



Gender Equality Perspectives Series

DEVELOPMENT FINANCE TOWARDS THE ELIMINATION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

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Internationally, gender-based violence (GBV) is an ongoing crisis, a shadow pandemic. Strong collective and individual action is urgently needed, and targeted financing towards the elimination of GBV is a necessity. This paper examines levels and areas of focus of official development assistance (ODA) towards the elimination of violence against women and girls in 2019.

Foreword

This paper is part of the ongoing *Development Co-operation Gender Equality Perspectives Series* and follows other sector analysis of official development assistance (ODA). It analyses ODA levels for 2019 as reported against the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Creditor Reporting System (CRS) purpose code 15180: ending violence against women and girls. This purpose code was created in 2016 and has only been applied since then on reported flows. The paper therefore focuses on the 2019 development finance data rather than 2-year averages found in the methodology of other sector analysis utilising the DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker.

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Key messages

- Gender-based violence (GBV) is a persistent global crisis. It has detrimental effects on individuals and family-life, and can destabilise social and economic systems.
- The COVID-19 crisis has coincided with an increase in rates of GBV, to the extent that many observers deem it a “shadow pandemic”.
- Bilateral official development assistance (ODA) by DAC members towards ending violence against women and girls (VAWG) in 2019 amounted to USD 439 million. This is less than 1% of bilateral ODA reported in 2019.
- In 2019, the European Union provided the largest amount towards ending VAWG, with USD 76 million.
- African regions accounted for two of the top three regions receiving bilateral ODA from DAC members towards ending VAWG in 2019, with Myanmar the largest recipient, at USD 13 million.
- Looking at specific contexts, such as Niger, reveals the interconnectedness of fragility, gender inequalities and GBV.

The complexity of gender-based violence

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) remains a global pandemic. Addressing it requires a multifaceted response, including redressing large-scale gender inequalities and power imbalances, and other fragilities.

Globally, more than one-third of all women have experienced gender-based violence (GBV)¹ in their lifetime, an average that increases significantly when looking at certain regions (WHO, 2021^[1]). However, this average is likely to be much higher, as stigmas, lack of institutional trust, and fears of unsafety lead to high levels of under-reporting; in OECD and non-OECD countries alike. The global COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated these issues, leading to an increase of all types of violence against women and girls, also called “the shadow pandemic” (UN Women, 2020^[2]). Adding to this perpetuation and complexity is the triple-nexus of conflict, COVID-19, and climate change, which accelerate worldwide inequalities.

The GBV crisis persists across societies. It is not only used as a means of subjugation and control, but also often prevents those who experience it from exercising their political, social, and economic rights, leading to further under-representation and marginalisation. In other words, GBV both stems from gender inequality and reinforces it (Camey et al., 2020^[3]). GBV destabilises social systems and political and economic structures by exacerbating vulnerability. Furthermore, it is often coupled with impunity and creates devastating impacts on the prosperity and safety of individuals, families, and communities.

Gender-based violence both stems from gender inequality and reinforces it

In recent years, there have been efforts to move the dial on gender inequality and to eliminate violence against women and girls, however, abuse in many forms continues. This includes cases of GBV, often in emergencies or conflict; or cases of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment, as seen in development and humanitarian assistance.

International collaboration and high-level diplomatic commitments have been made in recent years to combat GBV, such as the 2019 adoption of the OECD DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance (SEAH). The Recommendation recognises that “sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment are deeply rooted in structural inequality, especially gender inequality, that give rise to gender-based violence, among other forms of violence, and discrimination.” The Recommendation also provides a pathway for DAC members and other stakeholders in the international community to develop stronger institutional frameworks, increase international co-ordination, and establish survivor and victim-centred responses to ending SEAH.

Additionally, the Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies (CtA, 2020^[4]) and the 2021 Generation Equality Forum (GEF)² showcase the mobilisation of collective action to end VAWG on a global scale, and represent strong commitments. To date, partners have pledged USD 40 billion to advancing gender equality as a whole through the GEF (UN Women, 2021^[5]). The GEF Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence seeks to further the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on the achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls, and specifically targets 5.2: eliminating all forms of VAWG and 5.3: eliminating harmful practices (such as child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting – FGM/C), and bring about concrete commitments to take co-ordinated action to address, and eliminate, gender-based violence.

In the context of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and 26 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, it is clear that more work needs to be done to align commitments with action. Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members³ play an important role in providing leadership and maintaining momentum around this agenda. This also includes through development finance, which continues to be the central pillar of efforts to support progress towards gender equality, and ending VAWG more specifically.

ODA flows to combat violence against women and girls

DAC gender equality policy marker

The DAC gender equality policy marker is a qualitative statistical tool and tracker which enables the examination of development finance⁴ and the identification of gender equality and women's empowerment as either:

- Score “principal” (2): Gender equality and women's empowerment is a dedicated objective and the reason for funding the programme/project.
- Score “significant” (1): Gender equality is integrated/mainstreamed in the programme/project as one of several objectives.
- Score “not targeted” (0): Gender equality is not an objective.

The OECD DAC *Handbook on the DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker* sets out additional guidance: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Handbook-OECD-DAC-Gender-Equality-Policy-Marker.pdf>

ODA reported to the sector purpose code 15180 specifically captures support for ending violence against women and girls. This statistical code gathers data on:

“Support to programmes designed to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls/gender-based violence. This encompasses a broad range of forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence including but not limited to: intimate partner violence (domestic violence); sexual violence; female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C); child, early and forced marriage; acid throwing; honour killings; and trafficking of women and girls. Prevention activities may include efforts to empower women and girls; change attitudes, norms and behaviour; adopt and enact legal reforms; and strengthen implementation of laws and policies on ending violence against women and girls, including through strengthening institutional capacity. Interventions to respond to violence against women and girls/gender-based violence may include expanding access to services including legal assistance, psychosocial counselling and health care; training personnel to respond more effectively to the needs of survivors; and ensuring investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators of violence.”

ODA reported under this code is automatically identified to have a score of “principle” (2) against the marker.

Overall, in 2018-19 on average per year, DAC members committed USD 53 billion in bilateral ODA for gender equality. This represents 45% of all bilateral ODA committed on average in 2018-19 (OECD, 2021^[6]). Yet while the overall amount of bilateral ODA integrating gender equality objectives has risen in line with total bilateral ODA over the years, the overall share of this ODA has remained stagnant. This is especially true of bilateral ODA dedicated to gender equality as a principle objective which has not risen above 5% of bilateral ODA.

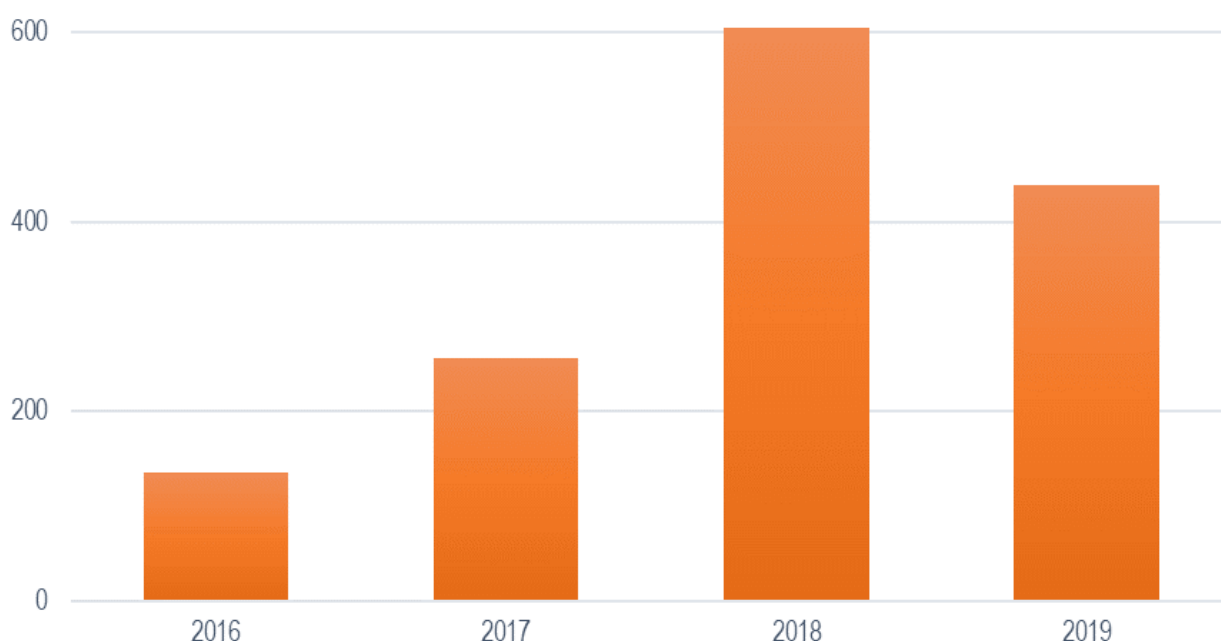
Bilateral ODA by DAC members towards ending VAWG in 2019 amounted to USD 439 million (see Figure 1); less than 1% of bilateral ODA reported in 2019. In particular, ODA in fragile and conflict-affected contexts accounted for 40% (or USD 177 million) of the total bilateral ODA to ending VAWG. Since DAC members began reporting on ODA towards ending VAWG in 2016, aid to ending VAWG has increased. However, this can partially be attributed to the limited amount of reporting against this code in 2016 (only 19 out of 30 DAC members reported).

Bilateral ODA by DAC members towards ending VAWG in 2019 amounted to USD 439 million

In 2018, bilateral ODA to ending VAWG was USD 605 million. The difference in bilateral ODA between 2018 and 2019 is largely attributed to the creation of the new Multi Partner Trust Fund – the Spotlight Initiative – managed by the UN, to eliminate violence against women and girls (VAWG) and harmful practices worldwide. This programme, funded by the European Union (EU), reported USD 200 million in commitments for 2018.

Figure 1. Total bilateral official development assistance towards ending violence against women and girls

USD millions, 2019 constant prices, commitments



Note: These figures are based on what is reported by DAC members against the sector purpose code 15180: ending violence against women and girls. This specific code was created in 2016, with members only able to report against it since then. While figures represent all financing that it is reported, it is not solely representative of DAC members' possible programming towards addressing gender-based violence. In 2016, 19 DAC members reported against this code. In 2017 and 2018, 24 members reported; and in 2019, 26 members reported against this code.

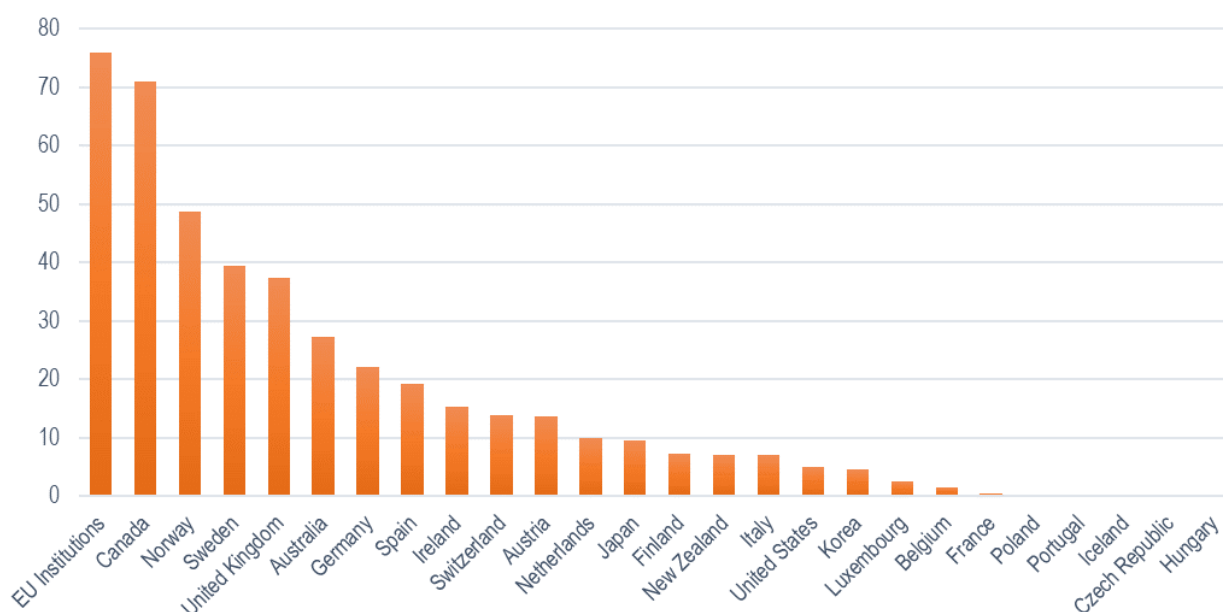
Source: Authors based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. Full dataset available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>.

DAC members' financing towards the elimination of violence against women and girls

Among DAC members, the European Union provided the largest amount towards ending VAWG worldwide with USD 76 million in 2019 (see Figure 2). This is followed closely by Canada (USD 71 million), Norway (USD 49 million), Sweden (USD 39 million), and the United Kingdom (USD 38 million). Notably, outside of EU institutions, the top three donors have all established feminist foreign policies. These countries also rank highly among the top donors in terms of the share of bilateral allocable ODA integrating gender equality objectives.

Figure 2. DAC members' ODA to ending violence against women and girls, 2019

USD millions, 2019 constant prices, commitments



Source: Authors based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. Full dataset available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>.

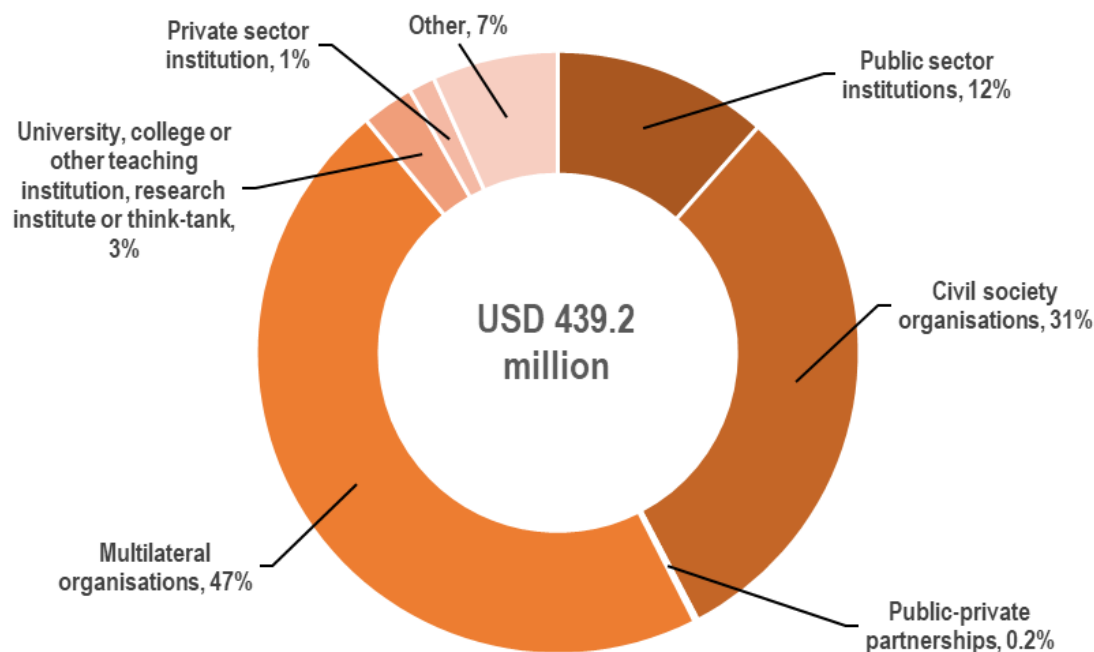
Programme examples include a Norwegian programme aiming to transform social, cultural and gender norms for reduction of violence against children, including child marriage and teenage pregnancy, also with a focus on returning married girls and teenage mothers to school. This project was implemented in various contexts, such as Malawi or Cambodia, and was done through partnerships with civil society organisations (CSOs) based in each context. An additional example is a Spanish programme in Bolivia that seeks to improve the comprehensive response to GBV with the empowerment and economic autonomy of women, and the strengthening of public institutions. The largest single programme towards ending GBV remains the EU Spotlight Initiative.

Channels of official development assistance delivery to the elimination of violence against women and girls

Much of the bilateral ODA for ending VAWG flows through multilateral organisations (see Figure 3), and in 2019 this amounted to USD 204 million. This channel continues to be the most used by DAC members when financing programmes towards ending violence against women and girls and gender-based violence.

The levels of financing through the use of civil society actors towards the elimination of VAWG is the second most utilised modality to channel ODA towards ending VAWG, at 135 million in 2019. Financing through the public sector also remains a common modality.

Figure 3. Channels for bilateral ODA to ending violence against women and girls, 2019



Source: Authors based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. Full dataset available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>.

One such example of the use of multilateral organisations to deliver on ODA commitments include a 2019 Canadian project in Myanmar which aims to promote community cohesion, with a specific emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment. The project, undertaken in collaboration with UNDP and UN Women, is designed to promote participatory and inclusive local planning processes and strengthen capacity of government and non-government stakeholders on human rights, gender equality and access to justice; building skills in communities for peaceful resolution of conflict. Project activities include: building capacity of communities for social cohesion through training of trainers, access to financial and technical support for community initiatives, trust-building and peace building activities; support to government-community co-ordination mechanisms to address access to justice issues and generate solutions; support and training for women's civil society groups on advocacy, leadership and life skills; and the facilitation of dialogue between government authorities and women's groups to identify priorities for gender-responsive policies and public services.

Other types of financing through multilateral organisations include core contributions and pooled programmes and funds such as contributions to UN Women's Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women and Girls. Contributions to such funds and programmes amounted to USD 114 million.

Other development finance towards ending violence against women and girls

While multilateral organisations play a significant role in the delivery of ODA, they also have a significant role to play in financing. However, figures for multilateral organisations are based on what is reported to the Creditor Reporting System and may not represent the full amount of funding flowing from multilateral organisations to programmes that address violence against women and girls. In 2019, seven multilateral organisations— such as United Nations agencies and the World Bank – reported their aid towards ending VAWG, amounting to USD 76 million towards ending VAWG.

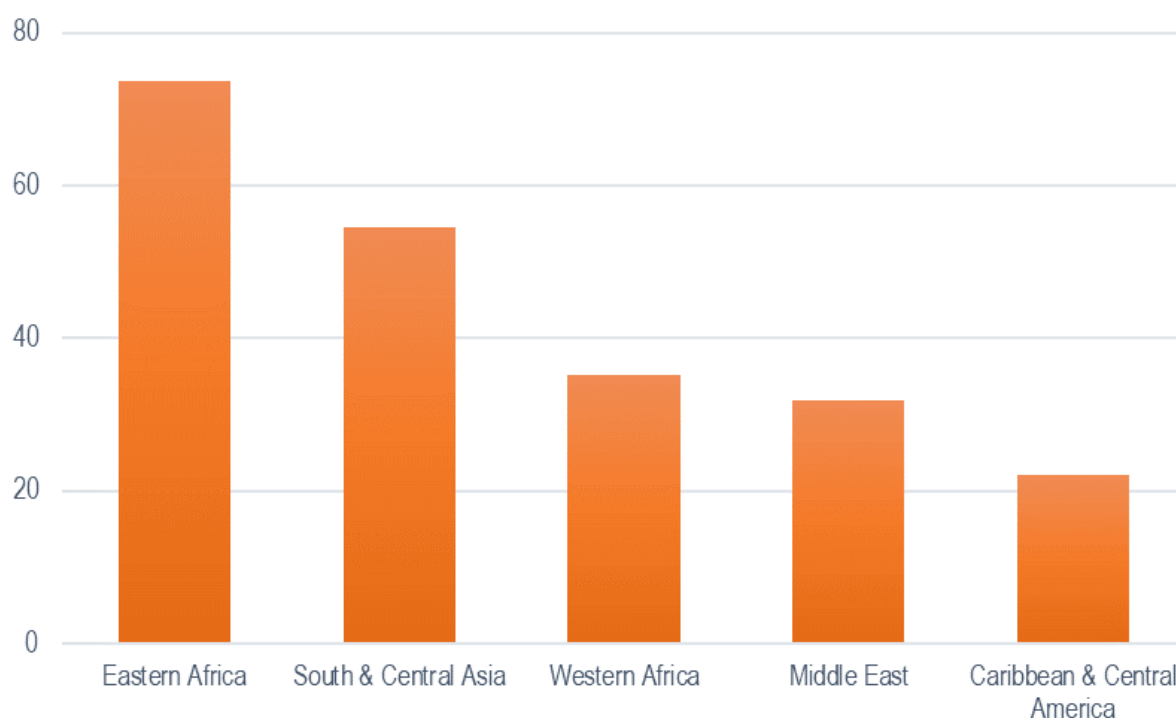
Additionally, 13 private foundations reported private development finance commitments against this code in 2019, amounting to USD 47 million.

Regional and country analysis of development finance towards ending violence against women and girls

In 2019, African regions accounted for two of the top three regions receiving bilateral ODA from DAC members towards ending violence against women, amounting to USD 109 million. The second largest region, South and Central Asia amounts to USD 54 million (see Figure 4). Programme examples from these regions include: a United Kingdom programme to improve sexual and reproductive health and livelihoods of adolescent girls through building their social, economic and health assets. This will include support, protection and treatment for 12,000 adolescent girl victims of sexual and gender based violence. The programme will also deliver social and life skills through safe spaces for 30,000 vulnerable adolescent girls and boys; a Swedish programme in Zambia – undertaken with the government of Zambia in partnership with the United Nations Joint Programme on GBV – aiming to improve capacity to deliver co-ordinated GBV services, access to safe shelters, capacity to deliver quality legal services, economic empowerment of GBV survivors and improving multi-sectoral co-ordination and governance related to GBV in Zambia; as well as a German programme in Myanmar that expands access to quality and rights-based GBV and Mental Health/ Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services for women and girls in Rakhine state.

Figure 4. Top 5 regional totals, 2019

USD millions, 2019 constant prices, commitments

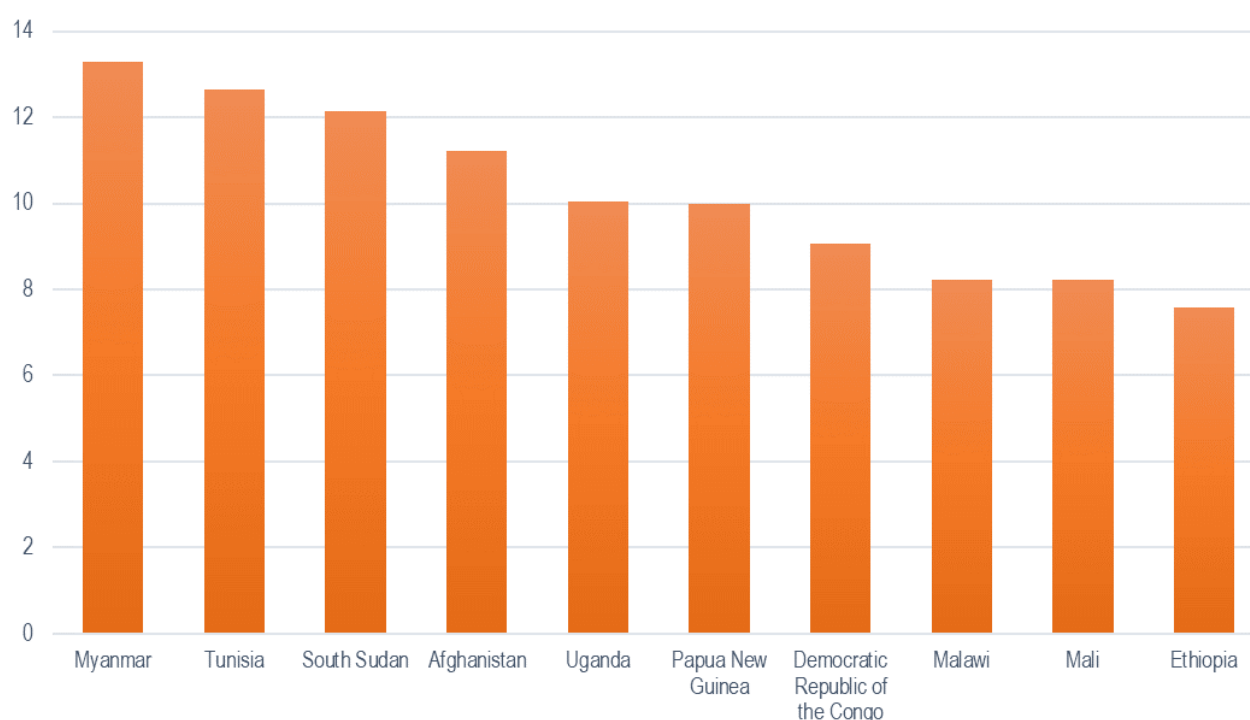


Source: Authors based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. Full dataset available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>.

While Eastern Africa ranks as the largest region receiving bilateral ODA from DAC members to ending VAWG, the 10 largest recipients of this ODA range across geographic areas. Notably, bilateral ODA to Myanmar (USD 13 million) and Afghanistan (USD 11 million) to ending VAWG account for 45% of the regional total; with both contexts ranking within the top five receivers of bilateral ODA to this sector (see Figure 5). Tunisia (USD 12.7 million), South Sudan (USD 12.1 million), and Uganda (USD 10 million) also rank among the top five largest recipients.

Figure 5. ODA to ending violence against women and girls by country, 2019

USD millions, 2019 constant prices, commitments



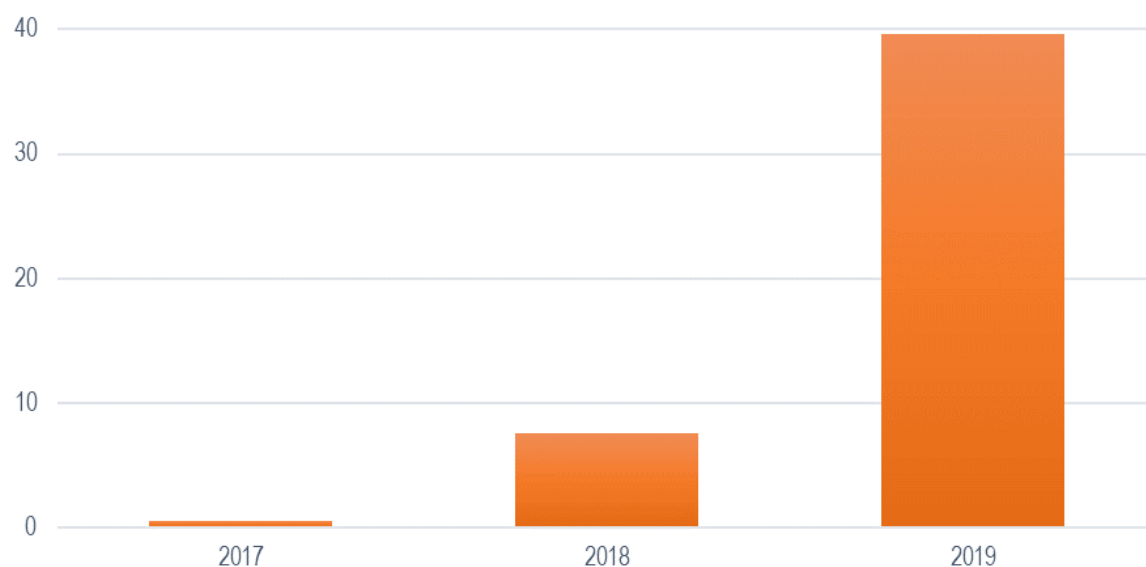
Source: Authors based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. Full dataset available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>.

Country profile: Niger

In 2019, Niger – classified as fragile by the OECD Fragility Framework – was the largest recipient of ODA by DAC members and multilateral organisations⁵ towards ending VAWG at USD 39 million, equating 6% of aid allocated to Niger (see Figure 6). Notably, Niger received 18% of ODA allocated towards fragile contexts for the VAWG sector; more than any other fragile context and more than the next 2 fragile contexts combined. Comparably, out of all 57 contexts considered fragile by the OECD framework, Niger accounts for only 2% of the total ODA flowing to those contexts.

Figure 6. ODA by DAC members and multilateral organisations to Niger towards ending violence against women and girls, 2019

USD millions, 2019 constant prices, commitments



Source: Authors based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. Full dataset available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>.

The complex interlinkages of fragility and gender inequalities perpetuate gender-based violence on both a global scale and in Niger. A complex and interwoven network of determinants converge to make Niger one of the lowest scoring countries for gender equality (154 out of 162 on the Gender Inequality Index in 2019) and ranks last in the UNDP Human Development Index (UNDP, 2019^[77]).

The overarching legislative setting within a country plays an instrumental role in the persistent permissibility and perpetuation of GBV. Niger has yet to ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). There is no law addressing violence against women, no law that protects women from domestic violence and does not explicitly address marital rape. Laws that criminalise female genital mutilation do not cover criminal penalties for some practitioners such as medical practitioners or parents and, under Niger's Civil Law System, men are the heads of a household unless under exceptional circumstances. Data from 2019 shows that 60% of women in Niger agree that a husband or partner is justified in beating his wife or partner under certain circumstances (SIGI, 2019^[81]). It is also the country with the highest rate of child marriages, with three in four girls married before the age of 18 and one in four married before the age of 15 (UNICEF, 2018^[91]).

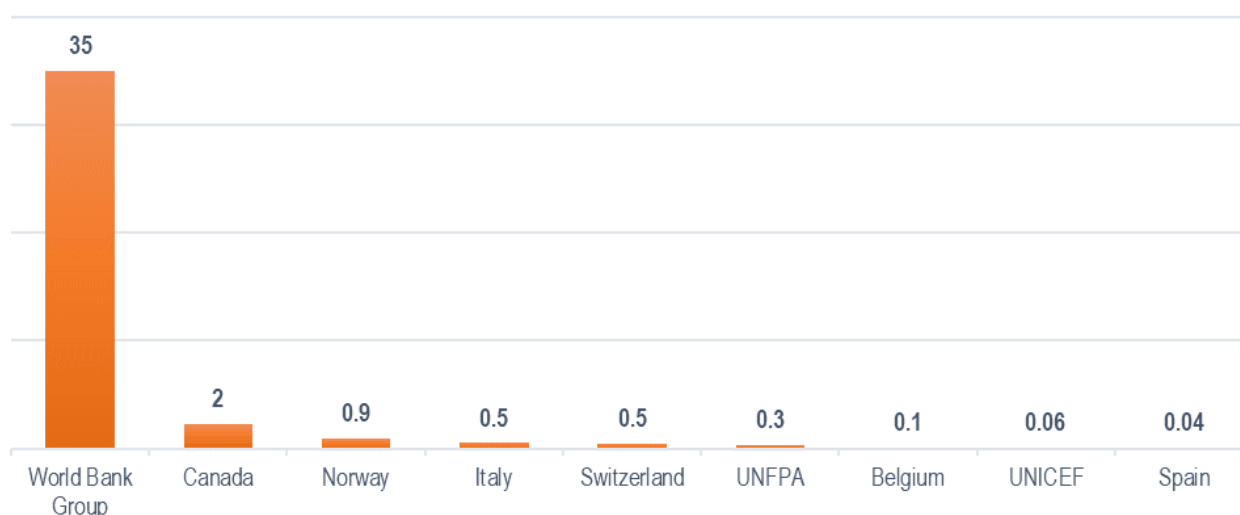
The complex interlinkages of fragility and gender inequalities perpetuate gender-based violence on both a global scale and in Niger.

Conflict throughout the Tillabéri region in the north – as well as neighbouring conflicts in the Sahel and Burkina Faso – illustrate a dire security context. This has only increased with the rise in instances of civilians killed by armed groups (ACAPS, 2021^[101]). Not only has this driven civilians from the region with an estimated 120,000 internally displaced persons in the region, but will also increase the likelihood of GBV. Programmes aimed at addressing this likely trend within Niger will become even more vital as the

emergency continues. One such example of this programming is a 2019 Spanish project specifically focused on reducing the risk of GBV within forcibly displaced communities.

Figure 7. ODA by DAC members and multilateral organisations to Niger for ending violence against women and girls, 2019

USD million, 2019 constant prices, commitments



Note: ODA from organisations such as the World Bank Group, UNFPA, and UNICEF, that are listed here, are based on figures reported to the OECD by these organisations and may not represent the total funding towards ending VAWG provided by multilateral organisations in Niger. Source: Authors based on OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System. Full dataset available here: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeId=3>.

Much of the bilateral or multilateral ODA that has been committed to Niger in 2019 is from the International Development Association (part of the World Bank Group) (see Figure 7). It is also the only ODA targeting the elimination of GBV that is flowing directly to the government of Niger as budget support.

Only one reported programme was undertaken with locally-based civil society at the core of programme implementation: A Canadian funded project aimed to reduce the extent of child marriage in Niger in partnership with Initiative OASIS Niger. This included research to understand the norms and practices for child marriage and their links to adolescent reproductive health and related rights.

Niger is one of the fastest growing countries in the world, as well as one of the poorest (Potsdam Institute and GIZ, 2021^[11]). Simultaneously, rising temperatures and unpredictable climate change-related natural disasters which create further instability are causing adverse consequences for the landlocked country in the Sahel (World Bank, 2020^[12]). Niger is one of the most vulnerable and least ready countries in regard to climate change, and its climate vulnerability is exacerbated by the fact that the country's economy is dominated by the agriculture sector, which contributed to nearly 40% of the country's GDP in 2018 and employs approximately 80% of the population (ICRC, 2021^[13]; Potsdam Institute and GIZ, 2021^[11]). One 2019 Italian programme, in partnership with UN Women, aims to incorporate a climate perspective while also addressing GBV by assisting 1,500 women and young farmers in rural areas in the Zinder region through the promotion of their access to land and markets. The project includes the supply of equipment in 40 farms and the acquisition of adequate technical skills.

In times of crisis, threats to women and girls and occurrences of VAWG increase, often exponentially.

In times of crisis, threats to women and girls and occurrences of VAWG increase, often exponentially. To illustrate, statistics show that after rapid onset crises and during slow-onset ones, in order to acquire economic capital and to relieve the pressure of feeling and housing an extra person, childhood and forced marriages are used as a strategy for survival, therefore resulting in increased rates of these marriages (UNICEF, n.d.^[14]). Similarly, women are sometimes forced to trade sex for resources needed for survival, cases of intimate partner violence escalate, and many armed groups use sexual violence as an instrument of war, all while institutions designed to protect women and girls are weakened.

Legal structures, social norms, climate change-related natural disasters, political instability, and both internal and neighbouring violent conflicts coalesce to magnify existing vulnerabilities such as gender inequality and poverty. Consequently, it can be understood why Niger is the largest recipient of ODA towards violence against women and girls given the contextual reality of the country.

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Notes

¹ For the purpose of this paper, the terminology of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and gender-based violence (GBV) are both used. The OECD CRS purpose code 15180, on which the analysis in this paper is based, refers to violence against women and girls. The UN defines violence against women and girls as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (General Assembly resolution [48/104](#), art. 1). The UN Commission on the Status of Women [Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly](#) recognises that “Women and girls are subject to different and intersecting forms of violence, mostly perpetrated by men, in a variety of contexts – in times of peace or conflict, or in the wake of conflict – and in diverse spheres: the family, the community and broader society.” The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women continues to advance the normative framework on the human rights of women and girls, and in its General recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women... underscores the gender-based nature of violence against women, sets forth its structural causes and multiple and intersecting forms and underlines that violence occurs in all spheres of human interaction.”

² For more information, please see <https://forum.generationequality.org/action-coalitions>; Analysis of development finance flows including this towards VAWG, the focus of this paper, was also included in part in the recent publication: OECD, (2021_[15]). “Development finance for gender equality: The Generation Equality Action Coalitions”. OECD Publishing. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/financing-for-the-gef-action-coalitions-web-june.pdf>.

³ Members of the Development Assistance Committee are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, European Union, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States.

⁴ DAC Creditor Reporting System: <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?ThemeTreeld=3>.

⁵ This particular section includes the data reported to the OECD CRS by multilateral organisations. It is thus not comparable to the figures based on bilateral ODA by DAC members used in the rest of this paper. Additionally, it only listed figures reported to the OECD, and against the DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker.