



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF PARLIAMENTARIANS  
ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT



ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES PARLEMENTAIRES  
POUR LA POPULATION ET LE DÉVELOPPEMENT

# Submission to Global Affairs Canada's International Assistance Review

July 2016

**Key words:** Health and rights of women and children, Sexual and reproductive health and rights, Feminist approach, Human rights-based approach, Humanitarian settings, Delivering results.

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## Canadian leadership on SRHR

A **comprehensive SRHR strategy** is required to guide Canadian leadership across all of Global Affairs Canada (i.e.: development assistance, diplomatic, foreign policy, multilateral, etc.). The most significant role for Canada to play lies in its political leadership, and particularly on the more sensitive elements of the SRHR agenda, including safe abortion care and adolescent sexuality. This would require applying feminist and rights-based lenses and integrated and intersectional approaches, strong accountability mechanisms, and the leveraging of Canadian and global expertise on SRHR.

**The following sections outline key areas requiring targeted investment both in terms of advocacy for SRHR and supporting the scale-up of quality SRHR, in line with areas outlined in the IAR discussion paper.**

### Health

**Progress in this area will require a strong intersectional approach that actively seeks to work across and beyond the silos that exist within the SRHR movement.** This approach includes ensuring that safe abortion and contraceptive care are integrated, or integrating initiatives working on other aspects of SRHR that are often separated out into different streams (i.e. STIs, sexual rights, HIV, etc.).

**Integration means adopting a comprehensive approach.** Arguments for integration include health system strengthening. For example, the outbreak of the Zika virus demonstrated shortcomings in the ability of health systems to address SRH needs in middle income countries. Another example is in responding to the issue of child, early and forced marriages. Such a response requires an intersectional and inter-sectoral approach that seeks to address the root causes associated within legal, social, cultural, religious and traditional contexts, across the justice, education and health sectors. An integrated approach requires a shift away from a “supply” driven approach towards a “demand” driven approach. A demand-driven approach focuses on the needs and realities of individuals, rather than verticalized health interventions stemming from donor-driven agendas and resource limitations.

### Allocate a minimum of 10% ODA for SRHR

Canada must catch up to and lead the donor community towards investments which exceed existing global targets.<sup>1</sup> At a minimum, Canada should invest \$500 Million/year in new funding over and above the current levels, and committed over a 10-year period, broken down accordingly:

- **Minimum of \$400 Million/year for universal access to SRH information and services, particularly contraception and comprehensive abortion care, focusing on the poorest and most vulnerable;**
- **Minimum of \$100 Million/year in feminist organizations, including youth-led and women’s rights organizations to advocate for SRHR through:**
  - Direct funding and funding (solicited, targeted, or unsolicited) through Canadian CSOs (ensuring support for those doing the advocacy, with legitimacy and credibility);
  - Establishing and/or joining diverse funding mechanisms;
  - Direct government and political advocacy;
  - Identifying and utilizing opportunities to advocate for comprehensive SRHR.

<sup>1</sup> Including the target of 10% ODA for SRHR agreed to during the International Conference of Parliamentarians on the Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Program of Action (IPCI, ICPD PoA).

## Adolescents and youth

There is a need to invest in adolescent SRHR – both as a human rights imperative and recognizing the significant impact on other development outcomes. This requires investing in neglected issues within the context of adolescent SRHR, related to abortion, contraception, emergency contraception, HIV treatment, care and support, comprehensive sexuality education, the elimination of child, early and forced marriages, youth friendly services, and data collection for 10-14 year olds. **Canada's new international assistance policy must make explicit commitment to promote and catalyze collective action in support of youth SRHR, by:**

- Holding global partners accountable to implementation of adolescent SRHR;
- Applying a youth and gendered lens consistently to all programming, including and beyond SRHR programming;
- Partnering with youth organizations/players who are working on adolescent SRHR;
- Supporting comprehensive sexuality education that aims to eliminate gender norms and stereotypes, discrimination and stigma while embracing diversity and respect for the evolving capacities of young people; advocacy by and for adolescents; including efforts to eliminate discriminatory laws and policies (including those that prevent young people from accessing services without parental consent);
- Advancing international norms and standards by advocating for the creation of a technical guidance for states to use in the application of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of policies, programs and curricula on comprehensive sexuality education and sharing best practices;
- Supporting services for adolescents including initiatives such as youth organizations that support peer-to-peer organizations and health facilities that provide services for adolescent girls; and
- Investing in research that examines and seeks to address adolescents' barriers in access to comprehensive SRHR information and services.

## Governance, diversity, pluralism and human rights

The adoption of a human rights-based approach to Canada's international assistance requires a strong commitment to voice accountability at all levels of decision-making, support for initiatives that seek to challenge discriminatory laws and policies, and the advancement of human rights standards in global policy forums. Canadian NGOs and global partners are playing an important role in pushing for greater respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights. **Canada's new international assistance policy must invest in feminist organizations, including youth-led and women's rights organizations to advocate for SRHR, by:**

- Directly funding organizations doing advocacy (with legitimacy and credibility) that work to promote respect for human rights and full implementation of human rights standards in relation to SRHR;
- Funding organizations that work to reform restrictive laws and policies related to abortion;
- Establishing and/or joining diverse funding mechanisms for advocacy in support of SRHR;
- Engaging in direct government and political advocacy;
- Identifying and utilizing opportunities to advocate for comprehensive SRHR; and
- Supporting the capacity of civil society to build movements in support of comprehensive SRHR.

## Gender equality and women's rights

A standalone pillar on gender equality and women's rights would seek to operationalize feminist principles through targeted programming in areas that fall outside the scope of the remaining elements of the international assistance policy. **Canada's new international assistance policy must establish a stand-alone pillar on gender equality and women's rights that:**

- **Allocates 20% of all aid investments have as their principle focus advancing women's rights and gender equality.** As part of this, Canada should **dedicate \$100 M annual towards an explicit fund for feminist organizations**, including youth-led and women's rights organizations;
- **Maintains a funding instrument for feminist organizations, including local women- and youth-led organizations** who are leading the effort towards great respect, protection and fulfilment of women's rights;
- **Establishes funding opportunities that are diverse, predictable, multi-year, and responsive, and support core funding for these organizations;**
- **Invests in research to address gender norms and stereotypes, power structures, systemic inequality and intersectionality;**
- **Creates a pool of technical experts with resources required to provide gender-based analysis across all areas of programming** and builds the capacity of actors in and out of Global Affairs Canada to adopt feminist principles;
- **Supports efforts to address the root causes of gender-based violence** by looking holistically at discrimination in all its forms, including social norms, laws, policies and institutions;
- **Regularly engages with feminist organizations, including youth-led and women's rights organizations, in Canada, at the global level and in the Global South, regarding thematic focus for future programming;** and
- **Leads donor community in developing feminist monitoring and evaluation practices** that ensure accountability and recognition for spending in this area.

## Humanitarian & Peace and Security

Recent evidence demonstrates the clear ways in which women and girls are disproportionately affected when crisis strikes, whether related to conflict, climate change, or natural disaster. According to the 2016 United Nations Population Fund State of World Population Report, gaps in the provision of comprehensive maternal health care, for example, contribute to the reality that three fifths of all maternal deaths occur in humanitarian and fragile contexts. The report more broadly highlights gaps in access to support service for survivors of sexual violence, particularly post-exposure prophylaxis, emergency contraception, and antibiotics to prevent sexually transmitted infections, among other issues, particularly in humanitarian settings. UNFPA, and other global actors,<sup>2</sup> show that SRHR services in humanitarian settings have been systemically underfunded and neglected for decades, resulting in sexual and reproductive health services often being left out of response strategies all together. Investing in SRHR may seem like an added burden in the short term, but it has multiple positive effects in the short and long term – particularly around increasing resilience and breaking the cycle of violence (specifically sexual and gender-based violence).

**Canada's approach to humanitarian assistance within the new international assistance policy must:**

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/aug/06/reproductive-health-in-crises-women-family-planning-abortion-inter-agency-working-group>

- Establish targeted investments in areas traditionally neglected in humanitarian assistance, namely emergency contraception, a range of methods of contraception methods and comprehensive abortion care;
- Take measures to address demand-side factors in delivery of humanitarian assistance, particularly those related to health (including SRHR) and supports for survivors of gender-based violence;
- Invest in feminist organizations, including youth-led and women’s rights organizations, working to advance SRHR in humanitarian and fragile contexts, and UN Security Council Resolution 1325;
- Address the full range of women, peace and security ‘pillars’ (participation (supporting the full participation of feminist organizations and activists in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peace building and recovery); protection (dealing with conflict -related sexual violence prevention (investing in conflict prevention); and relief and recovery (ensuring attention to women’s rights and gender equality results in humanitarian assistance and post -conflict initiatives));
- Invests in research that examines and seeks to address gaps in SRHR services in humanitarian assistance;
- Ensure application of feminist principles across all humanitarian efforts; and
- Ensure coordination between development, humanitarian efforts and peace and security efforts.

## Role of parliamentarians in advancing international assistance priorities

Parliamentarians can play a vital role in supporting governments to meet their international assistance commitments and human rights obligations, particularly those related to SRHR, by:

- Acting as opinion leaders through the engagement of constituents and the public (through constituency town-halls on global SRHR topics, public statements, press releases, statements in parliament, media statements, etc.);
- Participating in and representing Canada in global policy dialogue (including the G7 parliamentarians conference on population and development, functional Commissions of the United Nations (i.e.: UN Commission on the Status of Women), sessions of the UN Human Rights Councils, etc.);
- Facilitating dialogue stakeholders and relevant ministries (particularly towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals – in Canada and globally);
- Encouraging transparency and participation of marginalized groups, human rights organizations, youth-led organizations, women’s rights organizations, among others, in decisions related to international assistance;
- Initiating research and dialogue on global SRHR topics (through parliamentary committees, parliamentary friendship groups and associations, etc.);
- Engaging in bi-lateral discussions with parliamentarians from other countries towards the realization of global SRHR issues through international assistance and global policy dialogue;
- Monitoring the implementation of international assistance programmes and spending of ODA.

## Canadian political leadership on SRHR

Canada can take advantage of specific opportunities to demonstrate new and continued leadership on SRHR, gender equality and the adoption of a feminist approach to international assistance. Such opportunities include:

- **Using the G7 leadership moment:** hosting a **global universal SRHR access Summit** in Canada in 2018;
- **Establishing a donor circle for SRHR** of like-minded donors who are interested in addressing gaps/neglected areas in SRHR funding and learning from best practice;
- **Hosting the next Global Safe Abortion Conference in 2017** (most recent conference took place in London in 2007) with a goal of **establishing a global partnership on safe abortion care ('Safe Abortion 2027')**, similar to FP2020 initiative;
- **Advancing SRHR in policy dialogue in UN forums and other human rights bodies**, including the General Assembly, functional commissions, Human Rights Council, regional human rights bodies, etc.;
- Pushing for greater focus on SRHR from a rights-based perspective in **Canada's hosting role for the Global Fund replenishment in September 2016**;
- Bringing a rights-based approach to the **Global Financing Facility and other pooled funding mechanisms**: ensuring indicators are rights-based, pushing for support for a comprehensive approach to SRHR (including support for safe abortion and advocacy for SRHR);
- **Bringing attention to neglected aspects of SRHR at the UN Summit on Refugees and Migrants, September 2016: including** bringing focus to safe abortion care and emergency contraception;
- **Establishing Special ambassadors/envoys/councils**: engaging in dialogue with experts and other like-minded countries and leading dialogues to assess how best to support and galvanize efforts (i.e.: Dutch model with both an Ambassador and youth Ambassador on SRHR working together);
- Organize a public **launch of Global SRHR strategy**; and
- Convene a **group of experts to strategize on advancement of SRHR, globally** (building on [World Leaders Consultation Uniting for Safe and Legal Abortion](#)).

## Feminist principles and a human rights-based approach

Canada should champion an approach that addresses the root causes of structural and systemic inequalities and transform systems of power, many of which are grounded in social constructions of gender and patriarchal attempts to control the bodies and sexualities of women, adolescents and those transgressing gender norms. Feminist principles include: autonomy, choice, agency, empowerment and intersectionality. Fundamental human rights principles include non-discrimination, equality, transparency, sustainability, empowerment, addressing root causes, accountability and participation. Feminist and human rights-based approaches overlap tremendously, and are mutually reinforcing.

**Canada can promote a feminist a human rights-based approach by:**

- Supporting organizations that have recognized expertise in SRHR, which includes those working in areas currently neglected within the international development context;
- Supporting policy and advocacy, not just service delivery;
- Supporting organizations working on accountability for human rights, and strengthen the ability of feminist organizations, including youth-led and women's rights organizations, to influence legal and policy reform;
- Adopting participatory methodologies throughout the project planning, implementation and evaluation phases;
- Increasing poor and marginalized women's awareness of their rights and their access to information and justice;
- Offering financial and political support to feminist human rights defenders; and

- Strengthening the capacity of organizations to self-organize around the priorities of poor and marginalized women and other individuals;
- Developing a feminist and human rights-based accountability framework for tracking and reporting on results (including ways to better measure qualitative change and the integration of feminist and human rights-based indicators); and
- Developing strategies to assess Canada's role in multilateral fora from feminist and rights-based perspectives.

This approach must be applied across all sectors of development, and across all areas of work (i.e.: bilateral, multilateral, humanitarian, policy and partnerships).