

Parliamentary Resolution

on Iceland's policy for international development cooperation 2024–2028.

Parliament has resolved, pursuant to the Act on Iceland's International Development Cooperation no. 121/2008, that development cooperation for the period 2024 to 2028 shall be carried out in accordance with the following policy.

The multiple challenges facing the world do not only threaten the progress of the United Nations' (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but also the progress made in recent decades, which has now been put at risk. Poverty and inequality are on the increase in many countries and the consequences of climate change threaten the prosperity of mankind and the welfare of the planet. The number of refugees and internally displaced persons has never been higher as increasing levels of fragility know no geographical boundaries. A part of this trend may be attributed to Russia's illegal war of aggression, which has not only caused irretrievable losses in Ukraine and neighbouring countries but has also carried with it severe consequences for least-developed countries (LDCs), including in Sub-Saharan Africa.

International development cooperation plays a key role in resolving these challenges by contributing to increased prosperity, sustainability, and equality which, in turn, breeds stability, benefitting the entire world. Iceland's journey from being one of Europe's poorest countries, and a recipient of development assistance from the international community, to being one of the wealthiest democratic states on the continent, illustrates the importance of international development cooperation. As a small state, Iceland's core interests are dependent on increased stability of the international system, improved protection of human rights and strong democratic system worldwide. However, as has become clear in recent decades, it is evident that the development of LDCs will not be realized through development cooperation alone, which is why it is imperative that development cooperation is coupled with increased political engagement, investment and trade.

Iceland's international development cooperation policy for the years 2024–2028 shall present a vision towards 2030 and be based on the SDGs, the Paris Agreement on climate mitigation and adaptation, as well as other international agreements that Iceland is either party to, has approved or ratified, in addition to international obligations relating to financing for development.

Iceland's membership to the UN shall remain among the foundations of Iceland's development cooperation, and, furthermore, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shall provide the standards for its implementation. The Government of Iceland shall continue to be a reliable partner in development cooperation that operates in line with best practices that entail predictability in partnerships, as well as high flexibility and responsiveness to meet emerging needs. A wide variety of modalities shall guide the implementation of development cooperation, and emphasis placed on encouraging innovation as well as mobilising Icelandic expertise to contribute to resolving local and international projects, where applicable.

International development cooperation shall remain one of the cornerstones of Icelandic foreign policy, with importance placed on internal coordination within the foreign policy agenda and development cooperation to meet the global challenges facing the world. On that basis, it is urgent to react to the far-reaching impact and consequences of Russia's illegal war of aggression on Ukraine, neighbouring countries and further afield, including on LDCs.

Iceland places human rights at the heart of its policy, puts gender equality and the rights of children at the forefront, and strives to support vulnerable groups, such as LGBTQI+ persons and people with disabilities. Iceland's development cooperation thus aims to reflect the values of Icelandic society: respect for democracy, human rights, diversity, tolerance, justice and solidarity.

Local ownership shall be at the core of all development cooperation projects and shall continue to be based on the principles of responsibility, results and reliability.

Contributions

The Government of Iceland is committed to the United Nations' target of allocating 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) to official development assistance (ODA), as pledged by donor countries, and will endeavour to increase ODA contributions throughout the policy period. The contributions shall be increased from 0.35% of GNI in 2024 to 0.46% of GNI in 2028 as outlined in the table below, which sets the course to meet the 0.7% target by 2035.

	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
% of GNI	0,35	0,37	0,40	0,43	0,46

Increased contributions shall benefit LDCs in line with the Government's goal of reaching the UN target of providing at least 0.15-0.2% of GNI to LDCs. Iceland's humanitarian assistance and reconstruction efforts in Ukraine shall not be at the cost of LDCs and shall be additional to development cooperation contributions. A special five-year plan for support to Ukraine shall be put forth during the current legislative period. Special emphasis shall continue to be placed on aid effectiveness as well as demonstrating the results of Iceland's contributions.

2. Focus areas and objectives

Poverty eradication, respect for human rights and improved living standards shall be the overarching objective of Iceland's international development cooperation and shall be based on the vision for the future laid out in the SDGs.

Human rights, gender equality and environmental and climate affairs shall be both specific and cross-cutting objectives that serve as pillars of all development cooperation efforts. Gender equality and environmental considerations shall be integrated into all projects while also ensuring that monitoring and evaluation activities pay special heed to these considerations. The Government of Iceland will actively contribute to the fight against poverty and hunger and dedicate itself to ensuring that the increased prosperity of societies benefits the poorest, strengthens human capital, leads to increased equality, and contributes to stability in accordance with SDG 1. The Government of Iceland will thus prioritize the following four focus areas, which are accompanied by the 2024-2025 international development cooperation action plan.

2.1. Human rights and gender equality – SDG 5 and 10

Iceland's international development cooperation shall be based on Iceland's own development experience, which affirms that respect for human rights, gender equality and empowerment of women and girls are preconditions for progress, prosperity, and economic growth. Importance shall be placed on countering the serious and widespread backlash against human rights, gender equality and democracy that has occurred in recent years. Iceland shall utilize a human rights-based approach in its development cooperation on the premise that limitations to and disregard of human rights, including gender inequality, are the cause of development challenges such as inequality and poverty, and not a consequence. Special consideration shall be given to respecting human rights in emergency and conflict contexts and the response to and prevention of gender-based violence shall be strengthened. Emphasis shall be placed on empowering of women and girls on one hand and increasing the participation of men and boys in the fight for gender equality on the other, as impactful actions to deal with contemporary challenges and facilitate progress towards the SDGs. Iceland's international development cooperation activities in this focus area shall be guided by Iceland's gender equality strategy for international development cooperation.

The Government of Iceland will focus on the following objectives:

- Empowerment of women and girls,
- Improved civil rights,
- Improved legal and social protection of LGBTIQI+ persons,
- Improved sexual and reproductive health and rights,
- Eradication of gender-based and sexual violence,
- Increased participation of men and boys in the fight for gender equality.

2.2. Human capital and social infrastructure – SDGs 3, 4 and 6

The development of human capital and social infrastructure shall remain among the cornerstones of Iceland's development cooperation as prerequisites for the achievement of the SDGs. Investing in human capital is integral to economic development and a foundation for improved living conditions of individuals and societies. Importance will be placed on social infrastructure, including basic services such as quality

education, nutrition, health services, as well as water and sanitation and hygiene facilities, which play a key part in developing human capital as access to such services is a fundamental human right. Special attention shall be given to vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities. Additionally, the rights of children and adolescents shall be prioritized. Support will be given to developing institutions and other social infrastructure through initiatives, which will emphasize quality, equal access, and resilience.

The Government of Iceland will focus on the following objectives:

- Improved education, learning environment and nutrition of children and adolescents,
- Improved access to basic health services, especially for mothers and children,
- Improved access to clean water as well as improved sanitation and hygiene facilities.

2.3. Climate affairs and natural resources – SDG 7, 13, 14 and 15

Increased emphasis shall be placed on response to climate change with Iceland's efforts guided by the Paris Agreement and the outcomes of the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the UNFCCC. The Government of Iceland underlines the importance of international cooperation in resolving challenges related to climate change as well as increasing support for mitigation and adaptation measures. These measures are an important part of development cooperation and a prerequisite for increasing the resilience of societies. The sustainable use of natural resources shall remain a priority with the aim of contributing to improved living standards. Efforts in this regard shall continue to seek a balance between protection and preservation of biodiversity, and the sustainable use of resources. The importance of renewable energy sources, including geothermal energy, remains a priority and emphasis will be placed on the eradication of energy poverty, which disproportionately impacts women. Further, particular attention will be given to the health of oceans and waters as an important part of adapting food systems to sustainable solutions. Supporting sustainable land use, limiting land degradation, and restoring habitats will also be important aspects of Iceland's efforts.

The Government of Iceland will focus on the following objectives:

- Improved mitigation and adaptation capacity of societies,
- Increased use of and equal access to renewable energy,
- Protection and sustainable use of oceans and waters,
- Sustainable land use and restoration of habitats.

2.4. Humanitarian assistance and efforts towards stability and peace – SDG 2 and 16.

Emphasis shall continue on humanitarian assistance and work towards peace. The Government of Iceland will continue to contribute to humanitarian assistance, particularly in cooperation with UN funds and programs that play a leading role in humanitarian affairs. Iceland's efforts shall be made in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law, as well as international conventions and principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. The Government of Iceland shall strive to be a reliable partner in humanitarian affairs with predictability and responsiveness guiding its operations. Importance will be placed on coordination of humanitarian action in field settings and efforts to ensure that life-saving support reaches vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, and is delivered with the differentiated needs of all genders, as well as children and adolescents, in mind. Further, efforts shall be made to ensure that needs analysis and decision-making regarding humanitarian assistance are carried out in proximity to local stakeholders. Focus shall be directed towards the response to, and prevention of, gender-based and sexual violence in emergency settings, and synergies sought in the application of humanitarian, development and peace nexus approach. The Government of Iceland will continue their support to countries in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa in line with the humanitarian assistance strategy, which provides a more detailed framework.

As for efforts towards stability and peace, importance will be placed on strengthening social and civilian infrastructure in post-conflict settings and improving governance to ensure stability and enhance community resilience. Iceland supports reconstruction efforts in alignment with the focus areas of Iceland's development cooperation and humanitarian assistance and in accordance with partner government needs, as well as needs analysis of international humanitarian partners. Iceland dedicates its efforts to protect democracy, human rights and the rule of law in contexts where stability is under threat. In light of Russia's illegal war of aggression in Ukraine, special attention will be given to Ukraine and neighbouring countries.

In humanitarian assistance and efforts towards stability and peace, Iceland will look towards the implementation of Iceland's national action plan on women, peace and security in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

In humanitarian assistance, the Government of Iceland will focus on the following objectives:

- Reduced hunger and improved food security,

- Protection and improved living conditions of refugees,
- Contributing to improved humanitarian access.

In efforts towards stability and peace, the Government of Iceland will focus on the following objectives:

- Strengthened social and civilian infrastructure,
- Well-functioning democracy and improved governance.

3. Implementation and partnerships

The Government of Iceland shall continue to utilise a wide variety of modalities in the implementation of its development cooperation in order to facilitate progress of the focus areas outlined above. Mainly, this shall entail cooperation with bilateral partner countries, multilateral organizations, civil society organizations, the GRÓ International Centre for Capacity Development, private sector partners, and academia. Mutual responsibility and trust shall guide the cooperation with a diverse set of partners to advance progress of the SDGs. Local ownership, best practices and transparency shall be premises for all development cooperation activities. In projects funded by the Government of Iceland it will be ensured that human rights, gender equality and environmental and climate considerations are kept at the forefront, and respect for international commitments unceasingly honoured. Improving results and effectiveness of development cooperation will rely on increasing synergies between bilateral and multilateral development cooperation, humanitarian assistance, and peace efforts. The Government of Iceland shall be a reliable partner and a predictable provider, but will exercise flexibility when needed, for example in contexts requiring urgent action, in order to make sure that Icelandic contributions are put to good use. The selection of partners shall be guided by Iceland's priorities as well as the aim to ensure coherence between development needs and Iceland's added value in development cooperation.

3.1. Bilateral development cooperation

Iceland's bilateral development cooperation will be centred on cooperation with Malawi, Uganda and Sierra Leone, which are among the LDCs. Through bilateral development cooperation, the Government of Iceland plays a direct part in development projects in partner countries. Applying a human rights-based approach, special emphasis shall be on local ownership and leadership in the preparation and implementation of projects that are in line with national development plans. In Iceland's partner countries, activities will focus on selected districts with close cooperation with district authorities and national ministries. In order to maximise synergies and results, the Government of Iceland will also seek to work with other partners such as international organizations, civil society organizations, private sector partners, and other donor countries. In case of emergencies or disasters in bilateral partner countries, Iceland shall respond quickly, adopting a humanitarian, development and peace nexus approach when applicable. Iceland's activities shall be conducted in line with the bilateral development cooperation strategy, which provides a more detailed framework for the partnerships. The modality described above shall not preclude that cooperation with other countries will be explored or initiated during the policy period, nor that existing cooperation with partner countries will be terminated.

3.2. Cooperation with multilateral organizations

In order to make the most of development cooperation contributions and the impact of Iceland's participation, Iceland will strategically engage with multilateral organisations, with particular focus on certain priority organisations. Iceland's development cooperation will be focussed on the World Bank, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA). In relation to climate affairs, Iceland prioritises working with the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Adaptation Fund (AF) and the Nordic Development Fund (NDF). Priority partners in humanitarian assistance are the World Food Programme (WFP), UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Additionally, Iceland will continue to prioritise partnerships with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The Government of Iceland's support to multilateral organisations shall continue to be in the form of core contributions in line with Iceland's commitments to the UN Funding Compact, as this type of contributions enables the organisations to optimally plan their operations in accordance with their policies and objectives. Further, contributions will be made in line with the Government of Iceland's policy on certain thematic areas or countries, or in relation to the secondment of experts in the field. Iceland's activities shall be conducted in line with the multilateral development cooperation strategy which provides a more detailed framework for the partnerships.

3.3. Civil-society organisations

Support to projects implemented by civil society organisations in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian affairs shall continue, including through framework agreements in order to increase efficiency and predictability. Support to civil society organisations shall be aimed at strengthening the crucial role played by civil society, including in protecting the human rights of the poorest and those facing discrimination. Activities shall be conducted in line with the civil society organisation cooperation strategy, which provides a more detailed framework and methodology for the partnerships. Further, efforts will be made to directly support civil society organisations in bilateral partner countries.

3.4. GRÓ — International Centre for Capacity Development

Importance shall be placed on Icelandic knowledge and experience benefitting individuals and institutions in low- and middle-income countries through increasing capacity within fields where Iceland's expertise is strong. To that end, GRÓ - International Centre for Capacity Development, which operates under the auspices of UNESCO and manages the Gender Equality Studies & Training Programme, Geothermal Training Programme, Land Restoration Training Programme and the Fisheries Training Programme, plays an important role. Efforts shall be made to examine how to strengthen GRÓ's operations in order to maximise results and ensure the effectiveness of Icelandic development cooperation contributions in accordance with the results of Iceland's OECD DAC peer review.

3.5. Private sector partners

It is imperative that the Icelandic private sector supports sustainable development in developing countries, including through income- and employment-generating investments and projects aimed at increasing prosperity and reducing poverty. Strengthening innovation shall be encouraged with emphasis on financing of projects that might unlock investments from other parties. Utilising Icelandic expertise when relevant remains a priority as Icelandic companies, universities, institutions and individuals have a wide variety of knowledge that can be of use in development efforts in low-income countries. Continued importance shall be placed on these efforts, especially considering the results of Iceland's OECD DAC peer review. A strategy on private sector cooperation will be developed.

3.6. Academia

Cooperation with academia shall be strengthened as it plays an important role in innovation, education, and research, while possessing a wide range of expertise that can be useful to development cooperation. Further, academia plays an important part in increasing knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. With the aforementioned in mind, creating opportunities for the increased participation of academia in development cooperation shall be encouraged as well as improving the cooperation between Icelandic universities and universities in Iceland's bilateral partner countries on the focus areas of Iceland's development cooperation. Also, efforts will be made to increase cooperation with, and participation of, university students and teachers on knowledge generation and communication in relation to Iceland's development cooperation.

4. Internal processes

4.1. Communications and public relations efforts

The Government of Iceland will emphasise communications and public relations regarding Iceland's development cooperation and humanitarian efforts in line with the SDGs. Efforts shall be made to implement new ideas and approaches in communication and dissemination of information. Outreach to the public will be done through a variety of channels, including through interactive databases, social media, and cooperation with educational institutions, media, civil society organisations, academia, national committees of UN agencies and the UN Association in Iceland. The results of development cooperation and humanitarian assistance will be communicated to the public through appropriate communications based on respect for individuals and vulnerable groups. The communication and knowledge management strategy for international development cooperation provides a more detailed framework for these activities.

4.2. Efficiency, results and monitoring

Responsibility and integrity shall be a principle of all Icelandic development cooperation activities. Best practices and professionalism will serve as a foundation, with results, efficiency and transparency at the

forefront. The Government of Iceland has a duty to provide information to the Icelandic public, partners and stakeholders on how Icelandic development cooperation contributions are put to use. To that end, information on contributions, projects, partners and results will be made accessible to the public. Methods of work shall always be in line with best practices, contributing to increased transparency and rejecting all forms of corruption. External monitoring and evaluation shall be an important part of assessing implementation, efficiency, and results. The results of evaluations, including those of OECD DAC, shall be used in all reform efforts.