



BRIEFING PAPER

Canada's Aid Marker for Gender Equality

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Canada's Aid Marker for Gender Equality

1. What is the Gender Equality Marker?

1. Starting from 2007, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD DAC began publishing a biannual report on "[Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment](#)." These reports were based on an "aid marker" system, in which DAC donors were requested to categorize their bilateral aid commitments according to three levels of purpose:

0: "Not targeted" means that the activity was screened for promoting gender equality, but was found to not be targeted to it."

1: "Significant" means gender equality was an important, but secondary objective of the activity."

2: "Principal" means gender equality was an explicit objective of the activity and fundamental in its design. "

These reports averaged over two years, the reported bilateral commitments made in a calendar year (multi-year total aid promises for an aid project in the year the commitment was made, in contrast to annual disbursements) for each of these markers. The calculation is based on the total value of the project for each marker, irrespective for example of the degree to which gender equality is a proportion of a project's commitment for marker 1.

2. In 2011, CIDA¹ at the time began publishing an [historical project data set](#), which also sets out a "policy marker" for gender equality. However, CIDA's policy marker has four possible values, measuring the level of integration into CIDA project activities:

0: There are **no gender equality results**

1: There are gender equality **results at the immediate outcome** level

2: There are gender equality **results at the intermediate outcome** level

3: Gender equality is the **principal objective and result** of the initiative

Unlike the DAC marker, this CIDA marker is applied to all CIDA financed aid activities, including both bilateral and multilateral assistance, based on disbursement amounts in a given fiscal year (April to March).

¹ The institutional identification, "CIDA," is used in this Note as all of the Canadian ODA references pre-date the merger of CIDA with DFAIT.

2. The DAC Gender Marker: Canada's Performance

Table One: DAC Gender Marker: Canada

Average Bilateral Commitments; million US\$

Marker	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2010-2011
Principal	\$101.0	\$53.0	\$592.0	\$1,080.0
Significant	\$814.0	\$853.0	\$569.0	\$485.0
Not Marked	\$851.0	\$1,165.0	\$1,273.0	\$947.0
Total Screened	\$1,766.0	\$2,071.0	\$2,434.0	\$2,512.0

Source: DAC Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Various Years

Note: The marker system was not fully implemented in the early years (2006-2007 and 2007-2008) in this chart.

3. CIDA's bilateral commitments to the gender equality marker, principal, in projects where "gender equality was an explicit objective of the activity and fundamental in its design," increased remarkably from 2008-2009 period to the 2010-2011 period. In this last period this marker made up fully 43% of all marked projects. No other donor came anywhere near this performance for the principal marker: Australia – 17.7%; Sweden – 16.6%; Belgium – 13.7%; Finland – 5.9%. As a result, in a recent report by AWID, Canada was praised as "a major supporter of women's rights, dedicating an unusually high proportion of its aid - e.g. 43% of all screened aid for 2010-2011 – to gender equality, which it categorized as a "principal objective."²

4. While Canada has had a robust policy on gender equality and women's rights, is this praise for 43% of its bilateral commitments where gender equality was fundamental to the project's design, justly deserved? What lies behind these numbers reported by Canada to the DAC for these two years? How does it compare to the CIDA markers for gender equality in the Historical Project Data Set?

² Angelika Arutyunova and Cindy Clark, *Watering the Leaves, Starving the Roots: The Status of Financing for Women's Rights and Gender Equality*, AWID, 2013, page 53, accessed November 2013 at <http://www.awid.org/Library/Watering-the-Leaves-Starving-the-Roots>

3. CIDA's Gender Marker: Canada's Performance

Table Two: CIDA Gender Markers, 2010/11 and 2011/12

All CIDA Branches; Millions of Cdn\$

Marker	2010/11	%age of CIDA IAE	2011/12	%age of CIDA IAE	2-Year Average	%age of CIDA IAE
Millions of Cdn \$						
Marker 0	\$1,219.3	36.4%	\$951.8	25.8%	\$1,085.6	30.8%
Marker 1	\$933.4	27.9%	\$1,681.5	45.5%	\$1,307.5	37.1%
Marker 2	\$1,122.0	33.5%	\$1,005.6	27.2%	\$1,063.8	30.2%
Marker 3	\$73.3	2.2%	\$55.2	1.5%	\$64.3	1.8%
Total CIDA IAE	\$3,348.0		\$3,694.1		\$3,521.1	

Table Three: CIDA Gender Markers, 2010/11 and 2011/12

Bilateral Only; Millions of Cdn\$

Marker	2010/11	%age of CIDA IAE	2011/12	%age of CIDA IAE	2-Year Average	%age of CIDA IAE
Millions of Cdn \$						
Marker 0	\$639.8	33.9%	\$397.0	24.6%	\$518.4	29.6%
Marker 1	\$299.9	15.7%	\$346.3	21.4%	\$323.1	18.5%
Marker 2	\$884.4	46.4%	\$827.8	51.3%	\$856.1	48.9%
Marker 3	\$61.0	3.2%	\$44.0	2.7%	\$52.5	3.0%
Total CIDA IAE	\$1,885.1		\$1,615.1		\$1,750.1	

5. While CIDA's marker is calculated on a different basis than the DAC marker, it is significant that projects marked where "gender equality is the principal objective and result of the initiative" are only 3.0% of bilateral project disbursements in the two-year average of 2010/11 and 2011/12 (Table 3). In the DAC report for the 2010 and 2011 period, Canada reported 43% of bilateral projects had gender equality as a principal purpose. Projects identified by the CIDA marker where "there are gender equality results at the intermediate outcome level" account for 48.9% of the total bilateral projects marked.

6. In a response to an inquiry, officials in DFATD responsible for ODA statistics noted that at some point in the past few years CIDA decided to equate the DAC marker 2 (principal) with the CIDA marker 3 (principal) plus the CIDA marker 2 (intermediate outcome).³ But is this

³ Note that taking this equation into account, Canada's numbers for the DAC and the Historical Data Set will differ significantly due to the fact that the DAC amounts are in US dollars, based on a calendar (not fiscal) year, and are an average of multi-year commitments for two years, not annual disbursements for these years.

a fair equation? Can formerly CIDA projects marked 2 (intermediate outcome) be assessed as projects where “gender equality was an explicit objective of the activity and fundamental in its design”, the DAC definition of its marker 2?

7. The CIDA Historical Data Set records tens of thousands of aid transactions, making it difficult to assess the nature of the projects marked by CIDA as gender equality 2 (intermediate outcome). But it is possible to identify the 20 largest project disbursements marked 2 in 2011/12 and to consult the CIDA Project Browser to review a short description of the project and its expected results. One would expect to see gender equality, the rights of women and girls, figuring prominently in this description and reported results, consistent with the definition of the DAC marker 2. Table Four (next page) sets out the results of this exercise (the text of the project descriptions can be found in Annex One).

8. These 20 project disbursed a total of \$70.6 million, or 8.5% of the total disbursements in 2011/12 with a CIDA gender equality marker at the level of 2. Of these 20 projects, according to the project browser description,

- 9 projects, representing 55.1% of the value of the \$70.6 million disbursements, made no mention of gender equality and/or women or children as beneficiaries.
- 1 project only (#6), representing 3.7% of the value of the \$70.6 million disbursements, indicated a major focus on the interests of women in the project design and implementation. This project alone among the 20 could be considered consistent with the DAC marker for “principal” focus on gender equality.
- 10 projects (#s 2, 5, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19), representing 41.2% of the value of the \$70,6 million disbursements, indicated that women and children were among the beneficiaries and/or that gender equality goals were taken into account in the project design. These projects likely qualify as consistent with the DAC marker 1 for “significant” focus on gender equality.

4. Conclusions

9. The inclusion by CIDA of this sample of 20 largest project disbursements marked by CIDA as having gender equality intermediate outcomes, in the DAC system as projects having gender equality as the principal purpose, would clearly highly exaggerate the level of Canada’s commitment to projects with the intended purposes for the DAC marker. Given the relatively small sample of these 20 projects in the total disbursements for CIDA’s gender marker 2, the results cannot be directly extrapolated to the full \$827.8 million disbursements for marker2 in 2011/12. But it does raise serious caution about taking the CIDA report to the DAC on its gender equality marker for 2010/2011 at face value. Officials responsible for Canada’s aid statistical reports to the DAC indicate that there may be a review of the current methodology for reporting the gender marker to the DAC. The need for such a review is strongly indicated by the results of this study of the 20 projects.