

Critical Issues for Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is a complex process which has implications for a wide range of human security issues. For example, strategies to manage complex peace support operations, or rebuild trust in local police forces, need to take into account the importance of gender issues, the impact of war on children, the destabilizing impact of small arms proliferation, or the link between respect for human rights and peace.

Canada has been at the vanguard of international efforts to understand and explore ways to bring creative solutions to these issues.

War-Affected Children

For Canada, assisting war-affected children is not only a matter of addressing their needs, it is a matter of protecting their rights.

Through the Peacebuilding Fund, the Peacebuilding Program and

other mechanisms, Canada supports the work of Canadian and international NGOs, multilateral institutions and other Governments in assisting children affected by armed conflict. In particular, Canada is concerned with the growing phenomenon of child soldiers in many regions around the globe. Today, there are more than 300 000 girls and boys who serve in armies and rebel groups — not only as fighters but also as cooks, porters, messengers, spies, labourers and sexual slaves.

Canada is supporting the NGO Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, while at the same time allocating funds to community-based projects aimed at demobilizing and reintegrating these children into their communities. Canada is also supporting a number of activities, such as a project aimed at strengthening local capacity to counsel children traumatized by the massacres in Algeria (in

co-operation with Norway) and UNICEF programs aimed at the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers in Liberia and Uganda.

Canada also strongly supports

the work of Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict, and has developed partnerships with other governments and international NGOs, such as Swedish Save the Children, on issues including training for peacekeepers on children's rights. Securing international agreement on the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is also a priority for Canada.

Gender Issues in Peacebuilding

Gender equality is a cross-cutting theme to be integrated into all policies, programs and projects. Canada has long been a leader in factoring the gender dimension into development assistance, and in pursuing women's equality as an international human rights issue. Gender is a factor in peacebuilding activities since women and men experience conflict differently and have differential access to resources (including power and decision making during conflicts). Women, as well as men, have a fundamental stake in building peaceful communities. Their contributions to peacebuilding need to be encouraged and supported, while recognizing that women's economic and political marginalization means that they



CIDA Photo: Roger LeMoyné, Afghanistan.