

Canada

Religious Freedom Envelope of the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI)

Freedom of religion, including the ability to worship in peace and security, is a universal human right. There is a deteriorating trend in the state of freedom of religion worldwide, with 77% of the world's population (an estimated 5.5 billion people) reported to live in countries with high or very high government restrictions on religion and/or high or very high social hostilities by one religious community against another, up from 68% in 2007.

As part of Canada's efforts to address this growing problem, the Office of Religious Freedom was established in February 2013, with a mandate focused on protecting and advocating on behalf of religious communities under threat; opposing religious hatred and intolerance; and, promoting pluralism. Evidence shows that societies protecting freedom of religion are more likely to protect other human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of association, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly.

The Government of Canada recently announced a new funding envelope to support religious freedom projects through the **Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI)**, recognizing the ongoing need to support grassroots and community-level initiatives to advance this Canadian foreign policy priority.

The CFLI provides direct funding assistance to community groups, non-government organizations, civil society organizations and, in exceptional cases, international NGOs, and government institutions for small projects addressing governance, democracy, capacity-building, economic and other social development issues, including those related to religious freedom. CFLI funding is restricted to countries that are eligible for [Official Development Assistance \(ODA\)](#) under the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The criteria for the CFLI are determined by the Embassy or High Commission responsible for each eligible country and are tailored to respond to local realities. Possible project activities can include: **awareness-raising** (education on freedom of religion, pluralism and tolerance, as well as dialogue among different religious groups); **research** (to study freedom of religion and develop tools to help governments avoid discrimination and alleviate social hostilities against religious communities); **conferences and seminars on inter-religious dialogue** (to support the development of networks and the creation of meeting opportunities to bring together stakeholders on freedom of religion); and **legal support or specialized services** (training and capacity building to help defend communities targeted due to their faith).

Canada

In order to learn more about this programming envelope and to apply for funding, please contact the Canadian Embassy or High Commission accredited to your country and consult their website. Thank you in advance for your interest, and we value the important contributions made by local organizations around the world to promote religious freedom and human rights more broadly.