

# Together for Improved Child 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 education.

## Key Messages

**Child protection helps keep girls and boys safe from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect.** Over half of all children in the world—1 billion children ages 2-17 years—experience violence every year, negatively affecting short—and long-term health, education and economic outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

**Children are disproportionately affected by crises and instability.** Four hundred and twenty million girls and boys—nearly one fifth of children worldwide—are living in conflict zones, an increase of 75% from the early 1990s.<sup>2</sup>

**Child protection is aligned with Canada's core values and it represents a resource-effective approach to international cooperation.** The cost of inaction is clear: violence against children costs up US\$7 trillion, each year.<sup>3</sup>

**Protecting girls and boys from violence is a critical requisite for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals** by supporting improved health, education and economic outcomes and breaking the cycle of gender inequality.

1 Susan Hillis et al., "Global Prevalence of Past-Year Violence against Children: A Systematic Review and Minimum Estimates," *Pediatrics* 137, no. 3 (January 25, 2016): e20154079, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2015-4079>.

2 Save the Children, "Stop the War on Children," 2019, <https://www.savethechildren.org/content/dam/usa/reports/ed-cp/stop-the-war-on-children-2019.pdf>.

3 Paola Perezniето et al., "The Costs and Economic Impact of Violence against Children," ODI, 2014, <https://www.odi.org/publications/8845-costs-and-economic-impact-violence-against-children>.

## THEME DESCRIPTION

Child protection is the **prevention** of and **response** to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence against children. This includes physical and sexual violence, domestic abuse, bullying, child labour, gang violence, child marriage, harmful traditional practices and involvement in armed groups. Experiences of violence vary by gender, age and setting (home, school, community, etc.).

Child protection programming takes gender transformative approaches and focuses on changing the attitudes and practices that tolerate and perpetuate harmful practices and cycles of violence, strengthening the protective environment (including families, communities, faith leaders, local officials, teachers, doctors, police, courts and government agencies), and building girls' and boys' agency to protect themselves.

In conflict and fragile settings when risks of violence are heightened, gender-responsive child protection efforts help support girl and boy survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and reunite families who have been separated. These efforts also provide care to unaccompanied or separated children, demobilize girls and boys associated with armed groups or forces and provide critical mental health and psychosocial support for children overcoming acute anxiety and trauma, including sexual violence and attacks on schools and hospitals.

Integrating child protection into other interventions—including health, education and livelihoods programming—is essential to both prevent and respond to violence against girls and boys, ensuring the long-term success of these other interventions and breaking the cycle of gender inequality.

## CANADIAN CONTEXT

Canada has a long history of supporting global commitments that promote children's right to be protected from violence, exploitation and abuse, including by introducing the first-ever stand-alone resolution to end child, early and forced marriage at the United Nations General Assembly in 2013, and as one of the earliest supporters of the Office of the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict.

More recently, Canada has endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration (2017) to protect children's education from attack, developed The Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers (2017) and led on the Charlevoix declaration on quality education for girls, adolescent girls and women in developing countries (2018). Canada's 2018 Feminist International Assistance Policy commits to the protection of girls (and women) from all forms of gender-based violence.

It is difficult to determine the amount of official development assistance (ODA) focused on ending violence against children or to compare Canada's investments to other donors. There is no dedicated sector code for tracking investments in violence against children, although data does exist for spending on child soldiers (just one type violence against children) and violence against women and girls (which excludes boys and does not distinguish between investments focused on adult women as opposed to girls). Despite these limitations, we know that the child protection investments remain rare in international cooperation, given that investments in violence against women and girls in 2018-19 accounted for only 0.8% of Canada's ODA.<sup>4</sup>

Recent research has identified that Canada spent only USD\$2.92 million on child protection activities within its humanitarian funding in 2019. While this number represents an increase from the record low in 2018 (\$0.57 million), it still falls far short of what is needed as children's risk of violence is exacerbated during emergencies.<sup>5</sup> The number of countries with violent conflicts is the highest it has been in the last 30 years. Nearly one fifth of children worldwide—420 million children—are living in conflict zones, which is an increase of 75% from the early 1990s.<sup>6</sup>

4 Canada Global Affairs, "Statistical Report on International Assistance," 2018, <https://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/assets/pdfs/publications/sria-rsai-2018-19-en.pdf>.

5 Margot Thierry et al., "Still unprotected: humanitarian funding for child protection," ReliefWeb, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/still-unprotected-humanitarian-funding-child-protection>.

6 Save the Children, "Stop the War on Children," 2019, <https://www.savethechildren.org/content/dam/usa/reports/ed-cp/stop-the-war-on-children-2019.pdf>.

## DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development commits global stakeholders to, among other targets, “end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against, and torture of, children.” Violence keeps girls and boys from attending school and negatively impacts their physical and mental health and emotional [wellbeing](#).<sup>7</sup> It limits their ability to fulfill their potential and increases the likelihood that they will be perpetrators or victims of violence as adults, further perpetuating conflict and [gender inequality](#).<sup>8</sup> Violence within the family, including psychological, physical or sexual violence, or neglect, is also one of the main causes of [family breakdown](#) leading to children losing parental care.<sup>9</sup>

### Case study: Protection for IDPs and Returnees in Baidoa, [Somalia](#).<sup>10</sup>

Gender-based Violence (GBV) and child rights violations in IDP settlements in Baidoa, Somalia are pervasive. The Government of Canada has funded an emergency response project focusing on health, WASH and child protection interventions. The project provides services to address GBV through strengthening referral systems, training community health and nutrition workers on child protection issues and providing case management and psychosocial support for survivors of GBV and unaccompanied and separated children.

The project helps raise awareness about GBV and child rights-related issues in the community by working with local elders and faith leaders and through programs such as Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) and youth clubs. By the end of the project, people in 64% of households knew about the availability of protection case management services, and people in 66% of households were aware of whom to contact in cases of violence in their homes and communities.

In addition to violating the rights and wellbeing of these children, conflict, violence and displacement takes a devastating toll on efforts for long-term peace, stability and sustainable development. Violence against girls and boys has significant short, medium and long-term economic costs that are borne by individuals, communities and societies. The direct costs of violence include those placed on health care systems in treating the physical, psychological and behaviour problems arising from violence against children, social welfare systems in preventing and responding to violence against children, and criminal [justice systems](#).<sup>11</sup>

There are also massive indirect future costs—such as productivity losses—arising from the impact of violence on girls and boys. Adults exposed to violence in childhood have lower levels of education, employment, earnings and fewer assets—all of which has a negative impact on economic development and society as a whole.

Finally, over 80% of spending directed towards ending violence against children is channelled via projects that have gender equality as either a principal or significant objective. In fact, strategic investments in child protection is a key strategy for advancing gender equality and should be prioritized across development and humanitarian areas of intervention.

7 UNICEF, “Hidden in Plain Sight: A Statistical Analysis of Violence against Children,” UNICEF, August 22, 2014, [https://www.unicef.org/publications/index\\_74865.html](https://www.unicef.org/publications/index_74865.html).


8 Know Violence in Childhood, “The Global Report—Know Violence in Childhood: A Global Learning Initiative,” The Global Report, 2017, <http://globalreport.knowviolenceinchildhood.org/>.

9 SOS Children’s Villages International, “The world’s most vulnerable children: who they are, where they live, and what puts them at risk,” 2015, <https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org/getmedia/384bc38a-62aa-4c2a-9563-a5ecc61b6a77/SOS-Child-at-risk-report-web.pdf>

10 Justin De Los Santos, “The Economics of Violence | Copenhagen Consensus Center,” [www.copenhagenconsensus.com](http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com), 2014, <https://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/post-2015-consensus/news/economics-violence>.

11 Justin De Los Santos, “The Economics of Violence | Copenhagen Consensus Center,” [www.copenhagenconsensus.com](http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com), 2014, <https://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/post-2015-consensus/news/economics-violence>.





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## FINANCIAL IMPACT

While it is difficult to calculate the cost of [violence against](#) children,<sup>12</sup> the global economic impacts and costs resulting from the **consequences** of physical, psychological and sexual violence against children have been estimated to be as much as **\$7 trillion per year**.<sup>13</sup>

This massive cost is higher than the investment required to prevent much of that violence. Evidence shows that the price of violence against children (i.e. the cost to society of responding to the consequences of violence) is higher than the investment required for preventing it, including **returns of up to \$11 for every dollar spent to eliminate severe physical violence as a method of child discipline**.<sup>14</sup>

Child protection is a vital component of the accountability to girls and boys in humanitarian contexts, and a requisite for human rights-based, sustainable and people-centred development objectives. Child protection interventions are also resource efficient and effective investments in social and economic capital. Scaled-up ODA funding is required to ensure a systematic integration of child protection considerations in all aspects of international cooperation, as per Canada's feminist international assistance approach.


<sup>12</sup> UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children, "The Economic Costs of Violence against Children | UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children," [violenceagainstchildren.un.org](https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/economic_costs_of_vac_viewpoint), 2015, [https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/economic\\_costs\\_of\\_vac\\_viewpoint](https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/economic_costs_of_vac_viewpoint).

<sup>13</sup> Paola Pereznielo et al., "The Costs and Economic Impact of Violence against Children," ODI, 2014, <https://www.odi.org/publications/8845-costs-and-economic-impact-violence-against-children>.

<sup>14</sup> Copenhagen Consensus Center, "Post-2015 Consensus: Conflict and Violence Assessment, Hoeffler Fearon | Copenhagen Consensus Center," [www.copenhagenconsensus.com](http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com), 2015, <https://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/publication/post-2015-consensus-conflict-and-violence-assessment-hoeffler-fearon>.

# 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.



Climate change exacerbates all global challenges, while particularly affecting historically disadvantaged countries and the most marginalized populations. Adaptation and mitigation interventions are needed to prevent future crises and protect development achievements.

Gender equality is a guiding principle of Canada's international assistance and a key requisite for equitable and just societies that allow for the achievement of all other objectives.

Water, sanitation and hygiene investments can transform communities by improving health outcomes, enabling access to education, advancing gender equality, strengthening climate resilience and inciting social and economic development.

Child protection interrupts the cycle of violence and gender inequality by keeping girls and boys safe from harm, building their agency, and preventing significant costs to individuals, societies and economies.

Education is a requisite of every country's prosperity, with direct social, political and economic benefits recorded at individual, household, community, and national levels.

Food security investments can lift millions out of poverty and strengthen local economies, while improving health and nutrition, empowering women, and building climate resilience.

Nutrition is a necessary foundation to protect cognition and school performance, improve lifetime earnings and productivity, and ultimately break the cycle of poverty.

Governance interventions create an enabling environment for development, by strengthening inclusiveness, creating access to justice and decision-making structures, and protecting human rights.

Global health can erode or advance objectives across the international cooperation spectrum, but also safety and security. Healthy communities are thriving communities.

Humanitarian interventions encompass all emergency responses designed to save and sustain lives, representing the core of our universal human principles.

Investments in forced migration alleviate the burden on the least-developed countries hosting displaced populations and create long-lasting solutions.

# THE TOGETHER PROJECT

39 MCARTHUR AVENUE  
OTTAWA, ONTARIO K1L 8L7  
613-241-7007  
INFO@COOPERATION.CA

