Trends in Canadian Aid

Briefing Note Three

Tracking ODA for Reducing Poverty and Inequalities: The Core Poverty Accountability Standard (CPAS), A new accountability metric

July 2026

Prepared for Cooperation Canada

Brian Tomlinson
AidWatch Canada

AidWatch Canada
Promoting Social Justice

Preface and Acknowledgements

In January 2025, Cooperation Canada and AidWatch Canada published a series of Briefing Notes,[1] which provided an overview of main trends in Canadian ODA since 2015/16. The scope and allocations for Canadian aid have shifted over this past decade, responding to urgent global challenges (the pandemic and a deepening climate crisis) as well as Canadian foreign policy preoccupations (Ukraine) and trade and investment challenges. Documenting changes in the Canadian aid context can serve as a foundation for understanding the current unravelling of international cooperation and to inform advocacy directions for feminist aid priorities that focus on reducing poverty and inequalities.

In May 2026, Cooperation Canada commissioned AidWatch Canada to update these four Briefing Notes, taking account recent transformations in Canadian development cooperation with the most recent aid data for 2024/25. These Briefing Notes are organized around four thematic areas:

1) Overall Trends in Canadian ODA: What are key factors affecting its volume and allocations?

2) What issues and approaches are driving the changing priorities in Canadian ODA?

3) Tracking ODA for Reducing Poverty and Inequalities: The Core Poverty Accountability Standard (CPAS), A new accountability metric, and

4) What are the main channels for Delivering Canadian ODA, including multilateral organizations and CSOs?

They will be continued to be updated periodically, talking account the changing dynamics of development cooperation in the coming years.

I am very appreciative of the leadership and support by Paul Farran, Director of Policy and Advocacy, and Darron Seller-Peritz, Policy Analyst and Program Officer, with Cooperation Canada. Darron has encouraged and facilitated the research in every iteration and has generously arranged Cooperation Canada's financial support for the work needed to bring together these updated Briefing Papers. Paul and Darron provided thoughtful input into the development of the four Papers along with careful copy editing of the text and suggestions for its improvement. Comments by Vitalice Meja, Reality of Aid Africa, and Didier Jacobs, Oxfam International, on an earlier draft were also very helpful in clarifying the intentions of the Briefing Note.

The author alone is responsible for the content, calculations, and any errors or omissions in the analysis. The resulting Briefing Papers do not imply agreement by Cooperation Canada's Board of Directors or the Board of Directors of AidWatch Canada.

Brian Tomlinson
AidWatch Canada
July 2026

[1] See https://aidwatchcanada.ca/canadian-aid-trends/ for the 2025 Briefing Notes and a summary article by Brian Tomlinson and Darron Seller-Peritz.

Table of Contents

Highlights **3**

1. Introduction: Growing Poverty and Inequalities **5**

2. The ODA Accountability Act: Safeguarding Canadian ODA focus on poverty and inequalities **6**

3. Why do we need a measure to track aid allocations for reducing poverty and inequalities **7**

4. Developing a New Metric: The Core Poverty Accountability Standard (CPAS) **10**

4.1 What is included in CPAS? **10**

4.2 What is excluded from CPAS? **11**

5. Recent Trends in the Core Poverty Accountability Standard **12**

6. Disaggregating the trends for the Core Poverty Accountability Standard **14**

6.1 Allocation to LDCs and Extreme Fragile Contexts is the major component 15

6.2 Humanitarian assistance a significant priority in CPAS 15

6.3 Civil Society Organizations play a major role in delivering CPAS 15

6.4 Consistent with FIAP, gender equality is fully represented In the CPAS 16

6.5 CPAS sector allocations concentrate in emergency response and health 19

6.6 Adaptation finance under-represented in CPAS 20

7. Ways Forward **20**

Annex One: Core Poverty Accountability Standard: What is included? **22**

Annex Two: Disaggregating the Core Poverty Accountability Standard **21**

Annex Three: Core Poverty Accountability Standard: Sector Allocations, 2022/23 and 2019/20 **26**

Tracking ODA for Reducing Poverty and Inequalities: The Core Poverty Accountability Standard (CPAS), A new accountability metric

Summary Highlights

Multi-dimensional poverty and inequalities are growing in the global south, requiring sustained investments in development cooperation, in the context of persistent and multiple crises encompassing war, climate change impacts, the weaponization of trade, and geopolitical tensions. The latter are creating competing demands on Canadian ODA for domestic and foreign policy priorities.

1. The need to track aid allocations for poverty and inequality Aid is not only declining as a financial resource; it is also changing directions towards provider economic and security interests, under the guise of pursuing "mutual interests" with partner countries in the global south. Over the past decade, OECD DAC members have also changed accounting practices, undermining the credibility of ODA. They have broadened the rules for ODA to include an expanding range of activities (e.g. private sector instruments, climate mitigation) and ways of accounting for loans, creating the appearance of a much larger pool of resources, much of which does not directly address poverty and inequalities. The central purpose of aid, as a resource for reducing poverty and inequalities is being obscured and diminished.

This reality requires new approaches for safeguarding the original purposes of ODA – approaches that tracks and holds providers accountable for aid flows that directly affect the lives of the most vulnerable and those living in poverty.

2. The *Core Poverty Accountability Standard* (CPAS) measures the extent to which aid allocations contribute to direct poverty eradication through six key elements:

1. All ODA to Least Developed and Other Low-Income Countries
2. All ODA to Extreme Fragile Contexts (not included in #1)
3. All ODA to ODA-Eligible Small Island Developing States (not included in #1)
4. All ODA dedicated to Humanitarian Assistance (not included in #1, #2 or #3)
5. Core Poverty-Oriented ODA only (defined by select sector and purpose CRS codes) in Lower Middle-Income Countries (not included in #2 and #3)
6. Core Poverty-Oriented ODA only (defined by select sector and purpose CRS codes) in Regional Allocations for Africa and South Asia.

3. CPAS does not replace ODA, but is a metric that measures resource flows within ODA. As an accountability metric it is limited in scope in tracking only resource flows. Poverty accountability should also be understood as accountability for shifting power and decision making in strengthening recipient ownership and community agency. It should also assess transformative activity that address conditions that keep people poor and sustain inequalities. Such accountability is beyond the potential of a numeric metric that traces resource flows. Rather CPAS may enable greater attention to countries and sectors that are foundational for defending the poverty-focus for ODA, in a policy environment where such a focus may be marginalized.

4. The Core Poverty Accountability Standard is declining as a share of Canadian ODA While the average dollar value of $4,175 million has been maintained since 2020/21, CPAS has declined as a share of Canadian ODA – by 8% as a proportion of total ODA, and by 6 % when excluding COVID-19 Control and support for Ukraine. CPAS was 66% of Canadian ODA in 2019/20, but only 53% in 2024/25 (excluding in-donor refugee costs).

5. Cooperation Canada is calling upon the Government to protect a minimum of $5,500 million in Canadian ODA for the poorest countries and people, in the context of projected aid cuts through to 2029/30. This minimum does not prevent the Government from allocating additional ODA for other countries and sectoral priorities.

6. There are several notable trends in the allocations to the Core Poverty Accountability Standard up to 2024/25:

- Least developed countries and countries with extreme fragility make up two thirds of the Standard.
- On average, humanitarian assistance is approximately 25% of CPAS allocations in recent years.
- Gender equality and the rights of women and girls is fully embedded in the Core Poverty Accountability Standard, with 80% of CPAS allocations having significant purpose gender equality objectives, and 19% exclusively focusing on gender equality (principal purpose). The latter is higher than bilateral ODA at 15%.
- Reproductive health, basic & general health sectors accounted for 27% of CPAS allocations in 2024/25.

7. CSOs play a major role in the delivery of CPAS. In the delivery of CPAS, multilateral organizations account for close to two-thirds, and CSOs for one third. But within bilateral CPAS, CSOs channeled 48% of CPAS activities (excluding Ukraine and Covid-19 Control) in 2024/25, rising from 34% in 2020/21. CSOs implemented 74% of CPAS activities exclusively focused on women's rights in 2024/25.

The Core Poverty Accountability Standard:
A new accountability metric for reducing poverty and inequalities

1. Introduction: Growing poverty and inequality

The international community is far off track to achieve the ambitious goals of Agenda 2030 for eliminating poverty and substantially reducing inequalities.[2] Poverty and inequalities are growing. The UNDP's Multi-dimensional Poverty Index shows that 1.1 billion out of 6.3 billion people (18.3%) live in acute multi-dimensional poverty, half of them children.[3]

According to the annual UN report on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), "an additional 23 million people were pushed into extreme poverty and over 100 million more suffered from hunger in 2022 [in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic] compared to 2019."[4] These levels of poverty have been compounded by more recent wars in the Middle East, Sudan and Ukraine. A UNDP rapid assessment of the impact of the Iran war estimates that up to 32 million additional people are at risk of falling into poverty globally, including about 8.8 million in the Asia-Pacific region.[5]

Low-income, least developed countries, are home to 400 million people living in multidimensional poverty, making up 63% of the population of these countries. The majority of people living in poverty (740 million) are found in Middle-Income Countries, particularly in Lower Middle-Income Countries. According to the latest Multi-dimensional Poverty Index report:

> "More than half the world's multidimensionally poor people, around 637 million people (55.5 percent), live in lower-middle-income countries. These countries account for 48.7 percent of the population covered by the global MPI. Poverty there tends to be widespread and deeply entrenched, with 38.9 percent of poor people (248 million) experiencing severe poverty. Around 16.8 percent of the total population is at risk of falling into multidimensional poverty."[6]

---

[2] United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2025,* accessed at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2025/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2025.pdf.

[3] UNDP, *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2025: Overlapping Hardships, Poverty and Climate Hazards*, October 2025, accessed at https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/mpireport2025en.pdf. The percentage share is of population in the countries covered by the Index.

[4] Ibid, p.3.

[5] UNDP, "Military escalation in Middle East could push more than 30 million people into poverty worldwide, UN Development Programme warns," April 13, 2026, accessed at https://www.undp.org/press-releases/military-escalation-middle-east-could-push-more-30-million-people-poverty-worldwide-un-development-programme-warns#:~:text=Military%20escalation%20in%20Middle%20East%20could%20push,Development%20Programme%20warns.%20United%20Nations%20Development%20Programme.

[6] UNDP, *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2025,* op. cit., p.6.

2. The ODA Accountability Act: Safeguarding Canadian ODA focus on poverty and inequalities

In 2008 the Canadian parliament adopted the ODA Accountability Act, whose intent has been to safeguard the focus of Canadian ODA on activities that contribute to reducing poverty and inequalities. This Act obliges the relevant Minister to confirm that all approved ODA activities,

> "(a) contributes to poverty reduction;
> (b) takes into account the perspectives of the poor; and
> (c) is consistent with international human rights standards."[7]

In a series of interpretations of the Act, published by GAC in 2015, but no longer accessible, meeting the first criteria "should show a clear relationship between the initiative's activities/outputs and an expected outcome that can reasonably be expected to contribute to poverty reduction." Moreover, the initiative "should be able to demonstrate, at a minimum, that such perspectives have been sought and considered when designing the intervention or at the very early stage of implementation." Consistent with human rights standards is interpreted to mean that initiatives "should be able to demonstrate, at a minimum, that it can reasonably expect to "do no harm", meaning that due diligence is exercised to avoid undermining human rights in the country or community."[8]

The 2017 Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), which remains in effect, commits Canada to "concentrate Canada's international assistance in a way that will significantly improve the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable, including those living in fragile states."[9] The FIAP has had a positive impact on Canadian aid priorities. There has been a major scaling up of resources for sexual and reproductive health and rights, flexible funding for women's rights organizations, stronger women, peace and security initiatives, and consistent actions to improve global norms and standards around these issues.[10]

---

[7] Government of Canada, "Official Development Assistance Accountability Act," SC 2008, C17, accessed at https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/O-2.8/page-1.html.

[8] Global Affairs Canada, "Official Development Assistance Accountability Act – Contributing to Poverty Reduction," 2018; "Official Development Assistance Accountability Act - Taking Into Account the Perspectives of the Poor," 2018; and "Official Development Assistance Accountability Act - Consistency with International Human Rights Standards," 2015, no longer accessible on GAC's web site, but accessible at https://aidwatchcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Official-Development-Assistance-Accountability-Act-%E2%80%93-Contributing-to-Poverty-Reduction.pdf, https://aidwatchcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Official-Development-Assistance-Accountability-Act-Taking-Account-the-Perspectives-of-the-Poor.pdf, and https://aidwatchcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Official-Development-Assistance-Accountability-Act-International-Human-Rights-Standards.pdf.

[9] Government of Canada, "Feminist International Assistance Policy," 2017, page vii, accessed at https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/assets/pdfs/iap2-eng.pdf?_ga=2.86693201.833977450.1732978736-338376184.1705449268.

[10] See Heather Dicks and Beth Woroniuk, *Follow the Money: A Quantitative Review of Canada's International Assistance Investments in Gender Equality*, Equality Fund, October 2025, accessed at https://assets.equalityfund.ca/files/v49loltj/production/a5b7feceb1c5ec311ba6d797a7032a4f4665fcd5.pdf and Bénédicte Santoire, *Holding the Line on Gender Equality: Evidence to inform the future of Canada's International Assistance Policy*, Cooperation Canada, March 2026, accessed at https://cooperation.ca/holding-the-line-on-gender-equality-evidence-to-inform-the-future-of-canadas-feminist-international-assistance-policy-fiap/.

Yet, also in recent years, these aid priorities have been under increasing pressure with both declining aid resources (see **Briefing Note One**) and competing demands on these diminishing resources (see **Briefing Note Two**). ODA has become the answer for every major international agenda, in response to impacts of wars and worsening humanitarian contexts across the globe, addressing global public goods such as climate mitigation and pandemics, rising pressures and costs associated with growing refugee flows to provider countries, and the breakdown in international trade relations. Competing agendas for aid creates confusion around its central purposes and ultimately reduces its effectiveness as a catalyst for poverty reduction.

Those most vulnerable to multidimensional poverty and climate adversity (countries and populations within countries) will be sidelined by programmatic shifts towards these diverse priorities.[11] Canadian ODA may be relatively modest, but it is a unique policy resource. Civil society has long argued, with strong public support, that this resource can and should be directed exclusively to addressing conditions that sustain poverty and inequality for the most vulnerable.

In a context where Canadian ODA is increasingly responding to multiple Canadian foreign policy agendas, how can these poverty/inequality objectives be ensured and central to the allocations of this aid?

3. Why do we need a measure to track aid allocations for reducing poverty and inequalities?

Aid is not only declining as a financial resource; it is also changing directions towards provider economic and security interests, under the guise of pursuing "mutual interests" with partner countries in the global south. Over the past decade, OECD DAC members have broadened the rules and changed accounting practices, undermining the credibility of the ODA metric. They have included an expanding range of activities (e.g. private sector instruments, climate mitigation) and accounting rules for loans, creating the appearance of a much larger pool of resources, much of which does not directly address poverty and inequalities. The central purpose of aid, as a resource for reducing poverty and inequalities has been obscured and diminished.

Globally, the OECD DAC has confirmed that DAC members, including Canada, reduced their ODA by 23% overall in 2025. This was on top of a 9% cut the previous year. In doing so, these providers have not protected the poorest and most vulnerable, with humanitarian assistance dropping dramatically by 36%, aid to Least Developed Countries declining by 26% to its lowest level since 2008, and aid to Sub-Sharan Africa also by 26%, its lowest level since 2005.[12]

[11] Jesse Chase-Lubitz, "Global aid is leaving the poorest behind, new report claims," DevEx, January 28, 2026, accessed at https://www.devex.com/news/global-aid-is-leaving-the-poorest-behind-new-report-warns-111742.

[12] OECD DAC, "Preliminary Official Development Assistance in 2025," April 2026, accessed at https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD(2026)8/en/pdf. More recent projections by the OECD DAC suggest that aid to Least Developed Countries and Sub-Saharan Africa will fall by a further 11% in 2026. See "ODA projections for 2026 and the near-term: Implications for vulnerable countries and sectors," June 2026, accessed at https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oda-projections-for-2026-and-the-near-term_d7c74fa2-en.html.

While the demise of USAID has been a large factor in these declines, all major DAC providers have reduced their aid over the past three years, with more cuts to come in 2026 and 2027. Canada is among the providers cutting their aid, with substantial reductions out to 2029.

These shifts are not accidental. Aid is not only declining; it reflects changing priorities but also directions. Aid priorities are moving away from actions that directly address poverty and inequalities, towards a catalyst for promoting provider trade and investment interests and responding to geopolitical priorities. These dimensions have always been present in providers' allocation of ODA, to greater or lesser degree. But the scale and comprehensiveness of these shifts are not periodic adjustments in provider priorities, but rather transformational across the provider community. They are systemically hollowing out the areas of long-term development and humanitarian assistance that matter the most for vulnerable populations.[13]

According to the 2026 G7 Development Ministers, "our aim is to build a reformed development system based on mutually beneficial partnerships, that take into account our strategic interests and those of our partners." [emphasis added, note the order of priority in this statement.][14] In a context where multilateral norms and commitments are increasingly sidelined, multiple global crisis, genocidal conflicts, Russian military aggression, and a weaponization of economic competition are driving provider priorities.

Provider governments, including Canada, are arguing that aid must be reframed around "mutual benefits," in which provider security and economic interests rise to the forefront for a declining aid resource with shifting priorities.[15] In Canada this is manifest in a comprehensive focus on a trade-development nexus for Canadian ODA and a new policy framework, the Mutual Economic Partnership Policy, yet to be made public (as of May 2026).

Over the past decade, OECD DAC members have been reviewing the ODA metric "modernizing it to capture more of providers resource flows in support the economic and social development of countries in the global south. The result is a metric that has broadened ODA to include an expanding range of activities and accounting practices, creating the appearance of a much larger pool of resources, much of which does not directly address poverty and inequalities. These changes have undermined the credibility of the ODA metric as a measure of provider efforts relating to these core purposes.

---

[13] See Vitalice Meja, "Aid is Not Declining. It is being Replaced," Reality of Aid Africa, May 2026, accessed at https://roaafrica.org/main/view_resource/55.

[14] G7 Ministerial Communique, Paris, April 30, 2026, accessed at https://www.g7.utoronto.ca/dev/260430-communique.html. See also the 2026 G7 statement on development cooperation: "Leaders' declaration on mutually beneficial international partnerships," June 2026 at https://www.pm.gc.ca/en/news/statements/2026/06/16/leaders-declaration-mutually-beneficial-international-partnerships.

[15] Matthew Simonds, "Aid is being redefined around self-interest – it doesn't have to be," Eurodad, May 18, 2026, accessed at https://www.eurodad.org/aid_is_being_redefined_around_self_interest_it_doesnt_have_to_be. See also Charles Kojo et. al, "Beyond Aid: A Global Majority manifesto for the 2026 Global Partnership Conference," May 12, 2026, accessible at https://www.bond.org.uk/news/2026/05/beyond-aid-a-global-majority-manifesto-for-the-2026-global-partnerships-conference/.

Modernization measures have included important clarifications in the inclusion of activities for peace operations in ODA. They have retained different supports for refugees in provider countries, vastly inflating ODA in the past five years. They have allowed in-kind provision of COVID-19 vaccines and activities related to migration control (particularly for European providers). Climate finance has become a major component of ODA, with substantial allocations to climate mitigation – a global public good that benefits all countries, not just those in the developing world. As such it should be excluded.

Accounting for aid has also changed. DAC members have implemented a grant-equivalency approach to loans through a differential formula for low income, lower middle-income and upper middle-income countries. CSOs suggest that these formulae may inflate grant equivalencies and permit double counting for debt cancellation. After long debates, providers also agreed to include official support for Private Sector Instruments (PSIs), such as FinDev Canada, which finance private sector initiatives in developing countries. This inclusion has been especially controversial, as it allows ODA to be counted in support of non-concessional initiatives, particularly in upper middle-income countries. Concessionality (loans at below market rate loans) has been the cornerstone that has traditionally defined ODA.[16] Now providers must only demonstrate financial and "development" additionality for these PSIs.

As these new directions are increasingly driven by provider economic and foreign policy interests and as ODA has become a catch-all resource for addressing global challenges, the central purpose of aid is becoming both obscured and diminished. At a time when aid is declining as a resource, it is essential to reassert its core value as a catalyst for reducing poverty and inequalities.

To address some of these challenges, a new metric is proposed – the Core Poverty Accountability Standard (CPAS) – which would not replace ODA, but would clarify the resources within ODA that have the potential to directly affect conditions of poverty and inequality. Such a metric is a modest contribution in that it measures only resource flows based on readily available data. It does not address crucial issues of recipient ownership and community agency in the global south, that is, "taking account the perspectives of the poor" in implementing aid activities. Poverty accountability should also be understood as accountability for shifting power and decision-making closer to those most affected. Such accountability is beyond the potential for numeric metric on resource flows.

Nor does CPAS necessarily focus on activities that are transformational in moving people out of poverty, and whether they are changing conditions that keep people poor and sustaining inequalities. Such an understanding requires not only deeper analysis of impacts of aid flows, but equally important, an inclusive assessment by those in the global south most affected by those flows.

[16] For the latest rules, see OECD DAC, "Official Development Assistance – definition and coverage," accessed at https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/oda-eligibility-and-conditions/official-development-assistance--definition-and-coverage.html and "Development Finance Statistics – Resources for reporting," accessed at https://www.oecd.org/en/data/insights/data-explainers/2024/10/resources-for-reporting-development-finance-statistics.html.

CPAS' scope in measurement (see the next section) does not limit providers' allocations to broader dimensions of addressing poverty, in creating jobs through improving formal productive capacities, for example. Rather it is a contribution that may enable greater attention to countries and sectors that are foundational for defending the poverty-focus of aid in an environment where the potential for marginalizing people living in poverty and those experiencing high vulnerability is growing.

4. Developing a New Metric: The Core Poverty Accountability Standard

4.1 What is included in the Core Poverty Accountability Standard?

The Core Poverty Accountability Standard includes aid to countries and contexts (LDCs and extreme fragile contexts), where poverty, vulnerability and inequalities are pervasive and alternative source of finance very limited. Climate vulnerable ODA-eligible SIDS are included. While aid to poverty-oriented sectors is included for Lower Middle-Income countries, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa regions, CPAS excludes Upper Middle-Income countries, regions and sectors with access to a range of alternative development finance modalities.

In response to this growing and competing demands on ODA, Cooperation Canada and AidWatch Canada have put forward the **Core Poverty Accountability Standard (CPAS)**, which is intended to track aid flows that directly affect the lives of the most vulnerable and those living in conditions of poverty.

This metric is composed of six key elements:

1. All ODA to Least Developed and Other Low-Income Countries
2. All ODA to Extreme Fragile Contexts (not included in #1)
3. All ODA to ODA-eligible Small Island Developing States (not included in #1)
4. All ODA dedicated to Humanitarian Assistance (not included in #1, #2 or #3)
5. Core Poverty-Oriented ODA only (defined by select sector and purpose CRS codes) in Lower Middle-Income Countries (not included in #2 and #3)
6. Core Poverty-Oriented ODA only (defined by select sector and purpose CRS codes) in Regional Allocations for Africa and South Asia

The United Nations defines Least Developed Countries (LDCs) as those facing severe structural impediments to sustainable development, including weak human assets, very low gross national include, and high vulnerability to economic and climatic shocks. Aid should prioritize these countries due to their exceptional development challenges and limited capacity to mobilize resources domestically or externally. Extreme fragile contexts have been defined by the OECD DAC as contexts that are characterized by profound structural and systemic vulnerabilities, often including protracted conflict.[17] All ODA to these countries is considered closely focused on poverty and inequalities because these conditions are embedded across all sectors of development. The countries included can be found in **Annex One**.

[17] See OECD DAC, *States of Fragility, 2025,* 2025, accessed at https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2025/02/states-of-fragility-2025_c9080496.html

All humanitarian assistance is included in CPAS as this assistance is intended for the protection of the lives, dignity and basic needs of people facing crisis, extreme vulnerability and deprivation irrespective of location. Many lower middle-income countries (LMICs) also continue to experience widespread persistent and structural poverty. Despite higher gross national income, growth is uneven, with large informal sectors, regional disparities and significant inequalities. Large populations remain very vulnerable to economic and climatic shocks. These countries are also included in the **Core Poverty Accountability Standard**, but only aid directed to poverty-oriented sectors is included. Providers may also program regionally. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are regions with very high levels of populations living in poverty. This aid is defined by a selection of DAC sector codes and purpose codes, which can also be found in **Annex One**.

Climate vulnerability is playing an increasingly important role in deepening poverty and inequalities. Many climate-vulnerable populations live in LDCs and LMICs. But the CPAS also includes all aid for ODA-eligible Small Island Developing States. The top 30 countries for climate vulnerability in the ND-GAIN Country Index for Vulnerability are all among the countries of focus for the **Core Poverty Accountability Standard**.[18]

4.2 What is excluded from the Core Poverty Accountability Standard?

CPAS excludes all Canadian ODA to Upper Middle-Income Countries (UMICs) and all regions, except Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia regional allocations. These exclusions are countries and regions for which a range of alternative development finance modalities, including ODA, can be accessed. They are the main focus for private sector partnerships and blended finance.

The CPAS also excludes ODA to LMICs beyond the sector codes identified as directly poverty oriented (see above and **Annex One**), primarily global public goods activities such as climate mitigation and productive sectors for which other non-concessional resources might be more available than CPAS sectors. Combined these allocations for excluded countries and sectors amount to $3,685 million in Canadian ODA in 2024/25.

On a sectoral basis, the sectors listed in **Table One** account for 96% of allocations within this excluded ODA. At most 11% of excluded ODA is directed to sectors that might be considered directly affecting poverty and inequalities, largely in UMICs for which alternative sources of finance are more feasible.

[18] See Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative, "ND-GAIN Country Index for Vulnerability," Ranking, 2023, accessed at https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/.

Table One: Sector Allocations Excluded from the Core Poverty Accountability Standard, 2024/25

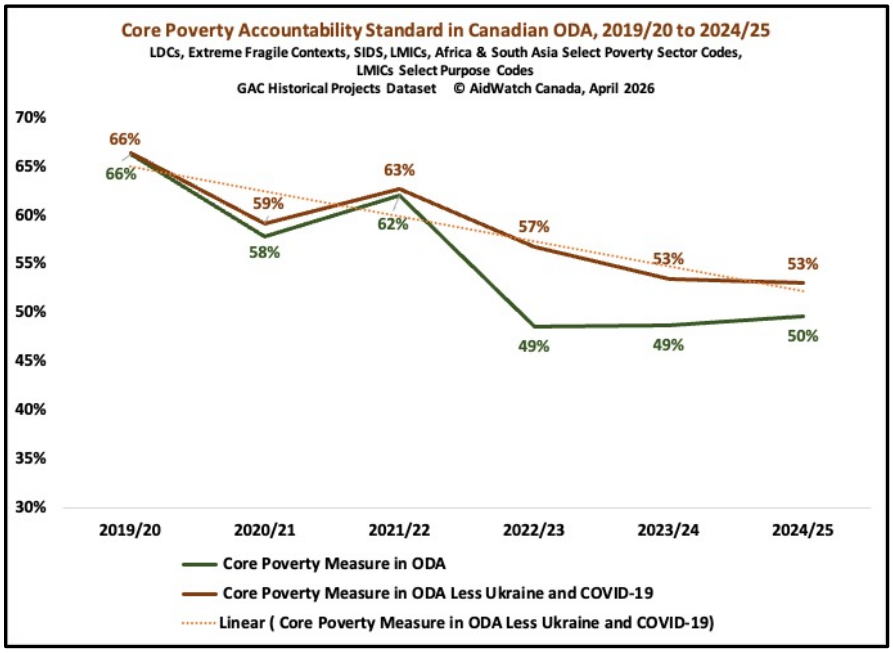
Sector	Share of Total
Other multisector	33%
Administrative costs of donors	9%
Energy generation and supply	9%
General environmental protection	8%
Government and civil society general	7%
Basic health	6%
Conflict prevention and resolution, peace and security	5%
Unallocated/Unspecified	3%
Health, general	2%
Agriculture	2%
Population policies/programs and reproductive health	2%
Other social infrastructure and services	2%
Banking and financial services	2%
Secondary education	1%
Business and other services	1%
Water and Sanitation	1%
Forestry	1%
Transport and storage	1%
Education, level unspecified	1%
Basic education	1%

5. Recent trends in the Core Poverty Accountability Standard

While maintaining an average dollar value of $4,174 million since 2020/21, the Core Poverty Accountability Standard (CPAS) has declined as a share of Canadian ODA, both in total ODA (by 8%) and excluding COVID-19 Control and support for Ukraine (by 6%). CPAS was 66% of Canadian ODA in 2019/20, but only 53% in 2024/25 (excluding in-donor refugee costs). Cooperation Canada is calling upon the Government to protect a minimum of $5,500 million for CPAS in Canadian ODA for the poorest countries and people as it implements aid cuts up to 2029/30. This target does not prevent Canada allocating additional ODA for other countries and sectoral priorities beyond CPAS.

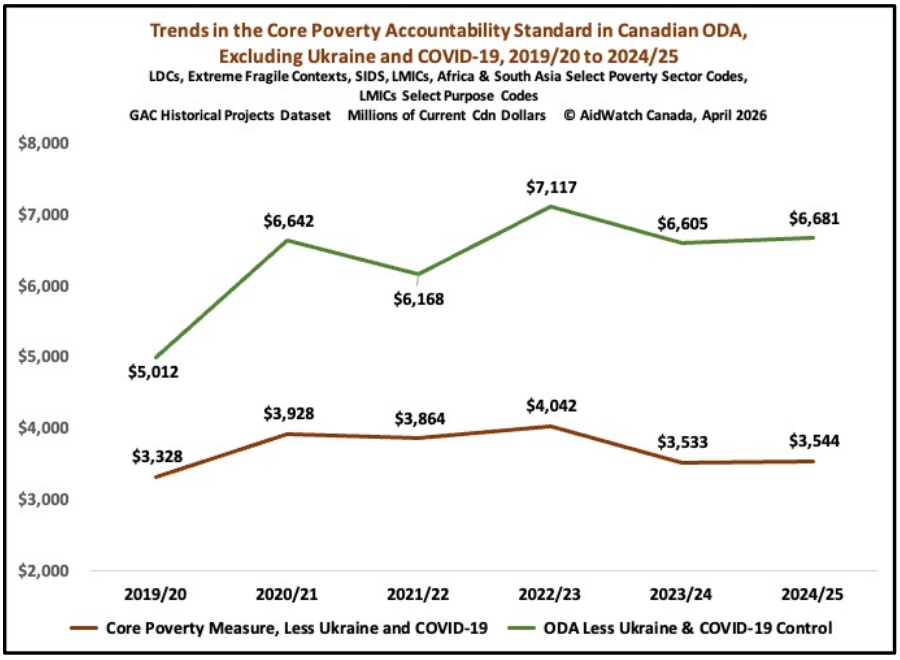
Charts One and Two demonstrate the erosion in the share of the Core Poverty Accountability Standard (CPAS) within Canadian ODA from 2019/20 to 2024/25.

Chart One: Share of Core Poverty Accountability Standard in Canadian ODA



The share of the Core Poverty Accountability Standard in Canadian ODA has declined sharply since 2019/20 when it accounted for 66% of total ODA. By 2024/25 it had fallen to 53% of total ODA, and 50% of ODA that excludes support for Ukraine and COVID-19 Control.

Chart Two: Trend in the Value of the Core Poverty Accountability Standard in Canadian ODA



As **Chart Two** demonstrates, the value of the CPAS has been relatively stable (in current dollars) since 2019/20. By 2024/25, it is 6% higher than 2019/20, but 12% lower than its peak in 2022/23 (excluding Ukraine and COVID-19 Control). Over the past five years (since 2020/21), CPAS has averaged $4,174

million, including allocations for Ukraine and COVID-19 Control ($3,782 million excluding these special areas for Canadian ODA).

Global Affairs Canada implemented 87% of the CPAS in 2024/25, with the Department of Finance accounting for an additional 11%. By comparison, across total ODA, GAC implemented 75% and Finance 14%.

In reducing Canadian Oda up to 2029/30, Cooperation Canada is calling on the Government to prioritize the poorest countries and people by increasing and protecting a minimum of $5,500 million in Canadian ODA for the Core Poverty Accountability Standard in these years. Ring-fencing this portion of Canadian ODA would fully dedicate it to activities that directly reduce poverty and inequalities, including humanitarian assistance, in least developed, low-income, lower middle-income and fragile contexts. This is a unique resource that it vital to addressing Canadian short- and medium-term economic, political and strategic interests in these contexts.

In 2024/25, allocating $5,500 million to CPAS would have resulted in 75% of total ODA (excluding in-donor refugee costs) to the CPAS. In 2019/20 CPAS was 66% of ODA in that year. It is important to note that the implementation of the CPAS target ($5,500 million) does not prevent Canada allocating additional ODA for other countries and sectoral priorities beyond CPAS.

5. Disaggregating Canadian aid trends for the Core Poverty Accountability Standard

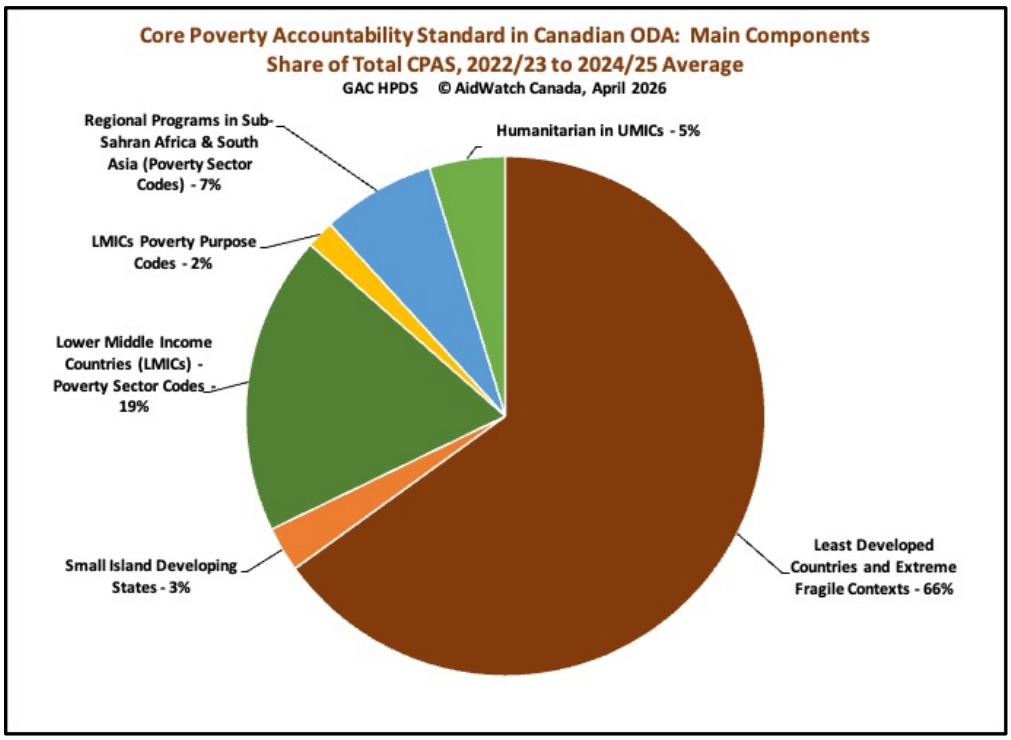
There are several notable trends for the Core Poverty Accountability Standard in Canadian ODA up to 2024/25:

- **Least developed countries and countries with contexts of extreme fragility make up two thirds of the Standard.**
- **On average, humanitarian assistance is approximately 25% of CPAS allocations.**
- **Gender equality and the rights of women and girls is strongly embedded in the Core Poverty Accountability Standard, with 80% of CPAS allocations having significant purpose gender equality objectives, and 19% exclusively focusing on gender equality (principal purpose). The latter is higher than bilateral ODA at 15%.**
- **Reproductive health, basic and general health sectors accounted for 27% of CPAS allocations in 2024/25.**
- **In the delivery of CPAS, multilateral organizations channel account for close to two-thirds and CSOs for one third. Within bilateral CPAS, CSOs channeled 48% of CPAS (excluding Ukraine and Covid-19 Control) in 2024/25, rising from 34% in 2020/21. CSOs implemented 74% of CPAS activities exclusively focused on women's rights in 2024/25.**

5.1 Allocations to LDCs and Extreme Fragile Context is the major CPAS Component

Chart Three displays the allocation of the main components of the Core Poverty Accountability Standard, averaged over the three years, 2022/23 to 2024/25. Least Developed Countries and countries with contexts of extreme fragility and conflict make up two-thirds of the Standard. This share has been consistent since 2019/20. (See the annual shares in **Annex Two, Table One**.) Allocations to sectors highly relevant to reducing poverty and inequalities in Lower Middle-Income Countries are 19% and allocations to these sectors in regional programming in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia make up an additional 7%.

Chart Three: Allocation of the Main Components of the CPAS



5.2 Humanitarian Assistance a significant priority in the CPAS

Since humanitarian assistance is fully included in the CPAS, its share of the Standard, at about 25% on average per year, is then higher than for total ODA (13% in 2024/25).

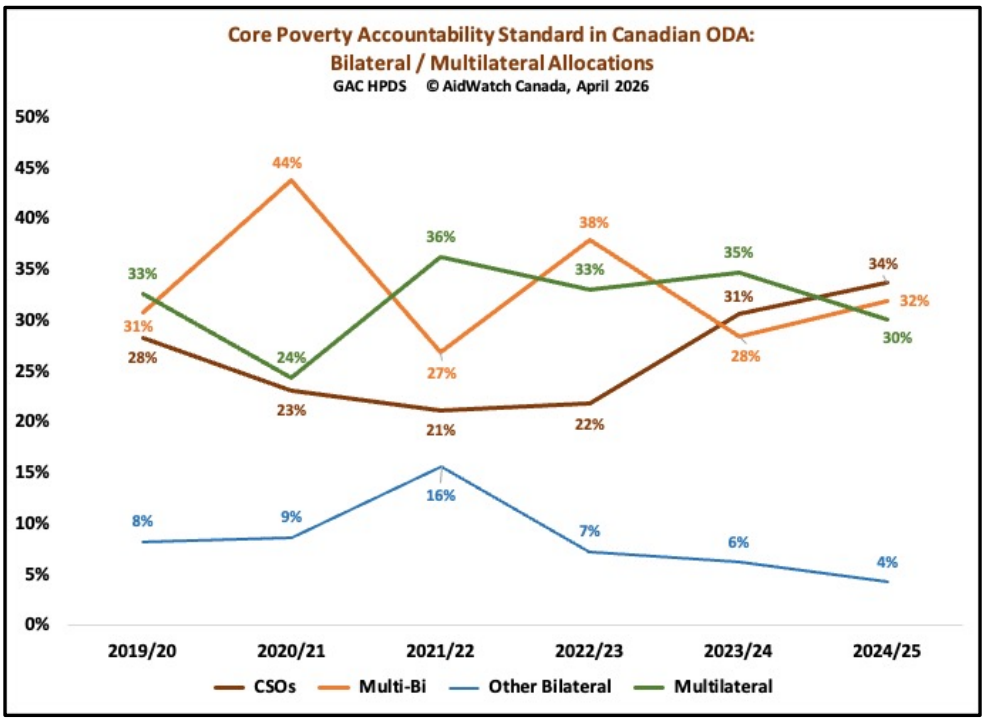
5.3 Civil Society Organizations play a major role in delivering CPAS

In 2024/25 bilateral ODA accounted for 70% of the CPAS, a lower share than its 76% in total ODA. Nevertheless, multilateral channels accounted for close to two-thirds of CPAS in that year and CSOs more than a third.

Multilateral Channels Similar to overall delivery channels for Canadian ODA, multilateral organization play a dominant role in CPAS. In 2024/25, they accounted for 62% of CPAS, including bilateral aid delivered

through multilateral channels (multi-bi) at 30%. This share for multi-bi aid is down slightly from 36% in 2021/22 at the peak of COVID-19 Control). (**Chart Four**)

Chart Four: Delivering CPAS through bilateral and multilateral channels



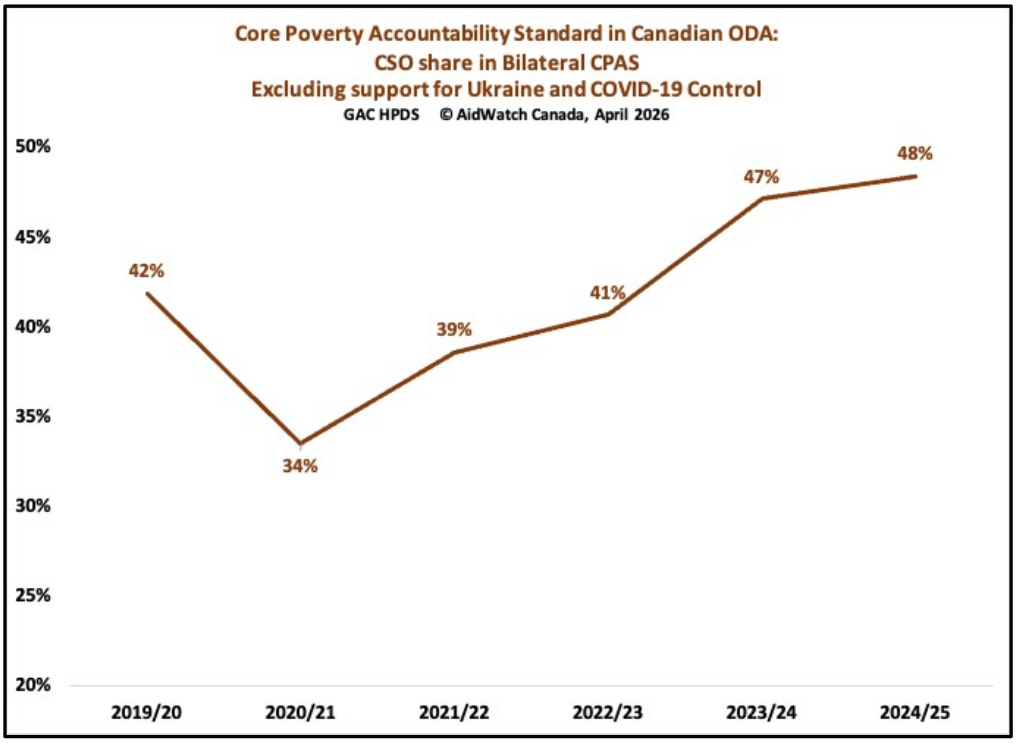
The top 10 recipients of multi/bi organizations, accounting for 83% of disbursements in 2024/25, were

- World Food Programme (22%)
- United Nations Population Fund (9%)
- UNICEF (9%)
- World Bank (9%)
- OCHA (7%)
- UNHCR (7%)
- UN Ops (6%)
- UNDP (5%)
- WHO (5%)
- UNRWA (3%)

Civil Society Organizations Canadian and foreign CSOs play a central role in delivering CPAS activities. Since 2019/20, the CSO share in CPAS has increased, rising from 28% to 34% in 2024/25, up from 31% the previous year. (**Chart Four**) Within bilateral CPAS, this role is even more pronounced, reaching 48% in 2024/25, when support for Ukraine is excluded. This share has been growing steadily since 2020/21. (**Chart Five**)

On average, between 2022/23 to 2024/25, 70% of Canadian aid delivered through CSOs was directed to activities within the Core Poverty Accountability Standard.

Chart Five: CSO share in bilateral CPAS



Other bilateral channels for delivering the CPAS, mainly governments, has been declining since 2019/20, reaching only 4% in 2024/25 (**Chart Four**).

5.4 Consistent with FIAP, gender equality is fully represented in the CPAS

Canada' 2017 Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) established a policy framework for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.[19] As such it informs all components of the Core Poverty Accountability Standard. It is an essential dimension of Canada's objective to reduce poverty and inequalities through its ODA.

Supporting gender equality and empowering women and girls in development is a key catalyst for reducing poverty and inequalities. According to UN Women, "women's poverty is fuelled by discrimination in the world of work, limited access to resources and financial assets, and deep-rooted stereotypes that limit women's participation in education, decent employment, and decision-making, while burdening them with a larger share of unpaid care and domestic work."[20]

[19] GAC, *Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy,* 2017, accessible at https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/assets/pdfs/iap2-eng.pdf?_ga=2.116992581.2103588935.1731715735-338376184.1705449268.

[20] UN Women, 2024. "How can gender equality reduce poverty?," February 24, 2024, accessed at https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2024/02/how-can-gender-equality-reduce-poverty#:~:text=Gender%20equality%20is%20a%20powerful,create%20healthier%20and%20just%20economies.

The FIAP committed to

- Spend at least 80% of bilateral finance on gender-integrated projects (significant purpose gender equality projects);[21]
- Spend at least 15% of bilateral finance on gender-specific projects (principal purpose gender equality projects);
- Spend at least $150 million over five years (up to 2022/23) on women's rights organizations and movements.

By 2024/25 these FIAP goals for embedding support for the rights of women and girls in Canada's aid priorities have been realized. This achievement has also been accompanied by a strong cultural shift within Global Affairs, consistent with the integration of gender equality considerations in most ODA activities.[22] In 2024/25, 95% of GAC's bilateral ODA was marked either significant purpose gender equality (80%) or principal purpose gender equality (15%), when Administration is removed from bilateral allocations. While a major accomplishment, some questions remain as to the degree to which multilateral organizations (particularly Multilateral Development Banks), through which approximately 60% of Canadian aid is channeled, actually implement gender equality objectives in their programming.

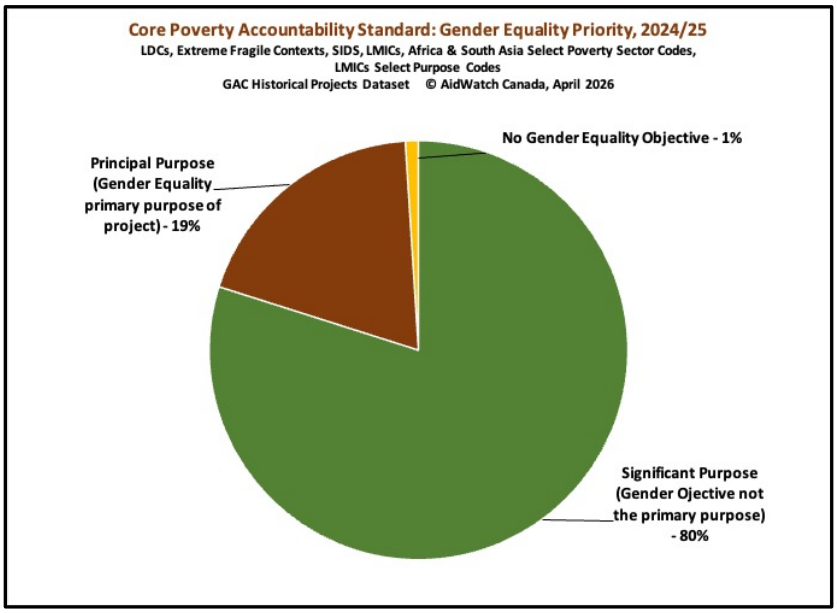
GAC exceeded by more than four times its target of $150 million over five years for allocations to women's rights organizations. Between 2018/19 and 2022/23, $640.9 million has been dedicated in support of these organizations. Between 2023/24 and 2024/25, GAC provided an additional $202 million for women's rights organizations.[23]

[21] The measure of these commitments is the OECD DAC gender marker, which identifies project disbursements that are principal purpose gender equality (the main objectives are gender equality) and significant purpose gender equality (gender equality is one objective among others, and not the main one). Given the range of possible degrees of integration of gender equality in a project, the DAC has set out criteria for determining significant purpose gender equality, but there is no monitoring of the implementation of these criteria. See OECD DAC, *Handbook on the Gender Equality Policy Marker,* December 2016, accessible at https://web-archive.oecd.org/temp/2024-02-06/369190-dac-gender-equality-marker.htm.

[22] See Bénédicte Santoire, *Holding the Line on Gender Equality: Evidence to inform the future of Canada's International Assistance Policy*, Cooperation Canada, March 2026, accessed at https://cooperation.ca/holding-the-line-on-gender-equality-evidence-to-inform-the-future-of-canadas-feminist-international-assistance-policy-fiap/.

[23] For a more detailed analysis of the implementation of FIAP up to 2022/23, the five year framework for the goals of the policy, see Brian Tomlinson, "Briefing Note Three: Is Canadian ODA focusing on tackling poverty and inequalities?," Cooperation Canada, January 2025, accessed at http://aidwatchcanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Final-2024-Briefing-Note-3-Tackling-Poverty.pdf

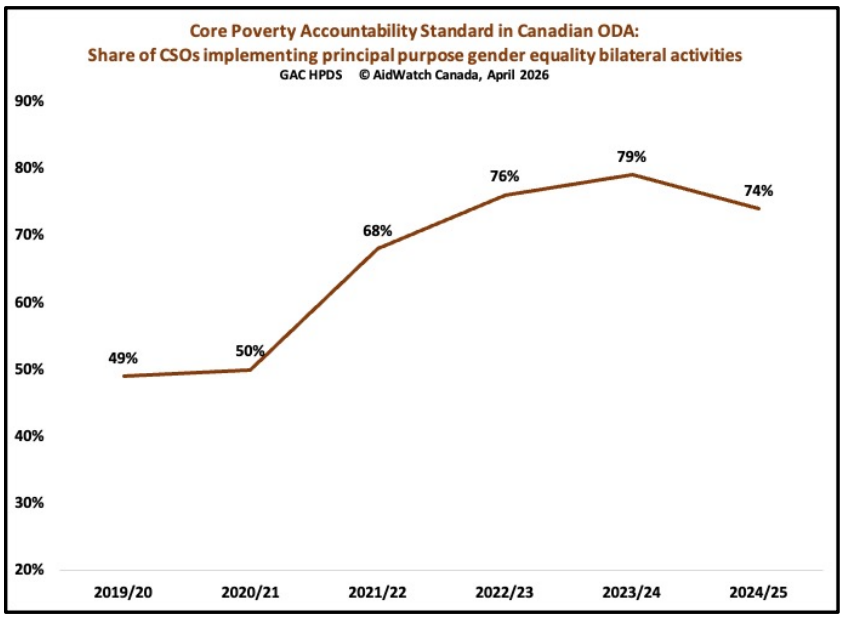
Chart Six: Gender Equality Purposes in the CPAS



Gender equality and the rights of women and girls is consequently strongly embedded in the Core Poverty Accountability Standard. **Chart Six** highlights the share of significant purpose and principal purpose gender equality in the 2024/25 allocations for the CPAS.

Eighty percent (80%) of activities covered by the Core Poverty Accountability Standard have at least one specific gender equality objective, while 19% of activities focus on the rights of women and girls as their primary objective.

Chart Seven: CSOs implement Bilateral Principal Purpose Gender Equality CPAS Activities

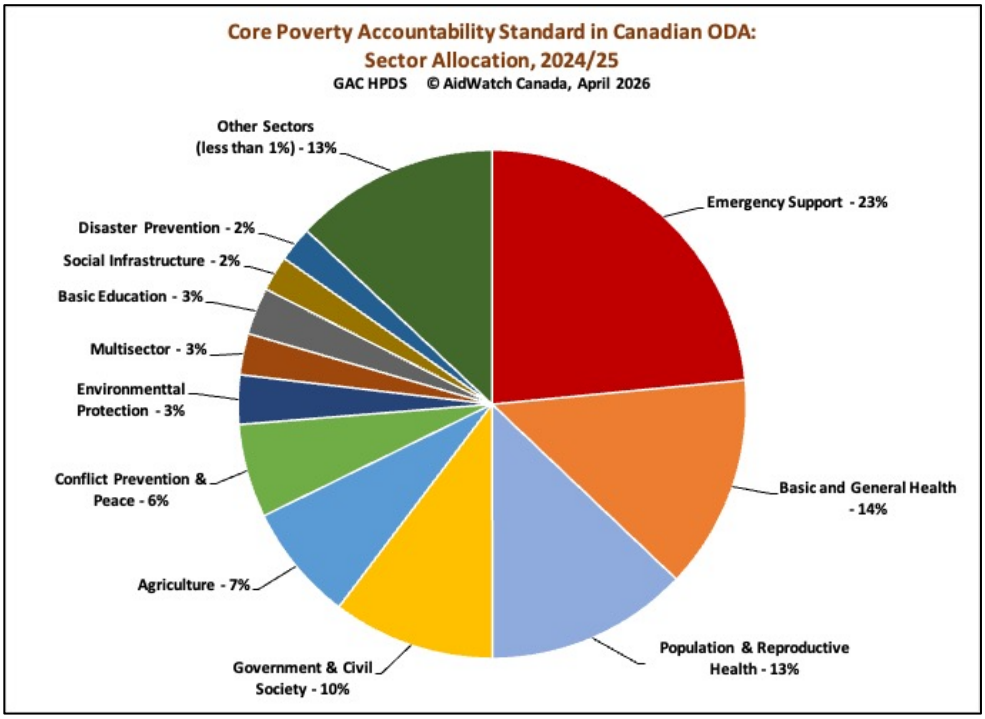


In 2024/25, of the $493.6 million invested in CPAS activities exclusively focused on women's rights (principal purpose gender equality), 74% were implemented by CSOs. CSOs' share in these project disbursements has almost doubled, increasing from 49% in 2019/20 to 74% in 2024/25. (**Chart Seven**) There is little doubt that CSOs have been essential in GAC's growth and delivery of gender specific projects in these six years.

5.5 CPAS allocations concentrate in emergency response and health sectors

Combined **reproductive health, basic and general health** made up 27% of sector allocations for CPAS in 2024/25. These activities represented 71% of total allocations in Canadian ODA for these sectors. Alongside emergency responses, these sectors account for half of the CPAS in that year. (**Chart Eight**) Reproductive health, basic and general health sector allocations are largely unchanged over the years since 2019/20, when they represented 24% of sector allocations, rising to 30% in 2022/23. The latter reflected a major allocation for COVID-19 Control. (**Annex Three, Charts One and Two**)

Chart Eight: CPAS Sector Allocations, 2024/25

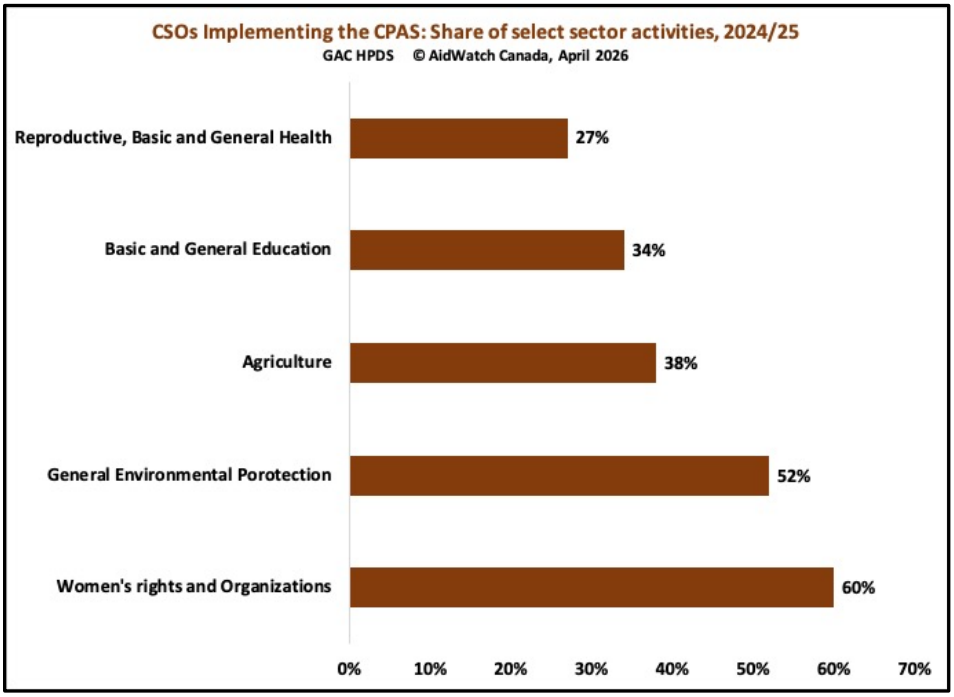


Agriculture has been a significant sector for the CPAS with a consistent 7% to 8% allocation. In 2024/25, 77% of agriculture activities took place within the Core Poverty Accountability Standard.

Allocations for **basic and general education** within the CPAS has declined from 6% in 2019/20 to 3% in 2024/25. In that last year, only 64% of basic and general education activities were implemented within the CPAS.

CSOs have been important in implementing key sectors for the CPAS. **Chart Nine** highlights the CSO share in implementing activities in several CPAS sectors in 2024/25. They have been particularly strong in supporting women's rights and women's rights organizations (60%) and environmental protection (52%)

Chart Nine: CSOs Implementing the CPAS: Select sectors, 2024/25



5.6 Adaptation finance under-represented in CPAS

In 2024/25, adaptation finance within the Core Poverty Accountability Standard accounted for only 44% of total adaptation finance. It is likely that the Standard does not fully capture adaptation finance that is channeled as core financing through the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD) and similar multilateral channels for adaptation finance. While some of this finance targets middle-income countries, such as the Canadian-directed funds at the Inter-American Development Bank, in other cases such as the GCF, allocated resources may be to countries that fall within the CPAS, but are not captured in the GAC statistics.

6. Ways forward

Aid is diminishing and increasingly being diverted to purposes beyond its core goals of addressing poverty and inequalities, while at the same time being artificially inflated by changing rules and accounting practice that expand what counts as aid. Geopolitical and national interests, such as trade diversification, private sector mobilization, are shaping future priorities for Canadian development cooperation. **Briefing Notes One and Two** document these trends for Canadian ODA.

In this context, it is crucial to protect a major share of ODA targeted directly to reducing poverty and inequalities. The Core Poverty Accountability Standard is a durable accountability tool grounded in current trends in Canadian ODA, consistent with the legal requirements of the ODA Accountability Act, and FIAP commitments to the rights of women and girls. As the Government implements its planned cuts through 2029/30, it is critical to ensure that Canada's ODA remains an expression of Canadian values at a time when the world seems increasingly to be abandoning international norms and commitment to economic, social and climate justice.

The recent erosion in the CPAS is driven by ODA pressed into service for too many other foreign policy goals. Ring fencing $5,500 million in future ODA for the CPAS through to 2029/30 would reverse this erosion and restore the share in ODA for these priorities, closer to the level Canada achieved in 2019/20. Canadian CSOs are encouraged to use this metric in their advocacy for high quality Canadian development cooperation and its reform.

Without policy protection, the core purposes of poverty-focused ODA will be crowded out by other policy goals, such as trade diversification, for which Canada has other financial tools available, such as the Export Development Canada. The continued erosion of the CPAS in Canadian ODA will mean that people in Least Developed Countries, in conditions of extreme fragility, and those in highly vulnerable contexts in Lower Middle-Income Countries, will carry the burden of these competing foreign policy priorities.

Annex One
Core Poverty Accountability Standard: What is included?

1. Least Developed Countries and other Low-Income Countries

Countries in red indicate extreme fragile context

Countries marked SIDS in green indicate Small Island Developing States

Afghanistan
Angola
Bangladesh
Benin
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Cambodia
Central African Rep.
Chad
Comoros **SIDS**
Djibouti
DPRK
DRC
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Gambia
Guinea **SIDS**
Guinea-Bissau
Haiti **SIDS**
Kiribati **SIDS**
Lao PDR
Lesotho
Liberia
Madagascar
Malawi
Mali
Mauritania
Mozambique
Myanmar
Nepal
Niger
Rwanda
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Solomon Islands **SIDS**
Somalia
South Sudan
Sudan
Syria
Tanzania
Timor-Leste **SIDS**
Togo
Tuvalu **SIDS**
Uganda
Yemen
Zambia

2. Countries with Extreme Fragile Contexts (not included those in #1 above)

Cameroon
Congo
Equatorial Guinea
Iraq
Libya

3. ODA-Eligible Small Island Developing States (not including those in #1 above)

Cape Verde
Cuba
Dominica
Dominican Republic
Fiji
Grenada
Guyana
Jamaica
Maldives
Marshall Islands
Mauritius
Micronesia
Nauru
Niue
Papua New Guinea
Saint Vincent
Samoa
Sao Tome & Principe
Suriname
Tokelau
Tongo
Vanuatu

4. Core Poverty Oriented Sector Codes in Lower Middle-Income Countries

112XX – Basic Education
122XX – Basic Health
130XX – Pop & Reproductive Health
14030 – 32 – Basic Water & Sanitation
15113 – Anti-Corruption Organizations
15130 – Legal and Judicial Development
15150 – Dem participation & Civil Society
15153 – Media & Free Flow Information
15160 – Human Rights
1517X – Women's Rights & Empowerment
15180 – Ending Violence Against Women
15220 – Civilian Peacebuilding
15230 – International Peacekeeping
15240 – Reintegration and SALW Control
15250 – Removal of land mines
15261 – Prevention Child Soldiers
16010 – Social Protection
16040 – Low-Cost Housing
16050 – Multi-sector for basic social services
16064 – Social Mitigation of HIV/AIDS
16070 – Labour Rights
16080 – Social Dialogue
24040 – Informal Financial Intermediaries
311XX – Agriculture
32130 – Small & Medium Enterprises
32140 – Cottage Industries
43060 – Disaster risk reduction
43072 – Household food security programs
52010 – Food Security Programs
720XX – Humanitarian Assistance
73010 – Reconstruction & Rehabilitation
740XX – Disaster Preparedness

5. Core Poverty Oriented Policy Markers (not included in #4 above) in Lower Middle-Income Countries

Gender Equality – Principal Purpose (2)
Child Issues – Principal Purpose (2)
Youth Issues – Principal Purpose (2)
Indigenous Issues – Principal Purpose (2)
Disability Issues – Principal Purpose (2)
RMNCH – Principal Purpose (3 & 4)
Disaster Risk Reduction – Principal Purpose (2)
Nutrition – Principal Purpose (2)

6. Lower Middle-Income Countries, 2025 (not included in #1, #2 or #3 above)

(per capita GNI between $1,136 and $4,465 in 2022 as measured by the World Bank)

Algeria
Bhutan
Bolivia
Cote d'Ivoire
Egypt
Eswatini
Ghana
Honduras
India
Iran
Jordan
Kenya
Kyrgyzstan
Lebanon
Mongolia
Morocco
Nicaragua
Nigeria
Pakistan
Sri Lanka
Tajikistan
Tunisia
Ukraine
Uzbekistan
Viet Nam
Zimbabwe

Annex Two
Disaggregating the Core Poverty Accountability Standard

Table One, Main Components of the CPAS All Canadian ODA

Millions of Cdn Dollars	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Least Developed Countries & Other Fragile Contexts	$ 2,328.8	$ 2,596.7	$ 2,776.8	$ 3,088.3	$2,335.8	$2,493.3
Other ODA-Eligible SIDS	$ 55.6	$ 63.3	$ 110.9	$ 135.2	$ 95.8	$ 110.5
LMICs - Poverty Sector Codes	$ 575.4	$ 677.2	$ 709.7	$ 1,146.1	$ 622.4	$ 500.4
LMICs - Poverty Purpose Codes	$ 62.2	$ 66.7	$ 52.2	$ 45.7	$ 67.6	$ 99.9
Regional SS Africa & S Asia - Sector Codes	$ 202.7	$ 751.5	$ 463.3	$ 333.4	$ 285.0	$ 241.3
Humanitarian in UMICs	$ 137.7	$ 248.9	$ 177.2	$ 161.9	$ 217.4	$ 196.3
Total	**$ 3,362.4**	**$ 4,404.3**	**$ 4,290.1**	**$ 4,910.6**	**$3,624.0**	**$3,641.7**

Table Two: Delivery Channels

a) All CPAS ODA

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
CSOs	$ 952.4	$ 1,018.5	$ 910.2	$ 1,071.7	$ 1,109.8	$ 1,228.3
Multi-Bi	$ 1,037.3	$ 1,932.3	$ 1,154.6	$ 1,864.5	$ 1,030.5	$ 1,161.1
Other Bilateral	$ 276.4	$ 380.2	$ 672.5	$ 355.1	$ 224.6	$ 155.5
Multilateral	$ 1,096.4	$ 1,073.4	$ 1,552.9	$ 1,619.3	$ 1,259.3	$ 1,096.7
Total	**$ 3,362.5**	**$ 4,404.4**	**$ 4,290.2**	**$ 4,910.6**	**$ 3,624.2**	**$ 3,641.6**

Share of total CPAS

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
CSOs	28%	23%	21%	22%	31%	34%
Multi-Bi	31%	44%	27%	38%	28%	32%
Other Bilateral	8%	9%	16%	7%	6%	4%
Multilateral	33%	24%	36%	33%	35%	30%

CPAS CSO share Total CPAS bilateral	42%	31%	33%	33%	47%	48%

b) CPAS ODA, excluding support for Ukraine and Covid-19 Control

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
CSOs	$ 936.5	$ 959.7	$ 895.5	$ 989.6	$ 1,076.6	$ 1,188.2
Multi-Bi	$ 1,030.6	$ 1,563.0	$ 994.4	$ 1,229.1	$ 995.1	$ 1,125.4
Other Bilateral	$ 268.8	$ 338.4	$ 431.7	$ 213.4	$ 211.8	$ 140.5
Multilateral	$ 1,092.0	$ 1,067.6	$ 1,546.3	$ 1,609.9	$ 1,249.1	$ 1,089.2
Total	**$ 3,327.9**	**$ 3,928.7**	**$ 3,867.9**	**$ 4,042.0**	**$ 3,532.6**	**$ 3,543.3**

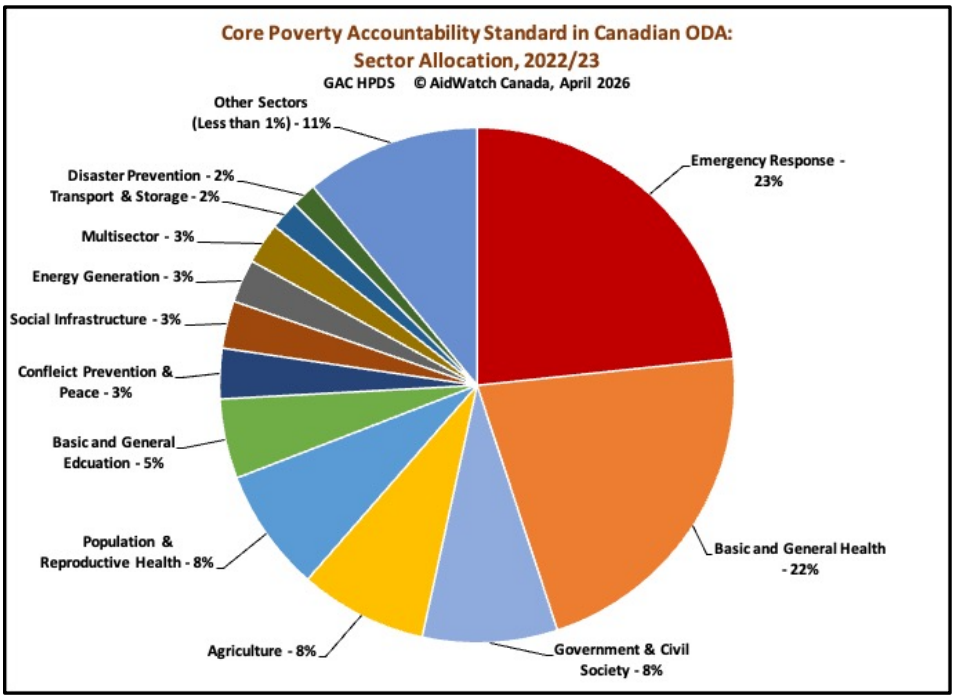
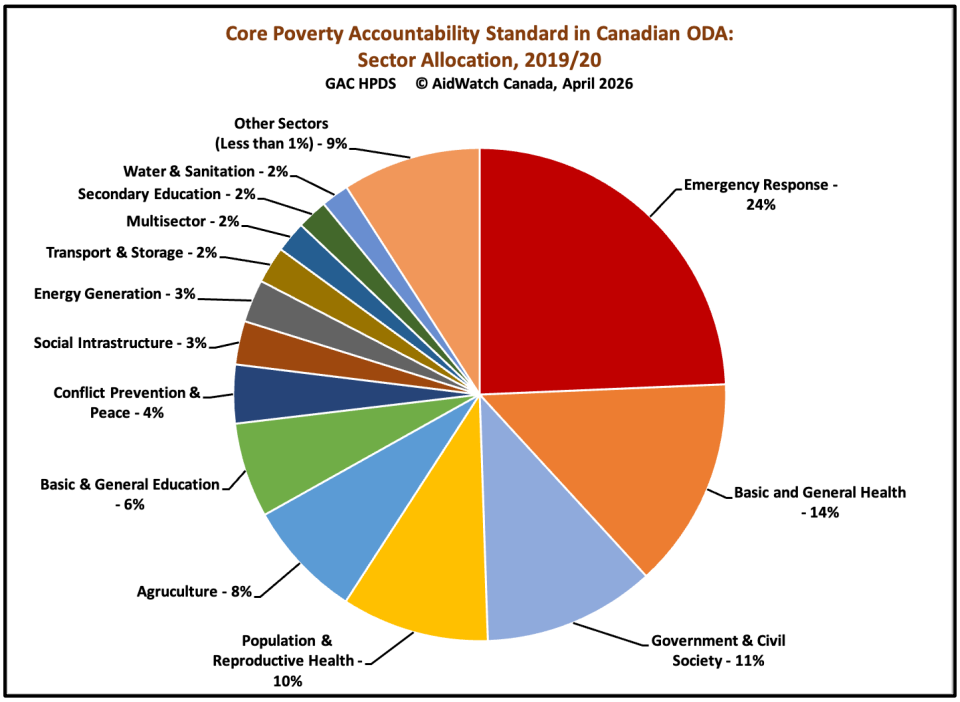
Share of total CPAS

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
CSOs	28%	24%	23%	24%	30%	34%
Multi-Bi	31%	40%	26%	30%	28%	32%
Other Bilateral	8%	9%	11%	5%	6%	4%
Multilateral	33%	27%	40%	40%	35%	31%

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
CPAS CSO share Total CPAS bilateral	42%	34%	39%	41%	47%	48%

Annex Three
Core Poverty Accountability Standard, Sector Allocations

2022/23 Sector Allocations



2019/20 Sector Allocations