

Organizational and human resource capacity for addressing gender equality:

Civil society engagement with the Feminist International Assistance Policy



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Executive Summary

The launch of Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) in 2017 signaled the Canadian government's commitment to combat the root causes of poverty, social and economic inequalities and gender inequality from a feminist perspective. The FIAP, as it is described, aims to support this form of transformative development. The policy focuses on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in a manner that is both targeted and central to its overall approach. However, implementation of this kind of policy continues to pose practical implementation challenges. Since the launch of the policy, the question of how the FIAP will shape future aid investments for Canadian organizations has emerged, including with respect to how organizations will align their programming and organizational structures with the principles and development objectives of the FIAP.

Through a survey of 45 Canadian civil society organizations (CSOs) and key informant interviews, this study examined how CSOs are addressing gender inequality and more specifically, the progress CSOs have made as a result of the development and launch of the FIAP in 2017. The study aimed to build on a similar study conducted in 2008 by the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) and l'Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale (AQOCI) to analyze how the FIAP may have shaped organizations' investments into gender equality. The recent survey examined current operational investments that affected financial, technical and human resources for project implementation.

The study showed that overall, Canadian CSOs claim to have made significant progress towards meeting gender equality objectives in certain areas such as policy development, monitoring and evaluation and program development. At the same time, the study revealed the need for further investments to align with the goals of the FIAP such as specific skills development required by staff to design, implement and evaluate projects, secure financial and social resources that contribute to both organizational and programmatic mechanisms in support of feminist development, and ongoing knowledge sharing across CSO networks in order to collectively strengthen overall sectoral responses to gender inequality under the direction of the FIAP. The following is a summary of the findings and recommendations presented in this report.

Summary of Findings

Policies

- Approximately three quarters of respondents reported including some aspect of gender equality in their human resources policy while 80% of organizations developed a stand-alone gender equality policy. Organizations reported to have additional supporting policies; for example, just over 70% of respondents reported to have a policy on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Assault (PSEA) in place.
- At the same time, less than half of respondents (43%) reported having monitoring mechanisms in place to track progress around their policies specific to gender equality, revealing limitations to the effectiveness of such policies and how they are operationalized (or put into practice), and monitored. Accountability mechanisms that support policies were reported from larger organizations (organizations with budgets of over 10 million and with over 30 staff) where, for example, 39% of respondents included a whistle-blower hotline. Staff from organizations with smaller budgets (less than 5 million) and with fewer than ten staff reported little to no supporting policy mechanisms.

Organizational Capacity and Structures

- Two thirds of respondents agreed that the FIAP influenced their organization's investments into organizational capacity through staff hiring and human resource investments. These investments, however, required additional external resources and consultants to meet the growing demands of additional gender equality objectives in projects. Majority of respondents said that they did not receive additional financial or technical support from GAC in order to align with the FIAP.
- The specific allocations and processes for designating financial resources towards this work were reported to vary, depending on the size, structure and overall mandate of the organization. Few organizations were said to carry a specific budget line around gender equality (24%) in programming. Budgets allocations varied. For example, respondents said they allocate funds specifically to staffing a team of gender equality experts, some said they employ full-time specialist(s), whereas other staff said their organization invests in consultants to conduct gender analysis. Organizations with existing overseas partnerships with women's organizations allocate

the majority of their budget to them to develop and implement specific projects that address gender equality.

Very few organizations who participated in the survey consider themselves feminist organizations. The majority of respondents aim to address gender inequality in their existing and future programming without explicitly framing their approaches as feminist.

Programming

- **Project implementation:** Over 58% of respondents mentioned that the FIAP has influenced their rights-based and advocacy work around gender equality. However, the extent to which rights-based approaches are implemented through projects varies, depending on existing capacities and the types of partnerships in place.
- **Project development:** Almost half of respondents (45%) conduct some level of context-specific analysis that includes gender, whereas 80% conduct a more specific gender analysis during the program development process. However the scope and quality of these activities are dependent on resources and funds available. Consultations with women's organizations were noted by 76% of respondents when developing projects.
- **Evaluation:** Over two thirds of respondents reported that the FIAP influenced their monitoring and evaluation activities. Designing feminist measurement tools (22%) were reported to be the most challenging aspect. Defining indicators (17.5%) and hiring researchers (17.5%) were also reported to be areas in need of further support. Feminist evaluation tools were used by very few surveyed.
- **Partnership development:** Only one third of respondents claimed that the FIAP influenced their existing and potential relationships with their overseas partners. Majority of respondents reported to have developed partnerships that support their gender equality objectives prior to the FIAP. Since the launch of the FIAP, some organizations were able to strengthen their partnership with women's organizations through specific funding opportunities, such as the Women's Voice and Leadership program; two respondents suggested that these opportunities were not available to the majority of organizations who work with overseas women's organizations. Many identified developing long-term partnerships as a priority, especially with LGBTQ communities. Yet, further

considerations around political, legal and security measures were said to be a concern in ensuring the sustainability of engagement and impact.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, a number of recommendations can be made to both CSOs and Global Affairs Canada:

Civil Society Organizations

- Strengthen and leverage existing expertise available to support diverse civil society organizations.
- Invest in internal monitoring procedures for policy effectiveness towards long-term gender equality goals.
- Document and share partnership development processes, experiences and challenges in sustaining long-term, overseas collaborative engagement.

Global Affairs Canada

- Strengthen consultation processes from civil society organizations in order to leverage existing expertise and experience towards effective FIAP implementation processes.
- Provide training, financial and human resources support to assist civil society organizations with their internal policies, procedures and staffing towards their gender equality goals. Greater investment in existing collaborative spaces (community of practice, working groups) could provide needed support in this area and to the sector.
- Support effective partnership engagement with overseas partners as necessary conditions for achieving long-term, sustainable results towards gender equality.

Introduction to the study

Background

The launch of Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) in 2017 (Government of Canada, 2017a) signalled the Canadian government's commitment to combat the root causes of poverty, social and economic inequalities and gender inequality from a feminist perspective. This new feminist policy created expectations of government partners to integrate feminist approaches into their programming and organizational structure as outlined in the FIAP. In response, Canadian civil society organizations (CSOs) engaged in development and humanitarian assistance are tasked with the challenge of how the FIAP, and feminism more broadly will shape their planning, programming, resource allocation and operations. Given the myriad of feminist approaches that exist, there is no consensus on a single approach among organizations. Further, Canadian CSOs' understandings of feminism can differ vastly, not to mention in relation to the views of their counterparts in the Global South. This reality raises important questions on how a feminist approach to addressing gender equality is interpreted and how it translates to programming, policy and practice on the ground. A better understanding is needed of how Canadian CSOs and their partners are pursuing (or not) feminist, rights-based approaches to international development and humanitarian assistance, and how existing practices inform and strengthen the capacity of Canadian organizations and their partners to address gender inequality and in the manner presented in the FIAP.

The inclusion of gender equality objectives into development initiatives is not new. Various frameworks have been implemented over the past decades, including the initial gender policy developed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in 1999 (Tiessen, 2016). The Gender Based Analysis Framework (GBA+) also set out to inform development organizations of key concepts, terms and approaches in mainstreaming a gendered lens in programming. These and other approaches demonstrate how applying a gendered lens to international development can bring to light 'unseen' inequalities. At the same time, past attempts have also paralleled, and over time exposed the existing limitations of different waves of feminism to truly address the complexity of gender inequalities in an increasingly globalized world.



In the 1970s, the Women in Development (WID) and Women and Development (WAD) agendas largely emerged from the wave of liberal feminism in the United States and emphasized equal opportunity for women (Ratherberger, 1990; Parpart et al., 2000). These approaches introduced 'women-focused,' projects and contributed to the global recognition of women's roles in economic development initiatives. It further established the need for statistical measures for women's labour and creating opportunities for women's access to education (Parpart et al., 2000). However, these earlier approaches did not fully embrace the diversity of global experiences. These earlier iterations also failed to respond to underlying power relations between men and women at the household level and maintained a focus on the economic rather than the social inequalities between them. Gender and Development (GAD) approaches were established with input from women's organizations based in the Global South (for example, DAWN) in the 1990s and led to programming that mainstreamed gender across different sectors and project areas. GAD focused on social and economic relations between men and women and addressed barriers to political engagement. Attempts to mainstream gender into existing development policy and programs, such as CIDA's Gender Equality Action Plan (2010-2014), saw varying degrees of success (Tiessen, 2015, Parpart, 2010). Human rights advocates found the GAD approach limiting because it rested on a binary framing of gender and neglected to acknowledge the marginalization of LGBTQ and indigenous groups, and others based on caste, race and ability, especially in countries where legal and policy frameworks continue to reinforce these inequalities (Vaast and Mills, 2018; World Bank, 2013).

The FIAP as a transformative policy?

Additional variations of GAD, including an intersectional feminist approach gained prominence in the 2000s. They considered how the intersection of sex, race, class, ability and ethnicity informed gender inequalities within different contexts (Bose 2011). Current GAD approaches that consider the contextual differences and the political challenges are seen to be transformative, in that it challenges the underlying systemic conditions that reinforce social and economic inequalities, and highlights women's agency in their contribution to structural changes (Parpart, 2010; Kabeer, 2012; Tiessen and Carrier, 2015; Tiessen, 2016). The FIAP, as it is described, aims to support this form of transformative development through a human rights-based approach and with intersectional considerations. Coding for all GAC funded projects ensures that there is some degree of gender equality objectives designed in projects. However, implementation of this kind of framework continues to pose practical and policy challenges for CSOs and for GAC. The policy applied an explicit framing of a feminist approach to development. It situates the policy along a human rights-based approach and centres gender equality rather than integrating it as a cross-cutting issue. Since the launch of the policy in 2017, there have been a lot of

discussion and critique around how the FIAP will shape future aid investments for Canadian organizations and how organizations will align their programming and organizational structure with implementing the FIAP (Tiessen and Swan, 2017; Brown and Swiss, 2017; Tiessen, 2019; Tiessen and Black, 2019; Mason, 2019; Rao and Tiessen, 2020;). Yet, little is known of the overall influence of the FIAP on CSOs, their existing capacities within Canada's development sector to address gender inequality and how organizational investments are affecting programming and project implementation around gender equality.

To fill this gap, civil society and academic partners commissioned a study with the support of MITACS to examine how organizations are equipped to address gender inequality in their programming, organizational structures and staffing. This report provides a summary of the findings based on research conducted in 2019.

Box 1. Informing the current analysis with results from a 2008 study

A study conducted in 2008 by CCIC and AQOCI (Kellher and Stuart, 2008 and Soares-Pinto, 2008) analyzed the organizational culture of member organizations and their reception for addressing gender equality in their programming and organization. The authors analyzed data collected from 35 organizations and over 100 staff from CCIC and AQOCI member organizations through interviews, focus groups and surveys. The study found that only a fraction of organizations introduced particular measures to integrate gender equality into their programming. The main limitation to progress identified at the time was organizational and leadership culture, where gender equality was circumscribed to a programming issue rather than considered a development priority that cut across all sectors of work and throughout the institution. This included the lack of leadership and gender parity present on CSO boards. Furthermore, the study highlighted how few gender policies were actually implemented. Most lacked any mechanisms to ensure operationalization, monitoring and accountability. Most organizations lacked the expertise and the tools and resources to effectively consider equality into their organizational structure and programmatic plans.

Based on the findings from this 2008 study and on the release of the FIAP in 2017, this current study aimed to examine the progress made to consider both the challenges and the opportunities for Canadian organizations to boost their engagement in gender equality and women's empowerment. It also examined how the FIAP influenced development practitioners' engagement with 'feminist aid.' In doing so, the study in 2008 serves as the basis for this research and informs future research in support of feminist development approaches.

Purpose and Objectives

Building on a previous study carried out by CCIC and AQOCI in 2008 (Box 1), the overarching objective of this study was to examine how Canadian CSOs engage with various feminist approaches to international development. Acknowledging the diversity of institutional engagement, regional and sectoral priorities with respect to gender dynamics, this project sought to identify and analyze current approaches to addressing gender inequality by Canadian CSOs in order to contribute to more inclusive and long-term impact from public and private donor investments.

Overall, the two following objectives guided the study:

1. Analyze current perceptions, organizational capacities and engagements with feminist development through the FIAP.
2. Identify resources for CCIC members to highlight good practices, the current state of progress and insights into possible future directions of particular policy, implementation and evaluation practices.

Methodology

Methodology for this research adopted a mixed method, grounded theory approach, where the data collected from a survey and from key informant interviews shaped the conceptual framework of the research. The research involved a collaborative approach, where CCIC network members and AQOCI's gender community of practice (GCoP) reviewed the research instruments and contributed to the analysis of the data collected. Staff from CCIC, AQOCI and University of Ottawa supported the research design process including ethics clearance, sampling, survey and interview question design. Members of the Women's Rights Working Group and AQOCI's GCoP reviewed the research instruments. The research team sent out a survey with both qualitative and quantitative questions to all CCIC and AQOCI members on current operational and organizational practices, and the extent to which current practices were shaped or influenced by the FIAP.



The survey aimed to identify key gaps in organizational and human resource capacity around addressing gender inequality and to identify recommendations for civil society organizations and Global Affairs Canada to strengthen overall international assistance strategies. A total of 15 interviews were conducted with directors, gender advisors and specialists from Canadian organizations. The interviews aimed at capturing both individual experience in engaging with gender equality prior to and following the FIAP launch, as well as their overall view of the Canadian development landscape towards realizing gender equality. A half-day workshop took place in Montreal with AQOCI's gender community of practice members. This workshop gathered input from AQOCI members on their current capacities for addressing gender equality and the influence of the FIAP in their work.

Respondents and Interview Profiles

A total of 45 respondents completed the survey, with an average of 1 respondent per organization. Most of the 33 questions included options for both qualitative and quantitative data collection. The bulk of respondents were gender specialists themselves (33%) others identified as directors of programming (24%) and 18% were program managers. Over 62% of respondents worked in organizations with an annual budget of over 10 million; 29% of respondents from organizations with budgets between one and ten million, and 9% of respondents operated in organizations with annual budgets of under \$500 000. In terms of staffing, 72 % of respondents reported to have over thirty staff, 18% employed between 11 and 29, and 29% operated with 10 staff members or fewer.

A total of 12 organizations participated in the Comité québécois femmes et développement de l'AQOCI workshop in Montreal with the researcher. All participants were members of the GCoP and included the following organizations: CECl, Avocats sans frontières Canada, SACO, SUCO, CUSO, Crossroads International, Oxfam Québec, Socodevi, CCISD, Fondation Paul Gérin-Lajoie, Mission Inclusion, and Equitas. Only one of the participants worked with an organization with a budget over ten million, with the remainder of organizations represented held an operating budget between one and ten million. Two participants were employed as gender equality specialists, while the remainder were program managers and gender equality focal points in their organizations.

The respondents' profile suggests that organizations with more resources (both human and organizational) were better placed to take part in the survey and that organizations with an interest or experience in some gender equality programming were more willing to invest the time into participating in the study. Interviews with gender specialists revealed the varying responsibilities within the organization that may or may not contribute to the availability of staff or time to complete tasks outside programmatic or organizational work around gender equality. Respondents voluntarily participated in the survey, which may have skewed the data towards responses from those who were already in favour of supporting the FIAP and the progress made since the policy launch. The responses, therefore, do not necessarily reflect the views and experiences of all Canadian organizations who are engaged in feminist development or in gender equality programming.

Limitations to the Study


A number of factors limited data collection for the research. Ethics clearance through the University of Ottawa delayed the administration of the research tools and resulted in a limited time for data collection and analysis before the end of the eight-month project. Ethics also shifted the focus to organizations based in Ottawa, rather than on partner organizations overseas, reducing the scope of the data collection.¹ Responses are not reflective of the diverse members and varying organizational and policy approaches.

Findings and analysis

Summary of Findings

Overall, organizations said they made significant progress towards integrating gender equality into their work since the launch of the FIAP. A majority of respondents also claimed that the FIAP influenced this progress in certain ways, for example to boost their advocacy activities and their rights-based approaches to development or include monitoring and evaluation methods that specifically measure for gender equality results. All organizations who participated in the survey were equipped with some form of a policy that addressed gender equality, ranging from the inclusion of gender equality

¹ Dr. Rebecca Tiessen conducted research on the perceptions of feminism and gender equality from the global South and the role volunteers in supporting gender equality initiatives.



considerations in human resource policies to programmatic and research strategies on gender equality. Staffing arrangements to support gender equality objectives included a wide range of positions and remuneration:

- Volunteer positions included those assigned to a specific program related to gender equality and hosted by an overseas partner organization.
- Focal points included full-time staff who were also the contact person for gender equality in their particular team.
- Some organizations designated one staff member to be the main gender specialist for the organization where larger organizations included full teams of gender specialists across varying programmatic sectors.

Since the launch of the FIAP, organizations claimed to have significantly increased their inclusion of gender equality into program development, design and implementation and monitoring and evaluation, both through their own investments and from external project and programming funds related to gender equality. Comments from respondents highlighted the use of their own tools and resources to support the integration of gender equality developed in-house and largely based on certain projects. In the case of AQOCI's gender community of practice, members had already a long history of collectively developing tools to operationalize a feminist approach, such as feminist evaluation guides, webinars for designing feminist development projects and knowledge sharing events on more specific issues such as programming in gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights and economic empowerment, as well as strengthening the institutionalization of women's rights and gender equality within Canadian and overseas organizations (CQFD, 2018; CQFD, Série Fiche technique de la CdP, 2009-2020). Several organizations involved in the study commented on the usefulness of the tools developed and shared by the GCoP.

At the same time, the majority of respondents also noted that existing capacities, in terms of staffing, financial resources and programming and evaluation tools were not enough to align with a more transformative approach to gender equality. A significant number of respondents (83%) reported increasing their internal investments as a result of the FIAP launch in 2017 in spite of limited to no additional financial support from GAC. Many organizations who were already strong in their gender equality work saw the FIAP as a welcomed support to their already ongoing efforts. A few respondents perceived the FIAP as a necessary boost to motivate their organization's leadership into committing more financial and human resources to their gender equality work.

The following section highlights more specific findings in terms of policies and procedures, and organization structures in programming and monitoring and evaluation. Views on the impacts of the FIAP are presented throughout and at the end of the section. Data collected focused on how respondents are currently addressing gender equality in development work through their organization and how staff perceive the influence of FIAP on their efforts.

Policies

Approximately three quarters of respondents reported including some aspect of gender equality in their human resources policy and 80% of organizations developed a stand-alone gender equality policy to guide their programming. One respondent reported that their organization did not have an official policy but prioritized gender equality in their work and identified as a feminist organization. This also included procedures for overseas partners to set the project agendas, and to ensure staff are well equipped to meet gender equality objectives throughout the project cycle.

One organization extended their gender equality policy to include aspects of social inclusion commitments, such as their policy towards a 'Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Commitments.' This policy, for example, extends beyond gender relations to consider disadvantaged persons, based on for example, on age, race, class, disability. Other forms of organizational guidance that refer to gender equality include: Codes of conduct for laying out acceptable behaviour in the workplace and employer expectations (see, for example, Baraja, 2017), Feminist principles and approaches that guide and shape organizational and programming efforts towards feminist development (Oxfam, 2018; Interpares, 2011) and a gender policy that explicitly mentions both women's rights and gender equality (AQOCI, 2019; CECI, 2018). One organization reported the use of committees to discuss particular areas of work including economic empowerment, positive masculinities, humanitarian aid and gender, resulting in more in-depth engagement with project design, activities and evaluation. Just over 70% of respondents reported to have a PSEA policy in place (at the time of the survey, the requirement by Global Affairs Canada for such a policy was just coming into effect, and hence this number may reflect this). In January 2020, AQOCI surveyed its membership and only 47% had an established code of conduct or policy on PSEA. In terms of mechanisms that reinforce internal policies, 39% of respondents include a whistle-blower hot-line service (all from respondents from organizations with budgets of over ten million and with over 30 staff) while only two respondents reported having an active ombudsperson.



Less than half of respondents (43%) reported to have monitoring mechanisms in place to track progress around their policies specific to gender equality. This shortcoming was also highlighted in the previous study by CCIC and AQOCI (2008) showing very little change in the effectiveness of policies once they are developed. A few respondents mentioned the limitations of such policies that only adhere to donor requirements rather than policies that support the adoption of a feminist development approach.

Overall half of respondents said that the FIAP influenced their policy development at varying stages. Some organizations developed their first gender equality policy, while others boosted more specific aspects related to organizational and programmatic guidelines through existing policy mechanisms. For example, one organization noted that this meant developing an internal gender equality policy when previously the organization had only a partnership policy across its offices globally. The same organization is now integrating gender into policy position statements in various sectors such as health and education. Similarly, another organization noted the FIAP resulted “in the updating (and substantial revision) of [the organization’s] program gender policy, the development of a broader organizational gender policy, and a PSEA policy.” On the other hand, one organization noted that its policy work on women’s rights and gender equality predated the FIAP. This organization is monitoring FIAP implementation and advocating for deepening some areas such as women’s unpaid care work. One respondent expressed concern over the dilution of gender equality issues to meet donor needs:

Without a time-bound action plan, and other accountability mechanisms, gender equality policy will likely be shelved or used minimally for communications or program development purposes. Without diligent implementation strategies, there is a risk that organizations will develop a gender policy to meet donor needs, rather than foster a true institutional and programmatic transformation.

Indeed, many organizations developed their first gender equality policies in the late 1990s, in the wake of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the UN decade on Women, and following CIDA’s gender equality policy (1999). Now, 20 years later, it is relevant that organizations are updating these policies. Also interesting to highlight is the work of AQOCI’s community of practice and its gender Socratic wheel (AQOCI, 2016), which over the last 10 years has ensured very consistent and deep reflection on institutionalizing gender equality, resulting in the renewal of gender equality policies, among its membership, as well as the development of clear action plans.

Program Development and Implementation

Based on interviews with gender specialists, advisors and program officers, a number of strategies, tools and resources are being used across the project cycle to boost the intervention responses to gender inequality. While most organizations reported responding to Global Affairs Canada's requirements, varying degrees of gender analysis were conducted in both program development and implementation processes. Approximately 76% of respondents consult with women's organizations that are based overseas, while almost half of respondents (45%) conduct some level of context-specific analysis, and over 80% conduct a gender analysis during the program development process. Less than half (45%) of respondents included an intersectional analysis in the initial program development phase. Assessing quality and effectiveness of engagement around gender analysis is beyond the scope of this study. At the same time, respondents mentioned increasing concern over donor requirements for these inclusions, and under considerable time and resource constraints during the program development process. Other additional work related to developing projects included desk reviews of foreign government policies, and peer or expert review of project design by an internal or external gender specialist (45%). One respondent noted that there is, at times, opportunities to consult with Global Affairs Canada staff in Canada or in the field but perhaps with minimal expertise:

Program development is currently undertaken by a small group of people and processes regarding gender equality integration have not been systematized. A lot of work/advising is provided by the gender equality lead to support this process. It feels like more training is needed at Global Affairs for staff in the field.

Once the project reaches the implementation stage, 66% respondents reported to regularly consult with overseas women's organizations and 59% include direct partnerships with women's organizations for the duration of the project. Hiring consultants based both in Canada (45%) and overseas (69%) were also a main strategy for integrating gender equality into projects.

Respondents mentioned several resources and partnerships already in place that support their projects and specific objectives for addressing gender equality. Many of these partnerships were in place prior to the launch of the FIAP. Respondents mentioned, for example: Forum for African Women Educators (FAWE), Association des femmes juristes de Côte d'Ivoire and Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF) based in Zimbabwe. Although the FIAP is a key driver for organizations to develop new



partnerships, two respondents expressed growing concern for creating unintended competition among Canadian organizations to partner with better established women's organizations in certain countries. For example, the Women's Voice and Leadership program invited selected organizations to apply for funding, indirectly excluding organizations who were well placed to build on their long-term overseas partnerships. Several respondents commented on the need for developing and diversifying their long-term partnerships, for example with LGBTQ communities. However, these organizations required further political and legal considerations, as well as specific security measures to address the safety of potential partner organization staff. One organization reported that it is their approach to have women's rights organizations and LGBTQ organizations develop the project themselves. In this context, the Canadian partner supports the implementation rather than leading the process.

Based on the coding of projects on gender equality integration and on the guidelines and requirements for submitting proposals to GAC, organizations saw that the FIAP did shape how they developed programs. At the same time, other organizations had already been emphasizing gender and were then working to better align their work with the FIAP. Organizations noted a range of ways the FIAP impacted their work. One noted greater attention to thinking about disaggregated data beyond sex and age, to disability, class, etc., while another noted that there is now more space to explore feminist evaluation and monitoring approaches. In terms of influence on other aspects of programming, respondents highlighted the following:

- “There is a large focus now in most, if not all [funding] calls on gender equality and women's empowerment, and this has prompted capacity-building and tool development for new business development staff.”
- “We have worked in gendering business sectors and services for 20 years but have now adapted to FIAP.”
- “Similarly, indirectly it may have had an influence where gender quality (GE) & women's empowerment (WE) are talked about often, the policy is making more gender-transformative methods a priority. It has also been observed that indicators and theory of change pathways are more scrutinized.”
- “The policy ‘forces the hand’ of NGO leadership who may have been resistant to changes in procedures, mechanisms that support new feminist programming.”

Budget Allocations

Most organizations do not carry a specific operational budget line around gender equality or for specific projects, unless specified by the funder (76%). The specific allocations and processes for designating financial resources towards this work varies. Some organizations utilize funds for a specific capacity building activity for organizations based overseas to strengthen their gender analysis work. One organization mentioned the long process required to streamline gender work across different programs where budget allocations were included in specific activities across all projects. For example, project site visits included funds for a specific gender assessment activity. Evaluation plans included a gender analysis or funding for training in feminist evaluation methods. One organization participating in the study reported that budgetary allocation for gender equality is divided into three areas: assessments, consultants and field visits, which for them, ensures that key activities are budgeted and accounted for in specific areas of the project cycle. In comparison, one organization whose mandate centres on gender equality mentioned the following:

The organization has a budget for activities of the gender equality Task Force, which includes operations and programming activities to implement the gender equality (GE) policy. Projects typically include specific budget lines on GE staffing, GE capacity building and technical assistance, and for GE targeted interventions.

For this organization, reporting on gender equality results is mandatory in all programs. If it is a gender-specific project, all results are gender equality results, meaning, the entire budget is aimed at advancing gender equality. If it is a mainstreaming approach then budgets are allocated to correspond to integrated gender equality results. However, separate gender equality staffing, training, analysis, research and capacity building, and monitoring and evaluation budgets are also facilitated.

The variation in how organizations manage their financial resources towards gender equality reflects the varied levels of knowledge, skills and experience in gender budgeting, as well as resources available to meet their commitments to gender equality. Budgetary constraints were also seen as a disincentive for collaborations between organizations, since CSOs were often competing for the same funds. AQOCI's GCoP members mentioned that institutional interests are prioritized over collaboration, needing to stake a claim of "gender expertise," creating a deterrent to sharing or collaborating on publications, tools and methodologies. Organizations are required to produce and demonstrate their gender equality

capacity through their existing staffing in charge of gender equality, as well as availability of technical resources and publications based on their impact. Through the FIAP, this competition extends to the degree and interpretations of feminist organizations with proven capacity to take on projects focused on gender equality.

Resources for Project Design and Implementation

Respondents reported using a number of tools to guide their program development process and integrate gender equality and women's empowerment including checklists for example, for ensuring that certain criteria, activities and resources are in place in the proposed project, pre-written texts that articulate specific approaches towards gender equality based on sectoral focus, and literature reviews that provide in-depth contextual analysis using knowledge contained in overseas government and civil society reports, research and past projects. Only two thirds of respondents saw that these existing resources and technical tools were enough to integrate gender equality into their work. Some of the challenges identified included: time required to complete consultations and limited staff capacity to further refine or build on existing gender analysis conducted using particular checklists or literature reviews. The majority of respondents agreed that the FIAP has influenced their efforts in developing resources and tools for their organizations; systematizing them across the organization leading to a more consistent use of resources and in an overall increase in staffing to support the work.

In the case of AQOCI's GCoP, members realized it was not only more cost efficient but created a greater potential for impact to pool resources, to collectively develop tools, and to exchange and share ideas, experiences and knowledge in order to strengthen their overall efforts and effectiveness towards gender equality goals. The GCoP aims to support the development sector as a whole by making the resources available to the wider development practitioner community (see CQFD, 2016), with the ultimate goal of advancing women's rights and gender equality. Creating high levels of trust within the GCoP members was necessary to foster an environment where sharing of best practices and lessons learned is possible. Despite these challenges, the GCoP produced a number of tools and resources over the last ten years including technical briefing papers on working with men and masculinities, feminist approach to climate change, to creating gender sensitive results-based management tools (CQFD, 2018; CQFD, 2016). Several study participants recognized the importance of these resources to their own capacity building in their organization.



For organizations with long-term engagement in gender equality, the FIAP allowed a deeper integration of gender equality into ongoing programming:

Our tools predate [the] FIAP, however the usage and application has gained traction. Furthermore, a more rigorous application across the programming cycle has been set in place to ensure consistency with [the]FIAP as well as its GE guidance.

One organization demonstrated how their overseas partners initiated skills and tools development for their organizational work around gender equality in a particular sector:

“Our organization tends to draw on our Canadian and Latin American partners for skills development and tools related to gender equity and women's empowerment. For example, the Central American teachers and sociologists who developed the Non-Sexist and Inclusive Pedagogy (NSIP) approach for Central American public schools have travelled to Canada numerous times to provide workshops and weekend-long seminars for Canadian teachers. When our Central American teacher partners have identified skills development needs that they are unable to fulfill, we have arranged for specialists from their Canadian teacher organization partners to travel to the different Central American countries to provide training for the NSIP promoters.”

Internal Organization Investments and Structures

The survey respondents highlighted an overall increase in financial and human resource investment by their organization over the past three years and since the launch of the FIAP. One organization set up a 'gender learning team' who is responsible for internal learning and reflection around their partnerships, their everyday engagement and their programming results. For programming, one respondent said that their organization includes a gender equality staff for each thematic area. Several respondents said that they hire consultants who are gender specialists to complete specific tasks. Others mentioned that “opportunities for gender audits and boosting support to the human resource team would be welcomed, provided that funds are available”. Respondents from organizations who have been working in the area for years prior to the FIAP claim that there are more progressive features in the

system, and that the work is far better articulated. They mentioned, “Development and implementation have increased to demonstrative organizational alignment with FIAP.”

All respondents reported flexible work environments. Other structures that accommodate staff include on-site childcare (16%) and various health and wellness opportunities (69.77%). Most respondents (93%) mentioned flexible work schedules, while 86.05% included remote work arrangements. Some organizations offered reimbursement of childcare while on missions.

Learning and Skill-Building Opportunities

Respondents were asked to determine the number and types of events and training activities that were specific to gender equality since the launch of the FIAP and whether or not there was an increase in activities as a result of the policy. All organizations in the survey invested in at least one event focused on gender equality in the last three years. Some of the organizations offered training for staff on specific skills building. This included learning basic theory and concepts, conducting gender analysis, awareness raising of sexual rights and gender-based violence, feminist monitoring and evaluation and intersectionality. Less common topics included financing and research design around gender equality. A number of respondents mentioned an increase in the number of activities that integrated specific training events. One respondent highlighted the topics for events that took place:

“In the last 18 months we have done training on MenCare, GAC Gender Equality Coding Guide, GAC Gender Toolkit, Gender transformative programming across thematics and project cycle; gender in emergencies; gender in marketing and communications.”

One respondent shared what they saw were challenges in event attendance in terms of gender parity and how this seems to reflect the current framing of gender analysis presented in the FIAP:

“Events are typically well attended, but disproportionately more women participation. Men at senior levels rarely attend, and if they do their participation is light/cursory. Among development & humanitarian actors, staff are disproportionately women, and often men in leadership roles do struggle with differentiating between the proportion of women to men within staff vs. analysis of who occupies positions of power & influence. Intersectional analysis

of internal capacities and operational programming is limited. This can be attributed to: a simplification of GE & WE and the language use in FIAP around women, men, boys and girls, comfort level with further analysis within institutions, and, the discussion of GE & WE being occupied by large INGOs who have dedicated staff.”

Since the FIAP, the GCoP has seen an increase in interest and the number of participating organizations has grown. The sector is seeking to strengthen its capacity in gender equality and women's rights to better respond to the priorities of the FIAP. Gender experts and program managers are finding it easier to get organizational buy-in to participate actively in the gender community of practice or to attend the CQFD's training sessions or biannual summer university on “feminist approaches to international solidarity.”

Overall Organizational Knowledge and Resources Available for Gender Equality Work

Two thirds of respondents agreed that the FIAP influenced their organization's investments into organizational capacity. Some noted the policy was “an 'enabler' that forces NGOs to work on gender equality [that has been] lagging for decades.” One respondent mentioned that the FIAP created “greater incentive to enhance staff's capacity in gender equality” to improve capacities. Another respondent highlighted that the FIAP “has caused [their] organization to grow significantly since gender equality was always [their] main focus but now there's actually funding for this.” The organization now has more capacity in terms of staff and projects. For another organization, staffing for gender equality has not increased or improved, but staff are more interested in learning about the FIAP including how to integrate gender equality into their work. Others claimed that more support from Global Affairs Canada is needed to improve capacities. One respondent noted that “GAC [(Global Affairs Canada)] hasn't provided support to build organizational capacity, but given the increased focus, organizations have had to run to catch up and ensure they are capacitated to address the asks of GAC.” Another respondent recognized the structural changes to funding and working with GAC as positively influencing gender equality work and noted, “It makes gender inclusion mandatory so that organizations have to put their best effort forward and learn more about why it is important and what they can do about it.”

Overall, respondents reported to have very little support from GAC on the integration of gender equality into their work and on operationalizing the FIAP at the organizational level. More than half of the respondents do not see GAC supporting their efforts in monitoring and evaluation, project implementation and program development. For example:

- “I believe the support provided has been minimal if any in most areas, apart from comments from GE desk officers during reporting cycles. And I have marked “none” in terms of policy support as our policy development process has been entirely self-motivated.”
- “The environment has definitely improved, but we have not received financial support from GAC for any of these activities.”

Two thirds of respondents said that the financial allocation and availability to support the integration of gender equality into their organization are the most challenging aspects of implementing the FIAP. One third of respondents mentioned the lack of human resource capacity available to integrate gender equality into operations and into the programs. Limited financial resources to hire new staff results in further investments in short-term consultants for task-specific assignments. One respondent mentioned the lack of partnership development support as a challenge alongside potential partner concerns over what accommodating a feminist policy may entail.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Gender Equality Results

Staff reported that monitoring and evaluation have been the most ‘improved’ aspect of their work in terms of assessing impact towards gender equality results. Almost two thirds (60%) of organizations reported using sex disaggregated data collection tools and 80% integrated various versions of participatory approaches. A majority of organizations reported both quantitative and qualitative data in their evaluation activities. Designing measurement tools (22%) were reported to be the most challenging aspect. Defining indicators (17.5%) and hiring researchers (17.5%) were also reported to be challenges.

One respondent highlighted the general capacity challenges with monitoring and evaluation:

“Defining indicators and establishing baselines are very difficult for us because we are working with large populations in most projects. But in truth the most

challenging aspect, with so many other things that need to be done, is to find the time to carry out effective evaluations and to train our partners in this."


While organizations showed an overall increase in monitoring and evaluation capacity, respondents identified developing and utilizing indicators as an area requiring further attention. This was also seen to be a weakness in previous studies (Pinto et al., 2008). Few of the respondents explicitly mentioned feminist evaluation methods in their work. However, the GCoP has been actively developing ways to develop transformative indicators that show evidence in changes to gendered relations of power or exercising their rights. Most organizations recruit local consultants to conduct the evaluation but are also limited by resources in the level of analysis and data collection that is possible. As one respondent noted, "We would like to hire more consultants with expertise, but it is difficult to find these types of resources."² Another respondent mentioned that they conduct more in-depth analysis when possible but it is inconsistent. They mentioned, "We also carry out independent evaluations of projects through a gender equity lens, but due to the high cost of these, they are infrequent (we have only done two in the past 8 years)." One respondent mentioned the tool they use for the evaluation needs:

"We apply our 'Architecture for gender transformative programming and measurement' that sets gender equality (GE) results and a theory of change; a Women and Girls' Empowerment Index that sets indicators across core gender equality domains including access, control, participation and decision-making; gender roles and responsibilities; social norms change and institutional and policy responsiveness, and an automated project scoring system."

With respect to research, more than half of respondents (51%) reported that their overseas partners lead the research activities in their organization that may include universities or women's organizations. One respondent highlighted the broader challenges with research activities as not just limited capacity:

"The challenge is not a lack of capacity but: competing sectoral interests, need for multi-sector approaches verses limited budgets and administration costs, staff burnout, staff retention, lack of local gender expertise or inability to

² "Nous aimerions engager davantage de consultants-es SEA ayant une expertise EG/AF, mais il est difficile de trouver ce type de ressources," (Survey respondent, AQOCI).



retain them, ethical considerations around research and consent, overwhelming the target populations, raising expectations and not being able to meet them, feedback mechanisms to target populations on research conducted."

One organization mentioned their intention to invest in improving research capacities around gender equality:

"Improving our qualitative data collection and gender-based analysis of both our qualitative and our quantitative data collection are areas for growth for us. We are also looking at how we can use innovative technologies that we apply for data collection to understand gender-related change over time."

Pinto et al. (2008) identified programming 'risks' around the instrumentalization of use of tools for addressing gender equality that still concerns gender specialists. As one specialist mentioned:

"As organizations develop tools to better integrate gender into their programming, there is a risk that the work of advancing women's rights will be depoliticized, in favour of very technical or instrumental approaches. Approaches to women's rights and gender equality are transformative and political in nature and depend on vibrant women's movements and organizations."

Based on the responses, support for organizations to strengthen their contributions to movement building and organizing is limited and often constrained by funding requirements and project deliverables that are quantifiable.

Partnership Development

More than two thirds of respondents did not see how the FIAP shaped their relations with their overseas partners. Many reported to have developed and maintained partnerships with overseas organizations since before the FIAP and that the policy has not changed these processes in any way. One respondent from a self-identified feminist organization said they maintained long-term partnerships with women's organizations prior to the FIAP, and has not seen an increase in resources, or support in

strengthening these partnerships. This has implications around future funding opportunities where organizations with established partners are better-placed to meet the requirements than perhaps smaller, issue-based organizations but who may have strong partnerships in place. As one gender specialist mentioned, “We can’t just work with those who are already ‘sold’ [or already are committed and working effectively towards gender equality through feminist development], we also have to work towards transforming ‘traditional’ partners to advance women’s rights.” One organization offered a thoughtful reflection on partnerships in light of the FIAP. The respondent noted that “although very important, it seems that we detach gender equality from cultural context, and do not accept different perceptions of what gender equality can mean. Consequently, we choose partners that exhibit western / North ideologies.”

While the FIAP clearly articulates what the Government of Canada sees as a feminist assistance policy, the implementation of the policy could benefit from further collaboration and consultation from civil society organizations who have experience with varying approaches to feminist development and addressing gender equality with overseas organizations that GAC intends to or are currently supporting. As one GCoP member mentions, key to ensuring the FIAP’s effectiveness is “Knowing how to reflect the point of view of the target groups (local communities, their perceptions, experiences and efforts to reaching gender equality) and not the perspective of the Canadian Government only.”³

Advocacy and Public Communications

Two thirds of respondents considered the FIAP as influencing their support for human rights-based approaches and providing space to expand the scope of interest and expertise in these areas. As one respondent mentioned, “...there has been a lot more openness to hearing our gender equality policy analysis since the FIAP came into place. This caused us to invest in a team of subject matter experts whereas before we just had one person covering all policy.” Another respondent saw that the FIAP reinforced their existing feminist approaches and stated, “We feel that we can now be more open about the feminist-oriented project work our partners have always done.” In terms of further advocacy and communications on gender equality, one respondent said, “I think the FIAP has highlighted important issues and set out an ambitious agenda for change for Canadian development assistance. It has set concrete targets and it will be important to see whether or not these targets are achieved.”

³ “savoir refléter le point de vue des groupes visés (communautés locales) et non la perspective du Gouvernement canadien seulement.”

More specifically, the use of the term feminist in the policy was seen by one respondent as enabling conversations that could address uneven power relations and noted, “the boldness of a 'feminist' policy forces conversations and asks us to confront power issues.”

Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, capacity for the promotion of gender equality in the organizations surveyed has increased since the 2008 study carried out by CCIC and AQOCI. Since the launch of the FIAP, organizations have increased their internal investments into building their capacity for mainstreaming gender equality into their programming and evaluation. Although no additional financial resources from GAC supported this additional work, the majority of organizations managed to slowly build new policies, hire new staff and increase their overall investments into gender equality work. Many organizations are budgeting a gender expert in their financial plans, allowing them to build organizational capacity. At the same time, limited financial and technical support or a clear definition of feminist development and implementing FIAP, limits any long-term or sustained impact of the policy. A number of recommendations can be drawn from the analysis of the data collected from the research. The recommendations are targeted at civil society organizations and Global Affairs Canada:

For Civil Society Organizations

Strengthen and leverage existing expertise available to support diverse civil society organizations.

Based on the findings, there are CCIC and AQOCI member organizations with expertise and long-term experience in addressing gender equality, with a number of them identified as feminist organizations. Utilizing this existing capacity across networks, and sharing experiences, tools and resources could support other organizations interested in building their capacities but who may have limited resources. Strengthening support for collective efforts, such as AQOCI's Gender Community of Practice would leverage existing and successful concerted action for building project implementation and evaluation tools and sharing and exchange of experiences and knowledge between organizations. Providing opportunities to share and document these experiences could contribute to the overall strengthening of the FIAP effectiveness and help to inform the implementation process.

Invest in internal monitoring procedures for policy effectiveness towards long-term gender equality goals.

The majority of organizations who participated in the survey reported to have developed policies and procedures around gender equality. Additional organizational mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of these efforts would strengthen the overall impact. Analysis of how organizations function internally and their ability develop, implement and evaluate programming that leads to feminist change could also contribute to stronger aligning with the FIAP.

Pay further attention to partnership development processes, experiences and challenges in sustaining long-term overseas collaborative engagement.

Insights into the contextual differences, perceptions of feminism and inequalities could greatly increase the effectiveness and responsiveness of Canadian organization's partnership investments and overall, FIAP's effectiveness. A feminist approach is about questioning power relations and structures. It is therefore a lens through which to question ideas of 'aid' and 'development' and how north/south relationships are supported. A feminist approach challenges knowledge production and expertise and open spaces for those that are still missing from the table.


For Global Affairs Canada

Continue to strengthen consultation processes from civil society organizations in order to leverage existing expertise and experience towards effective FIAP implementation processes.

Ongoing input from civil society leaders in gender equality work in international development will continue to strengthen GAC's efforts to ensuring that the FIAP results in an effective implementation of feminist development. GAC could benefit from additional input from organizations with minimal expertise and experience to identify more specific bottlenecks in project cycles and in policies, human resources and financial management that could boost the overall efficiency of funding towards gender equality results, eventually leading to a feminist approach to development.

Provide opportunities for civil society to strengthen their skills, resource base and, budgetary tools to support effective programming around gender equality that align with the feminist assistance policy.

It is clear that further financial and human resources, training and skills building are needed and in demand across civil society partners. GAC, under the guidance of FIAP could strengthen their support to civil society by ensuring that their own investments are securely in place with organizations equipped to centre their programming around gender equality and that organizations have access to the



necessary support to address gender equality through a feminist development approach. Further investment into short courses, or specific areas for the FIAP could support smaller, under-resourced organizations, while course attendance could also extend to participants beyond gender equality specialists to other departments in organizations such as administration, finance, communications and fundraising. Assessing the quality of gender analysis is beyond the scope of this study, however, identifying specific areas where analysis could be more effectively utilized could provide more effective use of funding resources from GAC and investments from CSOs. Greater collaboration and investment in existing initiatives, such as AQOCI's Gender Community of Practice, could provide needed support in this area and to the sector.

Support effective partnership engagement with overseas partners as necessary conditions for achieving long-term, sustainable results towards gender equality.

Valuing partnership development is a central component to feminist development approaches and therefore aligned with feminist international assistance policies. This process and the necessity for long-term partnerships to achieve lasting gender equality outcomes is crucial to effectively support rights-based approaches. Further to this, feminist approaches to development are inherently focused on the relational aspects to development - the processes in building and strengthening relationships at varying scales to ensure that all people benefit from Canadian assistance across differing cultural, social and political context, and that benefits are sustained beyond initial investments. A feminist approach to Canada's policy for civil society partnerships for international assistance offers a starting point in emphasizing the value of partnerships. This will ensure that the implementation of the FIAP will contribute to transformative change needed to fully and effectively address global inequalities.

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