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Progress on Women's Rights: Missing in Action

A Shadow Report on Canada's Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Prepared by a Network of NGOs,
Trade Unions and Independent Experts

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The opinions and recommendations in this report, and any errors, are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funders of this report.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AANDC Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada

BOFF Band Operated Funding Formula

CCAAC Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada

C-NAP National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

ECEC Early childhood education and childcare

FAFIA Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action

GBA Gender-based analysis

GDP Gross domestic product

GHG Greenhouse gas emissions

GIS Guaranteed Income Supplement

GSS General Social Survey

ICT Information communications technology

IFHP Interim Federal Health Program

LCP Live-In Caregiver Program

LGBTQ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and questioning

NAHO National Aboriginal Health Organization

NGO Non-governmental organization

NWAC Native Women's Association of Canada

OAS Old Age Security

OECD Organisation of Economic Development and Co-operation

PALS Activity Limitations Survey

PSEC Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act

RCMP Royal Canadian Mounted Police

RGI Rent geared-to-income

SAWP Seasonal Agricultural Worker Programme

STEM Sciences, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

STIs Sexually transmitted infections

SMART Specific, measureable, achievable, relevant and time bound

SWC Status of Women Canada

TFWP Temporary Foreign Worker Programme

UCCB Universal Child Care Benefit

UN United Nations

UNFC United Food and Commercial Workers Canada

UNICEF The United Nations Childrens' Fund

UPR Universal Periodic Review

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Introduction

Going the Last Mile

TWENTY YEARS AGO, thousands of activists, diplomats and world leaders, hundreds of Canadians among them, travelled to Beijing to articulate their vision of a world in which women and men — regardless of race, class, sexual orientation and ability — could live full and equal lives together. The result was a declaration that outlined some of the greatest barriers to gender equality and a platform for action that provided the tools for overcoming them.

In Canada, as in most high-income countries, women had already achieved high levels of health and education by the mid 1990s. Women in Canada continue to have some of the highest healthy life expectancies in the world and their life expectancies are consistently on par with those of men.[1] The last twenty years have also seen a six percent increase in the number of women completing some form of tertiary education, with 31 percent of women (and men) in Canada now holding a post-secondary certificate or diploma.[2] However, these high levels are not shared equally among women in Canada, nor have they translated to economic equality or equal representation in leadership roles.

In spite of their gains in education, women continue to make up only one in four senior managers.[3] In the political arena, the numbers are much the same. The last federal election saw the first significant increase in the percentage of female members of parliament in twenty years, rising from

22 percent to 25 percent.[4] Again the gains made here are not shared equally among women.

Progress in health and education has not produced an equally steady level of progress in women's economic security. The percentage of women living in poverty has actually increased over the past twenty years to over 13 percent today and has remained consistently higher than men's levels of poverty—with Aboriginal and racialized women and women with disabilities further over-represented.[5] Women's employment levels increased in the first few years following 1995, but have been stagnant over the past decade and remained consistently below the level of men's employment.[6]

In the same period, there has been little change in the levels of violence women in Canada experience. Over a million women in Canada report having experienced either sexual assault or intimate partner violence in the past five years.[7] Rates of intimate partner violence have fallen by a mere one per cent over the past two decades, with 6.2 percent of the population reporting having experienced intimate partner violence today compared to 7.4 percent in 1999. Rates of sexual assault have increased slightly, from 2.1 percent in 1999 to 2.4 percent today.[8] Aboriginal women and girls experience three times the rates of violent victimization as do non-Aboriginal women. The violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls has been so persistent and so disproportionate that it has spurred visits from several multilateral bodies.

Worryingly, the pace of progress towards gender equality slowed over the past decade. Twenty years ago Canada ranked first amongst nations in international measures of gender equality. In 2013, Canada had fallen to twentieth place in the *Global Gender Gap* rankings, and twenty-third place in the UN *Gender Inequality Index*. Nor can the slowdown in progress be ascribed to the global economic crisis. Canada's economy was among the least affected among developed economies. Yet as Canada's gender equality rank fell, some of the countries hardest hit by the global economic crisis demonstrated progress. Iceland, for example, experienced massive economic shocks following the global crisis, yet it has consistently achieved a higher score than Canada in the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report* and its score climbed at a faster pace than did Canada's score in the period following 2008.[9]

What follows is a detailed view of Canada's progress towards equality over the past five years. The report addresses the priority areas of concern identified in 1995, but provides additional information about emerging areas of concern. While each section examines the unique factors that contribute to

inequality, these factors intersect and impact each other. There are also some striking commonalities. Common themes include a marked slowdown in the rate of progress towards closing the gap between the well-being of women and men. The report also documents important and persistent differences between different groups of women, with Aboriginal, racialized, and immigrant women, as well as women with disabilities, all suffering a disproportionate burden of inequality. Finally, there has been a notable shrinking of the federal government's role in addressing the barriers to gender equality both at home and as part of its international commitments.

With miles to go before we meet the goals set out in Beijing in 1995, this report, in itself, is a testament to the resilience of our contributors and the communities in which they work. It is a testament to an unbowed commitment to achieving gender equality in Canada.

Notes

1 Healthy life expectancy at birth (adjusted for health life expectancy): "CANSIM Table 102-4307: Life expectancy, at birth and at age 65, by sex, three-year average, Canada, provinces, territories, health regions and peer groups occasional (years)." Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

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Women and the Economy

OVER THE PAST five years, women's participation in the labour force in Canada has been stagnant. Women's employment rates varied only slightly during this period from a 2008 high of 70.1 percent to a low of 68.8 percent in 2010, returning to 69.6 percent in 2013.[1] The gender gap in labour force participation closed slightly during this period. However, this was the result of a decline in male labour force participation, not a rise in female labour force participation.

The nature of women's employment in Canada is distinct from that of men. Women are more likely to work in part-time jobs — with 26 percent of working women holding part-time jobs, compared to 11 percent of working men.[2] Women are nearly twice as likely to work in minimum wage jobs (59 percent of minimum wage workers are women).[3] They are also more likely to hold multiple jobs.[4] Labour force segregation in Canada is typical of Organisation of Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD) countries, with male workers tending to be concentrated in agriculture, mining, manufacturing and trade, and female workers tending to be concentrated in education, health and social work.[5]

Employment levels are lower yet among some groups of women in Canada. Immigrant women's employment lags seven percent behind Canadian-born women and 14 percent behind that of immigrant men.[6] Aboriginal women's employment rates are 5 percent below that of Aboriginal men and 11 percent below that of non-Aboriginal women.[7] Women with disabilities,

who are able to work and who are actively engaged in the labour force, have even lower levels of employment.[8]

Younger women face significantly lower levels of employment than their older peers. While the official unemployment rate has gone down for young women, the participation rate has also declined. This means that fewer young women are looking for work. The percentage of women under age 25 who hold jobs has declined steadily since the 2008 recession.[9] Among the young women who are employed, only 45 percent hold full-time jobs, compared to 60 percent of men under age 25.[10] Conversely, employment rates for women over 65 have increased by four percent since the 2008 crisis.

For women who are in paid work, unequal rates of pay continue to undermine their economic security. The Canadian gender pay gap is the eighth-largest among OECD countries.[11] Women's median employment incomes are 34 percent lower than men's incomes.[12] For some groups of working women the picture is even worse. Visible minority women earn 17 percent less than non-visible minority women and 25 percent less than visible minority men. First-generation immigrant women earn 15 percent less than non-immigrant women and 25 percent less than immigrant men. Aboriginal women's median employment incomes are nearly the same as the incomes of non-Aboriginal women, but lag 10 percent behind the earnings of Aboriginal men and 31 percent behind the earnings of non-Aboriginal men.[13]

The gap between what women and men earn isn't merely the result of women's lower rates of full-time employment. Women working full time and full year still earn 20 percent less than men working full time and full year.[14]

Employment rates for women with young children are not significantly different from those of women without children in Canada. Two-thirds of women in Canada with children under the age of six have paid work.[15] In households where there is a working male parent, the mothers of young children are actually more likely to work and to work full-time. In families with young children, where both parents work, 63 percent of mothers work full time. Women spend double the number of hours on unpaid childcare work (50.1 hours per week) as compared to men (24.4 hours).[16]

Canada provides maternity and parental leave benefits for eligible workers, for a period of 15 weeks for mothers and an additional 35 weeks for either mother or father. Benefits are 55 percent of the parent's average insurable weekly earnings, up to a maximum amount. The rate of mothers who qualify for maternity leave benefits is 78 percent, up slightly over the past two years. Approximately 25 percent of fathers claim parental leave.[17]

Canada has one of the lowest rates of childcare access among OECD countries. The cost of having one child in daycare in metropolitan centres such as Toronto and Vancouver now amounts to as much as half of the median income of a working woman in those cities. The exception is in the province of Québec, where there is a publicly subsidized childcare program.[18]

A significant number of women in Canada (1.2 million) are caring for both ailing parents and children at the same time. Women make up 54 percent of unpaid caregivers in Canada.[19] The majority of women report spending 2–9 hours per week providing care for a family member or friend with an illness or disability.[20] Women are far more likely than men to cite family care work as the reason for part-time employment, with 16 percent of women who work part time doing so, compared to three percent of men.[21]

Federal Policies and Programs: 2009–14

Gender-based analysis of the economic policies of the current federal government over the past five years (performed by non-governmental organizations and academics) has demonstrated the extent to which women have not benefited equally from government expenditures and the government's economic policies.[22]

Although Canada was among the OECD countries least affected by the 2008 global financial crisis, the federal government has adopted a course of austerity measures — cutting public sector jobs and services. Current projections suggest that there will be an 8 percent reduction in federal public sector jobs by 2015, when the impact of post-2008 austerity measures are felt in full.[23] This will have a disproportionate impact on women because the public sector is one of the places where gaps in income and employment are smaller. Women working in the public sector earn an average of 4.5 percent more than their peers in the private sector.[24] Women seeking comparable work in the private sector see an estimated $2,000 reduction in their annual income.[25]

In 2009 the federal government passed the *Public Sector Equitable Compensation* (PSEC) *Act*. The PSEC Act significantly reduces the ability of public sector employees to make formal complaints about sex-based discrimination in their pay. It redefines sex-based pay inequality as a bargaining issue for public sector unions and a matter to be decided with respect to market forces. In 2012, the government passed Bill C-38, which makes parallel changes to the Federal Contractors Program, leaving compliance with the *Em-*

ployment Equity Act for contractors of the federal government to the discretion of federal cabinet ministers.

Federal investments in job creation in the private sector have focused on training and jobs in industries that are amongst the most male-dominated: mining, oil and gas and construction. Women make up 18 percent of mining, oil and gas workers and 12 percent of construction workers.[26] The pay gap in these sectors is also larger than in many other industries, with women earning 63 percent of what their male peers earn in the oil and gas industry and 68 percent of what their peers earn in construction.

In the 2009, the federal government announced a temporary extension of Employment Insurance coverage for eligible unemployed workers. These changes did not address the specific barrier to eligibility faced by women. Women are more likely to be employed in temporary and part-time work and continue to be disadvantaged by high thresholds for eligibility. During the recession, the gap in men's and women's eligibility for employment insurance widened significantly from a 2.3 percent gap in 2008 to a 14 percent gap at its worst.[27] That gap has since narrowed to its pre-2008 levels.[28] Women's benefits, like women's incomes, are consistently lower than are men's benefits, with women's Employment Insurance benefits amounting to $60 less per week than men's on average.[29]

In 2008, the federal government introduced a tax policy allowing seniors to 'split' their pension incomes — this effectively allows the senior spouse with the higher taxable pension income to transfer some of that income to the lower-income spouse. Because women's retirement incomes are lower on average than men's this means that the bulk of the benefit goes to senior men. This tax policy is also highly regressive, with the top 10 percent of income earners benefiting the most (receiving $820/year on average compared to $0.10/year for the bottom 10 percent).[30]

The federal government is currently committed to extending income-splitting to dual-parent households with children under the age of 18. Projections suggest this will have an equally regressive impact, increasing inequality overall and significantly decreasing women's labour force participation.[31] This is a troubling trajectory, and programmes such as this, as well as the PSEC Act run counter to the first objective of the *Beijing Declaration* and *Platform for Action,* which calls for macroeconomic polices that reduce gender-based inequality.

Notes

1 "CAN-SIM Table: 282-0002: Full-Time and Part-Time Employment by Sex and Age Group." Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

2 Ibid.

3 "CAN-SIM Table 282-0002: Labour Force Survey Estimates By Sex And Detailed Age Group." Ottawa: Statistics Canada. Custom tabulations from Labour Force survey microdata.

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13 "Employment Income Statistics in 2010 (7), Sex (3), Work Activity in 2010 (3), Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree (6) and Industry - North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) 2007 (104) for the Population Aged 15 Years and Over in Private Households of Canada, Provinces and Territories, 2011 National Household Survey." Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

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20 "CAN SIM Table 114-0006: Time spent providing care to a family member or friend with a long-term illness, disability or aging needs, by sex and age group." Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

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Women Migrant Workers

THE INCREASINGLY TEMPORARY nature of migration has led to unprecedented precarity for women migrant workers as their legal status is commonly tied with their employment status. As many migrant-receiving countries, including Canada, take steps to further enhance and promote temporary labour migration programs, women migrant workers' social protections are reduced.[1] While the United Nations *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families* sets standards for the promotion of fair and legal migration, most major migrant-receiving countries, including Canada, have failed to ratify this convention.[2]

Canada has seen rising numbers of temporary migrants in the last five years, largely driven by employer demand, and facilitated by an expansion of temporary program streams and categories of entry. As of 2013, in Canada, there were over 83,000 new entries or re-entries of people into low-skilled occupations under the Temporary Foreign Worker Programme (TFWP). These streams include agricultural workers entering under the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Programme (SAWP), domestic workers entering under the Live-In Caregiver Program (LCP), and those falling under the Low Skilled Pilot Program, all of which comprise varying proportions of women migrant workers. Approximately 90 percent of the LCP are estimated to be female, while over 90 percent of the SAWP are male.[3] In both streams, the exploitation, exclusion and discrimination of women have been well documented.[4] The following subsections outline the main facets of these programs and provide

background on the challenges and exploitation faced by temporary women migrant workers in Canada.

The Temporary Foreign Worker Programme (TFWP)

The TFWP has undergone profound changes in its operations since 2009. One of the more visible changes has been the transfer of responsibility to employers for ensuring the safety and well-being of migrant workers.[5] Giving autonomy to employers in the operations of the TFWP has led to numerous accounts of abuse of migrants, many of which have come to light over the past two years.[6] This has led to ministerial reviews and changes to the TFWP, making employer applications for labour market opinions slightly more difficult to obtain.[7] However, these changes have not addressed the inherent inequalities of the system, such as employer control over workers and the limited pathways to permanent residency.

The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Programme (SAWP)

The SAWP has been in place in Canada since the 1970s and has relied on bilateral labour agreements with sending countries primarily located in Latin America and the Caribbean. Migrant workers often live in residences provided by the employer are entirely dependent on the farm owner for food and living conditions.[8] While data on the prevalence of gender-based discrimination is unavailable, in July 2014 the United Food and Commercial Workers Canada (UNFC), Canada's leading union for migrant farm workers, requested that the Ontario Human Rights Commission open an inquiry into gender-based discrimination by Canadian agribusinesses that employ migrant farm workers under SAWP.[9]

The Live-In Caregiver Program (LCP)

The LCP, developed in 1992, is composed of individuals who provide care for children, elderly persons or persons with disabilities in private homes without supervision.[10] Since 2006, between 9,000 and 14,000 live-in caregivers (primarily from the Philippines) have come to Canada each year, often working for low wages, with unfair and unprotected working conditions.[11] The live-in nature of the program means higher violations of privacy

and more restricted mobility (caregivers are essentially available to an employer essentially 24 hours a day, seven days a week) than other temporary work programs. However, according to the federal government, these individuals have legal rights to fair working conditions and fair treatment "under labour laws in most provinces and territories."[12] While the government also acknowledges that LCWs are vulnerable to exploitation, it recommends that employees must resolve disputes with employers privately.[13]

Unlike the SAWP or TFWP programs, employees under the LCP (as well as their spouses and dependents) have the opportunity to apply for permanent residence, which will be an estimated 17,500 individuals by 2014.[14] However, Citizenship and Immigration Canada has reduced the total number of available permanent status positions over the last two years. The most recent changes by Citizenship and Immigration Canada in 2013 included the reduction in the age of dependents from 22 to 18, which will make it more difficult for live-in care worker's children to become permanent residents.[15]

There is little research about what happens to Live-in Caregivers after their two-year work requirement is complete.[16] Well documented though are the factors that prevent these workers from becoming economically integrated and include poor recognition of previous training, costly upgrading processes and the use of settlement services.[17] Although Canada may represent an attractive location for caregivers to pursue other career and educational opportunities, these are constrained by live-in care worker's temporary status and barriers to permanent residency.

Notes

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Women and Poverty

THE PAST FIVE years have seen little change in women's poverty in Canada. Between 2009 and 2011, the most recent year for which data is available, the percentage of women in Canada living in poverty decreased less than one point, from 13.9 percent to 13.3 percent.[1] Women's poverty continues to be concentrated in populations of women who face systemic barriers of discrimination and colonial legacies as well as unaddressed social policy gaps.

Almost 40 percent of children in families with female lone parents are living in poverty, a 5.4 percent increase from 2009. Canada still has not introduced universal, affordable, quality child-care, a key social policy alleviating poverty of single mothers. A 2012 study on Québec's widely available, government-supported, low-cost child care system reported significant reductions in the poverty of single mothers between its introduction in 1996 and 2008, including a 22 percent increase in employment rates for mothers with children under the age of six, reduction in the number of single mothers relying on social assistance from 99,000 to 45,000 (more than 50 percent), and increasing their after-tax median income by 81 percent.[2] The continuing provincial government practice of deducting child support payments from incomes of women on social assistance reduces single mother's income and options for movement toward paid employment.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit women experience high rates of low income in Canada, with 30 percent of all Aboriginal females classified as living in a household with incomes below Statistics Canada's low-income cut-off. This is almost double the figure for non-Aboriginal women, and also

higher than that of Aboriginal men.[3] The median income for Aboriginal women is 22 percent lower than for non-Aboriginal women.[4] Educational attainment by Aboriginal women is increasing, from nine percent who had a Bachelor's degree in 1996, to 14 percent in 2006. Post-secondary education has had a significant positive impact on income. The median income of Aboriginal women who have obtained a university degree is nearly three times that of Aboriginal women with a high school degree (at $46,663 compared to $17,398).[5]

Refugee and immigrant women, and those from racialized communities, also experience higher rates of poverty than do their peers.[6] Poverty rates for racialized families are three times higher than non-racialized families, with 19.8 percent of racialized families living in poverty compared to 6.4 percent of non-racialized families.[7]

Women with disabilities and Deaf women remain among the poorest women in Canada and continue to have the highest rates of unemployment.[8] Employment incomes for women with disabilities are well below the national average and, at $16,000 annually, they also fall below the low-income measure.[9] Disability related expenditures for medications, services and assistive technologies which are not covered by public health insurance impose an additional financial burden on women with disabilities.

Old Age Security (OSA) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) provide a guaranteed annual income to seniors. OAS/GIS is based on financial need and not tied to past participation in paid employment. The Guaranteed Income Supplement and additional top-ups recently introduced by the federal government have had a significant impact on reducing the poverty of women age 65 and older. However, Canada's rate of poverty among unattached senior women (65 years and older) is almost 40 percent higher than among unattached senior men, with 21 percent of women age 65 and older living in poverty (compared to 10 percent of men).[10] In 2012 the federal government announced that they will raise the age at which seniors would receive OAS/GIS benefits from 65 to 67 years of age, beginning in 2023. This increase will disproportionately affect women. They will spend more years experiencing the overall gap in earned income and have two fewer years of the largely gender-equal OAS/GIS income.

Homelessness has become a women's issue in Canada. Of the 210,000 people who use emergency shelters and temporary housing every year, 49 percent are female. Violence is a major cause of women losing their housing, with 75,000–100,000 women and children leaving their homes each year for emergency shelters serving abused women. 11,000 girls and young

women (age 16–24) use homeless shelters annually.[11] Concerns have been raised that the 2013 shift in federal funding to the *Housing First* model does not have obvious synergies with the shape of women's homelessness, which is characteristically hidden and violence-driven. This model requires linking to shelters for women fleeing violence and adaptation to their needs.[12]

Aboriginal women living on-reserve and Inuit and other women living in northern Canada continue to face a housing crisis. Nearly half of all women in Nunavut live in dwellings that are "either crowded or in need of major repairs or a combination of both" according to a recent government survey.[13] Efforts to pass legislation instituting a national housing strategy have failed. Canada is the only G8 country without a national housing strategy.

The majority of Canadian provinces now have anti-poverty strategies, with varying levels of monitoring and gender-sensitive evaluation in place. There is currently no federal anti-poverty strategy. The National Council on Welfare was established by an act of parliament in 1969 in order to conduct research on poverty in Canada. It has been one of the best and only sources of disaggregated information about gender, race and poverty in Canada. The federal government cut all funding to the National Council on Welfare in 2012 and consequently the Council closed its doors in 2013.

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Women and Housing

CANADA IS THE only G8 nation without a national housing strategy. Federal housing investments have declined in real terms since 1989 and much of the responsibility for social housing has been downloaded to the provinces and municipalities. In 2009, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) raised concerns about the situation of housing and homelessness in Canada during its Universal Periodic Review of Canada's human rights obligations.[1]

Housing is one of the key social determinants of health and women are particularly and profoundly affected by their access (or lack of access) to safe and affordable housing. Because women continue to earn significantly less than men (in 2008, women working full time, earned about 71 percent of men's earnings), single women and female lone parents have fewer options than men in accessing the housing market and they are also more likely to pay more than 30 percent of their income on shelter.[2]

Women make up the majority of low-income earners. Female lone parents, senior women, immigrant and refugee women, Aboriginal women and women with disabilities all experience high rates of poverty, which in turn limits their housing options.

Poor women are likely to be renters, either in the private market or in rent-geared to income housing. Across the country, housing costs for renters are rising more quickly than household incomes (except for the most wealthy), thus low-income households are increasingly at a disadvantage in the housing market.[3] Women are more likely to experience housing af-

fordability problems than men. Low-income women, particularly Aboriginal women, immigrant women, racialized women, single mothers and women on social assistance are also likely to face discrimination in the housing market. If they pay market rents, women on social assistance are often forced to use food banks and soup kitchens to supplement their income once they have paid the rent. Women who flee from violent situations often lose their housing and end up either temporarily or permanently in inadequate, crowded or unsafe housing or in shelters.

Aboriginal women face a number of additional barriers in accessing safe and affordable housing. They experience high rates of poverty and discrimination when they live off reserve and on reserves their right to housing is jeopardized by complex federal and provincial jurisdictional issues. There are gaps in family and matrimonial law which means that women facing violence often have little alternative but to leave their reserve. In addition, there is a severe shortage of housing on many reserves and in a number of areas, housing is unsafe or poorly constructed, overcrowded and lacking adequate infrastructure such a potable water.[4]

While there are no standardized practices for monitoring social housing waiting lists across the county, some data is available. The Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association compiles statistics on the waiting lists for rent geared-to-income (RGI) housing in Ontario. As of December 31, 2013, 165,069 households (over three percent of households in Ontario) were on waiting lists for RGI housing, an increase of four percent over the previous year. Average waiting time for a family is 4.14 years although in large urban centers the wait can be closer to 10 years.[5] In 2010, the Wellesley Institute estimated that nation-wide as many as 3.4 million households could be on waiting lists. Surprisingly, there is no gender breakdown of the people on the Ontario RGI lists. We do know, however, that seniors make up 29 percent of the list,[6] that women who are seniors live longer than men, and that senior women are more likely to live in poverty and be less adequately housed than men; hence they are much more likely to be in need of rent-geared to income housing. Women leaving abusive situations, women in receipt of social assistance, female lone parents and senior women often have few options but to wait for RGI housing. In some cities such as Toronto, women wait months or even years in the shelter system for subsidized housing as there is no alternative housing available. The lack of housing options often forces women to stay in abusive relationships.

The Wellesley report suggests that in order to address Canada's affordable housing gap by 2020 a federal plan is needed, 600,000 new affordable

homes should be built and 1.5 million shelter subsidies/affordable housing allowances allocated. Many housing advocates have called for the one percent solution, a proposal to allocate one percent of Gross Domestic Product to federal housing investments.

There is also a great need for information on women's housing needs in order to develop appropriate housing responses. Women have specific housing needs (in terms of size, design, location and safety) related to their roles as caregivers of children and the elderly and these needs are not necessarily considered in the planning, development and construction of affordable housing.

Canada was a signatory to the Habitat Agenda, the document produced at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) held in Istanbul in 1996. Among the commitments, Canada agreed to: "collecting, analyzing and disseminating gender-disaggregated data and information on human settlements issues;"[7] however, the government has not lived up to its commitment to implement gender-based analysis in the development of housing policies and programs.

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Education and Training

WOMEN IN CANADA have made tremendous gains in education, outpacing their male counterparts in both high school and post-secondary completion. However, women remain less likely to pursue post-secondary education in traditionally male-dominated fields such as in trades, and Sciences, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). As of 2011, women represented 39 percent of graduates in all STEM fields, with their participation further decreasing at the graduate level.[1] They also remain significantly unrepresented in registered apprenticeship programs, accounting for just 14.6 percent of registrants, and make up only 2.7 percent of completed apprenticeships as electricians, plumbers, carpenters, welders and in automotive services.[2] Instead, women continue to be concentrated in trades such as hairstyling and beauty services, accounting for 91.5 percent of completions in those fields, followed by 31.8 percent of completions in food services.

The cost of post-secondary education has continued to rise across Canada forcing many students to take on government and private loans to pay for their studies. On average, students are graduating with nearly $26,000 in government student loan debt.[3] For racialized women, tuition fees represent a higher percentage of income (i.e. 21 percent compared to 17 percent of non-racialized women's pay, and just 11 percent of the average income of a non-racialized man).[4] Young women in Canada also have higher take-up of the Canada Student Loans Program, and are more likely than men to take more than a decade to repay these debts due to lower earnings.[5] This not only affects the overall cost of a degree (i.e. higher compound interest),

it also has an impact on the disposable income of young women, and the likelihood of owning a home, having savings and/or investments.[6]

Financial assistance is provided to some status First Nations and Inuit students through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) to cover the costs of tuition fees, books, supplies, travel, and living expenses. However, there is no specific financial support given to non-status First Nations and Métis students. Since 1996, funding to the PSSSP has been capped at two percent annually, which has failed to keep pace with increasing costs. As a result, between 2006 and 2011, over 18,500 First Nations and Inuit people were denied funding — roughly half of those who qualified. The Assembly of First Nations estimates that an additional investment of $263 million is required to ensure that no Aboriginal students are denied access to post-secondary education because of financial barriers.[7]

Despite high levels of educational attainment in Canada generally, 11.6 percent of women do not have any certificate, diploma or degree.[8] Over 48 percent of women in Canada between the ages of 16 and 65 have literacy skills below Level 3 — the internationally-accepted level of literacy required to cope in a modern society and to be fully competent in many jobs. Between 2003 and 2012, the number of people with low literacy skills has grown by approximately 7.5 percent.[9] This growth in low-literacy is troubling because it results in higher incidences of unemployment.[10]

Significant gaps in educational attainment continue to persist between Aboriginal women and girls and non-Aboriginal people at all levels. While the number of Aboriginal people with university degrees has nearly doubled over the last 10 years, with nine percent of Aboriginal women holding a bachelor's degree, the gap between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people has continued to grow, as a result of higher rates of non-Aboriginal people attending university.[11] Inuit women have the lowest levels of educational attainment, with 55 percent of women over the age of 15 having no post-secondary education, followed by First Nations women, of whom 40 percent have no certificate, diploma or degree. Métis women have significantly better educational outcomes, but still lag behind the general population, with 46 percent attaining some form of post-secondary education.[12]

Lower than average educational outcomes for Aboriginal women and men alike are attributed to several factors, including high rates of poverty and chronically underfunded primary and secondary education systems on reserves that fail to meet students' needs. Funding for on-reserve schools are the responsibility of the federal government, and are administered under the Band Operated Funding Formula (BOFF) created in 1987. Through the

BOFF funding for First Nations schools has been capped at 2 percent on annual expenditure increases since the mid-1990s. As a result, funding has not kept pace with increasing education costs due to a growing population, and increases in teacher salaries, school supplies and equipment. The BOFF also does not cover costs for technology, First Nations language immersion, sports and recreation, student data management systems or libraries. Consequently, over 55 percent of First Nations schools identified funding as their main challenge.[13]

The Government of Canada recently introduced legislation to revamp First Nations education on reserves and announced additional funding in 2013. However, the legislation has been put on hold following the lack of support from national Aboriginal organizations. At the annual meeting of the Assembly of First Nations in 2014, chiefs voted to adopt resolutions "rejecting the bill outright and calling for 'an honourable process' leading to a plan respecting 'regional and local diversity' and 'inherent treaty rights.'"[14]

While overall levels of female education are high, women remain significantly unrepresented in STEM fields, and significant gaps remain in educational attainment between Aboriginal women and girls and non-Aboriginal people — two key challenges that must be addressed by greater federal-provincial coordination.

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The Girl Child

CANADA'S NEARLY 3.6 million girls contribute to the quality of life of their families, schools and communities. Canada played a leadership role in encouraging the United Nations to establish the International Day of the Girl, celebrated annually since October 11, 2012.[1] In the same year, Status of Women Canada released their first call for proposals to fund girl-focused projects.

Girls Action Foundation's 2013 report on the status of girls in Canada, found that while girls are advancing their educational and economic participation, they continue to face barriers related to violence, and mental and emotional well-being.[2] Girls that experience marginalization, including girls with disabilities and those from racialized, indigenous, rural and newcomer communities, are often at greater risk of personal and economic insecurity; they also possess strengths that they can transform into resilience and leadership qualities.

Violence Against Girls

Girls in Canada experience a multitude of both subtle and overt forms of violence.[3] Nearly 27,000 female youth aged 12 to 17 were victims of violent crimes in 2011, almost twice as high as the rate for adult women.[4] Girls were eight times more likely as boys to be the victim of a sexual offence (649 victims per 100,000).[5] Aboriginal girls face more frequent incidence of violence than non-indigenous girls, and the Native Women's Association of Canada

found that 17 percent of missing and murdered Aboriginal women are actually girls under 18.[6]

Girls experience forms of violence that are so common they often go unquestioned, such as sexual harassment.[7] Nearly half (46 percent) of high school girls in Ontario are victims of sexual harassment,[8] while one in ten teen girls in Québec reported being forced into sex.[9] Other forms of victimization by peers include bullying. For example, 13 percent of all Grade 10 girls across Canada experience bullying with racial overtones, [10] and 22 percent of Grade 9 Ontario girls experience homophobic verbal abuse.[11]

Several provinces across Canada are introducing anti-bullying legislation. For instance, when Québec and Ontario restructured their Education Act in 2012, gender-based violence was taken into account, and British Columbia announced a new strategy that mentions specific forms of violence such as, racism, homophobia and sexism. A number of "healthy relationship" programs are also being introduced to schools, but their application is highly inconsistent across jurisdictions.[12]

Sexual health education is another policy element that can contribute to reducing violence against girls.[13] The revised *2008 Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education* attempted to create common guidelines nationally, however no national policy has yet been implemented. Therefore, although some provinces such as Manitoba and British Columbia display promising practices, Québec has gone 10 years without a mandatory sexual education curriculum, while Ontario continues to use an outdated curriculum from 1998.[14]

Health and Well-Being

The *Health Behaviours of School Aged Children* survey found "a clear pattern of increasing pressure" in Canadian youths' lives over the last 10 years.[15] Girls feel pressure from all sides — to succeed in school and extracurricular activities, be attractive, please parents, teachers and peers, and conform to society's images of girls.[16] Consequently, stress rates are high. Girls tend to internalize their difficulties,[17] which can contribute to mental health challenges and self-harming behaviours, such as:

- *Mood and anxiety disorders:* Female youth age 12 to 24 are more likely to have mood disorders (4.6 percent of girls vs. 2.5 percent of boys) and anxiety disorders (6.1 percent versus 3.5 percent);[18]

- *Physical self-harm:* Of all gender and age groups, hospitalization rates for self-injury are highest among girls aged 15–19, more than twice the rate for boys;[19]
- *Alcohol use:* Binge drinking is on the rise and 54 percent of Grade 10 girls reported binge drinking;[20]
- *Risky sexual behaviour*: 21 percent of sexually active Grade 9–10 girls rely on the withdrawal method, and 8 percent do not use any form of contraception.[21]

Despite the clear influence of gender on youth health, few policies or programs explicitly take gender into account. The Mental Health Commission of Canada's 2012 *Mental Health Strategy* includes a brief mention of gender and sexual orientation, however gender analysis is not applied throughout the Strategy. Some of Canada's Centers of Excellence for Women's Health have notably done research on girls' health;[22] however federal funding for these research institutions was eliminated in 2012.[23]

Education

The vast majority of girls now complete high school,[24] and racialized and immigrant girls are more likely than non-racialized and Canadian-born girls, respectively, to be in school.[25] Girls have also been participating in post-secondary education in record numbers; by 2009, 8 percent more women than men held university degrees.[26] Some have also helped to advance education policies, such as The Miss G Project, in which a self-organized group of young women advocated for the implementation of a Gender Studies course in the Ontario secondary curriculum.

Despite these successes, gender inequalities in employment and salary persist. When girls drop out of school, the impacts can be severe: women with less than a Grade 9 education earn about $20,000, only half of what men with the same education earn.[27] In post-secondary education, girls continue to be over-represented in traditionally female fields such as education and nursing.

The parliamentary Standing Committee on the Status of Women completed its first study related to girls in 2012. The Committee sought input from many stakeholders on improving girls' economic prosperity and made recommendations, including:

- Support programs that create safe spaces for girls, particularly to prevent and address violence in schools and the workplace;
- Encourage the development of the capacity of Aboriginal girls, and improve their access to education and training programs;
- Support financial literacy initiatives; and
- Encourage the development of mentorship.[28]

Many advances have been made to improve the status of girls in Canada, yet significant challenges remain — especially for girls who are marginalized. Girls need to be taken into account in the development of programs and policies that affect their lives, and be given opportunities to learn and lead.

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Childcare

CHILDCARE HAS BEEN called "the ramp that provides equal access to the workforce for mothers."[1] The women's movement in Canada has made universal, publicly-funded childcare a central demand since the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1970. Nevertheless, Canada has never had a national childcare program or policy (except during World War II). In 2005, the federal government tabled Canada's first national childcare program, to be supported by substantial new federal funding. All provinces and territories had signed on, but even before the provincial/territorial action plans got off the ground, the newly elected Conservative government cancelled the agreements that formed the basis of the program.[2]

Today, the childcare situation in Canada — one of the world's wealthiest countries — gets abysmal reviews from international groups such as UNICEF (2008). By international standards Canada ranks at the bottom when it comes to childcare.[3]

In 2013, 67 percent of mothers whose youngest child was 0–2 years were employed.[4] For mothers with children between the ages of 3 to 5, that number was even higher, with 72 percent of those mothers in the paid workforce.[5] Employed mothers need childcare, as do the many women who are enrolled in post-secondary education or job training.[6] The need is more acute among some communities. One-quarter of off-reserve First Nations and Métis women and 38 percent of Inuit women reported "pregnancy/childcare responsibilities" as a reason they did not complete high school.[7]

Canada's birth rate is also increasing, and with it the number of children under the age of five.[8] The increased birth rate accounts for the substantial growth in the number of young children with employed mothers over the past five years. In 2013, there were nearly two million children under the age of five, an increase of five percent since 2009.[9]

The State of Canadian Childcare

Across Canada, there are severe shortages of regulated childcare spaces, especially for infants, children with disabilities, Aboriginal and rural/remote communities, and for parents working non-standard hours. Although there are childcare spaces to accommodate only a minority of children, growth in regulated childcare slowed to the low point in a decade in 2011/2012. In 2012, there were full- or part-time centre-based childcare spaces for only 22.5 percent of children 0–5 years. This was but a tiny increase — up only 0.7 percent from 21.8 percent coverage in 2010.[10] While 67 percent of First Nations' communities have licensed early learning and care programs for children under the age of six, only 22 percent of First Nations children have access to early childhood programs.[11]

International experts recommend that countries spend a minimum of one percent of GDP on early childhood education and childcare (ECEC), and some countries exceed this benchmark.[12] By contrast, Canada spent just 0.2 percent of GDP on ECEC in 2004, the last time these data were available.[13] Growth in public funding is very slow at best; between 2009/2010 and 2011/2012, public funding (adjusted for inflation) decreased in three provinces/territories and increased only slightly in most others.[14]

Most parents in Canada must pay fees for childcare. High user fees, a consequence of underfunding, mean that regulated childcare is out of the reach of many families. Parent fees continue to be higher than university tuition in almost all provinces/territories.[15] Fees range enormously across Canada — from $1,824/year ($7/day) in Québec to more than $12,000/year in Ontario for an infant. In 2010, median monthly parent fees across Canada were $761 for infant care, $701 for toddlers and $674 for preschoolers (including Québec, which, at $7/day, has substantially lower fees than other provinces). After adjusting for inflation, fees were higher in 2012 than they were in 1998 (the last year comparable Canada-wide fee data were collected) everywhere except Québec and Manitoba.[16]

The childcare workforce is strikingly female dominated: 98 percent of early childhood educators are women. Childcare centres have difficulty attracting and retaining qualified early childhood educators because the occupation is poorly valued and poorly paid. As a result, program quality is too often less than optimal. Although wages for childcare program staff have increased somewhat in the past 15 years, the average wage for an early childhood educator working full time is just under $26,000 per year — less than half the average wage for full-time workers in Canada overall.[17]

The limited supply of childcare has encouraged the growth of for-profit childcare, which tends to pay poorer wages and delivers lower quality than not-for-profits.[18] For-profit childcare has expanded significantly in the past few years; today 30 percent of total centre spaces are for-profit. For most parents, unregulated childcare in a private home with no public oversight or safety standards is the only affordable and available option.

To fill some of the gaps, the federal government's controversial Live-in Caregiver Program encourages low-income women from less-developed countries to come to Canada to provide low-waged, gendered, private child (and elder) care. Since 2006, between 9,000 and 14,000 live-in caregivers (primarily from the Philippines) have come to Canada each year, often working for low wages, with unfair and unprotected working conditions.[19]

Federal Actions Between 2009–14

The current federal government positions childcare as a private choice, not a federal government responsibility.[20] After cancelling the proposed national childcare plan in 2006, the federal government introduced a Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB). The UCCB is a taxable payment of $100/month to parents of children under the age of six. A recent analysis of the impact of the UCCB demonstrates that it has reduced the labour force participation of women overall, and reduced the participation of women with lower educational attainment by 3.3 percent.[21] The current government has committed to implement a policy of income splitting for families with children under the age of 18, in 2015. This policy would provide no relief to single parents, who are the family group most likely to live in poverty. The policy will also further contribute to the suppression of women's labour force participation, the result of which (in countries where income splitting has been introduced) is decreased economic security for women and their children.[22]

In the absence of a federal role, several provinces have made policy changes — some significant. Paradoxically, these initiatives have exacerbated inequities across Canada. For example, Québec spends significantly more than any other province on childcare.[23] As a result, Québec parents pay $7/day for childcare, while parents of infants in Toronto or Vancouver can pay $80/day or higher.

Advocates, such as the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada (CCAAC) continue to press for policy changes. However, the CCAAC and other civil society groups and organizations have been defunded by the federal government. In the absence of a childcare system, these groups had provided much of the infrastructure, providing professional development, research and data collection. As public funds and resources have been withdrawn, monitoring of the state of Canadian childcare has become much more difficult. Nevertheless, advocates continue to press for federal leadership to establish a Canada-wide system.

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Violence Against Women

RATES OF SEXUAL assault in Canada have remained stable over the past five years, with 34 incidents per 1,000 adult women (compared to 35 per 1,000).[1] The rate of intimate partner violence has declined slightly, with 6.4 percent of women reporting having experienced intimate partner violence in the five years prior to 2009 (compared to 7.2 percent in the five years prior to 2004).[2] The percentage of crimes that are reported remains low, with an estimate of less than 10 percent of sexual assaults and 30 percent of domestic violence being reported to police.[3] Police statistics record a decline in the number of sexual assaults reported since 1993.[4]

Rates of sexual assault and intimate partner violence vary by region and community in Canada. The northern provinces and territories have the highest rates of sexual assault and intimate partner violence. Women with disabilities experience higher rates of violence than do their peers.[5] Rates of violence against Aboriginal women are more than three times the level of violent victimization faced by non-Aboriginal women.[6] The Royal Canadian Mounted Police recently reported that the total number of Aboriginal women who have been murdered or whose disappearances remain unsolved over the past three decades now exceeds 1,000 women and girls.[7] The disproportionately high rate of violence experienced by Aboriginal women is now the focus of an Inquiry by the UN CEDAW Committee.[8]

Women also experience violence in the workplace, particularly in female-dominated employment sectors. One-third of all violent workplace incidents involve a victim working in social assistance or health care ser-

vices such as hospitals, nursing or residential care facilities. Other sectors with high rates of workplace violence include accommodation or food services, retail or wholesale trade, and educational services sectors. Rates of sexual harassment at Canadian workplaces have not been studied recently, however previous studies have indicated that young women and single women are more vulnerable to sexual harassment.

Services for those who have experienced gender-based violence vary by region. Women seeking services in rural and remote or northern communities are particularly disadvantaged. The number of women's shelters in Canada has increased slightly over the past five years.[9] However, the most recent shelter survey found that on a typical day 379 women and 215 children were turned away, most often because the shelter was at capacity and unable to accommodate them.[10] The Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development is responsible for shelters and other services related to intimate partner violence on First Nations' reserves.[11] This funding, however, only provides support for 41 on-reserve shelters for the over 630 First Nation communities in Canada.

Federal Policies and Programs: 2009–13

Over the past five years, federal policy to address violence against women has largely been directed through non-gender specific policies and initiatives. The federal government's *Family Violence Initiative* is the primary mechanism for addressing intimate partner violence but is not exclusively concerned with intimate-partner violence.[12] Responsibility for administering the *Family Violence Initiative* is spread out across fifteen federal departments and agencies.[13]

In 2011, the government committed $13 million in funding to a new *Federal Victims Strategy.* Like the *Family Violence Initiative*, the *Federal Victims Strategy* does not focus exclusively on intimate partner violence or sexual assault, but addresses victims of violent crime in general.

In 2012, the federal government launched a *National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking*. The Plan includes provisions to increase and target services for victims of human trafficking, specifically among immigrant and refugee communities. It includes provisions to increase prosecutions for human trafficking offences domestically and to support international efforts to prevent human trafficking. While the plan addresses a crime experienced

by women, it does not address itself exclusively to gender-based violence or violence against women.

One of the few federal mechanisms for addressing violence against women specifically is the grant program administered by the federal department Status of Women. Status of Women disperses between $14-$15 million/year in grants and contributions to non-profit organizations to deliver a variety of services ranging from shelters to public education. This amount represents less than 0.03 percent of total federal program spending.

Over the past five years, the Minister(s) for SWC have focused on the issues of honour killing and human trafficking. The focus on honour killing has resulted in mixed responses from women's and other civil society organizations. Honour killing is not distinguished from homicide in the criminal code. Homicides that fit the criteria of honour killing in Canada represent a very small minority of female homicides. The policy focus on honour killing has also been criticized for promoting stereotypical views of South Asian communities.[14]

The federal government does not have a stand-alone policy on intimate partner violence or sexual assault. Nor does the federal government have a national action plan to address violence against women. There is growing consensus among women's organizations, civil society organizations and Aboriginal organizations that such a national plan is needed to coordinate and increase efforts to end violence against women in Canada.[15] Six provinces and territories have regional action plans to address family violence, intimate partner violence and/or sexual violence. Among them, Ontario and Québec have the most comprehensive and best-funded action plans to end gender-based violence.[16]

Notes

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Violence Against Aboriginal Women and Girls

The Socio-Economic Situation of Aboriginal Women

There are clear barriers to Aboriginal women's full and equal participation in both the Canadian economy and in opportunities for economic development. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women also face distinct challenges as a result of social, cultural and regional differences. Aboriginal women in Canada face a double barrier of racial and gender-based discrimination as well as the long-term impact of colonialism. The impacts of residential schools, forced displacement and legislated discrimination are evident in the high levels of economic inequality and violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls in Canada.

Aboriginal peoples face disproportionately high levels of poverty and lower levels of access to economic and educational opportunities. Aboriginal women experience even lower levels of employment and income than do their male peers. Aboriginal women's employment rates are 5 percent below that of Aboriginal men[1] and Aboriginal women's median employment incomes lag 10 percent behind the earnings of Aboriginal men and 31 percent behind the earnings of non-Aboriginal men.[2]

Current federal funding for Aboriginal economic development has not addressed the distinct barriers faced by Aboriginal women, nor has it taken advantage of the potential of Aboriginal women to contribute to economic development. More than 80% of unmarried Aboriginal women raise their children alone, without financial support from the child's father. Many Aboriginal women take care of two generations, and as such many need childcare supports and Elder care supports.

If the Government of Canada were to invest at least half of their Aboriginal Economic Development funding into enhancing skills and opportunities for female Aboriginal entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs, Canadians could expect to see profoundly improved economic outcomes for Aboriginal women in all ranges of business development that extend beyond their own financial well-being. In many cases, their increased independence can mean profound life changes, including helping them escape violence, improve their own and their children's nutrition, exit poverty or afford safe housing. Aboriginal women also make up the fastest growing youth population in Canada and would be the ideal target for investment to fill the aging Canadian labour market gap.

In spite of the challenges they face, Aboriginal women have demonstrated exceptional leadership over the past five years. The number of Aboriginal women holding university degrees has doubled.[3] First Nations women have taken leadership positions within their own communities, with 16% of Band Chiefs being women. Eva Aariak, an Inuit woman, served as Premier of Nunavut from 2008–13. Aboriginal women's organizations have continued to provide essential research and leadership, in spite of significant cuts to their funding.[4] Aboriginal women started one of the largest grassroots movements in support of the rights of Aboriginal peoples in Canada: *Idle No More*.

Violence Against Aboriginal Women and Girls

Aboriginal women and girls experience extremely high levels of violence in Canada. Aboriginal women in Canada report rates of violence, including domestic violence and sexual assault, three times higher than non-Aboriginal women.[5] Young Aboriginal women make up 63 percent of those who report experiencing violence victimization.[6] Aboriginal women and girls experience both high levels of sexual abuse and violence in their own families and communities, and high levels of stranger violence in the broader society.[7]

Canadian police forces do not uniformly track the status of homicide victims as Aboriginal or not. However, Aboriginal and human rights organizations have tracked the numbers of Aboriginal women who have disappeared or been murdered over the past twenty years — demonstrating disproportionately high rates of homicide for Aboriginal women and girls. Between 2005 and 2010, through its *Sisters in Spirit* project, the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) documented the disappearances or murders of 582 Aboriginal women and girls over twenty years.[8]

In 2013 the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) finally commissioned a study on murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women and girls and released its findings in May 2014. The RCMP documented 1,181 murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women and girls between 1980 and 2012, with information from over 300 police forces.[9] This confirmed the broad scope of the violence and the over-representation of Aboriginal women and girls among murdered and missing women in Canada.

Federal Policies and Programs: 2009–14

Federal policy responses to the high levels of violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls have been hampered by the lack of data concerning that violence. Research conducted by the Native Women's Association of Canada has lead them to conclude that the scope of the violence is far greater than the cases it has been able to document through public sources. For many years, the inadequacy of data that identifies the victims and perpetrators by Aboriginal status has been well known and acknowledged, including by the federal statistical agency Statistics Canada.[10] But it has also been defended. For example, in its 2013 response to recommendations from the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Canada noted that "race-based statistics are not recorded in a systematic manner across Canada's criminal justice system due to operational, methodological, legal and privacy concerns."[11] In 2010, funding for NWAC's research was not renewed by the Government of Canada, further exacerbating the absence of systematic information about rates of violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls.

Existing research and human rights reviews have recorded the failure of the justice system in Canada to protect Aboriginal women and girls from violence, to investigate promptly and thoroughly when they are missing or murdered, to exchange information effectively between federal, provincial and territorial policing agencies in order to solve cases, and to prosecute and

punish perpetrators. Recent reports by both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch find evidence of a systematic pattern of neglect and mishandling of these cases by police forces, including the RCMP.[12]

A number of United Nations treaty bodies have also commented with concern on the inadequacy of the government's response and on the failure of the government to address and remedy the disadvantaged social and economic conditions in which Aboriginal women and girls live and which make them vulnerable to violence.[13]

During the Universal Periodic Review of Canada by the UN Human Rights Council in 2009, recommendations were made to Canada regarding violence against women, and against Aboriginal women in particular.[14] Canada accepted the underlying principles in these recommendations, which included recommendations that Canada remedy police failures to deal with violent crimes against Aboriginal women and girls, and that Canada address the low socio-economic status of Aboriginal women and girls as a factor that contributes to the violence against them. In 2013, during the second Universal Periodic Review of Canada, these recommendations were made again, with more force and more specificity, by twenty five participating countries.[15]

These recommendations included conducting a national public inquiry on murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women and girls, and implementing a national action plan to address violence against Aboriginal women and girls.[16] The federal government has consistently opposed the increasingly wide-spread support for holding a national inquiry.[17] There are also no plans currently by the federal government to enact a national action plan to address violence against Aboriginal women and girls.

The government's actions over the past five years include a 2010 commitment to spend $5 million per year to address this issue. This commitment was renewed in the 2014 federal budget. Of this amount, 40 percent of goes to a National Police Support Centre for Missing Persons and 20 percent goes to a Victims Fund.[18] Neither the Centre for Missing Persons, nor the Victims' Fund is targeted specifically towards addressing violence against Aboriginal women and girls. Federal funding is also dispersed through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (AANDC). AANDC is responsible for shelters and other services related to intimate partner violence on First Nations' reserves. This funding, however, only provides support for 41 on-reserve shelters for the over 630 First Nation communities in Canada.[19]

Most recently, in September 2014, Status of Women Canada released an *Action Plan to Address Family Violence and Violent Crimes Against Aboriginal Women and Girls*. While the plan acknowledges the severity of this issue

and announces several initiatives in response, the federal plan has been criticized for being uncoordinated and inadequate.[20] Notably, the report does not support a public inquiry into the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women and girls.

In the absence of a substantial and coherent government response to the on-going violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls, concerned organizations and the affected families and communities have increasingly turned to international human rights mechanisms.

In 2011, FAFIA and NWAC requested that the CEDAW Committee initiate an inquiry into the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women and girls in Canada under Article 8 of the Optional Protocol. In October 2011, the Committee initiated an inquiry. A report from this inquiry is expected in late 2014.

NWAC and FAFIA held two thematic briefings on the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women and girls at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in March 2012 and March 2013. The Inter-American Commission decided to make a visit to Canada to investigate and a report on this investigation is expected in late 2014.

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Women and Health

Federal Policies and Programs

The 2009–13 period was characterized by extensive cuts to federal government support for women's health research and programming. In 2012, funding was cut for health research and service programs carried out by a number of organizations working with Aboriginal communities, including: the Native Women's Association of Canada, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, the Assembly of First Nations, and the National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO).[1] These cuts resulted in NAHO shutting down altogether.[2]

In March 2013, Health Canada's Women's Health Contribution Program was closed. This program provided federal funding to a number of programs, including six women's health research and policy organizations: the Canadian Women's Health Network, the Réseau québécois d'action pour la santé des femmes, the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, the British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence and the National Network on Environments and Women's Health. Two of the six groups have had to permanently close their doors while the remaining four continue at severely reduced capacity.

In 2012, the federal government cancelled the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP), which provided basic health care for refugee women free of charge until they left Canada or became eligible for provincial health care. The cancellation of this program had a severe negative impact on al-

ready vulnerable populations of refugee women.[3] In 2014, the cancellation was ruled unconstitutional by the Federal Court.

Recognizing the need for a national mental health strategy for Canada, the Mental Health Commission of Canada was established in 2007. The strategy was released in 2012.[4] After critiques from women's organizations that the draft version did not include a gender-based analysis, the final strategy did recognize gender as a factor in mental health and identified as one if its priorities action around serious risk factors for women's mental health, including poverty, the burden of caregiving, and family violence.[5] However, no federal funding for specific programs addressing women's mental health was provided.

Health Canada instituted a gender-based analysis policy in 2000. The Gender and Health Unit (Strategic Policy Branch), within Health Canada, is responsible for providing support and advice on implementation of the government-wide 2009 *Departmental Action Plan on Gender-Based Analysis*. Deputy Heads of Divisions within Health Canada are responsible for implementation and monitoring of the Action Plan. Reports on department performance following 2009, however, do not provide any information on the implementation or monitoring of gender-based analysis.

Sexual and Reproductive Health

Over the past year, there have been several reported incidents in which women have been refused sexual and reproductive health information and services as a result of doctors' conscientious objection on moral or religious grounds. Most recently, in January 2014, when attempting to access contraceptive services, a woman in Ottawa received a letter explaining the doctor's decision to refuse to provide "vasectomies, abortions, the morning after pill and any artificial contraception," on the grounds of "medical judgement as well as professional ethical concerns and religious values."[6] This incident resulted in the emergence of evidence of other doctors in the province refusing to provide women with conceptive services.[7] The Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons is currently reviewing its policy on the issue.

Abortion is not criminalized in Canada, however, access to abortion services is uneven across the country and particularly challenging for women living in rural or remote regions.[8] A 2006 study found that only one in six hospitals provide abortion services.[9] The majority of service providers, both hospitals and free standing sexual health clinics, are dispropor-

tionately dispersed across Canada with most located in urban areas. In the province of Prince Edward Island there are no abortion providers. In 2014, in the province of New Brunswick, the only privately funded abortion clinic in the province closed due to financial constraints. This has resulted in women having to seek consent from two doctors before being able to access the service that must be done by a specialist in one of three hospitals that provides the service.

Overall the limited availability of abortion services is compounded by other barriers including significant wait times, age, financial and geographic location. The drug 'mifepristone' (RU-486), which could increase the access to medical abortion in rural and remote areas, is currently not approved for use in Canada.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education

In 2003, the Public Health Agency of Canada developed a comprehensive set of national guidelines for sexual health education.[10] Due to the division of powers between federal and provincial jurisdictions, the guidelines have not been consistently implemented across Canada, nor are there standards through which sexual health education curriculums can be monitored and evaluated. In Ontario, critics claim that the sexuality education curriculum is the most outdated in the country.[11] For example, the current curriculum "does not include references to sexual orientation, gender identity, homophobia or families with same-sex parents and is not in alignment with a number of existing provincial policies (i.e. the *Accepting Schools Act* and the *Equity and Inclusive Education* policy)."[12] In response, in 2010 the Ontario Ministry of Education released a revised 'Health and physical education' curriculum covering a range of issues related to health, physical activity, and sexual health based on the gathering of evidence and best practices and in consultation with relevant stakeholders. Four years later, the government of Ontario has yet to approve the curriculum, leaving students and teachers with a curriculum developed in the 1990s.

In Alberta, some school boards allow religious groups to deliver sexuality education which can contain inaccurate and misleading information regarding sexual and reproductive health, diverse family formations and scientific evidence.[13] In 2014, an Edmonton student launched a human rights complaint with the Alberta Human Rights Commission providing evidence that religious groups were delivering misleading information to students on

issues related to contraception and sexually transmitted infections, within a 'abstinence' based approach. Such an approach to sexuality education has the potential to increase the prevalence of STIs and unwanted pregnancies and result in negative health outcomes as it limits young people's access to comprehensive, evidence-based and scientific information related to sexual and reproductive health.

Canada's International Health Policy

In a high-profile announcement at the G8 Summit in Canada in 2010, the Canadian Government pledged $1.1 billion to a new international Maternal Health Initiative.[14] Following the 2010 announcement of Canada's Initiative, the Minister for International Development stated that none of the committed funding would go to international work which includes abortion services.[15] The plan for the Initiative originally excluded support for contraception as well, but this provision was later reversed as women's health experts presented extensive evidence of the importance of reproductive health services and education to reducing maternal and infant mortality.[16] A second summit on *Maternal, Newborn and Child Health* was held in May 2014 at which the program was renewed for 2015–20 with a commitment of another $3.5 billion.[17] Funding for access to abortion services continues to be precluded from this funding commitment.

The federal government's inconsistent position on the issue of sexual and reproductive rights sends conflicting messages to the international community, and sets a poor precedent for OECD countries.

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Gender Equity and LGBTQ Rights

CANADA LEGALLY RECOGNIZED same-sex marriage in 2005 with the *Civil Marriage Act*. Since 2006, the number of same-sex married couples has increased nearly three-fold.[1] However, there are many issues facing the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans (LGBT) communities with respect to health, violence and access to social services.

Violence and discrimination have continued to increase for LGBT communities. According to the 2011 census, hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation increased by 10 percent in 2011 and represented 18 percent of all hate crimes in Canada, while hate crimes motivated by other factors decreased during the same period.[2] Of hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation, 50 percent of the victims were under the age of 25 and 15 percent were female. Bisexual people in particular feel more unsafe in their communities: 11 percent of bisexual people reported feeling unsatisfied with their personal safety from crime, compared to eight percent of lesbian and gay people and seven percent of straight people.[3] Discrimination against "trans"[4] persons is particularly rampant and has resulted in high levels of violence and discrimination when seeking employment, housing and social services.[5]

Violence against LGBT persons is also widespread in schools: 21 percent of LGBT students and 37 percent of trans students reported being physically harassed or assaulted because of their sexual orientation.[6] An overwhelming 64 percent of LGBT students and 78 percent of trans students reported

feeling unsafe at school.[7] According to Egale Canada, 33 percent of lesbian, gay and bisexual youth have attempted suicide (compared to seven percent of youth in general) and 47 percent of trans youth have considered suicide.[8] This puts them at much greater risk than their heterosexual and cis-gender peers, and indicates that this population needs greater access to mental and other health services.

Domestic violence for LGBT persons is also becoming more widely recognized. According the 2009 *General Social Survey* (GSS), gay and lesbian people were twice as likely to report spousal violence as heterosexual people, while bisexual people were four times more likely.[9] These levels have persisted since the 2004 GSS. Lesbian and bisexual women were approximately three times more likely than heterosexual women to report violence,[10] although in general, spousal violence victims were less likely to report incidents than in 2004. It is more difficult for individuals affected by same-sex domestic violence to seek help (compared to opposite-sex couples) because there are fewer support services specifically for the LGBT community and victims might be hesitant to "come out" in order to receive support.[11] Lesbian and bisexual women often experience long-term social and psychological impacts from sexual violence because they experience barriers both as women and as members of the LGBT community to accessing appropriate services.[12] Women also continued to report more serious forms of spousal violence than men, within the LGBT community.[13]

While all sexual minority groups reported higher levels of mood or anxiety disorders than the heterosexual population, they are disproportionately high among bisexual women, one in four of whom reported a mood disorder.[14] Compared with heterosexuals, bisexuals report higher levels of unmet health care needs. However, gays, lesbians and bisexuals were generally more likely to consult mental health service providers when compared to the heterosexual population.[15] Lesbian and bisexual women frequently reported not having a regular doctor,[16] but this group was more likely to have consulted psychologists and alternative care providers and to have attended a self-help group.[17]

A serious human rights concern is the misplacement of trans people in Canadian correctional facilities.[18] The cases of Avery Edison and Katlynn Griffith, both transwomen detained in male facilities, brought international attention to the issue. In both cases, human rights complaints were filed for violating provincial human rights codes. Bill C-279,[19] known as the "gender identity" bill may help to address these concerns by providing equal hu-

man rights protections for trans people in Canada by recognizing them in both the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code.

Notes

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Food Security

HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY exists when people have physical, social and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.[1] Research suggests that women in Canada face higher levels of food insecurity than men.[2] Household food security worsened following the 2008 economic downturn. In 2012, the latest year for which information is available, four million individuals in 1.7 million households experienced some level of food insecurity.[3] Food bank use has also increased over the past five years, with women making up 48 percent of food bank users in 2013.[4]

One-third of female-led lone parent families were food insecure in 2012, by far the highest among household groupings.[5] Seven percent reported severe levels of food insecurity, including needing to skip meals, not eating for a whole day on multiple occasions, and losing weight because of an inability to afford food.[6] Female-led lone parent families that receive social assistance are particularly hard-hit.

Women living in rural and northern Canada are also particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. The cost of a nutritious food basket in Nunavut is the highest in the country.[7] Women's lower incomes and lower levels of employment exacerbate the their vulnerability to food insecurity in the region. A qualitative study of one northern community found that women in the community were significantly more likely to experience food insecurity, with 80 percent of women compared to 53 percent of men reporting food insecurity.[8] A recent study found that shifting patterns of traditional food

gathering and hunting practices have had a significant negative impact on women living in the north, exacerbated by the chronic problem of the high cost of store-bought food.[9]

Aboriginal women across Canada are also more likely to experience food insecurity or inadequacy than are non-Aboriginal women. First Nations women, in particular, have much higher rates of food insecurity than do their male peers, with 26 percent of First Nations women experiencing moderate or severe household food insecurity compared to 16 percent of First Nations men.[10]

Following his 2012 visit to Canada, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food noted "the growing gap between Canada's international human rights commitments and their implementation domestically."[11] Although there are a number of provincial initiatives aimed at poverty reduction and some initiatives to address food insecurity, there is no parallel policy development at the federal level. The Special Rapporteur recommended, in particular, that the participatory models of food system management need greater support from the federal government and should be integrated into a national food security strategy.[12]

The Special Rapporteur and the UN Committee on the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) have both noted the disproportionate impact of low rates of social assistance for women.[13] Women's higher rates of poverty and their lower levels of employment are exacerbated by lower levels of access to Employment Insurance and by rates of social assistance that often fall below the poverty line. This combination of factors contributes to their levels of food insecurity.

Notes

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Women and Armed Conflict

CANADA ENGAGES WITH issues related to women and armed conflict primarily through its foreign policy, development assistance programs and the Canadian military. Canada's *National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security* (C-NAP), released by the Government of Canada in 2010, was developed in light of the Security Council call for UN member states to develop action plans to implement *Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security* and subsequent related resolutions. This section is a brief look at progress in implementation of C-NAP as Canada's primary response to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, including the relevant components of the Beijing *Platform for Action*.

Assessment of the Canadian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

The term of C-NAP is from October 2010 until March 2016.[1] The plan is structured around the pillars of prevention, participation, protection, relief and recovery. It includes five specific commitments to:

- Increase participation and decision-making of women in situations of armed conflict;

- Increase effectiveness of peace operations to protect and promote the rights and safety of women and girls;
- Improve the capacity of Canadian personnel working in these areas,
- Ensure that relief and recovery efforts take into account the differential experiences of women, men, boys and girls; and
- Improve accountability of the peace operations leadership on these issues.[2]

The C-NAP includes 28 specific actions and 24 indicators. However, alignment of the actions with indicators is undeveloped; many actions have no indicators and there are no expected targets in the Plan. Indicators are not specific, measureable, achievable, relevant and time bound (SMART). As well, there are no targets, making it difficult to assess if anticipated progress has been achieved.[3] The C-NAP does not make any specific budget commitments and contains no mechanism to involve and consult with Canadian civil society.[4]

The plan has also been criticized for lacking a clear definition of gender equality or analysis of the structural causes of gender inequality in situations of armed conflict and post-conflict reconstruction.[5] The plan and Canadian foreign policy on women and armed conflict more generally tend to focus on providing for women who are survivors of violence and not on the promotion of women's leadership. The C-NAP does not make any commitment to increase the representation of women in decision-making during and after armed conflict.[6]

The C-NAP included a commitment to annual progress reports and a mid-term review during its six-year term (2010–16). Civil society requests for the overdue annual reports to the Hon. John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs, went unacknowledged.[7] The government released the annual reports on progress on the C-NAP for 2011 and 2012 in early 2014. The mid-term review commenced in July 2014.

Assessment of Progress

The two progress reports to date provide mostly anecdotal information on Canadian government initiatives, with detailed annexes submitted by the participating departments.[8] The reports present a positive picture and highlight initiatives carried out and funded by the government. These include

several diplomatic interventions (including at the level of the G8 Foreign Ministers), training for Canadian personnel and funding for large and small initiatives (including $18.5 million to support initiatives to address sexual gender-based violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo).

The progress reports list activities but provide little analysis of how Canadian programming has contributed to progress on meeting the goals set out in the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. Even though there is financial information on specific initiatives, it is not possible to assess what the government has actually invested in this area, and if spending is increasing or decreasing. The progress reports reflect the lack of attention in the plan itself to systemic causes of gender inequality.[9]

More generally, Canadian foreign policy on international women's rights has narrowly addressed two main issues: maternal mortality, and early and forced marriage.[10] While endorsing attention to these two issues, civil society has raised concerns that the government's approach is not predicated on a holistic human rights framework.[11] Specifically, the current government's initiative to reduce maternal and child mortality precludes funding for abortion, including for the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.[12] The C-NAP does not address the relevant Beijing *Platform for Action* Strategic Objectives E.2 and E.5 on women and conflict; nor does it endorse nonviolent forms of conflict resolution or women's contributions to fostering a culture of peace.

Notes

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12 See: *Women and Health* section.

Women in Power and Decision-Making

WHILE THE UNITED Nations defines 30 percent as the minimal amount of representation of women required for government to reflect women's concerns, this number is often used as a cap rather than a minimum.[1] Women in Canada are under-represented among elected officials at every level of government. At the federal level, 25 percent of members of parliament are women. Similar statistics are found at the provincial and municipal levels. Internationally, this puts Canada behind Sweden (where 45 percent of political councils are women), Finland (38 percent), Spain (36 percent) and New Zealand (32 percent).[2] While women can achieve effective representation in smaller coalitions, there are several overarching trends which reduce gender equity in decision-making, including the sustainability and longevity of women's leadership, and the policy environment in which women work.

Women are under-represented in professional leadership positions. Women make up three percent of top Canadian CEOs.[3] They also make up 14 percent of members of corporate boards.[4] Overall, men outnumber women amongst senior managers at a rate of two to one.[5] A TD Bank report on the S&P/TSX Composite Index revealed that 43 percent of Canada's largest 240 companies had zero female board members, and 28 percent only had one.[6] Between 2009 and 2011, Canada slipped from sixth to ninth in international rankings on the percentage of women on Boards of Directors.[7] That being said, there are significant differences between women's representation

in the public sector and private sector: women make up 46 percent of senior managers within government, but only 24 percent of the senior managers in the finance and business sector.[8]

"Encouraging women and girls in leadership and decision-making roles" is one of the three priority areas for Status of Women Canada. The department provides approximately $5 million annually in grants and contributions to organizations providing services in this area.

In 2012, the federal government created an advisory council to promote women's increased participation in corporate governance, which was convened in 2013. Its mandate is to advise industry and government on both policy measures and monitoring tools. The advisory council released "A Plan to Promote the Participation of More Women on Canadian Boards," with its primary recommendations to meet the 30 percent threshold for gender balance in corporate boards, develop a pan-Canadian approach with the provinces and territories, and encourage publically traded companies to develop a set of transparent goals to achieve gender-balance.[9] While these goals are attainable, coordinated action is needed to provide information on how both public and private entities can increase women's representation.

Notes

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Women and Media

THE *BEIJING DECLARATION* and *Platform for Action* articulated two strategic objectives regarding women and media:

- Increase participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication; and
- Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

Since 2009, progress on the first objective has been incremental, and changes in government funding practices have eroded the capacity of civil society groups to address the latter objective.

Advances in information technology have increased access to the Internet, connecting women in Canada with others across boundaries of all kinds. Although men continue to dominate traditional media, the blogosphere and LinkedIn, women engage in other social media platforms in slightly higher numbers, and their presence online has facilitated the growth of communications technology-assisted resistance projects channelled at challenging sexist and violent behaviour that has long been reinforced by media portrayal practices.[1] These include the Hollaback movement that seeks to end street harassment, and Twitter engagement around violence against women that spawned the *yesallwomen* hash tag in 2014, through which women shared examples of misogyny.[2] However, a digital divide remains in Canada; people

living in poorer households (disproportionately female) have considerably less Internet access than more affluent Canadians.[3]

Anecdotal evidence suggests that Canadian news media portray a greater diversity of women today than previously in both information and entertainment programming (two of Canada's national network major newscasts are now anchored by women) and there is increased public discourse about the importance of incorporating women's perspectives and accessing their talents for competitive reasons in the business world. However, women and girls continue to be sexually objectified and stereotyped in popular culture and advertising, access to degrading pornographic media portrayals remains pervasive, and young Canadians report high rates of encountering sexist content online.[4]

In theory, Canadian advertisers and broadcasters are expected to adhere to gender portrayal guidelines stipulating representative, balanced and respectful portrayals, established as a condition of license more than 30 years ago. However, research has found that the self-regulatory system governing broadcasters and advertisers militates against the enforcement of the relevant codes and guidelines, and the borderless reach of global culture makes enacting such codes more difficult than ever.[5]

Since 2009, Status of Women Canada has provided partial funding to six projects aimed at addressing one or more aspects of the women and media objectives. Notable projects by NGOs included:

- Réseau québécois pour la santé des femmes, which developed an ethical framework targeted to the fashion and advertising industries to encourage them to adopt more responsible approaches to their representation of women and girls;
- Femmes du cinéma, de la télévision et des nouveaux médias, which launched a project aimed at increasing the recruitment and retention of women working in the film, television and new media sector in the Montréal area and throughout Québec;
- Canadian Women in Communications, which developed and adapted programs, resources and tools to improve women's retention and advancement in the communications industry in four major Canadian cities;
- The Calgary Council for Advanced Technology, which worked to increase women's recruitment, retention and advancement in small,

medium, and large enterprises in digital media, gaming, software, and wireless/telecom;

- Regroupement féministe du Nouveau-Brunswick which initiated a project to increase the leadership capacity and media representation of New Brunswick's Francophone women leaders; and
- Media Action which motivated and trained women experts to share their knowledge and ideas with the media through commentary and analysis.[6]

The executive director of Canadian Women in Communications and Technology, an industry-funded NGO that seeks to increase women's employment opportunities in related fields, noted that progress for women in this area has been incremental at best.[7] Other sources documenting women's employment or presence in media-related industries found that in film and television production industries, "'the glass ceiling' for women continues to exist, but it has moved up a level of seniority"; and "gender-based disparities in earnings persist across screen-based industries."[8] Women made up 24 percent of Canada's ICT workforce in 2012, down from 25.8 percent in 2007.[9] In 2010, women made up 47 percent of reporters on CBC (public broadcaster) and 31 percent on CTV (private broadcaster).[10]

The ratio of female to male interviewees, however, was less equitable than the ratio of reporters; the same study found that women constituted 28 percent of the interviewees at CBC in 2010 (representing only a three percent increase since 1992), and 29 percent at CTV, a four percent increase since 1993.[11] These findings are consistent with the results of a smaller study conducted in 2010 by Media Action. This analysis of expert commentators on op-ed pages found that women constituted 15 percent of columnists and 16 percent of op-ed writers. A follow up study in 2013 of women-written op-eds in the four English-language Canadian dailies found an increase to 22 percent.[12]

Taken together, the status of women in the media is mixed — while there is growing dialogue on the importance of incorporating women's perspectives into this sector, gender-based disparities continue, as does the objectification of women in the media

Notes

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Women and the Environment

CANADA HAS RECEIVED international condemnation for its policies on climate change from the United Nations and a range of environmental scientists.[1] Canada withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol in 2011 and the government has reduced the budget and workforce of the federal department concerned with the environment, Environment Canada. Recent reports suggest that government scientists have been prevented from reporting on climate change and interacting with the public on the science involved in understanding it.[2] One of the ways in which Canadian federal policy on the environment lags behind is in its lack of gender-specific analysis and programming in this area.

The federal government reports that the two key government agencies concerned with environmental policy and programming, Environment Canada and Natural Resources Canada, "both implement gender based-analysis to ensure that policies and programs address the needs and reflect the interests of all members of the community, including women."[3] In its 2013–14 *Report On Plans And Priorities*, Environment Canada reiterates this commitment: "As a participant in the government-wide *Departmental Action Plan on Gender-Based Analysis*, the Department will remain fully committed to the integration of gender-based analysis into the development of its public policies and programs."[4]

However, there is no evidence that gender-based analysis is being conducted systematically or that it is integrated into Environment Canada's programs and policies. There is no mention of gender-based analysis or programs and policies that are directed at or involve women in any of the reports on plans and priorities of the five years previous (2009–13). The department's last five annual reports also contain no mention of gender-based analysis and the department's strategic objectives and indicators are all gender-neutral.

The lack of progress overall is also reflected in the failure to full meet the three objectives with respect to women and the environment set out in the *Beijing Declaration* and *Platform for Action*.

Strategic Objective K.1: Involve Women Actively in Environmental Decision-Making at All Levels

Women's interests are not consistently sought on environmental issues. Leona Agukkaq, an Inuk woman and Member of Parliament for Nunavut, was appointed to the post of Minister of the Environment by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in July 2013. Appointing an Aboriginal woman to this position is laudable and a first in Canada, however her appointment has not expanded the voice of women on environmental issues and, as with her predecessors, since her appointment there is no evidence that policies to include gender in environmental policies have been initiated.[5] The appointment of two women to the *National Aboriginal Council on Species at Risk* is also welcome, but remains the exception rather than the rule.

Strategic Objective K.2: Integrate Gender Concerns and Perspectives in Policies and Programmes for Sustainable Development

Gender concerns are not systematically integrated into federal policies and programs related to the environment. However, there are a small number of specific initiatives that are the exception to the rule. Health Canada acknowledges that pregnant women are more vulnerable to environmental risks and that pregnant women have increased risk to Bisphenol A exposure.[6] The *Aboriginal Forestry Initiative* has funded two projects that have gender-specific targets.[7]

Strategic Objective K.3: Strengthen or Establish Mechanisms at the National, Regional, and International Levels to Assess the Impact of Development and Environmental Policies on Women

There does not appear to be any systematic attempt by the federal government to conduct research on the impact of environmental issues on women. Most notably, the *Adaptation Platform*, Canada's major network governance structure designed to "better respond to the risks and opportunities of our changing climate," does not have a gender component.[8]

Neither Natural Resources Canada nor Status of Women Canada has a program that addresses gender and the environment. SWC has provided funding to women's group to improve their participation in occupations in mining, natural gas and other resource-related development.[9]

Through the department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, Canada does promote gender issues in sustainable development in less developed nations and also promotes gender mainstreaming for all development policies in these other countries.[10]

Obstacles, Gaps and Challenges

The lack of gender-based analysis of environmental shifts and climate change is a major barrier to understanding the differing policy needs of different groups of women. Almost all government reporting on greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), for example, whether through industry, transportation, or households, fails to distinguish activities by gender.[11] This can have an impact on the kinds of priorities that are given to various activities both to promote sustainable development and to reduce GHG emissions. This was most obvious in the environmental measures provided to counter the 2009 recession. Canada spent 8.7 percent of its total stimulus funding on 'green' initiatives, but there was no focus on women for any of the spending.[12]

Research has clearly demonstrated that specific groups of women, especially Northern and Aboriginal women, are affected in distinct ways by environmental degradation, extreme weather events, and climate change.[13] Government responses to these issues have not, to date, addressed those distinctions. Economic policies aimed at reducing carbon emissions are the subject of federal and provincial debate, and have been implemented in British Columbia, but the gendered impacts have not been considered in policy design. Similarly, the efforts to promote less carbon-intensive energy sources

have disregarded gendered issues in either energy production or use.[14] Altogether, detailed analysis needs to be undertaken to understand the different needs by gender in all industries, within households, and in communities in order to make their activities sustainable and to ensure that women do not disproportionately suffer from policy decisions and can be included in solutions to the problems.

Notes

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total GHG emissions in the country. Cohen, Marjorie Griffin (2014). "Gendered Emissions: Counting Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Gender and Why it Matters," *Alternate Routes* Vol. 25, 55–80.

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Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

CANADA HAS HAD a federal Minister responsible for the Status of Women since 1971.[1] There has never been a Minister solely responsible for the Status of Women without shared responsibility for another Ministry or portfolio.[2] Status of Women Canada (SWC) is an institutional mechanism that supports and reports to the Minister for the Status of Women. While SWC is a federal government organization that promotes equality for women and their full participation in the economic, social and democratic life of Canada, it is not a separate department. It is one of twelve federal agencies under the Department of Canadian Heritage's portfolio.[3]

Established in 2004, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Status of Women continues to serve as an all-party forum for sustained dialogue on gender equality, keeping decision-makers informed of issues pertaining to women's participation in society and facilitating government action on equality for women. The Standing Committee reports to Parliament on the progress of efforts to mainstream gender concerns.

The *Beijing Declaration* and *Platform for Action* list three strategic objectives regarding institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, which include actions to be taken by governments.

Strategic Objective H.1: Create or Strengthen National Machineries and Other Governmental Bodies

In 2006 the mandate of Status of Women was redefined. The words "advocacy" and "equality" were removed from its mandate (although "equality" was later reinstated). Funding for research and advocacy was eliminated, and twelve of sixteen regional offices were closed. Removing the mandate to fund research and advocacy activities from Status of Women has significantly hindered the capacity of civil society organizations to contribute to national policy-making debates in subsequent years.[4]

For the past five years the operating budget of SWC has remained fairly constant. At approximately $30 million annually, the budget for the Status of Women amounts to 0.03 percent of direct federal program spending.[5] As a percentage, this has varied little over the past decade. The bulk of the budget goes to grants and contributions to organizations that provide services in the three priority areas set by SWC. For the past five years those areas have been: gender-based violence, women's leadership and women's economic security.

In the area of ending gender-based violence, SWC has funded a broad range of services and education campaigns, from a toolkit designed to engage men in ending violence against women to support for domestic violence shelters. Over the past five years, the Minister(s) for SWC have focused on the issues of honour killing and human trafficking.[6]

In the area of increasing women's economic security, SWC has focused on funding programs that increase women's employment in the private sector and on increasing women's access to employment in non-traditional sectors.

The focus on increasing women's access to non-traditional sectors is complemented by the government's economic policies, which have invested significantly in training for work in the extractive industries. However, women's participation in these sectors is at the same level in 2013 as it was in 2008, with 0.6 percent of the female labour force working in mining, oil and gas and 1.7 percent of the female labour force working in construction.[7]

In the area of increasing women's leadership, funding has focussed on programs that increase women's participation in community and municipal organizations, as well as a more recent focus on increasing the representation of women in corporate governance. Because SWC no longer funds advocacy activities, the programs that are eligible for funding for increased women's leadership projects are significantly restricted. These projects cannot, by mandate, contribute to women or girls engaging in political activity.

Strategic Objective H.2: Integrate Gender Perspectives in Legislation, Public Policies, Programmes and Projects

Status of Women is tasked with leading the implementation of gender-based analysis across federal departments and agencies. The government's central agencies, Treasury Board, Privy Council Office and Finance, also share responsibility for ensuring implementation takes place. SWC has allocated between $2 million and $2.5 million annually for this purpose over the past five years, with an average of 18 full-time staff in this division of the department.

A 2009 report by the federal Auditor General found that there were significant gaps in implementation of the government's gender-based analysis policy.[8] The Auditor General's report concluded that there was no government-wide policy requiring departments and agencies to perform gender-based analysis. The report found that the Government's central agencies could provide no proof that they subject their advice regarding resource allocations and programming to any assessment of impacts on women. The departments that did perform gender-based analysis did not track whether or not that analysis informed decision-making.

In response to the findings of the Auditor General's report, the government developed the *Departmental Action Plan on Gender-Based Analysis*.[9] The Action Plan restated the existing commitments of SWC and the central agencies to perform gender-based analysis of government policies and programs and to monitor the results. Specific commitments included the development of new training tools and organizational capacity assessment tools. SWC committed to identifying departments for targeted training and those departments were asked to provide self-evaluations annually on their implementation of gender-based analysis.

Subsequent to implementing the action plan, SWC has conducted in-person training with a number of federal departments and developed an online training tool for federal public servants to use. SWC's annual performance reports record the number of departments engaged and the training conducted.[10] However, they do not include any assessment of the impact of their activities on increased levels of gender equality or the impact of gender-based analysis on the types of policies and programs undertaken by the departments that receive training.

There is little sign that the central agencies of the federal government have engaged in systematic gender based analysis of their programs and policies since 2009. Gender-based analysis receives no mention in any of

the Treasury Board's annual performance reports between 2009–13. The Privy Council Office identifies its intention "to ensure that quality requirements [are] met for Memoranda to Cabinet, including requirements linked to gender-based analysis" in its 2011–12 departmental report.[11] In its 2013 guide to preparing cabinet documents, the Privy Council office suggested that Memorandum to Cabinet should indicate if gender-based analysis is relevant to the subject being treated.[12] However, there is no requirement to perform gender-based analysis nor any record of whether or not Memorandum to Cabinet have, in fact, included gender-based analysis consistently.

Following the Auditor General's report, the Department of Finance signals "its commitment to conduct gender-based analysis (GBA) on all new spending and tax policy proposals it presented to the Minister of Finance, where appropriate and where data were available" in its 2010 and 2011 annual reports.[13] No subsequent mention of gender-based analysis is included in the 2012 and 2013 reports. There is no publicly available information about what analysis has been conducted and whether or not that analysis lead to changes in the design of fiscal and economic policies and programs. Externally conducted gender-based analysis of the economic and fiscal policies of the last five years consistently finds that federal economic policies have not addressed the distinct position of women in the labour market and their different levels of earnings and tax liability.[14]

The government is currently due to report on its implementation of the *Departmental Action Plan on Gender-Based Analysis* in 2014. Any measure of success must demonstrate that gender based analysis is being performed consistently, across departments and especially by the central agencies of the federal government. Success must also include a demonstration that such analysis is actually informing the decisions being made with respect to policy and programming, such that they are more inclusive of the specific situation of women in Canada.

Strategic Objective H.3: Generate and Disseminate Gender Disaggregated Data and Information for Planning and Evaluation

In order to conduct gender-based analysis, the federal government requires gender disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation. In coordination with Status of Women, Statistics Canada produces a report every five years on the status of women. The report includes national data

on: family life, health, education, economic well-being, employment, and gender-based violence. It also provides specific analysis of the well-being of different populations of women, including immigrant women, visible minority women, senior women, women with disabilities and Aboriginal women. The report is an amalgamation of data from a range of existing surveys. Statistics Canada does not conduct research specifically for this report.

Canada's census is a crucial source of gender-disaggregated data. Prior to 2010, Statistics Canada conducted a detailed survey of a significant sample of the population as part of its census. The "long-form census" was mandatory, and provided detailed gender-disaggregated information about, for example, time use and intra-household economic activity. In 2010 the federal government cancelled the mandatory long-form census and replaced it with a voluntary survey. In response, the parliamentary Standing Committee on the Status of Women held hearings in order to assess the impact of the loss of the long form census on promoting women's equality. A witness from SWC, appearing before the parliamentary committee, explained the role that data plays in gender-based analysis: "Having a strong set of data that is gender disaggregated is [...] fundamental to fulfilling the government-wide commitment to performing and entrenching the practice of GBA [....] It provides a snapshot in time that captures the realities of women and men affected by a particular issue."[15]

The final report of the committee made a number of recommendations, including: 1) the reinstatement of the mandatory long-form Census for 2011; 2) that questions on unpaid activities be included in the 2011 long-form Census; and 3) that Statistics Canada conduct a comprehensive public consultation on the possibility of expanding the unpaid activities questions for the 2016 Census.[16]

The federal government did not reinstate the mandatory long-form census in 2011, and has no plans to re-instate the long-form census for 2016.

Notes

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Research and Data on Gender Equality

STATISTICS CANADA CONSISTENTLY collects sex-disaggregated data in its major surveys. It also conducts several surveys that provide sex-disaggregated data about specific communities, including persons with disabilities, Aboriginal communities, and immigrant and racialized populations. However, recent changes to the census and the surveys that depend on census data have had a negative impact on the availability of reliable sex-disaggregated statistics.

In 2010, the federal government made a decision to discontinue the use of the long-form census. The mandatory long-form census provided consistent detailed and sex-disaggregated data on a wide variety of issues, including household divisions of labour, poverty, and differences between populations of Canadians. In its place, the government instituted the voluntary *National Household Survey*. The chief statistician at Statistics Canada resigned in protest to these changes. There is wide consensus among economists and statisticians that the new *National Household Survey* data is not as reliable as or comparable to historical long-form census data.[1]

A number of surveys that depended on the long form census have been affected by its cancellation. These include the Participation and Activity Limitations Survey (PALS), which has subsequently been replaced by the Canadian Survey on Disability. The PALS provided important data on the economic and personal security of women with disabilities in Canada. The sample for the PALS survey was drawn from respondents to the long form

census who indicated that they were living with an activity limitation. The new survey depends on a sample of the population who responded to the voluntary *2011 National Household Survey* and is therefore subject to the same sampling errors of any voluntary survey.

Data on violence against women is notoriously difficult to collect, because of low levels of reporting. In 1993, Canada undertook a thorough and well-designed survey of levels of violence against women. This survey became an international standard for measuring levels of violence against women and has been used as a model for surveys in a number of other countries.[2] The survey has never been repeated in Canada.

The only regular measure of adult sexual assault and intimate partner violence that is conducted by the federal government is the once every five years *General Social Survey* on victimization. This survey includes questions about women's experiences with these kinds of violence that provide a better estimate than the annual *Uniform Crime Reporting Survey*, which necessarily counts only those cases reported to the police, and only for the police services that participate in the survey.

The *General Social Survey* confirms findings by non-governmental, Aboriginal and human rights organizations that Aboriginal women and girls in Canada are disproportionately subject to violence. However, because police departments do not uniformly track the status of victims of violent crimes as Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, they cannot provide consistent or definitive data on the numbers of Aboriginal women and girls who have been victims of homicide or whose disappearances remain unsolved. The Native Women's Association of Canada has established a database that tracks missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada.[3] Initial funding for this initiative was provided by Status of Women but was subsequently not renewed in 2010. The levels of violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls has recently been the subject of a CEDAW inquiry and a visit by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Notes

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Conclusion

Opportunities and Challenges

CANADA HAS THE means and institutional capacity to ensure that women and men live equal lives. Yet, the previous five years have been marked by a slowdown in progress towards closing the gap between the well-being of women and men in Canada. While progress has been made in access to education, this report highlights the areas where inequality has persisted and worsened, particularly in terms of violence against women, political representation, economic security, access to social services, and the additional barriers to equality faced by Aboriginal women and girls, racialized women, women with disabilities and women from sexual minorities.

The absence of a comprehensive government-wide action plan on gender equality, or national strategies on housing or poverty reduction are preventing the government from making concerted progress towards ensuring that women in Canada are not denied a basic level of economic and personal security because they are women. The effectiveness of federal public policy is hampered by a lack of systematic gender-based analysis — resulting in policies and programmes that fail to meet the specific needs of women.[1]

Many of Canada's past commitments towards gender equality have gone unrealized. Canada must fulfil the recommendations from UN bodies, including on the disappearances of Aboriginal women and girls.[2] Canada must fully implement its national action plan on *Women, Peace and Security,*[3] and ensure that its international aid, including funding to reduce maternal and

child mortality, is consistent with international human rights standards. Closing these gaps in implementation can help to prevent the further entrenchment of gender inequality.

The lack of efficacy in current government initiatives is also disconcerting. Current initiatives that directly undermine the *Beijing Declaration* and *Platform for Action* include: the Universal Child Care Benefit, commitments to spousal income-splitting and the *Maternal Health Initiative* that precludes funding for abortion services. Addressing these issues will ensure a strong social fabric and more equitable economic system.

Partnerships with civil society represent an opportunity to pool the best research and insights available to work towards achieving better lives for women in Canada. However, changes to the mandate of Status of Women, gender-blind policy making, and funding cuts to organizations providing research and policy advice on the best practices for achieving gender equality means important insights and innovative practices are being lost. The absence of key data on the status of women, including the elimination of the long-form census, further reduces the feasibility of conducting gender-based analysis, thereby reducing the capacity of the government to produce effective public policy.[4]

The federal government has the potential to be a leader in progressive policies for women, nationally and internationally. Indeed, by implementing its existing commitments and ensuring that all of its policies address the specific challenges faced by women, Canada could once again be the best place in the world to be a woman.

Notes

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