
Strengthening Canada's International Leadership in the Promotion of Gender Equality

**A Civil Society Response to the Evaluation of
the Implementation of CIDA's 1999 Policy on
Gender Equality**

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Working Group On Women's Rights**

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STRENGTHENING CANADA'S INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY

1. INTRODUCTION

Advancing gender equality and women's rights around the world is fundamental to the development mandates of both the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and Canadian civil society organizations (CSOs) involved in international cooperation. Evidence clearly shows that gender is the most significant predictor of poverty, while gender inequality remains the most pervasive and fundamental obstacle to the eradication of poverty and guarantee of human rights for all.

In recent years it has become increasingly evident that both CIDA and many Canadian CSOs working internationally have reduced their overall commitment to gender equality despite strong rhetoric and policy guidelines. Despite this, many Canadian CSOs have had a long term interest and commitment to gender equality and women's rights, and thus considered that the recent CIDA evaluation of the implementation of its Policy on Gender Equality¹ between 1998 and 2005 presented an opportunity to help guide a renewed, increased and informed commitment to gender equality and women's rights for both CIDA and CSOs. Over the past six months, an informal group of CSOs (the signatories to this document) came together to reflect on the evaluation's detailed analysis and its recommendations and to offer some further recommendations for CIDA and its CSO partners on how to renew Canada's international reputation as a leader in the advancement of gender equality throughout the world.

The CIDA evaluation provides an important and critical lens on the role of Canadian development assistance in support of its 1999 Policy on Gender Equality. Based on a review of the evaluation and its related studies we ask what impact has this policy had on the Agency's programs, particularly their potential for direct benefits to poor and marginalized women and girls around the world? Has the policy been effective? What can be learned from the evaluation? And now, what next?²

2. WHY A COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY?

The Canadian civil society organizations (CSOs) who have participated in this analysis share an understanding with CIDA that the achievement of gender equality and the promotion of women's human rights is essential for sustainable development and social and economic justice. Canada has also recognized the inalienability and indivisibility of human rights, which include the rights of women and girls, by ratifying key human rights covenants including the *Convention*

¹ *CIDA's Policy on Gender Equality*, Canadian International Development Agency, Ottawa, 1999. Accessed at: [http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/INET/IMAGES.NSF/vLUIImages/Policy/\\$file/GENDER-E-nophotos.pdf](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/INET/IMAGES.NSF/vLUIImages/Policy/$file/GENDER-E-nophotos.pdf)

² The expression "gender equality and women's rights" is preferred by the authors in order to ensure a continued focus on and visibility of the rights of women and girls. CIDA uses the expression "gender equality" and this document will therefore use the terminology of the donor Agency for ease of consistency.

on the *Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*. Canada has also ratified agreements such as the *United Nations Declaration on Violence Against Women* and participated in key conferences such as the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women, which generated the *Beijing Platform for Action*.

Furthermore, in most developing countries, gender inequality is a major obstacle to meeting the MDG (Millennium Development Goals) targets. In fact, achieving the goals will be impossible without closing the gaps between women and men in terms of capacities, access to resources and opportunities, and vulnerability to violence and conflict.

CIDA's Policy on Gender Equality explicitly cites the interconnections that exist between poverty and gender equality and links CIDA's overarching commitment to contribute to poverty reduction with advancing gender equality. In its rationale for the policy, the Agency states that "gender inequalities intensify poverty, perpetuate it from one generation to the next and weaken women's and girls' ability to overcome it... For poverty reduction to be achieved, the constraints that women and girls face must be eliminated" (CIDA, 1999, ii).

Since June of 2008, Canadian development assistance has been bound by the Canadian ODA Accountability Act, which includes the implementation of programming relating to gender equality and women's rights. The Act asserts in Section 4 that "Official Development Assistance may be provided only if the competent minister is of the opinion that it contributes to poverty reduction; takes into account the perspectives of the poor; and is consistent with international human rights standards." The Act, along with CIDA's Policy on Gender Equality, implies an explicit human rights approach to the implementation of both direct and indirect programming relating to gender equality. While the Act is still a new tool and its application is yet to be seen, it underlines Canada's obligations to ensure our international development programming advances human rights, including women's rights and gender equality.

3. CIDA'S EVALUATION OF ITS 1999 POLICY ON GENDER EQUALITY

CIDA's Policy on Gender Equality has had three main goals: supporting women and girls in the realization of their full human rights, advancing women's equal participation as decision-makers, and reducing gender inequalities in access to and control over resources and benefits to development. In 1999 the policy was well received by CSOs as it concretely required gender equality and the realization of women's rights as an overall goal, consideration and methodology for all of the Agency's programs. In fact, many other donor agencies have referenced CIDA's Policy on Gender Equality as a basis for developing their own.

At the beginning of February of 2009, CIDA published the Executive Report of the Evaluation of CIDA's Implementation of its Policy on Gender Equality,³ along with the CIDA Management response to this evaluation. Through an access to information request, the Canadian Council for International Co-operation received the final report as well as a number of additional and

³ The Executive Report of the Evaluation is publicly available at: [http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/INET/IMAGES.NSF/vLUIImages/GenderEquality3/\\$file/GE%20Exec%20Report%20FINAL%2012%20nov%2008.pdf](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/INET/IMAGES.NSF/vLUIImages/GenderEquality3/$file/GE%20Exec%20Report%20FINAL%2012%20nov%2008.pdf).

substantial studies of the evaluation.⁴ The scope and rigour of the documentation demonstrates a thorough and multi dimensional review, which included multiple lines of enquiry from surveys with staff, to donor benchmarking, to field visits, to reviews of program, policy and other relevant documentation (CIDA, 11-12).⁵ The evaluation coverage was comprehensive with an analysis of both gender equality (GE) specific programming and GE-integrated programming.⁶ It reviewed 200 project files representing \$1.64 billion in CIDA investments (10% of Canadian Official Development Assistance (ODA)) in all branches between 1998-99 and 2005-06. It analyzed these activities in terms of models for aid delivery distinguished by channel, by type of funding and by geographic region.⁷

The evaluation has produced a rich array of lessons and learning which can inform CIDA's future work on gender equality and women's rights and the effective implementation of its 1999 policy. It can also inform broader development programming, including that of civil society organizations committed to gender equality and women's rights.

Civil society organizations committed to women's rights and gender equality carefully reviewed the multiple documents that contributed to this in-depth evaluation of CIDA's 1999 policy: What have we learned about the implications for women and girls around the world as a result of CIDA's international aid investments? What has worked and what has been effective? What directions for the future? And what role can civil society play to support CIDA to better implement its policy?

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Fundamentally, CIDA's 1999 Policy on Gender Equality is both sound and progressive as a framework to CIDA's long-term commitment to gender equality. The evaluation highlights important areas where some progress has been made in implementing the policy, but more often cites some significant weaknesses.

This Canadian CSO collective analysis draws on the evaluation's content to make an additional but related series of recommendations, based on our analysis of the solid data provided by the evaluation. We start from the belief in and commitment to the centrality of gender equality and women's rights as fundamental to poverty reduction and the achievement of social and economic justice.

⁴ The documents of the evaluation reviewed for this analysis include the Executive Report, the Final Report, the Desktop Review, a Benchmarking Report on 16 bilateral and multilateral donors, a Profile of CIDA's Investments in Gender Equality Initiatives, a Report on the Survey of CIDA Management and Professional Staff and Country Reports for Tanzania, Bolivia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Senegal, Egypt and Ghana.

⁵ All content and citations in this document refer to the Final Report of the *Evaluation of CIDA's Implementation of its Policy on Gender Equality* unless otherwise cited.

⁶ GE-specific programming is defined as an initiative that has GE as its principal objective and result. GE-integrated programming is defined as an initiative (project) that has at least one explicit GE objective and outcome.

⁷ The channel refers to the branch (i.e. Multilateral Branch or Africa Branch) responsible for the GE programming. The type of funding refers to core, responsive or direct funds. Core funds are often grants to multilateral agencies. Responsive funds are designed and implemented by Canadian or international partners. Directive programs are those designed by CIDA and carried out by an executing agent (usually bilateral). The geographic region refers to the countries in which GE investments are made.

4.1 Immediately implement the recommendations of the evaluation

The evaluation team made nine recommendations for CIDA in the Executive Report (see Annex One), which were largely related to CIDA's continued policy commitment to gender equality and women's rights, an enabling environment, development outcomes and relevance. We acknowledge and endorse these nine recommendations. As such, we also welcome the management response to these recommendations and strongly encourage their implementation.⁸ Many of our recommendations that follow build upon the stated commitment by CIDA management to "develop a Corporate Gender Equality Action Plan with broad based consultation" (Recommendation 1, Annex One).

RECOMMENDATION 1: *CIDA's Gender Equality Action Plan must be developed within a reasonable timeframe and must be both transparent and publicly-accessible. It must address the main areas of weakness identified by the evaluation, with goals, specific objectives, approaches and outcomes, to which the Agency and its management will be held accountable, within a defined timeframe. The development and implementation of this plan must be subject to public consultation and periodic review. The plan must include clear directions for the implementation of the nine recommendations made in the Executive Report, including the recommendation for a Gender Equality Help Desk.*

4.2 Dedicate greater overall financial resources to gender equality

Based on the solid data provided in the evaluation, an analysis of CIDA's international aid investments in gender equality was made. The data was analyzed with the intention of identifying trends in funding and disbursements over an 8 year period as well as an analysis of the implications of these trends.

Based on the evaluation data, some stark trends were observed:

- CIDA's total of GE investments (both GE-specific and GE-integrated programming) was \$793 million or 4.7% of the \$16.9 billion in *CIDA-managed ODA* between 1998 and 2005. These investments were only 3.8% of total Canadian ODA of \$21.0 billion in the same period.⁹
- There was some growth in both the percentage of CIDA managed ODA and in absolute dollars. CIDA's gender equality disbursements grew as a proportion of CIDA-managed ODA from 4.4% to 5.5%. Gender equality investments doubled from \$70 million in 1998-99 to \$138 million in 2005-06 in current dollars.
- While there has been some growth in GE total investments, the gains are less significant when inflation and exchange rates are taken into account (i.e. constant dollars). In 2006 constant dollars, GE investments in 1999-00 were \$106.6 million compared to \$114.6 million in 2005-06.

⁸ CIDA Management did not endorse recommendation #6 for a Gender Equality Help Desk.

⁹ Canadian ODA includes investments made by other government departments – Finance and DFAIT – not covered by this evaluation of CIDA's Policy on Gender Equality.

- A two-year average trend line for GE disbursements¹⁰ demonstrates that overall GE disbursements fell slightly as a percentage of CIDA-managed resources. But significantly, GE-specific programming fell sharply from 1.85% of CIDA-managed ODA from 1999-2001 to only 1.01% in 2005-06 (See Chart 1: Gender Equality Trends, Percentage of CIDA ODA, Two-Year-Running Average Disbursements, 1998-99 to 2005-06).

As indicated in the following section, CSOs consider GE-specific programming to be an important indicator of the actual overall impact of CIDA’s policy on programming and gender equality outcomes. Due to its specific nature, it will also be the most accurate from the point of view of coding errors for GE-integrated programming.

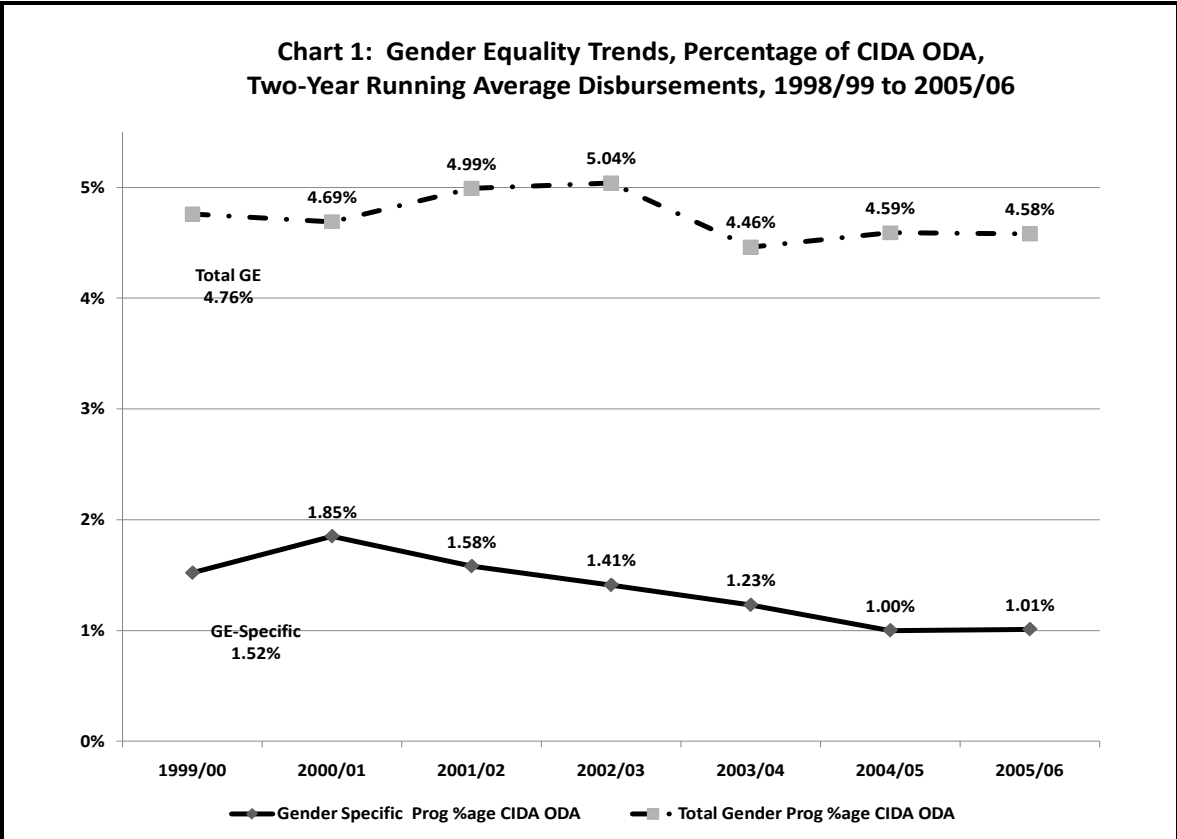


Chart 1: Authors’ calculations using evaluation data. For more trend charts and disaggregated disbursements, see Annex Two.

- The evaluation reported that 30% of total CIDA GE investments have been core funding grants through multilateral institutions, yet according to the evaluation these institutions reported to CIDA the least GE results and had the poorest quality reporting. This calls into question the ability of CIDA to draw actual conclusions about the results of its stated gender equality investments.

¹⁰ Two year averaging of disbursements smoothes out volatility in disbursements due to timing of project approvals and payments over two years and provides a more accurate picture of trends.

- CIDA programming in GE was concentrated in a number of countries. The top 10 countries in terms of total GE investments were Bangladesh, China, Pakistan, Tanzania, Mali, Senegal, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Afghanistan. Total GE investments in these countries represented 29% of total GE investments. But if core (multilateral) investments are excluded they represent 36% of responsive and directive channels for investment. Core investment channels (multilateral) are only significant in Mali (15% of Mali GE) and Tanzania (70% of Tanzania GE). The top 15 countries (adding Ghana, Kenya, Egypt, Haiti and Rwanda) make up 50% of total GE investments.

RECOMMENDATION 2: *As a key strategy for its renewed commitment to its Policy on Gender Equality, CIDA must commit greater financial resources specifically dedicated to achieving gender equality and women's rights in all its programs. Increased financial commitments must be targeted significantly towards GE-specific programming. Funding and disbursements for gender equality, as with all aid, must be long-term, predictable and transparent. Greater financial commitments must be commensurate with and reflective of the importance of the rationale for CIDA's Policy on Gender Equality which states that for the achievement of poverty reduction, we must eliminate the constraints faced by women and girls.*

4.3 Dedicate greater overall political and institutional commitment to gender equality

When analyzing the implications of funding trends discussed above, CSOs who reviewed the evaluation worked with the assumption that the level of committed resources and programming for gender-specific programming is a key indicator of the degree to which CIDA has been committed to the successful implementation of their gender equality policy and programming. The assumption is that gender-specific programming has an impact beyond the immediate objectives of the specific programs themselves, in that the objectives of these programs often seek consideration of gender equality issues more broadly in the sector and / or program area. They therefore have an influence (both direct and indirect) on the quality of GE-integrated activities. These GE-integrated activities have frequently been challenged by both GE specialists and CSOs for its loose interpretation (and coding) by aid programmers, as well as for a lack of documented impact on the actual outcomes of the projects in which they take place.

As such, when the evaluation indicates that GE-specific programming has fallen from a high of 41% of CIDA's gender equality investments in 2000-01 to 23% in 2005-06 (CIDA, 21) and make up only 1% of CIDA's managed resources (see previous section), CSOs consider this a minuscule amount of resources given the central priority of gender equality as a means to eradicate poverty, as laid out in the policy.¹¹

¹¹ This may somewhat under-estimate such programs due to the structure of CIDA's coding of programs which can, for example, code 50% of the program to Gender Equality and 50% to Basic Education when in reality the program seeks to support quality access to basic education for girls.

Given the trends in gender equality disbursements highlighted in the previous section, we conclude that there has been a likely decrease in the actual overall impact of CIDA's policy on programming and gender equality outcomes. As such, the evaluation findings and funding trends reinforce the urgent need to develop a solid Gender Equality Action Plan, to which the Agency will be accountable for a significantly stronger implementation of the Policy on Gender Equality. The Action Plan must be accompanied by the creation of an institutional vision based on a renewal of CIDA's political and institutional commitment to the Policy on Gender Equality and renewed CIDA leadership for gender equality among donors. Specifically:

RECOMMENDATION 3: *CIDA must reaffirm its commitment to the 1999 CIDA Policy on Gender Equality as a foundation for an agency-wide vision and framework for gender equality in CIDA's international cooperation as confirmed by the evaluation. The Agency can demonstrate this renewed commitment through political support, robust implementation and accountability to the Action Plan, starting at the highest managerial levels, with further responsibilities across the Agency. The Plan requires specific strategies to advance gender equality at all levels of CIDA operations, and to which these programs and operations are also held accountable.*

RECOMMENDATION 4: *CIDA's renewed focus on gender equality and women's rights should explicitly take account of the Canadian ODA Accountability Act and its provision that Canadian ODA disbursements focus on poverty reduction, take into account the perspectives of the people living in poverty, and be consistent with international human rights standards. These provisions of the Act suggest that CIDA's gender equality strategies and activities must be informed by international human rights standards, in which gender equality and women's rights are recognized to be essential components of any strategy for poverty reduction, sustained peace, human rights, and social justice.*

RECOMMENDATION 5: *CIDA should renew and regain leadership on gender equality and women's rights among donor agencies by systematically and effectively repositioning gender equality and women's rights as central to the Agency's mandate, its programming and policy promotion, and by collaboration with like-minded donors.*

4.4 Strengthen gender equality programming

According to the evaluation, the view of many CIDA informants and CIDA partners / executing agencies was that despite a recognized long term commitment to gender equality, CIDA "has not committed sufficient resources to GE-designated programming initiatives that are commensurate with its stated GE Policy objectives" (CIDA, 2). The CIDA review also found that gender equality outcomes were seldom realized, even when they were included in project design, unless gender equality measures were incorporated into implementation planning (in a project results framework or, at minimum, gender equality indicators). Furthermore, it found that gender

equality outcomes were seldom produced if corresponding human and financial resources were not committed to the objectives, and unless gender equality was fully integrated into the accountability of both CIDA officers and implementing partners (CIDA, 53).

In design and planning of projects, it was noted that a significant portion of CIDA investment did not have any gender analysis. Although gender analysis was more prevalent when CIDA was responsible for the design of the project (CIDA, 56), it occurred less frequently when CIDA partners were responsible for project design and planning. Proposals from multilateral organizations were even less likely to contain gender analysis than those submitted by Canadian CSOs. In the implementation phase, the evaluation notes that attention to gender equality often weakened during the course of the implementation process. Specifically, the weakest component of implementation was the overall lack of establishing gender equality baselines (CIDA, 65). In the monitoring and evaluation phase, gender equality was rarely addressed in the external monitoring of projects that were not coded to be GE-specific.

Furthermore, our review of the evaluation highlighted an inconsistency in CIDA's attention and treatment of gender equality in key sectors, both within the sectors and between them. Of the sectors reviewed (water management, children and youth, education and health, governance and infrastructure, fiscal reform), investments in the education and health sectors were deemed more likely to be GE-designated than investments in other sectors. However, even in these sectors, where there are widespread gender-based discrepancies in access to education and adequate health services, the evaluators noted (with surprise) a large number of major investments that did not address issues of gender equality. (CIDA, 97)

RECOMMENDATION 6: *While gender equality is a cross-cutting consideration for all programs and policies, CIDA's Gender Equality Action Plan should target and devote institutional resources to several strategic areas for principal results in gender equality and women's rights. This focus would enable CIDA to bring about sustained institutional, structural and policy change over the long term, rather than seemingly infusing all CIDA activities with a gender equality perspective with often invisible results. Possible programmatic or country niche areas for strategic gender equality results should begin where the Agency already has a demonstrated understanding of the entry points and issues.*

RECOMMENDATION 7: *To regain CIDA's leadership, strengthen institutional capacities and direct programmatic support for gender equality and women's rights, CIDA needs to designate women's rights and gender equality as a stand-alone sector (like 'education and health' or 'fiscal reform') with commensurate management, staffing and financial resources to be effective across the Agency.*

4.5 Enhance good practice in partnerships for gender equality results

The evaluation report cites the variance that exists in the ability of CIDA and CSOs to promote gender equality from country to country. More specifically, it makes reference to the important role, status and capacity of Southern civil society to CIDA's work on gender equality. While this is an important observation, what is lacking is a subsequent acknowledgement of the vital role that **women's organizations and movements** have played worldwide as key drivers of social change. These groups and movements have proven to play a key role in challenging development practices, identifying systems and structures that prevent more equitable power relationships and holding government and multi-national corporations to account for respecting and upholding human rights. "Without women's organizations, we would not have the many advances in women's economic rights and empowerment, sexual and reproductive rights and political participation." (AWID, 11) Yet AWID's research into funding for women's rights has indentified that there is a need for multi-year core funding for women's organizations in the South, substantial in size, with attention to how those resources can most effectively reach the full diversity of women's organizations. (AWID, 33)

CIDA must strive to support the development of an enabling environment for gender equality and women's rights. External aid actors such as CIDA do not themselves create sustained development outcomes, but rather can be a catalyst building momentum and propelling cutting-edge and innovative development initiatives. Given the noted decline in GE-specific disbursements and programming for CIDA, attention to increased funding and strengthening capacities of Southern CSOs for gender equality is essential to CIDA's goals for development results, consistent with the three tests of the ODA Accountability Act.

RECOMMENDATION 8: *CIDA's Gender Equality Action Plan must recognize and increase support for the central role played by Southern women's organizations in advancing women's rights in development, in ensuring national policies and plans reinforce those rights, and in holding governments to account through democratic participation – particularly in an era of aid effectiveness.*

The evaluation notes that CSOs in general have played a critical role in directing CIDA resources towards gender equality objectives. The evaluation reports that fully 44.8% of GE programming is by responsive delivery channels (largely through CSO programming). This "suggests that there is a relative importance placed on GE-related programming that involves partnership, and that rely on initiatives conceived by external proponents." (CIDA, Profile of CIDA Investments in Gender Equality Initiatives, 28)

RECOMMENDATION 9: *CIDA should encourage healthy and vibrant CSO partnerships as they play a crucial role in the development process and in effective programming for gender equality and women's rights by reaching key beneficiary populations on the ground. As development actors in their own right, CSOs must also recognize their need for accountability arising from their crucial, but diverse, roles in the development process as innovative agents of change and social transformation.*

Similarly, **gender equality funds** (small grants given to promote gender equality disbursed from Canadian embassies) were acknowledged by the evaluation as a useful part of programming to advance gender equality. They have supported women's groups and voices in advocacy and service delivery, supported the implementation of national gender equality policies, leveraged resources and catalyzed action by international and local actors. The evaluation report included interview responses speaking to the successes of regional country gender funds. One survey response suggested that "CIDA could reintroduce these gender funds as one of the ways of working with developing countries." (CIDA, 117) In the review of the Pakistan Gender Fund the file noted "the most successful mechanism we have found for moving the agenda from one of "women as beneficiaries" to that of "women as implementers" has been the several small project funds for women." (CIDA, 141) We note, however, with some dismay, that since the time of the evaluation the Pakistan Gender Fund has been discontinued.

RECOMMENDATION 10: *CIDA should give priority in key countries of focus to sustaining existing and creating additional country and regional-level gender equality funds, with specifically designated financial and human resources. These funds should give priority to the creative, innovative and cutting-edge work of Southern women's organizations. Given the proven effectiveness of these funds for supporting successful innovative grassroots mobilization for change, as demonstrated by the evaluation, gender equality funds should have a mandate to support country-level capacity-building, development initiatives as well as multi-stakeholder policy dialogue activities. Support for policy dialogue is particularly important in contexts where national governments are weak promoters and protectors of women's human rights.*

4.6 Improve Agency performance on gender equality results

The measurement tools developed by CIDA to measure gender equality results (for example their Performance Assessment Framework (PAF), tip sheets, "questions to ask", sample indicators, etc.) do not appear to be widely nor systematically disseminated and consistently used across the Agency for a variety of reasons. (CIDA, 74) Specifically in terms of measuring long-term gender equality results, one interviewee noted that CIDA "doesn't have the foggiest notion" beyond anecdotal evidence. This was identified as due to a lack of investment in the research and sectoral analysis needed to determine the long term impacts of promoting gender equality.

One reason for weak measurement is the coding system used by CIDA officers and the CIDA information system which is not very reliable. There are inconsistencies in interpretation and diligence in recording GE-focused initiatives, particularly those coded gender-integrated. Measurement was also identified as a concern with Canadian partners because the Canadian Partnership Branch, for example, has little quality control over the self-definition of partners' results and has only recently developed a training program to respond to this weakness. (CIDA, 76)¹² While it is true that there may be some invisible results that the reports do not capture, the evaluation also notes that in many programs where GE results were expected they were not achieved. (CIDA, 76)

¹² From the CSO side, the quality of reporting is said to suffer from a rigid application of a results management framework more concerned about defining short term measurable outcomes than permitting less onerous reporting, but greater attention to medium term impacts of CIDA investments and the lessons learned.

RECOMMENDATION 11: *Improve the Agency performance by developing gender budget lines in projects and programs, by rewarding innovative gender equality programming, by improving and updating gender training, by implementing quality control in gender equality coding, and by facilitating exchange and learning on the cutting edge gender work undertaken around the world.*

4.7 Increase action and activities that specifically promote women’s human rights

As already noted, the main objectives of CIDA’s Policy on Gender Equality are ensuring women’s decision-making, women’s human rights, and women’s access to resources and benefits. The evaluation demonstrated that most of the emphasis has been on the third objective “to reduce gender inequalities in access to and control over the resources and benefits of development”. The file review found that “human rights for women and girls” has the least programming attention and fewest documented results. (CIDA, 128-129) The study points out that a project that seeks greater gender equality in access to agricultural production may define its results in terms of “increasing women’s access to resources”; instead, it could adopt a human rights approach and thus define results as “advancing women’s full human rights in the economic sphere.” (CIDA, 129)

Adopting a human rights approach to CIDA development programming, as implied by the ODA Accountability Act’s requirement of consistency with international human rights standards, will improve both programming attention and results for the policy objective of increasing the capacity of poor and vulnerable women to claim their human rights. In understanding the relevant international human rights standards for programming related to gender equality and women’s rights, CIDA should reference the provisions of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), relevant General Comments by UN Treaty bodies and the work of the UN Special Rapporteurs as well as international customary law.

RECOMMENDATION 12: *CIDA’s Gender Equality Action Plan must address ways to ensure explicit CIDA support for the human rights of women and girls, in line with the already established key objective for the Policy on Gender Equality and the requirements of ODA Accountability Act.*

RECOMMENDATION 13: *CIDA must also continue to support activities related to the other two CIDA policy objectives, that is, to ensure women’s decision-making and women’s access to resources and benefits. These activities will be most effective and sustainable where there is increasing respect, protection and fulfillment of women’s human rights.*

4.8 Develop a strategic approach to manage challenges to gender equality arising from the new aid modalities

The evaluation considered the impact of the new aid modalities (including Program Based Approaches (PBAs), Sector Wide Approaches (SWAs), direct budget support, and basket or pooled funding) on gender equality results. PBAs offer potential for greater benefits (i.e. leveraging and scaling up, front end planning and coordination) though it may also be more difficult to identify concrete action on gender equality where donors and governments come to agreement through lengthy negotiations on shared objectives for pooled funding.

Positively, the evaluation points out that the new aid modalities can bring greater attention to program areas such as basic education, budget support for country (government) priorities and harmonization of donor funding terms in development cooperation. They therefore can provide opportunities to lift gender equality into central policy discussions with senior government officials and into finance, planning and sector ministries, potentially avoiding the marginality of gender equality to a women's ministry. Unfortunately however, gender equality initiatives are often invisible or excluded when working with large basket or pooled funding modalities. In these cases incorporating GE considerations have been seen by many donors as dependent on the approach of national host governments. This can also potentially reduce funding for civil society groups working to support women's organizations and women's movements as funding is diverted into pooled mechanisms and / or CSOs are directed to seek funding from government ministries rather than donors.

In the Evaluation Survey of CIDA staff, both opportunities and challenges were cited as emerging from the new aid modalities and their impact on gender equality initiatives. Some responses mentioned opportunities to strengthen CIDA's GE commitment through its increased reference by CIDA in policy dialogue with other donors and thus impacting a larger group. Other responses mentioned that these challenges could undermine attention to gender equality in the face of other more politically visible and viable CIDA priorities, decreasing the visibility of gender equality results in CIDA programming. (CIDA, 157)

The evaluation also included several country studies that this CSO analysis reviewed in search of examples of gender equality experiences with the implementation of the new aid modalities. The Bangladesh Country Study in particular illustrated some findings that highlight the implications for gender equality and the new aid modalities. The case study notes:

“a greater threat to consistent attention to GE in project implementation derives from the size of the Bangladesh program and ... the growing tendency to disburse through multilateral channels and pooled funding mechanisms. The risk of ‘aid effectiveness’ acting to the detriment of ‘developmental effectiveness’ in GE is particularly high for smaller donors in sectors and / or programs that may be already heavily subscribed.”
(CIDA, Bangladesh Field Mission Report, 8)

In other words, CIDA may be making an explicit attempt to move toward aid effectiveness; however, this may potentially be at the cost of gender inequality mitigation effectiveness. The study demonstrated that using multi-donor platforms and budgetary support has weakened CIDA's own institutional abilities to address gender equality as it lost the incentive to protect its investment.

The new aid modalities should not hinder the achievement of gender equality results, and mechanisms to overcome the challenges must be explored. It would be helpful for CIDA to find approaches to overcome these constraints in order to show leadership in its commitment to gender equality, especially at the implementation stage of programming, regardless of the funding mechanism. Building on the ninth evaluation recommendation on the new aid modalities, CSOs recommend the following:

RECOMMENDATION 14: *CIDA should develop additional strategies to address gender equality in the context of the challenges created by the new aid modalities. These strategies to strengthening gender equality outcomes in Program-Based Approaches should be developed in close consultation with women's organizations and country-level experts, parliamentarians, civil society organizations and other gender equality actors. A key strategy is support to Southern women's organizations who can work to uphold women's rights and keep donors, other CSOs and governments ministries (the aid recipients) accountable.*

4.9 Develop mechanisms for transparency and accountability

Transparency and accountability are vital principles to ensure public oversight by citizens, civil society and the media and play a critical role in both challenging and complementing state institutions. Fundamentally, the flow of information between governments and citizens ensures that public policy-making is accountable and representative of citizens' interests. In the case of donor agencies such as CIDA, open, transparent and accountable measures allow for developing country governments and their citizens to have knowledge, oversight and information regarding the policies and programs that impact their lives and that are intended to combat poverty and uphold human rights.

With regard to the evaluation, it should be noted that there are weaknesses in the CIDA data as presented in the evaluation studies, which are also acknowledged by the evaluators. For example, in the report some data is aggregated and therefore specific amounts for gender-specific programming by country were not presented. It is also difficult to verify CIDA figures, particularly for gender-integrated programming since this is based on predilections in coding by programmers with no institutional check. Data on a donor marker for gender equality programming published by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has similar issues and is no additional check since CIDA provides this DAC data based on its own coding system.

In addition to weaknesses in the data, CIDA can also make progress on issues of transparency and accountability through full and timely public access to information regarding gender equality policy and programming at the Agency.

RECOMMENDATION 15: *As part of ensuring the centrality of gender equality and women’s rights, the Agency must be accountable by ensuring that all reports to Parliament, including CIDA’s annual Statistical Report on Canadian ODA, fully address gender equality and women’s rights disbursements and programming in all sectors (for example, reporting on education must reflect a contribution to gender equality). The annual Statistical Report must make transparent and fully document all gender equality investments, both specific and integrated, at a country and regional level. All CIDA evaluations, including their published summary and recommendations, must contain an explicit analysis and recommendations for improved performance on gender equality and women’s rights.*

RECOMMENDATION 16: *CIDA must ensure strengthened and explicit accountability for gender equality results in funds channeled to multilateral agencies and international financial institutions, as well as to multi-donor aid modalities, such as Program-Based Approaches.*

4.10 Implement effective consultations on gender equality and women’s rights

We strongly support the implementation of the evaluation recommendation that the development and monitoring of CIDA’s Gender Equality Action Plan include meaningful and constructive consultation, involving Canadian civil society, CIDA partners, Southern women’s organizations and other important stakeholders. Good practice in consultations allows for face to face dialogue, based on timely documentation, as well as the possibility for written submissions and the opportunity for transparent feedback. Transparent feedback mechanisms demonstrate a commitment to open dialogue and the creation of better public policies for the benefit of all.

RECOMMENDATION 17: *Consistent with the Canadian ODA Accountability Act, CIDA must engage in meaningful and constructive consultations for the development and monitoring of its Gender Equality Action Plan with multiple stakeholders. Meaningful and constructive consultation should listen to and consider a diverse range of experiences, knowledge and expertise, with a view to developing and designing the best public policies, and ultimately better programmatic outcomes. Specifically, a consultation process should be:*

- **Timely** – *with sufficient and publicized notice to permit effective preparation by contributors, and conducted within relevant timeframes for key decisions by the Minister and / or Senior Agency Management;*
- **Open** – *enhancing equal opportunity for access and dialogue for all who wish to participate, including effective engagement with stakeholders in developing countries and in Canada, including civil society;*
- **Transparent** – *clear with respect to purpose, process and contributions, with timely feedback on the government’s response to those who contributed views;*

- *Informed* – with substantial preparatory and follow-up documentation (both internally and in reporting the process) allowing stakeholders to assess current practice and reflecting how key inputs have been considered and weighed; and
- *Iterative* – consultation is an ongoing process, not a singular event.

5. TOWARDS A STRENGTHENED COMMITMENT AMONG CANADIAN CSOS

Canadian CSOs committed to social justice and women’s rights who endorse this document are aware that not only CIDA, but they themselves must also renew commitment and improve practices for achieving gender equality and women’s rights. This implies that we must regularly review our own practices with regard to gender equality and women’s rights and as such, continually strive to improve our approaches, implementation and interventions. Furthermore, a mutual responsibility among Canadian CSOs is needed in order to improve our gender equality and women’s rights capacities, increase attention to the issue and better integrate it into our programming.

The CSOs who participated in this analysis further acknowledge the need to continually reinforce the dialogue with our Southern partners, especially women’s organizations and movements, in order to build a shared vision for gender equality and women’s rights.

Canadian CSOs seek to actively participate in a constructive dialogue with CIDA and to contribute to the implementation of an enabling environment in order to build a renewed commitment to gender equality and women’s rights in Canadian cooperation. The reinforcement of mutual responsibility for gender equality among CIDA and Canadian CSOs is essential to strengthening Canada’s international leadership in the promotion of gender equality and women’s rights.

6. CONCLUSION

The Canadian civil society organizations (CSOs) who have participated in this analysis strongly support CIDA’s 1999 Policy on Gender Equality and congratulate the Agency for commissioning such a robust and high quality evaluation process. The rich in-depth analysis and the lessons that can be drawn from the material provide a unique glimpse into the complexity and challenges of implementing progressive gender equality policy and programming for CIDA, but also for civil society organizations. We encourage CIDA and CSOs to consider the above mentioned recommendations that we believe are vital to strengthening Canada’s international leadership in the promotion of gender equality and women’s rights.

The agenda is daunting, but the task is vital given that the rights of women and girls continue to be violated around the world. The voices of these same women and girls find strength in the movements that propose a range of alternatives that better meet their needs and aspirations. Supporting them is crucial because “for poverty reduction to be achieved, the constraints that women and girls face must be eliminated.” (CIDA, 1999, 6)

ANNEX 1:

CIDA EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE FINAL REPORT¹³

Recommendation 1: Develop a Corporate Gender Equality Action Plan with broad based consultation. Recognizing that the current Policy is still vitally relevant, the action plan should provide further strategic focus to implementation, outline reasonable goals, accountabilities, and timeframes as well as measurable outcomes.

Recommendation 2: Secure budgeting for gender equality integration and initiatives, and continue to support gender equality funds as a way to strengthen local civil society and grassroots women's organizations to achieve better development results and to be effective agents of change.

Recommendation 3: Target additional investment for research and development in GE knowledge creation within and outside CIDA, and include resources for improving knowledge retention and dissemination.

Recommendation 4: Invest resources in GE training for all staff, including middle and senior management, so they can position GE in their units to deliver gender equality results more consistently.

Recommendation 5: Strengthen the ability of the Equality between Women and Men Division to engage program and field personnel as well as external partners, in a two-way exchange of experience and reflection, to ensure that gender-sensitive approaches are used more systematically in planning and implementation of programs and projects.

Recommendation 6: Consider developing a "GE help desk" capacity to provide information, tools, capacity development both internally within CIDA (Headquarters and field), and externally for partners.

Recommendation 7: Strengthen accountability for gender equality performance of core-funded organizations and within responsive programming, especially responsive proposals from multilateral organizations.

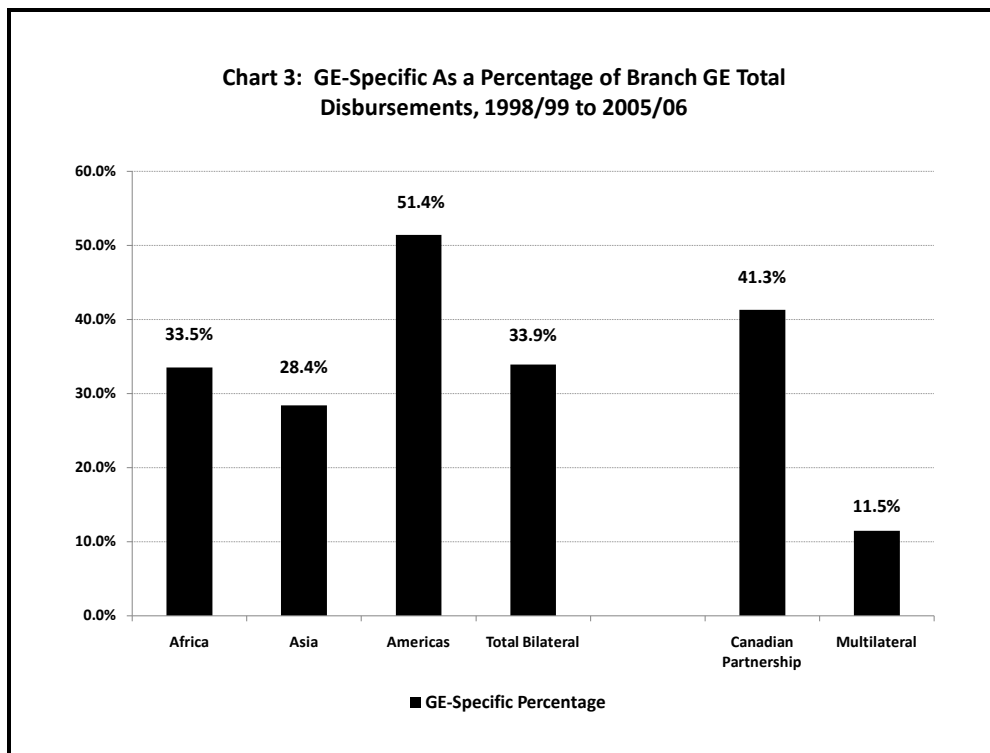
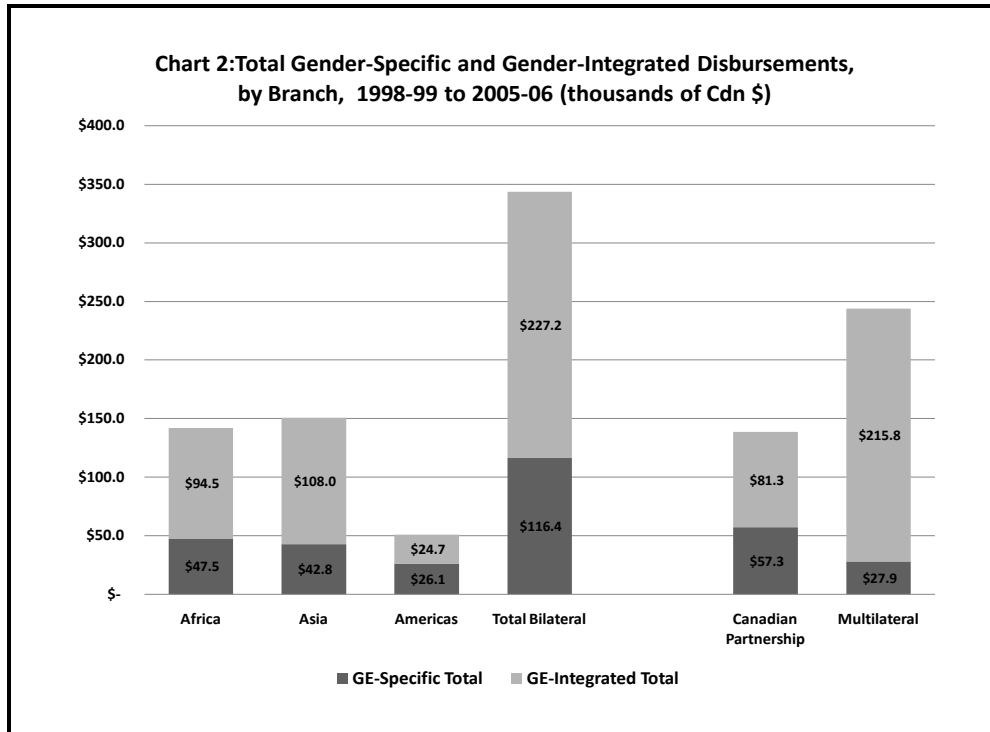
Recommendation 8: Strengthen GE reporting tools and data systems for collecting and monitoring gender equality results, as well as the collection of sex-disaggregated data both for baselines and for reporting purposes.

Recommendation 9: Develop a strategic approach to addressing opportunities and challenges presented by the New Aid Modalities, vis-à-vis gender equality and cooperation with other bilateral and multilateral donor organizations.

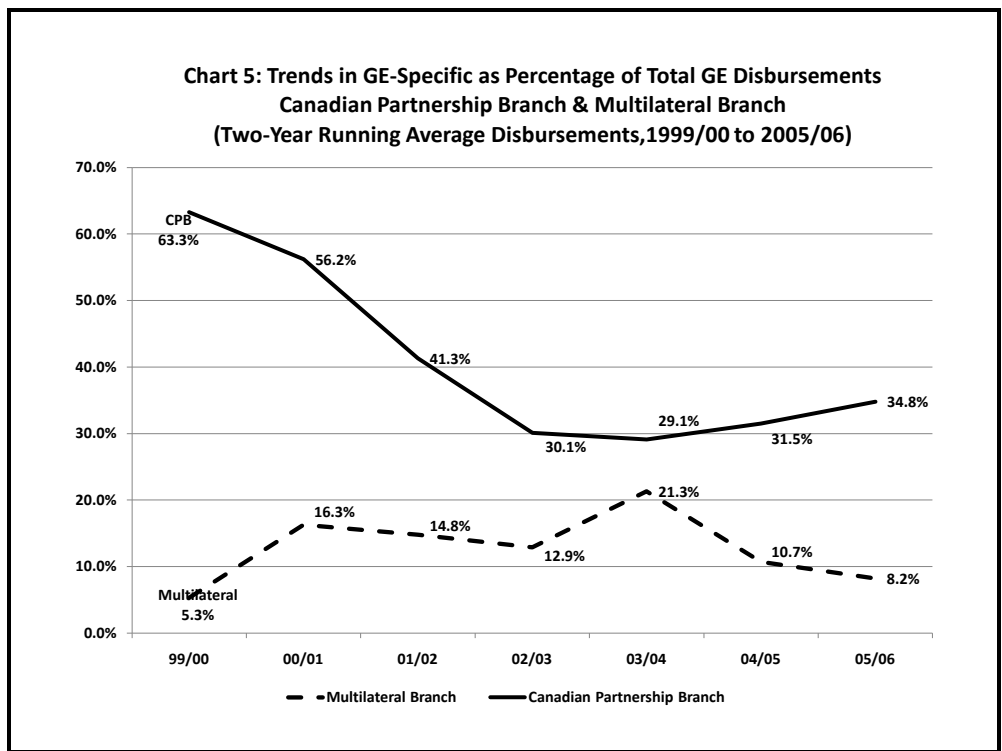
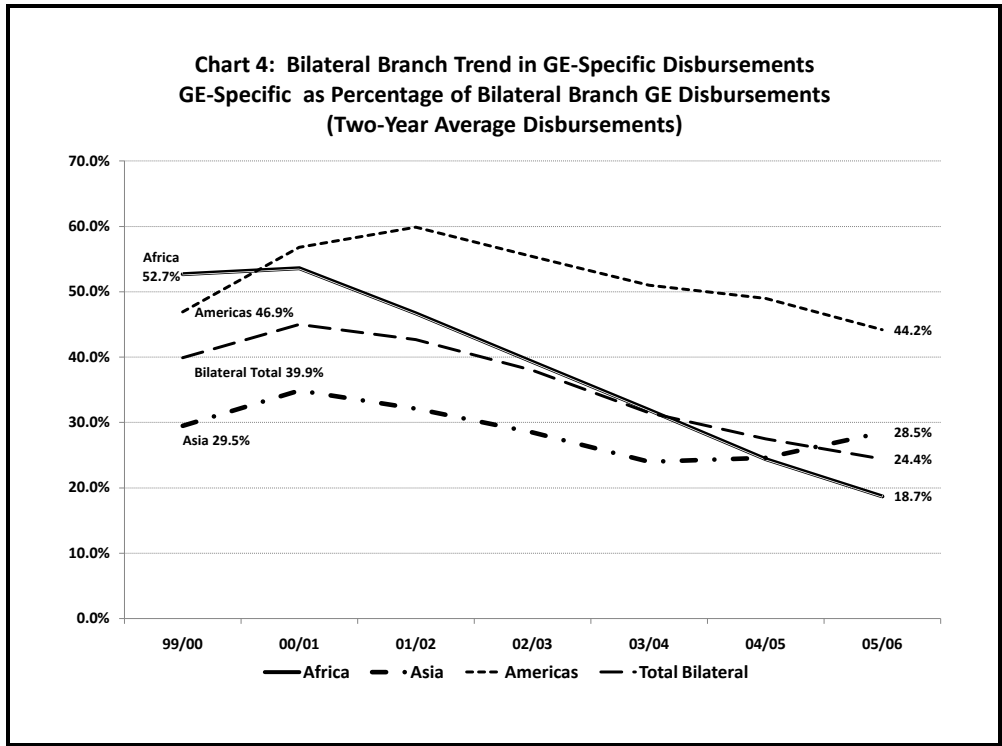
¹³ Recommendations cited from: *Evaluation of CIDA's Implementation of its Policy on Gender Equality: Final Report*, Performance and Knowledge Management Branch, CIDA, 2008. pp. 8-9. Document released under the Access to Information Act.

ANNEX 2: TREND CHARTS 2 THROUGH 5

All charts are based on calculations made by the authors of this report which are based on data presented in the evaluation report and related studies.



ANNEX 2: TREND CHARTS 2 THROUGH 5



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