Canada is a leader in the nutrition sector; policies are integrated into work in ‘human dignity’

Canada’s nutrition-related activities are embedded into the Feminist International Assistant Policy’s second action area, ‘Human Dignity’. Given the policy’s gender-equality lens, ensuring adequate nutrition of adolescent girls and pregnant women is a core focus, as well as battling against gender-based discrimination that forces women and girls to “eat less and eat last”.

According to the policy, Canada will leverage its nutrition investments to increase the provision of micronutrient supplements, and advocate for gender-responsive nutrition policies within international working groups such as Scaling Up Nutrition.

In 2017, Canada invested US$94 million in basic nutrition, making it the second-largest donor country to the sector (behind the US). This is down from US$102 million spent in 2016. However, funding is much higher when looking at nutrition-sensitive interventions. According to the 2018 Global Nutrition Report, Canada was the third-largest donor country (behind the US and the UK) in nutrition-sensitive interventions in 2016, disbursing US$1.4 billion in 2016 in total.

Canada is involved in multiple nutrition initiatives. In 2018, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) launched a partnership with Nutrition International and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) to engage girls in Bangladesh, Madagascar, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania with healthy eating programs. In the same year, Canada also invested CAD1.5 million (US$1.2 million) in the Right Start initiative in Indonesia, having contributed CAD7.5 million (US$58 million) to the initiative at its launch.

Nutrition-specific:
Interventions that address immediate causes of undernutrition and have the improvement of nutrition (i.e., support for exclusive breastfeeding, supplementary feeding, etc.) as their primary objective.

Nutrition-sensitive:
Interventions that address underlying causes of malnutrition and that take into account cross-sector actions and impacts (i.e., improving access to diverse foods).

Canada also hosts and is a large funder of Nutrition International; formerly the ‘Micronutrient Initiative’), a collaborative not-for-profit platform for technical experts, advocates, and other nutrition champions to advance innovative solutions to reduce vitamin and mineral deficiencies through advocacy and technical and programmatic support. According to the Canadian government, Canada is the largest donor of Vitamin A programs worldwide since 1998.

GAC sets nutrition policies; Global Issues and Development branch is a key player

Under the overall guidance of the prime minister, GAC steers development policy, including for nutrition. Within GAC, priority-setting for nutrition-related policies sits with the Global Issues and Development Branch, and the units for ‘Global Health, Nutrition and Education’ and ‘Global Food Security and Environment’. GAC’s four geographic branches managing regional and country programs play a key role in programming nutrition-related activities in Canada’s partner countries.