

Invest in Tomorrow

Submission by Cooperation Canada to Pre-Budget Consultations 2025



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 Tomorrow

Recommendations for Budget 2025

Recommendation 1: We call on Canada to commit an additional **\$650 million per year for four years until 2028/29 in support of young people, especially young women and girls.**

This commitment would include the following measures:

- **Sub-recommendation 1.1:** We call on Canada to **renew its investments to continue the impact driven by the Charlevoix Education Initiative**, as well as to expand the initiative by **launching a new political and financial global commitment to expand education's capacity** to prevent violence, foster social cohesion, promote resiliency and recovery, and build a culture of peace.
- **Sub-recommendation 1.2:** We call on Canada to **continue to advocate for comprehensive women and adolescents' healthcare services**, ensuring proper financing of key programs and empowering all women and girls with the resources and agency to control their bodies and futures, helping to secure the rights of future generations.
- **Sub-recommendation 1.3:** We call on Canada to **spearhead a multi-year commitment to targeted food security and nutrition programs** to address the global food crisis.

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

Recommendation 2: We call on Canada to invest in future generations by building on its existing climate pledge to 2025/26 and **committing its fair share to the next phase of its international climate finance package to begin in 2026/27.**

Recommendation 3: We call on Canada to ensure **commitments to blended finance activities do not come at the expense of other traditional Official Development Assistance (ODA) streams and that their objectives are grounded in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

Recommendation 4: We call on Canada to 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 5: We call on Canada to commit to **improving budget transparency by publishing current and forward-looking details** on the International Assistance Envelope (IAE) in annual federal budgets. Annual Budgets should provide a detailed breakdown of projections for the main components of the IAE, including Canada's climate finance as a separate line item in the IAE.

Context

Canada stands at a pivotal moment in its history. With the world facing unprecedented challenges — from climate change to growing global anti-gender and anti-rights movements to geopolitical tensions as well as extreme inequalities and the erosion in many countries of the rule of law — Canada's leadership, in line with its Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), is more crucial than ever. Central to this leadership is the recognition that substantial investment in tomorrow, in the next generations, in particular women and girls, is not only a moral imperative but also a necessity.

In 2023, up to 757 million people faced hunger,ⁱ including 1 in 4 children under the age of five who live in severe child food poverty.ⁱⁱ Food insecurity and chronic malnutrition disproportionately affects women and girls, hindering their cognitive development and future opportunities. Moreover, 224 million children and adolescents today affected by crisis urgently need support to simply exercise their right to education, with 72 million completely out of school.ⁱⁱⁱ

Underpinning these challenges is an urgent climate crisis, as it continues to reverse development progress significantly and threaten ecosystems and livelihoods worldwide, especially in many lower income countries.

Empowering young people, especially young women, is one of the most effective ways to drive inclusive and sustainable economic development, tackle multidimensional and intergenerational poverty, and promote peace and stability. Research consistently shows that when young individuals are educated, provided adequate infrastructure, and given equal opportunities, their communities thrive.^{iv} For every \$1 of Official Development Assistance invested in children there is a return of \$10 in benefits to the child and broader community.^v Youth want to build a better world, and Canada's strategically placed investments will empower them to forge a more secure, prosperous, and sustainable future.

Invest in Tomorrow: Budget 2025 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: We call on Canada to commit an additional **\$650 million per year for four years until 2028/29 in support of young people, especially young women and girls.**

By investing in health, education, and leadership to ensure respect for human rights for the next generations, Canada can build on its extensive international assistance experience and catalyze transformative change, setting a powerful example for other nations to follow. Accordingly, Canada should step up in 2025 when it will be called to pledge its fair share at global replenishments, including Nutrition for Growth, Gavi, Global Fund, and Global Partnership for Education. This commitment would include the measures outlined below.

Sub-recommendation 1.1: We call on Canada to **renew its investments to continue the impact driven by the Charlevoix Education Initiative**, as well as to expand the initiative by **launching a new political and financial global commitment to expand education's capacity** to prevent violence, foster social cohesion, promote resiliency and recovery, and build a culture of peace.

Canada's investment into the Charlevoix Education Initiative 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. Education is fundamental to empowering girls, notably to assert their rights, and breaking the cycle of poverty.

While Charlevoix began to address the humanitarian-development divide that sees schools the first to close and the last to reopen when crisis erupts, Canada should expand on the Initiative. The focus needs to be on a remaining gap: building the bridge to strengthened peace and human security, globally. In fact, balancing defence and foreign policy conversations to focus on conflict prevention and peacebuilding through education will lead to better use of existing resources, fewer human rights violations, and greater peace and security for the next generation.

Sub-recommendation 1.2: We call on Canada to **continue to advocate for comprehensive women and adolescents' healthcare services**, ensuring proper financing of key programs and empowering all women and girls with the resources and agency to control their bodies and futures, helping to secure the rights of future generations.

Canada should leverage its FIAP and invest in both securing gains already achieved in women and adolescents' health as well as continuing to expand its portfolio in this area, while encouraging other partners and stakeholders to champion these issues.

As a feminist leader in international assistance, Canada should increase its investments in addressing gender-based violence and supporting women and adolescents to attain their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) as fundamental human rights.

On delivery, Canada should focus its efforts on local women and girls' organizations, while centering gender equality in Canada's international assistance programming and staunchly opposing anti-rights movements.

Sub-recommendation 1.3: We call on Canada to **spearhead a multi-year commitment to targeted food security and nutrition programs** to address the global food crisis.

Canada needs to address global hunger and malnutrition with an integrated approach that meets short-term needs while building long-term resilience by reaching beyond the immediate impacts and tackling the systemic drivers. In fact, pursuing solutions that build stability and reduce the likelihood of crises over time will lead to more resilient food systems within more stable societies.

Seeing that women and girls are disproportionately affected by global crises, their empowerment in global food systems should be crucially integrated into all programming. In this regard, working with farmers led associations and enterprises, such as cooperatives, to boost their activities and services is key,^{vi} as is elevating young people's contributions to local and regional food systems.

Food and nutrition security are not simply basic human rights that enable people to thrive; they are a strategic investment for maintaining a stable world order. Only when today's youth have enough

nutritious food to eat will they provoke change leading to their communities' development and break the cycle of poverty for themselves, and generations to follow.

Recommendation 2: We call on Canada to invest in future generations by building on its existing climate pledge to 2025/26 and **committing its fair share to the next phase of its international climate finance package to begin in 2026/27.**

Canada needs to reaffirm its role as a leader in combating climate change at home and globally, as well as be accountable for the consequences of disproportionate climate impacts for billions of people living in low- and middle-income countries. This means significantly increasing its investment in climate justice.

With one year left on its current climate finance commitment, Canada should lay the groundwork to enable a strong funding package set to begin in 2026/27. Tripling the existing pledge to \$15.9 billion over five years, allocating 40% to climate mitigation, 40% to climate adaptation and 20% to loss and damage, would represent a 'good faith contribution' toward meeting Canada's fair share. This increased contribution would need to happen in the context of a growing IAE to ensure that climate finance doesn't take away from other important development priorities. Without a substantial increase in high-quality public climate finance, effective climate justice is impossible, leading to catastrophic outcomes for billions of people now and in the future.

Recommendation 3: We call on Canada to ensure **commitments to blended finance activities do not come at the expense of other traditional Official Development Assistance (ODA) streams and that their objectives are grounded in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

While both blended finance and traditional ODA have their place in the modern development ecosystem, the government should recognize that blended finance is inappropriate in sectors where rights-based approaches are more effective for delivering ODA, especially in essential public goods like health, education, water and sanitation, and climate change adaptation. Additionally, it is not the right tool for addressing the needs of the very poor or for supporting significant civil action, where grant mechanisms are usually preferred.^{vii}

Moreover, Canada should leverage civil society organizations' expertise as both blended finance implementers and catalysts, while creating more space for dialogue, in order to ensure accountability to accomplishing development goals.

Recommendation 4: We call on Canada to 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 5: We call on Canada to commit to **improving budget transparency by publishing current and forward-looking details** on the International Assistance Envelope (IAE) in annual federal budgets. Annual Budgets should provide a detailed breakdown of projections for the main components of the IAE, including Canada's climate finance as a separate line item in the IAE.

Conclusion

As Canada readies itself to assume the G7 Presidency, Budget 2025 provides a pivotal opportunity to align bold aspirations and concrete financial commitments. 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.

ⁱ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, "The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024 – Financing to end hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms," Rome, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd1254en>

ⁱⁱ UNICEF, "1 in 4 children globally live in severe child food poverty due to inequity, conflict, and climate crises," 5 June, 2024, <https://tinyurl.com/2fcj2d5r>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Education Cannot Wait, "Number of Crisis-Impacted Children in Need of Education Support Rises Significantly: Education Cannot Wait Issues New Global Estimates Study," 7 June, 2023, <https://tinyurl.com/4a94jfw>.

^{iv} Hayley Struzik, "5 Reasons Why Empowering Women Leads to Peace, World Vision," World Vision, 12 August, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/3frvtzzz>.

^v World Vision, "Putting Children First for Sustainable Development: The Return on Investment from Aid that Targets Children," 2024, <https://www.wvi.org/nextgen-aid>.

^{vi} SOCODEVI, "Cooperative Development for rural family resilience," 2022, <https://tinyurl.com/39s2kdcw>.

^{vii} Susan Spronk and Karen Spring, "Mapping Blended Finance: What is the Experience of Development Cooperation and Solidarity Organizations in Canada?," June 2024. (Draft)