



Sustainable Results for Children:
Submission for Review of International
Assistance Program
July, 2016

Introduction

The Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children (CCRC)ⁱ agrees with much of the analysis in the discussion paper, the stated issues, and objectives for this review of Canada's international assistance program. We agree with the importance of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, including the imperatives of universality and reaching the most vulnerable populations. We also note that, in addition to poverty reduction, the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act requires that all programming must be "consistent with international human rights standards" (paragraph 4). This is an important, timely, and unrealized objective that is critically important for this review.

To achieve the stated goals the CCRC proposes a feasible but significant change in Canada's approach to policies and programs for international assistance.

Recommendations

The CCRC recommends that the Convention on the Rights of the Child be adopted as the framework for all programming that relates to children and young people. This is a positive and robust way to address the challenges in the discussion paper, meet the objectives of the review, contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and fulfill the department's legislative obligations.

A shift from treating children's rights as one small area of programming to using the Convention as the framework for all programming that affects children is feasible and would have far-reaching, cost-effective impacts for the limited resources available. It would also help to foster policy coherence between aid and other areas of foreign policy, such as trade, security, and diplomacy. Within development programming itself, Canada should continue to make children and youth a sectoral priority. Below are ten benefits of this recommendation.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child:

- provides a **holistic framework that can integrate all the different aspects of development**, with respect for all young people as persons with rights as the central focus.
- has been **ratified by almost all countries and can help to integrate the work of most international actors**, including UN agencies, international human rights and development organizations, security organizations, and civil society groups in recipient and donor countries. Rights-based approaches to international assistance are already used by many other donor countries and international organizations, are reflected in recent international agreements about development, and help to implement the combined focus on universality and vulnerable groups in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- puts **children first, but includes other actors**, such as communities, and addresses the crucial role of good governance for children and young people.

- addresses **all rights and recognizes their intersections**, avoiding the negative impacts of focusing on any one issue and ignoring other equally important factors in the lives of young people. It would strengthen Canada’s focus on intersectionality – understanding children, and particularly girls, not as homogenous groups but as persons facing different overlapping vulnerabilities that must be addressed at multiple levels at the same time.
- includes a **healthy environment** as part of a right to health and **sustainable economic and social development**, within an integrated framework that considers both the present and future of young people. In keeping with the SDGs, it would help Canada promote clean, sustainable growth that integrates a focus on the fulfillment of children’s rights.
- requires assessing the impacts of proposed activities for **girls and boys separately**, allowing for a **specific focus on girls with a gender-transformative approach, without ignoring the role of men and boys**. Assessing impacts for different genders and different vulnerable groups of children is essential for the advancement of equality and respect for the rights of all.
- supports the **agency and empowerment of both girls and boys in rights-respecting relationships** with both women and men, at all levels of society.
- uses the principle of “**evolving capacity**” **to allow attention to adolescence without using arbitrary age designations** and to effectively address the crucial transitions from one stage of development to another into adulthood, within a larger, seamless framework.
- assists in achieving **policy coherence** in Canada by facilitating influence with other branches of Global Affairs, as well as with other government departments and jurisdictions and civil society, which are also to be guided by human rights commitments, as are all branches of recipient governments, who have also ratified the Convention.
- provides **helpful guidance in specific areas** through its General Comments, such as the General Comments on the Rights of Indigenous Children, Participation, Protection, Education, and others, which are already internationally recognized.

As a tool to implement this policy direction, the CCRC recommends the use of Child Rights Impact Assessments (CRIAs), including a vulnerability analysis, in line with the SDGs’ stated goal of reaching the most vulnerable and “leaving no one behind.” This should be clearly stated in Canada’s renewed policy and should be applied to determine who are the most excluded or marginalized in a particular context and what the appropriate basket of interventions should be to realize their rights. It is also a tool for identifying and addressing how all aspects of Canada’s international assistance programming affects children and young people.

Consistent use of CRIA would greatly expand the impact of very specific child-focused interventions by addressing related factors; and it would improve sustainability and coherence. The use of CRIA is growing, as reflected in the *EU–UNICEF Toolkit for Children’s Rights in International Development Assistance*.ⁱⁱ Support and leadership by Canada in this field would be a strategic investment with major long-term, sustainable impacts.

Summary

Among all the suggestions that will be received in the current review, this is one choice for a policy direction that is feasible, low-cost, and would have major positive impacts in terms of aid effectiveness. It would help to address the challenges in the current global context in an integrated way, increase policy coherence in Canada and in recipient countries, and strengthen Canada's reputation and impact within the global community.

The CCRC recommends that:

1. Canada establish the Convention on the Rights of the Child as the framework for all international assistance programming that relates to young people; and
2. Global Affairs Canada systemically use a Child Rights Impact Assessment to identify, assess, and address impacts of all aspects of international assistance programs and other foreign policy decisions for children and young people.

Members of the CCRC are willing to answer any questions, provide further information, and work with Global Affairs Canada in an on-going way to implement this shift, for the benefit of children and young people around the globe.

ⁱ The Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children (CCRC) is an umbrella network of organizations and individuals across Canada who work with children in Canada and in other countries, with the common goal of advancing fulfillment of children's rights as articulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

ⁱⁱ EU-UNICEF. "Child Impact Assessment," Module 5, in *Child Rights Toolkit: Integrating Child Rights in Development Co-operation*. Guidelines prepared by the EU Commissioner for International Development and UNICEF. Copyright UNICEF Programme Division, 2014.