



POLICY BRIEF | JANUARY 2021

# TEACHING THE WPS AGENDA IN A CHANGING SECURITY LANDSCAPE

## WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY CURRICULUM CONSORTIUM

by Erin Cooper

### THE PROBLEM

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was unanimously supported in 2000. Twenty years in, even with such broad ranging support, progress towards the goals of Women, Peace and Security (WPS) has been slower than expected. In Canada and the United States, there is a legal mandate to incorporate Women, Peace and Security in the military and civil service sector, but implementation has been met with many challenges. Trainings and educational programs on WPS are created in silos such as academia, military, government, etc., and are often ad hoc. WPS and gender-based analysis must be mainstreamed throughout the entirety of the defense sector. Professional military education (PME) was identified as a key area to target to ensure a broader knowledge base and application of the WPS agenda.

### THE SOLUTION

Multi-stakeholder engagement convenings, like this consortium, are a tangible step to better integrate Women, Peace and Security throughout the entire defense sector. It is necessary to professionalize the WPS field through cross-pollination of military service members, educational institutions (PME and civilian), and practitioners. Through sustained convenings with a diverse group, WPS training and education standards as well as crucial resources are shared to broadly strengthen the entire field. Regular collaboration across sectors can help map the field, inventory strategies to professionalize the field, and encourage institutions to offer more training and educational programs on WPS on a regular basis.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

Introduce gender analysis/[gender-based analysis plus \(GBA+\)](#) early in the career of military and civil service members, treating it as a core capacity integrated throughout all levels and aspects of training and education;

- Start with the gender assessment of a situation to mainstream gender at the beginning of a decision-making or project design process;
- Integrate gender analysis/GBA+ and the WPS framework in operational military planning and training scenarios as taught by PME;
- Prioritize cross-pollination between PME, academic institutions, and policymakers for successful integration across the field; “real-world” applications, curriculum design, terminology/vocabulary, research, and theory should all inform each other;
- Ensure frequent consultation with civil society to design, monitor, and evaluate implementation of strategy and commitments;
- Professionalize the field with regular convenings and budget support that demonstrate institutional commitment to gender analysis/GBA+ and integration.

## INTRODUCTION

In October 2020, Our Secure Future: Women Make the Difference partnered with the Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security within the Canadian Defence Academy to examine how to advance understanding of the WPS Agenda in the military context. This Consortium is made possible through a grant from the Mobilizing Insights in Defence and Security (MINDS) program in the Canadian government. The main objective of the WPS Curriculum Consortium was to draw on the expertise of the network of WPS actors among a global, intersectional, and crosscutting set of WPS stakeholders.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this consortium was held virtually over three days. This both limited and expanded the participation in the events as well as the activities and presentations from the panelists. Breakout rooms were facilitated during multiple sessions, comments were captured in the chat box, and additional feedback was gathered from the polling feature.

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The consortium had a range of 60 participants from across the Canadian Armed Forces, the United States, United Kingdom and Jamaican militaries, as well as thought leaders from civil society organizations and academia. This policy brief reflects the presentations from panelists and discussion amongst participants during break-out sessions and the chatbox.

### Key areas that framed the consortium:

- Strategies used to teach WPS principles in ways that are relevant to a military audience;
- Strategies and best practices to navigate institutional constraints and challenges to integrating WPS perspectives in training and education;
- Lessons learned when integrating WPS approaches in military training and education;
- Teaching the WPS Agenda in a changing security landscape.

## BACKGROUND

In August 2017, Our Secure Future: Women Make the Difference and Peace is Loud convened the first Women, Peace and Security Curriculum Consortium, a gathering of 27 experts and thought leaders from across US civilian and military learning institutions, media experts, and policy practitioners, at the US Naval War College.

Despite a rising demand in international affairs-related careers that require gender and WPS expertise, current trainings and educational programs on WPS are created in silos, such as academia, military, government, etc., and are often ad hoc. In order to professionalize the field and address what practitioners feel is missing when it comes to the implementation of Women, Peace and Security, and more generally, diversity and inclusion in the Canadian context, this event examined how to advance understanding of the WPS Agenda in the U.S. military or in the Canadian Armed Forces.



Members of the Canadian Armed Forces.  
Photo: Canadian Press/Jeff McIntosh.

## ANALYSIS & KEY TAKEAWAYS

### INTRODUCE GENDER ANALYSIS/GBA+ EARLY IN THE CAREER OF MILITARY AND CIVIL SERVICE MEMBERS,

treating it as a **core capacity** integrated throughout all levels and aspects of training and education. Develop leadership and institutional “buy-in” early and reinforce often in training as a core competency for advancement. Many participants felt that gender was introduced far too late in their careers without proper training or education.

Understanding the transformational nature of WPS at this later stage led to many participants championing the agenda, but meant the “golden thread” was often missing from the first half of their service. This is particularly the case for male champions for WPS. Male participants recognized that gender was not a barrier to their service or success within their careers. Gender analysis/[GBA+](#) is not given appropriate operational weight, despite the empirical research and political will. Gender-based analysis needs to be presented as a cross-cutting analytical tool and should be integrated across the PME curriculum. Gender-based analysis should not be treated as a special-interest topic for those who self-select based on their interest.

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For military implementation, it is crucial to integrate WPS concepts into pre-deployment training and education courses, as well as to include training and practice in operational planning and institutional doctrine. It must include gender analysis, resources, and a civil society leader engagement matrix for all gender advisors to be able to address human security issues like human trafficking before and after conflict, responding to gender-based violence, or speaking to gender dynamics in countering violent extremism operations. This means operationalizing a gender perspective across departments, and adjusting language and guidance to address human security needs, so that troops are able to engage with all genders of their fellow soldiers and civilians.

The sentiment that timing is critical was echoed by civilian academics who find WPS to be not well integrated across institutions. Rather, it is dependent on specific professors who try to incorporate it into their classes, without broader integration in educational programs as a core subject. One panelist identified that there is currently a bottom-up approach based on student interest in emerging security issues, but students need an awareness of policy frameworks,

their history, and evolution. She continued by specifically recommending that WPS and the role of gender in conflict be introduced to undergraduate students.

### START WITH THE GENDER ASSESSMENT OF A SITUATION TO MAINSTREAM GENDER AT THE BEGINNING OF A DECISION-MAKING OR PROJECT DESIGN PROCESS.

The military’s notion of combat operations has changed; they must now respond to a wide variety of issues. A gender perspective needs to be integrated across the full spectrum of military operations ranging from high intensity conflict to stability operations. This includes challenges such as nebulous terrorist cells, cyberattacks, global pandemics, the effects of climate change, and complex societal issues such as protection of civilians, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), and Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC). National security requirements and human needs are interconnected within future deployments focused on stability operations, securing civil society, and vulnerable populations. A gender assessment will help reframe blindspots and improve operational effectiveness.

Framing operational effectiveness more broadly and recognizing the limitations of traditional masculinist mindsets will improve security outcomes. In addition, enhancing traits like emotional intelligence, earning community trust, and focusing on retention will generate a force that can better respond to these new aspects of security.



*[Speaking about the Colombian peace process] “One of the things they did, for example, was remove the idea that men with guns essentially could forgive other men with guns for crimes committed against women.*

*They introduced the fact that sexual violence needed to be included in a ceasefire and could not be negotiated away in a peace agreement. It’s an issue of justice along the types of things we’re talking about.”*

*-Ambassador Jacqueline O’Neill*

One panelist described an experience in which a post-conflict nation experienced difficulties in rebuilding because of food insecurity. The mine removal teams relied on information from local leaders who advised clearing roads. This lacked consultation with female farmers, who would have pointed out the necessity of clearing mines in agricultural fields, around schools, and at water sources. Planners would save time, effort, and resources by initially performing a gender assessment, accelerating the stabilization process, and avoiding a deterioration back into conflict.

**PRIORITIZE CROSS-POLLINATION BETWEEN PME, ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS, AND POLICYMAKERS FOR SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION ACROSS THE FIELD.**

“Real-world” applications, curriculum design, terminology or vocabulary, research, and theory should all inform each other. There is an important relationship between academics teaching the theory of Women, Peace and Security in the classroom, and practitioners, like members of the armed forces and civil service, advancing WPS on the ground. Simultaneously, the military is a profession in which newly recruited service members are pushed straight into the practice of the profession before having the theory of how or why it functions.

Academics often do not have the “in the field” experience of implementers and one panelist outlined how the military’s focus on operational effectiveness of WPS has led to better buy-in from those in upper leadership positions. Combined with the military’s ability to lay out policy and procedure, this provides an opportunity to PME to be a leader, advancing WPS in broad application of curriculum integration.

The challenge of teaching gender in the military was brought up by several panelists with various approaches suggested and discussed. There were cautionary comments on an over-reliance on operational effectiveness to “justify” a need for WPS from members of civil society. One suggested a human rights-based approach and the need for ensuring marginalized groups have a fundamental right to participate and lead in peace processes.

*“There are tensions between the academic sector and the people who are doing the practical work that we do in development or diplomacy or with the military. I think those gaps have to be bridged and one of the things we actually set up was a programmatic framework on bridging theory and practice -- let’s get the actors together on all sides of this so we can do a better job of transmitting to the people who are in operations of all kind what they need to know and what could be useful to them.”*



-Ambassador Melanne Verweir

From participants and panelists coming from the military, though, most suggested meeting recruits and soldiers where they are, recognizing that many of these (mostly male) members have never encountered gender or feminist theory. In a traditionally male space dominated by masculine values, gender issues can seem to some outside of the realm of

the mission. Their experiences both within the military and PME narrow the motivation for understanding and applying gender-based analysis.

The debate between whether or not to use a rights-based approach or operational effectiveness is a *necessary tension* that breeds better understanding and outcomes among the different aspects of WPS. As one panelist remarked, there are various approaches to take from the feminist approach: examining power dynamics; a human rights based approach ensuring marginalized groups have a fundamental right to participate and lead in these processes; personalizing WPS by recognizing “women” could be your mothers, daughters, sisters; or applying a utilitarian standpoint based on the notion that peace processes and military operations that involve women are far more likely to succeed. It is not necessary to only advocate for a single approach. Rather, it is crucial to be aware of all approaches and utilize the right one based on the situation and audience. This awareness and understanding are better facilitated with sustained interaction through diverse convenings.

In the wake of a worldwide racial reckoning galvanized by protests against the ongoing marginalization of communities, a broad range of voices are calling for the integration of diverse perspectives and strengthening diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts across peace and security processes. Sources from the Global South and case studies from women peacebuilders are necessary additions to keep WPS current and relevant to the evolving nature of human rights movements around the world. Involving the work of practitioners strengthens the agenda further as those “on the ground” see their work reflected in institutions who are teaching and influencing policy creation.

**ENSURE FREQUENT CONSULTATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY TO DESIGN, MONITOR, AND EVALUATE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGY, COMMITMENTS, AND EDUCATION.**

Women-led civil society organizations, largely from the Global South, were the driving force behind the creation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). The success of WPS continues to be due to the work of women peacebuilders across the globe. “Nothing about us, without us” remains a crucial watch phrase as consultation with civil society organizations and those who are on the “receiving end” of policy not only improves implementation, but also enables the redesign of peace and security structures, budget disbursement, and an examination of systemic power dynamics. It means reconceptualizing and rebuilding the peace table with less focus on warring parties and more focus on peacebuilders.

This is an important step that goes beyond virtue signaling to ensuring accountability to governmental commitments, and measuring actions and outcomes. It begins domestically, as mentioned by multiple panelists. If a gender assessment is the start to any project or policy design, those skills are

applicable to the strategic design of domestic security commitments. WPS is more than a foreign policy function; it is a framework to analyze a wide array of tactical operations such as ensuring a diverse force, providing a comprehensive disaster response, or addressing long term effects of climate change. Students within PME must understand the theory and tactical opportunity of WPS, and also the skills required to engage in the work. WPS requires meaningful consultation with women-led organizations in a way that is not extractive and disempowering. Military education will be less effective if students are not exposed to the views and perspectives of the external perspectives and civil society organizations working to advance the WPS agenda.

**PROFESSIONALIZE THE FIELD WITH REGULAR CONVENINGS AND BUDGETARY SUPPORT THAT DEMONSTRATES INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT TO GENDER ANALYSIS/GBA+ AND INTEGRATION INTO ALL LEVELS OF EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES.** Without budgeting for implementation, National Action Plans, internal capacity training and education, gender advisers, and high level leadership, the growth of WPS will stagnate. Several panelists mentioned recognition from various nations of UNSCR 1325’s anniversary in October, but the failure to prioritize long term strategy or leadership to move Women, Peace and Security forward. Another panelist outlined how problematic it is for learners to hear messaging that WPS and incorporating gender analysis are priorities, while seeing institutions fail to integrate them as such, leading to questioning the usefulness of the agenda.

One key way to demonstrate commitment, while ensuring WPS is more effectively taught and implemented, would be the development of annual military consortiums. This could be a first step toward creating a professional network of gender

advisors within the military, civil service, and academic gender experts to better serve their institutions. Military institutions should support yearly consortiums to build a professional network of gender experts to better serve their institutions. This would benefit the students who will become military and civil service leaders, but also build the entire field of WPS.

## NEXT STEPS

Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy and Feminist Foreign Policy stem from Women, Peace and Security. As more states adopt a gendered approach, potential future steps must be integrated in the central tenet of Women, Peace and Security as laid out in UNSCR 1325-- increasing women’s participation in decision making in international peace and security matters. It is crucial to continue to expand the voices and perspectives of this space including international viewpoints. This means broadening from traditional western perspectives and biases, working in consultation with civil society and women led groups, acknowledging differences between feminist movements and regions, moving from a gender binary, and reconciling a historical colonization of indigenous lands.

With secure, accessible funding, these steps could move from ad hoc, one-off engagements to a consistent movement forward that is able to build upon itself. In summary:

- **Secure accessible funding;**
- **Professionalize the network;**
- **Expand the voices and perspectives;**
- **Annualize events that cross-pollinate across sectors.**



Photo: US State Department.

## PARTICIPANTS IN ATTENDANCE

Morrell Andrews	Global Affairs Canada	Dyan Mazurana, PhD	Tufts University
Ketty Anyeko	University of British Columbia	Ambassador Steven McGann	US Ambassador (ret); The Stevenson Group
Major Othneil Blackwood	Jamaica Defence Force	Colonel James M. Minnich, EdD	Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies
Staff Sergeant Jane Boissonneault	Royal Canadian Mounted Police	Lieutenant Colonel Carolyne Möller	UK Ministry of Defence
Brigadier General Lise Bourgon	Canadian Armed Forces	Major Carl Nielsen	Canadian Armed Forces
Julia Bracken	Global Affairs Canada		Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security
Karen Breeck, MD	MD Potentials Ltd.	Alan Okros, PhD	Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security- Canada
	Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security	Ambassador Jacqueline O'Neill	
Vanessa Brown	Consortium on Gender, Security, and Human Rights	Brenda Oppermann, JD	US Naval War College
Carol Cohn, PhD	Jamaica Defence Forces	Chantal de Jonge Oudraat, PhD	Women In International Security Royal Military College Saint-Jean, Canada
Major Alicia Cooper	Our Secure Future		
Erin Cooper	Canadian Department of National Defence	Mélanie Paquette	University of Vermont
		Jody M. Prescott, LLM	Our Secure Future
Karen D. Davis, PhD	Our Secure Future	Hannah Proctor	Canadian Department of National Defence
Sahana Dharmapuri	US Department of Defense	Josee Robidoux	University of California, Davis
Cori Fleser	York University	Jolynn Shoemaker, JD	Canadian Department of National Defence
Tammy George, PhD			
Lieutenant-Colonel S.A. (Sean) Hackett, CD	Canadian Defence Academy	Meaghan Shoemaker	Global Affairs Canada
Hanni Hanson	Compton Foundation	Jules Sisk, PhD	US Naval War College
Ellen Haring, PhD	Women In International Security	David G. Smith, PhD	Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security
Chief Warrant Officer Crystal Harris	Canadian Armed Forces	Jessica Smith, PhD	Center for New American Security
Jeannette Haynie, PhD, Lt.Col.	Athena Leadership Project	Brooke Stedman, LLM	Canada Border Services Agency
Stéfanie von Hlatky, PhD	Queen's University	Georgiana Stegarescu	US Ambassador (ret); Mobilizing Men as Allies for WPS
Carol Hottenrott, MPhil	US Naval War College	Ambassador Don Steinberg	The WPS Group
Alana Husson	Canadian Armed Forces	Kristine St. Pierre	UK Ministry of Defence
Miki Jacevic	Our Secure Future	Colonel Rosie Stone	University of Ottawa
Carolyn J. Kenney	US Department of Defense	Rebecca Tiessen, PhD	
Major Mathieu Lagacé	Canadian Department of National Defence	Lieutenant-Colonel Natalie M Trogus	US Marine Corps
	US Joint Chiefs of Staff- Department of Defense		US Ambassador (ret); Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security
Elizabeth Lape, PhD	Canadian Department of National Defence	Ambassador Melanne Vermeer	
Major Samantha Laplante		Lieutenant-Colonel Rowena Williams	Global Affairs Canada
Marion Laurence, PhD	Canadian Forces College		Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security
Annik Lussier Rez	Global Affairs Canada	Stefan Wolejszo, PhD	Our Secure Future
Lauren Mackenzie, PhD	US Marine Corps University	George Koichi Wong	Women, Peace and Security Network, Canada
Heather MacKinnon	Global Affairs Canada		Daniel K. Inouye Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies
	Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security	Saira Yamin, PhD	
Colin Magee, PhD	Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security	Chief Superintendent Maureen Levy	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Melinda Mansour	National University of General San Martin	Erin Baines, PhD	University of British Columbia
		Muhammad Bakini	University of British Columbia



The Consortium is made possible through a grant from the Mobilizing Insights in Defence and Security (MINDS) program in the Canadian government, Our Secure Future: Women Make the Difference, and the Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security. For more information, please see our [policy brief](#) from the first Women, Peace and Security Curriculum Consortium in 2017.

## OUR SECURE FUTURE

[oursecurefuture.org](http://oursecurefuture.org)



Our Secure Future: Women Make the Difference (OSF) is a program of the Colorado-based One Earth Future Foundation. OSF works to strengthen the Women, Peace and Security movement to enable effective policy decision-making for a more peaceful world.

## ONE EARTH FUTURE

[oneearthfuture.org](http://oneearthfuture.org)



ONE EARTH FUTURE fosters sustainable peace by partnering with innovative world leaders, global development agencies and communities to see complex problems at the root of armed conflict in new ways and solve them together through orchestrated collaboration.

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## CONTACT US

 303.533.1715

 [oursecurefuture@oneearthfuture.org](mailto:oursecurefuture@oneearthfuture.org)

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