



Canada's Approach to Transparency and Open Dialogue in Canadian International Assistance

Guidance Note

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : *L'approche du Canada en matière de transparence et de dialogue ouvert dans l'aide internationale canadienne*

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Introduction

This guidance note outlines the Government of Canada's approach to encouraging transparency and open dialogue in international assistance, which includes international development, humanitarian assistance, and peace and security initiatives.

By setting out expectations and providing guidance for Global Affairs Canada's staff and partners, this guidance note contributes to the implementation of the 2017 [Feminist International Assistance Policy](#), reflects the Government of Canada's broader commitment to transparency and open government principles, and seeks to increase effectiveness in achieving sustainable development results that benefit the poorest and most vulnerable, including women and girls.

The 2005 [Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness](#) set out donors' commitments to sharing more information about their aid activities in support of greater harmonization and effectiveness of development efforts. Subsequent multi-stakeholder efforts such as the [International Aid Transparency Initiative](#) and the [Open Government Partnership](#) (launched in 2008 and 2011 respectively) further advance global efforts to enhance transparency, participation and inclusiveness. Canada is committed to advancing this agenda, including by working with partners to foster a culture of transparency and open dialogue on its aid efforts and, more broadly, progress on the global stage.

As laid out in Canada's [Feminist International Assistance Policy](#), the full participation of women and marginalized groups in a country's development is central to eradicating poverty and building a more peaceful, inclusive and prosperous world. They should have a voice - from setting development priorities to delivering services and evaluating impact.

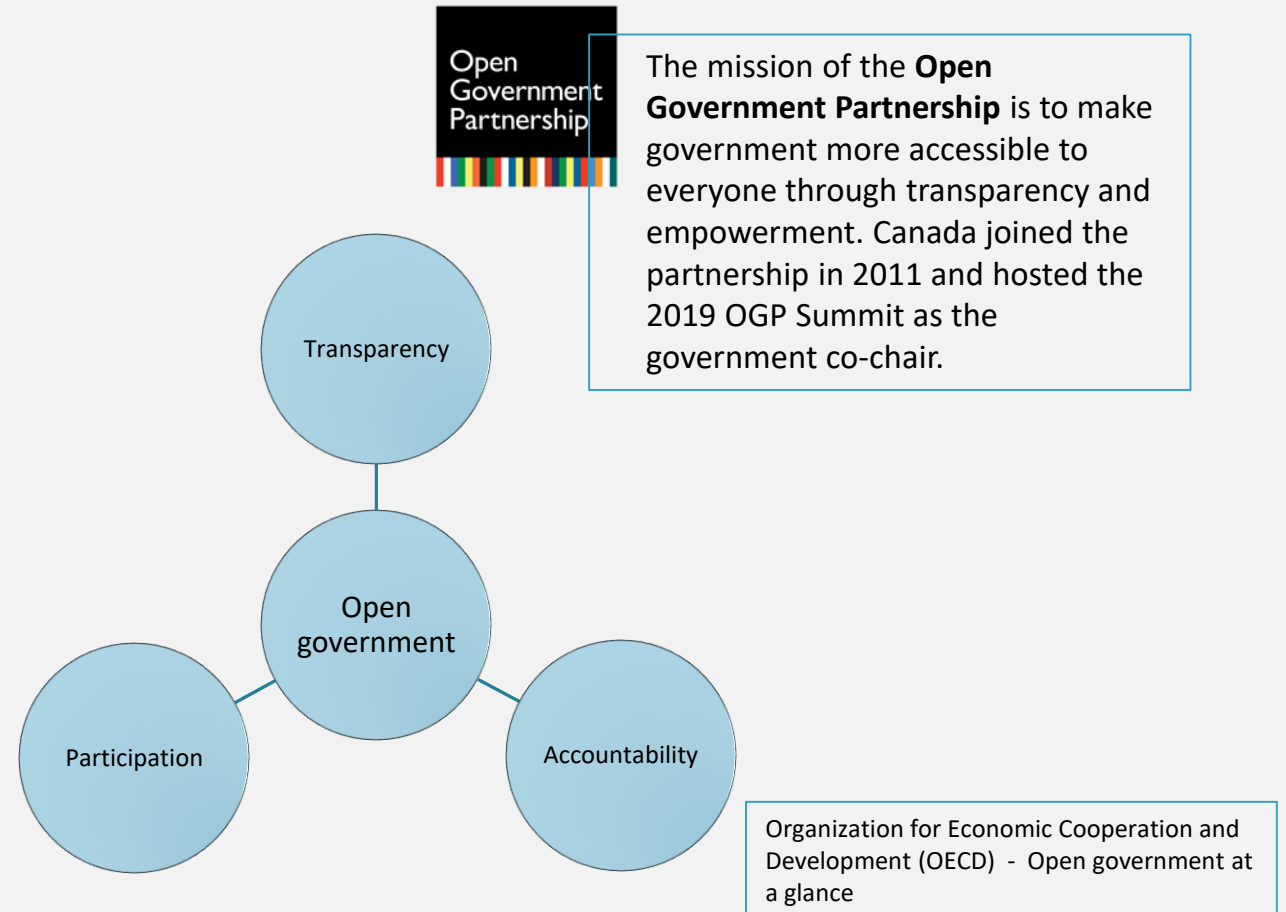
What is...?

For the Government of Canada:

Transparency refers to an environment in which information on the objectives, frameworks, rationale and accountability terms of government policies and programs is provided to the public in a comprehensible, accessible and timely manner;

Open dialogue means all the ways in which stakeholders can be involved in the policy cycle and in service design and delivery, including through the provision of information, consultation and engagement;

Open government is a culture of governance based on innovative and sustainable public policies and practices inspired by the principles of transparency, accountability and participation that fosters democracy and inclusive growth.



Case for Action

Transparency and open dialogue improve opportunities for sustainable development ...

Transparency and open dialogue lead to better policies and services, promote public-sector integrity and help to secure the trust of citizens in public administrations.

- Freedom of information is integral to freedom of expression as established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Better information enables better planning, decisions, coordination, monitoring and accountability.
- Access to information makes participation better-informed and more meaningful, and therefore more effective.
- Information on the activities and results funded through international assistance is required to monitor progress on priorities such as the Sustainable Development Goals.
- New sources of data and advances in data science can be harnessed to gain greater insights on development issues, especially marginalized populations.

... and are feminist issues

Women, girls and marginalized or disadvantaged groups often face greater challenges in accessing information or participating. This entrenches traditional power dynamics and can limit their opportunity to push for change.

The global community has made several commitments over the years to enhancing transparency and stakeholder participation in international assistance.



Canada's Commitments

The Government of Canada has set a higher bar on openness and transparency, striving to be open by default and to exercise leadership through constructive dialogue with Canadians, civil society and stakeholders, including in the sphere of development innovation and effectiveness by strengthening aid transparency and the collection, analysis and use of data.

As a leader on feminist open government in support of the 2030 Agenda, Canada adheres to transparency in tracking progress on the 2030 Agenda to help ensure no one is left behind. This includes a strong emphasis on disaggregated data to support intersectional analysis.



Feminist analysis and GBA+ are central to Canada's efforts. They can provide critical entry points for engagement and programming that reflect women's diverse roles as producers, users and subjects of information.

Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy adopts a human rights-based approach and commits to increasing transparency on activities and results to maximize the effectiveness of Canada's international assistance. In addition, the Policy's inclusive governance action area aims to foster societies in which all stakeholders interact to make decisions and allocate resources.

In its [Policy for Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance](#), Canada has committed to working with civil society organizations to empower citizens to assume ownership of their development and to improve access to information about the activities and results of civil society partners.

The Government of Canada has also committed to enhance the transparency of Canada's International Assistance Envelope, improve reporting, and move to a single, consolidated international assistance report.

Canada's Approach to Improving Transparency and Open Dialogue in International Assistance

Canada seeks to make its international assistance more accountable and effective by enabling stakeholders (including local, marginalized) to have **access to comprehensive and high-quality information** on Canada's international assistance activities and **opportunities to engage** with Global Affairs Canada on its policies and programs.

Four key principles will guide Canada's actions:

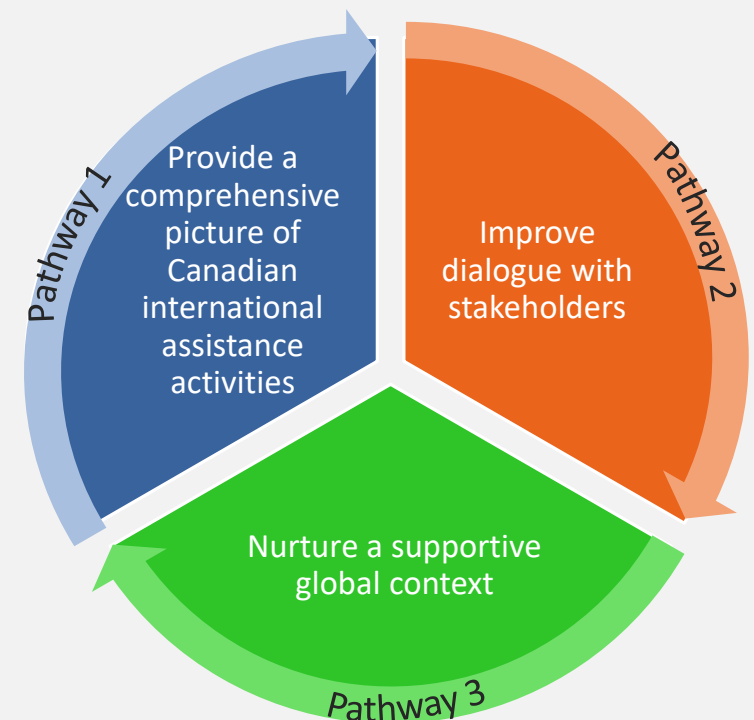
- **Leading by example:** Canada is committed to being a model publisher and user of open data regarding its international assistance.
- **Focusing on results:** Transparency, accountability and participation are

necessary conditions for sustainable development results.

- **Fairness:** All stakeholders and beneficiaries should have equal access to information and opportunities to influence Canada's international assistance efforts.
- **Partnerships:** Canada partners with those who share our commitment to transparency, accountability and inclusion, and partners play their part.

Building on Canada's commitments and informed by engagement with stakeholders, the Government of Canada will take a targeted approach to transparency and open dialogue in international assistance through **three main pathways** to effectiveness:

Three Pathways to Effectiveness



Pathway 1: Comprehensive Picture

Pathway 1: Provide a comprehensive picture of Canadian international assistance activities by improving the quality of information and reports on international assistance, and encouraging partners and other departments to share information about their activities and results.

a. Increase transparency of the Government of Canada's international assistance

- Enhancing reports on Canada's international assistance activities and results, including the [Report to Parliament on the Government of Canada's Official Development Assistance](#);
- Publishing more timely and complete data on international assistance projects (Global Affairs Canada and other departments);
- Encouraging the use of data to inform operations and decision making.

b. Strengthen partners' transparency

- Encouraging all partners to adhere to transparency, accountability and participation standards, including adoption of the IATI standard and engagement with stakeholders in planning and delivering projects funded by Canada;
- Facilitating the dissemination of lessons learned on transparency, accountability and participation among international assistance actors.

Delivering on Budget 2018

Starting in March 2020, Canada will present a comprehensive story of its international assistance in a single report, leveraging its dynamic web content and interactive tools.

Efforts in this pathway will build on Canada's strengths such as:

- ✓ Website offers more interactive reports and high-quality statistics;
- ✓ Scores in the Aid Transparency Index are improving steadily, from 62.6% in 2013 to 79.6% in 2018;
- ✓ The Departmental Data Strategy will increase Global Affairs Canada's capacity to collect, analyze and use data to inform decision making;
- ✓ The 2016 Policy for Civil Society Partnerships commits Canada to being a model publisher and user of open data and improving access to information about the activities and results of its CSO partners;
- ✓ Commitment to innovation, research and results.

Pathway 2: Dialogue with Stakeholders

Pathway 2: Improve dialogue with Canadians and other stakeholders, including by enhancing access to data and information.

a. Encourage greater use of information on Canada's international assistance

- Improving integration of information, including from partners, in Global Affairs Canada communications;
- Providing more and better tools to access and use data (for example, [Project Browser](#), statistical analysis tools, mapping tools, etc.).

Enhancing data on international assistance and interactive tools such as the Project Browser can enhance awareness and understanding of how Canada and its partners contribute to sustainable development results, leading to better-informed dialogue with stakeholders.

b. Encourage meaningful consultations and dialogue including with local stakeholders

- Encouraging dialogue, collaboration and partnerships among international assistance actors;
- Using diverse platforms, including social media, to communicate plans, outcomes and impact of Canada's international assistance;
- Creating feedback mechanisms on Canada's international assistance activities (e.g. through the Project Browser).

Efforts in this pathway will build on Canada's strengths such as:

- ✓ Since 2004, the International Assistance Project Browser has provided access to project information with search and download functions;
- ✓ The 2016 Policy for Civil Society Partnerships outlines many actions to enhance cooperation with Canadian and local CSOs, including to foster open dialogue and civic space;
- ✓ New strategies are implemented to secure feedback in policy design, such as those pursued through the 2016 International Assistance Review, 2017 Feminist International Assistance Policy, 2030 Agenda National Voluntary Review.

Pathway 3: Supportive Global Context

Pathway 3: Nurture a supportive global context by championing open government principles at the global, regional and country level.

a. Champion open government principles at the global, regional and country level

- Using Canadian engagement in global and regional forums to help create enabling conditions for transparency and open dialogue globally;
- Leveraging Canada's network to increase awareness and adoption of open government principles in partner countries.

b. Support the development of global open government norms and tools

- Contributing to the foundations of open government through relevant initiatives and organizations.

Inclusive innovation will be key to achieving the 2030 Agenda. Enhancing transparency and open dialogue can help foster innovation that empowers the most vulnerable, including women and girls.

Efforts in this pathway will build on Canada's strengths such as:

- ✓ As a member of IATI since 2011 and first Chair of its Governing Board in 2016-2018, Canada helps develop the aid transparency infrastructure, including standards and tools;
- ✓ Under Canada's term as co-chair from 2018 to 2019, the Open Government Partnership adopted a feminist open government agenda;
- ✓ Canada's guidelines on supporting human rights defenders, entitled Voices at Risk, help promote an enabling environment for civil society;
- ✓ The [Open Data for Development](#) program funded by Canada builds government and civil society capacity to implement open government principles in partner countries.

Implementation and Results

Canada's Theory of Change
on Transparency and Open
Dialogue

Improved access to information,
enhanced dialogue, supportive
global and national contexts



More effective and accountable
international assistance



Development effectiveness e.g.
faster progress on 2030 Agenda,
enhanced trust in government

Implementation

Global Affairs Canada will coordinate the implementation and monitoring of Canada's approach to transparency and open dialogue in international assistance as set out in this note.

In particular, the department will provide guidance and tools that will help staff and partners integrate this approach in their international assistance activities, in order to publish more and better information, make greater use of data, engage in dialogue and partnerships, and champion open government principles. These resources may include, for instance, more detailed "how to" notes on relevant topics and online tools to use development-related data.

Monitoring and reporting

A monitoring framework will enable Global Affairs Canada to assess progress and identify lessons learned.

The Government of Canada will monitor and report on the effectiveness of its international assistance, including transparency and open dialogue, through relevant national and global reporting mechanisms. These include in particular the new consolidated international assistance report, program evaluations, the OECD Development Assistance Committee Peer Reviews, and the monitoring process of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

Conclusion

Peoples' access to information and their participation in government affairs, from policies to program delivery and monitoring, are essential conditions to achieving sustainable development results and leaving no one behind, as envisioned in the 2030 Agenda.

Canada is responding to this imperative and taking action to make its international assistance more responsive, accountable and effective.

The three pathways outlined in this note will help guide improvements to Canada's international assistance policies and operations, resulting in greater access to high-quality information on Canada's international assistance activities and more opportunities for stakeholders to engage with Global Affairs Canada on its policies and programs.



By setting clear expectations for itself and its partners regarding transparency and open dialogue, and by championing these principles on the global stage, Canada will better support the achievement of its Feminist International Assistance Policy and of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.