



CanWaCH

Canadian Partnership for
Women and Children's Health

CanSFE

Partenariat canadien pour
la santé des femmes et des enfants

**House of Commons Standing
Committee on Finance**

Pre-Budget Consultations

**Testimony by the Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health (CanWaCH)
Dr. Helen Scott, Executive Director
October 20, 2017**

Dear Committee members,

CanWaCH is a network of Canadian non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, and health professional associations, - researchers, doctors, nurses and midwives, from coast to coast - working together to improve the health and lives of women and children in the world's poorest countries. Our partnership is focused on getting the most out of every dollar invested in global health through efficiency and collaboration.

We know that healthy women and children are foundational to building healthier and more productive economies and our research shows us that Canadians care greatly.

Budget 2018 is the time for Canada to *ensure that empowered women and girls can take full advantage of economic opportunities and decisions critical to their health, daily lives and livelihoods*. This vision is reflected in Canada's new [Feminist International Assistance Policy](#) and the [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

To meet this vision, CanWaCH has two recommendations for Budget 2018.

First, we recommend that Canada meet its international commitments and does its fair share to build a prosperous and peaceful world by committing to a timetable of at least a 12 percent annual increase to our International Assistance Envelope starting in 2018.

We are proud that Canada's development assistance is reducing global poverty and making the world safer while also advancing Canada's security, prosperity and values at home and abroad. Opportunities and productivity for Canadians are directly linked to inclusive and stable growth that works for everyone.

In a global economy, that means *greater prosperity for Canadians* by strengthening our international market share. Research indicates that countries receiving development assistance import more Canadian goods than they would without aid. Although it's not the

purpose of international aid, this is a positive byproduct. In fact, one dollar in aid can contribute to \$1.19 in exported goods.¹

The Government of Canada has stated that it will “restore and renew” Canada’s international assistance and “re-engage globally.” Since Canada is at its lowest Official Development Assistance levels in decades, responsible increases are urgently needed to ensure continued Canadian global leadership.

Second, we recommend that Canada affirm and expand its current commitments to women and children’s health.

This is the smartest investment with the greatest dividends.

Since 1990, rates of maternal and child death have been cut in half, with thanks to Canadian leadership and investment.² However, at current funding levels, we are at risk of losing these significant gains.

The stakes are high.

One woman dies every two minutes from pregnancy or childbirth related complications.³ And 16,000 children will die today from preventable causes.⁴

Yet, we know what to do. With access to basic, quality health care and modern contraception, maternal deaths will decrease 67 percent and newborn deaths by 77 percent.⁵

The hardest hit by extreme poverty, the effects of climate change and humanitarian crisis are women and girls and they must be at the heart of ending extreme poverty. Women and girls should be afforded every opportunity and every right to ensure that they can grow, learn, earn and lead. This requires access to basic healthcare, including addressing gaps in sexual and reproductive health and challenging harmful practices that perpetuate early pregnancy, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation, gender-based violence, economic disempowerment and gender discrimination.

¹ Martínez-Zarzoso, I., Nowak-Lehmann, F., Klasen, S. & Johannsen, F., 2016. Does German Development Aid boost German Exports and German Employment? A Sectoral Level Analysis. *Journal of Economics and Statistics*, 236(1), pp. 71-94.

² Wang et al. (2015) Global, regional and national levels of neonatal and under-5 mortality during 1990-2015. *Lancet*. Vol 384.

³ UNFPA (2016). Maternal Health Overview <http://www.unfpa.org/maternal-health>

⁴ UNICEF (2016) A fair chance for every child. https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/UNICEF_SOWC_2016.pdf

⁵ Every Woman Every Child (2015). The Global Strategy (2016-2030) <http://globalstrategyreport2016-2030>

The investment case is clear. Investing in women and children's health yields at least a 10-fold return through better educational attainments, workforce participation and social contributions.^{6,7,8,9,10} Investments in early childhood and adolescent health and development yield at least US\$100 billion in demographic dividends.^{4,5}

Canada's history of contributing to a healthy and prosperous world by investing in the health and rights of the most vulnerable populations is at risk and can only be safeguarded with renewed investment *now*.

In closing, we urge you to strengthen Canada's international assistance in Budget 2018 to reflect these Canadian values and so that together, we can ensure every woman, adolescent and child survives and thrives *everywhere*.

Thank you.

⁶ Stenberg K, Axelson H, Sheehan P, et al. Advancing social and economic development by investing in women's and children's health: a new Global Investment Framework. *The Lancet* 2014; 383: 1333-54. 14.

⁷ Jamison DT, Summers LH, Alleyne G, et al. Global health 2035: a world converging within a generation. *The Lancet* 2013; 382: 1898-955.

⁸ Heckman J. 4 big benefits of investing in early childhood development. 2015. <http://heckmanequation.org/content/resource/4-big-benefits-investing-early-childhood-development>.

⁹ The power of 1.8 billion: adolescents, youth and the transformation of the future. New York: UNFPA, 2014.

¹⁰ Maternal and Child Nutrition series. *The Lancet* 2013; 382. <http://www.thelancet.com/series/maternal-and-childnutrition>