



## **How Canada can enable women to be decision-makers in matters of peace and security**

Briefing Note presented to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development for their study on Women, Peace and Security

Prepared by Oxfam on May 6, 2016

This note has been drafted in response to a specific query by the Chair of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. It intends to provide starting points for consideration and outlines the range of areas where Canada could play a leadership role in supporting women's increased participation in peace talks and negotiations. It is not a complete list. Oxfam consulted with the Women, Peace and Security Network-Canada and have included their comments and suggestions in the development of this brief.

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**Women's meaningful participation and leadership rests on the recognition of the essential connection between democracy, justice and gender equality.**

***"The involvement of women should begin at the earliest stages of engagement and continue in a meaningful manner through all phases of dialogue, mediation and negotiation, and subsequent implementation and evaluation of policy measures, legislation and programs."*<sup>1</sup>**

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### **1. Canada can mobilize political support to ensure increased women's participation, by committing to:**

- Speak out **consistently** on the importance of women's participation in peace negotiations—as a matter of rights and in recognition of women's key role in sustainable peacebuilding;
- Support the explicit inclusion of relevant references to women's participation (such as SC resolution 1325) in the formal mandates of mediators and negotiators by:
  - Encouraging special envoys, mediators, envoys, negotiating parties and all other relevant entities to involve women in their teams and to consult with women peacebuilders;
  - Advocating for and providing training to increase the number and capacity of female negotiators and mediators;

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<sup>1</sup> Initiative on Quiet Diplomacy (2010). *SCR 1325 and Women's Participation: Operational Guidelines for Conflict Resolution and Peace Processes*. p.12

- Providing training and skills-building to all mediators and negotiators on the importance of women's meaningful inclusion and how this can be achieved;
- Providing logistical support to women's organizations so they can participate in talks and negotiations;
- Support the inclusion of non-state actors, such as women's rights organizations, who seek change without the use of arms in peace talks and negotiations;
- Ensure the physical security of women peacebuilders in official and non-official processes;
- Set up or host regular meetings for women peacebuilders with international missions, diplomatic teams and envoys, including during pre-talks and implementation phases;
- Support the creation of a gender equality working group (or equivalent) to monitor the inclusion of gender equality dimensions of the agreement;
- Increase the number of women put forward by Canada as nominees for senior UN positions;
- Increase financing for these initiatives (see point 4 below).

**2. Canada can provide technical assistance to women and women's organizations to build capacity and increase their effectiveness and meaningful participation:**

- Engage and sponsor individual women and women's groups from conflict-affected countries so they can participate in training workshops and symposiums offered by non-governmental and research organizations;
- Support women's participation and mobilization of women's movements at different levels (local, regional, national) to come together;
- Support south-south exchange and learning opportunities for women's organizations involved in peacebuilding;
- Support mechanisms for folding-in informal processes and actors into formal peace processes and conversations (women are more likely to participate in informal processes);
- Develop a call for proposals for Canadian NGOs to partner with and strengthen the capacity of women peacebuilders.

**3. Canada can support initiatives that create an enabling environment for women's increased participation in fragile states and post-conflict situations:**

- Increase overall support for women and girls' education programming as a means of empowerment in situations of state fragility and conflict;

- Target post-conflict electoral support on the participation of women as candidates, voters and in election processes. Support initiatives that address violence against women political candidates;
- Support initiatives that address impunity for sexual and gender-based violence crimes;
- Support the participation of women peacebuilders at donor conferences;
- Provide comprehensive, rights-based support to women in post-conflict situations (economic, psycho-social, legal, political participation, etc.);
- Consult with women peacebuilders on their needs;
- Support research and evaluation with a focus on documenting ‘what works’.

#### **4. Canada can increase financing for the implementing the women, peace and security agenda:**

- Provide support (financial and diplomatic) for gender equality-relevant provisions in peace agreements;
- Increase the percentage of our development assistance in crisis contexts and our humanitarian spending that addresses women’s needs and targets gender equality as a principal objective. The United Nations has adopted a specific target for this type of spending: their goal is to have 15% of peacebuilding initiatives with women’s rights/gender equality as their principal objective;
- Increase peace and security spending that principally targets gender equality;
- Ensure that the revised/new National Action Plan reports on Canada’s investment on WPS;
- Provide multi-year, core funding and sizeable grants for women’s organizations;
- Ensure that the next iteration of National Action Plan is fully resourced with a clear budget and human resources allocation. Our current Plan has **no** dedicated budget;
- Fund research and advocacy on women’s experiences in conflict and its aftermath;
- Dedicate funding for women’s participation in peace processes, including support for women delegates, women negotiators, women mediators, and for UN and regional negotiating teams to build gender expertise;<sup>2</sup>
- Initiate projects specifically targeted at training, education and capacity-building for women and women’s civil society organizations in situations of armed conflict.

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<sup>2</sup> Other types of financial support include stipends for women peacebuilders at the peace process and to take care of families at home and ensure transportation costs are covered.

## 5. Canada can influence global policy and debates on women's leadership and participation in peace and security:

- Continue to chair the Friends of 1325 Group and ensure that it is an effective working group;
- Support the work of the Informal Group of Experts from UNSC about WPS;
- Lobby for the creation of a specific gender advisory capacity within all UN mediation support units and standby teams;
- Advocate that the mandate of the new UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict be expanded to include explicit reference to broader issues of women, peace and security.

### Additional resources

Initiative on Quiet Diplomacy (2010). *SCR 1325 and Women's Participation: Operational Guidelines for Conflict Resolution and Peace Processes*.

O'Reilly, Mare, Andrea Ó Súilleabhain, and Thania Paffenholz (2015). *Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes*. International Peace Institute.

Oxfam (2016). *Commitment to Change – What world leaders must promise at the World Humanitarian Summit*, <http://www.oxfam.ca/our-work/publications/commitment-to-change>.

Oxfam (2015). *Women, Peace and Security: Keeping the Promise - How to revitalize the agenda 15 years after UNSCR 1325*, <http://www.oxfam.ca/our-work/publications/women-peace-and-security-keeping-the-promise-of-how-to-revitalize-the-agenda>

UN Women (2015). *Preventing Conflict Transforming Justice Securing the Peace - A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*.

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**Oxfam** is an international confederation working in 90 countries to support long-term development; humanitarian assistance and advocacy campaigns to address the root causes of poverty and vulnerability—with gender justice and women's rights at the heart of it all. Oxfam's years of work to advance women, peace and security objectives include our support for the Women's Initiative Network for Peace in Myanmar, our Young Women Peacebuilders program in Colombia, and our Afghanistan program training men and women on the importance of women's participation in society and access to justice issues.