

Aid Atlas: new tool to visualize development finance flows

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Who is Aid Atlas for?

The Aid Atlas is an interactive online platform which helps public and private actors to explore the flows of international development finance. The tool can help governments, researchers, development partners, international organizations, and others to understand more easily how much funding is provided, where it is going, and what it is being used for. It also enables users to ask questions about what impacts the finance is having for people and the environment.

The primary audience for the platform is government officials in countries where development finance is being invested, where familiarity with the aid landscape and data is more limited and capacity to spend time understanding aid flows is weakest and yet most needed. These are people that often have little time for seeking out and analysing data from development partners and international organizations, but whose work is extremely relevant to the way development finance is being used.

Figure 1. Alluvial diagram of aid flows (prototype)

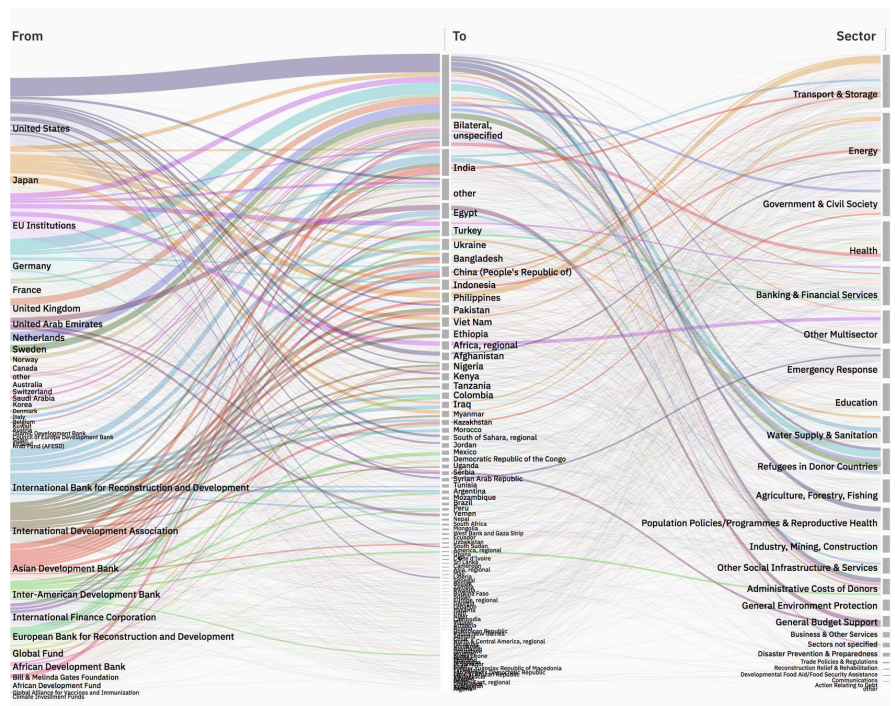
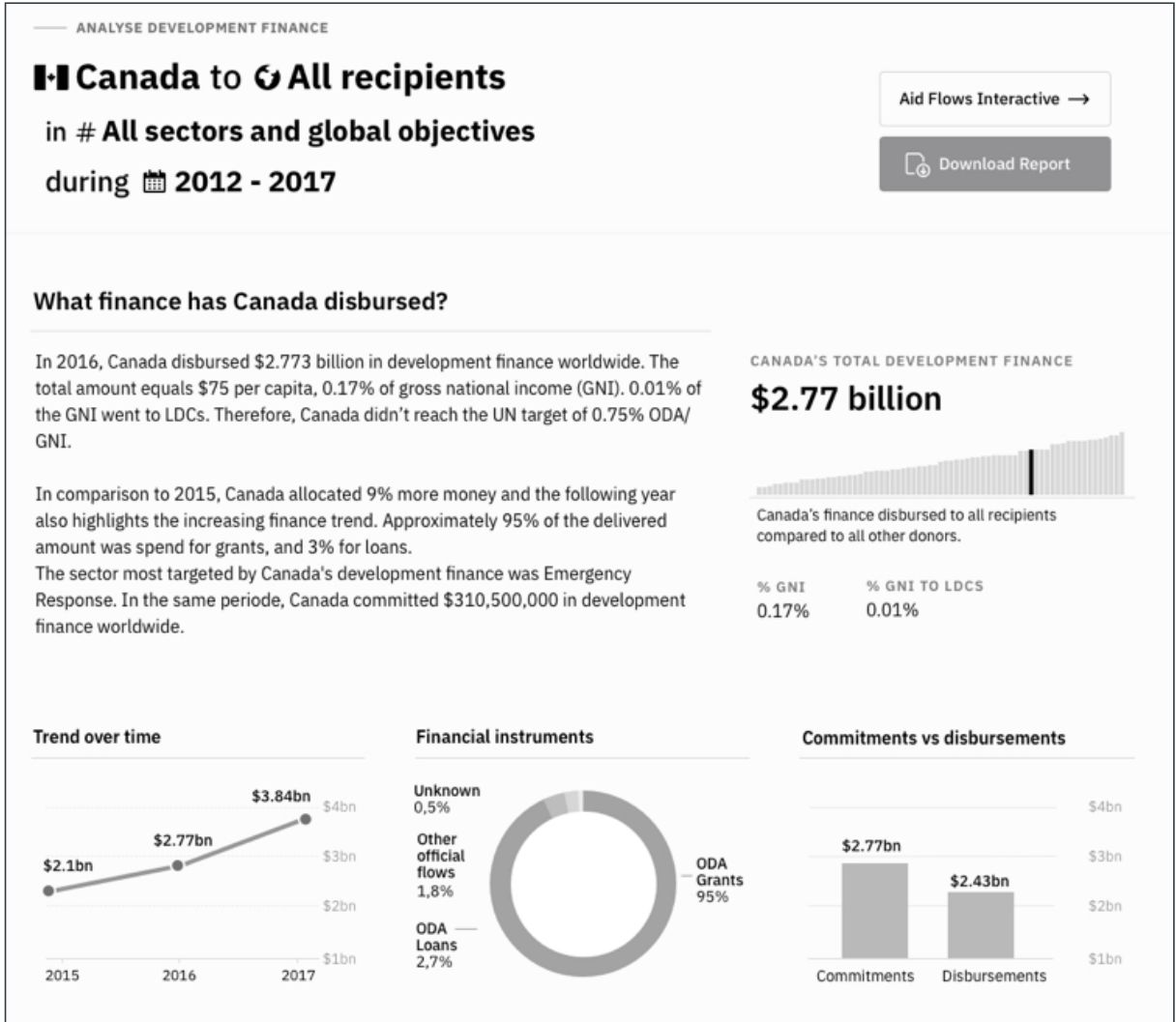


Figure 2. Country profile page (prototype) showing development finance disbursements in US dollars.



Other potential users include researchers interested in the effectiveness of development finance, and representatives of international organizations such as United Nations agencies, international development agencies, global climate funds, and multilateral development banks.

How Aid Atlas works

Aid Atlas enables users to access data about international development aid flows, and to interrogate the data according to the questions they are most interested in. The two main components on the platform are:

- a visual flow of development finance, and
- profile pages tailored to user needs.

The visualization of flows allows users to explore current and historical flows of finance using alluvial diagrams at various levels of aggregation (see Figure 1). The profile pages include information on total amounts of finance that have been committed and delivered over time, what financial instruments were used, the sources of finance and the recipients (see Figure 2).

Allowing both ready-to-download reports in PDF format as well as the download of the raw data of the analysis, these pages will also provide detail on which sectors, and sub-sectors, the finance is targeting (see Figure 3), or which policy objectives it is aimed at (see Figure 4).

Why is there a need for Aid Atlas?

Every year, a global development finance (or “aid”) budget of ca US\$ 146 billion is allocated to developing countries. This financial support is critical, especially for the world’s poorest countries who have basic development deficits and challenges.

Figure 3. Sectoral breakdown of Canada’s development finance in 2017 in US dollars (prototype)

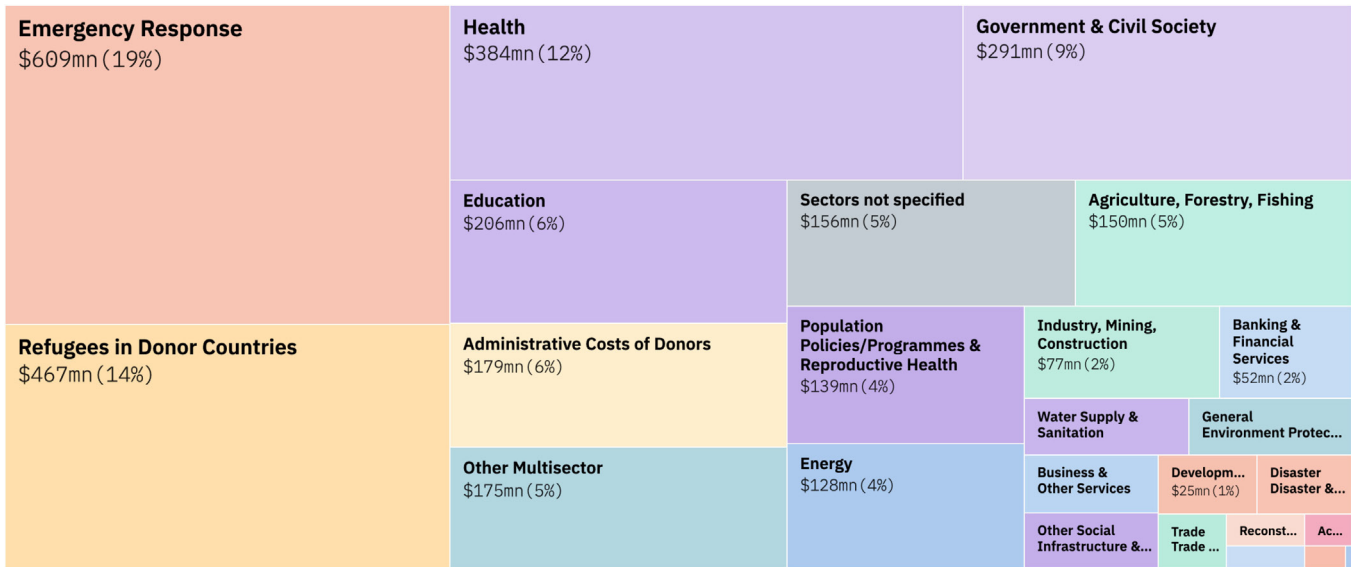
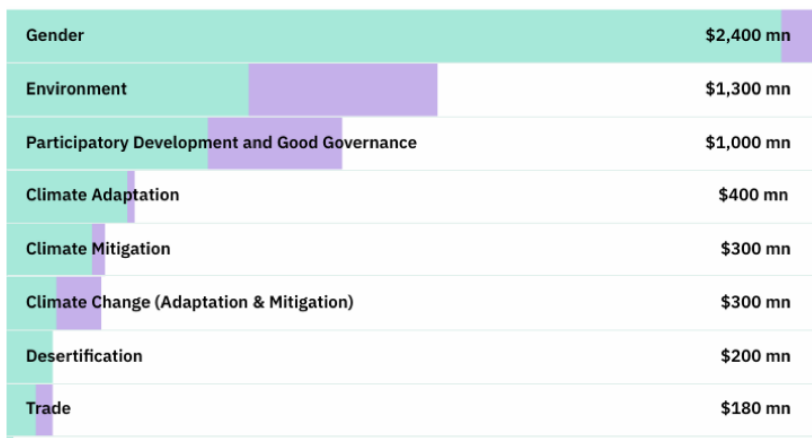


Figure 4. A chart showing development finance for different policy objectives and its division between "principal" and "significant" objectives. The principal objective of a finance activity is that which is explicitly targeted and fundamental in its design. Significant objective refers to a policy objective that was important, but secondary.

Policy objective was a ● principal or ● significant objective of the activity ⓘ



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Development finance flows via an architecture linking developed countries, multilateral funds, development banks, organizations who help countries programme the funding and implement projects (like UN agencies, for instance), and eventually "recipient" developing countries. This complex, opaque and political architecture makes it difficult to get a clear picture of where funding is coming from, where it is going, what it is being used for, and what impacts it is having.

While the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) provides an open access, relatively comprehensive data set of international development finance, it is not easy to use, and harder still for non-specialists. There is considerable variation in the quality of the data because each of the reporting entities has their own approach to reporting.

Aid Atlas therefore seeks to transform our understanding of the way development finance is working. By increasing transparency and usability of data about development aid, the tool helps users to explore the patterns in how finance is allocated. It also helps them to become aware of the knowledge gaps that make it difficult to see what impacts development finance is having.

In addition, Aid Atlas seeks to improve the quality of data on development finance that is available to the public. Because the tool makes the data easier to explore, those reporting it should have an incentive to improve the quality of their reporting, since it is in their interests to be able to demonstrate to their citizens and to the international community the support they have been providing.

Ultimately, Aid Atlas aims to improve the effectiveness of development finance. It makes it easier to see where there are gaps in financing and shows regions or sectors where it is concentrated but may not be well coordinated. In the future, we will explore opportunities to complement development finance with other financial sources. In addition, we aim to juxtapose development finance data with socio-economic development indicators. This could help us learn much more about the outcomes and impacts of this financial support on the ground.

Timeline

Aid Atlas is scheduled to be launched in October 2019. A beta version for internal use is expected to be available in July/August 2019. In 2020, pending additional funding, the work towards adding development indicators and additional financial flows will commence.

Want to know more?

Contact Adis.Dzebo@sei.org for more information.

