

Human Rights in Emergencies: Addressing the needs and realities of women and girls

Parliamentary Strategy Summary

On Thursday, March 21, the Canadian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (CAPPD), in association with CARE Canada and Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights invited parliamentarians to participate in a strategy session on ‘*Human Rights in Emergencies: Addressing the needs and realities of women and girls*’.

Premised on an understanding that women’s and girls’ rights remain furthest behind in conflict and emergency settings, but that a more systematic approach for ensuring that humanitarian action responds to women’s and girls’ rights and needs is within reach, the event brought together voices from the field, as well as experts from civil society and Senators and Members of Parliament committed to women and girls’ rights.

The objective of the session was to facilitate an all-party parliamentary dialogue aimed at sustaining Canada’s long standing leadership in support of women’s and girls’ health and rights in emergency settings - particularly in the year of the 25th Anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development, and in the lead-up to the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 20th Anniversary of Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2020.

// Briefing

Fatouma Zara Laouan, Emergency Response Specialist on Gender in Emergencies with CARE’s Rapid Response Team in Niger, shared reflections on her work in refugee camps and stressed that services supporting sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and addressing gender-based violence (GBV) are not only effective and feasible in humanitarian settings, but are as life-saving as food, water, and shelter. She underscored that in all circumstances, humanitarian organizations must uphold humanitarian principles of *humanity, neutrality, impartiality* and *independence*, respect local laws and customs, and respond to women’s and girls’ needs and requests.

Echoing this sentiment, UNFPA Senior Humanitarian Advisor Dan Baker raised the devastating impact of Cyclone Idai on the emergency and disaster relief infrastructure in Mozambique. He emphasized that SRHR services, as well as those to address GBV must be included in states’ and organizations’ initial responses to disasters, conflict, and other emergencies.

// Call to Action

CARE Canada President and CEO Gillian Barth noted the exciting and unprecedented way in which both policy and practice communities in the fields of humanitarian action and global health have come together to ensure women’s and girls’ unique needs and contributions in emergency settings are no longer treated as an afterthought, but as essential to effective and sustainable humanitarian response and recovery. Noting Canada’s strong track record on women and girls’ rights – from the Muskoka Initiative and the establishment of the annual resolution on violence against women at the UN Human Rights Council, to the Whistler Declaration and the International Conference on Population and Development on the Road to 2030 – Ms. Barth invited Canadian parliamentarians to participate in a Year of Action for



Action Canada
for Sexual Health & Rights



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF PARLIAMENTARIANS
ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT



ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES PARLEMENTAIRES
POUR LA POPULATION ET LE DÉVELOPPEMENT



Women and Girls' in Emergencies (see below) -- to help drive and sustain momentum towards a more gender-responsive humanitarian system.

// Discussion

In a discussion facilitated by the Honourable Senator Marilou McPhedran, parliamentarians discussed the responsibility and opportunity they have to propel action to help uphold women's and girls' rights in emergency settings.

Parliamentarians raised important issues and considerations including the need to ensure these same services are also available here in Canada, the need to address racism and neo-colonialism in our approach, and the need to work closely with NGOs and experts in the field. Parliamentary diplomacy and inter-parliamentary dialogue were proposed as key avenues for Canadian parliamentarians to share information and best practices with their counterparts in other countries.

// Resources

In anticipation of a number of key moments over the coming year, CAPPD in association with CARE Canada and Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights look forward to working with parliamentarians from all parties, to:

- Build awareness and understanding of SRHR and GBV as feasible, in-demand, lifesaving and cost effective interventions in emergency settings among Canadians.
- Foster understanding within global decision-making processes of the paradigm shifts underway towards a more gender-responsive humanitarian system.
- Leverage parliamentary processes to sustain momentum in support of initiatives to
- advance the health and rights of women and girls in emergency settings.
- Hold the Government of Canada accountable for the full implementation of the Whistler Declaration on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action, and the IPCI Ottawa Statement of Commitment.

Some upcoming opportunities include:

- 5th Anniversary Bring Back Our Girls (14 April 2019)
- Ministerial-level conference, Closing the Gaps in the Humanitarian Response to Sexual and Gender Based Violence, Oslo, Norway (24 May 2019)
- Women Deliver Conference. Vancouver (3-6 June 2019)
- International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict (19 June 2019)
- 16 Days of Activism on GBV (25 Nov - 10 Dec)
- Beijing+25 Global Women's Forum, France

For more information and resources to support your engagement through a Year of Action for Women and Girls in Emergencies, please contact: info@cappd.ca

Year of Action for Women and Girls in Emergencies

March 2019

International Women's Day (8 March) | Syria Conflict Enters Ninth Year (15 March) | Yemen Intensification of Hostilities Enters Fifth Year (26 March)

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Suggested Action: Sign [#March4Women petition](#); SO30/Senators' Statement highlighting conflict and emergency settings as critical frontier in fulfilling women and girls rights and Agenda 2030.

Suggested Tweet: More can be done to uphold women and girls' rights where they are most under threat: in conflict and emergency settings. That's why - as the world marks 4 yrs of hostilities in #Yemen, and 8 yrs of conflict in #Syria - I'm pledging to make #March4Women. care.ca/march4women

April 2019

5th Anniversary Bring Back Our Girls (14 April)

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Suggested action: CAPPD letter to Prime Minister and Minister of International Development, in the lead-up to the one-year anniversary of the Whistler Declaration on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action, requesting details on the measures taken by the Government of Canada to implement that Declaration.

Suggested Tweet: April 14 marks 5 yrs since abduction of #ChibokGirls' in Nigeria. 112 of those girls are still missing. Upholding women and girls rights means ending impunity for crimes against women and girls in conflict. #BringBackOurGirls

May 2019

Ministerial-level conference, Closing the Gaps in the Humanitarian Response to Sexual and Gender Based Violence. Oslo, Norway (24 May 2019)

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Suggested action: SO30/Senator's Statement underlining importance of coordinating with other donors to ensure SGBV prevention, risk mitigation and response programming is provided for in every humanitarian response

Suggested Tweet: More than 70% of women in conflict and emergency situations have experienced #GenderBasedViolence. It is high-time that the international community takes action to uphold #WomensRights where they are most under threat: in conflict and emergency settings.

June 2019

Women Deliver Conference. Vancouver. (3-6th June 2019) | International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict (19th June 2019)

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Suggested action: Dedicate a Committee hearing to survivors and experts on SRHR and GBV in conflict and emergency settings; Seek adoption, in both houses of Parliament, a CAPPD all-party motion underscoring the importance of upholding women's rights where they are most under threat: in conflict and emergency settings.

Suggested Tweet: More than 70% of women in conflict and emergency situations have experienced #GenderBasedViolence. Today, on International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, I'm reaffirming my pledge to #SpeakUp for #WomensRights in emergencies.

August 2019

World Humanitarian Day (19th August 2019)

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Suggested action: Op-ed or letter to editor highlighting women in conflict and emergency settings as first responders, community organizers and critical to the recovery of their communities, yet under-represented and under-supported in humanitarian decision-making structures

Suggested Tweet: This #WorldHumanitarianDay, I am proud to #SpeakUp for the thousands of women whose contributions to response and recovery in conflict and emergency settings are often overlooked and under-supported.

September 2019

Annual Meeting on the [Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies](#). Ottawa (TBC)

October 2019

International Day of the Girl Child (11 October)

November - December 2019

The Nairobi Summit on ICPD25: Accelerating the promise (12-15 Nov)

16 Days of Activism on GBV (25 Nov - 10 Dec)

June 2020

Beijing+25 Global Women's Forum, France.