

INTERNATIONAL
CHILD
PROTECTION
NETWORK
OF CANADA

SUBMISSION

**Recommendations for the Government of Canada's
International Assistance Review**

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Introduction

The International Child Protection Network of Canada (ICPNC) is a collaboration of child-centered international development non-governmental organizations and experts that aims to strengthen programs, policies and procedures, and to support Canada as a global leader in the area of child protection. We welcome the opportunity to participate in the consultations as part of Canada's International Assistance Review, based on our unique perspective as a multi-stakeholder network.

The ICPNC was very pleased by the statement on behalf of the Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, on the occasion of Universal Children's Day 2015, reaffirming Canada's commitment to championing children's rights and protection so that girls and boys in low-, middle-income and fragile contexts can realize their full potential.ⁱ We are further pleased by the Minister's commitment to take forward programs that focus on protection from violence, exploitation and abuse, including gender-based violence and Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) and Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH). And the ICPNC is greatly encouraged by the Minister's commitment that Canada will continue to deliver on its promise "to work toward safer and healthier lives for children around the world."ⁱⁱ

The ICPNC shares this commitment. We look forward to a continued dialogue with government at all levels about the ways we can work together to shape a world-class, evidence-based, international development, humanitarian assistance and foreign policy approach to these critical issues. Child protection is an important value-added area for Canadian investments. Canada has a history of respecting and supporting global commitments to protect children and would be welcomed as a political champion for children and youth by the international community. Through the recommendations outlined in this submission paper, Canada can make a tangible difference in the lives of the world's most vulnerable children.

A new response to the new global context: Addressing global challenges through strengthened and renewed global leadership

The ICPNC believes that Canada needs to do things differently if we are to achieve the two foundational pillars of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): to reach the most at-risk, vulnerable and marginalised populations, including those living in fragile contexts; and see that the principles of universality and equity guide Canada's efforts to realize this ambitious and bold global agenda for everyone - including here at home.

Globally, child protection has been a much neglected issue. This worked to undermine progress toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and without sufficient attention and resources, threatens to inhibit global efforts to accelerate progress for children and young people and reach the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Canada is well-positioned to address this gap, building on its strong and distinguished history in promoting and defending children's rights and working to protect the world's most vulnerable children from violence, exploitation and abuse; including children affected by armed conflict.

Building on Canada's demonstrated record, members of the ICPNC have identified core areas, aligned with the priorities set out in the consultation discussion paper, where Canada is well-positioned to move forward this global agenda and to make real gains for children and to uphold their rights through smart investments, political support, and leveraging Canadian technical, policy and programming excellence.

- **Recommendation: The Government of Canada should commit to breaking down barriers between issues, government departments and jurisdictions to bring a whole-of-government approach to advancing sustainable development (social, economic, environmental) and human rights-outcomes in support of achieving the 2030 Agenda for all.**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should clearly state reaching the most vulnerable, 'leaving no one behind' and addressing inequality as the key objectives of Canada's renewed international assistance agenda, in line with the 2030 Agenda; supported by the principle of equity.**
- **Recommendation: Children (under age 18) and youth, particularly girls, should be explicitly referenced and identified as a most vulnerable group and priority group, and included through meaningful participatory approaches in all policy and program design and implementation.**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should seek to apply a vulnerability analysis to identify the needs of the most excluded and vulnerable children and youth, in any given context; and identify the appropriate basket of interventions to realize their rights.**
- **Recommendation: Canada should prioritize an SDG implementation plan for women and girls, children and youth, as a marker of our success in reaching the most excluded.**

Canada leading the way through a feminist, gender transformative approach

The ICPNC welcomes the commitment of the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie that Canada's international assistance "must empower women and girls and protect their rights."ⁱⁱⁱ In particular, adolescent girls increasingly face some of the most extreme risks and challenges during disasters and crises,^{iv} but they are also among the groups most frequently missed by international assistance.

A gender-transformative, feminist approach to Canada's international engagement means bringing the full capacity of the Government of Canada – from international assistance to trade, defence and Canada's diplomatic efforts – to ensure that women and girls, men and boys have the same power to shape society and their own lives. This means addressing structural barriers to women's and girls' enhanced social, legal, political and economic participation. This feminist

approach must be pursued through a rights-based framework that is not just gender sensitive, but gender transformative. A gender transformative approach means fundamentally changing the purpose of Canada's efforts to focus not just on changing the conditions of the most excluded, but on changing power relations and the social position of women and girls in the household, community and wider society. This means placing an intentional priority on addressing social and cultural norms that perpetuate inequality throughout all policy, investments and programming.

Double discrimination, based on age and gender compounds other sources of exclusion (e.g. extreme poverty, race, religion, disability and sexual orientation) to render children, and adolescent girls in particular, among the most excluded populations in the world. Girls are the first ones to be pulled out of school, the last ones to eat and they are more likely to live in poverty, be denied access to education, and more likely to be malnourished. Evidence also supports working with men and boys to develop positive masculinities that promote healthy, non-violent, respectful attitudes and behaviours that transform personal power relationships that can in turn can be passed on to others^v.

- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should implement gender transformative strategies that recognise women and girls as both beneficiaries and as change-agents and active participants in sustainable and resilient development.**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should also prioritize working with men and boys as agents of change and co-beneficiaries in promoting equality in the private and public spheres; through challenging gender norms and constructs of masculinity.**
- **Recommendation: The principle of intersectionality should be a central tenet of Canada's feminist approach – to advance an understanding of women and girls not as homogenous groups, but as individuals experiencing overlapping vulnerabilities and barriers that must be addressed through complementary intersectoral interventions at multiple levels.**

A core supporting framework to protect the rights of children across all pillars of Canada's International Assistance: Child safeguarding standards for Global Affairs Canada

It is everyone's responsibility to protect children from violence, neglect and exploitation. Compliance with child safeguarding standards helps create a culture where violence against children is never tolerated and is acted against accordingly. To underpin a leading-edge, world-class child protection strategy, Global Affairs Canada must prioritize child safeguarding standards as a central tenet of all Canada's development, humanitarian and peacebuilding and stabilization projects and programming.

Furthermore, Global Affairs Canada officials, contractors, civil society and non-governmental partners, as well as multilateral, bilateral and private sector partners funded by the Department must be held fully accountable to child safeguarding standards.

- **Recommendation: With the support of the ICPNC, Global Affairs Canada should adopt and implement best practices in child safeguarding standards, and see that they are**

applied to all relevant Global Affairs Canada officials, contractors, volunteers and funding partners. These standards should be implemented through a graduated approach, depending on the level of risk to children.

See additional recommendations under 'Peace and security,' and 'Responding to humanitarian crises.'

Health and rights of women and children

Leading the way in protecting, advancing and promoting children's rights

We recommend that Global Affairs Canada works with the Department of Justice Canada to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure. The second anniversary of the entry into force of the Third Optional Protocol this year would provide a highly symbolic opportunity to demonstrate Canada's support for the right of all children to have the opportunity to access justice at the international level and to ensure state accountability.

- **Recommendation: Canada should ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure.**

Ending violence, exploitation and abuse: Protecting and empowering children and youth, especially girls

Persistent violations of children's rights undermine progress towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda. Children face multiple forms of violence and vulnerability in the absence of clear pathways to access child protection system responses. Up to 1.5 billion children experience violence each year^{vi}, and 150 million girls and 73 million boys are raped or subject to sexual violence^{vii}. Violence against children is largely under-reported and, therefore, difficult to monitor and track. In too many cases children are afraid to report abuse, and violence is allowed to continue in homes, communities, and schools with impunity. If children are exploited, abused, or neglected, for example, it is less likely that they will be healthy, educated and able to reach their full potential.

One of the key innovations of the SDG's commitment is that of *leaving no one behind*; this is of particular importance for millions of boys and girls in fragile settings, who remain invisible and often overlooked by humanitarian aid and international assistance.

Canada is well-positioned to play a strong global leadership role in driving the implementation of various SDGs, including SDG 16.2 – *to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture of children* (and its related targets), and SDG 5 – *to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*.

Canada can demonstrate this leadership by putting forward a strategy for child protection that emphasizes the rights and well-being of all girls and boys, especially the most disadvantaged, in the development and delivery of Canada's humanitarian assistance and development policies

and programming, with a focus on integrated and funded national child protection systems. In keeping with Canada's commitment to ensuring children and youth are key partners involved in articulating their needs and best interests, the ICPNC calls upon the Government to ensure that youth themselves, in particular young girls, are provided the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the design and implementation of this strategy.

Canada is also able to continue to champion international child protection within the Agenda 2030 framework through support to the newly launched Global Partnership and associated Fund to End Violence Against Children. This multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder platform works to "convene, support and coordinate efforts to implement target 16.2,"^{viii} and other targets related to child protection, as well as catalyzing the investments needed to deliver on this bold commitment. We are very pleased that Canada played a constructive role in the Interim Advisory Group, guiding the development of the Global Partnership and we hope that Canada will build on this engagement and continue to support the partnership.

- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should develop an integrated, gender-transformative child protection strategy, supported by increased investments in proven interventions. Global Affairs Canada should ensure that children and youth are provided the opportunity to meaningfully participate in the strategy design, development and implementation.**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should continue support for the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, through articulating a strong political commitment, a significant funding commitment, and providing continued technical support - leveraging Canadian excellence and expertise.**

A 'systems strengthening' approach

Canada was one of the first donors to recognize and promote a systems-strengthening approach to child protection, through support for national frameworks and community-based mechanisms that protect children from violence. This transformative approach is considered a best practice in the field of child protection; is critical to preventing and responding to violence and abuse effectively and supporting quality long-term solutions for children's protection, well-being and healthy development; and is essential to the achievement of the SDGs.

According to UNICEF, holistic and integrated child protection systems comprise of a number of key components that are inclusive of the policy and coordination frameworks; government, private sector and civil society actors, child protection information systems, the human resources (workforce) allocated to child protection, funding systems, the delivery of services, participation of children and consideration of their viewpoints, and the attitudes and values of people.^{ix} This model follows a life cycle approach and attempts to protect children and youth through the various life stages and across all public and community settings, including within the family. It is also context specific in attempting to engage the cultural values of communities that may result in harm to children and youth such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM).

Such a holistic and integrated approach allows for a focus on strengthening existing formal and non-formal systems and for all children and youth to be protected from all forms of violence and abuse instead of focusing on specific issues and creating separate responses that can duplicate efforts and result in more expensive interventions.

- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should continue to invest in integrated systems-approaches to protecting children (under age 18) and their rights, at the national and community level.**

Child, early and forced marriage and gender based violence

The ICPNC applauds the Government for its commitment to preventing harmful practices such as CEFM and FGM/C. CEFM and sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) are not just protection issues they are also a violation of the right to health for children. 1 in 9 girls are married before the age of 15^x. According to Girls not Brides, 90% of adolescent pregnancies are to girls who are already married^{xi}. Babies born to adolescent mothers are more likely to die than those born to women over twenty^{xii}.

Canada has shown resolute leadership by introducing the first-ever standalone resolution to end CEFM at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York in 2013. Canada should continue to play a leadership role on setting global standards and we are greatly encouraged by Canada's efforts to co-sponsor a second substantive UNGA resolution to end CEFM through a roadmap to action for the achievement of SDG 5.3 – *to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage*.

The ICPNC would like to see the government's efforts to end CEFM fully integrated as part of a comprehensive child protection strategy. As the government sharpens its focus on international assistance priorities for effective poverty reduction, we must continue to invest in interventions that challenge CEFM simultaneously at multiple levels. Working with partners who are committed to ending CEFM at the community, regional and international levels will be vital to seeing policy translate into transformational changes in social norms and practices.

- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should build on investments to develop and implement a robust initiative to challenge child, early and forced marriage, fully integrated as part of a comprehensive child protection strategy. A comprehensive approach must work to address CEFM at multiple levels simultaneously, through support for programs and interventions that have proven results on the ground.**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should increase investments in education to see that all children, especially girls, benefit from at least nine years of quality education as an effective means to combating child, early and forced marriage.**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should ensure flexible and informal educational and training opportunities to meet the needs of girls who are already married.**

- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada's support for adolescent-friendly health services should include access to sexual and reproductive health services that respond to the unique needs of those already married as girls.**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should invest in interventions that build child, youth, family, community and government capacities to protect children from sexual exploitation and violations of sexual and reproductive health rights.**

Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH)

Canada is recognised as a global leader in support of efforts to accelerate child survival and end preventable maternal deaths. Canadian leadership has advanced the rights, health and well-being – and saved the lives of – many of the world's most vulnerable women and children. However, clear gaps remain. Complications linked to pregnancy and childbirth are still the second leading cause of death for 15-19-year-old girls globally^{xiii}; including as a result of unsafe abortions.^{xiv} The risk of maternal mortality is highest for adolescent girls under 15 years of age in low- and middle-income countries^{xv}.

- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada through funding and policy efforts, should support access for adolescent girls and boys (including very young adolescents) to gender-responsive sexual health education that provides young people with the tools to protect themselves from sexual exploitation, unwanted sex and unwanted pregnancy. This should include supporting access to gender-responsive, youth friendly and confidential sexual and reproductive health services including family planning and contraception, to ensure that no girl or woman of any age dies of any preventable cause including unsafe abortion, and ensure access for adolescents to safe post abortion care, especially in humanitarian contexts and for survivors of sexual and gender based violence.**

Continued investment in Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS)

We are pleased to see the commitments by the Prime Minister and the Minister for International Development, to ensuring evidence-based and outcomes-driven approaches to advancing maternal, newborn and child health. Strengthened CRVS and data systems are critical to developing and implementing policies that can improve the lives and future of the most disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable children. Furthermore, CRVS is one of the most critical ways to provide children with legal protection against harmful practices such as child marriage, trafficking, exploitation and abuse, and ensure their right to access social and health services. To support the scale-up of CRVS, we encourage Global Affairs Canada to:

- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should increase financial and technical support to strengthen civil registration systems and support the scale-up of disaggregated vital statistics collection.**

- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should prioritize Universal Birth Registration as an essential child protection intervention to address harmful practices such as child, early and forced marriage.**

Partnerships

In seeking effective solutions to global challenges and new forms of partnership, we must, first and foremost, ensure that these innovations will improve the effectiveness and transparency of the international assistance delivery system. Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda's commitment to "leave no one behind", emphasizing the need to "reach the furthest behind first" must also be heeded. As such, all sustainable development and humanitarian actors must be equipped with the tools, resources and capacities to support affected populations amplify their voice, and provide assistance and protection that is inclusive, accessible and appropriate for all. More specifically, as recognized by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development in its June 2015 Report: *Beyond Survival: Protecting and Empowering Children and Youth*, it must be acknowledged that: "in the context of child and youth protection and empowerment, change can often be propelled by programs, leadership and capacity that are created and sustained locally."^{xvi} Partnerships between the private sector, civil society organizations, multilateral agencies, governments - and communities themselves - will be vital to realize tangible benefits and opportunities for children and families in some of the world's poorest countries. One of the most important partnerships that the Government of Canada can foster in delivering its international assistance objectives is that of youth and children, by recognizing their agency and empowering them to take part in local, regional and national decision-making processes.

Furthermore, there is a need for specific efforts to address the rights and needs of girls, who continue to be amongst the most excluded and discriminated against. Girls' full participation and equal opportunities for leadership in decision-making at all levels of political, economic and public life must be assured by actively promoting partnership opportunities, including with schools and community groups. Experience has shown that youth and children, girls and boys, who are informed of their rights, can be empowered to hold their governments to account for their international obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including on sexual and gender-based violence and adolescent sexual and reproductive rights.

Clean, inclusive economic growth and climate change: Strengthening child protection and youth agency

Sustainable (*environmentally, economically and socially*), inclusive economic development can help to address and mitigate climate change and contribute to the well-being of the most vulnerable children and families by securing livelihoods, increasing food security, encouraging education, and generating new sources of government revenues to fund vital public services - all of which contribute to a protective environment for children.

Yet economic growth that is not inclusive and sustainable, and which does not ensure children's rights and protection, can have far-reaching negative consequences, including a loss of livelihoods, an increase in the worst forms of child labour, unsafe working conditions, violence, and sexual exploitation.

- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada must put the rights, well-being and protection of children and youth at the centre of its investments and efforts to address climate change and advance clean and inclusive sustainable economic development.**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should explicitly affirm, including in the title for this priority theme, the need for economic growth to be both clean (environmentally sustainable) and inclusive.**

Economic opportunities for children and youth

Core to Agenda 2030 and the SDGs is the recognition that in order to advance sustainable, inclusive development, children and youth need to be both protected from harm and violence in the workplace (SDG 16.2, 8.7, 8.8), and provided equal access to opportunities for a better future, including education, vocational and skills training, and decent work (SDGs 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 and 8.5, 8.6, 8.8, 8.b). Moreover, we need to be intentional in placing a priority on gender transformation in the sphere of sustainable economic development. We need a new and innovative approach that empowers rights holders, among them, girls, and builds capacity of duty bearers to fulfill their obligations.

Training, education, and green jobs

SDG 4 outlines the need for specific actions aimed at children and youth to create an enabling environment for sustainable economic development.^{xvii} Education, training, and decent work for adults and youth (particularly for girls and women), including green jobs, can help efforts to address the impacts climate change and break the cycle of poverty for families, communities, and nations, by raising incomes, diversifying economies, and generating domestic tax revenue to fund vital public services. The ICPNC recommends that Canada seeks to prioritize policies and programming that help to increase the number of safe and decent work opportunities (including those linked to clean growth and addressing climate change), as well as decrease the number of out-of-school, unemployed and untrained youth.

- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should continue to develop and invest in relevant education and training opportunities for children and youth, including those who work.**
- **Recommendation: Canada's International Assistance should support employment creation and livelihood diversification for youth and caregivers to access safe and decent employment, particularly green jobs.**

- **Recommendation: Canada's International Assistance should focus on reaching the most vulnerable populations – including adolescent girls, by offering flexible, informal education and training opportunities that are accessible and meet their unique needs.**

Engaging the private sector

The private sector has a key role to play in contributing to sustainable inclusive development and lifting children, families, and communities out of poverty. However, without attention given to children's rights and protection, business operations can have unintended negative consequences, including an increase in the worst forms of child labour, unsafe working conditions for caregivers and youth, violence, and sexual exploitation.

The Canadian private sector can contribute to addressing climate change and promoting clean, low-carbon development pathways in low- and middle-income countries and emerging economies, through the provision of investments, expertise, and technologies. As a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Government of Canada has a responsibility to ensure that the Canadian private sector is, at a minimum, respecting and supporting children's rights and protection in their overseas operations.^{xviii}

Recommendation: As part of its efforts to engage the private sector towards sustainable development outcomes and the achievement of the SDGs, we encourage Global Affairs Canada to:

- **explicitly integrate the *Children's Rights and Business Principles* into the terms of reference (ToRs) with Global Affairs Canada's private sector partners;**
- **work to see that Global Affairs Canada's private sector partners uphold, implement, and are accountable to the ten principles outlined in the *Children's Rights and Business Principles*; and**
- **actively promote the necessary tools and resources, and build the capacity of Canadian businesses to see that the *Principles* are implemented – and that implementation efforts not only protect children from harm, but also promote their best interests and ultimately their rights.**

Climate Change

Children and young people, particularly those living in fragile contexts, are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change.^{xix} Climate change represents a fundamental threat to their most basic rights, their health and well-being. Loss of livelihoods, migration and family separation following climate related disasters and changing weather patterns also leave children, especially girls, exposed to the dangers of exploitation and violence.

Children and youth are often not recognized as key stakeholders, beneficiaries and change-makers in adaptation and mitigation responses. As stated in the report of The Children in a Changing Climate (CCC) coalition, *Realising Children's Rights in a Changing Climate*, "children are much more than passive victims of climate change – they are powerful agents of change

active at all levels. They can make a strong contribution to risk reduction, adaptation and building the resilience of their communities by undertaking climate risk assessments, planning and implementing adaptation and raising awareness of climate risks and solutions.^{xx}

Funding for climate change adaptation and investment in disaster risk reduction is essential to ensure that vulnerable children and communities are supported to become more resilient to the effects of climate change. Investments must take account of children's vulnerabilities and efforts must balance large-scale infrastructure responses with localized adaptation programs that seek to protect the most vulnerable communities.

Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada's investments and efforts to address climate change should:

- **focus on the most vulnerable groups, including children;**
- **recognise and prioritise addressing the specific risks faced by children and youth in a changing climate, especially girls;**
- **ensure that children's needs and capacities are central to adaptation planning and implementation;**
- **increase the voice and agency of children in adaptation decision-making processes;**
- **should be based on meaningful, gender-sensitive and inclusive consultations and participatory design processes that result in programs; and**
- **prioritise local, community-based actions.**

Governance, pluralism, diversity and human rights

Strengthening governance and systems through a capacity-building approach

Good governance, respect for diversity and human rights and policy coherence is vital to ensuring the realisation of children's rights.

- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should seek to leverage Canadian diplomacy, including through the network of Canadian missions and through the UN human rights mechanisms, in support of all nations to uphold their obligations as duty bearers in protecting children and their rights, including fulfilling their obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.^{xxi}**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should work to support bilateral partners to improve the implementation of these obligations, and build capacity in child protection, including through:**
 - **providing technical assistance for governments and civil service – including national, regional and municipal levels – in support of assessing and addressing gaps in policy, legislation, the legal framework and implementation practises; and**

- **gender-transformative support to build the advocacy capacity of civil society organizations and groups at the community level to hold duty bearers to account, specifically youth groups.**

Child Participation for Global Affairs Canada

Globally, never before has there been such strong formal support to enable children's and young people's – especially girl's - meaningful participation.^{xxii} Despite this commitment, institutional structures and adult decision makers are facing challenges in how to effectively and sustainably engage children and youth in the decisions and actions that affect their lives. Children's (under age 18) participation^{xxiii} in their own protection can improve these protection efforts through clarifying their unique and specific needs and collaboratively develop and implement solutions. The international community would welcome Canada in leading a global movement in championing the meaningful participation of children and youth, particularly girls^{xxiv}. The recent adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security^{xxv} and recently launched Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action^{xxvi} further affirms the importance of fostering meaningful participation of children and youth as agents of positive and transformative change, at the community, national and international level.

- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should leverage Canadian excellence and expertise, including through the support of the ICPNC, to develop and share best practises in the meaningful participation of children and youth.**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should mandate all partners to ensure quality gender-transformative participation standards for children (under age 18) to be enabled to express their views, be listened to, and influence decision-making processes^{xxvii} as core stakeholders at all stages of policy and program lifecycles.**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should enable the meaningful participation of children and youth through an advisory committee for Canada's International Assistance (including review, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases). A youth advisory committee should seek to engage voices from Canada and youth stakeholders of Canada's International Assistance programs, to contribute diverse youth perspectives; through continuous, youth-centred, gender-transformative and meaningful participation.**

Advancing peace and security, and protecting the rights of children and youth in fragile and conflict settings

Reaffirm the centrality of protection

Sustainable development, human rights and peace and security are indivisible. The SDGs were drafted with the promotion of peace, justice, human rights and the human security agenda in mind. The ICPNC believes that the peace and security pillar of Canada's international assistance

must both recognize and articulate children and youth as a specific group who are most vulnerable in conflict and who are adversely affected by varying forms of structural violence. Moreover, Global Affairs Canada should clearly recognize and articulate the central role that children and youth play as change-makers within their communities and in advancing global peace and stability, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2250.^{xxviii}

The nature of conflict has substantially changed over the last half of the twentieth century and early twenty-first century, from nation state conflicts to intra-state violence fuelled by civil wars, armed non-state actors, as well as gang and organized criminal violence. It is estimated that 250 million^{xxix} children (under age 18) live in conflict affected states. The impact of violence on communities and particularly on children is long lasting and has the potential to harm personal and community potential, social cohesion and stability for generations.

The 2030 Agenda, the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit and the Agenda for Humanity augment existing rights-conventions that uphold the rights of – and obligation to protect – children affected by armed conflict and in emergency and fragile contexts. Critically, these rights and obligations are enshrined in International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

The ICPNC recognizes and applauds Canada's recent reaffirmations of the centrality of IHRL and IHL, as well as its commitment to accede to the UN Arms Trade Treaty.

- **Recommendation: Canada should continue to champion respect for the guiding principles of humanitarian action, as well as continue to consistently condemn serious violations of International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law.**
- **Recommendation: Canada should continue to lead efforts to uphold the norms that safeguard humanity, including through engagement in nascent global efforts to limit the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and support efforts to protect civilians from contamination arising from explosive remnants of war^{xxx}.**
- **Recommendation: Canada should support the efforts of the UN Security Council on children affected by armed conflict, through continued leadership of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, and continue support of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and other relevant UN entities and agencies, including the human rights mechanisms.**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should continue investments and support for programs aimed at ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children in conflict, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers.**
- ***See additional recommendations under 'Responding to humanitarian crises.'***

Strengthening protection through peace operations, humanitarian and disaster response

The Government of Canada has committed to increase support for United Nations peace operations and an enhanced role for Canada in humanitarian and disaster response, including through the Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART). The concurrent *Defence Policy Review*

Public Consultation Paper notes that “contemporary mission mandates are heavily focused on protection of civilians, including support for the international agenda on women, peace, and security... Canada and the CAF stand ready to assist populations who are suffering the effects of natural and man-made disasters.”^{xxxix} The ICPNC sees a role for Canada in advancing the international agenda on the protection of civilians, and the international agenda on women, peace, and security.

- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should adopt and implement best practices in child safeguarding standards, including endorsing and implementing the *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action*.**
- **Recommendation: the Government of Canada, including the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), clearly recognize and articulate the distinct roles of humanitarian and development work and workers, and respect for humanitarian principles^{xxxii} - humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence – supported by international law; and protect against the conflation of military actions, peace operations and humanitarian response.**
- **Recommendation: Canada should increase financial and technical expert support for child protection and the integration of the minimum standards on child safeguarding throughout all peace operations, peacebuilding, stabilization, disaster assistance, reconstruction and humanitarian responses; including in support of UN and multilateral peace operations.**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should mandate and provide adequate training on child safeguarding, child rights and protection to all Canadian development, military and stabilization and reconstruction personnel overseeing or deployed in response to complex emergencies and humanitarian crises; including programming and operations supported by the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START),^{xxxiii} and all Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) operations.**
- ***See additional recommendations under ‘Responding to humanitarian crises.’***

As part of its revitalized engagement with the United Nations, Canada should support and prioritise child safeguarding and the protection of all children (under age 18) in the context of United Nations peace operations and peacekeeping training. Canada can play an important role in strengthening the policies, procedures and mechanisms necessary to protect children from violence and abuse by peacekeepers themselves, in peacekeeping training and where peace operations are underway, mechanisms to hold perpetrators to account, and means to ensure that victims receive the specialized services required to support their recovery.

- **Recommendation: Canada should support the promotion and implementation of *Train, Act, Protect: A new standard in child protection training for military peacekeepers*, and the promotion and implementation of the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles) through the Government of Canada's renewed commitment to peace operations^{xxxiv} and through all joint training programs.**

- ***See additional recommendations under 'Responding to humanitarian crises.'***

Addressing sexual and gender-based violence

Women and children, girls and boys, are too often subject to grave human rights violations – including SGBV – in conflict, post-conflict, emergency and fragile contexts. In times of conflict, formal and informal justice systems designed to protect women and children, often break down. Weakened governance combined with communities and families stressed by increased poverty, lack of security, and forced displacement caused by conflict and crisis lead to increased child rights violations including rape, CEFM^{xxxv}, domestic violence and other forms of SGBV. Moreover, the rights of women, girls and boys can be further undermined by a culture of impunity in fragile and conflict settings, in which SGBV goes unpunished. It is estimated that tens of thousands of children are born due to rape in conflict.^{xxxvi} The long lasting effects of SGBV for the mother, child, and family include stigmatization, family violence, and psychological trauma and for the community it can be destabilizing and harm peacebuilding efforts.

Responding to SGBV in conflict and humanitarian settings requires both prevention and response interventions that begin at the onset of a humanitarian emergency. In addition to services for victims of SGBV, communities and duty bearers need to be supported to uphold and enforce women and children's rights, helping to create a protective environment. Existing formal and informal legal services and systems can be leveraged to respond to incidence of violence and deter future acts of SGBV.

Furthermore, addressing SGBV and women and children's health, including SRHR throughout all stages of crisis response must also be prioritized. The current lack of resourcing for these two critical issues is a major systemic gap. The inclusion of clear indicators to measure progress toward the elimination all forms of violence against children, particularly girls, in emergencies, especially grave violations against children, must be supported. Multiagency, multi-sectoral risk assessments that include SGBV and SRHR in the first instance in needed to inform rapid, medium-term and longer –term interventions.

The ICPNC applauds the Government for its recognition that working with boys and men is essential to ensure that the rights of women and children, girls and boys, are upheld. Involving men and boys in the prevention and response to SGBV is paramount if a protective environment is to be sustained in a conflict, post-conflict or fragile environment.

- **Recommendation: Canada should implement and promote the *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action*.**^{xxxvii}
- **Recommendation: Canada should support gender-responsive SGBV prevention, mitigation and response interventions through its investments, programs and technical expert assistance; including but not limited to, access to appropriate legal services, psychosocial support, health services, community awareness and training of duty bearers.**

Responding to humanitarian crises

- ***See additional recommendations under 'Peace and security.'***

Ensuring the protection of children in emergencies

Children are at the epicenter of the world's crises and must be a central focus of efforts to address global humanitarian challenges. Canada can continue to be a political champion for the protection of children in times of crises, by making child protection a high priority within humanitarian response efforts around the world. We are encouraged by the Government of Canada's continued support for the *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action*, including through funding contributions to support their implementation.

Conflict and fragility undermine development outcomes across sectors, for example deepening poverty due to displacement often leads to increased numbers of children in harmful labour, recruitment into armed groups^{xxxviii} and other dangerous situations and behaviours. The ICPNC urges Canada to pursue a resilience-building approach in order to help limit the impact of shocks - whether climate-, economic-, or conflict- related - on vulnerable children and communities; including through support to strong child protection systems.

- **Recommendation: (as above) Canada should promote and implement the *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action*.**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should expand and extend multi-year programming opportunities in support of gender-transformative child protection approaches for conflict-affected and fragile contexts; that enable cross-sectoral solutions to the risks children face in complex environments.**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should amend the Request for Proposal (RFP) process to see that continuous funding is made available to support resilience- and capacity-building approaches to ensure transitions toward sustainable community-centred development programs.**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should foster initiatives that recognize women and youth, girls and boys, as change-agents and empower them to participate in peacebuilding interventions.**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should support gender-transformative child- and youth-centred resilience building approaches; with particular attention to displaced populations, to support communities to withstand current and future shocks through access to psychosocial support, and life skills training.**

Education in emergencies

In the midst of conflict, schools are a vital source of safety and hope for children, allowing them to learn, play and escape the horrors of war. Yet, recent years have seen devastating damage to access to education in emergencies. Between 2009 and 2012, armed non-state groups, state military and security forces, and armed criminal groups attacked thousands of schoolchildren, university students, teachers, academics and education establishments in at least 70 countries worldwide^{xxxix}. Last Year, attacks on schools and hospitals were prevalent, linked to the

increasing use of air strikes and explosive weapons in populated areas.^{xi} As referenced in the Report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, data collected in 2015 indicated that when explosive weapons had been used in populated areas, 92 per cent of those killed or injured were civilians, including in playgrounds, hospitals and crowded streets and queuing for food.^{xii} Fighting forces have also used schools and universities for military purposes in at least 26 countries experiencing armed conflict over the past decade.^{xiii}

Preventing and addressing violence, exploitation and abuse of children in all forms and in all settings should be central to Canada's approach to child protection and enhancing international peace and security. Safe and secure schools and education systems are of particular relevance to Global Affairs Canada's efforts to strengthen national child protection systems that prevent and respond to violence, exploitation and abuse. The ICPNC is encouraged by Canada's continued leadership in investing in educating and protecting children affected by crises, including the commitments made by the Prime Minister and the Minister for International Development, earlier in 2016, to ensure that the educational needs of children and youth are prioritised as part of Canada's response to the ongoing crises in Iraq and Syria, and that Canada's humanitarian assistance *'will target the most vulnerable, including children.'*^{xliii} Canada's continued leadership on this critical issue is welcomed.

- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should Increase investments in education and protection programs and safe and secure learning environments. This should include support to the Education Cannot Wait Fund, through articulating a strong political commitment, a significant funding commitment, and providing continued technical support - leveraging Canadian excellence and expertise.**
- **Recommendation: Canada should take a strong stand against attacks on education and support realization of SDG 14.a - *to provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all* - by endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration^{xliv} in order to express its political support for the protection and continuation of education in armed conflict. Moreover, Canada should endorse and implement the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict^{xlv}.**
- **Recommendation: Global Affairs Canada should develop, adopt and promote conflict-sensitive approaches to education^{xlvi} in international humanitarian and resilient-development programs.**

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ⁱ Statement from Minister Bibeau on Universal Children's Day, November 20, 2015.

<http://www.international.gc.ca/media/dev/news-communiqués/2015/11/20a.aspx?lang=eng>

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ⁱⁱⁱ <http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/development-developpement/iar-consultations-eai/document.aspx?lang=eng>

^{iv} <https://plan-international.org/state-worlds-girls-2013-adolescent-girls-and-disasters>

^v <https://plan-international.org/state-worlds-girls-2015-unfinished-business>

^{vi} Pinheiro, P (2006) World Report on Violence Against Children. United Nations, New York

^{vii} WHO (2000) World Report on Violence and Health, World Health Organisation, Geneva

^{viii} End Violence: Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children,

<http://files7.webydo.com/92/9216880/UploadedFiles/AB4FCF9F-566D-151A-84D9-A2237991AE82.pdf>

^{ix} http://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_57990.html

^x <http://www.icrw.org/child-marriage-facts-and-figures>

^{xi} <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/themes/health/>

^{xii} <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs364/en/>

^{xiii} <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs364/en/>

^{xiv} IBID.

^{xv} <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs348/en/>

^{xvi} Report of Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, *Beyond Survival: Protecting and Empowering Children and Youth*, June 2015,

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/hoc/Committee/412/FAAE/Reports/RP8054465/faaerp13/faaerp13-e.pdf>

^{xvii} These include SDGs 4.1 – 4.3 (*equal access to quality pre-primary, primary, secondary, technical, vocational, and tertiary education*), SDG 4.4 (*By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship*), SDG 8.5 (*by 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value*), and SDG 8.6 (*By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training*).

^{xviii} In April 2013, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child issued General Comment 16: *State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights* which states that, "all businesses must meet their responsibilities regarding children's rights and States must ensure they do so". This includes the operations of Canadian businesses operating overseas.

^{xix} Mitchell, P. and Borchard, C. (2014). Mainstreaming children's vulnerabilities and capacities into community-based adaptation to enhance impact. *Climate and Development* 6(4), p.372–381.

^{xx} Children in a Changing Climate Coalition (2015). Child-centred adaptation: realising children's rights in a changing climate.

http://www.childreninachangingclimate.org/uploads/6/3/1/1/63116409/realising_childrens_rights_in_a_changing_climate.pdf

^{xxi} <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

^{xxii} U. Butler, & K. Teamey. (2014). Conclusion: Unlearning participation. In E.K.M Tisdall, U. Butler, and A. Gadda. (Eds.), *Children and Young People's Participation and Its Transformative Potential* (pp. 208-224). Basingstoke: Palgrave.

xxiii Children's participation is defined as an '...ongoing processes, which include information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and in which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and shape the outcome of such processes.' United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2009). *General Comment No. 12: The right of the child to be heard*. CRC/C/GC/12.

xxiv http://international.gc.ca/development-developpement/priorities-priorites/secure_futures_children-avenir_sur_enfants.aspx?lang=eng

xxv <http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12149.doc.htm>

xxvi https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/event-pdf/CompactforYoungPeopleinHumanitarianAction-FINAL_EDITED_VERSION.pdf

xxvii Laura, Lundy, "'Voice' is not enough: conceptualizing Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child." *British Educational Research Journal* 33, no. 6 (2007): 927-942.

xxviii <http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12149.doc.htm>

xxix <http://www.unicef.org/hac2016/>

xxx [Report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict](#), S/2016/447, 13 May 2016.

xxxi <http://dgpapp.forces.gc.ca/en/defence-policy-review/docs/defence-policy-review-consultation-paper.pdf>

xxxii https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples_eng_June12.pdf

xxxiii Save the Children has found that 91% of development & military staff who have taken a training course in child rights and protection assert that such courses provide new skills that are useful in child protection in the field.

http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/sites/default/files/documents/summary_of_findings-kap_assessment.pdf

xxxiv <http://dgpapp.forces.gc.ca/en/defence-policy-review/docs/defence-policy-review-consultation-paper.pdf>

xxxv According to the Council on Foreign Relations "Most of the twenty-five countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage also rank highly on global indexes of fragility and vulnerability to natural disasters."

http://www.cfr.org/peace-conflict-and-human-rights/child-marriage/p32096#!/?cid=otr_marketing_use-child_marriage_Infoguide#!%2F

xxxvi Grieg, Kai. *The War Children of the World*. (Bergen, Norway: War and Children Identity Project 2001). Available online at <http://www.warandchildren.org>

xxxvii <http://gbvguidelines.org/>

xxxviii <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/areas/Armedconflict/lang--en/index.htm>

xxxix Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2014.

http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/eua_2014_full_0.pdf

xl [Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict](#), A/70/836–S/2016/360, 20 April 2016.

xli [Report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict](#), S/2016/447, 13 May 2016.

xlii [Lessons in War 2015: Military Use of Schools and Universities During Armed Conflict](#), Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, November 2012.

xliii *Addressing the Crises in Iraq and Syria and Impacts on the Region: Helping Those Most Affected*, February 8, 2016, <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/02/08/addressing-crises-iraq-and-syria-and-impacts-region-helping-those-most-affected>

xliv [Safe Schools Declaration](#), May 2015.

xlv [Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict](#), December 2014.

xlvi See [INEE Guidance Note on Conflict Sensitive Education](#), INEE, 2013.