

Annual Report

2022-2023





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Dr Kimberley Anderson (2023)

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Professor Elke Kleinau

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Mission

Our mission is to better the situation for Children Born of War the world over.

The concept “Children Born of War” (CBOW) refers to those children who, in the context of an armed conflict, have a local civilian woman as a mother and are fathered by a foreign soldier, para-military officer, rebel or other person directly participating in hostilities. Categories of CBOW are presently categories as children of enemy soldiers, children of soldiers from occupational forces, children of child soldiers and children of peacekeeping forces. The situations which lead to the birth of a CBOW differ in their nature and reach from intimate relationships to conflict-related sexual violence, including gang rape and sexual slavery.

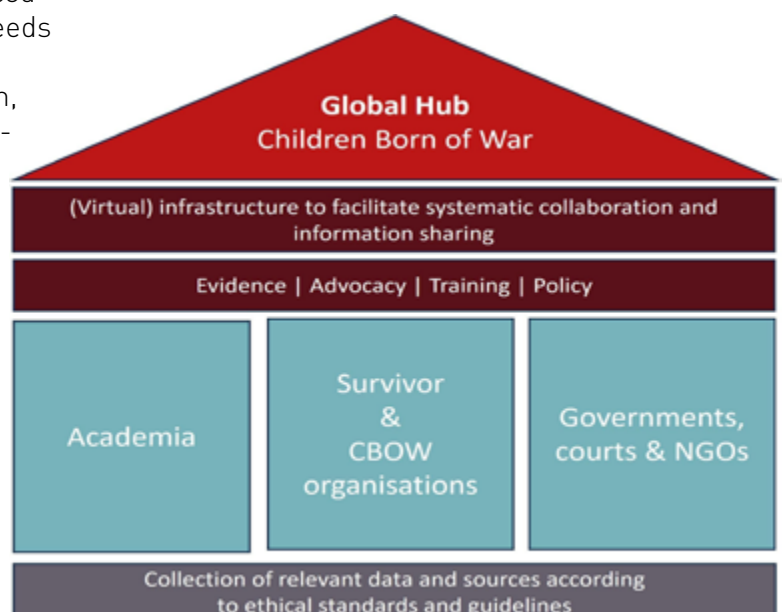
To achieve this mission, the CBOW Project works to promote and safeguard the needs and rights of CBOW as a means of alleviating the personal, social, economic and legal-political challenges they face. We strive for a state of positive identity and a stigma-free environment for CBOW worldwide.

To do this, we work towards developing evidenced based solutions that adequately address the needs and rights of CBOW, and do so by engaging in the collection of data and information, research, advocacy, training and developing policy recommendations.

Vision

Our vision is to unite researchers, survivors and CBOW organisations, governments, courts, and NGOs in supporting CBOW worldwide. This collaboration drives evidence-based practices, advocacy, training, and policy development, creating a measurable impact in addressing CBOW challenges.

This (virtual) hub facilitates systematic collaboration and information sharing, prevents siloes and ensures the rights and needs of CBOW are at the centre.





Executive Summary

This 2022-2023 Annual Report demonstrates success, both for the foundation - Children Born of War Project and for the visibility of the children born of war (CBOW) topic in general.

The official launch of the CBOW Project took place at the beginning of 2022, although the foundation's board had met officially on March 9, 2020 in Oslo. Like many things globally the pandemic had put many activities on hold. The marking of the official launch thus took place in March 2022 at the Hotel Bristol in Oslo and was featured extensively in the Norwegian news magazine "A-magasinet". This event was also a tribute to the Norwegian Children Born of War, so-called krigsbarn. Many of the children fathered by members of the German occupying forces and Norwegian women during WWII experienced severe stigmatisation and discrimination post-World War II. By sharing their stories, they contributed significantly to the success of the mobile game "My child Lebensborn," which provided the starting funds for the foundation.

The majority of these children were born in consensual relationships all over Europe. Nevertheless, in all occupied territories these children grew up with the stigma of belonging to the enemy. This is also the case in many of the other conflicts around the globe, which has been documented by several (research) networks such as the "War and Children Identity Project" (established 1999) and "The International and Interdisciplinary Network for Children Born of War" and "Born of War International Network" (both established 2008). With the increased attention on conflict related sexual violence (CRSV) in recent years there has also been a growing attention towards children born as a consequence of rape. The CBOW Project is proud to have been able to consult and contribute to several initiatives and strategies in 2022-2023

such as, amongst others, the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI), the Mugwege Foundation, the Global Survivors Fund (GSF), and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As important as the focus on CSRV and children born of rape are, the CBOW Project builds upon the well extensively researched experiences of the Norwegian CBOW, arguing that it is the child's perspective that defines its possible vulnerability and not solely how it was conceived. We are thus grateful that Norway's National Action Plan: Women, Peace and Security (2023-2030) which was published in September 2023 follows the broader definition, as recommended by the CBOW Project, stating that: "Children who are conceived through rape during armed conflict, and other children of war who have parents from opposite sides of a conflict, are particularly vulnerable" (p.22). In this context we are also very happy that Dag Ellingsen and Statistics Norway in 2023 agreed to translate the 2004 published report "Living conditions of Norwegian war children" into English with funds from the CBOW Project to make this significant research available to a non-Norwegian speaking audience.

Another highlight in this first reporting period was the first grant call published. The aim of the grant call was to reach out to organisations and individuals working on topics of relevance to CBOW world wide. The response was overwhelming with more than 100 applications submitted. This overwhelming feedback proves that there are a significant number of individuals and organisations



in the field who work to support CBOW. In an area where voices who speak out are often limited to a few, knowing that there is a huge number of diverse voices available is salient to develop a well-founded knowledge platform on CBOW.

In addition to these activities, the CBOW Project board members, affiliated members and partners have been extremely active in research projects, publications, media contributions, presentations, and training activities. Some of them are presented in this report, others can be found on the CBOW Project webpage.

Looking at the way forward, evolving the hub on CBOW in cooperation with partners to improve the evidence base is a main priority. So is the transfer of knowledge existing to support stakeholders in present conflict zones. Due to geo-political development and extensive need for advice and support on the issue of CSRV and CBOW, a training program has been developed by the CBOW Project and the Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies in 2022-2023. This will be implemented for the first time in Ukraine in the spring of 2024, in cooperation with Zaporizhzhia charitable foundation «Unity» for the Future». Seeking funding to customise and upscale this training program to be applied and implemented in various other conflict areas is thus also part of the future strategy of the foundation, which will be available autumn 2024.



Projects supported

CBOW Project and Statistics Norway collaborated on the English translation of the Norwegian study on “Living conditions of Norwegian war children” (72.375 NOK)

In September 2023, a report by Statistics Norway, originally published in 2004 by Dag Ellingsen, on the living conditions of Norwegian war children, was translated from Norwegian and is now available in English with funding from the The Children Born of War Project. The study team was able to trace the national identity numbers of a significant proportion of these children and were thus able to retrieve data about their living conditions from modern registers. The data suggests that social development patterns are influenced by stigmatising processes but also by a considerable potential for more ‘restorative’ life courses.

This report is a direct translation of the Norwegian report by Dag Ellingsen published in 2004. Some references have been updated. Since publication of the report in 2004, the field of research on (CBOW) has expanded considerably. However, this remains

the only published report that has used systematically collected register data from both the war and post-war period. The CBOW Project thus decided it would be valuable for the global CBOW research community to learn about the methodology of this study, but also to get access to the results showing that

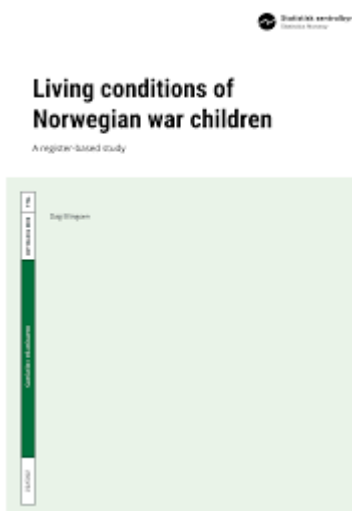
although CBOW were conceived in consensual and even love relationships, many of them experienced extreme hardships in post WWII Norway.

The CBOW Project chairwoman, Professor Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard was a main contributor to the original publication.

Find the report [here](#)

Grants for Registration, Advocacy, and Training

The CBOW Project published its first grant call in April 2022. The foundation received an overwhelming number of applications demonstrating the importance of work being done to support CBOW globally. After an extensive evaluation process, the foundation selected projects to fund for one year (October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023). Those working towards efforts to combat stigma and exclusion of CBOW, initiatives aimed at knowledge building, and/or activities related to the foundation’s purpose – to promote and safeguard the needs and rights of children born of war were selected.





Global Welfare Association Cameroon (USD 8,438.78)

The CBOW Project supported Global Welfare Association Cameroon (GLOWA) in a project to promote and protect the rights of children born of war, in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. Specifically, with the funding, GLOWA was first able to identify 20 committed community actors to serve as Project Animators. Read about GLOWA [here](#).

Grassroots Reconciliation Group (USD 3,834.00)

The GRG Entrepreneurship and Trauma Healing project has made substantial strides in addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by children born of war in Northern Uganda. The comprehensive psychosocial support, community engagement, and entrepreneurship training have collectively contributed to improved well-being, reduced stigma, and increased social integration. The success of the project underscores the importance of holistic, community-driven approaches in post conflict recovery. Check out their work [here](#).

Youth Leaders for Restoration and Development (YOLRED), Uganda (USD 2,314.00)

This programme has been able to empower the first YOLRED apprentice to provide for her basic social amenities and counter the irrational thoughts and stereotypes that people say 'children born of war can never do anything productive'. YOLRED believes this is part of trans-generational trauma that CBOWs have incurred through their parents while in captivity. YOLRED's first apprentice is a shining example; able to support herself and her family through this program. Check out their work [here](#).

War Love Child (USD 1,529.00)

The War Love Child is working towards breaking the taboo around children fathered by the Dutch military during their deployment from 1945 to 1949 in the colonial war against Indonesia. This organisation will be partially funded (USD 1,529.00) to maintain the online site (includes upgrades and modernization) and arrange for long term preservation and access of all content. Check out their new and improved website [here](#).

Archival Studies in Denmark and Outreach in Germany

In addition to these applications from organisations, the former leader of the Danish War Child Association and speaker of Born of War International, Arne Øland was supported to conduct archival studies using specific paternity cases stored in the National Archives in Copenhagen, Denmark (USD 665.00). Furthermore, the leader of the association Distelblüten, Winfried Behlau, received funding for the project "Europe's Hidden Children" (USD 530). The support covered costs to host lectures on children born of war for high school students and in a second event with seniors/adults. Due to the pandemic and personal circumstances these projects are still ongoing and likely to be finalised in 2024.



Grassroots Reconciliation Group, Uganda

War Love Child, the Netherlands



Global Welfare Association Cameroon



Youth Leaders for Restoration and Development (YOLRED), Uganda



Events

Official launch of the Children Born of War Project

On March 9th of 2020, the board had its first meeting in Oslo. Due to the Corona pandemic the official launch of the CBOW Project did not take place until March 7, 2022. At this event, which took place at Hotel Bristol in Oslo, Norwegian and Danish children born of war (krigsbarn) were invited as their life stories were the background of the idea and the development of the successful BAFTA-winning mobile game "My Child Lebensborn" and many of the adult CBOW had contributed and supported the development of the game. The story behind 'My Child Lebensborn' and the establishment of the foundation was told by producer and founder, Elin Festøy. Expert on the research topic of CBOW and the foundation's Managing Director and chairwoman Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard informed about the importance of evidence-based policy implementations and the recent report by the United Nations and its relevance to safeguarding the human rights of CBOW. However, the main aim of this event was to thank the 13 attending Norwegian and Danish CBOW for sharing their stories and thereby supporting the work to safeguard CBOW in present day conflicts. This event was extensively covered by the Norwegian newsmagazine 'A-magasinet'. The full [article](#) (in Norwegian) is in Aftenposten A-magasinet by Helle Aarnes.



Elin Festøy (Teknopilot), Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard (CBOW Project), and Torunn L. Tryggestad (EuroWARCHILD and PRIO) present the Children Born of War foundation, its background and aims. Source: own photo.

CBOW Project contributes to the Platform for Action on Children Born of conflict related sexual violence

The UK government hosted the "International Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) Conference" in London on November 28-29, 2022. In this context Lord Ahmad, Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and United Nations at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and the Prime Minister's Special Representative for Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict officially launched the "[Platform For Action: Promoting The Rights And Wellbeing Of Children Born Of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence](#)".

The Children Born of War Project is honored to be part of the working group of this important policy paper and endorsed the '[Call to Action](#)' and '[Platform for Action](#)' on children born of conflict related sexual violence already November 1st 2022 and committed to all priorities in the Platform for Action which are: **Priority One:** Building Evidence and Understanding on Children Born of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence **Priority Two:** Promoting Effective Laws, Policies & Practices **Priority Three:** Empowering Children Born of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Advocating



The invited Norwegian and Danish children born of WWII (war children) with courtice from. Source: own photo



With/on Behalf of Them and **Priority Four**: Focusing on the most vulnerable children



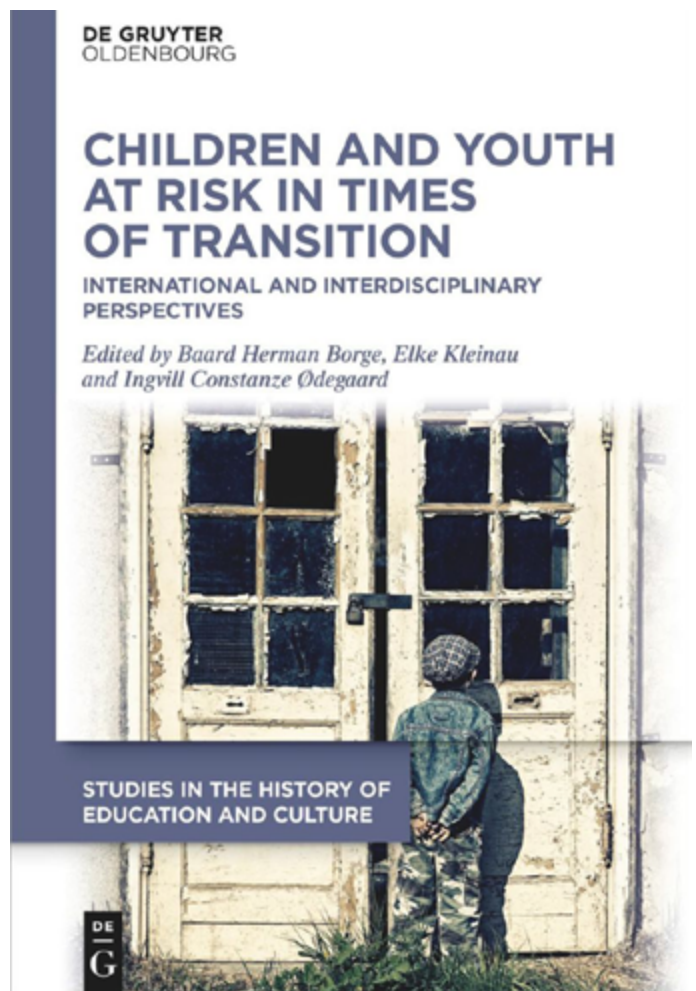
Lord Ahmad launching the Platform for action at the PSVI conference in London, November 2022. Source: own photo.

Publication **Children and Youth at Risk in Times of Transition**

An edited volume by Baard Herman Borge, Elke Kleinau and Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard on "[Children and Youth at Risk in Times of Transition. International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives](#)", was published in open access by De Gruyter on December 4, 2023. The book also includes six chapters on CBOW:

- Reflections on Methodological Approaches and Challenges in Researching Children Born of War by Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard and Elke Kleinau
- Researching Global Phenomena in Local Circumstances: Polish Children Born of War in the Context of CBOW Research by Jakub Gałęziowski
- Black German 'Occupation Children' in the Focus of Anthropological Research: Continuities and Discontinuities by Elke Kleinau
- Problematised 'Fatherlessness': On the (Re) Production of a 'Victim Narrative' in 'Occupation Children' Research by Rafaela Schmid
- Liminal Children, Liminal Rights? Media Representations of Scandinavian Children Born of

- War after World War II and after the Fall of the Islamic State by Martina Koegeler-Abdi
- The Evolution of Child Soldiers from 'Villains to Victims' in Law and Policy and its Significance for Children Born of War by Lina Stotz.





Selected conferences and media

Interview: Norwegian news NRK, June 1, 2022

On the occasion of the launch of the EuroWARCHILD Project led by Inger Skjelsbak, Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard (then Mochmann) was interviewed by the Norwegian news NRK about what is known about “children born of war” and what is needed to secure their basic human rights. See the full interview (in Norwegian)[here](#) (minute 18:30 onwards).



International Women’s Day 2023

Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard was invited by the Social Democratic Party (SPD) to [speak about Children Born of War and their mothers](#) on International Women’s Day following an article published by the CBOW Project board members, Lina Stotz and Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard in a German Newspaper on CBOW in Ukraine.

Lecture: Children’s Rights in Conflict

On May 22, 2023, at the University of Cologne, Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Dr. h.c. Claus Kreß LL.M, Chair for German and International Criminal Law at the University of Cologne, Director of the Institute for International Peace and Security Law and Special Adviser to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), hosted an event together with

Prof. Dr. Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard, on “Children - the forgotten victims of war”. Prof. Kreß gave opening remarks on current international humanitarian and criminal law of relevance to children in situations of armed conflict, and was joined by Prof. Dr. Oksana Senatorova, Director of Research Centre for Transitional Justice, Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University, Ukraine, and IOS Leibniz Institut für Ost- und Südosteuropaforschung in Germany, who further specified the war crime of unlawful deportation of children from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation and the arrest warrant issued by the ICC. CBOW Project chairwoman, Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard closed the session with a presentation on CBOW in Ukraine and discussed this in the wider historical perspective by looking both at CBOW and other groups of children that have been stolen and deported in various conflicts.



Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard, Claus Kreß, Oksana Senatorova.
Source: own photo



Workshop: Comparative Perspectives on European Children Born of War

In May 2023, CBOW Project Managing Director and Chairwoman, Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard as well as board members Inger Skjelsbæk, Lina Stotz and Norman Mukasa, Research Manager Kimberley Anderson and our CBOW Affiliated Experts Jakub Gałęziowski, Elke Kleinau, and Martina Koegele-Abdi, joined other researchers from across Europe to discuss [comparative perspectives on European children born of war](#). The international workshop was hosted by postdoctoral researcher Martina Koegele-Abdi, Department for Human Rights Studies, University of Lund, and was a chance for research experts on CBOW to discuss their comparative perspectives in more detail. Presentations and discussions focused on the hidden histories of CBOW, probing CBOW definitions and documenting their vulnerabilities across different disciplines.



Workshop participants “Comparative Perspectives on European Children Born of War”, Lund, Sweden, may 2023. Photo: own source

Expert Roundtable on Children Born of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Breaking Down Barriers to the Rights to Identity and Nationality

On June 27, 2023, Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard, was invited to give a key address at the roundtable

event, hosted by Global Survivors Fund (GSF), which included diverse stakeholders from humanitarian, transitional justice and child protection sectors, as well as civil society representatives, victim/survivor activists, academics and a range of UN bodies. The mission was to create a solution-oriented roundtable focusing on breaking down barriers for children born of conflict related sexual violence.

Symposium: CBOW at the Missing Peace Initiative at the United States Institute of Peace, Washington D.C.

A conference from the United States Institute of Peace and partners took place in Washington DC on November 1-3 2023. Despite increased and massive attention to CRSV, CBOW have for a long time been invisible, although they are likely to have been born in every war and conflict. However, CBOW Project board members were strongly represented at the symposium emphasising the importance not to forget the children born of war.



Inger Skjelsbæk, Nayanika Mookherjee, and Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard, Ajna Jusić and Kimberley Theidon are not in the photo. Source: own photo



Conference: Bridging Academia and Humanitarian Response To Support Children And Vulnerable Population

On November 29, 2023, Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard gave a keynote address on “Children affected by war in Ukraine” with special focus on the historical and comparative perspective of the group of CBOW, at the international conference “bridging academia and humanitarian response to support children and vulnerable population” in Bratislava, Slovakia. The event was organised within the framework of the partnership between UNICEF and Comenius University Bratislava, in the project “Supporting social work interventions with the refugee population and strengthening the overall social service workforce capacity within the refugee response in Slovakia”.



Conference: Strategies for R&D resilience in shifting security paradigms

On December 6, 2023, Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard was invited by Science Business in Brussels to take part in a panel discussion focusing on how security and defence developments profoundly impact research and development in the EU’s so-called Widening countries, and what policy responses are needed in order to safeguard the future of R&D in this region and beyond. Ingvill focused on the human aspects of security addressing the consequences of conflict-related sexual violence, children born of war and the safety and security discourses often addressed in this context.





Funding and background

The foundation, Children Born of War Project is funded by proceeds from the mobile game “My Child Lebensborn”, produced by Teknopilot AS and co-produced by Sarepta Studio AS.

The game was developed in co-operation with the Norwegian Children Born of War, simulating the situation for these children growing up in Norway after World War 2. The game has received international acclaim, winning the BAFTA for “Game Beyond Entertainment” in 2019. So far, over 20 million have played the game and it is translated in 18 countries.

The game is part of a larger transmedia project with the following aims: to tell the story of the Norwegian Lebensborn, to create reflection on the situation of CBOW and to use this visibility to help today’s CBOW. The latter goal motivated the foundation of “The Children Born of War Project”, which so far has received 100.000 Euro in funding from the game.

The game’s creative producer Elin Festøy in Teknopilot AS has continued working artistically to create empathy for CBOW, finishing her PhD “NUMB - exploring emotionally charged interaction to motivate reflection on non-fiction topics” at Innlandet University in the autumn of 2023. The work explores human decision making, othering of CBOW and how this can be communicated in virtual reality. The work is presented in an online exposition that can be studied here.

<https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1363914/2352748>



Witch Solo · Dec 9, 2023, 04:17 · 0 0

Device: [Samsung Galaxy Tab A](#) Device language: English App version code: - App version name: - Android version: [Android 11 \(S](#)



(SPOILERS) I've never been sad at any game but this one had me tearing up the poor stuff such a young child went through it scared me and made me wanna cry no child should ever go through that, it hurt even more because this has happend to actual people it's so disgusting and inhumane to do this to someone and the ending made me tear up it was sad yet sweet I hope Klaus is living the best life ever I love him and where it said "thank you for taking care of this child" made my heart melt :(



A.T. Dent-Woxie · Dec 9, 2023, 15:32 · 0 0

Device: [Samsung Galaxy A52 5G](#) Device language: English App version code: 258 App version name: 2.0.108 Android version: [Ar](#)



Amazing game that pulls the player in, emotionally connecting with the child main character, giving a glimpse of the ugly reality and difficult to heal psychological wounds inflicted on the most innocent of children, long after wars have been won'.



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