



Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council Submission on Canada's International Development Priorities

July 30, 2026

[The Canadian Muslim Public Affairs Council](#) (CMPAC) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of a new Canadian foreign policy. Canada's international development policy should be grounded in human dignity, international law, meaningful partnership, and the consistent protection of human rights. International development in Canada is an integral pillar of a coherent foreign policy that addresses the underlying conditions contributing to conflict, forced displacement, poverty, instability, and inequality. This approach supports Canada's security and economic interests while strengthening its credibility as a principled and reliable international partner.

International Development as a Pillar of Canadian Foreign Policy

International development cooperation is a central [pillar](#) of Canada's foreign policy. It is a humanitarian obligation, and a [strategic investment](#) in global peace, stability, and shared prosperity. Effective development cooperation advances Canada's long-term foreign policy, security, and economic interests by addressing the root causes of conflict, forced displacement, poverty, and food insecurity. By strengthening resilient communities and supporting sustainable development, Canada can help reduce the likelihood of humanitarian crises and prolonged instability while fostering conditions for inclusive economic growth and stronger international partnerships.

Development cooperation [complements](#) Canada's diplomatic and peacebuilding efforts and functions as a response to crises. Humanitarian and development assistance cannot substitute for principled diplomacy or consistent adherence to international law. Canada's credibility as a global development partner depends upon the coherence of its foreign policy. Development assistance is most effective when accompanied by diplomatic engagement that promotes the protection of civilians, peaceful conflict resolution, accountability for violations of international law, and meaningful support for self-determination and sustainable peace.

Over the next decade, Canada's development cooperation should pursue three interconnected objectives: protecting human dignity, preventing conflict and forced displacement, and strengthening the long-term resilience of societies through sustainable institutions and locally led development. This requires moving beyond short-term emergency responses toward investments that enable communities to recover, rebuild, and become increasingly self-reliant.

a. Development Priorities

Canada should [prioritize](#) assistance in regions experiencing protracted conflict, occupation, forced displacement, climate vulnerability, and severe humanitarian need. Particular attention should be given to crises where development gains have been reversed by conflict and where rebuilding essential civilian infrastructure is critical to long-term stability, including



[Palestine](#), Sudan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, and other overlooked humanitarian emergencies.

CMPAC is particularly [concerned](#) with the humanitarian and development situation in Gaza. Canada should adopt a comprehensive, long-term approach to Gaza's recovery that extends beyond emergency assistance. This should include rebuilding hospitals, schools, water and sanitation systems, housing, and other essential civilian infrastructure while supporting local institutions and organizations that are best positioned to lead recovery efforts. Reconstruction must be accompanied by sustained diplomatic efforts to ensure unhindered humanitarian access, uphold international law, protect civilians, and create conditions that prevent recurring cycles of destruction and humanitarian crisis.

b. Canada's Comparative Advantage

Canada's [comparative advantage](#) lies in its strong civil society, expertise in public health, education, refugee protection, inclusive governance, and multilateral diplomacy. Canada should leverage the expertise of Canadian diaspora communities. Leadership should rest with local actors wherever possible, with Canada's role centred on enabling rather than directing development.

c. Effective Development Approaches

Canada should prioritize multi-year, flexible funding, direct support for local civil society and public institutions, community-led programming, investment in essential public services, and stronger coordination between humanitarian assistance, development, diplomacy, and peacebuilding. Conversely, fragmented short-term programming, excessive reliance on international intermediaries, and initiatives designed without meaningful local participation are less likely to build lasting institutional capacity or resilience. Ultimately, Canada's development cooperation should seek not merely to alleviate immediate suffering but to strengthen the institutions, capacities, and partnerships that enable communities to achieve lasting peace, prosperity, and self-reliance.

Priority Actions

Canada should do more to provide predictable, needs-based humanitarian and development funding, particularly for overlooked and protracted crises. It should expand support for health care, education, food security, refugee-hosting communities, and post-conflict reconstruction.

Canada should also expand multi-year support for local civil society, strengthen refugee protection and humanitarian pathways, and apply international law consistently. At the same time, Canada should reduce fragmented short-term programming, unnecessary administrative barriers, and approaches that prioritize geopolitical or commercial interests over locally identified development needs. Canada should avoid using development assistance to secure political alignment, promote Canadian commercial interests without clear local benefits, or compensate for failures of diplomacy.

Strengthening Partnerships



Canada should adopt a locally led development approach in which partner governments, civil society, and affected communities participate in setting priorities, designing programs, and evaluating outcomes. Canadian assistance should strengthen local institutions and

transfer knowledge and decision-making authority rather than create parallel structures dependent on external funding.

Canada should also address barriers that prevent Muslim, Arab, African, Palestinian, refugee-led, and other racialized organizations from participating fully in international assistance programs. Organizations working in areas or communities impacted by Global Islamophobia may encounter disproportionate scrutiny, financial exclusion, banking difficulties, and burdensome risk-management requirements. Appropriate safeguards are necessary, but they must be transparent, evidence-based, proportionate, and accompanied by accessible review mechanisms. Canada should also formalize consultation with Canadian diaspora communities, whose expertise, local relationships, and cultural knowledge can strengthen development programming and build more effective partnerships.

Responsible Private Sector Engagement

Private-sector partnerships can contribute capital, technology, employment, infrastructure, and technical expertise. However, commercial participation should be evaluated according to development outcomes rather than the value of contracts awarded or investment generated.

Private-sector partnerships should support locally identified development priorities while respecting human rights, international humanitarian law, labour standards, environmental safeguards, transparency, and community consultation. Canada should prioritize partnerships that strengthen local enterprises, create sustainable employment, empower local communities, and transfer knowledge while avoiding tied aid, projects that primarily benefit foreign companies, or partnerships linked to serious human rights abuses or conflict-related exploitation. Canada should favour partnerships that build local enterprises, cooperatives, social-purpose businesses, sustainable infrastructure, and value-added industries within partner countries.

Canada should avoid tying assistance to the purchase of Canadian goods or services, subsidizing projects that would proceed without public support, or transferring financial and environmental risks to partner governments. It should also avoid partnerships involving companies connected to serious human-rights abuses, unlawful settlement activity, forced displacement, corruption, environmental damage, or the exploitation of conflict-affected populations.

Building Public Support for Development

The social licence for international development depends on public trust, transparency, consistency, and a clear explanation of why international cooperation matters to Canadians. Canadians should be shown that international development is not charity detached from domestic interests. Preventing conflict, supporting public health, strengthening food security, and reducing forced displacement contribute to a safer and more stable international



environment. Development cooperation also reflects Canada's responsibilities as a prosperous country and its obligations under international law.

Public support for international development depends on transparency, accountability, and demonstrating tangible results. Canada should communicate how development cooperation

contributes to global stability, reduces humanitarian crises and displacement, and reflects Canadian values, while greater consistency between Canada's development, diplomatic, trade, immigration, and national security policies will reinforce Canada's credibility.

Communications centred exclusively on Canadian generosity or images of passive beneficiaries are less effective and can reinforce negative assumptions. Public engagement should instead emphasize shared humanity, mutual responsibility, local leadership, and the contributions that partner communities make to their own development. Canada's credibility will ultimately depend on whether its policies are applied consistently. Canadians are less likely to support international assistance when humanitarian principles appear selective or when development objectives are contradicted by Canada's diplomatic, military, trade, or immigration decisions.



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CMPAC Resources

CMPAC's July Policy Brief

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bnoXM7EtaUORQzg7BY5SWfJA4QMu77R5/view?usp=sharing>

CMPAC's Combatting Islamophobia Policy Handbook

<https://canadianmuslimpac.ca/2026/06/04/combating-islamophobia-a-policy-handbook/>

CMPAC's dedicated section on Palestine

<https://canadianmuslimpac.ca/priorities/palestine/>