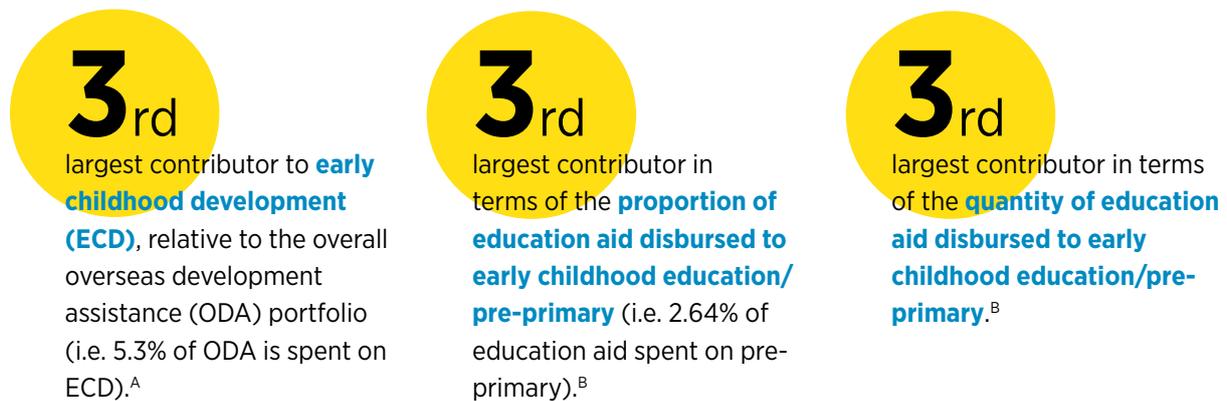


# LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

## Invest in the early years

The Canadian government launched its **Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP)** in June 2017.<sup>1</sup> The ambitious document is **a bold step towards putting women and girls at the centre of its international assistance policy**. As part of its policy commitments, Canada aims to allocate **95% of funding toward empowerment of girls and women by 2022**.

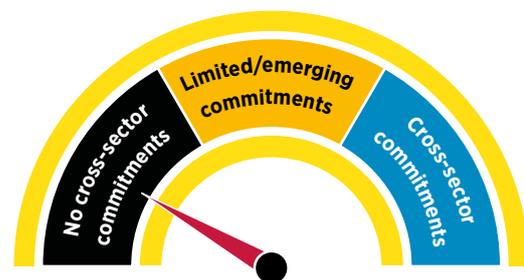
A review across 10 donors showed that in 2017 Canada was the:



### Strategic commitment to early childhood development



### Disability-inclusive early education investment commitments



<sup>A</sup> The table looking at the comparative levels of spending on ECD for the donors in this report can be found in the corresponding global report.

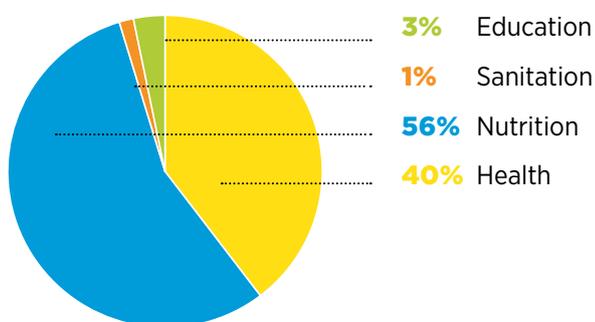
<sup>B</sup> In this report, two aspects were looked at in order to draw a comparison between the aid given to early education by various donors. Firstly, the total amount (quantitative) spent on aid to early education and, secondly, in an attempt to measure donor 'effort', the authors of the report compared the ratio of aid disbursed to the early education subsector to overall aid to the education sector.

## Integrated and inclusive early childhood development

Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy<sup>1</sup> calls for all aid projects to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into six core pillars of work. The pillars are gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; human dignity; inclusive economic growth; environment and climate change; inclusive governance; and peace and security. However, early childhood is largely absent from the Framework, with little explicit focus on young children; nor are there standalone objectives or goals for early childhood development (ECD). The Human Dignity pillar of the framework contains sectoral commitments to areas that would help strength ECD, namely, focusing on initiatives in health, education, nutrition, sexual and reproductive health and rights. Although there is no explicit stand-alone mention of ECD, there are enriching and refocusing aspects within subsectors. These aspects, geared towards young children and families that are at risk, have the potential to result in significant positive effects on populations in adversity.

The absence of a strong focus on very young children, overall, and on an approach that prioritises overcoming multiple and intersectional inequalities through explicit investments in ECD seems like an oversight. Especially since, the framework clearly acknowledges the importance of addressing multiple vulnerabilities and "challenging the discrimination...by recognising that inequalities exist along intersectional lines".<sup>1</sup>

**FIGURE 1 Breakdown of early childhood development ODA across different ECD domains. 2017 constant US\$ disbursements, based on DAC figures**



Source: OECD Creditor Reporting System. Accessed May 2019

Nevertheless, Canada's aid disbursements towards services likely to support ECD remain relatively high when compared to the other donors in this study, with Canada being ranked third out of nine donors relative to overall levels of aid contributed in 2017. This is because Canada provides for large allocations in health and nutrition (see Figure 1). In addition, a scoping of their aid programmes showed that there are pockets of good practice in integrated ECD.<sup>c</sup>

## Supporting early education and pre-primary

Canada does not have a standalone education sector strategy. However, the FIAP does contain a specific commitment towards "improving gender-responsive quality education from pre-primary to end of secondary, particularly for girls".<sup>d,2</sup> As such, this commits Canada to work towards improving the provision of accessible, gender-responsive quality education and learning for all, including the early years.

Financing for education at a sector level remains relatively low and, overall, Canada has not given bilateral aid to education a high priority in recent years. That is relative to signature programmes such as maternal, new-born and child health (MNCH). However, in spite of education not being an overall priority, the early education subsector gains more funding relative to other subsectors than many other donors in this study. Over a five-year period from 2013 to 2017, Canada aid disbursed 3% of aid to the education sector, on average. In quantitative terms, Canada was identified

### BOX 1 The Muskoka Initiative

Canada is a major leader in maternal and child health, most notably since it spearheaded the G8 Muskoka Initiative in 2009, and pledged 3.5 billion Canadian dollars for MNCH for the period 2010 to 2015 (2.6 billion US dollars). The Muskoka commitment was renewed when Canada announced 3.5 billion dollars over five years (2015–2020) to improving reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health (RMNCH)<sup>4</sup> around the world. These commitments have led to Canada standing out in terms of their investments in these areas. The commitment to child and maternal health and nutrition is reflected in very large contributions towards investments in health and basic nutrition as an overall percentage of their aid.

<sup>c</sup> A review of current active projects was carried out for this report within the Canadian Aid Portal with some small projects identified as facilitating an ECD approach, such as in Kenya (see: <https://cidpnsi.ca/foreign-aid-data/>).

<sup>d</sup> Due to new commitments, in total spending terms, the education sector ranked 2nd in 2017, 7th in 2018, and it is predicted that the sector will take 4th place in 2019.

as the 3rd largest contributor to pre-primary in 2017, relative to the donors in this study. Canadian aid to early education was allocated to 33 country recipients between 2012 and 2017. Other major recipients were Global Partnership for Education (GPE), UNICEF and other multilateral actors, such as the World Food Programme (WFP) school feeding projects. It is also one of the top donors to the GPE.<sup>E</sup>

Across the projects classified as pre-primary there were strong investments in gender-responsive education, with the FIAP gender targeting/integrating targets already met.<sup>3</sup> A detailed analysis of the complete data set for investment into early education from 2012 to 2017 found that four countries targeted marginalised and disabled children. The four countries were Bangladesh, Burkina Faso and Mali and each of them were planning to include children with disabilities along with other marginalised groups.<sup>F</sup>

## Health, nutrition and sanitation

### Global health and nutrition are key priorities of

**Canada's development policy.** Within nutrition, the vast majority of Canada's aid is focused on supporting young children and mothers, in a way which supports ECD. In fact, Canada is among the largest bilateral donors to support basic nutrition in support of child and maternal health. The FIAP also includes specific commitments towards continuing to work towards nutrition focused on women and young children notably to "make it easier for women, girls and all young children to access nutritious foods and supplements".<sup>1</sup>

### Meanwhile, sanitation investments were shown to be very small in the most recent years.

There was no focus found on spending in the areas of health, nutrition or sanitation linked to disability-inclusive early-years' service delivery in their most recently available aid disbursements in 2017.

<sup>E</sup> Canada pledged more than 147 million US dollars at the 2018 GPE Financing Conference replenishment.

<sup>F</sup> A review of current active projects was carried out for this report within the Canadian Aid Portal (see: <https://cidpnsi.ca/foreign-aid-data/>).



## Conclusions

Canada has been a solid supporter of the nutrition and health sectors for child and maternal health. Canada's investment in health and nutrition spending has supported millions of mothers and young children to survive; complementing this with investments to help support ECD in other areas, and in support of explicit goals of ECD, can also help millions of young children to thrive. Moreover, investments in ECD can help to achieve greater equity.

Investments in high-quality care and education can also help address multidimensional and intersecting inequalities for young girls and women: because early childhood education improves school readiness, it provides a firm foundation for learning as a child grows, and young girls in particular, who are at a comparative disadvantage to their peers narrow the gap.<sup>5</sup> Investing in early childhood care and education can have an especially large impact on young girls and women because it can also free up women from unpaid care, contributing to greater economic empowerment for women.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, a sharp focus on the most marginalised, such as children with a disability, could address the multidimensional discriminations identified in their framework.

As such, investments across education and parenting, as well as health and nutrition, can help to address multidimensional discrimination for young children and to empower young mothers – helping to deliver the feminist agenda outlined for Canadian aid.

## ABOUT THE RESEARCH REPORT AND DONOR PROFILES

Light for the World and their partners conducted a detailed analysis of the aid disbursements, which 10 donors have committed to support early childhood development. Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, UK and USA are the six bilateral donors reviewed for this report, together with four multilateral donors namely, the European Union, World Bank, UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education. Particular attention is paid in the research to donors' commitments towards children who are vulnerable, or at risk of being marginalised, or delayed in learning due to a disability. For this reason, donors' strategic frameworks were also analysed, in addition to their aid spend.

Light for the World and their partners have provided input to the donor profiles.

## Recommendations

The Canadian government should:

- Outline a strategy or plan for how investments in early childhood education and pre-primary school can help to tackle inequalities in school for young girls, and act as a tool for economic empowerment for women.
- Set timebound targets to make all ODA projects, which potentially support early childhood development, disability-inclusive.
- Increase global early education and pre-primary funding, based on the high returns on early childhood education, and aim to work towards disbursing 10% of their total education aid towards the subsector in the longer term.
- Influence the GPE to increase their focus and investment in early childhood education.
- Make investments in nutrition and health work even harder to help young children thrive by joining up investments across child health and nutrition with an explicit ECD approach.
- Address intersecting inequalities of women and girls by taking a more explicit approach to addressing the needs of the most marginalised, including children with a disability, and those who are at risk of delay in the early years.

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## COMPENDIUM OF ADVOCACY TOOLS

This Donor Profile is one of 10 advocacy briefs for ODA advocacy. There are also four recipient country profiles for national advocacy, as well as a Global Report and a user-friendly checklist to support the design of inclusive ECD programmes which seek to support the most marginalised children.



A Methodology Note providing more information on the process of analysis along with all the tools may be accessed at: [www.light-for-the-world.org/inclusive-ecd-investment](http://www.light-for-the-world.org/inclusive-ecd-investment)