

## Equality Fund Submission

WPSN-Canada Dialogue on Canada's next National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security

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### Introduction

Canada's National Action Plan (CNAP) 2017-22 and its annual progress reports outline how Canada is advancing the [United Nations' Women, Peace, and Security \(WPS\) Agenda](#). This submission details the Equality Fund's recommendations for Canada's next National Action Plan. We would like to see the next CNAP: embedded in a broader Feminist Foreign Policy; deepen Canada's dedicated support to LGBTQI+ women, girls, and non-binary people in conflict zones; include concrete measures to address the gender/security/climate nexus; and commit more and better funding to women's and LGBTQI+ organizations responding to conflict and building peace

**About the [Equality Fund](#):** *The Equality Fund is transforming the way that resources—and power—flow into the hands of women, girls, and trans people worldwide. Designed by feminists for feminists, we are a new model for sustainably resourcing feminist movements everywhere.*

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### Recommendations for Canada's next CNAP

#### **Recommendation 1: Articulate Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy, then situate the CNAP within it.**

Government officials consistently note that the CNAP is one pillar of Canada's feminist foreign policy. However, despite the commitment in February 2020 to produce a paper outlining Canada's feminist foreign policy, the paper has not yet been released. The current CNAP does not mention feminist foreign policy, although the *CNAP 2020-21 Progress Report* notes "The Action Plan is central to Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy" (p. 10).

**Sub-recommendations:** In 2020, the Equality Fund participated in the civil society [Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group's consultations](#), aiming to influence the Government of Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy development. We suggest a number of recommendations for Canada's feminist foreign policy of relevance to Women, Peace, and Security and focusing on activists, organizations, and movements. They are based on our submission in the 2021 [Be Brave, Be Bold: Recommendations for Canada's feminist foreign policy](#).

- 1.1 Challenge structures and institutions that perpetuate inequality and injustice.
- 1.2 Develop consultation mechanisms to learn from and dialogue with feminist activists in Canada and around the world.
- 1.3 Develop innovative strategies to protect space for women human rights defenders and LGBTQI+ rights defenders, women's rights organizations, and feminist movements.
- 1.4 Amplify diverse feminist voices in global dialogues and discussions, including in peace negotiations and at the United Nations Security Council.
- 1.5 Be accountable to feminist activists, providing regular public reporting on progress on policy implementation.
- 1.6 Strengthen feminist funding practices (more under Recommendation 4, below).

## **2. Increase dedicated support to LGBTQI+ organizations within the next CNAP.**

[The United Nations Women, Peace and Security Resolutions](#) define gender in a binary sense, rendering trans and gender non-conforming people and individuals of diverse sexual orientations and gender expressions invisible. Yet local LGBTQI+-serving organizations and humanitarian organizations have [exposed the threats](#) to the safety, human rights, health, and economic security of LGBTQI+ individuals in conflict and displacement contexts. [OutRight International](#) notes that LGBTQI+ people are at particular risk during conflict because networks that help people survive conflict are often not available to them, and a military context tends to assign specific roles to men and women, "erasing" many LGBTQI+ people.

Canada can play a leadership role in breaking down the gender binary common in many Women, Peace, and Security circles. Indeed, the current CNAP already does so in its domestic aspects. Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada's Departmental Plan consistently refers to "Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in Canada," because they in particular face "intersecting discrimination and violence" (*CNAP 2020-21 Progress Report*, p. 2). While the current CNAP does not mention LGBTQI+ individuals and communities, it calls for "challenging the discrimination women and girls face— recognizing that inequalities exist along intersectional lines—and designing our programs and policies accordingly" (p. 8).

**Sub-recommendations:** Canada could do more to make the next CNAP truly intersectional. Notably, Canada could be a leader in setting up robust measures targeting and including LGBTQI+ women across the next CNAP.

**2.1** Complete the Government of Canada’s *LGBTQ2 Action Plan* and align the next CNAP with its international framework.

**2.2** Recognize the particular lived experience, knowledge, and community connections LGBTQI+-led organizations offer, and fund their efforts. In our contribution to WPSN-C’s 2021 [Reporting on Progress: Reflections on the Latest CNAP Report](#), we argued that “Intersectionality is not just a lens through which to view oppression but an active tool for social justice, including conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and post-conflict recovery” (p. 12).

- Establish the means to fund unregistered organizations. If sexuality is criminalized, as in many fragile and conflict-affected states, LGBTQI+ are likely to be unregistered.

**2.3** Increase funding to the [Rainbow Refugee Assistance Partnership](#).

Funded by the Government of Canada’s [ACTIF](#) program and implemented by Colombia Diversa and Fondo Lunaria Mujer (an Equality Fund grantee partner) in Colombia, Asociación Lambda in Guatemala, and Inter Pares in Canada, “Reclaiming our History, Defending Our Rights” is a three-year project in support of LGBTQI+ people and communities in Colombia and Guatemala. The impact of conflicts and human rights violations against LGBTQI+ people in these countries is unacknowledged, as are their contributions to the social movements that resulted in the signing of landmark peace agreements. LGBTQI+ people face daily violence, hostility, and exclusion. The project description states, “As each country advances in its own unique process, LGBTQI+ people are demanding to have their rights respected, their stories told, and to leverage the distinct political moments to advance the rights of LGBTQI+ people and build more democratic and inclusive societies.” The project aims to: enhance the meaningful participation and leadership of LGBTQI+ people and organizations in the advancement of peace and promotion of human rights; improve the policies and practices of duty-bearers and other sectors in relation to LGBTQI+ rights; and increase community acceptance about the importance of realizing LGBTQI+ rights.

**3. Ensure the CNAP recognizes and takes action at the intersection of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda and Canada’s global response to the climate crisis.**

There are myriad ties linking the climate crisis, conflict and insecurity, and gender inequality. Those living in conflict are more vulnerable to the impacts of the climate crisis. The climate crisis compounds the humanitarian needs arising from conflict, and conflict compromises the ability of institutions, essential services, and governments to help people cope with and adapt to the climate crisis. Of the 25 states deemed most vulnerable to climate change, [14 are conflict-affected](#). Furthermore, the climate crisis may be [increasing future risks of conflict and insecurity](#). UN Women's 2020 [Gender, Climate, and Insecurity report](#) argues that climate change is a defining threat to peace and security in the 21st century, with impacts felt disproportionately by women. The [66th Commission on the Status of Women's Agreed Conclusions](#) notes the disproportionate impact of both the climate crisis and conflict on women and girls, and underlines the importance of women's full, equal, effective, and meaningful participation in all aspects of peace.

In addition, environmental and human rights defenders often face conflict and insecurity when standing up to corporate and government actors who are harming the environment and exacerbating climate change. According to [Front Line Defenders](#), in 2021, 358 human rights defenders were killed, of which 59% worked on defending land, environmental, and Indigenous peoples rights.

The current plan does not adequately address the climate-WPS-gender equality nexus. It briefly notes that the effects of climate change are a barrier to achieving peace (p. 4) and mentions Canada's commitment to including gender considerations in climate change negotiations (p. 9). The only references to the climate crisis in the *2020-2021 Progress Report* are one-line descriptions of three projects, in Colombia, Haiti, and Myanmar.

**Sub-recommendations:** The next CNAP could better incorporate the many issues that intersect with the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The climate crisis is perhaps the most urgent.

- 3.1** Commit climate finance to women's organizations and movements working at the intersection of climate justice and Women, Peace, and Security.
- 3.2** Document and share lessons learned from climate justice and Women, Peace, and Security programming, toward understanding the opportunities and challenges of advancing both agendas in tandem and informing Canada's broader efforts to advance each agenda.
- 3.3** Increase the quantity and quality of supports for women and LGBTQI+ environmental defenders.

Equality Fund grantee partner Ruta Pacífica de Las Mujeres is a feminist, pacifist, anti-militarist movement in Colombia, made up of over 300 women’s organizations. Its primary focus is to work for the negotiated settlement of the armed conflict in Colombia and to make visible the impact of war on the lives and bodies of women. However, it does not do so in isolation from tackling other issues, notably climate and environmental crises. Ruta Pacífica believes that if the peace agreement between the Colombian government and FARC is faithfully implemented, it will be a powerful tool for the protection of communities and the environment. To make this a reality, Ruta Pacífica is working to address the underrepresentation of women and girls at both peacebuilding and climate action decision-making tables.

*“[Women and girls] are not only victims, but they have demonstrated capacity, creativity and innovation... to protect the environment, improve the quality of life of their homes and communities, [and] help to reverse the inequities and inequalities that the patriarchal system imposes on women and the planet.”*

This social movement serves as a model for the unique power of women as inclusive peacebuilders—advancing the resolution of armed conflict through feminism, pacifism, and full participation of women at every level of peace processes and political leadership.

#### **4. Strengthen feminist funding practices across Global Affairs Canada**

Canada’s current CNAP recognizes the power of women’s rights organizations and movements to advance Women, Peace, and Security objectives. Yet global funding for these organizations is woefully inadequate (as acknowledged by the *CNAP 2020-21 Progress Report*,)

Canada is striving to help rectify this deficit. Current programs and initiatives include: Women’s Voice and Leadership; the Equality Fund; and PSOPS funding to local women’s organizations. Yet, more needs to and could be done, in terms of quantity as well as *quality* of funding.

All our recommendations take as a starting point the power and promise of women’s rights organizations and movements. They are key actors in realizing a Feminist Foreign Policy, advancing LGBTQI+, women, and girls’ rights, and striving for climate justice among many other objectives. To support their crucial (yet unfortunately underfunded) work, the CNAP should:

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- 4.1** Commit significant new funding to feminist funds and similar entities that are well-positioned to reach frontline, women-led, peacebuilding organizations. Ensure that funding is “quality,” or core, flexible, rapid response, and long-term.
- 4.2** Within humanitarian localization initiatives and discussions, highlight the importance of and increase funding for women-led organizations. Support the participation of these organizations in discussions of humanitarian response. Ensure that all efforts to increase the participation of ‘local organizations’ include significant and meaningful attention to women’s organizations.
- 4.3** In line with [Voices at Risk: Canada’s Guidelines on Supporting Women Human Rights Defenders](#), increase the quantity and quality of supports for women and LGBTQI+ peacebuilders and human rights defenders, many of whom put their lives on the line working with Canadian and other international initiatives. This includes:
- Support for those who choose to stay (humanitarian aid, access to media, access to diplomatic channels, resourcing, etc.).
  - Evacuation, travel, and resettlement to Canada.
- 4.4** Track and report on:
- The number of women’s rights organizations working in conflict situations funded, including year-over-year changes. While Global Affairs Canada’s CNAP Implementation Plan includes the indicator “# of regional and local women’s organizations supported,” the program was unable to report on this indicator in 2020-21.
  - Total annual funding to women’s rights organizations working in conflict situations, including year-over-year changes. This is a gap in the current CNAP.
  - Resources invested across government implementing partners in CNAP implementation.

## **A Feminist Response to Crisis**

The Equality Fund mobilized \$1.48 million to provide a feminist response to the crisis created by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and other crises around the world. Support is being provided to seven feminist funds: Ukrainian Women’s Fund, Urgent Action Fund for Women’s Rights, Global Resilience Fund, Women’s Fund Georgia, TASO Foundation (Georgia), Woman Fund Sukhumi (Georgia), and FemFund (Poland). This support is:

- Providing humanitarian assistance directly to refugees in bordering countries and internally displaced Ukrainians inside Ukraine, in particular war-affected women, girls,

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and non-binary people as well as ethnic minorities and Black and Asian refugees fleeing Ukraine.

- Providing rapid response grants to activists and human rights defenders at risk.
- Supporting economic activities for internally displaced women who are challenged to find new opportunities and livelihoods.
- Supporting young feminist activists who are experiencing the Ukraine war in complex and multi-layered ways across borders,
- Collecting and promoting the stories of women related to displacement, participation in peacebuilding processes, and in future recovery processes.
- Continuing to learn and document experiences and lessons that will inform the broader design and implementation of a new Equality Fund program (including both grantmaking and policy work) to respond to global crises.

As well, given our commitment to ensuring attention is given to all conflict situations, part of the support directed to both Urgent Action Fund and the Global Resilience Fund will be used to respond to other global crises.

## Conclusion

Canada's next CNAP presents an important opportunity to broaden and deepen Canada's global Women, Peace, and Security efforts and to demonstrate Canada's global leadership in advancing this agenda. Women-led/feminist/LGBTQI+ organizations build peace, respond to humanitarian crises, and rebuild economies and societies post-conflict. Increased Canadian support to these organizations could be catalytic on the global stage. The past five years provide a strong foundation to build on – both in Canada and around the world. Renewed ambition, strong commitments with matching resource commitments belong in the next CNAP.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide recommendations in relation to developing the next CNAP, and look forward to ongoing government–civil society engagement on the Women, Peace, and Security agenda.