



Galvanizing Canadian leadership on sexual and reproductive health and rights: retreat summary

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Background

In June of 2018, the Future Planning Initiative¹ held a two-day multi-stakeholder dialogue on 'Galvanizing Canadian Leadership on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)' to advance political and financial support for SRHR, beyond 2020. The meeting brought together key senior national and international SRHR experts and champions from civil society, private foundations, UN agencies, and Canadian government officials from Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and other departments with the following objectives:

- To reflect on the commitments Canada has made to global SRHR to date;
- To develop and deepen strategies that accelerate progress in neglected areas of global SRHR;
- To strengthen and make the case for increased investment in these areas;
- To strategize on how best to sustain political and financial leadership that leverages Canada's unique contribution to global SRHR.

The 2018 meeting was preceded by a retreat in June 2016² that played a pivotal role in securing a concrete commitment from the Government of Canada to advance global SRHR. Since then, under the leadership of the Minister of International Development and GAC, the government has taken significant steps towards prioritizing SRHR, both politically and financially. The 2016 retreat similarly brought together experts and stakeholders to build upon Canada's historical reputation on gender equality and maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH) through the development of a strategy for sustained global leadership on SRHR. Following the 2016 retreat, organizing partners launched the Future Planning Initiative campaign. The Future Planning Initiative calls on Canada to solidify its position as a global leader on SRHR by investing \$700 million per year over 10 years in a comprehensive SRHR agenda, with a focus on the most neglected areas including: advocacy for SRHR, comprehensive contraceptive care, safe abortion care, adolescent SRHR, including comprehensive sexuality education and SRHR in emergencies.

What now?

Recommendations from the 2018 retreat identified areas for Canada to drive progress, set targets and measure and communicate results. Beyond creating impetus for the building of common ground on SRHR within the Canadian development community, it continued to encourage Canadian leadership on SRHR that had been championed by Minister Bibeau since 2016.

A Cree elder opened by recognizing the meeting took place on unceded Algonquin territory and spoke to historical discrimination of Indigenous peoples and violations of their sexual and reproductive rights, calling on Canada to take action on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. Participants reaffirmed the Prime Minister's demonstrated commitment and Canada's work to advance feminist leadership and adopt a comprehensive approach to SRHR, noting significant progress made over the past two years. This included Canada's role at the FP2020 London Summit, the She Decides conference, the Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's

¹ The meeting was organized by Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, the Canadian Council for International Co-operation, the Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health, Global Canada, Inter Pares, the International Development Research Centre and Oxfam Canada.

² Ibid.

Health (CanWaCH) conference on adolescent girls, advancing gender equality at the G7 and as upcoming hosts of the Women Deliver 2019 Conference in Vancouver.

The Government of Canada's launch of its **Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP)** in 2017 provided an opportunity for increased investments in SRHR, particularly funding for advocacy, gender equality and feminist and women's rights organizations (WROs) in the Global South. Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Bibeau's announcement in 2017 to invest \$650M over 3 years in SRHR underscored it as a top development priority. Moving forward, a robust feminist Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system will be needed to review progress, capture lessons learned and demonstrate impact, informed by best practice. Transparency is critical; for understanding what, how and with whom the \$650M/over 3 years will address, as well as ensuring that Canada's value-added is funding the neglected areas of SRHR that few other donors are willing to fund. Tracking which components of the comprehensive SRHR agenda are funded is critical for addressing the whole agenda and ensuring that GAC support meaningfully addresses the neglected areas of SRHR. The government's work in developing an accountability framework for SRHR is also critical to ensuring that funded programming addresses real gaps and are aligned meaningfully with existing MNCH programming. Future sustained and robust SRHR programming requires investment in feminist, women's rights and youth organizations and movements in the Global South working on SRHR, as well as increased public outreach to bolster domestic support for Canada's commitment. Ensuring these elements become central to Canada's approach to SRHR in the future will result in a greater possibility of entrenching Canadian leadership on SRHR.

Noting the pressures and expectations on Canadian leadership due to recent investment, participants urged the government to sustain funding and recognize its unique convening role. This creates a strategic opportunity to solidify progress in advancing global SRHR and make it part of Canada's legacy and foreign assistance DNA. Canadian diplomacy and leadership on SRHR, despite diverse political opinions and partnerships with conservative and faith-based partners, was considered inspirational for other countries, and unique for North America.

Identifying neglected investments

Participants noted the important gap that Canada could fill by championing SRHR in a global climate where political pushback, regressive policies and laws, harmful social norms and funding gaps on SRHR remain. By accelerating its role as a global champion of SRHR, the government could advance its mandate by focusing investments on the following neglected areas of the SRHR agenda:

- **Mainstreaming SRHR in humanitarian settings:** Sexual and reproductive health services and upholding sexual and reproductive rights in emergencies saves lives. Canada must work with key stakeholders and implementing architecture to advance an integrated approach to SRHR and gender equality in humanitarian contexts. Canada can address resource, capacity and technical gaps with partners that aren't conversant with or fully supportive of SRHR. Special attention needs to be given to working in fragile states, with refugees, Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and victims of humanitarian disasters, and to integrating SRHR into service delivery systems that promote sustainability and resilience.
- **Supporting advocacy for SRHR:** Feminist and women's rights organizations from the Global South face challenges to address conservative and often fundamentalist barriers to SRHR at national and regional policy levels, impacting funding and often isolating global social movements in the process. Advocacy for SRHR equips individuals and organizations with the ability to claim and exercise rights and address discriminatory legal and policy barriers. By prioritizing support for advocacy, both standalone and mainstreamed within broader SRHR programming, Canada can work with civil society, feminist and WROs, enabling them to engage with accountability mechanisms for greater respect, protection and fulfillment of SRHR.
- **Championing intergovernmental and multilateral action:** Canada can deepen its convening and soft diplomacy skills to motivate new and traditional allied governments and partners to scale commitments to SRHR in global partnerships. Additionally, it can advocate at inter-governmental

platforms for increasing the percentage of total expenditure on SRHR within national health budgets.

- ***Integrating SRHR, particularly safe abortion care and comprehensive contraceptive care, in Universal Health Coverage (UHC):*** There is a need to break down silos to ensure the delivery of a comprehensive approach to SRHR within UHC. Contraceptive options provided should be rights-based and user initiated and should ensure that abortion is not isolated from broader healthcare systems within the UHC and Primary Health Care (PHC) levels. Major challenges remain with ensuring supply chain management and accessibility, particularly in humanitarian contexts.
- ***Advancing access to safe abortion:*** Medical abortion is rapidly changing the landscape of safe abortion care, and requires political support. Despite abortion being safer than it has ever been before, global opposition is well-funded and mobilized, and access in humanitarian contexts is becoming increasingly critical.
- ***Investing in adolescent and youth leadership:*** There is a need to prioritize adolescent engagement and build young people's capacities as leaders and decision makers. This requires investments in core support and building the capacities of youth-led organizations to influence decision makers. This includes increasing investments in youth leadership for SRHR at national and community levels and implementing comprehensive sexuality education, both in and out of schools. There is a need to identify and replicate good practice for meaningful youth engagement and recognize the diversity of youth communities, ensuring approaches addressing adolescent-specific demands are contextualized to their needs.
- ***Ensuring feminist principles for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL):*** Feminist approaches to monitoring, evaluation and accountability frameworks should be integrated into programming from the outset, including an analysis of power. This includes the need to build capacities in and a strong understanding of feminist MEL principles.

Key highlights

Raising the bar for measuring impact

The development of GAC's SRHR Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) has been a learning process towards the goal of gathering, sharing and analyzing SRHR data and impact. However, measuring impact requires a shift away from reporting activities and outputs, towards reporting on impact and outcomes. This can be done through the development of an evidence-based theory of change, alignment with SDG targets and other international frameworks, and suitability for humanitarian contexts. They must include mixed methodologies in data collection such as qualitative assessments and narratives. KPIs should include greater focus on outcome-level data.

Empowering community autonomy and feminist MEL

A feminist approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning is critical to SRHR programming. This includes an emphasis on autonomy and choice. It builds on robust participatory program design and evaluation, particularly with traditionally neglected and excluded groups. Participatory methods and co-creative approaches to MEL including in data collection should be mainstreamed and funded. This includes breaking down power dynamics and engaging women, girls, and communities at the program development stage and at key moments for learning and adaptation throughout the program. Building GAC's internal capacities to apply feminist MEL principles will strengthen research, improve accountability, improve partnerships and better measure progress.

Advancing Levels of Leadership

'A Levels of Leadership' matrix was developed for the 2016 retreat to measure political, departmental (GAC) and other Canadian stakeholders' actions regarding advancing SRHR leadership. This was reviewed and updated in June 2018. Recommendations included:

- Increased political leadership and long-term innovative funding for SRHR;

- Building support for domestic SRHR policy and programming to complement Canada's global SRHR leadership through GAC-led intra and inter department leadership on SRHR;
- Greater engagement with critical stakeholders, including foreign governments, donors and Canadian CSOs, with the objective of building capacity, knowledge sharing and relationship building.

The updated Levels of Leadership matrices can be found in the annex of this report.

Recommendations

Building and identifying new opportunities for Canadian leadership on SRHR in global spaces

- *Increase high-level engagement and presence in bilateral and global platforms.* As Canada prioritizes women's rights and gender equality in all international development programming, SRHR should be the legacy commitment of these efforts. This should be clearly communicated to diplomatic missions/country offices to present a consistent image and global messaging. This also includes the need to increase the capacities of Canadian diplomatic officials to engage constructively and strategically in bilateral and multilateral fora on a range of SRHR issues.
- *Lead the donor community in developing global accountability criteria to ensure the SRHR agenda is met* - in particular, at the following upcoming milestones:
 - The International Parliamentarians Conference on the Implementation of ICPD, ICPD+25 review, Voluntary National Reviews at the High Level Political Forum on the status of achieving the SDGs and the UN Security Council Campaign.
 - Continued leadership at the Commission on the Status on Women (CSW) and Commission on Population and Development (CPD) at the UN, in light of global opposition trends to SRHR and in particular, CSE, sexual health and rights.
- *Explore innovative and pooled funding mechanisms for SRHR within inter-governmental spaces.* Investigate opportunities for a fund on SRHR in, for example, the Global Financing Facility and through partnership forums such as Partnership on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH) and Every Women, Every Child (EWEC). This also includes exploring (piloting) new and innovative funding mechanisms, grounded in feminist principles, for greater impact particularly in the neglected areas of SRHR, where other donors may not be investing resources.
- *Ensure that SRHR is mainstreamed in Primary Health Care and Universal Health Coverage through the World Health Organization's Programme of Work,* as well as other global partnerships platforms such as Women Deliver 2019 and FP2020, amongst others.
- *Strengthening domestic support for SRHR,* by:
 - Championing SRHR as a priority in the 2019 Federal Elections and the 2019 Budget.
 - Assessing FIAP's potential to create sustainable partnerships and undertake a power analysis with existing partners to assess the nature of the same.
 - Think beyond 2020 as a sunset for both the Muskoka Initiative and \$650 million commitment for SRHR to look at establishing sustainable funding.
- *Invest in a communications strategy to demonstrate impact from SRHR programming* to garner public support; for example, through leveraging the #WeDeliver movement.
- *Invest in the use of feminist approaches to data collection and MEL,* and encourage the transparent sharing of information on funded projects and government contributions.

Ramp up new investments

In order for Canada to meet its current commitments, and strengthen and advance its SRHR legacy and impact, Canada should invest **\$700 million per year of ODA towards a comprehensive SRHR agenda**. This would be a 10-year commitment that includes support for the neglected areas of SRHR, including advocacy for SRHR, research to drive advocacy, direct funding to feminist and youth-led SRHR organizations leading groundbreaking work on SRHR, efforts to address inequalities within populations (including middle-income countries) and support for initiatives that bridge the gap between humanitarian – fragile – development contexts. This funding would be disbursed through mechanisms that support flexible and long-term investments. A high degree of accountability should surround this funding, aligned with existing feminist MEL and funding approaches.

This figure responds to the changing political landscape, particularly the expansive impact of the Global Gag Rule that moves approximately \$9 billion in US government health assistance away from family planning, maternal and child health, nutrition, and HIV/AIDS organizations. The policy has fundamentally damaged the capacity of organizations to effectively operate, provide sexual and reproductive health services and advocate for women's sexual and reproductive rights, putting millions of women and adolescents, particularly girls, at risk. In addition, with right-wing populist governments enacting restrictive legislation affecting reproductive rights in Eastern Europe and South America, global support for these issues is needed now more than ever.

Canadian funding can both help fill the gap and mitigate damage, providing a sustainable source of funding for SRHR initiatives. With a track record in maternal, newborn and child health as a result of the Muskoka Initiative, a commitment of \$700 million per year would build on Canada's position as a recognizing leader in the maternal and newborn health movement. Investing in SRHR carries significant multiplier benefits. Canada must be generous in supporting women and adolescents to fully exercise their SRHR.

Create an independent SRHR development and foreign policy

Recognizing the need for long-term, sustainable commitment to enable Canadian leadership for SRHR, a standalone **SRHR Development and Foreign Policy for Canada** was recommended. An SRHR policy would align with existing policies such as those on Gender Equality (1999) and the FIAP (2017). A policy would support the institutionalization of SRHR and should take a whole-of-government approach across GAC (to extend beyond development assistance to include diplomatic championing of SRHR), and include work led by other relevant departments (e.g.: Status of Women,). Such a policy would establish parameters for the delivery of new and additional sources of funding for innovative SRHR programming and advocacy, clearly articulating Canada's leadership in the neglected areas of SRHR. It should be grounded in feminist principles, be time-bound keeping in mind Canada's commitments to the SDGs and include provisions to ensure that GAC is fit-for-purpose (in terms of capacity and political will). It would establish criteria for the direction of funds to geographies in which they can have the greatest impact, such as South-East Asia and Francophone West Africa. Funds for local advocacy in areas that are often overlooked for ODA (middle income countries, Latin American countries, etc.) that have significant pockets of inequality should also be identified and supported. Such a policy would include effective and transparent accountability mechanisms, ensuring clear roles and responsibilities and reporting structures (with corresponding timelines) within GAC, and at the highest levels of government (ex.: Ministerial oversight).

Canada's value-add in new funding for SRHR

Such a policy should prioritize work in neglected areas where Canada can add additional value (as identified above), re-iterating specifically:

- Strengthening additional resourcing to neglected areas (adolescent SRHR including comprehensive sexuality education, advocacy for SRHR, comprehensive contraceptive care and safe abortion care) and intersecting priorities (such as SRHR and climate change, advancing sexual rights and CSE and ending Child and Early Forced Marriage (CEFM) and SGBV).
- Ensuring engagement and leadership of young people; Canada is well positioned to establish good practice for governments given the Prime Minister's focus on youth leadership and establishment of a non-partisan Prime Minister's Youth Council.

- Increasing funding to new technologies and entrepreneurial innovations for SRHR, particularly access to safe abortion.
- Integrating SRHR into PHC levels and in UHC systems.
- Increasing investments in SRHR in humanitarian settings and research, particularly linking evidence to advocacy and practice.
- Increasing diplomatic championing for SRHR at national and global levels.

Leadership level in June, 2016

Recommended leadership level

Status as of June, 2018

1. Political Leadership

Level of Leadership	First: Going through the motions (Initial)	Second: Checking the box (Minimalist)	Third: Making a Difference (Meaningful)	Fourth: Leading the charge (Masterful)
Seriousness of commitment	Aspirational speeches	Election platform	Mandate letter/ speech from the throne	International undertaking Anchored by an explicit SRHR Foreign/Development Policy
Clarity of outcome commitment	General statements	Directional statements	Concrete but unbound targets	Ambitious, concrete, time-bound (HIV/AIDS 3 by 5 initiative, FP2020 120 M women)
Top-level engagement	Minister not engaged-delegated	On Minister's list of priorities	Clearly a top 3 issue for Minister (Axworthy Landmines)	Priority for head of government (Blair 0.7%, Harper MNCH)
Global advocacy	Sub-Ministerial participation in key events	Minister/PM participation in key intl events	Creating/shaping key intl events on the topic SRHR champion in key health and other fora (e.g. WHO, GFF)	Other countries encouraged by Canada to increase SRHR commitments Priority item at top multilateral gatherings (UNGA, G7, G20)
Cross-partisan support	No engagement with/by opposition parties Positioned as a wedge issue	Some engagement by individuals in the opposition.	Strong cross-partisan consensus in support of SRHR (e.g. Canada and Peacekeeping 1950s-1990s)	Canadian leadership confirmed and enshrined through bill in Parliament (e.g. UK Commitment to 0.7% ODA/GNI)
Funding	Re-allocated funds: "shell game"	Modest additional funds	Significant additional funds	Leadership funding (France on Global Fund,) Committed for more than a decade (e.g. USA on PEPFAR; Rotary Club on polio)

2. Departmental Leadership

Leadership level in June, 2016

Recommended leadership level

Status as of June, 2018

Level of Leadership	First: Going through the motions (Initial)	Second: Checking the box (Minimalist)	Third: Making a Difference (Meaningful)	Fourth: Leading the charge (Masterful)
<i>Human Resources</i>	Added to existing responsibilities	1-2 people committed full-time	Dedicated SRHR Dir./DG plus staff (MNCN); SRHR staff with world-class policy/operating expertise (e.g. USAID)	SRHR Ambassador and/or Youth Envoy Dedicated ADM/DM plus dedicated staff (Afghanistan)
Engaging global expertise	Ad hoc meetings with experts	One-off group consultation with experts from civil society & governments	Regular, well-structured consultations with global experts	World-class, expert advisory group (Polio Strategic Advisory Group of experts)
Whole of GAC/ government engagement	Most programme funding from Global Issues and Partnership	Significant geographic branch funding; inclusion in all major bilateral health programmes	Engagement by Foreign Affairs beyond Development Engagement by Health Canada etc.	GAC and Health Canada recognized as global leaders on SRHR
<i>Policy Leadership at Country Level</i>	On laundry list of items for Ambassadors/heads of development	Priority for relevant Ambassador/heads of development	Successfully engaging host country on SRHR policies and line item funding.	Certain Canadian ambassadors/ heads of development recognized as SRHR champions in-country and by their peers
<i>Strategic use of metrics and measurements</i>	No overarching set of SRHR metrics	Preliminary set of SRHR metrics, focused primarily on outputs	Refined, robust set of SRHR metrics informed by international best practices focused on outputs and outcomes	Strategic use of SRHR metrics, clearly linked with programme outcome objectives and informing investment decisions
<i>Programming & funding modalities</i>	No specific funds or programming modalities for SRHR	Some specific SRHR funds but with few innovations, special characteristics.	Flexible, responsive funding (incl. advocacy & humanitarian settings) Strong focus on demand, range of	Long-term programming (7-10 years) where needed Genuine innovations in service delivery across challenging conditions Global leadership in advocacy

3. Canadian Stakeholder Leadership

Leadership level in June, 2016

Recommended leadership level

Status as of June, 2018

Levels of Leadership	First: Going through the motions (Initial)	Second: Checking the box (Minimalist)	Third: Making a Difference (Meaningful)	Fourth: Leading the charge (Masterful)
Multistakeholder outreach	Pro-forma consultations	Periodic, meaningful discussions	Structured, ongoing civil society engagement	Co-design & co-creation of programming, strategic objectives & implementation plans
Canadian civil society programming	New terms, same projects. No real changes.	Some minor new programming, no change in priorities	Significant new work	Effective, efficient programming with breakthrough partnerships and approaches.
Canadian private sector	No engagement	Ad hoc, CSR engagement	Structured involvement	Deep, multiyear engagement (Merck for Mothers)
Canadian philanthropy	No engagement	Modest, ad-hoc engagement	Meaningful support	Substantial sustained funding and top-level engagement (e.g. Gates for Global Fund, FP2020)
<i>Thought leadership and innovations</i>	<i>Thought leadership by individuals</i> No significant Cdn institutional thought leadership	Modest institutional engagement (e.g. IDRC, Grand Challenges, universities)	Structured, coordinated programming across Canadian institutions and granting bodies.	Canadian institutions recognized for supporting thought leadership and/or breakthrough innovations in key aspects of SRHR (e.g. demand, choice)
Public advocacy	Limited structured advocacy	Coordinated actions	Innovative social media and broad public engagement	Strong public campaign with credible, high profile spokespersons (e.g. Malala, Emma Watson)