Welcome to WPSN-C's special online series for #16Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence!

In Canada and around the world organizations, activists and institutions will use these 16 days to raise awareness, build political support for change, and identify concrete ways to go forward. This year’s official theme is “Together We Can End GBV in Education!” but the discussions are much broader.

2017 appears to a watershed year. Still stunned by the Trump election and the Ghomeshi verdict, activists were both reeling and then revitalized at the start of year. The women’s march in January generated energy. Discussions on sexual harassment, revelations from Hollywood and the #metoo campaign broke into the headlines and daily discussions. Stories from the Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls saddened and angered. The federal government announced a new Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence.

Over the next two weeks, members of our Network are holding multiple events.

KAIROS is organizing a tour of 2 women activists from the South Sudan Council of Churches.
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The GRAN advocacy network and the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) are combining to ‘orange' buildings and organize a panel in Toronto on November 25th.

Nobel Women's Initiative, Peace Brigades International, InterPares, and The Match Fund have an event on November 29, Nevertheless She Persisted: An evening of powerful stories from Women Human Rights Defenders in Colombia and Honduras.

As well, Nobel Women's Initiative will have an online campaign profiling women activists from all over the world to learn more about the vital work they are doing for social justice. Follow the campaign on their 16 Days blog or subscribe to have profiles delivered daily to your inbox.

Women in International Security Canada has taken on a coordinating role. Check out their site for more resources and events.

In order to highlight issues of concern to Network members, we're launching a special online series of blogs and contributions. Watch this space for news and commentary over the next ten days. We'll be featuring the following topics.

Nov 29th Day of Women's Human Rights Defenders: One Way to Build Your Resilience

Dec 1st World AIDS Day: Addressing Stigma and Discrimination in Combating HIV/AIDS

Dec 3rd Persons with Disabilities Day: Inclusive Feminist Lens

Dec 6th Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre: From Graves to Great; collective action builds feminist resistance in DRC

Dec 9th Day of Dignity for Victims of Genocide: Post-genocide Rwanda poses obstacles to women’s psychological health and well-being

Dec 10th International Human Rights Day: Video Interview with the founders of the South Sudan Women’s Foundation
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Feel free to enter into the discussions. Tweet at/with us, follow along on Facebook and engage. Many thanks to the authors of each input, to Rebecca Boyce (Cuso International and WPSN-C Steering Committee member) and Christine Izere (WPSN-C intern) for coordinating the series and to our dedicated webmistress Monique Cuillerier (World Federalist Movement - Canada).
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#16Days: One Way to Build Your Resilience
November 29 2017

By JO Rodrigues

This year the UNiTE campaign’s theme for the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is “Leave No One Behind: End Violence against Women and Girls.”

Today is Women’s Human Rights Defenders Day.

Bearing this in mind have you noticed how many women defending human rights and working to end violence against women and girls end up leaving themselves behind? There is a tendency for us to put many others’ needs before our own.

I wrote this post a year ago to help women build resilience so that we may continue to do the important work we are doing.

Experiencing something upsetting or traumatic, whether in our work or personal life, immediately makes many people recoil and isolate themselves. We suck it up. We decide it’s better to be on our own. No connection means not getting hurt. We’re protecting ourselves.

The more I learn about emotion, memory and suffering, the more I realize that the idea of isolating yourself to protect yourself just makes you more miserable, angry & frustrated. It’s a cycle that perpetuates itself.

But the alternative can be overwhelming. To connect requires you to be vulnerable – vulnerable to the exact hurt that has caused you to isolate yourself.

Here’s the catch: if you close yourself off to pain, you also close yourself off to love and connection. A wise, dear friend once told me this when I was experiencing overwhelming emotional and physical pain (Thanks Brig!).
Here’s the other catch: If you don’t have the tools to keep yourself grounded and safe as you reach out for love (acceptance, support etc.), you will get hurt again and it will be painful.

Acknowledge you don’t have the skills – at least to yourself. To do otherwise won’t help.

Realize, as well, that many of us don’t have the skills to keep us grounded and safe.

We’re taught to read, write and count but not how to accept feelings and emotions, listen to each other’s pain without casting judgment, communicate empathetically or communicate clearly what our expectations and boundaries are.

If you want to protect yourself from hurt, you need to connect and not isolate. **You need a support system.** It’s one of the ways to be resilient in the face of work and personal challenges.

At the core of this support system is you. If you are not there for you no one else can be there for you. The buy-in to take care and support yourself needs to come from within. **You need to be your best friend.** Around this core is your community. The one that supports you in all the imaginable and unimaginable ways you will need.

How do you get this support system?

There are 3 steps:

1. Self-awareness. It starts with cultivating self-awareness. This requires curiosity, acknowledgment and acceptance of yourself.
2. Clarity. A by-product of this process is developing clarity on what your wants and needs are as well as your boundaries.
3. Communication. In order to have a support system you need to communicate what you want and what you don’t want.
You also need to learn how to communicate with others. Again, you will have to exercise curiosity, actively listen, acknowledge what is being said and be clear of your intentions, expectations and boundaries.

Feeling overwhelmed at the task? Yeah, I felt the same way. I still do from time to time. The difference is now I know. I know that using these tools keep me from feeling miserable and powerless. As scary and as difficult as it is to practice these skills I do so anyway because I reap the rewards.

I still have challenges in my personal and professional life but how I react to them has changed.

I am more compassionate with myself and others. The result is trust and relationships that support me and take my work to another level of making a positive impact.

I am also incredibly clear on what my expectations and boundaries are. Instead of feeling under-valued and dismissed, I have a voice and I use it. I will not be shut down or told my perspective doesn’t matter. I use my energy more wisely. Trying to be heard by people who don’t want to listen is pointless. Flowing around them like a river moving around obstructions is how I choose to work now. I feel empowered instead of defeated!

Before you meet your next life or work challenge, take the time to build your support system.

How?

Reading this post is a first step. The next step is to take action.

Be gentle with yourself. You’re doing the best you can to be empowered to make a difference.

To help build your support system sign-up for my free toolkit on Clarity, Empowerment and Resilience here.

JO Rodrigues is a member of the Steering Committee for the WPSN-C, a consultant for WPS as well as trainer and coach for humanitarian aid and
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international development workers. More info on her work can be found here http://jorodriques.net/
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#16Days: Addressing Stigma and Discrimination in Combating HIV/AIDS
December 1 2017

By Christine Izere, student at the university of Ottawa, currently interning with the Women, Peace and Security Network - Canada.

World Aids day will be a day to increase the impact of awareness through Transparency, Accountability, and Partnerships with the government. We hope this day will emphasize the need to bring forth the issue of Aboriginal women and HIV in Canada. Hence, help in reducing the number of HIV infections in the coming years.

HIV / AIDS continues to be a significant global public health issue worldwide due to the lack of a definite cure to the epidemic. Since the time it was discovered science success in countering HIV have been limited to treatment rather than cure.¹ In most parts of the world the presence of treatment drugs, like the ARV's did not have a huge impact. Most of the people lack access to ARVs, due to the inflation of cost and in most cases the nutrition that enhances the effectiveness of the drug is inaccessible. Therefore, it is not just a problem of providing treatment but also a problem of providing nutrition that facilitates treatment.

Moreover, beyond finding the cure the discrimination and stigma of the ones infected with HIV is another issue that should be focused on. Hence, human rights based approach in combating HIV/ AIDS is necessary due to the cyclical relationship between stigma and HIV.² People who experience stigma and discrimination are marginalized and made more vulnerable to HIV. To compound the issue, it is important to note that those living with HIV are more vulnerable to experiencing stigma and discrimination.
Aboriginal women were three times more likely to be HIV positive than men to due to gendered experiences of trauma and sexual abuse. This has led to the disproportionate spread of HIV among women. The ongoing and collective experiences of colonization, historical trauma and intergenerational trauma have left aboriginal women particularly vulnerable to HIV infection. To take seriously the notion that stigmatization and discrimination must be understood as social processes linked to the reproduction of inequality and exclusion pushes us to move well beyond the kind of behavioral and psychological models that have tended to dominate work thus far.

Hence, putting more focus on issues that involves intergenerational trauma and sexual abuse might reduce the disproportionate spread of HIV among women and decrease it’s spread overall.

World Aids Day should be a day that speaks to the problem of HIV across all gender, however, emphasis should be put on issues of aboriginal women by addressing both reproduction of inequality and the stigmatization associated with HIV/AIDS. As we reflect on the different milestones achieved over the years in combating the epidemic, it is equally important to challenge the notions that we subconsciously associate with HIV/ AIDS patients. To recognize that at the root of stigma and discrimination are historical structural inequalities that still persist today.

Christine Izere, is a student at the University of Ottawa, currently in her final year of International development and Globalization. She has an interest in Women Peace and Security issues around the world.


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In April 2017, the department of Global Affairs Canada and the Women, Peace and Security Network-Canada (WPS-C) invited me to provide input in the renewal of Canada’s National Action Plan (CNAP). Recently, on November 1, 2017 the CNAP 2.0 was released. Being part of a 150 person strong, vocal, and passionate feminist group focusing on representing civil society and the government was an exhilarating and enlightening experience. However, on my first day, walking into the room, lack of representation from women with disabilities (WWD) was noticeable. During the consultations, there were intense debates to ensure a “feminist approach” is infused across all international assistance programs delivered by Canadian departments, such as Peace and Security programming, Disaster Management, Defence programs etc. With a steep learning curve to understand the CNAP framework and its implications, it became clear to me that in the absence of an “inclusive feminist approach”, the systemic exclusion of vulnerable groups will have grave consequences.

During a natural disaster such as an earthquake, tsunami, floods and hurricanes or atrocities such as war and physical conflicts, temporary or permeant disability can be caused in the case of civilians being injured; this, in addition to the pre-existing persons with disabilities facing these disasters will all require adapted assistance.

Without aligning Canada’s obligations under the CRPD, CNAP 2.0 is at risk of excluding persons with disabilities in its humanitarian and peace missions and during their disaster management programing. In Article 11, the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) states that there is
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an obligation for governments to undertake “all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.” Additionally, Article 4.1, states that “State Parties undertake to ensure and promote the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability” and also Article 32, which recognizes the importance of international cooperation to address the limited capacity of some states to respond to situations that involve risk and humanitarian crisis. War, conflicts, environmental dangers and natural disasters can lead to the onset of multiple types of disabilities, and inaccessible environments. Relief and evacuation efforts that do not consider the needs of persons with disabilities prevent them from benefitting from these limited relief efforts offered by the local and international communities. All groups of women experience multiple disadvantages due to their gender and physical abilities. Gender biases compounded by attitudes towards disabilities makes women with disabilities particularly vulnerable especially when resources are limited. Without the application of an accessibility lens at different stages of the disaster management process and peace efforts, WWD does not benefit from government and civil society’s relief, evacuation, recovery and rehabilitation efforts. It leads to severe inequities in access to immediate response, as well as long-term recovery resources for women who have disabilities prior to a disaster, along with those who acquire a disability as a result of the disaster. When a devastating earthquake hit Nepal in April 2015, the organization Accessibility for All (AforA) received desperate requests for help from the Nepal Independent Living Center, as they were trying to find accessible shelter and portable toilets especially for WWD. We approached the government and non-profit agencies collecting and donating funds and providing relief in Nepal with no success for six long days
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while men and women stayed in makeshift tent without access to a functional toilet. The international community failed to meet its obligations under the CRPD, and same situation was experienced when an earthquake hit Pakistan in October of 2015 with limited relief resources at their disposal, where relief workers extended help first to men, leaving injured women and children behind to die.

Today we observe, December 3rd, as United Nation’s International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) where theme for 2017 is “transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all”. Let us remember the overarching principle of this theme is to ‘leave no one behind’ and to 'empower and enable people with disability to be active contributors of society.' On this day, I encourage all of you to take a pledge for Canada’s recently released action plan which provides a framework for a cohesive whole-of-government approach to ensure that our efforts within fragile and conflict driven states align with Canada’s broader commitments such as: gender equality, empowerment of women and girls, respect for women’s and girls’ human rights, inclusion and respect for diversity include women with disabilities. During implementation of this plan, we must ensure adequate resources, mobility devices and equipment, technical aids to create accessible shelters providing disability accommodations at all stages are all equally included. Rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts must not only be inclusive and responsive to the needs of all people, including persons with disabilities, but should include the participation of persons with disabilities, to ensure that their needs and rights are respected. Women with disabilities are a particularly vulnerable group whose needs should be voiced at all stages of recovery and reconstruction efforts. After the Rana Plaza tragedy in Bangladesh, I had the privilege to work with the Queen’s University ICACBR and visit the Center for the Paralysed in Savar to deliver Peer Support, Girl Leadership and Accessibility Planning trainings to workers who acquired disabilities through this tragic incident, as part of the AHEAD project team funded by the Canadian CIDA. The project was designed and delivered using an “inclusivity lens”.

Fortunately, during discussions in April, I continued to raise awareness regarding the vulnerability experienced by various disabled groups in the
absence of “inclusive feminist lens”. Since then, I have found many allies who now have joined hands with me to highlight the exclusion of women with disabilities in the United Nations Security Council women, peace and security agenda and work in solidarity.

To continue to advocate for the needs of persons with disabilities, I take great pride in officially launching the AccessibilityforAll on December 3rd to ensure our government and civil society organizations strive for inclusivity by identifying, removing and preventing physical, attitudinal, employment, technological, financial and policy barriers experienced by persons with disabilities. AforA aims to break silos and create partnerships to strengthen the resilience of people with disability by creating meaningful opportunities to employment, social integration, peer support, rehabilitation, infrastructure and accessible communities.

To learn more about AforA please visit our Facebook page

Meenu Sikand the CEO & founder of the AforA (Accessibility for All), is a Canadian immigrant of South-Asian origin. She brings 30 years of personal and professional experience advancing the disability agenda nationally and globally with a passion to improve employment situation of WWD (Women with Disabilities), as she knows firsthand what it’s like to have a disability and accessibility barriers that exist. Under her leadership, AforA focuses on public education campaigns to raise disability and diversity awareness, human rights and the AODA, training and development of multi-year Accessibility Plans and accessibility policies for government, NGOs and the private sector to remove accessibility barriers strategically.
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#16Days: From Graves to Great; collective action builds feminist resistance in DRC
December 6 2017

By Rebecca Boyce, Global Lead for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion for Cuso International and Steering Committee member of the WPSN-C

December 6th marks the fatal tragedy of the 1989 Montreal Massacre, a horrendous crime that left 14 Polytechnique students murdered and 9 injured because they were women. Shooter Marc Lépine, explicitly targeted women to express his hate for feminists and to make a point that women have no place in STEM.

This tragedy is included in the 16 days¹ of activism as it allows us to remember and pay respect to those women who lost their lives. It also allows us to consider similar tragedies that have occurred since or are currently happening.

For four years I was a gender equality advisor working in a humanitarian capacity in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), during that time it became clear to me that investing in women's participation and rights is both important in preventing violence and conflict; and critical in promoting non-militarised solutions for sustainable peace.

When the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) was adopted women in DRC had already suffered 6 years of active conflict and some of the worst sexual and gender based violence in the world. Since the subsequent seven Security Council resolutions have been adopted women have still been exposed to all kinds of threats to peace and security. State violence linked to elections, and armed group attacks are the norm in some
parts of the country at most times; violence has infiltrated the intimate sides of people’s lives in such a way that there are countless daily examples of injustice towards women. For my work I collaborated with and interviewed numerous women victims/survivors of terrible acts of violence. Listening to first hand accounts of sexual violence I sometimes wondered if death might be more welcome than living with the physical and psychological trauma, isolation, and unwanted children that follow.

While driving to Uvira, in South Kivu province in June 2014, I will always remember how the driver slowed down so we could take a close look at the freshly dug graves of some 30 women and children outside of a church. The graves were mounds of dirt really, as if those who buried them were too tired to dig deeper. Mutarule, a small town had known numerous ethnic and political clashes resulting in massacres. This one targeting women and their children at their place of worship was one of many but it was deeply disturbing to me and the women's rights groups from South Kivu. Many women took to the streets in the months that followed.

On December 6th, along with some very dynamic women’s rights groups and several international organisations we staged a public memorial to honor the women massacred (and in one case buried alive) in the towns of Kasika, Makobola, Mutarule, Shabunda, Kalehe, and Béni that year. Since the marches mentioned above, we were no longer allowed to march, nor was it safe to host an event after dark so we held a kind of funeral on a Saturday to pay our respect but also to advocate to the provincial governor and the minister for women, family and children to use all the resources available from the state, from UN agencies and international organisations to ensure women’s right to peace and security.

I wish I could say this resulted in some major change but the fact is that massacres in DRC are still happening today. Just last month in Béni the level of insecurity continued to rise with a massacre leaving 20 civilians and 2 UN
peacekeepers dead. There is no question that most people in DRC want peace and security, there is also no question that things are being done to put a stop to it, but with a crippled justice system, extreme poverty, and political instability the 2+ decades of war and killing cannot easily be stamped out. However, women’s rights groups there are more mobilised than ever before and it is through acts of solidarity like this one that they have continued to grow stronger together. Presidential elections are meant to happen in the foreseeable future and if the ongoing push for women’s participation in peace processes including governance continues then perhaps change is possible.

Rebecca Boyce, is a gender equality and international development specialist with 9 years of experience in Canada, Latin America and Francophone Africa. She has worked for organizations such as Cuso International, Oxfam Quebec and Oxfam Novib. She has an interest and experience with issues of violence against women and girls, sexual and reproductive health rights and women peace and security. She has a Masters in Adult Education from the University of Toronto specializing in feminist theory of community development. She is the mother of two children and currently on parental leave with her 3-month-old baby.

1. In Québec it is the 12 days of activism as they end on Dec. 6th given its local importance.

2. le caucus des femmes, l’Association des Femmes de Médiass, Trois Tamis et RHA

3. International Alert, Kvinna til Kvinna, Search for Common Ground
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#16Days: Post-genocide Rwanda poses obstacles to women’s psychological health and well-being
December 9 2017

By Christine Izere, student at the University of Ottawa, currently interning with the Women Peace and Security Network - Canada.

Twenty-three years ago my mother fled Rwanda in hopes of finding refuge elsewhere. Nothing could have prepared her for the psychological scars that she would face in the years to come. However, she is considered the lucky one, who had the privilege of resettling in Canada and the ability to build a new life.

The genocide in Rwanda was the culmination of a century of ethnic discrimination. Neighbours murdered neighbours; family members murdered family members. “Hutu extremists used sexual violence towards Tutsi women and girls systematically as a method of war, not only to inflict pain and humiliation but also to spread HIV and thus ensure the end of the Tutsi people.”¹ In the span of 100 days approximately one million Rwandan men, women and children were killed and over a million were displaced in neighbouring countries.

Post-genocide Rwanda is characterized by strict government policies aimed at rebuilding Rwanda through the means of reconciling both victims and perpetrators. Hence reconciliation is often initiated by the state as opposed to the victims of the genocide. Consequently “many survivors are coerced into living in close proximity with the perpetrators of the violence while still dealing with psychological scars from the genocide”². For many survivors still confronted with the memories of pain, loss and despair their psychological health and wellbeing is often disregarded in an attempt to build a more unified Rwanda.

As we commemorate December 9th, the dignity for genocide survivors, it is imperative to question government initiatives aimed at reconciliation. Although it offers a way in which a country can begin the processes of healing it fails to address the survivors psychological overall wellbeing.
Schimmel finds that “survivors are trapped in the fears prompted by their experiences, sadness, pain, and the wounds that cannot heal because justice is so incomplete”.

Due to strict state policies on reconciliation thousands of the perpetrators of the genocide are freed leaving survivors feeling vulnerable and despondent that justice is not and will not be done.

There is a dire need to grant genocide survivors asylum status if they wish to relocate on the basis of psychological well being. Perhaps one of the most psychologically damaging aspects of being forced to live alongside perpetrators is the need to repress one’s own feelings in order to minimize the chance that perpetrators will try to harm you.

I recently asked my mom if she would ever consider relocating back home, and she simply said it isn’t her home anymore. It is a shame that her family is forced to deal with the pressure of reconciliation whilst still dealing with the wounds from the past.

Christine Izere, is a student at the University of Ottawa, currently in her final year of International development and Globalization. She has an interest in Women Peace and Security issues around the world.

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4. Ibid.
International Human Rights Day: Peace and Unity in South Sudan
December 10 2017

Inside South Sudan: Peace and Gender Based- Violence

WPCN-Canada spoke with Adit Abit, founder of the South Sudan Women's Foundation (SSWF). Adit has been involved in various peace initiatives and community programs in British Columbia before she began her Master's at the University of Ottawa. Adit started the South Sudan Women's Foundation as a means of involving South Sudanese women in being active participants in nation building. Her passion for gender equality fuelled the start of the foundation. The goal is to lift the voices of women, to challenge war, social inequality, and poverty. She hopes to establish collaborative resource mobilization initiatives for the betterment of the South Sudanese community both locally and globally.

[youtube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vM53fYZdGHg]
Sweden and Canada: Feminist trailblazers but are they really promoting security for all?

December 14 2017

By Diana Sarosi, Manager of Policy at Oxfam Canada and WPSN-C Steering Committee member

In Stockholm, the Canadian Embassy in Sweden is well known for its November event on Women, Peace and Security. Organized in collaboration with Operation 1325, a Swedish civil society organization that monitors the implementation of the Swedish National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), the event brings together government officials and Swedish civil society to discuss the progress Sweden has made in implementing its NAP. This year, the event was slightly different. For the first time the Canadian embassy invited a Canadian civil society organization – the Women, Peace and Security Network - Canada – to present its analysis of Canada’s progress internationally over the past year. And Canada has a lot to be proud of.

In June 2017, Minister of International Cooperation, Marie-Claude Bibeau, launched the groundbreaking feminist international assistance policy. The policy puts women’s rights and gender equality at the heart of Canada’s aid and prioritizes support to local women’s rights organizations. Then in November 2017, Canada released its long-awaited second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (CNAP). Instead of focusing solely on Sweden’s achievements and challenges in implementing the NAP and its
broader feminist foreign policy, this event provided a platform for Sweden and Canada to exchange valuable lessons and approaches on their path of being global champions of feminist policy.

Discussions quickly brought to light the differences and similarities between Sweden and Canada. The Swedish government first launched its Feminist Foreign Policy in 2014. It has moved much further in its implementation than the Canadian government, which is just starting out. But both have recognized the critical link between gender equality and security and are focusing on the advancement of gender equality as a means as well as an end in itself to more peaceful and stable societies. In both countries, it is the ministers themselves who have taken leadership and shown incredible commitment to this agenda.

In terms of differences, Canada has set up a better mechanism for civil society to support the implementation of the CNAP. Formalized within the CNAP, the WPSN-C plays a role as an advisory group to provide input on implementation. Sweden, on the other hand, has put in place an Ambassador of Gender Equality to ensure coherence and consistency within the Department of Foreign Affairs. With the help of a high level champion, the department was quickly able to mainstream its agenda throughout. One stark difference is also that Sweden’s foreign aid meets the international benchmark of 0.7% of GNI, whereas Canada trails far behind the OECD average.

However, Canada and Sweden also have something else in common: a lack of coherence between aid, trade and diplomacy. Both countries are significant producers of arms. In per capita measures, Sweden is the largest producer of arms and the industry contributes significantly to the economy. Canada has also increased arms sales over the past year and to Saudi Arabia specifically by 47%. Saudi Arabia’s war against the Houthi has unleashed one of the worst humanitarian disasters in Yemen. Millions of people are trapped inside at risk of starvation as humanitarian agency’s access is highly controlled. Women and children wear the brunt of a war with no end in sight. It is no wonder then that some are pointing out the hypocrisy.
There is no doubt that at a time of serious political backlash against women's rights around the world, Canada and Sweden are trailblazers. They are boldly advancing their feminist agenda in the corridors of power, including the Security Council. However, in order to truly call themselves feminist, disarmament and the peaceful resolution of conflict, which are key principles of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, must be pursued with as much determination as the goal of advancing gender equality. Women do not have a chance to advance or sustain rights when their countries are run by warlords and their lives are shattered by the destruction of the indiscriminate use of weapons against civilians. The advancement of security requires both – gender equality and disarmament – or else we are once again wasting billions of aid dollars that are not achieving the desired results.