

Major Research Paper

Mapping the Debate of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy

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Executive Summary

The 2017 implementation of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) marked an important step towards gender-focused foreign aid. The policy has since generated a robust debate regarding its effectiveness and soundness in reducing poverty and creating a more peaceful and secure world. This paper evaluates the debate on the FIAP by identifying and organizing the primary arguments that have surfaced.

The debate is organized into three main categories. The first category explores the discourse surrounding the policy development stage of the FIAP. The second category focuses on policy effectiveness specifically regarding monitoring, reporting, and evaluation. The last category presents the main strengths and weaknesses of the theoretical approach of the FIAP and considers its theoretical integrity. The purpose of the mapping exercise is to create a roadmap to facilitate the understanding of the main successes and failures of the policy and in the long term, contribute to the policy improvement processes.

Mapping the policy debate is a beneficial exercise for gaining clarity on the key strengths and weaknesses of the FIAP. By methodically outlining these components, policymakers, practitioners, stakeholders, and implementation partners can achieve a thorough grasp of the issues, pinpoint areas of agreement and contention, and identify obstacles to consensus or action. This approach can support informed decision-making, integrate diverse perspectives, enhance transparency and accountability, and ultimately foster the creation of stronger and more effective policies that cater to the needs and interests of all parties involved. This paper seeks to contribute to the improvement of future international assistance policies by creating a roadmap for better understanding the factors that are contributing to the successes and failures of Canada's international assistance.

Main Findings

The mapping exercise has produced two main findings. First, the FIAP's ambiguity is a main factor for its ineffectiveness. Among all three categories, ambiguity was consistently identified as a key contributor to the policy's inferior performance.

Secondly, the outcomes and impacts of a policy matter more than the intention; thus, the strengths and weaknesses of the policy's implementation and theoretical integrity should be weighted more than those regarding policy development.

Introduction

A trend is emerging among Western democracies. Canada, along with 16 other countries, has adopted a feminist foreign policy. In 2017 Canada adopted the Feminists International Assistance Policy (FIAP) which guides its foreign aid contributions and programming to promote gender equality, women's empowerment, and sustainable development. The implementation of a feminist foreign aid policy is significant for Canada and represents a shift in approach and objectives for the government. To put this shift into context, from 2010 to 2017, the years leading up to the implementation of the FIAP, Canada spent only 1-2 % of its international assistance funding on women (Zakaria, 2017). Although Canada has a significant history as a global champion of gender equality and women's rights, the FIAP represents a first in terms of its approach. As a feminist policy, it is guided by the theory that the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is the most effective way to eradicate global poverty and ensure a peaceful and secure world.

There is agreement that promoting gender equality is key to enhancing global well-being and should be among Canada's international assistance priorities. However, the FIAP has fallen under intense scrutiny for its implementation and effectiveness as an international assistance policy. It has become evident from several sources, including the Report from the Auditor General of Canada, development practitioners and academia, along with non-government organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs), that the policy may not be achieving the goals it set out to. The feedback, both positive and negative, is necessary for the success of Canada's international assistance efforts and foreign policies in the future. Given the complexity of the debate, this paper seeks to identify the key arguments surrounding the FIAP and organize them in a way that identifies key policy failures.

The purpose of this research paper is to clearly outline the major arguments that have emerged within the debate surrounding the FIAP. Canada's 2017 feminist policy has sparked the interest of development academics and practitioners alike and has prompted some support, but more importantly a plethora of criticisms. Such feedback is essential to understanding what is working and what is not in Canada's new international assistance approach. The goal of this paper is to map the current debate by categorizing assessments of the FIAP into three main sections. They include category 1: policy development, category 2: effectiveness, and category 3: theoretical claims and integrity. The method of categorization helps to identify where exactly the FIAP is having success and where it is failing.

Given the FIAP has been in place for 7 years, there is an opportunity to assess the policy's impacts. Earlier work on the policy has evaluated the integrity of the document, focusing on the soundness of the feminist approach, but with more recent data and audits, this paper can provide further insights into how the policy has been working in practice and whether Canada's international assistance has been living up to its promises.

More broadly, a mapping exercise of the policy debate can be particularly beneficial for policy improvement because it helps to clarify the various perspectives, arguments, and stakeholders involved in the debate. By systematically mapping out these elements, policymakers, practitioners, stakeholders, and implementing partners can gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand, identify common ground and areas of disagreement, and recognize potential barriers to consensus or implementation. This process can facilitate informed decision-making, enable the synthesis of diverse viewpoints, promote transparency and accountability, and ultimately lead to the development of more robust and effective policies that address the needs and concerns of all stakeholders involved.

The research for this paper began by consulting the Government of Canada FIAP policy document to provide the necessary context on what the policy entails, its goals, commitments, and approach for achieving its desired impact. To establish how the policy was developed, I reviewed other government documentation and reporting from the Regional Councils for International Cooperation. With generous context of the policy along with the environment in which it was developed, I turned my attention to gathering the main arguments within the policy debate. I consolidated the discourse surrounding the FIAP from government reports and grey literature, which included International Assistance Review submissions, blogs, writings from academics and civil society, and news articles. From this, I was able to identify and analyze trends in the debate and establish three main categories for organizing the discourse. This allowed for the recognition of key patterns in the arguments and the creation of a road map for better navigating the strengths and weaknesses of the policy.

Canada's Commitment to Gender Equality

To begin, it is important to situate the FIAP within Canada's historical commitment to gender equality and the rights of women. Although a feminist approach to foreign aid is new to Canada, the FIAP does not mark the beginning of Canada's commitment to gender equality. In 1976, Canada's Women in Development strategy was implemented. It was based on a Women in Development (WID) approach to address the specific needs of women in development contexts. The strategy came from the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) identified need for improving and increasing women's participation in the design and implementation of development projects. WID is no longer the norm in development practices due to its shortcomings in recognizing the role of gender norms and structural factors in development.

In the mid-1990s, the gender and development (GAD) approach was popularized because it more fully addressed gender norms and constraints while considering women's participation. CIDA's focus was on gender-inequitable structures and processes led to the 1995 Policy on Women in Development and Gender Equality. During this time, gender equality was being mainstreamed, and there was growing recognition of the need for the inclusion of gender perspectives in policies and programs. This swiftly led to Canada's 1999 Gender Equality Policy which was seen as a model for gender policies among donor countries (Tiessen, 2019).

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, the FIAP is not the first time an international assistance policy focused on gender equality has faced criticism. The 1999 Gender Equality Policy was heavily criticized for its "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" (Tiessen, 2019, p.4). Other limitations of the 1999 policy included a lack of consistent leadership among senior management and notably, a lack of coherence and consistency across implementing departments to make gender equality a priority. Additionally, it was highlighted that "commitments to gender equality weakened when translated into practice" with watered-down development practices and reporting that focused largely on outputs rather than outcomes (Tiessen, 2019, p.4).

Chapter 1: What is the FIAP?

The first step in understanding the current debate about Canada's foreign policy approach is to understand the context in which the FIAP emerges both domestically and globally. Since its 1999 Gender Equality Policy and implementation of a gender mainstreaming approach, "Canada has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to gender and development" (Tiessen, 2019, p.2). In 2016, when Trudeau's Liberal government came into power, Canada's international assistance

experienced an ideological shift. Before Canada's feminist approach, the Harper government had cut foreign aid funding for several consecutive years and treated development NGOs with disdain (Brown, 2016). During the conservative Harper government, from 2006-2015, the instrumentalization of Canada's foreign aid increased significantly (Brown, 2016). This is to say that during this period, the conservative government "consistently reoriented aid to benefit Canadian interests, to the detriment of poverty reduction abroad" (Brown, 2016, p. 18). Foreign aid has long been used to advance Canada's self-interests; however, the Harper government did not have a long-term perspective of foreign aid and "embraced an often-limited view of Canadian interests, including those of Canadian private sector companies" which directly hindered the achievement of poverty-reduction goals (Brown, 2016, p. 18). Historically, Canada has invested little to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. For example, in 2015-16 only 2% of Canada's international assistance spending was directed towards such objectives (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). Furthermore, evaluations demonstrate a downward trend in gender equality-focused programming leading up to the implementation of the FIAP.

Canada's foreign policies are highly influenced by the domestic political environment. The feminist approach was highly politicized during the 2015 Canadian elections. In response to nine years of conservative government, the Trudeau administration emphasized and strongly asserted its feminist values. Trudeau continued to affirm he was a feminist during his political campaign and, for the first time in Canadian history, had a gender-equal cabinet.

The policy development stage of the FIAP occurred within an equally interesting global context. In 2015, all members of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It outlines a "blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and

into the future” (United Nations n.d., para 1). The action plan includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that touch on a diversity of interconnected issues such as poverty, inequality, access to healthcare and education, and climate change. The SDGs call all countries into action to foster cooperation in improving global well-being. Canada's membership to the UN means it has a responsibility to make a dedicated effort to achieve the SDGs. SDG 5, achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, is central to the FIAP and Canada's commitment to achieving the other goals. In comparison to foreign aid policy during the previous government, the FIAP was designed to be directly connected to long-term and sustainable foreign aid goals, such as the SDGs. Furthermore, the FIAP comes at a time when there is an emergence of countries adopting feminist foreign policies.

Policy Development

In May 2016, the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Marie-Claude Bibeau launched the International Assistance Review (IAR). It consisted of a public review and consultation of Canada's international assistance policy which informed how Canada was going to approach its assistance efforts and resources going forward. From the initial stages of policy development, the rights of women and girls along with a feminist approach were set as priorities.

The IAR conducted inclusive consultations that "engaged with a diverse range of individuals and groups including CSOs, youth, secondary and post-secondary institutions, diaspora communities, research institutions, churches, and faith-based organizations, private sector representatives, nationals from the Global South, and interested individuals" (Kindornay, n.d., p. 2). The IAR also included more than 300 international consultations hosted in over 65 countries (Government of Canada, 2017). This resulted in the engagement of over 15,000 people and partners and more than 10,600 written contributions (Government of Canada, 2017).

The consultation process produced key overarching recommendations that would eventually contribute to the conception of the FIAP. Among them was an emphasis on Canada's leadership on reaching the SDGs both domestically and internationally, which called for "directly linking policy priorities to the SDGs" (Kindornay, n.d., p. 3). Secondly, an integrated approach to international cooperation, including investments in public engagement and education, and a dedication to working with a diverse range of partners, was recommended (Kindornay, n.d.). Thirdly, the review insisted Canada apply a human-rights-based approach by "focusing on poverty reduction and reducing inequalities", and "addressing intersecting forms of discrimination" (Kindornay, n.d., p. 4). Fourthly, in alignment with this, the consultation process concluded that Canada should target its assistance to support the poorest and most marginalized communities (Kindornay, n.d.). Fifthly, emphasis was placed on the need for greater local ownership of policies and programs to ensure they are adequately informed by local perspectives (Kindornay, n.d.). Finally, the consultation process recommended Canada implement a long-term, predictable, and flexible approach to international assistance financing (Kindornay, n.d.).

The Inter-Council Network's (ICN) recommendations concluded with an insistence on further information about how the government intended to adopt and implement a feminist approach in practice. It called on the need for a "coherent approach to international cooperation and a whole-of-government approach" in its international engagement (Kindornay, n.d., p. 17). Finally, the SDGs provided a strong framework for achieving long-term global goals, therefore, the ICN urged Canada to closely align its international assistance efforts with them (Kindornay, n.d., p. 16). The policy development context provides the groundwork for understanding the FIAP, its commitments, and motivations.

Contents and Commitments

The main goal of the FIAP is to "eradicate poverty and build a more peaceful, more inclusive and more prosperous world" (Global Affairs Canada, 2017, p.8). The policy emphasizes that supporting and promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is the most effective way to achieve its goals (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). The policy states that a feminist approach goes beyond concentrating only on women and girls; it represents the most impactful strategy for tackling the underlying causes of poverty (Global Affairs Canada, 2017).

This feminist approach represents a significant shift in how Canada has historically performed international assistance and foreign policy more generally. The move to a feminist approach is founded on the idea that investing in women and girls can significantly improve economic growth, encourage greater peace and cooperation, and improve the quality of life of families and communities (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). Furthermore, it acknowledges the discrimination women and girls face and its role in exacerbating intersecting inequalities (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). To improve the conditions of women and girls around the world, Canada has recognized that social norms and power relations must be transformed. The policy conceives women and girls as powerful agents of change and outlines that increasing gender equality can have many impacts such as "deliver strong economic growth, help cut down on extreme poverty, reduce chronic hunger, lead to longer-lasting peace, benefit entire families, and empower all those who face discrimination" (Global Affairs Canada, 2017, p.2).

In terms of financial commitments, the FIAP "ensures that by 2021-22 no less than 95% of Canada's bilateral international development assistance initiatives will target or integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls" (Global Affairs Canada, 2017, p.9). The policy approach also includes supporting local women's organizations (LWO) to enhance new

and innovative collaboration in hopes of advancing women's rights. Furthermore, the FIAP recognizes that gender equality must be achieved in collaboration with men and boys in order to challenge social norms and gender stereotypes along with engaging them as advocates for equality.

Another key goal of the FIAP is to improve the effectiveness of Canada's international assistance which includes more transparency in their results and activities. The policy claims that a new feminist approach will "enable Canada to maximize the effectiveness of its international assistance, provide more integrated and responsive assistance, invest in innovation and research, deliver better reporting on results, and develop more effective partnerships" (Global Affairs Canada, 2017, p.65). It commits to concentrating Canada's international assistance to support the poorest and most vulnerable populations, and to dedicating additional resources to sustainable development including building new partnerships (Global Affairs Canada, 2017).

Action Areas

Derived from the six thematic pillars of the UN Agenda 2030, the policy incorporates six action areas as strategies for realizing Canada's international assistance objectives, encompassing poverty eradication and peacebuilding. These action areas serve as thematic priorities that guide development assistance programming.

1. Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is the main action area of the FIAP and is implemented and integrated throughout all action areas to promote gender equality. Among its priorities, this action area seeks to address sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) through advocacy and investments with special emphasis on a multi-dimensional approach (Global Affairs Canada, 2017, p.17).

2. Human Dignity

Action area two focuses on supporting access to quality health care, nutrition, and education, as well as a needs-based approach to humanitarian assistance to better address the needs and potential of women and girls (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). The promotion of sexual and reproductive health is a central goal for which the policy commits a 650-million-dollar investment between 2017 and 2020 (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). In addition, the FIAP commits Canada to increase its support for women and girls in its humanitarian response, including supporting LWOs and local emergency response organizations. This adheres to the idea that the inclusion of women and girls in planning and implementing humanitarian response can improve overall outcomes.

3. Growth that Works for Everyone

Growth that works for everyone refers to assisting women and girls in achieving economic independence through increased access to economic opportunities and resources (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). It emphasizes the need for equal participation of women as economic actors and ensuring access to economic opportunities. It is founded on the belief that when women can fully participate in the economic lives of their families and communities it can produce economic growth and sustainable change (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). Other goals include promoting women's economic rights, supporting technical and vocational training for women, and helping address unpaid work and the disproportionate burden of care shouldered by women (Global Affairs Canada, 2017, p. 39).

4. Environment and Climate Action

The fourth action area commits to supporting governments in their efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change while promoting women's leadership and decision-making and creating

economic opportunities for women in clean energy (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). The policy acknowledges the disproportionate and destabilizing impacts that climate change has on vulnerable populations, particularly women and girls. As such, it commits "\$2.65 billion to support most vulnerable countries to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change by 2020-2021" (Global Affairs Canada, 2017, p.43).

5. Inclusive Governance

Action area five, Inclusive Governance, seeks to work towards ending gender discrimination by "promoting and protecting human rights, advancing the rule of law and building stronger institutions" (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). To support and advocate for women's rights, "starting in 2017 Canada will allocate \$150 million over 5 years in support of Grassroots Women's rights organizations" (Global Affairs Canada, 2017, p.49).

6. Peace and Security

To enhance global peace and security, the FIAP promotes increased involvement of women in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. It aims to boost women's representation in the security sector and enforce a zero-tolerance policy against sexual violence and abuse by peacekeepers (Global Affairs Canada, 2017).

Implementation Approach

The implementation of the FIAP is accomplished through a coordinated approach among federal government departments to ensure financial and legal best practices along with a continued dedication to the thematic priorities. There is an emphasis on the need for an integrated approach to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, thus including diplomacy, trade, security, and a wide range of Government of Canada departments and agencies (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). This is supported by the belief that global issues are

interconnected and require coordinated responses, thus the policy accentuates the need for "better integration of development and other objectives, such as trade" to have positive economic impacts on developing countries (Global Affairs Canada, 2017, p. 67).

Another key aspect of the novel approach is taking on responsible risks with partnerships and programming, supported by the modernization of results-based management, and risk management procedures. This approach will "support sustainable development through more effective engagement with fragile states and countries in crisis, stronger partnerships for sustainable development, and productive partnerships for transition" (Global Affairs Canada, 2017, p. 75).

Throughout the action areas, global partnership and collaboration remain key to realizing the objectives. This indicates that the government intends to engage in more diverse partnerships outside of government-to-government, including civil society, multilateral and international organizations, philanthropic foundations, developing country governments, at all levels, the private sector, and emerging official donors (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). In accordance with this, Canada has committed to "provide \$100 million over five years in dedicated funding for small and medium-sized Canadian CSOs so they can develop and implement innovative programming in partnership with local organizations" (Global Affairs Canada, 2017, p. 73).

Monitoring and Evaluation

To have more responsive and accountable assistance, the policy vows to streamline and accelerate its funding and reporting procedures to reduce the administrative burden on funding recipients (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). It claims that this will ensure that "assistance is more responsive, more transparent, and more predictable" (Global Affairs Canada, 2017, p.69). To deliver on their commitment to improved policy monitoring, Gender-Based Analysis Plus

(GBA+) has been included to “determine the extent to which gender was integrated into the projects and ensure that spending was being tracked appropriately” (Global Affairs Canada, 2017, p.7). GAC is to report on the results and delivery of the FIAP to Parliament and Canadians through the annual report on the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act and through the Departmental Results Report and publish international assistance program information per the International Aid Transparency Initiative (Global Affairs Canada, 2017).

Chapter 2: Mapping the Debate

The implementation of the FIAP has been accompanied by a complex debate ranging from the intent and conceptualizing of the policy, the ambiguity of its theoretical approach, to the weaknesses of GAC’s ability to monitor and evaluate outcomes. With such a wide range of strengths and weaknesses, it can be challenging to grasp the key arguments and what they mean for the FIAPs ability to achieve its goals. A mapping exercise can be beneficial for understanding the complexity of a policy debate and help clarify key arguments. Through this type of analysis, it can become easier to draw links and identify relationships between different arguments and issues. Often with such complex policies, it can become difficult to determine if a specific characteristic or aspect is the problem itself or a symptom of something larger, therefore mapping can be a helpful means of identifying the root causes of policy inefficiencies. A mapping exercise is particularly helpful in the context of the FIAP because it is a new policy approach. With the adoption of any new approach, some trials and errors are expected because it can be hard to predict how a plan will work in practice. However, this makes it even more important to continue to evaluate and analyze the strengths and weaknesses to make necessary improvements. The need for continuous improvement is reinforced by the nature of international assistance policies because they directly impact and affect the lives of the most vulnerable and

marginalized people. The failure of any foreign aid policy, including the FIAP comes with serious consequences and the risk of putting aid recipients in more precarious situations. Therefore, when implementing the FIAP, Canada has an additional responsibility to ensure they are appropriately supporting recipients and are not producing more harm. The mapping of the FIAP debate provides an opportunity to continue to evaluate how the policy is impacting marginalized individuals, if it is representative of Canada's goals and values, and can support continuous improvement.

In the long term, mapping can also be facilitated as a step in strategic planning, policy decision-making, and a learning tool. It provides the opportunity to consider and compare feedback from several sources including politicians, direct stakeholders, government officials, NGOs, academics, and beneficiaries. Gaining understanding from various sources is important because it provides diverse perspectives on how policies are having an impact. Especially when considering feminist policy, it is important to engage with women and girls to ensure that international assistance initiatives are meeting their specific needs.

With the implementation of new policies, there are several factors that contribute to their effectiveness and likelihood of success. In the case of the FIAP, which has adopted a 'new' approach to international assistance, it is possible to witness a disconnect between intention and outcomes. Novel approaches are not necessarily accompanied by road maps and clear guidance on how the initiative will produce the intended outcomes or how it should work in practice. Therefore, the failure to produce the desired outcomes is possible. Additionally, when deviating from the status quo, the logic of an approach must be put into question to ensure it is reliable and has solid reasoning. This becomes more evident when diving into the conversation surrounding the FIAP.

While collecting and analyzing the commentary, a pattern became evident; the arguments made regarding the FIAP could be categorized into three main groups. The first category of the policy debate focuses on how the policy development stage and presents the main strengths and weaknesses of the conception, intention, and development of the FIAP. The second category takes a closer look at the policy effectiveness specifically how GAC has managed the monitoring, reporting, and evaluation of international assistance programming. This section also considers the main arguments surrounding the policy's implementation plan and the government's transparency in operationalizing the FIAP. The final category focuses on the theoretical integrity of the FIAP's feminist approach. This section presents the key arguments regarding the type of feminism employed and the general clarity of how the policy will create better development outcomes.

Chapter 3: Category 1 - Policy Development

This section will take a closer look at aspects of the debate that pertain to how the policy was conceived and developed. The policy development stage is a logical place to start because it is during this step that the intention and motivations of the FIAP were established. This section takes a closer look at the domestic environment in which the policy was developed and how it influenced Canada's shift to a "new" approach. Additionally, the FIAP is not the first time Canada has committed to gender equality and a gender-based policy, however, the FIAP is highly characterized and framed as a novel approach for Canada. One of the major criticisms included in this section will explore the lack of acknowledgement of Canada's historical role as a global champion of gender equality and how this lack of recognition has reproduced the same policy errors. While the FIAP does not present a complete shift, many agree that it offers innovative approaches and language to foreign policy.

Motives

As elaborated previously, the policy development stage included important feminist values and principles, including cooperation, collaboration, and inclusivity. Key to the policy development process was the extensive consultation launched by the government in 2016. The consultation involved ordinary Canadians, CSOs and academics. Although initially content with being consulted, many participants have subsequently voiced frustration over the absence of feedback and the omission of potentially bold or contentious ideas from the final policy document (Sinclair, 2017). Sinclair (2017) also notes that the final drafting of the policy document was completed by a small group of GAC officials and the Minister. The omission of recommendations from experts and development practitioners raises concern about the inclusion of diverse perspectives and the motivation behind the consultation.

Coming under scrutiny are also the motivations and intentions of Canada's new foreign aid policy, noting that it may have been the result of domestic politics. The Liberal government likely used the policy as an opportunity to differentiate itself from the previous conservative governments (Sinclair, 2017). Additionally, Canada needed a means to deliver on its commitment to Agenda 2030, however, Sinclair (2017) notes that "the final document has ultimately become a feminist manifesto for GAC". Interestingly, it is noted that the FIAP's implicit purpose was to showcase "Canada is Back" as part of the campaign aimed at enhancing Canada's prospects for winning a seat on the UN Security Council in 2020 (Sinclair, 2017). While the policy document claims the main policy goal is poverty eradication through the empowerment of women and girls, the context in which it was developed raises serious questions regarding its actual purpose, specifically whether it was to achieve other political goals.

The Novelty of the FIAP

The FIAP has been framed as a novel approach to Canada's foreign aid and commitment to gender equality. The policy document includes consistent emphasis on the newness of the policy approach, for example, the repetitive use of "words such as "new" (mentioned 40 times), "innovative" (noted eight times) or "innovation" (mentioned 10 times) is noteworthy" (Tiessen, 2019, p. 3). The policy is framed as a significant shift in the way Canada conducts foreign aid, emphasizing the use of "new funding mechanisms, new ways of working, new partnerships and new solutions to achieve development strategies" (Tiessen, 2019, p. 3).

However, such newness is contested. Some CSOs, scholars and analysts have applauded the policy for being innovative, whereas others have proposed that the policy represents a return to a domain of Canadian expertise and leadership in gender equality (Tiessen, 2019). When taking into consideration Canada's policies and commitments to gender equality dating back to 1976, Tiessen (2019) provides considerations for why and how the FIAP may be more of the same. In addition, the FIAP's novelty framing prevents it from fitting within historical and multilateral international strategies on gender equality (Tiessen, 2019). The policy document omits the story of Canada's engagement with gender-centered initiatives. It would have been beneficial to showcase Canada's "particular feminist comparative advantage" in international assistance and would have added a level of credibility (Tiessen, 2019, p. 5). As will be explored later, for foreign aid to be effective it requires buy-in from recipients. The inclusion of Canada's continued work towards gender equality may have been a helpful way to secure the confidence of recipients.

Familiar Criticisms of a New Policy

The current discussion surrounding the FIAP is not dissimilar from that of the 1999 Gender Equality Policy (Tiessen, 2019). While the FIAP was intended as a new and improved approach to Canada's international assistance, it reproduces many of the same mistakes of previous gender policies. This indicates a relative lack of consideration for previous "lessons learned" within the policy development stage. While there may have been intent to improve on what Canada has previously done, the reproduction of similar missteps represents a serious flaw in the policy development stage of the FIAP. These missteps are as follows.

Hypocrisy is a reoccurring problem among Canada's gender equality commitments. While the FIAP claims to have a gendered approach among development and aid initiatives, defence, security, and economic foreign policy do not adopt the same goals. This is exemplified by Canada's selling of military weapons to Saudi Arabia, which is notorious for its "human rights abuses and lack of gender equality practices" (Tiessen, 2019, p. 5). Tiessen (2019) also highlights the hypocritical nature of the policy considering defence budget spending increases alongside no significant new monetary commitments for foreign assistance. The FIAP is grounded in the idea that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are the most suitable and effective means for establishing broader security goals. With this, expected action would include redistribution of current defence funding towards gender-focused aid initiatives or increased monetary commitments. Without additional funding and support, Canada will continue to under-deliver on its gender equality objectives.

Another key challenge that has persisted with the FIAP is its limited potential to translate intent into practice. To meet the government's intentions, it "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" (Tiessen, 2019, p. 5). However, Tiessen (2019) does not comment on whether what is currently outlined in the FIAP is enough to meet its goals.

The concern for the policy's ability to successfully deliver on promises is rooted in the unclear conceptualization of the implementation processes. It is unclear how the policy is intended to be implemented, specifically how gender funding targets will be imposed (Tiessen, 2019). Additionally, there was considerable ambiguity regarding "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 rights standards" (Tiessen, 2019, p. 5). Tiessen (2019) emphasized the need for dedicated policy monitoring and evaluation, specifically the need for timelines for measuring outputs and outcomes, along with broader timelines for aid funding to gender equality programming.

Persistence is Key

Although it may seem counterproductive to continue to implement gender-focused approaches given their weaknesses and inefficiencies in the past, evidence shows that "many possibilities emerge from sustained commitments to gender equality over extended periods of time" (Tiessen, 2019, p.2). Replicating weak policies that did not produce positive outcomes causes problems, however, more of the same is not always considered bad practice, especially for gender equality efforts (Tiessen, 2019, p.2).

Regardless, many agree that the FIAP presents a critical opportunity to return to and scale up Canada's development efforts, especially after the Harper government's departure from

appropriate aid commitments. Those that support the FIAP claim it "as an ambitious positive shift forward in a journey towards gender transformative change", a "game changer with its focus on inclusivity, power and even intersectionality" and assert it is "as progressive a feminist document as one can imagine a federal government department could issue" (Brown, and Swiss, 2018, p. 118). Tiessen (2019) expresses hope that although the FIAP policy document does not represent transformational feminist approaches and ideologies, it is possible that "the actions that result from a feminist policy can potentially address these missed opportunities" (p. 9).

In addition, Tiessen (2019) gives credit by acknowledging the use of the term feminism to frame the policy. It is explained that "the FIAP offers a new language that has not been widely used in previous policy commitments" (p. 9). However, it is reinforced that the true test of novelty will be the policy's "ability to articulate what that feminist vision entails, and how it will translate that vision into practice" (Tiessen, 2019, p. 9). This clarification reinforces the essence of development aid and highlights what is most important - improving the lives and outcomes of the most vulnerable and marginalized people.

Chapter 4: Category 2 - Effectiveness

This category focuses on points of the debate that pertain to the effectiveness of the FIAP in practice. This section will explore how the policy is being implemented and consider the current weaknesses and strengths of its operationalization, this includes the monitoring and evaluation of impacts, along with the delivery of the policy commitments. It will begin by exploring the findings of the "International Assistance in Support of Gender Equality" audit and will be followed by an examination of important limitations identified by scholars such as unclear implementation and lack of transparency.

Auditor General of Canada Report

Since international assistance falls under GAC's mandate, it is the main government body responsible for reporting and monitoring the progress and efficiency of the FIAP. In 2023, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada produced the "International Assistance in Support of Gender Equality" audit to evaluate the extent to which GAC implemented the FIAP. The audit sought to evaluate whether GAC was delivering on projects that supported gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and whether projects were generating expected outcomes. Between April 2017 and March 2021, "GAC's international assistance averaged \$5.2 billion per fiscal year" and was allocated specifically towards humanitarian assistance, multilateral assistance, and bilateral assistance (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023, p. 1). The audit focused on bilateral development assistance and examined project files to determine their alignment with the FIAP's goals.

The audit was successful in providing key insights into how GAC is working towards measuring the implementation of the FIAP. At a glance, it found that "GAC is unable to show the value of Canada's international assistance in support of gender equality" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023). The report highlights that the department failed to demonstrate the impact of the roughly \$3.5 billion in bilateral development assistance provided annually to low- and middle-income countries on enhancing outcomes for women and girls (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023). Additionally, tracking outcomes of policy goals was made significantly difficult due to weaknesses in the department's information management practices. Findings also included a failure to meet all spending commitments and adequate employment of GBA+ in measuring how projects responded to policy goals.

Lack of Comprehensive Monitoring and Reporting

To begin, the audit showed that GAC did not comprehensively monitor or report outcomes against policy goals. The findings of the audit are important because GAC has a responsibility to implement the FIAP and to demonstrate how funding and projects are working towards the policy goals, such as improving the lives of the most vulnerable. In general, there were significant weaknesses in the way GAC managed project information. The Auditor General's office requested project documents from 619 projects to assess their effectiveness in achieving gender equality outcomes (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023). Many such documents were not initially provided due to difficulty in locating information and general unavailability. Such problems have been reported previously through an internal audit from 2021 that found that "staff did not consistently use the department's data repositories to manage project-level information, there were no standardized procedures for storing and maintaining project information, and some of the required information had been stored on computers of staff who had since left the department, so officials were unable to find the required information" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023, p. 4).

The Auditor General's office was provided with completed information for only 50 projects, including "project objectives, a departmental gender assessment, and evidence of departmental monitoring" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023, p. 5). Among the documents provided, there was compelling evidence to suggest that "project officers followed processes to monitor projects to determine whether milestones and activities were completed" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023, p. 5). However, due to weaknesses in information management, such information was not being used at the departmental level. This raised critical concern for the department's ability to monitor progress toward gender equality outcomes

because it was unclear how or if evidence-based decision-making and impact assessments were being conducted.

No Tracking of Outcomes

Another key finding of the audit showed that the department was failing to track international assistance outcomes resulting in an inability to measure the progress of policy goals.

In the short term, project activities generate outputs and in the long term, outcomes are used to measure the extent to which a situation has changed. Both are important for international assistance project management and monitoring and GAC has established indicators to monitor progress towards policy goals (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023). However, it was found that 24 of 26 indicators did not measure outcomes. For example, one of the projects evaluated during the audit had the goal of making gender-sensitive infrastructure improvements to schools to increase attendance of girls and young women during menstruation. GAC tracked and measured improvements to communities, specifically reporting on where funding was allocated and the number of new bathrooms and hand washing stations built. However, outcomes were not captured, therefore, it is challenging to determine whether the project resulted in enhancements to the school attendance of girls and young women. Furthermore, an assessment of 60 projects found that only 35 of them were used to report on policy goals, representing incomplete reporting practices (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023).

Canada's dedication to the SDGs is tightly intertwined with its international assistance goals and initiatives. As previously outlined the FIAP makes numerous references to the SDGs and "the department mapped the policy indicators to the related SDGs so that it could measure project contributions towards each goal" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023, p. 6).

Due to the department's failure to utilize its policy indicators effectively in assessing outcomes for numerous projects, it also neglected to monitor contributions to SDGs. Consequently, the department overlooked a chance to highlight the significance of its international assistance (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023).

Current internal policies require management to measure and evaluate departmental progress to improve programs, policies, and services. From June 2017 to September 2022, no evidence suggested that senior managers regularly reviewed gender equality outcomes or progress on policy goals (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023). This is cause for grave concern because, without a complete understanding of project outcomes, upper management was unable to respond to evolving policy conditions and make changes to improve policy implementation which are specifically relevant when implementing an innovative approach such as the FIAP.

Failure to Meet Two of Three Spending Commitments

Furthermore, GAC was unsuccessful in meeting two out of three of the FIAP spending commitments. The policy outlines three spending commitments to allocate bilateral funds for projects in low- and middle-income countries to reduce gender inequality and empower women and girls. Of such bilateral spending, 80% must be directed to "projects that integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; 15% to projects that target gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and 50% to sub-Saharan African countries" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023, p. 8).

Among the key findings, the audit identified that the funding commitments were not accompanied by specific goals related to improvements in the well-being and circumstances of beneficiaries. Of the three spending commitments outlined in the FIAP only the first one was met. GAC "did not meet its commitments to spend 15% of its assistance on gender-targeted

projects or 50% of bilateral funding for sub-Saharan Africa" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023, p. 10). This raised serious worry for the likelihood of meeting the policy goals because "academic research shows that projects that directly support the empowerment of women and girls have a stronger impact on gender equality outcomes than projects that integrate gender" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023, p. 10). Therefore, although the department did meet the 80% spending commitment, it shows less evidence for producing strong gender equality outcomes.

Furthermore, during the period of the audit, the department had increased the proportion of spending year over year. Specifically, "it consistently exceeded its 80% gender-integrated spending commitment, reaching a high of 90% in the 2018-19 fiscal year" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023, p. 10). Although this increase may seem like a positive step towards reaching policy goals, any spending beyond 80% on gender-integrated projects means a decrease in available funding for more effective gender-targeted initiatives. The audit revealed that gender-integrated projects have a wide variety of approaches, from large proportions of the activities focused on women and girls, to simple gender-based data collection" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023, p. 11).

Application of Gender-Based Analysis

Key to the implementation and monitoring of its gender-focused policy, the government made commitments to the application of GBA+. In short, GBA+ is an "analytical process used to assess systemic inequalities and determine how gender and other diverse identity factors could have an impact on a person's ability to access programs and services" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023, p. 7). To align project design and implementation with the gender equality goals outlined in the FIAP, GAC employs GBA+ to assess the degree to which women

and girls are integrated into projects. The department's guidance "sets expectations for rating consistency and accuracy" and requires "assessment of GBA+ related project impacts, expected outcomes, and the skills and training of project staff and volunteers" (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023, p. 7). The audit revealed that the department has been successful in meeting such guidelines, however, there was concern regarding the scope of GBA+ being conducted. The assessment "did not consistently include analysis of intersecting identity factors apart from age," such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, and geography (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2023, p. 8). While GBA+ is an important and necessary tool for measuring impacts against policy goals, when it is not used to its full extent, GAC risks missing key insights into how the policy is working and who it is impacting.

Unclear Implementation

In addition to the findings of the audit, academics have also commented on some key concerns of the FIAP's effectiveness. There is consensus that the lack of precision and directness among the policy goals and action areas makes it difficult to implement and effect specific improvements in terms of poverty reduction and gender equality.

The concern for the policy's ability to successfully deliver on promises is rooted in the ambiguous description of the implementation process. It is unclear how the policy is intended to be implemented, specifically how gender funding targets will be imposed and realized (Tiessen, 2019). Additionally, there was considerable ambiguity regarding "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 rights standards" (Tiessen, 2019, p. 5). Tiessen (2019) emphasized the need for dedicated policy monitoring and evaluation, specifically the need for timelines for measuring

outputs and outcomes, along with broader timelines for aid funding to gender equality programming.

Lack of Transparency

Lack of transparency marks an important shortcoming because, among the thematic priorities outlined in the FIAP, transparency is also a key goal. Canada has committed to improving the effectiveness of its international assistance, including being more transparent in their results and activities. Wilson (2023) argues that although Canada is achieving in terms of its international aid, there remains a need for increased transparency in impact assessments and aid effectiveness.

Wilson (2023) makes a compelling point that although Canada's shift towards a feminist policy is the right decision, what matters is how the policy is working in practice. Justifications of the policy's effectiveness must be apparent in program monitoring and evaluations. While the FIAP has demonstrated clear feminist principles and values, such as collaboration and inclusion, the government has lacked transparency in how it intends to create structural transformation (Wilson, 2023). Wilson (2023) emphasizes that "a feminist lens to foreign policy is not just about representation, but also about the agency and equity that ensures a transformative approach to current challenges" (Wilson, 2023).

Regarding lack of transparency, Wilson (2023) also notes that it is unclear how the government selects aid recipients, meaning that donors from the public lack the insights to make fully informed decisions for donations (Wilson, 2023).

Overall, the government is not doing enough to deliver on its commitment to increase transparency of international assistance initiatives highlighting a major challenge for effectiveness.

Improved Monitoring Techniques

In addition, Wilson (2023) suggests that the FIAP could produce improved aid outcomes if monitoring and evaluation of impacts were done more effectively. Evidence demonstrates that the effectiveness of aid increases when donor countries use an evaluation framework in which the recipient country's own institutions and systems evaluate the effectiveness of foreign aid (Wilson, 2023). This is referred to as the country systems model. It has the potential to improve aid because it prioritizes local needs and can ensure that assessments are based on local situations and goals. A crucial method for assessing the performance of aid is by gathering feedback directly from the recipients to evaluate the assistance they have received (Wilson, 2023). Currently, the Government of Canada uses participatory methods and communication with stakeholders for this purpose, however, it is unclear how the feedback is used to assess effectiveness (Wilson, 2023).

Increased Cooperation with Women's Organizations

Although much of the debate around the FIAP focuses on the shortcomings of the policy, Wilson (2023) importantly highlights some of the contributions it has made to gender equality goals. For example, in 2021-22 "the government directed 95% of its bilateral international development assistance towards gender equality projects" (Wilson, 2023). Additionally, in the scope of comprehensive gender equality initiatives, \$150 million was allocated over a span of five years for Women's Voice and Leadership, while \$300 million was earmarked for the 15-year Equality Fund initiative aimed at bolstering women's organizations and movements, particularly in conflict-affected regions (Wilson, 2023). It is also noted that several programs cooperated and engaged with women's organizations and networks to prevent, respond to, and end SGBV, which is at the core of the FIAP's main action area.

The operationalization of the FIAP has many flaws including poor data management, a focus on impacts rather than outcomes, failure to deliver on spending commitments, general ambiguity in implementation plans, and a failure to adopt more effective monitoring techniques. In comparison, the FIAP has also provided an opportunity for Canada to improve its support of and cooperation with women's organizations. While many of the inefficiencies of the policy lie in its ambiguity, there is the possibility for improvement. However, this is only possible if the theoretical approach is evidence-based and there is clarity on how a feminist approach is the best means for achieving development goals.

Chapter 5: Category 3 - Theoretical Claims and Integrity

The final category of this debate explores the theoretical claims and integrity of the FIAP. Given it represents a novel approach to Canada's international assistance, this is one of the areas with the most feedback and criticism. Numerous academics have criticized the policy's feminist approach, commenting that it is not feminist in practice and that the inclusion of the feminist approach is performative. Furthermore, this section will present major criticism around the lack of definitions for the terms feminist and gender, the type of feminism employed, the role that intersectionality plays in the policy, the degree of exclusion, along the significant implications this has for the achievement of the policy goals.

Ambiguous Feminism

To begin, the most notable critique of the FIAP's theoretical integrity is its failure to define feminism. The focus on gender equality and the use of gender-focused language throughout the FIAP also raises many questions among critics. Tiessen (2019) sheds light on the policy's disproportionate use of the words "gender" (mentioned 144 times) and "women" (mentioned 430

times). This difference along with the lack of definition for the term "gender" "highlights the ongoing challenge of articulating gender inequality and the power relations between groups, particularly between men and women" (p. 6). The focus on women and girls has the potential to reinforce power dynamics because it frames their experiences in essentialist victim narratives (Tiessen, 2019). This has far-reaching consequences for aid efforts because it perpetuates paternalistic ideas of aid, including the roles of development actors, specifically those of Western donors within the process (Tiessen, 2019). The FIAP's conception of women and biological entities also fails to acknowledge the social environment in which gender inequality and discrimination exist. This narrow perspective has resulted in the FIAP's lack of engagement with the root causes of gender inequality, such as unequal power dynamics and patriarchal structures. The focus on women and girls is not enough to resolve the unequal development gains for diverse groups of people (Tiessen, 2019).

Furthermore, the lack of definition of terms like "feminism" and "gender" can be a deliberate practice to "create and sustain a broad-based policy constituency and to manage conflicts within that constituency" (Eyben, 2010, p. 5). It can also create space for interpretation from different and diverse perspectives. Although this may certainly be the case of the FIAP, the emphasis on liberal/mainstream feminist orientation is highly apparent in the policy's emphasis on legal gender equality and empowerment, lending itself to an instrumentalist rather than a transformative conception of feminism (Tiessen, 2019). The analysis of the instrumentalist approach of the FIAP encapsulates comparable criticisms regarding the vague definition of feminism and the consequences of the specific approach and language it employs (Tiessen, 2019). Curiously, while the FIAP has 80 instances of 'gender equality' in the policy document, nowhere does it define 'gender'. Such lack of precision has left many policy observers unclear on

who the policy serves (Nacyte, 2018). In the case of the FIAP, gender is made synonymous with women and girls and the policy makes it clear that they are the main targets.

The FIAP also makes a weak and inconsequential commitment to an intersectional feminist approach. Mason (2019) suggests that the term "intersectional" is used as a buzzword and disconnected from its origins in feminism and activism. Canada currently employs guidance and training initiatives on GBA+ which is successful in explaining intersectional analysis, however, in the FIAP "there is limited discussion of the intersectional realities of women and girls" (Tiessen, 2019, p.6). This critique has been echoed broadly as it poses significant barriers to creating sustainable and suitable change for women and girls because it ignores their dynamic experiences of age, ability, class, culture, religion, and sexual orientation.

Exclusion of Key Stakeholders

Although the FIAP targets women and girls, it does not represent an inclusionary policy. Nacyte (2018) criticizes Canada's feminist perspective stating that the policy "neglects other sexual and gender identities" along with underprivileged men (Nacyte, 2018).

While the FIAP claims to be for everyone, it refers to two sexes, male and female, thus failing to include LGBTQI+ people and their specific vulnerabilities. It relies on the sex binary rather than the social construct of gender. Nacyte's (2018) critique highlights that "same-sex relationships are criminalized in more than seventy countries" leading to high rates of murder, torture, sexual violence, discrimination, and sociocultural exclusion among the LGBTQI+ community. People in the LGBTQI+ community face increasing inequality in humanitarian settings, as their access to "shelter and medical care might be impinged" (Nacyte, 2018).

Nacyte (2018) claims that the FIAP uses women's rights "as a shortcut to gender equality" and "provides a simplified approach to the rights and needs of multiple genders". Furthermore, it

omits the diversity within the category of 'women' such as heterosexual, homosexual, transgender and intersex women suggesting an incoherence in its feminist approach (Nacyte, 2018). This makes it exceedingly difficult for the policy to address discrimination, harassment, homophobia, and transphobia. Action Area 5, Inclusive Governance, specifically seeks to work towards ending gender discrimination by "promoting and protecting human rights, advancing the rule of law and building stronger institutions" and to end all forms of discrimination against women and girls (Global Affairs Canada, 2017). Therefore, if Canada is deeply committed to reaching this goal, it must be more intentional in including diversity to target those most at risk.

In addition, the FIAP acknowledges the impacts of social norms and gender stereotypes in limiting the societal and family roles of men and boys and identifies the need for the engagement of men and boys to achieve gender equality. Nacyte (2018) calls out the FIAP for failing to address power disparities which are at the root of gender inequity and the complex dynamics of gender relationships.

Nacyte (2018) contends that the FIAP is limited in scope in its "depiction of men exclusively as responsible agents for gender inequality". This conception also omits the diversity among the category of 'men and boys', failing to consider the range of masculinities, especially those associated with the disabled or emotional (Nacyte, 2018). In societies where men are not confined to the societal roles and conceptions of men, they can face abuse and violence that have individual and collective repercussions (Nacyte, 2018). Therefore, Nacyte (2018) highlights that the FIAP's "concern with women and girls is well grounded" due to their systemic disadvantages, however, "those at the bottom of the gender hierarchy also require public and non-governmental intervention" including men and boys (Nacyte, 2018). Without adequate engagement of men and boys, transformational change becomes increasingly unrealistic.

Instrumentalist Feminism or Transformative Feminism

Central to the theoretical integrity of the FIAP is the type of feminist approach it employs. Tiessen (2019) argues that the FIAP will be successful only if it adopts a transformative feminist approach and leaves behind its instrumentalist approaches (Tiessen, 2019).

There is diversity among feminist ideologies and approaches. Instrumentalist, mainstream, or liberal feminism refers to approaches that "focus on enabling individuals to succeed within existing systems or the status quo" (Tiessen, 2019, p. 7). Instrumentalist feminist approaches focus on promoting and protecting women's participation in political and economic processes. Such approaches frequently use straightforward metrics, for example, quantifying the participation or influence of women or girls in policy interventions, as well as assessing the broader societal, political, economic, or social benefits resulting from these interventions (Tiessen, 2019). These types of approaches use women as instruments in the pursuit of broader economic and social gains and do not change the structures that prevent their, and other marginalized groups', participation in the first place. Increasing women's political and economic participation is desirable only if they can benefit from it. Tiessen (2019) illustrates this idea well by explaining that "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 if it does not contribute to the expansion of freedoms, improvement of quality of life and/or security of the woman and her family" (p.7).

Contrastingly, a transformative feminist approach addresses the underlying causes and structures that marginalize some groups, namely women, girls, and transgender people. It acknowledged the role of power relations and inequalities that contribute to the perpetuation of

gender equality at the individual and institutional levels. It is "comprehensive in scope, focusing on the root causes of gender inequality and ensuring widespread participation in tackling oppressive cultural norms in all program activities" (Tiessen, 2019, p. 8). Tiessen (2019) highlights that a transformative approach to addressing gender inequality requires "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" (p. 7). Effective approaches include "commitments to ending gender-based violence so that women and other highly affected groups can move freely between home and work and thereby benefit from economic opportunities" (Tiessen, 2019, p.7). They also include creating gender-equitable labor force participation through changes to law and tackling stereotypes and discrimination through advocacy and education. These efforts help to gain community support and buy-in, which is essential for creating sustained and lasting improvements.

For aid to have substantial impacts, it must address the social norms and traditional gender roles that allow inequality to exist. Addressing these social and cultural norms takes time and is often resistant to external intervention. In contrast to Tiessen (2019), Zuercher (2018) argues that "spending aid to change deeply embedded social norms in distant countries is probably the least effective way to spend aid". Not only is it ineffective, but focusing spending on social engineering takes resources away from initiatives that work, such as saving and improving livelihoods with clean drinking water, food security, and basic health. Therefore, to improve the effectiveness of Canada's foreign aid, it may be more useful to target initiatives towards providing basic needs rather than push for societal and cultural transformation.

Instrumentalization of Women's Rights and Equality

Furthermore, there is consensus that the FIAP uses gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as an instrument for achieving other political and foreign policy goals. Nacyte (2018) goes on to question the underlying motivations of the policy's commitment to the rights of women and girls. The FIAP commits to "support women and girls' security through their better representation in conflict prevention and peace-building processes, the promotion of sexual and reproductive rights, and an improved response to sexual abuses in conflict zones" (Nacyte, 2018). The empowerment of women and girls is used to achieve political goals of security. From this perspective, the neoliberal underpinnings of the FIAP become more apparent. Nacyte (2018) explains that the "eradication of political, educational, environmental, and healthcare barriers enables women and girls to reveal their potential and contribute to stability at the national and international levels". Of course, ensuring national and international security is beneficial for the whole of society and the world, however, in the case of the FIAP, "women are exploited as a resource for more security" rather than empowered for their well-being. The policy uses the "improved female status as an extension to the security of political units, rather than treating it as an end in itself" (Nacyte, 2018). Gender equality, equitable rights, and the empowerment of women and girls are viewed as pathways to achieving security, yet they also deserve recognition as fundamental goals in their own right. Nacyte (2018) echoes this by stating that the "advancement of their rights merits a self-contained agenda, yet women appear as a means of facilitating peace and security" (Nacyte, 2018).

Although women's involvement in overarching foreign policy objectives holds significance, and their role in promoting peace, justice, human rights, and development is vital, they should not be solely utilized as tools to achieve these broader objectives. They must also directly benefit

from the anticipated outcomes (Tiessen, 2019). This idea is supported by others such as Zuercher (2018) who argues that the FIAP ignores the importance of thoughtful, practical, and contextually relevant approaches for successful international development. Its biggest mistake is the instrumentalization of gender equality, and the rejection of gender equality as a valuable and desirable goal in and of itself (Zurcher, 2018). The use of gender equality as a tool for achieving other development objectives represents a confusion between cause and effect (Zuercher, 2018). The idea that gender equality is the best approach for improving the lives of vulnerable and marginalized individuals is not supported by any considerable evidence (Zuercher, 2018). Feminist scholars explain that "the notion that women in the developing world are heroines who are harder-working, more peace-loving, more oriented to their children and communities, and less corrupt than men has become a Western stereotype" (Zuercher, 2018).

In conclusion, while women's involvement in overarching foreign policy objectives holds significance, and their role in promoting peace, justice, human rights, and development is vital, they should not be solely utilized as tools to achieve these broader objectives. Their empowerment and equality deserve recognition as fundamental goals, rather than being instrumentalized for other political aims.

Intersectional Feminism

While the FIAP refers to the importance of recognizing inequalities along interactional lines, it does not adequately adopt an intersectional feminist approach. Mason (2019) provides a deeper analysis of the inclusion of intersectionality in the FIAP. They argue that the "bureaucratization of intersectionality in the sphere of Canadian development risks flattening out the hierarchal power analyses of intersectionality, ultimately concretizing traditional gender and development frames rather than transforming them" (Mason, 2019, p. 204).

Mason (2019) conducted interviews with Global Affairs Canada officials and civil society organizations in 2017 to gain a better understanding of "meaning-making practices around intersectionality" (Mason, 2019, p. 203). The findings of the interviews suggested a degree of consensus among both government and civil society practitioners that the language of intersectionality could facilitate the creation of a development framework that is more inclusive (Mason, 2019).

Intersectionality has emerged as the most important intervention in feminist theory and the most cited in feminist studies. It is the main characteristic that differentiates transformative (or Third Wave Feminism) from mainstream liberal feminism (Mason, 2019). Although it stands as a cornerstone in feminist theory and activism, the ongoing discussion revolves around the definition of intersectionality—specifically, what elements are meant to intersect, in what manner, and for what reasons. To correctly apply intersectional feminist approaches, clarity on what it entails is necessary (Mason, 2019). The FIAP fails to provide any definition or clarification. Mason (2019) notes that intersectionality is used twice in the policy, the first instance "places discrimination along intersectional lines, instead of the point where diverse systems of oppression intersect", while the second "offers intersectional discrimination as an additional concern, following gender as a primary concern" (p. 206). Mason (2019) argues that the difference between these two interpretations of "intersectional" presented in the FIAP goes beyond mere semantics; they hold significance for comprehending GAC's feminist approach and for the implementation of the policy.

Local Engagement and Cooperation

Finally, the FIAP is heavily criticized for its lack of local engagement and cooperation with aid beneficiaries. The FIAP represents a top-down, foreign-funded type of feminism that is

ineffective in producing transformational change because it fails to engage at the grassroots level to generate societal change. This approach does little to impact the underlying social norms and structures that allow violence against women to continue. Within these contexts, Zakaria (2017) explains that local women are often "deemed traitors by local populations who see them as having colluded with invaders". Another reason that this approach to feminist foreign aid fails is that it "continues to be administered and disbursed along colonial-era models" (Zakaria, 2017). Recipients are not at the center of decision-making and aid objectives and implementation usually represent donor interests (Zakaria, 2017). Furthermore, feminist sisterhood is not as pervasive as one may think. Instrumental feminism, which is prevalent among foreign aid approaches, has been criticized for its inability to address the underlying causes of inequality and its exclusion of diverse women. Historically, feminist movements benefited and addressed the problems and experiences of cisgender white women, and such ideologies remain today. In the current context of foreign aid power dynamics continue (Zakaria, 2017).

Therefore, Zakaria (2017) argues that for foreign aid to align with feminist principles, it should prioritize eradicating all types of inequality within the aid sector, reject exclusionary and dominant colonial-era dynamics, and avoid allowing women's empowerment to be exploited.

Another key error is the lack of acknowledgement that "effective development cooperation needs a mutually agreed partnership" (Sinclair, 2017). The FIAP seems to assume that recipient countries will be in favor of Canada's novel approach and not have their own development agendas and visions (Sinclair, 2017). Recipient governments may prioritize their own local goals over Canadian feminism, viewing Western ideals as imposing and skeptical due to colonial history (Zuercher, 2018). Muslim countries, in particular, harbor deep skepticism and mistrust toward Western influence (Zuercher, 2018). A feminist approach to aid also "risks creating

resistance and backlash where traditional cultural or religious norms are strong" (Zuercher, 2018). Gender-focused aid programming has in many cases increased harm and violence for women and girls. Zakaria (2017) argues that the main problem with the FIAP lies in its theoretical claim, specifically "the idea that pumping foreign money into women's empowerment and anti-violence programs will deliver the advances that a feminist policy expects to produce". Zakaria (2017) refers to this approach as "trickle-down feminist" and highlights the often-used example of Afghanistan. Between 2001-2017 an estimated USD 1.5 billion has been directed to women's programs in the country, including schools, women's shelters, and health initiatives (Zakaria, 2017). However, most of it has failed to deliver benefits to Afghan women. Evidence from a 2016 UN report found that violence against women increased by 400%, while a 2015 UN report concluded that the aid commitments were not producing the goals and improvements they intended (Zakaria, 2017). In other contexts, such as Pakistan, it is a similar story. Millions of dollars have been invested in gender programming; however, the funding has not produced benefits for local women with reports of violence increasing (Zakaria, 2017). This is a serious reality that must be considered when implementing gender mainstreaming policies in other countries.

Equally concerning is that nowhere in the FIAP is reference made to "the concept of do-no-harm or even context-sensitive approaches" (Zuercher, 2018). For strong and successful development local knowledge and context-sensitivity are necessary (Zuercher, 2018). The FIAP commits Canada to support grassroots women's rights organizations with \$150 million over 5 years. The focus of this funding is to support organizations with local knowledge and understanding of context-specific needs. Many of the "grassroots organizations" referred to in the FIAP rely on donors and are driven by donor agendas, adopting Western development rhetoric

but lacking connection to their societies, hence limiting their ability to drive societal change (Zuercher, 2018).

The FIAP faces specific criticisms for its top-down approach, lack of local engagement, and failure to address underlying social norms perpetuating violence against women. To align with feminist principles, foreign aid policies must prioritize eradicating inequality, reject colonial dynamics, and adopt context-sensitive approaches while acknowledging the importance of local knowledge and the do-no-harm principle.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

The mapping exercise has produced some key findings that are worth noting for future research and policy improvements. While there is limited capacity in this research to explore them fully, they are important for understanding the challenges of the FIAP's effectiveness.

Emergence of the Feminist Approach

A criticism I did not come across in my research but deserves significant investigation is regarding the decision to implement a feminist approach. From the IAR consultation process, it was recommended that Canada include gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as the main goals for its international assistance policy. However, what was not found among the recommendations was a call to make Canada's new international assistance policy a feminist one.

I have identified two key issues with this. First, this suggests that the government's focus on a feminist policy was decided before the consultation. It is unclear why the government wanted to implement a feminist approach and how it was informed. Part of the consultation process specifically asked participants to provide recommendations on how the government

could “take advantage of specific opportunities to demonstrate new or continued leadership on women’s empowerment and gender equality” in alignment with a feminist approach (Government of Canada, 2016, para. 52). The government had a clear idea on what the new policy would look like in terms of approach, and the decision to implement a feminist policy was not the result of extensive and inclusive consultation.

Secondly, the government's public call for consultation, states, "Empowerment of women and girls and the protection and promotion of their rights through advancing gender equality will be at the heart of Canada's international assistance. This feminist lens will be applied throughout all of Canada's international assistance activities" (Government of Canada, 2016, para. 32). This is the first instance of "feminist" in the call for consultation and from this statement we can conclude that the government considers gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls to be synonymous with feminism and a feminist lens. While gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are important aspects of a feminist approach, they do not need to be accomplished through this lens and are by no means a definition of a feminist approach, as the government seems to elude. In addition, with the lack of definition for key terms such as "feminism," as explained in Chapter 5, readers have a limited ability to distinguish or identify what feminism means to the government of Canada and whether it is in line with universally agreed definitions. This leads me to wonder if the FIAP is grounded in a false understanding of feminism. This has some wide-reaching consequences and raises several concerns regarding the integrity of the policy and the consultation process itself.

Weighing the Categories

Understanding what aspects of the policy failed and succeeded throughout the whole of the process, from conception to implementation and results, helps pinpoint areas for future

improvement. While all the strengths and weaknesses of the FIAP are important for understanding its effectiveness and its ability to reach policy goals, I would argue that some categories have more importance than others. While intention matters, in the context of international assistance I argue that the impact on recipients matters more. A majority of Canada's foreign aid is directed towards poverty reduction efforts; therefore, most of its beneficiaries are vulnerable and marginalized individuals. With this, there is an added level of responsibility and accountability to ensure that aid does not do more harm than good. Recipients of aid are already in vulnerable situations, making the stakes high as there is a risk of exacerbating their conditions. For this reason, I argue that the theoretical approach and implementation of the FIAP should be considered more carefully.

Additionally, even when policies are well-developed, evidence-based, and grounded in proven and informed approaches, there is still a possibility that they fail in practice. In contrast, sometimes poorly developed policies produce unexpected positive results. In both cases, the emphasis remains on the outcomes. Therefore, while intention and motivations matter for effective policies, the measure for determining its success should be based on the impact it has on stakeholders. In the case of the FIAP, there was considerable praise for the consultation process and overall policy development process, however, this becomes less relevant when findings from the auditor general show that GAC is unable to demonstrate the value of Canada's international assistance.

Overarching Themes

Through the consolidation of the debate and arguments surrounding the FIAP, one main theme stood out to me: ambiguity. Throughout all three categories, ambiguity was a consistent factor in the FIAP's challenges and inability to produce intended goals. The FIAP is ambiguous

in its effectiveness due to poor monitoring, evaluation, and an overall lack of evidence to show whether the policy is working. This was demonstrated by the Auditor General's Report, specifically GAC's inability to provide project documentation and reporting. It is also ambiguous in what it means by feminism and who the policy intends to target. In addition, the FIAP is ambiguous in how it intends to reduce poverty through gender equality and women's empowerment. It is ambiguous in its goals and more importantly how it intends to achieve them. The motivations behind the policy are also unclear, with some sources reporting it is due to domestic politics, for broader international security goals, and to secure a place in the UN Security Council. As demonstrated throughout this paper, ambiguity in policy presents significant challenges because it can severely undermine the ability to achieve outcomes and can contribute to the harm and dissatisfaction of stakeholders.

Canada's adoption of the Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) represents a significant departure in its approach to international aid. Despite widespread acknowledgment of the importance of gender equality, the FIAP has faced intense scrutiny regarding its implementation and effectiveness. Feedback from various sources, including the Auditor General of Canada, development practitioners, academia, NGOs, and CSOs, highlights both positive and negative aspects of the policy. This research paper has mapped the major arguments surrounding the FIAP debate, and categorized assessments into three main sections: policy development, effectiveness, and theoretical claims and integrity. By systematically analyzing these arguments, the paper aimed to provide insights into the successes and failures of the FIAP, and to establish a road map for navigating the complex discourse of the FIAP's effectiveness. In the long term, this mapping exercise has the potential to contribute to informed decision-making and lead to the

development of more robust and effective policies that address the needs and concerns of all stakeholders involved.

Through this exercise, I have identified two noteworthy findings. First, when considering the soundness and effectiveness of a policy, especially international assistance policies, special emphasis should be placed on outcomes and impacts rather than policy intentions. Secondly, throughout all categories of the mapping exercise, ambiguity is a consistent characteristic of the FIAPs criticisms. These findings are worth reporting because they should be highly considered for the improvement of future international assistance policies.

In the preliminary stages of planning and brainstorming this research, I outlined some key arguments I expected to find about the FIAP. Among them, I expected to find commentary on the neo-colonial nature of the policy. Aid has long been used and understood as an extension of colonial goals and as a means for western 'developed', or 'rich' countries to impose norms and values onto others. Although I think the FIAP is a key step away from such practices due to its focus on the inclusion and participation of vulnerable and marginalized peoples, I cannot help but wonder if the FIAP represents a continuation of the Western imposition of values and approaches that lack adequate consideration for local needs. As demonstrated in this paper, there is little discourse about the colonial characteristics of the FIAP which is a critical area for future research if Canada is committed to producing positive development outcomes.

There is also the potential to take this research further by examining examples to evaluate these categories in practice and to analyze outcomes. For future research, it would be beneficial to conduct a case study of specific Government of Canada Official Development Assistance programs to evaluate the extent to which they translate the goals of the FIAP into practice.

Determining the alignment level between development programming and the policy directives would accurately show where the policy fails or succeeds.

Overall, I think a feminist approach to international assistance and development has widespread benefits, but the FIAP is not doing feminism justice. The FIAP does not represent a truly transformative feminist approach therefore will continue to be unsuccessful in its implementation and impacts. However, Canada has remained committed to gender equality for nearly 50 years and can produce an effective international assistance policy that upholds its value of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. This will only be possible if future policies adequately consider lessons learned from the FIAP, are clear in their objectives and plan for producing outcomes and remain focused on the goal of improving the lives of the most vulnerable and marginalized people.

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