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WHAT'S NEW ABOUT CANADA'S FEMINIST INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE POLICY: THE PROBLEM AND POSSIBILITIES OF 'MORE OF THE SAME'*†

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SUMMARY

Canada's new Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) will succeed only if it leaves behind its instrumentalist feminist approach and takes on a transformative one. Instrumentalist approaches have been the status quo for such policies in the past, but they are limited in their reach because they confine themselves to relatively easy measurements of progress. These measurements include counting how many women and girls are involved in, or affected by, policy interventions that have broader societal and other goals. A transformative approach, however, goes deeper by working to permanently change the structures and institutions that perpetuate inequality.

Unfortunately, the FIAP falls short of the transformative mark on a number of fronts. It does not define feminism, an omission which sets the policy up

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for built-in vagaries and ambiguity. And with its explicit focus on women and girls, its perspective is limited to a binary one, neglecting a broader gender equality which should include LGBTQ, trans and other non-binary individuals.

The FIAP was released in 2017 with much rhetoric about its newness and innovativeness, but critics say it offers little more than what similar policies did in the past. That is a double-edged sword. The similarities are good because they reflect Canada's longstanding commitment to gender equality, but they can also foster the continuation of weak programming. The FIAP must move beyond previous policies if it is truly going to make a difference in the lives of those individuals abroad who suffer discrimination and oppression based on gender and/or sexual orientation.

A fully gender-inclusive policy must address such variables as cultural norms, discrimination, political processes and institutionalized gender inequality, and examine how and where they intersect. Policy implementation must include input and advice from local organizations that are aware of marginalization, as well as from individuals who have lived the experience of inequality and understand its local context. A review of best practices in gender equality programs over the last three decades of Canadian foreign assistance is vital for creating sustained commitments and long-lasting leadership. However, that review must also include close scrutiny of the ways in which previous strategies were limited, in order to design new policies.

Not only does the FIAP need to define its own transformative feminist approach, but it must also have a timeline for specific outcomes. To be successful in changing the lives of marginalized people abroad, the policy must carefully avoid instrumentalist and mainstream feminist approaches that pose stumbling blocks to changing the structures and institutions where inequality dwells. Until these very necessary changes are made, the FIAP's powers will be limited. Success will come when the FIAP's content is put into practice so that, together with local organizations and individuals, it promotes social justice, gender equality and the tearing down of systemic barriers that create and sustain inequality on so many fronts.

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QUOI DE NEUF DANS LA POLITIQUE D'AIDE INTERNATIONALE FÉMINISTE DU CANADA : QUAND ON RÉPÈTE LA MÊME CHOSE*†

Rebecca Tiessen

RÉSUMÉ

La nouvelle Politique d'aide internationale féministe (PAIF) du Canada ne réussira que si elle abandonne son attitude instrumentaliste et adopte une démarche transformatrice. L'instrumentalisme caractérise le statu quo des politiques du passé, mais sa portée est limitée car les politiques se limitent à des méthodes relativement faciles pour mesurer les progrès accomplis. Parmi ces mesures se trouve le comptage du nombre de femmes et de filles touchées par des interventions politiques dont les objectifs sociétaux et autres sont plus vastes. Une approche transformatrice, cependant, va plus loin en travaillant sans cesse au changement des structures et institutions qui perpétuent les inégalités.

Malheureusement, la PAIF n'atteint pas le niveau de la transformation sur un certain nombre de fronts. Pour commencer, la politique ne définit pas le féminisme, une lacune qui fait toute la place aux caprices politiques et à l'ambiguïté. Et avec l'accent explicite mis sur les femmes et les filles, la politique

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se limite à une vision binaire, négligeant ainsi une égalité des sexes qui devrait inclure les personnes LGBTQ, trans et autres personnes non binaires.

La PAIF a été dévoilé en 2017 avec moult discours sur son caractère innovant, mais les critiques disent qu'elle n'offre guère plus que les politiques similaires du passé. C'est une arme à double tranchant. Les similitudes sont bonnes parce qu'elles reflètent l'engagement de longue date du Canada en faveur de l'égalité entre les sexes, mais elles peuvent aussi favoriser la reconduction de programmes faibles. Pour avoir un réel impact dans la vie des personnes à l'étranger qui souffrent de discrimination et d'oppression fondées sur le sexe ou l'orientation sexuelle, la PAIF devrait aller au-delà des politiques précédentes.

Une politique pleinement inclusive doit aborder des variables telles que les normes culturelles, la discrimination, les processus politiques et les inégalités institutionnalisées. La politique doit aussi examiner comment et où ces variables se recoupent. La mise en œuvre d'une politique doit, quant à elle, inclure l'apport et les conseils d'organismes locaux qui sont au fait de la marginalisation ainsi que de personnes qui ont vécu l'inégalité et en comprennent le contexte local. En outre, pour favoriser un engagement soutenu et un leadership durable, il sera essentiel de procéder à l'examen des meilleures pratiques des trente dernières années dans les programmes canadiens d'aide étrangère prônant l'égalité des sexes. Cependant, cet examen doit également inclure une étude attentive des limites des stratégies antérieures, afin de concevoir de nouvelles politiques.

Non seulement la PAIF doit-elle définir sa propre démarche transformatrice, elle doit aussi se doter d'un échéancier pour des résultats précis. Pour réussir à changer la vie des personnes marginalisées à l'étranger, la politique doit soigneusement éviter les démarches instrumentalistes et féministes dominantes qui entravent le changement des structures et des institutions où se perpétuent les inégalités. Tant que ces changements n'auront pas été apportés, les pouvoirs de la PAIF demeureront limités. Le succès viendra quand la PAIF permettra de promouvoir, de concert avec les organisations et les personnes locales, la justice sociale, l'égalité des sexes et la suppression des barrières systémiques qui entretiennent les inégalités sur de nombreux fronts.

INTRODUCTION

Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) was released in 2017 as a self-proclaimed innovative and progressive policy document. The labelling of Canada's international assistance policy as feminist is new, and one of few such commitments around the world. Beyond the innovation of "feminist" in the title, questions remain about what is actually new – and different – about this policy document compared to Canada's previous gender equality policies. This paper provides an overview of the FIAP and its core content with a particular focus on the policy's framing as "new and innovative". Canada's previous gender equality policies are discussed, and consideration is provided for why and how the FIAP may, in fact, be "more of the same", and the problems and possibilities that brings for Canada's international leadership on gender equality. "More of the same" can be limiting when it reinforces and perpetuates weak programming. However, many possibilities emerge from sustained commitments to gender equality over extended periods of time. In other words, "more of the same" is not always bad policy or practice. Since the adoption of a gender mainstreaming approach, popularized in 1995 and reinforced in its 1999 Gender Equality Policy, Canada has demonstrated longstanding commitments to gender and development. The analysis in this paper lends itself to four key recommendations including:

1. The FIAP could go further in acknowledging and building on 30 years of Canada's world-leading gender equality practices;
2. The feminism at the FIAP's centre needs to be redefined and operationalized away from instrumentalist and toward transformational principles;
3. Time-bound commitments to specific gender equality outcomes in the FIAP are essential to ensuring policy translates into practice; and
4. The FIAP's successful implementation requires the engagement of those with knowledge, lived experience and institutional experience.

OVERVIEW OF THE FIAP

An examination of the FIAP requires consideration of both its content and framing. The policy's content provides insight into the nature of Canada's commitments, the core areas of focus and the priorities that will guide Canada's work.

With six distinct action areas, the FIAP offers a comprehensive approach to international assistance focusing on:

1. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;
2. Human dignity;
3. Growth that works for everyone;
4. Environment and climate action;
5. Inclusive governance; and
6. Peace and security.

In addition to these action areas, the Canadian government commits to maintaining funding for existing maternal, newborn and child health programs. These Trudeau government commitments come with an additional $3.5 billion of investment on top of funds set aside by the previous Harper government (Brown 2017). The government also expands its commitment to maternal health, including an investment of $650 million over three years on sexual and reproductive health and rights. This new investment is a departure from the Harper government's policies, which limited sexual and reproductive health programs largely to family planning initiatives and the Conservative government's (2006-2015) brief but significant replacement of gender equality with "equality between women and men" (Tiessen and Carrier 2015).

The FIAP's introduction signalled a return to investments and commitments to gender equality programming with the promise of increased spending targets for outcomes across a range of programs. These targets include a minimum of 80 per cent of Canadian international assistance to integrate gender equality and women's/girls' empowerment in pursuit of the FIAP's goals. They also include a minimum of 15 per cent (up from around two per cent in 2017) of Canadian international assistance explicitly targeting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Both these goals are to be achieved by 2021-2022 (Government of Canada 2017).

New priorities in funding allocation included a fund of $150 million to be administered over five years to local organizations that advance women's rights (Government of Canada 2017). In February 2018, Marie-Claude Bibeau, who was then minister of International Development and La Francophonie, announced $8.3 million to support the Women's Voice and Leadership Initiative in Haiti, among other similar initiatives directly aimed at promoting women's empowerment and/or gender equality. In May 2018, Bibeau also announced a commitment to form a new partnership based on blended financing to fund gender equality programs that will close gender gaps and eliminate barriers to equality in order to reduce poverty and support women's rights organizations. The federal government promised to commit up to $300 million to this partnership. In addition to these funding commitments, a strong momentum for promoting women's empowerment and gender equality can be found in other policy documents, including the Canadian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, and the announcement of $3.8 billion raised for girls' education during the 2018 G7 meetings.

The commitments outlined in the FIAP are presented, however, using a particular language and branding strategy (Brown 2018) that situates and reaffirms the policy document as new and innovative (Tiessen and Black 2019). The repetitive use of specific words such as "new" (mentioned 40 times), "innovative" (noted eight times) or "innovation" (mentioned 10 times) is noteworthy. A specific example from the FIAP is "new and innovative ways of working with local women's organizations that advance women's rights". The action areas are also labelled "new" – focusing on the poorest and most vulnerable. They refer to new funding mechanisms, new ways of working, new partnerships and new solutions to achieve development strategies.

Building on the FIAP's self-proclaimed newness, civil society organizations and some scholars and analysts have welcomed the innovation that FIAP represents (Nutrition International 2017). In 2017, the Canadian Council for International Co-operation

(CCIC) referred to the FIAP as a "bold new vision and policy" that highlights "a strong new emphasis on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls". Other commentators have suggested the FIAP represents a return to an area of Canadian expertise and leadership in gender equality. As Sinclair (2017) notes, the FIAP is a "critical opportunity to right-size our development co-operation", suggesting a need to return to, and scale up, our development co-operation efforts "after that lost decade under Stephen Harper".

Among positive receivers, the FIAP has been styled as an ambitious "positive shift forward in a journey towards gender transformative change" (CCIC 2017). Indeed, the FIAP may be a "game changer" (Brown and Swiss 2018) with its focus on inclusivity, power and even intersectionality, making it "as progressive a feminist document as one can imagine a federal government department could issue", (Brown and Swiss 2018, 118). Yet, how new and innovative is this policy and how does it differ from Canada's previous commitments, particularly to gender equality?

A NEW OR (RE)NEWED COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY?

Canada's international commitments to women, girls and gender equality can be traced back to 1976 when Canada issued its first Women in Development Strategy (Tiessen 2016) – a strategy that represented a pioneering commitment to addressing the specific needs of women in development (WID). The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) highlighted the need for improving and increasing women's participation in the design and implementation of development projects. Though path-breaking, the WID strategy was eventually criticized for targeting women as development beneficiaries without sufficient focus on the gender norms and structures that limit or prevent their participation.

In line with international efforts to adopt a more comprehensive feminist strategy that takes women's participation into account, but also more fully underscores and addresses gender norms and constraints, the gender and development (GAD) approach grew increasingly popular in the mid-1990s. CIDA's commitments to women's participation and gender equality focused on gender-inequitable structures and processes, leading to the 1995 Policy on Women in Development and Gender Equity (Tiessen 2016). The mainstreaming of gender equality gained popularity at this time, highlighting the need for it to be a cross-cutting theme in all policies and programs. Arising from these new insights, Canada created the 1999 Gender Equality Policy – what was then seen as a model for gender policies among donor countries (Tiessen 2016).

The policy's limitations included lack of program funding, the ongoing compartmentalization of gender equality work, and the challenges of mainstreaming a gender approach when it becomes a commitment both everywhere and nowhere – and thereby spread too thinly (Tiessen 2007; 2016). Several critiques of the 1999 policy emerged over time, including lack of consistent leadership in senior management and lack of coherence and consistency across departments within different parts of the international development machinery to make gender equality a priority. Criticism also included the fact that commitments to gender equality weakened when translated into practice, with those efforts watered down to relatively shallow traditional WID

practices, and reporting that reinforced bean-counting measures of including women in development projects, etc. (Bytown 2008). The FIAP needs similar analyses to consider what is new or different from previous gender equality policies. Furthermore, the emphasis on the FIAP's newness and innovation must not detract from a careful assessment of the policy`s core content and the implications for sustaining, renewing or building on Canada's longstanding (rhetorical) commitments to gender equality.

NEW POLICY, SIMILAR CRITIQUES

Critiques of Canada's 1999 policy are echoed in analyses of the FIAP. Policy (in) coherence as expressed in other commitments and strategies employed by the federal government suggests there are hypocritical elements to Canada's feminist commitments. For example, the goals of a feminist international assistance policy are simultaneously contradicted by selling military weapons to Saudi Arabia in light of that country's human rights abuses and lack of gender equality practices. The policy's goals are also hypocritical in relation to defence budget spending increases while no significant new money is committed for foreign aid or assistance (Brown 2017; CCIC 2017).

In addition to policy coherence challenges, the FIAP's framing sees it struggle to fit within historical and multilateral international strategies to promote gender equality. As Sinclair (2017) notes, Canada has a history of commitments to gender equality (and to some feminist principles of human rights), having long been an important contributor to major international world conferences on gender equality and women's rights. Recognizing this long history and showcasing it in the FIAP rather than emphasizing exclusively the policy's novelty would have demonstrated a particular feminist comparative advantage that Canada brings to international assistance priorities.

Further challenging is the FIAP's potential for translation into practice in a way that ensures its commitments are upheld and its spirit not lost. As CCIC (2017) notes: "Delivering on the government's intentions … will require forging stronger, more effective capacity among both government and its partners to deliver on these agendas in support of peoples' efforts to achieve their own development and claim their rights … [and] new and additional human and financial resources for global development and humanitarian assistance" (1). These concerns echo those of critics who have challenged policy-makers to focus more on translating policy into practice in ways that benefit the people for whom the policy is designed (Mosse 2004; Lewis and Mosse 2006).

Delivering on promises also requires a clear conceptualization of the process by which the policy will be implemented, and as CCIC (2017) observed, the FIAP lacks "clarity on how the policy will roll out with no clear action plan, or how gender funding targets will be imposed, and implemented …" Furthermore, it is "vague on how the new agenda will be implemented in accordance with the principles of Canada's Official Development Assistance Accountability Act – including taking into account the perspectives of the poor, and complying with international human rights standards" (CCIC 2017). To stay on track with its promise of implementing the FIAP, the federal government needs timelines for measuring outputs and outcomes (in addition to broader timelines of commitments of aid funding to gender equality programming).

The language of gender equality features prominently in the FIAP. However, its primary focus is on programs for women and girls. There are 144 references to "gender", while "women" are mentioned 430 times. The use of the word "women" at a rate of three times that of "gender" highlights the ongoing challenge of articulating gender inequality and the power relations between groups, particularly between men and women. Shining the spotlight on women and girls can also reinforce power dynamics when the experiences of women and girls are predominantly expressed in essentialist victimhood sentiments. In so doing, the references to women and girls reinforce their vulnerability in relation to those in positions of power, thereby also reinforcing highly paternalistic ideas about international assistance and the roles of diverse actors in this process.

Focusing extensively on women as biological entities, rather than gender equality as a multi-stakeholder social challenge, also minimizes longstanding commitments to gender equality over the last 30 or more years of Canada's international assistance commitments. The FIAP's failure to fully engage with the power dynamics that perpetuate gender inequality points to the policy's limited concern for, or ability to address, either the structural challenges that perpetuate gender inequality, or the interpersonal power dynamics that foster uneven development gains for diverse groups of people.

The FIAP also provides an incoherent and weak framing of intersectionality. While the policy mentions this key term as a lens to guide Canada's work, it is used primarily as a buzzword and disconnected from its origins in feminism and activism with consequences for its potential to innovate (Mason 2019). An intersectional approach to gender equality programming recognizes that needs and experiences differ depending on a range of factors such as age, ability, class, culture, religion and sexual orientation. Canada's guiding material and training initiative on GBA+ (gender-based analysis plus), prepared by Status of Women Canada, explains this intersectional analysis well. However, the FIAP does not well reflect any emphasis on the intersectional feminism that is a core training strategy for federal staff. There is limited discussion of the intersectional realities of women and girls – a critique articulated in various analyses of the FIAP.

With its emphasis on the binary of men and women, the FIAP also fails to encompass all genders. The omission of LGBTI+ individuals or gender-variant persons limits the FIAP's possibilities for addressing discrimination, harassment, homophobia and transphobia (Mason 2019; Husband and Tiessen forthcoming). Nacyte (2019) highlights the exclusion of LGBTI+ persons, noting that the FIAP "refers only to two sexes, male and female, (and) appears to rely on the sex binary rather than a social construction of gender". She notes that there are some efforts to identify inclusivity for all by highlighting that other groups (other than women and girls) face discrimination and inequality, including economic marginalization, at times on the basis of their sex, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. The FIAP's references to marginalized groups are therefore "vague" and it is silent on the vulnerabilities of certain of those groups such as trans individuals.

Most notably, in the context of a feminist policy, the FIAP has failed to define feminism, treating it as one set of approaches when there are, in fact, an array of feminist lenses. The diversity of feminist approaches and the implications of this conceptual ambiguity are examined below.

DIVERSE FEMINISMS AND THE FIAP'S CONCEPTUAL AMBIGUITY

While feminist approaches share a common concern for equality of opportunity for all individuals, distinctions within and among feminist approaches can be observed in the means of achieving equality of opportunity. For example, some approaches focus on enabling individuals to succeed within existing systems or the status quo. These approaches have been referred to as instrumentalist, mainstream or liberal feminism.

An instrumentalist feminist approach is generally concerned with ensuring women's greater participation in political and economic processes. Examples of strategies following this approach include quotas to guarantee women are considered in hiring processes, or targeted programming to ensure that often-marginalized groups are not overlooked in programming. Instrumentalist feminist approaches often focus on easily attained measurements such as counting the number of women or girls involved in – or impacted by – policy interventions and/or the effect these interventions have in broader societal, political, economic or social gains. Such approaches instrumentalize women for broader economic or political goals, making them tokens in strategies that do not alter the structures that prevent women, girls or other marginalized groups (such as trans individuals) from participation. Women's increased participation can have positive outcomes, but only if women are also able to benefit from their participation. For example, women's increased participation in the labour market means little if the women have no control over how the additional income is used within the household and/or it does not contribute to the expansion of freedoms, improvement of quality of life and/or security of the woman and her family.

A transformative feminist approach, in contrast, begins with an understanding of power relations and inequalities that perpetuate gender inequality individually and institutionally. This approach recognizes the underlying causes of gender inequality in relation to masculinities, cultural norms and socially sanctioned power relations that marginalize some groups – often women, girls and transgender people. An intersectional lens in feminist transformative approaches also underscores the ways that other forms of discrimination cross-cut gender relations and can amplify inequality. Important considerations in transformational feminist work include structural barriers, discriminatory laws and practices, and privileging of dominant voices. Addressing gender equality through a transformative approach requires simultaneously focusing on the immediate needs of marginalized groups and the long-term systemic changes required to alter the power relations and structures that perpetuate inequalities. A transformational approach that recognizes and seeks to address the structural barriers to gender inequality includes commitments to ending gender-based violence so that women and other highly affected groups are able to move freely between home and work and thereby to benefit from economic opportunities. Strategies required to facilitate gender-equitable labour force participation require changes to laws and practices that prohibit women's (and other marginalized groups') ability to get jobs, and investment in education and training so disadvantaged communities are able to compete for jobs. Tackling stereotypes and discrimination through education campaigns and involving all community members (including those who wield power and maintain systems of oppression) are central to creating buy-in and reducing resistance or backlash. A

transformational approach to gender equality programming is therefore comprehensive in scope, focusing on the root causes of gender inequality and ensuring widespread participation in tackling oppressive cultural norms in all program activities.

The FIAP and related announcements do not define the term "feminism". Discursive ambiguity can be a deliberate practice used to "create and sustain a broad-based policy constituency and to manage conflicts within that constituency" (Eyben 2010, 5) and to support a "vaguely defined common goal", leaving space for others to interpret the meaning from their own vantage points. Similarly, the use of vague, ambiguous and/or undefined terms such as "feminist" or "gender equality" allows for broad interpretation by diverse constituencies. The failure to define feminism (Brown and Swiss 2018) leaves the FIAP open to a range of interpretations, but the largely liberal/mainstream feminist orientation noted above is reflected in the policy's emphasis on legal gender equality and empowerment deployed in an instrumentalist rather than a transformative sense. For example, the FIAP emphasizes equality in income, and increased political participation and leadership roles. Evidence of this can be found in "Action area 5: Inclusive governance" which highlights equipping women in Arab countries for more active roles in politics, at the heads of companies and in other decision-making spheres. As Nacyte (2017) notes, the FIAP thus lacks transformative potential. In focusing on binaries of women and men and the explicit focus on generalized groups of women and girls, the FIAP fails to capture the "complexity of gender hierarchies".

Similar critiques of the ambiguous definition of feminism and the implications of the particular approach and rhetoric the FIAP employs are captured in the analysis of its generally instrumentalist approach. Nacyte (2017) argues that the instrumentalist approach to peace and security commitments in the FIAP means that: "Women are exploited as a 'resource for more security'. Advancement of their rights merits a self-contained agenda; yet women appear as a means in facilitating peace and security." Yet, the reasons why women are not actively engaged in peace-building processes, and the circumstances that limit their contributions to such initiatives, remain unexplored. Organizations must therefore consider the tensions between gender equality approaches for instrumental reasons and the goals of gender equality in its own right (Eyben 2010). A similar critique of instrumentalism is offered in relation to the Swedish government's feminist foreign policy. Wallstrom (2016) claims that the feminist foreign policy adopted in Sweden "seeks the same goals as any visionary foreign policy: peace, justice, human rights and human development … [but with a goal to] correct the particular … discrimination, exclusion and violence inflicted on the female half of us". While women's participation in broad foreign policy goals is important, and their contribution to the vision of peace, justice and human rights/development is essential, women cannot be exclusively instrumentalized as the means to these broader goals. They must also be the beneficiaries of the planned outcomes. Furthermore, the gender norms that perpetuate the marginalization of certain groups in peace processes must be identified, and efforts to tackle the systemic and deeply institutionalized practices of gender inequality must be prioritized.

While many of the persistent challenges of gender equality policies have been summarized above, Canada's new international assistance policy does signal something

more and new by virtue of its use of the term feminism (albeit undefined) to frame this policy statement. The FIAP offers a new language that has not been widely used in previous policy commitments and while this can be celebrated, the true test of the novelty of this policy is its ability to articulate what that feminist vision entails, and how it will translate that vision into practice. Furthermore, the continued commitment to gender equality (with the limitations and weaknesses provided by critics – and summarized above – in mind) highlights the possibilities of "more of the same" when gender equality remains at the heart of Canada's international assistance and foreign policy priorities.

CONCLUSION

A review of the FIAP and the emerging analyses of this policy's contributions to feminism, gender and international assistance reveal important ways that the FIAP offers both innovation and "more of the same". Some of the critiques launched against the FIAP reinforce concerns that have been central to feminist Canadian foreign policy analysis over the past 25 years. In this sense, the interpretation of "more of the same" refers to the FIAP's similar challenges and missed opportunities in comparison to other foreign policy gaps over time. The emphasis on instrumentalist language and the predominant focus on mainstream and liberal feminism highlight the similarities between the FIAP and earlier commitments to gender equality. In this sense, branding the FIAP as "new" and describing Canada's role as a "leader" in promoting feminist international assistance may be seen as little more than window dressing.

The assessment of "more of the same" can also be applied to the continued commitment to the promotion of gender equality and women's rights for which Canada's leadership is recognized both at home and abroad (Tiessen 2016). For this reason, the FIAP can be examined as an important next step in promoting Canada's leadership role in advancing gender equality. If seen as a next step, the goal then is to consider the direction we are heading. A feminist international assistance policy offers great potential to fulfil principles of justice and equality for all. Much of our future analyses will focus on translating the policy into practice. While the policy document does not currently promote a transformative feminist approach that focuses on changing structures and systems of inequality, the actions that result from a feminist policy can potentially address these missed opportunities. Doing so requires staying vigilant regarding the structural barriers to promote gender equality efforts in solidarity with dedicated organizations in partner countries.

Moving in the direction of a transformational feminist approach means finding strategies to dismantle the structural and systemic barriers to gender equality. To do so means recognizing the societal and cultural norms and diverse gendered power relationships. It also means engaging all community members in the process by including men and other gatekeepers of power relations in the design and delivery of the changes needed. Such an approach might begin with understanding knowledge as relational and asking who holds power, in what contexts and to whose disadvantage? A transformative feminist policy must be more than a "set of moral principles … to protect, promote or empower women … but rather a process that considers historical and contemporary relations

between actors and carefully considers context in making decisions and policies" (Robinson 2017, 9).

In assessing what's new about the FIAP, it is clear that the rhetoric of innovation and newness frame the messaging while the content and commitments suggest the FIAP is "more of the same" in terms of past policy priorities, conceptual ambiguity and missed opportunities. Nonetheless, Canada continues to prioritize gender equality, demonstrating ongoing leadership in policy commitments to gender across all international assistance strategies. Several challenges remain, including the emphasis on instrumentalist and mainstream feminist approaches that are stumbling blocks for implementing a transformative feminist vision of international assistance. The general content of the policy is thus limiting, but the opportunities for translating the FIAP into practice in ways that promote social justice, gender equality and the dismantling of structures of inequality remain distinct possibilities.

A feminist foreign policy must be more than just a rhetorical shift. Increased focus on feminist principles in the actualization of a transformational feminist approach is essential for making new strides in gender equality programming. To be inclusive of genders and intersecting variables that lead to inequality, such an approach must use an intersectional lens to more fully address cultural norms, discrimination, political processes and institutionalized gender inequality. Some recommendations to guide the FIAP and its implementation strategies include:

1. Ensuring implementation engages the expertise of those with knowledge, lived experience and institutional experience, including "gender policy entrepreneurs" (True 2003); and locally based women's rights organizations and other organizations that understand the nature and causes of marginalization and cultural impediments;

2. Acknowledging and building on best practices in gender equality programming over the past 30 years of Canada's international assistance programming to demonstrate sustained commitments and enduring leadership. At the same time, closer analyses of the limitations of these previous strategies can guide new policy design;

3. Including time-bound commitments to specific gender-equality outcomes; and

4. Defining and operationalizing a transformative feminist approach that focuses more explicitly on gender relations and intersectionality to better guide the translation of policy into practice.

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