



# Evaluation of International Assistance Programming in Afghanistan

**2014/15 to 2019/20**



Final Report  
International Assistance Evaluation Division

Global Affairs Canada  
June 2020



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# Executive Summary

## Evaluation Overview

Global Affairs Canada's International Assistance Evaluation Division conducted an evaluation of Canada's international assistance in Afghanistan from fiscal years 2014/15 to 2019/20. The purpose of this evaluation was to promote learning, inform decision-making, and to support improvements to Canadian policy and programming. It also addressed a funding renewal requirement. The evaluation assessed the relevance, coherence, gender equality, effectiveness, and sustainability of international assistance programming.

## Key Findings

Global Affairs Canada demonstrated strong overall alignment of its international assistance programming with the Government of Afghanistan's national priorities and strategies over the evaluation period. At the same time, these strategies were influenced by donor priorities at the expense of fully representing the Afghan population's true underlying needs and priorities. Furthermore, programming was designed with limited consideration of the specific needs and opportunities associated with different groups within Afghanistan. Canada's engagement was seen as not being sufficiently tailored to Afghanistan's unique, complex and evolving context.

Canada's programming took a valued development-focused approach that focused on strategically selected action areas based on Canada's experience and strengths. At the same time, it could have benefited from a more robust and more frequent conflict sensitivity analysis.

Global Affairs Canada implemented a multi-pronged and integrated approach through a combination of development assistance, humanitarian assistance and security sector support. This approach has been highly relevant to advancing Canadian values, policies and priorities.

In contrast to most other country programs, the Afghanistan desk has been one of the most amalgamated desks within the department. It has taken a broader programming approach compared to silos of international assistance work. Consultations between various programming streams reflected a concerted effort to provide coherent and integrated international assistance to Afghanistan. At the same time, there were still some missing pieces to programming coherence during the evaluation period.

While programming always had a strong gender focus, the new Feminist International Assistance Policy helped to support a more targeted approach to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Programming went above and beyond the traditional gender considerations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Ensure that future programming is even more tailored to Afghanistan's unique, complex and evolving context. In areas where the security situation permits it, this could include increased consultation and needs assessments at sub-national and local levels, and take into consideration the specific needs associated with different ethnic groups within Afghanistan.
2. Develop, update and disseminate robust conflict sensitivity analyses as events unfold. This should also include the development of a strategy to systematically incorporate the drivers of conflict into program design and implementation. This will help ensure that conflict sensitivity analyses bring about changes in development programming as circumstances change.
3. Develop and publish an Afghanistan strategy to promote greater coherence and integration across international assistance programming streams.

## Executive Summary (continued)

Through strong commitment and active engagement with key players and stakeholders, Canada made tremendous progress in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. During the evaluation period, Canada earned a reputation as a leader in this area. Gender perspectives were well-integrated across international assistance programming with some specific efforts in adapting to women's and girls' needs in Afghanistan's social and cultural context. Projects in the Women's and Girls' Rights and Empowerment sector resulted in female beneficiaries becoming more active, confident and self-sufficient.

At the same time, like many other donors, Canada's approach toward gender equality was perceived as ambitious. There were concerns that projects could have had an even greater impact if they had reflected a deeper understanding of Afghanistan's local cultural context and Islamic tradition. If not carefully managed, there was the risk that gender equality efforts promoted by Western donors could lead to backlashes and harm. In interviews and focus groups, Afghan women suggested that Canadian programming would have benefited from a more inclusive approach that engaged men and boys further.

Through implementation of bilateral development projects and contributions to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), Canadian international assistance contributed to positive results in providing equitable access to social services. In the health sector, Canadian assistance contributed to improved access to and quality of health-care services, especially for women, adolescent girls, children and newborns. In the education sector, Canadian assistance contributed to increased access to quality basic education, especially for girls.

Linking relief and recovery to development programming helped address gaps between immediate humanitarian response and longer-term development objectives. It complemented traditional humanitarian assistance work by focusing on enhancing the resiliency of vulnerable populations.

Along with other donors, Canada maintained its support to Afghanistan's security efforts through contributions to the Afghan National Army Trust Fund (ANATF) and the Law and Order Trust Fund (LOTFA) for Afghanistan. While these two trust funds helped to support the sustainment of the national army and the police force, there was a need for improved reporting in order to better understand what results have been achieved.

Most projects factored sustainability into project design by focusing on capacity building and transferring ownership to the government or local community bodies. While there were examples of strengthened capacity after support ended, overall sustainability of Canada's international assistance in Afghanistan remained difficult to achieve due to many challenges and constraints. Furthermore, there was no feedback loop in place to determine whether planning for sustainability actually translated into the achievement of sustainable results.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Identify ways to tailor messages in a manner to promote gender equality programming that resonate more with intended audiences in Afghanistan.
5. Build on existing successes and engage men and boys more to foster gender equality results and the empowerment of women and girls.
6. Work with other donors in urging the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank to improve results-based management, accountability and transparency in the administration of multi-donor trust funds in Afghanistan.

# Background on Afghanistan



**State fragility:** Afghanistan ranked ninth out of 178 countries, according to the Fund for Peace's Fragile States Index 2020.

**Human development:** Afghanistan ranked near the bottom of the UNDP's Human Development Index in 2019 (170<sup>th</sup> out of 189 countries).

**Gender inequality:** Afghanistan ranked low on UNDP's Gender Inequality Index (153<sup>rd</sup> out of 189 in 2017).

**Corruption:** Transparency International ranked Afghanistan near the bottom of its Corruption Perceptions Index in 2019 (173<sup>rd</sup> out of 180).

Located at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East, Afghanistan is one of the most fragile countries in the world. Home to different insurgent, extremist and terrorist groups (including Al-Qaeda and the Taliban), Afghanistan has faced ongoing determined insurgency for the past four decades, accounting for thousands of terrorism-related casualties each year.

Conflict over resources, communal disputes and rivalry among Afghanistan's different tribal, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups have also been among the main drivers of instability across districts and provinces. Corruption, along with the production and smuggling of illegal drugs has been a source of financing for insurgent groups and has further contributed to instability within and outside the country.

Afghanistan has also been subject to recurring natural catastrophes, such as periods of drought, floods, heavy snowfall, avalanches, landslides and earthquakes. These events have compounded the population's vulnerability, while increasing the number of casualties, rights violations and displacement, in a context of protracted conflict.

The combination of conflict, insecurity and natural disasters has contributed to the Afghan population's vulnerability by leading to the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of citizens annually. As of the end of 2018, there were 2.5 million internally displaced persons reported in Afghanistan, representing close to 7 percent of its population.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, poor infrastructure and low access to resources and services remained as further obstacles to human development in Afghanistan, especially in rural areas, where 75 percent of the population still lived in 2018.<sup>2</sup>

Afghanistan remained one of the worst countries in the world to be a woman. Women and girls were discriminated against on the basis of their sex and stripped of their rights by the Taliban government between 1996 and 2001. Although the Taliban were ousted from national power in 2001, progress has been slow to relieve women from the oppressive norms brought on by that regime.

The Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) law was adopted by the Afghan government in 2009. Although the law aimed to protect women's rights, in practice, years later, Afghan women were still vulnerable to discrimination, early and forced marriage, abuse and persecution.

## Gender Inequality

- 51% of Afghan women surveyed (aged 15-49) reported Lifetime Physical and/or Sexual Intimate Partner Violence (Afghan Ministry of Health, 2017)
- 46% of Afghan women surveyed reported Physical and/or Sexual Intimate Partner Violence in the last 12 months (Afghan Ministry of Health, 2017)
- Rate of child-marriage (defined as marriage under 18 years of age): 35% (UNICEF, 2018)
- Over 70% of females 15 years and older are illiterate, compared to 44% of males (UNESCO, 2018)

Sources:

1) United Nations, 2019

2) World Bank, 2018

# Canada–Afghanistan relations

## 20 years of engagement

Canada has provided international assistance to Afghanistan since the 1960s. Formal diplomatic relations were established between both countries in 1968. Prior to 2001, the Canadian International Development Agency's assistance to Afghanistan consisted of humanitarian aid delivered through multilateral organizations, ranging between \$10 million and \$20 million per year to address basic human needs.

In line with the agreements reached at international conferences, Canada's **post-2001** mission in Afghanistan was initially characterized by military initiatives, with reconstruction support also provided. In February 2002, as part of Operation Enduring Freedom, 850 Canadian troops were sent to Kandahar and roughly 1,700 to Kabul to join NATO's International Security Assistance Force. In 2002, diplomatic relations were re-established and in August 2003, a small contingent of Canadian diplomats was sent to Kabul to establish the Embassy of Canada to Afghanistan.

**In March 2004**, the Government of Canada committed \$250 million in aid to Afghanistan with a focus on national programming and state-building. In August 2005, Canada assumed leadership of the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team and command of a challenging military mission: to secure a large rural province (Kandahar) —the size of Nova Scotia— with just 2,500 soldiers. At the time, the security situation in Afghanistan, including in Kandahar, was still relatively stable. However, from the summer of 2005 onward, insurgency in Kandahar increased after the Taliban regrouped. Fighting in Kandahar was quite intense in the first six months of 2006, as it was in Operation Medusa in September 2007, which involved 1,400 international, mainly Canadian, troops, with many casualties.

**In October 2007**, the government commissioned an independent panel to examine Canada's mission in Afghanistan to make recommendations on the future of Canada's role in Afghanistan. In January 2008, the independent panel issued its report, commonly known as "The Manley Report." The response to this report was multi-pronged. First, it resulted in the definition of six policy priorities (grounded in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and the Afghanistan Compact) and three signature projects to focus Canada's efforts. Second, the government declared that Canada's combat mission in Afghanistan would end in 2011. Third, there was an increased level of involvement of the Privy Council Office in the planning and management of Canada's engagement in Afghanistan.

**From 2011 to 2014**, Canada's policy for engagement in Afghanistan shifted to a focus on transition, handover and development. During this period, Canada's activities were national in scope but operations were concentrated in the capital city, Kabul, and in four sectoral areas: children and youth, through education and health; security, rule of law and human rights; promotion of regional diplomacy; and humanitarian assistance. Canada continued to support the long-term objective of transferring governance and security responsibilities to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

**Since 2014**, Canadian assistance has focused on the security, education and health sectors, as well as human rights and the rights of Afghan women and girls.

# Canada–Afghanistan relations

## Recent development assistance in Afghanistan

At the July 2016 NATO summit in Warsaw, Poland, Canada committed \$465 million to Afghanistan including \$270 million in development assistance from 2017 to 2020. Canada’s development assistance pledge was reiterated at the October 2016 Brussels Conference on Afghanistan.

Canada worked jointly with other leading international donors to ensure its aid was effective and aligned with Afghanistan’s priorities. The funding was deemed critical to sustaining the progress already made in the country, as well as for contributing to programming efforts in support of improved security and stability in Afghanistan.

In 2017/18, Canada was the ninth largest bilateral donor in Afghanistan. Canadian official development assistance (ODA) accounted for 4 percent of all gross ODA to the country.<sup>1</sup>

Including all donors, net ODA to Afghanistan approximated US\$16.6 billion between 2014 and 2018,<sup>2</sup> with aid amounts declining over the years.

## Donor coordination

As a member of NATO, Canada has collaborated closely with partner member countries to support the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces through their transformational decade (2014-2024).

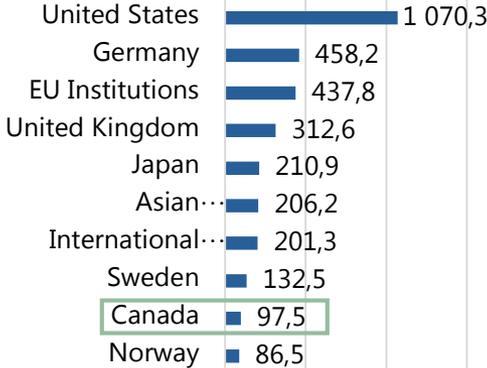
Canada also participated and chaired some of the donor working groups to coordinate donor responses to both the Afghanistan National Army Trust Fund (ANATF), as well as the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan. More recently, in 2019, Canada co-chaired the ANATF board.

In 2017 and 2018, Canada contributed to policy dialogue on the implementation of Afghanistan’s National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

As the lead donor on the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund Gender Working Group, Canada’s policy dialogue has been instrumental in the World Bank’s establishment of a forum to specifically address gender equality.

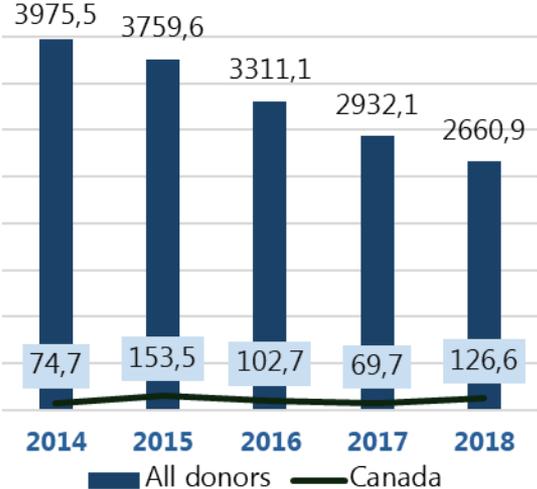
Sources:  
<sup>1</sup> OECD, Aid at a Glance - Afghanistan, 2018  
<sup>2</sup> OECD Stats, 2018

**Top Ten Donors of Gross Official Development Assistance to Afghanistan, 2017-2018 average**  
 (US\$ million)<sup>3</sup>



Source: OECD, Aid at a Glance - Afghanistan, 2018

**ODA in Afghanistan, 2014-2018**  
 Net disbursements, US\$ million <sup>4</sup>



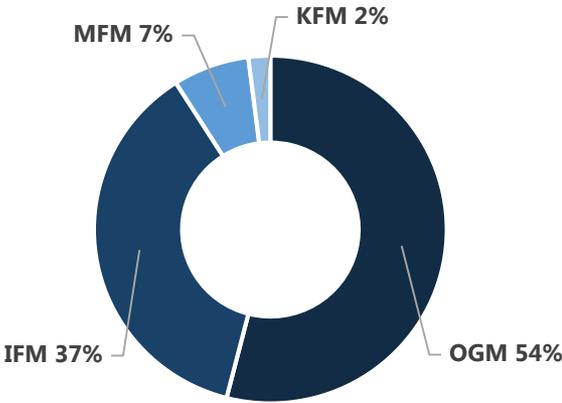
Source: OECD Statistics, 2018

# Global Affairs Canada Programming

## Program disbursements

Between 2014/15 and 2018/19, Canada disbursed a total of \$966 million to Afghanistan in the form of development assistance, humanitarian assistance and peace and stabilization operations. Funds were disbursed across four branches, with a concentration in the Asia Pacific Branch.

### International assistance disbursements, by branch, from 2014/15 to 2018/19\*



\*At the time of writing this report, 2018/19 was the latest fiscal year for which complete data was available.

Source: Chief Financial Officer – Global Affairs Canada, 2020

### Asia Pacific Branch

Over half of the disbursement to Afghanistan was allocated to the Asia Pacific Branch (OGM). OGM’s bilateral projects focused on health, education, women’s and girls’ rights and empowerment and linking relief and recovery to development. OGM disbursement also included the World Bank’s Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund and, starting in 2018, the UNDP’s Law and Order Trust Fund (LOTFA).

### International Security and Political Affairs Branch

Over one-third of the funds were disbursed through the International Security and Political Affairs Branch (IFM). IFM disbursements focused on the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces through the two trust funds: NATO’s ANATF and the UNDP’s LOTFA. These funds were designed to help sustain and strengthen the national army and police. Starting in 2018, the responsibility and budget for the LOTFA were transferred to OGM.

### Global Issues and Development Branch (MFM)

The Global Issues and Development Branch (MFM) Branch represented 7 percent of programming in Afghanistan. Disbursements through MFM were allocated to humanitarian assistance operations, mainly toward material relief assistance and services and emergency food aid.

### Partnerships for Development Innovation Branch (KFM)

The Partnerships for Development Innovation (KFM) Branch represented 2 percent of programming in Afghanistan. KFM initiatives involved development innovation programming in Afghanistan, mainly in the health sector.

# Scope and questions

The evaluation focused on Canada’s international assistance programming in Afghanistan from 2014/15 to 2019/20. The purpose of the evaluation is to inform decision making, support policy, and advance learning across the department. It also addresses a Treasury Board submission requirement for an evaluation.

The evaluation examined the international assistance programming in Afghanistan across four branches: Asia Pacific Branch, International Security and Political Affairs Branch, Partnerships for Development Innovation Branch, Global Issues and Development Branch, with a focus on OGM projects. The bulk of the data collection took place from November 2018 to September 2019, prior to the COVID-19 crisis.

The evaluation addressed the following key evaluation issues: relevance, coherence, gender equality, effectiveness and sustainability.

Criteria	Evaluation questions
Relevance	<b>Q1.</b> To what extent was international assistance programming in Afghanistan responsive to the evolving needs and opportunities of Afghanistan in its fragile context?
Coherence	<b>Q2.</b> To what extent was international assistance programming in Afghanistan aligned with Canada’s priorities and strategic interests? <b>Q3.</b> To what extent was international assistance programming in Afghanistan designed and delivered in a coherent manner?
Gender equality	<b>Q4.</b> To what extent has international assistance programming contributed to gender equality results and the empowerment of women and girls?
Effectiveness	<b>Q5.</b> To what extent did international assistance programming achieve the expected results in the following areas? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Health</li><li>• Education</li><li>• Transition to long-term development</li><li>• Peace and security</li></ul>
Sustainability	<b>Q6.</b> Is there evidence that results have been sustained in areas where support has ended? What is the likelihood that the results achieved will continue?

# Methodology

In light of the importance of this evaluation and the Afghanistan's fragile situation with ongoing conflict, 10 lines of evidence were used to inform this evaluation. The evaluation was based on a mixed-methods approach, where primary and secondary data was collected through a combination of sources to provide multiple lines of evidence in support of findings and conclusions. All findings were supported by a minimum of three lines of evidence, unless otherwise noted. The evaluation was also supported by an external peer reviewer.

## Literature reviews

Review of academic publications and other secondary sources:

- academic, peer-reviewed articles
- publications by other governments
- publications by other international organizations

## Review of internal documentation

Review of Global Affairs Canada documentation at both project and corporate levels:

- policy documents
- planning and strategy documents
- briefing notes, memos
- evaluations, audits, reviews
- financial and statistical reports
- other project documentation

## Financial analysis

Financial analysis:

- mapping and review of financial data
- trend analysis over fiscal years
- allocation across programming streams
- planned and actual disbursements

## Data collection missions in Kabul

Conducted between June and July 2019, semi-structured individual and small group interviews (total respondents=78) were conducted in Kabul with:

- Global Affairs Canada management and staff at the Kabul mission
- implementing agencies and local partners
- Government of Afghanistan
- international donors

## Key Informant Interviews

Conducted between November 2018 and September 2019. Semi-structured interviews (total respondents=41) conducted with:

- current and former Global Affairs Canada management and staff
- implementing agencies and partners
- international donors
- academia
- other external stakeholders

## Survey of key implementing partners

A survey was conducted with OGM's implementing partners between November and December 2019. Twenty-four (24) partners that implemented projects in Afghanistan during the evaluation period were invited to participate in the survey. In total, 22 partners responded to the survey, leading to a survey response rate of 92 percent. Participating partners included multilateral agencies, as well as international and local non-government organizations.

## Comparative donor analysis

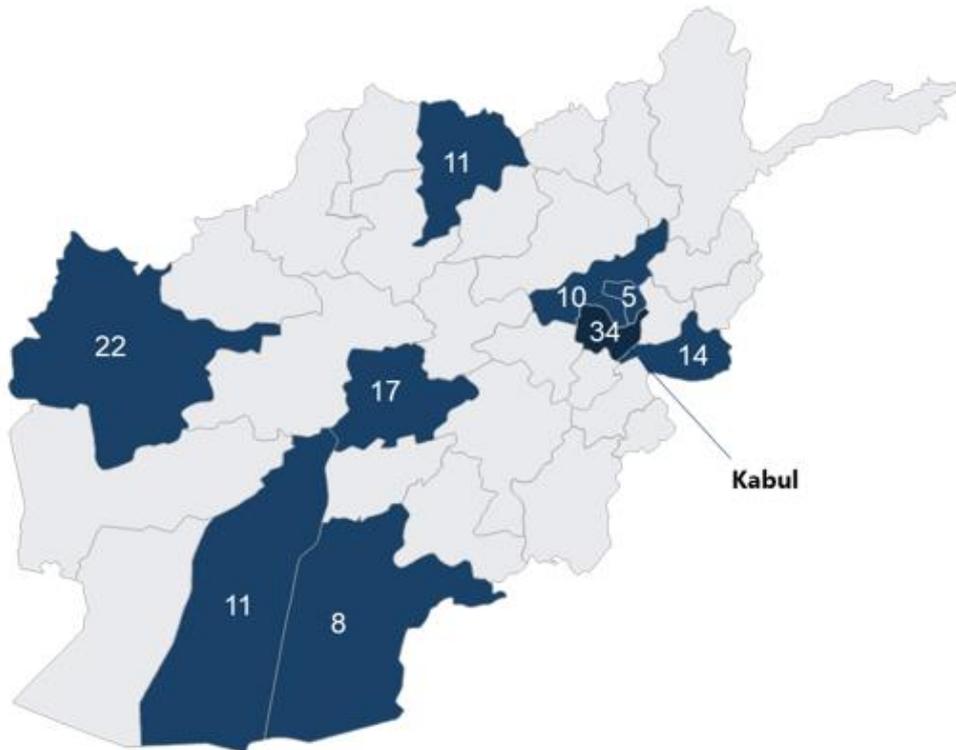
A comparative analysis of the international assistance to Afghanistan by selected major donors was conducted. Based on document reviews and interviews with donors, the analysis focused on donors' financial commitments, priorities, activities and key achievements.

# Methodology (continued)

## Beneficiary Data Collection

Seven (7) focus groups and 80 individual interviews were conducted in nine (9) different provinces across Afghanistan: Balkh, Daykundi, Helmand, Herat, Kabul, Kandahar, Kapisa, Nangarhar and Parwan. A total of 132 project beneficiaries (73 females and 59 males) were recruited from nine (9) different projects from various programming pillars.

The following country map illustrates the number of beneficiaries that participated in data collection in various provinces in Afghanistan.



## International expert panels

Two online expert panels were conducted (in November and December 2019) to collect specialized input from international experts on issues related to Afghanistan.

The information collected from these panels was also used to validate evaluation findings and to inform evaluation recommendations.

A total of 13 experts participated in the two panels. These experts were representatives from government, academia and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from various countries including Canada and Afghanistan.

## Social media analysis

An exploratory study was conducted using data collected from popular social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and major Internet websites. Using data from both Canadian and Afghan outlets, the study provided evidence to help inform a number of evaluation questions related to relevance and effectiveness. The study also answered methodological questions that helped inform the value of social media analysis in future evaluations.

## **Global Affairs Canada demonstrated strong overall alignment of its international assistance programming with Afghanistan's national, sectoral and ministerial priorities and strategies over the evaluation period.**

At the national level, Global Affairs Canada supported Afghanistan's national priorities to date during the first phase of the country's Transformation Decade (2014-2024). This was demonstrated by Canada's participation in a number of international agreements including the 2012 Tokyo Declaration Partnership for Self-Reliance in Afghanistan, the 2015 Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework and the 2018 Geneva Mutual Accountability Framework.

At the sectoral level, Canada's programming aligned with Afghanistan's sector priorities, especially in non-security sectors such as health and education. Canada's gender equality effort was also aligned with Afghanistan's commitment to promote gender equality in the country.

At the project level, many project implementers were required to sign memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with respective government ministries to ensure that projects were aligned with Afghanistan's national priorities.

## **At the same time, Afghanistan's national strategies have been influenced by donor priorities at the expense of fully representing the Afghan population's true underlying needs and priorities.**

Interviewees from Global Affairs Canada, other donor countries and the Afghan government noted that **the Afghan national strategies were influenced or even determined by donors, especially the dominant donors**. This perception was confirmed by expert panels, donor comparison analysis, literature review and document review.

Due to concerns over corruption, weak institutional capacity and lack of transparency, many donors, including Canada, focused on areas that were most appealing to their own national interests.

UNDP representatives interviewed as part of the donor comparison analysis indicated that the current aid approach in Afghanistan was based on short-term donor strategies rather than what was required in the country.

Literature reviews also identified that funding mechanisms like the World Bank's Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund were mostly controlled by donors and allowed little ability for the Afghan government to provide oversight.

# Relevance

**Afghanistan's unique and delicate social fabric consists in a multiethnic society, which is further divided among tribal factions.**

Afghanistan's national anthem mentions 14 ethnic groups, the largest four being the Pashtun, Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara.

Beyond ethnic differences and tribal rivalries, some persisting social clashes are also rooted in regional conflicts within Afghanistan.

(Chua, 2018)



**Canada's programming was designed with limited consideration of the specific needs and opportunities associated with different groups within Afghanistan.**

Although Canada and other donors conducted active engagement with the Afghan national government in an effort to identify needs and priorities of Afghanistan, evidence collected through expert panels, literature review, and interviews suggested that **there were insufficient consultations by donors and insufficient needs assessments conducted at the sub-national and local levels.**

According to expert panels, local NGOs had direct contact with Afghan communities. As a result, they were more aware of the emerging needs of the Afghan people and also better positioned to respond to these needs. However, expert panelists stated that donors generally did not conduct sufficient consultation with local NGOs as part of their needs assessment process.

According to one of the panelists, there had been more consultation with local NGOs in the past.

Other panelists focused on the timing and sequencing of donor coordination. Specifically, **current donor coordination practices in Afghanistan were post-implementation based rather than needs assessment based.** Coordination focused on reporting data and information sharing rather than operational level coordination.

Expert panelists noted that Afghan women were not part of the decision-making process for national gender equality strategies in Afghanistan. To date, the needs and priorities of the female population in Afghanistan were decided by the significantly male-dominated Afghanistan government.

The literature found that there have historically been gaps between the stabilization projects that were wanted or needed by local Afghan people and those that were implemented by donors (e.g. Gordon, 2011).

As identified by Global Affairs Canada representatives, as well as by international and academic experts, understanding Afghanistan's ethnic divisions and tribal rivalries is a key success factor for international assistance programs.

## **Canada's overall engagement in Afghanistan was seen as not being sufficiently tailored to Afghanistan's unique, complex and evolving context.**

According to interviews, Canada's spending in Afghanistan was to a large extent driven by political imperatives and external factors (such as obligations to support allies).

Between 2014/15 and 2017/18, Canada disbursed an average of \$193 million per year to Afghanistan.

As suggested by evidence from literature review and interviews, the volume of Canadian assistance was perceived as significant from a pragmatic standpoint. Many Global Affairs Canada staff said that there was a pressure to spend, and it was too much and too fast in the context of Afghanistan. Mission staff also expressed that it was sometimes difficult to find good initiatives in Afghanistan to disburse the amount of money available.

Many other donors also perceived their development assistance spending in Afghanistan as ambitious and exceeding the absorption capacity of Afghan institutions.

For example, a 2018 evaluation report of the European Union's support to Afghanistan (European Commission, 2018) suggested that the amount of on-budget interventions provided to the Afghan government was questionable due to low government absorption rates. Among other points, the procurement process in the Afghan government was slow and the limited capacity of some ministries to effectively access funds through the Ministry of Finance of Afghanistan was often a constraint.

According to most donors and implementing partners, Canada demonstrated flexibility in terms of project design and course correction.

At the same time, Global Affairs Canada staff noted that the department's funding was allocated based on predetermined programming strategies. As a result, there was a lack of budgetary flexibility to redistribute funds to respond to the rapidly evolving context in Afghanistan.

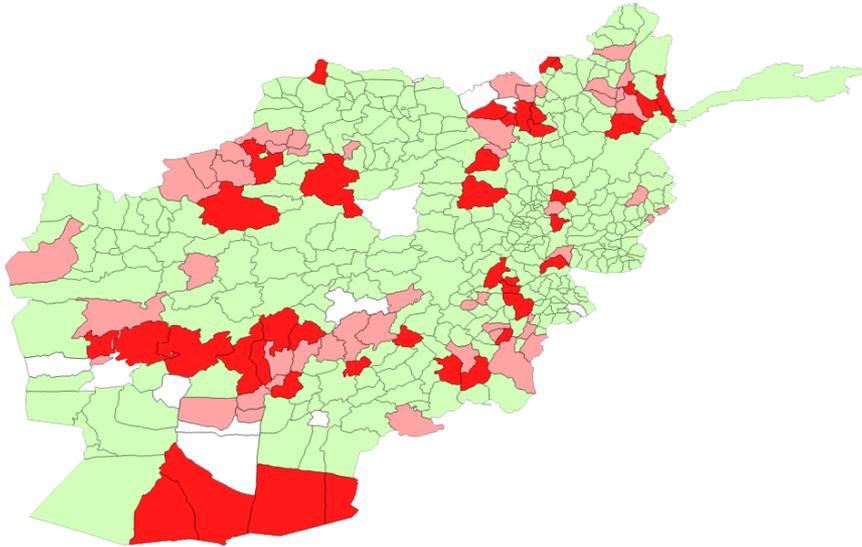
# Relevance: Deteriorating Security and Declining Reach Over Time

During the evaluation period, the Government of Afghanistan lost effective control over a substantial proportion of the country. This means that services provided by the government through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund and bilateral mechanisms used by Global Affairs Canada reached a smaller and smaller number of Afghans over time. This was especially the case for Afghans living outside of urban centres.

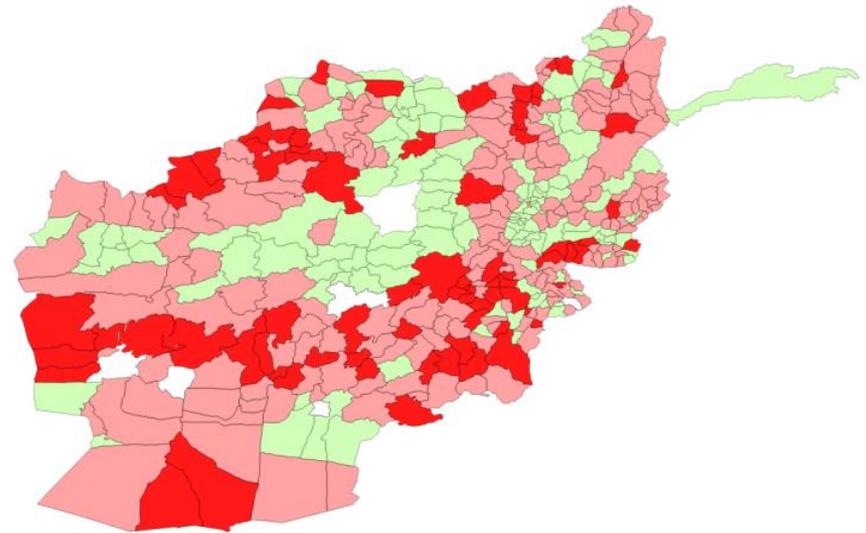
The following maps depict the number of districts that became controlled or contested by the Taliban at the expense of the Afghan government. They are based on data provided by the Foundation for Defense of Democracies through its Long War Journal project. It is important to note that the earliest data may (in retrospect) underestimate the number of contested districts.

By April 2020, the Government of Afghanistan maintained full control over only 33% of districts, while 46% of districts remained contested and 18% of districts were reported to be under Taliban control. The area still controlled by government contained 46 % of the population. Meanwhile, another 40% of the population lived in districts contested by insurgents and the remaining 14% of the population lived in districts controlled by the Taliban.

**March 2017**



**April 2020**



- Taliban-controlled districts
- Contested districts
- Government-controlled districts
- Unconfirmed or missing data

# Relevance

Engaging in fragile and conflict-affected states inevitably involves risk. There has been an increased recognition that donors must be willing to address risks in their programming and take steps to mitigate them. (OECD, 2014)

Conflict sensitivity analysis is a type of risk analysis, focusing on risks of conflict and fragility. Such risks require responses different from those applied in more stable situations. In fragile states like Afghanistan, poorly conceived involvement could do more harm than good. (OECD, 2011)

## **Canada's current engagement in Afghanistan took a valued development-focused approach focusing on strategically selected action areas based on Canada's experience and strengths.**

Compared to previous strategies in Afghanistan (2005-2014) that integrated defence operations with ongoing diplomacy and development efforts, the current engagement took a more development-focused approach, prioritizing social sectors such as health, education and women's empowerment.

These sectors were strategically selected action areas based on Canada's experience and success. Canada continuously demonstrated commitment and leadership in supporting these areas and achieved compelling results in the past two decades.

According to results from literature reviews and donor comparison analysis, the underlying thinking was that advancing social gains would enable Afghanistan to become more inclusive and stable as Afghans gained confidence in their government's ability to deliver services.

Through interviews, Global Affairs Canada staff and implementing partners also viewed the current approach as "strategic" and "critical."

## **At the same time, Canada's engagement could have benefited from more robust, more frequent and more formal conflict sensitivity analyses.**

A formal in-house conflict analysis was conducted in June 2018 to inform the developed Afghanistan Integrated Country Framework. The analysis identified Afghanistan's historical and current security context, its key state and anti-state actors, drivers of conflict and stability, sources of strength and resilience, as well as opportunities.

**This conflict analysis was developed late in the evaluation period in response to a formal requirement.** The evaluation team did not find substantial documentation of in-house conflict analyses being conducted during the 2014/15 to 2017/18 period.

While it has been the department's practice to include a risk assessment section in its planning and reporting processes, these risk assessments did not include a detailed and robust conflict sensitivity analysis. For example, the Afghanistan Integrated Country Framework (2018) included a risk and mitigation section that identified broad risks and mitigation strategies. The three risks identified were national security, natural disasters and fragile government. Under national security, only a brief description on Afghanistan's insecure environment and a number of high-level mitigation strategies were proposed.

## **International best practices for managing emerging risks such as continual updates and seeking outside views seem applicable to programming in the Afghanistan context.**

When identifying risks, it is important to consider existing risk factors, as well as those that were new and emerging (Institute of Internal Auditors [IIA], 2017). This will help facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the evolving risk dynamics.

While the formal conflict analysis was updated in December 2019, it was an exercise internal to the department. The updated conflict analysis was not disseminated to all relevant internal and external stakeholders.

After the formal conflict analysis was developed in June 2018, a number of major events occurred that had a significant impact on Afghanistan's security and stability.

For example, in September 2019, the United States cancelled its peace talks with the Taliban. The interruption of the peace talks led to a spike in attacks by Taliban insurgents.

Also in 2019, the announcement of the Afghan presidential election results triggered a series of political crises.

These two events would have inevitably generated considerable turbulence across political and socio-economic spheres, undermining peace and sustainable development. However, the impact and implications of these newly emerged events were not reflected in a disseminated version of the conflict analysis. As a result, an opportunity to develop targeted and coordinated responses was potentially missed.

Another best practice for conducting conflict analysis is the use of a participatory method to ensure that a range of perspectives were gathered to help inform the analysis.

Conflict analysis should use a combination of different data collection methods including desk research, surveys, expert interviews, community consultations and workshops with staff, partners and other relevant actors. (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012)

While the Afghanistan Integrated Country Framework (2018) was based on consultations with various branches in the department as well as the Kabul mission, **the conflict analysis appeared to be a desk research study based solely on academic sources dated between 2002 and 2012.** There was no consultation with external or Afghan stakeholders in an effort to incorporate potentially valuable external perspectives.

## **International best practices for developing and communicating risk responses seem applicable to programming in the Afghanistan context.**

According to best practices (IIA, 2017), once risks have been identified, the proper responses to the risks should have been determined.

There was a lack of evidence to determine whether specific responses were developed based on the results of the in-house conflict analysis.

At the corporate level, while the conflict analysis identified key drivers of conflict and instability, as well as their implications and overall impact, it was unclear whether or how this information was used to guide Canada's engagement in Afghanistan.

According to best practices, in order to develop the proper risk responses, a number of factors need to be taken into consideration, such as the impact of the risks, the cost and benefits of the response, the alignment of responses with the strategy and objectives, as well as the new impact of any potential risk response (IIA, 2017).

At the project level, project officers indicated that there was no requirement for implementing partners to integrate conflict analysis into their project designs.

Similarly, it is important to openly and frequently communicate risk information with both internal and external stakeholders. This best practice helps stakeholders to understand their specific roles and responsibilities and how risks impacting them are being addressed. It also provides opportunities to further increase the effectiveness of the risk information by incorporating relevant reactions (IIA, 2017).

The in-house conflict analysis was conducted to support the development of the Afghanistan Integrated Country Framework. The framework, although completed in 2018, was never officially approved to serve as a published and shared strategy.

It was unclear how the Integrated Country Framework and the supporting conflict analysis were shared and communicated with internal and external stakeholders.

# Coherence

Support was concentrated in four broad strategic areas: 1) Development Assistance, 2) Humanitarian Assistance, 3) Diplomacy and 4) Security. Efforts were concentrated in five key action areas:

- **Access to services:** Providing equitable access to social services through increasing access to safe, quality gender-responsive education and reproductive rights and health services, especially for women and girls;
- **Empowerment of women and girls:** Creating an enabling environment for the realization of the rights, leadership and economic empowerment of women and girls, particularly for the poorest, marginalized and vulnerable;
- **Transition to long-term development:** Linking of short-term humanitarian assistance with longer-term sustainable development;
- **Governance:** Encouraging self-reliance of the Afghan government and its ability to deliver basic services to its people in partnership with Afghan civil society;
- **Women, peace and security:** Helping to advance peace and security and citizen safety while increasing the meaningful participation of women in security forces and peacebuilding efforts, and in networks for conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict state-building.

## **Global Affairs Canada's current engagement in Afghanistan was the product of a multi-pronged, integrated approach that reflected Canada's values, priorities and strategic interests.**

Canada's current engagement was reflected in the Afghanistan Integrated Country Framework. It sought to continue implementing a multi-pronged and coordinated approach to improving stability and the prospects for peace in Afghanistan through a combination of development assistance, humanitarian assistance and security sector support.

Since the last evaluation (2015), Global Affairs Canada has refined its thinking to develop an integrated approach to deliver international assistance to Afghanistan. This approach has been highly relevant to advancing Canadian values, policies and priorities, notably the Feminist International Assistance Policy and Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

In line with the Feminist International Assistance Policy, Canada prioritized women's and girls' rights and empowerment in Afghanistan through development assistance programs in the health, education, humanitarian and human rights sectors.

Canada's engagement in Afghanistan contributed to Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, which has recognized and addressed the experience of women and girls in conflict-affected situations.

Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security also supported Afghanistan's own National Action Plan in implementing UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

## In terms of internal coordination at Global Affairs Canada, concerted coordination efforts took place at different levels.

In contrast to most other country programs where there have been separate streams of bilateral, multilateral, partnerships and security programming, **the Afghanistan desk has been one of the most amalgamated desks within the department.** It has taken a more broadened programming approach compared to traditional bilateral development work.

Its 'Linking Relief and Recovery to Development' (LRRD) programming was designed to bridge the gaps between short-term emergency relief and longer-term development assistance. It aimed to provide a more sustainable response to natural and conflict-related disasters and to reduce the annual cycle of humanitarian requirements. The LRRD programming allowed the Afghanistan desk to facilitate coordination between Global Affairs Canada's humanitarian and development efforts in Afghanistan.

The Afghanistan desk also managed Canada's contribution to the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, which was transferred from Peace and Stabilization Operations Programs (PSOPs) in 2018.

Within Global Affairs Canada, consultations and coordination between various programming streams reflected a sincere effort to provide a coherent and integrated international assistance to Afghanistan that included humanitarian, development and peace and security support. **Different branches consulted each other at the project design stage to avoid duplication and to ensure programming alignment.**

# Coherence

In its current 2019-2022 strategy, PSOPs designated selected priority countries for three different levels of engagement: comprehensive engagement, focused engagement, and engagement targeting conflict prevention. The strategy considers Afghanistan to be a country of focused engagement.

In Afghanistan, as in other “focus” countries like Burkina Faso, Haiti, Lebanon, Myanmar, West Bank and Gaza, Syria and Yemen, PSOPs would undertake focused engagement in order to help address specific challenges.

By contrast, in “comprehensive” countries such as Colombia, Iraq, Mali, South Sudan and Ukraine, PSOPs would use all available policy and programming tools to advance peace and stabilization objectives.

## **There was a narrow level of engagement and collaboration between the Peace and Stabilization Operations Program (PSOPs) and the Afghanistan program.**

During the evaluation period, Peace and Stabilization Operations Program (PSOPs) supported Afghanistan’s security forces by providing funding to NATO’s Afghanistan National Army Trust Fund (ANATF). This is consistent with the Department’s decision to designate Afghanistan a ‘focused’ country of engagement in PSOPs strategy 2019-2022, whereby PSOPs would engage in a limited number of areas and/or through a limited set of tools.

Interviewees from PSOPs and the Afghanistan program differed in their opinions as to where the policy leadership of the security programming in Afghanistan should have resided during the evaluation period.

Interviewees also revealed that, despite consultations between PSOPs and the Afghanistan program, there was a perceived need for more collaboration. Specifically, while Global Affairs Canada staff reported good internal consultations between PSOPs and the Afghanistan program, there was a perception that such consultations did not ensure deeper debate and discussion.

## **There were still missing pieces to programming coherence within the department during the evaluation period.**

According to Global Affairs Canada staff, there were still residual obstacles to achieving overall coherence within the department. These obstacles included contrasting cultures and mindsets associated with the nature of the work of each international assistance branch.

The non-geographic programming branches, such as Global Issues and Development, Partnerships for Development Innovation and International Security, did not have a country focused strategy during the evaluation period. As a result, their understanding of the specific Afghan context and their engagement with the mission in Kabul was limited.

This further led to certain disconnects between Global Affairs Canada’s mission staff and implementing partners at the project implementation stage. For example, when asked about KFM’s projects in Afghanistan, staff from Canada’s mission and the KFM branch indicated that it was mostly up to the implementing partner to provide visibility to the Mission. Mission staff confirmed that they were often not aware of the KFM projects being implemented in Afghanistan.

# Gender equality: approach and results

GAC's Internal Gender Equality (GE) coding:

- **GE-0: None** - There are no GE outcomes.
- **GE-1: Partially integrated** - There is at least one GE outcome at the immediate outcome level that will achieve a change in skills, awareness or knowledge that contributes to gender equality.
- **GE-2: Fully integrated** - There is at least one intermediate GE outcome that will achieve observable changes in behaviour, practice, or performance that will contribute to gender equality.
- **GE-3: Targeted** – Gender equality is the principal objective of the initiative: i.e. the initiative was designed specifically to address gender inequalities and would not otherwise be undertaken. All outcomes in the logic model are GE outcomes.

**Projects with a “Fully Integrated” or “Targeted” gender equality rating 2015/16 to 2018/19\* (percentage of all projects)**



\* Based on project start year.

**While the international assistance programming in Afghanistan already had a strong gender focus before the Feminist International Assistance Policy, the new Policy helped to support a more targeted approach to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.**

Canada's international assistance programming in Afghanistan has always had an explicit emphasis on gender equality. It was a clear priority and direction that started before the announcement of the Feminist International Assistance Policy in June 2017.

In the 2006-2008 Afghanistan Program Strategy, gender equality was given specific attention as a strategic sector of focus. In later strategies, gender equality became even more mainstreamed.

As articulated in the new policy, the current engagement in Afghanistan has focused on areas of human dignity and peace and security. Guidance from the policy supported further integration of assistance programming in Afghanistan by linking development, humanitarian assistance, and security sector support.

The policy helped to establish Canada as a feminist donor and a leader on women's rights and gender equality in Afghanistan. Through strong commitment and active engagement with key players and stakeholders, **Canada made tremendous progress in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.**

Specifically, implementation of the policy helped to reinforce feminist priorities and further push the feminist agenda. **It enabled Global Affairs Canada's programming in Afghanistan to go above and beyond the traditional gender considerations to promote the empowerment of women and girls** in Afghanistan.

Global Affairs Canada's gender equality coding framework assigns a gender equality rating in relation to a project's intended contribution to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The gender equality rating for most of the department's international assistance projects in Afghanistan increased in the latter years of the evaluation period with a noted spike in 2017, following the implementation of the Feminist International Assistance Policy.

# Gender equality: approach and results



As part of Canada's engagement in advancing women's role in the peace process in Afghanistan, the Canadian embassy hosted a roundtable discussion between the women members of provincial peace councils and representatives of the diplomatic community. Co-organized by the Women, Peace and Security Research Institute and the Institute for Inclusive Security, this roundtable discussion was part of the 3rd Women's Peace and Security Forum.

(Embassy of Canada to Afghanistan, 2014)

**Through active advocacy and policy dialogue, Canada earned a reputation as a leader in the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in Afghanistan.**

Canada played an important role in advocating for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in Afghanistan. **Working with other like-minded donors, Canada actively promoted the inclusion of gender equality in policy dialogue at the national level.**

- In 2017 and 2018, Canada contributed to policy dialogue on the implementation of Afghanistan's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.
- As the lead donor on the ARTF Gender Working Group, Canada's policy dialogue has been instrumental in the World Bank's establishment of a forum to specifically address gender equality in development assistance programming, as well as to improve data collection and reporting on GE results.
- Canada contributed to the advancement of gender equality by supporting capacity development of Afghan institutions and civil service organizations.
- Canada's support to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission increased its capacity to promote, protect and monitor human rights.
- As of 2018, Canada's bilateral development programming supported a total of 17 Afghan women's rights organizations, including the Empowerment Centre for Women, the Afghan Women's Council, Afghanistan Women Educational Centre and Afghan Women Skills Development Centre.

**The Canadian embassy was recognized as a safe venue for facilitating discussions,** as well as for hosting events on the protection and promotion of women's rights and gender equality.

- For example, the Canadian embassy hosted quarterly roundtable discussions on women's rights in Kabul, which included participants from civil service organizations, women's rights activists, government representatives and implementing partners.

# Gender equality: approach and results

**Gender perspectives were well-integrated across international assistance programming with some specific efforts also in adapting to women's and girls' needs in Afghanistan's social and cultural context.**

Most bilateral development projects included a gender equality approach in project design. Community education, technical support and capacity strengthening represented the main approaches for integrating gender equality.

To promote acceptance and integration of gender equality within communities, many projects incorporated participatory approaches. This included community consultations and involvement of influential community members, including some Afghan women, in the planning and implementation stages of many projects.

For 30 percent of bilateral projects, partners either conducted project-specific gender needs assessments or baseline assessments, or applied gender equality policies and frameworks, which helped to inform **gender-sensitive project design** and monitoring.

Projects funded through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund also reflected **a high level of attention to gender issues**. This attention to gender was not just focused on ensuring that women and girls benefited from the various development initiatives, but also on understanding and responding to their specific needs.

**The Education Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP)** was an ARTF investment window initiative. EQUIP aimed to improve the quality of education, improve access to schools and increase the number of female students who attend school. As Afghanistan's largest national education program, EQUIP focused on increasing equitable access to quality basic education, especially for girls.

The EQUIP was designed to promote education for girls by giving priority to female teachers and students. Gender grants were distributed as an incentive to increase female enrolment levels in the teacher training colleges. The project also used social mobilization mechanisms and infrastructure enhancements such as building walls to improve girls' enrollment and attainment in secondary schools.

**The System Enhancement for Health Action in Transition (SEHAT)** project was one of the ARTF investment window initiatives. SEHAT aimed to improve national basic health services for people in Afghanistan, with a focus on services for women and children. The project provided support to Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health for the implementation of the country's Health and Nutrition Sector Strategy.

Under the SEHAT project, gender analysis conducted during project preparation identified barriers to women's access to health services, such as poor transportation and shortage of female health workers. In order to specifically address issues of health service coverage and shortage of female health workers, the project implemented the Community Midwifery Education and Community Health Nursing Education Training programs.

# Gender equality: approach and results



Through Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI), murals were painted in 6 provinces of Afghanistan which give awareness on promoting and protecting women's rights. The above mural shows the faces of strong Afghan women with a message: "We are half of Afghanistan".

(Embassy of Canada to Afghanistan, 2018)

**Canada also supported Afghanistan's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, which aimed to increase women's participation in peace processes and the security sector.**

Canada's participation in the Women, Peace and Security Working Group in Afghanistan provided a strategic entry point to support the meaningful participation of women in peace frameworks.

Canada played an important role in coordinating donor support on police reforms, with a special focus on female police recruitment, training and retention. For example, Canada used its position as co-chair of both the International Police Coordination Board and the Ministry of Interior Support Team to advocate for functional Family Response Units to be sufficiently staffed by female police women and properly resourced throughout the country. The Family Response Units were essential in tracking allegations of domestic violence.

Canada was also a strong proponent of ensuring the retention and recruitment of women in the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, as well as their observation and implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Through the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI), Canada supported several projects that focused on women's empowerment and rights. For example, the "Promoting Peace, Security and Equal Rights through Urban Art" project promoted messages aimed at including women in peace, police and security forces. The message was expressed through mural paintings that were estimated to have been viewed through media platforms by thousands of Afghans every day.

# Gender equality: approach and results



Female beneficiaries participating in a focus group.

## **The projects implemented under the Women's and Girls' Rights and Empowerment sector resulted in women becoming more confident and self-sufficient.**

In terms of results, eight bilateral projects were implemented under the Women's and Girls' Rights and Empowerment sector to promote the advancement of the rights of women and girls, especially related to gender-based violence, and to enhance their role in decision-making processes.

Interviews and focus groups were conducted with beneficiaries from five of the eight projects. According to information collected from these beneficiaries, they became more active, confident and self-sufficient as a result of participating in the projects. There was also a shared perception that the attitudes toward women had improved in their communities.

Projects with an economic empowerment component increased women's access to economic opportunities through the provision of training and business support services.

For example, the Economic and Social Empowerment for Afghan Women project increased access to paid work. In the second year of project implementation, participants who had established a business also experienced a 297 percent increase in monthly income. Beneficiaries of this project who participated in a focus group discussion confirmed that they obtained the necessary vocational skills to start their own business. The income generated as a result of the project helped them become more financially independent.

## Gender equality: approach and results

A number of projects helped to raise awareness on the rights of women and girls, including the right to be free from violence.

For example, the Amplify Change: Supporting Women's Rights project aimed at promoting an enabling environment for supporting and protecting women's and girls' rights by increasing awareness of existing rights under the law and by enhancing women's and girls' access to services and support.

Beneficiaries of the project who participated in interviews confirmed that the project successfully promoted awareness of women's education and inheritance rights, and increased women's access to legal and advocacy services. The participants also indicated that they had noticed a decrease in gender-based violence against women in their community. They further attributed this decreased violence against women to the raised awareness on women's rights as a result of the project.

## Gender equality: risks

According to evidence from interviews, document reviews, expert panels, and data collection with beneficiaries, **programming efforts to integrate gender equality in Afghanistan often exceeded the country's realities and its capacity at various levels.**

For example:

- Projects focusing on women's empowerment were seen as mostly benefiting women living in urban areas and those of the elite class. As a result, it did not address women's basic survival needs, especially for those living in rural areas.
- While there were efforts to engage women, both as project implementers and project beneficiaries, there was a lack of basic infrastructure and social networks to ensure their mobility and safety.
- Some economic empowerment projects were seen as less successful, since women participants were unable to maintain business due to a lack of client base and other support such as transportation.

**Like many other donors, Canada's approach toward gender equality in Afghanistan was perceived as ambitious.**

Mission staff interviewed in Kabul indicated that the Women and Girls' Rights and Empowerment projects were expected to spend overly ambitious sums at an excessive pace. Project participants benefited directly from the projects. At the same time, it was unclear whether these projects would achieve their ultimate intended outcomes and have an impact on women's and girls' empowerment at a societal level.

It is worth noting that Canada's experience was not an exception in this regard. **Many other donors identified overambitious gender equality initiatives as a fundamental design problem for their development assistance programming in Afghanistan.** This included the United Kingdom (2009), the United States (2011), Denmark (2012) and Norway (2016).

**There were some concerns about getting the right mix in projects.**

Some of Global Affairs Canada's program staff interviewed expressed concerns over the tendency to design all projects around gender perspectives. In some cases, **a focus on an overarching gender perspective could potentially overshadow other relevant project objectives.** For example, interviewees perceived projects focusing only on promoting women's rights and empowerment as less relevant if they were unable to address real everyday challenges faced by women, such as illiteracy and immobility.

Such concerns were not unique to Global Affairs Canada projects:

- When commenting on gender projects aimed directly at increasing women's participation, expert panelists perceived such projects by donors as running the risk of being "tokenism."
- Panelists elaborated that many of these donor projects were not successful in identifying the meaningful changes that Afghan women would like to see within their households and communities.

**Similar to the experiences of many other donors, Canada's gender equality programming efforts in Afghanistan may not have been sufficiently adapted to the local context.**

Literature review has raised concerns about a Western-centric approach being employed by donors in Afghanistan to promote gender equality. Such an approach seeks to promote Western values in countries where gender equality has been severely compromised by political, social, cultural and economic factors.

It is important to recognize that accusations of cultural imperialism and cultural insensitivity can sometimes be levied as a ruse to undermine efforts to foster the empowerment of women and girls. At the same time, concerns about donor insensitivity in Afghanistan were raised across multiple lines of evidence; this included beneficiary data collection, expert panels, interviews and literature reviews.

Common terminology and slogans that were widely used by donors were at risk of being seen as imposing a foreign philosophy if they were not sufficiently conceptualized and adapted to the local context. Women's rights, women's empowerment, gender equality and gender based violence were identified as the main examples of such terminology in interviews with international donors and during the expert panel discussions.

Evidence further suggested that there was an **insufficient understanding and appreciation of Afghanistan's local cultural context and Islamic tradition**. For example, evidence from interviews, document reviews and data collection with beneficiaries pointed to a need to further engage and consult with local actors, including power brokers, community leaders, legal systems and media, as a way to improve the relevance and effectiveness of efforts to integrate gender equality.

# Gender equality: risks

**If not carefully managed, gender equality programming efforts could cause harm to some Afghans, especially women and girls.**

Project beneficiaries reported having faced challenges as a result of participating in Global Affairs Canada's projects. Challenges were either related to getting permission and support from their family members, or brought on by negative gender norms within society. Some beneficiaries also reported facing threats to their safety.

**Interviews and literature reviews found evidence of backlashes against the gender equality efforts promoted by other donors.**

One of the examples is the challenge associated with recruiting female officers in the Afghan police. A 2016 report by the Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence (Norway, 2016) found that, by placing women in the male-dominated police structure, many of the female police officers faced not only discriminations but also direct threats. At the time, international donors were more concerned about counting the number of policewomen than examining the negative consequences for these individuals.

A report from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR, 2009) documented the United States' failure to anticipate the additional danger women may face when participating in gender mainstreaming programming. Monitoring the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Promote: Women in Government program, the review revealed the "Afghan government failed to provide adequate protection for its female candidate, who received threats in the form of letters, phone calls and harassment."

In the interviews, there was evidence of unintended effects arising from efforts to provide shelters for women who were affected by violence. Examples were given where women who utilized these shelters were being shunned by their families. Some beneficiaries further expressed fear of backlash for bringing their domestic cases in public. According to literature reviews and interviews with other donors, similar evidence also existed in programs funded by other donors.

**There is a risk that narrow monitoring systems in donor projects may fail to capture the full range of unintended effects and negative consequences. However, it is not clear how to address this.**

# Gender equality: men and boys

Through the Afghanistan program's Knowledge Fund, Canada supported the first-ever International Men and Gender Equality Survey Afghanistan study.

The study found that men were far more likely than women to hold attitudes resisting gender equality at the societal level.

It further demonstrated a statistically significant relationship whereby younger men had lower gender-equality scores than older men, even when accounting for the influence of eight other demographic and childhood influences.

These findings suggested that Afghanistan's 40 years of conflict had fostered a more toxic masculinity in younger generations that will require responses to address the root causes.

On a positive note, **the Afghanistan program has already taken into account findings of the study to support its evolving policy dialogue and future programming.**

## Programming efforts to integrate gender equality could also have benefited from a more inclusive approach by further engaging men and boys.

The definition of gender roles was so central to Afghan society and culture during the period that any planned changes required not only consultation with male household members, but also with the larger community.

While there were some efforts to include men and boys in program design and implementation, the evaluation found that **the gender equality effort could have benefited from a more inclusive approach to further engage men and boys.**

- In focus groups and beneficiary interviews, female participants reported a need for programming to be extended to other family members including men. According to these participants, the inclusion of men would benefit women and the society in general, and foster more positive attitudes toward women. Program staff also indicated that women receiving training or incentives had in some cases generated jealousy and resistance among men. This pointed to a need to educate and engage men in the implementation process.
- When asked about programming efforts toward the integration of gender equality conducted through the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, interviewees noted a number of challenges related to the promotion of women's participation in policing, such as entrenched gender barriers and discriminatory attitudes toward female personnel.

This was confirmed by a number of articles included in the literature review. For example, a LOTFA desk review conducted by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 2018 concluded that the effort to achieve LOTFA's gender targets had fuelled discontent among their male counterparts.

Evidence from literature review also showed that male sexual abuse was a widespread problem in Afghanistan during the evaluation period.

# Results: Health

## Through contributions to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, Canadian assistance contributed to improved access to and quality of health-care services.

Under the ARTF, Canada gave preference to funding to the health sector through the System Enhancement for Health Action in Transition (SEHAT) program (2014-2017), and its follow-up project, SEHATmandi (2018-2021). These health projects aimed at increasing the use and quality of health, nutrition and family planning services.

As health funding was funnelled through the Afghan government and supported the entire health sector, it contributed to the increased scope, coverage, and quality of health services across the country.

For example, through SEHAT, the number of births attended by skilled health personnel more than doubled over the five years of the project. Nutrition services were also successfully scaled up country-wide by the Ministry of Public Health and other implementers.

As a main contributor to the ARTF, Canada also played an active role in donor coordination and policy dialogue. In 2018-2019, Canada led joint advocacy with USAID and the European Union to improve monitoring and reporting on the results of SEHATmandi.

## Through implementation of bilateral development projects, Canadian assistance contributed to improvements in the health of women, adolescent girls, newborns and children.

Health programming adopted a “women’s and girls’ rights first approach” by focusing on maternal, newborn and child health initiatives.

Bilateral health sector projects contributed to improved health and nutrition through a diversity of activities.

**Focusing on rural and remote areas, some projects contributed to improved access to basic health services for women and children.** For example, the Family Health Houses project improved the health services available to women and children through the establishment of family health houses, which provide health services to women, newborns and children under the age of five.

**By addressing underlying causes of malnutrition, some projects achieved positive results in improving nutritional status for infants and children under five years of age.** For example, the Improving Nutrition for Mothers, Newborns and Children project improved the nutrition status of newborns, children under five and women of reproductive age in nine provinces, through activities such as training, supplies, advocacy and partnerships.

**Many bilateral health projects also included capacity building activities such as community health promotion campaigns, training health personnel and development of local health human resources. These activities helped to support the achievement of expected health outcomes.**

Both the Health Action Plan for Afghanistan and the Family Health Houses projects provided training to midwives. By increasing the number of trained midwives who could provide reproductive health services in the communities, these projects not only contributed to increasing women’s access to necessary health services, they also served as models in conservative communities by portraying educated women playing important professional roles.

Most bilateral projects delivered by implementing partners demonstrated close coordination with relevant government ministries and alignment with government policies and strategies. In some cases, stakeholder consultations were also undertaken to develop linkages and to avoid duplication of effort. However, program staff identified a need to further enhance the geographic reach of health programming.

# Results: Education

**Through the implementation of bilateral projects and contributions to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, Canadian international assistance contributed to increased access to quality basic education, especially for girls.**

Global Affairs Canada focused its bilateral education funding to establish and operate community-based education (CBE) classes. This model offered educational opportunities for children who would otherwise not have been able to attend school.

According to project documents, established CBE classes increased access to safe and quality education in remote and even insecure areas, especially for girls.

Beneficiaries of CBE projects reported an increased literacy level within their community.

Some CBE projects also had capacity building activities such as providing training to teachers on child protection policies and guidelines, as well as supporting provincial and district education departments with transitioning students from community schools to government schools.

Through active engagement and policy dialogue, Canada also provided input and facilitation for the Ministry of Education to finalize the CBE Policy, which provided regulations and standards with respect to the implementation of community-based education.

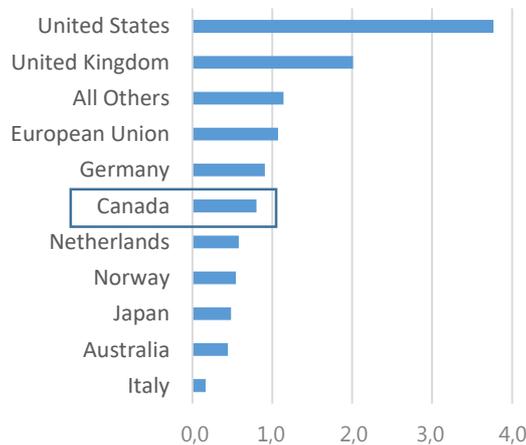
Implementing partners reported an increased community support for CBE in general and an improved perception of girls' education in particular. CBE teachers or school administrators who participated in beneficiary interviews also indicated that their role as CBE educators had led to many positive personal changes in their lives at the professional, economic and social levels.

Under the ARTF umbrella, Canada also provided funding to the Education Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP) (2014-2017) and Education Quality Reform in Afghanistan (2018-2023). These programs aimed to improve the quality of education, while also improving access to schools and increasing the number of female students who attended school.

- Unlike bilateral projects which tended to be localized, these ARTF projects supported the education system throughout Afghanistan.
- Results achieved by the World Bank through the support of Canada, other donors and the Ministry of Education have contributed to increased access to quality basic education. Statistics of children in school in Afghanistan have vastly increased, particularly for girls.

Looking at the effectiveness of international assistance in various sectors in Afghanistan, the analysis of social media concluded that it was highly evident that education was seen as a key part of the success stories.

**Cumulative Contributions to ARTF by 10 Largest Donors (2002 to 2019) (USD \$B)**



Source: World Bank, 2019

# Results: Linking Relief and Recovery to Development



Thanks in part to Canada, women deminers were equipped and trained to clear their community of remnants of war in Afghanistan. Mine removal offers increased financial independence to Afghan women. (Embassy of Canada to Afghanistan, 2019)

## Programming helped address gaps between immediate humanitarian response and longer-term development objectives.

While responding to humanitarian needs in Afghanistan was the mandate of the International Humanitarian Assistance Program, programming to link relief and recovery to development complemented traditional humanitarian assistance work by focusing on enhancing the resiliency of vulnerable populations.

During the evaluation period, the Mine Action Program in Afghanistan (MAPA), supported in part by Canada, made over 276 km<sup>2</sup> of contaminated land safe for agriculture and other purposes.

- Landmines cleared as a result of this program contributed to reducing injuries while increasing food security through the release of agricultural land. It also contributed to helping Afghanistan meet its commitment to the Ottawa Treaty (The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction), under which Afghanistan seeks to become mine-free by 2023.
- While 77 percent of known minefields and battle areas had been cleared, Afghanistan remained one of the countries most affected by landmines. Through activities such as delivering mine risk education and media outreach campaigns, MAPA helped to build the capacity of the Afghan government to carry on this work.

Support for emergency relief and disaster response provided essential services and strengthened key disaster response actors.

- In addition to responding to immediate humanitarian needs, the Supporting Undocumented Afghan Refugee Returnees project also provided legal assistance and psychosocial counselling services to undocumented Afghan returnees from Pakistan.
- Canada's funding supported the Afghan Red Crescent Society to build their disaster management capacity across the country. By improving the emergency relief and disaster response systems and structures, the Afghanistan Red Crescent Society reached over 1.4 million beneficiaries in 34 provinces and contributed to the provision of effective and efficient humanitarian assistance.

# Results: Security

## Canada provided its security sector support through the Afghan National Army Trust Fund and the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan.

In 2011 at the Bonn, Germany, conference on Afghanistan, the international community agreed on a Transformation Decade for the Afghanistan that would span from 2014 to 2024. The Transformation Decade seeks to ensure that Afghanistan achieves the goal of being a functional and stable nation.

As a NATO ally member, Canada has committed to help sustain the Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces until the end of Afghanistan's Transformation Decade.

Canada has provided its security sector support through the Afghan National Army Trust Fund and the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan. Canada's commitment to support these two trust funds was made at the 2012 NATO Chicago (Illinois) Summit and the 2016 NATO Warsaw (Poland) Summit.

At the NATO Chicago Summit, Canada committed to provide \$110 million per year between 2015 and 2017, divided equally between ANATF and LOTFA. At the Warsaw summit, Canada further committed to provide \$65 million per year between 2018 to 2020, with \$27.5 million per year allocated for ANATF and \$37.5 million per year allocated for LOTFA.

Canada has played an active role in promoting policy dialogue and donor coordination in the security sector. In 2019, Canada became a co-chair of the ANATF Board, responsible for co-chairing quarterly board meetings and the annual meeting. The mission in Kabul has also been active in leading working group meetings to coordinate donor responses to both trust funds.

**The Afghan National Army Trust Fund** was created in 2007 to provide a mechanism - for allied and partner nations contributing troops to the former NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, as well as for other NATO partners, to support the transportation and installation of donated equipment, purchase equipment and services for Afghan National Army engineering projects, and support in and out-of-country training. Over time, the scope of the ANATF was expanded to also support the sustainment of the Afghan National Army; to support literacy and professional military education and capacity building activities - including those to strengthen good governance within the Afghan security structures - and to enhance women's meaningful participation within the relevant Afghan ministries and security institutions.

**The Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan** was established by the UNDP in 2002 with an initial focus on salary payments to the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MOIA) personnel, including procuring non-lethal equipment and supporting critical police infrastructure. From 2012 onward, a capacity development component was included in LOTFA that expanded the trust fund to support the MOIA on areas such as payroll management, institutional reform and police professionalization. LOTFA aims to increase the effectiveness and accountability of security service delivery, improve justice service delivery for all Afghans (particularly vulnerable groups) and strengthen legal and institutional frameworks to combat corruption.

## Results: Security



Shoulder patch of the Afghan National Army  
(Shutterstock Inc.)

**Through contributions to the Afghan National Army Trust Fund, Canada continued to support the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces to peacefully manage, resolve and recover from conflict and crisis.**

Throughout the interviews, Global Affairs Canada staff perceived that the Afghan National Army Trust Fund was well managed by NATO.

At the same time, evidence from interviews and document reviews found that reports of ANATF's results had been mostly based on outputs, not outcomes. While NATO had sound measurement mechanisms in place for the management of projects, reporting on outcomes has been challenging due to the complexity of having multiple donors involved and the inability to support the reporting requirements of each individual country. **As such, there was a need for Canada and other donors to urge NATO to improve reporting in order to better understand what results have been achieved.**

According to interviews and document reviews, the ANATF achieved the following main results during the evaluation period:

- In line with Canada's commitment to support the professionalization and sustainment of the Afghan National Army, funding through the ANATF directly sustained and strengthened the national army's training and operational support with expert technical expertise and specialist advisors.
- In 2018, Canada made a targeted financial contribution of \$34.1 million for Women's Police Town (Phase I) to provide secure housing in Kabul for policewomen and their families. The project was expected to be completed by 2020 and included the construction of 10, 30-unit apartment buildings designed to house 300 Afghan policewomen and their families.
- Canada actively supported the recruitment of women as part of the Afghan National Army. The percentage of women in the army increased from 0.53 % in 2016 to 0.6 % in 2018, and was on track to meet the goal of 0.75 % women serving in the military.
- However, interviewees and literature review both pointed out the many challenges faced by female officers in the military. These challenges included entrenched cultural barriers, lack of infrastructure and mistreatment by male colleagues – all of which acted to suppress women's engagement and retention.

## Results: Security



Afghan National Police  
(Shutterstock Inc.)

**Through contributions to the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, Canada continued to support the Afghan government to build and maintain a professional police force and to implement the reform priorities of Afghanistan's Ministry of Interior Affairs.**

Canada's contributions to the Law and Order Trust Fund over the evaluation period were earmarked for the Support to Payroll Management (SPM) project. While 95 percent of these funds went toward police salaries, another key activity of the SPM was to build the capacity of the Ministry of the Interior so that they could take over the payroll management function. Canada's funding also supported workshops on discrimination toward women police officers and on improving access to appropriate facilities and transportation for women police officers.

Evaluation evidence was mixed on LOTFA's effectiveness. Document review revealed a number of issues including slow progress on project objectives and insufficient reporting on outcomes. In addition, an accumulation of unspent funds in 2016 raised concerns among international donors about the capacity of the UNDP to utilize funds and achieve desired outcomes. As a result, Canada, along with some other donors, redirected 2016 and 2017 LOTFA pledges to the Afghan National Army Trust Fund.

An independent evaluation in 2018 concluded that progress had been made. Specifically, the payroll process had vastly improved since 2015 and a near 99 percent rate of on-time pay disbursement was also achieved. In addition, improvements had been made in systems architecture and oversight mechanisms.

On the other hand, the transfer of the payroll function, intended for late 2016, had not taken place by 2019, and key issues such as inflated personnel figures (or "ghost police") had not been fully resolved.

Despite concerns with the progress on police payroll management, many donors, along with Canada, agreed in 2018 to expand the scope of LOTFA through new funding windows to improve justice service delivery among the police, courts and corrections, and to help strengthen legal and institutional frameworks to better combat corruption.

On the recruitment of female police officers, the percentage of women serving in the police force increased from 2.0 percent in 2016 to 2.7 percent in 2018, which was a significant improvement and showed progress towards the goal of 5 percent of the police being female. However, similar as in the military, female police officers were usually restricted to lower level roles and often faced harassment from colleagues in the workplace.

## **Most projects factored sustainability into project design by focusing on capacity building and transferring ownership to the government or local community bodies.**

According to evidence from interviews and document reviews, most bilateral projects included some aspect of capacity building as a strategy for sustainability:

- Many projects focused on transferring ownership of the project to local community bodies or government. For example, project planning documents of the two community-based education projects provided evidence of considerations for sustainability, such as integrating CBE into Citizens' Charter, a foundation for realizing the government's self-reliance vision. Some project planning documents also included strategies to transfer classes and students to Afghanistan's local governance system.
- Some projects incorporated strategies to establish and strengthen networks of local actors. For example, the Aga Khan Foundation's Afghanistan Community Renewal Programme focused on relationship building with civil society and private sector institutions as a means to promote economic growth in targeted communities.
- From a technical support perspective, the national Nutrition Surveillance System in Afghanistan project, implemented by the World Health Organization, sought to build Afghan-owned national nutrition data systems and to improve the country's nutrition services delivery.
- The trust funds supported by Canada also incorporated capacity building components:
  - The core principles of ARTF funding of investments was designed to promote sustainable planning processes. For example, the design and implementation of the Education Quality Reform in Afghanistan program was based on experience of the previous investment operations, EQUIP, which paid particular attention to building capacity in the Ministry of Education and transparency in resource management.
  - As a recent co-chair of the ANATF board, Canada promoted placing a greater emphasis on assessing project proposals based on sustainability criteria.

**Examples of the sustainment of results have been reported, which demonstrated cases of strengthened capacity in Afghanistan's government, institutions, and communities.**

In the education sector, community-based schools and teachers have been integrated into the public education system by the Ministry of Education. Graduates of these schools have also been enrolled in higher levels of formal education.

At the institutional level, Canada's support to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) helped to strengthen the organization's leadership role on human rights issues in the public arena and among the civil society.

One example of sustainability was Nisfe-Jahan, a grassroots membership-based women's organization initiated by Zardozi, an Afghan NGO and implementer of the Economic and Social Empowerment for Afghan Women project. Zardozi's female clients, which included participants of the Economic and Social Empowerment project, became active members of Nisfe-Jahan and devolved responsibilities of project implementation from Zardozi to community members. Project participants in a focus group discussion stated that, thanks to Nisfe-Jahan, they would be able to continue their business after the Economic and Social Empowerment project ended.

**Despite examples of increased capacity at various levels, the overall sustainability of outcomes remained difficult to achieve due to many challenges.**

Sustainability has been constrained by Afghanistan's complex political and security dynamics. Due to ongoing conflict and the disrupted peace process, results achieved to date may be at risk. **In June 2019, 99 percent of Afghan beneficiaries who participated in the focus groups and interviews indicated that, should the security situation deteriorate, the project they participated in would either come to a complete halt, or be greatly compromised.**

Despite evidence of progress on sustainability in different sectors, Canada's funding also remained necessary for continued project activities and sustained operations. The Afghan government did not have sufficient capacity or revenue to sustain the outcomes achieved through Canada's funding.

Literature reviews, expert panels, donor comparison analysis and interviews all pointed to Afghanistan's high level of dependency on international assistance. Literature reviews and interviews further suggested that, while external funding by donors may have raised the capacity of the Afghanistan government and institutions in the short run, there has been insufficient attention paid to medium- and long-term institutional, operational and individual capacity development.

In this evaluation, it was not possible to draw conclusions on the sustainment of results because of insufficient data.

- Although many projects reported output-level results, measuring sustainability should focus on outcome-level changes.
- While most bilateral projects integrated sustainability considerations in planning stage, **project reporting did not explicitly look at the sustainment of achieved results.**
- The project cycle and its monitoring and evaluation strategy were short- or medium-term based. This posed another challenge to understanding longer-term impacts of Canada's programming.

## **As a good practice, some donors conduct evaluations after project close-out to help inform effective planning and the sustainment of results.**

In evaluation, an “ex-post evaluation” examines the sustainment of the outcomes achieved by an intervention after the project has been completed. Some donors (e.g. Japan and the Asian Development Bank) regularly conduct these evaluations to assess the longer-term impacts of their programs for accountability and learning purposes.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) conducts ex-post evaluations three to five years after project completion, with the emphasis on the effectiveness and sustainability of the project. When there are concerns, JICA may choose to conduct another assessment seven years after the completion of a project to verify the project’s effectiveness, impact and sustainability, as well as the extent to which recommendations drawn from the evaluation were applied. The aim is to derive lessons learned and recommendations to improve the project, and to help design more effective and efficient projects in the future.

From 2014 to 2016, JICA published seven ex-post evaluations on technical assistance projects implemented in Afghanistan between 2003 and 2010. For example, its Inter-Communal Rural Development Project was implemented to establish a model for community-led rural development that would bring high regional effects in the provinces of Balkh, Bamyan and Kandahar. The project was completed in 2010 and its ex-post evaluation was conducted in 2015. The evaluation concluded on the sustainability of the effects of the project from various perspectives including policy, institutional, technical and financial perspectives.

At the time of the evaluation, Global Affairs Canada did not have a mechanism that required programs to follow-up or monitor the sustainment of results beyond the lifecycle of project funding. This gap was also reported in the Evaluation of Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Initiative (2010/11 to 2017/18).

For Afghanistan, many Global Affairs Canada projects adopted strategies designed to achieve sustained results. However, there was no feedback loop in place to determine whether the planning for sustainability had actually promoted the achievement of sustainable results.

This is important because more and more international assistance programming will be in fragile and conflict-affected states. As conflicts and violence pose additional challenges for the sustainment of results, such a feedback loop between project planning and reporting may become even more critical to ensure the success of future programming.

**Given the rapidly changing context of events on the ground, it remained to be seen if results achieved at the time of data collection in 2019 will be sustained.**

# Conclusions

## Canada's value-added contributions in Afghanistan

Since the end of Canada's military and training missions, international assistance programming has been the main avenue for Canada's engagement in Afghanistan. Canada has been recognized by the Afghan government and the donor community as a main contributor and leader in the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in Afghanistan.

Through strong commitment and active engagement with key players and stakeholders, Canada made tremendous progress on promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. While Canada's international assistance programming in Afghanistan already had a strong gender focus before the Feminist International Assistance Policy, the new policy enabled programming in Afghanistan to go above and beyond the traditional gender considerations to promote the empowerment of women and girls.

Programming also demonstrated compelling results in its other strategically selected areas such as health, education and linking relief and recovery to development.

## Relevance and coherence in a context of fragility and conflict

Canada sought to implement a coordinated approach to improving stability and prospects for peace in Afghanistan through a combination of development assistance, humanitarian assistance and security sector support. This approach was highly relevant to advancing Canadian values, policies and priorities.

The evaluation found that Canada's spending in Afghanistan was designed with limited consideration of the specific needs and opportunities associated with different groups within Afghanistan.

While Canada's engagement in Afghanistan took a valued development-focused approach, it could have benefited from a more robust and up-to-date conflict sensitivity analysis. In addition, there was a lack of evidence to determine whether and how the 2018 in-house conflict analysis was used to guide programming.

Within Global Affairs Canada, consultations and coordination between various programming streams reflected a sincere effort to provide a coherent and integrated international assistance to Afghanistan. At the same time, the evaluation found that programming coherence could be further enhanced by promoting opportunities for deeper debate and discussion.

## Challenges and opportunities

There were significant challenges to achieving demonstrable results in Afghanistan. In addition to ongoing conflict and instability, there were many other impediments to sustainable peace; namely, corruption, gender inequality, human rights violations, unemployment, persistently low social indicators and low confidence in the government.

There has also been a number of political and geopolitical uncertainties related to Afghanistan, such as the prospects of the Taliban peace deal, the future of the Afghan government and the upcoming U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

At the same time, and as other donors reduced their presence in Afghanistan, there were growing opportunities for Global Affairs Canada to focus its programming on areas where Canada had established leadership and success. Through active engagement with the Afghan government and strategic dialogue with the international community, Canada could further leverage its role as a key committed partner in supporting Afghanistan on its path to becoming a more stable and democratic country.

# Recommendations

1. Ensure that future programming is even more tailored to Afghanistan's unique, complex and evolving context. In areas where the security situation permits it, this could include increased consultation and needs assessments at sub-national and local levels, and take into consideration the specific needs associated with different ethnic groups within Afghanistan.
2. Develop, update and disseminate robust conflict sensitivity analyses as events unfold. This should also include the development of a strategy to systematically incorporate the drivers of conflict into program design and implementation. This will help ensure that conflict sensitivity analyses bring about changes in development programming as circumstances change.
3. Develop and publish an Afghanistan strategy to promote greater coherence and integration across international assistance programming streams.
4. Identify ways to tailor messages in a manner to promote gender equality programming in ways that resonate more with intended audiences in Afghanistan.
5. Build on existing successes and engage men and boys more to foster gender equality results and the empowerment of women and girls.
6. Continue to work with other donors in urging the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Bank, to improve results-based management, accountability and transparency in the administration of multi-donor trust funds to Afghanistan.

## Considerations for horizontal learning

Programming in a fragile, conflict-affected country with strongly related humanitarian, development, and peace and stabilization needs requires some adaptations and innovations in terms of the methods, tools and approaches traditionally used by Global Affairs Canada in its programming, especially in development.

This section offers some reflections in this respect, which may apply to other fragile and conflict-affected countries in which Global Affairs Canada works.

- **Development programming in Afghanistan and other fragile countries could further use the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives to respond to local needs and priorities.** The CFLI has funded a number of small-scale and high-impact projects in Afghanistan. These projects helped to fill programming gaps where regular funding approaches would have been ineffective and inefficient due to high operational costs.
- **Projects targeting women and girls' rights and empowerment need to be thought through to avoid backlashes and avoid unintended outcomes.** To be successful, this will require a deep understanding of the real needs associated with the most vulnerable groups, such as women with limited resources, subject to violence, living in rural areas. It can also require further engagement with sub-national and local actors, including power brokers and community leaders, to act as agents of change.
- **Donor coordination should begin at the beginning.** Donor coordination in fragile and conflict-affected states should begin during the needs assessment phase and continue during the operational phase when projects are sequenced and as they are rolled out. Information and data sharing is important, but sharing earlier allows for programming to pivot and be responsive as the context changes.
- **Implementing partners could benefit from tools and guidelines to help them integrate gender equality and empowerment of women and girls into their programming.** These tools and guidelines should be country specific, taking into consideration the specific security, political, social and economic context of the country. One size does not fit all.
- **In the Afghanistan context, and more broadly within the department, there is a need to measure the sustainment of programming outcomes.** Development assistance involves risk so not every project will deliver the expected results. Similarly, not every project can be expected to deliver sustained results after project completion because of the nature of programming in fragile and conflict-affected states. At the same time, it is important for learning purposes to verify that the assumptions and plans made to foster sustainability were valid and actually led to sustained results. This is true even when the contribution agreements with implementing agencies have been concluded. A richer understanding of sustainability considerations and what works can lead to improvements in project planning and design. When projects approach their end, it can ensure the appropriate transition of resources, skills and knowledge.

# Annex I – Evaluation limitations

The evaluation of Canadian programming in Afghanistan had certain limitations related to the context, the evaluation process and data. To the extent possible, the evaluation team implemented mitigating measures.

## Secure access to the field

The unpredictable and precarious security situation in Afghanistan was a constraint for Canadian evaluators travelling to Kabul for data collection. Access to collect primary data in Afghanistan from key informant and beneficiary interviews, as well as site visits, was limited due to logistical and security concerns.

As a mitigation strategy, field data collection by the evaluation team was limited to locations in Kabul approved by the Embassy of Canada to Afghanistan.

In addition, a local consultant firm with easier local access in Afghanistan was hired to collect field data through beneficiary interviews and focus groups conducted in Kabul and other provinces (to the extent possible, based on their own security limitations). They were also able to collect data in the populations' native languages.

In lieu of project site visits, evaluators also relied on document review and secondary data from other lines of evidence to collect data on project outcomes.

## Access to documentation

The evaluation team encountered some difficulties identifying and accessing project documents because of the unclear organization of IFM and KFM documentation. Furthermore, older project documents dating from the beginning of the evaluation period were sometimes archived and therefore difficult to access. One mitigation strategy used was to follow up by email with staff responsible for the projects or their documentation.

## Gaps in statistical data

The unavailability of reliable up-to-date statistics and other recent Afghan government publications restricted the evaluators' capacity to analyze and understand the changes in the country's development during the evaluation period. To respond to this limitation, the evaluation team relied on available published official data and statistics from international organizations and other reliable sources, and triangulated the information with data from the evaluation's other lines of evidence.

## Participation of evaluation stakeholders

Staff turnover within the geographic and non-geographic programming branches limited access to information and documentation that could inform the evaluation.

Since participation in this evaluation was open and voluntary, some of those targeted, though only a small number, did not want to participate or were unavailable. In some cases, people had not been involved in the program for many years. Where possible, the evaluators tried to compensate by conducting interviews with alternative stakeholders, and triangulating the information with data from the evaluation's other lines of evidence.

# Annex II – Afghanistan Program logic model

## LOGIC MODEL- AFGHANISTAN PROGRAM (OGM)

ULTIMATE OUTCOME	1000 A more self-reliant Afghanistan better able to meet the basic needs and reduce the vulnerability of Afghans, especially of women, girls and boys, in partnership with the Government of Afghanistan, Afghan civil society, and the international community								
↑	↑		↑		↑		↑		↑
INTER-MEDIATE OUTCOMES	1100 Increased equitable access to safe, quality basic education and relevant learning opportunities for all Afghans, especially women and girls		1200 Expanded access to and utilization of quality gender-sensitive health services that address preventable diseases and conditions, including malnutrition, affecting mothers, newborns and children under five across Afghanistan		1300 Increased opportunities for women's participation in the economic, political, and social spheres of Afghan society		1400 Enhanced ability of vulnerable communities, especially women and girls, to protect themselves and recover from natural and man-made disasters and hazards in Afghanistan		
↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES	1110 Strengthened capacity of local, provincial and national institutions in Afghanistan to deliver quality basic education services	1120 Increased availability of safe quality learning spaces and skilled teachers that provide quality basic education for girls and boys, especially in remote locations	1210 Increased capacity of the Ministry of Public Health and health facilities to plan, deliver and evaluate quality health services, including nutrition services, for mothers, newborns, and children under five in underserved areas of Afghanistan	1220 Increased awareness of healthy practices and disease prevention among women, men and children under five	1310 Increased capacity of Government of Afghanistan and civil society (CSO) organizations to strengthen systems and services that address human rights and gender-based violence	1320 Enhanced public decision-making and advocacy of civil society Organizations, leaders, and women leaders to promote the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan	1410 Enhanced capacity of Afghan humanitarian actors to plan for and manage natural and conflict-related hazards and disasters, with a focus on the needs and priorities of women and girls	1420 Increased access of vulnerable communities and individuals to social and protection services	

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