

Canada launches historic fund for women's rights organizations

[AWID](#)



On June 9, 2017, Canada announced its landmark "[Feminist International Assistance Policy](#)". With this new policy, the Canadian government aims to position the country as a leader on gender equality in its aid programming. The policy will apply a human rights approach in promoting six interlinked areas for action: i) Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; ii) Human dignity; iii) Growth that works for everyone; iv) Environment and climate action; v) Inclusive governance and vi) Peace and security. In their official note the Government of Canada states that by taking action in these areas, Canada will advance a more flexible, innovative and integrated approach toward achieving gender equality and addressing the root causes of inequality.

In support of this new policy, Minister Bibeu also announced the new Women's Voice and Leadership Program. As part of this initiative, the Government of Canada will allocate CAD \$150 million over five years (from 2017 to 2022) to respond to the needs of local women's organizations in developing countries that are working to advance the rights of women and girls and promote gender equality. The initiative aims to provide flexible funding to support the work of these organizations in advancing the empowerment and rights of women and girls, as well as to build their capacity and support their networks.



AWID welcomes this strategic move from Canada, which puts gender equality and women's rights at the center of Canada's International Assistance. We also applaud the work done by the MATCH International Women's Fund and Nobel Women's Initiative to call on the Canadian government to fund grassroots women's organizations. The creation of the Women's Voice and Leadership Program as a sizeable, flexible, multi-year funding program focused on women's organizations reflects what over a decade of AWID research indicates as good practice: feminist and women's rights organisations grounded in diverse communities, with in-depth analysis of gender inequalities, vast experience and tested strategies are a priority partner for anyone interested in making transformative and sustainable change for gender justice and women's rights.

Yet, research findings continue to indicate that feminist and women's rights organisations – around the world - are operating under significant financial constraints. Canada's landmark step is an encouraging signal of support and recognition--one that we have no doubt will yield tremendous results for women's rights. We call on other donor governments to draw inspiration from this example and follow suit!