

BACKGROUND NOTE 3

THE OPEN FORUM: CANADIAN CONSULTATIONS AND DIALOGUE WITH CIDA

HOW IS THE CANADIAN CONSULTATION FOR THE OPEN FORUM BEING ORGANIZED?

The Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) will conduct Canadian CSO national consultations as part of the Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness. The consultations will be an opportunity for Canadian CSOs to give advice on common principles and guidelines for CSO development effectiveness. A wide range of Canadian CSO development actors, not only CCIC members, will be included in the consultation. The Canadian Council for International Co-operation is an active member of the Open Forum and its Global Facilitation Group, a 25-member CSO group that manages the Open Forum (see Background Note 4, *The Open Forum: How it is Governed and Led by CSOs*).

A **three-day national consultation**, organized by CCIC, will be held in Ottawa in early March 2010. In order to prepare for the consultation, a series of one-day **preparatory meetings** with interested CSOs will be held in Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal in November 2009.

One day of the three-day March consultation will be set aside for a **high-level civil society dialogue with CIDA**. The focus on the CIDA dialogue will be the Open Forum's proposal for minimum standards, with donors and governments, for enabling conditions for CSO development effectiveness (donor policies and practices that need to exist to ensure that CSO can be effective development actors).

CCIC will also respond to select proposals for one-on-one workshops with Canadian members of international NGO (INGO) families. These workshops will be linked to CIVICUS-coordinated work with INGO families (CIVICUS is a member of the Open Forum Consortium – see Background Note 4). CCIC working groups, such as the Africa-Canada Forum, and other Canadian CSOs are encouraged to make specific contributions to the Open Forum and its global processes (Background Note 5, *The Open Forum: Organization of the Consultative Process*).

WHAT ARE THE GOALS FOR THE CANADIAN CSO OPEN FORUM PROCESS?

1. To propose common principles for CSO development effectiveness principles, guidelines on how to apply the principles and mechanisms to ensure that CSOs are held accountable to the principles.
2. To reflect on how to apply the common principles and guidelines to Canadian CSO practices.
3. To develop, with CIDA, enabling policies and support mechanisms to maximize Canadian CSO development effectiveness.

WHY IS THE OPEN FORUM AN IMPORTANT PROCESS FOR CANADIAN CSOs?

WHAT CCIC WORK WITH MEMBERS IS RELEVANT TO THE OPEN FORUM CONSULTATIONS?

The Open Forum offers Canadian CSOs the opportunity to demonstrate that:

- ❑ Canadian CSOs have strong development experience and are committed to critically examine and improve their development effectiveness;
- ❑ The CCIC *Code of Ethics* is a “living” resource for Canadian CSO accountability and can potentially shape CSO effectiveness;
- ❑ Many current CIDA and government practices are undermining the capacity of Canadian CSOs and their developing country counterparts to be effective in their roles as development actors. This is contrary to the commitments made by donors and governments, including Canada, at the 2008 High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness and in the *Accra Agenda for Action* (Background Note 1, *The Open Forum: Its Origins*); and
- ❑ Development impact cannot be achieved in the absence of an engaged citizenship, particularly those living in poverty and otherwise socially marginalized. The concept of an “engaged citizenship” is consistent with both the Canadian “ODA Accountability Act” and the *Accra Agenda for Action*.

CCIC and its members have undertaken a number of processes in the past five years relevant to the goals of the Open Forum:

- ❑ CCIC’s *Code of Ethics*: In dialogue with its members, CCIC developed and implemented the partnership principles and operational standards in the *Code of Ethics* (2005).
See <http://www.ccic.ca/e/002/ethics.shtml>.
- ❑ CCIC’s Leadership Forum and Dialogue with CIDA: In January 2008, CCIC’s Leadership Forum and Dialogue with CIDA focused on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness. The Forum and Dialogue looked at the themes of changing North / South partnerships, changing funding relationships, and development impact and democratic ownership. Case studies: the Project Counselling Service, the Foundation for Civil Society in Tanzania, and the Nordic Plus initiative on donor models of support for CSOs at country level.
See http://www.ccic.ca/e/docs/002_aid_2008-01_if_summary_report.pdf.
- ❑ Determinants of Civil Society Aid Effectiveness: CCIC prepared a 2006 Discussion Paper on Determinants of Civil Society Aid Effectiveness.
See http://www.ccic.ca/e/docs/002_aid_2006-11_cida_aid_effectiveness_and_csos_paper.pdf.
- ❑ CCIC Response to *CIDA Policy on Civil Society and Development* by Real Lavergne and Jacqueline Wood: The CCIC document proposed a potential framework for CIDA support for civil society as development actors (February – April 2008).
See http://www.ccic.ca/e/002/cso_development_effectiveness.shtml.

- ❑ CCIC Review of CCIC Members' Gender Equality Policies and Practices (October 2008). See http://www.ccic.ca/e/docs/002_ethics_gender_equality_study.pdf.
- ❑ The Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness: CCIC participated in regional and global consultations as a member of the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness and wrote, for the Advisory Group, the synthesis report of the outcomes of the consultations (January 2008).
- ❑ See http://www.ccic.ca/e/002/aid.shtml#ag_cso.
- ❑ Africa-Canada Forum Fall 2007 Symposium: The focus of the Africa-Canada Forum's Fall 2007 Symposium was civil society and aid effectiveness. The ongoing mandate of the Africa-Canada Forum is to examine and improve its members' development practices with African counterparts. See http://www.ccic.ca/e/007/archives_acf.shtml.
- ❑ Policy Capacity Building: CCIC's policy capacity building initiative produced a summary resource on themes in CSO policy capacity building, including North / South Partnerships for Policy Influence. Case studies and summarized lessons from Canadian CSO policy experience were also produced. See http://www.ccic.ca/e/002/capacity_building.shtml.

KEY ISSUES FOR CANADIAN CONSULTATIONS FOR THE OPEN FORUM

The international Open Forum process will address issues relevant to CSO development effectiveness such as: the meaning of development effectiveness; common principles for CSO development effectiveness; guidelines for the implementation of these principles; and the strengths and weaknesses of various CSO accountability mechanisms.

The Canadian consultations could address:

- ❑ Common principles and guidelines for Canadian / Developing Country CSO programmatic relationships that strengthen CSO development effectiveness.
- ❑ Key principles and guidelines for engaging the Canadian public in global issues, as part of the development effectiveness equation, including Northern CSOs public images and messages about development in the South.
- ❑ The strengthening of Canadian CSO accountability, drawing lessons from the implementation and challenges of CCIC's *Code of Ethics*.
- ❑ Demonstrating CSO development effectiveness, that is, the challenges in documenting and synthesizing the impact of diverse CSO support for development, across many sectors, on the rights of the poor and marginalized.
- ❑ Commitments made in the *Accra Agenda for Action* for strengthening responsive mechanisms in donor support for CSOs as development actors, taking account democratic country ownership, donor coordination, and use of developing country systems, including local CSO coalitions.