



The Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) is an organization established in 1919 that works to improve the status of women and to promote human rights, public education, social justice, peace, and economic prosperity for all women and girls in Canada and around the world. CFUW welcomes the Government of Canada's commitment to the development and implementation of a Feminist Foreign Policy that aims to advance human rights and achieve gender equality at home and abroad.

Overarching considerations

CFUW works on a global level for the adoption and implementation of international agreements that promote gender equality and international cooperation, such as the [Beijing Platform for Action](#), [United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security](#), and [the Sustainable Development Goals](#). CFUW supports Canada's approach to strengthening a rules-based international order and supporting lasting peace and security through Feminist Foreign Policy initiatives. We believe that intersectional gender equality is not only a human right, but is foundational to a more peaceful, sustainable, and prosperous world. Women's full and effective participation and decision-making, the elimination of violence, and the empowerment of all women and girls relies on the cooperation of all stakeholders in the international community to enact meaningful change. By placing the rights, needs, and perspectives of women, girls, and gender-diverse people at the centre of foreign policy efforts, we can begin to ameliorate the intersecting inequalities of sexism, racism, and colonialism.

CFUW believes that the six core action areas of the existing [Feminist International Assistance Policy](#) (FIAP) provide a comprehensive framework upon which Canada may improve its overall feminist approach to foreign policy. The policy's six action areas are: gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, human dignity (health and nutrition, education, humanitarian action), growth that works for everyone, the environment and climate action, inclusive governance, and peace and security. These six action areas should be the central focus of future foreign policy initiatives in order to strengthen Canada's policy coherence.

The economic crisis created by COVID-19 presents an unprecedented opportunity for foreign policy interventions and trade agreements that promote social safety nets and economic justice for women in emerging economies. These strategies must include supporting women entrepreneurs, enabling women in rural and local agricultural economies, removing barriers to land ownership, supporting women working in informal economies, promoting safe working conditions, and ensuring living wage work. More women must be involved at economic decision-making tables given the intersections between economic security, economic justice, peace and security.

There is a need to incorporate the lessons and recommendations already learned by the FIAP to avoid gaps or redundancies in future programs. Implementation policies and procedures should be examined to ensure they do not continue to perpetuate the disempowerment of women. No "one size fits all" approach empowers women and girls and consequently, Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy must be contextual and reflect diversity in goals and implementation strategies. CFUW recommends upholding a principle of "Nothing About Us Without Us!", or the idea that no policy should be decided by any representative without the full and direct



participation of members of the group(s) affected by that policy. Planned, targeted and periodic consultation with whom the policy is intended to impact is crucial for determining policy goals and outcomes metrics. The “Nothing About Us Without Us!” principle affirms that we live in a world that is interconnected and that collective progress and prosperity benefits us all. CFUW also recommends that the Government of Canada [apply established feminist metrics](#) to assess the impacts of foreign policy efforts – metrics related to the participation, leadership, improved status, and overall well-being of women.

The application of feminist metrics can also help to respond to evolving, and ongoing, vulnerabilities. Feminist metrics can illuminate disparities and injustices that are otherwise unseen by “tick box” approaches to foreign policy monitoring and evaluation. Many of the world’s most vulnerable populations are invisible, such as women in “fragile” states, women living in countries with longstanding conflict, women living in countries dominated by transnational organized crime, and women living in refugee settlements. Women and girls in these environments do not have access to protective social systems and basic services like healthcare, stable housing, or education which must continue to be embedded in Canada’s feminist policy goals.

Canada has a role to play in affecting change that improves the safety and security of women so that they are in a position to benefit from the higher goals of gender equality. CFUW recommends that Canada’s Feminist Foreign Policy implementation include opportunities for women to be involved in Canada’s diplomatic engagement and dialogue with “fragile states”.

Women, Peace and Security

CFUW applauds Canada’s second iteration of its National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) launched in 2017. CFUW agrees that violent conflict impacts women, girls, men, and boys differently and the importance of addressing these dynamics. The appointment of Jacqueline O’Neill as Canada’s first Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security in 2019 was a substantial step in this Action Plan. CFUW believes that women must be meaningfully included at every level of leadership and in all stages of decision-making in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. As CFUW is an organization that views education as the central tool to equality, promoting innovative strategies for increasing access to education for women and girls in conflict-affected areas must be prioritized. CFUW believes that education cannot wait for peace. In addition, Canada must work to protect women human rights defenders in feminist foreign policy initiatives as these women, and their families, are often [targeted by gender-specific threats and violence](#). The work of women human rights defenders underpins the sustainability of peace and security efforts – we must work to protect them.

Enhanced diplomatic engagement

In order to reaffirm Canada’s role as a cooperative, multilateral actor on the world stage, CFUW recommends that Canada “lead by example”. Although Canada has historically played an important role in United Nations Peacekeeping operations, Canada’s involvement in these missions [has sharply deteriorated since the 1990s](#). CFUW recommends that Canada reengage in United Nations Peacekeeping operations with the principles of WPS in mind. This means



integrating more women into Canada's military, security, and peacekeeping operations at all levels of leadership and decision-making. Integrating women's leadership roles and perspectives can help to challenge unequal power relations and assumptions of gender roles within the traditionally male-dominated military. Lastly, CFUW recommends that the Government of Canada make funds available to re-establish the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre in Ottawa as a strategy of enhancing diplomatic engagement. The Pearson Peacekeeping Centre successfully operated on a limited budget and its positive outcomes to peace and international security far outweighed the expenditure. CFUW advocates for an education-based approach should the Centre be reopened – develop courses and support research that facilitate global women's leadership and peacekeeping.

Inclusive digital transformation

Given the increasing digital gender divide and the impacts on exacerbating inequalities, CFUW recommends that in addition to supporting digital transformation, the Government of Canada should also support low tech programs for women. Access to, and mastery of, low tech tools can offer some women a level of independence that digital platforms do not.

Conclusion

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said in 1963, "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,". CFUW therefore emphasizes the need for intentionality in Feminist Foreign Policy efforts. Areas and populations that are the most vulnerable should be targeted by these policies – leaving no woman, girl, or country behind. In addition, a bi-directional approach to engagement in foreign policy initiatives that promotes "North and South" mutual learning is crucial to creating collective and inclusive prosperity. As CFUW believes that education is the single-most powerful tool for the empowerment of women and girls, we recommend that Canada's policy interventions on expanding education opportunities in conflict zones be strengthened.

The cross-cutting action areas outlined by the FIAP demonstrate the essential need for intersectionality in policy development and implementation, and Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy must follow suit. These ambitious policy goals can only be achieved with the support of a broad network of civil society organizations, male allies, private-sector stakeholders, and a Whole of Government framework all hinging upon collective prosperity.