

Holding the Line on Gender Equality: Evidence to Inform the Future of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP)

Launched in 2017, Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) placed gender equality at the centre of Canada's international assistance and contributed to global momentum around feminist approaches to development and foreign policy.

Nearly a decade later, geopolitical instability, climate shocks, fiscal pressures and democratic backsliding are reshaping development cooperation, while progress on gender equality remains uneven. In this evolving context, Cooperation Canada commissioned a study to assess the FIAP's results, draw lessons learned and explore next steps.

This brief summarizes the study's key findings and outlines practical considerations for sustaining and strengthening Canada's commitment to gender equality. The full study is available [here](#).

A Historic and Impactful Policy at a Critical Juncture

Since its launch, the FIAP has been widely recognized for establishing gender equality as both a core objective and a cross-cutting priority of Canada's international assistance. The evidence reviewed points to measurable progress across sectors, alongside meaningful shifts in policy discourse, programming practices and partnerships.

Growing Uncertainty Amid a Volatile Global Landscape

Geopolitical instability, economic pressures, climate shocks and protracted crises are reshaping international assistance priorities worldwide. In this context, ensuring clarity, coherence and strategic alignment for the FIAP within Canada's broader foreign policy framework will be important for sustaining impact.

The FIAP has Delivered Concrete Results

In 2024, Canada's official development assistance represented 0.34% of gross national income—slightly above the OECD Development Assistance Committee average, though below the UN's 0.7% target. Assistance levels increased following the launch of the FIAP in 2017 and have moderated since 2023.

Funding for gender equality also rose overall after 2017, both as a principal focus and as a significant objective, peaking in 2020–2021.

Flagship initiatives such as the Women’s Voice and Leadership Program, the Equality Fund and the 10-Year Commitment to Global Health and Rights demonstrate large-scale reach and measurable results. These initiatives have supported sexual and reproductive health and rights, girls’ education, efforts to end violence against women and girls, women’s economic empowerment, climate action and peace and security.

Notably, flexible and multi-year support to women’s rights organizations and feminist movements has strengthened institutional capacity, advocacy and participation in decision-making processes. Evidence suggests that investments in gender equality contribute to broader gains in health outcomes, economic resilience, climate adaptation, humanitarian effectiveness and peacebuilding.

The FIAP has also strengthened Canada’s international assistance ecosystem by expanding gender expertise, enhancing gender analysis in program design, introducing feminist monitoring approaches and fostering more equitable partnerships. Overall, the policy has reinforced Canada’s reputation as a credible global leader on gender equality.

Areas for Continued Strengthening

Alongside these achievements, the study identifies areas where implementation could be further strengthened.

- Greater policy coherence and alignment across foreign policy domains—particularly security, trade and crisis response—would enhance overall impact.
- Clearer articulation of key concepts, including feminism and intersectionality, would support consistent implementation.
- Continued efforts to improve funding accessibility, flexibility and administrative processes would benefit smaller and grassroots women’s rights organizations.
- Ensuring predictable and adequate resourcing remains important to fully realize the policy’s ambitions.

These findings reflect the complexity of implementing an ambitious and transformative policy across diverse institutional and global contexts.

Six Broad Conclusions Emerge from the Study

- 1 Renewing and clearly articulating the FIAP’s objectives and theory of change would support consistent implementation.
- 2 Stronger alignment with other foreign policy priorities would enhance coherence and effectiveness.
- 3 Flexible, long-term support to women’s rights organizations consistently yields positive results.
- 4 Monitoring and reporting systems could better capture qualitative and transformative change while supporting adaptive management.
- 5 Bridging the gap between ambition and predictable resources remains important, particularly for gender-targeted programming.
- 6 The FIAP is widely viewed as a credible and operationally significant framework that has shaped Canada’s partnerships and international leadership.

FIAP and Gender Equality are Strategic Pillars Supporting Canada's Evolving Foreign Policy and Fiscal Priorities and Reflect Canadian Values

The study highlights that gender equality should not be viewed as a standalone priority, but as a strategic pillar that supports Canada's broader objectives in economic resilience, peace and security, climate adaptation and humanitarian response.

In a global context marked by instability and competing pressures, sustained attention to gender equality can contribute to more resilient institutions, stronger communities and more effective international engagement. The findings suggest that consolidating and reinforcing what has worked under the FIAP will help Canada sustain its leadership in an increasingly complex global environment.

This report is made possible in part thanks to the generous support of the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada.

