Sustainability and Gender Inequality: A Local and Global Perspective

Authored by Filzah Belal, Shanice Burton, Darcy Gillespie, Carina Harb, Véronique Lahaie Luna, Kauthar Mohammad, Sooryavansh Seewoosungkur, Emel Tabaku, and Helena Teng
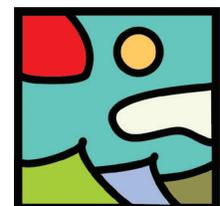Edited by Lauren Castelino

Designed by Sameeha Sheikh

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Executive Summary

This policy report addresses the systemic barriers faced by underserved self-identifying women in the sustainability sector in what is currently Canada and recommends actionable measures to promote gender equity and inclusivity in local organizations. The general public has a commonly held belief that sustainability organizations are staffed entirely by altruistic individuals who are unaffected by the existence of political influence, ego clashes, or power dynamics. As evidenced by this research, these institutions are just as prone to gender bias and discrimination, much like any other organization.

Simultaneously, this piece adopts a global approach in assessing Canada's international endeavors to tackle gender inequality in the Global South. The release of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) in 2017, though labeling itself as a progressive policy document, has raised questions regarding its innovation when compared to other gender equality policies Canada has released in the past (Tiessen, n.d.). At the global level, the study evaluates the effectiveness of FIAP while drawing on the lived experiences of focus group participants as the fundamental basis for our analysis and recommendations. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that Canada's international policy initiatives in the Global South adopt a transformative feminist approach. The purpose of this approach is to eradicate discrimination against women, dismantle patriarchal institutions, and address the intersecting forms of oppression that women and other underserved groups endure. Incorporating a transformative feminist lens in Canada's international policies can support the empowerment of women and other underrepresented groups in the Global South, thereby contributing to the achievement of sustainable development goals, notably Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality.

The research presented in this report was conducted through a series of focus group discussions and participatory based arts exercises. The findings uncovered that the majority of women find it difficult to be accepted into the sustainability sector. Often women faced informal barriers, such as male-dominated positions of power, unfair compensation, and an overall scarcity of paid roles in the industry which prevented them from succeeding in the sustainability sector. It was found that due to a lack of networking opportunities and the highly competitive job market, women deemed their pursuit of gaining experience challenging. Furthermore, underserved self-identifying women expressed frustration with the lack of diverse perspectives within their organizations, which often led to a lack of autonomy in decision-making processes, and exclusion from cultural events.

On a global scale, the analysis uncovered that FIAP leans into superficiality due to a weak structure. The policy tends to reduce women and girls to gendered stereotypes, which can reinforce some of the issues the document sets out to resolve. Another critique of FIAP was its limited involvement of diverse perspectives as various forms of Indigenous knowledge were excluded.

Introduction

Statement of Problem

Underserved women who self-identify as 2LGBTQ+, newcomers and/or BIPOC, encounter numerous systemic barriers in the workforce, including but not limited to discrimination, lack of inclusivity, work-life balance, fewer advancement opportunities, and unequal pay (Stamarski et al., 2015). Additionally, in male-dominated sectors, women are the primary targets of harassment and gender discrimination. These organizational and institutional barriers have adverse effects on women's mental and physical health, job satisfaction as well as their performance (Stamarski et al., 2015). Even in sustainability organizations led by women, gender inequality persists through human resources practices (hiring, training, paying and promoting women) leadership, and broader socio-cultural and environmental factors. According to Environment and Climate Change Canada, just 25% of Canadian environmental professionals are women (Sellers & WEDO, 2018). Evidently, there is a lack of representation in executive and leadership roles across the sustainability sector (Sellers & WEDO, 2018). We can conclude that these organizational and institutional barriers underscore the challenges that underrepresented women face in the sustainability sector, and urge us to explore ways to dismantle these barriers.

Efforts have been made on a global scale to advance gender equality through foreign and international policies, such as Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP). FIAP is an instrumentalist policy that sees gender equality as a solution to various goals: more growth, better health, peace, climate action or better governance. Instrumentalist approaches like FIAP focus on measurements and immediate needs, like the number of women involved in policy interventions and the socio-economic gains, rather than the systemic changes required to address structural barriers (Tiessen, 2019). Furthermore, Canada's FIAP provides financial benefits and investments through partnerships. For instance, FIAP helped

community centres in Iraq set up refugee camps for women, many of whom were escaping sexual violence. However, funding of gender initiatives and partnerships abroad is limited, and there is no new money being allocated to foreign aid or assistance (Tiessen, 2019). Additionally, there are differing perspectives on the effectiveness of funding projects and foreign aid to change deeply embedded social norms in foreign countries, and that these norms must slowly change from within (Zuercher, 2018). Therefore, we can infer that in practice FIAP promotes social justice and gender equality; however, it fails to address structural barriers and systems of inequality.

Research Objectives

- Examine the barriers faced by underserved women in the field of sustainability from a local perspective.
- Conduct a series of consciousness-raising and empowering focus group discussions with selected participants.
- Explore employability barriers and discrimination in the workplace.
- Obtain embodied knowledge that unravels the emotional aspects of systemic barriers faced by self-identifying underserved women in the sustainability field through arts-based exercises in focus group discussions.
- Critique current sustainability organizations in Canada that lack inclusive EDI policies and perpetuate gender inequality.
- Provide local organizational policy recommendations that will aid in eliminating the various barriers underserved women in sustainability face.
- Utilize the findings obtained from both forms of research to develop a critique of Canada's FIAP.
- Provide policy recommendations to improve Canada's FIAP.

Participant Eligibility Criteria

- To self-identify as a woman between the ages of 18 to 30 (inclusive).
- To identify with one of the underrepresented groups identified for this study (i.e. Black, Indigenous, visible minority, international student/visitor, francophone, LGBTQ2S+, refugee, newcomer, or people with physical or mental health related disabilities).
- To be seeking employment in sustainability, or currently working in the sustainability sector, or to have previously worked in the sustainability sector.
- To reside in what is currently known as Canada.

Research Methodology

- Prior to beginning the research process for this policy report, the research team was carefully selected based on their prior research experience in academic and professional settings. The team members collaborated for a period of 16 weeks to gather and produce primary and secondary research data for the purposes of this report.
- After the team selection process was completed, the Green Career Centre Community Research Team posted a call for applications on their social media accounts. Subsequently, the team reviewed the applications and selected participants to participate in both the focus group session and the arts-based research exercise. The participants were required to sign a research consent form prior to the focus group discussions in order to participate.
- The focus group sessions were held on Wednesday, February 15th and Wednesday, March 1st. Before the first session, the team established the desired outcomes and goals, and created a set of questions to guide the 1.5-hour Zoom focus group. In preparation for the second session, the team reviewed the participants' responses and adjusted the questions to address any gaps or issues from the first session. For instance, if a question elicited low-quality answers, the team rephrased it to provide more context and prompt a more insightful response.

- Participants who were unable to attend the synchronous sessions were given the opportunity to participate asynchronously by answering the same questions provided to the other participants. They were asked to submit their answers via email to the research team.
- The arts-based research sessions were held on Friday, February 16th and Friday, March 3rd. The team provided participants with a set of images and prompts to guide them in creating their artwork. Participants had approximately 45 minutes to create their piece based on the prompt of their choosing. Afterward, there was a 30-minute group discussion during which participants shared and explained their artwork, including the questions they selected and the inspiration behind their work. In cases where participants were unable to complete their artwork, they were given an additional three days to finalize their piece and submit it via email to the team.
- To supplement the primary research conducted through focus group discussions and arts-based sessions, this policy report also includes secondary research, which involved analyzing existing data and literature in order to develop recommendations.

Participant Demographics

The full demographics of participants can be viewed in Figure 1.0

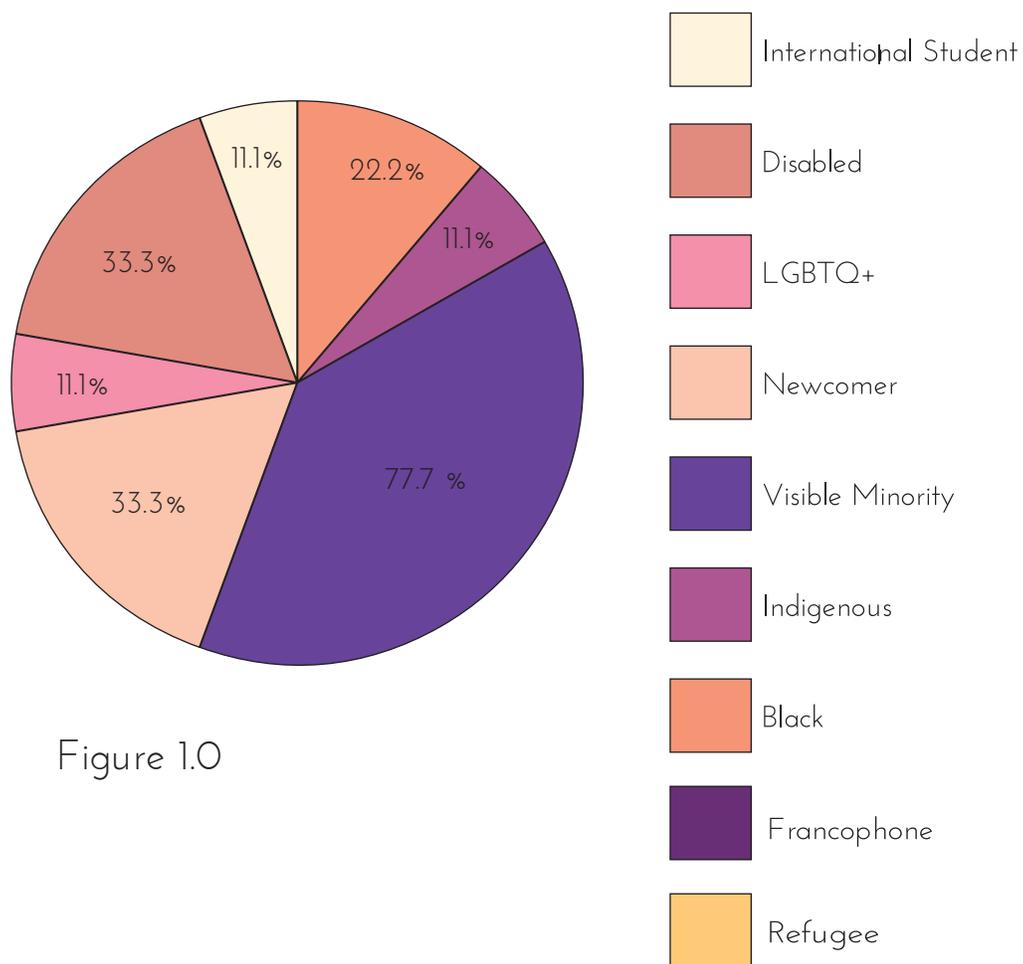### Demographics of Participants

Figure 1.0

Research Study Limitations

This study has a few limitations to be acknowledged and addressed in future research.

- An important aspect to consider is the level of active and equal participation among focus group participants. The online platform may have affected levels of participation given that participants were not required to turn their cameras on.
- The sample size for this study was small, with only five participants per session, which could impact the generalizability of the findings.
- Participants demonstrated a lack of prior knowledge about FIAP, which may have impacted the quality of their responses. To address this issue, a brief presentation was given to introduce participants to this policy.
- The creation of art involves a diverse and multifaceted methodology that encompasses various fields. This grants room for personal interpretation, rendering it challenging to differentiate between actual experiences and the dynamic process of art creation.

Future research should consider increasing the number of focus group sessions, implementing strategies to encourage active participation, and including participants with specific knowledge on the subject matter.

Local Scale – Discussion & Analysis

The participants' responses can be categorized into three main themes: systemic barriers faced by women in sustainability in Canada, equity, diversity and inclusion, and lived experiences.

1) Systemic Barriers Faced by Women in Sustainability in Canada

Participants agreed that environmental and social objectives can be achieved by addressing both individual and systemic structures, while also considering the resources and initiatives available at the organizational level. However, some participants noted a lack of inclusivity in their workplaces, which they attributed to their relatively limited professional experiences compared to their peers in the field

of environmental sustainability. Newcomers to Canada, in particular, face greater difficulties in the sustainability industry due to inflexible policies set by organizations and the government, differences in culture, language barriers, and variations in the experiences and skills required for professional positions.

"I have been an international student since I did my bachelor's. And then I went into my master's and I did a diploma. And when I was in my bachelor's, I was looking for a job in the environmental field. And it was very hard to try to find something. With having no experience, I was in my second or third year, I had only done like serving in a restaurant. So I really wanted to do something in my field, but I had no experience." - Participant 1, February 15th, 2023

The participants emphasized that greater opportunities and exposure to the environmental field early in their careers would have allowed them to expand their knowledge and skills. They noted that this could be facilitated by more inclusive policies at the organizational level. Many of the participants reported that the managerial practices in many of the participants' workplaces often overlooked the social and environmental context in which they were living in. For example, one participant noted that their organization's policies allowed supervisors to impose objectives that failed to consider the individual realities of their team members. As one participant explained:

"For example, [I have] tons of things I have to think about. And it's just natural, you know, like sometimes I don't want to think about it, but then as a mother, I do it. And intentionally so. I think as a society I think it's very important for them to understand that we should be treated equally, but then there must be different criteria to measure our performance. For example, sometimes I used to feel that my performance was being compared with a person who used to just sleep in the office." - Javeria, February 15th, 2023

In the discussion about creating an inclusive work environment that promotes personal growth, participants highlighted the importance of workplace recognition of diverse life circumstances, including those related to gender identity. Participants shared their experiences of facing barriers in the environmental field based on gender stereotypes, which hindered their professional development. As one participant noted:

"*At the same time, I've also worked in roles where I've worked with, let's say with men who largely didn't have to work as hard to get to where they were. I felt like I was always having to strive and really assert myself and to get opportunities, whereas others would just kind of slide in. So it was more of a it's, it's a it's largely it's like a more reflection of my experience . . . I do understand that there are some industries, particularly the investing in finance industry, when it comes to climate investing that is heavily male dominated. And I'm speaking on an account of somebody that I know, but in those scenarios it is still and I use this with quotes, but it's still very much a 'bro culture' and it's difficult for her to be understood. And she's typically seen as the emotional woman when she's just trying to represent something that a man would represent in the same context, but it's perceived differently on her accounts. So I do think it does vary in your industry and particularly how old the company is. - Taylor, February 15th, 2023*

Within local organizations, participants acknowledged that there were barriers in identifying oneself as a woman, BIPOC individual, or a combination of both. Additionally, they emphasized the issue of unfair compensation in sustainability related jobs or professions.

"*So yeah, I guess when I think of sustainability, like that's part of the reason why I created my own business to work from home so I could make enough money, whereas otherwise it just seemed like impossible.*" - Grace, March 1st, 2023

Furthermore, the participants explored the limited employment alternatives available to women and persons in rural locations. Sustainability organizations are often located in urban or suburban areas, where they have greater access to resources, and funding. As a result, individuals living in rural areas may find it challenging to access these organizations, either due to limited transportation options or because they lack the skills or experience needed to work in these fields. Additionally, many sustainability organizations may not have remote work options, which can further limit the employment opportunities available to rural individuals. For women, the challenges are often compounded by gender discrimination and social norms that limit their access to education, training, and employment opportunities.

"*If people are in remote communities and they don't have access to either wifi or the internet, or they're just not made aware of opportunities available to them, kind of leaves us left out in the conversation. And because Indigenous peoples, you know, the stewards of this land, they're like the majority of the people, you know, in Canada, especially protecting the earth and protecting the land. It's something that I think we should definitely be more involved in and have access to those types of opportunities. And something else that I've noticed too is like a lack of networking opportunities for us as well.*" - Grace, March 1st, 2023

The discussion also identified a lack of resources and support systems as barriers to success within an organization for women and BIPOC individuals. These barriers encompass mental health support, BIPOC-specific resources, and physical spaces for building relationships with other women and BIPOC individuals outside of work. Participants emphasized that having these support systems would create a more inclusive and comfortable environment for them.

"*And I also think like having someone to talk to who is a BIPOC individual so that other BIPOC individuals in the organization feel safe to come to them and so that they can actually talk to them*

outside of that and kind of say like, Hey, how are you feeling within the organization? Like, can you compare your workload compared to others? Is there anything that you've noticed that's been kind of off? And then also having someone else to observe these things too? Because I think being Indigenous in these organizations, it can be difficult to kind of see something that you might not be able to see but other people can see, right? Like if you're getting more work delegated or people are talking over you or you're not being taken as seriously, Right? So having someone who can come in and kind of make sure and call that out and make sure that it's held accountable in the organization." - Grace, March 1st, 2023

2) Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

During the discussion, participants also delved into the impact of systemic barriers on their personal and professional lives, particularly those related to equity, diversity, and inclusion. They emphasized that addressing certain aspects of diversity and inclusivity support should not be the sole responsibility of individuals from minority groups, as this would result in an unequal distribution of the workload. Instead, they called for a shift in the overall responsibility and recognition of these issues within organizations. Participants generally agreed that while organizations may have a diverse representation of gender and culture, they often lack inclusivity due to a failure to recognize and value diverse backgrounds, cultures, and experiences through processes and systems. This recognition should take various forms, such as acknowledging cultural holidays, providing speakers on specific cultures, and allowing time off. For example, an Indigenous participant describes the desire for "[organizations'] understanding, like ceremony, understanding the connection to the land, kind of decolonizing the way that things are presented to them as well." This can be in the form of paid days for Indigenous Peoples Day and things like that."

When discussing the underrepresentation of BIPOC women in leadership roles or decision-making tables, one participant remarked:

"[I would like to] see more people of colour, women of colour in leadership positions and in decision making positions. And I just don't see not enough of that. And there are many barriers, I feel, to people of colour sometimes. But once we are in the field, there are barriers to being the ones that actually make important decisions." - Participant 1, February 17th, 2023

Moreover, participants remarked that the provision of equitable access to collaboration and knowledge-sharing opportunities are often undervalued in the workplace. This lack of recognition and support results in an increase in uncompensated social responsibilities for individuals. For instance, one online submission highlighted:

"I think one thing organizations can do is have a designated staff person to work on diversity, equity and inclusion issues. Because what ended up happening for me and some of my co-workers is that we were taking on that extra work" Participant 1, February 17th, 2023

Participants further reinforced that it was the responsibility of employers to ensure inclusive governance by involving BIPOC communities in dialogue and decision-making processes. This relates to the broader issue of gender norms in sustainability that participants identified. They agreed that societal norms often undervalue women in the workplace, and that women are often expected to assimilate into a 'masculine-oriented' professional milieu. This means that women are frequently compelled to internalize male standards of conduct. Consequently, women may be advised to cultivate a more male-oriented demeanor, avoid certain pursuits, and refrain from discussing topics that are of interest to them. For example, a participant noted:

"When it comes to certain expertise fields, women are not taken as seriously, you know. This results in biases when it comes to how we see experts and how we kind of value expertise from especially female professionals . . . I feel like when there's kind of a lack of equal representation and where in certain fields are more male dominated, it can lead to like more informal barriers when it comes to like relating to your peers, forming networks, finding mentors, for example. So kind of a more boys club type aspect." - Participant 2, March 1st, 2023

This underlying assumption affects policies, processes, and organization culture. This means that policies and practices are often designed with male standards in mind, which can create barriers for women in terms of career advancement, recognition, and inclusion. For instance, promotion criteria may favor individuals who are more assertive or competitive, which may disadvantage women who value collaboration and consensus-building. Similarly, organizational culture may emphasize a "work hard, play hard" mentality, which can exclude women who have caregiving responsibilities outside of work. Therefore, it is important for organizations to recognize and challenge these gender norms to create more equitable and inclusive workplaces.

3) Lived Experiences
The participants came from diverse backgrounds and shared how their unique lived experiences and positionalities influenced their work and understanding of sustainability.

"So I always say, like because I'm Indigenous, when I think of sustainability, I always think of the long term impact that will have. We always talk about the seven generations in my culture and my teachings. So thinking about not just, you know, our generation and our kids or our grandkids with the people we won't meet so selflessly thinking about, you know, the impact it will have not only on ourselves, but on the earth and the planet and collectively. So I think that's kind of like a little bit more about what sustainability means to me. But I think also coming together in community and having

different approaches to make things more accessible, especially with, you know, the high rates of inflation and not being able to access certain things in today's society." - Grace, March 1st, 2023

"Coming more from an academic angle. When I think of sustainability, I think of it as more of a multidimensional concept. So it's something that kind of envelops a lot of different things. It's an umbrella term and it's also more importantly, a lens. So I think it's something that affects various sectors and various policies. But on a more ground level, I think as Grace mentioned, it's also a mindset. So basically it's something that helps establish a better future for all and kind of requires a lot of adjustments and sacrifices in the present to ensure a kind of a collective future." - Participant 2, March 1st, 2023

Participants further agreed that work environments should validate employees' lived experiences and value different ways of life within the same social boundaries of the workplace and personal environments. According to the participants, shifting workplace mentality and value systems could lead to meaningful changes in interpersonal interaction within their work environments. These changes would support individuals' autonomy and create a humanistic and sustainable field of sustainable environment systems, resulting in tangible social, environmental, and political growth. Additionally, participants noted that acknowledging the experiences of local contexts could help others outside their social and cultural groups understand the potential benefits and flaws of a system and its implementation in social and environmental spaces.

"I've been involved with a lot of different organizations and like indigenous ones versus non Indigenous. And what I'd say in terms of inclusive governments, I think it's hard when some organizations or industries don't really understand the different approaches to wellness or Indigenous ways of living holistically, spiritually. So just like what I mean by that is just like understanding, like ceremony, understanding the connection to the land, kind of decolonizing the way that things

are presented to them as well. And always kind of give the example of, you know, the linear form of living versus the cyclical way of living and Indigenous nature. So just like for some examples, when we kind of talk about having everything written down, whereas Indigenous language is presented orally and kind of having that work hustle culture over prioritizing rest and having those rest days." - Grace, March 1st, 2023

To prioritize Indigenous views and perspectives in sustainability, participants unanimously agreed that collaboration between Indigenous knowledge and non-Indigenous frameworks and practices could be fruitful. They expressed their willingness to engage in this process, but also emphasized the importance of ensuring that Indigenous voices and perspectives are given priority.

Additionally, participants emphasized that environmental protection and sustainability are not solely the result of technical solutions, but are also deeply intertwined with fundamental social, political, and economic factors. These factors must be taken into account when developing sustainable policies and practices on a national scale.

The unique experiences of each participant were reflected in their artwork, with certain major themes emerging as common threads. These themes were further explained and contextualized by the participants during the presentation of their artwork. In addition to discussing the content of their art, participants also shared their creative process and the thinking behind their artistic choices. The subsequent section will provide a more detailed analysis of the participants' artwork and the meanings conveyed through their creative expressions.

Unveiling the Deeper Layers: Exploring the Artistic Expressions and Lived Experiences of Environmental Sustainability Advocates

Throughout the art-making session, all participants were actively engaged and contributed valuable insights, drawing from their lived experiences to inform their perspectives. Each participant brought a unique perspective to the discussion, highlighting the significance of the elements within their artwork and the role that these elements played in conveying their message. Moreover, participants also provided meaningful feedback and thoughtful critiques of each other's artworks, leading to a deeper understanding of the different perspectives represented in the session.

Artwork 1

"I shared during our last session that because I was an international student for so long and it took me so long to just be a Canadian resident, I faced a lot of barriers just to apply for jobs, even though I had qualifications." - Participant 1, February 17, 2023

This artwork is a collage of various images depicting animal species affected by climate change. The composition showcases the diversity of environments impacted by climate change and the need for action to support the survival and coexistence of various species. Through the juxtaposition of leveled environmental landscapes, the artwork highlights the varying degrees of impact of climate change on different regions and species, providing depth to the message conveyed. The collage reveals the immense work that needs

to be done to ensure the survival and coexistence of these species in their respective environments.

The contrast in colors used in the artwork is a deliberate choice made by the artist. By combining different images of animals impacted by climate change, the artist creates a visually striking collage that draws the viewer's attention to the phrase "Nature for all." The use of bold and bright colors such as green and orange is intentional, as these colors represent nature and convey a sense of urgency in addressing the issue of climate change. Moreover, the sharp edges in the collage convey the severity of the conditions experienced by these species. By creating a sense of depth and texture in the artwork, the viewer can gain a better understanding of the artist's call for radical systemic change in actionable sustainability policy.

Despite the artwork being a collage made up of different animals and landscapes, it maintains a sense of cohesiveness. This cohesive quality is significant because it represents the interconnectedness of different species and environments, and the need for collaboration in achieving sustainable solutions. Through this artwork, the artist emphasizes that despite our differences, we must come together as one in our efforts to protect the environment.

The artist's choice of capital letters for the word 'NO' within the artwork emphasizes the strength of the statement being made. The use of bold letters conveys a sense of urgency and reinforces the artist's call for immediate action. The sunrise/sunset color scheme symbolizes change and transformation, which is necessary to protect the environment from the negative impacts of climate change.

By presenting a visually striking and thought-provoking piece of art, the artist encourages the viewer to engage with and reflect upon the urgent need for action to protect our planet's diverse species and environments.
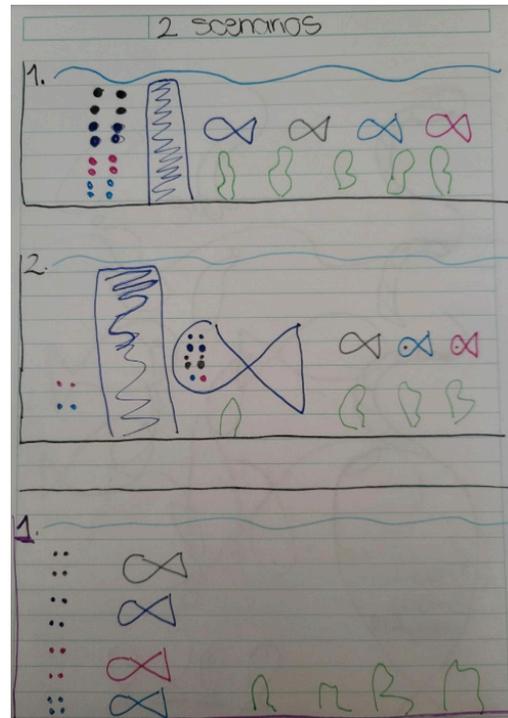
Artwork 2

"Since I was little, I have always felt very interested in science. I noticed the environment was neglected growing up, so I wanted to speak out for it. I took environmental management in college. However, during my college years, I understood that this sector was not really about the environment but rather about the people." - Participant 3, March 3rd, 2023

This artwork provides a simple yet powerful representation of workplace dynamics. In the first scenario, the barrier between the fish and the potential food serves as a metaphor for the barriers that can exist in the workplace. The subsequent image (bottom 1) shows the barrier being removed, allowing each fish an equal opportunity to access the food. This imagery highlights the potential benefits of breaking down barriers in the workplace and creating an environment where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

The second scenario, where the barrier remains in place and only the fish at the front receive the food, represents the inequality and uneven distribution of opportunities that can exist in some workplaces. This scenario serves as a reminder of the importance of creating a level playing field for all employees.

The use of different colors in the artwork represents the diversity of individuals in the workplace. By showcasing the different colors, the artist underscores the importance of inclusivity and diversity in the workplace. Overall, this artwork delivers a clear message about workplace dynamics and the need for a more equitable and inclusive work environment.

Artwork 3

The majority of the participants demonstrated a significant level of depth in their responses to the prompt questions and contributed to the discussion in a meaningful and insightful manner. Their responses were thoughtful and well-articulated, highlighting their unique perspectives and experiences. This depth of engagement helped to enrich the overall discussion and fostered a more comprehensive understanding of the topic at hand.

"I feel like many kids don't know this and things like that, but I guess like having an artist in the field with space where they could like maybe show people how to process their paint in a way that like they don't pollute the environment and they are able to choose more sustainable options in terms of creating their work?" - Participant 4, February 17th, 2023

The artist has carefully curated a combination of different elements in their artwork, each holding significant meaning and importance. The use of single-use materials as a medium for the artwork represents the artist's commitment to sustainability and environmental consciousness. This is further emphasized in the artwork with the sustainable offerings within the cosmic hair, which flows down the center of the artwork, of the individual such as flowers, onion, cardboard box, egg carton, paper, and soil. The paintbrush and paint in the hair, which is a representative statement on the sustainability practices of many art forms such as painting. The representation of gender neutrality with the central individual as a non-binary; femme presenting person. This allows for one to see the representation of individuals to be more encompassing and representative of a global community of individuals. The heart

that houses an infinity symbol, and the sprout covering the genitalia of this person symbolizes the infinite love this individual has for their community through the sharing of sustainable practices. This theme of love is embedded in the artwork as the artist believes that all beings have something to teach and impact those around them, as well as show love and care to the environment.

Overall, the artwork encourages viewers to reflect on their own relationship with the natural world and the interconnectedness of all things. The rings of balls surrounding the central artwork in different shades of white, beige, brown, and black are representative of the diversity of humanity as a community. The artist believes that we are all connected by infinity symbols to continue the message of community needing to be filled with love to infinity and beyond.

The participants' explanations provided a deeper understanding of their artistic medium choices and the symbolic representations of the different elements in their work. Their insights went beyond surface-level analysis to unveil the layers of meaning behind the artwork and shed light on the message they were trying to convey:

"I put women in the middle, which is like a metaphor. I felt the women have deep roots and also give leave fruits to society while dancing happily with all the responsibilities society and women give each other so many things, and they both need each other to survive."
- Javeria, February 17th, 2023

Artwork 4

This artwork expresses a statement about women's empowerment and their significant role in the environmental movement. The use of a deep, rich brown hue combined with the smooth and flowing strokes used in depicting the roots and silhouette of the woman captures the viewer's attention and emphasizes the central theme of the artwork.

The blended transition between the silhouette of the woman and the branches with leaves can be interpreted as a representation of the nourishing effect that women's involvement has had on the environmental movement. It is worth noting that this transition is the only part of the entire artwork that features secondary colors. This choice can be seen as symbolic of the potential for growth and evolution that comes from diversifying perspectives and including a range of voices in the environmental conversation. Overall, the artwork is a powerful testament to the value of women's contributions to the fight for a sustainable future.

"I feel that, like when it comes to gender, um, I think women have a higher burden when it comes to dealing with things like the worst environmental impacts. And there's a lot of labour that goes in when it comes to women's interaction with the environment. So for me, there is a lot of exhaustion involved in things like women protecting themselves and also like the tie between environmental health and personal health. So I think a lot of times there is an emphasis on Band-Aid solutions, which can lead to maybe perhaps like short term gains or minor gains. But when you look at the bigger picture, I like to imagine a better future. I think you need to craft like larger scale

solutions and really invest in kind of like an approach that considers all people." - Participant 2, March 3rd, 2023

Artwork 5
The artwork highlights the gendered impacts of environmental degradation and the struggles that women face in dealing with these issues. The participant emphasized that there is often an emphasis on band-aid solutions that may provide short-term gains, but that larger scale solutions are needed to address the systemic causes of environmental degradation and protect the health and well-being of all people. The emphasis on a larger scale approach that considers all people is particularly important, as it highlights the interconnectedness of environmental issues with social and economic issues.

"The idea behind that with like the woodland florals and everything is when I was thinking about, you know, gender equality and everything, you know, I felt like the flowers kind of represented like that female kind of energy coming through and like protecting the land through the flowers and through like, the spirit of them blooming."- Grace, March 3rd, 2023

Artwork 6

The artwork connects gender equality with nature and the environment that Indigenous folks are tied to. In this piece, flowers are a symbol of female strength and resilience, as they are able to bloom and thrive on the land even in harsh conditions. This idea of protection and nurturing is also evident in the reference to the flowers protecting the land through their blossoming.

The participants in this group demonstrated a strong sense of comfort and openness in sharing their personal experiences and elaborating on the various factors that have influenced their engagement in the environmental sustainability field:

"*I'm from Colombia and I moved to Canada five years ago. And a couple of years back, my former boss told me that there were that she wanted me to assist to do this sustainability fellowship or webinar. I can't remember what it was exactly, but it was a program that was targeted to people of colour. And it was great. And then I told her like, you know, it was great and amazing, but I'm not a person of colour. And then she said to me like, oh, I'm sorry, to me, you're a person of colour. I was like: Oh, really? So then after that happened, I started thinking. About, like, all these labels that we put on ourselves. And I don't consider myself a person of colour because I never grew up with that perception. Because in Colombia we are so diverse in terms of skin tones that like the fact that like because you have dark skin, they will call you black or person of colour doesn't exist. So it really like changed my perspective on if we want to achieve equality in.*" - Participant 3, March 3rd, 2023 (Artwork 2)

The participants in the group provided insightful and detailed interpretations of their artwork, linking specific elements to both local and global issues affecting BIPOC communities. Their explanations shed light on the complex and interrelated challenges faced by these communities in their pursuit of environmental sustainability:

"I guess education in general and the accessibility of education and like the institution of it. That's kind of a lot for especially underprivileged people and especially girls. I feel like that also relates back to the gender equality thing. But yeah, it's just like education is inaccessible and I feel like having this educational resource is like free of charge for other people would be really meaningful to the community at large." - Participant 4, March 3rd, 2023. (Artwork 3)

Overall, the art-making sessions proved to be a valuable and insightful tool for exploring the experiences of BIPOC community members in the environmental sustainability field. Through their artwork, participants were able to convey complex ideas and emotions that may have been difficult to express through traditional means. These insights and experiences have informed the development of policy report recommendations that aim to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the environmental sustainability field. By centering the experiences and perspectives of BIPOC individuals, these recommendations have the potential to create a more just and equitable future for all.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and focus-group discussions, it is recommended that sustainability-focused organizations in Canada take steps to reduce barriers for underrepresented women and promote gender equality. The following policy recommendations are proposed:

1. **Provide equal and better opportunities through inclusive HR practices.** The analysis revealed that underrepresented women in sustainability face challenges in accessing new job opportunities, particularly if they lack work experience, work permits, or are newcomers to Canada. To address this issue, organizations should offer more entry-level positions and opportunities for advancement. Additionally, sustainability organizations should not discriminate against female applicants who are new to the field and provide fair chances for everyone regardless of their country of origin. This requires full transparency during the hiring process and clear eligibility criteria within job postings to avoid any unintentional barriers to employment.

2. **Ensure fair and equal compensation within sustainability-focused organizations.** Addressing the gender pay gap is crucial in promoting gender equality in sustainability. In Ontario, women earn an average of 89 cents on the dollar compared to men on an hourly basis. Furthermore, the gender wage gap is greater for racialized women, immigrant women, women with disabilities, Indigenous women, and trans women. (Pay Equity Office, 2021). To reduce this gap, organizations should prioritize transparency in their salary structures to ensure fair compensation. It is important to offer paid positions to women entering the sustainability field, and free labour should not be accepted, especially when job opportunities within the organization are not guaranteed. Non-profit sustainability organizations with limited budgets could benefit from government funding initiatives to ensure fair compensation for employees and interns.

3. **Promote more programs and initiatives to support BIPOC employees**. One way for sustainability-focused organizations to support the well-being of their employees is through programs such as mentorship, wellbeing activities, and mental health support both in and outside the workplace. Research has shown that organizations that implement health and wellness programs at work experience benefits such as increased retention, productivity, and overall psychological well-being (Aryanti et al, 2020). However, BIPOC individuals are often less likely to access mental health services than other groups due to stigma and a lack of culturally responsive care (Holman and Grasso, 2020). Therefore, it is important for organizations to provide evidence-based, culturally responsive mental health benefits and support programs that can effectively promote the well-being of BIPOC employees. Inclusive spaces and initiatives can also help create a sense of belonging and strengthen relationships between colleagues within sustainability organizations.

4. **Integrate Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policies within the workplace**. Designating staff members who are trained in equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) can play a vital role in creating safe and inclusive work environments. EDI policies focus on preventing violence, harassment, and discrimination, and implementing such policies can help protect underrepresented women in sustainability organizations. In addition to implementing EDI policies, sustainability organizations should strive for better inclusivity and acknowledgement of Indigenous cultures and peoples in the workplace. Providing Indigenous ally toolkits and Indigenous-led training programs can help decolonize spaces, particularly in the sustainability sphere. These "engagement tools create increased awareness and understanding, informs and educates, and provides for culturally proficient and respectful workforces and communities." (Ka Ni Kanichihk Inc, n.d) Education is critical to shifting power dynamics and taking concrete steps towards reconciliation and inclusive communities. The Canadian government could support

organizations outside the public sector by providing funding for EDI programming, similar to the courses offered by the school of public service, and funding for Indigenous-led education and training.

5. **Ensure accountability and tracking gender equality goals**. To ensure accountability and progress, organizations should be subject to third-party audits. These audits could help identify and report pay inequities within the workplace, as well as gaps in EDI or organizational policies. Achieving gender equality and removing organizational and structural barriers should involve setting tangible, time-bound, and measurable goals. Sustainability organizations and others should clearly articulate their goals, seek constructive feedback, and track concrete progress towards achieving gender equality.

Global Scale – Analysis & Discussion

As noted previously, a key limitation of the study was the lack of prior knowledge about FIAP, which reduced the number of responses we were able to attain from participants. However, by analyzing the works of scholars such as Emma Swan, Rebecca Tiessen, Jessica Cadesky and Laura Parisi, we identified key themes that were also corroborated by participants in the study. These themes include the need to address structural sources of issues rather than implementing superficial 'band-aid' solutions, and the use of a gender essentialist framework. Participants expressed support for inclusive governance and greater accountability between Canada and the countries it supports as a means of advancing these goals.

What is Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP)?

In the 2015 election, the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau sought to engage differently with the global community as evidenced by various policy documents released in 2017 that positioned Canada as a leader in advancing women and girls' empowerment and gender equality. Justin Trudeau's victory indicated a notable shift from the preceding Conservative Party under Stephen Harper. One of these shifts was his commitment to re-engage with the United Nations and the international community as a whole. The Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) was released after the International Assistance and Defence Policy Review in June 2017, and "outlined how the Liberal Government planned to refocus Canada's international assistance on advancing gender equality and empowering women and girls". Their national advancements have been seen in pay equity and gender budgeting legislation, and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. The appointment of Canada's first Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security was one of the initial steps taken on a global scale towards this end (Swan, 2021).

FIAP's core action area is gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Its path to action outlines a multi-pronged approach that includes addressing sexual and gender-based violence, supporting and strengthening women's organizations and movements, providing support and funding, facilitating networks, and involvement in policy-making. In addition to this, FIAP also focuses on the following five action areas (Global Affairs Canada, 2017):

1. **Human dignity:** This core area examines the unequal access to health services and resources to improve the quality and accessibility of health services, increasing access to reproductive health rights, as well as improving gender-sensitive nutrition. It encompasses areas such as health and nutrition, education, and gender-responsive humanitarian action.

2. **Growth that works for everyone:** This action area focuses on reducing poverty and inequality, promoting women's economic empowerment in developing countries, supporting women's leadership and business, and recognizing unpaid and care-related work. Goals include creating inclusive economic growth without exacerbating existing inequalities and reducing barriers to pave the way for the full participation of women in the economy.

3. **Environment and climate action:** Working with women-led groups in environmental research, supporting women-led initiatives, and helping build more equitable and environmentally sustainable communities.

4. **Inclusive governance:** This action area aims to ensure equitable access to a functioning justice system, enhance public participation, and ensure public services are accessible and inclusive to everyone.

5. **Peace and security:** Supporting gender-inclusive and non-violent conflict prevention and crisis management, enhancing gender-responsive security and disarmament, and improving the multilateral management of peace and security challenges.

Structural Weaknesses

The scholarly literature identifies a key theme regarding the limitations of FIAP's analysis of the structural factors that perpetuate gender inequality, resulting in superficial solutions. Swan argues that the policy's narrow and tokenistic application of feminist principles fails to address the tangible power imbalances and inequality in the situations it intervenes in, unintentionally perpetuating the systems of inequality it seeks to address. The author highlights the case of Canada's developmental initiatives in Gaza as an example of how ignoring the political dimensions of the occupation and continuing to support the Israeli state contradicts Canada's goal of a "feminist" international assistance policy. Swan cites Ferguson's 1994 "anti-politics machine" framework, which highlights how development discourse

is reduced to a technicality, resulting in solutions that fail to address the structural or political causes at the root of the developmental issue. Another example of this is Canada's decision to provide Saudi Arabia with light armored vehicles (LAVs), which has been widely criticized for contradicting its commitment to the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda outlined in the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. This resolution acknowledges the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls, and the deal with Saudi Arabia has been viewed as supporting a regime that has been accused of violating human rights, including women's rights (Cadesky, 2020).

Upon discussing her work in climate change and public health, a participant noted that policies tied to "health and personal health [are] tied to environmental protection", and often have "an emphasis on "band-aid" solutions, which can lead to short term gains or minor gains." Solutions that better address underrepresented groups require "craft[ing] larger scale solutions and invest[ing] in an approach that considers all people".

Gender Essentialist Approach

One key issue with FIAP, as noted by Tiessen, is that it promotes gender essentialism by treating women as victims rather than active agents of peace and development (Tiessen, 2015). Simply identifying women as members of vulnerable groups does not address the underlying causes of gender inequality in fragile states. Similarly, Cadesky observes a tendency in Canadian policies to essentialize women as vulnerable people. Additionally, when FIAP is formulated as a policy tool for empowerment with gender equality not only as an individual goal but also as a means to the larger development goal of poverty reduction, women are instrumentalized as "conduits of policy" (Cadesky 2020). By framing development goals as achievable only if women and girls are liberated from their current state of oppression, they are burdened with the responsibility of bringing about positive change not only for themselves but for their families and communities (Cadesky, 2020). This narrative also assumes that women always aim

to transform their gender roles as "powerful agents of change", while men are viewed as the main obstacle to women's empowerment (Parisi, 2020).

Inclusive Governance

The participants expressed a shared interest in promoting inclusive governance as a means of addressing both the limitations in structural analysis and the gender essentialist approach identified in FIAP. After listing the six key action areas of FIAP, a participant on the inclusive environment required to allow everyone to play a role in decision-making:

"There is a growing movement today, and that is how life experiences are sometimes even heavier than work or educational experiences. Who can tell you better how a framework lacks inclusivity than someone that this has directly impacted? There are a lot of inclusion incentives and programs, but it is also vital to create a sense of belonging. Society and companies need to make sure women are appreciated and valued in the field because their input is essential and is being considered for making decisions, creating initiatives, and changing procedures." - Participant 5, March 4th, 2023

Modes of multi-level governance (MLG) are cited by scholars such as Simona Piattoni and Jill Vickers as governance forms capable of integrating more of those who are typically excluded from the policy-making and advocacy process. MLG refers to a form of political mobilization and policy-making (Piattoni, 2009) that has the capacity to restructure the state and associated policies by integrating individuals as key actors in political decision-making (Piattoni, 2009). This process thus attempts to equalize different districts and subnational governments with civil society organizations (Piattoni, 2009) to allow those typically unheard in the decision-making process to have a say. Vickers focuses on the use of MLG in the context of women's politics, and notes that key regime changes such as democratization occur because women's movements are able to understand when institutions

are most likely to be open to their participation, which allows women's movements to create strategies that can benefit them (Vickers, 2011). MLG is thus crucial to consider in light of inclusive governance as, depending on the type, having access to smaller governments "close to home" can increase the influence women have in decision-making (Vickers, 2011).

On an international scale, this could involve increasing the representation of women in civil society organizations (CSOs) and nonprofit organizations (NGOs) that are able to participate in and voice their concerns in inclusive modes of multinational government such as the United Nations Climate Change Conference.

Another participant reported that she had worked with her team to plan for COP28, noting:

"*There was a climate finance mechanism that was created from COP 20 from the most recent COP. And the issue is that when it comes to actual climate financing and from high-income countries to actually contribute towards adaptation in lower-income countries or countries in the Global South, there's no real accountability mechanisms to ensure that countries actually follow through with their commitments.*" *Participant 2, March 1st, 2023*

At the national level, this representation would be presented through the United Nations Division at Global Affairs Canada to enhance inclusivity in decision-making processes and their role in crafting feminist international policies. This representation and inclusion, however, must not reflect the same rhetoric of "sameness" that Smith and Ajadi point out in promoting the value-based and progressive discourse Canadian foreign policy has reflected in the past. Although Global Affairs has not yet produced a concept paper "aegis of 'feminist foreign policy'" (Smith and Ajadi, 2020). Instead, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland has previously stated that the goal of Canada's feminist foreign policy is to "enable women and men,

girls and boys around the world to have an equal voice and equal rights; to benefit from equal opportunities; and to live in equal safety and security" (Global Affairs, 2018). However, Laura Parisi highlights a potential issue with what Smith and Ajadi note prioritizes style over transformative change, leading to a gender equality mandate that is not equally applied. In the case of the 2010 G8 Summit, PM Harper's support for the Muskoka Initiative and its objectives for improving maternal and children's health contrasted with the lack of a gender equality framework despite its connection with maternal health (Parisi, 2020).

Ultimately, representation must not occur at a level that privileges rhetoric over action, and must make tangible steps to apply the gender equality framework specifically and unequivocally. Additionally, establishing collaborative frameworks to advance global climate policies, beyond providing aid after disasters, would allow for the inclusion of representatives from lower-income and Global South countries.

Recommendations

Although the Government of Canada portrays FIAP as a success in feminist international development, many critics wonder if the program is as progressive and successful as it is made out to be. In that regard, following are some recommendations:

1. **Reduce ambiguity around the term 'feminism'** Among the most common criticisms surrounding FIAP is the co-optation of feminist language while disregarding the meaning of the word and failing to successfully implement intersectional feminist values in its programming and assistance. Critics argue that FIAP has failed to develop a universal, organizational understanding of feminism as an actionable term. This failure prevents FIAP from utilizing feminism and feminist thought in a transformative manner, as it lacks a universal understanding of the grounding principles of feminism. The meaning of feminism can vary greatly between different individuals, depending on factors such as geographical location and culture

(Cadesky, 2020; Pew Research, 2019). Additionally, critics argue that the co-optation of terms like "empowerment" in FIAP's mission is politically and economically problematic. Such terminology is often associated with a "smart economics" approach that is frequently characterized as feminist neoliberalism, which links gender equality with economic growth and investment (Morton, 2020). This approach is problematic because neoliberalism and its policies have been and continue to be a system of oppression, particularly in the developing world, that negatively impacts marginalized women (Mohanty, 2003). A program built on the same policies that have historically oppressed marginalized women lacks a foundation built on empathy and cultural, political, and historical knowledge. To address this issue, we recommend that Canada forms relationships with those most impacted by its neoliberal policies around feminism. Through this partnership, Canada can be provided useful feedback and gain a deep understanding of how they can work to improve their projects and improve the lives of women in the communities they hope to serve.

2. **Partner with grassroots organizations in a meaningful way**. In its FIAP programming, Canada consistently fails to involve the grassroots organizations which they fund in the decision making processes that impact funding and ultimately the extent to which grassroots organizations are able to help their communities. This can be seen through the way that FIAP policies "zero in" on aspects of global gender equality they believe they can help with instead of engaging with those dealing with gender inequality as whole persons with different experiences and strengths (Morton, 2020). This can be attributed to some of their paternalistic tendencies which are deeply rooted in Canada's attitudes towards people in the Global South, believing that they know best when it comes to making women in the Global South feel empowered (Morton, 2020). What Canada fails to realize is that women in the Global South know what works for them and what they need. Women living in societies where there is little to no gender

equality have been surviving for years through their own systems of empowerment and management without the help of foreign policy. As such, small organizations of women, what we know as grassroots organizations, have been created as women worked together to solve their own issues. These women know best, and should be meaningfully involved in the decision making processes for policies like FIAP if these policies are to truly create any change. We recommend that FIAP work on building strong partnerships with grassroots organizations based on grassroots leadership - Canada needs to take a back seat. Giving local partners more authority in how programs are run and where funding is allocated will only strengthen FIAP's programming, increasing satisfaction rates in the Global South ultimately leading to more efficient and long-lasting policy implementation.

3. **Build an intersectional and transformative feminist approach.**
   Another flaw of FIAP is its failure to recognize the importance of intersectionality in its mission and programming. By essentializing women as a monolithic group and failing to account for the diverse identities and experiences that shape their lives, FIAP overlooks the complexities of achieving gender equality. For example, a wealthy woman living in Nigeria may face different challenges in achieving gender equality than a poor woman living in Jamaica. Furthermore, using categories such as "women and girls" fails to acknowledge the complexity of gender identity as a contributing factor to gender equality. For instance, Transgender women face distinct challenges in accessing services and receiving fair treatment in most societies. Not acknowledging this aspect neglects a broader spectrum of gender equality that is just as important as equality across the gender binary (Tiessen, 2019). Despite its claims to be an intersectional policy, FIAP's programming and mission statement fail to acknowledge these issues (Morton, 2020). To address this flaw, FIAP should adopt an intersectional feminist approach which examines the intersecting identities and inequalities that disadvantage various groups in society. A transformative

feminist approach that addresses cultural norms, discrimination, and politics would be ideal. This approach would also require FIAP to understand and name how these factors intersect to create unique gender issues in our society. To ensure that this approach is effective, FIAP should seek heavy input from local organizations and individuals who are dealing with issues of gender equality and discrimination in the countries which FIAP operates (Tiessen, 2019). Contrary to FIAP's current mandate, this approach would ultimately work towards eradicating the structures and institutions that perpetuate inequality.

4. **Take an upfront and outright stance on global issues of gender inequality.** An essential criticism of FIAP pertains to its lack of political engagement, that is, its apolitical nature, despite promoting greater participation of women in their countries' political processes. Take for example Canada's development initiatives in Gaza while continuing to support the Israeli occupation of Palestine which is surely harming Palestinian women and girls, or their military support for Saudi Arabia, a country who has long been criticized for their failure to commit to the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda outlined in the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (Cadesky, 2020). The unwillingness and perceived hypocrisy in failing to declare one allegiance in the fight for gender equality reflects poorly on Canada and its policies such as FIAP. It also does a disservice to the women in these countries who experience discrimination from their own governments. To combat this issue, FIAP and Canada in general should take a clear stance on political issues regarding marginalized women around the globe and choose more carefully the countries they ally with to be in alignment with Canada's supposed goals toward gender equality and women's rights.

5. **Mitigate bureaucratic and paternalistic factors leading to lengthened implementation times**. FIAP has long been critiqued for the ways in which it perpetuates the values of bureaucracy and paternalism in Canada's global affairs policies. Canada's specific

funding for programs like FIAP is considerably weak — only 6.2% of the international assistance budget is allocated to programs and initiatives that directly address gender equality. This is a much different number than the 95% of international assistance programs that Canada claims address gender equality as a principal or significant objective (Novovic, 2022). Critics rightfully claim that this 95% figure leaves room for bureaucratic "gender washing", undermining the integrity of gender based equality in international assistance. The reason that Canada can claim such success with their programs is because of a bureaucratic disconnect between implementers and target groups in countries around the world (Novovic, 2022). In that same vein, Canada's paternalistic tendencies mean that success is measured not by the opinions of target groups, but by morally unattached metrics calculated by the Canadian government (Morton, 2020). Additionally, many critics have noted that FIAP has moved at an incredibly slow pace when it comes to creating change through implementation (Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group, 2021). If FIAP hopes to address and correct these valid critiques, they must create meaningful attachments to community members in target countries and create funding mechanisms conducive to open and free communication between Canada and their target countries.

Breaking Barriers: Towards a Gender-Inclusive Future

In conclusion, this policy report highlights the pervasive gender biases and discrimination present in Canada's sustainability sector and the need for action to promote gender equity and inclusivity. The research conducted through participatory arts-based exercises and focus group discussions reveals the challenges that underserved self-identifying women face in the field, including informal barriers, limited networking opportunities, and a lack of diverse perspectives. The findings suggest that promoting gender equity and inclusivity in local organizations is crucial to eradicating discrimination against women and other underserved groups.

Moreover, it is crucial to acknowledge that gender inequality is not just a local issue but a global one, and Canada's international policies must reflect this reality. The study recommends adopting a transformative feminist approach to promote the empowerment of women and other underrepresented groups in the Global South. It is also essential to address the issues within FIAP, including its limited involvement of diverse perspectives and reliance on gendered stereotypes.

By implementing the recommendations presented in this policy report, the Government of Canada can take meaningful steps towards achieving gender equity and inclusivity in the sustainability sector, both locally and globally.

Appendix 1

The following questions were posed during the focus group sessions, while others naturally arose as the discussions progressed and are not included in this summary.

1. Please share your sustainability journey and what sustainability means to you.
2. Please describe your experiences thus far working in this field or your experiences looking for work in this field. Can you also share a specific moment or incident in which you experienced inequality in the workplace?
3. How prevalent is the instrumentalization of gender equality and women's empowerment in your workplace? If applicable, please provide examples to the best of your ability and comfort level.
4. How do institutional and informal factors in the sustainability field contribute to the marginalization of women? Please discuss the frameworks or systems that perpetuate these barriers.
5. Have you heard about Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy prior to this discussion group? If so, from where?
6. (Present FIAP's action areas) Have any of the action areas presented in Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy been

implemented in your current or previous work organization? This could include internal or external policies, programs, or projects. (The action areas are displayed on the screen as a visual reference.)

7. Based on the action areas presented in FIAP, if your organization were to closely engage with one of them, where do you think the most noticeable improvement would be in your local and/or global work environment in terms of sustainability, gender equality, and international development? Please describe the changes you envision. (The action areas are displayed on the screen as a visual reference while presenting this question.)

8. Do you think federal gender equality policies accelerate Canada's progress towards achieving the SDGs, specifically on gender equality, sustainability and global partnerships?

9. How can society better support women working in the sustainability field?

10. How would you go about transforming your current or future organization to promote a more inclusive, equity-centered work environment?

11. How do you envision a sustainable future for yourself and future generations?

Appendix 2

When conducting our arts-based focus group discussion, we engaged participants by introducing visuals that symbolize important aspects of their lives, particularly within the field of sustainability, gender equality and sustainable development. Some of the exploratory and preliminary questions that we posed during this process are:

1. What do you see?
2. What do these images make you think about?
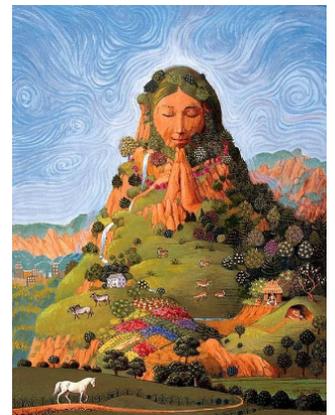
Process-based

1. How can you visually represent the connection between sustainability and gender equality through your artwork?
2. Using your artwork, depict how your professional responsibilities in the workplace align with sustainability objectives. This can include the Sustainable Development Goals.

How can institutions better support your work in sustainability? Please illustrate through your artwork any facilitators that you think would be helpful.

Group Reflection

1. Can you explain the inspiration behind your artwork and the emotions you experienced while creating it?
2. What inspired the symbols or images that you included in your artwork? How do these symbols relate to your experiences and perspectives on sustainability and gender equality?
3. What problems, conditions, experiences, environments or relationships does your art represent?
4. What do you hope others will understand or learn from your artwork?

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