



Issue No. 5 / February 2018



Optimizing Canada's Development Assistance to Promote Women's Economic Empowerment.

By Sonia Laszlo

In 2017, the Canadian government announced its [Feminist International Assistance Policy](#) (FIAP) in which gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls takes a front and center place in Canada's commitment to eradicate global poverty. While this is an admirable goal, the tricky bit is figuring out how to do this without new funding. In late January, development scholars and practitioners met at a conference on gender equality at Global Affairs Canada organized by the Canadian Association of International Development Practitioners. One of the sessions, in which I was a panelist, addressed the question of how to finance FIAP to best promote women's economic empowerment. With no new money, the task is then to optimize how we spend existing monies. The question is: does it have to be a zero sum game? Probably not, though most likely some reallocation across projects and priorities may have to happen, as Liam Swiss demonstrates in the feature piece for this issue.

IN THIS ISSUE

Optimizing Canada's Development Assistance to Promote Women's Economic Empowerment.

By Sonia Laszlo

Page 1

Feature Piece: "Feminism on the Cheap: Can Canada Achieve its Ambitious Gender Equality Aid Targets with No New Money?"

By Liam Swiss

Page 3

ISID'S 2018 Annual Conference: Unpacking Women's Empowerment.

Page 6

Gender Summit 11 and the Importance of Diversity to Creating New Local Models.

By Astrid Pregel

Page 6

FIND US ONLINE

Website:

<http://grow.research.mcgill.ca>

Twitter:

@GrOW_Research

Email:

grow.research@mcgill.ca



The good news is that we already know where to look. The usual microeconomic suspects include: unaffordability and barriers to accessing education and health (including reproductive health), lack of marketable or entrepreneurial skills, and poor access to markets. The relatively easy part is for policy makers to relax these constraints. The last thirty years have seen a proliferation of programs aimed at doing just that. Women and girls now have considerably more and better access to health and education, skills training and credit markets, and yet the economic gender gap persists.

Part of this persistence can be explained by the fact that these programs have failed to economically empower women. The evidence on microfinance for instance is mixed on this topic. Similarly, cash transfers have successfully raised educational and health outcomes of children but again the evidence on women's empowerment is mixed at best. At worst, it finds evidence of male-backlash. And job training programs do raise skills, only to add to these skills going unutilized.

One explanation as to why these programs have failed to yield results on economically empowering more women is that women continue to disproportionately bear the burden of childcare, so that putting their new skills and access to microcredit, for example, to productive use will be hindered by the realities of caring for young children, the disabled and the elderly. An affordable and quality childcare program could go a long way toward resolving this problem. Thus, bundling programs with childcare investments would lead these programs to be more efficient and have a stronger effect on both women's empowerment and on the economy as a whole. In addition, quality childcare presents an excellent opportunity to improve the health, education and wellbeing of pre-school children.

Development policy should look for opportunities where these sorts of efficiency gains can be made

through bundling programs, and where such positive externalities are present.

But none of this will really matter for eliminating the gender gap if women cannot contribute to their full potential because there aren't enough jobs, quality jobs or lucrative jobs. A sound macroeconomic and institutional environment is important to create those jobs, and it is hard to imagine strictly enforcing a gender lens on policies that can ensure that environment is there. Moreover, cultural and social norms that promote gender economic inequality may be especially difficult for multilateral or foreign donors to affect change.

Dr. Sonia Laszlo is the Director of the Institute for the Study of International Development and an Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and McGill University.



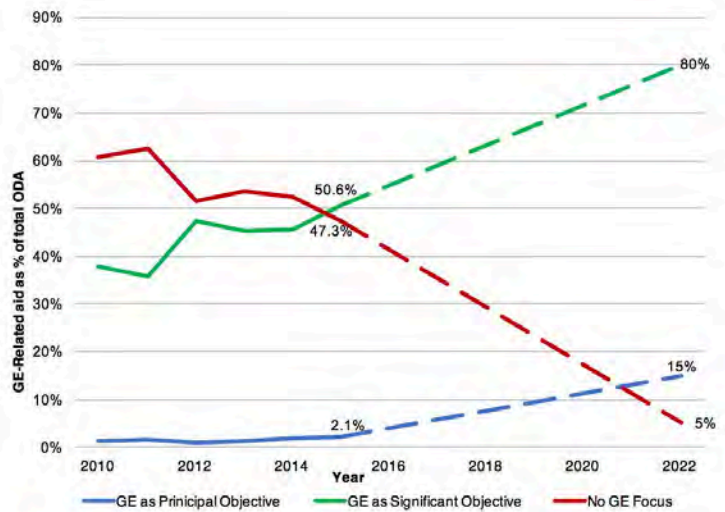
Feature Piece: Feminism on the Cheap: Can Canada Achieve its Ambitious Gender Equality Aid Targets with No New Money?

By Liam Swiss

June 2017 saw Canada release its new [Feminist International Assistance Policy](#) to much fanfare despite the miserly absence of new funds to go with it. In the [last issue of this Bulletin](#), Marie-Claude Bibeau, Canada's Minister for International Development, laid out her views on a Canadian approach to women's economic empowerment as embodied in the policy. She concluded by highlighting the policy's commitment to ensure that "at least 95 percent of Canada's bilateral international development assistance will either target or integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by 2021-22" (Bibeau 2017, p. 3). This ambitious target is one of the most concrete commitments laid out in the policy. It is ambitious because, as Figure 1 shows, according to the most recent OECD statistics, more than 47 percent of Canadian official development assistance had no gender equality (GE) focus as recently as 2015, and no new funding has been promised by the current government to implement the policy.

In the context of stagnant aid budgets, my focus in this commentary is on how Canada will grow its spending on gender equality to meet this target and move away from the days where half of its aid has no gender focus.

Figure 1. Canadian ODA Spending by Gender Equality Marker Category



Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2017

Implementing Canada's feminist aid policy is about more than meeting spending targets, but a momentous shift in aid allocation like that spelled out in the policy means Canada will need to spend its aid very differently going forward. As Figure 1 indicates, the bulk of this change will require shifting spending away from the "No GE Focus" category toward programming where GE is either a significant or principal objective. To better understand this shift and how it might be achieved, I first examine how Canada has recently been spending its "No GE Focus" / "No GE Results" aid. Then, I turn to three strategies Canada will need to employ for this target to be achieved and briefly discuss the prospects for each.

What is non-GE Programming?

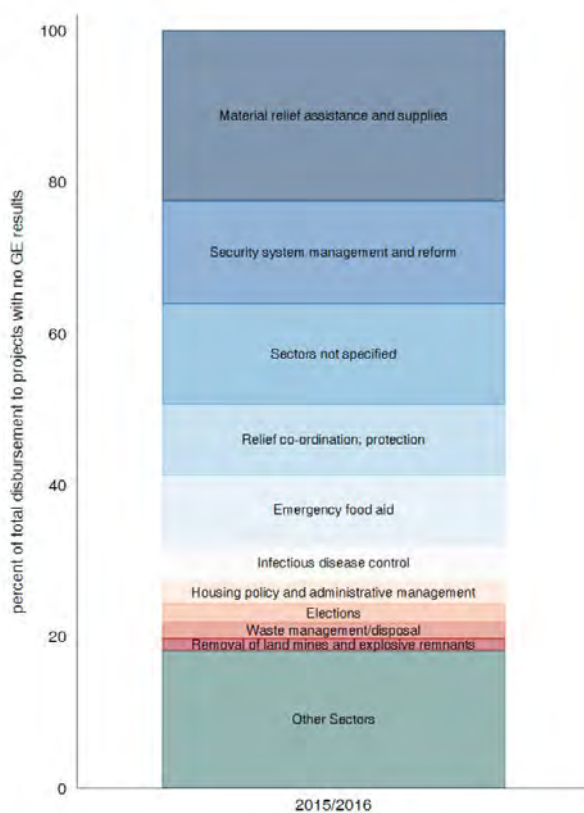
Using data from [Global Affairs Canada's 2015-2016 Historical Project Dataset](#), I examined all projects listed that fiscal year which were reported as having no gender equality results. This amounted to 494 of 1,295 bilateral projects reported that year, just over 38 percent.

Figure 2 shows how this spending is allocated across various sectors, reporting the top ten



sectors for Canada's non-GE aid in 2015-2016, as well as an aggregate category of "Other Sectors" which include the remaining 72 sectors where aid was spent. What the analysis reveals is a mix of spending in sectors associated with multi-sector aid or humanitarian relief (material relief assistance and services; emergency food aid; relief coordination, etc.), as well as sectors such as security sector reform (13.5 percent), infectious disease control (4 percent), housing policy (2.8 percent), elections (2.3 percent), waste management (2 percent), and landmine/explosives removal (1.5 percent). Though the humanitarian assistance-related sectors make up the largest share of non-GE aid, the other sectors in the top-ten are largely linked to the delivery of very technical services or specific reforms or events. Notably, none of these sectors preclude delivering aid in ways which include a focus on gender equality; however, to reduce non-GE-related spending in these sectors to below 5 percent in the next 4 years may prove challenging.

Figure 2. Spending by Sector on Projects with "No GE Results", 2015-2016



Strategies to Hit 95 Percent

To reach the 95 percent target, Canada will need to shift the allocation of its aid funding via three obvious strategies:

(1) *Reframing and adjusting existing programming:* The simplest solution to meeting the 95 percent spending target is to adapt as much future and existing programming as possible to meet the criteria needed to make projects address GE in either a significant or principal fashion. In some sectors this may be easier said than done. In others, it may lead to a forced or ill-fitting gender equality framework being imposed upon programming that has not conventionally aimed at GE results. How does a landmine removal project with no GE-results differ from one which treats gender equality as a significant objective? What does gender equality focused infectious disease programming look like versus the existing approach? Can rapid and responsive emergency aid adequately address gender outcomes when time is of the essence? Feminist research tells us that everything has gendered impacts, so there is no reason not to expect Canada to more fully target gender equality in these and other sectors. Still, the temptation to fall back on tired "add women and stir" approaches to gender will need to be resisted if we are to see anything more than a thin veneer of feminism applied to existing non-GE focused programs.

(2) *Reducing spending in areas where no gender equality results are possible or credible:* If Canada cannot credibly apply gender equality frameworks within some sectors of programming, or such frameworks are actively resisted by partner governments, organizations, or communities, then another way to meet the 95 percent target will be an active reduction of spending in those sectors where GE is not welcomed or being applied in a bona fide manner. Can all Canadian security sector reform programs be credibly planned to target gender equality as an outcome? The answer to this



question should be yes, especially if Canada's new [National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security](#) is taken at face value.

Still, if gender is simply being shoehorned into existing programming in a way that neither benefits gender equality nor improves development effectiveness, Canada would be better off avoiding new programming in such areas. Reducing spending in non-GE areas may be necessary to free up funds to commit to sectors where bona fide GE results can be achieved.

(3) Increasing spending in areas with bona fide chances of GE results: Most new Canadian aid programming will be expected to support gender equality results in some fashion. Increasing spending in areas where GE results can be achieved is thus the final strategy for meeting the 95 percent policy target - something that would need to go hand-in-hand with the first two strategies above. Some of this has already been made plain in the policy, including a special pool of \$150 million over five years to support women's organizations and groups working to support women's rights in recipient countries. This strategy relies on new funds being freed up by cuts made to non-GE areas, as well as the elusive potential of an injection of new funds into Canada's aid budget.

The Constraints of Miserly Feminism

With stagnant aid budgets projected for the near future, and no increases to ODA in the first two years of the Trudeau government's administration, the third strategy appears to be significantly hamstrung by Canada's miserly feminism. Without increased budget resources to pursue this third strategy, Global Affairs is constrained mostly to the first and second strategies I outline above. This lack of new funds to implement Canada's feminist aid policy runs the risk of limiting Global Affairs options to meet its ambitious targets. The continued stinginess of Canada's aid budget will lead to

either the dubious adoption of gender equality in formerly non-GE sectors of programming, or significant cuts to programming in sectors resistant to having gender equality results shoehorned into them. These strategies may help Canada reach its ambitious spending targets, but not nearly as easily as an injection of new funds. Canada has set its sights high with its new aid policy. It will be a shame if Canada fails to achieve its great ambition because we cannot muster the political will to move beyond the constraint of our current brand of miserly feminism.



Dr. Liam Swiss is an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Memorial University. For more information visit: www.liamswiss.com

ISID'S 2018 Annual Conference: Unpacking Women's Empowerment

The annual conference of the Institute for the Study of International Development will take place on March 15-16. This conference aims to “unpack” the agenda of women’s empowerment in global development, with an interdisciplinary group of experts who will discuss contemporary challenges and opportunities for research, policy and practice, as well as examine some of the recent evidence on empowerment initiatives in resource-poor settings.

ISID is also thrilled to announce that two very special keynote speakers will take the stage on March 15:



The Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau
Canada's Minister of International Development.



Dr. Naila Kabeer
London School of Economics and Political Science

The full conference [program](#) is available on ISID's website. [Register](#) today to reserve your seat - admission is free but space is limited.

Gender Summit 11 and the Importance of Diversity to Creating New Local Models

By Astrid Pregel

In November 2017, Canada sponsored for the first time, the largest gathering of the gender and science research community in the world, at the [Gender Summit 11 North America conference](#). The event was held in Montreal over three days on November 6-8. As noted on the conference website, “Gender Summits are platforms for dialogue where scientists, engineers, policymakers, scholars and stakeholders in science and innovation systems examine new practices and research showing when, why, and how equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) considerations impact outcomes.” I spoke on a fascinating panel on which explored how gender diversity can lead to the creation of new global economic models.

The energy in the room palpably shifted and the audience of some 675 mostly women scientists working on issues of gender seemed to come alive in response to the question I addressed to them partway through our panel discussion. I asked, “*Did anyone in the room feel that if women were in charge of the economy rather than men, would our present capitalistic system look as it does now?*” Would there be cut throat competition at any price and winner-take-all attitudes, or would there be cooperation, mentorship and perhaps less emphasis on growth at any cost? Would the drive be to grow big or go home or would companies and the workplace be a place where work life balance could be achieved? Would innovation be defined as being limited to creativity only in STEM fields, or would innovation also include women's interest in positive social impact, and new



products and services to solve problems and improve people's lives? Would the primary responsibility of the human race to nurture and care for each other continue to not be valued and not be measured in national accounts? Would maximizing shareholder value at all costs determine the distribution of wealth, or would environmental impact be important? Would employee and consumer wellbeing be of paramount importance as well. Would the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor exist at all in an economy constructed by women?

As Vicki Saunders, the founder of [SheEO](#), a brand new leading-edge model for supporting the growth of women-owned businesses, so often states,

"We live in a world constructed by men for men. It isn't our world."

My presentation was about SheEO and founder Vicki Saunders' new model for finding, funding and mentoring women entrepreneurs. What sets this diversity driven model apart from the traditional support for women's entrepreneurship is that it is a model created "by women for women". The concept is based on a philosophy of radical generosity. Groups of 500 women called Activators each donate \$1,100 dollars to form a pool of \$500,000 annually. Five women-owned firms are selected by the Activators using a straight forward, non-threatening application process (no pitch decks or lengthy application processes). All companies, whether selected for funding or not, receive tailored feedback and Activators have the opportunity to work with and support any of the ventures they have an interest in, even if the particular venture is not selected for funding. Activators who for the most part are not financial or investment specialists, select ventures that interest them; that have products or services with a social impact and that have the potential to export and become part of a global network of successful women business owners.

The five selected Ventures work together to allocate the pool of funds amongst themselves and in the process, learn about each other's firms and identify areas where they can help each other. Funds are provided interest free, and paid back over five years, resulting in a perpetually growing and replenishing fund to support women entrepreneurs. SheEO's goal is to create a \$1 billion fund that lends to 10 million women around the world annually. The selected Ventures have a monthly opportunity to request help from the Activators. The average turnaround time for help to be provided is less than 24 hours. Activators besides providing mentoring and advice, are early purchasers of the Ventures' goods and services and connect Ventures to their business networks. The results in the three years that SheEO has been operating have been impressive. There have been no defaults, growth has averaged between 60% and 150% annually, and all supported ventures have entered the export market. SheEO is up and operating not only in Canada and the United States but New Zealand also and will be entering Australia and Mexico in 2018. This has all happened on a shoe string budget with the support and help of thousands of passionate women Activators.

I traveled with SheEO's Vicki Saunders to Australia for a week right after the Gender 11 North America Conference where she was invited on an Entrepreneur in Residence program which included meetings and events sponsored by the Mayor of Sydney. Whether on the national news, presenting to the Mayor and her staff or at events for the women's entrepreneurial and startup community in New South Wales, the same electrified reaction happened everywhere. Women seem to identify with the need to create systems of support that are targeted to their values, priorities, needs and talents. Once the idea was launched and voiced clearly and articulately, the enthusiasm in the reaction of the crowds was



palpable and resonant, just as it had been in Montreal at the Gender 11 North America Conference.

The panel concluded that indeed diversity does have the potential to spawn entirely new out of the box models in the broader interest of society. The United States has already launched the SheEO model, as has New Zealand, and Australia and Mexico are not far behind. To cite Vicki Saunders' favorite quote,

"You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new models that makes the existing model obsolete." - Buckminster Fuller



Astrid Pregel is President of [Feminomics Inc.](#) a consulting firm working at the intersection of gender, leadership, entrepreneurship and the economy.

Produced with support from McGill University and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The observations and views expressed in this issue are the sole responsibility of the author(s).

OUR PARTNERS



International Development Research Centre
Centre de recherches pour le développement international

The GrOW Research Series brings together scholarly research on women's economic empowerment and growth in low-income countries, and provides a conceptual and empirical basis for policy-making. It is also the official research platform for the Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) program. This series is housed at the Institute for the Study of International Development (ISID) at McGill University in Montreal.

GrOW Research Series
Institute for the Study of International Development
Peterson Hall, 3460 McTavish St.
Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H3A 0E6
Email: grow.research@mcgill.ca
Twitter: @GrOW_Research
www.grow.research.mcgill.ca