



Canada's leadership in support of maternal, newborn and child health

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR INNOVATION AND RESULTS

In May 2014, Canada hosted the Saving Every Woman, Every Child: Within Arm's Reach summit in Toronto, Canada, which gathered together hundreds of global leaders and partners, and successfully refocused global attention on the pressing issue of maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH).

In September 2014, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon hosted a high-level Every Woman Every Child event on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly at which global leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the world's women and children. Global leaders and partners agreed that we can end preventable maternal and child deaths within a generation.

Global Financing Facility

In order to seize this historic opportunity and achieve this ambitious goal, financial resources will need to be leveraged and innovative approaches will be required. At the 2014 United Nations General Assembly in New York, Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister of Canada, along with the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, Dr. Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank Group, Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway, and Dr. Rajiv Shah, USAID Administrator, announced the creation of the Global Financing Facility (GFF) in support of Every Woman, Every Child. Canada announced contributions to the GFF of \$200 million of which \$100 million is dedicated to civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS). This funding commitment is part of Canada's overall \$3.5-billion pledge made at the Toronto summit.

Housed at the World Bank, the GFF will provide the financial infrastructure to mobilize the domestic and international capital

required to scale up and sustain health services for women and children by leveraging funds from all partners and domestic sources, including the private sector.

Strengthening health systems is an important part of Canada's efforts to improve the impact of MNCH investments in high-burden countries through scaling up access to quality essential services. This is why the Health System Bonds Program has been created. This initiative will complement Canadian investments in GFF-supported countries by increasing the availability of financial resources to close the funding gap for MNCH in countries where there is the greatest need. The program's main objective is to reduce maternal and child mortality, which is Canada's top development priority.

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems

The new Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics will support and complement the GFF's operations. The centre's aim is to strengthen national CRVS systems by gathering information that will help governments and other organizations make decisions on how to best allocate resources for improving maternal, newborn and child health. The centre will also help bring together a broad cross-section of specialists with the goal of sharing knowledge, best practices, tools and standards to improve national CRVS systems. All these efforts will help countries and the GFF better measure and assess the impact of their investments. Canada is home to the new centre of excellence, where it will operate at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). IDRC is recognized for its in-house expertise, with more than a decade of experience in health information systems and CRVS in developing countries.



Canada considers strengthening CRVS a priority and an important tool in achieving results and accountability, and improving women and children's health globally. More than 100 countries still do not have functioning systems for the registration of births and other life events. A key emphasis of the GFF will be CRVS systems. Strong CRVS systems are critical to current and future development efforts. They provide real-time information and data on population dynamics, such as the number and location of children born each day, the number and location of individuals who are dying and their cause of death, how many individuals are married or divorced, the number of eligible voters, those who are participating in the labour market and are employed, and who are citizens of a country.

Such information is essential to enable policy-makers and business planners to design effective and responsive policies, programs and services, including those related to MNCH and sustainable economic growth. By increasing access to health services for women, children and newborns, strong CRVS systems play a key role in improving MNCH outcomes. By registering every birth, death, marriage and divorce, individuals can also obtain crucial documentation regarding their national identity and status, thus safeguarding their rights and those of their children.

Canada recognizes that part of the dialogue is ensuring that every voice counts and should be counted. This basic facet is a challenge when more than 100 developing countries lack well-functioning CRVS systems, and an estimated one third of the world's annual births and two thirds of annual deaths are not legally recognized. For Canada, the CRVS component of the GFF is not merely about strengthening data and information, it is essential for providing opportunities to all individuals, especially women and children.

Potential for Private Sector Engagement

The involvement of the private sector in MNCH efforts over the past five years has been critical in ensuring that more women are surviving to see their children grow and more children are living to celebrate their fifth birthday. The private sector once again has an opportunity to play a significant leadership role, extending its roles and capacities in telecommunications technologies, information technologies and infrastructure, public outreach and advocacy for CRVS, and efforts that aim to improve the health and well-being of every woman and child.

The importance of CRVS is wide ranging. If children, young girls in particular, have the opportunity to stay in school and receive a higher education, they will be better positioned to participate in the labour market and contribute to the generation of new ideas to advance economies. Countries with lower mortality rates and better education and health outcomes are more likely to experience economic growth and greater stability. When women's rights, including economic and inheritance rights, are safeguarded, their children, families, and communities have a better chance to thrive.

CRVS also contributes to better governance and policy-making. It enables governments and businesses to better plan for the present and future. It ensures that individuals' rights can be safeguarded, and that individuals can exercise these rights.

The Government of Canada considers this investment in CRVS and in MNCH a win-win situation for all. The success of these efforts, as well as the GFF, will require the involvement of all partners, including the private sector, and Canada welcomes their active participation.

Canada's Leadership in Blended Finance

The development landscape is shifting, with private financial flows, such as foreign direct investment, now outpacing Official Development Assistance by more than 5 to 1, and remittances by 3 to 1.

Financing international development already involves a complex web of actors, sectors, geographic regions, instruments, and terminology. But the world will only be able to overcome gaps in development finance by taking a balanced, holistic approach. And the private sector, with its resources, talent and innovation, is the key to creating new and more effective products, services and technology to improve the lives of people in poverty.

Canada has been at the forefront of a number of initiatives that have proven the ability of blended finance to make new solutions to development issues possible. The GFF is helping to finance innovative initiatives with the private sector in maternal, newborn and child health—Canada's top development priority.