression. This dismisses the historical and cultural context, the effect of intersecting identities, and the different roles that women have in their own societies.¹¹

Despite the challenges and critiques discussed, the Elsie Initiative is the latest step in Canada's commitment to peacekeeping and, importantly, signals a willingness to reform. The Elsie Initiative provides an opportunity to move past the effectiveness-perspective which propagates a warrior mentality by including women in peacekeeping operations to maximize military impact. The Elsie Initiative can implement gender perspectives and anti-racist analysis to recognize the marginalization of groups that have been excluded from the definition of security policies and peace building processes in the national and international context. Further, the Elise Initiative can be an important mechanism for collecting data

10 Biskupski-Mujanovic Sandra, *Smart peacekeeping: Deploying Canadian women for a better peace?* International Journal. SAGE. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0020702019874791> (Pg.415,420)

11 Biskupski-Mujanovic, 420.

on the implementation of the WPS agenda. Notably, data collection ought to focus on how successfully women are being included in peacekeeping missions as well as the impacts of women's inclusion on peace operations.

The Elsie Initiative is an opportunity to recognize the link between the challenges that women face not only in peacekeeping operations but also the multiple barriers that women face in the armed forces. Both are deeply interconnected, and it is not possible to develop one without the consideration of the other. Traditionally, women have been placed in military activities close to domestic chores (nursing or cooking) and administrative duties.¹² In addition to the gendered job assignments, military budgets tend to view gender equality initiatives as unimportant compared to logistical and equipment needs. If it is necessary to reduce spending, the gender and cultural inclusion programs are the first to be cut or reduced to a two-week training separate from the institution's structure, its daily tasks, and socialization of its members.¹³ Gendered work allocation and underfunding is the reality of gender inclusion in militaries and the reality where the Elsie Initiative aims to operate; it ought to recognize and challenge this reality.

Research funded by the Elsie Initiative is helping to address these challenges and lay the groundwork for transforming how armed forces approach the inclusion of women in their peacekeeping contributions. For

12 Dominique Millette, Niko Block, Eli Yarhi, Tabitha Marshall, "Canadian Women and War", in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, accessed 6 December 2021, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/women-and-war>

13 Shoemaker and von Hlatky, 432.

instance, the International Peace Institute has published research on the taboos and stigmas faced by female peacekeepers that contribute to peacekeeping being a hostile work environment,¹⁴ and on challenging the gendered assumptions that pigeonhole female peacekeepers in certain roles.¹⁵ The Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security has conducted more systematic, empirical research on how female peacekeepers impact operational effectiveness, highlighting their importance for community engagement and the need for improved gender analysis in peacekeeping.¹⁶ The Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) produced a baseline study for the Elsie Initiative highlighting many of these critiques and the lack of evidence in some areas,¹⁷ and has partnered with Cornell University and several peacekeeping contributing countries to develop a rigorous methodology for identifying a range of barriers

14 Lotte Vermeij, "Woman First, Soldier Second: Taboos and Stigmas Facing Military Women in UN Peace Operations" (New York: International Peace Institute, October 2020), <https://www.ipinst.org/2020/10/taboo-and-stigmas-facing-military-women-in-un-peace-operations>.

15 Gretchen Baldwin and Sarah Taylor, "Uniformed Women in Peace Operations: Challenging Assumptions and Transforming Approaches" (New York: International Peace Institute, 2020), <https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2006-Uniformed-Women-in-Peace-Operations.pdf>.

16 Robert U. Nagel, Kate Fin, and Julia Maenza, "Gendered Impacts on Operational Effectiveness of UN Peace Operations" (Washington, DC: Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, May 2021), <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Gendered-Impacts-on-Operational-Effectiveness-of-UN-Peace-Operations.pdf>.

17 Marta Ghittoni, Léa Lehouck, and Callum Watson, "Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations: Baseline Study" (Geneva: DCAF, 2018), https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/Elsie_GenderReport_2018_Final.pdf.

to women's participation in peacekeeping,¹⁸ which has been used so far in Ghana¹⁹ and Uruguay.²⁰ Such research and critique is vital for realizing the transformational aims of the WPS agenda when it comes to women in peacekeeping.

When it comes to addressing the recruitment and use of children as soldiers, and child protection more broadly in peacekeeping, it is important to consider the improvements to operational effectiveness created by increasing the proportion of women in peacekeeping, while not instrumentalizing female peacekeepers, or relying on gender essentialist assumptions that women are naturally suited to child protection tasks. For instance, improved gender balance in peacekeeping improves community engagement and information gathering, which are important for child protection work.²¹ However, a sole focus on women in child protection can push female peacekeepers into roles based on their gender rather than skills and training, leaving them insufficiently prepared for their mission.²²

18 Sabrina Karim et al., "MOWIP Methodology: Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations" (Geneva: Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, 2020), <https://www.dcaf.ch/mowip-methodology>.

19 Sabrina Karim et al., "Ghana Armed Forces MOWIP Report 2020" (Geneva: DCAF, 2021), https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/Ghana_Armed_Forces_2020_MOWIP_Report.pdf.

20 Sabrina Karim et al., "Armed Forces of Uruguay MOWIP Report" (Geneva: Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, 2021), <https://www.dcaf.ch/uru-quay-armed-forces-mowip-report-2020>.

21 Nagel, Fin, and Maenza.

22 Georgina Holmes, "Situating Agency, Embodied Practices and Norm Implementation in Peacekeeping Training," *International Peacekeeping* 26, no. 1 (January 2019): 55–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2018.1503934>.

THE VANCOUVER PRINCIPLES AND THE CAAC AGENDA

The CAAC agenda is inspired fundamentally by the principle of protection of children in places that experience armed conflict. Despite its recent introduction, it is an agenda that gained broad support; even in places and societies with deep confrontations, protection of children is an ethical point of agreement. Nevertheless, humanity has witnessed increasing violence and diversification of inhumane practices against children in armed conflicts. The volume, variety and intensity of those practices is strong evidence that children are not collateral damage in conflict; rather they are an intentional and systematic part of armed conflict used to terrorize civilians, target certain ethnic populations, promote large displacements and reap financial benefits through modern-day slavery.

The international protection of children in armed conflicts has been included in the UN peace and security agenda since 1996, when the report the *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*²³ written by Graça Machel was presented to the General Assembly. The study starts by presenting the alarming situation of children in armed conflicts. In the conclusions, Machel's report strongly condemns violence against children and calls for direct actions to address the exploitation of children in armed conflict.

The flagrant abuse and exploitation of children during armed conflict can and must be eliminated. For too long, we have given ground to spurious claims

23 Graça Machel. *Impact of Armed Conflict on Children*. A/51/306, United Nations, 1996, https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/51/306.

*that the involvement of children in armed conflict is regrettable but inevitable. It is not. Children are regularly caught up in warfare as a result of conscious and deliberate decisions made by adults. We must challenge each of these decisions and we must refute the flawed political and military reasoning, the protests of impotence, and the cynical attempts to disguise child soldiers as merely the youngest “volunteers”.*²⁴

Over time, building on the work of the UN Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict the UN Security Council has dedicated increasing attention to the inhumane conditions faced by children in armed conflict. It has recognized that the protection of children is an important issue for international human rights, humanitarian, and criminal law; UN peacekeeping; and peace negotiations. In 1999, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1261²⁵ which brings attention to the harmful impact of armed conflict on children and emphasizes the long-term consequences this has for durable peace, security and development. From here the agenda has developed (see the table below) a list of six actions considered grave violations under human rights law and international humanitarian law. In 2005, the UN Security Council established a monitoring and reporting mechanism to systemically monitor, document and report on violations committed against children in armed conflict.

The Six Grave Violations identified by the UN Security Council as priorities are not a comprehensive list of issues affecting

children in armed conflict, rather they establish priority areas for the UN Security Council, the UN, and NGO networks. The six grave violations are:

- Killing and maiming of children
- Recruitment and use of children as soldiers
- Sexual violence against children
- Abduction of children
- Attacks against schools or hospitals
- Denial of humanitarian access for children

The protection of children in armed conflict represents a very complex challenge because children who live in armed conflict zones are often victims of pre-existing vulnerabilities like malnutrition, disease, sexual and domestic violence, and gender and racial discrimination. Armed conflict not only exacerbates these vulnerabilities, but also creates many other threats derived from the conflict and the use of children in the conflict.²⁶

Resolution	Year
1261	1991
1314	2000
1379	2001
1460	2003
1539	2004
1612	2005
1882	2009
1998	2011
2068	2012
2143	2014
2225	2015
2427	2018

24 Machel.

25 UN Security Council, Resolution 1261 (1999), [https://undocs.org/S/RES/1261\(1999\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/1261(1999)).

26 UNESCO, *The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education*, Paris: UNESCO, 2011, <https://news.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/190743e.pdf>.

One of the most recent additions to the international framework to protect children in armed conflict is The Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers. The Dallaire Institute for Children Peace and Security co-created the Vancouver Principles with the Government of Canada in 2017, a set of political commitments endorsed by UN Member States regarding the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers in a peacekeeping context. Informed by over 10 years of research and experience of gathering best practices in preventing children's recruitment and use, the Vancouver Principles are geared toward UN Member States and their military and police contributions operating under UN peacekeeping mandates.

The Government of Canada states that the Vancouver Principles were developed to build on and complement the existing framework, while addressing some of its shortcomings. Endorsing states commit to, among other actions, the following:

- *Encouraging the inclusion of child protection mandates in peacekeeping operations;*
- *Prioritizing the prevention of the recruitment of children during the planning of peacekeeping operations;*
- *Addressing the early warning signs of child recruitment;*
- *Conducting field-focused training on interacting with child soldiers and preventing child recruitment;*
- *Appointing child protection focal points throughout mission command structures, both military and police;*
- *Implementing special measures for the detention of children;*
- *Acting decisively and effectively to*

prevent child recruitment as permitted by mission mandates and rules of engagement;

- *Systematically reporting on abuses and grave violations against children in armed conflict;*
- *Investigating and disciplining any abuse of children by peacekeepers;*
- *Providing psychological support for peacekeepers faced by child soldiers;*
- *Including child protection in peace agreements;*
- *Sharing best practices; and*
- *Recognizing the critical roles of men and women in the protection of children and the prevention of recruitment of child soldiers.*²⁷

As of November 2021, the Vancouver Principles have been endorsed by 105²⁸ UN Member States. They complement existing treaties and principles designed to prevent harm to children during armed conflict and protect their rights, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, the Paris Principles, and the Safe Schools Declaration. The magnitude of the impact of armed conflict on children, in combination with all the vulnerabilities created by the economic, political, sociocultural, and systemic disadvantages, represent an overwhelming challenge. A serious and consistent joint effort between

27 Government of Canada, "Children and armed conflict," accessed 6 December 2021, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/human_rights-droits_homme/armed_conflict-conflits_armes.aspx?lang=eng.

28 Government of Canada, "The Vancouver Principles," accessed 6 December 2021, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/human_rights-droits_homme/principles-vancouver-principes.aspx?lang=eng.

UN programs, the Member States, and NGOs around the world is required to protect children in armed conflict. The CAAC agenda has numerous cross cutting-themes in the UN Security Council and in the security agenda. In consequence, it is urgent to identify common areas and key points to maximize implementation and develop an efficient system to collect data on violations committed against children. The CAAC agenda also requires engaging children in a meaningful way in peacebuilding processes by developing active, multilevel participation of children and promoting post-conflict holistic mechanisms to integrate children.

In relation to the importance of data, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (26 July 2021²⁹) recommended the composition of data and the recollection of good practices be prioritized, stating:

The past 25 years have witnessed an evolution of armed conflicts and of the actors directly and indirectly involved in them. Furthermore, emerging areas of concern require further attention. For example, one of the aspects often overlooked is the disaggregation of data not only based on age and sex, but also based on special needs, specifically those of children with disabilities. Understanding the gender dimensions of grave violations beyond the collection of sex-disaggregated data is vital in order to better protect children in conflict situations. In addition, climate change

has been playing a major role in the further deterioration of the situation of children affected by conflict, yet this aspect has not yet been considered within the framework of the children and armed conflict mandate. Therefore, one of the priorities of the Special Representative is to invest more in the improvement of data collection and analysis, as well as data management, to ensure these trends, and those that are new and emerging, will be sufficiently studied and elaborated in the context of the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

Another priority has been to identify lessons learned and good practices that can further enhance the impact of the mandate. In this context, the Office of the Special Representative is leading the development of a report consolidating the outcomes and recommendations from the high-level and technical level regional consultations on the implementation of the children and armed conflict mandate.

The NATO Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security Claire Hutchinson also describes, with caution, the importance of gender inclusion in the protection of children in armed conflict and asks a relevant question that informs and frames the analysis of Vancouver Principle #11 which promotes the inclusion of women in the peacekeeping operations:

The Vancouver Principles highlight the 'distinct and critical roles of both men and women in the protection of children and the prevention of the recruitment and use of child soldiers'. Yet, we do need to be cautious about making assumptions that women are innately

29 United Nations, "Report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict," A/76/231, 26 July 2021, https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/76/231&Lang=E&Area=UNDOC.

*suited to protection of children tasks – assumptions that are both inaccurate and dangerously essentialist. Where attention needs to be placed is in the gendering of responses to child protection. To what extent can gender perspectives enhance the political framework on children and armed conflict and the operational response to prevention and protection?*³⁰

While the CAAC agenda has not received as much academic attention or critique as the WPS agenda, it does have some problems that should be noted. As further discussed below, the CAAC agenda is premised solely on the protection of children, and does so from a paternalistic viewpoint that sees children only as victims needing protection. This serves to deny children's agency and right to participate in decisions about them and engage in politics, as enshrined in the CRC. This denial of children's agency and capacity for participation ignores their lived experiences in armed conflict, may miss opportunities to better protect them, and conveniently sidesteps questions of how to deal with children exercising their agency to engage in violence.³¹ As well, the framing of the CAAC agenda is largely built on a construction of childhood as universally, naturally, and linearly stretching from ages 0 to 18. This ignores the Eurocentric roots of this view of childhood, obscures differing local constructions of childhood, and neglects the

intersection of childhood with gender, race, ethnicity, ability, and so on.³²

WPS & CAAC

The UN has developed extensive and significant programming around women and children in armed conflict. In that process the agendas have generated increasing intersectional topics for the UN Security Council. The agendas — WPS and CAAC — have several common aspects where there can be synergies to develop their implementation and enhance efforts to build peace. Also, the intersection of WPS and CAAC creates an opportunity for data sharing, joint research, and common advocacy. However, merging the two agendas must also be done cautiously as there is always the risk of oversimplifying women and children in armed conflict under a victimization umbrella, thus misrepresenting both agendas.

The two agendas have been established and advanced with the purpose of protecting the civilian population and with the recognition of the severe impact that armed conflicts have on women and children through insidious and deliberate predatory practices. Two main points where the UN and the UN Security Council have fundamental challenges in the implementation of the agendas are: firstly, the lack of inclusion and active participation of women and children in the prevention, resolution, and maintenance of peace. Promoting the agency of women and children opens the conversation about the meaning of meaningful protection and participation. Secondly, the UN, the UN Security Council,

30 Clare Hutchinson, "Preface: Vancouver and Beyond: Reflection and Revision on Women, Peace and Security," *Allons-y: Journal of Children, Peace and Security* 5 (2021), <https://ojs.library.dal.ca/allons-y/article/view/10875>.

31 Cecilia Jacob, "'Children and Armed Conflict' and the Field of Security Studies," *Critical Studies on Security* 3, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 14–28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21624887.2015.1014675>.

32 Jana Tabak, *The Child and the World: Child-Soldiers and the Claim for Progress* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2020).

and Member States must work to coordinate multiple programs, organizations and institutions that work to implement the WPS and CAAC agendas. Most of the time, these efforts work in silos and are in permanent competition for the scarce pool of resources.

In this context, the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security hosted an open conversation to analyze and identify the tensions between the WPS and CAAC agendas and their common ground in the context of Canadian involvement in peacekeeping missions. This conversation recognizes the reality that both agendas share numerous pieces of the multidimensional puzzle of the Peace and Security agenda in the global context. Further, there is an opportunity to find the key aspects where WPS and CAAC can work together to represent and improve the implementation of both agendas.

ROUNDTABLE METHODOLOGY

On August 18, 2021 the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security hosted a Roundtable event on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC). Over sixty (60) professionals from the security sector, government, academia, and the international development community attended the round table to share their expertise. The Roundtable began with opening remarks and a panel discussion. Then, the attendees participated in moderated discussion groups. The Roundtable closed with a summary of the policy recommendations that emerged from the discussion groups.

Clare Hutchinson, the NATO Special Representative for WPS, delivered opening remarks. Ms. Hutchinson spoke of the importance of both the WPS and CAAC agendas, focusing on the areas of overlap between the two. However, Ms. Hutchinson also emphasized the risks of conflating the two agendas; while WPS and CAAC can benefit from joint strategic thinking, merging the agendas will only hurt their efficacy.

Following the opening remarks, Dr. Catherine Baillie Abidi, Director of Research and Learning at the Dallaire Institute, moderated a panel of three experts who shared their comments on WPS and CAAC as well as findings from their research.

Dustin Johnson — Research Advisor at the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace, and Security — presented his research on women’s participation in peacekeeping. Notably, Mr. Johnson’s preliminary findings

emphasize that organizations cannot assume individuals are suited for a role due to their gender. Instead, all participants in peacekeeping ought to receive proper training for their roles.

Dr. Vanessa Brown — Assistant Professor at the Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security within the Canadian Defence Academy — presented her research which focuses on the “enabling factors” within institutions that create a more inclusive security agenda. Centrally, to develop enabling factors, Dr. Brown recommends that security institutions must:

- challenge their embedded structures of inequality;
- reform their “warrior mentality” which frames their identity as a fighting force; and
- study their training programs to identify institutional biases.

The final panelist, Dr. Jennifer Klot from Policy & Praxis for Social Change, spoke of the challenges faced by the WPS and CAAC agendas at an institutional level within the UN. Dr. Klot opined that the feminist and demilitarization roots of the WPS agenda are fundamentally incompatible with the UN Security Council’s mandate of authorizing military action. Dr. Klot also shared several lessons that can be learned from the history of the WPS and CAAC agendas, including the need for feminist advocates to participate in existing institutions and lead reforms.

Following the panel, attendees were divided into four (4) groups, each with a moderator.

The groups were asked to discuss one of three questions related to the intersection of the WPS and CAAC agendas:

1. How can increasing the meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping improve child protection, and how can this be done without instrumentalizing gender or neglecting men's contributions to child protection?
2. What lessons should be learned from the first 20 years of WPS for a more transformational and gender-responsive approach to child protection?
3. What are the main areas of tension, and of complementarity, between the WPS agenda, and improving protection of children in peacekeeping and preventing violations of their rights?

To conclude, the groups convened to share the key points of their discussion, actionable policy items, and practical takeaways. Namely:

1. Implementation of the WPS and CAAC agendas needs to include a stronger emphasis on practical, on the ground use of intersectional gender analysis that interrogates institutional and personal biases and values, the historical development of systems of oppression such as patriarchy and colonialism, and enable the meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping work.
2. Training and education are vital for shifting cultures within the armed forces and shaping military identities and practices more suited to peacekeeping and child protection, and must provide practitioners with the historical context, knowledge, and skills to understand and apply an intersectional gender analysis in their work.

3. Collaboration between different practitioners, between different organizations, and between the two agendas is vital for improving their implementation, building upon their complementarity, and making better use of limited resources without competition. This must be done with recognition of the tensions within and between the agendas.
4. The relationships between and meanings of protection, participation, and prevention must be better understood, explored, and developed. A return to the feminist antimilitarist roots of the WPS agenda is important for making both agendas more preventative by addressing the gendered, political root causes of conflict and challenging the militarization of both agendas, while acknowledging the role of the military in peacekeeping and that force may be needed. Children's participation needs to be better recognized and enabled, and there is much to learn from the humanitarian sector in this area.

OPENING REMARKS BY CLARE HUTCHINSON

Thank you for the invitation to join you today. I am so happy to be part to this conversation because it is a critical one and to be able to talk about the nexus between the Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) agenda and the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agendas — which are personally important to me — where I have been privileged to work in and around the excellent people on the ground who implement these agendas.



This is a poignant moment for me, because I close my days as the NATO Secretary General Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security at the end of this month. I am reflecting on the evolution of NATO on both of these agendas and, as you all know, the CAAC agenda and WPS agenda fall under the Human Security umbrella. I am pleased to be part of the creation of [the Human Security] Unit in 2019. The unit also includes human trafficking, conflict related sexual violence, protection of civilians, and cultural property protection. For NATO, we thought that this would allow us to have a more holistic and robust approach to protection. Yet while they are all interconnected mandates, each agenda must stand alone and does stand alone. We must take into account the unique and exceptional focus of each agenda. WPS and CAAC have become significant cross-cutting themes, not only for the UN but for NATO. There are important overlaps in the protection agendas, with the goal of highlighting the vulnerabilities of the groups of population who are at risk in armed conflict.

WPS built on the CAAC mandate as well as protection of civilians. Today, CAAC and WPS have equal relevance and importance for all organizations, including NATO. We are looking at the aim to protect women and children but leaving specific principles and procedures to prevent and protect. The agendas share roots in international humanitarian and human rights law, and they have been worked on and implemented in parallel, so they do potentially complement each other. However, there are important differences. The intersection of WPS and CAAC can lead to contradictions and fragmentation and there has been direct tension between the two agendas. I see it — having come from peacekeeping as well as working in NATO — as a friendly sibling rivalry, but there is recognition from the WPS experts that highlight that women are not children. Often, experts in WPS are quick to disregard the inclusion of CAAC in the same conversation because of the danger of essentializing women. Likewise,

CAAC experts are critical of the absolute women approach to issues like sexual violence, which overlooks the men and boys and incidences like the bacha bazi in Afghanistan.

The growth of specialized protection agendas, which has also allowed for the evolution of sexual violence in armed conflict, has also increased compartmentalization or fragmentation of the protection mandate. Instead of holistically addressing protection needs, there has emerged a system of multiple overlapping reporting and structures that have, at times, created further tension. Over the years, the CAAC and WPS agendas have become primary and essential to operations in all organizations that are on the ground, including NATO and the UN. In November 2017, Canada launched the Vancouver principles which are focused on child protection and peacekeeping, but specifically recognize the contribution of women to peacekeeping and the critical roles women can play in the protection of children. We see this also supported by the Elsie Initiative. We do, however, need to be cautious about making assumptions that women are innately suited to the protection of children tasks. These assumptions are inaccurate and also quite dangerous. The intention of gender parity and increasing numbers of women, both uniformed and civilian, is important — it is very important. But, we must be cautious about resting this with the efficacy of the CAAC mandate. WPS is not a women's issue, and the responsibility to guarantee that children are protected is also not a women's issue. The Security Council address both WPS and CAAC as security issues, allowing them to be addressed with prevention tools and also through proactive security measures. This is important, because the mandates are exactly that, they are security issues that belong to all; everyone should be held responsible. The question we have to be asking is to what extent gender perspectives can enhance the framework of CAAC and what we can do more operationally to bring a gender lens and WPS to both prevention and protection.

Over the years we have learned much from the implementation of both of these mandates. We need to use the lessons we have learned to better inform the next steps of the journey. More events like this [Roundtable] are welcome because it is not often that we do bring together the brilliant minds, the thinking and the opinions on both of these agendas. Canada and other nations, of course, have been instrumental in initializing and implementing both of these agendas and have shown great leadership for both WPS and CAAC. Canada, as Chair of the Friends of 1325 and Friends of CAAC in both New York for the UN and in Brussels for NATO, has been especially supportive of me and my team in NATO.

Continued and enhanced support of nations is going to be even more central in the future, especially, to recognize the unique identities of these mandates. Merging all of these mandates, especially WPS and CAAC into what peacekeeping has often called the “Christmas tree mandates” is only going to damage the efficacy of both. However, we must do joint strategic thinking because these can only benefit us. Especially as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic — or learn to live with COVID-19 — and we have to deal with further fiscal challenges, identifying where these agendas meet and where they diverge is going to be essential.

Training and education always remains one of the most successful avenues to inform military and civilians on their roles and responsibilities. The CAAC mandate has done this incredibly well, [meaning] those that have worked on training and the development of training. I think this is because the messaging of CAAC has always been consistent. This is something WPS training needs to do more and could learn from CAAC because sometimes WPS messaging is a little confusing and not always targeted well.

The commonality in addressing sexual violence is part of the middle ground and one that we can offer, collectively, as a holistic approach between the two mandates. In NATO, the establishment of the Human Security Unit has provided a home for the collection of cross-cutting mandates. But this has also become contentious and there is a fear that all the mandates will lose their identity. I do not feel that in NATO this has been so; it was quite useful. In fact, this has elevated the status of CAAC and WPS ensuring a complementarity but keeping their distinct identities.

We have also learned that automatically integrating agendas into mission planning, earmarking funding, and deploying specialist advisors is important. In fact, the role of gender advisors followed from the deployment of the child protection advisors. The first gender advisors in peacekeeping were deployed in 2003. The modeling that was done was shown to be incredibly successful. Then again, later on, the deployment of women protection advisors has been replicated on the child protection advisors. We have a lot of identity that is common, and we have a lot that we can learn from each other.

Finally, I do think that the role of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on CAAC has been indispensable to the success of the mandate. I believe this is something that WPS should also replicate. As opposed to dividing the agendas into protection and participation, bring them together so there can be a robust and holistic response to the work we do on WPS by looking at the good practices that have been taking shape in CAAC.

I just wanted to frame the thinking from both the WPS and CAAC side, having had the experience with both and knowing that while we do have a robust framework there is always so much more to do. Collectively, trying to find ways forward where we can learn from each other is always the best approach and will certainly set us up for the next few years as we will come across many challenges.

Thank you very much for your ears gentlewomen and gentlemen and thank you very much for the invitation. It has truly been a pleasure to be here, and I wish you a very successful conversation.

PANEL SUMMARY

The panel discussion, moderated by Dr. Catherine Baillie Abidi the Director of Research and Learning at the Dallaire Institute, focused on research, policy, and practice developments in the WPS and CAAC agendas. Intersections or critiques about how the agendas approach gender and childhood, and the implication for policy, have been largely missing. Consequently, the discussion focused on the involvement and protection of women and children in armed conflict and the tensions and complementarities between both agendas. To introduce the conversation and present some of the main points of this discussion, the Dallaire Institute invited three speakers with policy and research experience to present their findings and experiences.

Dustin Johnson is a research advisor at the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security, and doctoral student in peace and development research at the University of Gothenburg. His work focuses on gender and child protection in UN peacekeeping missions.



Mr. Johnson presented current research

at the Dallaire Institute about gender and child protection in UN peacekeeping. Previous approaches to women's inclusion in peacekeeping raises the risk of instrumentalizing women's participation when it comes to child protection, based on a gendered assumption that women are more suited to work with children. Such an assumption ignores the diversity of women's lived experiences, the contribution of training and skills development, and that some men might also be suited to child protection. There is also a lack of recognition of children's

“We need to be continually careful to ensure that [choosing the right person for child protection is done] on the basis of who has the right skills, who has the right training, who is in the right position to conduct this work, and not just assuming that someone is the right or wrong person based on their gender.”

agency and participation in protection in the CAAC agenda, which may lead to peacekeepers missing better ways of protecting children from harm. Overall, this research aims to provide a more systematic and empirically grounded approach to inform policies and practice on this issue. The research is based on analysis of UN training materials and manuals, and interviews with military, police, and civilian peacekeepers. The initial findings are: i) Current policies and documents tend to essentialize women, but more recent ones are changing their approach; ii) Gender is important in child protection, but it is not always the most important or the only factor; iii) Interaction with age, culture, and organization is important; iv) trust building

and maintenance of relationships are key; v) skills and personality traits can be developed through training and are important in child protection practice; and vi) Both women and men are needed for this work and the importance of gender diverse teams.

Dr. Vanessa Brown is a gender and intersectional academic and military sociologist and Assistant Professor at the Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security with the Canadian Defence Academy. Dr. Brown facilitates graduate level learning in senior officer education programs offered by the Canada Forces College teaching in the broad areas of military sociology, gender and security, military leadership, operations, and policy. Her graduate research and written work focus on gender, intersectionality, and (in) security through the domain of Professional Military Education and the institutional social dynamics of the Canadian Armed Forces.



Dr. Brown's presentation focused on the enabling conditions that shape military organizations such as the Canadian Armed Forces and how to introduce changes to help shift their culture to prevent harm and improve their contribution to international

peace and security, particularly in relation to work that facilitates the WPS and CAAC agendas. The enabling conditions identified in the presentation include:

- *Organizational purpose and identity* – Every organization has a unique purpose and identity in relation to its work and goals. Organizational purpose and identity are shaped by social, political, economic and historical factors and can shift over time in response to changing contexts. Military identity and purpose are influenced by mutually reinforcing systems of power such as gender constructs, racialization, coloniality, and historical struggles across diverse groups in societies. Identifying the power relationships is essential for changing the conditions.

“Setting enabling conditions that facilitate CAAC and WPS agendas means a necessary turn within organizations. This turn means that steps are taken to look critically at organizational systems, structures, processes and cultures that may pose barriers to peace and security work.”

- *Institutional socialization* – Regarding organizational culture, members of the Canadian Armed Forces in particular go through intense socialization to fit dominant conceptions of military identity and purpose. This socialization has implications for how military members perceive their roles and responsibilities in relation to peace and security. As military identity and purpose can change according to context, perceptions of whether the military is a fighting force or peacekeeping force matters. For

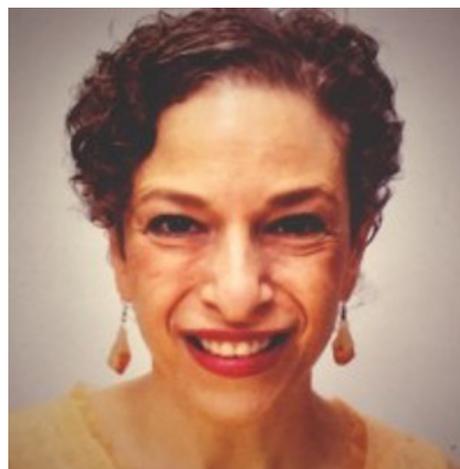
instance, the establishment of a fighting purpose for the military can influence how military members engage with local populations, civil society organizations, and partners. Likewise, the establishment of a warrior identity in the military can influence what is prioritized in Professional Military Education, professional development, and training.

- *Training and Education* – Sensitization to historical struggles within the Canadian (and local) contexts can be helpful to understand how the military and other organizations have been traditionally shaped, what institutional biases there might be regarding gender, women and diversity, and how the purpose and identities of organizations could be shaped differently, specifically around principles within the WPS agenda such as inclusion, meaningful participation, equality, human rights, and fairness. To be effective at contributing to the WPS and CAAC agendas, a good understanding of gender and age constructs in societies is required.

Learning about historical struggles in societies and their relation to gender and age constructs can assist in setting the enabling conditions for organizations to facilitate the achievement of the WPS and CAAC agendas. For the military, this includes a critical look at military culture as made manifest through military socialization and dominant conceptions of military identity and purpose. Essentially, learning to apply feminist and critical race theories as well as analytical tools such as GBA+ (Gender Based Analysis Plus, a critical instrument used in the Canadian government to understand the layered and mutually reinforcing way that experiential and

identity factors influence people's relative positions of power and risk) ensures that contributors to peace and security are not applying universal approaches to problems requiring tailored solutions.

Dr. Jennifer Klot has more than 25 years of UN experience working to advance gender equality, children's rights, and humanitarian action. At the UN, she led Graça Machel's 1996 Independent Expert Report on the Impact of Armed Conflict of Children, and the 2002 UN Expert Assessment on Women, Peace, and Security. These resulted in UN Security Council Resolutions on children and women. Dr. Klot was a Senior Advisor on Gender, Security, and HIV/AIDS at the Social Science Research Council, the VP Health of the Social Impact Exchange, and appointed as Plan International's Representative to the UN. She is the founding partner of Policy & Praxis for Social Change.



Dr. Klot's presentation analyzed international perspectives in the advancement of the protection of civilians produced in the 1990s and some structural characteristics that led to a framework for the WPS and CAAC agendas, identifying general points that impact both. For instance, there are

significant incompatibilities between feminist and decolonial theory and approaches to advancing a peace and security agenda, and the context of the UN, which is organized institutionally and bureaucratically in silos that separate human rights, economic, social, development, humanitarian action, etc. In the UN, programming focused on women and

“Looking at prevention within a Security Council context and children, I think we recognize that actions within a peacekeeping environment are much more protective in a sense. Though they have preventive aspects, fundamentally, peace operations are not addressing the root causes and drivers of conflict or the impact on children.”

girls are trifurcated among the funds and programs, between UN Women, UNFPA, and UNICEF. The UN’s organizations and programs overlap, and they have huge disparities in funding. Additionally, it is important to analyze the underlying political momentum and rationales driving the agendas. The CAAC agenda was driven more from a protection-oriented perspective, and the WPS agenda was more radical, visionary, and aspirational, challenging the basis of the entire peacebuilding project. Within these areas of critique, Dr. Klot identified five tensions between the agendas that require further exploration:

- *Lack of Institutionalization of WPS:* has led to the marginalization of gender mechanisms within the UN, and especially operationally at the country level, and the failure of gender mainstreaming. Without a significant operational entity to support the WPS agenda, it is not possible to fulfil the

agenda’s aspirations.

- *Women’s Agency:* The tension around agency and the portrayal of women primarily as victims ignores women’s power to participate and lead solutions. In some contexts, there is a false dichotomy between agency and victimhood, such as in the context of humanitarian law, where these categories dynamize different actions and resources in combination with the way the UN is organized to only focus on women’s victimhood. Questions of agency look different in the CAAC agenda, and have been largely marginalized, where children are assumed to be agencyless victims and childhood is assumed to be a universal rather than in part contextually dependent. This can create tensions in peacebuilding work where children’s agency is neglected, or local understandings of childhood are not considered.
- *Women’s Bodily Integrity:* sexual violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and any discussion of the impact of conflict on children and women will demand women’s bodily integrity to be included. Women fought for decades to expand the peace and security agenda to include all forms of violence against women and failure to include these forms of violence limits the CAAC agenda to a particular kind of violence, perpetrated by particular actors, in a particular moment.
- *Representation & Participation of Women:* the representation and participation of women in peace and security institutions is not a proxy for

gender equality but in many respects has become one. We are counting the number of women as indicator of impact in gender equality where there is no real evidence that this is a valid measurement. This moves us away from measuring the actually desired impacts and outcomes. In addition, we obscure the role of men both as gatekeepers and as door-openers. Men must be considered in order to engage with the underlying power structures preventing women's meaningful participation.

- *Prevention*: the feminist antimilitarism approach and peace and security are not entirely compatible with the Security Council's role, which is often reduced to authorizing military action. And yet, feminist antimilitarism perspectives have helped to inform the broadness of the peace and security agenda to look at peacebuilding and other preventative measures. One of the primary agenda items for feminists in terms of disarmament has been eclipsed, even though access to weaponry continues to be the single most important factor that shapes women's and children's lives in conflict. And, looking at prevention from the Security Council context, peace operations are often not addressing the root causes of conflicts that impact children.

As a conclusion, Dr. Klot identified lessons learned from the implementations of CAAC and WPS that show their weaknesses and strengths. The CAAC side has a stronger, tighter knit epistemic community and better shared understanding. Shared language and knowledge bring together the political, technical, and practical aspects of children,

peace and security. Conversely, there is a strong division between academic work and policy and practical aspects in the WPS agenda. The CAAC agenda has demonstrated more operational and tactical understanding in child protection compared to the WPS, especially in areas of early warning, data collection, and training. From the WPS perspective, it is not possible to underestimate the role of women's movements and organizations and their importance to advancing the agenda at the country level. Better international cooperation between these movements can help to advance the agenda internationally. Furthermore, we need to bring feminism into the international organizations and bureaucracies that are at the centre of these agendas, rather than having it remain on the outside with advocates and activists.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

Over sixty (60) professionals from academia, government, and civil society organizations attended to share their expertise and to engage in dialogue about the tensions and opportunities between the WPS and CAAC agendas. Following the panel, the participants were divided into four groups and each group explored one of the following questions:

Prevention

- What are the main areas of tension, and of complementarity, between the WPS agenda, and improving protection of children in peacekeeping and preventing violations of their rights?

Participation

- How can increasing the meaningful participation of women in peacekeeping improve child protection, and how can this be done without instrumentalizing gender or neglecting men's contributions to child protection?

Protection

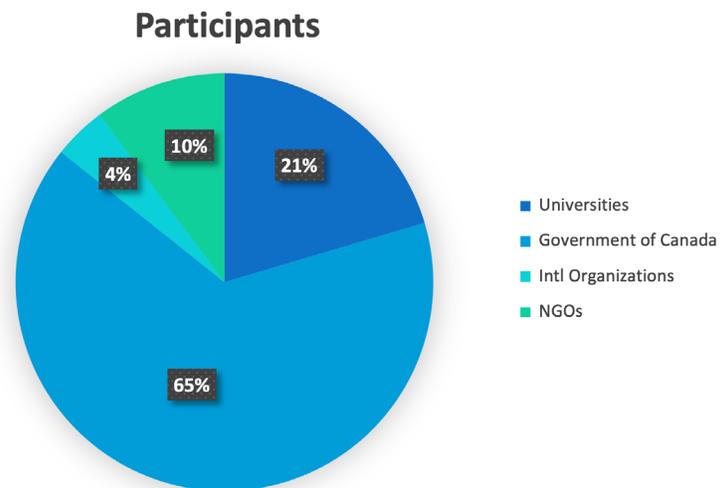
- What lessons should be learned from the first 20 years of WPS for a more transformational and gender-responsive approach to child protection?

Two groups examined the questions relating to Protection.

AUDIENCE COMPOSITION

The attendees were composed of representatives from universities, the government of Canada, NGOs and international organizations to create a conversation between researchers,

practitioners, and policy makers. This was an opportunity to analyze the application of WPS and CAAC agendas from an informed opinion and from different levels of implementation. The following table represents the breakdown of the participants:



RECOMMENDATIONS & DISCUSSION SUMMARIES

The Roundtable discussions highlighted multiple tensions and opportunities within and between the WPS and CAAC agendas. Four key points stemmed from the discussions:

Improving intersectional gender analysis

Building on the discussions of the panellists, the attendees emphasized the need for practitioners to have the knowledge and skills to implement a more historically and contextually rooted intersectional gender analysis in their work. Those doing the everyday work of child protection, peacekeeping, and gender mainstreaming, with “boots on the ground”, need to understand the relevance to their specific

work, and how to apply an intersectional gender analysis in their everyday practice. Current approaches tend to be too top-down and do not listen to people on the ground or feed their experiences back into policy development.

Several factors are important for improving how gender analysis and mainstreaming is carried out. While it is important to understand macro-level, structural factors that affect constructions of gender and power structures, practitioners need to understand their local, context-specific manifestations, and local dynamics that affect gender relations. Otherwise, practitioners risk applying more general, universalized understandings that may not reflect local realities and can obscure important dynamics. An historical understanding of the construction of gender and other power structures is also required. Social inequalities are not naturally existing, but created through historic, social processes. Such an understanding improves gender analysis by showing how such power structures come into being, shift over time, and work. This can improve understanding of how women and men contribute to child protection or safeguarding, without relying on essentializing or instrumentalizing gender, or placing practitioners in roles they are not suited for. This also helps practitioners to understand that constructions of gender may make women better suited for certain tasks in child protection than men in a certain context, but this will be influenced by other aspects of identity, personality, and skills and training.

Improving the use of intersectionality in gender analysis requires moving beyond approaches such as GBA+ that treat identity as additive and something that can be

disaggregated. While this is a start, it fails to provide an understanding of how other identity constructions are gendered (and vice versa, e.g. how construction of gender is raced) and how this intersection cannot be disentangled. This goes back to one of the original formulations of intersectionality by Kimberlé Crenshaw, who demonstrated how black women's experiences of discrimination in the US could not be addressed adequately by either the women's rights or civil rights movements, as the discrimination faced is because black women are black women, not black and women.³³ Particularly in the international setting of WPS and CAAC implementation, it is also important to consider the colonial legacies of power, knowledge, and discrimination that still pervade much work in peacekeeping, peacebuilding, humanitarian aid, and development. An intersectional approach helps to challenge the ways in which colonialism has shaped the modern international system, and especially for settler colonial states such as Canada, is needed to interrogate and address ongoing colonization and the relationship between domestic and foreign policy.

While it is important to maintain a specific focus on women and the ways in which they are affected by patriarchal power structures,³⁴ the WPS and CAAC agendas, and broader efforts considering gender in peace and security,

33 Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989), <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>.

34 Hannah Wright, "'Masculinities Perspectives': Advancing a Radical Women, Peace and Security Agenda?," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 22, no. 5 (2020): 652–74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2019.1667849>.

must address men and masculinities as well. The masculine warrior identities promoted in many militaries are a primary impediment to women's meaningful participation in peacekeeping and contribute to sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers. It is also important to better consider the positive roles that men can play in the CAAC agenda. For instance, some children might be more comfortable approaching a male peacekeeper, and positive male role models can influence children's decisions regarding joining or leaving an armed group. Involving both women and men meaningfully improves the diversity of perspectives and experiences that peacekeepers draw on and helps to challenge the assumption that women are naturally more suited to child protection.

Such approaches are relevant for CAAC and WPS agenda implementation, and age needs to be considered as a power structure in intersectional analysis. Linking together the need to understand local context, power structures, and social construction of identity, we need to acknowledge that childhood is not just a psychological and physiological reality, but a form of identity. Childhood is understood in different ways in different locations, and the way our international system approaches childhood as everyone under 18 is derived from a Western construction of childhood. To better address the protection and participation needs of children in different locations, we need to understand how children and the communities in which they live consider childhood. At the same time, CAAC implementation has often insufficiently considered gender, and as a starting point the differing (and similar) experiences and needs of girls, boys, and gender diverse children need to be considered.

Training and education key for transformation

Training and education, especially for military personnel serving in peacekeeping, was discussed as key for enabling transformation in women's meaningful participation in peacekeeping and improving approaches to gender in CAAC and WPS implementation. As mentioned by Dr. Brown, training and education is a key site of institutional socialization into the identity and purpose of the armed forces, contributing to the formation of different expressions of military identity. As well, related to the point above, better training and education are essential for providing practitioners, whether military or civilian, with the understanding and tools they need to provide more contextual, intersectional gender analysis.

Effective pedagogy that addresses historic context, power structures in society, biases and identities, and how they are relevant on the ground for practice, are required. This is a long-term, ongoing effort, as the identities and attitudes of strongly cultural organizations, such as the armed forces, are slow to change, and these efforts will face pushback as it is often directly counter to what many soldiers have been taught throughout their careers. While training and education are essential for transforming the gendered culture of the military and other institutions, they are insufficient by themselves. Other measures are also needed, such as improving retention of female soldiers, and ensuring women are well represented throughout the chain of command and in non-traditional roles.

Collaboration

Collaboration between individuals from

different organizations and between the CAAC and WPS agendas were highlighted as key approaches in improving both agendas' implementation and complementarity. At the individual level, collaboration and connection between different practitioners is important for complementary implementation and information sharing. Practitioners need to have the right personality and skills, while communication, clear mandates, and rules of engagement need to be improved. Different cultures and viewpoints between organizations can be an impediment to collaboration, such as differing understandings of what WPS entails, or different cultural understandings of gender and childhood. Training and education as highlighted above is important for addressing this to equip practitioners with the capacities and skills for navigating different institutional cultures.

Constrained funding for implementing both agendas is also a major concern, and one that collaboration can help to address. Particularly in peacekeeping contexts, there is poor and shrinking funding for both CAAC and WPS. Despite their complementary mandates, the agendas and organizations working as part of them are frequently in competition for the same small amounts of funding. While higher-level political pressure is needed to increase the funding available, and operational commanders in peacekeeping need to understand the need for specialist gender and child protection officers and focal points, improved collaboration between the agendas and implementing organizations can help to maximize the impact of the available funding.

Collaboration needs to be informed by understanding the tensions within and between the mandates, including the

importance of women's agency and participation in the WPS agenda that challenges their conflation with children as victims; how to address gender, women, men, and diverse gender identities in each agenda; how to continue and improve the complementarities between the agendas when it comes to sexual and gender-based violence, without reducing the WPS agenda to a focus just on this; ensuring that better linking of the agendas does not push women back into traditional roles such as caring for children; and tensions especially in the WPS agenda but also in CAAC about the militarization of participation and protection.

Relationship between Protection – Participation – Prevention

Improving the future complementarity between, and implementation of both the WPS and CAAC agendas, requires addressing questions about what forms of protection we prioritize and how they are implemented; how to bring meaningful participation of children more into the CAAC agenda; and what we mean by prevention in both agendas. Participants discussed a diverse range of issues under this common theme.

The implementation of the CAAC and WPS agendas has often been militarized, with a focus on the physical protection of children by military peacekeepers, for instance, or increasing the proportion of women in the armed forces. Such an emphasis neglects the radical roots of the WPS agenda, which was driven by feminist antimilitarist organizations. In the future of the WPS and CAAC agendas, revisiting calls for disarmament and demilitarization are necessary. This calls attention to the idea that we should aim to

prevent war from breaking out in the first place, rather than just seeking to ameliorate its impacts on women and children, and question if security-focused responses to child protection or preventing human rights abuses during armed conflict are the best responses. As discussed above, the masculine warrior identities promoted in many militaries are ill-suited for peacekeeping work, but practically the use of force is still sometimes required in peacekeeping contexts to protect children or protect civilians more broadly. This raises the question if we can have peacekeepers with the skills, training, and mandate to use force, while still demilitarizing the WPS and CAAC agendas and working to address root causes of conflict.

The concept and language of protection was also raised. Protection tends to set up problematic power structures and a binary relationship between protector and protectee. As discussed further below, there is also a tension between protection and participation and an emphasis on protection (as is particularly evident in the CAAC agenda) can constrain the space for participation. Humanitarian organizations are increasingly using the language of safeguarding instead of protection, and this may be one avenue to better conceptualize protection as mainstreamed across an organization, being the responsibility of all staff rather than just a specialized function, and emphasize that protection efforts need to be holistic, layered, and context specific. Knowledge of the culture, social structure, and history of the location is vital to ensure that safeguarding or protection is implemented in a sensitive way, as failure to do so may make it less effective or even unintentionally harmful.

While participation is a key part of the WPS agenda, the CAAC agenda is based solely on protection. This is founded on an assumption of children's lack of agency, which has been widely challenged in academic research from childhood studies and other fields. There is increasing recognition, particularly in the humanitarian sector, that children both have a right to participation (as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child), and that their meaningful participation is important for improving child protection or safeguarding. Participation is primarily framed in terms of consulting children, in non-adult-centric ways, about their needs and desires, and ensuring programming adapts to this. Such participation needs to be carried out with care so as not to cause harm or expose children to great risks from their participation. However, failure to enable children's participation is a harm, as it violates their rights. This also raises the question of how to address children's participation outside of the framework of safeguarding, particularly due to differing cultural understandings of when childhood ends and what is appropriate for children to do, or when children exercise their agency in negative ways such as joining an armed group.

Participation is also vital for addressing WPS and CAAC agenda implementation intersectionally. Women and children are not homogeneous groups and have differing needs, desires, and experiences in part due to divisions based on gender, race, class, ethnicity, ability, and other aspects. Recognizing the importance of and creating space for participation – with women and children - is required work to be effective and smart in preventing conflict, and in creating

a culture of protection while acknowledging agency that empowers women and children to build sustainable peace.

“NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US”

“Nihil de nobis, sine nobis” is a slogan used to communicate the idea that no policy should be decided by any representative without the full and direct participation of members the group(s) affected by that policy.

CONCLUSION

The Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security is committed to building bridges between researchers, practitioners, governments and communities in order to strengthen protection mechanisms for children affected by armed conflict. The WPS & CAAC Roundtable created an opportunity for participants representing diverse sectors to come together to explore the challenges and opportunities within and between the WPS and CAAC agendas. Key tensions and lessons learned were shared across the sectors.

The recommendations stemming from the Roundtable discussions focus on the importance of enhanced intersectional analyses of the inequities that manifest in conflict contexts; the need to identify and develop practical strategies to advance the implementation of the WPS and CAAC agendas; the opportunities to strengthen how we measure success in relation to prevention and protection work; and the need to further understand the complexities of agency and protection, gender and childhood. Embedded in all discussions was a recognition of the

need to decolonize approaches to WPS and CAAC implementation.

It has been twenty years since the introduction of Resolution 1325 and twenty-five years since the seminal work of Graça Michel who set the early foundations of the CAAC agenda. While important work has advanced our understanding of gender, childhood and peacebuilding, much work needs to be done. The intersections of the WPS and CAAC agendas offer space to accelerate our collective understanding of protection, participation and prevention and creates important opportunities to build better communication and strategic complementarity between actors. As Graça Michel so passionately stated:

“The impact of armed conflict on children is everyone’s responsibility. And it must be everyone’s concern.”

August 18, 2021

A Conversation Started – Not Finished

**“The impact of armed
conflict on children is
everyone’s responsibility.
And it must be
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