

# Leveraging the Interlinkages:

## Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and the SDGs





The British Columbia Council for International Cooperation (BCCIC) is a network of civil society organizations and individuals moving toward a better world based in British Columbia, Canada. Through coordinating this report, BCCIC hopes to contribute informed and reputable voices from civil society into the critical debate on Canada's role in developing and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

For more information on BCCIC or this report, go to: [bccic.ca](http://bccic.ca) or contact us:  
Unit 322 - 268 Keefer St., Vancouver, BC, V6A 1X5 Canada  
Phone: 604-899-4475

Produced with the support of Global Affairs Canada.



Global Affairs    Affaires mondiales  
Canada            Canada

# Table of Contents

<b>Acronyms</b>	5
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	6
<b>Foreword</b>	7
<b>Introduction</b>	9
<b>Section 1: Inclusive Development, Shared Prosperity and Decent Work</b>	23
Women Innovate! Lessons From the Co-Laboratorio Project for Achieving the SDGs	24
Advancing Gender Equality in Natural Resource Governance	31
Transforming Literacy Education for Afghan Women	35
Make It! Social Entrepreneurship for Immigrant and Refugee women	41
International Indigenous Youth Internship Programme	47
<b>Section 2: Poverty Eradication, Social Prosperity and Social Services</b>	50
Localizing SDG 5: A Case Study on Rural Development Work that Addresses Interlinkages	51
ILU Women’s Empowerment Fund	55
Working on Gender Empowerment in Central America	60
<b>Section 3: Freedom from Violence, Stigma and Stereotypes</b>	65
Exploring the barriers of Fijian blind and visually impaired youth and working age adults	66
Residential Addiction Treatment: Opportunities for Women’s Equality and Empowerment	71
<b>Section 4: Participation, Accountability and Gender-responsive Institutions</b>	76
Gender Inequality in Canada – A review of BMO’s transition to a gender equal organization	77
Cities and Gender Case Studies at Commonwealth, National and Municipal Scales	82
Cuso International – Adapting Canada’s Contemporary Feminist Approach	88
<b>Section 5: Peaceful and Inclusive Societies</b>	96
Inter-Departmental Justice Sector Efforts to Combat Gender-Based Violence in Guatemala	97
<b>Section 6: Environmental Conservation, Protection and Rehabilitation</b>	102
Grassroots Women Lead the Fight Against Climate Change	103
BCCIC’s Youth Climate Change Group: Gender, Generation and Climate Change	109
<b>Section 7: Cross cutting, Mapping and Networking Tools</b>	116
Visualizing the Interlinkages: The Movement Map	117
Gender Equality Community of Practice: Exploring the Opportunities in British Columbia	123
<b>Conclusion</b>	132

# Acronyms

AGHS	Access to Quality Health Services	SHARE	Sharing Canadian Expertise for Inclusive Development and Gender Equality
AMDV	Association de Mujeres Defensoras de la Vida	SKWID	Skills for Working in Development
APDC	Association d'Appui à la Promotion du Développement Durable des Communautés	TransMAPE	Education for the Transformation of Artisanal to Small-Scale Mining, Ecuador
ASGM	Artisanal and small-scale gold mining	TRC	Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission
ASM	Artisanal and small-scale mining	TSS	Tamakoshi Sewa Samiti
ASRH	Adult Sexual and Reproductive Health	UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
BCCIC	British Columbia Council for International Cooperation	UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
BGA+	Gender-based Analysis Plus	UPR	Universal Periodic Review
CAA	Commonwealth Association of Architects	V4P	Volunteers for Development
CAP	Commonwealth Association of Planners	VNR	Voluntary National Review
CASLE	Commonwealth Association of Surveying and Land Economy	VOICE	Volunteers for International Cooperation and Empowerment
CEC	Commonwealth Engineers Council	WCCI	Women's Climate Centres International
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	WEDO	Women's Education Development Organization
CIP	Canadian Institute of Planners	WEPs	UN Women Empowerment Principles
CIPO	Cambodia Indigenous Peoples Organization		
CIRDI	Canadian International Resource Development Institute		
CLB	Canadian Language Benchmark		
CoP	Community of Practice		
CSDM	Centre for Sustainable Development in Mountainous Areas		
CSW	UN Commission on the Status of Women		
CW4WAfghanistan	Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan		
CWIP	Commonwealth Women in Planning		
CWW	Climate Wise Women		
DCRS	DiverseCity Community Resources Society		
EAL	English as an Additional Language		
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council		
EWAD	Environmental Women for Action in Development		
FIAP	Feminist International Assistance Policy		
GAP	Gender Action Plan		
GDA	Gender Development Association		
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion		
GLI	Gender Lens Investing		
HLPF	UN High Level Political Forum		
IACHR	Inter-American Commission on Human Rights		
ICN	Inter-Council Network		
ICO	In-country Orientation		
IRCC	Refugees and Citizenship Canada		
ISEG	Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth		
ISOs	Immigrant Serving Organizations		
IWMS	Intercultural Women's Maker Society		
JES	Justice Education Society		
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators		
MDK	Gender Development Association - May Doe Kabur		
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning		
MSMES	Micro, small and medium enterprises		
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development		
OWN	Osokuru Women's Network		
P4CA	Planners for Climate Action		
PALS	Parents as Literacy Supporters		
PNC	National Civil Police (Guatemala)		
PPSIs	Public Post-Secondary Institutions		
PTIAs	Provincial and Territorial Institutes and Associations		
PWDs	People with Disabilities		
SCBF	Swiss Capacity Building Facility		
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals		
SDI	Service Development and Improvement		

# Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to all those who contributed to the creation of this report, without whom its production would not have been possible.

We acknowledge the authors, who submitted case studies and photographs for this report: Kristin Agnello, Susan Bazilli, Kessler Blanco, Kaila Borrelli, Tanya Cowie, Harriet Crossfield, Maria Eugenia Carrera, June Francis, Nicholas Gaulin, Gurleen Grewal, Kristina Henriksson, Felipe Juarez, Jose Lamyin, Orton Mak, Ariel Mishkin, Amar Nijhawan, Anu Pala, Nanna Pedersen, Bruce Petch, Vera Radyo, Janet Ray, Maya Redlinger, Jianfeng Qi, Lauryn Oates, Margot Sangster, Antonia Schiller, Dina Vivona, Nora Weber and Murwarid Ziayee. Gratitude should also be extended to the respondents, who agreed to be interviewed by the case study authors.

Special thanks goes to Dr. Zosa De Sas Kropiwnicki-Gruber, BCCIC's Senior Policy Analyst and Gender Specialist, who wrote the introductory and concluding chapters in this report, and took the lead on report coordination. We would also like to recognize the incredible hard work and dedication of Laurel Wayne-Nixon and Rowen Siemens for their editing and design, as well as Courtenay McKay for her artwork.

*In light of the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the 64th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW64) was scaled back to a one-day procedural meeting. As a result, BCCIC will no longer be sending a delegation to this event. This underscores the importance of leveraging interlinkages. This communicable disease (and others to come), will fundamentally shift how we work and the way we work together, calling for strengthened multi-stakeholder coordination and innovation to address 'wicked problems' that make a mockery of borders, and render 'us and them' categories null and void. Innovative, transformational approaches are needed to traverse scales, silos and sectors, enabling us to link the local to the global under a common Sustainable Development Goal framework.*

# Foreword



**Michael Simpson, Executive Director**

On behalf of the larger network of British Columbia Council for International Cooperation (BCCIC), I welcome this report with enthusiasm! We are five years into the larger global agenda of *Transforming Our World* through the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Canada now has a 30-point interim strategy, but we really only have ten years left to ‘accelerate’ this agenda and implement our plans. Time is of the essence!

SDG five, which focuses on gender equality, is the driving force behind Canada’s *Feminist International Assistance Policy* (FIAP), and we are told by the government that it is foundational to our foreign policy. Gender equality lies at the heart of our national theory of change, and it is clearly articulated in the nine-point implementation strategy of Global Affairs Canada that civil society organizations across Canada have helped to compile. We whole-heartedly agree with this overarching view, and we are pleased to see this orientation going into CSW64 this year. The devil is always in the details, but it does help to be on the same page. Goal five is an important lens through which to view the other sixteen SDGs, whether it be cli-

mate change or poverty eradication. While we have made great strides, and while the world is a fundamentally different place than it was 25 years ago when the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted, we have come to realize that such strides cannot be made in silos, nor have they been fast or big enough - particularly in light of the grim, time-bound nature of climate change. All of the Goals are interconnected, and some cannot be achieved without progress on others.

This is why we are so interested in gender equality and the interlinkages between Goal five and the other SDGs here at BCCIC. This is also why we are sending a strong contingent of fourteen women to the 64<sup>th</sup> Annual meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW64). If we can achieve progress on this single goal, then there is strong evidence to support the notion that other goals can be achieved at a faster pace. Indeed, perhaps accelerating progress on the entire Agenda 2030 is best achieved through the application of a gender lens. Not all of the goals have this quality.

Much has been said about what needs to be done. Our mapping of the SDGs (the BCCIC Movement Map), including Goal five, reveals we are not starting this process from scratch. In this report, we provide a broad policy analysis and present 18 positive case studies generated from our network. One of the underlying principles toward accelerating the SDGs is to learn quickly from each other regarding what works and what does not. Another principle is to learn by doing in order to build our internal capacity to engage. Like our SDG bootcamps and our Praxis Institute, our BCCIC delegations are fertile grounds for learning. In that respect, I am very happy to see our delegation, and participation in the CSW, to have more than doubled in size and scope from last year. In addition, we are able to send a young BC woman as one of eight youth representatives through the Inter Council Network of Provincial and Regional Councils (ICN).

*“These transformations are only possible when people lay strong foundations and difficult incremental steps are taken”*

There is a growing enthusiasm for working together with the government and the private sector toward emerging solutions; rather, working toward solutions that can only be discovered through dialogue, inclusivity and diverse views. This idea of sharing solutions, methodologies and convening discussions through multi-stakeholder dialogue is the fastest and most efficient way to make progress on gender equality... however difficult it may appear while this work is underway.

These are the discussions and the global discourse that we are so happy to be able to participate in through CSW. We hope this report contributes to the discourse. Change is not binary. It is developmental, with what appears at times to be great shifts. These transformations are only possible when people lay strong foundations and difficult incremental steps are taken. We believe all of the hard work that went into this report is exemplary. We believe the dedication of our CSW volunteers and staff helps to ripen the conditions for shifting views.

On behalf of BCCIC, I would like to thank everyone who was involved in this report and those who laid the foundations in prior reports. I would especially like to reflect back 25 years to Beijing and to the hard-working individuals on whose shoulders we stand today when it comes to our commitments to gender equality and equity. We still have a long way to go, and the challenge of the entire rubric of the SDGs reminds us how difficult our path is. And yet the pace palpably quickens and our sense of ‘we’ grows.

A final thank you to you, the reader, for your interest in this report. We hope it serves you well on your path toward gender equality and a better world.

# Introduction

## Background

BCCIC is sending a delegation of 14 members<sup>1</sup> to the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW64), which will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 9 to 20 March 2020. The theme of this summit is the review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly. The review will include an assessment of challenges and achievements in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women and its contribution toward the full realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

BCCIC is using this opportunity to showcase the work that its Members are doing in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment. The objective of the report is to promote accelerated progress towards women's empowerment, gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by highlighting innovative tools and case studies of promising practice interventions designed and implemented by BCCIC Members. The case studies capture diverse perspectives as well as practical examples of innovative tools and promising practices in order to inspire action and catalyze new initiatives.



1 A BCCIC member is an organization, group, private entity or individual based in British Columbia who supports projects overseas and/or promotes an understanding of sustainable development and global citizenship through related work within the province. BCCIC currently has 12 affiliate members, 36 full organizational members and 76 individual members.

## Innovation and Storytelling

In its National Review (2019) on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the Government of Canada has emphasized its role in advancing women's empowerment and gender equality across Territorial, Provincial, Federal and International scales<sup>2</sup> in order to fulfill its commitments to various international covenants<sup>3</sup> as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),<sup>4</sup> the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,<sup>5</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.<sup>6</sup> The Canadian National Review highlights the gender-responsive strategies, programs, policies and budgets<sup>7</sup> that have been developed and implemented at all levels of governance<sup>8</sup> as part of an "ambitious feminist agenda"<sup>9</sup> and foreign policy

2 Global Affairs Canada, (May 2019), Canada's National Review: Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, (1995), in the Context of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

3 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948, General Assembly Resolution 217A (III), UN Doc. A/810. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 19 December 1966, 999 U.N.T.S. 171, Can. T.S. 1976 No. 47 (entered into force 23 March 1976, accession by Canada 19 May 1976). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 24 January 2007, A/RES/61/106 (ratified by Canada on March 11, 2001). Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2 October 2007, A/RES/61/295 (ratified by Canada on November 12, 2010). Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 10 December 1984, 1465 U.N.T.S. 85, (1984) 23 I.L.M. 1027, Can. T.S. 1987 No. 36 (in force 26 June 1987; ratification by Canada 24 June 1987).

4 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 18 December 1979, 1249 U.N.T.S. 13, Can. T.S. 1982 No. 31 (entered into force 03 September 1981, accession by Canada 09 January 1982). Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Resolution A/RES/48/104 adopted 20 December 1993, Article 2(b).

5 For the full text: [https://beijing20.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa\\_e\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://beijing20.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf) or <https://www.undocs.org/en/E/CN.6/2015/3>.

6 Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989, entered into force on 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49. Canada ratified on December 13, 1991. <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/UN-Convention-Rights-Child-text.pdf>

7 This was enforced in the Canadian Gender Budgeting Act (Dec 2018). See <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/PDF/C-17.2.pdf>.

8 Overseen by the Minister for Women and Gender Equality, as formalized through the Department for Women and Gender Equality Act. See: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/W-11.3/page-1.html>.

9 Global Affairs Canada, (May 2019), Canada's National Review: Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) in the Context of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, pg. 5.



“At its core, Canada’s feminist policy reflects a conviction that all people should enjoy the same human rights and have the same opportunities to succeed and to live in safety and security, and that promoting rights-based, open and inclusive societies where all people, regardless of their gender, can fully benefit from equal participation in economic, social, political, and cultural life, is an effective way to build a safer and more prosperous world”.<sup>10</sup>

It situates the work that is being done on gender equality and women’s empowerment in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals and highlights its support for “innovative and horizontal initiatives” and “targeted approaches” to addressing gender in-

10 Global Affairs Canada, (May 2019), Canada’s National Review: Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) in the Context of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, pg. 9. See: [https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues\\_development-enjeux\\_developpement/gender\\_equality-egalite\\_des\\_genres/cnap\\_wps-pnac\\_fps.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/gender_equality-egalite_des_genres/cnap_wps-pnac_fps.aspx?lang=eng); [https://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/campaign-campagne/inclusive\\_trade/index.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/campaign-campagne/inclusive_trade/index.aspx?lang=eng).

## What makes a project innovative?

- New or creative solutions developed in a participatory or bottom up manner;
- Positive short-medium (outcomes) and long term (impact) changes when measured against a baseline;
- Positive changes are experienced by the most vulnerable and marginalized, particularly women and girls;
- Vulnerable and marginalized people, particularly women and girls, are empowered to exercise agency, power and control over their lives.

equality.<sup>11</sup> To this end, this BCCIC report will reveal how civil society organizations in British Columbia are promoting women’s equality and gender empowerment through innovative approaches that have leveraged the concept of interlinkages to accelerate the 2030 SDG Agenda and Platform for Action.

Innovation is also the theme of the *Feminist International Assistance Policy*. In order to have the “greatest possible impact on the ground”, the Honourable Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau argues that “We must be innovative and foster innovation in how we work – through our funding mechanisms and by forming new partnerships”.<sup>12</sup> With innovation in mind, a number of the Action Areas proposed by *Canada’s Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach* (CPAG) place emphasis on gathering evidence, piloting, designing and championing new and innovative ways of advancing gender equality, women’s empowerment and women’s rights (See Action Areas 1.4, 1.5, 4.1, 4.3) and facilitating “knowledge-sharing regarding best practices and processes in development innovations informed by gender analysis” (Action Area 4.3).<sup>13</sup> Through the format of evidence-informed case studies, our report provides an important opportunity for sharing knowledge around best practices, innovation and gender analysis.

In the *Canada’s Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach* strategy, Global Affairs Canada defines “innovation” as a “process, mindset, and means to enable new or improved locally-driven solutions for better results and greater impact, which benefit and empower the poorest and most vulnerable, particularly women and girls”.<sup>14</sup>

11 Ibid., 96.

12 Global Affairs Canada, (2017), Foreword in *Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy: #HerVoiceHerChoice*. GAC: Ottawa, pg. iii.

13 Global Affairs Canada, *Canada’s Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach*, (2019).

14 Ibid, Footnote 1, pg. 15.

In Action Area 4.1. Global Affairs Canada commits to working with CSOs and other partners to “incubate innovative ideas, test promising initiatives, adapt, replicate and scale up those solutions with the potential for widespread impact and effectiveness, while accounting for the gender dimensions of innovations”.<sup>15</sup> For this reason, innovation is an overarching theme for our report, as is the importance of promoting Sustainable Development Goal 5 – gender equality and women’s empowerment – as a means of driving progress towards the other Sustainable Development Goals, as emphasized in the Feminist International Assistance Policy.<sup>16</sup>

By showcasing our Member’s innovative interventions, this report also responds directly to the Canadian interim SDG national strategy, entitled *Towards Canada’s 2030 Agenda National Strategy*, which was developed by the Sustainable Development Goals Unit (SDG Unit) housed within the Ministry of Families, Children and Social Development at Employment and Social Development Canada. Action 8 of this interim strategy refers to working with “partners on compelling storytelling and calls to action” and highlighting “stories of Canadians who are taking action”.<sup>17</sup> This is reiterated in Objective 8 of *Canada’s Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach*, which describes the role that Canadian CSOs can play in fostering “global citizenship” and “inspiring” Canadians to engage in transformative action to promote gender equality and poverty reduction.<sup>18</sup> Through this report BCCIC will share positive stories of how Canadians are taking action at multiple scales - British Columbia, Canada and internationally - in relation to Goal 5 and the 2030 Agenda.

## Interlinkages

In 2015 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goals, at the center of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This includes 17 core goals and 169 associated targets, which are indivisible, in that they are fundamentally interdependent and interlinked. For this reason, interlinkages have been a common theme at the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which was mandated in 2012 to play a central role within the United Nations in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level.<sup>19</sup> Recognizing the universal, holistic and indivisible nature of the 2030 Agenda, the report of the 2018 HLPF meeting argues that it is essential to a) understand the interlinkages among goals and targets; and b) identify ways to leverage these interlinkages across multiple objectives.<sup>20</sup> At this meeting it was observed that in terms of the former, progress has been made in conceptualizing and modelling interlinkages in “abstract terms”, but in relation to the latter more needs to be done in terms of designing, implementing and evaluating projects around interlinkages in a more systematic way.<sup>21</sup> To this end, it provided a list of principles that should be followed when using interlinkages for decision-making.

<sup>19</sup> For more information on the mandate and structure of the HLPF please refer to <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>.

<sup>20</sup> HLPF, Advancing the 2030 Agenda: Interlinkages and Common Themes at the HLPF 2018: Report of the meeting (25-26 January 2018), United Nations Headquarters, New York, pg. 4.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., Executive Summary.

## HLPF Principles to follow when using interlinkages for decision-making<sup>22</sup>

1. *“Localize or domesticate an understanding of interlinkages and interconnections;*
2. *Rely on evidence-based knowledge that draws upon empirical observation and scientific assessment, but also aggregate knowledge from various stakeholders in an open and transparent way;*
3. *Leverage the knowledge building process itself to fuel the policy convergence process at various levels;*
4. *Use this knowledge to set priorities for action, noting that prioritization and policy choices will be context specific;*
5. *Adjust governance structures to reflect inter-relationships;*
6. *Gather high quality reliable data for decision-making and go beyond the formal global monitoring framework as needed;*
7. *Ensure multi-stakeholder engagement where different actors contribute toward the final outcome in ways that support each other;*
8. *Foster dialogue, learning and continual communications as essential to working together in more effective ways.”*

The 2018 HLPF report identified a number of challenges in harnessing interlinkages, including lack of contextual nuance in conceptual models; inadequate governance structures across scales (connecting global, regional, national and local levels); limited motivation or practical guidance on working across sectors; lack of guidance on multi-stakeholder partnerships, particularly in relation to public-private partnerships; and challenges financing projects around interlinkages.<sup>23</sup> While not explicitly focused on gender equality, the HLPF meeting on interlinkages argued that gender issues are “inextricable” from those related to education, land rights and water access, access to energy, health and sanitation labor, and that a “gender per-

22 HLPF, Advancing the 2030 Agenda: Interlinkages and Common Themes at the HLPF 2018: Report of the meeting, (25-26 January 2018), New York, United Nations Headquarters.

23 Ibid., Executive Summary

spective” is imperative, particularly when one considers the “leave no one behind” principle underlying the 2030 Agenda.<sup>24</sup>

The OECD has conceptualized interlinkages in relation to a “policy-coherence” framework, which focuses on (a) trade-offs and synergies; (b) transboundary analysis (effects across borders including spillover effects); and (c) an intergenerational lens (long term effects across generations).<sup>25</sup> This report argues that such interlinkages should be investigated at three levels, namely the individual, societal and global,<sup>26</sup> and that a holistic policy approach, which considers these interlinkages systematically and creates global governance mechanisms to manage potential trade-offs and promote synergies, is required to tackle the “gender-sustainability” nexus.<sup>27</sup>



24 Ibid, pg. 6-7.

25 OECD, (2019), Policy coherence for sustainable development and gender equality: Fostering an Integrated Policy Agenda, pg. 5.

26 Ibid., 6

27 Ibid., 34.

## Key terms

- **Interlinkages:** A connection between two concepts that may be explicit (e.g. an SDG text includes text that is found in another SDG) or inferred (i.e. when their connection can be assessed based on evidence).<sup>28</sup>
- **Policy Coherence:** Numerous policies are interrelated because they share common ideas or objectives. This includes vertical and horizontal coordination of policy priorities and objectives across institutional, geographical, sectoral and temporal dimensions, as argued by the OECD.<sup>29</sup>
- **Trade offs and synergies:** Trade offs are negative interactions between SDGs, where advances on one Goal have a negative effect on another Goal or parts thereof. Synergies are positive interactions where co-benefits can be identified by targeting multiple SDGs simultaneously; co-benefits include enhanced impact and achieving outcomes at a lower cost and may appear in the short, medium or long term.<sup>30</sup>
- **Transboundary and spillover effects:** There has been increased recognition of the effects of domestic policies on international progress in relation to Agenda 2030. Spillover effects are unintended consequences that may be positive or negative, as a result of trade, investment, migration, development cooperation and climate change, among others.<sup>31</sup>
- **Time horizons:** Trade offs and synergies may only develop or become apparent over time. For example, many argue for an intergenerational lens that looks at the effects of contemporary policies on future generations, for instance in relation to climate change.<sup>32</sup>
- **Nexus:** Recurrent patterns of interaction between small sets of goals and interactions (e.g. water-energy-food nexus).<sup>33</sup> The overlap between gender equality and sustainable development objectives and approaches was described as a “gender-sustainability nexus” by the OECD.<sup>34</sup>
- **SDG Clusters:** Grouping SDGs in different ways. Some argue that SDGs should be grouped based on their function and dependency on other SDGs; for example, grouping goals related to basic human needs as ultimate goals at the center and then grouping the means to obtain these goals (i.e. distinguish between outcome and process-related goals). Clusters have also been created out of priorities for policy action or based on systematic interactions identified through network and content analysis.<sup>35</sup>
- **Knowledge platforms or communities of praxis:** Researchers argue that in order to understand potential trade offs and synergies, transdisciplinary research should be conducted on interactions. Contextual case studies on positive and negative interactions should be compiled and form the basis of increased dialogue, debate and collaboration across sectors and silos at different scales (local, provincial, national and international). Some have argued for global knowledge platforms or communities of praxis to understand how to leverage these interlinkages, harness co-benefits, identify “innovative pathways” and initiative new collaborations across sectors.<sup>36</sup>

28 Alcamo, J., (2019), Water quality and its interlinkages with the Sustainable Development Goals. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 36, pg. 126-140.

29 OECD, (2019), Policy coherence for sustainable development and gender equality: *Fostering an Integrated Policy Agenda*.

30 Nilsson; Chisholm; Griggs; Howden-Chapman; McCollum; Messerli; Neumann; Stevance; Visbeck; ,Stafford-Smith (2018), Mapping interactions between the sustainable development goals: lessons learned and ways forward, *Sustainability Science* 13: 1489-1503.

31 OECD, (2019), Policy coherence for sustainable development and gender equality: *Fostering an Integrated Policy Agenda*.

32 Mans; Chisholm; Griggs; Howden-Chapman; McCollum; Messerli; Neumann; Stevance; Visbeck; ,Stafford-Smith (2018), Mapping interactions between the sustainable development goals: lessons learned and ways forward, in *Sustainability Science* 13, 1494.

33 For more detailed discussion refer to Liu, J., Hull, V., Godfay, C., Tilman, D., Gleick, P., Hoff, H., Pahl-Wosti, C., Xu, Z., Chung, M., Sun, J & Li, S, (2018). Nexus approaches to global sustainable development, *Nature Sustainability*.

34 OECD, (2019), Policy coherence for sustainable development and gender equality: *Fostering an Integrated Policy Agenda*.

35 Breuer; Janetschek; Malerba, (2019), Translating Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Interdependencies into Policy Advice, *Sustainability* 11, 2092, p.g.1-20.

36 Mans; Chisholm; Griggs; Howden-Chapman; McCollum; Messerli; Neumann; Stevance; Visbeck; ,Stafford-Smith (2018), Mapping interactions between the sustainable development goals: lessons learned and ways forward, in *Sustainability Science* 13, 1494.

## Leveraging gender-related interlinkages

### Synergies

The “review and appraisal” report of the Secretary-General, which will be presented at the Sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women places emphasis on the integration of gender and the Sustainable Development Goals:

“Under the Sustainable Development Goals, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in themselves constitute a goal (Goal 5) and a means for achieving the other goals, all of which contain gender-related targets. The systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective is crucial for the implementation of the 2020 Agenda”.<sup>37</sup>

In particular, the report refers to the grouping of SDGs within six clusters, namely poverty eradication, social protection and social services; freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes; participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions; peaceful and inclusive societies; environmental conservation, climate action, resilience-building. In its review of progress in each of these clusters, the Secretary-General calls for accelerated progress in relation to both the Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda by “breaking silos and building integrated approaches to implementation”,<sup>38</sup> “harnessing synergies between different policy interventions”,<sup>39</sup> “move(ing) beyond sectoral and towards systematic approaches”<sup>40</sup> and “addressing women’s rights and needs “in an integrated and coordinated manner”.<sup>41</sup> Interlinkages, and harnessing the

potential of synergies, are at the core of programming and policy making around gender equality and sustainable development.<sup>42</sup>

In other words, working on multiple SDGs promotes gender equality and women’s empowerment, and promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment (SDG 5) in turn leads to progress on other interlinked SDGs. For example, when women are free from violence, discrimination, stigma and stereotypes, it leads to progress in relation to poverty eradication (Goal 1), health (Goal 3), education (Goal 4), decent work (Goal 6) and peaceful communities (Goal 16). Integrating a gender perspective into environmental, climate and disaster risk reduction and adaptation policies will have a positive effect on climate change (Goal 13), poverty (Goal 1), food security (Goal 2), health (Goal 3), sustainable water and energy provision (Goals 6 and 7), and livelihoods (Goals 5 and 8).<sup>43</sup> Sustainable energy sources will have a positive effect on the environment and reduce the burden of unpaid care and domestic work on women, and in turn enhance their opportunities to decent work. In other words, “in addition to making sure that gender equality is addressed as a cross-cutting priority across the social, economic, political and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, all areas must themselves be integrated”.<sup>44</sup>

42 The way in which synergies between SDG5 and other sustainable development goals have been harnessed is the topic of numerous reports and academic papers. For example, Frangoudes, K and Gerrard (2018) discuss this synergy in relation to the fishing industry (Frangoudes, K and Gerrard, S (2018), (En)gendering change in small-scale fisheries and fishing communities in a globalized world. *Maritime Studies*, 17(2): 117-124.); Lindsey, I and Chapman, T (2017) discuss the synergy between sport, health, gender equality and women’s empowerment (“Enhancing the contribution of sport to the sustainable development goals: achieve gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls”. Gleeson (2018) and Wylie, L (2020) looks at the bidirectional interlinkages between SDG 5, SDG 1, 3 and 4 with specific reference to HIV/ AIDS, health care and Indigenous young women in Canada (Gleeson, Hayley et al, 2018, “Ending AIDS by 2030: The importance of an interlinked approach and meaningful youth leadership” in *Journal of the International AIDS society*, 21, 66-71; Wylie, L and Corrado, A.M (2020), “Colonial legacies and collaborative action: Improving Indigenous Peoples’ Health Care in Canada”, *International Indigenous Policy Journal* 10(5).

43 Commission on the Status of Women Sixty-fourth session, (9-20 March 2020), Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly: Report of the Secretary-General, pg. 83.

44 Ibid., 98.

37 Commission on the Status of Women Sixty-fourth session, 9-20 March 2020, “Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly: Report of the Secretary-General”, pg. 11.

38 Ibid., 9.

39 Ibid., 28.

40 Ibid., 28.

41 Ibid., 28.

This was reiterated in a thematic review of interlinkages in relation to Sustainable Development Goal 5 by the UN High Level Political Forum (2017). It noted that of the 230 SDG indicators, 53 make specific reference to women, girls, gender or sex, including the 14 indicators under SDG 5.<sup>45</sup> For instance, ending all forms of discrimination is a prerequisite for other SDGs related to quality and affordable education, access to the labour market and political participation. It discusses these interlinkages in relation to eliminating violence and harmful practices, promoting economic empowerment and financing, ensuring participation and leadership in decision-making and ensuring healthy lives. It describes how at a national level, governments have developed inter-ministerial committees, prioritized gender mainstreaming and enhanced inter-agency mechanisms on gender statistics in order to operationalize the concept of interlinkages and promote synergies.<sup>46</sup> As part of its “follow-up and review” role, the HLPF committed itself to ensuring that “gender perspectives are systematically integrated into its work, including in its negotiated outcomes”.<sup>47</sup> In particular, the HLPF report recommends the following:

“To accelerate the implementation of the SDGs, a comprehensive approach, leveraging the synergies between Goal 5 and all other SDGs, should be pursued. As stated in the 2030 Agenda, the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Agenda is crucial and realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all Goals and targets”.<sup>48</sup>

The OECD has also called for an integrated policy agenda centered on policy coherence for sustainable development and gender equality: “The OECD is continuously looking at ways to promote gender equal-

ity with and in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda”.<sup>49</sup> Referring to the 2015 OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life, it argues that the achievement of gender equality requires a “holistic” approach to policy-making and action across all dimensions, including education, social protection, labour, property rights, tax, infrastructure and governance.<sup>50</sup> It argues that that slow progress on sustainable development affects women disproportionately, and that women also have an important positive role to play in advancing sustainable development.<sup>51</sup> The OECD analyzed Goal 5 using a ‘policy-coherence framework’ in relation to Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation), Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy), Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities), Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production) and Goal 15 (life on land).<sup>52</sup>

The importance of interlinkages was affirmed by the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Minister Bibeau in her Foreword to the *Feminist International Assistance Policy*, in which she refers to the importance of a “targeted” and “cross-cutting” approach to gender equality, which on the one hand relies on very specific interventions that support gender equality and promote women’s rights, but also the integration of gender in all international assistance initiatives across all action areas,<sup>53</sup> including human dignity, growth that works for everyone, environment and climate change, inclusive governance, peace and security.

45 ECESA, (2017), 2017 HLPF Thematic review of SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, pg. 6-7.

46 ECESA, (2017), 2017 HLPF Thematic review of SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, pg. 6-7.

47 Ibid., 10.

48 Ibid., 9-10.

49 OECD, (2019), Policy coherence for sustainable development and gender equality: Fostering an Integrated Policy Agenda. pg. Acknowledgements.

50 Ibid., 5.

51 Ibid., 6.

52 Ibid., 34. The annex provides a useful mapping of SDG 5 in relation to other sustainable development goals.

53 Global Affairs Canada, (2017), Foreword in Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy: #HerVoiceHerChoice, GAC: Ottawa, pg. ii.

## Working across sectors

### Sustainable Development Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals

*Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries.*<sup>54</sup>

In its thematic review of Sustainable Development Goal 5, the HLPF argued that multi-stakeholder collaboration is required to promote an accelerated 2030 Agenda and ensure that the interlinkages between gender equality and women's empowerment and the other goals are harnessed. It emphasized the importance of coordinated efforts with civil society, private sector, UN system and other actors, and the promotion of active participation of grass-roots organizations, women's organizations, women's human rights defenders and youth-led organizations.<sup>55</sup> This "whole-of-society" vision was reiterated by the OECD, which stated that partnerships are essential to promote transformative change, particularly when developing integrated, holistic approaches to the gender-sustainability nexus.<sup>56</sup>

Canada's most recent National Review (2019) of Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) emphasized the importance of working with diverse stakeholders, including NGOs, local Indigenous organizations, professional associations, academic experts, think tanks, civil society groups and the Canadian public, including marginalized women

and girls.<sup>57</sup> This is in line with the Secretary-General's report (2020) for the upcoming Sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women Sixty-fourth session, which emphasizes the importance of partnering with different stakeholders across sectors and holding them all accountable. For instance, in relation to the private sector it states, "As the private sector's influence in the area of sustainable development grows, its action relating to and accountability for women's and girl's human rights should be brought fully into line with the Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda".<sup>58</sup> It also places emphasis on the key role played by women's movements, organizations and grass roots organizations<sup>59</sup> in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in line with Action Area 1 of the *Feminist International Assistance Policy*.<sup>60</sup>

In its review of gender equality in Canada, the OECD recommended that the Canadian government engage more systematically with civil society organizations, including gender equality advocacy groups, to elicit their views on gender policy and governance. In particular, it called for consultation at all stages of the policy cycle, clear and transparent communication procedures, the creation of feedback loops to stakeholders, and dedicated efforts to reach vulnerable, underrepresented and marginalized groups in society.<sup>61</sup> It also called for the establishment of an advisory panel of experts from civil society. With this in mind, Canada developed a Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for

54 See <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/globalpartnerships/>.

55 ECESA, (2017), 2017 HLPF Thematic review of SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, pg. 10.

56 OECD, (2019), Policy coherence for sustainable development and gender equality: Fostering an Integrated Policy Agenda, pg. 37.

57 Global Affairs Canada, (May 2019), Canada's National Review: Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) in the Context of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, pg. 95.

58 Commission on the Status of Women Sixty-fourth session, (9-20 March 2020), Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly: Report of the Secretary-General, pg. 9.

59 Refer to the section on 'Indispensable Collaboration with Civil Society' in Canada's National Action Plan 2017-2022 – For the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women Peace and Security.

60 Refer to Action Area 1 of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP).

61 OECD, (2018), Gender Equality in Canada: Mainstreaming, Governance and Budgeting. Paris: OECD Publishing., Executive Summary: Recommendation 11.

International Assistance – A Feminist Approach<sup>62</sup> and an Advisory Group (CPAG), which includes a group of representative CSO stakeholders and Departmental officials with knowledge and expertise related to FI-AP.<sup>63</sup> Objective 2 of this policy implementation strategy is aimed at facilitating a safe and enabling environment for civil society, which in Action Area 2.1. is described as including “a wide array of new, existing and non-traditional, Canadian, international and local stakeholders”. Under this Objective, Global Affairs Canada will “encourage multi-stakeholder approaches in support of an enabling environment for civil society” and “ensure that a large variety of stakeholders are engaged on relevant issues”.<sup>64</sup> This is reiterated in Objective 7, which outlines the approach that Global Affairs Canada will take in relation to fostering transparent, effective and accountable multi-stakeholder partnerships with CSOs, the private sector, the research community, multilateral organizations, national governments and other actors.<sup>65</sup>

This is echoed in Action 26 of the interim Canadian national SDG strategy which focuses on “innovative partnerships” and “enhance[ing] collaboration between different levels of government, the private and non-profit sectors and research communities, and support[ing] the development of new and innovative partnerships, approaches and breakthroughs to advance multiple SDGs”.<sup>66</sup> Action 27 talks about collaborating with private investors to contribute to achieving the SDGs, and in Action 28, it refers to partnerships that promote SDG implementation in the business community.<sup>67</sup>

62 See [https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues\\_development-enjeux\\_developpement/priorities-priorites/civil\\_policy-politique\\_civile.aspx?lang=eng](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/civil_policy-politique_civile.aspx?lang=eng)

63 See <https://www.ocic.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Advisory-Group-to-Support-Implementation-of-the-Civil-Society-Partnerships-for-International-Assistance-Policy.pdf>.

64 Global Affairs Canada, Canada’s Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach, (2019), pg. 7.

65 Ibid., 23.

66 Sustainable Development Goals Unit, (2019), Towards Canada’s 2030 Agenda National Strategy: Interim Document. Gatineau, Quebec.

67 Ibid.

## Leave No One Behind

In its report for the upcoming Commission on the Status of Women Sixty-fourth session, the Secretary-General has argued that a core principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Beijing Declaration was the reduction of “multiple and intersecting inequalities”.<sup>68</sup> Throughout the report it notes that “women and girls who experience multiple forms of discrimination, including based on age, class, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity or migration status have made the least progress”,<sup>69</sup> which it argues goes directly against the commitment to “leaving no one behind”.<sup>70</sup> It therefore recommends that laws, policies and programmes be systematically evaluated to ensure that they do not create or reinforce inequalities and marginalization.<sup>71</sup>

And indeed, this commitment has been made by the Government of Canada, which in its National Review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action emphasized its commitment to “assessing the potential effects of its policies, programs, and initiatives on a diverse group of women, men, and people of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions by taking into consideration the intersection of sex and gender with other identity factors”.<sup>72</sup> For this reason, Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+) has been rolled out across all Federal departments, and efforts have been made to address intersectional gender-related data gaps at a Federal level

68 Commission on the Status of Women Sixty-fourth session, (9-20 March 2020), Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly: Report of the Secretary-General, pg. 3

69 Ibid., 5.

70 For more information about the pledge, refer to the UN CPD Committee for Development Policy ‘Leaving no one behind’, [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2754713\\_July\\_PM\\_2\\_Leaving\\_no\\_one\\_behind\\_Summary\\_from\\_UN\\_Committee\\_for\\_Development\\_Policy.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2754713_July_PM_2_Leaving_no_one_behind_Summary_from_UN_Committee_for_Development_Policy.pdf). The first interim guide to operationalize this pledge can be found at <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/leaving-no-one-behind-unsdg-operational-guide-un-country-teams-interim-draft>.

71 Ibid., 98.

72 Global Affairs Canada, (May 2019), Canada’s National Review: Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) in the Context of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, pg. 5



and in certain provincial governments.<sup>73</sup> Despite these efforts, Canada's National Review report identified a number of challenges the Government has faced in promoting an intersectional and equity-centered approach to women's empowerment and gender equality including the difficulties associated with addressing socio-economic inequalities and gender-based violence experienced by diverse and marginalized people (such as Indigenous people and LGBTQ2 communities) as well as the challenges it has faced in promoting gender diversity in leadership positions and general social inclusivity at a community level.<sup>74</sup>

“While many advancements in gender equality have been made over the past five years, the Government of Canada recognizes that there is more work to be done particularly in preventing violence and discrimination, and promoting the rights of women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination”.<sup>75</sup>

In BCCIC's VNR Shadow Report series entitled, 'Where Canada Stands',<sup>76</sup> indigenous women and girls were identified as particularly vulnerable to discrimination and gender-based violence in Canada despite Canada's endorsement of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples<sup>77</sup> on November 12, 2010. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada included gender-based violence in its Calls for Action, referring specifically to the federal, provincial and territorial governments' responsibility to “work with Aboriginal communities to provide culturally relevant services to inmates on issues such as substance abuse, family and domestic violence,

73 The Government of Canada is committed to Gender-Based Analysis Plus. For a description of this please refer to: <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-ac/acs/index-en.html>. This commitment has its roots in the Report of the Auditor General of Canada on gender-based analysis (2015): <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-ac/plan-action-2016-en.PDF>.

74 Ibid., 8.

75 Ibid., 8.

76 See <https://www.bccic.ca/sustainable-development-goals/where-canada-stands-sdg-reports/>.

77 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2 October 2007, A/RES/61/295 (ratified by Canada on November 12, 2010).

and overcoming the experience of having been sexually abused”<sup>78</sup> and to appoint “a public inquiry into the causes of, and remedies for, the disproportionate victimization of Aboriginal women and girls”.<sup>79</sup> The Canadian government's commitment of \$53.8 million to this Inquiry<sup>80</sup> and the implementation of some of its initial recommendations,<sup>81</sup> reveals a recognition and acknowledgement of the persistent and deliberate rights violations and abuses experienced by Indigenous women and girls, which has its roots in historic, systemic and institutionalized oppression of Indigenous communities. The 'Reclaiming Power and Place' report calls for government to adopt a zero-tolerance approach and invest more in policies, structures and programs that prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence generally, and for Indigenous women and girls, in particular.<sup>82</sup>

The Canadian interim national SDG strategy, 'Towards Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy: 30 Actions to 2030', affirms its commitments to the 'leaving no one behind' pledge and includes numerous Actions that speak about enhanced engagement with Indigenous communities. It also commits to “Implement the 2030 Agenda with full regard for the rights of Indigenous peoples by protecting and promoting these rights, as reflected in the 10 Principles of Reconciliation, the TRC's calls to action, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' calls to justice and the UNDRIP” (Action 22).<sup>83</sup>

78 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, (2015), “Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada”, pg. 324.

79 Ibid., 325.

80 National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, (Officially launched on August 3, 2016).

81 See <https://www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-northern-affairs/news/2018/06/government-of-canada--national-inquiry-into-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-and-girls.html>.

82 For the final report and supplementary reports, see <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

83 See: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/agenda-2030/national-strategy.html>

## Intergenerational lens

The Secretary-General's report (2020) to the upcoming sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women emphasizes the importance of an intergenerational perspective that addresses "women's rights and needs throughout life".<sup>84</sup> It goes beyond this to highlight the important role played by youth in advocating for gender equality, women's empowerment and the SDGs: "Young women are at the forefront of movements calling for systemic change in an integrated manner across all dimensions of sustainable development".<sup>85</sup> The importance of intergenerational coherence was emphasized by the OECD, particularly given the feminization of poverty and the entrenched nature of gendered socio-cultural norms, which result in "gender inequalities [that] tend to be 'sticky' and perpetuate themselves across generations...".<sup>86</sup> As we improve gender equity for current generations, we also improve gender equity for future generations. It is also central to the UN Women's Youth and Gender Equality Strategy,<sup>87</sup> which seeks to empower young women as partners in achieving gender equality and sustainable development through leadership, economic empowerment and skills development. As argued by Lakshmi Puri, the UN Assistant Secretary General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women,

"We are at a defining moment at which the women's movement and the youth movement must come together with stronger partnerships and greater focus to ensure that the new agenda for sustainable development delivers for all women and girls, especially those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization. This is a critical moment for action".<sup>88</sup>

84 Commission on the Status of Women Sixty-fourth session, (9-20 March 2020), Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly: Report of the Secretary-General, pg. 28.

85 Ibid., 95.

86 Ibid., 35.

87 See UN Women's Youth and Gender Equality Strategy: <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2017/youth-leap-into-gender-equality.pdf?la=en&vs=5054>

88 UN Women's Youth and Gender Equality Strategy, (2017), Foreword: pg. 5.

Although youth were noticeably absent in the 30 Actions outlined in Canada's interim national SDG Strategy, youth engagement was highlighted as an important recommendation emerging from the first round of public consultations (March to May 2019). As noted in the 'What we heard' section of the interim report, "They [youth] require more tools, greater awareness of the opportunities to get involved and further support to sit at decision-making tables... Young people are looking for better access to the planning process in order to help define success for Canada's future generations".<sup>89</sup> This intergenerational argument is supported by numerous United Nations publications, in which it is argued that it is critical for policy coherence to address youth and the interlinkages of the SDGs associated with youth, and to recognize their role in the future labour force and the pivotal role that they can play as actors in sustainable development.<sup>90</sup>

In addition to encouraging young women's empowerment, the aforementioned UN Youth and Gender Equality Strategy sees "young men as partners of gender equality".<sup>91</sup> This approach was promoted in the Secretary-General (2020) report for CSW64 that argued in order to challenge unequal power relations and discriminatory social norms, "Initiatives designed for women, men, girls and boys together have proven more effective than those for men and boys alone".<sup>92</sup> This is reiterated by Canada's National Review of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (May 2019), which highlights the federal government's strategy to engage men and boys in the advancement of gender equality.<sup>93</sup> It is also included under Objective 1 of *Canada's Policy for Civil Society*

89 Sustainable Development Goals Unit, (2019), Towards Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy: Interim Document. Gagneau, Quebec., p. 6.

90 United Nations, (2017), Youth development links to sustainable development; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, (2018), World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

91 UN Women's Youth and Gender Equality Strategy, (2017), Foreword: 5.

92 Commission on the Status of Women Sixty-fourth session, (9-20 March 2020), Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly: Report of the Secretary-General, pg. 57.

93 Global Affairs Canada, (May 2019), Canada's National Review: Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) in the Context of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, pg. 96.

*Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach* strategy: “Men and boys must also be engaged in the fight for greater gender equality, take opportunities to advocate and lead by example by respecting the rights and interests of women and girls”.<sup>94</sup>

## A transformative and accelerated agenda

The ‘Leave No One Behind’ pledge is central to transformative nature of the 2030 Agenda as advocated for by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This approach argues that a “generalized shift” is needed that transforms deeply rooted systems of wealth, decision-making and governance based on unequal distributions of wealth and decision-making power. Furthermore, instead of focusing on specific groups of vulnerable and marginalized people,

“the policy choices most effective in leaving no one behind may not be those targeting specific groups but a combination of macroeconomic and fiscal policies conducive to equitable, sustainable growth; productive capacity development; mechanisms that empower and actively encourage the participation of all in relevant decision-making processes and ensure the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights; and transformative social policies that combine universal and targeted actions, as well as pre-market, in-market, and post-market redistribution”.<sup>95</sup>

In light of the fact that progress has “fallen short”, “stalled” and “even reversed”<sup>96</sup> in relation to gender

94 Global Affairs Canada, *Canada’s Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach*, (2019), pg. 1.

95 See [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2754713\\_July\\_PM\\_2\\_Leaving\\_no\\_one\\_behind\\_Summary\\_from\\_UN\\_Committee\\_for\\_Development\\_Policy.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2754713_July_PM_2_Leaving_no_one_behind_Summary_from_UN_Committee_for_Development_Policy.pdf)

96 Global Affairs Canada, (May 2019), *Canada’s National Review: Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) in the Context of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women*.

equality and women’s empowerment, the Secretary General made numerous comments in the report to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Special Assembly calling for a transformative approach, including “gender-transformative interventions”,<sup>97</sup> “transformational policies” and “systemic change”<sup>98</sup> to unequal power relations.<sup>99</sup> Access to social protection and public services are “not enough” when structural barriers to gender equality remain unaddressed.<sup>100</sup> Generally, the Secretary General’s report argues that “The usual approach of addressing symptoms rather than causes has led to a state of perpetual crisis. It would be better to fix the systems that perpetuate inequality by redistributing power and realizing women’s and girl’s human rights”.<sup>101</sup> This, it argued, is imperative in order to “accelerate”<sup>102</sup> the implementation of the Platform for Action and create “irreversible”<sup>103</sup> change:

“Broad, properly funded transformative strategies that have gender equality as a central concern are needed to forestall the collapse of the environment, the extinction of the whole species and irreversible climate change and for humanity to survive without plunging millions into poverty and displacement”.<sup>104</sup>

## Introducing the case studies

This report is comprised of 18 case studies compiled and submitted by BCCIC members.<sup>105</sup> These case studies span the globe as they reflect on the innovative work that Canadian organizations, development prac-

97 *Ibid.*, 57.

98 *Ibid.*, 5.

99 *Ibid.*, 28.

100 *Ibid.*, 46.

101 *Ibid.*, 95.

102 *Ibid.*, 9.

103 *Ibid.*, 94.

104 *Ibid.*, 94.

105 The views expressed in the case studies are not necessarily reflective of those of BCCIC.

titioners and volunteers are doing in relation to SDG #5 and its interlinkages. In most cases, the Members are implementing or have partnered with implementing partners on the gender and development-related projects described in the case studies, and the authors are working for or are affiliated with the listed organizations; however, in two case studies, the authors describe an innovative project in British Columbia that is being implemented by other stakeholders, and not by BCCIC Members.<sup>106</sup> This distinction is clearly made in the body of the report.

These case studies are informed by evidence, which includes – to varying extents - an analysis of secondary literature, policies, grey literature, quantitative data and qualitative data. In some cases, routine monitoring and evaluation data and reports were readily available for use by the authors, but in other cases, additional structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted for the purposes of compiling the case studies. The methodology used by the authors is described in the case studies. The photographs and logos contained in the report were submitted by the Members to support their case studies and BCCIC has permission to reproduce them in this report.

Although this report refers to ‘women and girls’, we recognize the need to move beyond binaries. More nuance, sensitivity and innovation is required in relation to the terminology used for policies, programs and reports related to non-binary, transgender and other gender-diverse people. Many of the case studies speak to intersectionality and the im-

portance of understanding differences in positionality, identification and experience in order to design and implement programs that leave no one left behind.

The case studies have been organized using the structure of Canada’s National Review Report to the Commission on the Status of Women, although it should be noted that some do not fit neatly under these headings and often cut across thematic areas, particularly when one considers the overarching theme of interlinkages:

- Inclusive Development, Shared Prosperity and Decent Work;
- Poverty Eradication, Social Prosperity and Social Services;
- Freedom from Violence, Stigma and Stereotypes;
- Participation, Accountability and Gender-responsive Institutions;
- Peaceful and Inclusive Societies;
- Environmental Conservation, Protection and Rehabilitation.

Each case study is preceded by a summary and concludes with recommendations, which will inform the overall Conclusion for the report. Gratitude must be extended once again to all the authors and organizations who submitted case studies for this report. By highlighting “stories of Canadians who are taking action” they have responded to the national call for “partners on compelling storytelling and calls to action”<sup>107</sup> and in so doing, will mobilize Canadians around the concept of global citizenship and the acceleration of the 2030 Agenda.

---

106 In the case study on residential addiction programs, the author (an individual BCCIC Member) works for Pacifica but has received permission to compare it to Heartwood. The Bank of Montreal is not a BCCIC Member, but it was identified by a Board Member as one of the best examples of change within a large Canadian company to research and implement initiatives to achieve gender equality. The author of the cities and gender case studies, was directly involved in the drafting of the Commonwealth and national policies, but was not involved in the drafting of the City of Vancouver’s policy. It was included as an example of innovative practice at a municipal level. Vancouver Community College is not a member of BCCIC, but the author of that case study is a member of BCCIC who is employed by Vancouver Community College.

---

107 Sustainable Development Goals Unit, (2019), Towards Canada’s 2030 Agenda National Strategy: Interim Document. Gatineau, Quebec., p.g. 17.

## Summary of case studies (alphabetically by author)

Author	Organization	Program/Project title	Geographical context
Agnello, Kristin	Plassurban, Commonwealth Women in Planning Network (CWIP) and Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP)	The Commonwealth Women in Planning Manifesto; CIP Gender Equity Policy	Commonwealth, Canada and British Columbia
Bazilli, Susan	International Women's Rights Project	Women's Climate Centres International (WCCI)	Uganda and Kenya
Borrelli, Kaila	Bank of Montreal	The Task Force on the advancement of women in the Bank	Canada
Cowie, Tanya	Vancouver Community College, SIETAR BC and BCTEAL	Make it! Social Entrepreneurship for Immigrant and Refugee Women	Vancouver, British Columbia
Crossfield, Harriet; Pedersen, Nanna; Redlinger, Maya; Gaulin, Nicholas & Qi, Jian-feng	BCCIC Youth Climate Change Branch	Intergenerational and gender-responsive climate change advocacy	International
Francis, June and Henriksson, Kristina	The Co-Laboratorio Project – based in the Beedie School of Business SFU	“Unleashing the Power of Women”	Peru
Grewal, Gurleen	World Neighbours Canada	Maternal-Child Health Initiative	Nepal, Burkina Faso and Honduras
Lamyin, Jose	Deetken Impact	ILU Women's Empowerment Fund and MonCash	Haiti
Oates, Lauryn & Ziayee, Murwarid	Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (CW4WAfghan)	<i>Afghanistan Lowalee!</i> (“Afghanistan Reads!”)	Afghanistan
Mak, Orton & Schiller, Antonia	BCCIC	The Movement Map	Global
Nijhawan, Amar	Canadian International Resources and Development Institute (CIRDI)	Education for the Transformation of Artisanal to Small-Scale Mining, Ecuador (TransMAPE) project.	Ecuador
Mishkin, Ariel & Vivona, Dina	Cuso International	Volunteers for International Cooperation and Empowerment (VOICE) 2015-2020	Laos (and South East Asia)
Pala, Anu	A-Nu Vision Coaching & Consulting	Project Ability	Fiji
Radyo, Vera	Kenoli Foundation (Ken & Oli Johnstone Foundation)	Empowering rural women living in poverty	Honduras
Ray, Janet	Independent	Gender equality community of practice: scoping study	British Columbia
Ronald, Hillary	VIDEA	International Indigenous Youth Internship Programme	Zambia and Uganda
Sangster, Margot	Pacifica and Heartwood Centres	Residential treatment programs for women	British Columbia
Weber, Nora; Carrera, Maria Eugenia; Kessler, Blanco & Juarez, Felipe	Justice Education Society (JES)	JES International Program: The Isabel-Claudia Alert	Guatemala

# Section 1

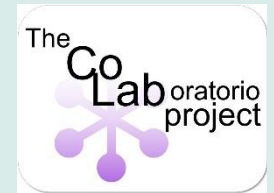


## Inclusive Development, Shared Prosperity and Decent Work

# Women Innovate! Lessons From the Co-Laboratorio Project for Achieving the SDGs



Written by June Francis<sup>1</sup> and Kristina Henriksson for Co-Laboratorio Project.



<sup>1</sup> Dr June Francis is the Co-founder of the Co-Laboratorio Project, Director of Institute for Diaspora Research and Engagement (Simon Fraser University) and an Associate Professor in the Beedie School of Business (SFU). Emigrating from Jamaica to Canada over 30 years ago, she currently serves as the Co-Chair of The Hogan's Alley Society, whose mission is to advance the social, political, economic and cultural well-being of people of African Descent.

**Name of organization:** The Co-Laboratorio Project – based in the Beedie School of Business, Simon Fraser University (SFU).<sup>1</sup>

**Website:** <https://www.ColabAdvantage.org>

**Geographical scope of the case study:** Peru

**Sustainable Development Goals:** SDG 1, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 9, SDG 16 & SDG 17

**Project Title:** “Unleashing the Power of Women”

**Description of project:** The Co-Laboratorio Project works with companies and institutions who are looking for radical shifts, bold ideas and new ways to engage and partner for more inclusive, sustainable outcomes. We are a group of practitioners and researchers that aim to find innovative solutions through spaces and engagement processes that foster collaborative problem solving, mutual learning, ideation and planning for more concrete solutions, bridging policy and practice. ‘Unleashing the Power of Women’ formed part of a larger project we conducted in Peru to strengthen innovation and collaboration capacity among system stakeholders – civil society, private sector, government, communities and universities – for more inclusive and resilient solutions in governance, polices, processes and business practice.

**Target population:** Women in and impacted by the mining and extractive sectors in Peru, including community leaders, community members, policy makers, all levels of government, private sector, civil society and academia.

**Main activities:** Created processes and spaces where women from very different parts of the society (community leaders, government, NGOs, private sector, rural/urban, indigenous/non indigenous) worked collaboratively to innovate actionable and transformative solutions to women’s full participation in decision making, economic and social benefits and political voice within mining contexts.

**Results:** Supported increased cross-cutting gender policies and practices at the national/regional/local levels and the incorporation of gender analysis into management instruments across agencies and ministries. Strengthened women’s capacities to be central agents in addressing the gendered impacts of mining, gendered inequalities in relation to the benefits of mining and as economic actors – mineworkers, suppliers, entrepreneurs and executives. These initiatives fostered collaborative action networks, and cross sector linkages among women from industry, community, government and academia to help drive future initiatives.

<sup>1</sup> For further information on The Co-Laboratorio Project, please contact [June\\_Francis@sfu.ca](mailto:June_Francis@sfu.ca) or visit <http://www.Colabadvantage.org>. Photos ©June Francis & Kristina Henriksson, with permission to use in publications.

*“Women are not simply consumers of prescribed solutions... they also design solutions for whole societies, and they are equipped to address the issues that affect their lives.” - Geraldine Byrne Nason, Chair of The Chair of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, address on the occasion of “Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change,” March 8, 2019- International Women’s Day.*

The Co-Laboratorio Project (<http://www.Colabadvantage.org>) works with companies and institutions who are looking for radical shifts, bold ideas and new ways to engage and partner for more inclusive sustainable outcomes.<sup>2</sup> We are a group of researchers and practitioners that aim to find innovative solutions through spaces and engagement processes that foster collaborative problem solving, mutual learning, ideation and planning for more concrete solutions, bridging policy and practice. This mini case recounts part of a larger initiative implemented in Peru, within a mining context. It focuses on achieving gender equity and inclusion and on implementing the goals of the SDGs by bridging the real gap between theory and practice, between goals and outcomes. As one government official and CoLab-stakeholder expressed it:

*“So, we have to include the gender approach and inequality. How do you do that concretely? That is so good in speech and you hear people saying that but no one tells you specifically what to do [in practice]. There are spaces where women really tell things, public things. For example,...they always go to the river on Mondays so they can wash their clothes and if you sit there on Monday at six o’clock you can hear them talk about everything...this is specific, every Monday at six o’clock they gather there.”*

One of Co-Lab Peru’s aims was to create such “riverside spaces,” where women from very different parts of the society (community leaders, government, NGOs, private sector, rural/urban, indigenous/non in-

igenous) worked collaboratively to innovate actionable and transformative solutions to women’s full participation in decision making, economic and social benefits and political voice within mining contexts.



## Peru, Mining and Those Left Behind

In Peru, systemic exclusion of women from decision-making and from participating in and benefiting from the mining sector have resulted in women accounting for less than 10% of the mining workforce. Looking more broadly at women participation in the economic sphere, in the 29 Peruvian governmental institutions (i.e. agencies, secretaries, ministries) 26 of them had less than 50% of management positions filled by women, with 21 of these having less than 40% women. Women often labour in obscurity as economic actors because much of this labour occurs in the informal (artisanal & small scale) mining sector or in marginal and often precarious areas of mining. Discrimination, marginalization and exclusion characterizes women’s experiences as economic actors in mining related areas.<sup>3</sup> Unemployment and underemployment are al-

<sup>2</sup> Co-Laboratorio Peru was funded by a grant from Global Affairs Canada.

<sup>3</sup> Lahiri-Dutt, Kuntala and Martha Macintyre (2006). ‘Introduction’ in Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt and Martha Mcintyre (eds) Women Miners in Developing Countries: Pit Women and Others, Ashgate, Aldershot, UK.



most twice as high for women as it is for men (PNUD) and lack of educational opportunities and attainment reinforces this inequity. In rural areas, where most of the mining activities take place, 28.2 % of women finish secondary studies as compared with the 41.9% for men.<sup>4</sup>



## The Co-Laboratorio Approach

The word *Co-Laboratorio* itself is instructive of our approach as it blends the words ‘collaboration’ and ‘laboratory’. Collaboration is seen as foundational for achieving sustainable development and the SDGs while Laboratory in turn refers to the lab-based practice of research in action that adopts a posture of constant learning and innovation. Processes and activities fostered collaborative problem solving, learning, ideation, planning and iterating.

Centre pieces of Co-Lab Peru were the collaborative spaces and processes where women’s aspirations, understanding, professional experiences and diverse lived experiences related to mining were centred. These spaces fostered an environment where innovative and transformative solutions could emerge. Systemic barriers to collaboration based on power differences, gender, race, class, geography etc. were intentionally addressed to both reveal the multiple intersectionalities as well as to neutralize the obsta-

cles to collaboration that these can present. Based on CoLab systems-centered design methodologies, charters, focus groups and interviews, the goals were to make women’s concerns and perspectives visible to multiple actors at multiple scales, to develop women’s capacities to lead, plan strategically and to enhance access to knowledge and information *for and with* women. The program included numerous leadership circles, workshops and working sessions focused on making gender policies cross-cutting (national/regional/local levels), incorporating gender approaches into management instruments across agencies, ministries and companies, as well as formulating strategic planning, policies and practice from the ground up.

## Visioning and Future-Oriented Planning



Women in Peru have formed resistance as well as taken active steps to bring a gendered perspective to the mining sector. Yet lack of access to power and effective voice have muted these efforts. We worked initially with community women leaders, who had started to form a local network to amplify their voice and capacity. The CoLab team included many of these women in strategic visioning, leadership training, innovation sessions and as next generation mentors. The leadership and learning spaces allowed women safety from the usual barriers to fully centre on their own aspirations and perspectives.

<sup>4</sup> INEI (2014) Peru: Encuesta Demografica y de Salud Familiar – Endes. Lima.

*...to see that approach you [took], that systemic approach; to see all the problems first, to identify the actors and see how we can –the different actors- inter-connect in order to make it work*



In parallel with each circle and iterative step in the learning process, the CoLab helped amplify community, strengthening inter-cultural and inter-institutional relationships over time. The resulting cross-sector action network came to include women who had typically operated in quite different professional, social and economic spheres but shared a common connection to the mining sector. Diversity and equity principles were embedded in all our activities. We therefore worked to not only include but centre women, youth and children who have typically not swayed power or influence while creating opportunities for collaborations to bridge these historical divides. One stream specifically developed methodologies to surface the priorities, values and aspirations of youth and children in plans for their community.

## **Women Innovating**

Eventually, the CoLab brought everyone together – community leaders, government officials, civil society activists, academics, the media, managers and executives – to innovate solutions to achieve equity in women’s economic inclusion in the mining sector.

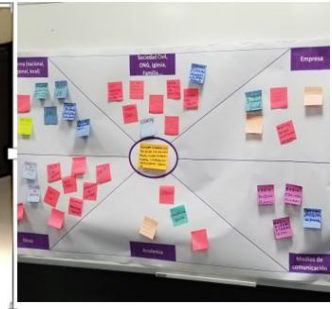
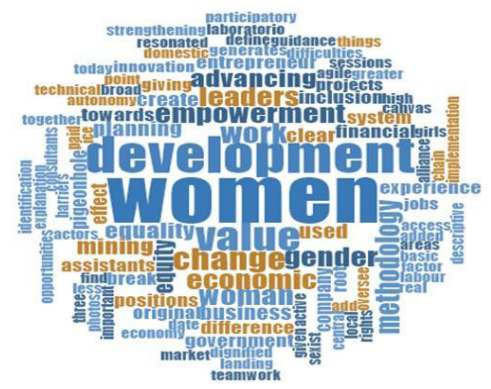
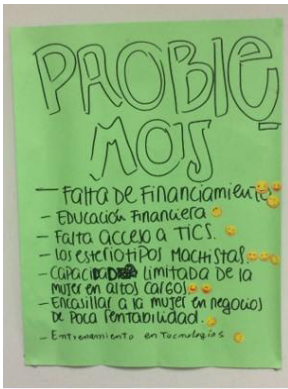
We collectively problematized issues through sharing research, lived experiences and practical examples, mapped the ‘ecosystem’ and existing landscape of initiatives, identified opportunities that could be leveraged and shaped actionable strategies for landing and launching new initiatives. The systems-centred design approach encouraged participants to broaden their understandings of both the problems and possible solutions and partnerships by considering all the systemic linkages.

Women who participated viewed the program as highly effective in supporting their aspirations and vision for their communities and organizations. Fostering women-only spaces to shape their futures and chart their own destinies through cross-sector collaboration and innovation was especially valued.

*“...being able to bring all the actors together. It is not easy...social organizations, the local government, the mine ...so that we can sit at a table, share the same problems, and look for solutions. We don’t always get all the actors involved. Despite the fact that we hold meetings by region. The macro southern region: Arequipa, Moquegua, Tacna; the macro northern region: Cajamarca, Ancash, Oyón...so, how to get all these actors to be there, not only to build the problem, but also to find solutions!”*

A key commitment was for participants to multiply their learning through taking generated practical strategies, solutions and knowledge back to their communities, organizations and government agencies. For example, in one program, participants were asked to make commitments to employ what they had learned in their own circumstances as well as to share their learning. We then had them report their reflections on what they would specifically share and subsequently followed up on what actions had been taken.

While a detailed narrative of the entire multi-year process is beyond the scope of this case study, below are examples highlighting the diverse priorities, solutions



and initiatives that emerged:

- In new mining projects, implement measures to include the participation of women in all activities;
- Promote financial products for women entrepreneurs and bring financial products closer to the needs of women;
- Promote eco-tourism;
- Promote projects with the state and non-state sectors, including the private sector, for training, mentoring and insurance for women entrepreneurs.

### Example: Strengthening Technical Productive Education Centers (CETPRO)

CETPRO was implemented in mining areas to offer career options or technical courses of interest to women and recover ancestral traditions. To illustrate, the group, composed of a cross sector of women including government, community leaders, private sector and civil society proposed

this initiative after participating in a problematizing, innovation and ideation processes. Their proposal was designed to specifically address the economic, cultural, educational, social and other systemic barriers to women being able access high paying mining related jobs. They proposed to deploy funding that they identified through jointly sharing their access and knowledge of funding sources (including competitive funding courses, Canon minero, Social Fund and corporate social responsibility spending from mining companies) and leveraging key contacts and programs they identified at the national and local government levels (e.g PROCOMPITE Program), specific private businesses, international agencies, programs in technical institutes and professional associations to design education and training targeted at high-paid, technical mining jobs. The proposal included a communications strategy to address social attitudes starting at the school level, providing financial support, implementing programs at a community level and addressing employment bias among other elements.

## Lessons Learned for Achieving SDGs

Much has been made of the need to increase women's role and participation in all aspects of life including economic opportunities (SDG 8). It is widely recognized that achieving true gender equality requires transformative change that addresses power imbalance and intersectionality. Yet finding practical ways to implement these ideals have proved elusive. One of the ongoing challenges is to find ways of "realising their full potential in society and shaping their lives in accordance with their own aspirations."<sup>5</sup> "The full and equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making to influence the planning, implementation and monitoring of policies is essential to accelerated implementation of the Platform for Action."<sup>6</sup> The Co-Lab case illustrates how a true commitment to gender equity, inclusiveness and governance leadership must and can start with women as active agents being at the center of the design, innovation and delivery of gender-based programs.

Outside of the gaze and without defaulting to male standard social norms, women learnt from each other, forged inter-institutional relationships, deconstructing their commonality and differences and orchestrating their collective ingenuity to address the SDG goals and their interlinkages. Working together at the nexus of mining, inclusive growth and sustainability, they were able to consider what each woman faced from her specific vantage point while joining together in generative collaboration.

It took perseverance and persistence to convene cross-sector collaborative spaces and to adopt a systems-centered approach. It is not intuitive to work in the 'interstitial' space, when many actors in the system are bound by 'single-stakeholder' performance outcomes and 'their own individual organization's results when it comes to, for example, gender equality

in the workplace. Supporting these types of inter-institutional and communal spaces capable of bridging policy and grassroots will be imperative for achieving long term sustainable action and concrete accountability for SDG implementation.

Despite CoLab achievements, some groups of women remained largely excluded from these spaces. Most notably Afro-Peruvians who until the census of 2018 were specifically made invisible by the Peruvian state as they were not previously included in the census. Our work to introduce a stronger intersectional perspective in particular with respect to Afro-Peruvian women was often stymied by the "racial democracy" that creates a façade of racial equality, a claim that was highly contested by the Afro-Peruvians we interviewed. Future work on achieving the SDGs needs need to focus more specifically on the aspirations of the UN International Decade of People of African descent for embedding recognition and justice and to ensure no one is left behind given women in the African diaspora are often some of the most excluded groups.

5 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, (1995), paragraph 12.

6 The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Turns 20, (2015), p. 56.

## Recommendations – Policy Makers

1. Women should lead the way. Funding requirements and policies need to intentionally center women's aspirations, leadership and participation
2. Intersectionality matters! Equity demands that the most excluded women as outlined in other UN programs aims such as UNDRIP and The Decade of People of African Descent are “transversalized” as requirement throughout gender equality initiatives.
3. Strengthen Funding support for inclusive multi-actor collaborative solutions and interlinkages necessary to implement the SDGs
4. Support “Lean development” rather than imposing “fully baked” solutions. Lab-based experimental and innovative approaches with systems actors allow for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

## Recommendations – Practitioners

1. Focus on Innovative and transformative processes led by women.
2. Address issues through a system's lens that is cognizant of interlinkages.
3. Address overt and covert barriers to authentic participation including power differences, agency, formal education, rural/urban, economic etc.
4. Prioritize groups that have been made invisible or pushed to the margins
5. Embed collaborative processes, interculturality, mutual learning and strategic and generative processes in all initiatives.

# Advancing Gender Equality in Natural Resource Governance

## SDG Tracker



Written by Amar Nijhawan<sup>1</sup> for CIRDI

CIRDI

Canadian International Resources  
and Development Institute



ICIRD

Institut Canadien International des  
Ressources et du Développement

<sup>1</sup> Amar Nijhawan is a Program Manager and Gender Equality Lead at the Canadian International Resources Development Institute (CIRDI), an independent center of expertise in natural resource-led development based at the University of British Columbia.

**Name of organization:** Canadian International Resources and Development Institute

**Website:** [www.cirdi.ca](http://www.cirdi.ca)

**Geographical scope of the case study:** Ecuador  
**Sustainable Development Goals:** SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

**Description of project:** This project aimed, through education, to encourage artisanal and small-scale gold miners to apply environmentally sustainable and economically efficient mining.

**Target population:** AGSM miners and resource dependent communities in Southern Ecuador,

**Main activities:** The project employed a community-based co-learning approach to community engagement, informed by a gender strategy. Activities included community consultations, targeted workshops and advocacy.

**Results:** Improved working conditions for women in mining communities. Informal women gold collectors had more economic opportunities. Public sector competence was built and policies were strengthened through the Vice-Ministry of Mines in Ecuador.

## Advancing Gender Equality in Natural Resource Governance

More than three-quarters of the world's extreme poor live in rural areas<sup>1</sup> and are the most dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods. Women are overrepresented in this population<sup>2</sup> and therefore are more likely to face higher risks, experience more serious impacts, and have fewer opportunities to benefit from natural resource development. Women devote considerable time to domestic work and disproportionate burdens placed on women on this front can limit their capacity to engage in the formal economy or to participate in decision-making related to natural resource management, resulting in the notable absence of women's voices, experience and knowledge.

Women have less access to and control over natural resources, including land ownership, and are more acutely impacted by contaminated or damaged natural resources - such as water affected by extractive operations or impacts related to climate change.<sup>3</sup> Resource governance decisions can have differential im-

<sup>1</sup> UN Women, (June 2018), [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/directory/women\\_and\\_poverty\\_3001.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/directory/women_and_poverty_3001.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Capacity4dev, (2015), Thematic Brief: Gender and Natural Resources Management. <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/public-gender/documents/thematic-brief-gender-and-natural-resource-management>.

<sup>3</sup> IUCN Natural Resource Governance Framework, (2017).

pacts on individual women. For example, increased resource extraction and development at the community level may increase household income levels, and yet related environmental degradation and impacts may disproportionately affect women because of higher frequency of exposure rates due to domestic duties.

An intersectional gender lens is necessary to address and understand the challenges that individuals living in resource dependent communities experience. An approach that considers the multiple, intersecting identities of women and girls within is most likely to achieve broader goals for gender equality. Solely relying on “women and girls” as a homogenous category of analysis erases the diverse experiences that rural, indigenous and racialized women may have - whether in a household of a resource dependent/adjacent community, project site, government office or company boardroom.

## **Gendering Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining**

Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) has grown significantly with approximately 40.5 million people directly involved, and an additional 150 million dependent on the sector for their livelihood.<sup>4</sup> Women make up 30-50% of the total workforce in ASM globally, making their contributions significant although not often recognized. Women face different economic challenges as a result of the lack of access to, use of and control over resourceful land and other productive resources, licences, finance, and geological data. As a result of the traditionally influenced legal constraints to owning or inheriting land and mineral rights, many women end up operating unregistered and unformalized. Approaching this issue without a gender lens has the potential to enable existing prejudices to be reinforced in the formalization process, stifling livelihood opportunities for women in resource dependent communities.

4 See <https://www.iisd.org/sites/default/files/publications/igf-women-asm-challenges-opportunities-participation.pdf>.

## **About the Canadian Natural Resources Development Institute (CIRDI)**

CIRDI is an independent center of expertise in natural resource-led development. We work at the request of developing country governments that seek to strengthen their capacity to govern and manage their natural resources for the benefit of their people. We envision a world where natural resources are developed sustainably and generate lasting and inclusive benefits for women, men and children in developing countries. CIRDI’s mission is to exchange knowledge and expertise with developing countries that enables leading practice natural resource governance, environmental stewardship, gender equality and ultimately, poverty reduction. CIRDI recognizes that incorporating a gender lens at the outset of programs, activities and research is necessary given that research shows reducing the gender gap in natural resource governance can help achieve broader social and economic goals, including the SDGs.<sup>5</sup>

## **Case Study: Jancheras and Women Gold Collectors in Ecuador**

Artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) is the primary source of gold production in Ecuador; in 2018, this sector accounted for 86% of the 3.4 tons of gold extracted in the country. Despite the potential to reduce extreme poverty, the majority of ASGM operations in Ecuador are informal and associated with hazards to human health and the environment. Lack of trust between miners and the government, coupled with limited institutional capacity, constitute major barriers to formalization. To address these opportunities and challenges, the Government of Ecuador has prioritized the formalization of the ASGM sector. In Ecuador’s ASGM community, there is considerable participation by women in roles related to the admin-

5 UN Women, (Feb 2019), “Gender Equality as an Accelerator for Achieving the SDGs”, United Nations Development Program, 4 February 2019, <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/womens-empowerment/gender-equality-as-an-accelerator-for-achieving-the-sdgs.html>.

istration and commercialization of minerals. However, women gold waste rock recyclers, referred to as *jancheras*, did not have a clear role in the AGSM cycle. Rural poverty, schooling desertion, and a lack of economic alternatives are driving women into this work with limited opportunities to improve their quality of life. In the interviewed sample (n=300) in Ponce Enriquez, nearly 76% of *jancheras* relied exclusively on gold collecting for their primary form of income with 96% of receiving less than \$500 USD every two months.

These women had a relatively high primary school enrollment rate (74%), however none interviewed had fully completed secondary school. The women interviewed were between 15-44 years old and had an average of three children, with over half (59%) being single mothers and not involved in any partner-relationship (single, divorced or widowed). This type of work is characterized by informality, with 90% reporting little knowledge of mining industry regulations and less than half are members of any working associations and collectives. As a result, their participation and income levels are well below their male counterparts.

In 2016, CIRDI partnered with Ecuador's Vice Ministry of Mines to launch the Education for the Transformation of Artisanal to Small-Scale Mining, Ecuador (TransMAPE) project. This project aimed, through education, to encourage artisanal and small-scale gold miners to apply environmentally sustainable and economically efficient mining. Through the TransMAPE project, CIRDI and the Vice Ministry of Mines developed long-term education and local needs-based training strategies that blend Canadian, Ecuadorian and international expertise. In addition, the project took a community-based co-learning approach, also known as transformative learning. CIRDI engaged with a diversity of actors to enable local knowledge, perspectives and values to inform the development of environmentally sustainable small-scale mining solutions.

The process demanded of all stakeholders a continuous negotiation through interactive community engagement that took place through the following key steps:

- I. The first step was two-way communication between a community-based organization, government or private institution and the ASM community. Members of the institution contacted members of the community organization, or vice versa.
- II. Together, they designed a project addressing the mining community's needs. Members from all groups participated in designing the project and identifying the expected outcomes (e.g., strategies, action plans, capacity development, community-based educational programs) and shared them with all stakeholders in a variety of ways (e.g., round tables, video presentations, play) in order to obtain feedback from all and confirm the principles, objectives, and methods outlined in the project.
- III. Each of the actions that were developed with input from all groups were oriented to strengthen trust and cooperation in the local ASM community, as they face sustainability challenges related to small-scale mining. Through this process of community engagement, local mining community members were able to see their knowledge systems accepted by "experts" as relevant in transforming mining practices to sustain the integrity of the natural environment.

This process was informed by CIRDI's developing Gender Strategy and experience working with the gendered dimensions of community-based decision making. Through inclusive facilitation (creating space for women as active speakers and participants, ensuring child care is provided, engaging in outreach to women's organizations/labour collectives, collecting gender-disaggregate data at all stages), the Project team



was able to create evidence driven recommendations and provide support to the Vice Ministry of Mines to mainstream principles of gender equality into institutions and governance frameworks.

Through community consultations and targeted workshops with the *jancheras* associations themselves and with policy makers in the Ministry of Mining, the TransMAPE project:

- Increased the understanding of women recyclers' and *jancheras* role through their inclusion as key stakeholders in the project
- Raised awareness of the difficulties they face in order to incentivize government officials to develop a public-policy framework that supports the fair and safe employment of women in the sector and
- Implemented an Economic Diversification Workshop with a group of 30 women gold recyclers. The workshop provided women with resources to transition into alternative paths for sustainable economic empowerment should they choose to leave the mining, or to enter into "horizontal" industries that service the sector

After two years of intensive work in Ecuador, the country's local communities, miners, industry and the government have an improved understanding of the ASGM sector and increased access to information. In June 2019, the Ecuadorian government released its new Mining Policy Priorities and is now in the process of updating its National Plan for the Mining Sector, which is taking the consideration of targeted formalization for women working in informal sectors. The women involved in the economic diversification training were offered a range of vocational training opportunities, and the majority of them chose a beauty-aesthetic course – with a focus on microenterprise development and management issues. Several of the participants have provided testimonies indicating that these trainings provided them with the confidence and certification necessary to explore other income-generating opportunities.

## Recommendations

- Natural resource projects must understand the differential impacts of environmental degradation caused by resource extraction on women;
- Local knowledge, perspectives and values should inform the development of equitable and environmentally sustainable small-scale mining solutions;
- Inclusive spaces should be created for women to participate as partners;
- Women's expertise in natural resource governance should be recognized;
- Training should be designed around local needs, but draw on a blended combination of international, national and local expertise.

# Transforming Literacy Education for Afghan Women

## SDG Tracker



**Written by Lauryn Oates<sup>1</sup> & Murwarid Ziajee<sup>2</sup> for Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (CW4WAfghan)**

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Lauryn Oates is an executive director of CW4WAfghan, as well as an associate faculty at Royal Roads University and adjunct faculty at the University of British Columbia. She can be reached at [Info@CW4WAfghan.ca](mailto:Info@CW4WAfghan.ca)

<sup>2</sup> Murwarid Ziajee is the Senior Director at Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (CW4WAfghan), and from 2010 to 2018 was the Country Director of CW4WAfghan's Afghanistan country office.

**Name of organization:** Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (CW4WAfghan)

**Website:** <http://www.cw4wafghan.ca/>

**Geographical scope of the case study:** Afghanistan

**SDGs:** SDG 4 (Quality education) and SDG 5 (Gender equality)

**Project title:** Afghanistan Lowalee! ("Afghanistan Reads!")

**Description of project:** Empowering women by literacy education.

**Target population:** Vulnerable women in conservative and post-conflict contexts.

**Main activities:** Training and coaching women teachers from local communities on the literacy and life skills curricula; stocking classroom libraries with appropriate reading materials; providing literacy and life skills classes to women in private homes; guiding women over the long term through educational and employment transitions; teaching women about human rights, life skills and other matters related to health, well-being and parenting in a holistic, integrated literacy program.

**Results:** A culture of reading has developed in participant's families and communities. Women's literacy scores have improved when compared against a control group. Some graduates have entered formal educational institutions or participated in vocational training and entrepreneurial activities. The graduates feel more empowered to exercise control over their futures and exercise agency in their own homes. This has had a multi-generational effect on their children.

## Background

Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan (CW4WAfghan) is a charity established in 1998, and we have been working on literacy education in Afghanistan for more than two decades. Since 2011, we have delivered our literacy education for adults through a program called *Afghanistan Lowalee!* (“Afghanistan Reads!”). This work is aligned to SDG# 4 (Quality education) and #5 (Gender equality).

Globally, it is estimated that more than 780 million people over the age of 15 are illiterate.<sup>7</sup> Two thirds of these are women. While important progress has been made in the last decade in combating illiteracy among children at the primary level in particular, illiteracy in adults has a unique set of challenges that have made progress more elusive. The most important of these challenges is that the adult brain learns literacy differently than the child’s brain, and most adult literacy programs are not designed in response to the neurological evidence on hand about how adults learn reading and writing. This compounds other challenges, such as the difficulty in making literacy education opportunities accessible to adults, especially those living in poverty, the lack of educators qualified in adult literacy methods, a lack of appropriate reading materials, and the low rates of program completion among adults who do make it to a literacy classroom. The available evidence shows clearly that most adults who enroll in literacy education do not succeed in becoming functionally literate.

Afghanistan still has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world, though literacy rates are slowly increasing. Yet progress is unevenly distributed by age, by sex, and by the urban-rural divide. More girls attend school today than at any previous time in Afghanistan’s history, but literacy rates drop significantly for those over 15 years old, and rural women are five times more likely to be illiterate than females living in urban areas.<sup>8</sup> This

7 UN Statistics Division, (2015).

8 CSO & UNICEF, (2012).

is due to many factors, including the years of Taliban rule where girls’ and women’s education was forbidden, leaving a generation of females without education; as well as due to conflict, internal displacement and migration; sometimes to cultural resistance to female education; and simply, often because there was no girls’ school in the area. The result is a large population of women who were denied the right to learn how to read and write, which consequently has denied them a myriad of other opportunities and keeps them marginalized within their households and their society. Changing this would not only mean changing the destiny of these women, it is also the most reliable path to development for the country as a whole: ensuring people know how to read is a surefire path out of poverty,<sup>9</sup> and yet a path too often ignored and de-prioritized.

## The AR Model and Method

Over many years, CW4WAfghan has integrated the results of our observations, performance measurement and lessons learned into a program that responds to the particular learning conditions of adult female literacy learners in Afghanistan. The main features of the AR model that make it different from other approaches to adult literacy education are:

9 Iran and Kleshchenko, (2017).



*Access to appropriate reading materials:* All AR classrooms have classroom libraries of 300-500 books in local languages, specially selected for new adult learners and their families. All of our literacy teachers complete a training called Basic Librarianship and Reading Promotion, in which they learn how to effectively encourage their students to read for pleasure. This approach is the key feature of AR: sustained literacy demands access to reading material that is engaging, level-appropriate and relevant to adult learners; and literacy education must foster a love of reading, rather than only approaching reading as a functional task. When the year-long classes are completed, the libraries remain in the community – they are transferred to a nearby public school.

*Teacher Education:* All AR teachers are qualified educators, women recruited from the very communities where they will teach, who complete further training from CW4WAfghan specifically in pedagogy for adult literacy education before they begin classroom teaching. Training is followed by one-on-one coaching that lasts the duration of the school year (12 months). Coaching invests in the capacity for teachers to promote reading among students through literacy activities. To support a consistent approach to coaching, CW4WAfghan has created a suite of coaching resources including a Coaching Manual, Reading Activities Menu, and other tools, which are all openly licensed and available in our open education resource library, [Darakht-e Danesh](#).

*Family literacy:* Most of our literacy students are parents, and many of them are motivated to become literate so that they can support their children's education. Our classroom libraries are stocked with children's books and students are encouraged to borrow books to take home and read to their children. Family literacy is embedded throughout the program model. In 2019, CW4WAfghan secured permission to bring the celebrated PALS (Parents as Literacy Supporters) family literacy program developed in Canada, to Af-

ghanistan<sup>10</sup>. In 2020, our master trainers will complete training in PALS and we will begin adaptation of the program for delivery in Afghanistan Reads.

*Accessible:* All AR classes are taught in students' communities, inside private homes. CW4WAfghan rents classroom space from a respected woman in the community, where families feel comfortable for their female family members to attend. There are 20 students per class, the classes are for women only – though many women bring their young children to the class with them -- and all the teachers are local women.<sup>11</sup> This is especially important in culturally conservative areas and increases program acceptance within the communities. Women can therefore attend these classes because classes are physically proximate and are culturally-acceptable spaces for families and communities. When a student occasionally stops attending the class, the teacher and/or another female program staff member visit the household to talk with the student and her family, to persuade them to return to the class, a strategy that is often effective.<sup>12</sup>

10 For more information about PALS, visit <https://www.decoda.ca/practitioners/professional-development-community-literacy/pals/>. The program will be translated into Dari (Afghan Farsi) and adapted for use in Afghanistan.

11 A needs assessment is carried out in the communities in advance, often in cooperation with the district Literacy Department, to identify students and confirm if there is sufficient demand. Then, CW4WAfghan administers assessments to confirm the illiteracy status of the prospective students. The classes are open to women and girls aged 15 and over who are not literate.

12 The majority of students who do not complete the class are those who relocate elsewhere.



*Evidence-based pedagogy:* In 2017 we began working with Dr. Helen Abadzi, a renowned adult literacy expert and psychologist who has carried out extensive research on the neurological processes behind how adults learn reading and writing (see for instance: Abadzi 2011; 2006; 2004; 2003a; 2003b; 1996; 1994). In brief, Dr. Abadzi's findings are that to gain automaticity, fluency and comprehension, an adult needs to be able to read at a speed of at least 45 words per minute—an extremely challenging benchmark to reach in adulthood. An adult learning to read in his or her own language is akin to a literate person trying to learn the script of another language, such as an adult English speaker trying to learn Cyrillic. Perceptual adjustment to recognizing and retaining the unfamiliar letters is far more arduous learning for adults, compared to children, whose brains are wired for exposure to new language—even multiple languages and scripts. In response to these research findings, Dr. Abadzi's method uses a perceptual learning method to optimize reading learning in adults. The method has been tested in multiple languages and script combinations. Besides the way the letters are presented, the method emphasizes repeated practice to gain automaticity. Teachers must be trained in guiding students in such practice in literacy classrooms. Testing has shown consistently much better outcomes than with other methods. With this approach in mind, Dr. Abadzi assisted CW-4WAfghan to redesign our literacy curriculum for Dari literacy learning, marking the first time the perceptual learning method has been applied in Afghanistan.

*Relevance:* A feature of the AR program is the integration of life skills into the curriculum. All teachers are trained in delivering a comprehensive life skills curriculum and provided with an illustrated manual to use in their classrooms, covering the following topics: Family Budgeting, Health, Hygiene, Nutrition, Menstruation and Pregnancy Care, First Aid, Personal Development, Parenting, Children's Rights, and Relationships and Communities. A separate women's rights guide is also distributed to literacy students, which aims to combat harmful social norms prevalent in Afghanistan such as



domestic violence and forced marriage, addressing these from an Afghan cultural and religious perspective.<sup>13</sup>

## Program Results

*Literacy acquisition:* The AR program's most important results are in the rates of functional literacy acquisition attained by the students. Since the beginning of AR Program, a total of 4510 literacy students (97.3 % women and 2.7% men) have graduated from AR classes in provinces across Afghanistan. In preliminary testing of the new perceptual learning method among female students in Kabul, within only 2.5 months, the perceptual learning group could read 58 words per minute, whereas in six months, the control group was reading at a rate of 33 words per minute -- nearly half the rate of the treatment group.

*Educational transitions:* On average, more than one fifth of our literacy graduates transition into further formal education, such as into a public school, an accelerated learning program, a vocational education program, or otherwise. This is achieved through use of a tool called the Personal Learning Plan, and training of literacy teachers to use this tool to guide students to set goals for themselves, such that literacy education serves as a stepping-stone to realizing other ob-

<sup>13</sup> Find these and other resources in our digital library, Darakht-e Danesh ('knowledge tree'): [www.ddl.af](http://www.ddl.af)

jectives. Students are tracked after completing the literacy classes to monitor their progress.

*Livelihood transitions:* In each community we research available programs and opportunities and compile them into a Referral Guide, which is used by the teacher alongside the Personal Learning Plan, so the student knows what livelihood opportunities exist in their community. While opportunities vary, typically there may be some vocational training opportunities, an accelerated learning program, and perhaps small entrepreneurship opportunities, such as honey production, raising poultry, kitchen gardening, pickling, or selling milk.

*Reading Culture:* Through the emphasis on classroom libraries and family literacy, most AR literacy classes have a high rate of library usage not just by the students, but by their family members and community members. Students report that reading books at home with their children supports children's literacy development. At CW4WAfghan, we have seen the extraordinary multi-generational effect of female adult literacy: we have never encountered a literate woman who does not raise literate daughters.

*Empowerment:* In exit interviews with graduating students, women report the dramatic impact that literacy has on their lives. They feel more confident in themselves, they have more agency within their households, and more control over their futures as they feel empowered to set and reach personal goals that once seemed unobtainable.

## Feedback from students

Rakia, 30 years old: Warsaj District, Takhar Province: "Our only income was through farming by my husband. During the literacy class and life skills training, I learned that I can make money for my family using my own skills at home. It gave me motivation and confidence to start carpet weaving and poultry business at home and contribute in improving our economy."

Fatima, 25 years old: Baharak District, Takhar Province: "The literacy courses are providing the opportunities to women like me who have dreamed throughout their lives to become educated. It is providing the opportunities for the rural Afghan women to follow their childhood dream, become confident and engage in their own community's activities, and read books at the literacy classes and their homes and spread reading culture in their family and community."

Behishta, 16 years old: Kalafgan District, Takhar Province: "I am a new literacy learner and wasn't sure if I could read a book, but one day I visited the library and borrowed a religious book. When I was reading the book I was about to fly because it made me so happy that I am able to read a book."



## Recommendations

CW4W Afghanistan offers the following recommendations that we draw from our experience in women's literacy education:

- Literacy education programming should be **evidence-based**. The choice of curriculum and pedagogical approach should be based on well proven methods, and this requires rigorous assessment and testing through the duration of the program.
- Programs should include formal support to female students to plan for **educational transitions**, to assist adult learners to bridge their literacy education experience to further learning.
- Literacy classrooms need **libraries**. Books should be in the local mother tongue, suitable for the level of reader and their interests, and they should also be oriented to support family literacy.
- Literacy education should be **relevant** to the level, needs and cultural context of adult learners. The content of their learning must be engaging and of immediate use to their lives.
- Literacy programs for women in culturally conservative contexts should be structured so as to enable **access** and participation, such as ensuring female-only spaces and situating classrooms within communities, in spaces acceptable to everyone in the community. It may be strategic to develop relationships with respected community members, such as female elders, local midwives, council members or others who can help negotiate access and acceptance.
- **Invest in teachers:** A program's educators are its greatest assets. Literacy education requires a specific set of skills, and in-depth understanding of how the adult reading brain works, as well as training in the specific methodology selected for the program. Training should be combined with other forms of professional development such as coaching, classroom observation, classroom exchange, and multimedia learning.
- When planning to initiate, replicate or scale up similar literacy education projects for women it may be necessary to secure permission from local or state authorities to run the classes, and sometimes also necessary to secure **buy-in from community leaders** in order to ensure widespread acceptance, in the needs assessment phase.

# “Make It! Social Entrepreneurship for Immigrant and Refugee women”



Written by Tanya Cowie<sup>1</sup> for Vancouver Community College and based on the Make It Project Guide by Michael Yue



<sup>1</sup> Tanya Cowie is an English as a Second Language Instructor at VCC teaching immigrants and refugees English, culture and aiding with the process of settlement

**Name of organization:** Vancouver Community College

**Website:** [www.vcc.ca](http://www.vcc.ca)

**Geographical scope of the case study:** British Columbia, Canada

**SDG's addressed in the case study:** SDG #1, SDG #4, SDG #5, SDG #8, SDG #17

**Project title:** Make it!

**Description of project:** Supporting the settlement of immigrant and refugee women through skills training and small business development.

**Target population:** Refugee and immigrant women in Canada

**Main activities:** The provision of basic and advanced skills training (communication, business and maker – business and sewing – skills) and guidance in setting up a small collective business.

**Results:** The women reported feeling more confident in speaking English, networking, making and selling products. They formed a business collective that was registered as a non-profit society.

**Are you interested in sewing and starting your own business?**

This no-cost program jointly delivered by Vancouver Community College (VCC) and DIVERSE city is designed to help immigrant and refugee women to potentially generate income as a business collective.

New immigrants and refugees have many challenges adapting to life in Canada. Women, in particular, often have the extra stress of domestic duties and caregiving. This can be a barrier in getting to English classes as well as getting into the workforce. I work with immigrants and refugees teaching English as an Additional Language (EAL) at Vancouver Community College (VCC). In my experience, women who immigrate or are granted refugee status in Canada have specific needs given that many are mothers and caregivers. They are usually keen to learn English as fast as possible in order to adjust to life in Canada. Many are also anxious to gain employment in order to contribute to the finances of their families. I have personally observed that if an immigrant woman is working and going to school her confidence is heightened as well as her ability in English.

Many programs that specifically target immigrant and refugee women offer free daycare, a flexible schedule, and topics relevant to parenting and settlement. However, in terms of training to be business owners, traditional entrepreneur programs have not accounted for the fact that many immigrant and refugee women may have experienced barriers such as lack of language skills, lack of social capital and difficulty in employability due to domestic duties.

Whereas traditional entrepreneur programs focus on the individual, this program has the philosophy of collective ownership. This model not only acknowledges domestic duties but also the need for collective support and team collaboration. The women in this program supported each other, worked together,



er, learned together, sold things together and learned from each other. As each one had different capacities and skills, they could use their combined talents to be successful. This model is also based on a part-time commitment.

### **MAKE IT!**

“Make it! is a settlement program that was started to help immigrant and refugee women turn their maker interests and skills into entrepreneurial opportunities by operating as a business collective using their combined talents.”

### **Entrepreneurship is the vehicle to accelerate settlement outcomes.**

Vancouver Community College has received Service Development and Improvement (SDI) funding from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) from September 2018 to May 2020 in order to implement the Make It! Project. The goal of the project is to support immigrant and refugee women to accelerate their settlement process by engaging in entrepreneurial activities that are based on their maker interests (e.g. sewing, cooking). There are two project cohorts: Sew-mates Crafts and Mama’s Hands International Cuisine.

### **Partnerships and Interlinkages**

The project is built on a partnership between Public Post-Secondary Institutions (PPSIs) and Immigrant Serving Organizations (ISOs), and uses a place-based approach to combine available partner resources (expertise, facilities, networks and clients) with local entrepreneurship opportunities. The participants will improve their communication and essential skills, maker (vocational) skills and business skills through the business activities they pursue together. They will also build a stronger connection to their community and increase their social capital. In addition, the skills they learn can be transferred to their employment and career pursuit.

The Participants were chosen based on having marketable ‘maker skills’, product ideas and a willingness to commit time and resources to pursue entrepreneurial activities together with other women. There are 10 participants in each cohort. The participants are mostly in their 30s and 40s and come from diverse countries including Libya, Iran, China/Hong Kong, South Korea, Eritrea, Syria, Philippines, Afghanistan, Pakistan. The Languages spoken are Arabic, Farsi, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Tegri, Tagalog and Urdu. Almost all have postsecondary education, including diplomas, degrees and post-grad (master’s), and have worked in professional careers. The immigration process has impacted their career pathways significantly, and most of them decided not to make efforts to continue with their former careers. The Make It! program gave them an opportunity to reconnect with their skills and experience, while opening up new doors. Many do end up returning to the labour market, and some continue with part-time entrepreneurial pursuits. To find participants, flyers were sent out to community networks, including immigrant serving organizations. Women learnt about the project through exposure to marketing materials or word of mouth.

In Metro Vancouver, VCC partnered with DiverseCity Community Resources Society (DCRS), an established immigrant serving organization in Surrey. DCRS provided a business advisor/trainer from their Immigrant Entrepreneurship Program to work with VCC’s communication/essential skills and maker (vocational) skills instructors. The project was able to use two maker spaces at VCC: a sewing laboratory (in the Fashion Arts Department) and a training kitchen (in the Culinary Department) and delivered two cohorts (sewing and cooking) that pursued different business activities. These programs were chosen as the institution had spaces for sewing and cooking and the participants had experience in these activities. Consultation with all partners in the design phase of the program determined the scope and specific activities chosen for these programs.

## Participants in the Mama's Hands cooking cohort



A recipe book was created with 5 women from Mama's Hands. The book was designed and produced with the help of the VCC Digital Graphics Design students.

The model is now being implemented in the Okanagan, a region with different immigrant demographics and market opportunities. Okanagan College worked with its local partners (including South Okanagan Immigrant Services Society and Community Futures) from the summer of 2019 to March 2020 to deliver one cohort of participants.

As well, Camosun College in Victoria has also adapted this model focusing on Farmers' Markets. The interlinkages here have a lot to do with knowledge transfer and community partnership. It is interesting to note that the flexible collectives have been successful in crafting as they are based on the needs, interests, and skills of the participating women, as well as the nature of the business they are doing.

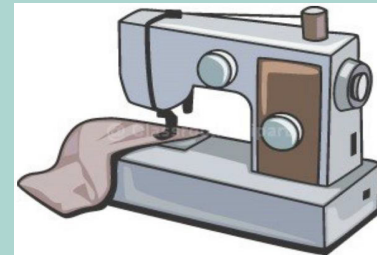
## Make It! Sewing Business Program

### Program Description

- Increase your English language skills;
- Improve your sewing skills and make products that are marketable;
- Gain basic Canadian business knowledge;
- Operate a business collective.

### Eligibility Criteria

- Permanent residents (naturalized citizens not eligible);
- Basic sewing skills and access to a sewing machine;
- Interest in working and learning in a group;
- Applicants must have Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) Level 5 or above (including reading & writing).



## Approach

The participants started with a 10-week classroom-based program that focused on basic skills development which included communications skills, essential skills, maker skills and business skills. The key was to develop a sense of belonging to a collective. Participants created a brand, logo, mission statement, sales event, group project (quilt) and conducted meetings.

Then they participated in 6-month guided business development. During this time the women were supported by a business instructor/advisor to start the process of developing their business as a collective. The women also took their wares to market events. Structured training in workshops and networking events were also included. Participants needed a lot

of support and in some cases were referred to Work-BC employment services to help address their specific employment needs.

The last stage was independent business development. The collective business was independent, but still required support. With the Sewing cohort, the 6 month timeframe, enabled the women to design their own products, conduct market research, secure marketing, and cost out budgets.

Michael Yue, the program manager for Make It! felt that before the program, many of the participants had experienced various degrees of social isolation. Regardless of English levels, most of them lacked the confidence of expressing themselves, probably due to a lack of opportunities to interact with English speakers. As the women’s agency grew through being able to make their products and sell them in the marketplace, their English and confidence levels increased dramatically. The United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres stated that women’s empowerment is “essential to global progress” and the heart of achieving gender equality.<sup>14</sup> These empowered women went on to start an official collective, participated in the workforce and contributed to their families’ financial wellbeing.

Without precedent cases to rely on, the project team needed to explore future strategies. It was understood that the “formal structure” needed to be in place before May 2020 in order for the women to gain the experience of operating within this structure. After considering various choices, the decision was made to create a non-profit society as the platform for their activities. The *Intercultural Women’s Maker Society (IWMS)* was created on June 7, 2019. The new society is now registered under the BC Societies Act.

14 Guterres, António, (March 7, 2019), UN News, Women’s empowerment ‘essential to global progress’ says Guterres, marking International Day, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/?s=empowerment>.

## Feedback from clients

Participants felt they gained expanded vision, practice working in a group and using diverse ideas, networking, and knowledge of personal weaknesses and strengths.

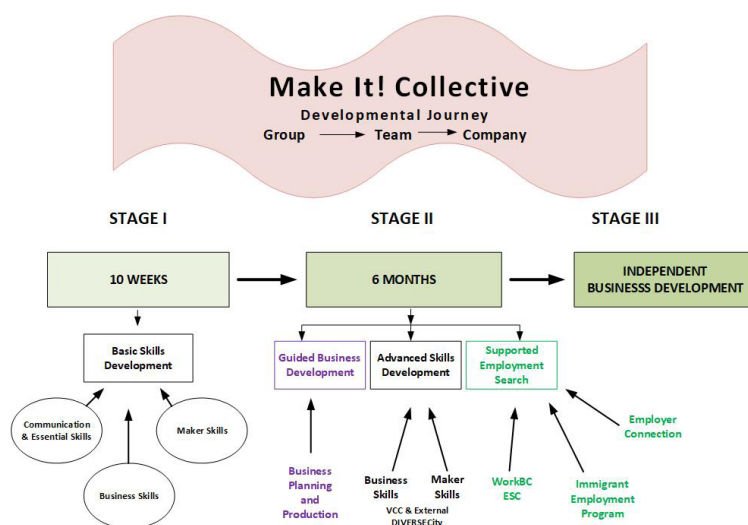
*Jenny: “Had a sewing machine for 5 years (but) nervous, hesitating. Now I can solve problems... I feel like there is now an open door for me.”*

*Bekhita: “ I learned to use my imagination in different ways, to make a bag, business process, to start a business, to work in a team, and teamwork”*

*Digna: “I learned a lot! Huge! Sewing, patterns, bags.”*

*Jane: “Learning professional kitchen and cooking! “*

*Grace: “ Inspiring being passionate by holding the knife”*



## Challenges

- *Support with digital and business skills:* Participants needed support in feeling comfortable with business structures, computer design, book keeping and marketing.
- *Managing expectations:* Some of the women expected the program to find them employment. It was made clear at the beginning that while they might learn many useful skills during the program, it was designed primarily to help them gain skills and knowledge that could help in future jobs. The program was not intended to lead to direct employment.
- *Balancing the needs of the individual with the collective:* Participants began to see the benefit of working together as a collective, but they often had to deal with personal demands on their time. The instructors had the students make pie charts in order to map out availability and obligations. This helped to balance the needs of the collective with those of the individuals. Once they decided on a collective identity —Sewmates Crafts and Mama’s Hands — they were able to work on finding a balance.
- *Exploring and deciding on the formal structure of the collective:* Because of the complexity of finding a formal structure, participants needed a great deal of support. As they could not engage in business activities while at VCC, finding a business structure took time.

### The Story of Mama’s Hands



We are a group of diverse women brought together by our passion for cooking and need for knowledge and experience to run a new business. Before the Make It! Program at VCC, we were hard working women with dreams of building a cooking business to build a better future for ourselves. This was a chance for us to meet and understand new cultures and taste foods that represent them.

With this opportunity to make something wonderful collectively, we were able to increase our confidence, our opportunities, and our skills. From this, Mama’s Hands was born, a company that values international cuisine and connecting people through food. We have become stronger business women who are equipped with knowledge and information to help us run a successful business.

We envision great future opportunities in the bigger market to become more financially stable and to further benefit us in our experiences as well as our personal and company growth. It’s been a WOW experience!!!

## Conclusion

Diverse actors worked together to find economic solutions to the ‘leave no one behind’ pledge, in collaboration with immigrant and refugee women. By creating workplaces that could build skills, capacity and a sense of community, women new to Canada were able to the workforce with pride. By using the collaborative entrepreneurship model, this innovative program works for women, who are new to Canada because it meets their needs, is based on their input and builds their social capital. We would like to thank the women who are participating in the projects, as it is really due to their courage and commitment that we are able to test the model.

For institutions who want to try and implement a program like this, the Make It! Team has these sug-

gestions. To start off, it is essential that childcare and transportation to the course must be in place for women to attend and thrive. It is also important to understand what is meant by a collective and the guiding philosophy behind it. As well, there is a need to be clear on what the training program should include (i.e. communication, business and maker skills improvement). And lastly, participants should go into the marketplace and have an authentic experience of marketing and selling products as a team.



*Michael Yue and Participants of Make It Sewing business program*

## Recommendations

- In order to encourage women's regular participation in vocational training projects, free day care and transportation should be provided;
- Social capital should be built to encourage peer-to-peer learning and collective enterprise; this notion of a collective should be guided by a clear theory of change;
- Community partnerships should be promoted in order to allow for the sustainability of these initiatives;
- Projects should be evidence informed and developed around the needs, interests and skills of participating women;
- Expectations should be managed from the outset and although no formal employment was offered women require ongoing support and mentorship as they navigate the transition into formal employment or try to turn their collective enterprise into a successful means of income generation.

# International Indigenous Youth Internship Programme

## SDG Tracker



Written by Hillary Ronald<sup>1</sup> for VIDEA



<sup>1</sup> Hillary Ronald is the Youth Programs Manager at VIDEA.

**Name of organization:** VIDEA

**Website:** <http://videa.ca/>

**Geographical scope of the case study:** Zambia and Uganda

**Sustainable Development Goals:** SDG #5 Gender Equality, SDG #13 Climate Change and SDG #16 Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions

**Project Title:** International Indigenous Youth Internship Programme

**Description of project:** Indigenous youth empowerment through a 4 month overseas internship and peer-to-peer learning program with local grassroots Zambian or Ugandan organizations.

**Target population:** Rural and urban Indigenous youth from Canada, the majority of whom are young women.

**Main activities:** Partnerships with communities are established and organic advertising is used to support the selection and recruitment of Indigenous youth interns, with diversity and equity considerations in mind. The capacity of the interns is built through workshops and hands on experiential service-learning. They are supported throughout their time in country and upon return, receive reintegration training and coaching. They also participate in community engagement and public awareness raising activities.

**Results:** Peer-to-peer learning relationships between Canadian Indigenous Youth, Zambian and Ugandan youth have been established. The capacity of Indigenous Youth women has been increased and they have been supported to achieve their personal goals and assume leadership positions upon return to Canada.

## Overview

VIDEA is a small/medium Canadian International Development agency that works alongside communities in Zambia and Uganda that use a human rights and social justice approach to advancing the 2030 Agenda. VIDEA delivers the International Indigenous Youth internship program, fully funded through Global Affairs Canada. VIDEA recruits small groups of Indigenous youth between the ages of 18-35 from across the country to participate in a 4-month overseas internship program. VIDEA advertises across Canada and the territories, primarily through social media, and relies on organic advertising carried out by former interns and strong, long term partnerships with communities to ensure that youth who are isolated and hard to reach have the opportunity to apply. Recruiting a diverse group of male and female interns with a wide variety of education, work, and life experience is an important feature of the IAYI program. Half of participants are recruited from rural areas and half are urban-based which provides a rich peer-to-peer learning opportunity for all within each cohort. VIDEA has 10 partner organizations in Zambia and Uganda that

work specifically on the SDG's of #5- Gender Equality, #13- Climate Action and #16- Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions.

VIDEA works to support the Indigenous interns to develop their understanding of the SDGs and international development by exposing them to practical, immersive learning experiences through placing interns with local organizations that are experts in gender, human rights, and the environment. All interns participate in an immersive 3-week pre-departure briefing carried out in partnership with the T'Sou-ke First Nation in Canada and the Mumbwa Development Association in Zambia in which they participate in a combination of workshops and hands on learning facilitated by VIDEA staff and local community members. Following this initial training, interns are placed in smaller groups with local, grassroots Zambian or Ugandan organizations to complete a three-month learning experience within the organization's offices. This exposes interns to the realities of rights based, community development work. In Zambia VIDEA partners with the work of Women for Change, the Zambia National Women's Lobby, Chipata District Land Alliance, Rising Fountains Development Programme, YWCA and Archie Hinchcliffe Disability Intervention. In Uganda VIDEA partners with Environmental Women for Action in Development (EWAD). Interns complete their internship through participating in reintegration training carried out in Mumbwa and then in T'Sou-ke. This closes the circle and allows interns to reflect on their experiences and create plans for how they will bring their learning into their lives in Canada.

Interns engage with the SDG's through monthly video reflections throughout their internships and on return to Canada deliver several public engagement activities to initiate conversations with Canadians on global issues and to share the program with other youth in their communities. VIDEA continues to support interns to achieve their personal goals on returning to Canada and to access additional leadership opportu-



nities such as sitting on a board of directors of local community organizations, or an advisory committee on topics like gender equality, environmental sustainability, and health and wellness.

The internship program is in its third year of running and by the fifth year, 140 Indigenous young people will have completed the program and learned about and engaged with the SDG's. Interns reflect on what they learn through three short videos shared via social Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/indigenous-voicesindev/>. Many of our interns have said that the internship has impacted their lives for the better and encourage their friends and relatives to apply. When interns return, we work with them in supporting their reintegration process and goals. Post-internship they begin working more closely with our Indigenous Governance Officer which supports them in finding leadership opportunities specifically Board Governance, opportunities for Public Engagement and further career development.

VIDEA strives to have gender-balanced cohorts but finds our cohorts mainly consist of young women, which is consistent with comparable international internships across the sector due to competing job opportunities available to young men as well as general interest in development. VIDEA emphasizes the importance of men and women working together to achieve gender equality and development goals. Our focus is to promote awareness of the SDG's by having the interns participate in Public engagements in their respected communities to highlight what work is being done overseas and how it can be applicable within Canada. We believe with the integration of Indigenous knowledge into the SDG's, they can be achieved. We urge interns to bring their lived experience, expertise and teachings to the SDG's in order to make them applicable to Indigenous communities.

VIDEA recognizes that the community knows how to best support community and to work effectively we must understand local context, realities and opportunities. This is true in engaging with Indigenous com-

munities in Canada as well as with overseas partners in Zambia and Uganda. Through developing long-term partnerships rooted in solidarity and friendship, VIDEA recognizes the importance of cross-cultural learning. Through the international Indigenous youth internship program, Indigenous youth have the opportunity to connect with Zambian and Ugandan youth and share stories and experiences and unpack the similarities and differences and diverse experiences of colonization and its impacts. This creates meaningful learning opportunities for the youth themselves, but the results are amplified through sharing about their experiences with their home communities.

## Recommendations

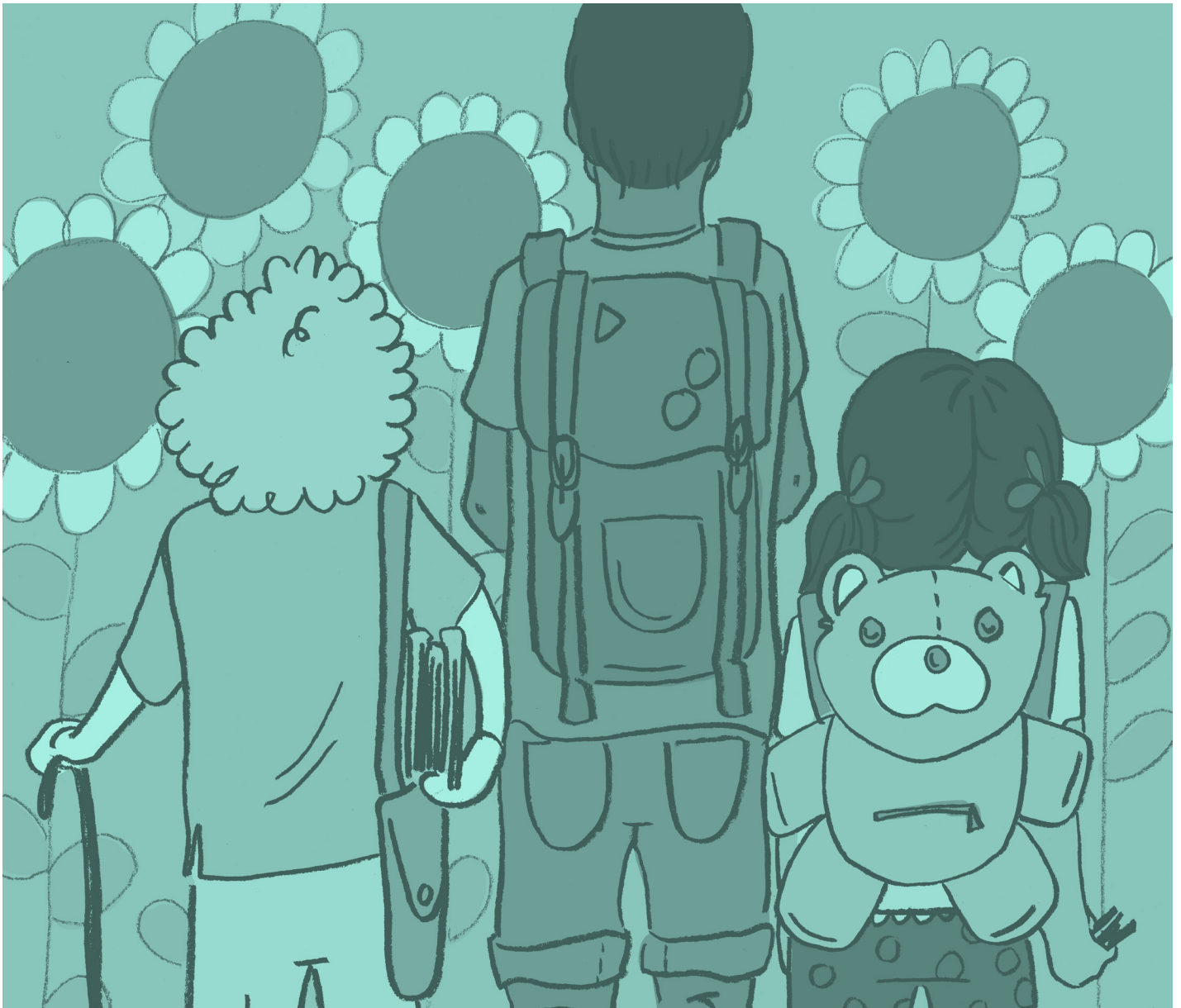
- We recommend there is a need to have more opportunities for Indigenous youth in the International development sector drawn from organizations delivering IAYI; as well as organizations that do not host the program should create opportunities for IAYI youth to engage in their organization
- We recommend the further and more meaningful integration of Indigenous knowledge into the SDG's; by valuing Indigenous knowledge equally to formalized education
- Proper consultation and incorporation of Indigenous women into policy development and implementation; meaningful incorporation of *Reclaiming Power and Place 231 Calls to Justice*,<sup>15</sup> *Truth & Reconciliation 94 Calls to Action*, and the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> For the final report and supplementary reports, see <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

<sup>16</sup> *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, 2 October 2007, A/RES/61/295 (ratified by Canada on November 12, 2010).



## Section 2



# Poverty Eradication, Social Prosperity and Social Services

# Localizing SDG 5: A Case Study on Rural Development Work that Addresses Interlinkages

## SDG Tracker



Written by Gurleen Grewal<sup>1</sup> with contributions from Bruce Petch<sup>2</sup> for World Neighbours Canada



<sup>1</sup> Gurleen Grewal is a Master's student in the Department of English at Simon Fraser University. Her research interests span across the fields of Black Studies, Diaspora Studies, and Rhetoric.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce Petch is the Executive Director of World Neighbours Canada.

**Name of civil society organization:** World Neighbours Canada

**Website:** <https://worldneighbours.ca/>

**Geographical scope of the case study:** Nepal, Burkina Faso and Honduras

**Sustainable Development Goals:** Primarily SDG 1 and SDG #5 Gender Equality, also 3, 6, 9, 12, 15 and 17

**Project Title:** Maternal-Child Health Initiative

**Description of project:** Improving the well-being of mothers and young children through locally designed interventions in health, food security, water supply and hygiene

**Target population:** Mothers and children under 5 years of age in selected rural and impoverished areas of Nepal, Burkina Faso and Honduras

**Main activities:** Training of mothers and fathers in nutrition, child development, prevention of childhood diseases and reproductive health; malnutrition screening of young children; supporting income generation and food crop production; construction of village water systems; installation of hygienic toilets and other home improvements.

**Results:** By combining measurable improvements in knowledge and capabilities with empowerment of people living in poverty and a gendered perspective focused on diversity and inclusion, indicators of well-being have improved, and local institutional capacity has been strengthened.

This case study compiles an analysis of applications of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) that engage the interlinkages between Goal 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and the larger framework. It focuses upon innovative interventions that discuss the work of three locally based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in development contexts in rural localities in Nepal, Burkina Faso, and Honduras. The organizations work in partnership with a Canadian NGO, World Neighbours Canada, with financial support from Global Affairs Canada. The case study shares evidence regarding the efficacies of, complementarities among, and obstacles in implementing development programs that adopt goal 5 with others.

In Nepal's eastern Ramechhap District, the organization, [Tamakoshi Sewa Samiti \(TSS\)](#), provides materials and technical training to villagers who plan, build, and maintain water systems, and install sealed toilets in their remote communities. With this infrastructure, villagers have easier and equitable access to water that is safe to drink, and this significantly lowers the occurrence of gastrointestinal disease. Attuned to the key messages of a session on SDG 6 from HLPF 2018<sup>17</sup>, TSS integrated their efforts with the existing sustainable development plans of the national and local governments. After finding that committees tasked with planning water systems often underrepresented women, TSS introduced quotas to encourage their participation and integration in decision-making spaces that operate at the village-level<sup>18</sup>. Having women at the table in the water-user committees revealed ways in which the water and sanitation systems had gendered impacts. The construction of this vital infrastructure resulted in Ramechhap being declared an ODF free zone in June 2018<sup>19</sup> and this, in turn, reduced the gender-specific anxiet-



ies of safety and privacy that often prompt women to “wait until after dark [to access sanitation facilities], negatively affecting their well-being and comfort.”<sup>20</sup> In remote villages, this infrastructure links to women's health, both reproductive and menstrual<sup>21</sup>, since it reduces the time they spend travelling to collect water by two-to-eight hours per day. This translates to an improvement in the physical and psychological health of women and girls who are tasked with collecting the water. During pregnancy and postnatal periods the positive health effects of water systems further benefit women, and lower child mortality. Reliable access to water promotes the ease of tending to menstrual hygiene, which is an important consideration in places where stigma around menstruation remains high<sup>22</sup>. Harnessing interlinkages between infrastructural improvement (SDG 9), procurement and management of water resources (SDG 12), inter-agency and cross-sectoral partnership (SDG 17), and gender equity, TSS has helped enable women to assume an increased, but still not an equal, agency in their communities.

17 Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, (2018), Summary Report – Expert Group Meeting on Advancing the 2030 Agenda: Interlinkages and Common Themes at the HLPF 2018

18 Gill; Navjot; Gray, (23 May 2019), Personal Interview.

19 World Neighbours Canada, (July 2019), Maternal and Child Health Initiatives through Drinking Water & Sanitation Program: Interim Progress Report.

20 OECD, (2019), Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development and Gender Equality: Fostering an Integrated Policy Agenda.

21 Gill; Navjot; Gray, (23 May 2019), Personal Interview. & Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, (2018), Summary Report – Expert Group Meeting on Advancing the 2030 Agenda: Interlinkages and Common Themes at the HLPF 2018

22 Gill; Navjot; Gray, (23 May 2019), Personal Interview.



The [Association d'Appui à la Promotion du Développement Durable des Communautés \(APDC\)](#) operates across eighteen villages in Fada, in the eastern part of Burkina Faso. Their program attends to family planning, food security, and encouraging the participation of women in leadership roles in community organizations. By combining education initiatives with the opportunities to put theory to practice, APDC fosters inter-generational growth. To increase women's ability to partake in development work, and mitigate the risks of short periods between successive pregnancies (SDG 3), APDC worked with 1,165 people (279 men, 629 women, 137 boys, and 120 girls) to offer education sessions that discuss methods of family planning services<sup>23</sup>.

They strengthened women's socio-economic positions, income-generation, and authority in food production by implementing an animal fattening program through which 75 women identified good fattening animals, produced and stored fodder, considered optimal selling periods, and decided how to organize the resulting financial assets<sup>24</sup>. In a semi-structured interview, APDC's Executive Director, Charles Tankoano, shared that the women who were in this program became like "business-manager[s]"<sup>25</sup>,

23 World Neighbours Canada, (June 2019), APDC Annual Report – July 2018 – June 2019 Period.

24 Ibid.

25 Tapsoba, Lydia and Charles Tankoano, (2019), Personal Interview.

developing partnerships with men in their villages who came to see them as having the authority to be part of decision-making processes in their families and communities. Between 2018-19, APDC has also built capacity for carrying out sustainable and ecological modes of production. For instance, they did training sessions (sample of 56 men and 16 women) on the planting of fields using stone bunds, which prevent soil erosion and boost production; training on gardening techniques (sample of 50 women) including transplanting, watering, phytosanitary treatment; training on harvesting that yields vegetables, which improve the nutrition of children, and pregnant and lactating women; diversification of household diets, which act as a source of income for women, and decrease malnutrition incidents during dry seasons<sup>26</sup>; and one program on rice production across 3 ha of lowlands (sample of 10 men and 64 women) that cemented and increased women's access to agricultural land and financial assets from food production chains<sup>27</sup>. The involvement of women in agricultural production boosts yields and reduces food insecurity<sup>28</sup>, mobilizes technical knowledge of agro-ecological growing methods to confront environmental damage at a local level (SDG 15), secures women's rights to land-use planning (SDG 1.4.2), and situates small-scale farming efforts as vital nodes in the consumption and production of food (SDG 12)<sup>29</sup>. Each stride APDC enables women to make towards inclusive agricultural and rural development follows the call to "leave no one behind."

Vecinos Honduras (VH) has a complementary approach to development. They work in the departments of Valle and El Paraíso, which are in the southern and eastern parts of Honduras. They stay in an area for six to eight years. Initially, they integrate in

26 World Neighbours Canada, (June 2019), APDC Annual Report – July 2018 – June 2019 Period.

27 Ibid.

28 OECD, (2019), Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development and Gender Equality: Fostering an Integrated Policy Agenda.

29 Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, (2018), Summary Report – Expert Group Meeting on Advancing the 2030 Agenda: Interlinkages and Common Themes at the HLPF 2018

communities by hosting educational initiatives on child nutrition or optimizing crop production. VH then trains local leaders to organize these sorts of initiatives, learn project-planning, and manage funds. For them, the eventual goal is to cultivate community capacity to imagine and implement development projects. To lower the mortality and morbidity in mothers and infants, VH offered routine weighing sessions that gauged health and nutrition and created a collective around the exchange of child-care methods and stories regarding the complexities of motherhood<sup>30</sup>.

In a bid to increase the number of women involved in leadership roles in rural contexts, VH held training sessions in which 95 women learned to work as members in the local committees on water and health infrastructure (SDG 9)<sup>31</sup>. Applying the concept of SDG interlinkages with a focus on Goal #5, particularly as it applies to women and girls in rural development contexts this case study analyzes surveys, semi-structured interviews, and monitoring and evaluation data in organizational documents which highlight the capacity-building, income-generating, and ecologically empowering work of TSS, APDC and VH. The lack of age and gender disaggregated data complicates the matter of moving towards coherent policies, yet it remains a fraught endeavour due to lack of training on the methods of collecting, analyzing, and communicating data across sectors; lack of funding to provide such training<sup>32</sup>; the frequency of terrorist attacks which hinder the implementation of all organizational activity in the case of APDC<sup>33</sup>; instability in national governance which affects TSS, APDC, and VH; and low literacy rates, which are of particular concern to APDC since Burkina Faso has one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world<sup>34</sup>. Despite such obstacles, this case study moves to celebrate the stories of women and girls in Nepal, Burkina Faso, and Honduras. It harnesses the

data gathered through extensive personal interviews and lived experiences. And it positions gaps in the current or archival quantitative, age and gender disaggregated data as spaces of ethical opacity.

## Recommendations

- Build the capacity of women and girls to engage positions of authority, and address systemic barriers that continue to impede their integration in decision-making processes at the level of the household, village, or region;
- Recognize women and girls as witnesses of the gendered distributions of material, social, and economic fissures in water and sanitation management, agricultural production, and maternal and reproductive health infrastructures;
- Strengthen funding for programs that can plan, organize, implement, monitor, and evaluate the gendered interactions that occur across civic and common infrastructures in rural communities; promote community partnerships that enable the sustainability of such programs at a local level;
- Consider how SDG indicators and quantitative data matrices can work in solidarity with the stories of women and girls; develop methodologies that do not instrumentalize their bodies and lives; and practice citational accountability.

30 Gill; Navjot; Gray, (23 May 2019), Personal Interview.

31 Tegucigalpa, M.D.C., (2018), "Thematic Project: Maternal and Child Health (SMJ); Mid Term Evaluation (EMJ)", World Neighbours Canada, November 2018.

32 Gill; Navjot; Gray, (23 May 2019), Personal Interview.

33 Tapsoba, Lydia and Charles Tankoano, (2019), Personal Interview.

34 United Nations Development Programme Africa, (n.d.), "Volunteer teachers combat illiteracy in Burkina Faso."

# ILU Women's Empowerment Fund

## SDG Tracker



Written by Jose Lamyin<sup>1</sup> for Deetkin Impact



<sup>1</sup> Jose Lamyin is the Managing Partner of Deetkin Impact. He serves on the Board of Directors for BCCIC.

**Name of private sector company:** Deetken Impact

**Website:** <https://deetkenimpact.com/>

**Geographical scope of the case study:** Haiti

**Sustainable Development Goals:** SDG 5 Gender Equality and SDG 8 Decent Work & Economic Growth

**Project Title:** The ILU Women's Empowerment Fund

**Description of project:** Women's empowerment through the promotion of financial inclusion for women and equal access to capital and innovative digital technology

**Target population:** Women who are living below the poverty line in a post-humanitarian context

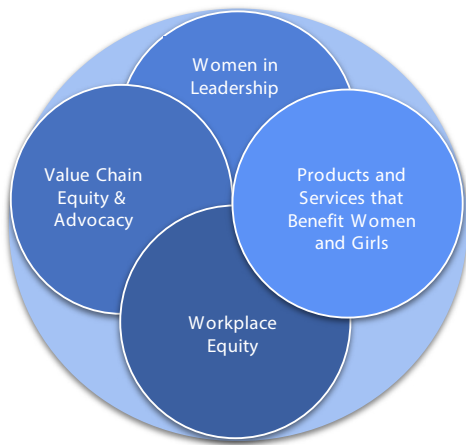
**Main activities:** The provision of micro loans, enhanced access to mobile phone-based digital wallets, and digital literacy training.

**Results:** By removing financial barriers for vulnerable women, enhancing their access to capital and strengthening their capacity to use digital technology, this innovative pilot project has improved women's financial inclusion and promoted their equal economic participation. It also highlights the important role that the private sector can play in promoting the 2030 Agenda.

## Background

In order to advance an accelerated Agenda 2030, it is essential for Civil Society to work in partnership with the private sector, who have a wealth of expertise, knowledge and resources on social development issues. Such partnerships require the sharing of information, joint programming and greater accountability and transparency. In this context, the Ilu Fund delivers meaningful and measurable social and environmental benefits, with a focus on advancing five of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Ilu Fund reports quarterly on 5 of the SDGs.

Our Fund's approach to capturing gender disaggregated information has been vetted extensively by two DFIs and a leading impact investor (second largest Credit Union) in Canada. Gender Lens Investing (GLI) at the Ilu Fund integrates gender-based factors into investment decisions. We look for businesses that show leadership or commitment to one or more of our four gender lenses (see graph below):



We collect gender disaggregated data at the individual company level to gain a better understanding of women’s barriers to accessing beneficial products and services and to achieving positions of leadership. The Fund invests in businesses that are already gender leaders and those that are embracing and committing to more gender equitable business practices.

Target beneficiaries of the Fund’s activities are:

- Women entrepreneurs and women led businesses
- Women and girls who are recipient of health-care services, educational campaigns
- Women and men working for portfolio companies

Among such portfolio companies, we would like to highlight three partner NGOs that provide health-care services for women and children (SDG #3, Good Health and Wellbeing), along with financial support: Espoir and Insotec (Ecuador), and Pro Mujer International (Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Mexico, Guatemala, and Nicaragua). In addition, the Ilu Fund began lending in Haiti two years ago, supporting an organization that serve women entrepreneurs.

## Deetken Impact in Haiti

At Deetken Impact, our goal is to provide businesses with not only the financial resources they need to improve the living standards of the communities where

they operate but also the technical assistance to make those changes sustainable. Key to this process is having strong relationships with organizations and businesses that are committed to the communities, that have deep understanding of their needs and have solid business plans to achieve their goals.

Two years ago, Deetken Impact invested in Haiti for the first time through a USD 1 million loan to FINCA Haiti. Their plan is to expand their lending services to individuals, micro and small – and medium- sized businesses (MSMEs). With this investment they will grow their network of branches and digital financial services and build their capacity to develop customer-centric and gender-sensitive financial products. Deetken Impact is working closely with them to support this ambitious plan, as it relates to 3 of the SDGs that the Ilu Fund reports quarterly: #4 Quality Education, #5 Gender Equality, and # 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth. These interlinkages are key to advancing gender equality. The case study presented here has shown how promoting poverty eradication and social protection can go a long way in lifting women out of poverty, enhancing their health and wellbeing – and that of their children - and reducing their vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence. By harnessing interlinkages, women’s resilience in the face of poverty and climate-related shocks has been strengthened.

## Challenges in Haiti

When we think of vulnerabilities for people in Haiti, it drums up scenes of earthquakes and hurricanes – with over 90% of the population at risk of natural disasters. However, these events pass, and people with low incomes must live much in the present moment. According to the latest household survey, 59% of Haitians are living under the national poverty line. For everyday Haitians, personal safety is top of mind compared to natural disasters. Theft, sexual violence, and political upheaval are continuous concerns. Carrying cash for personal purchases, and more so, the larger amounts required for your business can be risky. Bank-

ing clients are commonly followed by assailants on motorcycle and robbed in less public areas. Shootings during these incidents are not uncommon. Evidence suggests that women and girls are disproportionately affected by natural disasters and humanitarian crises. Women often shoulder a heavier burden of care during humanitarian crises and in their aftermath. Women and girls are also vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and violence (including sexual violence) during and immediately a humanitarian crisis, with little support, protection and legal recourse.<sup>35</sup>

Another challenge is logistical. Those living in the city face gridlocked traffic, where a 2-kilometer trip can take over an hour. For those working on farms, public transport may be infrequent and there may be long walking distances to boarding points. These logistical issues eat into valuable income-earning time which have a significant effect on already low incomes, or the ability to otherwise support a family. FINCA, one of Deetken Impact's investments in Haiti, has come up with a unique solution to overcome some of these issues.

## **Mobile phone-based digital wallets: the start of MonCash**

This case study has revealed how important it is to harness technological innovation and ensure accessibility in order to leave no one behind in the 2030 Agenda. This requires deliberately promoting vulnerable women's access to and training on digital technology.

FINCA<sup>36</sup> has been leveraging the use of technology in the countries it operates for over a decade. More recently, the widespread use of mobile phones even among poor countries has made it possible to use

<sup>35</sup> This is emphasized in the Global Affairs Canada, (2017), Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy: #HerVoiceHerChoice, GAC: Ottawa, under 'gender-responsive humanitarian action'.

<sup>36</sup> FINCA Haiti is a microfinance institution founded back in 1989, which currently has eight branches that serve over 45,000 customers – 90% of whom are women. They provide the majority of micro-loans through the village banking model, where a group of individuals come together and support each other while growing their business, and the group guarantees the individuals' loans.

them to expand access to financial services. In 2013, FINCA Haiti partnered with Digicel, the largest telecom provider in the country, to offer clients (90% of whom are women) the option to make their loan repayments via mobile phone – a service they called Moncash. MonCash is a digital wallet that can hold a currency balance in a digital account that can be accessed using a user's mobile phone. And the phone doesn't have to be a Smart Phone since it is code based rather than using an interface. Instead of having to make a long and expensive trip to a FINCA branch, this new service would allow clients – at no additional cost to them – to transfer their payments via mobile phone using a nearby Moncash agent.

The benefits to their clients were self-evident but the success of this program did not happen overnight. In 2015, less than 350 clients were paying their installments via Moncash. That's when FINCA Haiti, with the support of Swiss Capacity Building Facility (SCBF), conducted a study to determine what needed to be done to improve the use of mobile banking. The study confirmed that 93% of FINCA Haiti clients had a mobile phone and a Digicel line, which confirmed that the platform had great potential to reach most of their clients. So, what were the barriers to adoption?

As with any new technology, one of the main obstacles to the uptake of Moncash had been the lack of appropriate training for both FINCA credit officers and their clients. They needed to raise awareness about the program and make sure clients felt confident doing the transactions with a digital literacy campaign. They undertook hands-on practical training of the credit officers and motivated them to train and encourage their clients. Thereby, they became champions of Moncash. FINCA also realized that the existing network of Moncash agents was limited in size and it didn't cover the geographic area needed so they recruited and trained additional sub-agents and trained the existing ones to better serve the needs of their clients. "In addition, FINCA Haiti offered lines of credit to agents, allowing agents to better manage their liquidity and more



reliably serve customers”. Lastly, they created better channels of communication with Digicel and resolved issues with the service more promptly.

After implementing these recommendations, the growth of loan repayments via Moncash has been impressive. While the number of FINCA clients has grown from approximately 35,000 in 2015 to nearly 47,000 in 2018; the use of mobile payments has gone from a start of 340 members in 2015 to a remarkable 15,241 to date. Mobile loan disbursements have recently been rolled out. Future changes in legislation with regards to the maximum transfer amount could allow this number to increase significantly. That said, the 1,052 clients, who were mostly women, receiving loan disbursements to date has proven the success of this pilot project. We look forward to watching this growth continue at the same time as we further our understanding of the broader impact of digital finance on Finca’s enterprising clients.

Gender-sensitive poverty eradication and social protection interventions are only effective when projects are developed in a holistic, transformative and systematic way that cuts across silos. In this case study, enhancing access to technology, providing micro-loans and offering practical training made a significant difference to the rights, wellbeing and resilience of vulnerable women and that of their children; effectiveness in this case study relied on all three components.



*Finca Haiti clients taking advantage of Moncash service.*

## **The bigger picture for Haitians**

As FINCA expands and continues to enroll more clients to do their loan payments and disbursements via Moncash, it is not only improving financial inclusion but is also helping to on-board more and more Haitians to the digital economy. They are overcoming barriers that have until now limited technology and finance to the domain of affluent citizens.

With their digital wallet usable for other types of transactions, it further reduces their need to carry cash, a particularly useful feature for women entrepreneurs. They can buy food at local stores that also use MonCash; they can transfer funds electronically to suppliers that also use the service; and they can exchange cash at a nearby MonCash agent and have it applied to their digital wallet. Access to their wallet requires verification of identity at the agent limiting the possibility

of false access to their account. This has a compounding impact on their safety, cost savings, and time savings as they are now using less cash everywhere.

As an example, the farmers in the Arbonite Valley in Haiti now have new opportunities as they cross the digital divide: using their phones to check weather, research plant conditions, find the best market prices, and use their digital wallets for transactions to sell their produce and buy supplies safely and securely. There is a direct linkage to the *Feminist International Assistance Policy* (FIAP), specifically Action Area 3 'Growth that works for everyone.'<sup>37</sup> This policy argues "Limited access to financial services – such as banking, credit and insurance – makes it difficult for poor households to recover from events such as poor harvest or a health crisis. This limited access to vital financial services also results in lost economic opportunities, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises owned by women"<sup>38</sup>. FIAP also explains that in order to ensure that women can participate equally in contributing to economic growth, they need greater access to and control over assets such as land, housing and capital.

This innovative case study speaks directly to the promotion of "financial inclusion for women and equal access to capital, markets, digital technology and business development services."<sup>39</sup> This initiative is true testament of how access to credit, mobile technology and digital literacy are jointly contributing towards sustainable economic growth in Haiti, particularly for women entrepreneurs. Thus, it has the potential for making a positive contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment. It also highlights the importance of collaborating with the private sector to promote Agenda 2030, and in this case SDG #5.

Finally, this case study has shown that it is important to remove financial barriers for vulnerable women and support them to exercise their agency and have control over their livelihoods, finance and decision-making. Simply focusing on their victimization or providing them with cash transfers and hand-outs will not create sustainable and systematic changes in unequal power relations; rather working together with vulnerable women in the design and implementation of projects that promote their agency is key to a transformative and accelerated 2030 Agenda and Platform for Action.

## Recommendations

- Multi-stakeholder partnerships with the private sector should be explored, with special attention to information-sharing, joint programming and greater accountability and transparency.
- Projects should harness digital technology innovation and ensure accessibility in order to leave no one behind in the 2030 Agenda.
- Gender-sensitive poverty eradication and social protection interventions should be developed in a holistic, transformative and systematic way that cuts across silos and sectors.
- The multi-generational effects of poverty eradication and social measures for mothers and caregivers, should be considered in relation to the wellbeing of their children.
- An agentic approach to the 'leave no one behind' pledge is required to create sustainable and systematic changes in local communities.

<sup>37</sup> Global Affairs Canada, (2017), Foreword in *Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy: #HerVoiceHerChoice*, GAC: Ottawa

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, pg. 36.

<sup>39</sup> Global Affairs Canada, (2017), Foreword in *Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy: #HerVoiceHerChoice*, GAC: Ottawa, pg. 38.

# Working on Gender Empowerment in Central America



Written by Vera Radyo<sup>1</sup> for The Kenoli Foundation



<sup>1</sup> Vera Radyo is the Executive Director of Kenoli Foundation and has been active in gender equality and social justice issues all her life.

**Name of organization:** Kenoli Foundation (Ken & Oli Johnstone Foundation)

**Website:** <http://kenoli.org/>

**Geographical scope of the case study:** Honduras

**SDG's addressed in the case study:** SDG #1 (Poverty); SDG #2 (End Hunger); # SDG 3 (Health); SDG #13 (Climate Change); SDG #16 (Peaceful and inclusive societies); SDG #5 (Gender equality)

**Description of project:** Promoting gender equality and empowering women through a holistic, integrated program for rural women.

**Target population:** Rural women living in poverty or extreme poverty.

**Main activities:** Women receive training on nutritional practices, children's development, ecological farming techniques, leadership, entrepreneurship and business skills. They receive support with micro-enterprises and sustainable food gardens and now use improved stoves for cooking.

**Results:** The food security, health and wellbeing of women and their children have improved. Children have overcome malnutrition and women have given birth to healthy babies. Adverse effects on the environment have been reduced and soil fertility has been enhanced.

## Introduction

Kenoli Foundation (Ken & Oli Johnstone Foundation) is a small private Canadian foundation that is leveraging the talents and competencies of individuals, organizations, governments and institutions to contribute towards an inclusive, sustainable, and resilient future where no one is left behind. Kenoli works to empower women, alleviate poverty and hunger, and advance human rights in Central America; and thereby impacts the lives of thousands of people each year through 25 civic society organizations (CSOs) in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. Kenoli develops long term relationships with these CSOs and provides accompaniment, funding and technical support. The small Kenoli team is composed of Canadians and Central Americans working together remotely. The Foundation receives no government funding, but it relies upon its endowment in working towards the Global Goals. Poverty, hunger, poor health, climate change, violence and lack of justice impede women's empowerment.

Below, we provide one case example of Kenoli's work that links Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #5 of empowering women with the following SDGs:

- SDG #1: End poverty in all its forms.
- SDG #2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
- SDG # 3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote the well-being of all at all ages.
- SDG #13 – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- SDG #16 – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

## Case Study – Gender Empowerment in Context

Since 2011, Kenoli Foundation has been working with Asociación de Mujeres Defensoras de La Vida<sup>40</sup> (AMDV), a rural women's organization located in the southern dry corridor of Honduras, called Choluteca.

AMDV works in extremely challenging and dangerous circumstances, as Honduras is one of the poorest, deadliest and most corrupt countries in the world. 17% of the population lives in extreme poverty (under \$1.90 US/day) and 62% live below the national poverty line.<sup>41</sup> 25% of those employed make less than \$3.10 US/day.<sup>42</sup> Women, and especially, rural Indigenous women suffer the most, as Honduras is highly unequal. Even though homicides have decreased in the last few years, Honduras continues to be one of the most violent countries in the world that is not at war, with a ho-



micide rate of 42/100,000 population.<sup>43</sup> Transparency International rates Honduras in the bottom 30% of the most corrupt countries in the world.<sup>44</sup> To escape these unbearable conditions, thousands of Hondurans have joined caravans through Mexico and to the United States. The toll on human lives has been immeasurable.

Working in these extremely challenging circumstances, AMDV was one of the first organizations in Honduras to tackle the issue of women's rights, and the organization became a platform for women to raise their voices. AMDV uses a distinctive two-dimensional approach: they influence local and national public policies that affect women; and they work directly with rural women living in poverty or extreme poverty, so that "no one is left behind". AMDV began their work by defending the environment and halting the cutting of trees by building solar stoves. Over the years, the organization honed its focus and strategies in leader-

40 In Spanish, their name translates into English: Association of Women Defenders of Life

41 United Nations Human Development Program (UNDP) data, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/HND>.

42 United Nations Human Development Program (UNDP) data, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/HND>.

43 United Nations Human Development Program (UNDP) data, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/HND>.

44 Transparency International, <https://www.transparency.org/country/HND#>.

ship and advocacy and began working towards the 2030 sustainable development goals.

Since Kenoli met AMDV, we have worked with them to promote gender equality, squelch poverty, increase food security, reduce malnutrition, improve health and well-being, and promote more environmentally friendly practices. Kenoli has supported AMDV to reduce poverty through early childhood development and economic initiatives. Poverty begins in early childhood. Children who are malnourished between 0 to 5 years old will not develop normally, and they lessen their chances to attain an education. The probability that they will leave the cycle of poverty is almost non-existent. In our most recent partnership with AMDV, mothers monitored the height and weight of their children and implemented sound nutritional practices, based upon local foods and the training they had received from AMDV. The result was that within a year, 152 children overcame their nutritional and developmental problems.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, all the 34 pregnant women who gave birth had infants with a normal weight.<sup>46</sup> AMDV implemented economic initiatives through rotating funds, along with training in entrepreneurship and business skills. This allowed 172 women to successfully develop micro-enterprises to support their families.<sup>47</sup> Most women chose to develop small stores in their villages.

As a result of AMDV's work in food security, families have learned about nutrition and established 112 environmentally sustainable family gardens and 3 school gardens.<sup>48</sup> The women have learned ecological farming techniques, such as planting diverse crops, making organic compost, saving seeds, drip irrigation, and others. These gardens have allowed the women to improve their family's diets with nutritious food; and have also improved soil fertility.

<sup>45</sup> AMDV final narrative summary to Kenoli Foundation, (April 18, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> AMDV cumulative reports to Kenoli Foundation, (2011 – 2018).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

As an example,<sup>49</sup> Mrs. Gladys Waleska was a 29-year-old mother of a 27 month old baby when she was invited to have her child's weight and height monitored at AMDV meetings. She then joined the family gardens initiative and later, she became a health and nutrition promoter, sharing all her experience and knowledge with other women. She developed a remarkable garden, the likes of which had never before been seen in her village. She grew yucca, sweet potatoes, bananas, cilantro, beets, radishes, cucumbers and sweet peppers. These last two were planted inside used car tires. She applied organic fertilizers and natural pesticides, and used other ecological farming methods she had learned. Mrs. Waleska didn't have much land, yet with these sustainable farming methods, she was able to feed her family. This story is replicated with many other women.

<sup>49</sup> Kenoli interview with AMDV, (March 2018).





AMDV's work in solar and improved stoves, has improved the health and well-being of hundreds of women and children; and improved the environment. Many rural women in Honduras cook like in the middle ages, over open fires. These women and their children are particularly vulnerable to illnesses from smoke inhalation, as they stand over their stoves for many hours in a day and all too often, little children stand near their mothers. With 170 improved stoves, these women and children no longer breathe in fumes from their wood stoves, and as a result are healthier. The rates of asthma and respiratory diseases have decreased significantly.<sup>50</sup> In addition, the solar and improved stoves are better for the environment, as the improved stoves use less than half the firewood and the solar stoves use none. Thousands of trees have been saved.

AMDV's has had significant achievements in advancing gender equality and women's rights through political advocacy, policy making, and training in a predominantly male centered "*machismo*" culture, with very high rates of femicides, most of which are not punished. Interlinkages between women's groups are important in their work. Eight networks in eight municipalities, now have trained women who replicate their knowledge about the vicious

cycle of violence and accompany other women to file reports against their perpetrators. There are also women in municipal committees who have become community advisors and participate in public actions to struggle for women's rights. The most notable participant is María Ester Velasquez,<sup>51</sup> who after undergoing AMDV's comprehensive training process, spoke up to one of the mayoral candidates in her town. He then chose Mrs. Velasquez to run on his electoral slate. Their slate won the election and she is now a municipal council member, who represents other women and influences decisions with respect to women's policies.

AMDV's struggle has not come without ongoing hardships, obstacles, and threats to the personal safety of the dedicated staff. Following a political coup in 2009, attacks on human rights defenders have increased. The Honduran State has been in constant political turmoil, and the population took to the streets after what many considered a fraudulent election in November 2017 that determined Juan Orlando Hernandez to be the president of the nation. Over 300 marches were held throughout the country. Retaliation and increased repression against the protesters was rampant and continues to this day. People have been shot and beaten; and small armored bullet-proof tanks terrorized the streets. Coupled with these atrocities, the country is known for persecuting human rights defenders' organizations, and AMDV, as a women's advocacy organization, faces criticism and persecution for their views. They fear the repeat of assassinations such as that of prominent Indigenous environmental activist, Bertha Caceres in 2016. Given the dangerous environment that they work in, AMDV has evaluated its risks, debated mitigation efforts, taken precautions, and drafted security plans to increase their safety. AMDV's relentless motivation to achieve the well-being of all women and all Honduran people, keeps them working steady in a very dangerous environment. In 2018, AMDV's

<sup>50</sup> AMDV cumulative reports to Kenoli, (2011 – 2018).

<sup>51</sup> Kenoli interview with AMDV, (March 2018).

work was acknowledged when they received a prestigious award from the Women's World Summit Foundation for their courage in fighting for rural women.<sup>52</sup>

## Conclusion

A Canadian foundation, Kenoli, is working with AMDV in Honduras to end rural poverty, ensure healthy lives, achieve gender equality and empower women and girls toward reaching the Global Goals 2030. Reducing poverty and social suffering, also reduces the need for dangerous migrations.



## Recommendations

- Understanding local context is essential in any development work. One effective way to do this is through a local partner that has a deep understanding of the local context.
- Women's lives are holistic and thus holistic solutions are required that cross multiple SDGs, such as, reducing poverty, improving health and addressing climate change.
- Working "on the ground" with the most marginalized women, hearing their needs, utilizing their talents and engaging them in solutions is critical to reduce social suffering and empower the women.
- Using an evidence-based approach, the expertise of a local partner, an iterative strategy and continuous communication, enables a Canadian civil society organization [CSO] to positively impact the lives of vulnerable women in a developing country in concrete ways.
- Interlinkages with other CSOs, municipal governments and the national government increases the effectiveness of the CSO.

<sup>52</sup> <https://woman.ch/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2019-1994-2.pdf>

## Section 3

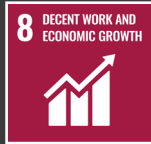


# Freedom from Violence, Stigma and Stereotypes



# Project Ability: Exploring the barriers of Fijian blind and visually impaired youth and working age adults

## SDG Tracker



Written by Anu Pala<sup>1</sup> of A-Nu Vision Coaching and Consulting



<sup>1</sup> Anu Pala works as a vision loss consultant and life coach in her business, A-Nu Vision Coaching & Consulting and is the fundraising/communications Coordinator with Surrey Women's Centre

**Geographical scope of the case study:** Fiji

**Project Title:** Project Ability.

**Description of project:** Exploring the barriers of blind and visually impaired youth and working adults in the areas of education, employment and social inclusion.

**Target population:** Post secondary students and working age adults living with vision loss and educators of students with vision loss.

**Main activities:** Identify key challenges that Fijians with vision loss and educators experience, increase awareness about current technology and accessible mobile apps and discuss current Canadian practices to support blind and visually impaired youth and working age adults in the areas of education, employment, and advocacy.

**Results:** This project has helped to identify some of the systemic attitudinal and institutional barriers for people, especially women, living with vision loss and has helped to identify gaps in services in the areas of education, social welfare and social protection. Learning about the realities of accessing disability related supports in Fiji has created the foundation to develop and deliver a variety of programs for those living with vision loss, including life skills, career development, and assistive technology.

## Introduction

While living with vision loss can present its challenges, it is still possible to pursue higher education, obtain employment, use public transit and participate in community activities – at least it is where I live. As a Fijian-born Canadian woman living with vision loss, I have had opportunities to grow and progress in the areas of education, employment, performing art and all other aspects of life. Since childhood, I have been privileged to have had access to government and community services throughout school and adulthood. I have been exposed to assistive technology, government grants and other social supports that have enabled me to have a fair chance to pursue education, seek employment, and to be able to contribute to society.

In June 2018, while pursuing my BA in professional communications, I received a scholarship through the Erving K. Barber One World Scholarship to carry out an international study. I was curious about the attitudes, misperceptions and barriers that Fijian blind and visually impaired youth and working age adults face in the areas of education, employment and social inclusion, and I wanted to learn whether assistive technology is utilized and how it plays a role in people's lives. I was also interested in learning

about what types of services are available, as Fiji is my birthplace and is not nearly as developed as Canada. In addition, I wanted to learn what support systems are in place in high schools and post-secondary institutions, and whether employers participate in equal hiring practices like we do in North America. This was a creative and innovative collaboration between Canada and Fiji, as a study like this, on a grassroots level by a Fijian-born Canadian living with vision loss, had not yet been pursued.

As part of the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, (SDGs), this case study addressed the following SDGS:

- *Goal 1 End Poverty:* Numerous research studies have shown that people with disabilities, (PWDs), live below the poverty line as they are often unemployed, underemployed and are not exposed to the same education opportunities as their able-bodied peers. This is even more prominent for girls and women.
- *Goal 4 Quality Education:* For a variety of reasons including gender, socioeconomic status, geographic location and lack of appropriate tools and resources, people living with vision loss, especially girls and women, do not have equal opportunities to pursue higher education.
- *Goal 5 Gender Equality:* Women with disabilities are often not seen as equal team players and experts for participating in high level discussions with government. The intersectionality of race, socioeconomic status and different abilities plays a role in how we are perceived and accepted in mainstream society.
- *Goal 8 Decent work and Economic activity:* While Canadian non-profit and advocacy groups have actively been promoting the rights of people living with disabilities in the workplace, which has helped to create more employment opportunities, countries like Fiji still have a long way to go in terms of employers being open to creating inclusive workplaces.

For the intents and purposes of this study, I defined disability from the UN's perspective, highlighting that "Disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."<sup>53</sup> As a blind woman of colour, living in a developed country, I have experienced discrimination at school, at work and in my community, and I understand how negative attitudes and misperceptions can contribute to judgement, social exclusion and limited career advancement. Hence, this is what triggered the desire to pursue this study in Fiji. Since Fiji is my birthplace, I have some awareness about the challenges that Fijians with vision loss face, but wanted to explore further, identify the gaps and create positive change.

According to the Fiji Society for the Blind, enrolment rates for young persons with blindness or vision impairment are generally low due to school enrolment exclusionary policies in the Pacific. In 2015, there were an estimated 11,402 persons with disabilities (1.4 per cent of the population), and youth aged 14-19 had the second highest prevalence rate after the 51+ age group. Furthermore, 7.3 per cent of persons with disabilities had exclusively a vision problem and 25.5 per cent had multiple disabilities (including visual disabilities).<sup>54</sup>

In July 2018, I reached out to the Fijian Ministry of Education and other entities, including local NGOs such as the Fiji School for the Blind, the Fiji Society of the Blind, United Blind Persons of Fiji and local Universities. Through my communications, I met the Vice Chancellor of Fiji National University who helped me connect to key contacts, community representatives, educators, administrators and relevant stakeholders. After numerous emails and telephone conversations,

53 UNDESA, (2019), United Nations Disability and Development Report 2018.

54 Fiji Society for the Blind. See: Youth Policy Toolbox, (2016), "The Fiji Society for the Blind- Fiji." [yptoolbox.unescapsdd.org, https://yptoolbox.unescapsdd.org/portfolio/fiji-society-blind-fiji/](https://yptoolbox.unescapsdd.org/https://yptoolbox.unescapsdd.org/portfolio/fiji-society-blind-fiji/).

these meetings led to securing my focus groups and individual interviews.

## Research Methods

The objectives of the study were:

- To identify the barriers that Fijian blind and visually impaired students face at school, work, and in their community;
- To learn whether assistive technology is utilized at schools and work, and whether accessible mobile applications are used by people living with vision loss;
- To identify whether working age adults with vision loss contribute to the work force;
- To understand what supports are in place for vision teachers.

I wanted the research process to be interactive and welcoming to encourage open dialog and sharing. To help guide the discussions, I designed two separate questionnaires, one for educators and the other for students and working age adults. I felt that this would be the best method to capture participant's thoughts, feelings and experiences.



## Sample semi-structured questionnaire:

1. What age group do you fit into?
  - 18-22
  - 23-27
  - 28-31
  - 32-36
  - 37 and above
2. Please define your level of vision.
  - Low vision in both eyes
  - Low vision in one eye
  - Blind in left eye
  - Blind in right eye
  - Totally blind
3. Are there any barriers to accessing government or community services in Fiji?
4. Do you participate in recreational activities? Are they accessible to you?
5. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
6. What is your level of awareness about assistive technology?
7. How is disability perceived in Fiji?
8. In your opinion, what are the perceptions about blindness in Fiji?
9. Do you feel that there are adequate services in place for blind and visually impaired people in Fiji? E.g., education, housing, student grants, job opportunities?
10. What do you want the mainstream to know about people living with vision loss?

Prior to beginning the research, I was required to complete three ethical reviews with Royal Roads University, the Fijian Ministry of Education and the University of the South Pacific. This was to ensure that all ethical considerations were thought out before gathering primary data. I carried out a variety of face-to-face interviews and focus groups with teachers, youth and working age adults age 19 and above. Telephonic interviews were conducted with participants who were unable to meet in person due to their geographic lo-

cation. While the majority of participants that I met resided in Suva, the capital city, I was also able to meet others in Nadi, on the western side of the main island. While each participant shared their individual challenges about the realities of living with vision loss, I was humbled and inspired to witness their strength, determination, resilience and tenacity.

## Reflexivity

As a Fijian-born Canadian woman living with vision loss, I found this experience to be eye opening in many ways. The participants, especially the young adults, were very candid in sharing their thoughts, challenges and experiences. They openly discussed the systemic barriers that exist in Fiji, and they expressed their desire for change. The fact that I had roots in Fiji, and that I am personally living with vision loss appeared to not only inspire them, but it also offered an additional level of trust towards me. They expressed their gratitude and felt inspired to meet a fellow Fijian woman with vision loss in this capacity.

For me, going to Fiji as a researcher, from a developed country like Canada, firstly gave me a sense of gratitude as there is a level of privilege for people with disabilities, who reside in developed countries compared to underdeveloped countries. For instance, there is often better infrastructure and access to government and community programs, unlimited access to public transit, audible signals, mandatory building requirements and wheelchair ramps. Access to assistive technology training, career development programs for job seekers with different abilities and professional development opportunities for vision teachers are also more readily available. I took this into account when interpreting the data, as it allowed me to reflect on my own personal and professional development which in return helped me determine what I could do in my own capacity to make a difference and create positive change.

## Key Findings

Some of the common themes that were found from the study included:

- *Lack of inclusive and accessible transportation:* 95% of participants disclosed their frustrations around bus travel within their communities as well as long distance travel. Currently, the government provides a \$40 preapproved travel card for people with disabilities which allows unlimited travel. Once the \$40 has been utilized, the user has to wait until the following month to top up their card. This system causes a huge barrier for those who have to travel to other towns for medical appointments, job interviews, or other purposes.
- *Lack of JAWS licenses:* Some of the participants reported that they were using pirated versions of the screen reader, which caused challenges with new updates and functionality with other computer applications.
- *Lack of familiarity with useful mobile applications:* While most participants had access to a smart phone, the majority had limited knowledge about useful applications that could benefit them with tasks related to school, work, and daily life.
- *Limited orientation and mobility teacher training:* In Suva, there was only one teacher who received minimal training through an Australian NGO. There was no funding to hire her, therefore, she taught students on a voluntary basis on an as-needed basis.
- *Limited orientation and mobility training for individuals living with vision loss:* Currently, Fiji does not have a formal orientation and mobility program in place. Individuals who require cane training receive informal training from a local advocacy group.

## Recommendations

- To engage with the Fijian government to help develop a policy for a universal transportation system and offer a bus pass that allows unlimited travel throughout the island for people with vision loss.
- To collaborate with the Ministry of Education and local NGOs to purchase JAWS and other adaptive technology licenses to be used in schools and local community agencies to support the enhancement of technology skills, education, career development skills and secure employment.
- To develop and deliver an empowerment program for girls and women focused on confidence building, communications, career and life skills and technology training.
- To work with the Canadian government to support researchers with disabilities to pursue international research projects and participate in high level meetings that promote the advancement of women with disabilities as part of the United Nation's 2030 agenda to leave no one behind and have our voices heard.
- To explore opportunities to have local Fijian teachers receive orientation and mobility training and create a formalized orientation program for learners living with vision loss.

# Residential Addiction Treatment: Opportunities for Women's Equality and Empowerment

## SDG Tracker



Written by Margot Sangster<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Margot Sangster has over twenty-five years of professional experience in international development, public health, labour force development, refugee/immigrant settlement, etc. She earned a Master's Degree in Counselling Psychology. Margot currently works in residential addictions treatment and previously worked with Vancouver Coastal Health.

**Name of organization:** Pacifica Treatment Centre and Heartwood Centre for Women

**Website:** [www.pacifica.ca](http://www.pacifica.ca)

**Geographical scope of the case study:** British Columbia, Canada

**SDG's:** SDG #3 (Health) and SDG #5 (Gender Equality)

**Program title:** Residential Treatment Addiction for Women

**Description of projects:** Intersectional, gender-responsive residential care and psychosocial support for female-identifying persons who are addicted to substances.

**Target population:** Female-identifying persons, including LGBTQ+ persons.

**Main activities:** Female-identifying persons are provided with accommodation, food and health care. They are also provided with gender-responsive psychosocial support and culturally-sensitive treatment for Indigenous clients in an individual or group format.

**Results:** These programs have helped many female-identifying persons overcome their addictions and have supported their reintegration into their families and communities.

## Introduction

The following case study highlights two residential addiction treatment programs Pacifica ([www.pacificatreatment.ca](http://www.pacificatreatment.ca)) and Heartwood ([www.bcmhsus.ca](http://www.bcmhsus.ca)) in Vancouver that accept women. Program details and best practices are included with the desire that new programs are developed and contribute to expanded access and empowerment for all women everywhere. Action Area 1.4 of *Canada's Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach* hopes that Global Affairs Canada and its partners, will gather ideas for future initiatives.<sup>55</sup>

In this case study, the two programs highlighted provide an example of how addressing the primary sustainable development goals (SDGs) #3 and #5 has spillover effects and creates rich interlinkages.

The SDGs involved are:

- SDG #1: End poverty in all its forms.
- SDG #2: End hunger.
- SDG #3: Ensure healthy lives and promote the well-being of all ages.
- SDG #5: Gender equality.

<sup>55</sup> Global Affairs Canada, *Canada's Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach*, (2019).

- SDG #10: Reduce inequalities.
- SDG #16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions.

Six of the seventeen SDGs are readily addressed in the two addiction treatment programs discussed. In this context, SDG #1 includes those who are homeless or whose income is consumed by purchasing drugs. SDG #2 highlights that during treatment three meals are provided daily. Some women connect to social assistance enhancing their food security after treatment. SDG #3 addresses mental and physical health, and a life free from addiction or at a minimum harm reduction. It also implies not dying from an overdose. SDG #5 and #10 require that all women have access to addiction treatment programs that meet their needs. Gender specific treatment programs were often limited to men in the past. SDG #16 is relevant because as women access either gender specific or fifty percent of co-ed treatment beds, this facilitates inclusive societies and institutions.

This case study is illustrative of working across silos i.e. gender and the health sector.<sup>56</sup> The two addiction treatment programs in this case study are examples of working across sectors, as sometimes clients go to the publicly-funded Heartwood first and then to the not-for-profit Pacifica, or vice versa. Working across scales also takes place as clients originate in Vancouver, elsewhere in British Columbia, and sometimes from other provinces like Alberta or Ontario.

<sup>56</sup> The case study methodology included document review, direct observation, and expert interview. The author is employed with Pacifica and has worked in this field for fifteen years including with Vancouver Coastal Health. An expert interview took place with Melanie Hall, the Heartwood Clinical Services Manager.

## Background and Context

The following table summarizes the two treatment programs and their best practices. Pacifica and Heartwood are the only residential addictions treatment programs in Vancouver. There is a long-standing tradition in Vancouver of being cutting edge when it comes to addiction treatment. These two programs belie that reputation. In addition, because these programs receive full or partial public funding access is possible for most. This is not the case in all regions of Canada. Pacifica accepts females, males, trans females, trans males and non-binary identifying persons. Heartwood is for female-identifying clients only, including trans women, and some non-binary individuals.

## Achievements, Challenges and Innovations

Both programs are providing much needed holistic residential addiction treatment services for British Columbia residents, including for women and those who identify as women. This ensures equal access to treatment for women. For some Pacifica clients, this is the first time they have participated in residential treatment. For other clients this may be their second or one of many attempts. One example of success is a client whom after ten attempts at sobriety and recovery finally achieved success at Pacifica. In addition, the treatment offered in both programs is trauma informed. “Trauma-informed services take into account knowledge of the impact of trauma and integrate this knowledge into all aspects of service delivery.”<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps the greatest challenge for both programs is that residential treatment is not available, upon demand. Pacifica always has a waitlist. Another challenge is when there are many complex trauma clients in treatment at one time, issues such as gossiping, wolf-packing, and lateral/verbal violence can increase.

<sup>57</sup> Harris, M. and R.D. Fallot, (2001), as cited in Gendering the National Framework, Trauma-informed Approaches in Addictions Treatment, British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health.

	<b>PACIFICA TREATMENT CENTRE</b>	<b>HEARTWOOD CENTRE FOR WOMEN</b>
<b>ORGANIZATION TYPE</b>	Not-for-profit	Public: PHSA (Provincial Health Services Authority) – BC Branch of Mental Health and Addiction Services.
<b>LOCATION</b>	Community: Vancouver, BC, Canada	BC Children’s and Women’s Hospital: Vancouver, BC, Canada
<b>FUNDING</b>	75% public through health authorities (i.e. free)/25% private (e.g. self-paying, union, employee assistance program, etc.)	100% publicly funded.
<b>HISTORY</b>	43 years in operation. Many program modifications over the years.	7 years in operation.
<b>PHILOSOPHY</b>	Trauma informed, 100% abstinence, client centered, strength based.	Trauma informed, abstinence but will work with a lapse, feminist, whole-person, strength based.
<b>SUBSTANCES</b>	Treatment provided for all substances.	Treatment provided for all substances.
<b>OPIOID REPLACEMENT THERAPIES</b>	Accepted. These may include methadone (methadose) or buprenorphine (suboxone).	Accepted. These may include methadone (methadose) or buprenorphine (suboxone).
<b>PROGRAM DURATION</b>	12 weeks although private clients may stay for 4, 6, 8, 10, or 12 weeks.	12 weeks tertiary care including 2 weeks stabilization/10 weeks of treatment.
<b>INTAKE</b>	Continuous.	Continuous.
<b>REFERRALS</b>	BC residents with addictions issues and a few clients attend from out of province.	BC female residents with mental health and addictions issues including those with a stabilized eating disorder.
<b>GENDER IDENTITY</b>	Co-ed including people who identify as trans females, trans males, and non-binary persons. Active eating disorders not accepted.	Women only including people who identify as trans females. People identifying as non-binary are accepted on a case by case basis because a lot of the programming is through a gendered lens.
<b>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</b>	Heterosexual, homosexual, or bi-sexual.	Heterosexual, homosexual, or bi-sexual.
<b># CLIENTS</b>	35 women and men, 19 years old and up.	30 women, 19 years old and up.
<b>FACILITY</b>	Private rooms with three meals per day; smoking not allowed on site but there are five scheduled off-site smoke breaks per day.	Shared rooms (i.e. 2 or 4 to a room) with three meals per day; smoking is allowed.
<b>PROGRAM COMPONENTS</b>	Instruction sessions; orientation and process groups; case management; 1-1 counselling; family days; recovery meetings; drama, art, writing, and music therapy; mindfulness; TED talks; daily physical activity (e.g. yoga, walking, running, gym, fitness classes, swimming, etc.); field trips, etc.	Psychoeducational sessions, group therapy, family sessions (weekly), physical activities, mindfulness, etc.
<b>SAMPLE INSTRUCTION TOPICS</b>	Relapse prevention, window of tolerance, boundaries, assertiveness, secure attachment, toxic shame, spirituality, forgiveness, gender specific sessions, non-violent communication, etc.	Relapse prevention, emotional regulation, mindfulness skills, trauma, substance use, women’s wellness and substance use, spirituality and recovery, indigenous talking circle, indigenous medicine wheel, etc. Resources: Seeking Safety, Dialectical Behavior Treatment, etc.
<b>RECOVERY MEETINGS</b>	Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Codependents Anonymous, SMART, LifeRing secular recovery, etc.	Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous.
<b>STAFFING</b>	Counsellors (5); doctor (1 day); nurse (1/2 day); activity coordinator; art/drama/music/writing therapists (part-time).	Social workers (4), dietician, indigenous care coordinator (2 days); doctor (4 days part-time), psychiatrist (2 days part-time), nurse, recreation therapist; acupuncturist, art/music therapists, yoga teacher (part-time). All direct staff female.



And finally, both programs recognize that their programs do not meet the unique needs of some trans clients.

In addition to being trauma informed, both programs are innovative in many other ways. Both programs adhere to a holistic perspective on healing that includes the emotional, mental, physical, and social aspects of recovery. This is addressed through critically important instruction topics, process groups, daily physical activity, and complementary therapies such as music and art therapy. Pacifica also offers drama and writing therapy. Mindfulness is another innovative program addition to both programs. That said, it is critically important to be mindful of the trauma clients may have experienced and ensure they have choice, as argued by Treleaven.<sup>58</sup> At Pacifica, Marshal Rosenberg's non-violent communication is offered as an important new tool for clients' day-to-day functioning whether in treatment or in other aspects of their life. All of Heartwood's programming is delivered through a gendered lens. For example, this may be particularly salient when female clients deal with guilt and shame related to having had their children removed by the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

The Heartwood Program Manager stated a women's residential addictions treatment program is needed for a number of reasons including: 1) safety and readiness for treatment 2) people use for different reasons 3) safer for women because there are no men present (i.e. there is less triggering, distraction, and co-dependent acting out). For some, a women's only program allows them to focus exclusively on their addiction without the added concern of male clients. For other women, Pacifica provides an opportunity for women to access psychosocial support while also addressing their addiction. The operative word is choice. Pacifica and Heartwood also have very different housing options. For some women this is an important consideration. Some female clients report not being able to

function without a private room whereas this may not be the case for others. One female recently reported she preferred sharing a room. Once again, what is most important is choice. Most women receiving addictions treatment have experienced trauma of one form or another. As such, part of a women's healing journey is reclaiming their right to safety as they define it. And in so doing they become empowered! Finally, it is also important to acknowledge that Heartwood hired a part-time indigenous care coordinator to ensure culturally sensitive treatment for its indigenous clients. This is very important as we attempt to advance reconciliation in Canada.

## Conclusion

Both of the programs discussed are making outstanding contributions to residential addictions treatment for women through assisting them to overcome the feelings, issues and behavior patterns that initially led them to addiction and continue to keep them stuck in a cycle of using. What makes these two programs unique is the extent to which they are trauma-informed. The question to be asked is not what is wrong with the woman rather what happened to her. Other program highlights include designing programs exclusively for women; offering co-ed programs that include gender specific programming; integrating mindfulness, non-violent communication, art/music/writing/drama therapy; and allowing women to attend programs while using opioid replacement therapies. Feeling ashamed is what leads many women to use harmful substances that rob them of their dignity and dreams and, in too many cases, their lives. Addiction treatment must help women rediscover their inherent self-worth and empower them to begin the journey towards self-empathy and self-love. Both treatment programs are inclusive and welcome women, and those who identify as women, of all sexual orientations. Utilizing an intersectional lens is important! For many women, the impact of gender inequality is compounded by other forms of discrimination including race, disability, prejudice against Indigenous

---

<sup>58</sup> For more information about trauma-sensitive-mindfulness, refer to Treleaven,

D.A: <https://davidtreleaven.com/>

peoples,<sup>59</sup> gender identity, sexual orientation, class, age, religion and spirituality, etc. The Women's Equity Strategy states "Applying an intersectional lens to developing programs, services and policies considers this differential impact and aims to address it."<sup>60</sup> Racism, homophobia, sexism, ageism or any form of discrimination are unacceptable.

Growth may occur on the psychological, intellectual, physical, social or spiritual level. Women may live to see another day, gain a place to call and make home, connect with ongoing counselling services perhaps for the first time in their lives, reconnect with loved ones, choose to leave or not engage in abusive relationships, engage in career exploration testing, or simply enjoy a peaceful life. And still, it often takes time for people including women to reclaim their lives from the jaws of addiction. What is most important is women have equal access to programs that meet their needs and empower them to learn to make wise choices which respect their authentic self. This shift reflects the intersectional nature of identity. Then women will be sober and create a sustainable recovery and be able to reclaim their rightful place in society and enjoy the rewards the sustainable development goals afford.



<sup>59</sup> City of Vancouver, (2018), *Vancouver: A City For All Women, Women's Equity Strategy 2018 – 2028*.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.6

## Recommendations

- Offer a variety of residential addictions treatment program models including women only and co-ed, if culturally appropriate. Ensure all direct staff are female, for women only programs.
- Ensure all addiction treatment programs are trauma-informed; anything less may serve to further traumatize an already traumatized population.
- Allow opioid replacement therapies to be used during treatment.
- Ask clients during intake if they prefer their one-to-one therapist be of a particular gender or sexual orientation, if possible.
- Utilize an intersectional identity perspective in recovery.
- Include a family component in all residential addictions treatment. Addressing addiction in isolation and without ongoing support is a set up for relapse.
- Include gender-specific instruction sessions in co-ed addictions treatment programs including topics such as constructions of gender, intimate partner violence, eating disorders, etc.
- Expand programming options for those identifying as trans-females. They may feel alienated in sessions intended for women who have lived their whole lives identifying as such.
- Include mindfulness in addiction treatment programs.
- Hire an indigenous care coordinator if Indigenous clients attend addictions treatment programs.

## Section 4



# Participation, Accountability and Gender-responsive Institutions

# Gender Inequality in Canada – A review of BMO’s transition to a gender equal organization

## SDG Tracker



Written by Kaila Borrelli<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Kaila Borrelli is a Program Manager in the telecommunication industry where she manages and oversees construction projects across Western Canada. She currently serves on the Board of Directors of the British Columbia Council for International Cooperation as their treasurer.

**Name of private sector company:** Bank of Montreal

**Website:** <https://www.bmo.com/main/personal>

**Geographical scope of the case study:** Canada

**Sustainable Development Goals:** SDG 4 – Quality Education, 5 – Achieve Gender Equality, SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 9 – Industry and Infrastructure

**Project Title:** The Task Force on the Advancement of Women in the Bank

**Description of project:** An evaluation of the past status of the balance between men and women at BMO and the steps and initiatives implemented to increase the percentage of women in senior management and create a gender equal work environment.

**Target population:** Women working at BMO.

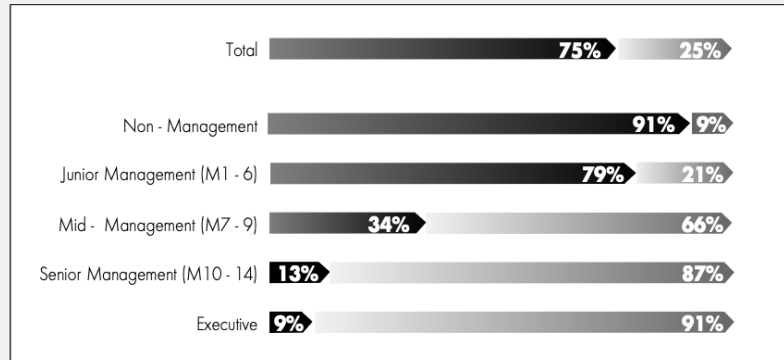
**Main activities:** Conducted surveys to understand the required changes, ensured women were at least 50% of participants in training programs, offered support in finding childcare, implemented flexible working hours, documented career aspirations, and provided coaching to managers to help support the women in the business.

**Results:** An increase from 9% to 40% of senior managers at BMO are women.

### The Imbalance of Women and Men in the Bank

Three-quarters of our 28,000 full-time and part-time permanent employees are women, yet only 9% of executives and 13% of senior managers are women. The President asked the Task Force to find ways to correct the imbalance.

■ Women ■ Men



*The Imbalance of Woman and Men at different levels of management in 1991*

Canada is often viewed as a country that is generally advanced in terms of gender equality compared to many other countries. However, one area where Canada still has a major gender gap is in managerial positions in the workplace, particularly in the private sector. This review will explore the status of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 - Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Girls, in Canada within the private sector. More specifically, the focus will be on target 5.5 - ensure women's full participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life and Indicator 5.5.2 - Proportion of women in managerial positions. This review will also look at the intersection between SDG 4 - Quality Education, SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth, and SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure.<sup>61</sup>

The gender wage gap has been clearly documented. Statscan shows that women in Canada make \$0.87 for every dollar earned by men.<sup>62</sup> In a report published in 2017 by the CBC, it stated that "Despite outnumbering men at university and colleges, women make up just under half of all entry-level employees but only 25 per cent of vice-presidents and 15 per cent of CEOs."<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, women are 30% less likely than men to

get promoted out of an entry-level position and 60% less likely to move from middle management into the executive ranks.

In 1991 BMO published a report to their employees entitled "The Task Force on the Advancement of Women in the Bank".<sup>64</sup> This report highlighted the common misconceptions their employees held about why there was such a large gap in the percentage of men and women in senior management positions which were then compared to the facts collected through their employee statistics and surveys. The top reasons employees believed that there were less women than men in senior management positions included: Women are less committed to their careers because of familial obligations; women needing to be better educated to compete with men; and that in time more women would naturally advance to senior levels.<sup>65</sup> BMO then presented the facts supporting the root cause of the gender gap in their organization, which proved that the previously listed examples were all inaccurate and that women did in fact have fewer opportunities and more barriers to advancement in the organization. The president's message in the report stated "We are embarking on an adventure, all of us together. It's all

61 The Global Goals for Sustainable Development, "The 17 Goals", <https://www.globalgoals.org/>.

62 Statistics Canada, (2019), The Gender Wage Gap in 2018.

63 Evans, (2017), "How much does gender inequality cost Canada? \$150B, report finds", CBC News, 21 June, 2016.

64 I believe this case study to be one of the best examples of change within a large Canadian company to research and implement initiatives to achieve gender equality.

65 Bank of Montreal, (1991), Report to Employees: The Task Force on The Advancement of Women in the Bank, p. 6.

ready exciting and it's going to be rewarding. In our Bank, in the near future, women and men will work and compete and succeed on a fully equal basis.”<sup>66</sup>

Almost 30 years later in 2019, BMO Financial Groups became the first Canadian company to sign the UN Women Empowerment Principles (WEPs).<sup>67</sup> The WEPs provide a gender lens through which businesses can analyze their current initiatives, benchmarks, and reporting practices.<sup>68</sup> Then businesses can tailor or establish policies and practices to realize gender equality and women's empowerment. BMO also created a \$3 billion fund for women-owned business in 2018, which supports local Canadian women in leading businesses.<sup>69</sup> This fund goes beyond financial services and capital to these organizations to provide innovative educational programs and sponsors conferences that focus on women entrepreneurs. Just recently, in early February 2020, the Brandon Hall Group awarded BMO with a Gold Award in the best Advance in Executive Development category for their LEDGE leadership program, which is designed for their most senior leaders in the organization.<sup>70</sup> Although it is not specifically tailored to women, this program was designed to continue developing the senior managers of the organization and continue to bring women into the highest levels of management.

BMO was able to make this change to a more gender-equal company by implementing specific initiatives and programs to gradually make this transition. One of the major initiatives that they implemented was to highlight personal potential within their existing employees by creating a formal record of employee's career aspirations and to train managers to better coach

their team members to achieve their highest potential. This allowed women who were previously being looked over for management roles to formally communicate their career goal and set a plan in motion for what training they would require getting there. Other initiatives employed were to expand career opportunities by ensuring 50% representation of women in the Bank's training and development programs, increase the diversity of training programs available, publicize job opportunities internally and implement cross training and an executive mentorship program that allow managers to work with executives to exchange ideas.<sup>71</sup> By having jobs formally publicized internally, this allowed women to apply for more senior positions that historically were not advertised to them. In a recent study done by the McKinsey group, it was found that fewer than 35% of organizations offer interventions to support and develop women. However, organizations that are leading in gender equality have developed formal mentorship programs to develop more female leaders.<sup>72</sup> This also intersects with the SDG 4 – Quality Education. By providing better educational programs and ensuring an equal participation of women, BMO was able to provide quality education to more women in the organization and ensure they were getting adequate training to prepare them for higher levels of management.

In order to support employees who were managing multiple commitments – such as providing primary care to others or attending education outside of work – BMO also implemented several policies to help their employees have a balanced lifestyle. For example, they established referral services that helped employees find childcare services in their local communities across Canada and they developed a new HR policy that allowed managers to give employees special time off for family, education, or community activities.<sup>73</sup>

66 Bank of Montreal, (1991), Report to Employees: The Task Force on The Advancement of Women in the Bank, p. 2.

67 Bank of Montreal, (2017), “BMO Financial Group Becomes First Canadian Bank to Sign the UN Women's Empowerment Principles”, BMO News Room, September 26, 2016.

68 Ibid.

69 Sobic, (2019), “BMO's \$3-billion fund for women owned businesses taps into segment growing faster than any other”, Financial Post, 1 November 1, 2019.

70 Bank of Montreal, (2020), “BMO wins Brandon Hall Gold Award for excellence in leadership development”, BMO Corporate Responsibility, February 6, 2020.

71 Bank of Montreal, (1991), Report to Employees: The Task Force on The Advancement of Women in the Bank.

72 McKinsey and Company, (2019), Women Matter: The present and future of women at work in Canada.

73 Bank of Montreal, (1991), Report to Employees: The Task Force on The Advancement of Women in the Bank.

As women are still the primary caregivers and spend more than double the time caring for children and doing housework compared to men, despite often working a full-time job, this had a large impact on women being able to move up to high positions.<sup>74</sup> Providing support and options for women with dependents is a substantial contributor to achieving SDG 5 of Gender Equality by providing equity for women who are burdened with extra, unpaid work. All of these initiatives led BMO to increase the number of women in senior management from 9% to 40%, which demonstrates that with the correct initiatives and the mandate to do so, improving gender equality is achievable.<sup>75</sup>

There is also a business case for gender equality in the private sector. Even companies with only 30% of senior managers being women show up to 6 percentage points more in profits compared to companies with no women in senior managements.<sup>76</sup> In addition, having a demonstrated track record for gender inclusivity and diversity in a company is important for attracting the best talent, as most female candidates take this into consideration when looking into job opportunities. One of the biggest benefits to companies that have gender equality is that diverse teams are more likely to be balanced, as well as develop more innovative ideas and be more creative.<sup>77</sup> Creating this balance and improved team dynamics also intersects with the SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. Diversification and innovation are what are driving the top organizations to be able to better compete within their industries and improve profitability.

On a larger scale, it is estimated that advancing gender equality will increase global GDP by \$12 trillion by 2025.<sup>78</sup> A study from 2017 reported that actions taken

to decrease gender inequality in the workplace could benefit Canada's economy up to \$150 billion by 2026, which is not a long return on investment. The study also estimated that if the gender gap was eliminated, Canada's economy could rise to \$420 billion.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, by achieving gender equality in the private sector, we will also be able to contribute to the SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth. Having a better balance of women and men in senior management positions will improve the opportunities for women to access decent work, instead of staying at entry level positions, and will aid Canada in continuing to strengthen and grow our economy.

However, without an executive leadership team that is making gender equality a priority for organizations, it is unlikely that companies will make the shift to bringing more women into management. This problem is engrained in a broader social framework within our society that is gradually shifting. As this transition builds momentum, more organizations are making commitments to make gender equality a corporate mission, but this change is slow. In order to achieve gender equality in the private sector and achieve the SDGs, organizations need to implement specific plans for bringing women up to all levels of senior management, otherwise they will be left behind by organizations that are currently making this a priority.

---

74 Bresge, (2018), "Gender gap in unpaid labour means women work 'double shift', experts say", National Post, 31 July, 2010.

75 Bank of Montreal, (2019), "BMO Financial Group Named to Bloomberg's Gender-Equality Index for Fourth Year in a Row." January 16, 2019.

76 Peterson Institute for International Economics. (2016). Is Gender Diversity Profitable? Evidence from a Global Survey.

77 Turban; Wu; Zhang, (2019), "When Gender Diversity Makes Firms More Productive", Harvard Business Review, February 11, 2019.

78 Woetzel, J et.al, (2015), "How advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth", McKinsey Global Institute, September 2015.

---

79 McKinsey and Company, (2017), The Power of Parity: Advancing Women's Equality in Canada.

## Recommendations

- Commitment at the executive level to make the shift toward a gender equal organization; without support of the top leaders, change will not be possible.
- Hire an expert to help develop a plan.
- Collect data to understand what percentage of men and women you have at each level within your organization in order to set targets.
- Conduct a survey with your employees to understand how the majority of the organization feels about the status of gender balance in your organization, what your employees believe to be the biggest barriers in their career growth and what changes they would like to see implemented.
- Based on the main requests from employees, develop a plan to implement multiple initiatives to increase the percentage of women in senior management.
- Develop programs to help employees taken on more responsibilities, such as childcare resources or flexible working hours as examples.
- Communicate the results or surveys, the facts and the plan to all members of the organization to be transparent about the ongoing changes.
- Implement, track and monitor progress over several years. During this process evaluate which initiatives are working, and adapt any that are not yielding results.
- Promote women when they are ready to take on the role. The purpose is not to immediately promote women in order to check off a box, but rather to select women who have communicated a desire to be a senior manager and support her with proper coaching and training to prepare her for the role.
- Do not expect results overnight, this is a long-term transition that takes time and requires a cultural shift within the organization



# Cities and Gender Case Studies at Commonwealth, National and Municipal Scales

## SDG Tracker



Written by Kristin Agnello<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Kristin Agnello is the founder and Director of Plassurban, an intersectional urban planning and design practice dedicated to addressing inequity in the built environment. Kristin is a Registered Professional Planner with the Canadian Institute of Planners and a member of the Planning Institute of British Columbia. She is the Regional Coordinator for the South Vancouver Island Chapter of the British Columbia Council for International Cooperation, Vice President (Canada) of the Commonwealth Association of Planners, Chair of the Commonwealth Women in Planning Network, and a TeachSDG Ambassador.

**Name of organization:** The Commonwealth Women in Planning Network & Canadian Institute of Planners

**Website:** [www.commonwealth-planners.org/cwip-network](http://www.commonwealth-planners.org/cwip-network).

**Geographical scope of the case studies:** Commonwealth, Canada and Vancouver Municipality

**SDG's:** SDG #5 (Gender Equality), SDG #11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), SDG #17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

**Project titles:** The Commonwealth Women in Planning Manifesto, Gender Equity Policy and Women's Equity Strategy.

**Description of projects:** The projects focus on enhancing women's participation in shaping the built environment and in participating equitably in internal practices and policies.

## Case Study at Commonwealth Scale - The Commonwealth Women in Planning Network

### Background

The Commonwealth Women in Planning (CWIP) Network focuses on gender equality and the participation of women in shaping the built environment. The Commonwealth Women in Planning Network is a part of the Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP). CAP is a major global institution in the worldwide promotion of urban planning as a fundamental part of governance for sustainable human settlement. CAP currently represents over 40,000 planners from 27 countries throughout the Commonwealth. In addition to the Commonwealth Women in Planning Network, CAP also supports a Commonwealth Young Planners Network. The Commonwealth Association of Planners is part of the Global Planners' Network and the UN-Habitat Cities Stakeholder Advisory Group. CAP works closely with the Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA), Commonwealth Engineers Council (CEC), Commonwealth Association of Surveying and Land Economy (CASLE) and others.

## The Commonwealth Women in Planning Manifesto



*Presenting the Commonwealth Women in Planning Manifesto at the Plan Africa Conference in Cape Town, South Africa.*

The Manifesto was conceptualized and drafted with input from 34 female planners across 10 countries, including planners in urban and rural communities, planners representing Indigenous communities and professionals from international, gender-based civil society organizations. The Manifesto was adopted and signed at the Commonwealth Association of Planners' Biennial Business Meeting held in Cape Town, South Africa on 14 October 2018. The Manifesto has since been endorsed by the Commonwealth Association of Planners, Canadian Institute of Planners, Royal Town Planning Institute (UK), Ghana Institute of Planners, Barbados Town Planning Society and New Zealand Planning Institute. The Manifesto garnered the attention and support in principle from numerous organizations, including UN-Habitat, Women in Cities International, Women Transforming Cities, and Women in Planning (UK). The development, presentation and promotion of the Manifesto has been led by a Victoria, BC-based planner who Chairs the Commonwealth Women in Planning Network and also sits as the Canadian Vice-President of the Commonwealth Association of Planners.

Implementation of the Manifesto will be focused on projects in three key areas: Networking and Outreach, Planning Education and Publications and Research. Development of an Action Plan is currently underway.

### Objective

The objective of the Manifesto is to ensure all self-identified women and girls have the social, economic and political power to shape and benefit from our shared built environment, making it safer, more prosperous and more inclusive of all members of society, particularly the most vulnerable. Women have a fundamental role to play as designers of, and active participants in, the built environment. Women's participation is essential in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda and the International Guidelines for Urban and Territorial Planning, in Canada and globally.

### Impact

The impact of gender inequality in planning, designing and occupying the built environment is intersectional and varied, contributing, in part, to:

- gender-based violence and vulnerability of women in public spaces;  
limited physical and social mobility, including unequal access to jobs, training,
- education and land or financial capital for entrepreneurial activities;
- prolongation of discriminatory social norms and policies, including limited rights to land title and use;
- decreased housing security and access to affordable housing;  
limited or inconsistent access to and use of public amenities, including public transportation, parks, roads and sanitation services, particularly for breastfeeding mothers and women travelling alone;
- inhospitable environments and lack of proximity contributes to uneven distribution of responsibilities for the burden of care and limitations for women;

- limitations regarding girls’ and women’s pursuit of non-traditional careers and majors and under-representation of women in the built environment professions.

## Relevant Interlinkages



The Commonwealth Women in Planning Network is dedicated to providing an intersectional, gender-based lens through which we can examine the built environment, advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and support women working in the planning profession to support inclusiveness and equality, as advocated for by the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement, and the Montreal Design Declaration.

The signing of the Commonwealth Women in Planning Manifesto, marked the first international commitment by planning associations across the Commonwealth to advancing the role of women as active participants in planning, designing and shaping the built environment. It is a call to action for planners worldwide to assume a leadership role, positioning themselves as ambassadors of women and girls, and calling for gender-inclusive, responsive, sustainable and equitable

built environments in the face of global challenges.

This Manifesto represents an international commitment to supporting gender equality in the built environment. The Manifesto has been endorsed by a number of global planning organizations, including the Canadian Institute of Planners, thus highlighting the commitment of these professional organizations toward achieving these aims. Through the Commonwealth Women in Planning Network, professionals can access the critical resources and support necessary to drive social change. The Commonwealth Women in Planning Network is currently drafting an Action Plan in order to support realization of the objectives of the Manifesto.

## Case Study at national scale: Gender Equity Policy - Canadian Institute of Planners

### Background

The Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) is dedicated to advancing gender equity within the organization and demonstrating best practices. CIP recognizes the necessity of taking an intersectional approach to addressing gender equity and is committed to being a model organization that supports fair and inclusive access to opportunities for everyone, regardless of gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, ability, family status, genetic characteristics or a conviction for which a pardon has been granted or a record suspended. The Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) works on behalf of over 7,000 planning professionals nationally. CIP maintains close relationships with all eleven planning Provincial and Territorial Institutes and Associations (PTIAs) across Canada. The PTIAs are responsible for governing the rights and responsibilities of their members and setting and upholding the criteria for professional planners within their jurisdictions. The Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) is a member of the Commonwealth Association of Planners and the Global Planners' Network. CIP is internationally-recognized for innovation and advocacy with the built environment and has been actively involved in the World Urban Forum, Habitat III and Planners for Climate Action (P4CA).

### The Canadian Institute of Planners' Gender Equity Policy

The Canadian Institute of Planners' Gender Equity Policy was approved on September 22, 2019. This policy is intended to advance CIP's work in continuing to integrate and advance gender equity into its internal practices and policies, including, but not limited to, strategic planning, governance, human resources, membership, programs and policies, awards and events. This policy, identified by the Board as a priority

in 2017, was developed with support from the CIP Social Equity and Diversity Committee. It was established to be consistent with the Commonwealth Women in Planning Manifesto, UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality), Sustainable Development Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and all applicable federal legislation related to gender equity, including Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+). The objective of this policy is that the Canadian Institute of Planners demonstrates gender equity best practices across its operations and programs, creating a welcoming, inclusive and fair professional environment with equitable access to resources and opportunities.

The Canadian Institute of Planners' Gender Equity Policy was initiated as a result of feedback from Global Affairs Canada and is reflective of the Government of Canada's commitment to advancing gender equality.<sup>1</sup> This internal policy provides direction to the Board and members of the Canadian Institute of Planners, which highlights the importance of considering gender in professional planning initiatives. The Canadian Institute of Planners is currently developing an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy, anticipated to be completed in May, 2020.

This policy is focused on the governance structure of the CIP and its Board to ensure that opportunities at the Institute are fair and balanced. This policy is also intended to raise awareness of gender equity in the built environment and advance education with members.



<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada, (2019), Advancing gender equality and empowering women and girls.

## Case Study at Municipal Scale: The Women's Equity Strategy

### Background

"Because it's 2016: Action on Gender Equality" was the Vancouver City Council motion that inspired the development of an updated women's equity strategy and provided the opportunity to consider our work in light of the persistent issue of women's inequality in our community. The result is Vancouver: A City for All Women, Women's Equity Strategy 2018-2028.<sup>2</sup> The City of Vancouver is currently undertaking a number of related initiatives that support the direction of the Women's Equity Strategy around the Greater Vancouver Region. These include a Healthy City Strategy, Direct Social Services Grants, Sex Work Response Guidelines, City of Vancouver Capital Plan, Childcare Program Development and Stabilization Grants, Joint Childcare Council, Childcare Research, Policy Development, and Innovation Grant, and Housing Vancouver Strategy. The City of Vancouver set out to develop a comprehensive intersectional gender equity strategy that builds upon the City's Gender Equity Strategy (2005) and proposes measurable short and long-term goals for every municipal department. The Strategy was developed through consultations with subject matter experts, extensive engagement with the City of Vancouver's Women's Advisory Committee, City staff, as well as public input, research and consultation with other organizations, including municipalities.<sup>3</sup>

### Vancouver: A city for All Women, Women's Equity Strategy

Vancouver: A City for All Women is a 10-year strategy that recognizes the current shifting political and social landscape. Five key priority areas have been identified in the Strategy: Intersectional Lens, Safety, Childcare, Housing, and Leadership and Representation. Within each priority area, a number of Phase 1 Actions were

identified for 2018-2019 and a progress report was submitted to Council in 2019.

Four key strategies have been identified for implementation of the Women's Equity Strategy<sup>4</sup>: Education and Awareness, Policy, Data, and Partnerships and Collaboration. This Strategy is unique in that it is positioned within a series of related policies and municipal priorities, including intersectionality, women's safety, childcare, housing, and leadership and representation. City of Vancouver Staff reported to Council in April 2019, noting that a number of initiatives were currently underway across all five priority areas. Completed projects included:<sup>5</sup>

- Participation in UN Women's Global Flagship Initiative, "Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces," including commencement of a scoping study on women's safety;
- Publicly recognizing the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence;
- Facilitated discussions between the Departments of Engineering Services and Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability and the Women's Advisory Committee;
- Creation of an inter-departmental team, including representatives from the Vancouver Police Department, Board of Parks and Recreation, Engineering Services, Legal, City Manager's Office, Vancouver Fire and Rescue Services and Arts, Culture and Community Services. This team meets monthly;
- Contributed input from the Women's Equity Strategy consultations for consideration in the City's updated childcare strategy; and
- Contributed input from the Women's Equity Strategy consultations for consideration in the implementation of the Housing Vancouver Strategy.

<sup>2</sup> City of Vancouver, (2018), Women's Equity Strategy 2018 – 2028.

<sup>3</sup> @CityofVancouver

[www.vancouver.ca/people-programs/womens-equity-strategy.aspx](http://www.vancouver.ca/people-programs/womens-equity-strategy.aspx)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> City of Vancouver, (2019), Interim Report - Women's Equity and Trans, Gender Variant and Two-Spirit Inclusion.

This gender strategy reflects the City of Vancouver's vision to make Vancouver a place where all women have full access to the resources provided in the city and have opportunities to fully participate in the political, economic, cultural, and social life of Vancouver. Vancouver's Women's Equity Strategy<sup>6</sup> recognizes the current shifting political and social landscape with respect to five priority areas: intersectional lens, women's safety, childcare, housing, and leadership and representation. This Strategy is structured around a series of measurable targets and deliverables within each priority area. The City of Vancouver has committed to being accountable to the goals and objectives outlined within the Strategy, measuring progress and reporting out regularly.

## Relevant Interlinkages

This project is unique in its alignment with a number of the City of Vancouver's related policies and initiatives, including the City's Healthy City Strategy, Childcare Strategy and Housing Strategy. This strategy has been designed to have measurable short and long-term goals in every municipal department. Realization of the Sustainable Development Goals will be dependent upon localization of the goals in municipal planning policies, strategies and initiatives.<sup>7</sup> To ensure accountability for implementation, this Strategy was linked to existing City goals. Staff incorporated SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound) goals, and it included a requirement for regular progress reports.

## Recommendations

- At Commonwealth, national and provincial levels, women should be supported to assume leadership roles in planning, designing and shaping a more gender-inclusive, responsive, sustainable and equitable build environment.
- Effective policies on gender equality and women's empowerment cannot be developed without encouraging women's meaningful participation and leadership, and until these policies are put into practice, there is still much left to do;
- Multi-stakeholder collaboration mechanisms should be established in order to facilitate consultation and research on gender and equities policies;
- An in depth understanding of intersectionality is required in order to ensure that built environments are responsive to the differential needs of men and women from different communities and positionalities.

<sup>6</sup> City of Vancouver, (2018), Vancouver: A City for All Women. Vancouver's Equity Strategy 2018-2028.

<sup>7</sup> Agnello and Muir-Owen, (2018), Global Goals, Local Plans: Achieving an International Agenda through Local Action, *Planning West*, 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Issue: 60(4), pg. 9-11.

# Cuso International in South East Asia – Adapting Canada’s Contemporary Feminist Approach

Written by Dina Vivona<sup>1</sup> with contributions from Ariel Mishkin<sup>2</sup> for Cuso International



<sup>1</sup> Dina Vivona completed a one year placement as a Cuso International volunteer in Laos where she worked as a Project Management Advisor for three organizations across separate development sectors; the Lao Federation of Trade Unions, the Gender Development Association, and the Cuso International Country Program Office.

<sup>2</sup> Ariel Mishkin is a member of the BCCIC’s Board of Directors and is currently volunteering with CUSO International to support Indigenous women’s climate justice work in Laos as a Research and Communications Advisor.



**Name of organization:** Cuso International

**Website:** <https://cusointernational.org/>

**Geographical scope of the case study:** Laos (and South East Asia)

**Sustainable Development Goals:** Cuso International’s strategic program works directly towards the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals 1 (No Poverty) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities). However, Cuso projects also cover SDGs 3 (Good-Health & Well-Being), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth), and 13 (Climate Action).

**Project title:** Volunteers for International Cooperation and Empowerment (VOICE) 2015-2020

**Description of project:** VOICE is focused on achieving three objectives targeting Access to Quality Health Services (AQHS), Inclusive Sustainable Economic Growth (ISEG), and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

**Target population:** 17 countries across three continents; Africa, South East Asia, Latin American & the Caribbean

**Main activities:** (1) Promote greater citizen participation, ensuring the voice of poor and marginalized people is heard and has an influence on government decision-making at the local, regional, state, and national levels; (2) Build the capacity of government to respond to the voice of poor and marginalized people and integrate it into their planning processes, policy development and service delivery; (3) Strengthen the internal governance processes of our local partners, ensuring integration of the principles of equity, inclusion, transparency, and accountability at the organizational level and within their AQHS, ISEG, and GESI programs and services.

**Results:** 1080 Volunteers (678 female, 402 male, 907 Canadians) placed in VOICE project areas between 2015 and 2019; 81 International Volunteers placed in VOICE project areas in Laos (not including e-Volunteers); improved skills and strengthened capacities among all VOICE partners.

## Background

Cuso International, formerly CUSO (Canadian University Service Overseas), is an Ottawa-based not-for-profit development organization that works to fight poverty and inequality across Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin American, the Caribbean and Canada's North.

Since 1961, Cuso has envisioned a world where all people are able to realize their potential, develop their skills, and participate fully in society. Cuso's development framework harnesses the power of volunteerism to foster mutual knowledge exchange, capacity-building and empowerment. Using a people-centered approach, experienced Canadian professionals are connected with Cuso partners across the world to contribute their skills to a variety of project areas, and support communities as champions of their own change. Aligning its programming objectives with both Canadian and International development priorities, Cuso projects focus on advancing gender equality and empowering women and girls; improving access and quality of economic opportunities for young people and engaging volunteers to help achieve its own Strategic Development Goals.

## Volunteers for Development (V4D) – How it Works

Cuso International works collaboratively with partner organizations, donors, governments and civil society to achieve shared development objectives in the areas of equitable, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and access to quality basic services. At the heart of Cuso's Theory for Change are skilled and committed volunteers who contribute to meaningful impact by supporting the work of local communities. This is the basis of the Cuso *Volunteers for Development (V4D)* framework. Underpinning the contributions of Cuso volunteers from across Canada and around the world, are the values of solidarity, reciprocity, respect, collaboration and a genuine commitment to making a difference.

The V4D framework includes seven innovative placement programs that accommodate a varying level of volunteer capacities and commitment levels; North-South volunteering; South-South volunteering; North American volunteering; E-volunteering; National volunteering; Diasporas for Development volunteering; and Corporate & Institutional volunteering. Volunteer placements cover a diversity of job sectors from health and education to natural resource management, and these can range from short-term (3-6 months) to long-term (1-2 years) contracts.



The volunteer selection process works much like a traditional job application, but overseas placements include a rigorous 'pre-departure training program' to ensure volunteers are prepared for all aspects of transitioning to a new job and environment. Upon completing the online application, volunteer candidates are shortlisted through a preliminary telephone interview. Once the initial screening is complete, candidates are invited to participate in a panel interview at Cuso Headquarters. The interview is designed to assess if potential volunteers have the interpersonal skills essential for successful placements. The Cuso Skills for Success include; self-assurance, flexibility and adaptability, sensitivity to the needs of others, ability to work in a team, the desire to learn and help others learn and a positive and realistic commitment to volunteering.



After the suitability of candidates is confirmed by both the Cuso selection committee and the partner organization overseas, new volunteers begin their preparations for departure and complete the in-house *Skills for Working in Development* (SKWID) training. Once volunteers arrive in-country, they are welcomed by the Country Programme Office team who takes them through a two-week In-Country Orientation (ICO). ICO provides a cultural and contextual overview and covers a series of topics such as health and safety, security, logistics and visas. Depending on the location of placements, some ICO's are accompanied by an intensive 'survival' language course. Upon the completion of the placement, returning volunteers are invited back to Cuso Headquarters for *Re-Integration*. Although Re-Integration is optional, it provides an opportunity for volunteers to share their experiences, navigate any 'reverse culture shock' and provide useful feedback to Cuso on ensuring the quality of future placements.

## **Volunteers for International Cooperation and Empowerment (VOICE)**

In 2015, Cuso International launched its VOICE Project in 17 countries across Africa, South East Asia, Latin American and the Caribbean. Between 2015 and 2019, Cuso placed a total of 1080 volunteers in VOICE project areas. VOICE volunteers were comprised of 678 females, 402 males, and 907 Canadians.

With the financial support of Global Affairs Canada, the five year project aimed to target development in three key areas; Access to Quality Health Services (AQHS), Inclusive Sustainable Economic Growth (ISEG) and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI). Although Cuso endeavoured to apply a gender lens to all project areas, it was only through the development of VOICE's GESI programming that Cuso launched its first stand-alone area of work dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Initially, GESI projects were rooted in three main thematic areas: gender-based violence, women's political

participation and positive masculinity. Working towards the advancement of Sustainable Development Goal 5, it wasn't until the Government of Canada introduced the *Feminist International Assistance Policy* (FIAP) in June 2017 that Cuso decided to redesign its strategic plan giving greater priority to its GESI programming.

In 2018, Cuso also launched its Global Strategy 2018-2021, which synchronized well with the implementation of FIAP. Identifying six priorities that are both outward and inward facing, the strategic plan now included a single goal dedicated to "advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls."

According to Gender Consultant and Cuso Global Lead on GESI, Sarah Pentlow, the implementation of FIAP challenged the organization to reaffirm its commitment to gender programming and "up the ante" on how it could effectively apply a feminist lens to both its internal and external operations. "Ensuring a feminist focus that could produce impactful results meant that GESI programming had to shift from simply gender-mainstreaming VOICE initiatives, to implementing an impactful and holistic gender-transformative framework into every target area."

In addition, to ensure all partners committed to increasing their ability to integrate a gender lens into all project activities, Cuso increased its partnerships with organizations and regional networks focusing on a variety of areas within gender development. Internally, Cuso staff undertook their own gender training to ensure professional development and capacity-building was reflected in all levels of the organization. As Ms. Pentlow describes, this truly showed Cuso's commitment to the FIAP mandate, as values and perspectives on gender development shifted from donor-driven mainstreaming activities to a fully transformational approach. "The feminist lens went from something that was applied externally, to an internal mechanism that helped define Cuso's approach to meaningful change."

As the FIAP evolved in its implementation over the last few years to reflect a more results-based development approach, Cuso too adapted its VOICE project so

that GESI objectives under the newly-aligned strategic plan were integrated across all program areas. GESI objectives themselves shifted from their key thematic areas to three *pillars of gender development*; **Empowerment** - accelerating women's individual agency; **Equity** - improving interventions that promote equity and building equitable relationships between women and men at the community level; and **Enabling Environments** - institutional changes that ensure sustainable development.

As the VOICE project concludes in March 2020, Cuso's upcoming *Sharing Canadian Expertise For Inclusive Development and Gender Equality* (SHARE) Project introduces some of the technical changes Cuso has made such as: gender-responsive budgeting, gender-sensitive MEAL (Monitoring Evaluation Accountability and Learning), impact reporting that highlights stories of transformational change and a new volunteer training format that includes a GESI-learning module. Unfortunately, since the redesign of Cuso's strategic plan occurred mid-way through the implementation of VOICE, results from the final evaluation will not accurately reflect the full impact potential of shifting the GESI framework from the key thematic areas to its current 'pillar model.' Restructuring its strategic plan and programmatic structure to include a stronger feminist lens, exemplifies Cuso's commitment to continuous improvement, quality assurance and the achievement of meaningful and sustainable change.



## GESI in Action: Cuso Partners in South East Asia

Since 1991, Cuso International has maintained a strong partnership with the Gender Development Association (GDA) in Laos. With the support of Cuso volunteers, GDA has become a leading grassroots organization and champion of gender equality, both nationally and throughout the region. With a focus on rural and remote ethnic communities, GDA projects span a number of development areas including Adult Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH), Women's Political Participation, Gender-Based Violence and, most recently, Adaptation for Climate-Resilient Livelihoods. In addition to their community-based development projects, GDA dedicates a large portion of their work to strengthening the capacity of other Lao Civil Society Organizations (CSO) to engage in critical policy dialogue, and ensuring the voices of marginalized communities are heard at all levels of government. In December 2019, with notable contributions by Cuso-Laos volunteers, GDA was awarded the unprecedented opportunity to present as a panelist at the 35th Pre-Session of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Lao PDR at the Palace of Nations in Geneva. This event marked the first time a Lao-based CSO directly participated in State reporting on human rights at the highest level. It was also an opportunity to bring to the forefront the voices of Indigenous Women and

present localized solutions for a bottom-up approach to institutionalizing gender equality in Laos.



In addition to supporting the work of its partner organizations in-country, Cuso International has strengthened its presence throughout the region as it works to foster relationships and expand networks across South East Asia. Together with national partners, the Cambodia Indigenous Peoples Organization (CIPO), Gender Development Association, May Doe Kabar (MDK) and the Centre for Sustainable Development in Mountainous Areas (CSDM), Cuso and the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), with the support of the Stockholm Environment Institute and Global Affairs Canada, held a regional conference in Bangkok entitled *Climate Smart Women Connect* from December 2-4, 2019. The conference brought together Indigenous Women from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, along with multi-sectoral stakeholders, and aimed to jumpstart discussions toward more inclusive climate policies that value and amplify the voices of Indigenous Women.

The *Climate Smart Women Connect* Conference established standards for international NGOs to build relationships with rural and remote Indigenous Women throughout South East Asia. Specific outcomes of the conference included developing Calls to Action from Indigenous Women of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, to demand climate action from world leaders at COP25. In addition to organizing pre and post

conference webinars, the conference established an online social media network for Asian Indigenous Women to maintain partnerships, foster solidarity and strengthen their calls to development stakeholders across the region. Lastly, Cuso International published a series of research papers in both English and native languages that reflected on the challenges facing Indigenous Women in South East Asia, and analyzed their unique approaches to climate change adaptation.

Over the last 5 years, Cuso-Laos has placed 81 volunteers under its VOICE initiatives. Although the VOICE Impact Report is still in its final stages, early results from the evaluations conducted in Laos indicate that all projects and partner organizations benefitted from the technical expertise of volunteers. In the area of GESI targets specifically, of the female stakeholders that participated in the project evaluation:

- 55% indicated High Impact and 31% indicated Medium Impact on *increased autonomy in deciding how personal and household income was used*;
- 45% indicated High Impact and 45% indicated Medium Impact on *increased sharing of decision-making regarding partner's and children's life choices*;

Select results from both male and female respondents include:

- 53% indicated Medium Impact and 36% indicated High Impact on *greater equity of men and women in the workplace, community organizations, and other public spaces*;
- 50% indicated Medium Impact and 32% indicated High Impact on *change in understanding about your role as a man/woman in your family/community/organization*.

*“My experience with the VOICE Project in Laos was my first real opportunity to thrive in my cultural duality as a Lao-Canadian. The chance to work in my country of origin, learning from a community of feminists on the front lines of gender advocacy, was beyond any opportunity I had conceived growing up in rural Canada. I was given the space to develop programming and projects based on my skills and experiences, and felt that my contributions and collaborations had real purpose. I have grown professionally, but also learned about my culture, history, and positionality through a new lens.”* – Elizabeth Thippawong, Cuso-Laos 2017-2019

As the revitalized GESI framework was implemented mid-way through the implementation of VOICE, considerable progress towards the achievement of the new objectives cannot be noted. Although the results of the VOICE evaluation do not reflect the effectiveness of Cuso’s transition from a gender-mainstreaming to a gender-transformative approach, final evaluation results will perhaps be used as a baseline for tracking progress on Cuso’s upcoming SHARE project. With a new monitoring framework and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) designed in accordance with FIAP targets, the evaluation of SHARE will be more indicative of the positive changes Cuso has made since adapting to a more contemporary feminist approach.

### **Best Practice – Redefining Volunteerism for the SDGs**

Over the last 60 years, Cuso has strived to ensure Canadian development priorities are reflected in its organizational values, local operations, and international projects. The introduction of FIAP however, really challenged Cuso on multiple levels. Firstly, Cuso undertook the formidable task of realigning its own

strategic plan to prioritize a development area that had not traditionally been given much consideration. Next, Cuso had to integrate this new development priority into its own volunteer paradigm. It was not simply enough to put greater emphasis on partnering with gender-focused organizations, but if Cuso was to truly adopt a transformational approach, the feminist lens needed to be applied multilaterally - from the volunteer selection process, to post-placement re-integration. On a positive note, although a daunting task at the onset, the challenges of implementing FIAP have provided an opportunity for Cuso to contribute meaningfully to Canada’s international commitments to achieving gender equality, as set-out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and to hold their partners to the same standard.

When done well, volunteerism can be a powerful mechanism for establishing bridges of solidarity between North and South. In an increasingly polarized world, fostering partnerships between diverse stakeholders and building a collective voice for peace and equality must take a multi-dimensional approach. Although de-

*“Working with coffee farmers, government representatives, community groups, international NGOs, and other Cuso volunteers changed the way I see today’s global challenges and corresponding solutions; it revolutionized my intellectual curiosity and propelled my many aspirations...I bring back to Canada a more holistic understanding of social innovation. It is important to not only engage with local communities, but to enable them to lead the way. Global development must be accompanied by empathy, respect, and integrity.”*

– Vivekan Jeyagaran, Cuso-Laos 2018-2019

“I love having the opportunity to work with other women entrepreneurs in Laos, as they look for new ways to capitalize on their traditional skills. For instance, we’re developing a project with the women of Don Kho, famous for their silk-weaving, who want to profit more directly from the tourism their village attracts by creating interactive experiences and designing new products. We also piloted a project in Southern Laos on basic and advanced social media skills programming that helps SME’s effectively market their businesses for free. Knowing that the new income generated will directly contribute to improving their livelihoods, it feels tremendously meaningful to use my particular skillset in a totally new way!

– Rosemary Murphy, Cuso-Laos 2019-2020

velopment through volunteerism has received strong criticism over the last few decades from academics and practitioners alike, “evidence shows that when volunteerism is integrated into national development strategies and United Nations plans, people are increasingly able to contribute to achievements in education, health, governance, sustainable livelihoods, security and peace, environment, gender and social inclusions.”

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 70/129 on Integrating volunteering into peace and development: the plan of action for the next decade and beyond. Co-sponsored by 100 Member States, the Resolution recognizes that volunteerism can be a powerful means of implementation for the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) also acknowledges the value of volunteerism and notes the added value “lies in its capacity to transform passive recipi-

ents and beneficiaries into active agents of change.”

In regards to the advancement of SDG 5 specifically, “volunteers have a proven record of modelling attitudes and catalyzing behavioural changes.”

Volunteer organizations like Cuso International recognize that it is simply not possible to attain the SDGs without a wide range of people engaged at all stages, at all levels, at all times.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, “volunteerism is a powerful means for bringing more people into the fold and is already expanding the space in which we work to achieve the future we want.”<sup>2</sup> Cuso continues to redefine the role of volunteerism in sustainable development by ensuring the value of volunteering transcends models which enable systems of dependence and temporarily fill capacity-gaps. “The combined action of international, national, community, and on-line volunteers strengthens international exchanges, South-South and regional cooperation; and can trigger a ripple effect, inspiring others and reaching the most remote communities.”<sup>3</sup> After decades of refining its approach, Cuso understands that the volunteer experience does not simply end when the placement contract does. Volunteers bring their professional skills and expertise to a placement, but often return with a deeper understanding of their role as global citizens and a dynamic view of their capacity to contribute to meaningful change, wherever they may be. The Cuso framework works to synergize impact through skills development, capacity-building and empowerment, and it ultimately aims to establish symbiotic and reciprocal relationships between all stakeholders.

1 United Nations Volunteers, (n.d.), “Volunteerism and the Global Goals,” United Nations Volunteer.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are from the perspective of past volunteers. Similar recommendations were made throughout Cuso's End of Service feedback forms and other quality assurance mechanisms.

- Diversify funding sources to reduce dependence on Global Affairs Canada as a primary donor.
- Increase brand visibility through innovative marketing strategies that better position the organization among peers, donors, and the general public. Cuso should leverage its long-established V4D model to elevate its image as the 'leading Canadian volunteer development organization.'
- Consider increasing visibility among graduates and young professionals, especially those entering the international development and humanitarian sectors, as hiring processes are putting greater emphasis on field-experience.
- Consider mobilizing the Volunteer Mobilization team to expand reach and improve personal connections with potential volunteer candidates.
- Ensure the gender-transformative approach is holistic and evident in both internal and external operations. This includes but is not limited to: applying gender-responsive budgeting consistently among Cuso finance team, partners and projects; gender-responsive MEAL and reporting frameworks; and volunteer training modules.
- Increase understanding and consideration of intersectionality in all working areas. Cuso projects should be more aware of the complex intersections both among and between marginalized groups throughout project design and implementation. For example, if GESI programming aims to be truly holistic, it must acknowledge intersectional groups like women with disabilities, Indigenous Women and ethnic minorities, and the LGBTQ+ community.
- Increase partnerships with LGBTQ+ organizations in permissible contexts and assign greater emphasis to positive masculinity and engaging men and boys in contexts that are more sensitive.
- Improve GESI's approach to gender as non-binary. While focusing on the empowerment of women and girls is undoubtedly crucial to sustainable development, if a contemporary gender-transformative approach is being applied, then it must transcend the traditional conceptualization of gender as binary.
- Determine and establish Cuso's feminist values and translate them concretely to the selection and training processes for both volunteers and partners. It is a major challenge when a volunteer or partner's values conflict with Cuso's values. As such, Cuso must be conscientious in how it applies a contemporary feminist lens when determining future volunteers and partners.
- Improve staff retention to mitigate early drop-out rates (# of volunteer candidates that rescind their application before departure) from lack of confidence in the organization's ability to support them.

# Section 5



## Peaceful and Inclusive Societies

# The Isabel-Claudina Alert: Inter-Departmental Justice Sector Efforts to Combat Gender-Based Violence in Guatemala

## SDG Tracker



Written by Nora Weber, Maria Eugenia Carrera, Kessler Blanco and Felipe Juarez<sup>1</sup> for Justice Education Society



<sup>1</sup> This initiative is part of our Guatemalan Institutional Justice Program funded by the Swedish International Development Agency. Kessler Blanco is the Project Coordinator, Maria Carrera is the Project Officer, Felipe Juarez is the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, and Nora Weber is the Communications Specialist for JES.

**Name of organization:** Justice Education Society

**Website:** <https://www.justiceeducation.ca/>

**Geographical scope of the case study:** Guatemala

**Sustainable Development Goals:** SDG 5 Gender Equality and SDG 16 Peaceful and Inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

**Project title:** The Isabel-Claudina Alert Response for Missing Women

**Description of project:** Establishing and sustaining coordinated inter-departmental efforts to strengthen intersectional and gender-responsive policies and programs in relation to missing women and women who have experienced gender-based violence.

**Target population:** Judges, local authorities, law enforcement authorities and civil society organizations, who have a role to play in investigations on missing women and violence against women.

**Main activities:** The development and strengthening of tools and procedures for the investigation of missing women and violence against women; the promotion of interdepartmental and multi-stakeholder coordination; training of judges, law enforcement authorities, local authorities and civil society actors; and awareness-raising on the Immediate Search Mechanism.

**Results:** Cross-departmental coordination at a local level has improved in relation to investigations; there is greater awareness of the Immediate Search Mechanism; there is greater confidence in the judicial system and women feel more empowered to report gender-based violence.



The Justice Education Society (JES) started thirty years ago to ensure access and transparency in the British Columbian justice system by providing educational programs and online resources. Today, JES' mandate is to empower people to access and deliver justice in Canada and globally.

The JES International Program has earned a reputation for best practices in the international justice sector, working with institutional partners to deliver practical, integrated and impactful training that strengthens the effectiveness and accessibility of justice systems in the countries where we work. JES has developed programs that help strengthen the infrastructures of justice across Central America. JES draws from expertise in the Canadian and British Columbian justice systems to develop and deliver training programs in the countries where it engages.

Guatemala is a violent country, which disproportionately affects women and girls. Crimes against this population are the most recurrent crimes reported to the Guatemalan Public Prosecutor's Office (referred to in Spanish as Ministerio Público or MP); they represented 41% in 2018 and 35% in 2019 of all crimes reported, equivalent to daily reports of 203 and 219, respectively. The widespread disappearance of women is inextricably linked to these statistics. To address these gender-based crime rates, in 2016 the MP created the Isabel-Claudina Alert<sup>1</sup> and the Immediate Search of Missing Women Law, addressing three judgements of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) for femicide cases with investigative deficiencies.<sup>2</sup> The Justice Education Society of British Columbia (JES) is providing technical support to the Guatemalan MP in their implementation of the Search for Missing Women initiative.

This case study outlines how the initiative contributed to establishing and sustaining coordinated inter-de-

1 María Isabel Véliz (15 years old) and Claudina Velásquez (19 years old) were victims of murder and sexual violence in Guatemala, their deaths gave rise to a new system consisting of the immediate search for women reported missing, which is known as the Alerta Isabel-Claudina.

2 These sentences were in 2014 [http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec\\_277\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_277_esp.pdf) and in 2015 [http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec\\_307\\_esp.pdf](http://www.corteidh.or.cr/docs/casos/articulos/seriec_307_esp.pdf)



partmental efforts to develop intersectional gender policy and programming. The initiative highlights the power of collaborative efforts in working towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda, and how progress towards SDG 5<sup>3</sup> can only be achieved by advancing progress in SDG 16<sup>4</sup> and vice-versa; Women's full and effective participation in public life requires promoting the rule of law to ensure equal access to justice and to build effective, accountable judicial institutions.

Gender-based violence in Guatemala is folded into the systemic disappearance of women, which demands a more complex approach to investigation. Based on the ruling of the IACHR, the MP has made efforts to implement effective tools to search for missing women, and although the Alert set up in 2016 was an important step towards an improved response by the MP and the National Civil Police (PNC), it was recognized that better instruments were needed to implement the plan. Faced with this challenge, the MP established the Immediate Search Mechanism in 2018 as an inter-institutional tool to coordinate the actions of the different dependencies, to more effectively and effi-

3 SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

5.2- Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

4 SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

16.1- Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.

ciently respond to different types of violence against women with differentiated approaches – particularly when searching for missing women where immediate action is critical.

The project by JES seeks to strengthen tools and procedures to investigate cases of missing women by directing immediate responsive actions in the location where the case is reported, thus reducing the possibility of femicide. The methodology included designing local search teams, creating guidelines for forming those teams and building awareness processes to achieve better responses in new cases. JES supports training by the MP that includes a comprehensive gender approach applicable at a national level that takes into consideration the economic, cultural and social conditions of the place of origin of the women. While it is important to contextualize search actions, one of the key elements has been to build awareness around cultural discrimination because many victims or their families might be monolingual in non-Spanish languages, so discrimination needs to be broken down and the support capacities of more actors enhanced for effective results. Some of the educational efforts included raising awareness of gender stereotypes and biases, working to resolve and set aside these common obstacles to successful investigations of any type of violence against women.

An important aspect of this initiative is that it brings together actors on the local and national levels; the Mechanism for the Search of Missing Women supported by JES is composed of key players from the justice system, government sector and civil society organizations, with the cross-sector coordination increasing response time and effectiveness. The diverse perspectives direct the main strategic actions of the Mechanism, each adding value by sharing how each actor responds to missing women alerts, reports related activities and shares the lessons learned for the improved performance of the Mechanism. Moreover, the Alert response can only be successful if more “on the ground” actors are involved, such as fire departments, community committees, women’s organizations and forest rangers – making violence against

women a matter of a joint responsibility and generating more confidence in access to justice for women.

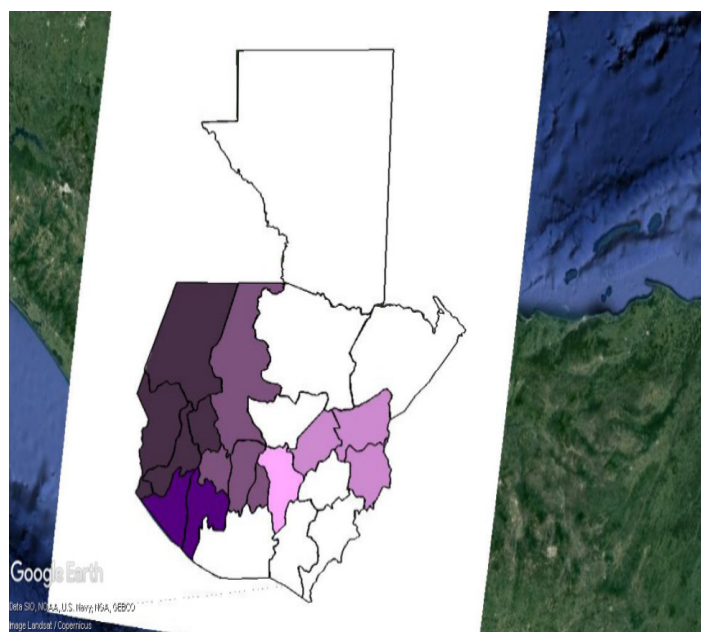
The interdepartmental Mechanism has yielded results. Given its relatively recent establishment, the data shows that these cross-departmental efforts support information dissemination that generates greater awareness not only in the State offices, but also in the general population. The alerts are circulated via the official media channels of the MP, but are further promoted through social media and other outlets from partner organizations. JES’ 2019 evaluation of the initiative confirmed that localized collaboration of different authorities (municipal mayors, indigenous leaders, and others) is critical for establishing the location of the victims of gender-based violence in order to reduce the possibility of femicide.

JES supports the dissemination of the Isabel-Claudina Alert through regional events and trainings that include the PNC, judges, local authorities and civil society organizations. The immediate search for missing women is an action that must be regulated by the authorities of the justice sector; however, in order to increase the effectiveness of their efforts, justice officials must have the tools that can also measure non-compliance in order to increase the effectiveness of their efforts.

Between May and October 2019, JES provided support to the MP in five launches and 15 workshops in dif-



ferent regions of Guatemala (see Table 1. for details). 805 participants were involved in the launch events of the Alert, and 620 were involved in the detailed training workshops for police officers, prosecution agents, judges and civil society.



SDG 5 and SDG 16 intersect in the promotion of mechanisms that respond to violence against women such as the Isabel-Claudina Alert, by instilling confidence in the justice system and empowering women to demand an immediate response from the justice system in cases of gender-based violence. Implementing these tools and mechanisms through coordinated national and local efforts sends a signal to society as a whole, raising awareness of the types of violence that women suffer and the need for immediate action to save lives.

JES' work in the Guatemala has focused on building better inter-departmental linkages and supporting the MP in their efforts to ensure that multiple social variables and diverse voices are considered within the complex investigations of gender-based violence. However, there is still a clear need to develop further interventions. Despite these efforts, Guatemala still has alarming rates of missing women: 605 alerts for 2018 and 2,095 for 2019, of which 21% remain unresolved.<sup>5</sup> JES' ultimate goal is to help ensure greater democracy through justice and to reduce gender disparity through the empowerment of women.

Table 1: JES activities on the Isabel-Claudine Alert. May-October 2019

Region	Participants	
		Workshops
Guatemala	183	147
Metropolitana	92	63
Nororiente	249	169
Centro Occidente	196	163
Occidente	85	78
Sur		
<b>Total</b>	<b>805</b>	<b>620</b>

<sup>5</sup> Ministerio Publico, Women's Observatory. (2020). Retrieved from: <http://observatorio.mp.gob.gt/wordpress/index.php/estadisticasportal/>

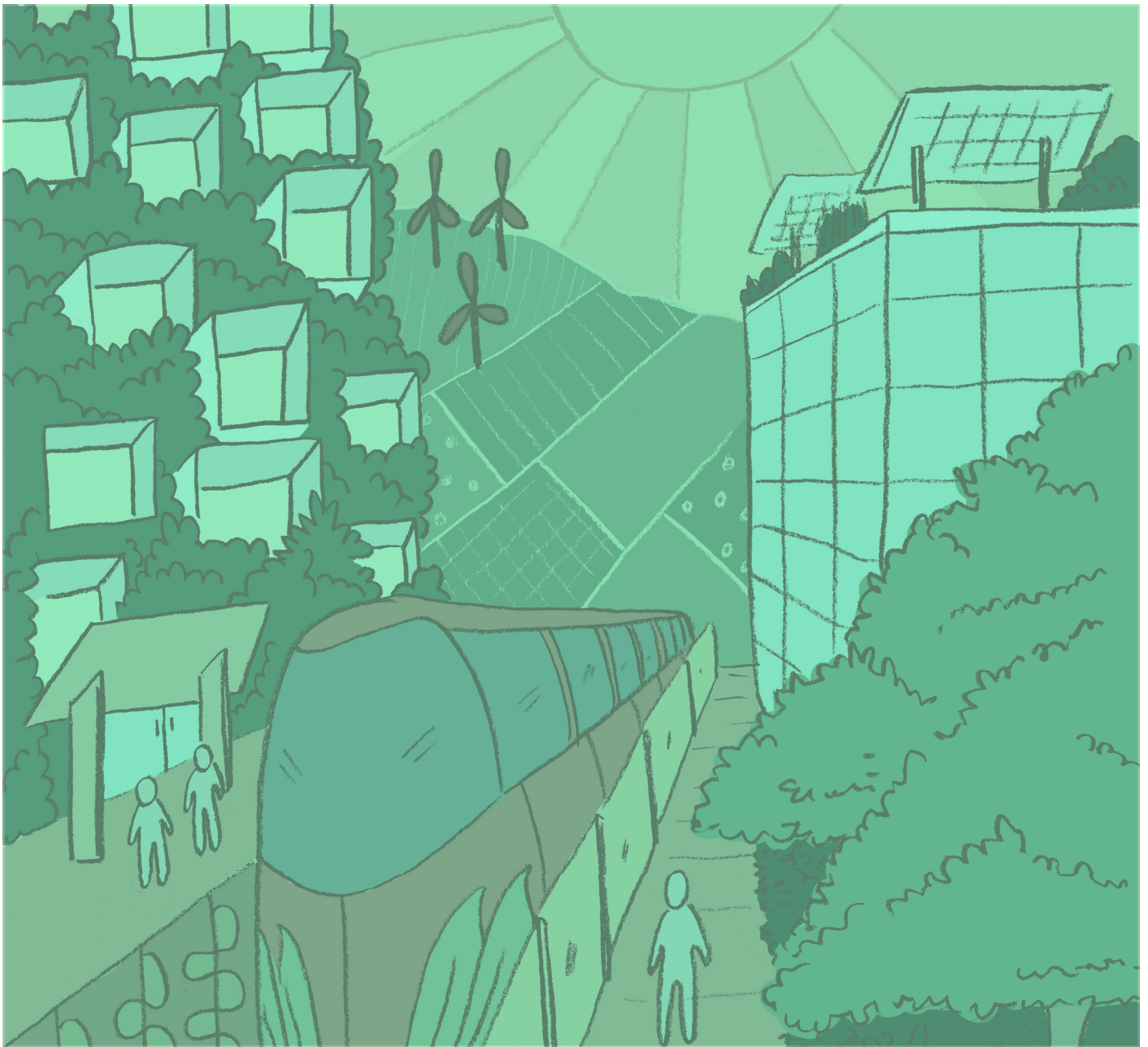


## Recommendations

Recommendations for policy-makers and practitioners in Guatemala and similar regions on how to replicate or scale up this specific project.

- Cross border missing women search teams have to be included in an immediate search for missing women methodology.
- Improve international consulate system decision-making or immediate actions based on alert mechanisms.
- Conduct gender-based investigations to ensure searches, investigations and judicial processes are free of stereotypes and corruption.
- Promote a legal framework that obliges multiple justice and public institutions to follow search actions upon missing alert activation.
- Measure and mediate justice system overload risk levels resulting from wrong case registration on the part of any institution participating in the missing women alert mechanism.
- Coordinate national level search team mechanisms that get engaged at the local level.
- Introduce tools for transparency that can measure non-compliance or actions based in stereotypes to build in accountability based on tactics and results.
- As part of contextualizing women's search actions, one of the key factors for success is intersecting gender mainstreaming and cultural awareness, considering that many victims or their families might experience linguistic or cultural discrimination.

## Section 6



# Environmental Conservation, Protection and Rehabilitation

# The Women's Climate Centers International: Grassroots Women Lead the Fight Against Climate Change

## SDG Tracker



Written by Susan Bazilli<sup>1</sup> for International Women's Rights Project

International  
**WOMEN'S**  
Rights Project

<sup>1</sup> Susan Bazilli is the Director of the International Women's Rights Project (IWRP), an international human rights lawyer and a gender and development consultant with 30 years of professional, strategic and technical experience as an evaluator, lawyer, consultant, author, executive director, trainer, researcher and advisor

**Name of organization:** Climate Wise Women & The Women's Climate Centers International (WCCI)

**Website:** <https://www.cjrfund.org/womens-climate-centers-international>

**Geographical scope of the case study:** Kenya and Uganda

**SDG's addressed in the case study:** SDG #1 (Poverty); SDG #2 (End Hunger); SDG #13 (Climate Change); SDG #5 (Gender Equality)

**Description of project:** Promotion of climate security and women's empowerment through Indigenous knowledge exchange, community-owned networks, financial literacy training and agricultural equipment in Eastern Africa.

**Target population:** Rural women farmers.

**Main activities:** Enhancing rural women's climate security and ability to adapt to climate change by providing leadership training and training on financial literacy, bookkeeping and sourcing markets; promoting the sharing of Indigenous knowledge, skills and expertise; building a community-owned network; and encouraging village savings, providing loans and equipment.

**Results:** Local, regional and global networks of women have formed to promote women's climate security and empowerment. Women in East Africa are able to increase their yields in a more environmentally sustainable way despite climate related shocks. Women are collaborating more and sharing their knowledge on agriculture, water management and other sustainable practices.

## Background

This case study begins with a story about how a few women from around the world came together to form a global network to tell the stories of women’s resistance to the impacts of climate change and their resilience and activism. A few women from British Columbia have played a role in the ongoing story that is “Climate Wise Women.” The NGO Climate Wise Women (CWW)<sup>1</sup> was started in 2009 by five women activists from the USA, Uganda, Carteret Islands and Cook Islands who met each other at the United Nations Secretary General’s High Level Meeting on Climate Change. Tracy Mann is a US based communications professional with over 30 years of media experience. She recognized that the stories of these grassroots women not only had to be told, but their voices had to be brought into the UN Climate Change meetings. With seed funding and ‘femtorship’<sup>2</sup> from former Irish president Mary Robinson’s US foundation Realizing Rights, the women seized the opportunity to advocate for support for women’s leadership on climate change at a moment when people were just beginning to understand the fundamental role women play in helping their communities survive climate change impacts. CWW was born to promote the voices and visibility of this group of grassroots women.

Between 2010 and 2016, CWW created a series of public speaking events, in which global grassroots women engaged in public conversations about climate change with local leaders, that covered five continents, making it possible for grassroots women to tell their own stories directly to decision makers and influencers at UN climate forums including the COPs (UNFCCC Conference of the Parties), UN General Assembly and Commission on the Status of Women as well as other international fora.

While continuing to support women’s voices in public spaces, they have expanded to build deeper relation-



ships between funders and women’s groups working on climate change resilience and to connect women’s networks globally for knowledge sharing and collective influence. By connecting grant opportunities with women-led community resilience groups in Papua New Guinea, Uganda and Maldives, they facilitated first-time international grants for the recipients.

Stories about CWW have appeared in [The New York Times](#), [Sierra Magazine](#), [The Guardian](#), [CNN](#), [The Weather Channel](#), BBC, National Public Radio, [The Telegraph](#), [Public Radio International](#), Die Zeit, among others. This coverage has generated new speaking opportunities, attracted the attention of influential international organizations, and strengthened grant proposal submissions.

So what is the British Columbia connection? Susan Bazilli is the Director of the International Women’s Rights Project<sup>3</sup> which is based in Vancouver. Ruth Hoffman is an accountant now based in Kampala, running her own accounting firm, but she used to work as an Associate Finance Director at the Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia. Claudia Medina is a filmmaker who lives on the Sunshine Coast. This is a story about feminist networking and Canadian women seizing opportunities to collaborate, support and build connections with other women in support of grass-

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.climatewisewomen.org/>

<sup>2</sup> ‘Femtorship’ is a Feminist word for mentorship .

<sup>3</sup> See more at: [www.iwrp.org](http://www.iwrp.org).

roots women working to cope with, adapt to, speak about and confront the impacts of climate change in their communities. Susan, Ruth and Claudia are all volunteers with Climate Wise Women.

## Harnessing women's networks

Susan attended the Rio+20 conference in Brazil. She had contributed to papers submitted by UNDP and UN Women on women and sustainable development and water. A group of 45 feminists were staying at the rural conference centre run by Thais Corral, one of the women who founded the Women's Education Development Organization (WEDO), along with Bella Abzug and Wangari Mathaai. WEDO was founded after the Rio Conference in 1992. There, Susan met Tracy and the CWW delegates, including Constance Okellet from Uganda. Constance founded the Osokuru Women's Network (OWN), based in Tororo in north-eastern Uganda, a network of 1200 women subsistence farmers. Constance founded OWN after she was trained in Kenya by Wangari and her Green Belt Movement. For a decade, Susan had been working in Uganda with the Environmental Women for Development in Action (EWAD)<sup>4</sup>, run by Margaret Tuhumwire. Susan has been sending student interns and co-op students from the University of Victoria and the Victoria Development Association (VIDEA) to work with EWAD. So... she offered to do what she could to support Constance and became one of the advisors to CWW.

Tracy had been looking for a documentary filmmaker to profile the work of CWW. She found Claudia Medina, who is an amazing filmmaker who happens to live in British Columbia. Claudia is now also an advisor to CWW. She began to film CWW, and she has been on the mission to Papua New Guinea. We all attended the Global Climate Summit in San Francisco in 2018 along with Constance. The filming in Uganda will take place next year.

Through organizing a fundraiser for EWAD in Vancou-

<sup>4</sup> See more at: <https://ewaddevt.org/>

ver one summer when Margaret was visiting, Susan met Ruth Hoffman, who had been volunteering for a Ugandan organization that supported young softball players. Ruth would help arrange for containers of sports equipment to be delivered to Uganda. Ruth then moved to Uganda to set up her dream, an accounting company that would work with NGOs, as well as training young Ugandans to become accountants<sup>5</sup>. So, Susan introduced Ruth to Constance. Ruth then proceeded to develop a grassroots training program for the women in Osokuru in financial literacy and bookkeeping, as well as assisting them in sourcing markets for new products.

## Supporting women in Osokuro to adapt to climate change

The impact of climate change has meant that the growing season is different and unreliable, floods and droughts are more frequent, and the women in Osokuro had to find other food products to grow. Farmers in Uganda, as in most parts of Africa, rely on rain fed agricultural practices. Where before rain patterns could be regularly anticipated, farmers could confidently start preparing their land and plant seeds a month before the rains would come. Water is critical during the initial days of growth. Without it, the harvest is compromised.

With climate change, rain patterns became irregular. Following traditional planting practices, farmers began losing their crops when the rains didn't come when needed. They tried to adapt – by waiting – to be sure. But such an approach limits their ability to put land into production. There just isn't time to prepare the land. Having oxen and plough gives them the ability to wait – and still prepare their land.

Through grants that Tracy and Susan were able to find for OWN, the women subsistence farmers now have pairs of oxen to help them plough fields in two days

<sup>5</sup> See more at: <https://csuaccounting.com/about/>





that used to take 30 days to hoe. The impact of the oxen is that productivity increased significantly for 2 reasons. Primarily - more farm land was able to be put into production. Before this – with only a hoe – land preparation was difficult and took a long time, the result being that available land was not being used. But secondly, yields increased even when comparing the same amount of land prepared with oxen as opposed to the hoe. With an oxen and plough the soil is turned over at a much deeper level providing more nutrients and aeration that results in fewer weeds growing and increased yields. Between these 2 factors, women (selecting those with previously unused land) were able to increase their yields several times over. Anecdotally, where before their harvest was 1 bag of 100kg of maize, yields with oxen and plough were 6 to 8 bags. The women talk openly about the impact of their economic empowerment. The network has trained the women and the men in the community about gender equality and human rights. While the research has not yet been completed, anecdotally several women discuss the reduction in violence against women that they attribute to their empowerment and having more control over their livelihoods.<sup>6</sup>

## WCCI in East Africa

Constance and Tracy had a dream that the women

<sup>6</sup>For the initial research on these linkages, see Castañeda; Sabater; Owren; Boyer, (2020), *Gender-based violence and environment linkages: The violence of inequality*. Wen, J. (ed.). Gland, Switzerland: IUCN, 272pp.

from Osokuru could share their knowledge of climate change adaptation with other women in Africa, just as Constance had learned from Wangari. The CWW team members attended the Global Climate Summit in San Francisco in September 2018, and we began the process of turning the dream into the reality that became the Women’s Climate Centres International (WCCI). Tracy had been able to source funding from the Climate Resilience Fund<sup>7</sup> for the first seed money to begin the Centres and the founding meeting took place in Kampala in April 2019. Rural and indigenous African women already know what they need. WCCI exists to help them get to where they know they can go. WCCI’s purpose is not to lead, but to support the sharing and distribution of rural women’s skills and expertise so that indigenous knowledge can flourish. WCCI’s mission is to pollinate resiliency.

WCCI’s vision is to realize a world-wide network of women who share their adaptive wisdom to thrive. Constance Okollet – local women’s network coordinator and family farm agriculture expert - is emblematic of that vision and one of our key team members. Sierra Magazine called Constance Okollet, “An uncommonly ordinary heroine...rather than succumb to apathy or despair, she has responded to the climate crisis by organizing her neighbors to build enterprises that will help them adapt to global warming...and has also become a prominent voice demanding climate justice.”<sup>8</sup> In her book on climate justice, *Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience, and the Fight for a Sustainable Future*,<sup>9</sup> Mary Robinson’s second chapter is on Constance, whom she describes as a “climate change witness who has transformed her local activism into a powerful global voice.”

After several site visits and consultations, Tororo,

<sup>7</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.cirfund.org/womens-climate-centers-international>.

<sup>8</sup> Beckett, (2017), “Ugandan Women Didn’t Cause Climate Change, But They’re Adapting to It: How a Network of Women are Weathering the Changing Climate”, Sierraclub, 12 October, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Robinson, (2018), *Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience, and the Fight for a Sustainable Future*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Uganda, the district where the Osokuru Women’s Network live and farm, was selected as the community where the first WCCI would be built. It follows Constance’s long dream of building a capacity-building and training center like the one that she experienced with Wangari Mathaai.

The WCCI concept recognizes that the answer to climate security lies within the indigenous and traditional knowledge of the grassroots women who farm, raise families and sustain communities throughout the world. Our goal is to catalyze a vital network of knowledge exchange and best practices so that agricultural yields become vigorous, safe drinking water becomes routine, water-borne disease becomes a part of history and revenue generating opportunities and newly-learned business skills unlock a more prosperous and climate resilient future for rural women and girls. Our theory of change is simple: in order for grassroots women and girls to achieve their full transformative potential, they should be supported by a community-owned network in which they are fully respected partners, engaging in a transparent process of collaboration and assessment to facilitate indigenous knowledge exchange and access to the tools and resources they need to thrive.

WCCI, led by a unique partnership between women development professionals and community leaders from Uganda, Kenya, South Africa and the United States, co-creates hubs for sustainable climate solutions with vulnerable communities. The Climate Centers address climate change systemically through programming in four key areas: environmental conservation and restoration, climate smart water sanitation and hygiene, bio-intensive farming technologies, and advocacy and entrepreneurship training. The Centers are carbon neutral spaces in East Africa that are women-led and women-owned. They address the interconnected impacts of climate change in vulnerable communities and emphasize low-cost environmentally appropriate technologies, advocacy and leadership.

Despite this work falling squarely under the Canadian FIAP, there has been no interest on the part of the Canadian government to invest in the Centres.<sup>10</sup> There are no funded Canadian partners within the WCCI. Despite making several presentations to Global Affairs Canada, the only Canadian funding has been from the Match International Women’s Fund (now the Equality Fund) with a much-needed direct grant to the OWN to purchase oxen. We hope that this situation will change and that there will be Canadian investment in this innovative endeavor in the future. Canadian partners could learn from the women’s climate centers and the climate wise women. This work clearly addresses a number of SDGs.<sup>11</sup> Achieving gender equality, the realization of women’s human rights and the empowerment of women are essential and cross-cutting to all of the SDGs and to actualizing a transformative agenda.

<sup>10</sup> The funding has come from the Climate Justice Resilience Fund in Washington DC.

<sup>11</sup> For example, SDG #1 (Poverty); SDG #2 (End Hunger); SDG #13 (Climate Change); SDG #5 (Gender Equality).



## Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the recent policy brief by the Canadian women's organizations – The Equality Fund and the Nobel Women's Initiative.<sup>12</sup> It is important for this case study to show our alliance with this approach. Their brief examines the case for taking a feminist approach to climate change policy and what such an approach could mean for Canadian policy-makers working in the areas of climate change and global development.<sup>13</sup>

Our case study illustrates a grassroots example that addressing gender, climate and environmental priorities is critical because:

- There is a clear link between women's equality rights and how women experience climate change. When women lack full and equal rights, they suffer disproportionately from negative climate change impacts. In turn, climate change negatively impacts women and their rights.
- Local-level, women-led initiatives such as the Osokuru Women's Network are having significant positive impacts on climate change action, and gender equality. Yet, global climate finance flows are being directed elsewhere. Even when donors fund local-level climate change projects, they rarely take gender equality issues into account. Funding that targets women's rights and gender equality, meanwhile, tends to overlook women's climate change adaptation efforts.
- Canada can bolster its leadership in environmental and climate action and gender equality, by strengthening its feminist approach.

The policy brief *Supporting Women's Organizations and Movements: A Strategic Approach to Climate Action* reinforces the position that Canada should:

**Fund:** Increase the proportion of climate change funding directed to projects led by women's organizations. Prioritize partnerships with local women's rights actors in calls for proposals for climate change projects. Provide core funding for women's rights organizations and movements that address climate change impacts. Canada should establish a women's fund for climate adaptation.

**Listen:** Facilitate, fund and support the participation of grassroots women's organizations in climate policy and finance discussions. Advocate at international climate fora for the meaningful inclusion of women who are directly affected by climate change.

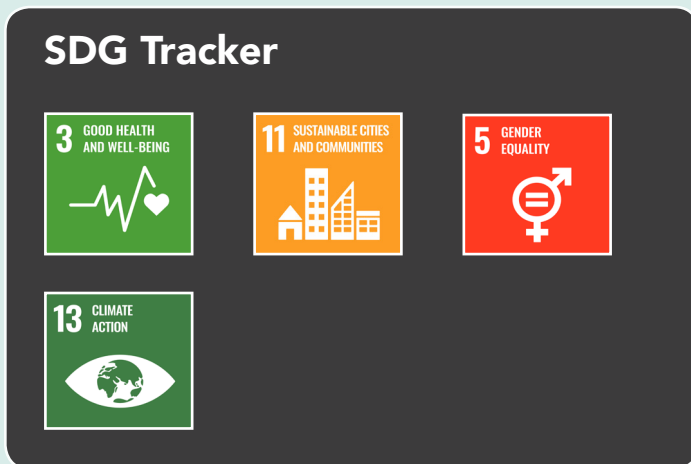
**Build:** Strengthen the capacity of grassroots women leaders and their organizations to participate substantively in climate change for and negotiations. Invest in movement-building of women's rights actors on climate change. Fund consortiums that build the collective power of women's rights and environmental justice movements.

**Influence:** Advocate for a deeper understanding of climate change as a critical human rights issue at international fora. Advocate for the use of a feminist approach to tackling climate change with other governments and stakeholders. Canada should use its influence to advocate for a more inclusive Green Climate Fund.

<sup>12</sup> Nobel Women's Initiative and the Equality Fund, (2020), *Supporting Women's Organizations and Movements: A Strategic Approach to Climate Action*.

<sup>13</sup> In particular: Environment and Climate Change Canada and Global Affairs Canada.

# BCCIC's Youth Climate Change Group: Gender, Generation and Climate Change



Written by Harriet Crossfield<sup>1</sup>, Nanna Pedersen and Maya Redlinge,<sup>2</sup> Nicolas Gaulin<sup>3</sup>, and Jianfeng Qi<sup>4</sup>, for BCCIC Climate Change

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Policy Analyst, Nordic Climate Action, BCCIC Climate Change Branch.

<sup>2</sup> Policy Analyst and Project Manager, Human Rights & Climate Nexus, BCCIC Climate Change Branch.

<sup>3</sup> Executive Coordinator, BCCIC Climate Change Branch.

<sup>4</sup> Coordinator, Multilateral Affairs Division, BCCIC Climate Change Branch

**Name of organization:** British Columbia Council for International Cooperation (BCCIC)

**Website:** <https://www.bccic.ca/>

**Geographical scope of the case study:** British Columbia and international

**Sustainable Development Goals:** SDG #5 Gender Equality, SDG #13 Climate Change, 3 and 11

**Project Title:** BCCIC Climate Change

**Description of project:** Youth engaged in research, policy analysis, advocacy, capacity building and knowledge sharing on the intersection of gender and climate change.

**Target population:** Male and female-identifying youth in British Columbia.

**Main activities:** All youth in the BCCIC Climate Change branch complete the Gender-based Analysis (GBA+) course offered by Status of Women Canada. As delegates, youth participate in high level UNFCCC negotiations related to gender and climate change, mentor future delegates and collaborate with other youth organizations. They also conduct research on university student's engagement with climate change in intersection with gender and offer capacity building workshops for the student population more broadly. Female youth leadership is promoted.

**Results:** The female youth and minority groups who participated in training and advocacy-related activities felt more empowered to voice their opinions. Delegates and students were inspired to engage in gender & climate change action. Intergenerational, gender equitable and international joint advocacy projects among youth groups was effective in getting the youth's opinions heard in high level political meetings. Numerous reports and policy briefs have been published and widely disseminated.

## Gender Voice in Climate Action

Incorporating gender equity in climate change is crucial in order to promote women's and other gender-based communities' participation in climate change. Importantly, the effects of climate change are not gender neutral.<sup>1</sup> A UN Women report from 2018 indicates that climate change exerts a disproportionate impact on women and girls, who are 14 times higher risk of death during a climate change induced disaster than men.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, it is estimated that women make up approximately 80% of climate refugees<sup>3</sup> and that they face a higher risk of sexual violence and abuse in the wake of disasters.<sup>4</sup> Because of the disproportionate impact faced by women and girls, it is imperative that women are active participants and leaders in the global effort to combat climate change through innovative policy solutions and strategies.

Historically, there has been a lack of representation from women and sexual minorities in climate change policy spaces. In order to mitigate this gap, it is important that women in all countries have access to relevant information, material resources and opportunities to facilitate their participation in climate action. It is equally important that the global climate action community takes into account gender-centric experiences and knowledge in mitigation and adaptation planning, as well as in multilateral negotiations and policymaking. Women play an important role in shaping these discourses as their knowledge and leadership at both the local and international levels are crucial in advancing climate action. Empowering women to share their knowledge with regards to climate change can lead to effective implementation of climate policy actions.<sup>5</sup>

1 IJR, (2018), *Applying intersectionality to our climate change response*, Cape Town: The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation.

2 UN Women, (2018), *Turning promises into action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, New York: UN Women.

3 WECAN International, (n.d.), *Why Women?* Mill Valley.

4 WHO, (2010), *Gender, Climate Change and Health*, Geneva: World Health Organization.

5 Nordic Council of Ministers, (2019), *Closing the Gap on Gender and Climate Policy*. Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers.

In order to incorporate meaningful gender equity and representation in climate action spaces, there are several considerations that must be taken into account. Firstly, women must be included as agents for change rather than "victims." As *Chair of The Elders*, Mary Robinson, described at the European Parliament, "women are more affected by climate change because of their traditional roles in the community, but they are not victims, they are *increasingly agents of change*."<sup>6</sup> It is also crucial that women are not oversimplified as "as a homogenous group."<sup>7</sup> Women are affected variably by climate change depending on their economic, social and cultural contexts.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it is imperative that diverse groups of women – particularly from those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, those representing ethnic and cultural minorities, Indigenous and First Nations communities and those with (dis)abilities – are active participants in climate negotiations and policy-making.

## Intergenerational Approaches in Climate Action

In addition to creating climate negotiation spaces where the diverse perspectives of women shape climate change policies, it is crucial to see the importance of one particularly under-represented demographic: young people. Youth play an integral role in the international community's lasting efforts to achieve a sustainable world. According to the 2018 UN World Youth Report, there are currently 1.2 billion young people aged 15 to 24 years old, accounting for *16 percent* of the global population.<sup>9</sup> Given that youth will inherit responsibility as the future stewards of the planet, they must be included as partners in the development and implementation of climate change solu-

6 Robinson, (201), *Women, Gender Equality and Climate Justice*. Brussels: European Parliamentary Hearing on 25 April 2017.

7 Djoudi, (2016), *At the Intersection of inequalities - Lessons learned from CIFOR's work on gender and climate change adaptation in West Africa*, New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

8 Ibid.

9 UN-DESA, (2018), *UN World Youth Report*, New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

tions. In other words, *intergenerational collaboration* is essential to the enduring realization of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 – Climate Action.

Intergenerational collaboration on climate change promises to produce comprehensive policies for a number of reasons. Youth bring a unique perspective to the table through firsthand experiences of the changing globe.<sup>10</sup> They present a talent for innovative thinking and creative problem-solving.<sup>11</sup> Youth also have the capacity to spread a mindset of stewardship amongst their peers and onward to future generations. Ultimately, inclusive partnerships between generations can yield positive and robust solutions – in the short term and long term – that benefit our society, the planet and its inhabitants.

## The Intersection of Gender and Intergenerational Approaches

Including the intersectional voices and experiences of *female youth* can further deepen the effectiveness and scope of climate action. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has reported that young women are disproportionately affected by unsustainable environmental practices.<sup>12</sup> In low-income countries where traditional gender roles are prevalent, women and girls typically take on jobs as caretakers of the household.<sup>13</sup> This includes obligations like collecting water, food and biofuel, making them more vulnerable to being exposed to pollution and other negative externalities of production.<sup>14</sup> Hence, voices of female youths add depth to the discussion of sustainability by prompting policy-makers to consider how traditional gender roles are intertwined with the effects of unsustainable economic development.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 71.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> OECD, (2018), *Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development and Gender Equality: Fostering an Integrated Policy Agenda*, Paris: The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

Moreover, women's limited access or ownership to natural resources, such as land, in economically-poor countries excludes women from conversations regarding environmental sustainability.<sup>15</sup> Both women and girls engagement in household activities such as collecting water, food and biofuel, and thus their experience provides them with in-depth knowledge of sustainable practices.<sup>16</sup> The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognises that eliminating all forms of gender discrimination is necessary in achieving the SDG goals.<sup>17</sup> By promoting equal access to education and political participation among female youths, girls will feel empowered to work towards poverty eradication and will help to create a society where both girls and boys, from a young age, are equally engaged in sustainable development.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations, (2017), *2017 HLPF Thematic review of SDG 5: Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls*. New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



*BCCIC Climate Change Youth Delegate Maya Guttman, Marina Melanidis and Veronika Bylicki at the Joint-Canadian Youth Press Conference organized by BCCIC Climate Change at COP-24, Katowice (Photo by Liam Orme, BCCIC)*

## Current Progress and Future Prospects

The 2018 UN World Youth Report indicates youth engagement has been particularly strong at the local level.<sup>19</sup> According to data drawn from international case studies, young people have been particularly active in grass-roots and national initiatives to advance the SDGs; they are engaged in raising local awareness, collecting and applying data, monitoring and enforcing accountability and creating progress reports.<sup>20</sup> These findings certainly apply in the case of SDG 13. The BCCIC case study (*see below*) presents a specific example of the unique ability of local organizations to bridge generational, local, global and gender gaps in climate action.

To achieve impactful intergenerational collaboration, firstly, a climate justice approach must be taken, which adopts a human-rights centred approach that protects the rights of the most vulnerable.<sup>21</sup> Considering that children and youth are more susceptible to the indirect and direct impacts of climate change, intergenerational collaboration must entail providing mentorship and education to youth, as well as valuing young people's opinions and creative solutions. More importantly, by further promoting youth participation and engagement, we are creating a momentum of fostering stewardship and sustainable development values among future designers, politicians, engineers and architects of the world. Investing in the next generation of young leaders will contribute to the short- and long-term global integration of the SDGs and more robust climate and social justice actions.



*BCCIC Climate Change members Maya Redlinger (Left) and Nanna Pedersen (Right) discussing their project at the BC-CIC SDG Hub Vancouver (Photo by Kyro Plaviak, BCCIC)*

## BCCIC – A Case Study for Gender and Youth Climate Action

The British Columbia Council for International Cooperation's Youth Climate Change Branch is proud to incorporate an intergenerational gender-centric approach to its policy development, research, administration and negotiation activities. All research and policy development volunteers are required to complete the Gender-based Analysis plus (GBA+) course offered by Status of Women Canada and complete the certification process. GBA+ provides the volunteers with essential knowledge on how to recognize and overcome their assumptions and incorporate crucial diversity considerations in any policy recommendations and research.<sup>22</sup> As climate change and climate action will affect certain groups of people disproportionately relative to other groups, the GBA+ certification process ensures that volunteers keep in mind the intersectionality between climate change and social justice and complete a series of GBA+ questions in order to test if the proposed policy truly leaves no one behind.

<sup>19</sup> United Nations, (2018), *UN World Youth Report*, p. 98.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Mary Robinson Foundation, (2013), *Climate Justice: An Intergenerational Approach*, Dublin: Mary Robinson Foundation Climate Justice Centre.

<sup>22</sup> Status of Women Canada, (2018), *Gender-based Analysis Plus*. Ottawa: Status of Women Canada.

## Example of GBA+ principles in climate action

### ISSUE

Support a rights-based approach in the implementation of cooperative approaches and the establishment of a carbon market under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.

### QUESTIONS

- What is the current level of gender-based considerations in the carbon market assessment process?
- What are the types of human rights abuses resulting from mitigation activities and REDD+ projects currently?
- Are there any groups that are disproportionately affected by these types of human rights abuses?
- Should this support be universally applied to all areas of the world or should there be more local considerations in terms of traditions, culture, regional circumstances etc.?
- What are some of the barriers that exist for marginalized groups to participate in Article 6 negotiations and report such human rights violations?

Climate action GBA+ analysis does not limit the scope of consideration to only gender issues; instead, it advocates for a more holistic approach to policy development that recognizes the complex interlinkages between climate change impacts, adaptation and mitigation measures and social equity.

The Climate Change Branch's coordinator team – those who lead volunteer divisions and define the team's strategic vision – benefits from gender-balanced representation in its decision-making capacity. Within the general membership base, 72% of the working members of the Climate Change Branch self-identify as fe-

male.<sup>23</sup> The Branch has maintained gender parity at all levels of its administration and activities through an open and inclusive coordinator and volunteer recruitment process. Volunteer postings stress the importance of a varied pool of applicants in best representing the intersectional nature of climate policy, and the necessity of myriad lenses in researching and accomplishing portfolio projects. Moreover, online position postings specify required qualifications broadly enough to include the full diversity of qualified applicants whose merits and worth might not be recognised through formal means.



*Coordinator of Policy & Research Bronwyn Moore (Centre) and Carbon Market Policy Analyst Chloe Mao (Left) with the female-led BC Youth Opinion Survey research team (Photo by Kyro Plaviak, BCCIC)*

<sup>23</sup> Data obtained through BCCIC Climate Change's internal volunteer management tracking system and periodic volunteer satisfaction survey. Latest data set obtained in January 2020.



## Volunteer Testimonies

“The BCCIC Climate Youth Branch is an example of how local climate advocacy groups offer fertile ground for intergenerational, gender equitable, and international collaboration to advance the SDGs. My experience reflects a deeply diverse exchange in the sense that I am continually reading and analyzing the climate change policies recommended by the Nordic Council of Ministers; I act by adapting these international recommendations by senior level experts into actions and policies that are applicable at provincial and municipal levels in British Columbia.

Working at BCCIC empowers me by giving me a voice and a platform to accelerate local climate action. As a young woman, it is meaningful to know that the organization I work for is actively concerned with equal representation of women and men and cares about my ideas despite my age. Being on all-female and gender-balanced teams has cultivated my confidence in expressing my ideas, criticisms, and experiences in group settings. I can recall times in group meetings and team phone calls at BCCIC when I felt able to ask questions that I would have readily dismissed as unimportant in other scenarios, or would have saved to ask one-on-one due to fear of sounding unintelligent in front of adult- and male-dominated company. I know that my voice has a respected place at the table.”

– Maya Redlinger, Assistant Policy Analyst for Multilateral Affairs

In line with GBA+ holistic practices, the Climate Change Branch is cognisant of the numerous life experiences that compose its diverse membership. In order to best accommodate members who work professionally full time, members who are geographically distant from the Branch office, members with physical disabilities, or members with busy family lives, coordinators are tasked with implementing flexible work strategies such as non-fixed work hours, organising audiovisual-meetings, and ensuring that all meeting spaces are accessible regardless of disability. Flexible work management recognises that a variety of work

styles can produce equally effective results.

The Climate Change Branch strives to create a safe and welcoming space for intellectual discussions and the emergence of creative solutions to address the toughest issues today. Volunteers are encouraged to share their concerns anonymously with the leadership team. The coordinators are receptive to requests for support from division members, and they are encouraged to discuss these anonymized issues during coordinator meetings in order to find the best possible solution that would ensure the diversity of the Branch.

## BCCIC Climate’s Gender Action on the International Stage

BCCIC Climate Change monitors the implementation of the Gender Action Plan (GAP) under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The GAP aims to “advance the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all UNFCCC negotiations.”<sup>24</sup> Specifically, our youth delegates are following the negotiations of the GAP’s six priority areas including:

1. Capacity-building and learning;
2. Knowledge management and communication;
3. Gender balance, participation and women’s leadership in climate action;
4. Coherence in implementation;
5. Gender-responsive implementation; and
6. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting, and continuous learning.

In addition to monitoring the negotiations, the Climate Branch is committed to advocating for gender equity within the broader climate space and implementing the GAP within the BCCIC Youth Delegation to UN Climate Change – learning from and sharing our lessons-learned with all stakeholders within the UNFCCC space. We are acutely aware of the invisible

<sup>24</sup> Nordic Council of Ministers, (2019), Closing the Gap on Gender and Climate Policy.

glass ceiling for women and minority groups in the environmental NGO realm,<sup>25</sup> and thus, we are actively identifying and removing barriers for women and minority groups to advance into leadership positions and accelerate global climate action.



*BCCIC Climate Change Senior Program Advisor for Negotiations and COP-25 Delegation Coordinator Keila Stark speaking at a community engagement event at UBC (Photo by Rowen Siemens, BCCIC)*

For the COP 25 Delegation in 2019, the Youth Delegation Project had its first full female coordinator team, led by Ms. Keila Stark and Ms. Sadie DeCoste – both are alumni of the Youth Delegation Project. Through a mentor-and-support system, the Youth Delegation acts as an incubator for past delegates to train and mentor emerging youth climate leaders and provide them a chance to lead the delegation in the future. And the Youth Delegation Project is committed to continue this gender-balanced management model in future Youth Delegations to UN Climate Change. At the same time, BCCIC Climate Change is sharing our experience, best-practices and lessons-learned on gender action with other youth organizations within the official youth constituency to UN Climate Change, hoping to inspire more youth organizations to follow our lead and enact their own gender action within their teams.

## Recommendations

- Recognize young people as a unique rights-holder and stakeholder that paves the way for meaningful youth engagement and empowerment.
- Incorporate intergenerational equity principles when enacting policies that would affect the future generation's ability to thrive, including gender and climate actions.
- Recognize the inherent linkage between ambitious climate action and achieving gender equality and incorporate gender-based analysis principles in developing new policies and assessing existing ones.
- Assess the current level of gender- and minority-representation within organizational leadership and explore the barriers to achieving gender-balance or equitable representation.
- Noting the phenomenon of the Green Glass Ceiling for women and minority groups to serve in leadership positions within environmental organizations; and actively seek to address institutional arrangement issues that hinder gender- or minority-representation within the organization.
- Provide more mentorship opportunities for young women in policy analysis, project management, negotiations and decision-making, NGO management and in STEM works to foster a new generation of female leaders in different sectors of the society.

<sup>25</sup> Dorceta, (2014), *The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations*. Ann Arbor: Green 2.0, University of Michigan.

# Section 7



## MOVEMENT MAP

SEARCH | DISCOVER | CONNECT

The Movement Map presents the scope and scale of the work being done by organizations across Canada to achieve the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)

Start exploring



What are the  
**SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS?**

Civil society groups  
achieving the SDGs in  
Canada

**11,686**

Created By



Partners



Global Affairs / Affaires mondiales  
Canada / Canada

Employment and / Emploi et  
Social Development Canada / Développement social Canada

## Cross-cutting, Mapping and Networking Tools

# Visualizing the Interlinkages: The Movement Map



Written by Orton Mak<sup>1</sup> and Antonia Schiller<sup>2</sup> for BCCIC



<sup>1</sup> Orton Mak is a Map Developer

<sup>2</sup> Antonia Schiller is the Map Officer at BCCIC.

**Name of organization:** British Columbia Council for International Cooperation

**Website:** [www.bccic.ca](http://www.bccic.ca)

**Geographical scope of the case study:** British Columbia, Canada

**SDG's:** SDG #5 (Gender Equality), SDG #1 (No poverty), SDG #2 (Zero hunger), SDG #4 (quality education), SDG #10 (reducing inequalities), SDG #11 (Sustainable cities and communities), SDG #16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions)

**Project title:** The Movement Map

**Description of projects:** Mapping organizations working on the SDGs across Canada and visualizing and analyzing the interlinkages between SDGs

**Main activities:** Conducting an analysis of which organizations are working on SDG #5 in relation to other selected Sustainable Development Goals in Canada.

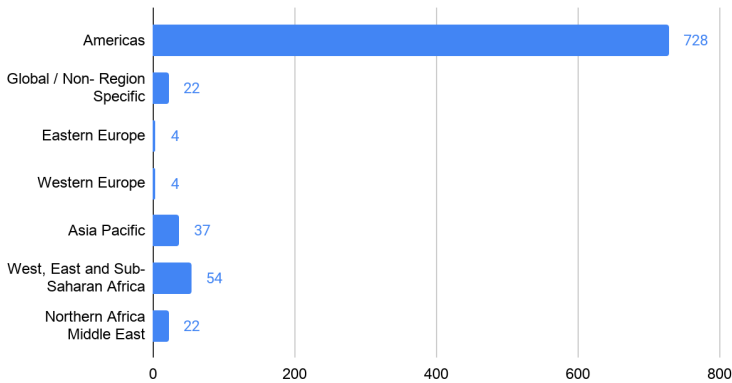
**Results:** The findings provide insight into the connections between SDGs and offer suggestions on how to promote synergies and mitigate trade-offs. It also provides useful information that will support networking among organizations working on particular clusters of SDGs related to gender equality and women's empowerment in particular geographical contexts.

Talking about achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 can sound rather abstract and overly ambitious. It raises questions and opens up conversations about how we should proceed with only ten years to go. Is it most efficient as an organization to work on as many SDGs as possible to speed up progress or is it more effective to focus all resources on a few goals or just a single one? Can one even work on more than just one SDG in an efficient way?

Looking at the SDGs it becomes clear that while they are all connected and dependent in some way, some goals are more likely to be intertwined than others. The British Columbia Council of International Cooperation (BCCIC) found a way to visualize this interlinkage, which allows us to get from an abstract conversation to a substantive one. The Movement Map (<http://map.bccic.ca>) makes it possible for everyone to see how non-profits and charities, mainly across Canada, are working on the achievement of the SDGs.

The map shows a total of 819 organizations succeeding on Goal 5, gender equality. Their work ranges from ending all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, to ensuring the full participation of women in leadership and decision-making positions. The data collected and shown on the map makes it

Projects by Regions



possible to obtain even more information about what targets are most worked on in relation to SDG 5, as well as with which goals gender equality is most interlinked. Furthermore, it allows us to see where in the world their work is taking place.

Although all the organizations working on Goal 5 are based in Canada, they have operations around the world, as is evident in the graph below. Many of these organizations have multiple projects in different countries in the Middle East and North Africa, in Eastern and Western Europe, in the Asia Pacific Region, Sub-Saharan terrain, or spread their actions globally without a special focus.

In future studies, it would be valuable to perform the same analyses, but instead of focusing on organizations within Canada, compiling data for groups working on SDG 5 by continent and then disaggregating the findings to compare results. We expect the interlinkages predicted by the data to reflect the different factors within each continent. Similar analyses could also be completed at the country level.

The graph below shows that out of the 819 organizations in Canada focused on SDG 5, 43.7% of these engage on projects dedicated to Target 5.1, ending discrimination, and 53.4% are focused on Target 5.2, ending violence against and exploitation of women

and girls. Thus, the majority of effort is applied to these two targets. The graph stresses that although there are many groups involved in improving gender equality across the country, almost no attention is given to Target 5.4, valuing unpaid care and domestic work.

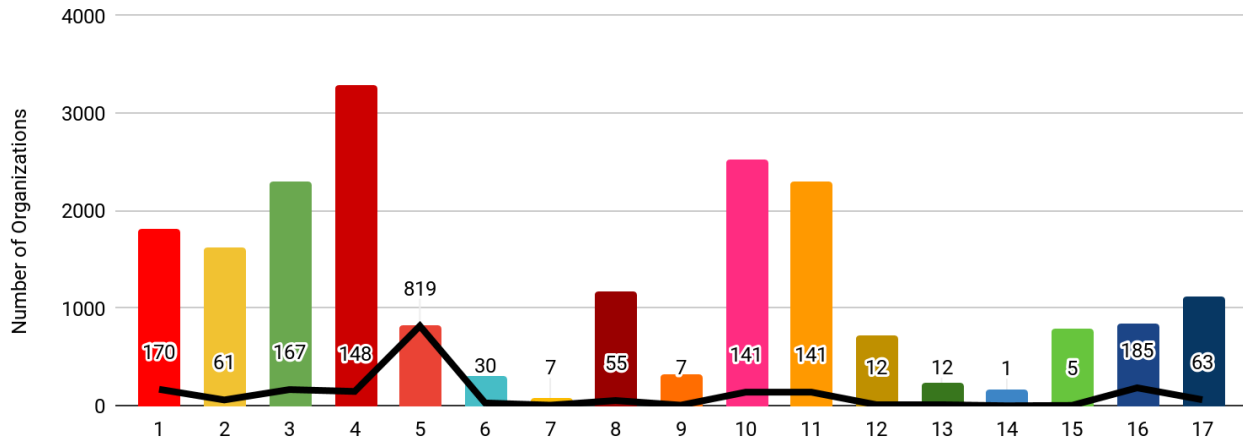
Moving from targets to goals, the graph “Combination of Goal 5 and Other SDGs” presents the number of organizations working on each SDG across Canada, while the black line shows the number of organizations working on Goal 5, in addition to the given SDG. For instance, there are 141 organizations working on both SDG 5 and SDG 10, but only seven organizations working on both SDG 5 and SDG 7. All data presented is accessible through the map. Therefore, within organizations in Canada, gender equality is most frequently worked on simultaneously with Goal 16 - peace, justice and strong institutions, Goal 1 - no poverty, Goal 3 - good health and well-being, Goal 4 - quality education, Goal 11 - sustainable cities and communities, and Goal 10 - reducing inequalities, in this order. Additional research is necessary to determine whether the degree of these correlations reflects real-world positive interlinkages between SDG 5 and all other SDGs.

The strongest alliance can be found with SDG 16: though there are 837 groups working on SDG 16, 185 groups or 22.1% of them are also working on SDG

SDG 5 Target Disaggregation



## Combination of Goal 5 and Other SDGs



5. Strictly speaking, in this instance, the highest correlation occurs between Targets 5.2 and 16.1. Out of all groups working on SDG 16 and 5, this combination appears 63.8% of the time. The combinations of Targets 5.2 and 16.2, and Targets 5.1 and 16.1 are right behind, occurring among 41.6% and 34.1% of all groups working on both SDGs. These correlations are certainly not surprising, as all four targets relate in some way to ending discrimination, violence, and exploitation of women and girls. Also of note is that 24.3% of all groups working on both SDGs 5 and 16, have a focus on Target 16.3, namely to promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice. Our key findings are that most work on gender equality issues done through the lens of Goal 16, involve initiatives to reduce violence (16.1), protect children (16.2) or promote the rule of law and equal access to justice (16.3).

A total of 170 or 20.8% of all groups working on SDG 5 are also working on SDG 1, no poverty. Most significant is the link between Targets 5.2 and 1.4; this combination represents 92 groups or 54.1%. This finding puts a spotlight on how important equal rights to ownership, basic services, technology and economic resources are to achieving gender equality. At the same time, groups working to reduce overall poverty (1.2) and implement social protection systems (1.3) are also targets being worked on concurrently with SDG 5.

Looking at SDG 6, one can see that there is not a signif-

icant number of organizations working on clean water and sanitation in combination with gender equality. However, relative to the 300 total groups working on SDG 6 nationally, the 30 groups working on both SDG 5 and 6 represent a significant proportion of them (10.0%). These data suggest that gender equality is also affected by having access to clean water and sanitation, and that it can be improved by continuing work to ensure universal access to safe drinking water (6.1) and ending open defecation and providing access to sanitation and hygiene for women and girls (6.2). One may wonder if there are sufficient groups working on clean water and sanitation in Canada and particularly in developing and least-developed countries in order to take advantage of positive interlinkages with other SDGs, including gender equality.

For SDG 3, good health and well-being, 167 organizations are linked to SDG 5. Data shows that groups in this context focus largely on reducing mortality from non-communicable diseases and promoting mental health (3.4, 86 groups), prevention and treatment of substance abuse (3.5, 30 groups) and ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services (3.7, 47 groups). While groups working on both SDG 3 and SDG 5 account for only 7.3% of all organizations working on SDG 3, 20.4% of all groups striving for gender equality also have a focus on good health and well-being.

Lastly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, quality education plays an important role in addressing gender equality. Speaking in total numbers, 148 non-profits and charities working on quality education are also working on Goal 5. They are mainly concentrated on increasing the number of youth and adults with relevant skills (4.4), eliminating gender disparities in education (4.5), achieving literacy and numeracy for all men and women (4.6) and building and upgrading safe and inclusive schools (4.a). Hence, a substantial number of organizations are trying to achieve gender equality through education, yet at the same time it is conspicuous that out of 3,283 civil society actors working on quality education, only 4.5% of them are acting to improve issues of gender equality. Additional research to determine why so few groups are working on education to further gender equality could result in some valuable findings. Perhaps more schools need to be built for girls in developing and least developing countries so that they have access to the same opportunities as boys in their communities, or maybe there need to be more conversations and policies in place that address conservative views of roles within the household. Girls might simply not be able to go to school because it is not regarded as important and beneficial to their future.

Both SDG 10, reducing inequalities, and SDG 11, sustainable cities and communities, show just about 141 organizations taking action in combination with SDG 5. In the context of Goal 5, work on reducing inequalities is mainly focused on promoting economic inclusion (10.2, 91 groups) and addressing equal opportunities (10.3, 41 groups) while work on SDG 11 is focused on the availability of safe and affordable housing (11.1). A survey of groups working on Target 11.1 in combination with SDG 5 reveals that most are women's shelters. In fact, out of 141 organizations working on both SDG 5 and 11, 101 are women's shelters or provide other safe spaces for women and children. Many also offer services that prevent violence against women.

This case study only mentions the six SDGs most likely



interlinked with gender equality but even here two important points can be made. For one, it showcases the many different ways existing issues are being addressed and improved. It also demonstrates how work on gender equality, or any other SDG for that matter, will not be effective if we only concentrate on solving issues one SDG at a time. This is of course the interconnected principle espoused by the Sustainable Development Goals. Instead, stakeholders need to recognize that gender equality is a part of almost every other SDG and can only be achieved by widening one's understanding of the Goals and their Targets, as well as seeing their interconnectedness. It is revealing to see that action on gender equality coincides with addressing good health and well-being, poverty, and quality education. The highest interlinkage shown by the map data occurs with peace, justice and strong institutions, while reducing inequality and promoting sustainable cities and communities play an active and important role as well.

The Movement Map makes it possible to see how over 11,538 civil society organizations in Canada are working on the SDGs. Of these, 49.5% are working on more than one SDG and 17.2% on more than two SDGs. Therefore, only 33.3% of groups are working on one SDG and thus not taking advantage of positive synergies. As we have shown in this case study, analyzing the work of organizations *en masse* reveals probable positive interlinkages between the SDGs, even at the

level of Targets. We have determined which Targets and SDGs are most correlated with SDG 5 but we could also do the same analysis for any other SDG. Another possible use of the map data is to determine whether or not there are a sufficient number of civil society organizations to address specific issues in a given community; will Kamloops be able to mitigate the effects of climate change considering the groups currently present in the community?

This case study makes the hypotheses that the most common combinations of SDGs and Targets being worked on within thousands of existing organizations exist because they represent probable positive interlinkages. The combinations we discover can encourage us to address all factors that affect gender equality, not just a limited few or the ones that are negatively interlinked or not interlinked in any way. Still, it is important to keep in mind that the most highly correlated combinations can be interpreted in different ways. One possible interpretation is that civil society has recognized which issues are the most interconnected. Thus, putting our efforts into SDG 16 - peace, justice and strong institutions, is more effective than putting our efforts into SDG 13 - climate action when it comes to addressing gender equality. A second possible interpretation is that combinations of SDGs or Targets that are less correlated can potentially point us to gaps in our capacity or the strategy we are employing to address particular SDGs or Targets. On the map there are only fourteen groups working on both climate action and gender equality - does this number indicate there is only a minor interlinkage or maybe even a negative interlinkage between these SDGs? Perhaps our understanding of the link between them is in the early stages and therefore we have not developed the capacity to address them in an interconnected way? Each combination of Target and/or SDG will need further investigation in order to determine how it should inform our understanding of the issues and our strategy for achieving the SDGs by 2030.

Not only does the map offer insights about how SDGs compliment and affect each other but it also offers a

wide range of networking opportunities for existing organizations. By virtue of the map's search function, it is possible to look for like-minded organizations with which to share knowledge, ideas, and resources but also find new inspiration and approaches to projects and activities. With the map moving forward and becoming international it will further promote partnerships on a bigger scale. Organizations working on SDG 5 can identify and partner with other organizations working on the same goal in other countries and thereby not only build a Pan-Canadian network but an international one. That way, innovation, best practices and lessons learned can be shared and showcased in a global way which can lead to more diverse views, strategies and maybe most importantly, varied understandings of how gender equality affects different countries and their communities.

In order to move forward and achieve abstract and ambitious goals such as gender equality and the other 16 SDGs, it will be absolutely necessary to build networks at all scales. We will need to come to an understanding that working together as charities, non-profits and civil society organizations is a powerful force that not only impacts and influences local communities but also government decisions. In the second half of 2020, BCCIC will begin mapping private sector groups, which will increase the potential for partnerships across sectors. Scaling up the Movement Map to work at a global scale will require new features and significant changes to its user experience. Organizational profiles on the map will be displayed in English as well as the native language of the organization. Also, new features will be added that will encourage networking between groups around the world working on the same SDGs or even interlinked ones. In the future, positive interlinkages between organizations will be shown visually on the map together with relevant data, which has the potential to assist in identifying strategic leverage points for achieving the SDGs. Organizations across sectors will be able to take advantage of this knowledge to make better strategic decisions that will accelerate the 2030 Agenda.



## Recommendations

- Organizations should explore the map and use the different tools to uncover interlinkages and develop innovative partnerships for coordination and knowledge sharing.
- Canada's federal SDG Unit should use the map to understand the scope and depth of development programming in Canada and identify gaps to determine where resources and capacity is lacking.
- The SDG unit should also use the Map as a means to roll out its public engagement strategy as it provides useful information about the stakeholders who are part of a broader SDG movement for change.
- The Map should be promoted globally to accurately capture who is working on the SDGs and where; this could form the useful basis of local to global partnerships, peer to peer learning and SDG synergies.
- BCCIC and other organizations interested in mapping need to build their capacity in order to enhance the skills of development practitioners to find relevant organizations working on the SDGs (or raise their awareness of the linkage between their own work and the SDGs), effectively classify projects by SDG targets and make them visible on the map.
- In order to realize the full potential of the map in identifying interlinkages, more data should be collected from all sectors, including the private sector, and development practitioners trained on how to analyse this data. BCCIC should invest in adding tools to the map that stakeholders can use to explore SDG interlinkages.
- BCCIC should invest in evaluations that consider the relevance and utility of the Map for organizations who are on the Map, in order to see how effective it has been in terms of improving their work and what resources and support they need to fully and effectively use all the tools of the Map.
- More quantitative and qualitative research and analysis is needed in terms of understanding the interlinkages between SDG 5 and the other goals. The findings presented in this case study provide useful information about the interlinkages; however, in order to know what has been effective in promoting women's empowerment and gender equality, further in-depth research is necessary to inform policy and practice.
- Across scales and sectors, stakeholders outside the non-profit and charity sector should provide much needed technical assistance and information sharing to accelerate gender equality and women's empowerment.

# Gender Equality Community of Practice: Exploring the Opportunities in British Columbia

## SDG Tracker



Written by Janet Ray<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> After a rich leadership career, Janet Ray has retired from nursing and is now pursuing an interest in women's global health; therefore, gender, health, intersectionality and community of practice are close to heart for her. Drawing on her experience facilitating an interdisciplinary community of practice for health care professionals, she has discovered the conceptual and practical relevance of a gender equality community of practice.

**Name of organization:** Independent

**Geographical scope of the case study:** British Columbia

**Sustainable Development Goals:** SDG #5 Gender Equality, SDG #17 Partnership for the Goals

**Project Title:** Gender Equality Community of Practice: Scoping Study

**Description of project:** Primary and secondary research on the feasibility of a gender equality community of practice in British Columbia.

**Target population:** Policy-makers, practitioners and researchers interested in gender equality and women's empowerment.

**Main activities:** This case study reflects on the theoretical frameworks underlying communities of practice and outlines the steps to be followed if a gender equality community of practice were to be established in British Columbia with an emphasis on cross-sectoral partnerships, collective processes and innovation.

The intransigence of gender inequality has given rise to calls for innovation and accelerated change, and community of practice presents a robust conceptual approach to creating the transformative change that gender equality entails. To that end, this case study is exploring community of practice as a novel strategy to advance gender equality in British Columbia, Canada.

## Background and Context

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action sounded the clarion call for gender justice, and the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals encased gender equality as a core principle. Despite areas of progress, gender inequality continues to be a significant issue across the globe. Canada too has “unfinished business,” and in British Columbia improvements are evident. However, the need for gender action remains clear.

*“Each woman was alone to face her own gender experience: most of the time, she would think she was the only one to handle the problems she was dealing with. She could look at the world around and feel it should be different, she had no one to speak about. She had to take it on her own.” (Coutinho, 2019)*

Historically, progress toward gender equality in Canada decelerated in the decade of 2005-2015, largely

*“Social processes that acknowledge privilege and vulnerabilities, recognize power disparity, intersectional identities.... this is a very politically charged, evolving topic of discussion and in some places, conflict” (respondent).*

due to federal government budget cuts that narrowed the Status of Women Canada mandate and led to the dismantling of the network of women’s groups across the country.

The planned universal childcare plan was scuttled, and social service reductions disproportionately impacted women, particularly marginalized groups. Women have had fewer opportunities to come together and disadvantaged people have even less capacity to do so. The resultant discontinuity led to fragmentation, isolation and working in silos for the gender equality cause.

#### **What is a community of practice?**

*“a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly”*

(Wenger, 2015)

Currently, the call for gender equality focuses on structural forces driving inequality, and three of the most effective change strategies have proven to be collaboration, advocacy and organizing movements, all of which involve gathering together. A community of practice is best known as “a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly”. The three essential elements comprising community of practice are: a domain of joint interest, a community of mutual engagement and a shared repertoire of practice. Historically viewed as a venue for practitioners to “think together,” communities of practice are emerging in spaces of transformation.

#### **Community of practice elements**

- Domain
- Community
- Practice

Since a community of practice activates critical reflection on exclusion and systemic elements of institutional and cultural inequities, it provides a forum to address the intersectionality embedded in gender equality. Gender equality communities of practice have been established for research, global financial governance and international cooperation.

As international development organizations explore transformative approaches to gender inequality, communities of practice have emerged as a collaborative means to engage in gender mainstreaming work.

Global Affairs Canada instituted the *Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP)* and *Canada’s Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach*, acknowledging collaboration for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. A gender equality community of practice aligns with FIAP policy in at least four of its action areas; namely, collaboration in designing innovative ways of working with women and others (Action Area 1.4), leadership in innovation by testing promising initiatives (Action Area 4.1), knowledge-sharing of best practices (Action Area 4.3), and multi-stakeholder approaches through dialogue and collaboration (Action Area 7.2).

## **Methodology**

The case study methodology consisted of online research regarding the current state of gender equality, evolving women’s movement in Canada and communities of practice, considering the concept, historical background and contemporary overview. The BCCIC delegation (hereafter, ‘respondents’) to the 64th Commission on the Status of Women was surveyed to understand their familiarity with communities of practice and their perspectives on joining specifically a gender equality one. In addition, a colleague was interviewed to tap into her expertise and the lessons learned from co-founding and leading a province-wide virtual research community of practice comprised mainly of women.

## What works best?

Community of practice as a concept is not well understood and often is used interchangeably with other terms such as 'network' and 'team.'

All involve learning and each possesses a series of connections. However, a team essentially focuses on task and a network promotes flow along nodes, while a community of practice embraces relationship and shared intention. In the survey, uncertainty about the term was evident with a hesitation to answer, responses of "I'm not sure" and examples offered that were actually task groups, study groups or committees. At the end of the interview, some commented on gaining a new understanding of community of practice e.g. "I'm kind of surprised that I don't know what a community of practice is and that I don't know of an existing one...I can see how beneficial [it] would be for women and young women from diverse backgrounds." It's reasonable to expect that at inception, considerable attention will need to be devoted to building awareness of not only what is a community of practice, but also how gender equality is understood and to be applied.

**"I'm kind of surprised that I don't know what a community of practice is and that I don't know of an existing one...I can see how beneficial [it] would be for women and young women from diverse backgrounds" (Respondent)**

In the community of practice literature, anecdotal discussion proliferates with success factors and recommended steps to set them up, for example, those proffered by gurus McDermott and Wenger-Trayner. As community of practice knowledge evolves, conceptual frameworks emerge and research emphasizes measurement and evaluation. In their breakthrough study, Jagasia, Baul and Mallik show that the effectiveness of knowledge management in communities of practice correlates with four categories of success

factors. Namely, community support, people factors, alignment with business strategy and knowledge management processes. While yet untested in other areas, these results can give at least preliminary guidance to community of practice design.

### Community of Practice Critical

Jagasia, Baul & Mallik, 2015

*Community Support*

*People Factors*

*Alignment with Strategy*

*Knowledge Management Processes*

Authors describe the *community support* category as functional supports such as time to participate, IT support, effective communication strategies, quality content to motivate members and clear facilitator/member roles. Leadership is recognized by others as a requirement for community effectiveness. Known by different titles - perhaps manager, facilitator, leader, moderator, coordinator - but whatever the name, the role is critical to facilitate results and enable social processes. An optimal leader possesses deep knowledge, energy to enthuse people, sufficient time available and skill to deal with whatever surfaces.

In the survey, respondents were consistent in the view that leadership is an essential resource, one specifying tech savvy network manager and collaborative leaders as key roles; another cited "knowledge and expertise to convene people." Structure was noted by respondents with reference to "a paid coordinator, clearly defined terms of reference ...and well-organized presentations on the various topics... I always came away with the feeling that my time was well spent." Another emphasized leadership expertise, stipulating that these expectations exceed volunteer capacity.

Jagasia, Baul and Mallik refer to *People Factors* as community connection aspects that are dependent on trust, personal relationships, open communication channels and reliable knowledge sharing mechanisms. In the survey, the connection theme generated

**“Learning to collaborate and to see the commonalities is not necessarily a spontaneous thing but rather the one that can best emerge through some intentional processes that allow for inclusive interactions” (Respondent).**

the most comments, ranging from the value of a common focus, to the difference-making in the company of highly motivated people, to the importance of face-to-face meetings and to participation requirements keeping people close. Many respondents spoke about motivation, and “opportunities to connect with others engaged in similar work and talk to other practitioners with the same lens – to convene, unpack, get advice, debrief, for motivation and inspiration, see what other people are working on.” Most people are keen to engage around “teamwork for collaboration” and appreciate implicit personal benefits such as mentorship and support. Several voiced concerns about confidentiality, personal security and the need for a safe environment. Power analysis was raised “includ[ing] social processes that acknowledge privilege and vulnerabilities, recognize power disparity, intersectional identities... this is a very politically charged, evolving topic of discussion and in some places, conflict.” One person called for “a values statement to ensure that all members of the community of practice [are] on the same page not only professionally, but ethically in their approach to this work.”

The *Alignment with Strategy* category in Jagasia, Baul and Mallik’s research speaks to the strategic importance of the community of practice and how learning practices must be situated in articulated goals. In the survey, these points were revealed in comments about a mandate to do the gender equality work, setting clear goals and the importance of “alignment with the purpose and what we’re trying to achieve,” “believing in it.” Structure and learning go hand in hand for respondents; for example, “promoting gender equality...required an initial effort to create common ground” and “learning to collaborate and to see

the commonalities is not necessarily a spontaneous thing but rather the one that can best emerge through some intentional processes that allow for inclusive interactions.” References to capacity building included problem-solving and “Actually creat[ing] results with people that are committed, not only show-up but follow through. It’s so irritating to just have noise then nothing happens. Want to see the product in front of us.” Creativity is a drawing force since “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts - the synergy of community enables the group to incubate innovation.” One person observed her community of practice as “an interesting social experiment to see how our combined skills, values, interest and experiences came together to build something functional, and hopefully impactful.”

The *Knowledge Management Processes* category of Jagasia, Baul and Mallik’s study features the time required to capture and share best practices, sharing expertise for coaching members in use of knowledge tools and helping members to recognize their own assets for reciprocal knowledge sharing. In the survey with delegates, a competent network manager was identified as an essential requirement for coaching members in using tools for knowledge exchange since “most people don’t know how to work in a virtual environment.” Interest was expressed for information

**“It’s an interesting social experiment to see how our combined skills, values, interest and experiences came together to build something functional, and hopefully impactful” (Respondent).**

**“The biggest challenge is to find a way to maintain some combination of ongoing activities and questions to keep the group alive” (Respondent).**

access, sharing resources, “intellectual and professional exchange” and “lessons learned to avoid reinventing the wheel.”

Survey respondents cited maintaining vigour and ensuring sustainability as major challenges for community of practice effectiveness. Comments included “There needs to be clear focus otherwise the group will flounder or lose momentum” and “the biggest challenge is to find a way to maintain some combination of ongoing activities and questions to keep the group alive.” “When it was a program there was more structure and once it transitioned into a collective, it was harder to keep the ball rolling. It lost momentum.” Another noted that “the problem is that only a few people take credit and only a few people benefit from the inputs of others, so people quickly fall off because of the sense of no real value.” The need to keep the group active and energized was of common concern.

Despite the desire and interest for connection with colleagues, workload and time availability were chief constraints identified by survey respondents. Individuals discern the value proposition of benefit versus commitment, the dilemma of which is encapsulated in the following reflection:

*“It is difficult to say if I would join a community of practice. I think there is true value in such a community, but the challenge is always a question of time and resources. If I saw true value in moving forward, in a substantial way, specific objectives then I would be far more motivated. Also, it would depend on the quality of the contributions and the quality of the commitments of the other members. So it would definitely have to be well enough defined and focused with clear aims. I also think it has to be managed and resourced so that it does not fall by the wayside” (Respondent).*

In an open section at the end of the survey, a number of respondents volunteered their support for a gender equality community of practice with such remarks as “Great idea!” and “the gender equality community of practice is an innovative idea whose time has come for the benefit of everyone,” “It’s a good topic and I’ll be interested to see what happens with it,” as well as “the concept of a gender equality community of practice is a good one especially as it provides the opportunity for like-minded people to come together and contribute to a meaningful project...We can accomplish more in numbers than we can on our own.”

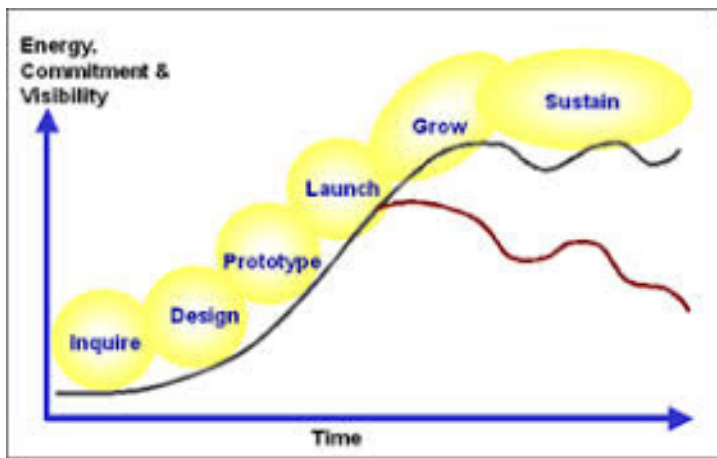
**“Most people don’t know how to work in a virtual environment” (Respondent).**

## Community of practice life cycle

In the literature, start-up advice is primarily directed towards a community of practice within a single or unified entity such as a business or a particular content area like information technology. Based on its complexity, gender equality deserves a sound exploratory process for thinking, planning, engaging and mobilizing *vis a vis* community of practice. Stakeholders are multiple, key actors are diverse and the geographical span is unwieldy. A structured approach is warranted and Cambridge, Kaplan and Suter’s design guide can assist with framing community of practice analysis.

Cambridge, Kaplan and Suter describe the community of practice life cycle in a series of six phases entitled inquire, design, prototype, launch, grow and sustain (see diagram). To design the social and technical community architecture, key questions with associated activities are posed at each development stage. The ‘inquire, design, prototype and launch’ phases offer general guidance for initiating a community of practice in British Columbia while the ‘grow and sustain’ phases would provide the continuum for possible future stages.

“The gender equality community of practice is an innovative idea whose time has come for the benefit of everyone” (Respondent).



### Community of practice life cycle

Cambridge, Kaplan and Suter (2005) adapted from McDermott (2002)

As the name suggests, the *Inquire* phase is a period of exploration and inquiry to determine the vision, domain, goals and audience for the community of practice. Activities include a needs assessment, stakeholder analysis, resource estimation and recruitment of an initial representative team.

In the *Design* phase, roles, technologies, group processes and activities are defined for the community goals. The focus is on outlining communication channels, meeting schedules, learning goals, collaboration activities, knowledge resources as well as roles and responsibilities.

For the *Prototype* phase, a pilot is offered to test the design, refine plans, craft a success story and enlist the support of stakeholders. Target activities are shaping group identity, creating stakeholder enthusiasm and testing technologies and implementation plans.

In the *Launch* phase, a staged implementation occurs in order to deliver to a broader audience and reach new members. Revisions are made from pilot feed-

back and the community considers orientation, member recruitment, event scheduling and communication pathways. A community charter conveys vision, goals and member conduct.

Full member engagement unfolds in the *Grow* phase with oversight of the entire community as participation increases in collaborative learning, knowledge sharing activities, group projects, network events and expanding awareness of community culture. Implementation brings recruitment for emerging roles, resource inventories, member recognition, data collection for measurement and review of community culture, processes, practices and technologies.

When the *Sustain* phase is reached, attention is paid to keeping the community dynamic and incorporating positive planned change. Based on review, improved strategies are adopted, technologies are updated, processes are refreshed, new opportunities are identified and evaluation is underway.

### Where do we start?

Presuming that the *Inquire* phase offers a departure point to embark upon the investigation of a gender equality community of practice, an initial step would be to review the literature. Then based on the literature review, a concept note can outline background, rationale and goals for the proposed gender equality community of practice. Setting up an initial governance structure will provide overall direction and recruiting a core team will delegate leadership for the inquiry process according to a negotiated workplan. Given the provincial reach, an environmental scan will be important for gathering information from across British Columbia. Preparing a feasibility report will present an analysis of current state, gaps and issues, critical success factors, resources with cost estimates and recommendations for gender equality action including community of practice design and governance. Building a committed coalition will form a foundation

## Community of Practice Life Cycle

- Inquire phase
- Design phase
- Prototype phase
- Launch phase
- Grow phase
- Sustain phase

Cambridge, Kaplan and Suter (2005) adapted from McDermott (2002)

to support consensus decision-making for determining whether to proceed to the next phase of exploring the gender equality community of practice life cycle.

Engagement through a variety of channels would ensure relevant representation for forming a referent group of diverse inclusion. A feature of the engagement process would be interlinkages that enable cross cutting efforts to support root cause analysis, foster integration and potentiate impact. Inclusive engagement can enable vulnerable groups to be meaning-

### Inquire phase: exploring a gender equality community of practice in BC

- Review the literature
- Write a concept note
- Conduct an environmental scan
- Prepare a feasibility report
- Establish an initial governance structure
- Recruit a core team
- Ensure inclusive, multi-channel engagement
- Convene a forum
- Simulate a gender responsive environment
- Apply best practice
- Work toward consensus
- Build a coalition
- Decide on next steps

fully involved and gender diversity could speak to intersectionality. BCCIC member organizations and SDG Movement Map agencies could be identified particularly those working on gender issues of pay equity, gender violence and First Nations women. Councils in other provinces may be contacted to access resources and elicit the lived experience of establishing and maintaining a GE community of practice.

A forum could be convened to acquaint key actors, share expertise, promote collaboration and secure high level commitment. Welcoming leaders and influencers to the gender equality conversation can break down silos, open doors to networks, reduce barriers to resources and provide access to decision-makers. In gaining a strategic hold, the process could activate synergies in collective social action around gender equality. It is not difficult to imagine that building a broad-based coalition would infuse energy, promote solidarity, dispel isolation and sustain resilience.

As the community of practice inquiry process proceeds, it is conceivable that opportunities could unfold for simulating a gender responsive environment. Incubating gender-just structures and processes, developing women's leadership and forming gender justice relationships could all take hold, and new norms could be instilled for future endeavours - such as the Gender Equality Community of Practice, should it eventuate. Best practice adoption would be visible in consulting credible toolkits, frameworks, measurement tools and methods of analysis. With gender equality reflexivity permeating processes, an emerging cultural shift would be nurtured by gender-based learning in joint reflection and by the sharing of experiences.

*With gender equality reflexivity permeating processes, an emerging cultural shift would be nurtured by gender-based learning in joint reflection and sharing of experiences.*



## Other challenges

Community of practice is conceptually congruent with gender equality policy. However, successful gender equality community of practice function will be reliant upon sustaining an inquiry stance and cultivating evolving social identity. Acknowledging the degree to which an organization have achieved gender equality institutionalization would be an important consideration in its establishment.

*“International cooperation organizations reflect and reproduce socially constructed gender roles and relationships.... institutionalization of gender equality requires changes in practices but also in attitudes, behaviors and values. The result is a collective dynamic with its own existence”.*

The transformational aspects of initiating a gender equality community of practice within this context, require judicious planning. Social innovation requires cross-sectoral partnership, the work of which is notoriously challenging. There must be a change process, diverse involvement (including senior leaders), expert facilitation, concurrent focus on task, a solid relational foundation and opportunities for people to learn. Cross-sector work takes deep volunteer engagement, it challenges inconsistent integration and it tackles barriers that impede progress. Instituting complex change calls for resources, the sum

### **Cross-sector work takes deep volunteer engagement, challenges inconsistent integration and tackles barriers that impede progress (IVAR)**

of which supersedes business as usual. Upfront investment begets venture success. Social innovation signifies an outlay of human, financial and other resources including social capital, which is in itself is genderized. Change is indeed challenging but also forges opportunities for advancement.

## Conclusion

Notionally, community of practice shows promise as an innovative strategy to accelerate gender equality action. Not only will it address SDG 5 (Gender Equality), but significant gains can be anticipated in nine other SDGs, to the extent that intersectionality can be addressed. These are SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG3 (Good Health & Well-being), SDG4 (Quality education), SDG6 (Clean water & sanitation), SDG8 (Decent work & economic growth), SDG10 (Reducing inequality), SDG16 (Peace, Justice & strong institutions) and SDG17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The synergies of community of practice with gender equality enact principles of indivisibility, interdependence and interconnection.

Furthermore, the collective process for examining the merits of community of practice demonstrates the application of interlinkage principles in decision-making i.e. localizing inter-connectivity, utilizing best practice, leveraging knowledge building for policy convergence, forming governance structures that reflect interrelationships, using quality data for decision-making, ensuring equitable stakeholder engagement and fostering dialogue, learning and continual communications in working together.

A structured inquiry process to investigate community of practice can create a platform to assemble people, stimulate discussion and facilitate consensus around gender equality as a shared enterprise. Engaging in this collaboration will contribute to the global vision of gender equality and in doing so, it will generate new knowledge and evoke more inspiring stories to tell about women’s empowerment. Inquiry serves as a catalyst for transformation toward the 2030 Agenda.

### Synergies & Intersectionality

SDG 1 No poverty  
SDG 2 Zero Hunger  
SDG 3 Good Health & Well-being  
SDG 4 Quality education  
SDG 5 Gender equality  
SDG 6 Clean water & sanitation  
SDG 8 Decent work & economic growth  
SDG 10 Reducing inequality  
SDG 16 Peace, Justice & strong institutions  
SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals.

SDG Principles  
Indivisibility  
Interdependence  
Interconnection

### Recommendations

- At a theoretical level, practitioners should develop a strong theory of change with clear objectives for a community of practice to be effective;
- More research is needed on women's networks and communities of practice both globally and within Canada in terms of scope, structure, best practice, and optimal gender mainstreaming processes, particularly in a virtual environment.
- Opportunities should be created for women and men from diverse backgrounds, positionalities and identities to collectively explore the feasibility of a gender equality community of practice and the process by which innovative projects on gender and its interlinkages can be developed.
- Proceed with thoughtful planning given the intersectionality of gender equality and community of practice; for both concepts all participants will require learning opportunities at the outset and as the inquiry unfolds.
- Establish a governance structure and anticipate that resources will be required, starting with a representative decision-making group that can appoint a dedicated leader to facilitate the collaborative work
- Utilize a current gender equality community of practice framework such as ACT (2019), then adapt to the local context. Build in measurement and evaluation using best practice tools from both gender equality and community of practice perspectives.
- Gain clarity about geographical scope and ensure congruency i.e. if it's province-wide then the engagement needs to reflect this.
- Maintain a gender equality reflexivity throughout the inquiry process.

# Conclusion

The objective of the *Leveraging the Interlinkages* case study report is to showcase the achievements and innovations of BCCIC Members, who are implementing or conducting research on gender equality and women's empowerment interventions in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals in Canada and abroad, and in doing so, respond to Action 8 of the *Towards Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy* interim national SDG strategy, which calls for "compelling storytelling and calls to action."<sup>1</sup> The overarching theme of this report is innovation. The language of innovation permeates *Canada's Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach*, which sets out Global Affairs Canada's approach to civil society partnerships for the implementation of the *Feminist International Assistance Policy*.<sup>2</sup> This policy states that Global Affairs Canada will work with:

- "partners to pilot, design and champion new and innovative ways of working with women's organizations to advance women's rights" (Action Area 1.4);
- "CSOs and other partners to incubate innovative ideas, test promising initiatives, adapt, replicate and scale up solutions for widespread impact and effectiveness, while accounting for the gender dimensions of innovations" (Action Area 4.1);
- "CSOs and other stakeholders to facilitate knowledge-sharing regarding best practices and processes in development innovations informed by gender analysis" (Action Area 4.3).<sup>3</sup>

Global Affairs Canada defines "innovation" as a "process, mindset, and means to enable new or improved locally-driven solutions for better results and greater

impact, which benefit and empower the poorest and most vulnerable, particularly women and girls."<sup>4</sup> The 18 case studies reveal exciting, new and creative ways in which integrated interventions have been developed to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, all of which have leveraged the concept of interlinkages to enhance impact on the ground.

## Interlinkages showcased in the case study

- Implementation across scales (local, provincial, national and international);
- Cross-sectoral collaboration (public, private, non-profit and civil society);
- Promotion of multi-stakeholder coordination and partnerships;
- The clustering of Sustainable Development Goals or working on cross-cutting issues;
- The clustering of Sustainable Development Goals across goal-specific silos, often identified through bottom up, participatory approaches with women and girls;
- Analysis or mapping of the interaction of SDG #5 with other sustainable development goals;
- Engaging with SDG #5 from an intergenerational and intersectional lens;
- Undertaking feminist, gender-based, intersectional and human-rights-based gender analysis to inform policy and programming, as well as promoting the collection of sex and age disaggregated data;
- Integration of gender equality and feminist principles into organizational and institutional policies, programs and structures;
- Working across SDGs from the lens of 'leave no one behind' and providing a vehicle for the voices of the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalized to be heard and exercise ownership over the policies and projects that affect them;
- Designing and implementing innovative capac-

Dr. Zosa De Sas-Kropiwnicki wrote the introduction and conclusion of this report. Zosa is the Senior Policy Analyst at BCCIC

1 Sustainable Development Goals Unit, (2019), *Towards Canada's 2030 Agenda National Strategy: Interim Document*, Gatineau, Quebec, pg. 17.

2 This advisory group is tasked with supporting the implementation of the *Feminist International Assistance Policy* (FIAP), <https://www.ocic.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Advisory-Group-to-Support-Implementation-of-the-Civil-Society-Partnerships-for-International-Assistance-Policy.pdf>

3 Global Affairs Canada, *Canada's Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach*, (2019).

4 Ibid, Footnote 1, pg. 15.

- ity-strengthening, coaching and intrapersonal interventions for women’s empowerment;
- Promoting women’s leadership across SDGs at multiple scales;
- Supporting gender equality communities of practice and women’s networks;
- Promoting social dialogue and public engagement from an intersectional, gender-integrated and equity lens;
- Advocating for equitable policies and driving transformative and sustainable social change to tackle the root causes of gender inequality and systematic discrimination, while closing gender gaps and overcoming socio-cultural, economic and structural barriers to women’s equitable participation and leadership.

## SDG Interlinkages: Working across silos

As was highlighted in the Introduction to this report, attention has increasingly been paid to policy coherence and interlinkages, as well as the importance of breaking silos and building integrated approaches that harness synergies and minimize trade-offs when accelerating the 2030 Agenda.<sup>5</sup> The results of the projects showcased in this report reflect how systematic rather than sectoral approaches have been effective in promoting women’s empowerment and gender equality. This underscores the value of promoting SDG #5 through integrated projects that leverage interlinkages across multiple objectives, as promoted by the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.<sup>6</sup>

Interlinkages are at the heart of the Movement Map developed by BCCIC. In this case study, the work that is being conducted by 819 organizations in Canada is visually mapped and interactions analyzed amongst

multiple SDGs, including the interaction between SDG #5 and SDG #16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), SDG #1 (no poverty), SDG #3 (good health and well-being), SDG #4 (quality education), SDG #11 (sustainable cities and communities) and SDG #10 (reducing inequalities). As an innovative tool, the Movement Map can be used to identify synergies, trade-offs and gaps, and can facilitate networking among organizations promoting women’s equality and gender empowerment.<sup>7</sup>

Numerous projects have adopted transformative theories of change grounded in an in depth understanding of interlinkages. For example, the Kenoli Foundation’s work in partnership with AMDV Honduras has revealed how food security, health and wellbeing of rural women and children can be improved while addressing climate change. These dual goals have been achieved by providing women with training on nutritional practices, children’s development, ecological farming techniques, leadership and business skills, as well as by supporting micro-enterprises, sustainable food gardens and better stoves for cooking. The author notes that “women’s lives are holistic and thus holistic solutions are required that cross multiple SDGs, such as, reducing poverty, improving health and addressing climate change”.<sup>8</sup>

World Neighbours Canada has partnered with local organizations in Nepal, Burkina Faso and Honduras to integrate gender equality and women’s empowerment into their projects in ways that address clusters of SDGs. For instance, in Nepal providing villagers with materials and technical training to build and maintain water and sanitation infrastructure (SDG #9 infrastructure and SDG #12 procurement and management of water resources), along with promoting women’s active participation in water-user committees has led to significant gains in women and children’s safety, health and wellbeing. Progress has included improve-

5 Advancing the 2030 Agenda: Interlinkages and Common Themes at the HLPF 2018: Report of the meeting, (25-26 January 2018), New York, United Nations Headquarters.

6 ECESA, (2017), 2017 HLPF Thematic review of SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, pg. 6-7.

7 Mak, Orton & Schiller, Antonia, “Case Study: Visualizing the Interlinkages: The Movement Map”.

8 Radyo, Vera, “Case Study: Canadians Working for Gender Empowerment in Central America”.

ments in sexual and reproductive health, reduction in child mortality, increased privacy and security for daily functions, and lowering stigma associated with menstruation. In Burkina Faso, World Neighbours Canada's partner has combined sustainable agricultural production and food security projects with those related to women's leadership and family planning. Child health and nutrition, and women's leadership, were incorporated into interventions focused on crop production in Honduras.<sup>9</sup>

Similarly, interlinkages are evident as WCCI also engages with climate change from a gender lens, CIRDI merges gender with natural resource governance and SFU's Co-Laboratorio develops innovative solutions to integrate gender within policies in the mining sector across agencies, ministries and companies. CWIP and CIP have promoted gender equality and women's empowerment in relation to creating sustainable cities and communities (SDG #11). CW4Wafghan has integrated content on human rights, infant and maternal health, hygiene, nutrition and parenting into literacy programs for Afghan women, and in doing so, generates synergies across sustainable development goals.<sup>10</sup> These are but a few of the examples of SDG interlinkages contained in this report.

## Bottom-up and participatory co-learning approaches

Action Area 1.3 of *Canada's Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach* states that CSO partners will consult with women and girls throughout the program cycle so that projects respond to their specific inputs.<sup>11</sup> The stories told by our authors reveal how innovation has been researched, “incubated”, tested, implemented and championed in Canada but also in South East Asia, East Africa, Central and Southern America using cre-

ative bottom-up approaches. The Kenoli case study highlights evidence-informed holistic solutions to the challenges faced by rural women living in poverty, which are developed in consultation with marginalized women “on the ground” and in partnership with local stakeholders.<sup>12</sup>

Many of these innovative solutions were developed in a participatory manner, by not only consulting with women and girls from marginalized communities, but by engaging with them as partners in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects. For instance, the Co-Laboratorio case study describes the process by which innovative solutions have been designed to bridge theory and practice with the objective of achieving equity in women's economic inclusion in the mining sector. Drawing from systems-centric design, these innovative solutions and actionable strategies have emerged out of collaborative incubator spaces and processes involving women from different sectors as well as community leaders, government officials, civil society activists, academics, the media, managers and executives.<sup>13</sup> CUSO's projects also encourage the voices of remote, rural Indigenous women in Laos to come to the fore so that they can present localized solutions for a bottom-up approach to gender equality in Laos.<sup>14</sup>

In another example, the CIRDI case study on natural resource governance in Southern Ecuador was effective in enabling local knowledge, perspective and values to inform the development of environmentally sustainable small-scale mining solutions and safe, fair working conditions for women recyclers and *jancheras*. Positive spaces for women were developed, childcare was provided and women's organizations and labour collectives were invited, all of which enabled women to participate as active speakers and participants. Women and local mining community members were

9 Grewal, Gurleen, “Case Study: Localizing SDG 5 – A case study on rural development work that addresses the interlinkages”.

10 Oates, Lauryn and Ziayee, Murwarid, “Case Study: Transforming Literacy Education for Afghan Women”.

11 Global Affairs Canada, *Canada's Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach*, (2019).

12 Radyo, Vera, “Case Study: Canadians Working for Gender Empowerment in Central America”.

13 June, Francis, “Case Study: Women Innovate! Lessons from the Co-Laboratorio Project for achieving the SDGs”.

14 Mishkin, Ariel and Vivona, Dina, “Case Study: Cuso International in South East Asia – Adapting to Canada's Contemporary Feminist Approach”.

treated as “experts” in transforming mining practices into environmentally sustainable and gender-responsive natural resource practices. A “co-learning” or “thinking together”<sup>15</sup> approach, otherwise known as transformative learning, centred on a continuous negotiation and interactive community engagement process informed CIRDI’s theory of change. In addition to raising the awareness of the difficulties that women face in the mining industry and providing women with resources to transition into alternative paths of economic empowerment, this project informed the development of a more inclusive and equitable public policy framework in the mining sector.<sup>16</sup>

## Women’s leadership

Action 1.5 of *Canada’s Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach* places emphasis on “raising the leadership, visibility, influence, capacity and access of women and girls in the context of international assistance”.<sup>17</sup> Many organizations showcased in this report, focused specifically on advancing women’s leadership and decision-making in governance in order to ensure that reforms and legislation are more gender-sensitive and consider the interests of marginalized groups. For instance, Kenoli Foundation in partnership with AMDV has trained women to assume leadership roles on official municipal committees and councils; this case study includes an example of a participant who, as a result of the program now represents other women and influences decisions related to women’s policies as a municipal council member.<sup>18</sup> World Neighbours Canada in partnership with local organizations in Burkina Faso and Honduras has trained women to assume leadership roles in community organizations and local committees, and in Nepal, partners have

introduced quotas to encourage women’s participation and integration into village-level decision-making committees on water, health and sanitation. In these projects, women were not only seen as “witnesses” but as experts and “business-managers” on water and sanitation management, agricultural production, and maternal and reproductive health, working in partnerships with men in their villages.<sup>19</sup>

Women’s leadership has also been promoted in the private sector. The case study on the Bank of Montreal reveals the development of innovative educational, mentorship and leadership projects in the private sector that ensure equitable representation of women in senior management and thereby promote not only SDG #5 but also SDG #9 Industry and Infrastructure, as well as SDG #8 Decent Work and Economic Growth.<sup>20</sup> In promoting SDG #5 in relationship to SDG #11 Sustainable Cities and Communities, the Commonwealth Women in Planning Manifesto as well as Canadian Institute of Planners Gender Equity Policy also reveal the commitment of the private sector in advancing the role of women as active participants and leaders in planning, designing and shaping the built environment. While these documents have not been implemented fully yet, they reveal an interest in promoting women’s leadership and adopting an intersectional, gender-based lens through which the private sector – and in this case planning professionals and associations - can promote equity, diversity and the 2030 Agenda across scales – Commonwealth, Canada and the City.<sup>21</sup>

## Women’s networks

Underscoring the importance of interlinkages, many projects created opportunities for local knowledge to be shared with women in different contexts through networks and collaborative events that facilitate criti-

15 Pyrko I, Dorfler V & Eden C. 2017. Thinking together: What makes communities of practice work? Academy of Management Proceedings.

16 Nijhawan, Amar, “Case Study: Gendering Natural Resource Governance – Women Gold Collectors and Artisanal Mining in Ecuador”.

17 Global Affairs Canada, *Canada’s Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach*, (2019).

18 Radyo, Vera, “Case Study: Canadians Working for Gender Empowerment in Central America”.

19 Grewal, Gurleen, “Case Study: Localizing SDG 5 – A case study on rural development work that addresses the interlinkages”.

20 Borrelli, Kaila, “Case Study: A review of BMO’s transition to a gender equal organization”.

21 Agnello, Kristin, “Case Study: Cities and Gender – the Commonwealth Women in Planning Network”.

cal reflection and the sharing of ideas and best practices, and thereby lay the foundation for the incubation of innovative solutions for better results and greater impact. For example, the aforementioned Commonwealth Women in Planning Manifesto emerged out of the collaboration of 34 female planners across 10 countries, including planners in urban and rural communities, planners representing Indigenous communities and professionals from civil society organizations.<sup>22</sup>

In the context of climate change adaptation, Women's Climate Centres International (WCCI)'s approach in Uganda reveals the importance of embracing Indigenous and traditional knowledge of rural women, while catalyzing a global network of knowledge exchange and best practices in agriculture, with unique partnerships between women development professionals and community leaders from Uganda, Kenya, South Africa and the United States.<sup>23</sup>

Both VIDEA and CUSO have also supported co-learning within networks of youth volunteers and Indigenous women. VIDEA's International Indigenous Youth Internship Programme stresses the value of integrating indigenous knowledge into SDG programming while encouraging cross-cultural learning among Indigenous Canadian, Zambian and Ugandan youth to promote innovative solutions to development challenges.<sup>24</sup> CUSO's case study also reveals the power of partnerships and networks for Asian Indigenous women across Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, who collectively have advocated for changes in relation to inclusive climate change policy and practice in the region. Networks have also formed the basis of the Kenoli Foundation and AMDV's response to gender-based violence, such that eight women's networks in eight municipalities have been trained on how to identify

and respond to gender-based violence.<sup>25</sup> BCCIC's Climate Change volunteers participate actively in youth networks to develop and implement joint advocacy, research and policy-related projects on gender and climate change.<sup>26</sup>

In counterpoint, the Gender Equality Community of Practice case study explores the conceptual underpinnings of community of practice that reinforce the rich interplay of learning in context, sharing resources and taking collective action, all of which are evident in the case studies. The case studies demonstrate the process of assembling partners to set priorities and establish a shared agenda for unified action. The collective space offers an incubator for gender mainstreaming and process improvement by applying best practice in real time, within a local context. In the spirit of praxis, theory becomes embedded in practice and practice informs theory.<sup>27</sup>

## Multi-stakeholder collaboration

Objective 7 of *Canada's Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach Strategy* focuses on “fostering multi-stakeholder approaches to international assistance” so that all relevant actors can “contribute to development in distinct and complementary ways.”<sup>28</sup> Action Areas 7.1. and 7.2. highlight the principles and processes by which multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaboration will be fostered with CSOs, the private sector, research communities, national governments and other actors, including those representing poor, marginalized and vulnerable populations. Numerous case studies reveal the importance of interlinkages in relation to working across sectors with a ‘whole-of-society’ vision. These Canadian organizations have invested and

22 Agnello, Kristin, “Case Study: Cities and Gender – the Commonwealth Women in Planning Network”.

23 Bazilli, Susan, “Case Study: Grassroots Women Lead the Fight against Climate Change”.

24 Ronald, Hillary, “Case Study: International Indigenous Youth Internship Programme”.

25 Mishkin, Ariel and Vivona, Dina, “Case Study: Cuso International in South East Asia – Adapting to Canada's Contemporary Feminist Approach”.

26 Crossfield, Harriet; Pedersen, Nanna; Redlinger, Maya; Gaulin, Nicholas & Qi, Jianfeng, “Case Study: Gender and Climate Action”.

27 Ray, Janet, “Case Study: Gender Equality Community of Practice – Exploring the Opportunities in British Columbia”.

28 Global Affairs Canada, *Canada's Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach*, (2019).

supported the creation of multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms, innovative partnerships and collaborative solutions. For example, the Co-Laboratorio project in Peru created “riverside spaces” where women from very different parts of the society, including local communities, government, NGOs and the private sector, worked collaboratively to develop actionable and transformative solutions to ensure women’s full participation in decision-making within mining contexts. The systems-centered approach was effective in breaking “single-stakeholder” constructs in favor of “inter-institutional and communal spaces capable of bridging policy and grassroots” that have the potential to enhance accountability and bring about long term sustainable change.<sup>29</sup>

Intersectoral collaboration is at the heart of the Justice Education Society (JES), Isabel-Claudina Alert project in Guatemala. This case study has revealed the effectiveness of coordinated inter-departmental interventions to develop intersectional gender-responsive policy and programming in order to protect women from gender-based violence. These interventions include the development and strengthening of inter-institutional tools and building coordination mechanisms at national and local levels to investigate missing women, respond to reports of gender-based violence and support women survivors of violence. This project also involved different stakeholders such as fire departments, community committees, women’s organizations and forest rangers, with the result that women’s safety has become a matter of “joint responsibility”.<sup>30</sup>

Women’s literacy has also emerged as a matter of joint responsibility in culturally conservative contexts. CW-4WAfghan’s literacy programs for women were only relevant, appropriate and effective because strategic relationships were developed with respected community members, such as female elders, local midwives, council members and others who were able to ne-

gotiate access and acceptance. Permission was also obtained from local and state authorities. The whole-of-society vision was also incorporated into their theory of change, which in addition to teaching Afghan women also stocked community libraries, trained local teachers and encouraged family literacy, in order to make an impact at multiple scales - individual, family, community and state.<sup>31</sup>

Deetken Impact’s case study reveals how important it is to partner with the private sector through information sharing, joint programming and strengthening accountability mechanisms in order to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment in the context of the 2030 Agenda. By working across SDGs and cutting across silos and sectors Deetken Impact has enhanced women’s access to technology, providing micro-loans and offering practical training on technology, entrepreneurship and financial management, in order to lift women out of poverty, enhance their health and well-being – and that of their children – and reduce their vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence in the aftermath of a humanitarian crisis caused by natural disasters in Haiti.<sup>32</sup>

The scoping study of a gender equality community of practice in British Columbia also reveals the value of convening key actors from different sectors, sharing expertise, promoting collaboration and securing high level commitment, and has revealed how this collaborative approach can “break down silos”, “open doors”, “reduce barriers” and provide access to decision-makers. The author argues, “The process could activate synergies in collective social action around gender equality. It is not difficult to imagine that building a broad-based coalition would infuse energy, promote solidarity, dispel isolation and sustain resilience”.<sup>33</sup>

29 Francis, June, “Case Study: Women Innovate! Lessons from the Co-Laboratorio Project for achieving the SDGs”.

30 Weber, Nora & Portales, Maria, “Case Study: JES International Program: The Isabel-Claudina Alert”

31 Oates, Lauryn and Ziayee, Murwarid, “Case Study: Transforming Literacy Education for Afghan Women”.

32 Lamyin, Jose, “Case Study: ILU Women’s Empowerment Fund”.

33 Ray, Janet, “Case Study: Gender Equality Community of Practice – Exploring the Opportunities in British Columbia”.



## Intersectionality and Equity

Many of the case studies have advocated for an intersectional approach to gender programming. Intersectionality is at the heart of the BCCIC Climate Change Youth Branch's case study on gender and climate change from an intergenerational perspective. This case study has revealed how an intersectional and gender-responsive lens has shaped the youth's engagement with climate change both within Canada and on an international stage, and how intersectional Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) has informed the youth's engagement with policy and practice. The intergenerational approach has also empowered female-identifying youth volunteers from British Columbia and has given them a platform to accelerate local climate action.<sup>34</sup>

Many of these innovative projects have produced positive short to medium term outcomes and long-term impact, when measured against historic or moving baselines. These solutions have ensured that even the most vulnerable and marginalized women and girls are able to experience and be a part of driving positive changes in their lives. The Justice Education (JES) example reveals the significance of adopting an intersectional approach when trying to support victims of gender-based violence, who may experience linguistic or cultural discrimination.<sup>35</sup> VIDEA's International Indigenous Youth Internship Programme relies on organic advertising and partnerships with communities in order to ensure that marginalized youth, from isolated and hard to reach areas have an opportunity to apply for internships. VIDEA also applies urban-rural quotas and diversity criteria to ensure that no one is left behind. As a result of their international development experience, young Indigenous women are better positioned to access employment and leadership opportunities in Canada.<sup>36</sup>

34 Crossfield, Harriet; Pedersen, Nanna; Redlinger, Maya; Gaulin, Nicholas & Qi, Jianfeng, "Case Study: Gender and Climate Action".

35 Weber, Nora & Portales, Maria, "Case Study: JES International Program: The Isabel-Claudina Alert"

36 Ronald, Hillary, "Case Study: International Indigenous Youth Internship Programme".

The Co-Laboratorio project in Peru intentionally addressed barriers to women's collaboration based on power differences, gender, race, class, geography etc.<sup>37</sup> The Commonwealth Women in Planning (CWIP) Network Manifesto is designed specifically around intersectionality to ensure that women's differential needs are recognized and met in planning built environments, for instance, in relation to the accessibility of certain spaces, the need for increased security and access to affordable housing. The Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) gender equity policy also specifically mentions intersectionality and its support for fair and inclusive access to opportunities for everyone, regardless of gender identity or expression, sex, sexual orientation, race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, family status, genetic characteristics or ability.<sup>38</sup>

Ability was the theme of a case study, which describes an innovative research project, which was undertaken by a Fijian born Canadian woman living with vision loss. She focused on the barriers faced by Fijian blind and visually impaired youth and working age adults. Her case study makes one question the stereotypes that surround disability and its simplistic association with vulnerability. Through her research, the author has given women living with disabilities an opportunity to be heard and advocate for positive social change. Her case study also reveals the importance of recognizing the significance of intersectionality in understanding the barriers and opportunities that people living with disabilities face.<sup>39</sup>

BCCIC's 'Where Canada Stands' reports has noted that refugee and immigrant women are often 'left behind' when considering the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>40</sup> The case study on the Vancouver Community College 'Make it!' program reveals how literacy and vocational training as well as collective small busi-

37 Francis, June, "Case Study: Women Innovate! Lessons from the Co-Laboratorio Project for achieving the SDGs".

38 Agnello, Kristin, "Case Study: Cities and Gender – the Commonwealth Women in Planning Network".

39 Pala, Anu, "Case Study: Project Ability – Exploring the Barriers of Fijian blind and visually impaired youth and working age adults".

40 See <https://www.bccic.ca/sustainable-development-goals/where-canada-stands-sdg-reports/>.

ness development support combined with childcare, can be provided from an agentic, empowerment and gender-responsive lens in order to contribute to SDGs #1 (no poverty), SDG #4 (quality education), SDG #5 (gender equality), SDG #8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG #17 (partnerships for the goals).<sup>41</sup>

In this vein, many authors have argued for an agentic approach to the 'leave no one behind' pledge. The Deetken Impact case study reveals the need to develop measures that remove financial barriers while promoting women's agency and enhancing their control over their livelihoods, finance and decision-making.<sup>42</sup> CW4Wafghan's case study on literacy education for Afghan women also focuses on agency – students who graduated from their program reported feeling more agentic and empowered. Their literacy scores drastically improved, enabling them to enter formal educational institutions or participate in vocational training and entrepreneurial activities.<sup>43</sup> Generally, the graduates felt more empowered to exercise control over their futures and exercise agency in their own homes, and this had a multiplier effect on their children.<sup>44</sup>

While many of the case studies in this report discuss empowerment in relation to the building or strengthening of the skills and knowledge of those 'left behind' through education, training, coaching and leadership interventions, the more 'internal' dimensions of empowerment was highlighted by the case study on substance addiction. The Pacifica and Heartwood comparative case study refers to women and female-

identifying persons (including LGBTQ+) who are often 'left behind' and end up in a cycle of addiction. This case study argues for holistic integrated interventions that not only provide residential and material support, but also psychosocial support using an intersectional, feminist and culturally-sensitive lens. An intersectional lens is particularly important, as the author notes, "For many women, the impact of gender inequality is compounded by other forms of discrimination including race, disability, prejudice against Indigenous peoples,<sup>45</sup> gender identity, sexual orientation, class, age, religion and spirituality".<sup>46</sup>

This case study highlights the need to consider the intrapersonal environment in empowerment programs, so that individuals are better able to reflect upon, evaluate and view their own power and capacity to influence people and the services and systems that affect them. In other words, empowerment should be understood in relation to three dimensions in line with Zimmerman (2000), namely the way that individuals reflect upon, evaluate and view their power and capacity to influence people and the services and systems that affect them (intrapersonal empowerment); the knowledge and skills of the agent, and the way that agents draw on this knowledge when interacting with people, services and system (interactional empowerment) and lastly how individuals mobilize themselves to affect the changes that are important to them (empowered behavior).<sup>47</sup>

This supports a holistic, multi-dimensional and transformative approach to gender equality and women's empowerment, that bridges both theory and practice. Some authors have focused on systems-centered theory to identify and leverage interlinkages (See the

41 Cowie, Tanya, "Case Study: Make it! Sewing Business Program and Mama's Hands Cooking Program".

42 Lamyin, Jose, "Case Study: ILU Women's Empowerment Fund".

43 Oates, Lauryn and Ziayee, Murwarid, "Case Study: Transforming Literacy Education for Afghan Women".

44 The multi-generational effects of these programs, were highlighted suggesting the need to consider interlinkages in relational to temporal coherence. In the Kenoli case study, infants and children were able to overcome nutritional and developmental challenges by training mothers and supporting their mothers to establish environmentally sustainable family gardens. The rates of asthma and respiratory diseases have decreased significantly among children as a result of new cooking stoves. Deetken Impact found that promoting financial inclusion for impoverished women and equal access to capital, markets and digital technology and business development services, ultimately had a positive effect on their children in the long term. CW4Wafghan found that their literacy program for women had a significant effect on children's literacy development and love of reading, which had the potential to improve educational outcomes in the long term.

45 City of Vancouver, (2018), Vancouver: A City For All Women, Women's Equity Strategy 2018 – 2028.

46 Sangster, Margot, "Case Study: Residential Addiction Treatment – Opportunities for Women's Equality and Empowerment".

47 Zimmerman, M. A. (2000). Empowerment Theory: Psychological, Organizational and Community Levels of Analysis. In J. Rappaport & E. Seidman (Eds.), Handbook of Community Psychology (pp. 43-63). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Co-Laboratorio case study),<sup>48</sup> while BCCIC's Theory of Change is derived from Integral theory, which considers the individual and collective, as well as interior and external domains.<sup>49</sup> This involves promoting self-efficacy, agency and empowered behaviour at the level of the individual, while combatting the structural root causes of gender inequality by removing attitudinal and socio-cultural barriers, as well as institutional, political, economic and legal barriers to the realization of human rights, equal participation and social justice at the level of the collective. This approach extends to building opportunity structures for gender equality and women's empowerment through robust policies and legislation, good governance, social capital and capacity strengthening, all grounded in rigorous theory, logical theories of change, comprehensive policy and innovative practice.

Therefore, it is imperative to work across domains (individual, interpersonal and structural), which is captured in Cuso International's description of the three 'pillars' of gender development, which include empowerment (accelerating women's individual agency); equity (building equitable relationships between men and women) and enabling environments (institutional change). This framework has informed its holistic and gender-transformative approach to international development as well as its new and emerging internal transformational strategic plan, which includes gender-responsive budgeting and gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation.<sup>50</sup>

It is important to note that more needs to be done in terms of devising innovative solutions to ensure that the 2030 Agenda 'leaves no one behind'. For example, despite CoLab's achievements in relation to intersectional analysis and programing, some groups of

women (specifically Afro-Peruvians) remained largely excluded from these spaces given dominant societal socio-cultural, economic and institutional barriers.<sup>51</sup> The authors of the CUSO case study argue that development projects should be more aware of the complex intersections both among and between marginalized groups throughout project design and implementation, including women with disabilities, Indigenous women, ethnic minorities and the LGBTQ+ community. In terms of the latter, the authors argue, "While focusing on the empowerment of women and girls is undoubtedly crucial to sustainable development, if a contemporary gender-transformative approach is being applied, then it must transcend the traditional conceptualization of gender as binary".<sup>52</sup>

More work also needs to be done in terms of protecting and supporting women's rights defenders. Women are also under attack for advocating for human rights reforms, as civic space closes in many countries; for instance, a prominent female Indigenous environmental activist was assassinated in Honduras.<sup>53</sup> Violence was also described as a barrier in the World Neighbours Canada case study, as was the instability in national governance and lack of funding.<sup>54</sup> Other challenges raised by the authors of the case studies include the dearth of age and gender disaggregated data, lack of political will, discriminatory social and cultural norms that are resistant to woman's empowerment and the "slowness" of institutional, social and economic change. The dominant silo-centric and sector-specific way of working for the goals, continues to undermine the actualization of a transformative agenda.

48 Francis, June, "Case Study: Women Innovate! Lessons from the Co-Laboratorio Project for achieving the SDGs".

49 Wilber, K. (2000). *A Theory of Everything: An Integral Vision for Business, Politics, Science and Spirituality*, p. 153. Boston: Shambhala Publications. See also Zimmerman, M. (2005). "Integral Ecology: A Perspectival, Developmental, and Coordinating Approach to Environmental Problems." *World Futures: The Journal of General Evolution* 61, nos. 1-2: 50-62.

50 Mishkin, Ariel and Vivona, Dina, "Case Study: Cuso International in South East Asia – Adapting to Canada's Contemporary Feminist Approach".

51 June, Francis, "Case Study: Women Innovate! Lessons from the Co-Laboratorio Project for achieving the SDGs".

52 Mishkin, Ariel and Vivona, Dina, "Case Study: Cuso International in South East Asia – Adapting to Canada's Contemporary Feminist Approach".

53 Radyo, Vera, "Case Study: Canadians Working for Gender Empowerment in Central America".

54 Grewal, Gurleen, "Case Study: Localizing SDG 5 – A case study on rural development work that addresses the interlinkages".

## Storytelling

*“Canadian CSOs play a key role in expressing Canadian values and telling Canada’s feminist international assistance story, which can foster global citizenship, particularly among youth, and help inspire Canadians to engage in transformative action to reduce poverty and overcome gender inequality. CSOs engage Canadians in a broader and deeper understanding of international issues, including promoting global citizenship and mobilizing citizens to participate actively in Canada’s international assistance efforts”.<sup>55</sup>*

The case studies provide numerous insights and recommendations in terms of how Canadian institutions and organizations can strengthen their international development programming in relation to gender equality and women’s empowerment from the perspective of interlinkages. Furthermore, two cases studies have revealed the direct benefit of international development programs for Canadian communities. For example, in the VIDEA case study Indigenous youth interns (the majority of whom are women) who travel from Canada to work with local, grassroots Zambian or Ugandan organizations return to Canada and engage in public mobilization activities that enable them to share their experiences with youth in their home communities and initiate conversations with Canadians on global issues.<sup>56</sup>

The volunteers who participate in CUSO’s VOICE project have not only developed new skills and learnt about their “culture, history and positionality” but also developed a real sense of “purpose”, all of which they took back to their home communities in Canada. In addition to contributing to local projects promoting women’s empowerment in Laos, they have also modelled attitudes and catalyzed social changes upon their return to Canada. As the authors argue, it has

triggered a “ripple effect, inspiring others and reaching the most remote communities... [they] often return with a deeper understanding of their role as global citizens and a dynamic view of their capacity to contribute to meaningful change, wherever they may be”.<sup>57</sup> Volunteerism and other co-learning approaches, therefore, have the potential to foster symbiotic and reciprocal relationships among stakeholders across scales and geographical contexts.

In general, this report is comprised of inspirational stories – stories that reveal the plethora of organizations, networks and individuals who are already taking action to promote gender equality and an accelerated 2030 Agenda through advocacy, development practice and volunteerism at multiple scales – British Columbia, Canada and internationally. As global citizens, their work underscores the universality and indivisibility of the Sustainable Development Goals, revealing a shared sense of collective responsibility to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment within a Sustainable Development Goal framework. This *Harnessing the Interlinkages* report is a call to action for Canadian institutions, organizations and individuals to assume a leadership role in accelerating the 2030 Agenda. In making this call, we stand behind the powerful commitment expressed by the Honourable Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau, in the Foreword to the *Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy*:

*“We commit to all of this because international solidarity is a shared Canadian value. We live in an increasingly interconnected world, and Canada’s international assistance will benefit not only partner communities but also Canadians. Together with our international partners and allies, we have a collective responsibility to safeguard and promote global health and security, education, environmental protection and growth that works for everyone – and we will do so with conviction and pride.”<sup>58</sup>*

<sup>55</sup> Global Affairs Canada, *Canada’s Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance – A Feminist Approach*, Objective 8 (2019).

<sup>56</sup> Ronald, Hillary, “Case Study: International Indigenous Youth Internship Programme”.

<sup>57</sup> Mishkin, Ariel and Vivona, Dina, “Case Study: Cuso International in South East Asia – Adapting to Canada’s Contemporary Feminist Approach”.

<sup>58</sup> Global Affairs Canada, (2017), “Foreword” in *Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy: #HerVoiceHerChoice*. GAC: Ottawa, pg. 7.

**14** LIFE  
BELOW WATER



**7** AFFORDABLE AND  
CLEAN ENERGY



**11** SUSTAINABLE CITIES  
AND COMMUNITIES



**2** ZERO  
HUNGER



**9** INDUSTRY, INNOVATION  
AND INFRASTRUCTURE



**15** LIFE  
ON LAND



**12** RESPONSIBLE  
CONSUMPTION  
AND PRODUCTION



**8** DECENT WORK AND  
ECONOMIC GROWTH

