

Annual Report

2024





Chairwoman and Managing Director

Professor Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard

Board Members

Catharina Bøhler

Dr Elin Festøy

Ingeborg K. Haavardsson

Dr Norman Mukasa

Professor Inger Skjelsbæk

Lina Stotz

Dr Torunn L. Tryggestad

Staff

Torunn Festøy

Gabriella Rodriguez

Affiliated Experts

Dr Kimberley Anderson

Dr Jakub Gałęziowski

Professor Elke Kleinau

Dr Martina Koegeler-Abdi

© Children Born of War Project 2025

Contact: Professor Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard

Email: ingvillconstanze.odegaard@cbowproject.org

www.cbowproject.org

Org.nr. 926537202

Contents

Mission and Vision

Executive Summary

Training

Engagements in Policy Development and Advocacy

Publications

Other Activities

Funding and Background

Report prepared by

Torunn Festøy

Gabriella Rodriguez

Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard



Mission

The mission of the Children Born of War Project 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 defined 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.

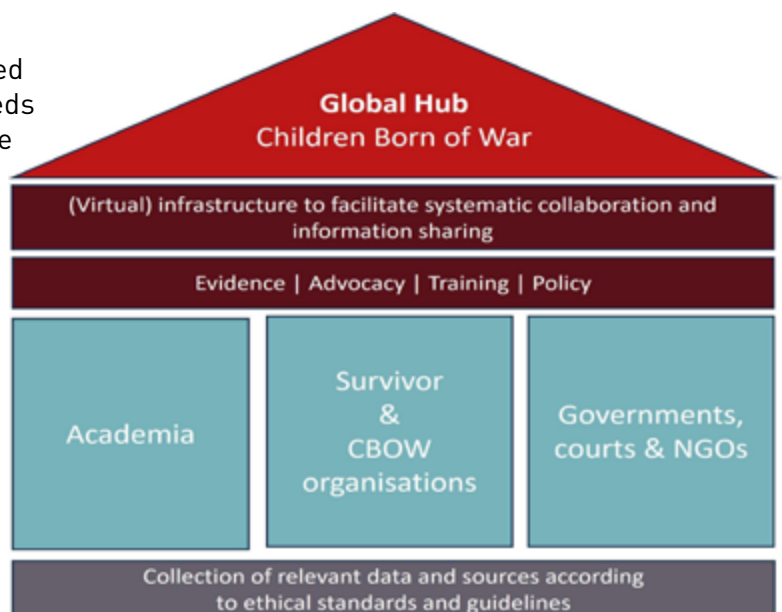
To achieve this mission, the CBOW Project works to promote and safeguard the needs and rights of CBOW as a means of alleviating the personal, social, economic and legal-political challenges they face. We strive for a state of positive identity and a stigma-free environment for CBOW worldwide.

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.



Source: Ødegaard 2023.



Executive Summary

The Children Born of War Project made significant strides in 2024, advancing training and advocacy on children born of war across global conflicts.

Throughout 2024, the CBOW Project focused on three main activities: training, policy and advocacy, and securing funding.

In response to continuous publication and outreach activities, the CBOW Project has become a highly visible competence center for topics regarding knowledge based expertise on children born of war. Both with regard to research projects and training activities in ongoing conflicts, the CBOW Project has engaged and partnered with various stakeholders and carried out trainings and/or research amongst others in Ukraine and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Uganda, and Cameroon.

To improve the database and knowledge on CBOW in various conflict settings the CBOW Project has been strongly engaged in directly and indirectly submitting funding proposals, either to facilitate the implementation of projects supporting CBOW in various countries or to evolve training programs and customize these to respective conflict settings. The present geopolitical situation indicates that the demand will increase in years to come and the dramatic cut in funding from the recently appointed US government will increase the lack of support to already highly vulnerable groups such as CBOW.

Furthermore, the CBOW Project has been strongly engaged in advocacy and policy development during 2024. A policy dossier with the US based New Lines Institute and expert interview with the German organisation Kindernothilfe show the

importance of the topic. The CBOW Project is honoured to partner with these excellent organisations and thereby share information to a wider audience both at national and international level.

Another important highlight is the inclusion of the CBOW Project in the working group of the UNESCO-CODATA Data Policy for Times of Crisis facilitated by Open Science (DPTC). The CBOW Project is strongly dedicated to evidence-based policy implementation. This requires robust data and secure, timely sharing. This is particularly relevant in crisis situations where vulnerable groups such as CBOW and their mothers often receive little to no attention and support. In contrast to data collection in non-crisis times, crisis are often characterised by a huge variety of actors in the field who may possess relevant data for decision making. Developing policies which facilitate open and efficient use of relevant data is thus imperative and the CBOW Project is proud to be part of this work.

In 2025 we embark on the 80th anniversary since end of World War II. A year in which we see the principles of the international order dissolve, the rise of right-extremism all over the world, increase in authoritarian regimes, attacks on children, civilians, and humanitarian workers and more. 80 years is not that long and we still have individuals amongst us who have experienced the devastating years of WWII as well as the post-war years and consequences this has had for their life.



This has in an impressive way been documented by the photographer Angenient Berkers in her book "Lebensborn - Birth Politics in the Third Reich". The book features, now adult children, who were in one way or another connected to the Lebensborn programme of the Nazi regime.

Many of these children were stolen from their parents, taken to Lebensborn homes, given to childless couples, their identities faked etc. Several of these are also children born of war. The book is a strong reminder of the responsibility we have as adults and the association to today's conflicts and wars and their effect on children, the ignorance of children's rights and even deliberate violations of children's rights is evident. The children's voices may be ignored today, but their sufferings will form our common future.

April, 2025

Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard
Chairwoman and Managing Director



Training

Strengthening Local Capacity in Eastern Ukraine on the Consequences of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Children Born of War Through Online Training

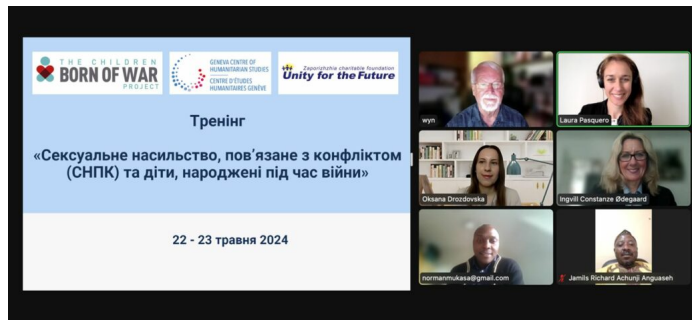
On the 22nd and 23rd of May 2024, the CBOW Project, the Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies and the Ukrainian charitable foundation Unity for the Future successfully conducted a joint online training for civil society organisations, social workers, and local community leaders in eastern Ukraine.

The focus of the training was on the consequences of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and how to provide support for CRSV survivors and CBOW. Training community leaders in Ukraine on CRSV was and remains crucial due to the widespread, unreported cases linked to the ongoing war and occupation, particularly in heavily affected eastern regions like Zaporizhzhia.

The two days featured sessions with international experts, including CBOW Project Managing Director and Chairwoman Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard, and Board Member Norman Mukasa, who shared and discussed international standards and best practices for providing survivor-centred responses to CRSV survivors and CBOW. The experts emphasised the need for a holistic approach to creating safer environments within communities.

The participants reported that the training greatly improved their understanding of the topics discussed, which they found highly relevant and valuable to their work.

Further information can be found [here](#).



Screenshot from the digital training in May 2024.

CBOW Project Involved in Pilot Initiative to Support Children Born of Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones

The Geneva Center of Humanitarian Studies and Terres des Hommes, Netherlands, invited the CBOW Project to participate in a pilot, addressing the needs of children conceived through sexual violence in conflict settings in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Chairwoman Ødegaard contributed to the training session digitally, presenting the case of children born of war.



Photo: Geneva Center of Humanitarian Studies.



Engagements in Policy Development and Advocacy

Policy Recommendations to Protect Children Born of War, Co-Authored by the Chairwoman of the CBOW Project

Together with Emily Prey, Director of Gender Policy at New Lines, CBOW Project Chair Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard has authored a policy dossier on children born of war, offering key recommendations for policymakers. The dossier was published on the webpage of Washington based New Lines Institute, including insights from stakeholders in Bosnia, Cameroon, Uganda, and Ukraine, highlighting the unique needs and challenges faced by children born of war in diverse conflict and post-conflict contexts.

Read the dossier [here](#).



Photo by the Justice and Reconciliation Project.

Contribution to New Expert Study on Sexual Violence Against Children in Ukraine

The German NGO Kindernothilfe conducted a study on sexual violence against children in Ukraine, interviewing 15 experts, including CBOW Project Chair Ødegaard. The report concludes with recommendations in order to improve the situation for children affected by sexualized violence in Ukraine, including a call to “ensure that children born of war and their families are recognized as war victims and receive adequate support”.

The full report is available to read [here](#).



Photo from the Kindernothilfe report on sexualized violence against children in Ukraine.



Participation in UNESCO-CODATA Working Group to develop Data Policy for Crisis Response

The UNESCO-CODATA project Data Policy for Times of Crisis Facilitated by Open Science (DPCTC) has invited Chairwoman Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard to participate in the working group to share her experience with respect to data collection and sharing amongst vulnerable populations in times of crisis.

This project, coordinated by CODATA, contributes to the UNESCO Open Science Toolkit by developing guidance and tools for data policy in times of crisis, with a focus on open science. It supports the implementation of the 2021 UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science by providing updated resources in collaboration with UNESCO partners and working groups.

As part of the working group, Ødegaard was invited to present insights based on the CBOW case during a consultative meeting on 4th and 5th of July at UNESCO in Geneva, focusing on the secure and timely sharing of data in crisis situations in the context of Open Science.

Find more information on the DPCTC [here](#).



Photo from UNESCO-CODATA, taken at the consultative meeting on the 5th of July 2024.



Publications

New Book on the *Lebensborn* Features Essay by CBOW Project Chair

In “Lebensborn – Birth Politics in the Third Reich” the photographer and psychotherapist Angeniet Berkers from the Netherlands documents the stories of nine individuals who were born under the so-called Lebensborn organisation. The CBOW Project is proud to have contributed to the book, with an essay titled “Endurance and Empowerment - reflections on the life development of children of Lebensborn”, by Chairwoman Ødegaard.

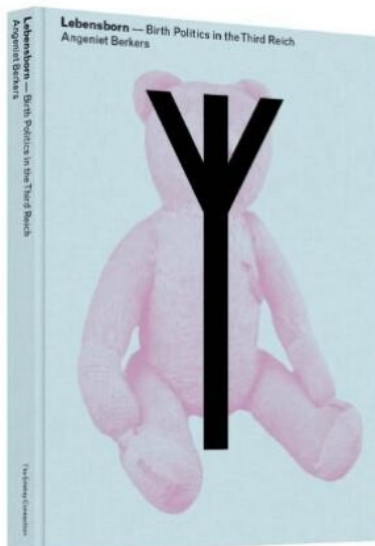
The book was shortlisted for the 2024 Rencontres d’Arles Book Award, an accolade recognizing exceptional creativity in photographic publishing. For more details on the book, including reviews and ordering information, click [here](#).

From March 28-July 13 2025 the Kunsthal in Rotterdam will be presenting Angeniet Berkers work in the exhibition Lebensborn. For information see [here](#).

CBOW Project Highlighted as Promising Initiative in Report

In June 2023 the Global Survivors fund (GSF), founded by Nobel Peace Prize laureates Dr Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad, hosted an expert roundtable on children born of conflict-related sexual violence. CBOW Project Chair Ingvill Constanze Ødegaard delivered a keynote address at the meeting, focusing on breaking down barriers for children born of conflict-related sexual violence and ensuring their access to rights related to identity and nationality.

In March 2024, the GSF published the outcome report [Expert Roundtable on Children Born of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence](#), which includes information on existing barriers to children’s rights to legal identity and nationality, as well as best practices, recommendations, and proposed next steps. The CBOW Project is delighted to be featured in the report as a promising international initiative by the GSF.





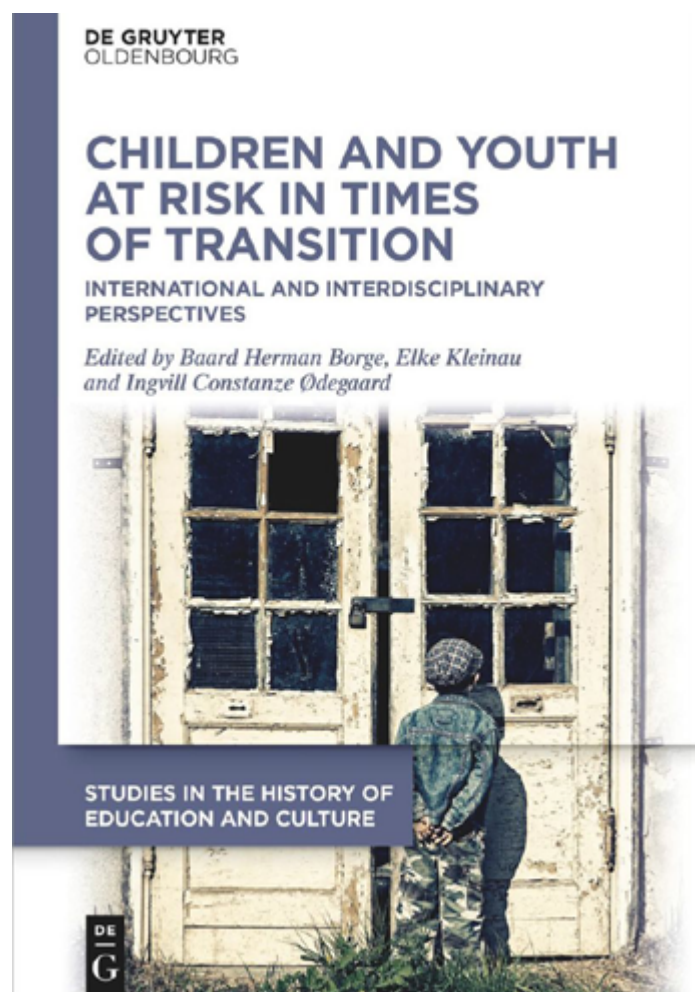
Children and Youth at Risk in Times of Transition

Although electronically published end of 2023, the 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 made available as hard copy in 2024.

A book review by Flavia Guerrini, first published in German in *Bildung und Erziehung*, 78 (2025), 1, pp-161-163, is now available in english [here](#).

The book 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.





Other Activities

In addition to the specific events and activities presented, ongoing administrative tasks also took place, including financial audit, seeking funding, networking, outreach and dissemination.

Relaunch of Webpages

Although not yet completely finalised, the [CBOW Project web pages](#) have been updated in 2024 with support of the company Thinforest Solutions.

Distribution of Newsletters

Two newsletters have been distributed in 2024, the first in June and the second in October. Find all of our newsletters [here](#).

First Publication of Annual Report

Publication of the first [CBOW Project Annual Report](#), for 2022/2023.

Project Applications

In order to support projects and secure operational funding for the foundation, the CBOW Project also submitted several applications in 2024, some in cooperation with partners. While these applications have not yielded funding, the foundation remains committed to pursuing relevant opportunities throughout 2025. We are also continuously open to new partnerships and collaborations that align with our mission.

- Grieg Foundation, September 2024: Trauma Counseling & Economic Empowerment of Children Born in Captivity: Concept Note for the Children Born of War Project with Grasroots Reconciliation Group, Uganda (approx. 18.000\$)
- 1st OSCARS Open Call, May 2024: Children Born of War go FAIR (FAIR-CBOW) (250.000€)
- Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) research grant, July 2024: Collaborative Participatory Action Research on Dealing with the aftermath of conflict-related sexual violence in orthern Uganda with the Justice and Reconciliation Project (JRP) (approx. 150.000\$)



Funding and background

The foundation CBOW 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 at 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](#).



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 t o heal psychological wounds inflicted on the most innocent of children, long after wars have been 'won'.



Foundation registered under Norwegian law
Org.nr. 926537202