

Together for Refugee Protection



Introduction

Canada's international cooperation sector is calling for a substantial increase of official development assistance (ODA). ODA represents a key investment in a safer, more just and sustainable world—one that reflects core Canadian values. Canada's contributions, however, currently stand below the average of the international donor community and national historical commitments. Reaching the ambitious targets of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy and maintaining Canada's reputation as a global leader in human rights require an increased ODA budget.

The evidence for increased international assistance is clear. Effective investments in a safer and more just world for us and future generations require holistic interventions that support social, economic and environmental wellbeing underpinned by strong governance systems. Canada can and must step up. We must work alongside diverse partners to ensure continuity between humanitarian, development and peacekeeping operations. We must support locally driven solutions. The following investment case outlines the transformative potential of Canada's fair share contributions in forced migration.

Key Messages

Global forced displacement is worsening.¹ Worldwide, over 79.5 million² people were forcibly displaced at the end of 2019. This represents the highest number of displaced people since World War II.³ Some 40%⁴ of the world's displaced people are children and some 50%⁵ are women and girls at heightened risk of exploitation, imprisonment and enslavement.

Without adequate support, the strain of refugee flows in host communities can threaten hard-won development gains and stability. A handful of low- and middle-income countries host 88%⁶ of the world's displaced people. For decades, these host communities have shouldered refugee-related costs even while facing development challenges themselves. They need our support.

International assistance can transform threats posed by forced displacement into development opportunities. Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy provides a solid framework for scaled-up collaboration with Canadian organizations engaged in integrated and gender-responsive humanitarian, peacebuilding and development interventions in partnership with displaced groups around the world.

Political leadership is required to uphold the rights of people on the move and tackle the drivers of forced displacement. Canada is globally recognized for embracing diversity and immigration and assisting those fleeing conflicts and persecution. Canada must champion refugee rights and norms, and support gender-transformative collaborations with the world's most vulnerable displaced people and their hosts.

THEME DESCRIPTION

Worldwide, over 79.5 million⁷ people were forcibly displaced at the end of 2019, of which 45.7 million people were classified as internally displaced people, 26 million people were refugees, and 4.2 million people were asylum seekers. Some 40%⁸ of the world's displaced people are children, and some 50%⁹ are women and girls. This represents the highest number of displaced people since World War II.

Often confined to cramped conditions and lacking access to basic sanitation, social services and information, refugees and migrants face additional risks¹⁰ from COVID-19. Refugees are also 60% more likely to be financially impacted by the pandemic than host country populations, and will be among the hardest hit¹¹ by unemployment, xenophobia and economic exclusion.

88%¹² of today's refugees are hosted in low- and middle-income countries grappling with development and protection challenges. Without adequate support, the strain of refugee flows in such countries can threaten hard-won development gains and stability, with regional and even global consequences.

Despite these figures, the global forced displacement challenge is entirely manageable. Displaced people make up just 1% of the global population,¹³ and the vast majority are concentrated in a handful of countries of first asylum.¹⁴ With appropriate policies and support, human mobility can be harnessed as an opportunity to promote sustainable, gender-equitable and inclusive development in host communities while upholding international human rights and laws.

CANADIAN CONTEXT

Canada has a proud history of international leadership and support for the world's displaced people. In 1986, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees awarded the Nansen Medal to the People of Canada for their contributions in accepting over 60,000 Vietnamese "boat people" seeking refuge after the fall of Saigon. Canada has won international praise for resettling over 53,100 Syrian refugees between 2015 and 2018. Canada has benefited greatly from decades of contributions by migrants and refugees—several of whom have become prominent members of Canada's business, political and civil societies.

In 2016, Canada played a leading diplomatic role in support of the United Nations General Assembly's unanimous adoption of the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants¹⁵ and the call for a Global Compact on Refugees and a Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.¹⁶ Canada adopted both Global Compacts in 2018. In 2017, Canada contributed to an in-depth exploration of the challenges and opportunities facing refugees and host countries through its support of the World Refugee Council.¹⁷ Under its G7 Presidency in 2018, the Government of Canada committed¹⁸ \$400 million to dismantle barriers and support quality education for women and girls living in crisis, conflict-affected and fragile states, including refugees.¹⁹ Canada also responded to the Rohingya crisis, investing \$300 million over the first three years of the crisis and appointing a Special Envoy to support diplomatic efforts, in one of the most challenging refugee crises of the decade.

7 UNHCR, "Figures at a Glance—UNHCR Philippines," UNHCR (UNHCR, 2017), <https://www.unhcr.org/ph/figures-at-a-glance>.

8 UNHCR, "Figures at a Glance—UNHCR Philippines," UNHCR (UNHCR, 2017), <https://www.unhcr.org/ph/figures-at-a-glance>.

9 UNHCR, "Women," UNHCR, 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/women.html>.

10 Refugee International, "COVID-19 and the Displaced: Addressing the Threat of the Novel Coronavirus in Humanitarian Emergencies," Refugees International, 2020, <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2020/3/29/covid-19-and-the-displaced-addressing-the-threat-of-the-novel-coronavirus-in-humanitarian-emergencies>.

11 Helen Dempster et al., "Locked Down and Left Behind: The Impact of COVID-19 on Refugees' Economic Inclusion," July 2020, <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/locked-down-and-left-behind-paper-71320.pdf>.

12 Center for Global Development and International Rescue Committee, "REFUGEE COMPACTS Addressing the Crisis of Protracted Displacement Final Report of the Forced Displacement and Development Study Group," 2017, <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/Refugee-Compacts-Report.pdf>.

13 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "The World Counted 258 Million International Migrants in 2017, Representing 3.4% of Global Population," 2017, https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/popfacts/PopFacts_2017-5.pdf.

14 World Refugee Council, "World Refugee Council," Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2019, <https://www.cigionline.org/activity/world-refugee-council>.

15 UNHCR, "New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants," 2016, <https://www.unhcr.org/new-york-declaration-for-refugees-and-migrants.html>.

16 Refugees and Migrants, "Global Compact for Migration," Refugees and Migrants, April 5, 2017, <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/migration-compact#:~:text=In%20September%202016%20the%20General>.

17 World Refugee Council, "World Refugee Council," Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2019, <https://www.cigionline.org/activity/world-refugee-council>.

18 Global Affairs Canada, "Minister Monsef Concludes Successful G7 Development Ministerial Meetings in Paris and Announces Support to Improve Access to Education for Women and Girls," July 5, 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2019/07/minister-monsef-concludes-successful-g7-development-ministerial-meetings-in-paris-and-announces-support-to-improve-access-to-education-for-women-an.html>.

19 CIMM, "Government Response - 8512-421-492 - House of Commons of Canada," www.ourcommons.ca, 2018, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/CIMM/report-23/response-8512-421-492>.

1 UNHCR, "UNHCR Global Trends—Forced Displacement in 2017," UNHCR Global Trends—Forced Displacement in 2017, 2017, <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2017/>.

2 UNHCR, "Figures at a Glance—UNHCR Philippines," UNHCR (UNHCR, 2017), <https://www.unhcr.org/ph/figures-at-a-glance>.

3 UNHCR, "UNHCR Global Trends 2018," UNHCR Global Trends 2018, 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2018/>.

4 UNHCR, "Figures at a Glance—UNHCR Philippines," UNHCR (UNHCR, 2017), <https://www.unhcr.org/ph/figures-at-a-glance>.

5 UNHCR, "Women," UNHCR, 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/women.html>.

6 Center for Global Development and International Rescue Committee, "REFUGEE COMPACTS Addressing the Crisis of Protracted Displacement Final Report of the Forced Displacement and Development Study Group," 2017, <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/Refugee-Compacts-Report.pdf>.

Canada also contributes annually to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). In 2019, Canada's contributions to UNHCR totalled USD\$59.7 million, down from USD\$72.9 million in 2018 and USD\$81.9 million in 2017. Canada is the world's ninth largest donor to UNHCR and has made important financial and political investments—through its private sponsorship model. These efforts have further galvanized Canada's authority on refugee protection and durable solutions, while helping to reduce xenophobia and encourage hospitality.

Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy highlights Canada's intention to address the particular unmet needs and agency of women and girls in humanitarian response, including in situations of forced displacement. Today, Canada has an opportunity to lead in the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees by scaling up proven programs and approaches, and by mobilizing longer-term development investments to complement traditional humanitarian funding in a way that supports the comprehensive refugee response frameworks.

DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

Integrated gender-responsive humanitarian, peacebuilding and longer-term development interventions provide proven means to transform the threats to development gains posed by forced displacement into development opportunities. Evidence [shows](#)²⁰ that, given access to labour markets, displaced people rapidly become net contributors to host community economies, tax revenues and job creation. Access to human rights and protection can reduce refugees' and migrants' heightened vulnerability to sexual and other forms of exploitation, unwanted and early pregnancy, child and early forced marriage, imprisonment and enslavement. Access to basic health and sanitation services, including sexual and reproductive health services, are critical for tackling communicable diseases that can accompany overcrowding and limited housing.

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Canadian humanitarian organizations are already leading innovative gender-responsive approaches for supporting displaced populations and host communities. [Research](#)²¹ conducted in 2017 confirms that many Canadian NGOs are already implementing programs that reflect the goals of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework articulated in the New York Declaration, and are achieving significant results. Canadian programming also supports internally displaced people, who lack the protections and rights afforded to refugees under international law and have less access to resources provided by UNHCR. Canadian partners and programming are already making an impact while upholding good practices under the emerging international framework provided by the Global Compact on Refugees.

FINANCIAL IMPACT


The world's displaced people represent a vast economic potential. In many countries, particularly historically disadvantaged ones, this potential is squandered through prohibitive legal regimes, prevailing gender-related barriers to accessing productive employment and inadequate social services. These barriers slow or stall displaced people's, particularly women's and youths', integration into local labour markets, prevent them from acquiring marketable skills, and push them into the informal economy or prolonged dependence on humanitarian assistance.

Only 0.5%²² of working-age Syrian refugees in Lebanon have work permits, for example, and only 32% of Syrian workers have a permanent job and a stable income. Displaced people who do have a job, even if temporary, tend to earn less than workers from the host community. Refugee women in Jordan, for example, earn just over \$1 an hour on average, compared to over \$4 an hour for host-country men and women. Engineers work as taxi drivers, and doctors as olive pickers, representing a significant underemployment of a highly educated workforce. Similar situations play out among displaced populations and host communities worldwide.

²⁰ World Refugee Council, "World Refugee Council," Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2019, <https://www.cigionline.org/activity/world-refugee-council>.

²¹ Open Policy, "IPIIC 2017 - Tyler Foley - Canadian Best Practices for Global Compacts and Beyond," YouTube Video, YouTube, December 4, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnGbtLS2yKI&index=3&t=0s&list=PLz16nPgTeTH_MNd4rHIG5hwzHAWDwv6ZQ.

²² CARE, "Syrian Refugees in Lebanon Eight Years on: What Works and Why That Matters for the Future," n.d., https://www.care-international.org/files/files/CAREInternationalLebanon_RefugeesinLebanon_Whatworksandwhythatmattersforthefuture.pdf.



Often confined to cramped conditions and lacking access to basic sanitation, social services and information, refugees and migrants face additional risks from COVID-19.

This does not need to be the case. A [study](#)²³ by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security and the International Rescue Committee found that refugee women could add USD\$1.4 trillion to annual global gross domestic product (GDP) if employment and gender gaps were closed in the top 30 refugee-hosting countries. In [Turkey](#),²⁴ for example, where refugees are formally allowed to own businesses, Syrian refugees started a total of 6,033 formal companies from 2011 to 2017. These businesses employed 9.4 people on average—a total of about 56,710 people. In [Uganda](#),²⁵ refugee-owned businesses provide valuable services, including the provision of goods and as suppliers and distributors.

Finally, remittances from displaced family members abroad represent a vital source of funding for poor and vulnerable households, and are associated with improved development outcomes, including higher spending on education, lower child labour rates and improved nutrition. In 2019, remittances to lower and middle income countries reached a record [\\$554 billion](#),²⁶ outpacing foreign direct investment. These remittances are [predicted](#)²⁷ to fall by 20% in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting many families' spending on nutrition and education, and causing increases in child labour.

Across the board, the developmental and financial advantages of ensuring displaced people are able to enjoy their human rights, basic social services and equitable access to labour markets offers a clear opportunity to enable displaced people to become agents of development within their host communities, and in support of loved ones left behind.

A Case for Increasing Canada's Official Development Assistance

International cooperation is about integrated, context-informed, and nationally led solutions that help resolve key global issues. Canada's expertise in devising inclusive and equitable approaches in collaboration with global and local partners is valued at home and abroad.



23 Raiyan Kabir and Jeni Klugman, "Unlocking Refugee Women's Potential," 2019, <https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/3987/reportrescueworksunlockingrefugeewomenspotential.pdf>.

24 Building Markets, "Another Side to the Story a Market Assessment of Syrian SMEs in Turkey Building Markets Building Markets," 2017, https://buildingmarkets.org/sites/default/files/pdm_reports/another_side_to_the_story_a_market_assessment_of_syrian_smes_in_turkey.pdf.

25 Alexander Betts et al., "Refugee Economies Rethinking Popular Assumptions," 2014, <https://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/files/files-1/refugee-economies-2014.pdf>.

26 The World Bank, "World Bank Predicts Sharpest Decline of Remittances in Recent History," World Bank, 2020, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/22/world-bank-predicts-sharpest-decline-of-remittances-in-recent-history>.

27 The World Bank, "World Bank Predicts Sharpest Decline of Remittances in Recent History," World Bank, 2020, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/22/world-bank-predicts-sharpest-decline-of-remittances-in-recent-history>.

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