FROM SEEDS TO ROOTS

TRAJECTORIES TOWARDS FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

IWDA INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) is an Australian-based organisation, resourcing diverse women's rights organisations primarily in Asia and the Pacific, and contributing to global feminist movements to advance our vision of gender equality for all. For the last four years IWDA has been working to develop an understanding of feminist foreign policy (FFP) through research, consultations with women's rights activists from around the world, and strategic collaborations.

Since 2014, six countries have adopted and declared feminist foreign policies (FFPs) and/or feminist international assistance policies (FIAPs), embedding gender equality as the central purpose and key goal of these commitments[1], and it appears that appetite for this approach at a global level is gaining momentum[2].

In recent years, scholars and advocates have called for more evidence about how and why the FFPs/FIAPs declared to date have come about [3]. In response, IWDA implemented a multi-country qualitative research project in 2020. The purpose of the research was to improve understanding of the trajectories towards adoption of FFPs/FIAPs, and to better understand the factors and conditions that have enabled or undermined the adoption and declaration of these policies, to strengthen the evidence base to support advocacy for uptake elsewhere.

From 29 interviews across 10 countries, our research findings relate to four key themes:

1) factors that influence the declaration of FFPs/FIAPs;
2) factors that influence the development and sustainability of FFPs;
3) factors that have, and could, influence the future of existing and new FFPs; and
4) debates and contested questions.

Our research confirms that existing FFPs/FIAPs have been the result of a 'window of opportunity' where progressive political leaders have taken advantage of a confluence of factors to declare a FFP or a FIAP. In each case, these declarations tended to come as a surprise to those working in government and civil society, which had implications for how these policies were developed and institutionalised, and for opportunities for civil society to help shape and deepen FFP practice. Our findings suggest that policy development processes differ according to policy type, and that civil society has played a key role in supporting implementation of FFPs and progress against FFP declarations.

Our research suggests that advocacy through traditional policy processes is unlikely to be sufficient for achieving declaration of a feminist foreign policy but that advocating for progressive gender equality policies, and vocally welcoming and rewarding those who adopt them, contributes to the enabling environment for such declarations, and importantly, for implementation. Coupled with high-level individual political will, this confirms the importance of having both top down and bottom up support for FFP.

Our research also suggests the importance of ensuring policy coherence across domestic and foreign policies that aim to advance gender equality, and the important role that transnational women's rights movement can and do play in supporting domestic Women's Rights Organisations (WROs) to advocate for progressive domestic gender policies, as well as international and foreign policies.

The timing of this research is important. As Canada works towards developing a FFP Whitepaper[4], the Biden administration signals a change in direction in foreign policy, the geopolitical contest in the Asia Pacific region creates an environment for values-competition, and countries look for progressive policy solutions to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic[5], there are increasing opportunities to support the uptake of FFP around the world. Since completion of interviews, Spain has gone on to adopt a feminist foreign policy[6] and a 'Growing global coalition for FFP'[7], made up of government and civil society actors, was introduced at the Committee for the Status of Women conference in March 2021. In an era of tension between increasing support for, and backlash against, women's rights and human rights around the world, there has never been a more important time to advocate for policies which can advance gender equality for all.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FFP RELATED ADVOCACY

RESEARCH FINDING	SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS
THEME 1. GETTING TO DECLARATION: FOUR CRITICAL FACTORS	
HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL WILL FOR SURPRISING, BOLD, AND FEMINIST ANNOUNCEMENTS	Political actors considering FFP should ask for forgiveness, not for permission; acting boldly and trusting that others will back in their leadership. FFP advocates may find that focusing on creating an enabling environment for an individual minister or head of government to go out on a limb by announcing FFP, rather than trying to build a broad consensus amongst policy-makers / politicians, is a more effective strategy for achieving a FFP.
AN ENABLING GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT	Resourcing women's rights organisations working at local, national and transnational levels to continue laying the ground work, and creating a receptive environment, for progressive policy announcements is critical to support greater uptake of FFP around the world.
PERSONAL VALUES OF POLITICAL LEADERS	FFP advocates should nurture relationships with individual progressive politicians who hold positions of political power, or are likely to in the future. Both top down leadership at the political level, and bottom up support from women's rights movements, are important for furthering FFP.
NEED FOR AN ANNOUNCEABLE	FFP advocates need to tread a careful line between leveraging governments' desire for headline grabbing announceables, while emphasising the importance of cohesion between domestic and foreign policies that aim to advance gender equality in order to prevent governments using these announcements to deflect accountability.
OPPORTUNITY ON THE WORLD STAGE	Feminist mobilising around processes like the G7/G20, the Generation Equality Forum and other United Nations (UN) forums can provide a platform for individual leaders to make a declaration of FFP amongst a receptive global audience.
THEME 2. FROM DECLARATION TO DEVELOPMENT: THREE CRITICAL FACTORS	
ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN SHAPING AND DEEPENING FFP PRACTICE	FFP advocates need to be ready following an announcement to demand consultation on policy design, and with proposals for principles, structures and accountability mechanisms to influence how the commitment should be implemented.
ROLE OF DOMESTIC VS INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY	Transnational women's rights movements can play an important role in supporting domestic women's rights organisations to advocate for progressive domestic gender policies, and ensure policy cohesion across international and foreign policies. International organisations, who are often better resourced, should carefully navigate tensions between their advocacy for FFP and the demands of local feminist movements.

RESEARCH FINDING	SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS
GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES TO FACILITATE INSTITUTIONAL OWNERSHIP	Governments should partner with and draw on the expertise of civil society to help legitimise and institutionalise FFP. FFP advocates within government should develop strategies to socialise and embed FFP across government. Political leaders who are personally associated with FFP should develop strategies to ensure policy longevity beyond their tenure.

THEME 3. FUTURE FFP TRAJECTORIES (EXISTING AND NEW)

FUTURE TRAJECTORIES FOR EXISTING FFPS	Work remains to be done to deeply embed and institutionalise the FFPs/FIAPs declared to date, and the concept of FFP, within political institutions. Both civil society and advocates within government can play an important role in institutionalising FFP/FIAPs to ensure that these policies become part of the bedrock of a country's approach, and survive changes in leadership and government.
FUTURE TRAJECTORIES FOR NEW FFPS	The COVID-19 pandemic is shaking up all areas of policy making, and advocates within government and civil society should leverage this disruptive moment to make the case for bold, transformative policy change. FFP can sometimes be seen as an approach to pursue when the sun is shining, with governments at risk of falling back on old ways of doing things when the going gets tough. Instead, governments should embrace the transformative potential of FFP, acknowledging that old approaches never worked for the most marginalised.

THEME 4. DEBATES AND CONTESTED QUESTIONS

DIFFERING FFP DEFINITIONS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY	Governments and civil society should work together to establish robust accountability measures, common standards and principles, and monitor adherence to implementation of existing commitments.
EFFECTIVENESS OF CALLING A FOREIGN POLICY 'FEMINIST'	While many are ambivalent about whether or not it matters what a policy is called, FFP is about transformative change, and transformative change requires bold action. Labelling policies feminist demonstrates the boldness required to succeed in implementing them. On its own, labelling a policy feminist is not sufficient to make it so, but having this standard in place provides a hook for civil society to hold governments to account for the full scope of their commitments.
MILITARISM V FEMINISM	Military force exemplifies the differences between governments and civil society, with the latter often viewing militarisation as fundamentally incompatible with FFP. While the women, peace and security agenda is sometimes seen as an entry point for FFP, it risks normalising the role of military force in foreign policy in a way that is contrary to feminist goals. Having an FFP provides a hook to open up deeper conversations about militarisation and feminism, and to further policy coherence across domestic and international spaces.

INTRODUCTION

Following Sweden's declaration of a Feminist Foreign Policy in 2014, interest in feminist approaches to international development and foreign policy as promising strategies to advance gender equality has grown steadily. In response to calls made by foreign policy scholars, this report contributes new information about how existing policies have come about, and what advocates can learn to support uptake in the future.

BACKGROUND

Following Sweden's declaration of a Feminist Foreign Policy in 2014, interest in feminist approaches to international development and foreign policy as promising strategies to advance gender equality has grown steadily. As of May 2021, six countries have adopted feminist international assistance (FIAP) or feminist foreign policies (FFPs), embedding gender equality as the central purpose and key goal of these commitments; Sweden (2014), Canada (2017/2020), Luxembourg (2019), France (2019), Mexico (2020) and Spain (2021). Political groups in other countries have also expressed an interest in adopting FIAPs/FFPs and it appears that appetite for FFP is gaining momentum at a global level[8]. Legislation calling for a FFP was introduced in the United States (US) House of Representatives in September 2020[9] and the European Union (EU) parliament approved a report[10] that called for a FFP to be adopted in December 2020.

Whilst there is no single government definition of a FIAP/FFP, there are many commonalities between the policies that have been adopted and declared to date [11]. Each policy is framed around principles of human rights, women's rights and gender justice, gender mainstreaming, and intersectionality and several make specific reference to the Sustainable Development Goals and other international human rights commitments and treaties. The FIAPs declared by Canada and by the United Kingdom (UK) opposition Labour party in 2018 aim to eradicate poverty and address inequality, and the FFPs declared to date share the central goal of gender equality and upholding the human rights of women and girls which they commit to implement via common thematic focus areas including: preventing violence against women and girls, women peace and security, women's political participation, women's economic empowerment and climate change. Several countries make specific reference to ensuring gender parity within the Foreign Service through their FFPs; to making financial commitments to Official Development Assistance (ODA), and/or set performance and spending targets for gender equality activities, the most ambitious being Canada's commitment that 95% of its ODA will target gender equality as a principal or significant objective.

This increased uptake of feminist approaches to international assistance and foreign policy is underpinned by decades of successful advocacy from feminist civil society stakeholders, who continue to evolve the concept of FFP and hold governments to account for their commitments[12]. Civil society are increasingly mobilising around the concept of FFP and advocating for their governments to adopt FFPs as a strategy to advance gender equality commitments and outcomes. Civil society working groups and coalitions focused on FFP have been established in Sweden, France, Canada, America, Germany and the United Kingdom. A global coalition of government and civil society advocates has also been set up to progress transnational action towards the adoption of FFP at national and regional levels[7].

Accordingly, there is a substantial and growing body of work developed by academics and feminist civil society organisations, including IWDA that critically examines the goals, principles, accountability mechanisms and guidance for implementation of FFPs. Within the body of FFP literature, there are two topics that have received some, but comparatively less attention than other areas of FFP. These include 1) the impact and effectiveness of existing FFPs/FIAPs and 2) how the FFPs/FIAPs declared to date have come about.

In relation to the first topic, as most FIAP/FFP declarations have been made recently, there has not yet been a full cross-country comparison of the impact and effectiveness of these policies. Whilst there is some information available about the impact of the Canadian FIAP and the Swedish FFP [13] this is not comparative to other feminist or pro-gender foreign and international assistance policies with similar objectives. As women in the Global South are the intended beneficiaries of FFPs/FIAPs, any analysis of the impact and effectiveness of these policies would require considerable resources to ensure women's rights organisations from the Global South are actively involved as research partners and research collaborators.

The research project described in this report contributes information towards the second topic –

understanding how and why FFPs/FIAPs declared to date have come about– with a view to strengthening the evidence base to support advocacy for the uptake of FFPs elsewhere. To date, a small portion of FFP research and literature has focused on how and why different countries have come to adopt FFPs/FIAPs and the factors that influence the adoption of pro-gender equality and feminist foreign policies. These studies and reports suggest that five main factors have influenced trajectories towards the declaration and adoption of existing FIAPs/FFPs:

- high-level individual political will and leadership – political leaders who self-identify as progressive or feminist[2, 3, 8, 14-17];
- government practices and values – progressive political parties have adopted FFPs[8, 12, 18, 19];
- domestic policies and values – countries that have strong domestic gender equality policies[3, 15, 18, 20];
- relationships between countries who are in close geographic proximity or share the same values[15, 21, 22]; and
- global norms and mechanisms that promote gender equality and women's rights[3, 18, 21-23].

However, the relationships between these factors, which factors have been the most influential and why, and whether this has differed across countries and by policy type, is less well-documented. Whilst FFP declarations have been enabled by decades of groundwork by feminist civil society actors, the source of the demand for FFP is unclear in terms of whether it has been driven from within government or from civil society. In addition, there is less available evidence about how some countries have come to declare and adopt a FIAP/FFP than others; trajectories towards declaration for France, Mexico and Luxembourg are less well-documented than those taken by Sweden and Canada. As Mexico is the first Global South country to declare a FFP, understanding more about the factors that influenced this trajectory in particular, and whether they are similar to the experience of countries in the Global North, is critical.

A deeper understanding of these issues and of how FFPs/FIAPs have come about is important and can help to strengthen the evidence base to support advocacy for the declaration, development and institutionalisation of FFPs/FIAPs. Equally important is understanding what factors go on to sustain and deepen these declarations into action. Considering the important role that government and civil society actors play in developing, advocating for and monitoring progressive policy solutions, understanding more about how these policies have come about from both perspectives to build the broadest view of what has taken place, is similarly important.

This research contributes empirical information, from civil society and government representatives from across 10 countries, about the trajectory towards declaration, development and institutionalisation of FFPs/FIAPs declared to date. This research project is among the first empirical research projects to conduct a cross-country comparison of this issue from the perspectives of both government and civil society representatives and therefore contributes important information to our knowledge of these issues.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research seeks to improve understanding of the trajectories towards adoption of feminist foreign and international assistance policies (FFPs/FIAPs) announced to-date to support advocacy for uptake elsewhere. The following question guided the research: What factors and conditions have enabled the adoption and declaration of feminist international development and/or foreign policies?

In line with IWDA's feminist research values [24], this research project adopted a qualitative research methodology and research activities that were feminist, accountable, and collaborative with a view to creating evidence that can contribute towards achieving transformational change.

To build the broadest view of the influences and drivers (and spoilers and challenges) to the adoption and declaration of FFP/FIAP, in-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders across civil society, academia and government who brought specific knowledge of countries who have adopted a FFP/FIAP. Twenty-nine (29) interviews were conducted between September and December 2020 with participants from 9 countries (Canada, France, Sweden, Mexico, The Netherlands, UK, Germany, Australia and United States of America), including four interviews with government representatives from the UK, Sweden, Mexico, and Canada.[1]

Data analysis was thematic [25], participatory and involved multiple stages. Members of the research team first identified key themes from the interview transcripts. Research participants were then invited to review and provide verbal and/or written feedback on these themes and their implications for knowledge and advocacy. Eleven research participants, including government representatives, civil society representatives and academics, did so, which helped to strengthen and validate our research findings.

It is important to note that there are several limitations to this research project. The timing of research interviews meant that we were unable to fully capture the full process of developing a FFP Whitepaper in Canada, and the research excludes the more recent FFP declaration by Spain in March 2021. We were also unable to reach participants with distinct knowledge of Luxembourg's pathway towards adopting a FFP. Further enquiry to address these limitations, and to capture future developments of both existing and new FFP trajectories, is warranted.

1 Research participants were identified and recruited through IWDA's networks, a literature review, a public survey and through other research participants. Participants provided verbal or written informed consent before the interview. Throughout this report, some quotes are attributed to participants and others are anonymous. This reflects the privacy and confidentiality preferences of research participants, all of whom were invited to review and approve their quotes in this report. Interviews were conducted remotely over Zoom or Teams. Four interviews were conducted in Spanish and French with the assistance of native French and Spanish speaking research team members.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of this research was to document the factors that influenced the early stages of FFP/FIAP policy declaration and development. However, our research identified key factors that go beyond declaration, through to institutionalisation – as well as key debates within the FFP discourse that could also influence the future of FFP. As such, the research findings in this report are presented in chronological order as they relate to the factors that influence 1) the declaration 2) the development and institutionalisation and 3) the future trajectories, of FFPs/FIAPs declared to date, followed by key debates and areas for further enquiry.

THEME 1. GETTING TO DECLARATION: FIVE CRITICAL FACTORS

The first theme presented in this report relates to the factors and conditions that made declarations of FFP/FIAPs possible. FFPs tend to come as a surprise to those working in government and civil society, and are driven by high level political will for surprising, bold, and feminist policy announcements. Our research also suggests that existing FFPs/FIAPs have been the result of a 'window of opportunity', where progressive political leaders have taken advantage of a confluence of factors to declare a FFP or a FIAP. These factors include: an enabling environment created over decades by the women's rights movements, personal values of political leaders, the need for an "announceable" and an opportunity to announce the FIAP/FFP on the world stage. These factors have been identified elsewhere and our research confirms that these factors are deeply interconnected: none of these are sufficient on their own. Together these factors have implications for advocacy strategies to support the declaration of FFP by government and civil society stakeholders.

HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL WILL FOR SURPRISING, BOLD, AND FEMINIST ANNOUNCEMENTS

Feminist foreign policy declarations, particularly the explicit use of the label feminist on these policies, have tended to come as a surprise to many working within government and civil society. Government and civil society representatives from Mexico, Sweden, France and Canada reported that they had not anticipated the declaration of an explicitly 'feminist' foreign or international assistance policy. Whilst civil society played a significant role in creating an enabling environment for these policies to be declared, government and civil society representatives reported that in all cases, the decision to label the policy as explicitly feminist was sparked from within government, and was often the decision of an individual minister or Head of Government.

> *"We said that the Generation Equality Forum is a good framework to make an announcement that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is going to have a foreign policy with a gender perspective. When we were in the 74th General Assembly, we passed over our notes to the Chancellor, he starts talking about a feminist foreign policy... the Chancellor called it feminist." - Dr Cristopher Ballinas Valdez, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Mexico*

This was also the case for the FIAP in Canada and the FIDP declared by UK Labour opposition party when in Opposition in 2018. Both of these policies had involved extensive consultation processes but had not seen a concerted push from either bureaucrats or civil society for an explicitly feminist frame.

> *"For the international assistance policy, there was a big review in 2016. There was push from a whole range of civil society organisations to have stronger emphasis on gender equality. We did occasionally use the word feminist, but not everyone did. They talked about gender mainstreaming, gender transformative, women's rights, women's empowerment, those kinds of terms. Actually, a lot of us were really surprised when the Government put feminism in the title of the Feminist International Assistance Policy in 2017. We were at the launch. I said to someone, "Did you think we would be sitting here talking about a feminist international assistance policy, that they'd actually put that word in front of it?" Everyone was saying, "No, we never thought they would do that."" - Beth Woroniuk, civil society representative, Canada*

However, Canada's decision to extend their FIAP across all areas of foreign policy by developing a FFP whitepaper in 2020 was an exception. Canadian civil society representatives and global FFP advocates noted that once the FIAP was in place, this provided a strong basis for explicit calls from domestic and international civil society groups for a comprehensive FFP to be implemented.

> *"It strikes me that a lot of these countries seem to have taken this up without there necessarily being a huge civil society demand for it in their country. Canada is the really solid exception on that one." – Lyric Thompson, global FFP advocate, USA*

The unanticipated nature of FFP/FIAP declarations to date indicates that these policies do not tend to be declared following the course of traditional policy development, but rather are the result of a decision made by an individual minister. This has implications for advocates and supporters of FFP within both government and civil society and suggests that focusing on creating an enabling environment for an individual minister to declare a FFP might be a more influential strategy than building broad consensus amongst policy-makers/politicians or relying on formal policy development processes. On the other hand, while Canada is only a single example, it does suggest that introducing feminism as the foundation for international development policy could be an effective pathway to extending the concept to foreign policy as a whole.

AN ENABLING GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

Reflecting the findings of other studies [3,12], research participants from all countries and across all sectors recognised that decades of activism by the transnational women's rights movement had created an enabling environment for progressive policy solutions to advance gender equality and the rights of women and girls and LGBTQI people where FFP is viewed as not only possible, but favourable.

> *"Even Margot Wallstrom, in 2014, when she announced feminist foreign policy; that was based on decades-long work of feminist civil society organisations. Starting, at least, back in 1915, at The Hague, at the International Congress of Women, which turned into Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. They've been instrumental for Resolution 1325. Margot Wallstrom, in her role as Special Representative for Sexual Violence and Conflict. That's all been a huge process. Sweden is always credited, and rightly so, for state-level introduction of feminist foreign policy. None of that would have happened without civil society and their work over decades." – Kristina Lunz, global FFP advocate, Germany*

Government representatives in Canada, Sweden and Mexico also reported that the ideas and thinking generated by civil society had made the adoption of FFPs possible through the creation of progressive ideas to advance gender equality.

> *"In this work, as well as in many other fields, I would say that the inspiration, the good ideas, the bravest ideas would come from civil society. So if in this context or in other contexts we don't listen to civil society, our arsenal of policy ideas would be very limited and not at all as courageous and forward looking as they are. This is a strong belief that I have not only about women's movement, but generally when it comes to building a society that the true popular movements and civil society are essential for holding power to account and this was of course also applied here and both Margot and I had in particular strong ties with some civil society organizations that inspired our work." – Annika Söder, Government representative, Sweden*

This finding confirms the importance of ensuring that the transnational women's rights movement are resourced to continue laying the ground work, and creating a receptive environment, to support uptake of FFP by other countries in future.

PERSONAL VALUES OF POLITICAL LEADERS

The importance of the individual values of political leaders declaring FFP/FIAP has been well-documented, particularly as it relates to Margot Wallstrom and Justin Trudeau, who both self-identified as 'feminist' and 'progressive' political leaders [3, 14-16]. This was re-affirmed by our research participants as it relates to these countries, but also as it relates to Mexico's FFP, France's Feminist Diplomacy Policy, and the declaration of a Feminist International Development Policy (FIDP) by the UK Labour party under Jeremy Corbyn. For these policies, the progressive political values of an individual minister, and a desire to be viewed as progressive by others, enabled FFPs/FIAPs to be declared.

> *"The Chancellor [Marcelo Ebrard], previous to this appointment, he was the Mayor of Mexico City. So, when he was the Mayor of Mexico City, he was really determined to move forward a really feminist agenda in the capital of Mexico City. Therefore, you cannot afford to be less than you have been before, so you need to go forward to be more ambitious." – Dr. Cristopher Ballinas Valdés, Ministry for Foreign Affairs-Mexico*

> *"I've come from working with grassroots women's organisations, and I know even in the UK it's very difficult for small NGOs or civil society organizations to get funding because they do not fit or meet the criteria of what is expected to get funding. I wanted to apply [my experience] to the Global South." - Kate Osamor, Government representative, UK Labour Party*

Several participants thought that whilst personal values and political will are important, the declarations would not have been possible without the enabling environment created by the women's rights movement, highlighting the relationships between these factors.

> *"In Canada and France there's been white men who have led that process. That's the kind of thing which gets it over the line and it's obviously built on decades of women's rights advocacy and women's rights organisations in the Global South, building what they need or what the practice of it looks like. To develop what an alternative is and then women's rights or feminists working in development sector or foreign policy sectors in the Global North countries. They translated that and strategically pushed for it but then at the end of the day it does take that decision from those people in the leadership roles in government to endorse it and to give it that validity." – global FFP advocate, UK*

This finding suggests that nurturing relationships with individual progressive politicians who hold positions of power could be an effective strategy for FFP advocates in government and civil society. This is counterintuitive to many feminist approaches, which tend to be collaborative and process oriented when working within the system, or adversarial/ activist when applying pressure from the outside.

NEED FOR AN 'ANNOUNCEABLE'

Participants also identified the need for an 'announceable', driven by one of several factors, including a new ruling party or minister and wanting to been seen in opposition to a predecessor, or a desire to demonstrate a progressive stance on gender equality either domestically or on the world stage. Our participants reaffirmed that the declaration of a FIAP in Canada and the FFP in Sweden were in part driven by a desire for political actors to position themselves in opposition to conservative predecessors[21, 26]. Our participants also confirmed that in France, Sweden and the UK, the need for an announceable was driven at least in part by domestic social pressure to respond to gender equality issues. For example, participants reported that the rise of the 'Me Too' movement in France, and the sexual abuse and harassment scandals that rocked the UK international development sector in early 2018[27] provided impetus to political actors to respond in ways which counter this negative attention. On the flipside, the increasing popularity of a feminist political party in Sweden contributed to a culture where other political actors sought to raise their ambition on feminist issues in order to remain competitive with a progressive audience.

> *"A feminist approach to development showed me that if we put women at the front and centre we (UK) would more likely not be in the place that we found ourselves. The scandal shone a light on [gender inequality in the aid sector]. …I also used that, the sexual exploitation in the aid sector, to actually talk about the fact that you know things are not working. This one size does not fit all. We need to change the way that we work in this sector and this [the scandal] kind of exposed it." - Kate Osamor, Government representative, UK Labour Party*

> *"In 2014, there was a new party trying to get into the parliament, called the Feminist Initiative, running solely on a feminist platform of issues. And in the polls, if I remember it right, it looked like they might get into the parliament in 2014. There was a lot of buzz around them. Media wrote a lot around them because they were the new fresh force of younger people, feminist people who are more forward and I think that that probably affected the whole election process and the campaigns on making the other parties position themselves. You know, "Are you feminist? What kind of feminist?" It just became a more used term, I think, in Swedish politics, thanks to this party." – Klara Backman, civil society representative, Sweden*

Research participants from France and Mexico noted that FFP declarations made by governments in these countries were made despite pressure from civil society groups to focus on addressing domestic gender equality issues. Research participants thought that at least in part, FFP declarations in these countries were driven by a government's desire to demonstrate commitment to gender equality despite concerns about domestic gender equality policies or because it was easier to make ambitious gender equality commitments in international policies rather than domestic. This reflects suggestions made elsewhere that declaring a FFP could provide countries with an opportunity to deflect attention away from political domestic shortcomings[19, 23, 28].

> *"There is a tension between national policies and international policies. I think in some ways you have more freedom on the international scene. It's quite paradoxical but I think it's the case. France is much more progressive on the*

> *international scene." – Nicolas Rainard, civil society representative, France*

> *"With Mexico, it was born more of the desire to put Mexico as the leader of creating FFP since Mexico is the first country from the Global South doing so, so they want to show Mexico to be at the vanguard of the of this movement. So most of the countries who have adopted this feminist foreign policy are countries in the Global North and Mexico wants to present itself as the leader in that option in the Global South. Yeah, so that makes it different from the way the FFP policies were born in the Global North, because the demand was different" – Isabella María Esquivel Ventura, civil society representative, Mexico*

This finding highlights the sometimes opportunistic nature of FFP announcements, and provides a caution to feminist groups to continue to call for policy cohesion across domestic and foreign policy to ensure that FFPs/FIAPs are not declared or implemented at a cost to domestic women's rights issues. It points to the key role that transnational women's rights movement can play in supporting domestic feminist civil society organisations to also advocate for progressive domestic gender equality issues. At the same time, it highlights the way in which feminist movements can take advantage of 'critical junctures' – sometimes initiated by scandal or crisis moments where there is significant shifts in social discourse - to push for policy shifts, recognising these as moments where more radical change may become possible.

OPPORTUNITY ON THE WORLD STAGE

The opportunity to announce a FFP on the world stage, generally through a multilateral forum or mechanism such as the G7 or the UN Security Council also enabled FFP/FIAP declarations to be made. Our research participants reaffirmed that these mechanisms enabled the adoption of FFPs by France, Mexico, Sweden and the FIAP in Canada, due to the spotlight that for example, hosting the G7, puts on a country and the advocacy from women's rights organisations that builds up around these events [3, 18, 21-23].This includes through forums such as the W7 which facilitates direct advocacy on gender equality issues to the annual G7 meeting, allowing for progress and momentum to build over time.

> *"I think ultimately there's the confluence of factors, which is why you see this movement developing. I do think the fact that you've got not only the UN Security Council with Women, Peace and Security and promoting national implementation, but also the G7 having promoted gender equality being very significant as well, both from an economic and a security point of view. There's a triangulation across institutions and its framework." – foreign policy scholar, 2*

> *"France was the head of the G7 in 2019, and they made sure to include …a ministerial meeting that was specific on gender equality, which was one of our key demands since the beginning of the process. They also made an attempt to transversalise and mainstream gender across the other themes treated within the G7 process … the G7 was the moment in which France wanted to show at the international level that they've adopted this feminist diplomacy." –Ludovica Anedda, civil society representative, France*

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda was also identified as an entry point for the declaration and adoption of FFP [20]. Some participants noted that previous government commitments, and/or a personal ministerial commitment, to WPS was an enabling factor for the announcement of FFP. This may be because it is another example of taking a feminist or gender lens to a traditionally masculine area of government, and because it involves working across multiple areas of foreign and domestic policy.

> *"The WPS national action plan has enabled us to have discussions with the military. Have discussions about countering violent extremism. Have discussions about why WPS issues matter in refugee policy. Our national action plan has the signatures of seven different ministers. It wasn't just seen as only a development initiative. It is cross-ministerial, which I think then also opens the door for foreign policy discussions that do involve trade, that do involve military, defence, involves those of kinds of broader issues. It gave us, as civil society, a platform to advocate on. It also helped us get smarter about how to carry on some of these conversations." - Beth Woroniuk, civil society representative, Canada*

This finding suggests that international moments on the world stage (i.e. G7, G20) and multilateral processes are important facilitators for the declaration of FFPs/FIAPs. Lessons from other policy areas, particularly Women, Peace and Security, can inform approaches to FFP. Civil society and government advocates can use these processes strategically to mobilise advocacy and provide a platform for declaration of FFPs.

DISCUSSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVOCACY TO SUPPORT UPTAKE ELSEWHERE

Our finding that FFPs are not usually declared following the course of traditional policy development - but rather as the result of a decision made by an individual minister - has implications for advocates and supporters of FFP within both government and civil society. Political actors considering whether to adopt FFP would be wise to follow the maxim "ask for forgiveness, not for permission," as our findings suggest that making a bold announcement and then establishing processes to institutionalise it across the foreign policy bureaucracy, and at the political level, can be effective.

Advocates outside of government could be influential by focusing on creating an enabling environment for an individual minister or head of government to go out on a limb by announcing FFP, rather than focusing all their energies on trying to build a broad consensus amongst policy-makers / politicians. Nurturing relationships with individual progressive politicians who hold positions of political power, or are likely to in the future, may also be an effective strategy. This is counterintuitive to many feminist approaches however which tend to be more collaborative and process oriented when working within the system, or adversarial/activist when applying pressure from the outside. However, these approaches should not be abandoned altogether; advocates need to be ready following an announcement to demand consultation on policy design, and with proposals for principles, structures and accountability mechanisms to influence how the commitment should be implemented.

Our findings confirm that declarations are often made on the world stage during multilateral forums and processes, and that advocacy from the transnational women's rights movement can create a receptive global environment for FFP/FIAP declarations to be made. This suggests that mobilising around processes like the G7/G20, the Generation Equality Forum and the UN Security Council can provide a platform for individual leaders to make a declaration of FFP. Canada's establishment of the Gender Equality Advisory Council to the G7 – a mechanism continued by France and the UK in subsequent years – further demonstrates how multilateral forums can be structured in ways that lock in progress. This finding also confirms the importance of ensuring that women's rights organisations are resourced to continue laying the ground work, and creating a receptive environment, to support uptake of FFP by other countries in future.

Our findings suggest that FIAPs might be one entry point for advocacy in support of FFPs. In Canada, the FIAP has advanced discussion and progress towards FFP, and provided a basis for civil society to push for broader feminist policy change. However there is a significant risk that FIAPs could be seen as an alternative to FFP, which would be counterproductive to the aims of FFP which are ultimately about transforming global paradigms and institutions towards gender equality. International development cannot achieve this scale of change alone, if foreign policy is working against it. Unless more countries go down this path of moving from FIAP to FFP, and until the effectiveness of Canada's strategy can be measured, it is difficult to conclude whether FIAPs do provide a good entry point to FFP or whether they run the risk of absolving countries from deeper, more challenging transformative work. Similarly, it is difficult to draw lessons for opposition parties considering making FFP/FIAPs part of their election platforms based on the experience of UK Labour, due to the myriad of complicating factors that contributed to the 2019 UK election result. Lessons from successful approaches would seem to suggest that waiting to form government and then announcing a FFP may be more effective. However, if other opposition parties adopt these policies it would make an interesting area for future study.

THEME 2. FROM DECLARATION TO DEVELOPMENT: THREE CRITICAL FACTORS

The second key theme presented in this report explores what happened after FFP/FIAP declarations were made. The unanticipated nature of most FIAP/FFPs, and the fact that they were usually declared prior to a detailed policy process being undertaken, had implications for the development and institutionalisation of these policies. Research participants spoke about how civil society has shaped and deepened FFP practice and how government have implemented and led strategies to facilitate institutional ownership of these policies.

ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN SHAPING AND DEEPENING FIAP/FFP PRACTICE

Our findings confirm that civil society stakeholders played a key role in strengthening FFP/FIAP practice by contributing to policy development process, and tracking and monitoring progress against declarations. Our research findings also confirm that the processes of policy development differed according to the type of policy. The two feminist international development policies, the Canadian FIAP and the FIDP declared by the UK Labour party when in opposition in 2018, involved extensive consultation with civil society before declaration (including women's rights organisations in the Global South), so policy development was in progress prior to announcement.

> *"I think another factor is engagement. I mean, we went out with this paper. Clearly there were many, many voices - I guess given the evidence and experience and so on - saying yes, actually we really do need to keep that focus [on gender equality]. We trust Canada's expertise. We know it's important and there are many, many stakeholders who [in Canada and the Global South] are happy to stand up and say strengthening your work in this area is a good idea." - Government representative, Canada*

Civil society and government representatives in Canada, the UK and globally suggested that this was because the development sector tends to consult with civil society more readily than the foreign policy sector and that the development sector is more generally accepting of the evidence base to support feminist approaches. Some interviewees went further, suggesting that a feminist lens on international development is less likely to rock the boat, as international development is already a more 'feminine coded' suite of activities. As such, a feminist approach to this areas of policy doesn't challenge deep sectoral norms in the way it might in their foreign policy space.

> *"Foreign affairs includes not only development but also trade, defence and diplomacy. Three areas where feminism as a tool/idea is difficult to portray because of all the controversial natures of patriarchal/militaristic/capitalist structures but through development feminist standpoints can be actually more easily pursued. Helping others "achieve equality", "economic empowerment", "clean water access" are soft/non-threatening spheres of work that actually work in favour of the developed nations." – Natalia Bonilla, Puerto Rican civil society representative, Mexico*

For FFPs, policy development tended to occur after the declaration, and involved varying degrees of consultation with civil society. For example, Sweden's FFP was launched with little detail but with a plan to roll the policy out to create ownership in the Foreign Service. The policy then took more detailed shape and form as work started with experts in the ministry and with all staff.

> *"We launched it [Sweden's FFP] on the day when the government took office and we had prepared a program, but we had not really prepared how to conduct this advocacy both within the ministry and the government, and with all the people that should work with this, but that came up very soon." - Annika Söder, Government representative, Sweden*

Whilst civil society representatives in Sweden, France and Mexico noted that they would have preferred to have been consulted prior to the FFP declaration made by their governments, some noted that it was more important to get the announcement on the record, and then advocate for the content that you want to see developed afterwards

> *"France's policy started with something that was labelled with nothing behind it … of course it's going in the right direction but if you want to sum it up, I don't think that France has a feminist diplomacy yet. But I think that applies to every advocacy strategy or analysis. You can't go from zero to 100 without intermediary steps. I guess there is another way. You can debate for five years about what feminist diplomacy should be and do nothing and then have the perfect plan and put it in action. I don't think that policies work that way. I would almost say whatever the starting point, whether it's a document endorsed by a minister or a big strategy that no one reads, it's the same - the important part is the day to day business and to see how it takes root." – Nicolas Rainard, civil society representative, France*

Research participants across all sectors and countries also described the important role that civil society stakeholders play by pushing for progress against FFP declarations. In Sweden, Canada and France, civil society working groups have tracked and monitored government progress on FFP commitments. After Sweden's FFP announcement, the national Swedish platform for civil society action on gender equality shifted their focus to monitor and influence progress of the FFP development and implementation in Sweden.

> *"As soon as Margaret Wallstrom announced the feminist foreign policy we [civil society group on gender via Concord Sweden] were of course, really excited and welcomed it and we sat down very soon after the announcement and decided that now, the mandate of our group was to monitor the new feminist foreign policy." Jessica Poh-Janrell, civil society representative, Sweden*

In Canada, a FFP civil society working group was set up after the FIAP was declared, in response to statements by the then Minister for Foreign Affairs that Canada already had a FFP. As soon as these public statements were made, this civil society working group started tracking and pushing for progress made towards developing a comprehensive FFP.

> *"I think the commitment to define it – I don't think that would have been happening if we hadn't been pushing and pushing and pushing, and to be honest, it's a small group of us who have really raised it in every possible forum for the last couple of years. It was, "What do you mean by this? What does this look like? Can you please articulate this?"… I do suspect that the government is really looking to us to continue the advocacy and to really define what it needs to look like." – civil society representative, Canada*

The benefits of civil society stakeholders holding governments accountable and tracking government progress on developing and implementing FFP declarations was noted by several research participants, in part, because it could increase awareness of the FFP amongst policy-makers and bureaucrats.

> *"The Gender Equality High Council … has evaluated the gender equality international strategy for the last seven years. You know when you do it, each edition seems almost useless and you say yeah they're just going to say that they did everything great but when you do it every year and you ask questions that come back, at one point it becomes compelling because the civil servants have to do the report. The first year they do a report that some guy who knows nothing about it reads. That the next year maybe somebody in a higher position reads it." – Nicolas Rainard, civil society representative, France*

ROLE OF DOMESTIC VS INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY STAKEHOLDERS

Our research findings suggest that there is a tension between the role of domestic civil society, and global FFP advocates, in advocating for, and shaping and deepening FFP practice and the role of advocates from southern and northern countries. Civil society representatives described little interest amongst Mexican WRO's in monitoring and pushing for progress on Mexico's FFP. These participants identified several reasons for this, including that domestic WRO's are more focused on upholding the rights of women and girls in Mexico, because FFP is thought to be a concept developed by and for the Global North, and due to a belief that the FFP will not lead to any tangible contributions towards addressing gender equality.

> *"The criticism that arose from women, that here, feminist movements are so fed up with*

> *the current administration because it has been promoting misogyny through the discourses and is not recognising the gender violence within the country… What I have gathered interviewing and talking with Mexican feminist activists and researchers is that, in terms of Feminist Foreign Policy, they don't want to talk about what's happening here [in relation to FFP], first because of the language barrier [most global FFP commentary is in English], and second because they feel like the FFP model of Mexico is phony." – Natalia Bonilla, Puerto Rican civil society representative, Mexico*

> *"We are in a standby with this feminist foreign policy because we have situations more important to attend right now like the pandemic … And we can't make these feminist foreign policy work if we don't have all rights guaranteed in our country." – Fernanda Vazquez Rojas, civil society representative, Mexico*

Several research participants also reported that because FFP is not an election issue, and is not typically an issue that most people care about, it can be difficult to build domestic momentum towards FFP, especially in countries with domestic gender equality issues.

> *"Most of the electorate doesn't care about foreign policy at all, let alone feminist foreign policy. It's not something that animates domestic movements. And in a democratic system, there needs to be some demand for it to help push policymakers along." – Lyric Thompson, global FFP advocate, USA*

One research participant suggested that capacity constraints amongst domestic WRO's, compared to transnational WRO's, might undermine their influence with the government, at a cost of government action on addressing domestic gender equality issues.

> *"This makes me think of the difference in capacity that exists between the domestic and international women's rights sectors in countries such as Canada and the UK – in the UK the domestic WR sector has much less access to funding and influence than the 'development' NGOs who are often massive organisations. Does this skew priorities towards international policies and the implementation of a FFP, away from attention that should be on a government's domestic policies? Wondering if anyone brought up the way FFP and FIAP has boosted Trudeau and the Liberal government's image and reputation as a feminist actor, making it harder to raise domestic policy gaps? Or does it give an opportunity to point out the inconsistencies and use that as leverage?" – global FFP advocate, UK*

Participants wondered about the possible benefits of FFP becoming an election issue, including that it may have a greater chance of becoming institutionalised long-term within government if there were greater support from domestic civil society and the broader public.

> *"If a policy was declared due to public pressure it would have a greater possibility to survive and maybe become almost a permanent part of the country's direction. Same with consultation with civil society, if a policy has been developed in consultation with civil society you would assume it would have greater chances of surviving – is this the case?" – Jessica Poh-Janrell, civil society representative, Sweden*

These findings confirm that it is important for civil society, as well as international development policy-makers supportive of FFP, to be ready following a declaration to demand consultation and make proposals about how commitments should be designed and implemented. This push and pull between political and civil society actors appears critical to ensuring that political actors can make bold, ambitious announcements without being encumbered by detail, but that these policies can ultimately hold weight and not remain at the level of political announceables. These findings also highlight the importance of ensuring policy coherence across, and similar levels of political will for, domestic and foreign policies that aim to advance gender equality. Similarly, that the transnational women's rights movement plays an important role in supporting domestic WROs to advocate for progressive domestic gender policies, as well as international and foreign policies.

GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES TO FACILITATE INSTITUTIONAL OWNERSHIP

Across countries, CSO and government representatives discussed the importance of ensuring that policies are institutionalised, and are not just associated with the legacy of a particular leader. Others have reported that whilst individual political will is an important enabler for FFP, it could also undermine the adoption or longevity of a FFP, if the policy is closely linked to the legacy of a particular political leader[3, 8]. Our research participants reaffirmed this, and discussed the strategies that they and others implemented to address this issue.

> *"A problem that Margot Wallstrom had, I mean she's done an amazing job, but it seemed to many people that the policy belonged to her. It was so strongly connected to her as a person and to the party to the Social Democrat Party." – Jessica Poh-Janrell, civil society representative, Sweden*

Government representatives in Canada, Sweden and Mexico reported that it was important that policy-makers and bureaucrats within departments of foreign affairs felt a sense of ownership over the policy. Processes of internal development and consultation were seen to be a particularly important way to achieve this.

To embed ownership of their FFP across the department of foreign affairs, Swedish and Mexican government officials described strategies that they implemented to institutionalise the FFP amongst bureaucrats. This included appointing an ambassador; socialising the policy, and developing a narrative or 'shorthand' of the policy to facilitate use amongst those less comfortable and familiar with principles of gender equality and feminism; and allowing Ambassadors and teams to develop their own programs of work around a set of principles to build ownership.

> *"We appointed the ambassador for gender equality to institutionalise this FFP and during the first year she also got some collaborators. We also had brainstorming sessions that we mixed young, often women, people very knowledgeable when it comes to gender aspects with the elder or more senior men in in management positions and had long discussions and it all started with getting rid of the giggle factor because everyone started to giggle when we said feminist. Now that is gone and I would say it's even gone globally. We've stopped giggling at the word feminist. Then six years ago and that induction that ownership that was about all embassies coming up with their own plans for how to try to make an impact in their countries…*

> *"The brainstorming session was then developed into Communications… about how each and every Department in the ministry and each and every embassy in our delegation abroad could implement this….That was a very important first step in in the work because we wouldn't have been successful, hadn't we also done this. … We also coined the phrase that has helped us remember what this is about and explain also the three Rs [rights, representation, and resources] and then we added a reality check." – Annika Söder, Government representative, Sweden*

This finding confirms that while there are perceived limitations of a FFP being too strongly associated with the legacy of an individual leader, implementing strategies to embed the FFPs within the broader vision of a political group could help to address and overcome this potential pitfall.

DISCUSSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVOCACY TO SHAPE AND DEEPEN FFP PRACTICE

Our finding that FFP declarations often come as a surprise to those working within government and civil society has implications for advocacy to support the development and institutionalisation of FFPs. This finding confirms that it is important for civil society and also, international development policy-makers supportive of FFP, to be ready to consult and be propositional on how commitments should be designed and/or implemented following a declaration. Our findings also confirm that since a minister is typically 'going out on a limb' to declare a FFP, the practice requires significant and dedicated approaches to establish and embed. Therefore, a first action required for embedding feminist foreign policy is to ensure that internal FFP advocates within government have developed a plan to socialise a FFP/FIAP within the broader political vision of a group to address the gap between declaration and policy and facilitate implementation.

Our findings also suggest that FFP has become a rallying point for feminist civil society stakeholders and that WROs and other civil society stakeholders have played a key role in shaping and deepening FFP practice. However, this differs between domestic and international WRO's and a tension exists between these stakeholders, which is unsurprising, as currently no country [29] is on track to achieve the gender equality SDGs by 2030 and there are sufficient gender equality gaps in each country domestically. Our findings suggest that, except for Sweden, foreign policy and specifically feminist foreign policy has not been an election issue and that domestic WRO's have had little interest in pushing for FFP commitments. This is particularly the case in countries like Mexico where feminist groups argue that the government is not making meaningful progress on advancing domestic gender equality outcomes; and where it was widely thought that it is easier to declare progressive gender policies that are international in nature rather than deal with the pressing domestic challenges. This finding highlights that international organisations, who may be better resourced, should advocate for policy cohesion across domestic and foreign policies that aim to advance gender equality. Similarly, these findings highlight the important role that transnational women's rights movement can play in supporting domestic WROs to advocate for progressive domestic gender policies, as well as international and foreign policies.

The difference in levels of trust in government and institutions may also contribute to the difference in experience between Mexico and other countries, given that Sweden, France and Canada all rank above the global average in terms of public trust in politicians, whereas Mexico falls significantly below average[30]. This has implications for advocacy in countries with more robust democratic systems where there is higher trust in government, as civil society can be more confident that they will be able to play a role in developing the policy framework. While more evidence would be needed to explore effective strategies in low trust contexts, a mix of insider and outsider pressure may be effective.

THEME 3. FUTURE FFP TRAJECTORIES (EXISTING AND NEW)

The third theme presented in this report relates to the factors that participants thought could influence the future trajectories of both existing and new FFPs/FIAPs. Most participants noted the impact of COVID-19 as both an opportunity and a threat for existing and new FFP trajectories providing new information about the impact of this once in a century event on pathways towards adoption of FFP.

FUTURE FFP TRAJECTORIES FOR EXISTING POLICIES

Research participants were concerned that changes in government, a lack of buy-in for feminist approaches amongst the foreign policy 'elite' and the economic impacts of COVID-19 could lead to a prioritisation of domestic issues and increased caution about new approaches to foreign policy that could undermine development and implementation of existing FIAPs/FFPs.

Government and civil society representatives in Mexico and Canada reported that COVID-19 is leading to a redirection of resources and attention away from FFP, inwards towards domestic issues.

> *"Everything is logistically more difficult [since COVID-19]. So honestly from a very practical point of view I just think it's not situation normal right now. So just to maintain the focus, things are moving so fast and it's a very uncertain environment. We have to be very nimble and responsive. I think everything is going up in the air with COVID-19, definitely at a practical level and at a strategic level." – Government representative, Canada*

Others noted that COVID-19 could undermine political willingness to push for progressive policy solutions, which could hinder further development and implementation of Mexico's FFP.

> *"It's tough… I've got to tell you, it's a difficult time to be feminist. A difficult time to be progressive, but the pandemic is tough in many ways, because when you have proper feminist or egalitarian institutions in place before a pandemic, of course it's easy for some countries to continue doing things in the way they were doing them for some years. When you aren't necessarily an egalitarian country, or when you don't have proper egalitarian institutions in place, it's difficult." – Dr. Cristopher Ballinas Valdés, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Mexico*

The possibility of a withdrawal of support for existing feminist policy approaches from political leaders, for example Trudeau in Canada and the new Foreign Affairs Minister in Sweden, in response to a rise of conservatism and backlash against feminism and women's rights, as well as upcoming elections, was identified as one factor that could undermine prioritisation of FFP policy development and implementation.

> *"One thing we've learned from the Swedish experience is that you have to have the strong commitment from the top. It's interesting that I've never heard Prime Minister Justin Trudeau talk about feminist foreign policy. I've never heard him say a word about it...Same with Minister Freeland, and now, Minister Champagne. I think that, because it's within foreign affairs, and that's the only place it's broached, I think that where they're dealing with it is within foreign affairs. I think, if we were hearing the Prime Minister strongly talking about feminist foreign policy, it would send a different message… I think that, by the Prime Minister not speaking out, it lowers the priority level." – civil society representative 1, Canada*

Other participants highlighted concerns about what would happen to current FFPs/FIAPs if a new political group was to come into power who didn't share the same political values. Swedish participants discussed how civil society stakeholders, in the lead to the 2018 election, were concerned about what would happen if the Social Democrats lost the election, and the strategies they put in place to try and ensure the continuation of Sweden's FFP regardless of which political party came into power.

> *"Ahead of the election in 2018, we realized that we might lose our government, so the first couple*

> *of reports [monitoring Sweden's FFP] we were kind of tough and we tried to push them to be brave and to take it as far as they could… And then when we were going to do the report before the election we took a step back and thought OK, what do we want to do this time? This time we want to see if we can encourage other parties to stand behind the feminist foreign policy.… We encouraged them to talk about how they would view the FFP if they were to win the election. I feel like they rose to the challenge of forming it and started to formulate how they would like to see it." – Jessica Poh-Janrell, civil society representative, Sweden*

This finding reflects a concern that the FFPs/FIAPs declared to date are not necessarily deeply embedded within the political parties and government institutions that have declared these. This has implications for FFP advocates within and outside of government who are working to ensure the continuation and sustained implementation of FFPs/FIAPS to focus on deepening the ongoing institutionalisation and political will for these approaches.

FUTURE FFP TRAJECTORIES FOR NEW POLICIES

Research participants also shared their views on the factors that could influence uptake of FFP by other countries in future. Participants had mixed views about whether COVID-19 represented an opportunity or a threat for greater uptake of FFP. Some participants reported that the major disruptions to national and global economies, caused by COVID-19 may decrease governments' appetite for new progressive policies.

> *"I think any degree of risk or big changes in those areas would not be welcome at this time when the priority is on economic growth. They're not suddenly going to be like, "Actually, the main priority here is human rights." I just don't see that happening. I don't think it's going to be as easy." – civil society representative 2, Canada*

Some participants thought that whilst COVID-19 represented a critical turning point for new policy approaches, managing the negative impacts of COVID-19 could mean that feminist approaches are deprioritised.

> *"You have the possibility for that critical juncture of starting something new and beginning new conversations about policy, but it just feels like governance everywhere around the world is going to be so focused on dealing with COVID-19. Dealing with the immediate fallout from COVID-19 and then thinking about the economic recovery post COVID-19 and I think even in times where you might be able to start those conversations, I think so often, feminism and equality work more generally is seen as something you do when the sun is shining. It's something you do when you have time and energy to work on these issues." – foreign policy scholar, 1*

Other participants saw COVID-19 as an opportunity for greater uptake of FFP, citing that there had been an increased focus on gender inequality highlighted by the pandemic and increased interest in cooperative foreign policy approaches to address gender inequality.

> *"I think that although the pandemic has been very difficult, that it's also this moment of many crises has sort of forced people to reckon with the systems that we are living in, and many of the root causes and the systemic causes of many of the crises we're facing. And so I think that has also actually enabled space for people to think about bolder and more radical solutions that maybe have sometimes been not possible in the past." – Akhila Kolisetty, civil society representative, USA*

Participants also discussed the paradox of a growing group of nations with FFP/FIAPs, and how this could either undermine or advance uptake of FFP amongst other countries. Some participants thought that as more countries adopt a FFP, the concept would become more normalised and therefore appealing, especially to countries who may want to demonstrate their progressive identity on a global stage, as was the case with France and Canada. This reflects what others have written about how the FFP precedent created by Sweden is thought to have enabled a supportive ecosystem at a global level for other countries who were considering the approach [20].

> *"I do think the global environment [will facilitate more FFP declarations]. Not peer pressure, but if there's more momentum, I think that might make it easier for other governments to self-identify. If there's a club that more and more can join, I think that that's a very positive trend. – Beth Woroniuk, civil society representative, Canada*

Some participants noted that as more countries adopt a FFP, perceptions of the appeal and value of the approach may diminish. Whilst belonging to a

global 'club' of feminist states may be an incentive for some countries, there is also no penalty for not being in the 'club' as there remains a small number of countries with the approach. Additionally, whilst increasing the number of FFPs could help to normalise the idea, it could also mean that there are diminishing returns on the extent to which it helps a country to stand out from the crowd, or positions it as a global leader on gender equality – both drivers that have influenced countries to adopt FFPs to date.

> *I don't think there's a lot more cache to be got from that [adopting a FFP], by doing that now, because other countries have been the first movers, so you just look like a follower. It's not going to mark you out. It's not going to give you any special voice or access." – foreign policy scholar, 2*

By comparison, some global FFP advocates thought that because FFP is still a relatively new concept, that the opportunity to 'shape' and put their mark on FFP could be appealing for other governments.

"There is the opportunity that if you get on board with it now, you really get to shape it in a lot of ways and set the standard for what it should look like. Whereas if you have it in 10, 20 years, that part's already been done, it's already had its formative years. I think there is probably a degree of appeal that whoever does it now gets to put their fingerprints on it a little bit in a more significant way than if you adopt it later down the road." – Marissa Conway, global FFP advocate, UK

Whether the continued uptake of FFP will make it easier for future governments to also adopt FFPs, and whether it makes it easier and more attractive for civil society to advocate for this approach (as is currently happening in Australia, the UK, US and Germany) warrants attention in future research.

DISCUSSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVOCACY TO SUPPORT FUTURE FFP TRAJECTORIES

These findings suggest that to a great extent, the transformative nature of FFP has not yet been realised; work remains to be done to deeply embed and institutionalise the FFPs/FIAPs declared to date, and the concept of FFP, within political institutions.

At present, despite attempts to institutionalise FFPs/FIAPs within wider political or social landscapes, FFP is still thought to be easily undermined by changes in political leadership and, within the last year, COVID-19. Likewise, FFP is still seen as a 'nice to have' - something additional to, or competing for attention with other problems that are deemed more pressing or central, such as government legitimacy or COVID-19 response and recovery.

By comparison, a deeply embedded FFP/FIAP would understand gender equality as both a primary source of legitimacy and a critical motivator of other action. A country with a deeply embedded FFP would fundamentally shift its understandings of key issues such as individual v collective security; the role of human security vis-a-vis national security, and; the legitimacy of the global operating frameworks and institutions.

Without deeply embedding the practice of feminist foreign policy countries risk pursuing a foreign policy that reproduces marginalisation based on gender, masquerading under the label of feminism. Notwithstanding, there is a case for an evolutionary approach to embedding the concepts from surface to core, acknowledging that all journeys must have a starting point. This ties back to the counterpoint raised by some participants that the disruptive nature of COVID-19 could prove to be an entry point for FFP, making political leaders more receptive to transformative policy shifts. This suggests that advocates should draw connections between the systemic failings that have been highlighted by the pandemic, and the potential of FFP to radically transform approaches to foreign policy.

THEME 4. DEBATES AND CONTESTED QUESTIONS

The fourth area of our research findings relates to debates and contested questions about FFP trajectories. These topics included: 1) differences in how FFP is defined by civil society and government and between different civil society stakeholders, 2) whether calling a foreign policy feminist makes it a more effective instrument to advance gender equality and 3) militarism as a particularly strong area of debate which draws on elements of both of these issues.

DEFINITIONS

The first debate, which centres on differences between civil society and government stakeholders in defining FFP, was brought up in most interviews with global FFP advocates and civil society representatives and by some government representatives. These participants thought that civil society has more progressive, evidence-based and 'best practice' ideas about FFP than government.

> *"If you're talking with both policymakers and civil society, I'd be very interested to know how the two sectors define feminist foreign policy because I would bet that they would be very different. The feminist foreign policy that policymakers talk about is probably going to be a very, very watered-down version of the feminist foreign policy I talk about. I think that's definitely an important thing to note. Not to take the state feminist foreign policy as gospel. I think a lot of people do that. Most research right now basically looks at state policy and says, "This is what a feminist foreign policy does," and doesn't take into account the way civil society defines it. Even more than academic resources right now. Academia has not caught up with civil society in terms of what we want out of a feminist foreign policy." – Marissa Conway, global FFP advocate, UK*

> *"What I think would be very interesting to hear more specifically about is the rationale for why they [civil society] opt to use that [FFP] framing, because you know, there's this ambivalence among feminist activists because it's the strong association to the state, with patriarchal structures, but then you have these groups that still opt to talk. They are not grounded in the state bureaucracy; some are academics, some are civil society organization but still like to use the feminist foreign policy framing. That's interesting." – Karin Aggestam, foreign policy scholar, Sweden*

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The second question that arose during many interviews, particularly with global advocates and country-specific civil society representatives, was whether calling a foreign policy 'feminist' is necessary to ensure it is advancing gender equality. Participants contested this point, and held differing views about the strengths and limitations of using the word feminist. This included the belief that policies do not need to be labelled feminist if the policy content and practice are strong on gender equality, as the policy content is what matters, not the name.

> *"From a policy perspective at the end of the day, you know it doesn't matter what you're calling it. If you have a really fantastic set of policies around your international, your development work, if you are doing all of this work anyway, is it so important? Does it matter so much? You know if potentially countries could be doing way, way, way more than for example Canada. OK, if you're not using the language, who cares, if you're getting it done? If you are managing to continue anyway, and if using that feminist language is going to be difficult or disruptive to that work or draw attention to it in negative ways, then almost why bother, it's fine. It's getting it done." – foreign policy scholar, 1*

Government representatives from Mexico and Sweden also recognised the polarising nature of the term feminist as it relates to foreign policy.

> *"This [FFP] is important, because I know, around the world, the F word is not necessarily welcome everywhere. It's disruptive, but it's super progressive. We were really, let's say – it's like*

> *walking around on egg shells when you are trying to move forward something called feminist." - Dr. Cristopher Ballinas Valdés, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Mexico*

Others worry that labelling policies feminist could act as gender-washing, obscuring weaknesses in practice, while simultaneously putting a more mainstream audience offside. Some Canadian civil society participants expressed disappointment that the FIAP includes the term feminist in the title, arguing that it hasn't adopted core principles of feminist practice.

> *"Canada has had a good track record over the years and has been a strong advocate for gender equality and for a foreign policy perspective that includes a sustained commitment and language around gender equality. Yet, we can be clearer about what we're doing when we call our foreign policy 'feminist'. A stronger focus on what we mean by feminism and how it relates to gender relations and gender equality would be more impactful. The Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) doesn't define or explain feminism and references to feminism are few, mostly in reference to the title of the FIAP." – Rebecca Tiessen, foreign policy scholar, Canada*

Other participants thought that a FFP might be important for some, but not all countries, and that a range of strategies, including FFP, might be more productive to advance gender equality (including policies with feminist objectives not labelled as such).

> *"It's good to have a range of different strategies, but I don't think it would necessarily be productive for everyone to take the Swedish strategy. It's good to have a Sweden, absolutely. If Canada wants to do the same, fine, but there have to be others who are willing to go in and have the quieter conversation and see if they can move that country a bit further along, rather than to set it up as a competition or a fight and polarise things further, which actually won't benefit the world's women." … "It's fine for some to state that their foreign policy is feminist, but others don't need to state their foreign policy is feminist in order to practice a feminist foreign policy." – foreign policy scholar, 2*

Global FFP advocates spoke about the paradox that as civil society continue to call for greater accountability and resourcing of existing (and future) FFPs, this makes the approach less attractive to governments because it becomes a higher standard to implement.

> *"There's almost always resistance to the term, unless you find it politically helpful because it's disruptive or edgy. Increasingly as we make efforts to try to draw a line in the sand that says feminist foreign policy has resources behind it and has accountability mechanisms and "teeth," those can actually be disincentives for government to embrace FFP. But the point isn't to make it easy; it's to make it transformative. Better to have a smaller sample of feminist foreign policies that are robust in nature than a growing embrace of the term by more governments without making the necessary changes to have real impact." – Lyric Thompson, global FFP advocate, USA*

Other participants felt that branding foreign policies as feminist was important, as the feminist rhetoric could be politically appealing to governments and hold them to account.

> *"A question is – could you execute a feminist foreign policy without calling it feminist? Is the policy the only important thing, and the labelling of it less important? That's something I don't have solid answer for, but I do have some reflections on it. One is that I'm trying to argue here that the term feminist can have political advantage, which is, I think, new…. I think it's a bit of a baby boomer phenomenon that people are afraid of feminism and think it's something bad, whereas millennials and younger think it's good and are willing say, "Yes, I'm a feminist." There's a political case for embracing not just the ideas, but actually the branding of it as feminist." – Gawain Kripke, civil society representative, USA*

MILITARISM V FEMINISM

The role of security, defence and militarisation in foreign policy is an area that exemplifies both of these debates. Participants identified the fact that governments tended to see military force as a necessary part of foreign policy, and something that could be made to be consistent with a feminist approach. Some participants felt that the different definitions of FFP between government and civil society drove this, with governments not seeing the contradiction between pursuing FFP and increasing defence spending because they failed to see that FFP is about more than women's participation in foreign policy and security sectors.

> *"The European Union is moving towards more spending in the military sphere, it's moving towards more use of military instruments … But the documents on the new policy instruments in security and defence hardly – if at all – mention the women peace and security agenda. So my question is, how does this go together? On the one hand, they move at least rhetorically speaking more towards a feminist foreign policy. But on the other hand …the EU is also militarising. So I think that here you have member states that are on the conservative and/or far right populist side that want to do more in security and defence and vaguely agree to the women, peace and security agenda. But they – and even more liberal member states – don't really understand that [FFP is] more than thinking about women in conflict, it's more transformative." – Hannah Muehlenoff, foreign policy scholar, The Netherlands*

> *"What I have found so far in the Canadian feminist foreign policy is that they are seeing this policy as just women's empowerment, but they are not really looking at other concepts that they are very important in the feminist theory, like safety, the role of the army … the role of militarization." – Fernanda Vazquez Rojas, civil society representative, Mexico*

Other participants highlighted this contradiction but linked it to the importance of having FFP in name as an accountability mechanism, and an entry point to pursue deeper and more transformative change.

> *"Because France calls it feminist diplomacy, and France is the only nuclear weapons-owning state that has declared foreign policy somehow feminist, but they would not go anywhere near this conversation. When you ask them, they say, "No. We were hoping we could do our thing without having to discuss it." Then as feminist organisations, we're like, "Well, that doesn't work that way. You don't get our feminist name and then not start a conversation about nuclear disarmament." They don't do it because they know that once they did it, the pushback within the government, within the responsible parties would be so huge that they wouldn't even be able to keep the term feminist in policy anymore, so it's compromised." – Kristina Lunz, global FFP advocate, Germany*

Militarisation was also identified as a way to draw parallels between domestic and international policy areas, and to mobilise domestic movements behind foreign policy objectives, and make links between feminist movements working in different parts of the world.

> *"Another thing we're trying to do is really help to break out of the silo between domestic and foreign policy, because we really recognize the interconnections between the two. For example, when we look at the discriminatory policing of the Black Lives Matter movement and the impact of militarism on communities of colour in the US. We connect that to the impact of war and US militarism abroad and you know it is largely communities of colour and women of colour who are impacted. And so we do a lot of kind of work on the movement and organizing side to build connections between activists in the US and in the Global South and with feminists of colour." – Akhila Kolisetty, civil society representative, USA*

DISCUSSION: DEBATES AND CONTESTED QUESTIONS

These debates have potential implications for the declaration, development and implementation of new and existing FFPs. The debate amongst participants about the effectiveness of action taken under the FFP label confirm the importance of further research to be conducted to determine impact and effectiveness of feminist foreign policies.

Civil society and government have different definitions of FFP and this could have implications for advocacy to strengthen existing FFPs and support the uptake of new FFPs elsewhere. It was widely recognised by research participants that civil society stakeholders have more progressive definitions and expectations of FFP than government stakeholders. Evidence of this can be found by comparing the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) definition of FFP [31] with the FFP policy information provided by Sweden, Mexico and France. Differing definitions of FFP between civil society and government stakeholders could undermine efforts to support the uptake of FFPs by creating challenges, including the two groups talking past each other because they lack a shared understanding of the central concept; disappointment from civil society when policies do not live up to their expectations; and disappointment from governments who believe they are enacting progressive policies, but are not supported by feminist movements.

The lack of shared understanding between government and civil society may not be new, but underscores the need for robust accountability measures and for ongoing monitoring of adherence to commitments. This finding also suggests that an overriding set of standards that need to be adhered to for FFP could be helpful. Whilst civil society have developed a global set of FFP guidelines for FFP, having these institutionalised could be beneficial.

The debate about whether the goals of FFP can be achieved without branding policies as feminist is fraught. Many participants in the research expressed ambivalence on this question, arguing that ultimately what matters is what gets done. Again, without deep assessment of the impact of FFPs this question is hard to determine, but the very debate itself risks undermining the project of FFP – both in name and in practice. Ultimately, feminism is about deep, normative change and transformation of systems of power; these are politically challenging and ambitious goals, and a leader or government which approaches them ambivelantly is unlikely to succeed. Transformative change requires bold action, and while FFP may not be the only transformative agenda (see for example New Zealand's recent embracing of foreign policy based on Indigenous values[32]), it is clear that it is both challenging and ambitious, and requires bold leadership. So while talking about gender equality may be effective for pursuing gradual improvements within existing systems, labelling policies feminist demonstrates the boldness required to succeed in transforming them.

Similarly, while the women, peace and security agenda was identified in the research as a potential entry point to FFP, the agenda poses a risk of normalising the role of military force in foreign policy and gives the impression that it can be consistent with feminist goals. By contrast, labelling foreign policy as feminist provides an accountability mechanism to go beyond surface level interventions and consider whether human security can ever truly be upheld by military might. Drawing parallels between the priorities of domestic movements around de-militarisation and defunding of police provides an entry point to connect domestic and global injustice, and mobilise movements around a common agenda.

But just because not labelling a policy as feminist may present a barrier to its effectiveness, it shouldn't follow that doing so will automatically improve it. As discussed in the section above, the transformative potential of FFP has yet to be fully realised, and it is clear that labelling a policy feminist is not enough to make it so. In politics, good decisions often come from a mix of noble and self-interested drivers. The FFP/FIAPs adopted to date all display this mix, having been driven both by a genuine desire to make progress on gender equality and also to meet some other political ends, whether that be redirecting attention from a scandal or shortcoming in another policy area, or to bolster the credentials of a political leader. In this context, it may be more useful to look to other areas of policy – if FFP/FIAP is wildly out of step with a government's other policy positions, and there are no plans to bring other areas up to this standard, this may be a red flag. This again underscores the important role that civil society plays in holding governments to account for implementing their commitments in meaningful ways, ensuring policy coherence across government and progressing FFP/FIAPs from declaration to institutionalisation.

CONCLUSION

Foreign policy scholars have called for more empirical research to be conducted to better understand the factors that influence the adoption of pro-gender and feminist foreign policies [3]. In response to this call, we set out to contribute new evidence to better understand how and why existing FFP declarations have come about, and the factors that have influenced and enabled these declarations to be made. To do this, we implemented one of the first empirical, cross-country studies to date of trajectories different countries have taken to declare and adopt a FFP/FIAP from the perspectives of both civil society and government representatives. Our empirical findings have implications for FFP related advocacy, and highlight new areas for further enquiry to strengthen existing FFP related discourse.

Our research confirms what is known about the key factors that have influenced the declaration of FFP/FIAPs, emphasising the importance of having the right person in the right role at the right time who took advantage of a window of opportunity. Our research also provides new information about pathways from declaration to implementation and continuation of FFPs, and the key factors that can enable and undermine this, provides a comprehensive overview of the role of civil society across this trajectory, and contributes towards the evidence base for advocacy to support the uptake and implementation of FFPs elsewhere.

Our research findings have implications for advocacy to support the uptake and implementation of FFP. Our research suggests that traditional policy processes may not be the most effective way to successfully advocate for a FFP, but that advocating for progressive gender equality policies, and vocally welcoming and rewarding those who adopt them, may help create the right conditions. Our research also confirms the importance of nurturing relationships with individuals, and taking advantage of international moments, such as the Generation Equality Forums, the G7, W7 and WPS national action plans, to advocate for the adoption and declaration of FFPs.

The findings of our research also point to several areas of FFP related discourse that would benefit from further enquiry. First, there is debate as to whether FFP needs to branded as feminist in order to be effective, or whether feminist goals and objectives can be advocated for through other strategies. Second, the WPS agenda is an entry point for FFP related advocacy, however militarisation arising from geopolitics could potentially undermine the continuation and uptake of FFP. Third, to date there has been limited critical examination of the implementation and comparative experiences of implementation of FFP/FIAPs currently in place. This remains a significant knowledge gap as it is important to understand the effectiveness and limitations of current FFPs in order to have a better understanding of the transformative potential of FFP. Fourth, if the concept of FFP becomes more normalised, the pathways to adopting FFP will be followed by a 'second wave' of declarations. This highlights the importance of further research to capture these developments in FFP to better determine how and why FFPs become adopted and the factors that may influence this, and how these trajectories and factors may by change over time and be influence by external events.

Our research illustrates that FFP is a journey. It starts with declaration and progresses through practice, institutionalisation and implementation. That progression is assisted by a delicate balance of collaboration and consultation with civil society as well as pressure and advocacy from civil society. Shared definitions of FFP are helpful for fine tuning that balance and for finding common ground about the goals and parameters of FFP and can help to keep the concept moving in an evolutionary way. It helps focus energies on issues that are currently contested and gives a good understanding of where transformation is furthest out of reach.

The timing of this research is important. As Canada works towards developing a FFP Whitepaper, and the Biden administration signals a change in direction in foreign policy, and the geopolitical contest in the Asia Pacific region creates an environment for values-competition there are increasing opportunities to support the uptake of FFP around the world.

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