



CCYPS
Canadian Coalition for
Youth, Peace &
Security

Feminist Foreign Policy Review

Submitted to Global Affairs Canada

By: Canadian Coalition for Youth, Peace & Security (CCYPS)

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We wish to begin this submission by applauding Global Affairs Canada and the current Government for the launch of Canada's first [Feminist International Assistance Policy](#) in 2017. We are especially pleased by the foreign policy's focus on women and girls and wish to highlight its complementary overlap with Canada's second [National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security](#) (C-NAP) launched in November 2017. With that, we support further cross-departmental efforts to bridge gaps in the creation and establishment of Canada's new Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP), using the C-NAP as a best practice for breaking silos among government departments.

We applaud the commitments made to environment and climate action, recognizing Canada's role in creating a more green and safer future. However, there is a significant need for more concrete actions and substantive input from diverse groups, especially Indigenous youth leaders, on this front. This includes a focus on mitigating impacts of climate change on rural communities; and the impacts of climate migration on women and young people by ensuring the protection of young people and women who are forced to migrate or seek asylum. As it has been widely documented, [climate change has exasperated forced migration](#) and [child, early and forced marriage \(CEFM\)](#), therefore, we ask that the new FFP include specific funding to initiatives to counter CEFM.

We are cognizant and applaud the wave of feminist funding over the past four years, contributing greatly to re-building the feminist movements across the world. However, more dedicated funding on [sexual reproductive health and rights \(SRHR\)](#) services must be prioritized. Efforts to support SRHR include the promotion and protection of laws against [sexual exploitation and abuse/sexual harassment \(PSEA/SH\)](#); access to free and safe abortions, medication, reproductive services; and, inclusive approaches developed with civil society leaders working on reducing stigmas and re-integration of survivors into societies, as the world sees a continued resurgence of these rights. Countering sexual harassment should be considered as a fundamental aspect of upholding human rights. The new policy should explicitly reinforce supports to ensure young women's maternal health care and family planning.

Furthermore, we wish to offer an alternative to the heavily referenced [concept of empowerment](#). Empowerment is problematic as it infers lack of autonomy, ability, and independence. Instead, we ask that you prioritize language on uplifting and elevating young women, women and girls in the new FFP. This ensures the recognition of the agency and their already active contributions in various aspects of societies.

We ask for specific recognition and targeting of [intersectional analyses](#) of foreign policy implementation in this new FFP. Intersectional consideration emphasizes dedicated initiatives for [Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour \(BIPOC\)](#) and other marginalized



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groups, including those living with visible and invisible disabilities, as both collaborators and recipients of aid. To strengthen increased intersectional considerations, we ask that the FFP focus on the de-tokenization of young people by investing in programs and initiatives that highlight key contributions of young people in humanitarian and other peacebuilding approaches, including youth in political decision-making, peace agreements, and sustaining peace. Dedicated support, promotion and protection of rights of [2SLGBTQ+ people](#) should also be a priority in applying an intersectional lens for a true feminist foreign policy – this is more than just about women and girls, it is also about gender diversity and expression.

Grassroots and youth-led movements need dedicated support with significant financing and sustained resources, including in core funding, to ensure delivery of services, programming and assistance. This includes funding specific to grant development and for required reporting for those who are recipients of government funding, especially from women and youth-led organizations; with adaptability and flexibility in reporting requirements, keeping in mind the local capacities of organizations in humanitarian or other conflict-affected areas. Funding and requirements should be context-specific and not over-burdensome for local grassroots organizations – a fundamental part of eliminating barriers to entry.

We stress the need to recognize and mainstream [Youth, Peace and Security \(YPS\)](#) principles in the overall new policy, including key synergies between YPS and [Women, Peace and Security \(WPS\)](#), in its inception, implementation, funding, and monitoring.

Investing in youth, and especially young women's, economic initiatives and supporting organizations working in local communities for strong economic activities of young people is a significant contributor to the elimination of barriers to entry and reduced sexual and gender-based violence. As [COVID-19 has exasperated the digital divide](#), the new FFP should include specific attention to closing the digital gap for those in lower income or rural communities, to ensure their access to potentially life-saving and life-changing information and technology. This can only be achieved by divesting from economic endeavours that perpetuate conflict in the Global South, for example by resource extraction, often used for technology development.

We ask for dedicated commitments to close the gap in access to education, [exasperated by COVID-19](#), especially for young people (and specifically young women) in rural or remote communities who do not have access to safe education facilities or online learning tools. Furthermore, it is vital to ensure support to policies that allow young mothers to return to formal or informal education, including considerations in the post-COVID-19 recovery plans. To support the implementation of [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 4 on education](#), we ask that specific support and funding to countering extremism and attacks to education be prioritized, this includes protecting education and strengthening support to skills-building initiatives.



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Canada's leadership in peace and security is commendable. However, there is a significant lack in the prioritization of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda across all policies, including a lack of explicit reference to YPS overall. We ask for the recognition and amplification of the crucial role of young people in the peace and security agendas, including but not limited to peacebuilding, political participation, reconstruction, and building sustainable [positive peace](#). This is part of implementing [SDG 16 on strong and just institutions](#). This includes ensuring consistencies within other foreign policies and priorities, for example in terms of demilitarization and conflict financing.

As a global leader in human rights, Canada must call out abuse by UN peacekeepers and ensure no impunity for perpetrators of gender-based violence or (sexual) violence by military or other personnel, especially for violations committed against local populations which includes young women and girls.

Overall, we ask for a stronger consideration of youth in the new FFP, currently youth or young women are mentioned only eleven times throughout the current policy. We ask to include partnerships with young leaders in peace initiatives and ensuring the implementation of the SDGs; recognizing that youth should not be lumped into the same category as children as their experiences are unique and their contributions are different. This is essential to ensuring no one is left behind.

Being gender transformative is key for an effective and comprehensive feminist foreign policy. We do not want more temporary solutions; thus, we ask that this policy be creative in its inception and approach by ensuring a peace-focused and de-colonial lens. By shifting priorities from state security to human security, including in funding commitments, we can ensure more robust feminist commitments, and recognize and challenge the oppressive effects of current capitalist systems which perpetuate violence and conflicts.

Lastly, we ask for data and that proof of commitment to applied practice be prioritized. To ensure thorough monitoring and reporting, we suggest dedicated funding to shadow reporting mechanisms, specifically led by intersectional, intergenerational civil society representatives from both Canadian and aid-recipient regions.

By integrating these recommendations, we can ensure a strong, robust and inclusive Feminist Foreign Policy – continuing to lead by example and uplifting those most affected by violence and crises.

This submission was prepared by the Government Advocacy Working Group of the Canadian Coalition for Youth, Peace and Security. It does not necessarily reflect the views of all its members.