



ICCRP

International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership

Intergenerational Advisory Committee Roundtable Discussion Report

20 June 2026



Children's Rights to Mental Health and Well-being

Report prepared by Malak Elgendy

Table of Contents



ICCRP
International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership

What is the ICCRP and IAC? 3

Speakers List 4

Introduction 5

5.1 Opening Remarks

5.2 Overview of the Topic

Roundtable Discussion Questions 6

Panellists' Contributions 7

7.1 Beatriz Costa da Silva (Brazil, Young Person)

7.2 Kyrstin Dumont (Canada, Adult)

7.3 Benyam Mezmur (South Africa, Adult)

7.4 Fatima Warraich (Canada, Young Person)

Discussion Summary (Q&A) 13

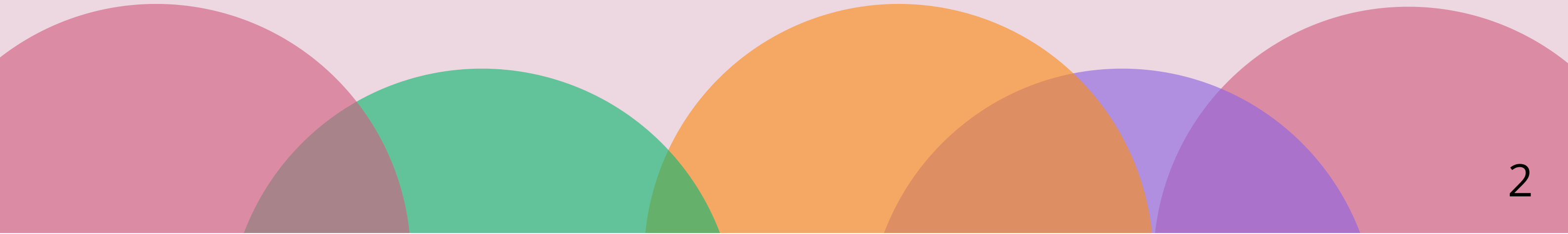
Closing Remarks 18

18.1 Closing Reflections by Phalo Damba

18.2 Key Takeaways by Vicky Johnson..... 19

Special Thanks 20

Helpful Links 21



What is the ICCRP?



ICCRP

International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership



The International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership (ICCRP) is an international research network that focuses on children's rights. Its goal is to further the implementation of children's rights in research, policy, and practice. The ICCRP has relationships between people of different generations who live in and outside of Canada.

What is the IAC?



The Intergenerational Advisory Committee (IAC) shares knowledge, advice, and recommendations to guide the ICCRP on how we can support intergenerational partnerships and the implementation of children's rights.

.....

One of its key activities is to convene virtual roundtables of its members to foster international global dialogues on different topics to further children's rights understanding and implementation.

.....

The IAC includes 9 adults and 12 young people (who are both Canadian and international) from ICCRP case study research and partner organizations. The IAC is supported by Dr. Tara Collins (ICCRP Project Director), Valeria Millan (ICCRP Child and Youth Participant Coordinator), Steven Gibson (Project Manager), and many talented and wonderful Research Assistants.

Speakers List



ICCRP

International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership

Moderators

Tara Collins and Valeria Millan

Opening Remarks

Tamás Szilagyi-Kiss (Canada, Child/Young Person)

Victor Karunan (Thailand, Adult)

Panellists

Beatriz Costa da Silva (Brazil, Child/Young Person)

Kyrstin Dumont (Canada, Adult)

Benyam Mezmur (South Africa, Adult)

Fatima Warraich (Canada, Child/Young Person)

Closing Remarks

Phalo Damba (South Africa, Child/Young Person)

Vicky Johnson (Scotland, Adult)





The theme, “**Children’s Rights to Mental Health and Well-being,**” explores mental health and well-being as a fundamental right of children and adolescents, and the extent to which this right is currently being upheld. Victor Karunan highlighted that the protection of children’s mental health extends beyond charity and welfare, and should be recognized as a human rights and justice issue. In his view, a country or society that values children must also value their mental health.

Introduction by Tamás Szilagyi-Kiss and Victor Karunan

Tamás Szilagyi-Kiss provided an introduction to the ICCRP and IAC:

“The ICCRP is the International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership, an international research organization that focuses on children’s rights. From the perspective of young people, the ICCRP demonstrates a valued commitment to listening to young people and advising them on children’s rights, allowing them to give a firsthand account on issues that concern young people directly.”

“The Intergenerational Advisory Council (IAC) is a group closely tied with the ICCRP, sharing knowledge, advice, and recommendations to guide the ICCRP and other intergenerational partnerships around the world. It currently includes 9 adults and 12 young people from all over the world.”

Victor Karunan shared his perspective on the ICCRP and IAC:

“As a member of the ICCRP for the last 5-6 years, I see this as an international research network, which is one of a kind. There are very few platforms that provide a meaningful space for dialogue between adults and children. As an adult, I’ve learned that children’s participation is not about them speaking alone, but more importantly, about adults learning to listen.”

Tamás Szilagyi-Kiss shared his insights into the value of roundtable discussions:

“Roundtables bring people from different contexts and perspectives together. We can learn and share advice about various topics. These perspectives support shared learning from diverse backgrounds, which is key to the ICCRP and IAC.”

Roundtable Discussion Questions



ICCRP

International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership

Question for all panellists:

Why is the theme of children's rights in mental health and wellness important?

Question for child/youth panellists:

How can children and young people feel supported to have discussions around children's rights to mental health and wellness? Why are child and youth perspectives important on this theme?

Question for adult panellists:

How can you and other adults encourage and motivate other adults to effectively listen to children and young people so that they can impact decision-making concerning mental health and wellness?

Beatriz Costa da Silva
Brazil

Child/Youth Panellist



ICCRP

International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership

Why is the theme of children's rights in mental health and wellness important?

Beatriz highlighted that the current global mental health crisis is characterized by an increase in anxiety and depression. Furthermore, in Brazil, approximately 20 percent of young people between the ages of 10 and 19 face emotional challenges.

According to the World Health Organization, half of the issues reported are regarding mental health. These issues begin to surface around the age of 14, but most cases go unidentified. Mental health should be examined from a holistic perspective, shifting from exclusively addressing anxiety and depression to include other factors such as school pressures, family issues, social media, and global crises.

How can children and young people feel supported to have discussions around children's rights to mental health and wellness? Why are child and youth perspectives important on this theme?

Beatriz suggested that adults should act as a bridge to well-being by welcoming them, listening, and being attentive to their frustrations. Ignoring children and young people in this way forces them to deal with their issues on their own.

Whether from a parent, guardian, therapist, or a trusted adult, feeling welcomed, heard, and respected is what allows children and young people to open up about their struggles.

" Whether you are a child or teenager, you deserve to be heard."



Why is the theme of children's rights in mental health and wellness important?

Kyrstin shared that for Indigenous children, this theme carried a particular significance due to the impacts of colonization, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, systemic racism, and ongoing inequities affecting several generations. Upholding Indigenous children's rights means ensuring that they can access culturally safe mental health support, opportunities to learn languages and traditions, strong connections to family and community, and environments that embrace their authenticity.

Protecting children's mental health should not only be about addressing challenges in the present, but nurturing future leaders, knowledge keepers, parents, and community members. When children's rights are respected, communities become stronger, healthier, and able to carry forward culture, language, and traditions.

How can you and other adults encourage and motivate other adults to effectively listen to children and young people so that they can impact decision-making concerning mental health and wellness?

Adults should encourage one another to listen to children and young people by first recognizing that they are knowledge holders with valuable lived experiences. Kyrstin emphasized that when adults create space for youth voices, they demonstrate respect, humility, and a commitment to shared decision-making.

Creating youth councils, advisory circles, and opportunities for young people to participate in planning and policy development ensures their perspectives are embedded in decision-making processes.

Benyam Mezmur

South Africa

Adult Panellist



ICCRP

International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership

Why is the theme of children's rights in mental health and wellness important?

Benyam highlighted that conversations around mental health addressed many provisions within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly around best interests, child participation, access to information, protection from violence, and the rights to the highest attainable standard of health.

The Convention's preamble states: "a child should grow up in an atmosphere of love, happiness, and understanding." Benyam emphasized mental health as the core of that statement. A failure to prioritize the mental health of children is a failure of Article 19 in relation to violence, abuse, and neglect.

How can you and other adults encourage and motivate other adults to effectively listen to children and young people so that they can impact decision-making concerning mental health and wellness?

Benyam shared that framing mental health as a way to reduce abuse and neglect, while also fostering positive family relations can encourage children to engage with adults. He highlighted the use of positive discipline instead of harsh punishment to help facilitate conversations around mental health.

The association of stigma around mental health is part of the challenge. Benyam emphasized the effects of stigma drive children away from their empowerment, their opportunities, and their self-confidence.

"If you do not have mental health, education becomes almost impossible."

Emerging Issues in Children's Mental Health



ICCRP

International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership

Benyam highlighted two emerging issues in children's mental health: (1) the relationship between mental health and the environment; and **(2)** the relationship between mental health and digital media.

While the core, longstanding issues in children's mental health remain unaddressed, Benyam noted that new challenges are also emerging. He emphasized the role of the international committee for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in facilitating discussions with children around mental health, taking into account the climate and environment, along with digital media.

Regulating social media and banning children from access to these spaces fails to address the mental health challenges linked to social media abuse.

Benyam closed by sharing that resilience is important only if it presents itself naturally. He cautioned that we must collectively move away from using resilience to cover up adult failures.

Resilience is important when children develop it and can cope on their own. Still, legislation, programs, and policies should not be developed to emphasize children's resilience, they should address and prevent issues that expose children to negative mental health challenges, and provide the appropriate services and support for a safer environment.

Fatima Warriach

Canada

Child/Youth Panellist



ICCRP

International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership

Why is the theme of children's rights in mental health and wellness important?

The expectations of children by adults, peers, and mentors create pressures for young people. Children are independent but also rely on the people around them because of their vulnerable age. Fatima pointed to education as one of the most important rights, noting that schools need to pay closer attention to how children are performing.

Beyond children performing well in school, Fatima also highlighted that children should perform well socially. All bullying, including cyberbullying, plays a significant and essential part in the mental health of children. Having experienced social anxiety, Fatima shared her struggles interacting with adults and other children. She emphasized the effects of personal self-esteem and confidence, and the importance of mental health as a result.

How can children and young people feel supported to have discussions around children's rights to mental health and wellness? Why are child and youth perspectives important on this theme?

Fatima shared that support starts with trust. A foundation must be built for children to feel comfortable and supported by adults. Children need mentors who build genuine friendships with them.

Fatima suggested that children and young people should participate in activities and pursue hobbies. Additionally, mentors should utilize social media to reach out to children and young people as an efficient method of communication.

"Children have so much potential. We are the future keepers. [...] We have so many goals. [...] It's very important to understand and appreciate that."

Discussion: Q&A



ICCRP

International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership



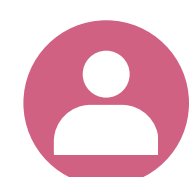
“Young people often admit they feel anxiety and are being medicated as a result. What are other forms of coping that young people find helpful?”



Beatriz: “Therapy has always helped me get through it. From the pressure of anxiety, to understanding my feelings and what I’m experiencing.”



Salamudeen: “By creating judgement-free active listening spaces, normalizing mental health as our basic right, using creative outlets like art and sport instead of just talking, creating support in schools, and letting youth lead advocacy.”



“Young people feel most supported when they have safe spaces to express themselves[...]. They want to be heard without being judged, and valued in this way.”

Discussion: Q&A



ICCRP

International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership



"I often see adults making major life decisions for vulnerable young people without consulting them. How can we as professionals better support children and youth when adults are making decisions on their behalf?"



"Having the tools, the right support, and adults, whether a parent/guardian or teacher, is crucial. Also helping children build the skills needed to thrive in life and have access to resources from a mental health point of view."



"I would like to hear about the mentor's role with the young participants and what kinds of support they offer."



"As a mentor, I play an active role. I support them on the front line and where they are at. Whether it is in their school, gym, or library. My colleagues and I do activities such as character development and use it as a support in guiding them."

Discussion: Q&A



ICCRP

International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership



“Why do children and young people often stay silent about mental struggles?”



Beatriz: “Insecurity. Talking about your own feelings, especially when you already experienced a similar situation and it wasn’t supported at the time, causes you to refrain from speaking.”



Victor: “Stigma is the main reason why young people hesitate. Stigma is not created by young people. It is created by society. That environment creates a hierarchy or competitive world where if I feel like I have a mental challenge, I cannot talk about it or seek help.”



“Stigma is a matter of culture, society, or family expectations.”

Discussion: Q&A



ICCRP

International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership

? **How can we ensure meaningful child and youth participation in mental health discussions, and help other adults appreciate the value of these perspectives?**



Beatriz: “It’s really important to remind adults that we are here because we want to be here. To share with you.”



Victor: “We should be advocating for more focused and targeted policies and services on mental health for children and adolescents.”

Discussion: Q&A



ICCRP

International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership



Can you share examples of successful programs or policies that effectively apply children's rights to mental health and well-being, whether at the community level programming or policies, state level, provincial level, or the international level? What made them work? What needs to be included in these programs and policies for them to be effective or successful?



Beatriz: "I believe in what we're doing here. It already functions as a program that listens to young people. I think it's very important to hear their opinions on a program like this, and there could be more all over the world."



Tara: "It also helps for children and young people to be able to ask for help while having some degree of anonymity. That can be really important to overcome the challenges or barriers that children and young people might have."



Benyam: "Child help lines are an important aspect of mental health services for children."

Closing Remarks: Phalo Damba



ICCRP
International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership



01

Creating Practical and Realistic Solutions

Conversations alone are not enough. Without practical solutions, children are left to continue facing the same struggles. Children feel genuinely supported only when solutions promise real and lasting change in their lives.



02

Mental Health Begins at Home

Strong family structures, healthy parenting practices, and positive discipline give children a foundational support system. Conflict, poor communication, and destructive disciplinary methods at home can undermine a child's mental health from the very start.

Key Takeaways: Vicky Johnson



ICCRP

International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership



03

Youth Agency, Ideas, and Role Models

Meaningful participation means setting aside assumptions about what young people are capable of, and instead valuing their agency, ideas, and the role models among them. Learning from what has worked across international contexts is key to moving toward a future where children and young people can experience love and security.



04

Spaces for Peer Support

Children and young people need dedicated spaces to support one another, from online groups to shared training opportunities and places where they can spend time together. These spaces should be age-appropriate for younger children and include guidance to safely navigate digital media.



05

Connecting with Nature, Land, and Sea

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, connecting with nature has become an important way to build a sense of self, improve mental and physical health, and strengthen connections with others. Caring for the environment together can support both individual well-being and a broader sense of belonging and community.



06

Formal and Informal Intergenerational Support

Intergenerational support works in two directions. It is not only adults supporting children, but also young people being recognized for what they contribute to their communities. Their innovative ideas can help navigate new political and environmental challenges, along with uncertainty and crisis. Additionally, place-based planning should include young people's input and evidence.



07

Shift from Listening to Supporting and Acting

On its own, listening to children and young people is not enough. Adults must move toward actively supporting and acting on what they hear, in ways that feel safe for young people to engage with.

National and international frameworks and laws can help support this shift. The new UNCRC Incorporated (Scotland) Act provides a framework for duties of statutory bodies and enforcement of child rights as specified in the UNCRC.

Special Thanks



ICCRP

International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership

The ICCRP sincerely thanks everyone who contributed to the June 2026 IAC Roundtable and driving its success. We deeply value the meaningful contributions of each child, young person, and adult from the IAC and participating communities who helped shape the dialogue on Children's Rights to Mental Health and Well-being with passion, insight, and care. Your experiences, stories, and strategies enriched this conversation and strengthened our shared commitment to advancing intergenerational justice.

We are especially grateful to:

Panellists

- Beatriz Costa da Silva (Brazil, Young Person)
- Kyrstin Dumont (Canada, Adult)
- Benyam Mezmur (South Africa, Adult)
- Fatima Warraich (Canada, Young Person)

Roundtable Hosts and Organizers

- Dr. Tara Collins – ICCRP Project Director
- Valeria Millan – ICCRP Child and Youth Participant Coordinator
- Steven Gibson – ICCRP Project Manager
- ICCRP Research Assistants – for their behind-the-scenes work and commitment

Discussion Contributors

- Tamás Szilagyi-Kiss (Canada, Young Person)
- Victor Karunan (Thailand, Adult)
- Beatriz Costa da Silva (Brazil, Young Person)
- Krystin Dumont (Canada, Adult)
- Benyam Mezmur (South Africa, Adult)
- Fatima Warraich (Canada, Young Person)
- Phalo Damba (South Africa, Young Person)
- Vicky Johnson (Scotland, Adult)

A special acknowledgement goes to **Valeria Millan**, the ICCRP's dedicated **Child and Youth Participant Coordinator**, whose unwavering commitment to supporting and engaging the children and young people on the IAC has been vital to their meaningful participation in our work. Thank you, Valeria, for all your exceptional contributions!

We also extend our sincere thanks to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and the Government of Ontario (ORF-RE) for providing funding for this important work. The views articulated in this report are those of the speakers, and do not necessarily reflect those of the funders.

This roundtable would not have been possible without the dedication, insight, and collaboration of our intergenerational team and global partners. Thank you for your continued work towards a more inclusive and decolonial future for children's rights.

**With deep appreciation,
The ICCRP Team**

Helpful Links



ICCRP

International and Canadian
Child Rights Partnership

Visit the ICCRP Website Here:

www.torontomu.ca/iccrp

Recommended Citation:

International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership (ICCRP). (2026). *Intergenerational Advisory Committee Roundtable Discussion Report: Children's Rights to Mental Health and Well-being*. June 20, 2026. Accessed from <https://www.torontomu.ca/international-canadian-child-rights-partnership/news-events-resources/>



www.torontomu.ca/ICCRP



iccrp@torontomu.ca



[@ICCRP_child_rights_partnership](#)



[iccrp_tmu](#)



www.linkedin.com/in/iccrp