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Three pillars of gender equality



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Financing for women's economic empowerment

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Gender equality: Economic empowerment and financial inclusion



JULY 2020

Investing in shared prosperity: Financing for women's economic empowerment

BY KALILA JAEGER, HUGO PETITJEAN, AND ZOE JOHNSON, SEEK DEVELOPMENT

JULY 13, 2020

Of all the plans laid out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), SDG 5 ("Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls") is one of the most ambitious. Throughout human history, half of the world's population has been counted out, their intellectual and economic contributions disregarded, their bodies abused and commodified. Considerable progress has been made towards empowering women globally to live their lives autonomously. Since the adoption of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, [131 countries have enacted 274 laws and regulations in support of gender equality](#). [More girls than ever before are in school](#), and [maternal mortality rates have fallen by 38% globally](#). Still, massive challenges remain. Nowhere in the world are women born into full equality and, in many places, to be born female is to be born a second-class citizen.

We have already entered the final decade before the SDG's 2030 deadline. However, [progress on SDG 5 lags](#) across a range of indicators, including targets to eliminate violence against women and girls and ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). To level the playing field between men and women globally will require a massive and focused international effort.

This year, in recognition of the importance of SDG 5 in the Decade of Action, the [Donor Tracker](#) has added Gender Equality to our analyses of 14-major Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donor markets, allowing users to compare donors' commitments and disbursements to gender equality efforts. In addition, the Donor Tracker is publishing a series of three Insights pieces, which will provide readers with a more detailed analysis of three main elements, or 'pillars' of gender equality endeavors: namely, funding for women's economic empowerment; the fight for sexual and reproductive health and rights; and efforts to end gender-based violence. This first piece analyzes existing research and newly released 2018 OECD data to assess how donor countries are approaching and, in many cases, falling short on efforts to empower women economically.

Alongside the right to live free from violence and to make decisions about their own bodies, women's right to full economic participation is one of the most critical prerequisites for the realization of their human rights. When women earn, spend, and save their own money, they can move more freely through society and are more likely to be able to [make decisions](#) about various aspects of their lives. Women's economic rights go hand in hand with personal agency and political power; without any one of these, women cannot truly be free to live their lives as equal citizens. Enabling women to make independent financial decisions and to achieve economic success also drives [broader social and economic progress](#).

Over the last decade, donors have begun to take this issue more seriously. In 2015, 193 United Nations (UN) mem-

ber countries [officially committed](#) to promoting women's economic empowerment and Women20 (W20) was [launched](#) as an official G20 engagement group. Two years later, the G20's [leadership declaration](#) included a section dedicated to women's empowerment for the first time. In the past few years, high-profile donors like [Canada](#) and [Sweden](#) have made broad commitments to gender equality in their development strategies, rolling out the first explicitly feminist foreign policies. Other states have begun to incorporate feminist rhetoric into their development strategies, too.

This Insights piece takes stock of how Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donor countries are using official development assistance (ODA) toward

promoting gender equality. Specifically, this piece aims to dig deeper into how donor countries support women's economic empowerment. It asks:

- What is the current state of bilateral ODA for women's economic empowerment?
- Which OECD DAC donor countries prioritize women's economic empowerment in their development policy and financing?
- Which donors prioritize gender equality as the defining goal of their development projects, and which instead incorporate gender as one of many lenses?

Despite donors' policy commitments, women still face barriers to economic freedom

Despite efforts by global development actors to invest in programs that promote women's financial inclusion, women around the world continue to face barriers to economic freedom. Women play an important role in the paid workforce, yet in nearly every country in the world, female workers earn less than their male counterparts. Pervasive discrimination in hiring practices and the concentration of women in low-wage positions, sometimes exacerbated by lack of access to education, makes it more difficult for women to accrue the capital needed for investments such as land or homeownership. The World Bank reported in 2019 that women are still consistently denied land and property rights in half of the world's countries. Lack of representation in senior employment positions makes it difficult for women to influence workplace policy, which continues the cycle.

In many countries, women are banned from participating in certain paid industries; often they are simply unable to participate in the paid workforce at all. UN Women estimates that women perform at least two and a half times more unpaid domestic labor than men, which can prevent them from seeking gainful employment (see box: 'Gender equality in focus'). When women do enter the formal economy, they are often expected to continue managing domestic labor single-handedly, meaning that they are forced to work much longer hours than men while still earning just a fraction of their pay. In this way, women are often trapped in a matrix of seemingly unrelated legal regulations and social norms that combine to undercut their economic potential and which contribute to women's disproportionate likelihood of living in pov-

erty. Given that women's economic empowerment will be at the core of achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to what extent are OECD DAC donors providing funding for it?

Using OECD DAC data, we can assess donor funding for gender equality in the economic and productive sectors

Donors use the OECD's gender equality policy marker to record ODA that targets gender equality (see box: 'The OECD DAC gender marker'). The OECD database also provides purpose codes, used to classify the area toward which development spending is directed. We determined 21 purpose codes¹ to be relevant to this analysis of women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion based on the methodology used in a 2019 report from the G7, which monitors progress on development-related commitments.

Purpose codes fell under the sector categories of education and training; transport and storage; communications; energy; banking, business, and financial services; agriculture; industry; trade and tourism; and urban and

The OECD DAC gender marker: A quick guide

The DAC gender equality policy marker records development assistance activities that target gender equality as a policy objective.

The marker has three possible scores:

- **Principal:** gender equality is the main objective of the project or program;
- **Significant:** gender equality is an important and deliberate, but not the main, objective of the project or program; or
- **Not targeted:** project or program does not target gender equality.

This Insights piece considers all '**principal**' and '**significant**' funding to be 'gender-related'.

Source: OECD DAC, Handbook on the OECD-DAC Gender

¹Secondary education; Post-secondary education; Medical education/training; Health personnel development; Education and training in water supply and sanitation; Transport and storage; Communication; Energy; Banking and financial services; Business and other services; Agriculture; Forestry; Fishing; Industry; Mineral resources and mining; Construction; Trade policies and regulations; Tourism; Environmental education training; Urban development and management; Rural development; Multisector education/training

rural development, and are referred to throughout this piece as the ‘economic and productive sectors’. Projects in the economic and productive sectors which target gender equality as a principal or significant goal (see box: ‘The OECD DAC gender marker’) are therefore considered in this analysis to be ‘economic empowerment projects’.

When donors report their spending to the OECD, they themselves choose whether to tag projects as gender-related, and whether to characterize the gender focus as principal or significant. With no external partner providing an objective check on the projects’ aims, there have been instances in which donors mark spending as gender-relevant, even when projects do little or nothing to effectively address real barriers to gender parity.

Donors spent US\$37.7 billion on projects in the economic and productive sectors in 2018; only 2% went to programming with gender equality as an explicit objective

Gender-targeted funding for projects in the economic and productive sectors has increased over the past five years. Between 2014 and 2018 there was a 56% increase (from US\$8.1 billion to US\$12.6 billion) in the volume of total bilateral allocable ODA for women’s economic empowerment (see Figure 1). In addition, the relative share of total gender-targeted funding to the economic and productive sectors also increased from 24% to 34% (see Figure 1).

At first glance, these figures indicate progress toward

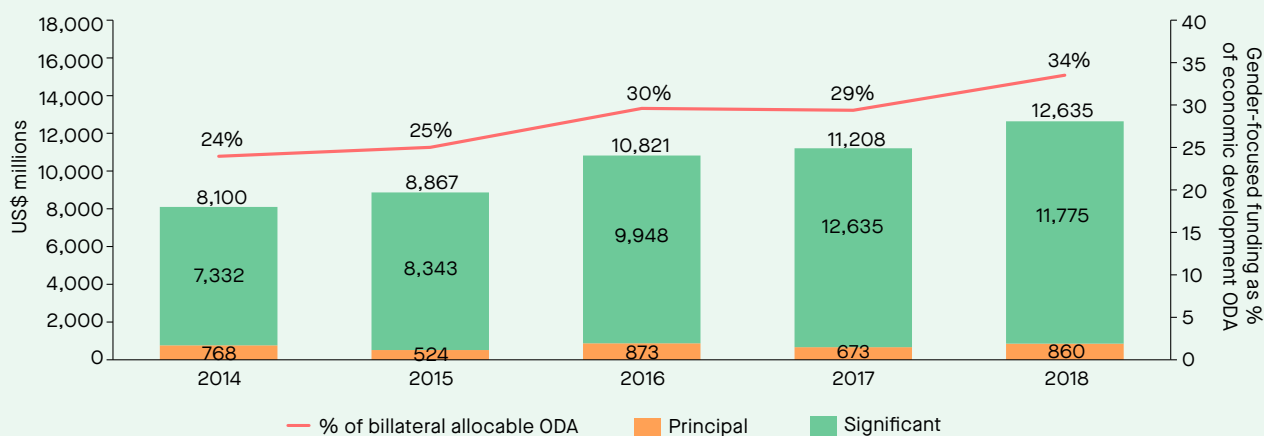
increasing gender-related funding for projects in these sectors. A closer look at the data reveals a less positive story. While overall funding for women’s economic empowerment has increased substantially, these gains have been driven almost exclusively by increased funding for projects which integrate gender equality as only one of multiple goals, not as their primary focus. Funding for projects in the economic and productive sectors with a significant gender focus increased by 61% between 2014 and 2018. Meanwhile, funding to projects in these sectors with a principal gender focus has increased much more slowly, by only 12% over the same period. The percentage of ODA for projects in the economic and productive sectors targeting gender equality as a principal goal was 2% in 2014 and remained at 2% in 2018. Only in 2015 did DAC donors deviate from the 2% allocation, when the proportion of principal funding fell even further to 1%.

Agriculture; transport and storage; and banking and financial services receive the greatest portion of gender-related funding in the economic and productive sectors

Agriculture

Of all economic and productive sectors, agriculture receives by far the most gender-related funding; it attracted over one-quarter of all gender-related funding, or US\$3.4 billion in 2018 (see Figure 2). The agricultural sector has historically been viewed as a cornerstone of development efforts overall. Trainings and capacity building for small farmers can serve many development-friendly purposes: for example, increasing food production to alleviate hun-

Figure 1: Bilateral ODA to the economic and productive sectors with principal or significant gender equality focus



Source: OECD CRS. Aid projects targeting gender equality and women’s empowerment. Gross disbursements; 2018 prices.

ger, building out local economies in rural communities, and providing jobs in farming and crop sales. Because of the great potential of agricultural development projects to deliver on multiple development goals at once, and because a large number of women are already involved in and employed in the agriculture sector, it is also an attractive target for gender-related spending.

Supporting and building capacity of female workers in rural agriculture benefits communities across several metrics and is given as an explicit priority in the development strategy documents of many of the most prominent OECD donors, including Germany and France. Gender-related spending in this sector is driven in part by large-scale contributions from Germany, whose funding made up 16% of the total allocations in 2018.

Transport and storage

The sector of transport and storage, though the second largest after agriculture in terms of absolute funding, is made up of far fewer projects. This means that a few large-scale initiatives somewhat distort the reality of most donors' focus in terms of gender-targeted spending in the economic and productive sectors.

In 2018, the OECD reported that a single Japanese railway project in the Philippines worth US\$2.0 billion accounted for more than half of all gender-related development assistance in the transport and storage sector. In 2018, Japan's spending in this sector made up 81% of the total gender-related funding, driving the rank of transport and storage far above where it would otherwise be in terms of global economic empowerment priority sectors.

Banking and financial services

Like agriculture, the third-largest sector, banking, and financial services, is a more traditional focus area for projects on women's economic empowerment and has historically attracted a significant proportion of gender-related funding to the economic and productive sectors. Projects in banking and finance often work well to address some of the most fundamental issues of women's economic disempowerment, by giving women the specific knowledge and resources that they need to participate in a paid workforce and to engage effectively with financial institutions, thereby enabling them to invest and save the money they earn. Projects in this sector often entail the facilitation of knowledge trainings and public sector reforms, which improve access to finance and promote small and medium enterprise development, job creation in sustainable livelihoods, and workforce development. Initiatives of this type lend themselves well to gender equality as a principal goal, and many descriptions of projects in this sector specifically name access to the programs for women and youth as a central tenet.

As with transport and storage, financing for gender-related activities in this sector is primarily driven by contributions from a single donor: in this case, the UK, whose spending accounts for 71% of all gender-related spending in the banking and financial services sector.

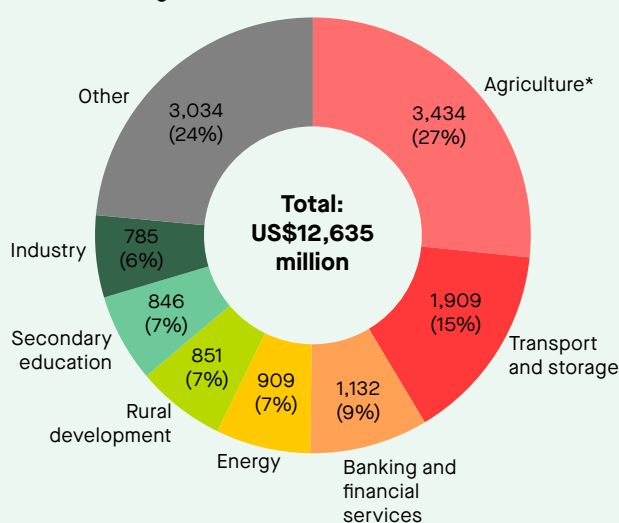
UK, Japan, and Germany are the largest donors to projects targeting gender equality in the economic and productive sectors

In terms of absolute volume, the UK, Japan, and Germany outspent all other DAC donors on projects in the economic and productive sectors which target gender as a principal or significant goal in 2018.

The US\$2.2 billion spent by the UK in 2018 was part of the realization of a development strategy document released the same year, titled '[2018-2030 Strategic Vision for Gender Equality](#)'. The document lays out five key priorities, the first of which is "addressing gender-specific barriers to inclusive economic growth".

Figure 2: Bilateral ODA to the economic and productive sectors with principal or significant gender equality focus by sector, 2018

All DAC donors, total gender-focused funding, US\$ million



Source: OECD CRS. Aid projects targeting gender equality and women's empowerment. Gross disbursements; 2018 prices. *includes forestry, fishing, rural development

Of the US\$2.0 billion spent by Japan in 2018 on gender-related projects in the economic and productive sectors, 76% was disbursed for projects related to transportation and storage. This is due in part to massive spending on rail and transport projects, primarily in South Asia, which incorporate gender as a significant goal. This spending is in keeping with Japan's larger [policy priorities](#) for long-term development cooperation which primarily focus on plans to expand support to Asian countries in infrastructure development, green investment, and improving financial access and support for women. Compared to other DAC donors, however, Japan is one of the lowest-ranking in terms of principal gender spending, with less than 1% of bilateral allocable ODA earmarked in 2018 for principal gender programs across all sectors.

In 2018, Germany was the largest absolute donor to gender equality programs overall (when considering all sectors) but ranked third in terms of funding allocated to gender-related programs in the economic and productive sectors. The largest portion (30%) of its gender-related economic and productive sector funding went to the agricultural sector, in keeping with the German development ministry's 2014 '[Gender Equality in German Development Policy](#)'. This document names "rural development, agriculture, and food security" as one of four priorities, along with economic empowerment. Like Japan, however, less than 1% of gender-marked spending across all sectors in 2018 was for projects principally targeting gender equality.

Only five donors spend 5% or more of their economic and productive sector ODA on projects directly empowering women, a critical indicator of real commitment

Much of the existing analysis on donor finance for gender-related projects in the economic and productive sectors examines aggregate funding or total funding to economic empowerment including projects which target gender as a principal and as a significant goal. These analyses are important in understanding the broader finance landscape. However, given the [higher bar](#) donors are expected to meet to qualify funding as principal, levels of principal-tagged gender funding to the economic and productive sectors serve as a better (though still imperfect) proxy for the assessment of donors' real commitments to women's economic empowerment.

When ranking the share of principal gender-related funding disbursed to projects in the economic and productive sectors, Spain sits well above any other donor; 24% of the bilateral allocable ODA that Spain channels to the eco-

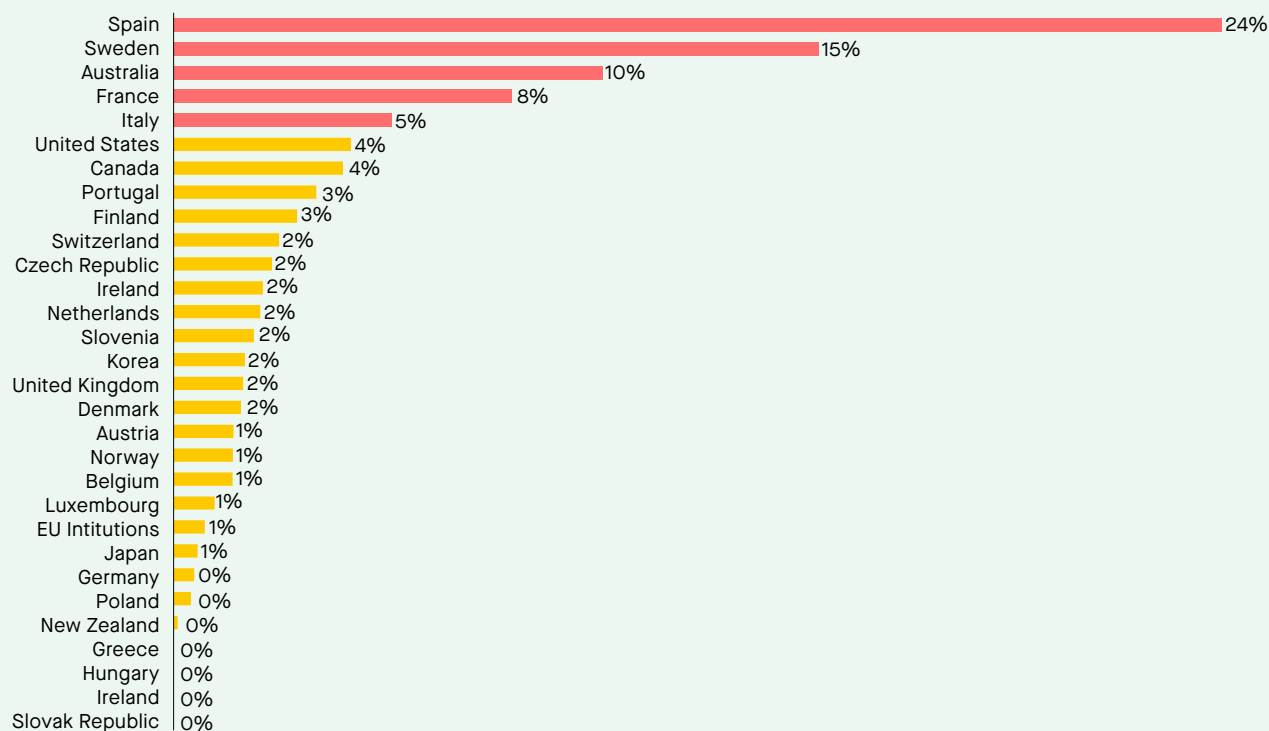
Gender equality in focus: Donor efforts towards economic empowerment are hampered by persistent disparities in unpaid care work

The scale of the threat that domestic and other unpaid work poses to women's potential to fully participate in their communities' financial and economic activity is recognized in SDG 5. The necessity to overcome this obstacle is enshrined in Target 5.4 ("Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate."). Programs that offer labor force trainings or that create local job openings will ultimately fail in elevating women's societal and financial status if they do not simultaneously address the underlying social structures and norms which rely on and perpetuate women's relegation to the nursery, the sick bed, and the kitchen.

In a [2019 report](#) titled 'Enabling Women's Economic Empowerment: New Approaches to Unpaid Care Work in Developing Countries', the OECD advises that implementers of development programs design programs and policies which integrate the reduction of women's unpaid domestic and care work as a primary objective from the start of the project and also ensure that all projects include efforts to address cultural masculinities which undercut women's equality. For example, gender-blind projects in the economic and productive sectors which offer skill trainings while failing to simultaneously build out programs to free women from unpaid tasks such as childcare, do not have a gender-blind impact. These types of programs are destined to fail women and, when they inevitably do, communities are left with even more highly [feminized rates of poverty](#). It is for this reason that programming in the economic and productive sectors which targets gender equality as its principal focus is so crucial. Programs which center women — and which explicitly recognize and seek to dismantle the unique obstacles they face — have the capacity to fundamentally change the landscape of women's financial participation and access in a way that projects which simply integrate gender as one of many targets rarely do.

Figure 3: Bilateral ODA to economic and productive sectors with principal gender equality focus, all DAC donors, 2018

Funding for gender equality as a principal goal as a percent of bilateral allocable ODA to economic and productive sectors



Source: OECD CRS. Aid projects targeting gender equality and women's empowerment. Gross disbursements; 2018 prices.

economic and productive sectors has a principal gender-focus. Spain is followed by Sweden with 15%, and Australia with 10%.

It is important, however, to consider these shares of principal funding in the context of each donor's overall spending on gender equality in the economic and productive sectors, especially given that well-funded projects with principal gender foci are some of those most likely to make a strong, lasting impact on women's economic empowerment.

France, the US, and Sweden spend the most on projects with a principal gender focus in the economic and productive sectors

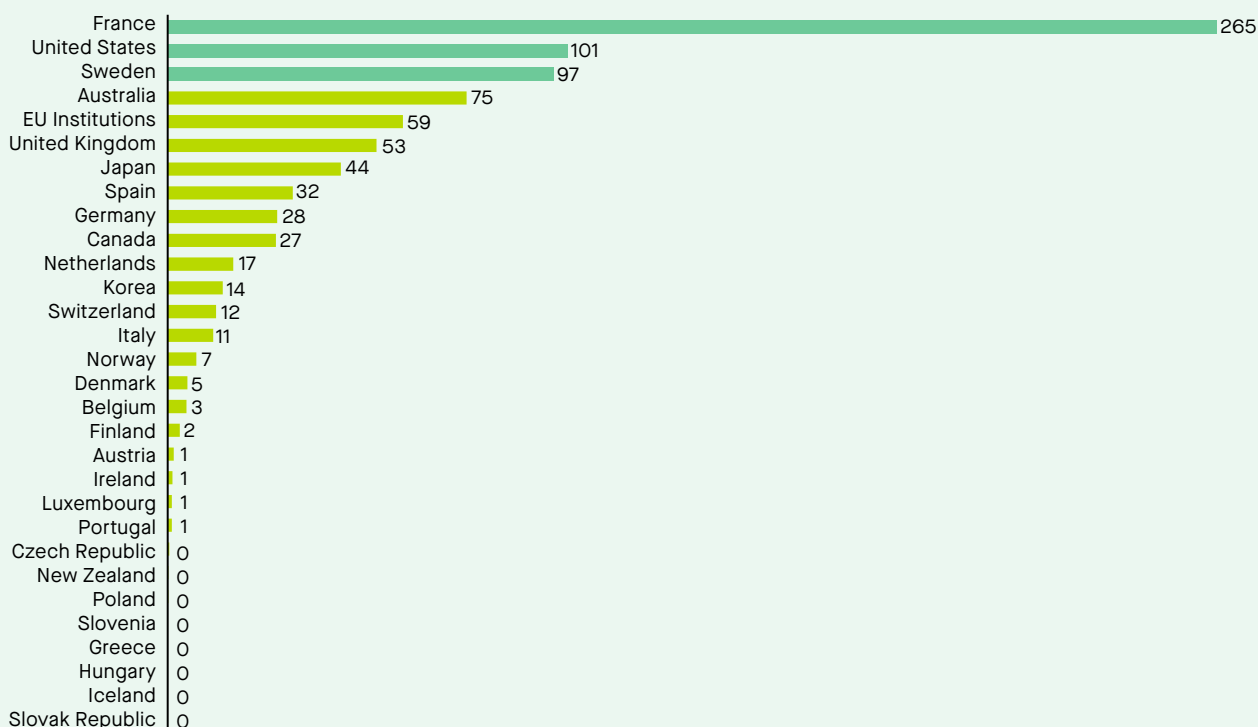
The donors that rank highly in terms of both absolute and principal spending can be considered some of the heaviest hitters in the field. They consistently channel high volumes of funding and consistently earmark those funds for work which centers gender equality in economic empowerment as its primary goal.

In terms of absolute spending on gender-related projects in these sectors, France, Sweden, and Australia again rank highly, taking first, third, and fourth places respectively. The US sits in second place, and Spain falls to eighth place in absolute terms.

France dwarfs all other DAC donors with US\$265 million channeled to programs in the economic and productive sectors with gender as a principal objective in 2018; this is over two and a half times the funding of its closest runner up, the US. Following in the footsteps of Sweden and Canada, France announced its new policy of feminist diplomacy in 2019, committing to channeling 50% of its ODA to projects with gender equality as a significant or principal goal. Even before this announcement, France's '[2018-2022 International Strategy for Gender Equality](#)' (the third such French gender strategy of its kind) laid out five key aims to improve gender inequities globally; the promotion and monitoring of access to economic and productive resources was, notably, the second action item in the plan. Data released in the coming years will demonstrate definitively how well France has adhered to

Figure 4: Bilateral ODA to economic and productive sectors with principal gender equality focus, all DAC donors, 2018

Funding for gender equality as a principal goal, US\$ millions



Source: OECD CRS. Aid projects targeting gender equality and women's empowerment. Gross disbursements; 2018 prices.

their feminist diplomacy commitments, but as of now, the funding trend looks very positive.

The US gave US\$101 million in ODA to projects in the economic and productive sectors which named gender as the principal goal. The US is the fourth-largest absolute funder to projects targeting gender equality overall, and its [policy documents](#) highlight a focus on economic empowerment projects. Although funding levels to principal economic empowerment projects are still high compared to many other donors, US funding for total gender equality projects has actually fallen by 18% as the Trump administration cut spending since 2016; between 2017 and 2018, principal funding for gender equality projects plummeted from US\$1.6 billion to US\$671 million.

Sweden disbursed US\$97 million in principal gender-related funding to the economic and productive sectors in 2018, almost the same amount as the US; however, unlike the US, Sweden's funding to principal gender equality projects has been steadily increasing over the last three years in both absolute and relative terms. Though still outspent by the US in absolute terms on principal

gender projects in the economic and productive sectors, Sweden's ranking rises above the US when funding is assessed as a proportion of total ODA (see Figure 3). Sweden has displayed an impressive commitment to global programs promoting women's rights through their Feminist Foreign Policy. Since 2014 when the policy was announced, Sweden has incorporated a clear gender perspective across all international activities, supporting women as societal leaders and highlighting the role of men and boys in the efforts to promote gender parity and to stop violence against women. The very first of Sweden's three main objectives given in its [2020 Feminist Foreign Policy paper](#) is the "promotion of women's and girls' economic and social conditions".

Australia, which ranked fourth in terms of overall spending on gender equality in the economic and productive sectors, and third in relative terms, has prioritized women and girls in its development policy since 2014. In May 2020, Australia launched a [new development policy](#) that focuses entirely on recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis; the new policy also commits to investing in gender equality and women's economic empowerment.

Given the COVID-19 crisis, donors' investment in women's economic empowerment is more critical than ever

According to [UN Women](#), the full inclusion of women in labor markets worldwide would add an estimated US\$28 trillion to the global economy. Given the colossal economic shocks caused by the COVID-19 crisis, measures that in any way hinder women's participation in the labor workforce are a direct threat to global economic recovery. Efforts to fully integrate women into paid markets are more crucial in 2020 than ever. In this context, and given the incredible potential return on donor investment, DAC donors' disbursement of only US\$860 million in principal gender-related funding in the economic and productive sectors is disappointing.

Over the last few years, many OECD DAC countries have made bold and praiseworthy commitments to gender equality; however, as we approach 2030, real progress will require donors to follow up on these commitments with quantifiable action. Successful development initiatives must incorporate policy which makes women's unpaid labor obsolete, while simultaneously building out infrastructure and resources to support women's entrance into the paid labor force. More principal funding for gender-equal financial inclusion programs is crucial to this cause. It is only the combination of these two types of efforts with a significant volume of real, targeted spending that has the potential to radically transform the way women around the world interact with and benefit from the global economy.

DT INSIGHTS

Gender equality: Combatting gender-based violence



OCTOBER 2020

A life free from fear: Financing to end gender-based violence

BY KALILA JAEGER, ISABELA VERA, AND HUGO PETITJEAN, SEEK DEVELOPMENT

OCTOBER 8, 2020

Of all the plans laid out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), SDG 5 ("Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls") is one of the most ambitious. Throughout human history, half of the world's population has been counted out, their intellectual and economic contributions disregarded, their bodies abused and commodified. Considerable progress has been made towards empowering women globally to live their lives autonomously. Since the adoption of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, [131 countries have enacted 274 laws and regulations in support of gender equality](#). [More girls than ever before are in school](#), and [maternal mortality rates have fallen by 38% globally](#). Still, massive challenges remain. Nowhere in the world are women born into full equality and, in many places, to be born female is to be born a second-class citizen.

We have already entered the final decade before the SDG's 2030 deadline. However, [progress on SDG 5 lags](#) across a range of indicators, including targets to eliminate violence against women and girls and ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). To level the playing field between men and women globally will require a massive and focused international effort.

This year, in recognition of the importance of SDG 5 in the Decade of Action, the [Donor Tracker](#) has added Gender Equality to our analyses of 14-major Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donor markets, allowing users to compare donors' commitments and disbursements to gender equality efforts. In addition, the Donor Tracker is publishing a series of three Insights pieces, which will provide readers with a more detailed analysis of three main elements, or 'pillars' of gender equality endeavors: namely, funding for women's economic empowerment; efforts to end gender-based violence; and the fight for sexual and reproductive health and rights. This second piece analyzes existing research and newly released 2018 OECD data to assess how donor countries are approaching and, in many cases, falling short on efforts to combat gender-based violence in their global development programs.

[Gender-based violence](#), or GBV, encompasses any type of threat or violence committed against a person because of their sex or gender identity. GBV can be physical, psychological, emotional, or sexual, and may take the form of deprivation of resources or access to services. Though GBV manifests differently in different regions of the world, no country is immune. There is work to be done in every single locality to elevate the status of women and girls and eradicate the pervasive violence against them.¹

Figures from United Nations (UN) women demonstrate the scale of the problem:

- Approximately [15 million adolescent girls](#) worldwide have experienced rape or another forced sexual act. Data from

30 countries in 2017 show that only 1% of those affected ever sought help.

- [70% of women](#) studied have experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime.
- Of the 87,000 women intentionally killed in 2017, [58% were murdered](#) by current or former intimate partners or by family members.
- According to data from 2018, girls and women together represent [72% of all human trafficking victims](#). More than 75% of all trafficked girls and 80% of all trafficked women are trafficked for forced sexual labor.
- 2019 data show that at least [200 million girls and women](#) have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM), with the majority of cases performed on girls under five years old.

¹While men and boys can be victims of GBV, most frequently in cases where they do not conform to traditional cisgender or heterosexual gender norms, the vast majority of the world's GBV is perpetrated by men and boys against women and girls.

As if these figures were not shocking enough, the COVID-19 crisis has [caused an increase](#) in incidences of GBV around the world, as women have had to lock-down with abusers and support services have been forced to shutter their doors.

In addition to the strong moral arguments underpinning the advocacy for combatting GBV, data from the World Bank shows that GBV incurs significant social and economic costs at a national level. In some countries, GBV is estimated to cost states [up to 3.7% of their GDP](#) which is more than twice, the World Bank notes, what most countries spend on education.

In the last few years, tackling GBV has slowly [gained recognition](#) as a priority for donors' and multilateral institutions' global development programs. In 2016, the World Bank launched the [Global Gender-Based Violence Task Force](#) to respond specifically to sexual exploitation occurring in World Bank-supported projects. In 2017 — the same year that the [#MeToo movement took the world by storm](#) — the [Spotlight Initiative](#) launched with €500 million (US\$590 million) in seed funding from the EU Institutions. It became the first targeted, international effort to end all forms of violence against women and girls.

That it took until 2017 to galvanize donors into multilateral action at this scale is a testament to its relative obscurity in the development community when compared to other, longer-standing thematic issues such as malnutrition. By comparison, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched its first global campaign against childhood hunger in 1946.

GBV is a violation of women's and girls' human rights and poses an existential threat to their lives and livelihoods. As such, eradicating GBV is a prerequisite to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 5; 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls') as well as all other sub-goals of gender equality. Donor efforts must rapidly scale up if the global community is going to succeed at ending GBV in time to meet the SDG's 2030 deadline.

This Insights piece takes stock of which OECD DAC donor countries are using official development assistance (ODA) toward eradicating GBV. It asks:

- How much bilateral ODA do donors currently provide for anti-GBV efforts and related civil society and human rights areas?
- Which OECD DAC donor countries prioritize GBV in their development policy and financing?

- Where are the gaps, and what more needs to be done by donors?

This analysis provides evidence for advocates that increasing donor efforts toward ending GBV are more important than ever.

Using OECD DAC data, donor funding for GBV and gender equality in civil society and rights sectors can be assessed

In 2017, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) introduced a purpose code (a funding label for donor projects) explicitly for anti-GBV activities, titled 'Ending violence against women and girls'. This was an important step towards increasing transparency around donor finance for activities against GBV.

Some donors, however, reported no spending tagged with the anti-GBV purpose code despite having allocated money to relevant projects. According to OECD data, [France](#), for example, appears not to have spent any ODA on anti-GBV initiatives; given that France does engage in known anti-GBV activities, specifically as part of its [Support Fund for Feminist Organisations](#), this suggests uneven uptake of the GBV purpose code by donors. Although the fact that there may be additional spending

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Source: [OECD DAC, Handbook on the OECD-DAC Gender](#)

not pictured here is ultimately positive, accuracy in reporting is crucial to empowering advocates with up-to-date, transparent data on the current state of donor finance for ending GBV.

It is important to note that the purpose code only captures bilateral ODA provided by donors; that means that donors' core contributions to multilateral organizations working on anti-GBV issues, such as UN Women and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), is not included in this analysis.

Additionally, this purpose code cannot sufficiently capture the multifaceted approach that is necessary to eradicate violence because GBV and the structures which en-

able it necessarily permeate every aspect of society, from social to legal. Therefore, six additional [purpose codes](#) are relevant to this analysis:

- 15130: 'Legal and judicial development';
- 15152: 'Legislatures and political parties';
- 15150: 'Democratic participation and civil society';
- 15160: 'Human rights';
- 15170: 'Women's rights organisations and movements, and government institutions'; and
- 16010: 'Social protection'.

Increasing women's representation in parliamentary, judiciary, and law enforcing institutions strengthens the fight against GBV

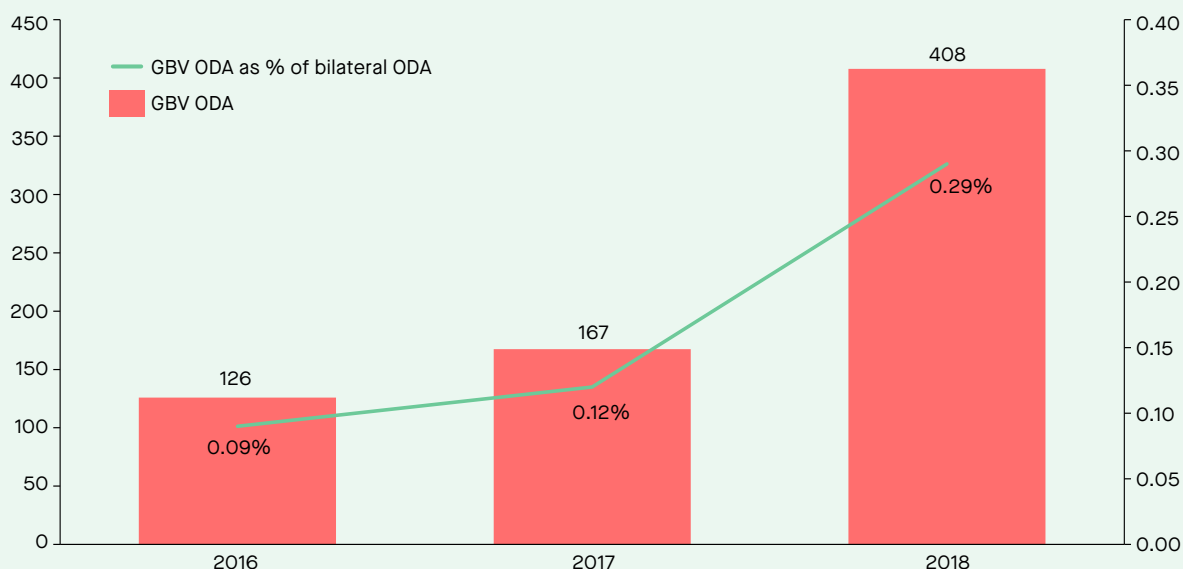
SDG 16 calls for 'access to justice for all' and for the establishment of 'effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels'. Target 16.7 requires nations to enhance the inclusiveness and representativeness of their institutions including their legislatures, public services, and judiciaries. Yet even in 2020, the overwhelming dominance of regulatory institutions by men, and the failure of those institutions to take GBV seriously stands in the way of real progress on the issue.

- **GBV is perpetrated with impunity:** In Pakistan's upper Sindh region, just 19 of the [649 criminal honor killing cases](#) brought to courts between 2014 and 2019 received sentences. In Mexico, [fewer than five percent of gender-based murders](#) are officially solved. In Spain, 23 women have been murdered since January of 2020 and [call volume to domestic violence hotlines have spiked 493%](#) since the start COVID-19 lockdowns.
- **Legislative and judicial bodies are dominated by men:** Women [held just 24.6% of the world's parliamentary seats](#) in 2019 and are [vastly outnumbered](#) by their male counterparts in global judiciaries. [Many documented cases](#) have proven that high ranking politicians themselves can be perpetrators of GBV, too. With gender ratios in legal

institutions globally [so skewed](#), there is potential for abusers and their enablers to [outnumber](#) those who defend the rights of women, shutting down legal reforms and [covering up allegations](#) of abuse.

- **Law enforcement does not take GBV seriously at an institutional level:** In the United States, multiple studies have shown that [40% of police officer families](#) experience domestic abuse, compared to 10% of the general population. A [2013 US-based investigation](#) showed that nearly 30% of officers accused of domestic violence still worked for the same agency a year later, compared to 1% and 7% of officers who failed drug tests or were accused of theft, respectively.

This lack of gender equality in lawmaking bodies worldwide poses a major obstacle for the passage of legislation with the potential to protect women from GBV, and the gender inequities in the world's judiciaries and law enforcement undermines public faith in courts' willingness and ability to prosecute GBV crimes effectively. Legal reforms that explicitly recognize and penalize femicide as a crime are [effective in helping slow the rates of murder](#). Trainings for judges, lawyers, and police on GBV have also proven useful, as well as the passage of legislation that increases access to women's shelters. The inclusion of women in lawmaking and law enforcing bodies, and their promotion to leadership roles, is a crucial first step to promote the introduction and passage of these important legislative initiatives.

Figure 1: Bilateral allocable ODA for ending violence against women and girls, 2016-2018*All DAC donors, US\$ millions**Source: OECD CRS. Gross disbursements; 2018 prices.*

ODA for 'Ending violence against women and girls' has more than tripled since 2016

A 2018 Gender Equality Report from Donor Tracker found that all 14 donors monitored by the platform had a focus on ending GBV explicitly named in their development strategies. ODA for 'Ending violence against women and girls' has risen every year since 2016, when it amounted to US\$126 million. This rose to US\$167 million in 2017, before more than doubling to US\$408 million in 2018.

The dramatic leap in funding for GBV between 2017 and 2018 was driven by a US\$152 million funding package directed by the [EU](#) mainly towards the Spotlight Initiative (see box) that year. GBV-related spending in 2018 represented 0.29% of donors' overall bilateral ODA, only a slight change from the 0.09% and 0.12% share it held in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

EU Institutions account for almost 40% of all funding to projects aimed at ending GBV

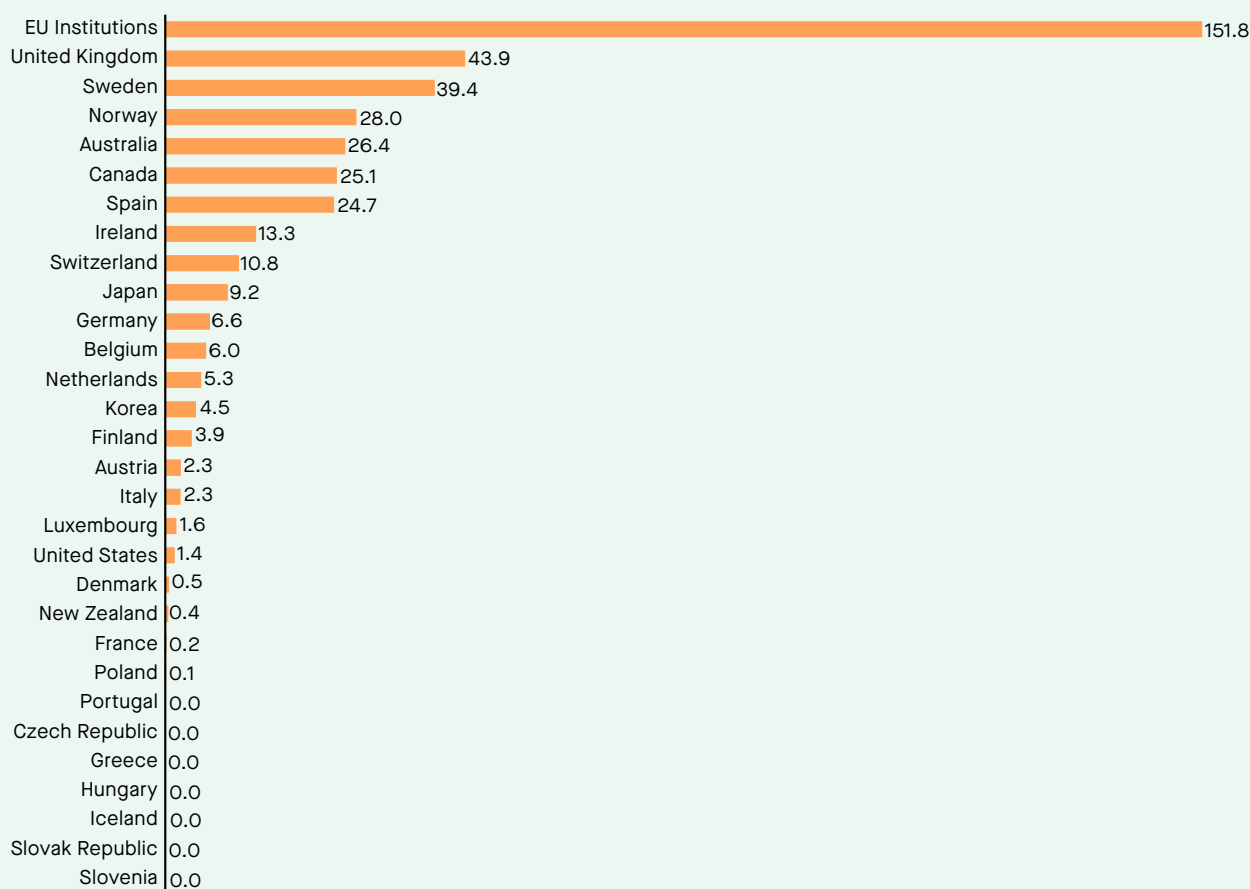
The EU institutions, the [UK](#), and [Sweden](#) were the largest donors for projects aimed at eliminating violence against women and girls in 2018. Their allocations of US\$152 million, US\$44 million, US\$39 million, respectively, reflect the increased policy focus from these donors on this issue in recent years.

The EU easily outspent every other donor by orders of magnitude in funding to the sector. The EU — along with UNFPA the United National Development Programme (UNDP), and UN Women — is a founding donor of the Spotlight Initiative. The EU's €500 (US\$590) in seed funding to Spotlight in 2017, the year it was established, helped propel the EU to first place in spending to end violence against women and girls.

In 2016, the EU's framework '[Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-20](#)' (known as the Gender Action Plan or GAP II) came into force. GAP II aims to promote, protect, and fulfill the human rights of girls and women through EU external relations and is mandatory for the EU and its member states. The first thematic area given in GAP II is 'Ensuring girls' and women's physical and psychological integrity', illustrating the EU's attention to the issue.

The UK is a leader in gender mainstreaming for development policy

In second place, with just about a third of the EU's total funding, the UK allocated US\$44 million in 2018 to projects ending violence against women and girls. The UK passed the [International Development \(Gender Equality\)](#)

Figure 2: Bilateral ODA for ending violence against women and girls, 2018*All DAC donors, US\$ millions**Source: OECD CRS. Gross disbursements; 2018 prices.*

Act in 2014, requiring all UK development projects to target poverty reduction while also promoting gender equality. Its '2030 Strategic Vision on Gender Equality' also made 'eliminating gender-based violence' one of five explicit policy priorities. However, since the Department for International Development (DFID; which was originally responsible for the policy) has since been merged with the UK Foreign Office, the future of the policy framework is unclear.

The UK is also a topline donor to multilateral organizations including UNFPA and UN Women, both of which are majority funders of the Spotlight Initiative.

Sweden frames women's rights in a human rights policy framework

With US\$39 million in bilateral ODA for projects for ending violence against women and girls, Sweden takes third

place in terms of absolute spending. Sweden's 'feminist foreign policy' has been in place since 2014, when the government committed to mainstreaming gender into every arm of its foreign policy initiatives. The policy incorporates 'freedom from physical, psychological, and sexual violence' as one of its six priorities for achieving global gender equality. Sweden also adopted an additional strategy in 2018 for gender equality and women's empowerment focusing on human rights protections for women, which explicitly includes combatting gender-based violence as a top focus.

Ireland and Spain lead on anti-GBV spending when accounting for donors' overall global development project portfolio

As Figure 3 illustrates, spending on ending violence against women and girls makes up only a small proportion of donors' overall bilateral ODA.

Major multilateral initiatives like Spotlight are paving the way

The Spotlight Initiative focuses specifically on ending domestic violence, femicide, human trafficking, and sexual exploitation. Launched in 2017 by the EU and UN Institutions with seed funding over €500 million (US\$590), Spotlight represented the first major coordinated international effort to address GBV as a systemic, transnational problem.

Spotlight focuses on [six programmatic pillars](#): 1) promoting laws and policies to prevent violence and discrimination and to address impunity; 2) strengthening national governments and regional institutions; 3) promoting gender-equitable social norms, attitudes, and behaviors; 4) making high quality essential services available for survivors of violence; 5) improving the quality, accuracy, and availability of data on GBV; and 6) promoting strong and empowered civil society and autonomous women's movements.

Spotlight is coordinated by the Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General and operated by three core UN agencies: UN Women, UNFPA, and UNDP, with additional support from UNICEF. While many organizations have existed for decades doing important work to fight against specific aspects of GBV on a smaller scale, the establishment of the Spotlight Initiative not only represents a chance to unify and align existing efforts but also sends a powerful message to the world: GBV is a global problem and its solution must be a global priority.

According to the anti-GBV purpose code, Ireland and Spain outrank the other DAC donors by a significant margin in terms of relative spending or spending on ending GBV as a proportion of total bilateral ODA (see Figure 3).

Ireland spent more of its bilateral ODA (2.5%) on ending violence against women and girls than any other DAC donor. Ireland is currently implementing its third [National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security \(2019-2024\)](#), which prioritizes efforts to include women in conflict resolution initiatives and, within its portfolio of anti-GBV activities, places a high priority specifically on ending

FGM. Ireland's disbursements across the African continent to projects such as ['She Leads Africa'](#), an empowerment initiative for female entrepreneurs which also prioritizes ending GBV, and to the UNFPA 'Zero Tolerance for GBV' program, account for its spot at the top.

With 2.3% of bilateral ODA allocated to ending violence against women and girls, [Spain](#) takes a close second place in the relative ranking. 'Ending violence against women and girls' is an explicit priority named in Spain's 'Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation 2018-2020'. Spain's funding is mostly targeted towards Latin America and the Caribbean and directed towards projects to end domestic violence.

Spending on other key areas of the fight against GBV does not yet adequately mainstream gender

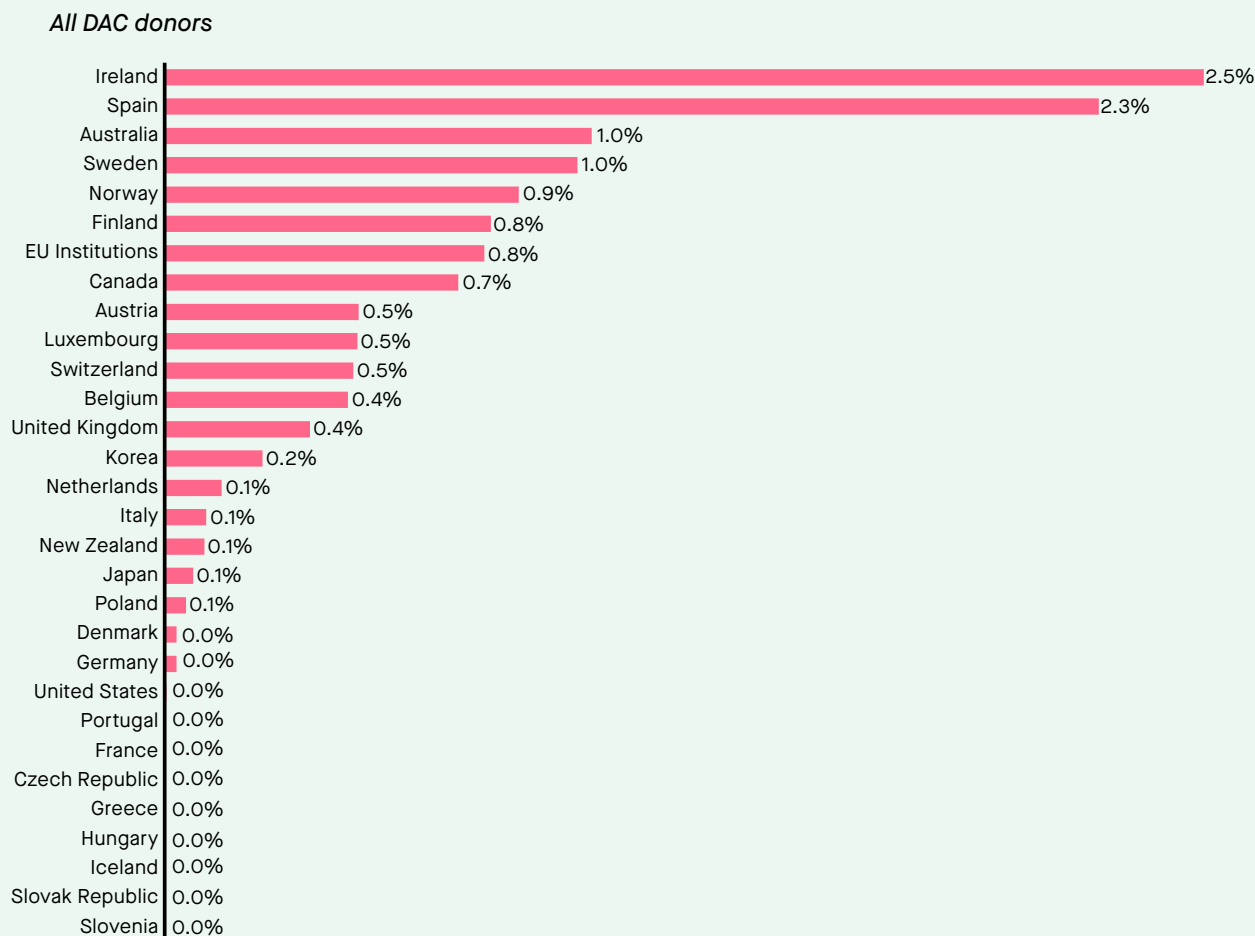
To comprehensively assess donors efforts to combat GBV, it is also important to analyze donor spending for other types of projects which target areas closely linked to ending violence against women. By working to change cultural narratives about women's place in society and by directly empowering women to participate in democratic activity, gender-focused spending in the following areas helps tackle the root causes of GBV:

- 'Legal and judicial development';
- 'Human rights';
- 'Women's rights organisations and movements, and government institutions';
- 'Social protection';
- 'Legislatures and political parties'; and
- 'Democratic participation and civil society'.

It is well known that when women hold diversified leadership positions in government and law enforcement institutions, and when their voices are sought out and heard, the organizations [operate more fairly and more effectively](#) overall. The achievement of gender equality in these other areas of civil society can elevate the status and legitimacy of women as equal citizens, and act as an accelerator for the eradication of GBV.

The ODA analysis of the extent to which projects in these six areas prioritize gender equality as a principal or significant project goal shows that, unfortunately, gender is not yet sufficiently mainstreamed into projects within these six thematic areas. Figure 4 shows a strikingly small amount of movement in funding levels over the last five years.

Figure 3: Bilateral ODA for ending violence against women and girls as percent of total bilateral ODA, 2018



Source: OECD CRS. Gross disbursements.

- All projects marked as **'Women's rights organizations and movements'** are fully gender-focused, the same is not true for funding to the other purpose codes.
- Of the sectors examined, **'Democratic participation and civil society'** saw the highest level of gender mainstreaming, with 70% of funding in 2018 going to projects which included gender equality as either a principal or significant goal. The percentage is encouraging, but funding has been higher in the past.
- That **'Social protection'** is seeing increasing gender mainstreaming is a promising sign. Nevertheless, given that projects in this sector should improve institutional, programmatic protections for "vulnerable groups" in society, just under 60% of funding went to projects that included gender equality as a principal or significant goal is insufficient. All projects in this sector should at least include gender as a significant goal.
- Alarmingly, less than two-thirds of funding for **'Human rights'** projects appears to be mainstreaming gender;

this in a project sector which should by any definition include a focus on the rights of women and girls. Projects in this sector are specifically designed to protect the basic rights of the most endangered in society, those on the margins of society who are at risk of being abused and physically harmed. It is understandable that not every single project in the category has gender as its principal focus, but integrating gender objectives into project spending in this category is imperative given what is known about the pervasiveness and perilousness of gender-based discrimination and violence.

- Gender-focused funding for projects on **'Legislatures and political parties'**, already the sector with the second-lowest level of gender mainstreaming, appears to be on the decline. This is a worrying development given how significantly the functionality of legal and judicial systems affects the propensity of survivors of GBV to come forward and press charges.

- **'Legal and judicial development'** took last place, with just 30% of funding targeting projects with gender equality objectives. Like 'Legislatures and political parties', funding to this sector is crucial to improve the responses of and trust in legal institutions.

GBV has deep roots in the systemic inequality between men and women that has persisted throughout modern history. Projects which provide direct support to survivors of GBV and which operate to penalize perpetrators are imperative, but a sustained effort to promote women's full citizenship, in the broadest possible sense, is critical to proactive prevention. By mainstreaming gender across democratic civil society and human rights sector projects, donors can increase the impact of their direct anti-GBV work and help to raise a new generation with a modern conception of women's place in society. The next decade must, therefore, see a massive push by the advocacy community to introduce gender equality elements to every project in these crucial sectors.

Recommendations

Ending GBV is both a moral and an economic imperative. Studies have shown again and again that children raised experiencing or witnessing violence are at high-

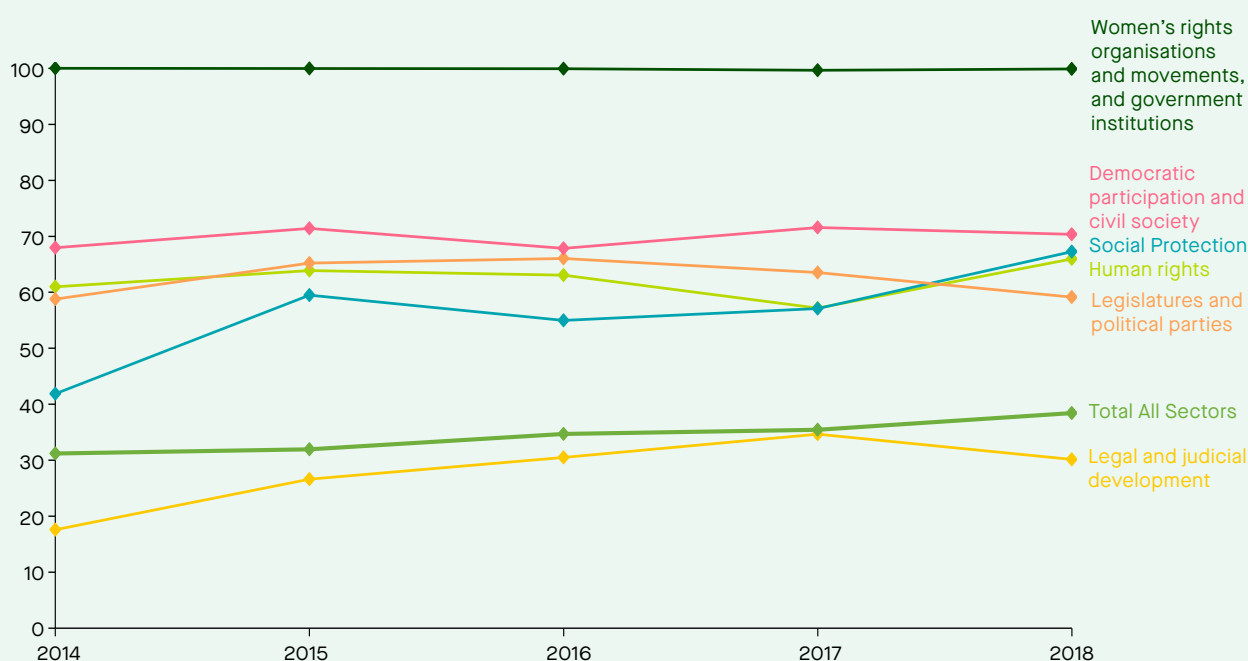
ly increased risk of becoming perpetrators or victims of violence themselves. By investing in interventions now, donors can save the lives of women and children today, and build a brighter, more peaceful future. Over the next few years, as donors grapple with the fallout from the COVID-19 crisis, it will be crucial that funding for recovery not be taken from the already meager allocations for combatting GBV. On the contrary, spending to eradicate gender inequality is more critical now than ever.

With just ten years remaining to meet the ambitious goals of the SDGs, a rapid infusion of donor funding into the projects and the sectors known to be effective in the fight against GBV, is essential. Considering the findings of this ODA analysis, advocates should consider the following points in their advocacy to donors for GBV-related development activities.

1. **Donors need to increase spending on activities that directly target GBV.** Although donors have increased absolute spending in recent years on efforts to combat GBV, total funding is still a drop in the bucket compared to the scale of the issue. The problem transcends borders and permeates every society across ethnic, cultural, and class divides. Funding to combat a problem of this scale must match its

Figure 4: Gender-marked funding as % of all bilateral ODA to secondary civil society sectors

All DAC donors, 2014-2018



Source: OECD CRS. Aid projects targeting gender equality and women's empowerment. Gross disbursements.

proportions and projects to directly target the root causes of GBV (among them the persistent cultural devaluation of women's rights as citizens) must be prioritized. The EU's leadership with the Spotlight Initiative is a good starting point; more donors should join the Initiative (so far the EU is the only contributor), and continue to fund at a high level the UN organizations which form the project's backbone.

2. Donors should consistently make use of the 'Ending violence against women and girls' purpose code. The introduction of the OECD purpose code in 2017 was an excellent first step towards focusing donor efforts on the range of problems it encompasses. To begin effectively tracking spending towards ending GBV, donors need to start using the code consistently in their reporting. Donors, like France, which are already making efforts towards ending GBV but not yet reporting it as such, deserve to be recognized for their work, and those donors that have not yet committed to work in this area should be held accountable. In either case, advocates need accurate, up-to-date information to press for smarter policy.

3. Donors should also ensure that projects in related areas such as 'Human rights'; 'Legal and judicial development'; and 'Legislatures and political parties' increasingly mainstream gender issues. In addition to funding that directly targets GBV, there is an urgent need to increase complementary funding to civil society and 'Human rights' sectors that specifically targets gender equality, to ensure that the conditions which enable and perpetuate GBV are addressed in a holistic and impactful way. As this analysis shows, currently only between 30 and 70% of all projects in legal, judicial, and law enforcement sectors, which have the potential to strengthen systems that prevent and prosecute GBV, include gender equality as a significant or principal goal. Nowhere is mainstreaming more important than in the 'Human rights' sector, where 100% of projects should at least include gender as a significant focus, and where gender should be the principal focus of many. Instead, the percent of gender-tagged funding across these crucial sectors is lagging. Donors must use the next decade to drive these levels up across the board, imbuing every initiative with smart, targeted gender benchmarks.

DT INSIGHTS

Gender equality: Sexual and reproductive health and rights



MARCH 2021

Generation Equality? Trends from a decade of donor funding for SRHR

BY KALILA JAEGER AND ZOE JOHNSON, SEEK DEVELOPMENT

MARCH 1, 2020

Of all the plans laid out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), SDG 5 ("Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls") is one of the most ambitious. Throughout human history, half of the world's population has been counted out, their intellectual and economic contributions disregarded, their bodies abused and commodified. Considerable progress has been made towards empowering women globally to live their lives autonomously. Since the adoption of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, [131 countries have enacted 274 laws and regulations in support of gender equality](#). [More girls than ever before are in school](#), and [maternal mortality rates have fallen by 38% globally](#). Still, massive challenges remain. Nowhere in the world are women born into full equality and, in many places, to be born female is to be born a second-class citizen.

We have already entered the final decade before the SDG's 2030 deadline. However, [progress on SDG 5 lags](#) across a range of indicators, including targets to eliminate violence against women and girls and ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). To level the playing field between men and women globally will require a massive and focused international effort.

In 2020, in recognition of the importance of SDG 5 in the Decade of Action, the Donor Tracker added Gender Equality to our analyses of 14-major Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donor markets, allowing users to compare donors' commitments and disbursements to gender equality efforts. In addition, the Donor Tracker is publishing a series of three Insights pieces, which will provide readers with a more detailed analysis of three main elements, or 'pillars' of gender equality endeavors: namely, funding for women's economic empowerment; efforts to end gender-based violence; and the fight for sexual and reproductive health and rights. This third piece analyzes existing research and newly released 2019 OECD data to assess how donor countries are approaching and, in many cases, falling short on efforts to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights in their global development programs.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights, or SRHR, is a critical element of gender equality. SRHR refers to several, interconnected freedoms and rights: the freedom to choose if, when, and how to reproduce; the right to access comprehensive sexual and reproductive healthcare; and the right to a safe and satisfying sex life with whichever partner or partners a person should choose.

At the 2021 Generation Equality Forum, donors and stakeholders will come together in a framework convention for gender equality, launching concrete, ambitious investments, and policies. Promoting universal access to SRHR resources must be a top priority in the commitments that emerge from the Forum. SRHR is is cru-

cial for people of all genders; the freedom to control the functions of one's own body is a fundamental right, one without which all other types of freedoms fall away. Inadequate access to condoms can lead to the uncontrolled spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs or STDs) including HIV, putting people of all genders at risk. For people who can become pregnant, lack of access to SRHR resources can lead to involuntary pregnancy, potentially turning young girls into mothers decades before they would have chosen this responsibility, often cutting off access to school, paid work, the chance at life with a chosen partner. This can undermine their ability to benefit from other efforts toward improving their social and economic mobility.

We still have a long way to go to achieve universal SRHR for people around the world:

- Approximately [218 million](#) women of reproductive age in low- and middle-income countries have an unmet need for modern contraception¹; that is, they do not wish to become pregnant but are not using a modern method of prevention. 49% of pregnancies in low- and middle-income countries are unintended (111 million annually).
- These 111 million unintended pregnancies result in [30 million](#) unplanned births each year, 69 million abortions (of which 35 million are unsafe), 12 million miscarriages, and one million stillbirths.
- Every week, approximately [5,500](#) young women aged 15 to 24 years become infected with HIV. In ‘sub-Saharan Africa’², adolescent girls account for five in six new infections. Women in this age range are two times more likely to be living with HIV than men of the same age.

To make matters worse, these major challenges to SRHR access have been further complicated by the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic has strained health systems globally and undermined women’s access to SRHR services. Combined with an [uptick](#) in domestic violence, this means many women are facing crises of reproductive autonomy. [Experts](#) have been [warning](#) since the outset of the pandemic that a failure to prioritize SRHR services throughout the outbreak would have dire consequences. UNFPA predicted that 47 million women in 114 low- and middle-income countries would lose contraceptive access in the first six months of lockdowns resulting in [seven million](#) unintended pregnancies. For every three additional months of SRHR service disruptions, they estimated up to two million additional women would lose access to modern contraceptives globally, with unintended pregnancies [increasing](#) steadily throughout.

We likely won’t know the full measure of the COVID-19 pandemic’s consequences on SRHR access for several years to come but understanding the funding landscape over the past decade can help inform future-oriented discussions and advocacy to ensure that donors continue to provide adequate support for SRHR through their official development assistance (ODA) despite the increased strain caused by COVID-19.

¹Modern contraceptive methods are defined here as any of the following: permanent (female and male sterilization); long-acting reversible methods (implants and IUDs); short-acting methods (hormonal pills, injectables, male and female condoms, emergency contraceptive pills, patches, rings, diaphragms, vaginal spermicides and other supply methods); lactational amenorrhea method, which involves exclusive breast-feeding for up to six months postpartum; two fertility awareness-based methods: standard days method and two day method. Traditional methods, which are not considered modern contraceptive methods in this Insight, include periodic abstinence, withdrawal, abstinence, and breast-feeding. This definition is based on a 2019 [report](#) from the Guttmacher Institute.

²UNAIDS’ ‘sub-Saharan Africa’ designation includes Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South, Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

This ‘Insight’ draws on the latest OECD data to track ODA being spent on SRHR. It asks:

- How much ODA did donors spend on SRHR in 2019? How did funding changed in the last 10 years? Which are the top donor countries (in absolute and relative terms)?
- Which areas of SRHR receive the most funding and which donor countries are championing which aspects of SRHR in their ODA funding and policy?
- What resources are available for analyzing more granular funding data on the key elements of SRHR, including multilateral contributions?

OECD data is the best way to comprehensively track donor funding for SRHR

The data for this analysis was drawn from the [OECD’s Creditor Reporting System](#) (CRS) database, which covers development assistance provided by the 30 Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donor countries, 20 non-DAC donor countries, and 46 multilateral donors. When reporting ODA to the OECD, donors mark their funding using sector and purpose codes that classify the issues being addressed by the projects their development assistance is channeled toward.

In accordance with the methodology used in the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health’s 2020 report, [‘Funding for SRHR in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: Threats, Outlook, and Opportunities’](#), this analysis of SRHR looks at funding flowing to sector code 130: ‘Population Policies/Programmes & Reproductive Health’. This includes the following purpose codes:

- **13010: ‘Population policy and administrative management’**, which marks ODA for population policies, demographic research and analysis, and reproductive health research.
- **13020: ‘Reproductive health care’**, which includes disbursements used to fund the promotion of reproductive health, prenatal and postnatal care including delivery, prevention and treatment of infertility, prevention, and management of consequences of abortion, and safe motherhood activities.
- **13030: ‘Family planning’**, which includes ODA toward

counseling, information, education and communication (IEC) activities, delivery of contraceptives, and capacity building and training. Although not mentioned anywhere explicitly, funding for abortion services falls under this category.

- **13040: 'STD control including HIV/AIDS'**, which includes funding for all activities related to STDs and HIV/AIDS control such as testing, prevention, treatment, care information, education, and communication. Access to preventative care and treatment for HIV/AIDS is critical to ensuring safe, healthy sex lives are within reach for all.
- **13081: 'Personnel development for population and reproductive health'**, which marks funding used toward the education and training of health staff for population and reproductive health care services.

To illustrate the scale of funding to SRHR, this Insight also refers to "total health ODA". This includes funding for sector codes 121: 'Health, General', 122: 'Basic health', 123: 'Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)', and 130: 'Population Policies/Programmes & Reproductive Health'.

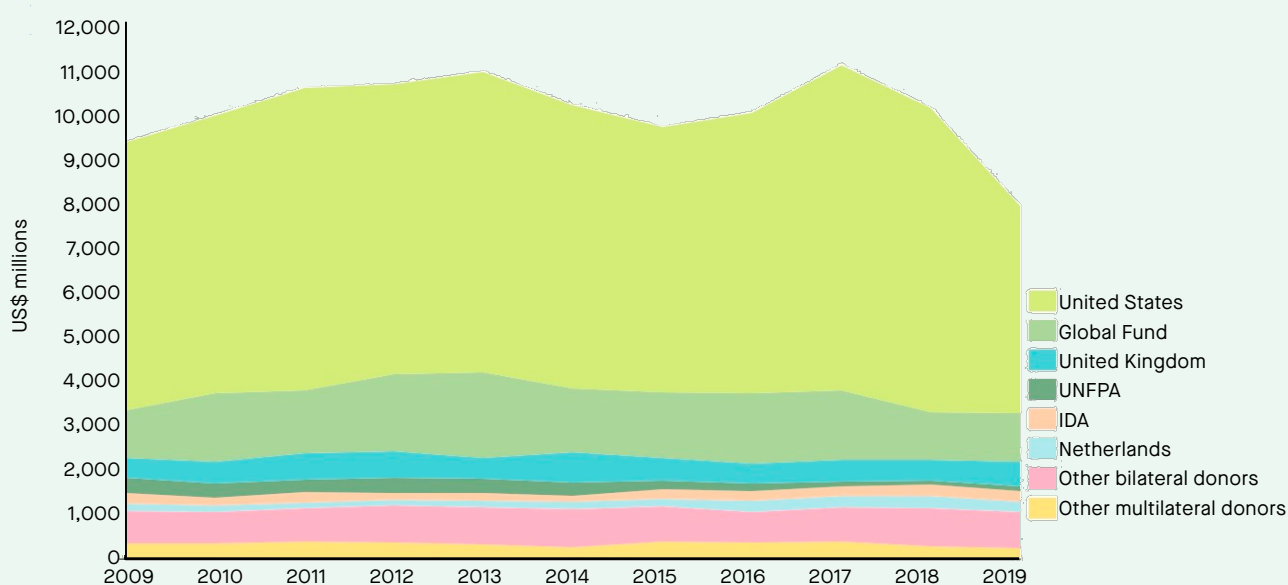
Following the broader analysis of overall funding for SRHR, this piece ODA to the three highest funded purpose codes within 'Population Policies/Programmes & Reproductive Health': STD control including HIV/AIDS, reproductive health care, and family planning analyzes in more detail.

After a peak in 2017, ODA to SRHR declined to US\$7.9 billion in 2019; belated data reporting from US may change the picture in months to come

In 2019, total ODA (including bilateral ODA from OECD donor countries and ODA from multilateral donors) to SRHR was US\$7.9 billion (see Figure 1). Total funding for SRHR has declined in recent years following a peak of US\$11.1 billion in 2017. The reduction in funding since then is, in large part, attributable to what appears to be a decline in funding from the US, particularly in the STD control subsector; however, US funding to the SRHR sectors has not fallen as sharply as 2019 OECD data appears to show. The US' 2019 totals in the CRS database are known to be low for several reasons, but primarily because disbursements, (particularly to HIV projects) have not all been reported yet. New releases of CRS data in the coming months will reflect updated US totals. It is important to note that US disbursements in the SRHR sector are not reflective of political commitments. A number of factors may cause US disbursements to fluctuate over several years, but funding provided annually by US Congress for HIV projects (pictured here as STD control) and for family planning and reproductive health projects have remained stable for several years.

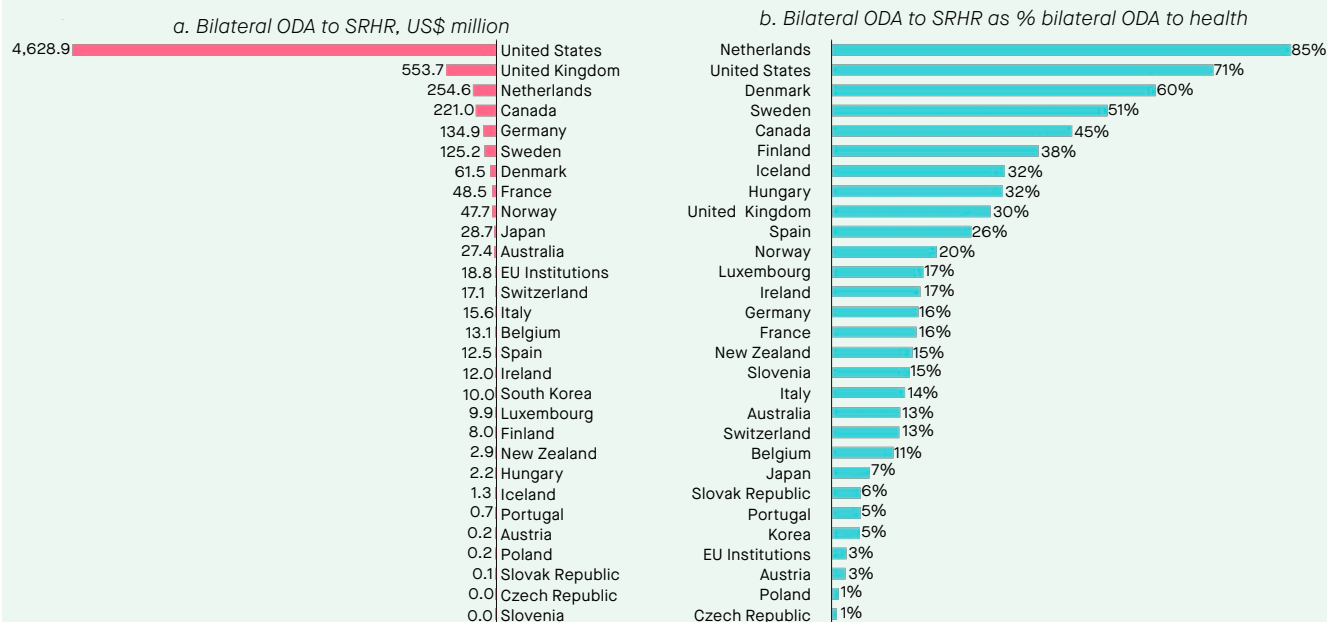
Bilateral ODA from donor countries accounted for 79% of total SRHR funding over the 2009-2019 period. This

Figure 1: Total ODA to SRHR
All donors*, 2009-2019



Source: OECD CRS. Gross disbursements; 2019 prices. *Including bilateral ODA from OECD donor countries and ODA from multilateral donors. Note: 'Other bilateral donors' includes disbursements from remaining 26 DAC donor countries as well as non-DAC donors that report to the OECD. Disbursements the EU Institutions are included in 'Other multilateral donors'.

Figure 2: DAC donors' bilateral ODA to SRHR and as % bilateral ODA to health
DAC donors, 2019



Source: OECD CRS. Gross disbursements; 2019 prices. Note: Greece did not report any funding to SRHR (sector code 130) in 2019.

includes both DAC and non-DAC donors, although the latter, which are not obliged to report ODA to the OECD, represented only 0.01% of funding. Multilateral donors (including the EU Institutions) contributed the remaining 21% (see box: 'Top multilateral donors to SRHR' for information on the top multilateral donors to SRHR).

The US, the UK, and the Netherlands are the largest donor countries to SRHR; the Netherlands most strongly prioritizes SRHR in its health ODA

The US is by far the most important bilateral funder for SRHR, making up 59% of total SRHR funding (US\$4.6 billion) in 2019 (see Figure 2a). Meanwhile, the UK allocated US\$554 million to SRHR in 2019 and the Netherlands provided US\$255 million.

The Netherlands, the US, and Denmark spent the largest shares of their total health ODA on SRHR in 2019 (see Figure 2b). In relative terms, the Netherlands topped the charts in terms of the emphasis it places on SRHR services, directing 85% of its health ODA toward SRHR projects. The US placed second (71%), followed by Denmark (60%), Sweden (51%), and Canada (45%). These countries

spent much more of their health ODA on SRHR than other DAC donor countries; in 2019, DAC donors on average spent 23% of their ODA for health on SRHR-related projects.

For further analyses of funding for SRHR, recommended readings include:

- '[Funding for sexual and reproductive health and rights in low- and middle-income countries: threats, outlook and opportunities](#)', commissioned by The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health, which analyzes SRHR funding by both donors and low- and middle-income country governments toward SRHR between 2009 and 2017³
- '[Adding It Up: Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health 2019](#)', a 2019 Report from the Guttmacher Institute, comprehensively studying the need for SRHR services in low- and middle-income countries and the impact and cost of fully funding these services

³The funding figures quoted in this report may differ slightly from that of PNCH due to changes in the US\$ conversion rate. In this report, spending is quoted in US\$ according to 2019 prices.

Top multilateral donors to SRHR

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund): The Global Fund's investments support access to health services for girls and women in remote communities, integrating SRHR and HIV/AIDS services with a focus on comprehensive sexual health education and the development of measures to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. The Global Fund was the top multilateral contributor to SRHR between 2009 and 2019, accounting for 14% of total SRHR ODA. The Global Fund's spending in the sector peaked in 2013, when the Global Fund disbursed US\$1.9 billion for SRHR, then stagnated around US\$1.5 billion until 2018 when funds dropped to US\$1.1 billion. The US, France, and the UK are among the [top government donors](#) to the Global Fund.

United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA): UNFPA was the second-largest multilateral donor to SRHR between 2009 and 2019 with 2% of total SRHR ODA. UNFPA primarily focuses on population policy, administrative management, and reproductive health. Funding to UNFPA has fallen significantly over the decade, in part due to the Trump administration's elimination of all appropriations to the Fund. In 2009, UNFPA allocated a total of US\$343 million to SRHR. By 2019, the amount was down to US\$113 million (core funding only; donors' earmarked funding to UNFPA is considered ODA). The UK, Sweden, and Canada contributed the [largest sums](#) to UNFPA in 2019, including core and non-core funding.

International Development Association (IDA): The World Bank's IDA ranks third among multilaterals in terms of total disbursements of ODA for SRHR between 2009 and 2019, with 2% of total SRHR ODA. IDA's funding to SRHR has held relatively steady over the last 10 years, other than a period of lower funding levels between 2012 and 2015. IDA allocated US\$227 million in funding to SRHR in 2009 and US\$220 million in 2019, most of which has been channeled toward STD control and reproductive health. The UK, the US, and Japan were the [top donors](#) to IDA in 2019.

The following section analyzes SRHR funding trends and policies of some of the most important donor countries in absolute and relative terms, namely: the US, the UK, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Canada.

Deep Dives: Top Donor Countries and Countries Championing SRHR

United States: the US is the top SRHR ODA provider; the volatility of American politics impacts the whole SRHR sector

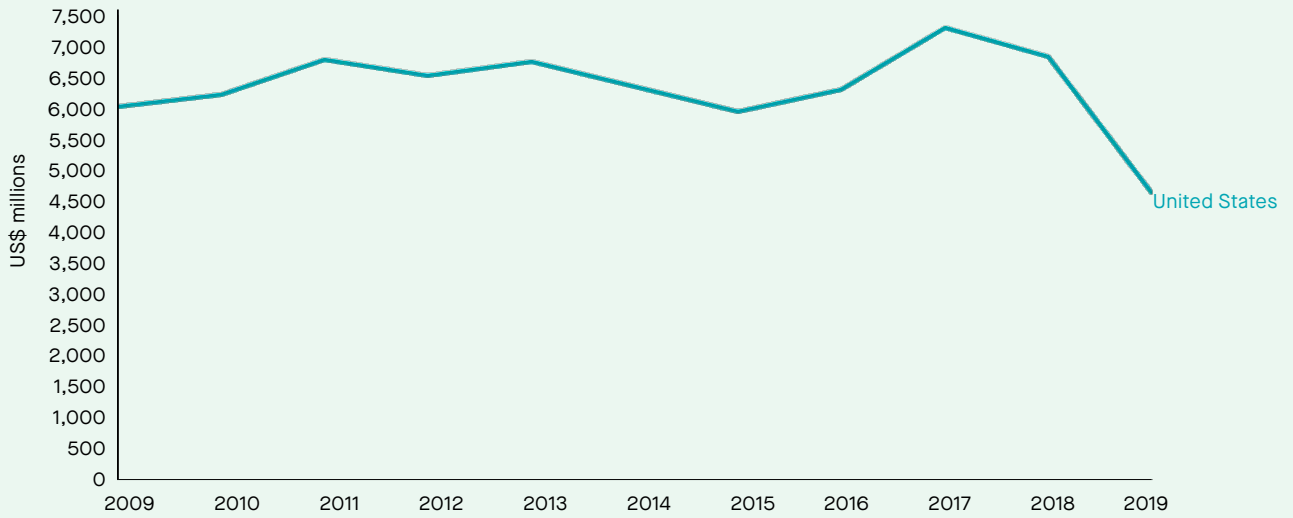
US ODA for SRHR has dwarfed funding by all other donors for at least the last 10 years. In fact, US ODA to SRHR, particularly in STD control, is on such a different scale than any other bilateral donor that a chart depicting them together is unreadable. For this reason, US funding flows to the total sector and to the STD purpose code are depicted separately from other donors (see Figure 3 and 6).

The scale of the US' contribution to SRHR is less representative of a strong political affinity for the topic and more of the overall size of the US' large global health budget. Because of the US' importance for SRHR funding, US electoral politics have had an outsize impact on the landscape of the SRHR sector more broadly.⁴ Sex, gender, sexuality, and especially abortion are highly polarizing topics in the US. The association of these issues with SRHR funding, in particular family planning, has made ODA to SRHR a wedge issue in American electoral politics; Republican administrations repeatedly introduce policies restricting funding for family planning programs and Democratic administrations repeatedly roll back limitations to restore them. Despite political division over some types of SRHR funding, it is worth noting that US congressional support for ODA to SRHR has historically been bipartisan.

Under the Obama administration (2009-2017), the US' ODA for SRHR increased from US\$6.0 billion in 2009 to its peak of US\$7.3 billion in 2017, an increase of 22%. Once in office, President Trump tried to cut US spending on SRHR initiatives across the board. Repeated attempts to slash funding to the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR, the US' flagship program to combat HIV/AIDS) by US\$800 million or 20% were dismissed by Congress, as were attempts to cut support for maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH) by US\$80 million.

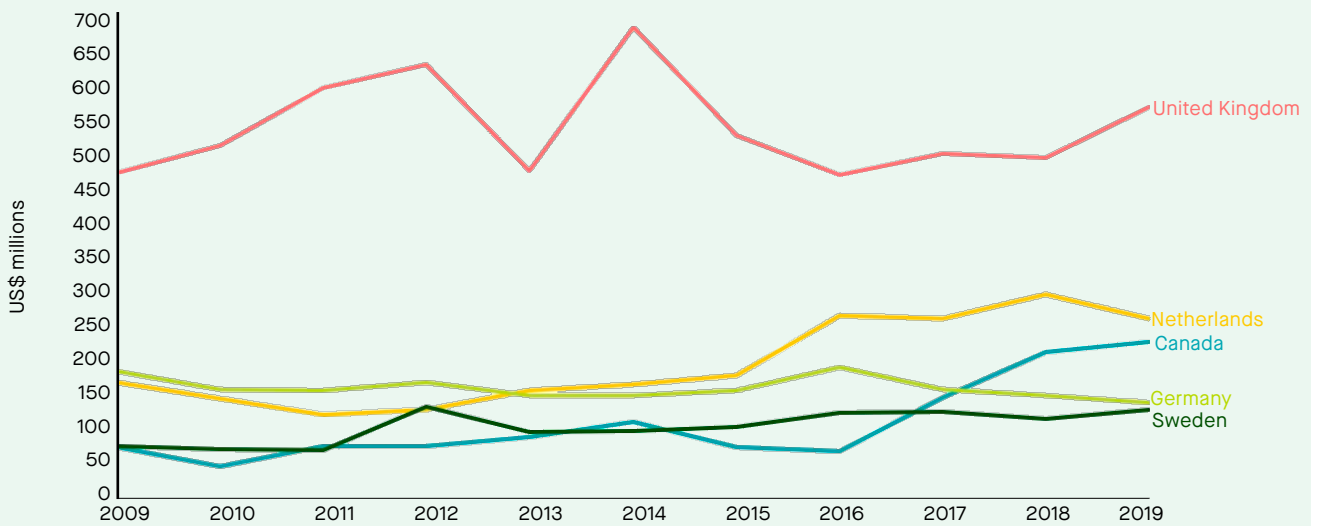
⁴Figure 3 appears to show dramatic peaks and valleys in US spending for SRHR; this is due to several combined factors, primarily irregular timing in disbursements, such that spending in some years appears to look twice as low or twice as high as appropriations actually were. In some cases, allocations to the SRHR subsectors did take significant cuts: for example, STD control in 2015. Because STD control is by far the largest area of US SRHR spending, these cuts pulled the whole curve down, despite the fact that spending in the other two subsectors remained steady or increased. A granular analysis of funding trends to the individual purpose codes is given later in the piece.

**Figure 3: Bilateral ODA from the US to SRHR
2009-2019**



Source: OECD CRS. Gross disbursements; 2019 prices.

**Figure 4: Bilateral ODA from top DAC donors (excluding the US) to SRHR
2009-2019**



Of all SRHR subsectors, though, family planning came under the harshest, most enduring attack as the Trump administration attempted to cut US ODA to the subsector through a variety of means, only some of which were successful (see ‘Family Planning’). The reinstatement of the US’ “global gag rule”, disqualifying any organization which provides or refers out for abortion services from receiving US global health funding, caused a ripple effect across the sector, as other donor countries scrambled to fill the sudden need for funding to support the full spectrum of family planning services (see box: ‘Understanding the US’ Global Gag Rule’). Trump also eliminated all support for UNFPA, prompting other donor countries, particularly Norway and Sweden, to increase their spending.

Newly elected US President Biden has already rescinded the global gag rule. Biden also ordered the US’ withdrawal from the Geneva Consensus Declaration, an anti-abortion declaration signed by 34 conservative countries. So far, Biden’s first budget proposal has been significantly delayed but once published, it will provide more information about funding levels to global health projects writ large, as well as SRHR and family planning specifics, and give a better picture of Biden’s vision for the US as a provider of SRHR ODA.

United Kingdom: As the second-largest bilateral donor to SRHR, the UK has stepped up funding and political commitments to SRHR

The UK’s allocations to SRHR have seen significant highs and lows over the last decade but have ultimately trended upwards from US\$461 million in 2009 to US\$554 million in 2019, an increase of 20% (see Figure 4).

As the second-largest bilateral donor to SRHR projects, the UK has played a major role in the international effort to maintain full-spectrum funding for SRHR as the US under the Trump administration withdrew funding from crucial pillars of the sector.

The UK’s 2018-2030 Strategic Vision for Gender Equality names “promoting universal sexual and reproductive health and rights” as one of five strategic priorities. The UK has prioritized SRHR in its COVID-19 response, by committing £10 million (US\$13 million) to UNFPA’s COVID-19 response. In the spring of 2020, the UK signed a joint diplomatic statement with 59 other countries (including the Netherlands, Sweden, and Canada), vowing to protect SRHR and “promote gender responsiveness in the COVID-19 crisis”.

It is unclear whether the UK will maintain such high levels

Understanding the US’ Global Gag Rule

The Mexico City Policy, also known as the ‘global gag rule’, is a US policy prohibiting international organizations from receiving US funding if they provide abortion services, referrals to the same, or advocacy for abortion law reform, even if they use other, non-US funds for those programs.

The rule was first enacted in 1984 under Republican President Ronald Reagan and since then it has been rescinded and reinstated by every administration in turn along partisan lines. It has been active for 21 of the past 36 years, significantly shaping US foreign assistance for global health. Under the ultra-conservative Trump administration, the policy became even more restrictive than under previous Republican leaders, extending beyond family planning groups to apply to child and maternal health, malaria, nutrition, and PEPFAR programs, among others, ultimately affecting an estimated US\$7.3 billion in global health funding in Fiscal Year 2020 alone. By comparison, the policy under George W. Bush, the last US president to employ it, had applied to about US\$600 million in total family planning funding.

A study from International Women’s Health Coalition two years into Trump’s expanded global gag concluded that the policy had had an especially devastating effect on the most vulnerable populations, disintegrating vital health services and limiting access to critical community providers.

Studies have shown that individuals seek out and get abortions, even in settings where they are restricted or banned. Unsafe abortion, which accounts for up to 13% of maternal deaths annually, is overwhelmingly concentrated in low-income countries. The cost of treating the 7 million women who are admitted each year to hospitals for major complications arising from unsafe abortion is approximately US\$553 million, annually: more than half of all donors’ total expenditure on family planning in 2019.

of ODA to SRHR in the years ahead. In September 2020, the UK Prime Minister merged the former Department for International Development (DFID) with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), forming a new Foreign,

Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Despite reassurances from the FCDO that gender equality, including SRHR, will remain central to its mandate, the department's failure to formally adopt the Strategic Vision for Gender Equality (introduced in 2018 by DFID) has raised concern among gender advocates.

This concern is compounded by the November 2020 announcement that the UK will only spend 0.5% of gross national income (GNI) on ODA starting in January 2021, rather than the formerly legally mandated target of 0.7% of GNI. This, combined with the fall in UK GNI as a result of the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis, will result in a substantial decrease in volumes of UK ODA. So far, the government has not released comprehensive information about exactly which projects will be impacted by these cuts, but given the scale of the expected decreases, it is safe to assume negative implications for SRHR funding levels as well.

The Netherlands: The Dutch government has championed the global movement for women's right to choose

The Netherlands has significantly increased funding for SRHR over the last decade with funding starting at US\$164 million in 2009, peaking in 2018 at US\$289 million, and decreasing slightly again in 2019 to US\$255 million: 55% more than the 2009 allocation (see Figure 4).

With 'Sexual and reproductive health and rights' as one of eight overarching development priorities, the Netherlands is a proven international leader on this topic, with a special focus on family planning and the rights of minorities and vulnerable populations, including sex workers and LGBTQ+ people.

The Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and International Development in 2017, Lilianne Ploumen, founded 'She Decides', an international organization established in response to Trump's signing of the expanded global gag rule, which galvanizes political support for women's social and political rights to make informed decisions around their sexuality and reproduction. In the first year following the implementation of the expanded global gag rule, 'She Decides' raised US\$453 million in additional funds (i.e. funds not already pledged or budgeted at the time of the initial pledging conference). Sigrid Kaag, Ploumen's successor, has continued working to keep SRHR in the spotlight of the Netherlands' ODA policy. With the Netherlands' federal elections scheduled for March 2021, it remains to be seen which changes, if any, are to be made to the country's strategy on SRHR, but

the outgoing government has made an effort to reassure the public that SRHR is still a top priority. Addressing the Dutch parliament in October of 2020, Kaag reiterated that, despite a contracting economy, the government was committed to maintaining budgetary levels in its framework protecting SRHR and women's rights abroad

Sweden: Consistently elevating SRHR on the international agenda and mainstreaming SRHR in its own global health programming, Sweden exemplifies SRHR leadership

Sweden's funding for SRHR has steadily increased over the last ten years with disbursements starting at US\$74 million in 2009, peaking in 2012 at US\$129 million, and settling at US\$125 million in 2019: a 74% increase over ten years (see Figure 4).

As the first country to adopt a feminist foreign policy in 2014, Sweden has long been viewed as a trailblazer in the field of gender equality generally, and particularly in the world of SRHR, which is one of six objectives of the policy framework. Funding to the sector has been increasing since the start of the decade.

Sweden lobbied aggressively for SRHR to be included in the 2019 UN Political Declaration on Universal Health Coverage and, the same year, released a new government 2019-2023 engagement strategy for the Global Fund, with a focus on promoting SRHR in health system strengthening projects.

Canada: With its Feminist International Assistance Policy, Canada has joined the ranks of SRHR champions

Canada has significantly increased funding for SRHR over the last ten years (see Figure 4). With a starting point of US\$71 million in 2009, Canada scaled up its allocations starting in 2017 with US\$141 million, eventually reaching US\$221 million in 2019: 211% growth over ten years.

Health is a cornerstone of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), in particular, SRHR and MNCH. Canada's development policy frames SRHR as fundamental to the empowerment of women and girls.

Canada was an active participant in global efforts to blunt the effects of the global gag rule, including through contributions to 'She Decides'. Canada hosted the 2019 Women Deliver conference in Vancouver, where Prime Minister Trudeau announced an annual commitment worth US\$1.1 billion to support women's and girls' health for ten years beginning in 2023, with US\$540 million dedicated to SRHR annually.

The following section analyzes SRHR funding trends to the three purpose codes within SRHR that received the most ODA over the last ten years. These are STD control (including HIV/AIDS), reproductive health care, and family planning. It also includes links to further readings that provide more in-depth analyses of these issues.

Deep dives: Highest ODA-funded subsectors of SRHR

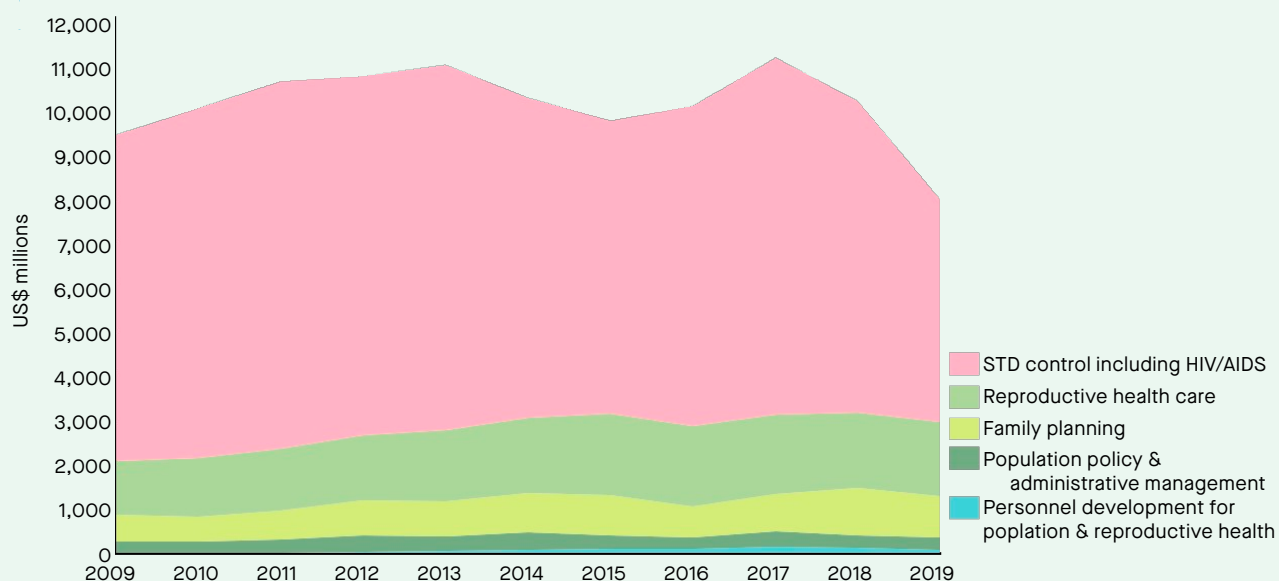
STD control: In the last ten years, almost three quarters of SRHR ODA went to STD control, including HIV/AIDS

The sheer scale of the global effort to eradicate HIV/AIDS and the fact that all HIV-related projects are considered by the OECD to fall under SRHR means that STD control projects comprise the majority of the sector (see Figure 5). In 2019, total ODA for STD control stood at US\$5.0 billion or 63% of total funding to SRHR that year.

STD control still attracts the largest share of ODA for SRHR, but funding to the subsector has fallen by 36% over ten years. STD control ODA reached a peak in 2011 with a total of US\$8.2 billion, of which US\$5.7 billion was provided by the US. In the years following, nearly every major donor country decreased spending on STD control resulting in a loss of US\$1.6 billion in over four years and culminating in a 2015 crash (see Figures 6 and 7). Stark reductions in funding, particularly from the US and UK, and a gradual withdrawal from the sector by Germany primarily powered the decrease.

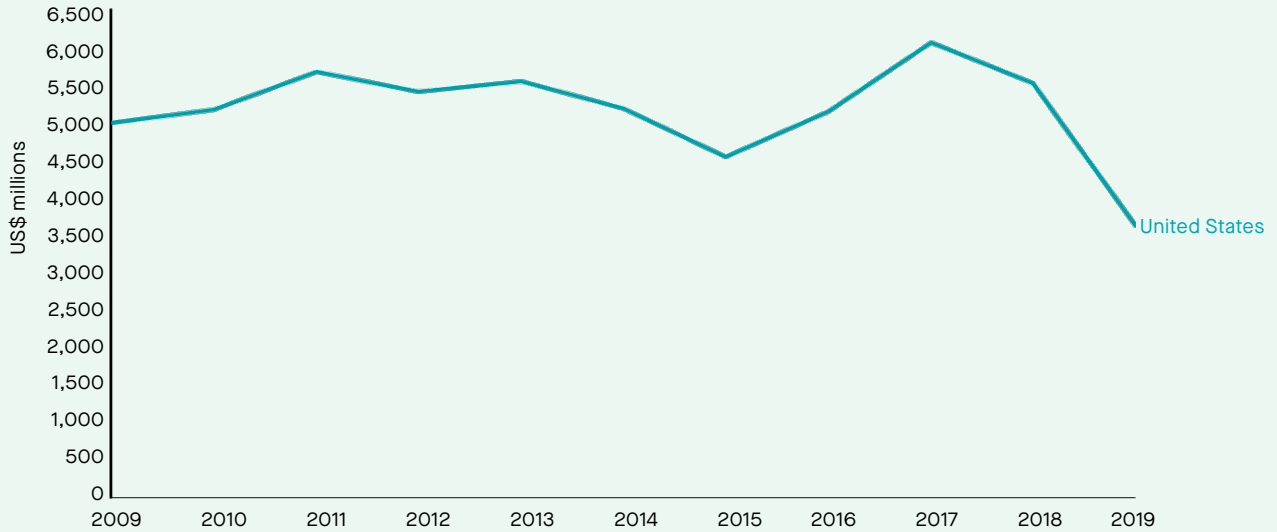
The decline of ODA to the STD control purpose code is also likely a reflection of the success of global efforts to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS and to reduce the number of associated deaths. Mortality rates have fallen by 49% since 2005; however, according to UNAIDS, an additional US\$26.2 billion is still needed to meet the global 'Fast-Track' targets by 2030.

Figure 5: Total SRHR ODA broken down by purpose code
All donors*, 2009-2019



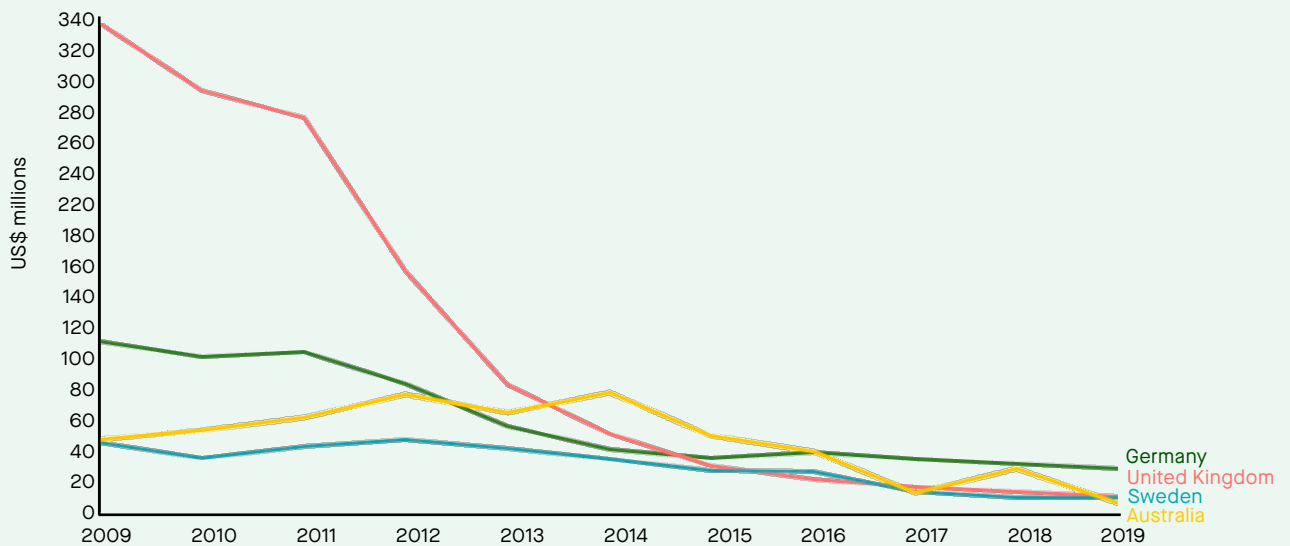
Source: OECD CRS. Gross disbursements; 2019 prices. *Including bilateral ODA from OECD donor countries and ODA from multilateral donors.

Figure 6: Bilateral ODA from the US to STD control including HIV/AIDS 2009-2019



Source: OECD CRS. Gross disbursements; 2019 prices.

Figure 7: Bilateral ODA from top DAC donors (excluding the US) to STD control including HIV/AIDS 2009-2019



Source: OECD CRS. Gross disbursements; 2019 prices.

For further analyses of funding for STD control including HIV/AIDS, recommended readings include:

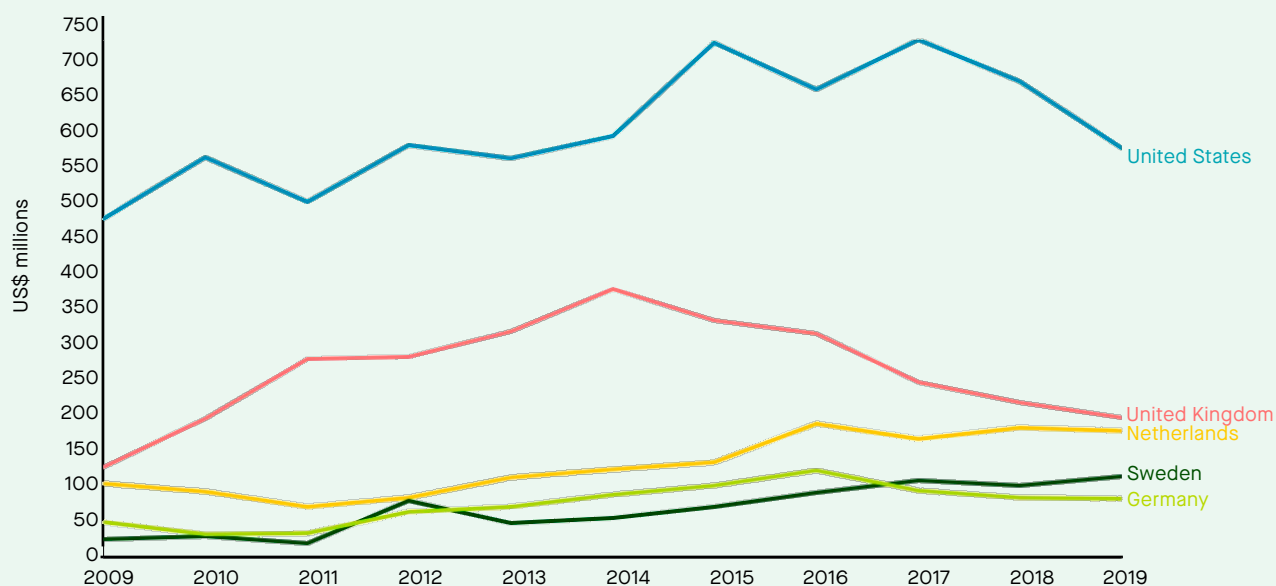
- The Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) report '[Donor Government Funding for HIV in Low- and Middle-Income Countries in 2019](#)': In collaboration with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), KFF tracks spending by donor governments to HIV, relying on data collected directly from donors, from the OECD CRS, and UNAIDS records
- UNAIDS' report, '[UNAIDS data 2019](#)', which provides important context with information on progress made against the HIV epidemic as well as remaining challenges

Reproductive health care: Funding for reproductive health care increased steadily until 2015, then stagnated

Reproductive health care is the second most-highly funded issue within SRHR, accounting for 16% of total ODA to SRHR between 2009 and 2019 (see Figure 5). In 2019, funding for reproductive health care totaled US\$1.7 billion, or 21% of SRHR funding (see Figure 8).

From 2009 to 2015, total funding to reproductive health care increased at a fairly steady rate, reaching a peak of US\$1.8 billion in 2015. The largest donor countries to this subsector are the US and the UK, with the US primarily responsible for the influx of funds to the reproductive health care purpose code in the first half of the decade.⁵ Between 2009 and 2017, the US nearly doubled its spending to a peak of US\$707 million, before delays in the disbursement of US funding resulted in a sharp drop to US\$560 million in 2019.⁶

Figure 8: Bilateral ODA from top DAC donors to reproductive health care 2009-2019



Source: OECD CRS. Gross disbursements; 2019 prices.

⁵Because the OECD purpose codes do not directly align with the budget lines in the US' development budget, OECD data on US ODA for reproductive health care is not reflective of the US government's understanding of their own SRHR funding priorities. For example, US funding for projects targeting MNCH, considered its own funding line in US budget documents, is grouped together under the umbrella of 'reproductive health' when it is reported to the OECD. Because MNCH funding is a US development priority, it represents a significant portion of US funding marked with this purpose code.

⁶US Congressional appropriations are provided on a yearly basis but may be disbursed over a multiyear period. The fluctuations in disbursements that the OECD data appears to show are attributable to a variety of factors including the timing of disbursements or the realignment of programs; they are not necessarily reflective of political commitments. Congressional appropriations to most US programs were relatively flat during the decade between 2009 and 2019. The reproductive health purpose code now captures MNCH funding, but until changes were made under the Obama administration, it was recorded under the basic health purpose code. The code for some (but not all) of the MNCH funding was later reallocated to the reproductive health code, resulting in further fluctuations in the US disbursements depicted in Figure 5.

The UK, the second-largest bilateral funder to the purpose code, tripled its spending on reproductive health over the first half of the decade between 2009 and 2015 to reach US\$368 million. The second half of the decade saw another decrease in UK spending, with funds dropping again by almost 50% down to US\$192 million in 2019. The Netherlands, the third-largest donor country to reproductive health, has gradually increased funding over the decade, from US\$102 million in 2009 to US\$174 million in 2019. This is consistent with an increase in Dutch spending in the SRHR sector at large over this period.

For further analyses of funding for reproductive health, recommended readings include:

- [‘Estimates of aid for reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health: findings from application of the Muskoka method, 2002–17’](#) a technical Lancet paper which illustrates the complexity of SRHR funding through an analysis of ODA to reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health across a large set of purpose codes

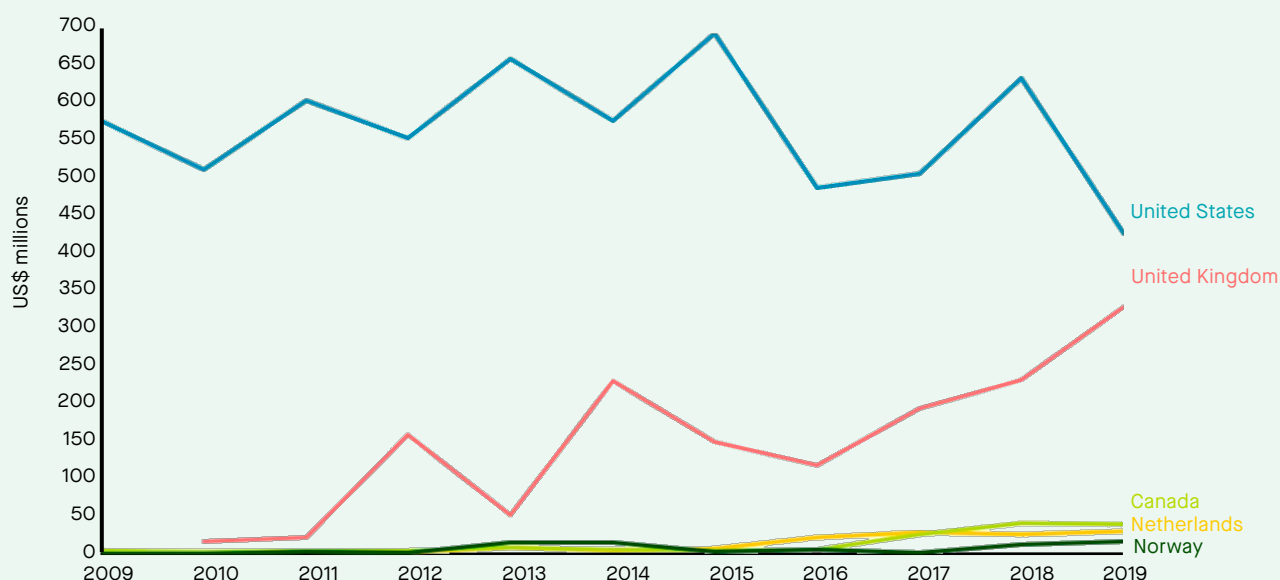
Family planning: with US’ global gag rule back in effect, other donor countries stepped up support for full-spectrum family planning

Family planning ranks third among the top-funded sub-sectors of SRHR and accounted for 8% of total SRHR ODA between 2009 and 2019 (see Figure 5). In 2019, family planning projects received US\$930 million in ODA (bilateral and multilateral), or 12% of total ODA to SRHR. Family planning allocations have increased gradually over the decade, with the US, UK, and Canada as top donor countries.

The US was by far the largest donor to family planning between 2009 and 2019, providing 73% of the total funding to the sector throughout the decade. Although Figure 9 appears to show a marked decrease in US ODA for family planning between 2018 and 2019, this is largely due to the timing of disbursements; in fact, US bilateral appropriations for family planning remained steady during the Trump administration, despite the president’s efforts to eliminate or drastically cut funds.

The reinstatement of the global gag rule in its expanded form reshaped the sector as other donors rallied togeth-

Figure 9: Bilateral ODA from top DAC donors to family planning 2009-2019



Source: OECD CRS. Gross disbursements; 2019 prices. Note: UK did not report any funding to this purpose code (13030) in 2009.

er. The overall growth in funding for family planning in the years following was therefore primarily driven by increased allocations from non-US donor countries (see Figure 9), namely the UK (which nearly tripled funding levels between 2016 and 2019 to US\$322 million), Canada (which increased funding to family planning nearly eight-fold between 2016 and 2019 to US\$39 million) and Norway (which tripled funding in the same timespan to US\$30 million).

The UK, the second-largest bilateral ODA provider to family planning in 2019, spent US\$322 million for the purpose code. Starting in 2012, the UK hosted its yearly [Family Planning Summit](#), committing to spending an average of £180 million (US\$242 million) annually until 2020. In 2017, the UK [reported](#) that it had so far supported eight and a half million women in accessing modern contraception, and committed to redoubling efforts to spend £225 million (US\$301 million) yearly for five years. In a thinly veiled reference to the US' withdrawal from the sector, the report specifically referred to providing “predictability” to “allow [partners] long term planning”. [Family Planning 2020](#), a global organization working with governments, civil society, multilaterals, philanthropists, and the private sector was also born out of the 2012 Summit and has since become a key player in the family planning sector.

At the 2019 UN General Assembly, the UK announced a £600 million (US\$767 million) package for family planning in low-income countries, a move viewed by many as an open rebuke of the Trump administration, whose delegation at the event had called for the term “sexual and reproductive health and rights” itself to be removed entirely from UN documents. The five-year funding envelope was the UK's largest ever standalone package for family planning and included financial support for abortion in countries where those services are legal.

Canada also significantly stepped up its commitments to the family planning purpose code in 2017 to address funding gaps caused by the US' expanded global gag rule, raising its rank among donor countries to the third-largest in the subsector. Canada made two major pledges that year: US\$15 million at the 'She Decides' conference, plus US\$501 million to be disbursed over three years to fill gaps in global SRHR funding.

The Netherlands, too, has taken on a significant leadership role in the family planning subsector. Even before the US implemented the global gag rule, the Netherlands had started to scale up its funding for family plan-

ning, tripling spending between 2015 and 2016 to a total of US\$21 million, ultimately reaching US\$30 million in 2019. With the US abdicating its role as a global leader in the family planning space, the Netherlands decided to take a bold policy and financing stance on the issue, launching the 'She Decides' campaign and embedding SRHR frameworks at the highest levels of its development policies.

For further analyses of funding for reproductive health, recommended readings include:

- KFF's '[Donor Government Funding for Family Planning in 2019](#)'. Since the London Summit on Family Planning in 2012, KFF has been producing annual reports tracking donors' spending toward family planning. The KFF estimates differ from those presented here due to their more complex methodology, which relies on data collected directly from donors and is only supplemented with data from the OECD.
- Data on recipient-country level expenditures from [Family Planning 2020](#), which tracks progress toward its set of indicators on family planning service provision.

Recommendations for donors

1. **The downward trend in ODA to SRHR funding urgently needs to be reversed.** Ensuring universal access to SRHR is a core target of SDG5, and the realization of women's freedom to control their bodies is a prerequisite for the achievement of the other SDGs more broadly. The downward trend in OECD donors' ODA to SRHR since 2017 is highly concerning as it could jeopardize hard-won progress in the sector. DAC donor governments should ensure SRHR funding budgets are scaled up or, at the very least, protected from further funding cuts. Donor countries like the UK, the Netherlands, Canada, and Sweden, who have increased funding levels in recent years to fill the gap left by the US' withdrawal from the sector, should maintain these higher levels, even though US funding is likely to increase again in the next four years. More broad-based funding for SRHR will leave the sector less vulnerable to the tides of US political change.

2. Donors should ensure COVID-19 response and recovery programs include SRHR as a focus area.

Organizations that provide on-the-ground SRHR resources will need a surge of funding in the coming years to reconnect patient networks with services to which they've lost access over the last year. Following a devastating loss of access to family planning services, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, more women than ever will be in need of services connecting them with modern contraceptive methods in the coming years. The COVID-19 crisis has spurred international efforts to strengthen health systems around the globe. Donors should ensure that the health efforts they fund involve support to SRHR infrastructure.

3. Advocates can capitalize on key events in 2021 and current political momentum to make the renewed case for SRHR funding.

The Generation Equality Forum, taking place in Mexico at the end of March of 2021 and culminating in France in June of 2021, will be a key moment for advocates to push for increased support to the SRHR sector at large. Other important moments for SRHR advocacy over the next months include the G20 Global Health Summit in May 2021 (jointly hosted by Italy and the European Commission), the G7 Summit, hosted by the UK in June 2021, and the G20 Heads of State and Government Summit in October 2021. With the whole world bearing witness this year to the importance of multilateral cooperation in addressing momentous challenges in global health, advocates have an opportunity to use these events to elevate SRHR further on the international agenda.