

Invest in Aid, Secure the Future: Canadian Leadership in a Deeply Insecure World

**Submission by Cooperation Canada to
Pre-Budget Consultations 2024**



Cooperation Canada is Canada's national, independent coalition for Canadian civil society organizations working in international development and humanitarian assistance. With over 100 members, we work alongside our members and partners, in Canada and around the globe, for a fairer, safer and more sustainable world for all.

Invest in Aid, Secure the Future: Canadian Leadership in a Deeply Insecure World

Recommendations for Budget 2024

Recommendation 1: We call on the government to commit an additional **\$400 million per year for 2024-25, and \$650 million per year thereafter** in support of women and girls in humanitarian emergencies and protracted conflicts and crises, education by doubling down on the Charlevoix Education Initiative, and human rights, civil society and democracy, for a total commitment of \$3 billion over five years.

This commitment would include the following measures:

- **Sub-recommendation 1.1: Expanded Canadian global leadership on gender equality through new and additional humanitarian and development programming to support the rights of women and girls in humanitarian emergencies and protracted crises and conflicts.**
 - Invest an additional **\$100 million/year** for five years to double down on the impacts being driven by the **Charlevoix Education Initiative**.
 - Invest an additional **\$150 million in 2024-25** and **\$275 million/year** in humanitarian and development funding for an additional four years to support women and girls in humanitarian emergencies and protracted crises and conflicts.
- **Sub-recommendation 1.2: Investments in rights and democracy for a more stable global future by committing to support human rights, civil society and civic space,** including by protecting democratic institutions, journalists and free and fair elections.
 - Invest an additional **\$150 million in 2024-25** and **\$275 million/year** for an additional four years in programming that supports human rights defenders, civil society, democracy, building on Canada's leadership supporting women's rights and feminist movements.

In addition, we call on the government to take steps to:

Recommendation 2: Commit that international assistance to Ukraine will be additional to stable or growing assistance to the rest of the world, and track international assistance investments that respond to the war and resulting crisis in Ukraine by launching an Eastern Europe Assistance Tracker.

Recommendation 3: Commit to improving budget transparency by publishing additional, forward-looking details on the International Assistance Envelope (IAE) in annual federal budgets.

Context

The world order that we have taken for granted over past decades is shifting fast. And not in small ways. Ongoing reverberations from the pandemic, the impacts of the climate crisis, global inflation, rising armed conflict and hostilities, the rise of authoritarian and anti-democratic forces, and attacks on women's and children's rights are disrupting the global order as we know it. We are seeing the intensification of humanitarian emergencies, where needs are enormous, and women and girls are bearing the brunt of them. The basic pillars of democracy are being undermined, humanitarian needs are on the rise, hard-won rights are under attack, and we are witnessing the reversal of decades of progress on development, especially for the world's most vulnerable.

Specifically, the global share of people experiencing extreme poverty – those living on less than \$2.15 a day – decreased consistently between 1990 and 2019. But this downward trend changed in 2020, influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, conflict and climate change, putting the goal to end extreme poverty by 2030 out of reach.¹ According to the latest figures from the United Nations, nearly 300 million people in 72 countries will require humanitarian assistance and protection in 2024, and more people are displaced now than at any other time since the beginning of the century.² Globally, as many as 783 million people – close to twice the population of Canada and the U.S. combined – suffer from hunger, and compared with pre-pandemic levels, today 122 million more people face hunger. Conflict remains the biggest driver of hunger, with 70 per cent of the world's hungry people living in places affected by war and violence.³ And while hunger and conflict are on the rise, democratic principles are under threat. According to CIVICUS, in 2023 two-billion people, or 28 per cent of the world's population, live in the 27 countries where civic space is totally shut down – where expressions of democratic dissent can mean, prison, exile or death.⁴

The challenges of today pose direct threats to Canada and Canadian interests, by increasing global insecurity and stifling global prosperity.

Canada's legacy of global leadership

When Canada has stepped up to deliver its values-based leadership internationally, including through international assistance, our efforts have led to demonstrable impacts. We've done this because it's the right thing to do. But it's also the smart thing to do.

Canadian governments of all political stripes have taken bold leadership on international cooperation (see Graph 1). The Muskoka Initiative on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, Prime Minister Harper's leadership initiative at the 2010 G7, contributed to preventing 1.3 million deaths of children under five

¹ Development Initiatives. (2023). Poverty Trends: Global, Regional, and National. Development Initiatives. <https://devinit.org/resources/poverty-trends-global-regional-and-national/#note-i4zlruXJE>.

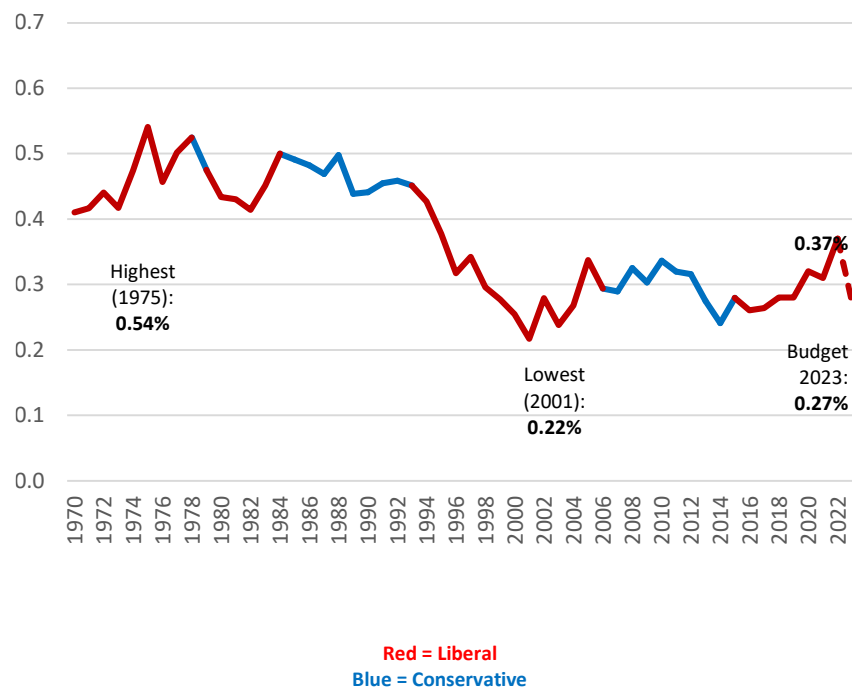
² United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) (2024) Global Humanitarian Overview 2024, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2024-enarfres>.

³ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2023) The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023. Urbanization, agrifood systems transformation and healthy diets across the rural–urban continuum. <https://www.wfp.org/publications/state-food-security-and-nutrition-world-sofi-report-2023>.

⁴ CIVICUS (2023) People Under Attack 2023 – A Report Based on Data from the CIVICUS Monitor, https://monitor.civicus.org/globalfindings_2023/.

years of age. The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, and the Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance Policy were also launched under Conservative governments. Signature initiatives of the Trudeau government have also been consequential. Canada’s commitment to girls’ education, made through the Charlevoix Education Initiative at the 2018 G7 in Canada, has impacted the lives of four million girls. Canada’s 10-year \$1.4 billion annual commitment to global women’s and children’s health and sexual and reproductive health and rights, made at Women Deliver in Vancouver in 2019, reached 12 million people in 2021-22.⁵ In 2022, Canada doubled its commitment to climate finance at \$5.3 billion over five years, and made a \$1.21 billion commitment to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Canada’s commitment to women’s rights organization and feminist movements has been demonstrated through the \$300 million investment in the Equality Fund, made in 2019, and the flagship Women’s Voice and Leadership initiative, which was renewed and expanded in 2023 with a commitment of \$195 million over five years and \$43.3 million per year afterward. Canada has also been responsive to increased humanitarian needs. The creation of various matching funds, including for the hunger crisis in East Africa and in response to the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria, has contributed to unlocking Canadians’ generosity. Canada’s leadership and commitment to gender equality is also evident: a 2023 report from the Auditor General of Canada on international assistance in support of gender equality found that Canada is meeting the target made through the Feminist International Assistance Policy that 80% of projects integrate gender equality and the empowerment of girls.

Graph 1: Canada’s share of Gross National Income (GNI) spent on Official Development Assistance (ODA), 1970 - 2023



⁵ Government of Canada. (2022). Global Health - Canada's Contributions (2021-2022). Government of Canada. <https://www.international.gc.ca/transparency-transparence/global-health-sante-mondiale/2021-2022.aspx?lang=eng>

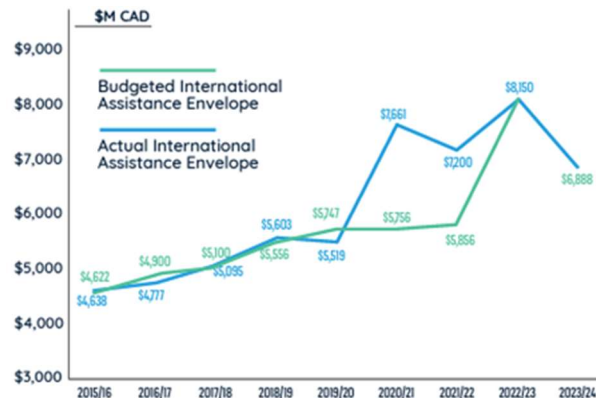
We know that through times of uncertainty and instability, communities and countries can turn inwards. But for Canada this is not an option. We are deeply connected to the stability and prosperity of the world, and must ensure that our words on global partnership and engagement are matched with action.

Canadians understand the importance of global leadership and investment in international assistance. They know that Canadian international assistance is having an impact on the lives of millions of people around the world. Millions of Canadians support this work through generous private donations. Canadians feel the impact of converging global crises and understand that international assistance is an investment that we all want to live in. They see the strategic value of Canadian international assistance in an increasingly insecure world. Indeed, a 2023 Abacus Data survey found that 71% of Canadians consider it crucial to uphold Canada’s tradition of stepping up and supporting people in other countries in their times of need, and 81% expressed support for Canada’s provision of international assistance.⁶

Canadian international assistance: falling short?

While this government has made specific investments in international assistance that we applaud, Canada’s commitment to international assistance is now falling short. Canadian aid increased from 2015/16 up to and including 2022/23, but 2023/24 may see a significant decline. Indeed, Budget 2023’s commitment of \$6.888 billion to international assistance was a 15% budget decrease from the 2022/23 budget of \$8.150, which meant that this government did not meet its commitment to increase international assistance year on year through to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target. And when adjusted for inflation, the 2023/24 International Assistance Envelope (IAE) base in Budget 2023 is only 5% higher than in 2019/20.⁷

Graph 2: Budgeted and Actual International Assistance Envelope, 2015/16 to 2023/24⁸

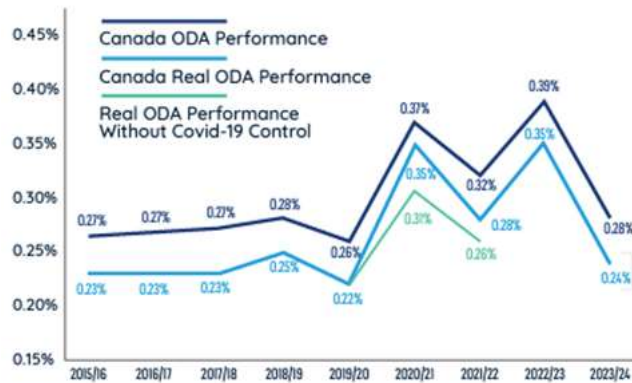


⁶ Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health. (2023). Canadian Perspectives on ODA 2023. Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health. <https://canwach.ca/learning/canadian-perspectives-oda-2023/>

⁷ Brian Tomlinson (2023) Canadian Aid Trends Report. AidWatch Canada and Cooperation Canada. <https://cooperation.ca/2023-canadian-aid-trends/>.

⁸ Ibid

Graph 3: Canada’s ODA Performance (ODA to GNI Ratio), 2015/16 to 2023/24⁹



In addition, despite the increase in ODA over the past seven years, Canada’s aid commitment has not kept pace with growth in its overall wealth, resulting in a continued poor performance when tracked against gross national income (GNI) target. Indeed, measured against its G7 peers, Canada ranked fifth out of seven on ODA as a percentage of GNI in 2022. When we look at the 30 members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), Canada ranked 18th.¹⁰

Graph 4: ODA / GNI Performance Ratios¹¹



So while we applaud specific commitments that have been made, it is critical to not lose sight of the bigger picture: Canada’s 2023 federal budget saw a 15% decrease in the aid budget, and a renegeing on the government’s commitment to increase international assistance year on year. This declining investment in international assistance at a time of immense global need sends the wrong message to our allies, partners and rivals around the world. It leaves Canada at risk of being left out of critical global conversations and coalitions – and certainly diminishes the chances of winning Canada’s bid for a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council. It puts an end to many life-saving and life-changing programs that Canadian international assistance supports, with very real impacts on the lives, rights and opportunities of people and communities around the world. And it means that Canada is not doing its

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ OECD. (n.d.). OECD Statistics. <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>

¹¹ Ibid

fair share to contribute to a safer, more stable and more prosperous future - for Canadians and people around the world.

So What Should Canada Do? Budget 2024 Recommendations

In Budget 2024, Canada should make vital, strategic investments to protect and advance the extraordinary progress Canada has contributed to on global health, gender equality, education and climate change – and ensure it cannot be rolled back in years to come. And, at a time when women’s rights are threatened globally, we should do so in a way that builds on Canada’s legacy of putting gender equality at the centre of its international assistance.

Recommendation 1: We call on the government to commit an additional \$400 million per year for 2024-25, and \$650 million per year thereafter in support of women and girls in humanitarian emergencies and protracted conflicts and crises, education by doubling down on the Charlevoix Education Initiative, and human rights, civil society and democracy, for a total commitment of \$3 billion over five years.

This commitment would include the measures outlined below.

Sub-recommendation 1.1: Expanded Canadian global leadership on gender equality through new and additional humanitarian and development programming to support the rights of women and girls in humanitarian emergencies and protracted crises and conflicts.

- Invest an additional **\$100 million/year** for five years to double down on the impacts being driven by the **Charlevoix Education Initiative**.
- Invest an additional **\$150 million in 2024-25** and **\$275 million/year** in humanitarian and development funding for an additional four years to support women and girls in humanitarian emergencies and protracted crises and conflicts, specifically to address gender-based violence, support their nutrition and food security, attain their sexual and reproductive rights and leverage their critical role in brokering peace.

Canada needs to double down on the leadership it showed at the 2018 G7 through the Charlevoix Education Initiative. Canada’s leadership put increased attention and focus on the need to invest in girls’ education, especially for those living in countries impacted by conflict and crisis. Backed by its own \$400 million investment, Canada leveraged \$3.2 billion from the G7 and other partners. Canada’s investment alone reached an additional 4 million girls and young women with safe, quality, gender transformative education. Continued investment in girls’ education – where the needs remain significant, and where Canada has developed expertise and shown impact – makes sense.

Canada should also leverage its Feminist International Assistance Policy and expand on its leadership on gender equality through new and additional humanitarian and development programming to support the rights of women and girls in humanitarian emergencies and protracted crises and conflict. The current scale of humanitarian needs is immense, and the protracted nature of many of the world’s crises leaves people living in dire conditions for years. And we know that it is most often women and girls who bear the brunt of humanitarian crises – suffering the most violence, eating the last and the least, and having their rights – including their right to education – stifled. As a feminist leader in international assistance, Canada should increase its investments in addressing gender-based violence, supporting the nutrition and food security of women and girls, supporting women and girls to attain their sexual and reproductive rights in crisis settings, and supporting women’s leadership and local women’s

organizations in humanitarian and protracted crises, including by supporting their critical role in brokering peace – aligned with Canada’s Women Peace and Security agenda. Investing in ‘triple nexus’ – which connects humanitarian, development and peace programming and funding, and allows for flexibility in funding across humanitarian, development and peace programs of work – is key and Canadian partners stand ready to work with Global Affairs Canada on the changes necessary to realize and support ‘triple nexus’ approaches.

Sub-recommendation 1.2: Investments in rights and democracy for a more stable global future by committing to support human rights, civil society and civic space, including by protecting democratic institutions, journalists and free and fair elections.

- Invest an additional **\$150 million in 2024-25** and **\$275 million/year** for an additional four years in programming that supports human rights defenders, civil society, democracy, building on Canada’s leadership supporting women’s rights and feminist movements.

In the context of crack downs on human rights and democracy around the world, and the rise of authoritarian and regressive movements and forces, Canada should increase its support for human rights, civil society and democracy. As a country that stands up as a global defender of human rights, and a country that has launched its bid for a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council, we must match our words with action. Concretely, this could involve support for human rights defenders and human rights education, investments in programs supporting elections and democratic institutions – at all levels of government, support for journalism and a free press, investments in bolstering the enabling environment for civil society, and investments in legal empowerment and the justice system. Gender equality should remain at the centre of these programs, and build on lessons learned through Canada’s leadership supporting women’s rights organizations and feminist movements around the world.

Recommendation 2: Commit that international assistance to Ukraine will be additional to stable or growing assistance to the rest of the world, and track international assistance investments that respond to the war and resulting crisis in Ukraine by launching an Eastern Europe Assistance Tracker.

Canada’s leadership in response to the war in Ukraine should be applauded. Canada is right to show solidarity and support to Ukraine in the face of the Russian invasion. But this support should not be at the expense of other crises that require Canada’s engagement. According to the OECD, in 2022, the world’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Africa was cut by 8%, while aid to Ukraine rose to US\$16 billion.¹² Canada should pledge that its ongoing humanitarian and development assistance to Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees will be additional to existing or growing international assistance to other parts of the world, and it should advocate for other OECD-DAC countries to follow suit. It should also actively promote within the OECD-DAC the establishment of a dedicated Eastern European Assistance tracker, specifically designed to monitor and coordinate humanitarian and development support for Ukraine and other regions impacted by the war in Ukraine.¹³ This would be similar to the separate designation for support to former USSR states in the 1990s.

¹² OECD. (2022). ODA 2022 Summary. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/ODA-2022-summary.pdf>

¹³ Global Canada. (2023). Eastern European Assistance Final Report. Issuu. https://issuu.com/global-canada/docs/230405_eastern_european_assistance_final?fr=sNDY2MzQ0Mzc5MDA

Recommendation 3: Commit to improving budget transparency by publishing additional, forward-looking details on the International Assistance Envelope (IAE) in annual federal budgets.

In the spirit of fostering greater fiscal openness and accountability, we recommend that the government take a comprehensive approach to budget transparency, incorporating specific details related to the International Assistance Envelope (IAE) in annual budgets. We need a step-change on budget transparency: the section on international assistance in the 2023 Budget contained insufficient levels of detail. Adopting these transparency measures not only aligns with principles of good governance but also ensures that the government's commitment to increasing international assistance until 2030 is accompanied by a clear and accountable fiscal framework. This approach contributes to the building of trust among Canadians, policymakers, civil society, and international partners in Canada's global engagement efforts.

Specifically, in Budget 2024, the government should:

- Include figures on the budgeted as well as the estimated actual IAE for the fiscal year preceding the one presented in the budget.
- Present the IAE amount (to the millionth dollar) budgeted for the upcoming fiscal year.
- Project the budgeted IAE for the following five years. Ideally, this projection would run until 2030 – the period for which the government has promised annual increases – but five years is a minimum.
- Present the basic allocation of the IAE by main program areas and implementing departments for the current fiscal year and the previous year.¹⁴

Furthermore, multi-year projections should include a breakdown of the proportion of direct allocations to country partners in assistance programs. This measure aims to move away from funding announcements of repurposed allocations, promoting a commitment to predictability and transparency. When funding announcements and commitments are made, explicit statements should accompany them, clarifying whether the funds are new and additional, or sourced from existing allocations.

Conclusion

As Canada approaches 2025, with the anticipation of assuming the G7 Presidency, and as the world grapples with instability, uncertainty and complexity that we have not seen in decades, Canada must step up globally. Canada must re-affirm its status as a consequential country on the world stage through principled investments in international assistance. Budget 2024 provides a pivotal opportunity to align bold aspirations and concrete financial commitments. The investments and actions recommended in this Budget Submission are relatively modest in the context of growing global needs and demands, yet signal Canada's commitment to global leadership in a world fraught with economic instability, inequality, and geopolitical fractures. These investments are essential for responding to the immense global needs, advancing our own strategic interests, and positioning Canada in the world we want to see for generations to come.

¹⁴ Brian Tomlinson (2023) Canadian Aid Trends Report. AidWatch Canada and Cooperation Canada. <https://cooperation.ca/2023-canadian-aid-trends/>