

**A REPORT ON THE
CCIC-CIDA CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE**

ON

**EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS
FOR DEVELOPMENT**

**CHÂTEAU CARTIER
GATINEAU, QUEBEC
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CANADA'S COALITION TO END GLOBAL POVERTY
ENSEMBLE POUR ÉLIMINER LA PAUVRETÉ DANS LE MONDE

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“This view that government has a monopoly on truth and wisdom, I'm afraid, reflects an outdated notion of governance – one that sees it as the exclusive domain of governments.... Citizens are arguing for a new notion of governance that requires political leadership to engage with citizenry in ways that allow for ongoing input into decision-making and policy formation....”

“We do not suggest that civil society is intrinsically good and that governments are intrinsically bad. That is far too simplistic a position to take. However, we need to recognise that effective democracy needs a vibrant civil society as well as an effective and accountable government. Both face struggles of accountability, but they bring a vital diversity to governance and provide complementarity and mutual accountability systems.”

Kumi Naidoo, Secretary General & CEO, CIVICUS
“Civil Society, Governance and Globalization
World Bank Presidential Fellows Lecture
Washington, February 2003

1.0 SUMMARY INTRODUCTION

Timed to follow its May 2006 Annual General Meeting, CCIC hosted a Dialogue with CIDA that was designed to provide input into a CIDA review of its partnership relationships with civil society and the private sector. It was an opportunity for CCIC members to consider CIDA's vision and principles for effective partnerships in the context of current roles for civil society, and to discuss with CIDA representatives their views on effective partnerships. It brought together more than 100 participants from among CCIC members, other Canadian civil society organizations, the various Branches of CIDA, and included six resource people from civil society organizations (CSOs) in Africa and Latin America.

Participants discussed a range of themes – principles of partnership, aid effectiveness, and accountability – which were also raised by CIDA in its discussion paper for the Dialogue. CCIC members and Southern CSO colleagues affirmed the critical importance of CSOs as democratic actors for innovation and development progress. CSO partnerships were understood to be “vehicles for long term accompaniment that support the right of peoples to determine and carry out activities that further their own development options” (CCIC's Code of Ethics). Since the 1970s CIDA has been a leader among donors in strengthening such civil society partnerships, particularly through its innovative responsive funding mechanisms. Participants urged CIDA not to abandon this core principle of responsiveness, which has been so important in strengthening civil society organizations as development actors in their own right. The renewal of CIDA's programming strategies and funding modalities for partnership should strengthen, and not weaken, Southern CSO ownership.

Participants welcomed CIDA's senior management commitment to an "ongoing dialogue" that would continue to look at civil society partnerships across all CIDA Branches, leading to the elaboration of a CIDA policy framework for renewed partnerships. CIDA's plenary presentation and background discussion paper for the dialogue provided some initial directions and questions for debate and reflection.

This report structures the Dialogue presentations and discussion according to the topics covered in each section of CIDA's discussion paper. The report also describes a number of detailed proposals which can be summarized as follows:

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

CIDA should:

1. Develop a **renewed framework for CIDA partnerships** based on evolving CSO development roles and CIDA-civil society partnership principles that strengthen these roles. Include in these principles a statement of the purpose and value of such partnerships, and guidelines regarding shared risk, accountabilities, democratic development objectives and results for poor and marginalized peoples.
2. Make CIDA a **champion for civil society in the OECD DAC**, with a particular eye to the upcoming assessment of progress in the Paris Declaration, where donors should acknowledge and discuss the implications of the seeming absence of civil society organizations as distinct development actors in their strategies to improve aid effectiveness. Support policy dialogues and engagement with civil society organizations in Canada and the South to advance this agenda.
3. **Involve civil society, North and South**, in the assessment and establishment of Canadian aid priorities in all CIDA's priority country plans.
4. **Re-align and simplify CIDA-civil society operational relations** in light of the partnership principles and "best practice" in the government and internationally.
5. Develop a **new joint framework and strategy for public engagement** and global citizenship.
6. Not assume we are starting from scratch. **Learn from and document lessons from past and current CIDA-civil society partnerships**, whether in developing partnership principles, addressing operational questions, considering new forms of NGO-collaboration, or public engagement.
7. Establish immediate and **ongoing mechanisms for civil society-CIDA consultation** in the North and South, to implement the proposals suggested in this report.
8. Consider **innovative partnerships between CSOs and academic and other Canadian institutions** to conduct research and pilot initiatives relevant to the above.

2.0 CONTEXT – A HISTORY OF PARTNERSHIP

In setting the stage for this Dialogue, speakers – from Canada and the South, from civil society organizations and government – encouraged participants to take an historical view of CIDA's relationship with civil society. They drew on a rich civil society contribution to development change spanning 40 years – from support for the anti-apartheid movements of the 1960s and 70s to the achievement of a treaty to ban landmines in 1997, from hundreds of cooperative and trade union partnerships to four decades of volunteer placements by a dozen organizations that have exposed tens of thousands of Canadians to the realities of life in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and instilled in them a lifelong commitment to “global citizenship”. In dozens of ways, participants were reminded that this Dialogue builds on this long history of cooperation between CIDA and civil society organizations in Canada and the South: government-citizen collaboration has been a signature of Canada's aid program, and the envy of many around the world.

CIDA-civil society collaboration has taken many forms, and has evolved over time. It has always reflected CIDA's overarching goals, but also the interests, expertise and “publics” that are represented by the diversity of civil society organizations that have been CIDA's Canadian partners over the years: academic and research institutions; faith communities; professional associations; trade unions; NGOs that provide personnel and technical assistance; and others that have focused mainly on public education and the engagement of Canadians.

These CIDA-civil society partnerships have recognized and responded to unique, often long-lasting relationships between Canadian organizations and their counterparts in the South. They have adapted to changing Southern needs in a dizzying array of circumstances – from decolonization in the 1960s to economic globalization in this decade, from war, political turmoil and widespread repression to famine and natural disasters. They have withstood many changes of government, outlived numerous trends in development assistance, and many government policy shifts. They have been reciprocal and mutually beneficial, and have achieved things that are only possible when the specific assets of government and citizens' organizations are understood and combined – to strengthen the unique roles that each partner plays.

Participants were encouraged, repeatedly, to learn from and build on this rich history – its failures and “best practices”. “To ignore [it] would be to lose the benefit of decades of fruitful collaboration”, in which frankness and honest dialogue have played an important part.

This report summarizes the major points raised in the Dialogue. Though direct quotes are not attributed, they are used liberally in the text to offer a flavour of the exchange that occurred.

3.0 CIVIL SOCIETY ROLES IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH (CIDA'S PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT)

“Civil Society Organizations in the North and South are called on to redefine their alliances to intervene in the global public space, and to play a role like other political actors in building a globalization that cares about social and environmental rights.”

Jorge Eduardo Durao, FASE, Brazil

This dialogue on effective partnerships for development took place in the context of the Paris Declaration – an OECD statement regarding “aid effectiveness” that now underpins Canada’s aid policy. This Declaration sets out principles to improve aid effectiveness, as well as commitments and targets as indicators of progress toward more effective aid. Participants and resource people, however, were quick to observe that these principles and approaches may exclude the most important roles of civil society in development – whether in Canada or the South. They stressed that these roles must be understood, if civil society is to contribute effectively to Canada’s aid program, and if CIDA and other official aid organizations are to avoid – however unintentionally – undermining the critical role of civil society in the development process, by focusing almost exclusively on governments to improve the effectiveness of aid.

What, then, are the principal roles of civil society? How do civil society organizations see their contribution to development? What would need to change in the current definitions of effective aid, to facilitate a lasting contribution by civil society to effective aid for development? These are some of the questions that the Dialogue addressed – as a starting point for assessing “effective partnerships”. They often went well beyond the questions that CIDA had raised in the discussion paper¹ it had prepared for the meeting.

3.1 WHAT ARE THE ROLES OF CIVIL SOCIETY?

3.1.1 Organized, Independent Citizens’ Voices

“Civil Society is different from other ‘non-state actors’, and especially from the for-profit private sector.” Civil society organizations are “driven by a commitment to particular values and causes,” whether social, cultural or environmental. As a “sector”, civil society is intentionally independent of governments, has a role very different from governments, and is hugely diverse. In a myriad of forms – from loose affiliations of people within communities, to formal organizations, coalitions and broad social movements, from local to regional to international in scope – civil society reflects the many concerns of citizens around the globe, organized for specific purposes, and to make their voices heard.

3.1.2 Democracy and Good Governance

A strong civil society is central to any healthy democracy, including Canada’s. It provides a vehicle for the public exchange of ideas on issues of public interest. It is essential to ensuring healthy public debate on matters of public policy.

Participants frequently reminded one another that civil society is just as important, and arguably more so, where democracy does not exist, or where democratic traditions are weak and dissent may be dangerous. In “failed states” and countries at war, in conflict zones and other situations where human rights are violated with impunity, it is often civil society organizations that act where governments cannot, or will not – invariably with the solidarity and support of civil society colleagues and “partners” from abroad. Participants were offered many examples: Brazilian civil society organizations, like their counterparts elsewhere in Latin America, received much-valued solidarity from Canadians while they organized to resist the continent’s dictatorships. South Africa’s anti-apartheid movement received moral and material support from many Canadian organizations – sometimes in partnership with CIDA – over decades.

¹ CIDA, “Strengthening Canada’s Role in the World Towards Greater Effectiveness of International Aid: Dialogue with Canadian Partners”, May 2006, available at <http://ccic.ca/e/002/aid.shtml>.

This was not merely technical assistance or financial resources. Civil society organizations collaborated from a shared commitment to human rights, social justice and democratic development. These values remain at the heart of current partnerships, alliances and coalitions that have emerged as civil society itself has matured and evolved in different places. This role of accompaniment in strengthening citizens' roles in democratic governance – which goes far beyond resource or technical transfers – must remain at the heart of civil society partnerships.

Some of the “democratic functions” performed by civil society globally include: independent research on issues of public policy; encouragement of public debate on these issues; input into government policy processes; monitoring government performance; defence of human rights and documentation of human rights violations; and the representation of citizens' voices – nationally and in the multilateral arena. Roles such as these, and opportunities for civil society organizations in different countries to learn from the experience of their counterparts elsewhere, should find a prominent place in aid programs that wish to strengthen good governance and democracy.

3.1.3 Innovation, Responsiveness and “Nimbleness”

“Civil society is often way ahead of governments.” “How many times have we seen the ‘crazy ideas’ of a handful of people eventually become policy, and common practice?” Civil society “can often act more quickly than governments.” Whether by finding practical ways to put women at the centre of development initiatives or leading a movement to conserve agricultural bio-diversity, civil society – at its best – is recognized for its innovation and risk-taking, its ability to “think outside the box” and imagine new ways of doing things. It is an “incubator” of new ideas and approaches – that can be tested on a small scale, and later scaled up.

For civil society to play an effective role in development, its capacity for innovation should be nurtured. As one participant said: “Civil society should not be squeezed into an aid framework that is so risk-averse and prescriptive that innovation is stifled” – a perceived danger in the current context. At the same time, civil society organizations should always be testing their own assumptions, structures, programs and methods. They should ask themselves whether they are relying too much on “comfortable, old” approaches, and whether they could be more innovative.

3.1.4 Reach

“Civil society works at the micro, meso and macro levels – providing services at the community (micro) level, addressing specific policy issues at the meso level, and dealing with national and multilateral governance issues at the macro level.” Taken as a whole, civil society has a reach that is both deep (into communities) and wide (across national boundaries, via regional and global networks, alliances and coalitions). All aspects of this “reach” are assets that should be recognized and tapped in government-civil society relationships. Whether by providing targeted, community-based services and programs, assessing the impact of policies locally, or pressing for policy change on a global scale, as was done by the “Make Poverty History” campaign, civil society connects with and engages citizens in ways that governments cannot do. Government-civil society partnerships should build on and strengthen this reach.

3.2 Specific Reactions to CIDA's Discussion Paper, *Dialogue with Canadian Partners*

If civil society is to offer something unique to effective aid partnerships, then its contributions must draw on, and be grounded in the unique roles of civil society described above – in Canada and in every country that receives Canadian aid. These roles should be seen as the “value added” that civil society brings to development partnerships for poverty reduction and democratic governance. They go well beyond the more “instrumentalist” perspective that CIDA outlines in its paper, where civil society partnerships (in section 1.2 and 1.3) are described as a means to “facilitate ... implementation of effective and innovative programming; leveraging of additional resources for development; sharing expertise, and creation of networks; and engagement of Canadians in support of ODA.”

The “attributes”, identified by the CIDA paper, may all be appropriate, but they are much more than a “significant asset contributing to CIDA's development efforts” (section 1.2). Rather CIDA's renewed partnerships should clearly acknowledge the wider and independent societal roles of civil society, both North and South. For example, the attributes of partnership defined by CIDA in section 1.2 ignore the central contributions of civil society as representatives of citizens' voices in democratic governance. Civil society makes effective contributions to CIDA's development efforts when partnerships are structured and firmly anchored in understanding these roles in particular country contexts.

ACTION PROPOSAL CIVIL SOCIETY ROLES

CIDA should:

- Acknowledge and elaborate the roles of civil society as unique actors in the development process in its renewed framework for partnerships as the basis for characterizing the appropriate attributes of civil society partnerships for greater effectiveness of Canadian aid.
- Build on its rich and unique history of cooperation with civil society, to become a “champion” for civil society partnerships in international donor/recipient assessments of progress to achieve the goals for effective aid arising from the Paris Declaration. (This proposal is elaborated in greater detail below.)
- Take leadership, with like-minded donors, to promote an understanding of the unique roles and contributions civil society, without which donor strategies for achieving effective and sustainable results for poverty reduction will largely fail.

4.0 PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES

“Trust and respect are essential in true partnerships. They must be rebuilt between CIDA and NGOs. We have developed entrenched views of one another that have to change.”

Workshop Participants

“There are more and more operational obstacles that hinder partnerships.”

Michel Chaurette, Plenary Discussion

“Don’t make Canadian NGOs the police of their partners.”

Kumi Naidoo, CIVICUS

“For us, strong partnership itself is a purpose.”

Workshop Participant

Two very different types of principles were discussed during the Dialogue. One was a set of “principles for aid effectiveness”, described in CIDA’s discussion paper, and in the Paris Declaration. The others were principles for effective partnership. To distinguish clearly between them, they are reported on separately, beginning in this section with principles for effective partnership.

4.1 PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

CIDA’s document “solicit(s) views from Canadian partners on the principles of effective partnership” but does not itself include a statement of principles that should underpin or guide partnerships. Dialogue participants felt these should be developed – to help define the purpose and nature of the relationships that CIDA hopes to establish with civil society in its “partnership renewal”. These would form a solid, principled base from which to tackle operational concerns and issues of shared risk and appropriate accountabilities, discussed below.

It was suggested that an agreed set of partnership principles should inform more in-depth discussions and provide direction on a number of core questions in CIDA-civil society partnerships: What do we want to do together? Why? What does each partner offer? What operational constraints impede effective partnership? And, what timeframes are relevant, to achieve realistic results?

Participants cited a number of existing resources, to underscore the point that neither CIDA nor CCIC members need start this exercise from scratch. As part of its Code of Ethics, CCIC has established partnership principles that serve as a guide for relationships between Canadian NGOs and their Southern partners. According to CCIC’s Code, “partnerships should be vehicles for long term accompaniment that support the right of peoples to determine and carry out activities that further their own development options, through their civil society organizations.” There is much in these principles that would be transferable to CIDA-civil society partnerships. Similarly, the Government of Canada and the Canadian voluntary sector have signed an Accord and two Codes of Good Practice – on funding and policy dialogue – that were designed to guide government – civil society partnerships. CIVICUS released at its June Global Assembly an “accountability charter” that may also be pertinent.

These resources are already used by CIDA and CCIC members. All this prior work is highly relevant and should be used in developing partnership principles that are appropriate to all Branches of CIDA, in all future partnerships with civil society.

During the course of the Dialogue, participants returned to a number of words that should inform a statement of principles characterizing good partnerships. They included:

shared values	common purpose
respect for southern ownership and voice	trust
honesty (about realistic results, failures)	self criticism, mutual learning
values-based, not utilitarian, not instrumentalist	reciprocity
responsiveness	risk taking, not risk-averse
promoting rights, justice, humanity	continuity, multi-year

ACTION PROPOSALS PARTNERSHIP

CIDA should:

- Develop consultative mechanisms (round tables, forums, working groups) where CIDA and civil society organizations can jointly develop and confirm principles to underpin future partnerships.
- In relation to this, research and document examples of particularly good partnerships, in an effort to understand the qualities that made them so effective.
- Conduct research (perhaps in collaboration with academic institutions) on the application of CCIC's partnership principles, and the impact they have had on civil society relationships North-South.

4.2 THE PARIS DECLARATION AND CIDA'S PRINCIPLES OF AID EFFECTIVENESS

African governments are more accountable to foreigners than they are to their own citizens... Economic decision-making has been removed from parliaments. National ownership is only possible if the dominant macro-economic models can be opened up, and economic decision-making returned to parliaments.

Muthoni Wanyeki, FEMNET, Kenya

"NGOs are being displaced from the field of development, where... they have a special and irreplaceable role to play."]

Jorge Eduardo Durao, FASE, Brazil

Flexibility is uncommon, and very important.

Helena Hofbauer, FUNDAR, Mexico

The March 2005 Paris Declaration is a focal statement by donors, multilateral agencies and recipient governments on actions to improve their partnerships for effective aid. While there were repeated references to it during the Dialogue, the implications of the Paris Declaration for civil society actors in development were the focus of a separate workshop that followed the Dialogue on Effective Partnerships.²

In its Dialogue discussion paper and plenary presentation, CIDA outlined the five principles of aid effectiveness from the Paris Declaration that now guide CIDA programming. They are:

- Ownership – by partner countries of their development policies and strategies;
- Alignment – of donor country development aid with beneficiary country strategies;
- Harmonization – of donor country aid (simplification and alignment of procedures, complementarity of investments and reduction of transaction costs, harmonized evaluation and monitoring approaches);
- Managing for results – effective management of resources linked to results; and
- Mutual accountability – of donor and recipient.

Participants commented on different aspects of these principles and on the Paris Declaration more generally. Their comments covered: the overall purpose of aid, against which results are measured; the singular government focus of the Paris Declaration, and its silence on civil society; concerns about exclusively linking all aid priorities to PRSPs; specific comments about “ownership, alignment, and harmonization”; and potential tensions between aid effectiveness principles, democratization and authentic partnership.

4.2.1 General Comments

Participants often prefaced their comments on the Paris Declaration with a recognition that it responded to many long-standing civil society criticisms of the aid regime. Efforts to streamline aid from multiple donors around common national priorities, to strengthen governments to make progress on the Millennium Development Goals, to reduce the administrative burden on aid recipients, and to “join up” or integrate aid programs were welcomed. But a number of concerns were repeatedly raised.

Ignoring a wider context of North-South relations

Civil society participants emphasized, with illustrations from Ghana to Mexico, that the Paris Declaration cannot be separated from the wider context of North-South relations, and the impact of past aid practice on conditions for poor and marginalized citizens to claim their rights. The current focus on aid effectiveness, they said, does not adequately address the perpetuation of the negative legacy of several decades of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) and related aid conditionality, promoted by the World Bank and IMF, and supported by official aid agencies, including CIDA. SAPs, whose negative fallout is now well acknowledged, were widely condemned by civil society in the North and South, in part because they so clearly undermined development capacities of the state – especially in education and health – and accentuated conditions of poverty. The Paris Declaration has no objectives and targets for reducing the

² Background papers and an audio of the panel presentation for this workshop on the Paris Declaration is available electronically at <http://ccic.ca/e/002/aid.shtml>.

negative impacts of imposed macro-economic and other policy conditions by donors. On the contrary, harmonization of aid policies with World Bank/IMF HIPC and the IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) conditions belies the stated commitment to local ownership.

Aid isolated from other policies, technical and de-politicized

Similarly, participants said, new aid policies can not be isolated from other, often contradictory aspects of Northern foreign policy that affect the South. Nor can aid be divorced from the detrimental development impacts of recent trade agreements. Recent WTO requirements "have effectively pulled away the ladders that Northern economies used to develop", and have fuelled a massive global movement by civil society and many Southern governments that is demanding fairness in world trade and an end to global poverty. None of this complex and highly political context is acknowledged in the largely technical language of the Paris Declaration. As well, little attention is given to how government aid would be delivered in circumstances of war, "fragile or failed states".

4.2.2 The Purpose of Aid and Expected Results

Participants repeatedly endorsed the importance of targets against which to assess whether aid is effective, but many worried that CIDA's discussion paper and the Paris Declaration are largely silent on the prior question: "aid (and partnerships) for what?" Like the Paris Declaration, the introduction to CIDA's document does state that "Canada is collaborating in an international effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)", and that Canada "joins the international community" in its effort to make "international development assistance an effective tool for reducing poverty". Civil society organizations welcome this focus. But the "targets" established in the Paris Declaration will not permit measurement of progress against these goals. Instead, donors will be assessing the mechanisms of aid delivery, not whether Canada's ODA is contributing to the achievement of the MDGs, or poverty reduction. Civil society participants suggested that CIDA establish hard, measurable poverty reduction targets for Canadian aid, against which CIDA, other OECD donors, and partners can be assessed.

4.2.3 Singular Government Focus and the Absence of Civil Society

Nobody at the Dialogue expressed opposition to effective bilateral aid. Both civil society and government speakers emphasized the centrality of governments, good governance, and the "development state". They agreed that governments and sound government policy are and will remain essential for progress towards poverty reduction and democratic development. Many participants also recognized the logic of focusing bilateral aid efforts of multiple donors on the national priorities of recipient governments. They raised serious questions, however, about the singular focus of the Paris Declaration on government-to-government development partnerships, to the exclusion and likely detriment of other actors in the development process. In particular, they noted the absence of civil society from the Paris Declaration. "In this new regime, partnership is seen as the preserve of governments, and this concerns us greatly."

In sum, participants argued that sensible efforts to coordinate and rationalize bilateral aid in line with national priorities had been taken too far, become too circumscribed, marginalizing civil society and undermining its contribution to democratic development processes.

Participants welcomed reference (in Section 1.3 of CIDA's document) to some of the roles of civil society in development, including in places where there is no government presence. But the overall framework of the Paris Declaration made it hard to imagine how these roles would actually be supported, when the only partnerships envisaged are between governments. Participants agreed that CIDA and civil society organizations should work jointly to ensure that the Paris Declaration recognizes the distinct contribution of civil society to development, and the necessary conditions for effective partnerships with civil society. They suggested that CIDA engage in a dialogue with civil society organizations in the South about the role of Southern civil society in ODA, and they proposed that designated ODA funds be established for use by civil society organizations in all country programs (e.g. for gender-related work).

4.2.4 Weakness of PRSPs as Expressions of Country Ownership

Linked to concerns about the singular focus on governments was a serious concern about the reliance on Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in establishing all donors' (including CIDA's) country priorities for aid. "There is a fundamental problem in equating Southern ownership with PRSPs", said one participant, echoed in the comments of many others. "What measures can be taken to ensure that citizens own these strategies, and will benefit from them?" "Budget supports are only as strong as PRSPs – which are often seriously flawed".

The critique of PRSPs is well known; participants referred to several research studies that analysed their weaknesses, including from Sweden, World Vision, and the North South Institute. From the perspective of civil society, the PRSP process typically involves a small segment of civil society in a very limited process of consultation – on priorities already determined by national governments and donors. Many of the specific concerns of civil society – like gender – are simply lost in PRSPs. In addition, concerns were voiced about the extent to which donors could become "so invested in a PRSP process that they fail to recognize when it simply isn't working." It was suggested that ways be found to involve civil society organizations in the development of CIDA's country plans.

4.2.5 Comments about "Southern Ownership, Alignment, and Harmonization"

There was no argument that "Southern ownership" of aid priorities was essential for aid's contribution to sustainable poverty reduction. "It is useful to name it." What was questioned, however, was its meaning: "ownership of what, and by whom?" "How is Southern ownership defined?" As already noted, the macro-economic parameters within which governments must operate are not Southern driven. Graphic examples were cited to illustrate how extensively national policy is determined by "undemocratic institutions, biased in favour of the Northern donors and creditors" that "limit control of development, by even the most developmentally-minded Southern governments". "If these [macro-economic constraints] could be opened up, then many of the other limitations of the Paris Declaration could be addressed. But these are not on the table". Furthermore, ownership by governments can not assume ownership by citizens, and particularly by the poorest, most marginalized citizens. Participants returned here to the risk of ignoring civil society when Southern ownership is seen to be the exclusive preserve of governments. In a context of poverty which has important implications for political representation and participation, "We need to demarcate the role of civil society in defining 'ownership'".

Similar questions were raised about “alignment”. Alignment with what? Many participants were concerned that “alignment” is essentially alignment of national strategies with the “prevailing policies of the IMF and the World Bank, and trade liberalization requirements of the WTO”. “The aid culture is dominated by donors, and doesn’t take account of human rights, and especially the right to development”.

“Where do NGOs fit in? With whom should they be aligned?” “If NGOs are aligned with the interests of partners”, asked one participant, “why do they need to be aligned with CIDA or a PRSP? What about alignment from the bottom up?” The key question is: “how do we make sure that aid strategies are aligned with the needs of the poor?”

Several participants feared that alignment with government strategies, combined with harmonization of donor requirements, might generate a “homogenization” of development approaches, and underscored, again, the importance of diversity and dissent. Alignment “ignores the different roles of governments and civil society in the development process”, and “takes no account of the tension or outright conflict that can exist between governments and civil society”. The expectation that civil society roles can always be aligned with government priorities is unrealistic, and may well undermine the most valuable contributions that civil society can make.

4.2.6 Tension between Aid Effectiveness Principles and Authentic Partnership

Finally, participants were concerned that a single-minded insistence on alignment with government priorities could limit both the innovation and quick response capability of Civil Society, and the potential for authentic partnership as part of ODA. “How much room will there be for things that aren’t aligned with PRSPs?” “What about responsiveness?” “Will the entire aid program become CIDA-driven?” “Will it be possible to facilitate authentic North-South civil society partnerships, within the Paris Declaration framework?” These questions should be addressed, in further dialogue.

4.3 THE CHALLENGE OF THE PARIS DECLARATION FOR CIVIL SOCIETY OPERATIONS

The Paris Declaration is the result of a concerted effort by official aid donors to streamline their efforts, minimize the administrative burden of aid and improve the effectiveness of aid to achieve results. Civil society organizations were challenged by CIDA, and one another, to do likewise: to reduce the “fragmentation” of their efforts and look for new forms of cooperation – especially within aid recipient countries, but also in their efforts to engage the Canadian public.

Many participants reflected on the substantial experience of innovative, CIDA-supported collaborations in Canada, including several that no longer exist. These include Partnership Africa Canada (which, significantly, brought African Civil Society organizations into its governance), COCAMO (Mozambique), Program Angola, the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Fund, the Philippines Canada Human Resource Development program (PCHRD), and the South Asia Partnership. If collaboration and innovation among civil society organizations is a good idea, why did these not survive? Information should be assembled about these past initiatives, so the current generation of practitioners can learn from their strengths and limitations, and avoid re-inventing wheels (or flat tires).

Similarly, there are current collaborations from which lessons should be learned and disseminated. These include (nationally) an initiative among Canada's volunteer sending organizations to develop a common framework and a joint negotiation for multi-year agreements with CIDA; and (internationally) a successful effort by the family of 12 Oxfams to align their development assistance and policy work more deliberately around common themes; and the successful transition of ACORD from a Northern-driven funding consortium to an African-led civil society alliance. All of these efforts could shed light on future collaboration among civil society organizations and creative roles for CIDA in supporting these efforts to improve civil society effectiveness.

ACTION PROPOSALS

THE PARIS DECLARATION AND AID EFFECTIVENESS

CIDA should:

- Establish clear poverty reduction goals and targets against which all Canadian aid initiatives can be measured.
- Initiate a dialogue (or dialogues) with civil society in the South, about the appropriate role of civil society in effective aid and the impact of the Paris Declaration objectives on-the-ground.
- Involve Canadian and Southern civil society organizations in setting the priorities and approaches to realize results for all CIDA's priority country plans.
- Establish special sectoral funds for use by civil society partners in the North and South (e.g. for gender-related work).
- Enable pilots for new forms of in-country collaboration among Canadian CSOs and Southern counterparts, to reduce fragmentation and "transaction costs".
- Study and draw lessons from past examples of civil society collaboration.
- As proposed above, make CIDA a champion for civil society in the OECD DAC, with the aim of "retrofitting" the Paris Declaration to acknowledge the roles for Northern and Southern civil society organizations as development actors in their own right.

5.0 ACCOUNTABILITY – FOR WHAT? TO WHOM?

Not everything that counts can be measured. Not everything that can be measured counts.

Kumi Naidoo, CIVICUS

Our supporters don't want us to play it safe. They want us to make something happen.

Molly Kane, Inter Pares

After three or four years, this community seems to develop collective amnesia. We forget our experience, and seem unable to learn from what we have done in the past...

Tim Brodhead, J.W. McConnell Family Foundation

All participants in the Dialogue acknowledged the central importance of accountability – both for the use of public funds, and for development results. But many participants wanted to “unpack” what is meant by accountability. “Accountability for what, and to whom?” they asked. Participants, from CIDA and civil society, recognized that improvements are needed to current practice – so that CIDA’s partners account well, but not unnecessarily or repeatedly, to the right people, at reasonable intervals, in an appropriate manner.

Partners were frustrated that recent high-profile scandals over the inappropriate use and management of public funds had caused an unreasonable “burden of accountability on organizations across the board”, many of which have decades of solid experience and a public record of sound professional management. Civil society participants welcomed news that these issues were understood and would be addressed at CIDA. They urged that this be done quickly, with appropriate civil society consultation. Several people recommended that the Voluntary Sector Initiative’s *Code of Good Practice* on Funding be used a resource in this exercise. “It already has the blessing of the Government of Canada.” An accreditation process for NGOs was also proposed, so that CIDA could deal more quickly with organizations whose experience and competence were known, and for which a track record of solid management had been established. Several additional specific proposals were made, which are recorded below.

5.1 ACCOUNTABILITY FOR WHAT?

Participants agreed that CIDA and its partners must be accountable for public funds, and for the results of their efforts. They understood that there are different types of accountability, to be addressed in different ways. “Let’s ensure that the funds will be well accounted for, and then let us think together about what the public really wants to know about how funds are used.” “What would help Canadians understand how aid money is used?” It was suggested that Canadian CSOs and CIDA meet with the Auditor General, to consider the question of “reasonable accountability” and what the Canadian public most wants to know about the use of ODA funding and the results of aid.

Many participants returned to the importance of poverty reduction goals for aid, with strategies to achieve them. They wanted to see indicators of progress toward the MDGs and poverty reduction, for example, against which program outcomes could contribute within appropriate timeframes.

On the other hand, participants also had reservations about unrealistically short-term targets, and an “obsession with results”. “What measurable things can be achieved in the short term when so much of what we are trying to do will take time to show results?” They cautioned that “a narrow focus on short-term results can be counterproductive and ultimately dishonest”. It is inherently difficult to establish clear cause-effect chains in a complex process of development on the ground. It can lead people to attribute results that are not the sole result of their work and claim results that may not be sustainable. Currently the tools for measuring results are technocratic and reductive. Participants agreed that CIDA and its partners should tackle these accountability questions together – a more complex and difficult undertaking than accounting for money.

With a similar voice of caution, participants were reminded that “results aren’t everything.” A “pathological fixation” on results may undermine innovation. “Good strategies may be as important as results, if they lead to breakthroughs, or teach important lessons”. In these cases predicting a-priori results may be inherently difficult and stifle the innovation required for effective development. Perhaps a balance between “measurable” results and innovative programming should be adopted. While CIDA recognizes the importance of learning processes, it needs to harmonize the context for good learning processes with the current methodologies for setting out program results.

5.2 ACCOUNTABILITY TO WHOM?

Accountability is not unidirectional. Speakers and participants quickly observed that CIDA and its partners have accountabilities to many people. All are accountable to Canadian taxpayers where Canadian public funds are involved. In addition, all partners are (or should be) accountable to the intended beneficiaries of aid, for the results they are striving to achieve. Like Northern governments Southern governments are first and foremost accountable to their citizens – even where aid funding is concerned. Civil society organizations, both South and North, are accountable to their missions (the “global justice project”, as one put it), and to their membership, public, or “autonomous base”. Northern NGOs are also accountable to their financial supporters: individuals and institutional donors, as well as governments. Civil society organizations must balance these multiple accountabilities, which can sometimes be in tension with each other.

On the theme of “accountability to whom?”, one workshop participant suggested that intended beneficiaries of aid be involved, somehow, in evaluating the effectiveness of aid, and several people asked: “how can we hold governments accountable, in the North and South?”

Participants suggested that expectations for two-way accountability in CIDA-civil society partnerships be discussed and agreed: codified in broad terms in partnership principles, and spelled out in more detail in individual agreements or contracts.

5.3 RISK AND RISK SHARING

Discussion about accountability, and the “tyranny of results” provoked numerous references to risk: the importance of risk-taking and shared risk, and the “deadening effect” of risk-aversion, which many participants believed had become pervasive in the current aid culture. “Once we have understood accountability, we need to do some serious work together on risk, and sharing risk”. “We shouldn’t play it safe, or feel we have to play it safe, for fear that we might fail. But the current climate does not encourage risk-taking.” One speaker suggested that all donors put a fixed percentage of their program funding into high-risk and innovative initiatives, and document what is learned from them.

As with accountability, it was proposed that CIDA and its civil society partners North and South consider the issue of risk, perhaps as part of an immediate discussion about partnership principles, but also as part of an ongoing dialogue about partnership.

5.4 DOUBLE STANDARDS

Several speakers prefaced their comments about accountability with an observation about “double standards”, or “hypocrisy”. They pointed to the lack of democracy and accountability in institutions like the World Bank and the IMF – which nonetheless preach “a mantra of democracy and good governance” to others. One participant also pointed to governance problems that are very current, and very close to home. She described the debilitating impact of the current government transition – where organizations have ongoing government contracts for which funds are not being released. “Surely our contracts are with the Government of Canada, and should not simply be put on hold because the government changes”.

ACTION PROPOSALS ACCOUNTABILITY

CIDA should:

- Document and learn from good, innovative operational relationships, leading to less burdensome but effective accountability in CSO partnerships (including multi-year arrangements). In doing so,
 - Expand CSO involvement in the Harmonization of Operations for Partnership Effectiveness (HOPE) initiative that is currently underway at CIDA.
 - Include CSOs in CIDA’s agency-wide process to assess best practices.
 - Take account of the recently appointed Lankin Committee on accountability with reduced paper burden for government grants and contributions.
 - Acknowledge and use the principles set out in the *Accord Between the Government of Canada and the Voluntary Sector* and its *Code of Good Practice on Funding* when considering questions of accountability, risk etc.
- Meet with the Auditor General to discuss appropriate levels and forms of accountability to Canadians for the results of publicly funded aid.
- Consider establishing an accreditation process for CSOs, to distinguish between new CIDA-civil society partnerships and those organizations that have an established programmatic and management track record with CIDA.
- Consider setting aside a fixed percentage of organizational budgets for high risk, innovative work.
- Establish permanent mechanisms and processes for continuing dialogue between CIDA and civil society, North and South.
- Press for legislation that would confirm poverty reduction as the exclusive goal of Canadian aid with improved accountability to Parliament and aid beneficiaries.

6.0 GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND CANADIAN ENGAGEMENT

Fostering global citizenship goes to the heart of what we do as international NGOs, and why we do it.

Karen Takacs, Canadian Crossroads International

This section corresponds with, but is distinct in its title from, Section 4 in CIDA's Discussion paper entitled "Reflecting Canadian Values in Development Cooperation". Participants found CIDA's conception too narrow and limiting to capture the full range of public engagements for global citizenship. These engagements seek to expand understanding and practice based on universal or internationalist values and aspirations, which include human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In a similar desire to widen the scope of this section, CSO participants aspire to activities that "engage" Canadians well beyond their support for Canadian aid.

Participants returned to a familiar question: What's the "value added" for Northern aid donors of North-South partnerships between civil society organizations? Why should CIDA fund Canadian NGOs, when they could cut out one level of administration by dealing directly with organizations in the South? These questions have been with us for over a decade: they were the focus of a taskforce on direct funding in the late 1980s, and the subject of its report: *Mind If We Cut In?*. "We ought to continue to ask ourselves these questions" said one NGO representative. "And we ought to be able to answer them convincingly." There may be Canadian organizations that do little more than transfer funds to their Southern counterparts. If that is the case, the "value added" may be limited. But most North-South relationships are about much more than money.

Some of the positive features of North-South civil society relationships are alluded to in Section 2, above. They have to do with the unique roles of Civil Society globally, and the strength of linking citizens from around the world in common cause on issues that transcend national boundaries. The substance of long standing North-South civil society partnerships gives credibility to the Canadian counterparts as they engage in unique ways with different segments of the Canadian public. These relationships allow Canadian organizations to mobilize informed public support for global justice, development cooperation and a strong voice for Canada in world affairs – in ways that government cannot replicate. This section deals with these two dimensions of North-South partnerships: helping Canadians to think and act as global citizens, and enabling/building the capacity for global citizenship worldwide, including in the South. Dialogue participants felt that CIDA's relationships with civil society should recognize these related aspects of global citizenship.

6.1 ENGAGING CANADIANS

"All Canadian CSOs are entry points for engaging Canadians, and public engagement is a central part of what we do", said one representative from a Canadian volunteer-sending organization. "NGO supporters and alumni from volunteer programs want to act. Our volunteers come home to Canada with a commitment to 'do something'. Our challenge is to help them find something meaningful to do: to help them move from awareness to action".

The Dialogue did not produce an exhaustive inventory of the ways that organizations have engaged their publics over the years, though many participants referred to an organizational history of "development education" and public engagement, and spoke about the role that CIDA

once played in supporting it. The following phrases from the Dialogue capture the range of activities that participants mentioned, and the collective experience they brought to the discussion. Together, participants in the Dialogue:

- Accompany individuals to become global citizens;
- Encourage individuals to work within their professional organizations as global citizens;
- Encourage responsible consumerism;
- Connect with people / organizations in diasporas, and work with them in Canada;
- Run schools programs and youth programs on global issues
- Organize speaking tours and North/South exchanges;
- Undertake systematic initiatives with journalists and the media;
- Connect individuals and Canadian organizations with global movements;
- Contribute to international campaigns (e.g. landmines, Make Poverty History);
- Support transnational coalitions (and their Southern components);
- Link Canadians in different social movements with their Southern counterparts;
- Undertake and publicize the results of policy analysis on global issues;
- Foster links between Canadian CSOs and academia (though these could be improved);
- Support Canadian citizen involvement in national official policy processes on global issues;
- Document, share and learn from success stories of public engagement / campaigning (e.g. landmines); and
- Encourage Canadians to interact with the parliamentary process and their local MPs on global issues.

Participants expressed concern that, despite four decades of such activities, and strong support by CIDA for public education in earlier years, there has been “no vision, and no policy for public engagement at CIDA” for a long time. The infrastructure for public engagement has been “fatally weakened”. “Large organizations have been compelled to cut regional offices” and reduced their regional presence across the country, in response to funding pressures. Many small organizations that were dedicated to public education and engagement simply folded, for lack of resources. “We need to re-build an infrastructure for public engagement in Canada.” “There is no point rehashing old battles, but we need to look together at where we have come from, and think about increasing the quality and impact of our public engagement work”, in the current situation.

In anticipating this, Canadian CSOs were challenged, and challenged one another, to look at their own current practices, and the missed opportunities to engage Canadians more fully. For many organizations, the most consistent contact they have with their public is for fundraising. “What is the ensemble of messages that Canadians are getting? Couldn’t we all do better, using only the resources we now have?” asked one participant.

In addition to self-examination, however, participants in one workshop argued that “a clear policy and a strategy for engaging key sectors are needed. Then we need to measure whether it is working”. To do this, it was suggested, “We should take advantage of research on how information technology has changed people’s connection with the world”, and especially how

“young people are acting on global issues.” The intimation in these latter suggestions is that old organizations and approaches may be less relevant to young people, and that fresh ideas and approaches may be needed. Developing a public engagement strategy will “require creativity, new ideas and resources”, but it should also build on the lessons learned from past efforts.

6.2 BUILDING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP INTERNATIONALLY

Some people and some organizations from most countries now see themselves as actors on a global stage. There exists now an informed and articulate “international civil society elite” that includes people from the South, who are part of global coalitions, networks and campaigns that give expression to citizens’ voices from around the world. These networks and movements work in many ways to shape public opinion and influence the decisions and policies of global institutions – on issues as diverse as social development, human rights, international trade, the environment and gender equality – to name some. Most recently, the “Make Poverty History” campaign involved millions of people from North and South, in a concerted effort to convince Northern governments and multilateral institutions to take action on global poverty. Dialogue participants argued that, in addition to supporting the “engagement of Canadians”, North-South partnerships should strengthen and give voice to these trans-national expressions of global citizenship.

At the same time, “we must recognize that national citizenship is still problematic in many countries, and for marginalized groups in all countries, including in the North.” And, as with inter-government bodies, there is usually a power imbalance in international civil society coalitions and networks, which are often dominated by Northern organizations that are better resourced than their Southern counterparts. Returning in this discussion to the roles of civil society in democratic development, many participants repeated how important it is to strengthen the capacity and “space” for people to express their citizenship in the South, as an essential foundation for their full participation in global citizens’ action. This too is a role for North South partnerships, which can help expand the space for diverse Southern voices to be heard, by their national governments and in the inter-governmental arena. This should also be part of a CIDA focus on civil society.

ACTION PROPOSALS PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

CIDA should:

- Develop a new, jointly agreed CIDA-civil society framework and strategy for public engagement and global citizenship, learning from past campaigns and experience in other countries, with particular notice to current trends in youth engagement.
- Through effective North-South partnerships, support the capacities of Southern civil society organizations to engage as national and global citizens, and promote the expansion of the “democratic space” within which they operate.
- Consider innovative partnerships with academic institutions and other Canadian organizations in developing these roles.

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