

DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION DIRECTORATE

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2024 Poverty and Inequalities Profiles

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This brochure compiles the section on poverty and inequality focus of DAC members (27 of them) published in the [2024 OECD Development Co-operation Profiles](#) and informed by a survey of DAC members poverty and inequality approaches conducted in Spring 2024, a desk review, interviews and other qualitative research.

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Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Members 2024 Poverty and Inequalities Profiles

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Australia

While poverty reduction is not one of the explicit objectives of Australia's [International Development Policy](#), it is recognised as an essential means of achieving Australia's international development objectives in the Indo-Pacific region. Australia's approach to poverty reduction strongly emphasises horizontal dimensions of inequalities – primarily gender and, to some extent, disability – and seeks to embed them in the programme cycle as cross-cutting objectives. Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is developing dedicated strategies on gender equality and disability equity and rights. Australia also has an [indigenous diplomacy agenda](#) and a [guidance note on reaching indigenous people](#) through development co-operation. Its approach to other dimensions of poverty and inequalities is less explicitly documented.

Austria

Eradicating poverty is one of the three objectives of Austria's 2022 [Federal Act on Development Co-operation](#) and one of the core objectives of its [Three-Year Programme](#). Austria focuses on multi-dimensional aspects of poverty: the 2009 [policy on poverty reduction](#) touches on links between poverty, economic inequality and gender equality, with an emphasis on targeting least developed countries (LDCs). It has also developed a poverty marker for internal statistical usage. Austria takes into account some dimensions of horizontal inequalities, namely [gender equality](#), [persons with disabilities](#), and [children and young people](#).

Belgium

The [overarching objective of Belgium's development co-operation](#) is to achieve sustainable human development by eradicating poverty, exclusion and inequalities. Social and economic inequality is understood as a key driver of poverty and is one of the [priority areas](#) of Belgium's development co-operation agency, Enabel. In line with this emphasis, Belgium has carried out extensive work on [conceptualising inequalities](#), with a focus on vertical and gender-based inequalities. Belgium has also taken initial steps to embed an inequalities lens in its programming, including by developing ex ante appraisal tools.

Canada

Canada recognises that in addition to addressing multidimensional poverty, gender inequality intersects with other dimensions of exclusion, discrimination and marginalisation. Canada's [Feminist International Assistance Policy](#) anchors gender equality as the overarching, cross-cutting objective of



Canadian ODA through a human rights-based approach. Promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls is seen as the most effective approach to eradicating poverty. Innovative tools, such as GAC's programme assessment process, support Canada's emphasis on gender-based inequalities. Canada's feminist evaluation methodology aims to explore power relations and focus on the systemic or structural causes of inequalities and discrimination. According to findings from the Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) survey on poverty and inequalities and internal CoP-PI analysis, other dimensions of poverty and inequalities such as disabilities, human dignity, human rights, LGBTQ2I+ communities and indigenous issues are considered or targeted in GAC's policies, programming and processes, within a policy framework focused on gender equality.

Denmark

Poverty reduction is a central part of the Danish development co-operation mandate and is enshrined in its development law as a main objective. Denmark takes a multi-dimensional approach to both poverty and inequalities – encompassing both vertical and horizontal dimensions. It places a particular emphasis on the driving factors. The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' "[how-to note](#)" on fighting poverty and inequality details how poverty and inequality can be mainstreamed across the full spectrum of Danish development co-operation. This approach is further reinforced by the inclusion of a poverty criterion in the programme appraisal stage.

European Union institutions

Inequality is a prominent priority theme in the European Union's development co-operation. The Directorate-General for International Partnerships primarily focuses on vertical/income inequality. Horizontal dimensions such as [gender equality](#) are also considered [external priorities guiding EU ODA](#). The European Union has a range of strategies and detailed guidance on reducing inequalities, while an extensive research agenda has been developed in partnership with other international development agencies. The European Union developed an [Inequality Marker](#) to assess the degree to which development interventions target reducing inequality as their principal objective. Poverty reduction is also a priority goal for EU development co-operation: it is enshrined as one of the primary objectives in the [Treaty on the European Union](#) and the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) and reaffirmed as the primary objective of EU ODA in the [European Consensus on Development](#). However, it is less visible than inequality in the European Union's detailed strategies and implementation processes.

Finland

Finland's development co-operation is centred on a human rights-based approach. The Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs' (MFA) approach to reducing poverty and inequalities emphasises horizontal inequalities, notably gender and disability, as well as the intersections between group inequalities. This focus is expected to remain part of the MFA's cross-cutting objectives. The MFA has a series of tools to ensure that projects comply with minimum standards for gender equality and disability inclusion, including data disaggregation when monitoring implementation and using OECD-DAC policy markers.

France

Eradicating poverty and combating inequalities are core objectives of France's development policy, as indicated in France's [Programming Act on Inclusive Development and Combating Global Inequalities](#) and [French law](#). The French Development Agency (AFD) is committed to reducing inequalities through its "[100% social link strategy](#)", focusing on social links between peoples and countries. France considers both vertical and horizontal inequalities with a multidimensional lens, particularly gender-



based inequalities. AFD is deepening its evidence base and strengthening programming through [the EU-AFD Research Facility on Inequalities](#), which researches effective policies for reducing inequalities (in collaboration with the European Union) and [the Sustainable Development Analysis and Opinion Mechanism](#), which appraises project alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). France pays particular attention to the links between inequalities, climate and environmental issues.

Germany

BMZ's [2030 Reform Strategy](#) cites overcoming hunger and poverty as the primary aim of German development co-operation. Among the quality criteria that should apply to all programmes, BMZ identifies poverty and inequality reduction, as well as human rights, gender equality and disability inclusion. Germany approaches poverty and inequality reduction in a multidimensional way. It placed increased attention on vertical and horizontal inequalities, as reflected in the 2023 [position paper: Less Inequality, More Opportunities for Sustainable Development](#). GIZ has developed several tools to mainstream poverty and inequalities in development co-operation, including a dedicated poverty marker.

Hungary

Hungary's 2020-25 development strategy states that its five goal-oriented pillars will be delivered following the aims of the 2030 Agenda and the overarching guidelines of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) on eradicating poverty. It seeks to mainstream these principles and guidelines across its thematic priorities, as the policy section outlines.

Iceland

Iceland's human rights approach to development co-operation, outlined in [its policy for international development cooperation 2024-2028](#), focuses on poverty reduction, gender equality and locally led development through improving human capital and social infrastructure. Iceland is in the process of updating its strategic documents on human rights and gender equality. Other group-based inequalities targeted include inequalities faced by LGBTQI+ persons, people with disabilities and children, with projects and programmes centred around disability making up almost 50% of Iceland's bilateral allocable aid. Iceland focuses on partnering with subnational authorities in the second tier of government in specific targeted regions to support the decentralised provision of basic services, such as water and sanitation, health, and education. Additionally, through its GRÓ programme, specialist Icelandic knowledge and experience are shared with subnational government actors in partner countries to develop specialist sectors like fisheries and geothermal energy to support livelihoods in underserved regions. Iceland's Directorate for Development Cooperation targets a few of the least developed countries (LDCs) in sub-Saharan Africa and tailors development co-operation based on income levels.

Ireland

"Reaching the furthest behind first" is the overarching objective of Ireland's [international development policy](#). The Department of Foreign Affairs interprets being "furthest behind" as a multi-dimensional concept encompassing multiple forms of poverty and inequalities and their intersections (see [here](#)). Regarding inequalities, one of Ireland's four policy priorities is gender equality. Vertical (income) inequality and other forms of group-based inequalities are not explicitly identified as priorities. Ireland has developed an information note on "reaching the furthest behind first" to support its strategy, although this is not publicly available. New tools and formal processes to embed poverty and inequality in the programme cycle are under development.



Italy

[Article 1, Clause 2.a of Law 125/2014](#) states that “uprooting poverty and narrowing inequalities, improving the living conditions of peoples and promoting sustainable development” are fundamental objectives of Italy’s international co-operation for sustainable development. Italy aims to take an intersectional approach to delivering on these objectives by identifying the most vulnerable situations in specific contexts. The Italian Agency for Development Co-operation (AICS) has specific guidelines [on poverty reduction, children and youth, disabilities, social inclusion, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls](#), as well as an earlier [operational toolkit for gender equality and female empowerment](#). Italy’s targeted interventions for poverty reduction take a sectoral approach, focusing on health, food security, access to water, gender violence and human rights.

Japan

Japan aims to achieve quality growth and, through this growth, to eradicate poverty sustainably and realise a prosperous society in which all people can live with dignity. As such, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has put building blocks in place to target the reduction of poverty and inequalities through development co-operation. These include JICA’s commitment to human security within the conceptual framework established by its 2011 Thematic Guidelines on Poverty Reduction, which also include a detailed analysis of the causes of poverty and potential steps for JICA to take in response. In addition, JICA’s priorities are group-based inequalities, which implies a structured approach to embedding gender equality in the programme cycle and, to a lesser extent, inequalities facing children, persons with disabilities, the elderly, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples, and other socially vulnerable groups, as well as economic disparities.

Korea

Korea’s 2020 [Framework Act on International Development Cooperation](#) states that its goals include reducing poverty and improving the quality of life in developing countries, with a strong emphasis on reducing gender-based inequalities. Targeted horizontal inequalities in Korea’s development co-operation includes improving the human rights of women, children, people with disabilities and youth. Korea is taking steps towards gender mainstreaming, including through the publication of a gender strategy, links with Korea’s domestic gender-sensitive budgeting system and the presence of specialist staff.

Luxembourg

Luxembourg’s [General Development Cooperation Strategy: The Road to 2030](#) states that Luxembourg’s main objective is to contribute to eradicating extreme poverty through support for sustainable development on an economic, social and environmental level, in particular focusing on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups/people, especially women youth. In particular, it strongly emphasises gender equality and the gender-climate nexus. To combat extreme poverty, Luxembourg focuses on the following inclusive thematic priorities: improving access to quality basic social services, enhancing the socio-economic integration of women and youth, promoting inclusive and sustainable growth, and strengthening inclusive governance. Luxembourg also targets partner countries with large poverty gaps, low human development scores and limited financial resources, particularly LDCs.

The Netherlands

The Netherlands’ development co-operation aims to address the root causes of poverty and gender inequality, as outlined in the [2022 Policy Document for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation](#),



with a particular emphasis on increasing access to basic needs and rights such as nutrition, agriculture and water. Gender equality is the most prominent dimension of the Netherlands' approach to reducing poverty and inequalities, focusing drivers of gender inequality, such as unequal power relations, social norms and stereotypes. Promising features of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' approach include incorporating gender equality considerations throughout procurement processes and mainstreaming gender in other policy areas such as trade.

New Zealand

Equity and inclusion are cross-cutting themes and core principles of New Zealand's 2019 policy statement for [International Cooperation for Effective Sustainable Development](#). New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) is committed to addressing the root causes of poverty and inequalities while promoting resilience and equitable participation, with a focus on Pacific Islands. New Zealand places particular emphasis on reducing group-based, horizontal inequalities – primarily [gender](#)- and [youth](#)-based inequalities – and promoting [human rights](#) through dedicated strategic action plans and policy markers. MFAT is seeking to better mainstream these cross-cutting elements across its international development programme.

Norway

Poverty reduction is a long-standing objective of Norwegian development co-operation and reducing inequality is perceived as an important political priority under Norway's current development policy, although overarching policy documents include limited explicit commitments or statements. Norway has a clear focus on reducing some dimensions of horizontal inequalities, notably gender inequality – through its dedicated [action plan](#) – and disability-based inequalities – through its dedicated [strategy](#). Norway is also interested in the linkages between poverty, inequalities and climate action. According to Norway's response to the DAC survey on poverty and inequalities and other research, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) is focusing on different enablers of inequality reduction and approaches to support them, and seeking ways to best operationalise the government's rising prioritisation of tackling vertical inequalities.

Portugal

The mission of the [Portuguese Development Cooperation Strategy 2030](#) is to eradicate poverty; fight inequalities; and promote sustainable, equitable and inclusive global development, informed by the concept of leaving no one behind. The Solidarity and Social Security Strategy is currently being reviewed. According to Portugal, it is likely to reach many people experiencing poverty and inequalities through its strong focus on social sectors in least developed countries (LDCs) and fragile states. Portugal's poverty and inequality projects target vulnerable populations such as children and youth, women, the elderly, and people with disabilities by using social protection as the main policy instrument for reducing poverty and inequalities and strengthening local systems. Portugal does not have specific guidance or programming tools for mainstreaming poverty and inequality considerations across its ODA programming.

Slovak Republic

The [Medium-Term Strategy for Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2019-2023](#) consists of four pillars, one of which focuses on poverty reduction and social inclusion. It also addresses the root causes of migration and the refugee crisis. The Slovak Republic responds by focusing on creating jobs, supporting food security, developing and increasing human capital, and increasing economic and social resilience in partner countries. Its inequality focus zooms in on gender equality, for which it has published [guidance](#) with a cross-sector focus.



Slovenia

Slovenia's [Resolution on Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid](#) outlines eradicating poverty and creating peaceful and inclusive societies as key development co-operation goals. Slovenia is beginning to implement its guidelines for mainstreaming gender equality in development co-operation, aiming to ensure a targeted intersectional approach to gender and inequalities. Slovenia's broader development programming aims to identify and target the most vulnerable and marginalised populations, such as internally displaced women and female refugees and children.

Spain

Reducing poverty and inequalities has a prominent focus in Spain's new [Law on Sustainable Development Co-operation and Global Solidarity](#) (2023). Different dimensions of poverty and inequalities, including both vertical (income) and horizontal inequalities between groups, feature among the principles and objectives of its development co-operation. The Spanish Agency for International Development Co-operation (AECID) recently developed a working definition and conceptual framework for inequalities, which encompasses vertical and horizontal inequalities across multiple dimensions and highlights the need to adopt an intersectional approach. AECID has detailed guidance to help embed considerations relating to gender- and disability-based inequalities and has funded research on poverty and inequalities. A range of additional measures to help implement Spain's new law is under development, from a new marker to further developing strategic documents and training materials related to poverty and inequalities. Fighting poverty and inequalities will be a cross-cutting priority of the upcoming Spanish Cooperation Master Plan.

Sweden

Sweden's approach to poverty and inequality reduction focuses on multi-dimensional poverty and [gender-based inequality](#). Sweden's [multi-dimensional understanding of poverty](#) encompasses resources, opportunities and choice, power and voice, and human security. The Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency's (Sida) country offices are expected to conduct [multi-dimensional poverty analyses](#) to inform their country strategies and programming cycle. This is a well-established approach to conceptualising and analysing poverty in different country contexts. The government's 2023 "reform agenda" for Swedish ODA reaffirms Sweden's high-level commitment to poverty reduction but does not explicitly mention the various and cross-cutting dimensions of its poverty and inequality priorities.

Switzerland

Switzerland's approach to reducing poverty and inequalities focuses predominantly on horizontal inequalities, founded on and guided by the "leave no one behind" principle. According to the current [development co-operation strategy](#), poverty reduction is the *raison d'être* of Swiss development co-operation. Within this overall framework, Switzerland has a strategic objective of promoting peace, the rule of law and gender equality, and considers gender equality as a cross-cutting theme across all its interventions. The Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC) has developed [overarching guidance on leave no one behind](#), and sees being "left behind" as closely linked to multi-dimensional poverty. Switzerland has also produced [detailed guidance on participatory assessments](#) to involve people at risk of being left behind in different stages of the programme cycle.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom's [International Development Act \(2002\)](#) requires that development assistance (including ODA) provided under the Act is likely to contribute to reducing poverty and reducing



gender-based inequalities. The 2023 [White Paper on International Development](#) reiterates the central strategic importance of poverty reduction for the United Kingdom's ODA programme. Under this overall goal, one of the approaches the United Kingdom has undertaken is ensuring opportunities for all, which includes addressing different dimensions of horizontal inequalities, such as those based on gender, disability and sexual orientation. The United Kingdom has dedicated strategies for tackling [gender-based inequalities](#) and [promoting disability inclusion](#). The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) has a range of tools to ensure a stronger focus on inclusion and equity in development interventions, such as its Gender and Social Inclusion analysis, its Value for Money framework, and its [equality impact assessments](#). The FCDO also funds the [Data & Evidence to End Extreme Poverty](#) research programme to support the design and implementation of its policies, programmes and strategies to tackle extreme poverty.

United States

The United States' approach to reducing poverty and inequality focuses on promoting [inclusive development](#) and [diversity, equity, inclusivity and accessibility](#) as a cross-cutting agenda. The United States' [Joint Strategic Plan FY 2022-2026](#) outlines that recent international crises have reinforced the attention to poverty reduction as a strategic objective. USAID has dedicated strategies on a wide range of horizontal inequalities, including [gender equality and women's empowerment](#), [youth](#), [indigenous peoples](#), [LGBTQI+ inclusion](#), and [children in adversity](#). With the [2023 updated Equity Action Plan](#), there has also been a push towards advancing racial equity, justice and equal opportunities. To embed inequality considerations in its programme cycle, USAID requires all programmes to undertake gender and youth analyses, but also recommends [inclusive development analyses](#).

