

A TIME TO BE BOLD

Canada's opportunity to deliver innovative international assistance through a feminist approach



Pilot project to empower “150” grassroots women’s organizations around the world

Two NGO’s launch “Canadian Feminist Action Lab” concept to create an innovative international assistance model

(OTTAWA, April 12, 2017) Today, on the heels of Malala Yousafzai’s Ottawa visit, **The MATCH International Women’s Fund** and the **Nobel Women’s Initiative** are pleased to launch the concept for a **Canadian Feminist Action Lab** with the aim of bringing a bold, innovative and more impactful way to deliver international aid, in line with the 2017 Federal Budget’s Gender Statement.

Nobel peace laureate **Leymah Gbowee** from Liberia, and Canadian peace activist **Yanar Mohammed** working in Iraq are in Ottawa for the announcement and to speak to the importance of direct support to women’s rights organizations, including in conflict countries. They will also meet with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tomorrow.

Less than half a percentage point of gender-based funding provided by Canada to civil society organizations around the world reaches women’s rights organizations directly. In 2013, out of a total of \$562 million dollars, women’s grassroots organizations received only \$1.7 million.

“There is overwhelming evidence that women’s empowerment and gender equality are associated with peace and stability in society,” said Nobel Women’s Initiative Executive Director Liz Bernstein. “What we are proposing to the federal government today is pragmatic and innovative, and we very much hope they will consider working with us to make this pilot project a reality—and help women and their communities end wars and build peace.”

CANADIAN FEMINIST ACTION LAB CONCEPT

The Canadian Feminist Action Lab would provide a means for government and various international aid stakeholders to innovate together and act boldly on Budget 2017’s premise that “...When women and girls are fully engaged in decision-making, our societies become stronger, our economies more prosperous, and our countries more secure.”

As a first tangible initiative, the proposed Canadian Feminist Action Lab would be tasked with executing a \$5 million pilot project providing grants to 150 women’s grassroots organizations around

the world – “150” in honour of Canada’s 150th anniversary. A simple yet effective reporting mechanism would be established by which the Lab could learn about the impacts of the modest grants, and how it could scale up the model to maximize Canada’s aid delivery.

“Canada is taking bold, yet much needed progressive stances internationally as evidenced by its recent announcement of \$650 million for sexual and reproductive health and rights,” said Nobel laureate Leymah Gbowee. “Clearly the federal government understands that adopting a feminist approach to international development yields immense benefits to local stability and economies – but it can and should be even bolder during this critical time in the world.”

For true impact, the two groups are calling on Canada’s feminist Prime Minister and the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Marie-Claude Bibeau, to also introduce a longer-term feminist funding model which enables women leaders on the ground to be supported through stable, predictable and non-project specific funding.

“My organization provides shelter to women in Iraq fleeing violence at the hands of militia and others, including their husbands” said Yanar Mohammed, the co-founder and president of the Organisation of Women’s Freedom in Iraq (OWFI). “We can’t create safety and security for these women unless we have support that allows me to think beyond getting to the end of the year.”

“Canada has an opportunity to step up and be a true, innovative leader in delivering impactful international assistance to women, said MATCH International Women’s Fund Executive Director Jess Tomlin. “We very much look forward to working with the federal government to drive transformative solutions at the grassroots.

PANEL EVENT

This evening at 5:30 p.m., Ms. Gbowee and Ms. Mohammed will be in the iPolitics offices in Ottawa for a public panel discussion with Members of Parliament **Matt DeCourcey**, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and **Hélène Laverdière**, Vice Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, and NDP Critic for Foreign Affairs.

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The Nobel Women’s Initiative brings together six women Nobel peace laureates—Shirin Ebadi (Iran), Tawakkol Karman (Yemen), Mairead Maguire (Northern Ireland), Jody Williams (U.S.), Leymah Gbowee (Liberia) and Rigoberta Menchu Tum (Guatemala)—to support women human rights defenders around the globe.

The MATCH International Women’s Fund provides direct financial support to grassroots women’s rights organizations in the global South. We fund innovative and brave women to dismantle barriers, challenge perceptions, and change the world for women and girls.

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