

## ENSURING THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH



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Development assistance has improved the lives of many of the world's children through programs in health, education, nutrition, access to water and sanitation, and family incomes. However, some children continue to be marginalized from these benefits, including working children, children affected by armed conflict and natural disasters, and sexually exploited and trafficked children. It is estimated that 500 million to 1.5 billion children, particularly girls, are still experiencing violence, exploitation, and abuse every year. More than 700 million women alive today were married as children. 168 million children around the world are engaged in child labour.

Canada is a world leader on children's rights. The government helped draft the CRC, and hosted the first major international conference on war-affected children in 2000. Canada was also influential in the formulation of international instruments related to children, including the optional protocol to the CRC on children in armed conflict. Over the last few years, Canada has acquired leading-edge expertise in many areas of child protection and in fostering the participation of children in the decisions that affect their lives.

Canada has been working in developing countries to strengthen national systems that support the rights and protection of children and youth, particularly girls, from violence, exploitation, and abuse. Work is being done to ensure that schools are safe and secure, and offer child-friendly learning environments and provide opportunities for youth at risk to reach their potential and find alternatives to crime and violence. The Government of Canada's development assistance to support child protection also complements our foreign policy initiatives concentrated on addressing the practice of child, early and forced marriage.

## CANADA LEADS THE UNITED NATIONS EFFORT TO STOP CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE

Canada has played an important role in bringing global attention and action toward ending child, early and forced marriage (CEFM). For example, in the fall of 2013, Canada and Zambia co-led the first-ever stand-alone resolution on CEFM at the United Nations General Assembly, with the resolution being adopted by a consensus of 109 co-sponsors. Canada also co-hosted a signature event on CEFM during the General Assembly to build greater awareness of the impacts of the practice worldwide.

Canada has intensified programming efforts to end CEFM, including through projects undertaken to tackle the causes and consequences of the practice in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Ghana, Somalia and Zimbabwe. In addition, Canada is contributing \$20 million over two years to UNICEF to accelerate the movement to end child marriage in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Yemen and Zambia.



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