

Global Affairs Canada – A Feminist Donor? Recommendations

In order to fully implement the vision represented in the Feminist International Assistance Policy, Global Affairs Canada's donor practices should operationalize the following principles/priorities:

Intersectionality

FIAP sets forth an intersectional feminist analysis, and names the need to address the root causes of inequality. Operationally, this means:

- Country/thematic development strategies should be based on a contextual analysis of power dynamics and of drivers of structural change. This analysis should be informed by consulting with civil society, including those who have been historically sidelined, through developing ongoing relationships of accountability.
- Building on this analysis, funding strategies can prioritize supporting both communities who are disproportionately suffering from inequality, and the civil society actors who are driving change at different levels, with an emphasis on resourcing leaders from historically marginalized groups.
- Budget allocations should recognize the rampant inequality that exists in many middle-income countries, as well as in low-income countries, and that actors there need support.
- Strategies that address gender-based violence & inequality should explicitly be LGBTQ2-inclusive, and prioritize funding autonomous feminist movements.

Institution- & movement-building

In a [May 2020 op-ed](#), Minister Gould called for a systemic response to tackle human health, food security, planetary health and gender equality and democracy, arguing these are inextricably linked. This analysis calls for structuring support civil society organizations to work across sectors, have strong feminist methodologies and practices, and rely on bottom-up responses that endure. Historically, Canadian development organizations were able to secure funds from Global Affairs Canada (CIDA at the time) to carry out work that was responsive to the needs on the ground, and that addressed various issues in one holistic program.

Multi-year, core, flexible, responsive funding is paramount for building strong institutions and social movements that drive social change. Such funding:

- Allows organizations to focus precious resources on their programming, instead of investing time in managing multiple short-term projects, each with its own fundraising demands, reporting and management obligations, and compliance burden.
- Allows organizations to allocate program funding according to their expert contextual analysis and evolving opportunities/needs, not to predetermined outcomes (particularly not to donor-assigned outcomes).
- Allows setting and working toward long-term objectives, in recognition of the slow & complex processes that drive transformational social & policy change, instead of delivering short-term, easily quantified results.

- Enables creativity, innovative programming, and synergy between regions and themes.
- Enables NGOs to maintain long-term relationships with Southern CSOs, beyond the lifespan of short-term projects or shifting focus of donor-led funding opportunities, thus ensuring stronger local institutions with more powerful long-term impact.
- Ensures NGOs can invest in project-unrelated administrative capacity such as governance, fundraising, and financial systems, so as to then deliver strong programs and impacts.
- Resources crucial movement-building activity such as networking, coalition-building, and alliance relationships.
- Allows NGO staff to invest time in advocacy, which is a crucial driver of lasting change.
- Enables investment in ongoing institutional learning, and to engage in mentorship (e.g. by women's organizations with girl/youth-led movements).
- Permits collective care measures that are essential in caring workplaces with stable leadership, yet are often excluded from admissible project expenses, such as parental leave top-ups, counselling/wellness funds, child care expenses, and short sabbaticals.
- Should also apply a feminist approach to monitoring, evaluation, and learning, by foregrounding participatory mutual learning approaches that use locally relevant, appropriate expertise.
- Would cut down on massive oversubscription to GAC calls for proposals for specific initiatives. This oversubscription has led to frustratingly long delays, which are discouraging for GAC staff as well as civil society applicants.

Accessibility

FIAP's vision cannot be fully implemented without resolving operational issues (many of which have been under discussion for several years through the CFO working group, with little to no progress) that are creating a significant compliance burden on civil society partners, and perpetuating a risk-averse corporate culture that limits access to funds. GAC should:

- Eliminate the cost-share requirement for GAC-funded programs, which have a disproportionate impact on small to medium NGOs with smaller private fundraising capacity (an impact which COVID-19 has exacerbated).
- Develop new mutually acceptable standards for accountability on financial/audit matters such as time sheets, receipting, proof of government registration, and banking arrangements. At best, the current standards place an unacceptably high compliance burden on NGOs and southern CSOs; at worst, they force the exclusion of informal organizations (favoured by most marginalized communities and those in repressive contexts) as local partners. This could entail moving to a grant-based system after satisfying that partners' systems conform with accountability standards.
- Assume some of the financial risk entailed in working with emerging organizations, instead of passing entirely onto NGOs and civil society intermediaries.
- Ensure that all funding streams use a two-stage application process, where the first stage is a short concept note, and where NGOs invited to submit full proposals are given small grants so as to develop them properly with local participation.

- Ensure transparent, open, and proactively accessible communication with the full range of civil society (especially with historically marginalized groups) regarding funding opportunities, including dialogue about submitted proposals.
- Ensure Southern CSOs are funded directly, where capacity and interest exists. Southern CSOs can then choose to partner with Canadian NGOs for advocacy, public engagement, and movement-building purposes on their own terms.
- Ensure that CSOs at a range of sizes can access funds, so that they are not disproportionately captured by large Northern-led (I)NGOs.

Recommended resources

- [*Moving More Money to the Drivers of Change: How bilateral and multilateral funders can resource feminist movements*](#), by Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID) and Mama Cash, November 2020.
- [*Funding Organisational Development: a smart investment to multiply impact – Views from five foundations*](#). Laudes Foundation, MAVA Foundation, Mercator Foundation Switzerland, Oak Foundation, PeaceNexus Foundation. September 2020.
- [*An Analysis of Civil Society Organizations’ Experiences with the Women’s Voice and Leadership Program*](#), Canadian Council for International Co-operation and Women’s Rights Policy Group Women’s Rights Policy, July 2020.
- Section 1, “Grantmaking,” of [*High Hopes & High Expectations: Feminist Movement Recommendations to the Equality Fund*](#), AWID, May 2020. Pp. 21-28
- [*Towards a Feminist Funding Ecosystem*](#), AWID, 2019.
- [*Strengthening Women’s Rights Organizations Through International Assistance*](#), Nobel Women’s Initiative & The MATCH International Women’s Fund, March 2017
- [*A Feminist Approach to Canada’s International Assistance*](#). Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, Inter Pares, Oxfam Canada, 2016.

The above summary recommendations were developed Inter Pares in consultation with members of the Women’s Rights Policy Group. December 2020.