

CanWaCH Submission to the House of Commons Finance Committee in Advance of Federal Budget 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health (CanWaCH) brings together over 100 Canadian organizations working to ensure that women and children worldwide survive and thrive.¹ We believe that a strong and inclusive economy for Canadians depends on global peace, stability and the untapped potential of the most marginalized people globally, particularly women and girls in the global south. The Canadian government has committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (**SDG**), a universal framework that affirms that prosperity, justice, environmental sustainability and human development is a global challenge that requires multilateral efforts.

Ensuring the Canadian economy is more productive and competitive globally requires supporting the poorest and most vulnerable to grow an inclusive global economy that works for everyone. Budget 2018 is an opportunity for Canada to fulfill its commitment to inclusive growth and to women and girls empowered to take full advantage of economic opportunities and decisions critical to their daily lives and livelihoods, as envisioned in Canada's new [Feminist International Assistance Policy](#).

In 2018, Canada will host the G7² and be preparing to host the 2019 Women Deliver Global Conference. Budget 2018 is an opportune moment for Canada to demonstrate global leadership and commitment to deliver on its feminist principles by increasing the International Assistance Envelope and in particular the portion dedicated to Official Development Assistance (ODA). ODA has long played a catalytic role in building communities and economies, supporting the realization of human rights, and is critical to achieving the SDGs. While Canada has been an important global leader on women and children's health, its overall assistance to the people and places that are most vulnerable has fallen to historic lows. Therefore, CanWaCH recommends that Canada's 2018 budget:

1. Commit to increasing ODA by 10% per year to support realizing the SDGs, thereby doubling aid by 2023 and achieving the globally agreed target for ODA of 0.7% of Gross National Income by 2030.
2. Within the above commitment to increasing ODA, the budget should affirm and expand existing investments in women's and children's health (\$3.5 billion by 2020) by committing new, additional resources to close gaps in adolescent health and sexual and reproductive health and rights (**SRHR**).
3. Budget 2018 should affirm Canada's commitment to sustained global leadership on women's and children's health and promoting predictability in aid flows by pledging to renew investments in mutually reinforcing reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (**RMNCAH**) and SRHR interventions at levels greater than existing investments beyond 2020.

We thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the pre-budget review process and would welcome appearing before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance to provide greater insight into any of the above recommendations. We also welcome the opportunity to share our interesting work around data advocacy and public engagement in relation to international development assistance.

¹ The [Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health](#) (CanWaCH) is a unique and innovative Canadian multi-stakeholder partnership that includes Canadian NGOs, academic institutions and health professional associations who work in over 1000 regions globally to improve the health and lives of women, children and adolescents in the world's poorest countries. Together we have the evidence-base and experience to implement and drive results for the most vulnerable.

² As Canada prepares to host G7 2018, of note is the [2017 G7 Roadmap for a Gender-Responsive Economic Environment](#), which calls for investments in health, well-being and nutrition to promote women and girls' full economic empowerment and their crucial role as agents for change.

BACKGROUND

In an interconnected global economy, opportunities for individual Canadians and Canadian businesses are intimately linked to inclusive and stable growth that works for everyone, including women and girls who represent more than 50% of the global population. The Canadian economy thrives when businesses have new markets in which to sell and invest. Conversely, instability and poor global growth causes havoc for businesses as markets shut down and access to primary resources or labour markets are disrupted. Thus, as Canada makes critical investments in our own economy for increased productivity and competitiveness in Budget 2018, we must think equally about how to support the pre-conditions for a strong and inclusive economy through investments in human development overseas.

Canada's support of a global, gender-transformative economy is one that not only works for a prosperous and safe Canada, but also for the poorest and most vulnerable so they too have the opportunity to thrive. Aligned with this global outlook is Canada's new Feminist International Assistance Policy, which makes a commitment to women and girls including their economic empowerment. This means ensuring they have greater control over their access to comprehensive health, nutrition and education services, including their SRHR. Empowering women and children to live to their full potential so they can grow, learn, earn and lead, will contribute to their economic success, poverty reduction and gender equality.

While trade and defence are two tools that Canada has at its disposal, ODA continues to play a unique role in alleviating poverty and building a peaceful, inclusive and prosperous global economy. ODA is also a critical tool in promoting the realization of human rights and gender equality—a critical economic issue. Investing in women and girls are values that Canadians believe should be enjoyed universally and have also long been argued by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and many others as a critical prerequisite for sustainable development and pro-poor growth.³ For example, \$12 trillion could be added to global GDP by 2025 by advancing women's equality.⁴

When **every woman and every girl everywhere** can choose whether, when and with whom she has children, and when that choice is met with adequate, comprehensive and age appropriate services, we lay the foundation for economic empowerment and gender equality. For example, every day approximately 830 women die from pregnancy or childbirth related complications, which equates to one woman every two minutes.⁵ Globally, the second leading cause of death for adolescent girls (15-19 years) is complications due to pregnancy and three million adolescent girls undergo unsafe abortions.⁶ Yet, if we meet the need for modern contraception and provide all pregnant women and newborns with quality care, maternal deaths will decrease 67% and newborn deaths will decrease 77% respectively.⁷

While we are investing in women, we also have to invest in children to achieve the goal of ending poverty, respecting human rights and gender equality. As Akinqumi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank, has stated: "Stunted children today lead to stunted economies tomorrow." One of the most precious commodities for a parent is time and having a sick child takes a parent's full attention. By ensuring that children have appropriate neo-natal care, vaccination, nutrition, and early childhood development interventions, we lay the foundation for not only addressing their basic needs and rights, but success in school and the workforce. This investment makes economic sense. For example, malnutrition costs the global economy \$3.5 trillion annually.⁸ Yet simple cost-effective interventions exist. Every dollar spent

³ OECD (2012). Promoting Pro-Poor Growth : the role of empowerment www.oecd.org/dac/povertyreduction/50157530.pdf

⁴ McKinsey Global Institute (2015) How Advancing Women's Equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth <http://www.mckinsey.com>

⁵ UNFPA (2016). Maternal Health Overview <http://www.unfpa.org/maternal-health>

⁶ WHO (2014). Media Centre: Adolescent Pregnancy Fact Sheet <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs364/en/>

⁷ Every Woman Every Child (2015). The Global Strategy (2016-2030) <http://globalstrategyreport2016-2030>

⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2017). Nutrition Key Facts <http://www.fao.org/nutrition/en/>

towards achieving breastfeeding targets generates a return of \$35 in economic benefits as well as improved cognitive development and child survival rates that contribute to future economic gains.⁹

When adolescent girls and boys have access to programs that promote gender equality through transforming the way they relate to each other, we consolidate the foundation for changing harmful gender norms that perpetuate early pregnancy, early and forced marriage, gender-based violence, economic disempowerment and systemic gender discrimination. For example, every year 15 million girls, or 28 girls a minute, are forced into early marriage.¹⁰ To change harmful practices like this, Canadian investments can support gender equality through keeping girls in school which provides a space to facilitate education about their rights and health, and helps to make headway on child marriage, nutrition, family planning, maternal health, and sex-selective abortion.¹¹

The health of women and children has been a cornerstone of Canada's work to promote gender equality and human rights, build fair and thriving economies and reinforce stability globally. For Canada to be a leader on the world stage and follow through on its laudable commitment to realize the Feminist International Assistance Policy and the SDGs at home and abroad, will require significant, sustained and predictable investment in the lives of women and children globally. While we have seen significant progress in lowering mortality rates for women and children, progress has been uneven as the most marginalized did not benefit equally from investments. To reach those who have been left behind requires bold investments. As a result, this submission makes three interconnected and actionable recommendations for increased investment in international development in Budget 2018.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Increase Investment in Official Development Assistance

While Canada has made significant investments in international women and children's health, overall, Canadian ODA has been falling since 2011.¹² Canada's investment in ODA (0.26% GNI in 2016) has fallen well below the average country effort of OECD DAC members of 0.40%. If Canada is going to fulfill the ambitious mandate laid out for the Minister of International Development of refocusing Canada's development assistance on helping the poorest and most vulnerable, and supporting fragile states, Canada must commit adequate resources to achieve its development objectives.

Our ODA budget must reflect the fact that, just as human rights are indivisible, so is progress on development objectives.¹³ We must therefore commit adequate resources to ensure that development objectives are not pitted against one another but pursued in tandem in ways that are effective and efficient. **CanWaCH recommends Canada commit to increasing ODA by 10% per year to support realizing the SDGs—thereby doubling aid by 2023 and achieving the internationally agreed to target for ODA of 0.7% of Gross National Income by 2030.**

⁹ Global Breastfeeding Collective (2017). The Investment Case for Breastfeeding <https://thousanddays.org/>

¹⁰ Girls Not Brides (2017). About Child Marriage <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage>

¹¹ McKinsey Global Institute (2015) How Advancing Women's Equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth <http://www.mckinsey.com>

¹² While one off-concessional loan to the Ukraine and refugee resettlement costs in 2015-2016 increased ODA levels, these investments, while important, do not translate into increases in the international assistance envelope, the amount of money Canada invests in development and humanitarian programming (See CCIC, "Smart, Transparent, and Impactful AID Submission to Consultations on Budget 2016", p. 2 for full details http://www.ccic.ca/Brief_Budget_2016.pdf)

¹³ Development objectives, such as economic empowerment, access to health, nutrition, clean water and sanitation, protection and education are interlinked and must be mutually addressed and supported through investments for lasting progress.

2. Affirm and Expand ODA to Women and Children's Health

In 2015, Canada committed \$3.5 billion in funding over 5 years (2015-2020) to women and children's health. In 2017, Canada further committed a \$650 million investment towards women's empowerment, including SRHR. To maximize impact, Canada's efforts to improve the health and rights of women and children must be new and additional to existing commitments. These new investments are the right and smart thing to do: every dollar spent globally on interventions promoting maternal, newborn and child health would reap up to \$120 in benefits.¹⁴

Budget 2018 should, consistent with the mandate letter for the Minister for International Development, confirm **Canada's intention to maintain and expand its investment women's and children's health by supporting comprehensive integrated package of health and nutrition interventions across the continuum of care and announce new, additional resources to close gaps in adolescent health and sexual reproductive health and rights.**

3. Indicate Renewed and Expanded Investments in Women and Children's Health Beyond 2020

While Canada's support to women's and children's health up to 2020 is crucial and greatly appreciated, for Canadian organizations and multilateral partners to be effective in sustaining their efforts to achieve the health related SDGs requires predictable and sustained Canadian investment in an expanded RMNCAH and rights agenda beyond 2020. This expanded agenda is necessary to pursue a comprehensive and integrated approach to health and nutrition and to account for the increased upfront costs of reaching those living in fragile contexts.

By 2030, over two-thirds of the world's extreme poor will be living in fragility, through a combination of poor governance, violence, poverty, inequality, corruption, injustice and environmental vulnerability.¹⁵ Vulnerable populations remain more likely to die of preventable causes than their counterparts in more stable contexts: 60% of preventable maternal deaths, 53% of deaths in children younger than five years and 45% of neonatal deaths take place in fragile settings of conflict, displacement, and natural disasters. While the upfront costs of responding in fragile contexts may be higher, the dividends and yield of impact from interventions are greater.¹⁶ To reach the hardest to reach will continue to require significant ODA funding.

Budget 2018 is a critical opportunity to affirm Canada's commitment to predictable and effective aid to achieve the health related SDGs and support the *Every Woman Every Child Global Strategy's* everywhere agenda by committing to **renew investments in mutually reinforcing RMNCAH and SRHR interventions at levels greater than existing investments beyond 2020.** Consistent with the principles of the [ODA Accountability Act](#), Canada should further affirm that these resources will prioritize investments in the people and places in greatest need taking into account international human rights standards and the perspectives of those living in poverty.

¹⁴ World Health Organization (2015). Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2015: WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, The World Bank and the United Nations Population Division. <http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/monitoring/maternal-mortality-2015/en/>

¹⁵ OECD (2015). *States of Fragility 2015: Meeting Post-2015 Ambitions*, OECD Publishing, Paris. Retrieved: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/governance-peace/publications/documentuploads/SOF2015.pdf>

¹⁶ UNICEF (2010) "Narrowing the Gaps to Meet the Goals," report concludes that investing to reach the most disadvantaged children first has two key advantages: (1) it allows us to be faster at making progress toward key global targets ; and (2) it is more cost-effective than focusing on those easiest to reach, as the majority of deaths occur in fragility where services are weak or non-existent so larger gains within interventions can be made http://www.unicef.org/media/files/Narrowing_the_Gaps