

**CIDA's "Towards a Long-Term Strategy  
for Canada's International Assistance Program:  
A Framework for Consultation"**

**A Commentary**

**Canadian Council for International Cooperation**

**CCIC Policy Team**

**January 2001**

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January 2001

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## **Key Messages in CCIC's *Commentary on* CIDA's *Framework for Consultation for a Long Term Strategy***

"Canada should become the unorthodox herald of a new world order which sees justice in dissent, equity in human rights, and economic progress in development without strings attached."

Stephen Lewis, in The North-South Institute, *Canadian Development Report 2000*

1. The issues and principles for international cooperation suggested in the *Framework for Consultation* for CIDA's Long Term Strategy are fundamentally important and require both sustained reflection and informed debate within constituencies for international cooperation in Canada (and overseas). Canadian civil society has a wealth of experience and innovative programming that address directly many of these issues. A public debate on the proposals for CIDA's Long-Term Strategy will strengthen Canadians' understanding of Canada's global responsibilities.

2. CCIC's *in common* campaign makes the case for placing poverty eradication at the centre of the rationale for Canadian international assistance. This is in Canada's "enlightened self-interest" as well as an ethical imperative in our relations with developing countries. Increased integration of the South into the global community requires a shift of power, resources, decision-making and accountability to the South, to enable those who are marginalized to take control of their own development. A rationale for Canadian aid based on "enlightened self-interest" may undermine cooperation with the poorest countries and people and may distance CIDA from an ethical rationale for aid that is strongly supported by the Canadian public.

3. While agreement may exist on essential principles that should characterize donor relationships in development assistance, there is still little consensus among development actors on policies, models and approaches that address poverty and create more equitable North South relations in the context of globalization. Indeed, a policy-oriented and knowledge-based CIDA requires above all humility about the "rightness" of our answers and their imposition on others.

4. Development is not a process easily amenable to bureaucratic and technical fixes; rather it is widely recognized as an iterative domestic political process, even in the most aid-dependent countries. It is a political process that engages people, particularly the poor and the powerless, in negotiating with each other, with their governments, and with the world community for policies and rights that advance their livelihood and secure their future in their world. Therefore revised approaches to development cooperation, policy and knowledge-creation require an explicit consideration of how the roles and capacities of civil society touch all aspects of Canada's development assistance, and

these considerations must be central to CIDA's Long-Term Strategy. CCIC is proposing a comprehensive civil society approach to achieve this end.

5. The real challenge for donors, government and NGOs alike, is to understand how policy decisions and other development interventions affect the lives of poor people and draw conclusions from grassroots experience to improve policy making for the intended beneficiaries.

6. The Long-Term Strategy must commit CIDA to sustained and comprehensive public education and engagement strategies for global citizenship. Such strategies would assist the government and all development partners to build a long-term moral and political base of support for international development assistance among Canadians, and promote public engagement on international policy issues with CIDA and other government ministries in Canada.

7. The Long-Term Strategy's emphasis on increased strategic and programmatic coherence in CIDA's aid interventions will be welcomed. Nevertheless, as an aid mechanism, projects allow for significant risk-taking and innovation, with low political fall-out for domestic governments and CIDA itself. Projects can engage directly in social processes, strengthen excluded social actors, and can thereby have both intended and often unpredictable impacts on the livelihood and rights of the poor. CIDA should consider in coordinated donor country strategies a niche role for itself that leverages innovative civil society pilot projects combining policy dialogue and on-the-ground programming.

8. Consistent with donor-articulated principles, CIDA contracting arrangements must take account of requirements for long-term collaboration, local knowledge, local participation and decision-making, and an understanding of the risk inherent in promoting development change. A thorough examination of complex dimensions of CIDA's accountability in development is required for the Long-Term Strategy.

9. Reversing sharp reductions in Canadian ODA volume with interim targets to reach 0.7% of GNP is essential for assuring equitable share of resources from Canada towards donor-inspired targets for reducing by half the proportion of people living in poverty by 2015 and the goal to eradicate poverty.

10. To achieve better Canadian foreign policy coherence, it will be vital for CIDA to engage and strengthen policy roles of Canadian civil society organizations to help counterbalance both narrowly conceived national interests in Canadian foreign policy, and tensions with lead ministries on policies that have major implications for developing countries and people living in poverty.

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## **1. Introduction**

1.1 CIDA's *Framework for Consultation* (October Draft) represents a vitally important and timely review of strategic issues facing the Agency and Canadian international co-operation. It provides an important opportunity to address comprehensively some long-standing issues that have their origins in earlier debates and reviews of the contribution of Canadian aid to international co-operation. It is also an opportunity to renew CIDA's strategic directions, taking account of the analysis of poverty and recent policy discussions among official donors in the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD, the UN system and the World Bank's Comprehensive Development Strategy. We appreciate this emerging body of knowledge, and are following parallel debates have been taking place within several European country donors, most notably DFID in the UK, Dutch aid policy and among the Nordic countries.

1.2 The issues raised in the draft are fundamental and require both sustained reflection and informed debate within constituencies for international co-operation in Canada (and overseas). Canadian civil society organizations have a wealth of experience in international co-operation, in large part supported by CIDA over the past 30 years. We note in Appendix 1 examples of innovative programming within our membership that address directly many of the issues raised in the *Framework*, on aid effectiveness for poverty reduction, partnership and recipient-led aid.

1.3 The *Framework for Consultation* establishes an extensive and iterative consultative process within CIDA. While we have had informal access to some documentation, we feel that it is a missed opportunity that CIDA did not systematically open a public consultation at an early stage. In this light, our *Commentary* and our meeting with CIDA at the end of February initiates a dialogue on crucial issues for Canadian international cooperation, which we expect, will continue in the public realm for some months to

come. Indeed, a full public review and renewal of Canadian aid policy and practice is long overdue.

1.4 Over the past 8 weeks, CCIC has consulted with its membership – representing 100 Canadian international NGOs – on the analysis and questions posed in the *Framework for Consultation*. In general members have responded positively to the Long-term Strategy (LTS) initiative. We are pleased that CIDA will be setting a long-term strategy that respects the principles of strong partnerships and recipient-directed initiatives in our international assistance, and that pro-actively addresses the coherence of Canadian foreign policy with development concerns affecting poverty. But we must also report that many who are on Canada's frontline in international co-operation are disappointed and concerned that significant issues for poverty eradication are, at present, missing from CIDA's analysis. In our contributions we offer means to strengthen the integration of the goal of poverty eradication into CIDA's Long-Term Strategy. We can elaborate on a number of these proposals over the coming months as a draft CIDA Long-Term Strategy is set out for public consultation.

1.5 The *Framework for Consultation* speaks to many of the core issues raised by CCIC and 30 prominent Canadians in our 1999 Call to End Global Poverty and our Open Letter to the Prime Minister, calling for a renewal of Canadian aid policy and practice. One of our motivations with the Open Letter was to stimulate discussion on poverty-sensitive aid and strengthen its implementation framework.

1.6 CCIC's members have reaffirmed that the *in common* goal of poverty eradication must be at the core of Canada's relations with developing countries. Understanding the importance of this goal, our *Commentary* raises a number of concerns and missing issues in the *Framework's* analysis. We propose a comprehensive approach to civil society in Canadian international assistance that brings together a number of these issues. Civil society should be a crosscutting theme that touches all sections of the draft Long-term Strategy. We provide some rationale for this proposal and make links with other strategic directions that may inform CIDA's renewed approaches to international assistance and cooperation.

1.7 Canadian NGOs have drawn lessons from their understanding of poverty and the efforts of people living in poverty to overcome these conditions. These lessons resonate with many of the areas of concern of the LTS and poverty reduction. But above all, they suggest that humility is required – humility about our assumptions on the positive role of aid interventions in determining development options and actions by the poor, and about the "rightness" of the answers we sometimes seek to impose to order other peoples' world in a manner that we think appropriate. At the same time, country-specific development and social change are the result of very delicate social and political processes that are inherently risky. As outsiders to these processes, humility should inform all our deliberations and always qualify our conclusions. What are the limits of a northern donor's influence over policy decisions that should be rooted in democratic practice?

1.8 This *Commentary* provides background and is accompanied by a shorter summary of the rationale for these conclusions. It is structured along the following lines. Section Two points to important strengths in the *Framework* upon which we also construct our proposals and analysis. We then turn in Section Three to discuss the rationale for Canadian aid, since clarity on the purpose and rationale for aid establishes the framework for appropriate methods and mechanisms to achieve these purposes. In Section Four we review some of the programmatic and analytic implications of our central recommendation that poverty eradication be the defining goal and ethic for Canadian international assistance. Based on this poverty framework, we elaborate in Section Five the rationale for our proposal of a comprehensive approach to civil society, and its potential contributions to the principles underlying Canada's assistance programs. We then analyze briefly in Section Six a number of other issues identified in the *Framework* in terms of the poverty rationale for Canadian aid and civil society capacities and roles.

## **2. Positive Elements of CIDA's Long-term Strategy**

2.1 Along with CIDA's agenda for key social development priorities announced by Minister Minna in September 2000, the *LTS* will be addressing some of the most important issues that have long been central to Canadian aid advocacy efforts. We would like to affirm five important positive elements, upon which we will build our commentary in subsequent sections.

### **Poverty reduction as the overarching goal**

2.2 We commend the identification of poverty reduction as the overarching goal for international cooperation in the *Framework*. Understanding the complexities inherent in this goal, we appreciate the intent of the *LTS* to renew a framework for Canadian aid interventions that are focused, strategic and policy-based. We also strongly support the commitment to evolve CIDA into an organization that is knowledge-based and applies learning to improve the impact of programs. NGOs too seek these goals in their own work, and for our engagement with CIDA. The *Framework* suggests that too much time is spent by too many CIDA officials on micro-managing and processing stand-alone CIDA-determined development projects. We agree. A focus on poverty reduction requires projects that take into account both local impact and macro policy dimensions, with a sound understanding of the country context for leveraging impact.

### **Recipient-led development strategies and programs**

2.3 Like many recent analyses from within the official donor community, we strongly endorse the *Framework's* acceptance that authentic recipient-led development strategies and programs are the foundation for effective and sustainable donor

interventions. While it only hints at contradictions between this principle and (Canadian) donor practices in many areas, importantly a strong argument is made for significant untying of Canadian aid, long advocated by academic and NGO critics of Canadian aid practice.

### **Influencing Canadian foreign policy and promoting coherence with development goals**

2.4 CCIC's *Call to End Global Poverty* sought a strong catalytic role for CIDA and other Canadian aid actors in Canadian foreign policy. We are pleased that the *LTS* is likely to explicitly raise the importance of policy coherence and set out roles for CIDA to influence Canadian foreign policies to achieve greater sensitivity to the common interests of Canada and developing countries. Canadian aid is to be situated within a broad foreign policy context that includes the development implications of trade, investment and environmental policies. Canadian policies in these areas, among others, have major implications for developing countries.

### **A broader notion of human security**

2.5 The *Framework* rightly recognizes the complexities (and inter-departmental tensions) embedded in the notion of 'human security'. To date the focus has been narrowly on individual freedom from violence, conflict and fear. The *Framework* suggests that 'human security', when understood more broadly in terms of meeting human needs, rights and capacities, may be a foundation for superseding these tensions.

### **Intermediate multi-year financial targets for Canadian ODA Towards the Goal of 0.7% of Canadian GNP**

2.6 The *Framework* recognizes that reversing sharp reductions in ODA volume in the past decade is essential to achieve donor-inspired targets for reducing the proportion of people living in poverty by 2015. Recent injections of funds have stabilized Canada's ratio, but at historically low levels of 0.27% of GNP. Affirming CCIC's own analysis, the *Framework* proposes consideration of intermediate financial targets that will move Canadian ODA realistically towards the UN target of 0.7% of GNP, including CCIC's proposal of 0.35% by 2005.

2.7 The *Framework for Consultation* is a unique and explicit recognition by CIDA of important issues and dilemmas facing the form and substance of development assistance and its role in Canada's foreign policy with developing countries. At the same time, despite a strategic reflection on these issues and some important indicators of changes being contemplated, the *Framework* itself lacks an explicit strategic analytic foundation concerning what is required for poverty eradication and the related responsibilities and roles of donors. Instead it takes up uncritically a supposed donor/recipient "consensus" on a model for aid effectiveness, in support of a World Bank inspired comprehensive development framework, and based on *donor* lessons

extracted over the past decade. Having made these assumptions, the *Framework* focuses on the technical realization of selected elements of this model for CIDA. We elaborate on this core concern in subsequent sections.

### **3. The rationale for Canadian aid**

#### **An Emerging rationale for Canadian aid?**

3.1 CIDA's LTS will revisit the rationale for Canadian aid. The *Framework* suggests the need to revise the traditional rationale with one based on Canadian "enlightened self-interest" arising from globalization and increased international inter-dependence. In this paradigm, aid is perceived as a resource for creating global public goods that tackle major concerns – disease, environment, financial stability, peace and security, or knowledge and information – that are transnational in scope. Equally, aid is seen as essential to entice developing countries to fully engage in the institutions and the creation of rules that are supposed to address these global challenges, and promote economic stability and growth.

3.2 This "emerging" rationale would have significant influence on the allocation of aid resources to countries and sectors, shifting these resources towards multilateral institutions with strategies to support these global public goods and towards countries that are important players in the multilateral system (i.e. middle income countries that have growing interests in the global economy). In our view, allocation criteria based on this rationale have no integral foundation in poverty reduction, which has been proposed by the Minister in her *Framework for CIDA's Social Development Priorities* as CIDA's primary goal. The latter, for example, would give increased priority to the poorest countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and to sectors and locations where significant numbers of people live in poverty; while the former would almost certainly write-off these countries for everything except humanitarian relief.

3.3 The need for this "new" rationale is balanced (and in tension) with the acknowledged continued importance of the ethical foundation for Canadian's support for aid. The October version of the *Framework* recognizes that "most Canadians support development cooperation for one simple reason: They believe it's the right thing to do, as a matter of ethics, justice and human solidarity" that should not stop at national boundaries. Central to this values-based approach is the firm belief that poverty reduction should lie at the heart of our aid efforts. The *Framework* also at a later point agrees with the Minister's social development statement that this goal – poverty reduction – is the overarching goal for Canadian development cooperation.

## Setting poverty eradication as the overarching goal for Canadian international cooperation

3.4 In fact, "poverty reduction" seems a very modest goal in light of Canada's commitment, most recently in the September 2000 UN Millennial Declaration, and specifically at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, to work for the eradication of poverty in the world. Taken together, the World Summits of the 1990s set out people-centred plans of action that tackled the systemic roots of poverty, gender inequality, food insecurity and unfulfilled human rights to realize eventually a world where poverty is eradicated.

3.5 These UN action plans have in fact been largely ignored by the world community, including Canada. In their place, more modest social sector targets were developed by aid ministers of OECD countries in the DAC's *Shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, and later adopted by the World Bank and the UN, that call for halving the proportion of people living on a dollar a day, in no sense a definition of poverty as it is really experienced in the world. Even from the point of view of the World Bank's own analysis of poverty in the *2000 World Development Report*, these narrow income-based targets are inadequate. It is widely recognized that at least two thirds of people living in developing countries are vulnerable to poverty, lacking the basic resources and assets to realize productive and sustainable livelihoods. With growing inequalities throughout the world, poverty eradication is a central element in Canada's "enlightened self-interests". CIDA's LTS must therefore reflect an overarching rationale for aid that is inspired by a comprehensive strategy for the eradication of poverty in all of its dimensions.

<b>CCIC Recommendation #1:</b> Poverty eradication should be the sole rationale for Canadian aid in CIDA's Long-term Strategy for international assistance.
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### Whose "consensus"? Whose development model?

3.6 The *Framework* locates CIDA's strategic goals in the International Development Targets from the influential DAC donor paper, *Shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* and the World Bank's Comprehensive Development Strategy (CDF), in which neither developing countries nor other development actors could make any real contribution. What is missing from these donor-inspired "consensus" targets and strategies is an acknowledgement on the part of the donors of their failed policies of the past 20 years – articulated as the "Washington Consensus" and unanimously supported by donors in the 1980s and 1990s. Many of these fundamental policy goals remain embedded in the Bank's more nuanced CDF today. Equally important, there is also missing an explicit commitment to address and rectify the impact of the failure of these policies on the poor. The imposition of the "Washington Consensus" is now widely understood to have accentuated and deepened poverty, increased national and global economic inequalities, and perpetuated highly unequal access to the instruments of international governance.

3.7 Most NGOs and peoples' organizations around the world challenge the notion taken up in the *Framework for Consultation* that "globalization has helped expand opportunities for millions of people around the world". According to many observers, including NGOs, globalization has deeply accentuated inequalities within and between countries. Financial instability, the result of intense pressure on developing countries to liberalize, has pushed millions into poverty in SE Asia. In the words of David Korten, we have an evolving system "in which power and expertise are delinked from moral accountability, instrumental and financial values override life values, and what is expedient and profitable takes precedence over what is nurturing and responsible" [*Post-Corporate World*]. The fault lines of the globalization debate in recent years are visible on the streets of Seattle, Washington, Prague as well in popular protests on the streets of many capital cities throughout the developing world.

3.8 How much has now changed as a result of the new donor "consensus" where bilateral and multilateral policies are intended to be more sensitive to the interests of the poor? Very little, according to recent analyses by NGOs. The UK NGO-supported Bretton Woods Project documents the lack of progress for the IMF, which has done little to reassess its macroeconomic strategy in the light of its new commitment to poverty reduction beyond looking at narrow measures of fiscal resources in government ministries. Recent civil society reports from Bolivia, Nicaragua and Ghana raise serious concerns about the authenticity of processes for public consultations for poverty strategies initiated by their governments and the World Bank. These same governments are still negotiating in secret with the IMF and are compelled to accept stringent macroeconomic policies that severely constrain the government's ability to meet the needs of the poorest people for basic social services and economic opportunities.

3.9 In fact, rather than a consensus, the *Reality of Aid* global network to monitor aid policies and practices reveals a deep scepticism on the part of Northern *and particularly Southern civil society organizations* about the underlying motivation for aid. After 50 years of changing donor rationales and approaches, aid is widely viewed and deeply resented as a tool to advance the commercial, political and diplomatic interests of the North. A Canadian rationale for aid based on our "enlightened self-interests", when combined with false assumptions about "consensus" on globalization and development models flies in the face of a stated commitment to base our aid priorities on self-determination in poverty in the South. Rather, the values of justice, fairness, and solidarity – widely shared by Canadians and people around the world – offer a much more profound foundation for understanding aid interventions that are to be rooted in a changed North/South relationship – one that contributes to poverty eradication by shifting power, resources, decision-making and accountability to the South, to enable those who are marginalized to take control of their own development.

**Recommendation #2:** CIDA's Long-term Strategy must take better account of the profound debates underway among development actors with respect to the implications of globalization for the poor and donor "consensus" on aid effectiveness for poverty eradication.

## Engaging Canadians as global citizens

3.10 Canadian aid and its underlying humanitarian values may appear to have thin support against other domestic priorities in recent opinion polls. Substantial cuts to ODA in the 1990s were made on this premise. This should not be surprising, given the rather weak defence of ODA and its limited promotion through public education in Canada over the past several decades, by both government (CIDA) and Canadian NGOs. We should compare the Canadian experience with Nordic donors where the ethical rationale for international cooperation and high aid levels have been strongly supported in domestic education programs for 40 years.

3.11 Canadian NGOs have advocated long and hard for strong CIDA partnerships with NGOs, education institutions and the private sector in a comprehensive CIDA strategy to engage Canadians as global citizens. In doing so, we have recognized that exploring new methodologies and institutional arrangements for global education and citizen engagement is an essential part of this strategy. In the 1990s, CIDA's support for global education and the promotion of citizen involvement faced severe cuts and lacked strategic focus and scale for long-term impact. In this area, more so than most, CIDA's role seems to be confined to micro-managing distinct short-term initiatives by Canadian civil society and private sector organizations and periodic public relations opportunities to expose the "good work" inherent in CIDA projects. But in November 1999, NGOs welcomed Minister Minna announcement of a long-awaited Public Engagement Strategy and Action Plan, with new resources and institutional commitment to a coherent strategy. (See CCIC's assessment of this Strategy on the Voluntary Sector page of its web site, [www.web.net/ccic-ccci](http://www.web.net/ccic-ccci).) Unfortunately however the importance of tapping the potential for global citizenship on the part of Canadians receives no attention in the October version of the *Framework for Consultation*. This is not only short-sighted, but is contrary to the implied goals of the LTS itself, which will require concerted public support and engagement for CIDA to have policy impact within government.

3.12 A public engagement strategy built on an ethical rationale for aid that seeks poverty eradication will resonate with Canadians. Polls reveal consistent support for the aid program that focuses not only on immediate relief, but also on long-term humanitarian programs. CIDA's own focus group testing of messages about Canadian aid (in 1995) reveals overwhelming support for aid solely based on philanthropic and altruistic principles. For these Canadians decisions concerning "who deserves our help" should not be based on "potential returns" to Canada. The language of "global security" was not understood and considered confusing and irrelevant.

3.13 Financial support for Canadian NGO efforts has remained steady during the 1990s, which has also been a period of high taxation for Canadians along with sharp reductions in the government's aid efforts. Canadian international NGOs raise from Canadians each year approximately 3 times (\$450 million) the annual disbursement of Partnership Branch to these same organization. While there is a great deal of room for improvement in some of the images and rationales promoted by Canadian NGOs in

their fundraising appeals, it is also clear that those appeals based on humanitarian solidarity and a fundamental need to share in an unfair world strongly engage Canadians. Support by CIDA for a sustained and sophisticated public education program would assist in the building of a long-term moral and political base of support for international development assistance among Canadians.

**Recommendation #3:** CIDA's Long-term Strategy should reflect Agency commitment to coherent and sustained strategies for public education and citizen engagement on global issues and in support of Canadian international cooperation.

#### **4. A Poverty Framework for Renewed Approaches in Canadian Development Cooperation**

4.1 The *Framework for Consultation* suggests that donor consensus on the principles for development cooperation (stronger partnerships, local ownership, donor coordination) will require CIDA to place much more emphasis on policy influence, increased knowledge transfer, and more strategic investment of aid resources. Conversely, the model places less emphasis on discrete projects. Such projects will be driven directly by the poverty reduction strategies of developing countries and CIDA will therefore give less weight to those proposed independently by Canadian partners that are not closely linked to priorities of those countries.

##### **Ending poverty as a strategic framework for Canadian international assistance**

4.2 CIDA's strategic framework for these new approaches, beyond the broad donor principles and lessons, is not clear. As noted in the previous section, CIDA's September *Social Development Priorities* and the *Framework for Consultation* refer to the centrality of poverty reduction to Canadian development cooperation, reflecting similar stated priorities in the World Bank, the UN agencies and other bilateral donor agencies. The *Framework* refers to the importance of the Bank's *2000 World Development Report* with its fuller understanding of the many dimensions of poverty, particularly the importance of expanding opportunity for the poor, improving their security against multiple vulnerabilities and removing obstacles to their empowerment. If poverty reduction is given as an overarching goal for Canadian aid – and we would argue that this goal should be poverty eradication – then one would expect that the LTS would be rooted in a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach to poverty. But such a framework is not explicit in the *Framework for Consultation*.

4.3 Canadian aid should have an unambiguous focus on poverty and a comprehensive understanding of who are the poor and the conditions that have made them poor. CCIC detailed some aspects of this framework in some 40 recommendations arising from its 1999 *Policy Background Paper: A Call to End Global Poverty, Renewing Canadian Policy and Practices* (available on the Development Policy page of CCIC's web site). Targeting those living in poverty with aid implies

- expanding support for "human capital" through access to education and health services (CIDA's social development priorities); but also
- attending to sectors (and selecting countries) where poverty is concentrated (the rural economy, agriculture and food security, and informal urban sectors);
- structuring interventions that address the gender dimensions of inequality;
- tackling inequality through redistribution of productive assets (credit and land);
- emphasizing community-based approaches that address the link between poverty reduction and issues of environmental degradation that affect the poor;
- concentrating on locally-determined labour intensive growth, with support to small scale rural and urban enterprises; and
- strengthening the participation, voice and rights of the poor in civil society, local and national governments, and in multilateral fora.

**Recommendation #4:** CIDA's Long-term Strategy should elaborate CIDA's understanding of a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach to poverty as its foundation for its approaches to Canadian international cooperation.

### **Understanding development as an iterative political process**

4.4 Strengthening the participation, voice and rights of those living in poverty is one of the most important dimensions of new approaches to aid that is missing from the current version of the LTS. As the work of Amartya Sen demonstrates, people-centred development for poverty eradication is ultimately about recognizing the rights of the vulnerable, and transforming the power relations, and cultural and social interests that sustain inequality. Consequently, finding avenues to address unequal power, capacity, and access to resources for those without rights – the poor and the marginalized – is a fundamental challenge to donor interventions wanting to link poverty reduction to democratic governance and participation. Development is not a process easily amenable to bureaucratic and technical fixes; rather it is widely recognized as an iterative domestic political process, even in the most aid-dependent countries. It is a political process that engages people, particularly the poor and the powerless, in negotiating with each other, with their governments, and with the world community for policies and rights that advance their livelihood and secure their future in their world.

4.5 Donors can make substantial contributions to specific poverty reduction objectives through approaches to development cooperation and dialogue-focusing resources on the policies, strategies and opportunities that are determined by developing country partners themselves. But in doing so, donors can also easily depoliticize development by isolating policy debate among largely unaccountable external bilateral and multilateral civil servants and like-minded counterparts in national governments.

## 5. A CCIC Proposal for an Approach to Civil Society that Touches all Aspects of Canada's Development Assistance

5.1 The real challenge for donors, government and NGOs alike, is to understand how policy decisions affect the lives of poor people and draw conclusions from grassroots experience to reform and improve policy making for the intended beneficiaries. Donor rhetoric – and here the *Framework for Consultation* is no exception – tends to reduce this politics of development to the notion of "participation" of the poor and understand the latter as a condition for achieving results, as though there were no issues about who gets to participate and who does not, and as if participation does not affect the content and nature of interventions. Civil society is not just a convenient delivery mechanism to assure participation of the poor in donor agency and government strategies.

Engagement with the politics of civil society is central to governance, local ownership, partnership and policy dialogue. Interventions must serve to strengthen those living in poverty and the marginalized to claim rights-based social, economic, cultural, gender and political entitlements from the state and responsible market institutions. Any revised approaches to development cooperation require an explicit consideration of how the roles and capacities of civil society touch all aspects of Canada's development assistance, and these considerations must be central to CIDA's ultimate LTS.

**Recommendation #5:** CIDA's Long-term Strategy should have a comprehensive approach to civil society that touches all aspects of Canada's development assistance and our aid relationships.

### Understanding civil society

5.2 Much has been written to deepen our understanding of the complexity and richness of civil society as the arena where citizens come together to promote common interests of community and civic values. We do not intend to delve into the debates on the differing notions of civil society; others have done so in-depth. Rather we want to highlight the connections between civil society organizations and other actors in development cooperation – particularly the state and the private sector. In doing so, we take up the challenge of Kumi Naidoo, Secretary General of Civicus, in his 1999 *in common* lecture on behalf of CCIC, that we must focus on "building new 'social infrastructure' as part of a strategy to eradicate poverty and [must] place civil society fore-square in this endeavour".

5.3 In Kumi Naidoo's words, "civil society is a representation of collective citizen action, whether to advance mutual interests, solve common problems, or promote shared aspirations. Civil society and its organizations provide an alternative means for citizens to participate in designing and creating a healthy public life in their own image". Despite reflecting multiple and diverse actors, and contending points of view, civil society is fundamentally the citizen acting collectively to advance common interests in the public

realm through actions that do not threaten the basic rights of others (e.g. exclusion based on race, religion, ethnicity or gender).

5.4 CIDA's 1996 *Framework for a Renewed Relationship* with the Canadian voluntary sector recognized our mutual interest in building strong civil societies in support of sustainable development. We also share a cross sector perspective in which "the three sectors [private, government and civil society] are not separate and distinct sectors, but rather, dynamic and fluid spheres of activity that continuously interact and change, a complex system that varies enormously from country to country". Since 1996 both CIDA and the CCIC have explored our understanding of this interaction for improving our approach to development work, as well as the ability of each sector to relate to the others more effectively.

5.5 There are many types of organizations in civil society, not all of which are relevant to the overarching objective of reducing poverty. Popular organizations – i.e. organization made up of poor or marginalized people (organizations of farmers, women, workers or indigenous people) – need to be clearly distinguished as ones that aim to represent, serve and protect the interests of poor communities. NGOs are also distinct and important intermediary organizations in civil society. At their best, according to Alan Fowler, "NGOs gain legitimacy, accountability and resources in their relation to civil society. What they offer are innovation within civil society, articulation of interests to other players, mediation and negotiating expertise and, when mandated, representation of a civic voice". While the numbers of each have expanded dramatically over the past three decades in both the North and the South, more recently international networks of NGOs, institutions, trade unions, and sometimes popular organizations, have formed, having influence on the global agendas of UN conferences, in international treaty processes and reforming multilateral debt, trade and environment policies.

5.6 Both CIDA and Canadian civil society organizations have had long-standing programmatic relationships with popular organizations and NGOs across the globe, which have defined a distinct Canadian approach to international cooperation. Such organizations, North and South, combine to make up a dense social fabric and are now primary actors against poverty. It is these organizations within civil society that are relevant to a comprehensive approach to civil society by CIDA.

### **What are the strategic roles of civil society actors in strategies for poverty eradication?**

5.7 Like other development actors, not least the official development agencies like CIDA, the work and roles of civil society, and particularly NGOs, require constant scrutiny and revision, responding to both a changing world and their own weaknesses and challenges. In the 1990s, Canadian NGOs and other institutions, with their partners and through CCIC, have been examining, renewing and altering their strategic roles in development cooperation. We can extract lessons that draw on this wide body of

experience (strengths and weaknesses) and that point to the comparative advantages of civil society organizations for the development process. We can then suggest areas of mutual interest with CIDA's LTS. (Other official donors – DANIDA, DFID and the World Bank among others – have explored more systematically and at length many of these lessons and remaining issues in recent policy papers.)

5.8 Within developing countries civil society organizations are a crucial means to

- i) provide an organized voice for the expression of interests of citizens, including poor and powerless people, in community development and policy-making processes;
- ii) incorporate and extend democratic forms of national and local governance through innovative mechanisms for participation and the mediation and aggregation of interests within and between communities;
- iii) promote human rights and protect the interests of those who are affected unfairly and/or excluded from decision-making in relation to individual cases, national policies and reform programs;
- iv) act as bridge-builders between people with differing interests, between those engaged with the different social sectors and in innovative collaborations between the private, government and civic sectors.
- v) act as political intermediary between citizens and the state, and between donors and other civil society organizations;
- vi) support capacity-building of grassroots popular organizations, and sometimes local government and national ministries, providing opportunities for learning and training in social change and development;
- vii) respond to emergencies with detailed knowledge of local communities, and mediate social conflict in community-level processes;
- viii) mobilize local resources and expand local philanthropy;
- ix) mobilize voluntarism in society in self-help groups, in support of grass-root development, and the promotion of civic values;
- x) implement participatory, often innovative, programs in communities, particularly in the social sectors and income generation (production and savings and credit schemes);
- xi) facilitate networking and sharing of experiences across regions in the countries and in the South.

5.9 While significant differences exist among NGOs, North and South, and within their respective regions, NGOs also consciously build relationships based on common cause

rooted in common values and common citizen interests across boundaries, and not just money and resource transfers. Many Southern NGOs and some popular organizations have extended their funding relationships beyond Northern NGOs to northern bilateral agencies and multilateral institutions. But the former still privilege and protect long-term reciprocal relationships of solidarity with Northern NGOs and their constituencies, since these values are not usual characteristics of their relations with bilateral donor relations.

5.10 Within Canadian civil society, we can also identify comparative advantages for Canadian NGOs, NGLs and other civil society organizations who have been active in the development process:

i) Canadian NGOs and other civil actors have developed unique experience and expertise over the past 30 years in adapting to changing roles and realizing true dimensions of long-term partnerships. Many have pioneered participatory processes with long-standing partners to identify partner-led programming priorities. While not without considerable room for change as noted above, NGOs, churches, unions, and other civil society organizations in Canada have been leaders within global civil society in responding to challenges from the South to move from a donor/recipient model to one based on transparent reciprocal dialogue and respectful support for the concerns of Southern partners. CIDA has been an incubator of many of these early experiences. As CIDA works to implement changes in its own relationships, it should be seeking out and learning from this experience within its own NGO constituency.

ii) Canadian NGOs are the primary civil expression of public commitment in Canada to development, justice and global citizenship, and many Canadian civil society organizations have formed North/South linkages among civil society organizations, based on shared values and objectives. They reflect the diversity of the population and its different interests in international cooperation. Many of these linkages have been innovative and have expanded opportunities for Canadians to participate in international cooperation, such as the Canadian union labour funds working under the umbrella of the Canadian Labour Congress, linkages with Canadian universities and colleges, or with farmers' or women's organizations in Canada. They also undertake substantial global education programming with their constituencies and are experimenting with new methods for engaging Canadians in the important issues for tackling global poverty.

iii) It is important to note that most southern civil society organizations receive little or no outside support; they seek change based on their own creative commitment of local resources. Nevertheless Canadian NGO participation in a strong international civil society movement, with powerful North/South linkages, provides increasing room for manoeuvre for local civil society to act as a democratic counterweight to powerful vested interests that seek to concentrate social resources and wealth and thereby deepen social and economic inequalities.

iv) Canadian NGOs have been risk-takers and major innovators in the development process over the past 30 years. NGOs were pioneering participatory methodologies long before official donors understood their importance; NGOs took up a rights based

approach to empowerment of poor people long before it became the rhetoric and a program area of official donors; NGOs developed experience in peacebuilding and responses to complex humanitarian emergencies in the 1980s and 1990s long before they became specialized departments of official donor agencies. In Canada such innovation would have been impossible without the sustained support of Partnership Branch and its early innovation towards *responsive program funding* that provided the programmatic scale and the required flexibility for the most important Canadian NGO innovators. It is Partnership Branch that has been the most innovative and 'knowledge-led' Branch of CIDA.

v) No one development actor has a monopoly on development knowledge or the "correct policies" to pursue in policy dialogue. A vibrant NGO community in Canada will monitor the change process within CIDA and provide comment, at times critical, on its direction. Given opportunities, it will also engage with CIDA, share its accumulated organizational expertise (for example on immunization and sustainable health care, or the application of core labour rights standards). The community has always provided CIDA with a window and listening post for the concerns of civil society actors in priority countries where CIDA seeks program and policy dialogue based on country-led policies and priorities. We need to invent creative and efficient North/South mechanisms for sharing this knowledge.

### **What might a comprehensive approach to engaging civil society bring to CIDA and its long-term strategies to restructure Canadian aid relationships?**

5.11 First, the LTS can recognize and build on CIDA's own experience in working with civil society since the 1960s and in strengthening the rights and voice of the poor in the development process, particularly in the 1990s. CIDA's Partnership Branch, and the responsive mechanisms in CIDA's bilateral Branches, have creatively supported the capacities of Canadian NGOs to collaborate with civil society and communities in the South over the past 30 years. Indeed, it can be argued that this is the single most important contribution of Canadian ODA in the past decades. The principles of responsive programming, cost-sharing and mutual respect in open and on-going dialogue with Canadian voluntary organizations has been fundamentally important to the development of CIDA itself, as well as the growth and diversity of the involvement of Canadian civil society in long-standing partnerships throughout the South. Rather than resulting in unfocused interventions, these principles have sharpened Canadian contributions to development innovation and placed Canada at the forefront of official donor engagement with civil society long before others understood its importance.

5.12 Until the early 1990s and the publication of CIDA's policy for human rights, democratization and good governance, human rights did not enter into CIDA's development discourse; promoting human rights was seen as an unacceptable politicization of development cooperation. Only NGOs raised these issues in the 1970s and 1980s. While CIDA's projects in the 1990s focused primarily on strengthening government services, more than 60% of these projects in human rights and democratization have been implemented by civil society organizations.

5.13 Second, the LTS can systematically draw lessons from this Canadian/Southern civil society experience, within which to situate CIDA's programmatic and institutional integration of comprehensive approach to civil society. Over these decades, a wide range of civil society organizations have been primary partners in delivering Canadian ODA in both long-term anti-poverty programs and in humanitarian assistance. These organizations have been very important social and programmatic innovators, and have been citizen advocates for crucial policy changes and popular participation in policy making that affect the lives of millions who are poor and excluded. (See Appendix One for examples)

5.14 A comprehensive approach to engaging civil society in all aspects of Canadian development assistance is consistent with the principles and directions contemplated for CIDA's LTS. How might CIDA create synergy between its proposed approaches and existing strengths of civil society programming?

i) A comprehensive approach to civil society by CIDA will support civil society engagement in policy dialogue at all levels and in programming and innovation. It will ensure the realization of the Agency's social development priorities through more extensive people-oriented approaches to poverty reduction (including an approach to sector wide approaches (SWAPs) that emphasizes civil society and governance – see Section 6 below).

ii) Southern civil society consistently seeks new opportunities to participate and influence national country strategies for poverty eradication. The World Bank and the IMF, along with donors, are mandating Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) that seek out the views of civil society and private sector interests in the poorest countries. To date, authentic civil society engagements with the PRSPs have been very weak, with the possible exception of Uganda and Tanzania. A comprehensive approach to engaging civil society on the part of CIDA might extend Canadian international experience in governance programming as Canada's "niche expertise" to facilitate civil society roles and policy contributions to PRSPs and Sector Wide Approaches in basic education, primary health, and other areas. CIDA will require extensive country-level knowledge and an intensive presence to influence policy dialogue. Long-standing Canadian in-country civil society relationships with counterparts will form an important dimension of this presence, bringing independent windows and channels for knowledge and influence.

iii) Some Canadian NGOs and other civil society organizations have developed expertise in making the very difficult translation of field experience into policy lessons that can be adopted in broader country programming or across regions. Nevertheless the structure of many NGOs, including their own priorities based on long-standing field partnerships, and the difficulty in funding from Canadian sources the work required to develop authentic North/South policy learning, all pose constraints on policy participation and knowledge-sharing on the part of many organizations. CCIC has its own capacities and with the support of IDRC has been working with others to extend policy development work through learning circles and other inter-agency processes.

However, greater flexibility in CIDA funding that give priority to North/South policy development and learning exercises will enhance policy engagement with CIDA, but also expand their roles in country-led strategies for poverty eradication.

v) A comprehensive approach to engaging civil society will also give priority to financial resources for civil society strengthening, particularly for organizations of the poor and the promotion of human rights. CIDA should emphasize policies for a healthy enabling legal environment for domestic civil society actors and take up all opportunities to encourage cross-sectoral policy dialogue.

v) Given the centrality of livelihood issues for poverty reduction, attention should be given to understanding the implications of core labour standards in its development actions and promoting programs that link core labour standards with poverty reduction efforts.

vi) Finally increased collaboration on development awareness and citizen engagement efforts in Canada between CIDA and Canadian civil society and education institutions should form an equally important component of a comprehensive approach to engaging civil society.

5.15 The roles and capacities of CIDA and civil society organizations in Canada are evolving. A comprehensive approach to strengthening civil society in all aspects of Canadian international assistance will deepen our mutual commitment to strengthening the principles of ownership and democratic governance in overcoming poverty. Over the next several years, many Canadian organizations with an international focus on poverty will be assessing their own expectations, roles and capacities in support of civil society in the South, through both community-based programming and influencing policy. A comprehensive approach to civil society for CIDA will imply institutional changes in the relationship with the Canadian voluntary sector not only in Partnership Branch, but will also affect the nature of bilateral country strategies, humanitarian assistance, multilateral priorities, programming methodologies, staffing skills and human resources for development, new avenues for North/South knowledge development and sharing, and the creation of new fora for ongoing policy consultation, among many other areas.

## **6. Other Issues Raised by the *Framework for Consultation***

6.1 The LTS will also address institutional changes within CIDA and the bureaucratic tools that define its relationships with external partners and other government departments. The implications of a strategic emphasis on policy influence and recipient-led programming raises a number of issues that are highlighted below.

**A cautionary note on a seemingly exclusive emphasis on government-to-government programming relationships and multilateral "global public goods"**

6.2 The current emphasis of the *Framework for Consultation* is on government-to-government capacity building and multilateral initiatives for achieving change for global public goods. The former arises from a desire to work within government-determined poverty reduction policies and assumes that 1) poverty reduction and pro-poor growth are genuine priorities of recipient governments; and 2) that macro-economic and governance policies are largely in place for effective delivery of aid resources for intended purposes and results. These conditions rarely exist, particularly among the poorest countries.

6.3 In any case, this orientation will lead CIDA to prioritize countries on the basis of these criteria and will certainly exclude where conditions of poverty are extreme, such as many in Sub-Saharan Africa, and where governments are clearly captured by elite policy interests, to the exclusion of any real concern for the poor. The selection of priority countries for the LTS should be based on criteria that stress the extent of poverty, the nature of this poverty and institutional tools and channels most appropriate to tackle this poverty. In many cases, these channels and tools will combine government level policy dialogue and programs, along with those initiated by other social actors that create capacity to improve government strategies for poverty reduction.

**Recommendation #6** The selection of priority countries for the Long-term Strategy should be based on criteria that stress the extent of poverty, the nature of this poverty and institutional tools and channels most appropriate to tackle this poverty and not government capacities.

6.4 With respect to the multilateral system, CIDA should give priority to those institutions with a proven track record on poverty reduction – such as UNICEF or UNDP. These institutions in fact received higher proportionate cuts to their funding from Canada in the 1990s, compared with other Canadian commitments to multilateral programs. While all multilateral institutions have had an important role in highlighting critical issues for a common policy agenda for member governments, assessment of on-the-ground programming strengths should be determined on a case-by-case basis. Canadian NGOs and their partners in the South have a very good working knowledge of many multilateral donors, their advantages and constraints in their effective contribution to recipient-led people-centred development.

6.5 The proposed LTS will make a strong link between Canada's "enlightened self-interests" and investment in achieving global public goods. The UNDP has proposed a number of areas -- equity and justice, financial stability, health, environment and cultural heritage, peace and security, and knowledge and information – as global public goods. While these are important concerns for the international community, an emphasis by donor countries on global public goods should be tempered by the need to substantially reform multilateral institutions so that they respond not only to the policy interests of the North but also to those of the South. The rich already have identified many of their own interests in a range of global public goods, and these may be very different from global public goods that prioritizes the interests of poor populations and very poor countries.

The UNDP's proposal for focusing on global public goods, which was also taken up by the Bank, most importantly suggests that ALL relevant northern government ministries contribute budget resources to their realization and that aid resources not be further diverted from direct poverty reduction efforts.

**Recommendation #7:** The emphasis in the Long-term Strategy on global public goods should be tempered by the need to substantially reform multilateral institutions so that they respond not only to the policy interests of the North but also to those of the South.

### **Piloting Canadian participation in Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAPs)**

6.6 In the 1990s a number of mainly European donors have been experimenting with "Sector Wide Approaches" (SWAPs) in their delivery of aid resources. The *Framework for Consultation* takes up recently CIDA analysis and pilots (in Uganda basic education for example) based on this experience as an option for placing greater emphasis on local ownership of development priorities and programs, strategic focus and policy coherence, and improved coordination among stakeholders.

6.7 Internationally, NGOs writing in *Reality of Aid* have praised sector-wide approaches by donors as "a more coherent way of enhancing government capacity and increasing developing country ownership". SWAPs also recognize the prime responsibility of government in delivering universally accessible social programs for education, health and basic infrastructure. Nevertheless current debates on SWAPs skim over or seem to ignore a number of issues and tensions in this approach. These issues should be examined in current and future CIDA pilot participation in SWAPs.

6.8 Donor considerations of SWAPs are still heavily oriented to their own requirements for close management of development resources. Donor approaches to SWAPs stress the need for thorough assessments of the underlying conditions required for a "successful" SWAP. While basic governance factors (including recognition of rights for social organization and expression) are clearly relevant, IMF macro-economic conditions, World Bank-imposed civil service reform and privatization are often included as important considerations. For aid-dependent low income countries, SWAPs may result in less bargaining room with individual donors as so-called "pre-conditions" or "critical success factors" are imposed under the guise of improved donor coordination.

6.9 A narrow sector-focus may miss crosscutting concerns for improved livelihood, social and gender issues that affect the multiple dimensions of the lived experience of poverty. Engagement with those who are poor, through their representative organizations, local government or rooted NGOs can integrate sector strategies with broader and specific context issues for poverty eradication. Participation from civil society organizations takes many forms – representation of community interests, assuring cross-sectoral planning, bringing local initiative and innovation to a national platform, implementing and/or assessing the impact of community-based programs, monitoring watch-dog, and evaluations. Given the missing emphasis on these dynamics

in current SWAP dialogue, CIDA could make a valued contribution by giving priority to strengthening civil society relationships in a successful SWAP.

**Recommendation #8:** CIDA Long-term Strategy should consider some niche roles for CIDA in Sector Wide Approaches that emphasize gender and governance and strengthening civil society engagement in SWAPs.

### **The continued relevance of a project approach**

6.10 For developing country governments that may be required to manage thousands of donor-initiated individual projects with different priorities and administrative requirements, pooled resources from donors is an attractive option. Yet despite some highly critical commentary on the project approach, projects should not be abandoned by CIDA as an appropriate tool for some forms of intervention. Projects, often developed and carried out by NGOs and other civil society actors in North/South partnerships, allow for significant risk-taking and innovation, with low political fall-out for domestic governments and CIDA itself. Additionally, given the highly fluid and contingent nature of the development process, projects allows donors and partners to 'hedge their bets' as to development outcomes and results. This does not preclude focus or results-based management, but allows flexibility to ensure impact and effectiveness in real world situations.

6.11 Relative to policy engagement, particularly in a political context where there is no clear vision and commitment on the part of developing country governments to poverty eradication, projects can intervene directly in social processes, strengthen excluded social actors, and can thereby have both intended and often unpredictable impacts on the livelihood and rights of the poor. Projects that strengthen civil society actors to engage beyond the sphere of service delivery (particularly organizations rooted with constituencies in areas where the poor are located) stimulate accountability and engagement with government at all levels and build popular pressure in support of poverty reduction goals (see section 4 above).

**Recommendation #9:** Recognizing the importance of donor coordination for program approaches, CIDA should continue to utilize projects as appropriate means for some interventions that permit greater risk-taking and innovation.

### **Reducing aid conditionality in promoting recipient-led programming**

6.12 A major challenge for all official donors and many Northern civil society actors is to confront the contradiction between the principle of recipient-led programming and increasing conditionality in aid relationships. Many African countries have to comply with more than 100 benchmarks – conditions imposed by the IMF and other donors with little or no negotiation, and with little regard for the policies of locally elected governments. SWAPs are rife with donor/recipient "undertakings", largely to be implemented by recipients as agreed in policy "dialogue". Such undertakings in negotiations with

individual ministries by concerted donor interests may in fact result in increased micro-conditionalities, largely beyond the capacities of ministries of poor countries to comply. Canadian Professor Gerry Helleiner has proposed a wide range of donor-initiated actions that would reduce conditionality and increase the role of developing countries in their own development process. These range from a full review of northern technical assistance leading to its reduction, longer timeframes for realizing program objectives, accepting risk as a necessary part of international cooperation, providing better information from donors to recipient governments on their program intentions and untying aid. The *Framework for Consultation* only addresses the subject of untying Canadian aid (which might usefully be updated to take account of recent moves by the U.K. government to fully untie British aid).

**Recommendation #10:** The Long-term Strategy should commit to a full review of Canadian technical assistance leading to its reduction, less Canadian-determined timeframes for realizing program objectives, greater acceptance of risk as a necessary part of international cooperation, promoting more complete information from CIDA and other donors to recipient governments on their program intentions and significant untying aid of Canadian aid.

### **Making CIDA contracting regulations consistent with locally-directed development processes**

6.13 Institutionally, the principles governing CIDA's strategic approaches to aid relationships need to be consistent with the current practices of open bidding bilateral contract management by the agency. Canadian development initiatives are not only largely distinct projects, they are also divided into traditional contracts that are in turn micro-managed by CIDA officials to achieve the results they perceive as the goals of the project. Aid contracting has tended to transform complex development processes that require long-term commitment and local knowledge into "biddable products". Accountability is almost entirely back to CIDA and for short term "results", rather than to locally directed development process by developing country partners. The stress is on management control by northern institutions, and often linked to conditionality as described above. There is some evidence that competitive bidding can also increase competition in regions targeted by donors and may lead to accentuated tensions among key development actors in that region. The LTS, if it is to be true to the donor-articulated principles, needs to reconsider CIDA contracting arrangement to take account of the importance of long-term collaboration, local knowledge, participation and decision-making in structuring new forms of accountability in the South and to Parliament in Canada.

**Recommendation #11:** The Long-term Strategy must address new forms of accountability arising from contradictions between current CIDA contracting arrangements and the donor principles acknowledging recipient-led development, local knowledge and participation in decision-making.

## **Institutional changes for knowledge-driven programming**

6.14 The LTS will address the need for CIDA to become "knowledge-driven" and to understand development knowledge as a valuable development resource. In order to substantially link program level interventions in the South with the capacity to capture and share knowledge, CIDA needs to work more efficiently and with much less micro-management. In comparison to bilateral projects, multi-year program funding of Canadian partners in civil society, where the focus is on institutional capacity to realize a range of program goals and objectives over three-to-five years could be a model. Unfortunately, recent concern to identify unrealistically specific results in these multi-year plans have re-introduced levels of micro planning that limit the advantages of these agreements. In becoming knowledge-driven, CIDA has to be more sensitive to the wide range of development knowledge that is relevant to their concerns and to issues of "ownership" in knowledge-creation and promotion. A comprehensive civil society approach as described in section 4 above can be one practical means, among others, for CIDA to interact with knowledge that is rooted in the lived experience of the poor. The key questions for the LTS is who determines what perspectives are included in "knowledge for development" and in whose interests is such knowledge promoted. The assumptions in the *Framework for Consultation* on consensus among development actors, noted in earlier sections of this *Commentary*, highlight this very point.

**Recommendation #12:** CIDA knowledge networks must be inclusive of development actors outside of CIDA and must take into account knowledge rooted in the lived experience of those living in poverty.

## **Linking an enhanced CIDA role in Canadian foreign policy coherence with strengthened policy roles for Canadian civil society**

6.15 CIDA's LTS will recognize the critical importance of Canadian policy coherence and bringing development objectives to bear more effectively on a range of policy issues affecting developing countries. CIDA recognizes from experience the tensions between foreign policy determined by short-term narrow Canadian economic and political interests, and CIDA's mandate, which arises from the real needs of developing countries and challenges unequal global economic and political structures. CIDA has an important role to play as an agency with knowledge of these issues, and as an agency to coalesce the energy and contributions of Canadians who want to contribute their experience. CIDA has been strengthening its own policy capacities, particularly in the areas of trade and the environment, so that it can become a more pro-active policy actor in the formulation of foreign policy. CIDA's policy advice on trade in particular must guard against prescriptions that mask a trade promotion agenda for Canada. Given the potential tensions with lead Ministries in government, it will be vital for CIDA to work with and strengthen policy roles of Canadian civil society organizations to counterbalance narrowly conceived national interests in Canadian foreign policy.

**Recommendation #13:** An enhanced CIDA role in the coherence of Canadian foreign policy formation will be strengthened by stronger CIDA policy dialogue with Canadian and Southern civil society organizations.

## 7. Conclusion

7.1 CIDA's Long-term Strategy offers a very welcomed opportunity for a renewal of CIDA's aid policies and practices and represents an institutional commitment to implement new directions. The *Framework for Consultation* suggests promising directions for these changes. CCIC has made additional proposals that stem from our concern that Canadian international assistance address poverty eradication as its central goal. Significant challenges remain for both CIDA and Canadian civil society in identifying appropriate strategies in international assistance to contribute to this goal. NGOs are also continuously learning through their engagements in Canada and overseas, whether with civil society organizations and governments at all levels, and more recently the private sector. NGOs and other civil society organizations involved in international cooperation with developing countries are continually involved in rethinking our own roles and long-term strategies. Our central proposal for a crosscutting civil society dimension in Canadian international assistance is offered in the spirit of learning and collaboration that have defined our relationship over the past 30 years. We look forward in the months to come to a full and fruitful discussion of these and other proposals for shaping CIDA's strategic directions.

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