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YEAR IN REVIEW:
STEADYING FEMINIST PEACE
IN UNSTEADY TIMES

25

WPSN-C 



Reflections from 2025

2025 unfolded in a global context marked by deepening armed conflict, accelerating military spending, democratic backsliding, and shrinking civic space. From Gaza and Sudan to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Haiti, and beyond, women peacebuilders and human rights defenders continued to confront extraordinary levels of violence and repression while sustaining communities, documenting abuses, and advocating for justice.

As the world marked the 25th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, it became increasingly clear that while the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda has expanded institutionally, its transformative promise remains unevenly realized. Defence spending surged globally while civic and feminist space contracted. Militarized responses continued to dominate political discourse, often sidelining feminist alternatives grounded in prevention, accountability, and inclusive peacebuilding.

In Canada, a federal election and shifting geopolitical dynamics prompted renewed debate about defence policy, arms exports, feminist foreign policy, and Canada's global role. These debates underscored the urgency of sustained, principled civil society engagement — particularly at a moment when institutional continuity and policy coherence could not be assumed.

Within this landscape, the Women, Peace and Security Network – Canada (WPSN-C) remained a volunteer-driven, non-partisan space for coordinated advocacy, dialogue, analysis, and collective reflection. Our membership—comprising 29 organizational and 51 individual members—reflects a diversity of perspectives and approaches. While we do not take unified positions on every issue, we remain committed to fostering rigorous feminist analysis, principled advocacy, and solidarity rooted in care.

In a year defined by polarization, fatigue, and political transition, WPSN-C focused on continuity, credibility, and coherence.

Katrina Leclerc (chair), Alexandria Bohémier (treasurer; Canadian Coalition for Youth, Peace & Security), Dr. Germaine Basita (Canada for Africa Group), Dr. Sarah Keeler, Dr. Sandra Biskupski-Mujanovic, and Dr. Sophia Papastavrou

2025 Steering Committee



Highlights of 2025 Advocacy and Policy Engagement

A defining milestone in 2025 was the publication of WPS at 25 and Canada's CNAP3: Feminist Reflections on Progress and Gaps — the most comprehensive and substantial analysis WPSN-C has produced to date.

Edited by Katrina Leclerc, Sandra Biskupski-Mujanovic, and Sarah Keeler, the volume brought together academic and practitioner voices to critically assess Canada's third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (CNAP3) within a broader context of escalating conflict, institutional strain, and political uncertainty.

The publication examined implementation gaps, crisis response frameworks, arms exports, feminist foreign policy, funding structures, and the intersectional dimensions of both domestic and international WPS commitments. It asked difficult questions about whether institutionalization has translated into transformation — and where commitments remain aspirational rather than operational.

As the largest collective analysis in the Network's herstory, the volume represents a significant intellectual and organizational achievement. It demonstrates the depth of expertise within Canadian WPS civil society and reinforces the Network's role as a space where rigorous feminist scholarship and practitioner insight converge.

During the 16 Days of Activism, individual chapters were featured through a coordinated online campaign, substantially increasing engagement with feminist policy analysis and expanding the publication's reach beyond academic audiences.



Image: Cover art for policy brief "Women, Peace and Security: Strengthening Engagement Between the Government of Canada and Civil Society Representatives – Recommendations for Global Affairs Canada," published February 2025.

In addition to the edited volume, WPSN-C published a policy brief titled Women, Peace and Security: Strengthening Engagement Between the Government of Canada and Civil Society Representatives – Recommendations for Global Affairs Canada, commissioned by the Office of Canada's Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security in 2024.

The brief examined how the Government of Canada engages with civil society representatives and women human rights defenders, both domestically and through Canadian missions abroad. Grounded in interviews, consultations, and survey data, it offered practical recommendations aimed at improving the quality, transparency, and safety of engagement practices.

The report emphasized grounding interactions in respect for safety and agency; avoiding extractive consultation; improving the flexibility and quality of funding; strengthening implementation of the Voices at Risk guidelines; investing in staff capacity; and improving policy coherence across Canada's international commitments.

While more targeted in scope than the 25th anniversary volume, this brief contributed to ongoing dialogue between civil society and government institutions and reinforced the importance of structured, accountable engagement mechanisms.

Throughout the year, WPSN-C members facilitated and supported several open letters initiated by members. These included:

- A call for the continuation of the Women, Peace and Security Ambassador's Office (February 2025);
- A letter urging leaders of Canada's major political parties to prioritize the appointment of a WPS Ambassador (April 2025);
- A congratulatory letter to the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs outlining calls to action on WPS commitments (June 2025);
- A letter raising concerns regarding Canada's public statements and policies on arms exports to Israel (August 2025).

In March 2025, Network members also supported and signed onto a joint civil society petition calling for the reinstatement of the Minister of Women and Gender Equality after the position was removed from Prime Minister Carney's first cabinet announcement. The removal raised significant concerns across feminist and human rights communities regarding the institutional standing of gender equality within federal decision-making structures. WPSN-C members joined broader civil society partners in underscoring the importance of maintaining clear ministerial leadership and accountability mechanisms for gender equality in Canada.



Collectively, these interventions reflected ongoing civil society scrutiny of the coherence between Canada’s stated feminist commitments and its security, defence, and governance practices. As always, members signed in their individual capacities, reflecting the Network’s diversity while demonstrating shared commitments to accountability, institutional integrity, and principled engagement.

Following the federal election, WPSN-C launched the [#WPSAdvice blog series](#), offering feminist policy guidance to newly elected officials. Contributors addressed issues ranging from lethal autonomous weapons and defence spending to sustained funding for women’s peacebuilding organizations, youth inclusion in peace and security, and the importance of meaningful civil society engagement.

The series sought to provide constructive, evidence-based recommendations at a moment of political transition. It was later compiled into a downloadable format to ensure broader dissemination and accessibility.

In partnership with the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations in New York, WPSN-C completed its Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI)-supported project examining [civil society–government collaboration in developing and implementing WPS National Action Plans](#).

The initiative brought together networks from Canada, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon, Nigeria, and Rwanda. Through dialogue sessions during WPS Week at the United Nations, bilateral meetings with Permanent Missions, and follow-up consultations, participants from 19 countries engaged in collective reflection on how to strengthen collaboration and ensure that WPS processes remain responsive, inclusive, and accountable.

The project culminated in the publication of [Leveraging Government–Civil Society Collaboration: Insights and Recommendations for Strengthening the WPS Agenda Amid Growing Challenges](#) (March 2025). The brief synthesizes cross-regional findings and outlines five core recommendations, including centring justice and human rights-based approaches, investing in flexible and accessible funding for grassroots actors, strengthening intersectional engagement, and moving beyond procedural consultation toward sustained, transparent partnership.

Published during the 25th anniversary year of UNSCR 1325, the brief offers timely, evidence-based guidance for governments committed to advancing WPS in an increasingly polarized and conflict-affected global context.



Image: Group photo of WPSN-C members alongside other WPS practitioners from various countries participating in the WPS Learning Lab. The event was held on the sidelines of the 24th anniversary commemoration of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in New York on October 22, 2024. This initiative was supported by the Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives through the Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN in New York. The report for this project was published in March 2025.



Highlights of 2025 Strengthening Knowledge and Connections

Knowledge exchange remained central to WPSN-C's work in 2025.

In June, the Network collaborated with Women of Colour Advancing Peace, Security and Conflict Transformation – Canada (WCAPS-Canada), the Canadian Coalition for Youth, Peace and Security (CCYPS), Egale Canada, and Inter Pares to host [Queering Peace and Security: Moving from Rhetoric to Action](#). Framed by the understanding that Pride is rooted in protest, the event examined systemic exclusion of 2SLGBTQI+ communities from peace and security policymaking and reflected on the growing backlash faced by queer and trans communities globally.

In July, WPSN-C members Katrina Leclerc (chair) and Dr. Denise Koh [travelled to Kuala Lumpur](#) at the invitation of the High Commission of Canada to Malaysia and Malaysia's Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, as Malaysia finalized its first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2025–2030). Through civil society roundtables and inter-ministerial dialogues, they shared lessons from Canada's experience with WPS National Action Plans, emphasizing sustained civil society engagement, intersectional approaches, cross-ministry coordination, and relationship-building beyond the drafting phase.



Image: Group photo in Kuala Lumpur, following the government-civil society exchanges contributing to Malaysia's first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, on July 22, 2025.



During the same regional visit, Katrina also participated in [government and civil society exchanges in Singapore and Indonesia](#), through the High Commission of Canada to Singapore and Canada’s Mission to ASEAN, contributing to broader discussions on feminist peacebuilding and regional approaches to WPS.

These engagements, taking place during the 25th anniversary year of UNSCR 1325, underscored the value of peer exchange across different national and regional contexts. Denise [shared reflections](#) on the Malaysia visit, highlighting the intersections between public health, equity, and peace and security, while Katrina engaged in wider dialogue on feminist political economy and peacebuilding. Collectively, the mission reinforced WPSN-C’s commitment to principled, respectful international engagement grounded in mutual learning and civil society expertise.

In November, WPSN-C co-hosted [Revitalizing Canada’s Commitment to Women, Peace and Security: A Parliamentary Evening on the WPS Agenda](#) at the Senate of Canada. The event was organized alongside Senators Rebecca Patterson and Marilou McPhedran, and Members of Parliament Dr. Hedy Fry, Anita Vandenbeld, Elizabeth May, Alexandre Boulerice, and Andréanne Larouche—parliamentary allies who have consistently supported the advancement of the WPS agenda in Canada.



Structured around thematic roundtables, the evening facilitated direct and substantive exchange between parliamentarians and civil society experts. Discussions focused on Sudan; Colombia; women human rights defenders; the Ottawa Treaty and international humanitarian law; climate change and WPS; 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion; humanitarian crisis funding; and women veterans. These conversations were led by WPSN-C members and partner organizations, whose expertise and intersectional analysis grounded the dialogue in lived realities and policy experience.

Also in November, WPSN-C co-hosted alongside the Sudan Working Group a [public event on so-called “forgotten” crises](#) in partnership with the Centre for International Policy Studies (CIPS), the Gender, Peace and Development Research Network, the Research Network on Women, Peace and Security, and Inter Pares. The panel brought together activists, practitioners, and researchers to examine conflicts in Sudan, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Yemen, Afghanistan, and other contexts that continue to generate profound human suffering while receiving limited sustained policy attention.

Panelists reflected on why these crises are marginalized in global discourse, the implications for advancing Women, Peace and Security commitments, and the advocacy strategies required to close the gap between rhetorical commitment and political action. By foregrounding these contexts, the event reinforced the Network’s commitment to sustained attention on crises that risk being sidelined in moments of geopolitical transition and competing priorities.

Image: Photo of Katrina Leclerc (chair) and Dr. Denise Koh in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on July 21, 2025, ahead of the government roundtable contributing to the country’s first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.



International collaboration also advanced in 2025 through the launch of a joint edited volume project with the U.S. Civil Society Working Group on Women, Peace and Security. Titled Fragmented Peace: Women, Peace and Security in a Polarised Canada–United States Context and forthcoming with Routledge, the volume brings together academic and practitioner contributors from both networks to examine how shifting political landscapes, democratic strain, climate insecurity, militarization, and polarization are shaping the trajectory of the WPS agenda across North America.

Throughout 2025, members from both networks worked collaboratively on their respective chapters, developing comparative and context-specific analyses that reflect the complexities of advancing WPS in increasingly contested political environments. The project represents a deepening of cross-border civil society partnership and reinforces WPSN-C's commitment to sustained dialogue, collaborative scholarship, and rigorous feminist policy analysis.



Image: Group photo of WPSN-C members alongside Senator Marilou McPheeran and Member of Parliament Dr. Hedy Fry at the Parliamentary Hill reception in Ottawa, held by the Network and parliamentary allies on November 19, 2025.



Highlights of 2025 Expanding Our Network

WPSN-C continued to grow in 2025. LinkedIn followers increased from 1,609 to 3,002, reflecting heightened engagement with feminist peace and security analysis. The Network established a presence on Bluesky and saw significant website traffic following the release of the 25th anniversary volume.

Internally, monthly newsletters and informal brown-bag discussions sustained coordination and mutual support. In a volunteer-driven network, spaces of reflection and care are foundational to resilience.



Image: Group photo of WPSN-C members meeting with officials from the Department of National Defence at the Inter Pares office in Ottawa on November 21, 2025.



Leadership, Governance, and Strategic Renewal

2025 was a year of both continuity and renewal in WPSN-C's leadership.

The 2025 Steering Committee welcomed one returning member, Germaine Basita (Canada for Africa Group), and one new member, Sophia Papastavrou. They joined Katrina Leclerc (Chair), Sarah Keeler (Treasurer), Alexandria Bohémier (Canadian Coalition for Youth, Peace & Security), and Sandra Biskupski-Mujanovic. Together, the Steering Committee guided the Network's strategic direction, policy engagement, and internal coordination in a fully volunteer capacity during a year marked by political transition and geopolitical uncertainty.

The Network extends its sincere gratitude to Bénédicte Santoire for her several years of dedicated service on the Steering Committee. Her leadership and steady commitment have contributed meaningfully to the growth, professionalism, and credibility of WPSN-C. We thank her for the time and expertise she so generously shared with the Network.

A particular note of appreciation is also due to the Governance Working Group, which was active throughout 2025 under the leadership of Shayne Wong. The Working Group undertook a careful review of the Network's bylaws, thoughtfully considering potential revisions to strengthen clarity, accountability, and long-term sustainability. This work reflects the Network's commitment not only to external advocacy, but also to internal governance practices grounded in transparency and care.

From September to November, the Steering Committee led a structured consultation process with members to develop the WPSN-C Strategic Priorities: 2026 and Beyond, annexed to this report. This process clarified realistic volunteer capacity, identified priority thematic areas, and reaffirmed the Network's commitment to feminist, intersectional, and anti-racist principles. It emphasized sustainability, transparency, and collective care as guiding values for the coming years.



The Sudan Working Group continued its engagement throughout 2025 under the co-leadership of Amani Khalfan (Inter Pares) and Nazik Kabalo (Sudanese Women Human Rights Project). Their leadership ensured sustained attention to the crisis in Sudan within Canadian policy conversations and civil society spaces. The Working Group convened discussions, supported advocacy, and strengthened solidarity across organizations committed to advancing women's rights and accountability in the context of ongoing violence.

Across all of these efforts, WPSN-C's work remained firmly volunteer-driven — sustained by members who contribute time, expertise, and care to advance feminist peace and security in Canada and beyond.

Looking Ahead to 2026

The 25th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 has been both commemorative and evaluative. It has required honest reflection about institutionalization, implementation gaps, and political will.

As WPSN-C moves into 2026, it does so with clarity and intention. Our focus will remain on targeted advocacy aligned with member expertise, sustainable volunteer engagement, and principled dialogue.

Our strength lies not in scale, but in continuity. Not in unanimity, but in rigorous feminist reflection. By centring care, coherence, and credibility, WPSN-C continues to steady feminist peace in unsteady times.



WPSN-C Strategic Priorities 2026 and Beyond

This effort was led by the Steering Committee from September to November 2025. The Steering Committee thanks the members of the Governance Working Group for co-leading the consultation process and for their input into this document.

The Women, Peace and Security Network – Canada (WPSN-C) brings together more than 80 Canadian non-governmental organizations and individuals committed to advancing Women, Peace and Security (WPS) through dialogue, collaboration, and advocacy initiatives led by members.

Our mandate is to:

- Promote and monitor the Government of Canada’s implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS); and
- Provide a forum for exchange and action by Canadian civil society on WPS-related issues.

As a volunteer-run network operating in a context of limited political attention and constrained funding for feminist and peacebuilding work, our strategy focuses on what is most feasible, sustainable, and impactful over the next five years.

This document outlines short-term (2026) priorities and longer-term (2026–2030) directions, grounded in the collective insights shared by members through consultations held from September to November 2025.

Our Approach

WPSN-C remains unique in Canada: a voluntary, non-partisan, and inclusive space where practitioners, researchers, and advocates exchange perspectives and collectively shape feminist peace and security action.

Our work is grounded in shared principles that guide how we collaborate and evolve:

- Feminist and intersectional: We strive to centre gender justice, anti-racism, and decolonization in all that we do, while recognizing that we are still learning and do not always get it right. We commit to continual reflection, listening, and improvement.
- Collaborative and caring: We value relationships, trust, and mutual respect, recognizing both the emotional labour of advocacy and the importance of collective care.
- Evidence-based and principled: We ground our advocacy in the lived experiences of women and gender-diverse peacebuilders and in feminist analysis.
- Sustainable and realistic: We prioritize what we can do well with our volunteer capacity, rather than overextending our commitments.



Short-Term Priorities (2026)

a. Strengthen Core Functioning and Internal Cohesion

- Maintain simple, transparent governance, including monthly meetings for information-sharing with members; an Annual General Meeting for reporting and Network decision-making; and open calls for Working Groups and leadership in Network initiatives.
- Re-energize Working Groups only where there is active leadership and interest, allowing dormant groups to pause without pressure.
- Host informal brown-bag discussions, reflective sessions, and debriefs that strengthen trust and social cohesion—foundational elements of a feminist peacebuilding network. These spaces enable members to share insights, surface emerging issues, and collectively sharpen the Network’s ability to respond to developments in Canada’s and the global WPS landscape.
- Adopt lightweight communications practices by finalizing a concise internal communications guide to ensure consistency, ethical practice, and safe platform use; maintaining the monthly members’ newsletter as the central tool for coordinated advocacy and knowledge-sharing; and continuing to use LinkedIn as the primary public channel to amplify evidence-informed analysis and elevate Canadian WPS leadership without stretching volunteer capacity.

b. Focus Thematic Work Where Members Already Lead

As a network of diverse organizations and individuals, WPSN-C does not take positions on behalf of all members. Rather, the Network provides a platform through which members can collaborate, coordinate advocacy, and amplify initiatives led by interested members or coalitions of members.

Indicative areas of interest for 2026 include:

- Palestine, Sudan, and Afghanistan – continued solidarity and advocacy,
- Canada’s increasing defence spending – feminist critiques and calls for peace-centred approaches,
- Domestic implementation of WPS – strengthening links with Indigenous, northern, and diaspora women’s leadership, and
- Climate and security – pursued through partnerships rather than new structures.

c. Maintain Realistic, Targeted Advocacy

- Continue constructive engagement with Global Affairs Canada on CNAP3 implementation and feminist foreign policy, including through the WPS Advisory Group co-chaired by WPSN-C and Global Affairs Canada.
- Organise one advocacy initiative in 2026 (for example, an open letter, policy brief, or parliamentary briefing) rather than multiple campaigns.
- Engage selectively with Parliament and other departments (such as DND and Veterans Affairs) where there is clear feminist value-added and reciprocity.
- Strengthen relationships with allied networks and coalitions, including member organizations, to share effort, visibility, and impact.

What success looks like by end of 2026:

- Members feel informed, connected, and supported.
- At least one well-positioned and visible advocacy output—such as a public statement, policy brief, or collective letter—is developed by interested members and recognized within the wider WPS community.
- Clear, caring, and sustainable internal communication and coordination practices are in place, enabling engagement without burnout and ensuring continuity, transparency, and shared ownership across the Network.



Longer-Term Directions (2026–2030)

a. Build Modest but Sustainable Infrastructure

- Explore micro-funding or partnership opportunities to support essential coordination functions, such as part-time administrative support, website maintenance, and events.
- Develop a small resource-mobilization team under the leadership of the Finance Committee to identify realistic opportunities, including joint grant proposals or co-hosted events with academic partners.
- Encourage leadership renewal by mentoring new Working Group leads and supporting intergenerational participation.

b. Consolidate WPSN-C's Role as a Feminist Policy Voice

- Focus on depth rather than breadth by providing concise, evidence-based inputs to government and allied institutions (such as universities and women's rights organizations), ensuring accountability while reducing coordination burdens.
- Publish an annual State of WPS in Canada reflection analysis summarizing civil society perspectives. This analysis will serve as a tool for tracking national progress, surfacing systemic gaps, and informing government commitments.
- Host one low-cost annual national convening or virtual dialogue bringing together women's rights organizations, peace and security institutions, and key policymakers to sustain visibility of WPS

priorities, generate evidence-based recommendations, and influence national policy processes.

c. Strengthen Advocacy Principles and Boundaries

- Continue dialogue with the Canadian government guided by transparency, reciprocity, and feminist ethics.
- Advocate for fair resourcing of feminist peacebuilding and for Canada's policy commitments to be matched with adequate funding.
- Maintain independence and create space for various member advocacy priorities, while engaging respectfully with multiple actors.

What success looks like by 2030:

- A stable, respected, volunteer-driven network with modest operational support.
- Continued recognition by government and partners as a credible and principled voice on WPS.
- An active and diverse membership contributing to policy dialogue and feminist knowledge-sharing.

Annual Review

To maintain trust and continuity, the Steering Committee will produce a timely Annual Report each year summarizing key activities, advocacy milestones, and lessons learned. The report will be distributed to Network members and made publicly available in the first quarter of the year.

In summary

This strategy is intentionally realistic and sustainable. It acknowledges that the current political context offers limited institutional attention to WPS, while recognizing that WPSN-C's strength lies in its continuity, credibility, and collective voice. By translating these principles into concrete practices, the Network can continue shaping agendas even within constrained environments.

By centring care, coherence, and principled advocacy, WPSN-C remains both a vital space and a steady voice for feminist peacebuilding in Canada, as well as a strategic actor capable of contributing to the advancement of the WPS agenda globally.

WPSN-C 

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