

## Peace and Security



### Introduction

*Inter Pares was founded in 1975. Our feminist analysis informs our understanding that unequal power structures are at the root of underdevelopment, and that transformative social change is required for true positive development. The following is a summary of the relevant section of our full submission to the International Assistance Review (IAR).*

Inequality is a major root cause, and can be both a driver and consequence of conflict. Class, race and gender inequities (to name just a few) are further exacerbated by insecurity. Despite a general growth of macro-economic indicators in many parts of the world, wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of few. According to the UNDP, the richest eight per cent of the world's population now earns half of the world's total income.<sup>1</sup> Inequalities in income, deeply exclusionary policies and the failure to build inclusive and pluralistic societies are contributing to new, or exacerbating existing conflicts.

While there are many commonalities between conflicts around the world, each situation has complex root causes, factions and fault lines and the impacts can be experienced for generations. As outlined in the 2030 Agenda, there is a need for interlinked solutions within this complex terrain<sup>2</sup>. In order to address inequality, international assistance in fragile situations requires normative and structural change, and these are very long-term processes.

A lack of policy coherence can be detrimental to achieving peace and security results. Indeed, there have been times when Canada's trade interests in particular have undermined development results.

It is also important to note that peace is not merely the absence of armed conflict. In order to create and maintain national peace and security, women, men and youth need to be key actors.

Too often donor countries direct the bulk of their resources to building state systems and pay much less attention to strengthening civil society. To promote inclusive governance, to establish accountability mechanisms and to build trust in emerging or weak democracies, an independent and competent civil society and engaged public is critical.

In looking at peace and security with a feminist lens, it is important to look at the continuum of violence across societies in which there is little or no respect for women and girl's rights and gender equality. Gender-based sexual violence during conflict does not occur in a vacuum. The problems are systemic and therefore the solutions need to be too.

### Inter Pares' Work on this Theme

Inter Pares believes peace is a long-term process which involves seeking resolutions to issues that drive conflict. This means working with local people to address inequalities.

Our counterparts in many parts of the world have responded to social, political, and armed conflict in ongoing and "post-conflict" settings. They have promoted the participation of women and marginalized communities (including Indigenous peoples and Ethnic communities) in peace processes; and supported refugees and displaced people. They work for the accountability of their

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governments and push for policies that protect and promote the interests of all. In close collaboration with our counterparts, we have been creating possibilities for a local development that responds to people's needs and promotes broad participation in the construction of peace.

### Recommendations

#### ***Canada should provide long-term, flexible, predictable, institutional funding***

This kind of support allows Canadian civil society to build relationships with local civil society in fragile situations and enables them to respond to the opportunities, challenges and needs as they arise. Peace and reconciliation cannot happen within a restrictive timeframe, and the directions of conflicts are at times unpredictable. Programming frameworks that offer reliable and long-term funding facilitate innovative adaptation and redesign.

We have seen significant results from this kind of support. For example, over a decade ago, with support from Partnership Branch, Inter Pares began supporting the Guatemalan "Breaking the Silence and Impunity Alliance". This alliance of three civil society women's organizations combined efforts to provide psychosocial, awareness-raising and judicial support to an emblematic case involving a group of women from the rural community of Sepur Zarco who had suffered sexual violence in the 1980s, during the internal armed conflict. It would have been impossible to imagine the outcome of this support at the beginning of the process, much less the timeframe for results, when survivors were barely able to speak about what they had been through. However, it ultimately led to historical precedents on the judicial front, most notably the first trial for sexual violence during Guatemala's internal armed conflict; the first ever sexual slavery case to be heard by a national court<sup>3</sup>; and the precedent-setting sentences in February 2016 to the accused former military officers. It is

hoped that not only will this contribute to Guatemalans' efforts at truth, justice and reconciliation, but will serve as a deterrent from such crimes ever being committed again.

#### ***Canadian assistance must invest in local civil society***

In conflict and fragile situations, the root causes, factions and fault lines are complex and it is therefore important to work with local expertise. This is also fundamental to the sustainability of any peacebuilding efforts. Local civil society that is rooted in conflict-affected communities can play an instrumental role in governance accountability, citizenship participation and building trust in emerging democracies

Since our founding 40 years ago, Inter Pares has sponsored numerous South-South exchanges with women on issues related to peace and security to debate, discuss, learn, strategize, and work collectively. These exchanges enable local organizations working in different contexts to benefit from each other's expertise. We have convened roundtables on the issue of sexual violence in countries in conflict or in post-conflict situations and we have supported programming targeting women's involvement in peace processes and political decision-making in countries such as Burma, Guatemala, Sudan and Colombia.<sup>4</sup>

#### ***The promotion and protection of human rights should be the cornerstone of Canada's aid and foreign policy objectives through a whole-of-government approach***

The Global Markets Action Plan, adopted by the Canadian government in 2014, reinforced a trend towards the prioritization of Canada's trade interests, often at the expense of human rights protection. (Then) Minister of International Trade Ed Fast stated that the plan would "ensure that all Government of Canada diplomatic assets are harnessed to support the

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*pursuit of commercial success by Canadian companies and investors.” Foreign aid is referred to in the plan as “leverage...to advance Canada's trade interests<sup>5</sup>.”*

This approach has had a negative impact on Canada's reputation globally as a human rights advocate. The pursuit of Free Trade Agreements with countries that have serious human rights concerns and in which there have been no prior human rights impact assessments has raised profound concerns among civil society actors in Canada and abroad.

Countries that are in conflict situations are particularly vulnerable, given the variety of actors involved and contexts often characterized by their volatility. A case in point is Colombia, a country with which Canada signed a Free Trade Agreement (CCOFTA) in 2008. Civil society organizations in both countries expressed fears that an agreement would increase and protect the kind of investments most associated with the armed conflict, violence and forced displacement. Moreover, in such a context, there were fears of the real potential that Canadian companies could actually benefit from human rights abuses. Particular concern was expressed that the agreement's investment chapter would restrict the ability of governments to put in place the types of public policies and regulations needed to benefit their citizens<sup>6</sup>.

These fears are proving to be well founded: according to recent reports, Eco Oro Minerals, a Canadian mining company, has announced its intention to sue Colombia under the investment chapter of CCOFTA over measures that Colombia has taken to protect the Santurbán wetlands and wetlands around the country from the harmful impacts from large-scale mining. The wetlands are the source of 70% of the fresh water that is consumed in Colombia and are essential for mitigating climate change. This lawsuit has the potential to undermine Colombia's capacity to respond to the needs of its people and to address root causes of the conflict.

The Mandate Letters issued by Prime Minister Trudeau to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Development highlight the new government's approach “to champion the values of inclusive and accountable governance, peaceful pluralism and respect for diversity, and human rights including the rights of women and refugees<sup>7</sup>.” Along the same lines, the discussion paper for the IAR suggests the possible adoption of a “rights-based approach to development”. We would welcome such an approach and urge a refocusing of Canada's aid and foreign policy objectives with a prioritization on the promotion and protection of human rights.

### ***Canada must promote women's rights and support the four pillars of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda.***

According to a study by UN Women that reviewed 31 peace processes over two decades, an average of nine out of every ten negotiators and signatories were men.<sup>8</sup> In addition to being combatants, women are impacted by armed conflict in a variety of ways. It is often women who have to provide food, clothing, and shelter to sustain their families and children during and after conflicts. Sexual and gender-based violence is used as a weapon of war; women experience physical and psychological trauma, sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, and stigmatization. At the same time, women are always at the forefront of efforts to press armed actors to lay down their weapons and engage in peace talks.

Canada has taken some commendable symbolic steps in the past six months towards gender balance and women's rights. Canada's emphasis on re-engagement with the multilateral system, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding offers multiple entry points to continue this work. As a member of the Women's Peace and Security Network-Canada (WPSN-C)<sup>9</sup>, Inter Pares urges the Government of Canada to address the full range of the four WPS pillars:

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1. **Participation** - supporting the full participation of women in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peacebuilding and recovery;
2. **Protection** - addressing gender-based violence;
3. **Prevention** - investing in conflict prevention; and
4. **Relief and recovery** - ensuring attention to women's rights and gender equality results in humanitarian assistance and "post-conflict" recovery initiatives<sup>10</sup>.

## Conclusion

To summarize our recommendations specifically in terms of the IAR questions on Peace and Security.

***What specific strengths should Canada build upon to respond to peace and security challenges?***

- The Foreign Affairs and International Development Mandate Letters and the IAR Discussion paper highlight the importance of human rights and this should be the cornerstone to a coherent whole of government approach
- Canada has taken some commendable symbolic steps towards gender balance and women's rights and must champion this issue by investing in the four pillars of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda.

***How can Canada align its international assistance efforts in peace and security with international approaches, including the 2030 Agenda?***

- As outlined in the 2030 Agenda, there is a need for interlinked solutions within this complex terrain. Funding mechanisms used to exist within Partnership Branch to support complex, innovative long-term programming -

these mechanisms for institutional support should be reinstated.

***What kind of international assistance partnerships should Canada pursue to achieve its peace and security goals?***

- A freely functioning civil society is critical to any democracy. Canada must take a balanced approach to fragile situations, supporting the building of State systems, while at the same time prioritizing support to local civil society.

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP, "Humanity Divided: Confronting Inequality in Developing Countries", November 2013.

<sup>2</sup>

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

<sup>3</sup> Other cases, most notably those of Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, were prosecuted outside the countries where the crimes were committed through UN-sponsored International Criminal Tribunals.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.interpares.ca/resource/inter-pares-annual-report-2014-%E2%80%93-forty-years-global-solidarity>

<sup>5</sup> Making a Bad Situation Worse: An analysis of the Text of the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement, Canadian Council for International Cooperation, Ottawa, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> <http://international.gc.ca/global-markets-marches-mondiaux/plan.aspx?lang=eng>

<sup>7</sup> <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/minister-foreign-affairs-mandate-letter>

<sup>8</sup>

<http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2012/10/wpssourcebook-03a-womenpeaceandnegotiations-en.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> The WPSN-C is a network of over 65 Canadian organizations and individuals. Its objectives are: 1) promote and monitor the efforts of the Government of Canada to implement and support the UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security; and 2) provide a forum for exchange and action among Canadian civil society on this theme.

<sup>10</sup> Wording of the four pillars comes from the UN Strategic Results Framework on Women, Peace and Security, 2011-2020.