

**Written Submission for Pre-Budget Consultations
in Advance of the 2020 Budget**



Rohingya children in a refugee camp in Bangladesh. Photo by Jon Warren.

**Submitted by World Vision Canada
August 2019**

Recommendation 1: That the Government of Canada increase its funding to children living in fragile contexts to at least 20% of total Canadian Official Development Assistance (ODA) to foster global prosperity, peace, and sustainable development. This should be within the context of 35% of total ODA being directed to fragile contexts, and predictable funding through a timetable of ambitious and strategic investments in international assistance.

Recommendation 2: That the government advance the rights of children living in fragile contexts to be healthy, educated, protected and participating through foreign policy and international assistance investments which:

- a) support preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding;
- b) promote child-focused initiatives and outcomes;
- c) ensure context-specific action in humanitarian, development and peace programming;
- d) strengthen protective systems for children at multiple levels.

Recommendation 3: That the government establish a Global Children's Advisory Council to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Protecting and promoting the rights of the most vulnerable children in fragile contexts is essential to achieving global – and Canadian – prosperity.

Today two billion people live in countries where development outcomes are deeply affected by fragility, conflict and violence. By 2030, the share of extreme poor living in fragile and conflict-affected contexts is projected to reach more than 80 per cent, the majority of whom will be children.¹

The children of today are the leaders of tomorrow: the wellbeing and contributions of girls and boys in these contexts will be key to long-term global peace, stability and sustainable development.

In addition to being moral and humanitarian imperatives, Canada’s support to children in fragile contexts will be essential to our long-term economic growth, with emerging markets’ share of Canadian exports set to double that of developed markets by 2020.² Research has found that every dollar of Official Development Assistance (ODA) provides an average return of \$1.19 in Canadian exports.³

What are fragile contexts?

In fragile contexts political and social stresses result in extreme vulnerability of children to violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. In some fragile and conflict-affected contexts the government is unable or unwilling to ensure the basic rights and well-being of its population and lacks the capacity to manage conflict without violence. In extreme cases the state may be either non-existent or actively involved in perpetrating violence against its people. Fragility and conflict are neither fixed nor immutable but move along a spectrum. They can affect entire countries or be contained in particular parts of a country, and they can cross borders to affect neighbouring states that are vulnerable to instability.

Fragile contexts are some of the most dangerous places in the world to be a child. In these contexts, girls and boys face extreme violations of their rights, including abuse, exploitation, and violence, often resulting from – and perpetuating the cycle of - unequal gender and power dynamics. Children living in fragile contexts experience some of the highest levels of food insecurity, malnutrition and mortality rates. Girls and boys in these contexts are nearly three times more likely to be out of primary school than in other low-income countries.⁴

Today’s children will form the largest generation in history. By 2030, the population of 15-24 year-olds will increase by nearly 100 million, primarily in Africa and Asia where the majority of

¹ OECD (2018), [States of Fragility 2018](#).

² Export Development Canada (2019). [Global Export Forecast, Spring 2019](#).

³ Canadian International Development Platform (2017), [Trade with Developing Countries and Development Assistance](#) (Working Paper).

⁴ DFID (2015), [‘Delivering Quality Education in Protracted Crises: A Discussion Paper’](#).

fragile contexts are situated.⁵ Investing in girls and boys in these contexts will be essential to ensure the peace, stability, and sustainable development the Canadian economy depends on.

Without urgent and increased action to advance the rights of children living in fragile contexts, Canada and its partners will fail to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals’ commitment to ‘leave no one behind’ and impede progress on critical foreign and defense, development, and international trade objectives.

What is needed for children in fragile contexts?

In fragile contexts, those with a responsibility to care for children are unable or unwilling to do so. These are places where ‘emergencies’ can continue for decades, and where humanitarian action is a temporary and inadequate response to what are, at their core, geopolitical, development, governance, economic and state-building failures. In these contexts natural disasters and climate change often exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and/or cause new ones.

International assistance programming in fragile contexts can be extremely complex, with frequent, rapid, and profound changes in context. Flexibility and consistency need to be held in careful balance.

Our recommendations reflect World Vision’s experience and learnings from our extensive work with children and their families in fragile contexts.⁶

Recommendation 1: *That the Government of Canada increase its funding to children living in fragile contexts to at least 20% of total Canadian Official Development Assistance (ODA) to foster global prosperity, peace, and sustainable development. This should be within the context of 35% of total ODA being directed to fragile contexts, and predictable funding through a timetable of ambitious and strategic investments in international assistance.*

While ODA is not the whole solution to achieving the 2030 Agenda, it remains crucial in meeting urgent needs and realizing the rights of the poorest and most vulnerable, especially children. ODA is particularly needed in fragile contexts where government capacity is often weakened or non-existent, other modalities of funding often aren’t viable, and needs are greatest.

Recent clarity from Global Affairs Canada on humanitarian funding has been welcome, given the immense structural, political, economic and social challenges faced in fragile contexts. Canada will need to double down not only on life-saving humanitarian assistance but also longer-term assistance for the most vulnerable girls and boys in fragile contexts, to help bridge the divide between humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding and broader development efforts.

Recent research conducted by the Canadian International Development Platform in partnership with World Vision found that USD \$510 million, or 16 per cent, of total Canadian project-level

⁵ UNDESA (2015), [Youth Population Trends and Sustainable Development](#).

⁶ In 2018, World Vision directly reached 10.1 million of the most vulnerable people in 10 of the most fragile countries where we operate: Syria, South Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Pakistan, Burundi. Almost 60 per cent of those reached were children.

ODA went to projects in fragile contexts that were child-related or focused.⁷ Given the proportion of girls and boys in fragile contexts and how significant their well-being is to realizing the 2030 Agenda and Canadian and global prosperity, this is an area where much greater investment is needed.

Reaching the most vulnerable in fragile contexts costs more money, yet it is the ‘last mile’ without which we cannot assure sustainable transitions and realize inclusive economic growth for everyone. By committing to new and additional funds to children in fragile contexts, Canada can demonstrate leadership on the world stage, contribute to saving more lives, promoting the rights of the most vulnerable, strengthening communities, addressing systemic inequality and reducing conflict. Taken together, such investments create a safer and more prosperous world, while also creating clear returns for Canada and Canadians.

Recommendation 2: *That the government advance the rights of children living in fragile contexts to be healthy, educated, protected and participating through foreign policy and international assistance investments which:*

a) support preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding

Lasting solutions in fragile contexts require focusing on the core issues of peace, social cohesion, and good governance. This includes investing long-term political will as well as technical and financial resources to address disputes between state and non-state actors before they lead to violence and conflict. This is done most effectively by building the capacity of states to support peace and reconciliation processes, including local capacities for peace, and increasing mediation capacity and informal diplomacy.

Canada also has an opportunity to promote a greater role for children and youth in the peace and security agenda, which focuses on their potential as peacebuilders and counters pressures towards radicalization and migration.

b) promote child-focused initiatives and outcomes

Transformational change, especially in constantly evolving contexts of fragility, is more successful when informed by the voices, intersectional needs, and solutions of the people intended to benefit from interventions. Yet, the voices of affected people, especially women and children, and their expectations are largely missing from decision-making in humanitarian, development and peace efforts. Urgent efforts are needed for Canada to shift spending to invest in and grow child-focused initiatives that can join and accelerate local, national and global progress to realize the 2030 Agenda in fragile contexts.

For Canada to achieve our international development, trade and foreign policy objectives, we need to continue to increase our support to fragile contexts and local women’s and youth initiatives while taking the next crucial step of growing child-focused initiatives that put girls’ and boys’ needs, contributions, and voices at the heart of our efforts.

⁷ Publication forthcoming.

Canada's support to fragile contexts will also need to include adequate funding for monitoring and evaluation to be better able to learn, adapt, and be effective in contributing to concrete, tangible improvements in the lives of the most vulnerable children.

c) ensure context-specific action in humanitarian, development and peace programming

At the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, the international community committed to a “new way of working” to transcend the humanitarian-development-peace divide. As an organization that works across this humanitarian-development-peace “nexus,” we believe effective programming must be both context-specific and context-appropriate. Moreover, to adapt to rapidly evolving situations, Canada's international assistance must respond quickly and effectively to ensure the most vulnerable children and families have the tools and support to survive; simultaneously and consistently assistance must address the root causes of fragility, catalyzing recovery and bringing hope to the affected population.

Context-specific action in fragile contexts requires that Global Affairs Canada:

- (1) Mandate regular impact-focused and people-centered joint context analysis to develop a shared understanding of the context that will equip operational staff to make and implement principled, evidence-based decisions;
- (2) Consult with partners to redefine and accept increased levels of risk by all departments engaged in supporting fragile contexts, including flexibility in planning, implementation and sustainable funding of core programmes and strategies.

d) strengthen protective systems for children at multiple levels

Programmes must first and foremost focus on strengthening systems that build and reinforce a protective environment for the world's most vulnerable girls and boys. This includes strengthening: (1) community-based/kinship systems; (2) local government structures; (3) national systems; (4) global safety-net and social protection systems, including the international humanitarian system; (5) advocacy movements for social cohesion and child rights, led by children and youth at the local, national, regional and international levels.

Recent research, however, indicates that Canada is currently spending very little on child protection, with only USD \$74 million, or 2.4 per cent, of total Canadian ODA spending going to projects that included child protection activities in 2017.⁸ Separate research has identified that Canada spent only USD \$0.57 million on child protection activities within its humanitarian funding in 2018 – the lowest reported level since 2010.⁹

Recommendation 3: *That the government establish a Global Children's Advisory Council to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Development.*

⁸ Publication forthcoming.

⁹ Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (2019), [Unprotected: crisis in humanitarian funding for child protection](#).

Girls and boys should not be treated as passive recipients or beneficiaries of Canada's international assistance. The best way to ensure children's unique perspectives and voice are considered in decisions affecting them – as is enshrined in The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* – is to create opportunities for them to engage with decision-makers. A children's advisory council comprised of young global leaders – including those from fragile contexts – would be an invaluable means for girls' and boys' experiences, needs and assets to be reflected in the above-mentioned priorities for Canada's international assistance and foreign policy.

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