

AN ANALYSIS OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS' EXPERIENCES with the

WOMEN'S VOICE AND LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

HIGHLIGHTS

Women's Voice and Leadership (WVL) is a flagship initiative of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP). It is an innovative and path-breaking program of Global Affairs Canada (GAC) that aims to get financing and support to women's rights organizations (WROs) via country- and region-specific WVL programs, managed by civil society organizations. It currently spans 30 countries and regions, and has committed CAD\$174 million in contributions.

This document provides highlights from an analysis of the application process to implement WVL projects. The findings and recommendations are based on a survey and a workshop conducted by the Canadian Council for International Co-operation and the Women's Rights Policy Group.

SUCCESSSES

The participating organizations highlighted:

- The importance of WVL as a positive example of the implementation of the FIAP. They noted that WVL fills an important gap in the sector, dedicating resources to WRO institutional and capacity strengthening.
- Their support for WVL's goals of supporting local WROs and meeting their specific needs.
- An appreciation for GAC's willingness to engage in more feminist funding approaches, allowing WROs to identify their own priorities and approaches.
- The importance of WVL's focus on research, which allows the sector to build an evidence base on the effectiveness of WROs.
- The helpfulness of GAC staff throughout the application process, for those who submitted proposals.

GAPS AND CHALLENGES

Organizations also noted that:

- GAC's communication, transparency and consistency during the application process could have been stronger.
- The nature of consultations across country programs was uneven. There were some cases of good scoping practices to identify potential implementing partners. In other cases, the selection of implementing organizations could have been informed by more robust consultations with Canadian organizations, feminist funders and local WROs.
- Many organizations had to deal with midstream changes of funding requirements during the application process, and the proposal process required significantly more resources than past proposals to GAC.
- GAC contracting and partnership practices did not always reflect feminist principles. This is causing ongoing challenges in the implementation phase – especially around compliance.
- At times, Southern organizations were placed in direct competition with Canadian and international non-governmental organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Global Affairs Canada:

- Continue to invest in internal discussions, learning and capacity-building on feminist approaches.
- Ensure that future programs in support of WROs (including program monitoring frameworks) are informed by consultations with feminist funds, activists, networks, and WROs in all their diversity, as well as Canadian organizations and their partners.
- Establish open, transparent and inclusive application processes that are accessible to a wide range of organizations, including women's organizations based in the global South as well as diverse Canadian non-governmental organizations.
- Work across GAC to ensure that feminist approaches and intent translate through from

programming into contracting arrangements, and into the overall management of WVL until current projects end.

- Continue to fund WROs and work closely with civil society to learn from past experiences and adjust future approaches.

For members of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation and the Women's Rights Policy Group:

- Work with GAC to help ensure that feminist approaches and intent translate through from programming into contracting arrangements, by sharing feminist programming expertise and information about WRO realities.
- Continue to advance discussions on feminist approaches in concrete programs, to build a common understanding of the concepts and move beyond generalities.