



Evaluation of Global Affairs Canada's Engagements in Complex Environments in Sub-Saharan Africa, 2018-2023



Evaluation Report

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Global Affairs Canada

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ATMIS	African Union's Transition Mission in Somalia	IMF	International Monetary Fund
BVG	Auditor General of Mali	LES	Locally Engaged Staff
CCISD	Center for International Cooperation in Health and Development	MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
FIAP	Feminist International Assistance Policy	MSR+	Management summary report
FRELIMO	Mozambique Liberation Front	ODA	Official development assistance
FPDS	Foreign Policy and Diplomacy Service	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and development
FSI	Fragile States Index	ONUMOZ	United Nations Operations in Mozambique
FSSP	Field Support Services Projects	PSOPs	Peace and Stabilization Operations Program
GAC	Global Affairs Canada	RENAMO	Mozambique National Resistance Movement
GBA Plus	Gender-based analysis plus	SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
GDI	Gender Development Index	TCS	Trade Commissioner Service
GE	Gender equality	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
HDI	Human Development Index	UNFPA	United Nations Populations Fund
HET	Hazardous Environment Training	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
HOM	Head of Mission	WFP	World Food Programme
IDP	Internally displaced people	WHO	World Health Organization

Executive summary

The evaluation of Global Affairs Canada's (GAC) engagements in complex environments in sub-Saharan Africa examined the Department's programming and engagement activities in these environments for the period of 2018 to 2023. The evaluation covered the work of various engagement streams, including international assistance, diplomacy, and trade, in four case study countries: Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria and Somalia. The objectives were to examine the relevance, effectiveness and results of GAC's programming and activities in these environments, and to draw lessons to formulate recommendations to improve Canada's engagements in these contexts more broadly.

The evaluation found that GAC's engagements were responsive to local needs and added value through the use of contextual analyses and field support services projects (FSSPs). While programming and activities were aligned with departmental priorities, the absence or lack of clear strategic direction for Canada's engagement in each country limited the effectiveness and coherence of those activities. Security and resource constraints created gaps between the level of GAC's ambitions and the realities on the ground, thus reducing the effectiveness of the engagement. The development stream's project approval and funding agreements amendment processes did not have the adaptability needed to operate effectively in complex environments, which resulted in significant delays and negative impacts on projects. Despite these difficulties, successful adaptation responses provided valuable lessons that should inform future funding processes in these environments. The evaluation also took a cursory assessment of staff resilience in these complex environments finding that the majority of mission staff from the country case studies did not feel they were sufficiently equipped to operate effectively because of a lack of specific training, tailored guidance, and travel restrictions within countries due to security and financial constraints.

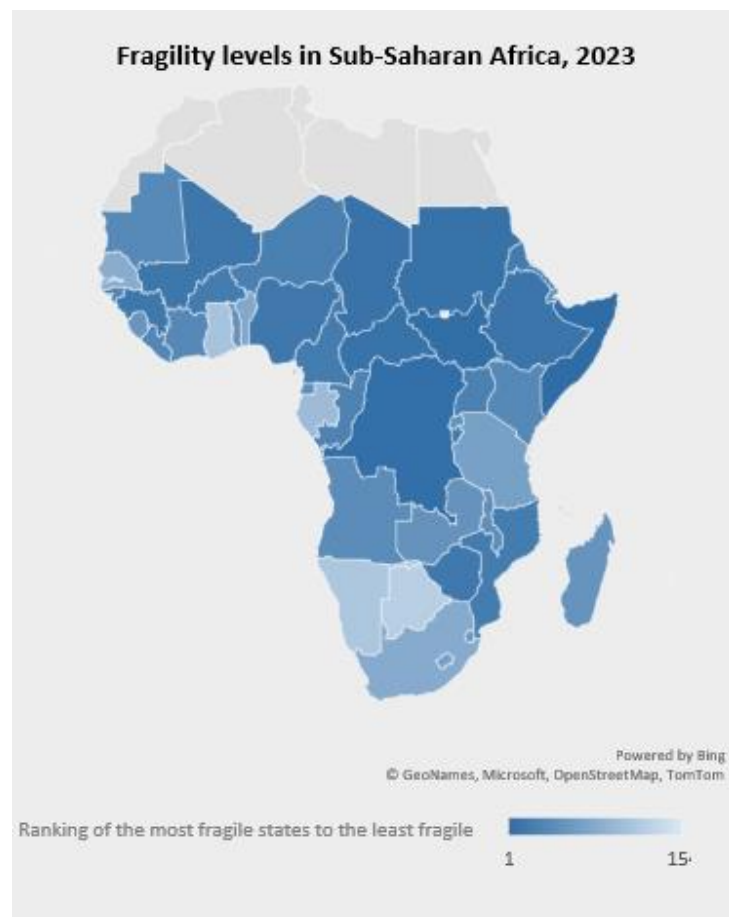
To better understand the outcomes that Canada was able to achieve in complex environments, and to learn from them, the evaluation assessed the results of GAC's international assistance programs in the health, governance, peace, and security sectors. There were notable outcomes in advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights, advancing democratic principles, and supporting peace processes. Canada's approach to integrating the advancement of gender equality into all of its engagements produced notable results, positioning Canada as a leader in this field; however, long-term commitments would be necessary to sustain results. The Foreign Policy and Diplomacy Service successfully supported the navigation of complex relationships while advancing discussions on the protection of human rights and the promotion of good governance. Trade engagements achieved notable results in the mining and education sectors. To continue to advance Canada's trade interests, it was recommended that GAC strengthen its analytical capacity to assess economic forecasts and trade opportunities in these complex environments.

Summary of recommendations

- 1) Explore and pilot a new approach to support integrated strategic country planning to provide an overall engagement and communication strategy for Canada to operate effectively in complex environments (i.e., countries classified as hardship 4 or 5). Resultant plans should align the objectives, activities and programs of the mission, headquarters and other government departments.
- 2) Support projects in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS) to remain relevant by streamlining project approval processes and building flexibility in funding agreements to respond to unexpected crises.
- 3) Strengthen personnel selection, pre-posting preparation, and support CBS and LES at post for hardships 4 and 5 assignments to improve staff capacity and resilience.

Please note that the findings of this evaluation and subsequent recommendations only reflect the period 2018 to 2023. Canada's Africa Strategy: A Partnership for Shared Prosperity and Security, launched in March 2025, is therefore not part of the evaluation scope. However, some of the considerations raised in this report have been reflected in the strategy.

Context



Source: Fragile States Index (FSI), 2023

Background: Complex Environments and Fragility Factors

The world is in an era defined by multiple climatic, health, security, political and socio-economic crises (OECD, States of Fragility, 2023). At the state level, these crises are often amplified by their complexity and fragility.

Complexity is defined as a system of interconnections, encompassing diverse economic, environmental, human, political and security links, risks and vulnerabilities, as well as the intensity of this interconnectedness.

Fragility, on the other hand, refers to the vulnerability of a state or societal system, and its capacity to adapt to change and recover after a crisis.

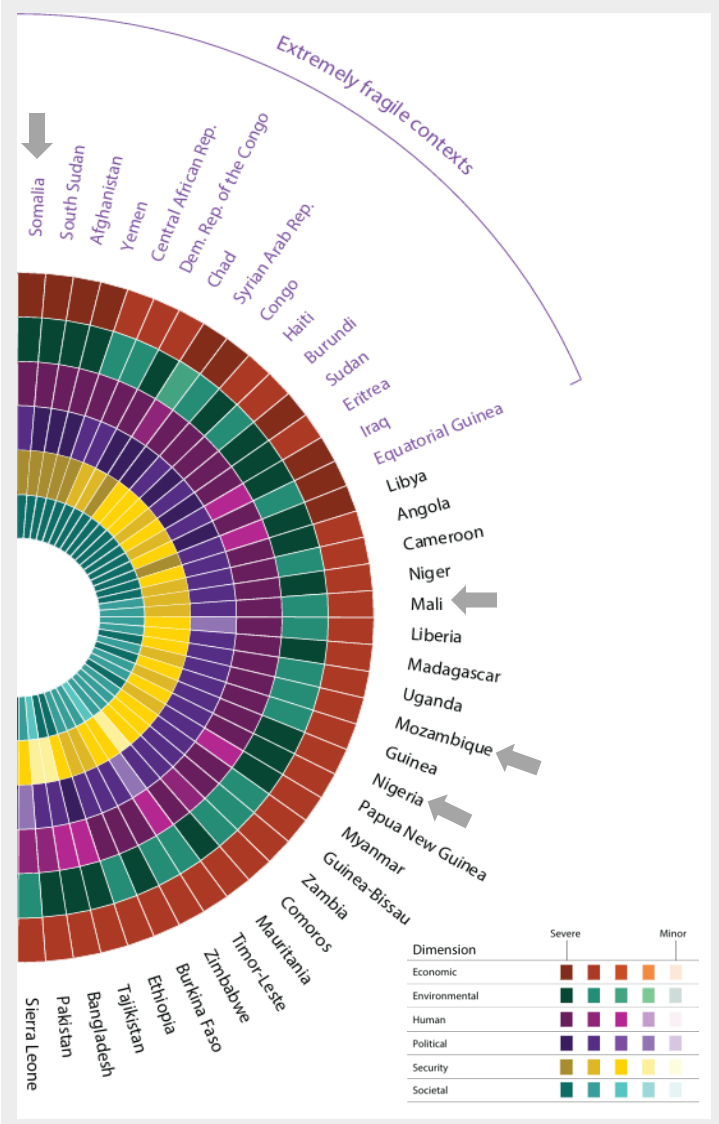
Global Affairs Canada (GAC) works toward a more peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world by leading efforts to protect and advance Canada's interests in a complex global environment. This requires GAC to adapt to complex and fragile situations. The purpose of this evaluation was to understand how GAC has responded to these difficult conditions and to draw lessons from its diplomatic, trade and development engagements in sub-Saharan Africa. It is important to note that this evaluative study was not an evaluation of a specific program or of international assistance disbursements. Instead, an evaluation framework and methodologies were applied to examine the relevance and effectiveness of the different facets of Canadian engagement in these complex environments by conducting four country case studies in sub-Saharan Africa.

Canada in Sub-Saharan Africa

Canada's engagement in sub-Saharan Africa represents long-standing relationships that are reflected in the presence of 26 missions in the region. The region also received over \$13.2 billion between 2018 and 2023, or 45% of GAC's total international assistance investments (bilateral and multilateral). Although countries in the region have experienced varying levels of economic growth during the evaluation period, in most cases, their situation worsened. The prior few years were marked by a resurgence of conflicts and *coups d'état*, even in democratic countries that had undergone several peaceful transitions of power over the prior 30 years. In 2024, only 2 of the 49 countries in sub-Saharan Africa were considered to be stable, according to the Fund for Peace's Fragile States Index.

With this in mind, the sub-Saharan Africa region was selected as a learning opportunity for how Global Affairs Canada engages in these complex environments. Considering the range of challenges the region faces, a better understanding of complex environments with multiple fragility factors was intended to support GAC to better operate and position itself in these environments, including identifying lessons learned for improving Canada's strategic positioning while implementing the Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and development (OECD's) principles for fragile states.

Context

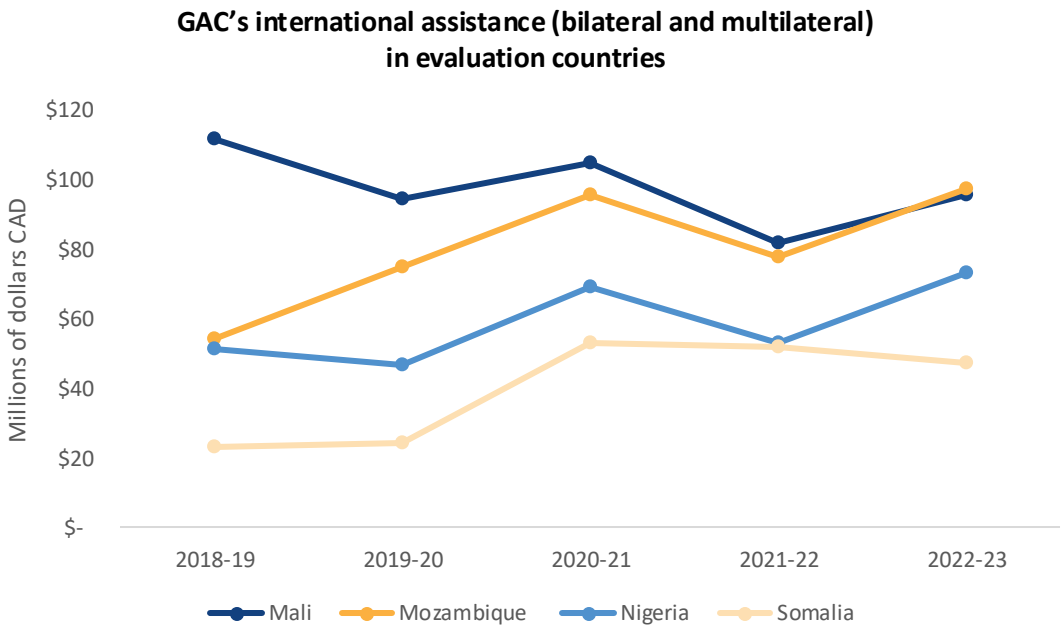


Source: OECD's multidimensional fragility framework, 2022.

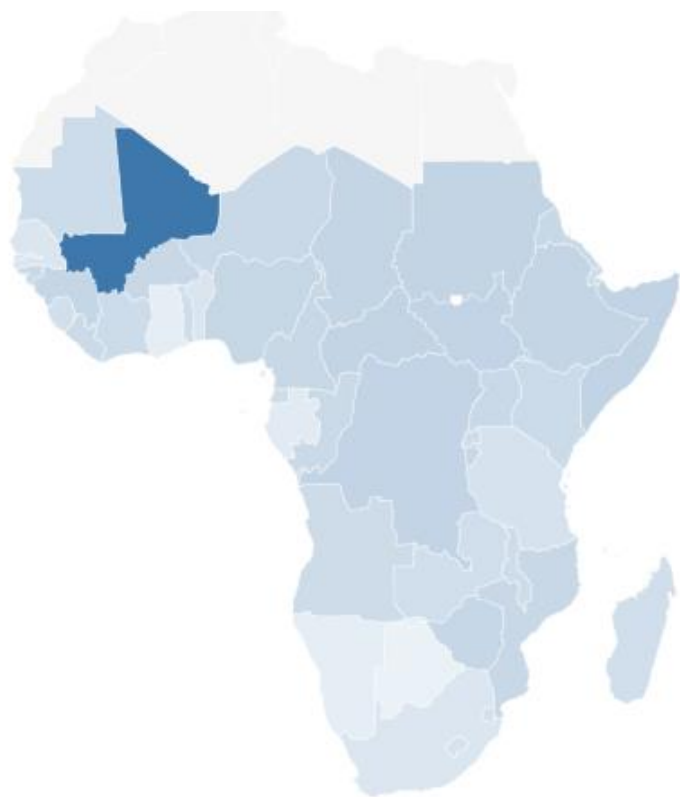
Investments and Engagement in Complex Contexts in Sub-Saharan Africa

The evaluation focused on 4 case study countries with distinct engagement and programming characteristics as well as Canadian mission operating models. Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria and Somalia were chosen because of their different complexity factors. This approach was intended to increase the diversity of learning opportunities and the potential to apply lessons learned to other similar complex contexts.

Description of the engagement in and complexity of the 4 case study countries during the evaluation period



Context - Mali



Mali, with a population of 21.3 million people, 47% of whom were under the age of 14, faced numerous challenges. The poverty rate was 44.4% and the country ranked 188th out of 193 on the human development index (HDI). In 2023, there were 15,779 people working for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Mali was ranked 13th on the Fragile States Index (FSI) in 2023.

Selection of Mali

Mali was the third-largest recipient of GAC's international assistance (bilateral and multilateral) in sub-Saharan Africa with \$580.9 million (2018 to 2023 data). Given the scale of Canadian support over the years, choosing this country was an opportunity to learn more about the long-term outcomes of programming and to observe GAC's ability adapt to rapid changes, such as those resulting from a sudden government change. Including Mali in the evaluation was also beneficial considering the Canadian trade investments in key mining sectors and the ties created through international education work with Malian graduates.

Description of Engagement Between 2018 and 2023

Global Affairs Canada made significant contributions to Mali during the evaluation period (\$335 million in international assistance), supporting health and education systems, food security, and governance. The \$51.8 million in humanitarian assistance targeted malnutrition, access to sanitation and health services, and sexual and gender-based violence against displaced persons and their host communities. Canadian exports averaged \$31.6 million during the evaluation period, peaking at \$50.2 million in 2021. GAC facilitated dialogue between governments and investors, mainly in the mining sector, and monitored corporate social responsibility. Peace and security programs (\$69.3 million) focused on conflict prevention, reconciliation and women's participation in peace efforts. Among other initiatives, diplomatic efforts supported gender equality. According to OECD data, Canada ranked third in terms of official development assistance (bilateral and multilateral ODA) in 2023, after the United States and Germany. In 2022 – 2023, key partners in implementing projects funded by Canada included the World Food Programme (WFP), KfW Development Bank, and German International Cooperation Society (GIZ).

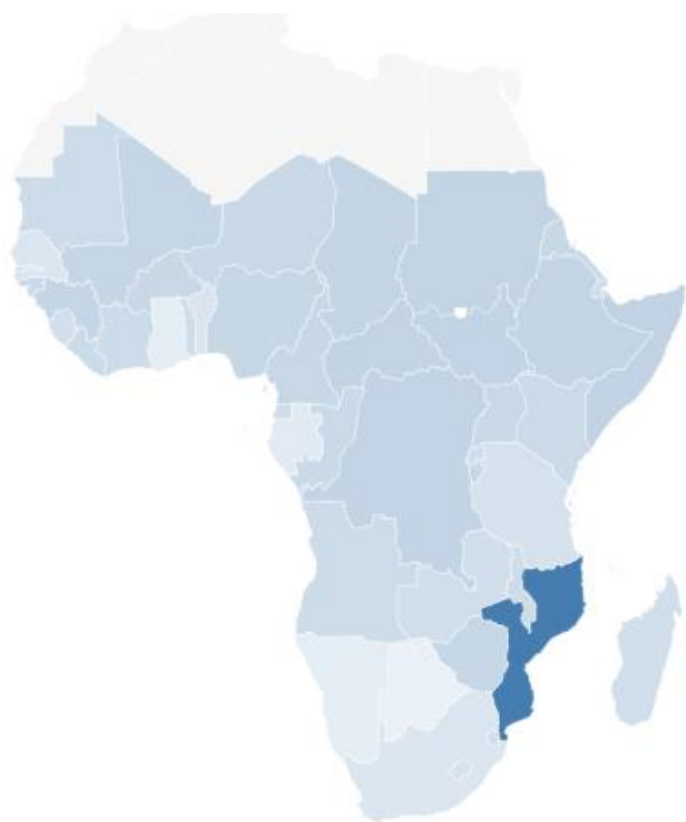
The Mali case study was considered a mission with the “classic” model: a mission led by a head of mission (HOM) and two bilateral divisions at headquarters that managed development, trade and diplomacy.

Complexity and fragility in Mali

During the evaluation period, the country experienced great political and social instability, summarized as follows:

- 1. Multiple *coups d'état* and delayed elections:** There were two successive *coups d'état* in Mali that resulted in election delays and persistent political uncertainty.
- 2. Chronic political instability and weak institutions:** Malian institutions were fragile, which contributed to chronic political instability.
- 3. Insecurity and terrorist attacks:** Northern and central Mali were especially affected by frequent terrorist attacks, which exacerbated insecurity in the region.
- 4. Gender inequality:** Women in Mali continued to face significant inequalities in various aspects of social, economic and political life.
- 5. Environmental degradation:** The country faced environmental challenges, including land degradation and desertification, which affected the livelihoods of local populations.

Context - Mozambique



Mozambique, with a population of 32.5 million people, 45% of whom were under the age of 14, faced numerous challenges. The country ranked 183rd out of 193 on the Human Development Index and had a poverty rate of 46.1%. Since the end of the United Nations Operations in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) mission in 1995, Mozambique has experienced institutional fragility and democratic backsliding.

Selection of Mozambique

Mozambique was the fifth-largest recipient of GAC's international assistance (bilateral and multilateral) in sub-Saharan Africa totaling \$518 million (2018 to 2023 data).

The Mozambique case study was an opportunity to observe how Canadian programming adapted to climate change fragility and to conflict. With this selection, the evaluation could observe the scope of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) programming and determine the extent of the interaction between diplomatic and development activities. Considering Mozambique had established a unique task force that worked to align development, security, and humanitarian programming, this case study provided an opportunity to review the lessons of "nexus" programming decisions.

Description of Engagement Between 2018 and 2023

GAC was a key development stakeholder during the evaluation period, investing \$413 million to improve health and sexual and reproductive health (SRHR), quality education, and governance. Humanitarian assistance (\$31 million) targeted addressing climate disasters and conflicts. Peace and security activities totaled \$8.8 million, with an emphasis on reducing tensions in the country's northern region. Exports averaged \$65.6 million, mainly in agriculture. Moreover, exports grew, with an increase of 76% between 2022 and 2023. The trade program promoted opportunities in clean technologies, infrastructure, oil and gas, and education. Diplomatic efforts supported stabilization in the north and the defense of human rights. According to OECD data, Canada ranked fifth among bilateral and multilateral ODA donors in 2023. The United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Japan were the main donors. In 2022 – 2023, UNICEF, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Government of Mozambique, and World Bank were some of GAC's main implementing partners.

Mozambique followed a "HOM accountability model" which meant that the HOM was also the Director of the Bilateral Development Program with two Heads of Cooperation that divided the programming thematically. This approach was aligned with Canada's engagement that primarily focused on providing development programming.

Complexity and Fragility in Mozambique

Mozambique experienced a civil war between 1977 and 1992, involving the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) and the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO), which resulted in the deaths of nearly one million people and the displacement of five million others. A long peace process, in which Canada played an important role, concluded in 2023. However, the north of the country was still affected by terrorism and insurgency. In addition, Mozambique was also especially vulnerable to climate change-related natural disasters, such as tropical storms and cyclones. Mozambique was ranked 21st on the Fragile States Index in 2023, demonstrating the many challenges the country faced.

Context – Nigeria



Nigeria, with a population of 230.8 million people, 40.7% of whom were under the age of 14, faced numerous challenges. The poverty rate was 40.1% and it ranked 161st out of 193 on the Human Development Index (HDI).

Selection of Nigeria

Nigeria was the sixth-largest recipient of Canadian international assistance (bilateral and multilateral) in sub-Saharan Africa totaling \$479.4 million (2018 to 2023 data).

With the selection of Nigeria as a case study, the evaluation was able to observe development programming decisions, humanitarian work and engagement in a more favourable economic context that was nevertheless plagued by pockets of insecurity and inequality. As an economic power, Nigeria was Canada's largest trading partner in the region in 2023. It was also a security hub for the Sahel region. The case study provided an opportunity to understand the link between security challenges and business opportunities.

Description of Engagement Between 2018 and 2023

GAC invested \$267 million in bilateral and multilateral international assistance in Nigeria during the evaluation period, focusing on improving access to sexual and reproductive health services, governance as well as women-led businesses. Canadian exports averaged \$569 million annually, with a 4% increase in 2023 in the agriculture and automotive sectors. Trade priorities included advancing a foreign investment protection agreement and finalizing an air transport agreement for long-term investment. Advocacy efforts focused on strengthening government accountability and democratic principles. According to OECD data, Canada was also the sixth-largest ODA donor in Nigeria, with the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany being the top 3 donors. In 2022 – 2023, Canada's main partners included UNICEF, the World Food Programme (WFP), and World Health Organization (WHO).

The Abuja mission focused mainly on development funding, strengthening diplomatic relations and providing humanitarian assistance, while the Lagos mission focused more on advancing trade interests and supporting the engagements of other Canadian federal departments. In terms of the governance model, the Abuja mission was managed by a HOM while the Lagos mission was managed by a Deputy HOM.

Complexity and Fragility in Nigeria

The level of gender inequality was high, adding a layer of complexity to the country's socioeconomic challenges. According to the 2022 Gender Development Index (GDI), Nigeria ranked in Group 5, which included countries with the greatest gender inequalities. Women's economic and political exclusion and gender-based violence were common. Health indicators remained among the worst in the world, particularly for women and girls. According to UNICEF data, in 2020 Nigeria had the third-highest maternal mortality rate and one of the worst infant mortality rates for children under 5. Nigeria struggled with an Islamist insurgency in the Northeast, long-standing militancy in the Niger Delta, and an increase in banditry and communal conflicts.

Corruption was considered high and there was limited government control. According to the World Bank's governance indicators, Nigeria's score of control of corruption was 16.98 out of 100, reflecting the country's persistent challenges in terms of transparency and accountability. In addition, the 2019 and 2023 presidential elections were delayed due to logistical and security challenges. At the same time, inflation was rising, and the country faced a shortage of fuel and resources. According to the IMF, the inflation rate in Nigeria was 25% in 2023. These challenges were reflected in the Fragile States Index (FSI), which ranked Nigeria 15th in 2023, underlining the scale of the challenges facing the country.

Context - Somalia



Somalia, with a population of 12.7 million people, 41.5% of whom were under the age of 14, faced numerous challenges. The country's poverty rate was extremely high at 73%, and the country ranks 193rd out of 193 countries according to the Human Development Index (HDI). The country also faced terrorism and intercommunity violence, as well as high levels of gender inequality. Climate change-related disasters such as droughts and floods exacerbated the situation.

Selection of Somalia

During the evaluation period, Somalia received international assistance (bilateral and multilateral) from Global Affairs Canada amounting to \$251.8 million, the majority of which came from humanitarian assistance (data from 2018 to 2023). Somalia was selected as a case study considering it was the most fragile state in the world and because it was a country that had only recently started receiving Canadian development assistance (official development assistance) receiving \$250 million between 2018 and 2023. There were important links between Canada and Somalia, particularly with the size of the Somali diaspora in Canada and the considerations related to the informal economy that this entailed. During the evaluation period, a new development program was launched and managed remotely. The evaluation provided an overview of the programming outcomes and possible entry points for future engagement decisions. The case study provided lessons in remote management, risk management and diplomacy.

Description of Engagement Between 2018 and 2023

GAC invested \$60.7 million in international assistance to improve health and sexual and reproductive health and rights, education, and governance in Somalia. Humanitarian aid was a crucial part of GAC's international aid, with \$166.7 million addressing malnutrition, providing food security, water, sanitation services, and shelters. The peace and security objective was to promote long-term security, with funding of \$1 million.

Bilateral development programming resumed in 2019 focusing on sexual and reproductive health and rights, education, and governance. Although there was not a specific trade program, average exports reached \$4.41 million during the evaluation period, mainly in the aerospace industry. However, there was a 5% drop in exports between 2022 – 2023. Diplomatic advocacy efforts focused on supporting gender equality and human rights. According to OECD data, Canada ranked 7th among official development assistance (ODA) donors in 2023, and the United States, Germany and the United Kingdom were the main donors. The main partner organizations were UNICEF, World Food Programme (WFP), and Care Canada.

Canada's diplomatic complement was based remotely in Nairobi, Kenya, similar to other international stakeholders, because of major security challenges and Somalia's extreme fragility. Although travel restrictions to Somalia were often imposed to ensure staff security as aligned with the department's Duty of Care responsibilities, there were differences within the donor community. Some donors had a diplomatic presence in Somali, while others who were based in Kenya visited Somalia more frequently.

Complexity and Fragility in Somalia

The African Union's Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), whose mandate ended in December 2024, was operating during the evaluation period. According to Good Governance Africa, among other factors, the tensions between certain member states and Somalia's federal government have significantly impacted the country's stability and overall state-building. Corruption was high and accusations of human rights violations were significant. According to the World Bank's governance indicators, Somalia ranked in the bottom percentile in terms of control of corruption with a score of 0.94 out of 100 in 2023. Somalia's score for human rights-related fragility was 9 out of 10, according to the Fragile States Index.

The complexity of Somalia was reflected in its overall score in Fragile States Index, which ranked Somalia first, indicating extreme fragility.

Evaluation scope and objectives

Systems theory in evaluation

Given the diversity of the contexts, complex workflows and stakeholders involved, the evaluation framework is based on **systems theory** and its associated techniques. Systems theory takes into account interconnections in complex contexts in order to understand the whole and not just a single individual element to accurately reflect real-world situations. Using this approach for the evaluation makes it possible to understand complex environments as systems based on 4 dimensions: interventions, stakeholders, external systems and internal systems (Bamberger, 3ie, 2021). The benefits of this theoretical framework are as follows:

- seeing (more of) the big picture
- identifying the limits of what is included
- adapting to changing contexts
- discovering unknown links, unexpected results or unintended consequences
- considering challenges and opportunities from multiple, non-traditional points of view

Evaluation objectives

The objectives of this evaluation were as follows:

- To examine the **relevance, effectiveness and outcomes** of Global Affairs Canada's engagements in complex environments.
- To draw lessons and make recommendations to improve Canada's engagements in these contexts.

Evaluation scope

The evaluation focused on departmental funding and activities in the areas of development, diplomacy, trade, peace and stabilization, and humanitarian assistance in Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria and Somalia over the period of 2018 to 2023, excluding consular work and the actions of other Canadian federal departments. In the context of this evaluation, "engagement" refers to the combination of funding and activities by each of the streams in the case study countries. Opportunities for collaboration and coherence between each of these engagement streams were also identified during the evaluation. The evaluation used the OECD's principles for fragile states as the framework to compare GAC's engagement in these contexts to international standards. The exercise used a cross-cutting vision of risk as an essential element of relevance, efficiency and effectiveness in fragile contexts, as well as gender equality, including gender-based analysis plus (GBA Plus), climate change considerations and conflict sensitivity. In addition, in the area of development assistance, three engagement themes were examined: health (especially SRHR), governance, and peace and stabilization.

Evaluation approach

The evaluation used a **mixed approach** with both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect primary and secondary data, including the use of interviews with key informants, thematic case studies and the analyses of programming and strategic documentation, academic literature and project which were organized according under four country case studies. The evaluation team used a non-probability sampling method combining a purposive sample (data collected from specific people or groups chosen for a specific purpose) and a quota sample (data collected from different groups) to select projects and key stakeholders.

The evaluation's design relied on a number of methodological considerations as follows:

Cluster Evaluation: Selecting different operating contexts for the case studies was an effective way of identifying commonalities and differences between the various mission models.

Utilization Focused: The evaluation was designed to be useful to its primary users: decision makers at GAC.

Systems Theory: The evaluation sought to break down and understand how various stakeholders, programs and activities operated individually and as a whole where stakeholder mapping was central to understanding the complexity of GAC's engagements in the case study countries.

Outcome Mapping: This methodology was used to collect information on changes in behaviour, relationships, actions, and activities of GAC's engagements in the case study countries.

Gender-sensitive Conflict Analysis: The evaluation compared international standards for conducting gender-sensitive conflict analysis to GAC's engagements to determine the extent to which Canada's engagements in complex environments were based on a robust understanding of the root causes of conflict and how those conflicts were impacting men and women differently.

Strategic considerations

Various levels of learning

This evaluation provides GAC with the following learning opportunities.

Departmental level (macro)

The corporate issues in the evaluation highlighted areas for improvement or reflection on engagement choices, priorities, tools, processes and human resources to better position the department in complex and fragile environments.

Branch level (meso)

At the Africa-branch level, the evaluation was an opportunity to reflect on higher-level strategic engagement in terms of GAC's engagement in the sub-region. It also provided the possibility of extrapolating lessons to better position Canada's actions in similar complex contexts.

Program level (micro)

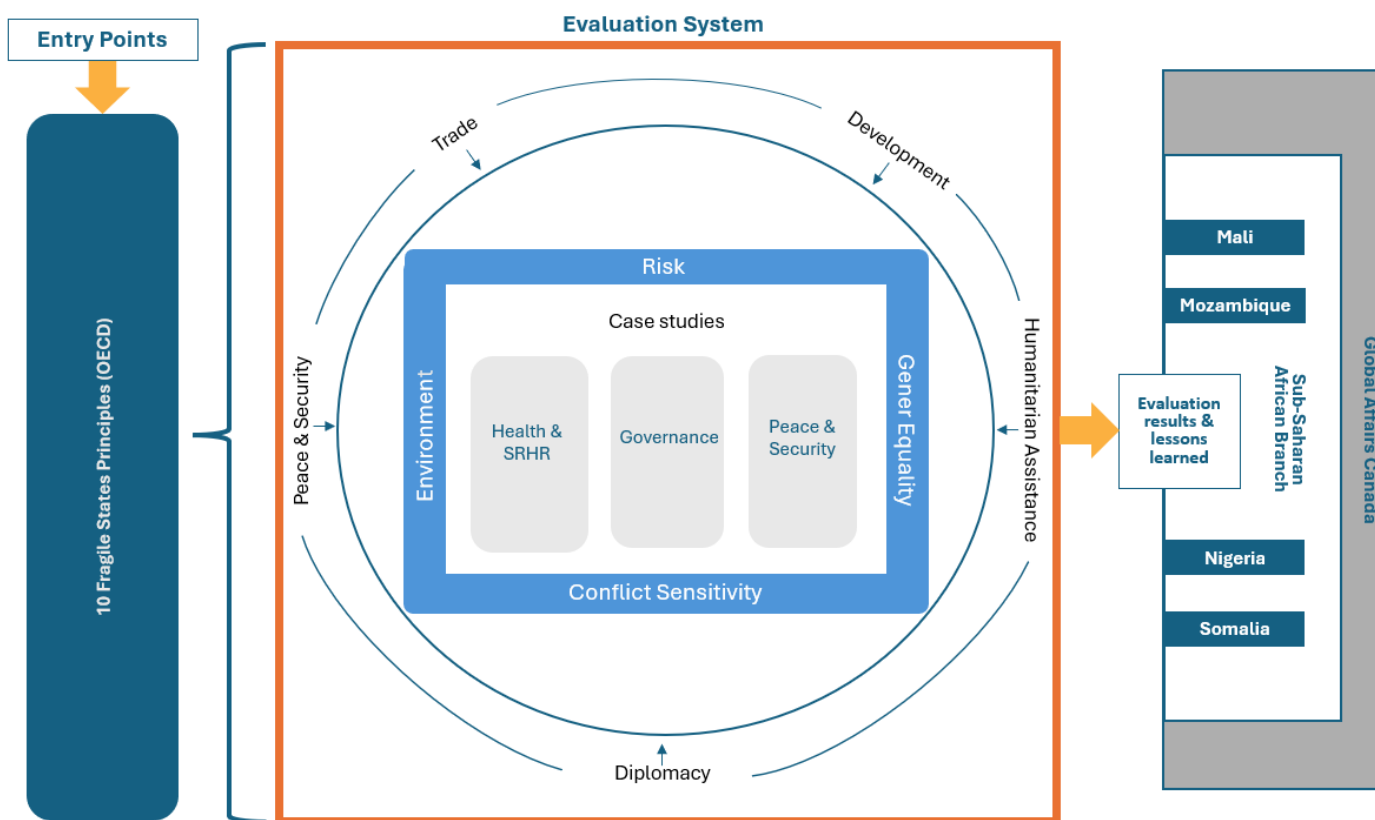
At the case study country level, it was an opportunity to look at specific contexts and outcomes, and at the coherence between the different streams of work and between Headquarters and the missions. This level also allowed lessons to be learned from other donors that faced similar contexts.

It should be noted that the department was restructured during the evaluation. Since the evaluation is retrospective, the names of the former divisions and branches have remained the same in the report, but the recommendations are addressed to the new structures.

Evaluation conduct

The evaluation was conducted by the Evaluation Division and supported by four local specialized evaluators as well as by students from the University of Ottawa. An expert in complexity evaluation was also engaged to support the evaluation. The evaluation team also included a Knowledge Translation Adviser who was responsible for identifying opportunities for maximizing the learning impact for evaluation stakeholders.

Evaluation Framework



Evaluation questions

The evaluation questions examined the department's **relevance**, **effectiveness** and **outcomes** in complex environments. By examining how the department operated in these contexts, the evaluation aimed to identify how these strategies and actions take the context into consideration, meet the situation's evolving needs in a timely manner, remain adaptable in the face of change and produce the desired results.

Studied aspects	Questions
Relevance	Q1. To what extent did GAC's engagement adapt to and meet the needs and realities of complex environments in sub-Saharan Africa?
Effectiveness and Outcomes	Q2. To what extent did GAC's engagement in complex environments in sub-Saharan Africa use its various operational tools, approaches and mandates to support and pursue Canadian objectives?
	Q3. To what extent did GAC's programming and engagement allow expected results to be achieved in the following areas? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) • governance • peace and stabilization • foreign policy and diplomacy • trade • gender equality

Methodology

Administrative analysis and document review

Review of internal Global Affairs Canada documents, including the following:

- general policy documents, including FIAP, guidance notes and directives
- planning and strategy documents
- briefing notes and memos
- previous evaluations, audits and reviews
- administrative and human resources data
- integrated planning and reporting tools, including Strategia, My international, MSR+, etc.

Literature review

Review of academic literature, partner country publications and other secondary documents, including the following:

- fragility indexes
- global reports
- synthesis documents and thematic research on best practices

This analysis will also include an initial documentary analysis by means of a quick assessment of the evidence:

- review of large-scale datasets on key thematic issues

Interviews with key informants

Semi-structured interviews, one-on-one or in small groups, using evaluation approaches.

The people interviewed included the following:

- current and former program managers and staff
- representatives from implementing partner organizations, civil society and multilateral organizations
- representatives of program recipients
- leaders of global initiatives, organizations or groups in which Canada participates

Analysis of donors and multilateral organizations

Review of the approaches of a group of donors and multilateral organizations to understand engagement models and methods in complex environments.

Each donor's model was studied to draw inspiration and best practices. The analysis included a documentary review of the available information and follow-up interviews with representatives who specialize in policies and programs in sub-Saharan Africa.

Three thematic case studies

To review the results achieved and GAC's engagement, there will be 3 case studies in which gender equality, climate change, conflicts and risks are cross-cutting themes. These studies focused on the following themes:

- health and SRHR
- governance
- peace and stabilization

It involved field visits and interviews with stakeholders, including Canadian missions, government representatives, partners and recipients. Participatory methods were used, such as outcome mapping, group discussions and stories. The case studies analyzed project design, implementation strategies and engagement timelines.

Financial analysis of disbursements

Disbursement data from the department's financial management systems will be reviewed to profile programming investment over the evaluation period.

The review will consider the following elements:

- total disbursements and disbursements by sector
- type of executing agency
- funding mechanisms
- analysis of the level of gender integration in projects
- selection and approval mechanisms

Limitations and mitigation measures

Limitations



The diversity and complexity of a multi-country and multi-stream evaluation process

Given the atypical nature of this evaluation, in that it involved several engagement streams in different countries; while applying complexity lens, it was a challenge to reconcile data and to make comparison that could be extrapolated to GAC's engagements in complex environments around the world. Furthermore, the size of the programs, particularly the development programs (both in terms of grants and contributions and human resources) varied considerably between the four countries evaluated, adding further complexity.

Security issues and limited line of sight

Each of the 4-country case studies had security concerns. In some cases, like Mali and Somalia, it was not possible to conduct data-collection missions on the ground. This limited the team's ability to better understand the local context. This constraint hampered the team's ability to fully grasp nuances on the ground, which may have affected how the results were interpreted in some complex situations.

Access to key respondents

The rotation and availability of staff, whether from GAC, implementing partners, project participants, local governments or other donors, was a constant challenge in difficult and complex environments. The loss of corporate memory was significant, as new employees and new projects began and ended during the evaluation period.

Mitigation measures



Systems thinking and complexity expertise

The evaluation team received external support from an expert in evaluating complex contexts in order to better identify the systems (people, places, problems, situations and solutions) involved in evaluation selection and analysis. The evaluation team also recruited local evaluators in each country case study to support data collection and the analysis of local dynamics. In order to overcome the variability in the size of the programs and teams among the four countries selected, this evaluation did not adopt a comparative methodology but used a multiple case study methodology to illustrate different facets of complexity. This approach made it possible to highlight the various aspects of socioeconomic, security, governance and gender complexity. By using each country as a separate case study, the evaluation was able to draw valuable lessons without the biases introduced by direct comparisons and better understand the multiple dimensions of complexity that development programs must face.

Accept the limitations and follow safety recommendations

The evaluation team worked directly with mission staff to identify security limits and needs. When data collection was possible, the evaluation team followed all guidance to ensure the mission's success while respecting the security regulations and standards established by Canadian missions. In addition, local evaluators carried out the fieldwork in cases where the main team was unable to travel.

Engage stakeholder networks

The evaluation conducted a stakeholder mapping exercise as part of the gender-sensitive conflict analysis. This mapping allowed for all of the key stakeholders in the system to be identified. The evaluation team relied on GAC's project monitoring staff and on implementing partners to obtain a list of key stakeholder contacts. Implementing partners facilitated the evaluation team's and local consultants' access to project participants.

Findings: Relevance

Relevance

Understanding the context

Added value of the FSSP

In complex environments, the services provided by FSSP, which value the use of local consultants and contextual knowledge, were of great added value in understanding and better aligning GAC's engagement. They provided essential support for implementing partners. Recognizing the importance of these services was also mentioned in previous evaluations, including the country program evaluations of the Democratic Republic of Congo (2020) and Ethiopia (2020). Field support services were provided by third party implementing organizations and were managed locally. These organizations employed experts, separate from GAC employees, and they provided essential support to the planning, delivery and monitoring of Canada's international development assistance; they were predominantly utilized in countries with a high level of development programming. They also offered consultation services on: (1) socio-economic policies; (2) the analysis of development issues, needs and strategies; (3) technical support; (4) project monitoring; and (5) logistical and administrative services.



F1: GAC's engagements and programming considered complexity, fragility, situations of conflict, and local needs, however, challenges remained. Contextual analyses and Field Support Service Projects (FSSP) services added considerable value and led to a better understanding of situations.

The contextual analyses conducted by GAC (at Headquarters and at the missions) and by funded partners provided a clear picture of the complex environments in which they operated, despite the limitations related to available staff and resources.

For Somalia, difficult access and extreme fragility made it difficult to take the context into consideration when implementing programming and diplomatic engagement. However, programs like the Peace and Stabilization Operations Program (PSOPs) conducted conflict analyses to provide options for pursuing conflict-sensitive approaches. Programming managed by the Partnerships for Development Innovation Branch had a more limited understanding of the context considering the team was located at headquarters and had few opportunities to connect with local stakeholders, also because of the multi-country nature of their funded projects.

FSSP services, with their local knowledge and sectoral expertise, added considerable value in terms of understanding complex contexts. Their contractually funded services included contextual analyses and technical support, such as building gender-equality competencies within partner organizations in Mali. These services proved to be relevant in complex environments, as they were essential for aligning GAC's engagements.

In addition to conducting robust contextual analyses, Canadian programming took local authorities' priorities into account by aligning projects with national and sectoral development plans. Regular discussions between mission staff and local authorities allowed projects to be adjusted according to the countries' priorities. It was also noted that the political and geopolitical context influenced the definition of local authorities' needs, like in Mali, where adjustments were needed because of the changing geopolitical situation and the breakdown of constitutional order.

At the political level, Canadian teams socialized Canadian values and carried out advocacy actions that were aligned to the local contexts.

Implementing partners integrated local needs into project designs by consulting various stakeholders, including community leaders, civil society and local organizations. The situational experience of implementing partners like Plan International in Nigeria and World Health in Mali was essential to meeting local needs. These consultations were complemented with statistical data and sector studies to identify people's needs. However, weak national statistical systems in complex contexts limited the availability and reliability of essential data. For example, in Somalia, the last government census published was conducted in 1974.

Relevance

Coherence

Coherence within GAC is intended to be a proactive process to identify and capitalize on opportunities that appear across streams of diplomacy, trade and international assistance. It relied on the assumption that GAC would become more effective and more efficient and have a greater impact on the international stage. Coherence is based on 3 pillars: coherence thinking, collaboration and coordination.

[Source](#)

Leverage effects refer to the ability to use the results and experiences from one stream to advance results in another stream, or to achieve multi-stream objectives.

Nexus (triple): The triple humanitarian-development-peace nexus refers to the ties between humanitarian, development and peace activities, especially in fragile contexts and conflict-affected contexts. The ties between the development and trade stream are also called the development-trade nexus.



F1 (cont.): GAC's engagements and programming considered complexity, fragility, situations of conflict, and local needs, however, challenges remained. Contextual analyses and Field Support Service Projects (FSSP) services added considerable value and led to a better understanding of situations.

The Trade Commissioner Service (TCS) also took the needs of the local market and of authorities into account when defining economic needs as they related to opportunities for Canadian businesses. This was especially notable in Nigeria - a country with which Canada has significant direct investments - where the TCS identified opportunities in the oil, gas and technology sectors. To further advance Canadian interests, respondents suggested that better macroeconomic and geopolitical analysis would help refine strategies and optimize trade opportunities for Canadian businesses.

In terms of cross-stream coherence, notable progress was made in Mozambique and Somalia as a result of cooperation between bilateral programs, the FPDS stream and PSOPs allowing for more relevant results and engagement. For example, in Mozambique, a rapid analysis following the degradation of the security situation in Cabo Delgado resulted in projects being adapted to the new local reality. In Somalia, a series of analyses (political economy, security) led to practical recommendations to better integrate fragility issues into strategic planning. However, there were still notable challenges. In Somalia, collaboration between the humanitarian sector with other programming was inadequate. In Mali and Nigeria, cross-stream collaboration was limited, although examples of cooperation emerged, such as in Nigeria with advocacy initiatives that were aligned with development engagements and resulted in closer diplomatic relations.

The success of coherent cross streams collaborations often was due to official structures, like the Cabo Delgado Task Force and the Sahel Committee, which facilitated communication and coordination. However, these structures depended on the engagement of individuals in positions of power, which limited sustainability. The management of prolonged crises highlighted the need for a systematic approach to maintaining effective collaboration.

Although progress was made in terms of coordination and collaboration in complex environments, there were still challenges. Experts noted that a more systematic "nexus" approach (i.e. security, humanitarian assistance, development) systematic approach and greater coherence between the various streams could enhance the effectiveness of GAC's engagement and better meet the needs of project participants.

Recognizing that engagement in fragile contexts responds to realities that are especially different from those in stable situations, Canada, along with other member states of the OECD, adopted the Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States in 2007. Evidence from evaluation interviews and the documents analyzed showed that several of these principles were well reflected in Canada's development programming in Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria and Somalia. The OECD has created a [guide](#) to better operating in fragile environments.

Relevance

Strategic orientations

Lessons learned from other donors

Other donors that reported being able to successfully manage their engagements in complex contexts developed not only plans, but also planning systems that provided an in-depth understanding of the specificities of the context and while anticipating potential issues. These systems included reviews that ranged from annual to mid-mandate (every 5 years), thereby allowing plans to remain relevant in the event of changes to the context or priorities.

Best practices:

France's strategic efforts materialized in its 3D approach for the Sahel, developed jointly by the defense, diplomacy, and development sectors.

Other donors also developed 5-year strategies divided into different themes.

The **UNDP** developed a country strategy that was then translated into an action plan. This plan was then validated by an exercise that relied on probable and pessimistic scenarios, which helped to refine the plan.

F2: Canadian engagements aligned with departmental priorities in complex environments, but there was a lack of clear strategic direction which limited the effectiveness and coherence of those engagements.

Although Canada's engagements in complex environments aligned with departmental priorities, the evidence from the document review and the interviews demonstrated little to no strategic direction to guide engagement or to manage change effectively.

Despite the presence of priority areas for engagement for the various case study countries, there was a disconnect between the departmental "Strategia" planning exercise where certain priorities were identified by each stream, and the perceptions of interviewed GAC's representatives at the mission and at headquarters, except for Mozambique. Many interviewees expressed a lack of confidence in the strategic planning processes and felt that there was not a coherent understanding of Canada's overall vision for its engagements in these countries.

A large proportion of the staff interviewed reported that they had not received enough direction to guide engagement in their country of assignment and/or that guidance was not provided systematically. Moreover, although more specific direction was noted under certain streams, such as development, the lack of a holistic view for the overall engagement reduced coherence and limited their understanding of Canada's overall purpose and interests in the targeted countries. In addition, in times of crisis, or when there are major changes related to the security, political or climate situation, the lack of timely direction was identified as a factor that limited staff's ability to operate effectively, especially mission staff. This was particularly true for the Mali case study related to the *coups d'état* in 2020 and 2021.

Although Canada's bilateral engagement in Mozambique was not officially called an Integrated Country Framework across streams, an overall policy framework with associated guidance for development programming and engagement in the country was identified as an essential tool for providing strategic direction which minimizes the problems that were mentioned. As a result, activities specifically related to development, the main driving force behind Canada's engagement in the country, benefited from a clear policy framework and multiple guiding documents, which provided effective guidance. However, some stakeholders interviewed also commented on the need to better integrate the activities of the other streams in order to provide a comprehensive framework for Canada's overall involvement in this country.

Findings: Effectiveness

Effectiveness

Diplomatic ambitions and ground realities

“If we decide to be here, let’s really be here”:
comment from a GAC employee on the need to align ambitions with the resources needed to achieve them.

Impact of limited resources in complex environments

Evidence from security specialists in the case study countries demonstrated that gaps in terms of the resources needed to ensure the proper movement of mission staff were limited. This meant fewer movements, and the use of external services in very expensive contexts. This finding also emerged in the evaluation of the 2017 to 2023 Duty of Care envelope.

F3: Canada's missions abroad strived to represent and promote the country's interests, but there were gaps between the level of GAC's ambitions and the realities on the ground, notably due to security and resources constraints that limited the effectiveness of engagements.

The purpose of Canada's missions abroad is to represent and advance Canada's interests while maintaining relationships to promote these interests. The diplomatic corps' role was to act as an intermediary with local authorities and to monitor Canada's programming investments. However, in the case study countries, gaps were identified between GAC's level of ambition for its engagement compared to the realities on the ground, and the resources available.

For example, in Somalia and Mali, the security measures that were put in place to address increased risks limited or prevented development teams from conducting monitoring-evaluation missions. Interviewees highlighted the disconnect between the high cost of security services which often exceeded the available financial resources. In Somalia, advocacy dialogues to advance Canada's gender equality priorities were hampered by an inability to pursue essential face-to-face interactions to establish trust with government stakeholders because of security restrictions to keep staff safe.

In Nigeria, the federal system with a central state and 36 states each with their own governments and jurisdictions had complicated comprehensive bilateral engagement. Moreover, traditional chiefdoms, although without official political power, played a crucial role in the cultural aspect of Nigerian society. Interviews and field visits had shown that GAC engagements in Nigeria, particularly the diplomacy and trade streams, had limited human and financial capacity to take all these power dynamics into account and meet all expectations in terms of the level of engagement. The development projects financed by GAC had been implemented at the national level, but the bureaucratic burden, limited human resources and high costs of ensuring the safety of personnel when traveling did not allow for optimal engagement with all relevant local authorities. Local authorities stressed this limitation during field visits highlighting the desire to be also engaged in the overall bilateral relationship.

GAC's results-based reporting requirements were also deemed to not be suitable for demonstrating progress in complex environments. Although the framework provided information on project indicators, it did not provide an overall results story that accounted for the complexity of the context. Interviewees felt that planning and reporting did not do justice to the extent of the work accomplished or to be accomplished. Because of access difficulties, such as travel restrictions due to security or natural disaster risks which restricted program monitoring or diplomatic engagement, interviewees suggested that GAC should review or better define its ambitions to better align Canada's overall vision for bilateral engagement with the realities on the ground to achieve more realistic expectations.

Effectiveness

Processes and tools

F4: The development stream's project approval and funding agreements amendment processes did not have the adaptability needed to operate effectively in complex environments, which resulted in significant delays and negative impacts on projects.

Evidence from the case study countries, the document review and interviews with implementing partners demonstrated that the project approval and funding agreements amendment processes did not have the adaptability needed to operate effectively in complex environments. An analysis by GAC's grants and contributions transformation team showed that, on average within the department, the time between approval of the call for proposals and the final signature of a contribution agreement was 91 weeks with a median of 120 weeks. These delays caused by GAC's administrative processes often had impacts. Projects experienced significant changes on the ground and between the submission of their concept notes and implementation phases, which sometimes required amendments to their implementation plans and sometimes the need to redo contextual analyses. These issues are not new or unknown to the entirety of the department, however, these typical disruptions were seen to be more serious in complex environments. There remained an ongoing need to align funding tools and project management processes with fast-changing, complex environments.

Moreover, anecdotal evidence from GAC's project leads and implementing partners also demonstrated significant delays when amending contributions agreements. These two elements were points of contention for interviewees.

In some cases, experienced staff were able to use skill and creativity to navigate burdensome administrative processes. Other departmental branches, like PSOPs and humanitarian assistance, relied on their separate approval and funding agreement processes to better adapt to complex environments. The department's flexibility during the COVID-19 crisis was also raised throughout the evaluation, although this was not limited to complex environments. Budgetary supplements and flexibility in reporting and project activity delivery were seen as good practices during that time which could inform future process reviews.

Interviewees emphasized that flexibility was key to ensuring effective engagements in complex environments and should be considered as central to delivering on expectations in volatile environments.

Effectiveness

Adaptation capacity

Crisis modifiers

Crisis modifiers are funding tools that allow early action and a rapid response to humanitarian or crises needs to mitigate shocks in development projects, especially in a context that is vulnerable to shocks, like Somalia.

In the Somalia context, these modifiers were considered an innovative application of the nexus approach to development, where humanitarian interventions could be helpful to development initiatives in terms of maintaining long-term gains of projects.

To note, several iterations of this type of flexibility had been piloted in GAC and at the time of the evaluation, work was ongoing to further standardize these processes. The new options in this area included, among other things, a crisis modifier clause for all contribution agreements in order to maintain the achievements of projects in times of crisis, without, however, becoming humanitarian assistance.

F5: Despite process challenges, successful adaptation responses in unstable and changing contexts provided lessons on operating in complex contexts.

The volatile context in the evaluation's four case study countries was exacerbated by several factors, including the degradation of the security situation (i.e. insurrections in Mozambique, Mali and Nigeria, and terrorist threats in Somalia), shifting politics (i.e. electoral uncertainties and *coups d'état*), the COVID-19 pandemic, and major climate events. These events led to adjustments being made in funded development programs, mainly in the form of minor changes to intervention activities, and the implementation timelines allowing for slowdowns and changes to project components to better adapt to new local realities.

Despite the administrative problems affecting the development steam, a number of process innovations increased adaptability of GAC's engagement. The development program in Somalia stood out in terms of its ability to adapt, as a result of piloting the inclusion of "crisis modifiers" in project contracts with implementing partners. This approach enabled a quick response to ongoing crises, such as providing humanitarian responses while maintaining development objectives. For example, the *Improving Girls' Education for their Empowerment in Somalia (CARE Canada, 2020 – 2023)* project included measures such as direct and unconditional money transfers and scholarships to encourage girls to continue their education, even in times of crisis. This flexibility was integrated into the contribution agreement and was widely adopted in subsequent projects in Somalia. In Mozambique, the approval of smaller projects in the country's northern region in response to the crisis was considered an innovative measure. By selecting only projects with budgets within the HOM's authority threshold, the approval processes were faster and required less involvement from headquarters.

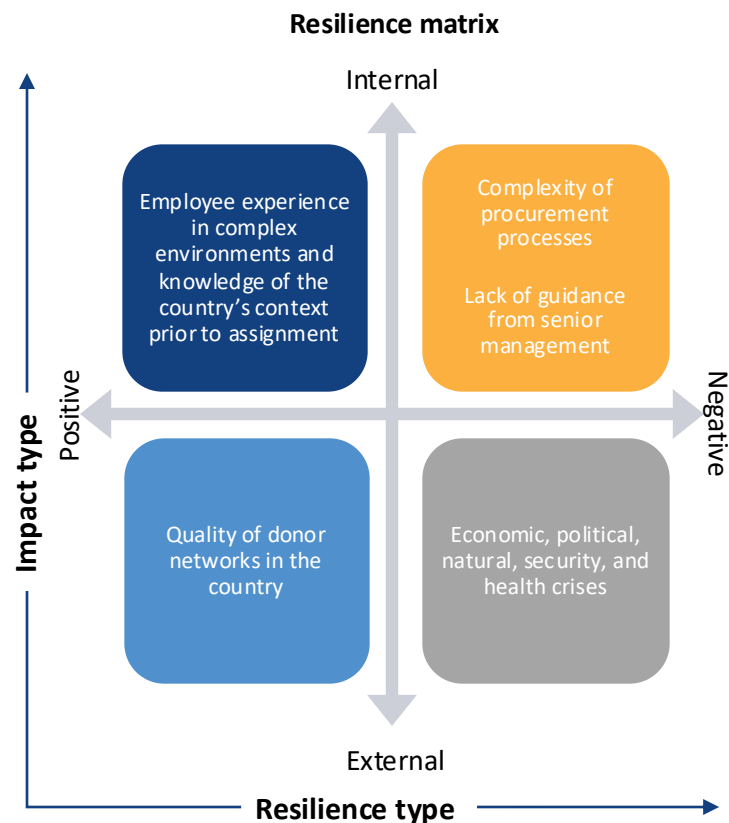
In Mali, the 2020 and 2021 *coups d'état* raised questions about Canada's position. The lack of timely direction from headquarters was felt to have limited staff's ability to react effectively or to adjust Canada's strategic response to the crisis, highlighting the necessity of clear and quick direction.

The projects' adaptability was also influenced by the local communities' level of engagement, the experience of implementing partners and the use of their networks on the ground. However, external limitations, such as the complexity of the country context, and internal limitations, including slow administrative processes, sometimes hampered this ability to adapt.

Innovations were introduced to increase the missions' adaptability to crises, such as the creation of multi-sectoral working groups and coordination committees. These initiatives led to a better common understanding of the environment, the sharing of best practices, and problem-solving to identify how Canada's engagement needed to adapt. The Sahel Committee was an example of this type of innovation, contributing to more coherent response to the crises in the region.

Effectiveness

Resilience



Source: Interviews with GAC personnel

F6: The majority of mission staff from the country case studies did not feel they were sufficiently equipped to operate effectively because of a lack of specific training, tailored guidance, and travel and access restrictions, which they felt reduced their effectiveness and their resilience.

As part of this evaluation, interviewees were asked to self-assess their level of resilience by indicating how prepared they felt when faced with major changes, crises, and complexities; the extent to which they were able to bounce back from challenging experiences; and whether they had sufficient direction.

In the case study countries, staff during the evaluation coverage period did not feel sufficiently prepared to work effectively in complex environments, and this was especially the case in the development and political streams. Interviewees highlighted the need for context-specific training to support their understanding of the different degrees of complexity and how this affected their ability to work. Moreover, the lack of guidance for operating in these contexts negatively affected staff. Security risks and access restrictions, which were deemed necessary to protect staff, limited staff's ability to travel and thus understand their operating contexts, which they felt reduced their effectiveness. This finding aligned with the academic literature that suggested the need to balance security approaches with staff's ability to build local knowledge and networks (Essex & Bowman, 2022).

At the time of the evaluation, GAC offered training courses on working in fragile states and conflict situations, but many respondents had been unable to pursue those courses prior to their assignments abroad. The lack of geographic specificity including the unique challenges of their country's context in these courses was also felt to have reduced the utility of the training in increasing staff resilience.

In several cases, notably in Mali, difficulties in recruiting Canada-based staff had an impact on the human resources profile. The interviews and human resources data showed a large number of whom were non-rotational or on their first assignment abroad. These employees felt they had not been sufficiently trained for the level of complexity of the context. The mission's hardship level (level V), along with the changes related to the requirements of that level, such as the restrictions on having dependents, contributed to making Bamako a less attractive mission, especially for staff with more experience in this type of environment. Staff interviewed emphasized that complex environments required a balance between new recruits and experienced employees, but that incentives for attracting experienced personnel were insufficient.

In missions, distinctions between Canada-based staff and locally engaged staff (LES) also affected staff resilience. For example, LES felt that their limited access to training courses, like in-person Hazardous Environment Training (HET) led to feelings of exclusion and a minimization of their security concerns. It was felt that despite their lack of training, these employees were nevertheless asked to travel to regions with security challenges.

Interviewees who felt they had a high level of preparedness and resilience attributed these competencies to their high levels of experience and specialization in fragile environments, their knowledge of the context prior to their assignment abroad, their skillful use of networks, and having a clear guidance for operating in complex environments.

Effectiveness

Resilience

Recruitment and Preparation Challenges

The Mali case study was notable because of the issues related to human resource management, particularly the difficulty in recruiting rotational personnel and the proportion of employees in interim positions. According to human resources data, on average, 57% of Canadian staff members posted to Bamako were non-rotational during the evaluation period, that is, employees who were not part of the rotational pool of foreign service officers for whom the positions abroad were originally intended. Interviews with staff members showed that the requirements of the mission's difficulty level (level V) in Bamako, such as restrictions on having dependents (spouses and children), contributed to the problem of recruiting rotational foreign service officers. Interviewees emphasized that the concern was not the type of employees assigned abroad, but rather the fact that staff who were not part of the rotational cohorts did not have the same pre-assignment preparation opportunities.

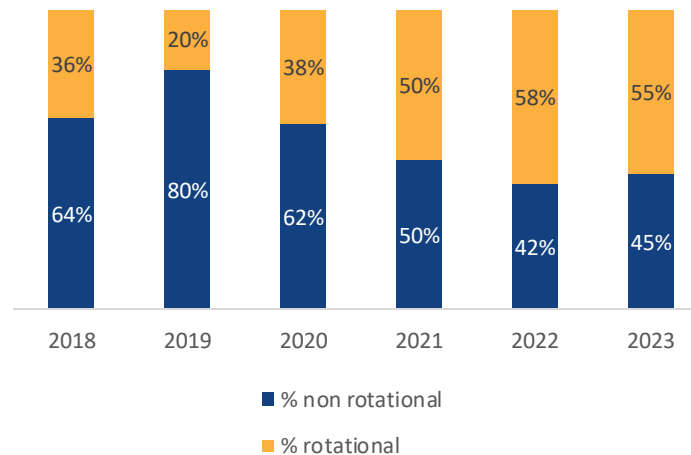
Additionally, human resources data also showed a high proportion of Canadian staff members in interim positions. As a result, several staff members with little management experience in complex contexts took on higher roles than expected, especially during critical periods such as the *coups d'état* in 2020 and 2021 when staff needed guidance.

F6 (cont.): The majority of mission staff from the country case studies did not feel they were sufficiently equipped to operate effectively because of a lack of specific training, tailored guidance, and travel and access restrictions, which they felt reduced their effectiveness and their resilience.

Funded partners responsible for implementing international assistance projects indicated that they felt resilient and ready to deliver results. They attributed these competencies to their vast experience working in the region, collaboration with other partners and local communities, the use of networks, and relying on advice and support from GAC specialists.

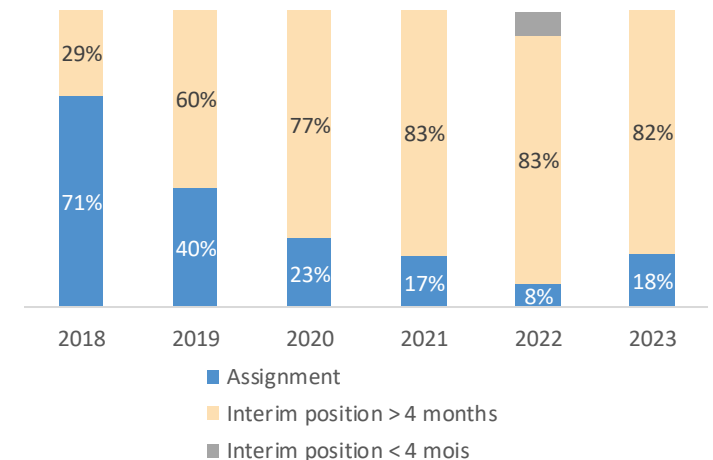
However, interviewees with partners highlighted the challenges around GAC's administrative mechanisms (see the section F4 on processes) and, in particular, the challenges related to amending contribution agreements which was felt to have limited some partners' ability to adapt to changing contexts.

Type of Canadian employees in Bamako



> 50% of employees were non-rotational in Bamako between 2018 – 2021.

Interim positions in Bamako



> 60% of employees were in interim positions in Bamako between 2019 – 2023.

Findings: Results

Results



Sample selection



To better understand the outcomes that Canada was able to achieve in complex environments and to learn from them, the evaluation conducted an in-depth review of a sample of projects in each case study country. Although they were not representative, these samples were selected according to the following criteria and were validated with the program teams:

- level of financial disbursements
- project status (closed, operational)
- coverage of the evaluation's priority themes (health, health and sexual and reproductive rights, peace and security, and governance)
- type of implementing partner
- selection mechanism
- geographical distribution.
- GAC branches responsible for the project

The evaluation also considered the results achieved by the Foreign Policy and Diplomacy, and Trade streams identifying notable outcomes despite the fragility and complexity of the case study countries. However, the evaluation relied on limited qualitative data (i.e. interviews and document reviews) to reflect on how results were impacted by the complexities of the operating environments. These findings should be interpreted as contextual descriptions and are not intended to provide definitive conclusions on the effectiveness of these engagements.

Results

International assistance: Health and sexual and reproductive health and rights

Canada and SRHR

In 2023, Canada renewed its existing engagement with Canadian and international health partners to defend and promote SRHR through “Women Deliver conference”. Considering the weakness of health and SRHR indicators in complex environments, this programming theme was considered necessary to achieve Sustainable Development Goals commitments and had a direct and indirect positive impact on women, girls and vulnerable populations.



Photo credit: Women Deliver 2023 official photo album

F7: Health, including Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) programming, was the area of engagement that had the most notable outcomes in the complex environments studied highlighting the scale and value of Canada’s investments in this area.

Most of the projects identified achieved their objectives by improving the health of project participants in the targeted locations. Case studies in Mozambique and Mali showed the best results in terms of SRHR outcomes. As one of the main bilateral donors in SRHR, Canada made significant contributions to progress in these countries during the evaluation period. Three main areas stood out: improving service offerings and access to these services, increasing demand for services, and providing health advocacy and coordination.

The projects studied achieved or were on track to achieving their objectives, with indicators such as an increase in the number of women and young girls receiving pre-and postnatal care, greater use of and satisfaction with contraception services, and increased decision-making power for women and girls.

In the four countries studied, the majority of projects improved the offering of and access to quality services. For example, in Mozambique, 67% of the projects sampled built the capacities of health institutions and staff, and projects such as *Strengthening National SRHR in Mozambique (World Bank, 2018 – 2024)* almost doubled the number of primary health care staff, from 11,970 in 2017 to 23,029 in 2022. In Mali, 85% of the projects sampled focused on increasing the service offering by training over 1,500 local health care staff including doctors, nurses, and midwives. The *Improving Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health in Complex Contexts in Mali (Canadian Red Cross, 2016 – 2022)* project implemented over 243 transportation systems to support the referral-evacuation system, which contributed to the reduction of maternal and child mortality in the country.

In Somalia, the *Strengthening Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights through Midwives (UNFPA, 2020 – 2025)* project improved the training and availability of midwives. In Mali, the *Spotlight+ (UNFPA, 2019 – 2023)* initiative recruited 43 new midwives in the regions of Ségou, Mopti, Gao, and Timbuktu. In Nigeria, projects trained nurses and midwives in 11 schools and raised awareness among 4,000 traditional attendants. The number of women and girls benefiting from safe abortion and post-abortion care services increased by 45% between 2017 and 2023 in the targeted regions.

The projects also improved family planning in Mozambique, with an increase in the use of modern contraceptives, from 10% to 77% for adolescent girl participants in the *Healthy Women and Girls in Nampula Province (Plan International, 2017 – 2023)* project. In Mali, the number of women using modern contraceptive methods has surpassed the target of 35,000 set by the *Spotlight+ Initiative (UNFPA, 2019-2023)*, with approximately 944,000 users. In Nigeria, nearly 370,000 women and over 30,000 adolescents benefited from family planning services provided by funded projects.

Improvements were also noted in sanitary environments, with projects such as the *Improving the Health Environment for Mothers and Children in Mali (CCISD, 2015 – 2020)* project, which reported over 90% user satisfaction with newly provided sanitary facilities.

Results

International assistance: Health and sexual and reproductive health and rights

Factors that limited the achievement and sustainability of outcomes	Factors that facilitated the achievement and sustainability of outcomes
Social norms (e.g. female genital mutilation, early marriage, etc.)	Alignment with national policies
Health crises and natural disasters (COVID-19, cyclones, heavy rains, extreme heat, etc.)	Flexibility during COVID-19 to facilitate budget changes
Insecurity (presence of armed terrorist groups, conflicts, attacks, etc.)	Community approach (involvement of community leaders in implementation)
State institutions' lack of capacity (financial and technical)	Collaboration between implementation stakeholders (including NGOs, other donors and civil society)
Difficulty balancing the service offerings with demand	

F7 (cont.): Health, including Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) programming, was the area of engagement that had the most notable outcomes in the complex environments studied highlighting the scale and value of Canada's investments in this area.

The increase in demand for, and use of, health and SRHR services in complex environments showed significant progress. GAC projects increased access to pre- and postnatal care, satisfaction with family planning services and women's decision-making power through training, awareness raising and communication campaigns.

In Mozambique, GAC's engagement led to mentoring for over a million girls and young women, helping to reduce early pregnancies with projects such as *Action for Girls and Young Women's SRHR (UNDP, 2019 – 2023)*. Awareness-raising campaigns increased the use of SRHR services, with a notable increase among adolescent girls (from 18% to 31%) and adult women (from 25% to 60%).

In Nigeria, communication campaigns by the *Strengthening Primary Health Care Systems in Bauchi State (UNICEF, 2021 – 2023)* project reached over 2 million people, increasing the use of prenatal care by recipients by 37% between 2018 and 2022. Similarly, the *Spotlight+ Initiative (UNFPA, 2019-2023)* in Mali reached over 2 million young people with its awareness campaigns on gender-based violence.

GAC's advocacy and coordination efforts, notably with WHO and other donors, resulted in optimal resource management in complex contexts. In Nigeria, collaboration with WHO in 36 states helped to eradicate polio on 2020, while in Mali, GAC facilitated a health dialogue group to increase access to services. GAC also advocated for the fight against gender-based violence in Nigeria and supported the implementation of the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act. In Mozambique, GAC played a key role in coordinating health partners.

Lessons learned from engagements in sexual and reproductive health and rights

The combination of pressing needs and international engagement backed by significant investments strengthened Canada's position in a sector that was considered a Canadian niche reported by external stakeholders. Despite significant successes, there were concerns expressed around the achievement and sustainability of outcomes in complex environments (see left). Interviewees and academic literature noted that programming in this area, as in complex environments in general, required long-term engagement in order to see real change in health care systems.

Results

International assistance: Governance

Promoting Inclusive Governance Despite Political Challenges

GAC continued to make efforts to promote inclusive governance despite the increased complexity created by the various *coups d'état* in Mali. One notable example was the deployment of FSSP's technical specialists to build the capacity of women appointed to the National Council of Transition. This initiative increased women's participation in decision-making processes, thus contributing to more inclusive governance.



BVG-Mali building, photo credit: GAC

F8: Canada's engagements in Mali and Somalia produced remarkable results, leading to significant changes within state institutions. In Nigeria and Mozambique, although the projects met their specific objectives, their overall impact was more limited. This highlights the challenge of extending the effects of governance projects beyond their immediate expected outcomes and sustaining the results, particularly in advancing democratic principles.

During the evaluation period, projects in Mali maintained high success indicators despite the challenges posed by two successive *coups d'état* in 2020 and 2021 and the shrinking size of the country's civil society.

Governance projects focused on state capacity building, supporting the institutionalization of public authorities and civil society, improving access to justice for victims (particularly women) and increasing citizen participation (particularly by women) in the peace process, and in reducing local conflicts. These efforts were key in a context where governance indicators declined between 2017 and 2022, according to World Bank data.

All governance projects in Mali showed a high success rate according to their expected intermediate outcome indicators. Interviews with GAC staff suggested that the most notable success of GAC's programming during the evaluation period was its ongoing support for the Office of the Auditor General of Mali (*Bureau du Vérificateur Général - BVG*), an independent audit institution based on the Canadian model. Since 2003, GAC contributed significantly to anti-corruption efforts in Mali by supporting the technical capabilities, professionalism, visibility and credibility of the BVG. The project also provided the BVG with tools to carry out audits and publish public reports.

According to World Bank's governance indicators, Somalia ranked the lowest in the area of governance in 2023 among the countries studied. GAC supported the strengthening of institutional capacity and improved policy making despite a fragile political and economic environment. Progress was made through the IMF's Phase II funds for Somalia, which were felt to have achieved strong results and to have contributed to Somalia's completion of the "Heavily Indebted Poor Countries" process.

Complexity and governance

Governance is often hindered by weak state institutions and insurmountable social divisions, which is particularly the case in fragile states. These social divisions affect the socio-political dynamics and contribute to limiting holistic development opportunities. In this context, some experts emphasize the importance of addressing the root causes of conflicts and divisions in order to promote good governance (Carment & Samy, 2023).

Results

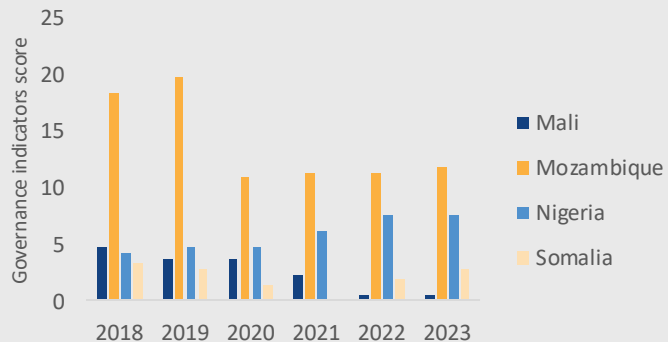
International assistance: Governance

Integration of governance in other projects

Although few projects were identified as falling under governance, this component was included indirectly in many of the projects, thus helping achieve results in the other areas. An example of this was building the management capacity of state health authorities.

- Sectoral budget support in health for Mali's Ministry of Health and Social Development and the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, Children and Families.
- Other capacity-building efforts were carried out through health projects and peace and security projects.

Political stability in case study countries



Source: World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators

F8 (cont.): Canada's engagements in Mali and Somalia produced remarkable results, leading to significant changes within state institutions. In Nigeria and Mozambique, although the projects met their specific objectives, their overall impact was more limited. This highlights the challenge of extending the effects of governance projects beyond their immediate expected outcomes and sustaining the results, particularly in advancing democratic principles.

A small sample of governance projects were included in this study for the other case studies. Although these projects reached their performance targets at an individual project level, less progress was made in terms of overall impact. Projects that reported having achieved intended outcomes focused on the electoral process in Mozambique and Nigeria.

In Mozambique, the only sampled project, *Support to 2019 Mozambique Elections (UNDP, 2019 – 2020)*, focused on the integrity of electoral democracy, a core issue since Mozambique's first multiparty elections in 1994, as shown by academic literature (Hanlon, 2021). Although Canadian funding to the UNDP between 2019 and 2020 led to important progress, such as improved election observation, increased scrutiny of results and improved media ability to monitor elections, the underlying complexities affecting Mozambique's electoral processes—such as environmental factors (cyclones), regional insecurity, and the growing number of internally displaced people (IDPs)—remained unresolved.

In Nigeria, Canadian funded initiatives strengthened women's participation in decision-making processes. The *ADVANCE: Women's Political Participation in Nigeria (UN Women, 2022 – 2025)* project that allowed for equal opportunity legislation to be passed in Kaduna State, helped women register to vote, and supported their candidacies for the 2023 election in 22 states, where 25 women were elected.

Lessons learned from engagements in governance

Noted lessons for successful programming highlighted the importance of supporting institutions, targeting inclusion, understanding local social and political dynamics, and working on projects that were both distinct and integrated in order to strengthen governance in fragile contexts.

Results

International assistance: Peace and security

Importance of Conflict Analyses

The document review and interviews highlighted the value of the support provided by the Conflict Prevention, Stabilization and Peacebuilding unit of the Peace and Stabilization Operations Program (PSOPs). The unit's support in providing tools and training staff on conflict awareness, as well as carrying out conflict analyses, led to a greater understanding of the operating contexts allowing various leads at mission and headquarters to adjust their engagement strategies to remain relevant. However, given resource limitations, this support could not be offered systematically for every complex and/or fragile country where GAC operates. Interviewees underscored the lesson learned that in order for engagements to remain relevant in rapidly changing environments, GAC should explore options for promoting situational analyses that consider conflict, complexity and fragility factors.



Lindsey Partridge, Deputy Director (Cooperation) of the High Commission of Canada in Mozambique, witnessed the historic transition of ex-combatants to civilian life, highlighting Canada's unique role as the sole international observer due to its long-standing support for the peace process.

Passing of the final weapon between RENAMO Momade and President Nyusi in Mozambique. Photo credit: GAC

F9: Significant results in Canada's engagements were observed in Mozambique related to the country's peace process and in Mali related to the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission for Peace and Stability. At the community level, the results achieved demonstrated the value added of conflict analysis in developing an appropriate response.

Canada's engagement in Mozambique significantly contributed to the success of the peace process concluded in 2023 as a result of interconnected projects and the effective coordination of donors. The use of technical assistance funds allowed for rapid and adaptable programming and achieved a multiplier effect by attracting funding from other donors. Canada positioned itself as a leader in this process. In addition, all the external stakeholders interviewed considered Canada to be a trusted actor which was recognized by members of the government and the donor community. Moreover, this series of projects was an example of leveraging diplomatic tools and funding across streams to achieve results, given that these projects were funded in succession by the bilateral program and by the Peace and Stabilization Operations Program (PSOPs).

In Mali, peace and security projects helped citizens participate in the peace process and helped reduce conflicts at the national and local levels. Funded activities included consultation, mediation and psychosocial support services that were carried out by three PSOPs projects as well as three development projects in the sub-Saharan Africa branch with a peace and security component included in the sample. The most notable funded intervention in Mali was Canada's support for the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission which resulted in strengthening the commission's capacity, and an increased participation of civil society within the Commission's decision-making process, including women and individuals considered to be victims of the conflict. Overall, the project surpassed its expected outcomes. Similarly, projects funded by GAC in northern Mozambique to respond to local conflicts strengthened communities' resilience by promoting social cohesion among displaced people and host communities. The sampled projects in Mozambique conducted community needs assessments and focused on co-creating action plans for promoting social cohesion by engaging displaced populations and host community members using innovative methods for engaging in dialogue and problem-solving. These projects benefited from small-scale funding and rapid conflict analysis by the Conflict Prevention, Stabilization and Peacebuilding unit. Although this approach allowed for a quick and contextually appropriate response, experts interviewed expressed concern around the sustainability of the stabilization results if longer-term programming did not follow to address underlying root causes of insecurity.

Lessons Learned from Engagements in Peace and Security

Interviewees felt that in complex and fragile environments, GAC programming should be thinking more about how to integrate peace and security engagements given the level of interconnectivity between the causes of fragility and the ability for engagements to achieve their expected results. There was the perspective that in very fragile environments, engagements in maintaining peace and security - which are traditionally offered by PSOPs - should be combined in a more balanced way with development programs and humanitarian assistance in order to respond to unexpected crises as well as to protracted crises. In addition, the importance of conflict analysis proved crucial to interviewees who felt that they were able to better respond to the complexity of the context when such an analysis was available to them. From their perspective, GAC should ensure conflict analysis process take place when operating in complex and fragile environments.

Results

Cross-cutting theme: Gender equality

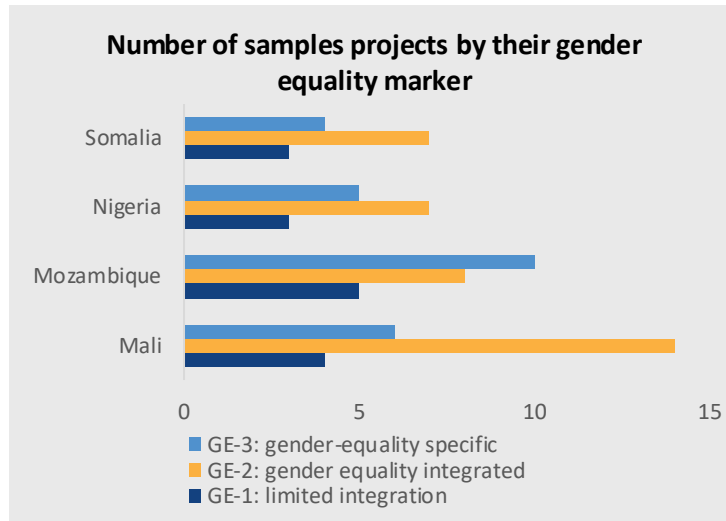


Photo credit: Embassy of Canada to Mali

F10: Canada's engagements integrated activities across its engagement streams to advance the foreign policy priority of achieving gender equality. This approach produced results in all programming streams and in all types of diplomatic engagements. Canada was seen as a global champion on advancing gender equality.

The majority of international assistance projects sampled in this evaluation either specifically focused on promoting gender equality as a core focus (GE-3), or projects integrated core project activities to also promote gender equality (GE-2). Other work streams also demonstrated a high degree of including gender equality considerations in their respective areas of engagement, except for trade and humanitarian work streams, where conducting gender-based analyses was a requirement, but working to advance gender equality goals was not a core focus.

Development programming achieved significant results in preventing gender-based violence, providing services for victims of gender-based violence (care, legal services, etc.) and supporting women's empowerment and their participation in decision-making.

Interviewees highlighted that successful engagements for advancing gender equality were rooted in a uniquely Canadian approach its activities: inclusive community engagement. This was particularly evident in the peace and stabilization projects in Mozambique and Mali. In addition, the foreign policy and development streams led successful advocacy and awareness-raising efforts between government officials, donors and communities through its GBA Plus approach.

Interviewees, including other country representatives, expressed that Canada was viewed as a leader in supporting the advancing of gender equality. However, in the Nigerian case study, this strong recognition was not apparent likely as a result of the limited size of the program compared to the scope of the expected results, and the exclusion of inclusive growth, an area with a significant gender equality component, from the evaluation scope. Although gender equality was a cross-cutting theme integrated into the sampled projects, particularly in health and sexual and reproductive rights, the results were less visible in this evaluation. The most significant gender equality project in *Nigeria, Women's Voice and Leadership (Action Aid Nigeria, 2019 – 2024)*, was not part of the sample, as it had already been evaluated in 2022.

Interviewees cautioned that although the results achieved were significant, working to promote behavioural changes in vastly different socio-cultural context would take long-term commitments to achieve gender equality.

Results

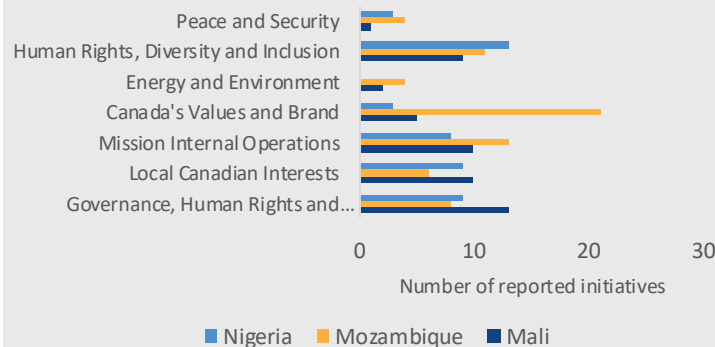
Foreign policy and diplomacy



Navigating complexity diplomatically

In the countries studied, challenges such as the lack of human resources in the FPDS stream, contextual challenges such as *coups d'état*, electoral crises, insecurity, and COVID-19, limited the ability of actors to achieve results. The case of Somalia was even more affected by the absence of personnel dedicated to the FPDS stream, which resulted in an additional workload for the development team that had to take on this role. Despite the limited capacity and human resources in Somalia, advocacy efforts contributed to convincing country officials to advance legislative initiatives, particularly the blocking of a bill to lower the legal age of marriage. When the teams were able to find the right niche and network for Canadian engagement efforts, significant results were possible in these complex environments.

FPDS initiatives (2018 - 2023)



Source: GAC

F11: In three of the countries studied, significant results were observed from the Foreign Policy and Diplomacy Service (FPDS) in supporting Canada's ability to navigate complex relationships. This included providing analysis that explained the complexity of the environments and reporting on opportunities for engagement, which included identifying key stakeholders. Results were also achieved by promoting bilateral dialogue on the protection of democratic principles, good governance, and human rights. The Somalia case study was an exception due to its limited FPDS capacity.

The role of FPDS officers in the complex environments studied was to gather information and provide analysis that unpacked the complexity for decision makers, while maintaining relationships with various stakeholders to advance Canada's interests. For example, FPDS teams provided reports on geopolitical situations, elections, and security, and tailored crucial information from the field for headquarters. These reports played a key role during crises, such as the *coups d'état* in Mali, helping to influence Canada's response decisions and positioning. In delivering on this role in complex environments, FPDS officers reportedly faced challenges related to changing power dynamics, obtaining reliable information, navigating human rights discussions, and providing recommendations that considered security issues, including threats of terrorism. The skills of officers to navigate this complexity, especially during crises, was key to supporting all streams in achieving their objectives.

In terms of advancing Canada's advocacy priorities, FPDS officers focused on promoting human rights and inclusive governance, particularly women's empowerment and gender equality in Mozambique, Mali, and Nigeria. They leveraged international events such as International Human Rights Day, International Day of the Girl Child and the 16 Days of Activism to engage in productive dialogue with country's officials, civil society, and the general public.

In Mozambique, advocacy efforts primarily focused on supporting media freedom and advancing democratic principles. The FPDS team also achieved remarkable results in terms of promoting Canada's visibility through external communications which interviewees felt strengthened Canada's image in the country. Efforts were also made, although to a lesser extent, to raise awareness about issues relating to energy, environmental concerns and peace and security, particularly in Mozambique and Mali.

Engagement in the area of promoting good governance was also a priority, particularly in Mali, where action was taken prior to the *coups d'état* to support citizens' participation to democratic processes. Mali case study was notable due to the observed impact of complexity on the FPDS agenda during the evaluation period. After the *coups d'état* in 2020 and 2021, there was a reorientation of priorities in foreign policy and diplomacy, with a focus on political transition, elections, and constitutional reforms.

The FPDS team in Nigeria supported several initiatives aimed at reducing intercommunal conflicts in Nigeria to advance the Canadian foreign policy objective of peace and security. GAC participated in election observation in central Nigeria, focusing on intercommunal violence during the 2019 electoral cycle. Peace and security efforts continued in 2022-2023, with the Canadian High Commission launching the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflicts. Despite these notable results, complexity of socio-political context in Nigeria had an impact of the overall visibility of Canada's engagement. The interviewees highlighted the major challenges that the mission to Nigeria encountered in raising the profile of Canada's engagement given Canada's smaller size and financial contributions, as well as less overt communication strategies in comparison to other countries' missions. Interviews with local authorities and project participants also highlighted a limited understanding of Canada's engagements.

Results

Trade

Navigating commercial complexity

A number of internal and external complexity factors limited trade results in the three case study countries (Mali, Mozambique, and Nigeria) during the evaluation period, particularly difficulties in obtaining necessary funding and human resources, political and social instability, insecurity, unpredictability of institutional reforms, lack of transparency, and the prolonged impact of COVID-19 on the economy. Despite these challenges, the TCS succeeded in defending the interests of Canadian mining companies and representing Canada at major international mining and education conventions.

Greater ability to analyze macroeconomic and political trends is required

Interviewees reported that trade engagement in the complex environments of sub-Saharan Africa was often constrained by rapidly evolving political and macroeconomic developments, which negatively impacted the predictability of Canadian investments in these countries. They urged the department to pursue efforts to strengthen GAC's analytical ability in these areas for complex environments.



Participants of the EduCanada Fair in Nigeria in 2020.

Photo credit: High Commission of Canada to Nigeria

F12: The most significant trade results achieved were evident in the mining sector in Mali and in promoting enrollment in Canadian educational institutions in both Mali and Nigeria. To continue advancing Canada's trade interests in complex environments, interviewees recommended that GAC further strengthen its analytical activities to support the identification of new areas of trade focus in rapidly evolving and sometimes volatile spaces.

Canada's Trade Commissioner Service (TCS), through its on-the-ground presence, provided market information and analysis to decision makers while providing practical advice on foreign markets to its Canadian business clients to help them make informed and timely decisions to support their trading goals abroad.

In the studied complex environments, this work involved understanding and recommending options to respond to the challenges of markets in less secure areas and the highly fluid nature of the political and economic context, which affected their attractiveness for Canadian companies.

Canada was a major trading partner for Mali, particularly in the mining sector. During the evaluation period, Canadian companies were the largest private investors in 2021, accounting for approximately 5% to 10% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, the political and trade environment was disrupted by two *coups d'état* where the ruling junta reformed the country's mining code in 2023 in a less favourable manner for international companies, including Canadian. Following the coups, Canada's trade interests in the country were influenced by how the ruling junta perceived Canada's political stance. During this period, the priority for the trade stream was to assist Canadian companies in finding solutions to problems arising from unfavourable institutional reforms.

In Mali, in the education sector, a significant success was the organization of the EduCanada Fair, which brought together 38 Canadian institutions and 5 associations, strengthening Canada's positioning as an education destination for foreign students.

In Nigeria, education also remained a key area of trade engagement, due in part to Nigerians' growing interest in the Canadian education system. At the time of the evaluation, Nigeria was Canada's largest market in sub-Saharan Africa, with numerous trade shows and partnerships between educational institutions. The oil and gas sector was also crucial, as Nigeria was an important market for Canadian companies. Although the pandemic affected the achievement of results, primarily because of the cancellation of trade shows, as a result of travel restrictions, the recovery period was strong, particularly in the education sector, which saw a 150% increase in serving Canadian business clients between 2021–22.

Several challenges affected TCS results in Nigeria such as the deterioration of the local economic situation, the departure of long-standing local employees and the residual impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, by prioritizing the agricultural sector in 2021–22, the TCS was able to make significant progress in strengthening the trade relationship. The Nigerian government's growing interest in food security, particularly in light of the war in Ukraine, allowed the TCS to finalize several opportunities to train farmers and dairy producers. These efforts made 2022–23 a record year for the TCS in Nigeria.

Conclusions

Conclusions

The strategic vision of Canada's engagement in complex environments needs to be strengthened.

GAC's ability to have responsive and effective engagements and programming in countries studied was predicated on the presence of a robust understanding of the unique situational complexities at the country and local levels. Intentional analytical pieces unpacked the complex allowing for targeted Canadian programming and engagement. Contextual analyses provided by the FSSP services and the conflict analyses provided by PSOPs were particularly found to be helpful. However, evaluation evidence underscored the lack of consistent strategic direction for Canada's overall country engagements. These results point to the need to move the annual departmental Strategia planning exercise away from a burdensome reporting tool to become its intended strategic visioning exercise that provides a coherent Canadian engagement vision with realistic and prioritized expectations for advancing Canada's interests.

Improved processes for approving and adjusting responsive projects are needed to ensure the relevance of funded programming in complex environments.

Project approval and funding agreement amendment processes did not have the adaptability needed to operate effectively in complex environments. These issues were not new and have been previously reported by other evaluations and internal review exercises. However, these challenges were more prominent in complex environments when the situational reality changed rapidly, and funded programming was not able to be approved or adjusted fast enough. Despite these administrative problems that particularly affected the development business line, a number of process innovations were piloted and increased adaptability, notably the use of "crisis modifiers" in project contracts with implementing partners. These successful adaptations point to the need to further socialize what's possible among staff and to continue to make opportunities to test new ways of responsibility adapting funding agreements.

Improved support for employees in complex environments is needed to ensure staff are more resilient and effective.

The evaluation identified significant concerns around the resilience of GAC staff in complex environments. Staff asked for more tailored training and country-specific advice. They wanted more guidance and strategic direction with well aligned resourcing to be able to travel where necessary and operate effectively in complex environments. The evaluation uncovered recruitment challenges that prevented a sufficient complement of experienced staff to balance the number of individuals on their first post pointing to the need to review posting incentives, rules, and the adequacy of foreign service pools. Some training offerings that were available to Canada-based staff that were not available to locally engaged staff (LES) also pointed to the need to reflect on what training gaps may exist for LES in these complex environments.

Canada's engagements achieved significant results despite the complexity challenges with emerging lessons for ongoing opportunities.

GAC's international assistance programming demonstrated significant results in the health, governance and peace and security sectors, which were well suited to addressing the pertinent challenges of complex environments. Canada's gender equality engagements produced significant results across sectors positioning Canada as a leader. However, long-term commitments are likely necessary to sustain these results. The Foreign Policy and Diplomacy Service (FPDS) successfully navigated complex relationships and provided advice to decision-makers by providing analysis that explained the complexity of the environments, with the exception of Somalia. When FPDS officers were able to find the right niche and network for Canadian engagement efforts, they achieved meaningful results that advanced the protection of human rights, the promotion of good governance and accountability to democratic principles. Trade engagements found success by focusing on the mining and education sectors in complex environments. To continue to advance Canada's trade interests, there is an opportunity to further strengthen GAC's analytical capacity to be able to assess the evolving economic forecast and opportunities within these complex environments to proactively position and advance Canadian business interests.

Recommendations

Recommendations

Note: The findings of this evaluation and below recommendations only reflect the period 2018 to 2023. Canada's Africa Strategy: A Partnership for Shared Prosperity and Security, launched in March 2025, is therefore not part of the evaluation scope. However, some of the considerations raised in this report have been reflected in the strategy.

1

Explore and pilot a new approach to support integrated strategic country planning to provide an overall engagement and communication strategy for Canada to operate effectively in complex environments (i.e., countries classified as hardship 4 or 5). Resultant plans should align the objectives, activities and programs of the mission, headquarters and other government departments.

Supported by findings 1, 2, 3 and 9

Primary responsibility centre: Transformation Team Bureau

2

Support projects in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS) to remain relevant by streamlining project approval processes and building flexibility in funding agreements to respond to unexpected crises.

Supported by findings 4 and 5

Primary responsibility centre: Grants and Contributions Center of Expertise

3

Strengthen personnel selection, pre-posting preparation, and support CBS and LES at post for hardships 4 and 5 assignments to improve staff capacity and resilience.

Supported by finding 6

Primary responsibility centre: Assignments, Performance and Talent Management Bureau