



**Brief submitted by UNICEF Canada to the House of Commons
Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International
Development**

**A Study on the Canadian Government's Countries of Focus for
Bilateral Development Assistance**

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Written Brief: House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, study on the review of the countries of focus for Canada's bilateral development assistance.

UNICEF Canada written brief, submitted toward the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development's review of the countries of focus for Canada's bilateral development assistance, and consideration of the priority sectoral themes – increasing food security, stimulating sustainable economic growth, and securing the future of children and youth.

UNICEF Canada

As a UN agency, UNICEF is active in 190 countries and we have saved more children's lives than any other humanitarian organization. UNICEF Canada was established 60 years ago and we work tirelessly as part of the global UNICEF family to do whatever it takes to ensure that children and young people survive and thrive, and achieve their fullest potential. We support UNICEF's innovative programs, providing healthcare and immunization, clean water, nutrition, education, emergency relief, and protection from violence and harm.

In Canada, we build awareness, raise funds, and mobilize Canadians across the country to help save the lives of the world's most vulnerable children. We promote public policy and practices in the best interest of children, to contribute to the fulfillment of children's rights in Canada and around the world.

UNICEF and Canada

There is a long history of partnership between UNICEF and Canada to promote the rights of children and youth around the world – and to advance their health and well-being. For decades, we have worked in partnership to address some of the most urgent needs of children and their families in the areas of health, nutrition, child protection, education and emergency assistance. Like UNICEF, Canadians believe that no child is too far.

A new era for sustainable development

2016 is a pivotal and momentous year. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development¹, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)² and the supporting Addis Ababa Action Agenda³ on Financing for Development enter into force. The past weeks have also marked the occasion of the signing of the landmark Paris Agreement⁴ on climate change, and the agreement of the 'Grand Bargain'^{5 6} at the World Humanitarian

¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

² <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

³ http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA_Outcome.pdf

⁴ <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/l09r01.pdf>

Summit – a commitment from donors and aid agencies to make financing in support of humanitarian response more efficient and effective. Combined, these agreements will drive action and investment in nearly every country in the world and form a roadmap, marking a new era for sustainable development and a drive for progress. They shape a new agenda that integrates social, economic and environmental outcomes, underpinned by human rights. This bold agenda represents a renewed sense of need for a global approach to global challenges - such as climate change, the refugee and migrant crisis, the response to extremism and protracted conflicts, and economic uncertainty.

We are encouraged by the commitment of the Government to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.⁷ Like Canada, UNICEF welcomes this ambitious agenda. These global goals provide an historic opportunity to advance the rights and well-being of every child, especially the most disadvantaged and most vulnerable. We believe that healthy, safe, educated and empowered children and young people are the key to a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. We commit to do all that we can to achieve these global goals, in partnerships that go across all sectors, including with the Government of Canada, to scale up what works, innovate for improved solutions and results, measure progress and share lessons learned.

Recommendation: Leadership in driving progress and building momentum to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs must be a central pillar of Canada’s global engagement and the core mission of Canada’s International Assistance.

Moreover, children and youth must be at the heart of delivering this new agenda – their well-being is the ‘litmus test’ for the health and future well-being of our societies. Children still suffer disproportionately from poverty. Adequate and equitable investments in children are a precondition for sustained economic growth. They represent investments in a nation’s future human capital. UNICEF Canada believes that the most effective and efficient use of Canadian International assistance is in addressing the financing gaps in underfunded SDG priority areas with the greatest impacts in achieving progress for children and young people.

This is not just the right thing to do, there are strong economic arguments for investing in children, as supported by the analysis of the Copenhagen Consensus, which identifies the most effective 19 of the 169 SDGs, based on over 100 peer-reviewed analyses from the world’s leading economists and sector experts.⁸ Out of these 19 priority targets, 13 directly relate to child-related outcomes and services – including in health

⁵<https://consultations.worldhumanitariansummit.org/bitcache/49e7f4a097b98159887e398aded818147450fb7?vid=580250&disposition=inline&op=view>

⁶<https://consultations.worldhumanitariansummit.org/bitcache/8ff6102bbf42673cc4146e308cca271d430a9c42?vid=581078&disposition=inline&op=view>

⁷ <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/minister-international-development-and-la-francophonie-mandate-letter>

⁸ <http://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/post-2015-consensus/nobel-laureates-guide-smarter-global-targets-2030>

and nutrition; newborn survival; protection from violence; access to quality education, especially for girls; and early childhood development.⁹

Recommendation: Canada should continue to prioritize children and youth through its International Assistance.

Bilateral assistance: A multi-tiered prioritization framework

UNICEF Canada advocates that the Government of Canada should not pursue a restrictive country-specific approach through an established list of identified priority countries. We believe that in order to be used most effectively, Canada's International Assistance must be nimble and responsive and guided by the overarching principle of advancing sustainable development outcomes for the poorest and most vulnerable. To that end, UNICEF Canada recommends that Canada should concentrate efforts on reaching the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children, youth, and their communities, through a multi-tiered prioritization approach, in support of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. However, it is vital that this flexible and responsive approach is balanced in practice by adequate, predictable and sustained resource commitments to bilateral partners, in line with donorship best practices.^{10 11}

Priority: 1: Reaching the hardest to reach.

UNICEF Canada is encouraged by the Government of Canada's commitment to "refocus Canada's development assistance on helping the poorest and most vulnerable, and supporting fragile states."¹² We cannot reach the SDGs by 2030 without focusing on the needs of those most disadvantaged – and this includes children in fragile settings. Nearly 250 million children, one in nine children globally, live in areas affected by conflict.¹³ Children make up nearly half of the world's displaced people and they are now more than half of all refugees.^{14 15} Millions more are affected by or at risk of natural disasters and extreme weather events, including those caused by climate change, and nearly 160 million children are living in areas of high or extremely high drought severity.¹⁶

Intergenerational cycles of poverty are perpetuated due to repeated and cumulative effects of crises – be they conflict-related, climate-related, health epidemics or socio-economic shocks. To address these chronic cycles of vulnerability, we must address the underlying drivers of inequity and fragility – through the promotion of resilient development. Resilient development means providing children and communities with

⁹ (IBID)

¹⁰ <http://www.oecd.org/development/effectiveness/49066202.pdf>

¹¹ <http://www.ghdinitiative.org/ghd/gns/best-practices.html>

¹² <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/minister-international-development-and-la-francophonie-mandate-letter#sthash.iebO2X1x.dpuf>

¹³ http://www.unicef.org/media/media_89952.html

¹⁴ UNHCR. 2015. Protection and Building Resilience. <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c1e8.html>

¹⁵ UNHCR. 2014. World at War: UNHCR Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2014. Geneva: UNHCR. p2.

¹⁶ http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Unless_we_act_now_The_impact_of_climate_change_on_children.pdf

what they need to better prepare for and better manage crises, and recover from them more rapidly. It means bridging development and humanitarian assistance, supporting countries to ‘build back better,’ integrating risk factors such as climate change into development programming, and strengthening systems that can anticipate as well as absorb shocks.

The 2030 Agenda commits to ensuring that ‘no one is left behind.’¹⁷ The Millennium Development Goals have proven that targets work. We have made tremendous progress and achieved significant and rapid development gains in the past 15 years. However, persistent disparities remain. The principle of equity guides UNICEF’s work with a sharp focus on the world’s most vulnerable children: those from the poorest households, girls, children with disabilities, migrant and refugee children, those living in remote areas, and children from ethnic or religious groups facing discrimination.¹⁸ Failure to invest in these children comes at great social and economic cost.¹⁹ Investing in the most disadvantaged and marginalized children and youth is vital for truly sustainable and inclusive social and economic development. Furthermore, investing to reach the most disadvantaged children first has two key advantages – it allows us to be faster at making progress toward key SDG targets and is more cost-effective than focusing on those easiest to reach.²⁰

Recommendation: Canada should champion the rights and well-being of the world’s most vulnerable children and communities, through an expanded focus on fragile and vulnerable country settings; targeting the most vulnerable populations within a given country; and promoting resilient development approaches.

Priority 2: Protecting hard-earned gains.

Sustainable development means ensuring that progress is continued. Many countries will transition from low-income to middle-income status between 2016 and 2030. However, government capacity to deliver effective, quality social services may lag. UNICEF defines government capacity as ‘a product of country income and government effectiveness.’²¹ It will be critical to continue Canadian support to countries undergoing these economic transitions, to build on the progress made supported by Canadian investments and to ensure that gains for children and communities are sustained and can be taken to scale.

Canada has a demonstrated track record in supporting systems-approaches that build capacity – critical to building the resilience of vulnerable countries and communities to shocks and crises. For example, the Government of Canada has partnered with UNICEF to strengthen health systems through a catalytic initiative in Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique and Niger to train, equip and deploy over 60,000 community

¹⁷ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

¹⁸ http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/For_every_child_a_fair_chance.pdf

¹⁹ http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/For_every_child_a_fair_chance.pdf

²⁰ UNICEF “Narrowing the Gaps”, 2010.

²¹ http://www.unicef.org/health/files/UNICEF_Health_Strategy_Final.pdf

health workers²² – playing a critical role in saving the lives of the most remote communities and also supporting the development of nationally integrated community case management systems.

Recommendation: Canada should work to protect hard-earned gains and build on progress, through support to scale up proven interventions and sustainable approaches that strengthen social systems and build government capacity.

Priority 3: Fostering innovation.

We are pleased that the Government has committed to “foster development innovation and effectiveness.”²³ Through support to big-impact initiatives to improve global health such as Grand Challenges Canada, Canada is in the vanguard of the global social innovation movement. It is fundamental that Canada continue to foster and support excellence in innovative and entrepreneurial approaches to sustainable development challenges, through pioneering new technologies; supporting groundbreaking science and research; and solutions-focused implementation approaches. To ensure that Canada’s International assistance is effective, nimble and responsive, Canada should continue to fund the development and/or scaling-up of leading-edge and cost-effective interventions, regardless of geography.

Recommendation: For Canada to remain at the forefront of innovation, Canada should continue to invest in ‘game-changing’ and innovative initiatives, regardless of geography.

Canada’s comparative advantage: Playing to our strengths

Canada is leading efforts to address some of the greatest global challenges of our time. Further to a proposed multi-tiered prioritization framework for Canadian bilateral assistance, UNICEF Canada has identified four areas where Canada is well-positioned to continue to take the lead:

- 1) Lead ‘last mile’ support for the unfinished agenda of the MDGs in global health and child survival**
- 2) Ensure the protection of children from violence, abuse and exploitation.**
- 3) Work to secure a climate-resilient future for children.**
- 4) Continue leadership in shaping innovative development and climate finance and innovative partnership models to achieve the SDGs.**
- 5) Support the data revolution and evidence-based approaches to achieve sustainable development.**

²² <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cidaweb/cpo.nsf/vWebSEn/CF6916C498390FD9852573C6003CAEDF>

²³ <http://www.international.gc.ca/departement-ministere/priorities-priorites.aspx?lang=eng>

1) Lead ‘last mile’ support for the unfinished agenda of the MDGs in global health and child survival

Canada has a demonstrated track record of saving lives through leadership in Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. Together, UNICEF and Canada have worked in partnership in support of ending the preventable deaths of millions of women and children, through providing vaccines and micronutrient supplements, treating and preventing malaria, diarrhea and pneumonia, training community health workers, registering the births of newborns and strengthening national health systems to reach all women and children.

We are very pleased that Canada will continue to lead efforts in global health and child survival. We welcome the announcement that Canada will host the Fifth Replenishment Conference of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria in Montréal, September 2016.²⁴ We also welcome the Government’s commitment to continue valued Canadian leadership in Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health,²⁵ including through an expanded focus on sexual and reproductive health, adolescent health, and health in fragile contexts – all of which are reflected in the new SDGs. But there is much work to be done to ensure the significant health gains made for women and children in recent years are not lost. Canada’s continued leadership is needed in order to reach those left behind and finish the job of the MDGs.

2) Ensure the protection of children from violence, abuse and exploitation.

Children’s health and well-being cannot be separated from the protection of their rights and protection from violence, abuse and exploitation. This connection was overlooked in the MDGs. Fortunately, with support from Canada,²⁶ protecting children from violence and exploitation is now a central part of the new Agenda for 2030 and reflected in specific targets across the SDGs.

Canada is a respected defender of children’s rights and has a strong history of protecting the world’s most vulnerable children from violence and exploitation. Supporting the protection of children helps to ensure that children who survive and benefit from Canada’s investment in Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, also have the opportunity to thrive, as these two efforts – keeping children healthy and safe – work together.

Specifically, in the context of Canada’s bilateral assistance, we urge Canada to continue to invest in strengthening national-level child protection systems. Canada is one of the foremost - and few - supporters in this area – providing both critical investment and technical capacity building assistance. Without Canada’s continued leadership, we risk undermining the progress made for children.

²⁴ <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/05/09/canada-host-global-fund-replenishment-conference-fight-aids-tuberculosis-and-malaria>

²⁵ <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1040409>

²⁶ http://www.international.gc.ca/development-developpement/priorities-priorites/mdg-omd_consultations.aspx?lang=eng

3) Work to secure a climate-resilient future for children

Children and young people are disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Climate change represents a fundamental threat to their most basic rights and presents numerous challenges to child development, health and well-being, including increased malnutrition through changing agricultural yields and greater risk of disease and death through the higher frequency of extreme weather events. Loss of family livelihoods, migration and family separation following climate related disasters and changing weather patterns can also leave children exposed to the dangers of exploitation, violence and abuse.

We must act now to help children and communities in vulnerable countries adapt to current and future climate shocks and to ensure resilience to future challenges. Developing countries also require technical and financial support to embrace low-carbon development pathways. Investments in adaptation and mitigation will provide a more sustainable, safer and cleaner future for current and future generations.

UNICEF Canada is very pleased by Canada's commitment of \$2.65 billion to address climate change in developing countries.²⁷ This commitment will go a long way to securing the future of millions of children and youth, and their communities. UNICEF Canada is very encouraged by the commitments made by Canada at the COP21 in Paris, to support the poorest and most vulnerable countries, (including specific commitments to the Least Developed Countries Fund²⁸ to support critical adaptation action; support for investments to improve Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS); and Climate Risk Insurance).²⁹

We are further encouraged that Canada is supporting investments in innovation and renewable and sustainable energy—as these can be game changers for children and youth. Access to energy is strongly associated with social and economic development and plays a key role in poverty reduction. Children and youth will be among the most important direct beneficiaries of access to sustainable energy services and their needs and rights should be taken into consideration when developing them.

Through these investments the Government should ensure that Canada's climate financing for low- and lower-middle-income countries is predictable, sustainable and adequate, and supports investments related to climate adaptation that prioritise the strengthening the resilience of the poorest and most vulnerable communities.

4) Continue leadership in shaping innovative development and climate finance, and innovative partnership models to achieve the SDGs.

Investment in sustainable development and the achievement of the SDG targets represents 'shared value' for all sectors of society and an opportunity to forge a more sustainable, inclusive and equitable path to low-carbon economic growth, prosperity and improved social outcomes. As a complement to Overseas

²⁷ <http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2015/11/27/prime-minister-announces-investment-global-climate-change-action>

²⁸ <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1022459>

²⁹ <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1023619>

Development Assistance (ODA), private and ‘blended’ sources of finance will be of increasing importance, as will innovative mechanisms that catalyze sustainable domestic resource-mobilization.

Canada is at the forefront of innovative multilateral development financing initiatives such as the Global Financing Facility for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, the Convergence Blended Finance Platform, and climate financing initiatives such as the Global Green Fund and the African Renewable Energy initiative. Canada is well-placed to continue to play a leadership role in the area of innovative finance, including in the context of bilateral assistance, in support of leveraging private sector investments and private philanthropic contributions. While we welcome Canada’s leadership in promoting innovative ways to finance development projects, ODA continues to remain vitally important for low-income countries that have limited capacity to raise public resources domestically and UNICEF Canada supports calls to halt the decline in ODA flows to the poorest countries.

The SDGs can only be achieved with the involvement of donor and domestic governments, the UN system, civil society, the private sector, philanthropists, and the scientific and academic community. Canada should continue to actively work to foster and support innovative partnerships that bring together actors from all sectors – including a broad range of Canadian actors. We are encouraged by Global Affairs Canada’s efforts to engage with Canadian business to apply their creativity and innovation to solving sustainable development challenges. However, the business sector holds both a leadership and an accountability role in the achievement of the SDGs. The Government of Canada has a responsibility and an opportunity to support Canadian businesses in respecting, supporting and enhancing children’s rights through their operations in low- and middle-income country settings and emerging markets, through the Children’s Rights and Business Principles,³⁰ developed by UNICEF, the UN Global Compact and Save the Children. The Principles have been welcomed by the Government of Canada³¹ and endorsed by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.³²

5) Support the data revolution and evidence-based approaches to achieve sustainable development.

UNICEF Canada shares Canada’s commitment to data and evidence-based policies for results. Not only are evidence-based and impact-focused approaches key to the ‘smart’ investment of Canada’s International Assistance, but credible, quality and timely data are critical to implementing policies and programs that can most improve the outcomes for the most marginalized and vulnerable children and youth. Furthermore, robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks are essential in ensuring accountability for the beneficiaries of Canadian assistance, and in assuring accountability of Canadian tax dollars.

³⁰ <http://childrenandbusiness.org/>

³¹ <http://news.gc.ca/web/article->

[en.do?crtr.sj1D=&crtr.mnthndVI=12&mthd=advSrCh&crtr.dpt1D=6673&nid=934089&crtr.lc1D=&crtr.tp1D=1&crtr.yrStrtVI=2014&crtr.kw=&crtr.dyStrtVI=1&crtr.aud1D=&crtr.mnthStrtVI=1&crtr.page=70&crtr.yrndVI=2014&crtr.dyndVI=31](http://news.gc.ca/web/article-)

³² <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&DocId=8054465&File=69#17>

The Government of Canada should work to leverage globally-recognised Canadian excellence in science and technology innovation, and in research and data excellence, to better support our bilateral partners to improve capacity and track progress against SDG target indicators. Canada has played a constructive role as part of this ‘data revolution’,³³ for example, through the participation of Statistics Canada as part of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators responsible for the development and agreement of the SDG indicators, and through establishing the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Systems.³⁴

³³ <http://www.undatarevolution.org/>

³⁴ <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cidaweb/cpo.nsf/vWebMCSAZEn/3FE6B85E5CB984B685257E850035A092>

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1): Canadian leadership in driving progress and building momentum to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs must be a central pillar of Canada’s global engagement and should form the core mission of Canada’s International Assistance.

Recommendation 2): Canada should continue to prioritize children and youth through its International Assistance, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Bilateral assistance: A multi-tiered prioritization framework

UNICEF Canada advocates that the Government of Canada should not pursue a restrictive country-specific approach through an established list of identified priority countries. We believe that in order to be used most effectively, Canada’s International Assistance must be nimble and responsive and guided by the overarching principle of advancing sustainable development outcomes for the poorest and most vulnerable. To that end, UNICEF Canada recommends that Canada should concentrate efforts on reaching the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children, youth, and their communities, through a multi-tiered prioritization approach, in support of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. However, it is vital that this flexible and responsive approach is balanced in practice by adequate, predictable and sustained resource commitments to bilateral partners, in line with donorship best practices.

Recommendation 3): Canada should champion the rights and well-being of the world’s most vulnerable children and communities, through an expanded focus on fragile and vulnerable country settings; targeting the most vulnerable populations within a given country; and promoting resilient development approaches.

Recommendation 4): Canada should work to protect hard-earned gains and build on progress, through support to scale up proven interventions and sustainable approaches that strengthen social systems and build government capacity.

Recommendation 5): Canada should continue to foster ‘game-changing’ innovation through investment in cutting-edge initiatives, regardless of geography.

Canada’s comparative advantage: Playing to our strengths

Recommendation 6): Canada should continue to lead ‘last mile’ support for the unfinished agenda of the MDGs in global health and child survival.

Recommendation 7): Canada should continue to work to ensure that children are protected from violence, abuse and exploitation, through continued investment in strengthening national-level child protection systems.

Recommendation 8): Canada should build on demonstrated leadership in working to secure a climate-resilient future for children.

Recommendation 9): Canada should continue to pioneer innovative development and climate finance, and innovative partnership models to achieve the SDGs.

Recommendation 10): Canada should continue to champion the data revolution and evidence-based approaches to sustainable development.