



**A Map of Canadian Civil Society Organization Coalitions'
Governance, Capacity and Agendas:
Common Challenges, Shortfalls and their Implications**

Part 1 of 2

March 2011

The Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) is a coalition of Canadian voluntary sector organizations working globally to achieve sustainable human development. CCIC seeks to end global poverty and to promote social justice and human dignity for all.

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Introduction

This study of Canadian civil society organization (CSO) coalitions and policy agendas was commissioned by the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) to help the Council and its members reflect and act on issue gaps, overlap and current capacities in coalition work.¹ This study was undertaken in the context of CCIC's Visioning process of 2010. Taking account of reduced staff capacities in the Secretariat, it foresees a greater role and reliance of CCIC on current policy coalitions as key to ensuring ongoing, timely robust and broad-based Canadian CSO policy agendas.

This report is intended as a resource to support strategic reflection and discussion in CCIC and the sector. Such reflection is particularly important given the political realities that have narrowed the policy space available to many Canadian CSOs engaging in policy advocacy. It reflects the outcome of interviews with individuals from 24 different Canadian civil society coalitions and networks focused on issues related to CCIC's ten-point agenda *The Global Challenge to End Poverty and Injustice*.² It is intended to help shape a model for how CCIC as a Secretariat and a broad coalition continues to have a policy presence on the full range of issues in this ten-point agenda.

The report is not an evaluation of Canadian CSO coalition work, but a snapshot of current Canadian CSO coalitions' capacity, and self-identified strengths and weaknesses. The report aims to:

- provide an overview of major Canadian CSO policy coalitions' operating structures, sources of revenue, current policy agendas, membership and upcoming priorities for 2011;
- analyze emerging issues of concern, as well as overlap and gaps in these coalitions' thematic work in relation to CCIC's ten point *Agenda The Global Challenge to End Poverty and Injustice*.

Additionally, this report can act as a useful reference for CCIC's members, many of whom are very active among these different coalitions. It may serve as a guide to a number of cross-cutting challenges and concerns common to many of the coalitions profiled and point to important areas for further learning across a range of different coalitions.

This report is divided into four sections. The first section sets the context. It defines the concept of "coalition", categorizing the different types of coalitions profiled in this study. It looks at the value added of coalitions in Canada and finally reviews the current political context in which coalitions find themselves engaged. In the second section, the report identifies some cross cutting issues – opportunities and challenges – that emerged from the interviews and that raise some issues for consideration. The third section considers some of the overlaps and gaps in the work of the various coalitions from a substantive perspective. The fourth and final section considers the implications of all of this for CCIC.

¹ With the exception of the CCIC's three regional Working Groups, this study has essentially surveyed thematic coalitions focused on CCIC's ten point agenda, It has not included the important work done by any of the country-specific coalitions, such as the Sudan Inter-Agency Reference Group, la Table de concertation sur la Région des Grand Lacs, la Concertation pour Haïti, Stop the Killings (Phillipines), Canadian Friends of Burma nor a number of Québec based organizations and coalitions, including Pas de démocratie sans voix. Including these groups would have enriched the reflection, but it was felt that their inclusion went beyond the immediate scope of the study.

² See Appendix E for a list of interviewees; See CCIC Website, www.ccic.ca, for details of the ten-point Agenda.

I. Definitions and context

1. Defining the Canadian coalition

One of the most striking realities revealed by this study is the breadth of issues addressed by Canadian coalitions, as well as the diversity of formats that coalitions take. There is no typical coalition. Even the term “coalition” does not accurately describe every case in point – there are loose networks, informal working groups, research groups, NGO-government reference groups, as well as more formal coalitions and groups still in their infancy. To cover the plethora of organizations and forums included in this report, the term “coalition” is used here to denote a number of like-minded organizations who have coalesced around a common focus to engage in a set of collaborative actions, primarily related to Canadian global policy issues, over an extended period of time.

The groups profiled in this report might loosely be characterized in the following way:

- Coalitions with an evolving menu of policies and positions on a range of issues, actively monitoring and responding to the government’s policies and legislative initiatives, and reacting to these developments with civil society analysis and their own work-plan of research, education and advocacy;
- Coalitions established primarily for learning and exchanging information on emerging issues and best practices among peers within civil society and government, and for mediating relations and positions between civil society and government officials – either with an advocacy angle or not;
- Coalitions dedicated towards public mobilization, outreach and education at the grassroots level on specific issues, including running very targeted and time-specific campaigns on very specific issues;
- Coalitions that are beginning to coalesce around a specific issue but have yet to find a format or focus for their work.

While coalitions generally stay within the parameters of one of the above profiles, the barriers between the characterizations are artificial, with coalitions slipping into different roles at different moments in time depending on circumstance and need. Some coalitions may formally resist engaging in more direct forms of advocacy, preferring the closer exchanges with government that come from less combative relationships. Other coalitions play a more aggressive “outside” game, which may contribute to advance the “inside” game pursued by other coalitions. Others may play both sides.

In essence, the different formats reflect a strategic choice made by the group about the role that the coalition sees itself playing in the policy-making process and the influence it is seeking to have, whether formally or informally, on key decision-makers.

2. The value added of policy Coalitions in Canada

Coalitions have an important place in the work of Canadian civil society. Unlike in some other Northern donor countries, like the United States and the United Kingdom, few large Canadian NGOs have their own in-house policy shops focused on a range of issues. Even where there are Canadian members of large families (such as Oxfam, World Vision, WWF, Save the Children, Plan etc.) the Canadian member is usually much smaller than their European or American counterparts. And unlike the European Union, Canada cannot draw from policy experts on individual issues from 27 different countries. It is therefore not surprising that Canadian civil society has had a long history of policy coalitions to pool resources, build policy capacity and generate collective responses.

The existence of the range of coalitions profiled here, the substantial commitments made by member organizations to these coalitions, and the emergence of three new coalitions in Canada in this past year (the Canadian Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH), the Policy Working Group on MNCH and Voices), all illustrate the value that Canadian CSOs place in coalition work. In particular, interviews with the participants in this study highlighted the advantages and benefits that organizations derive from coalition work. These include the following:

- *Collaboration increases impact.* Given the small size of the international development and policy community in Canada, being part of a coalition serves a pragmatic purpose. A lot more gets accomplished by a handful of dedicated individuals, even with shoestring budgets, competing priorities, and limited time, when they choose to work together and combine some of these resources to achieve common objectives. Working through coalitions, for example, organizations can put common concerns on the government's and opposition's radar, rapidly mobilize resources to bring partner concerns into the public realm, monitor the government's response, and generate their own collective response.
- *Political Impact and Voice.* Many organizations speaking a common message with one voice has more political impact than many organizations each providing their own message. The weight and importance of a coalition comes in part from the number of organizational members who stand behind a coalition's recommendations. Coalitions become a voice for the sector.
- *Safety comes in numbers.* Since the current political context provides little space to voice opinions, organizations are reluctant to stand alone in their critique of government policy for fear of repercussions. (See "the current context" below.) These organizations find greater security when they stand behind a coalition that brings together a broader range of organizations and interests. One individual also noted that coalitions can act as a kind of "safety net" for partners working on the ground.
- *Networking and community.* Program and policy work can be isolating. Coalitions allow individuals from a range of different organizations working on the same issues to connect with their peers. It also allows groups to expand their contacts beyond their own network of associates to those of their peers, both North and South.
- *Intelligence and Information exchange.* Intelligence and information is a valuable commodity, and good information, analysis and intelligence can be hard to come by. A coalition of groups allows one organization to tap into a much deeper pool of information, perspectives and intelligence sourced from a network of groups with different partners and official contacts. Where there are ties to international networks, coalitions can also help frame members' understanding of the Canadian government's perspectives and the work of the coalition within a broader international context – a context that includes both international policy agendas and the perspectives of international social movements.
- *Building collective knowledge and learning on an issue.* Another astounding feature of many of the coalitions profiled here is how rich the collective experience and expertise is among the individuals and organizations involved. As one individual put it, for its members, coalitions become a "hub for learning" and content development on a range of sector specific issues related to, for example, anti-terrorism initiatives, corporate accountability, education, food security, health, and the international financial system and its institutions. This learning is essential given the often technical nature of some of the issues many coalitions are addressing. Two others described coalitions as "catalysts" that stimulate discussion and learning on current issues of shared concern. In many cases, this knowledge sharing is not just internal, but external. Many coalitions have also become a credible and authoritative reference point for government officials, parliamentarians, media and other networks and coalitions on these issues.
- *Creating a community of practice.* Some coalitions, for example on climate change and development, humanitarian assistance, maternal, newborn and child health, and peace, are set up for technical

cooperation, training and exchange of best practices among peer organizations. These fora allow for a very practical technical and operational learning experience between individuals who are actively engaged in implementing international development programmes. As one participant in this study noted, it helps develop a common technical language and standards among peer groups, it builds individual member strength, and it generates broader confidence within the system.

- *Bridge building.* Coalitions can also provide a space for building bridges between different communities working on different issues, but with a shared desire to tackle an issue more comprehensively by integrating their approaches --for example, on climate change and development or on health, nutrition and sanitation. As one participant indicated, “our coalition helps connect the dots between different communities.”

Evaluating the success or achievements of coalitions, and attributing the work of any coalition to specific policy achievements, is always hard to do. However, there can be no doubt that over the past few decades, coalitions in Canada have accomplished much: they have contributed to public debates on issues; they have drawn attention to, and conducted research on issues missing from these debates; they have exposed shortcomings in government policy, transparency and accountability; they have contributed to the development of policies that fill these gaps; and, they have educated the general public about these issues and drawn media attention to them. In short, coalitions work.

3. The current context

In recent years, the space available to civil society to discuss and debate government policy and positions has shrunk considerably. A number of organizations who have critiqued the government’s positions, including Alternatives, Climate Action Network (CAN), CCIC, and KAIROS – Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, as well as countless women’s groups, have seen long-standing core and project-related government funding drastically cut or cancelled. The Board of Rights & Democracy was badly divided with partisan appointments. Meetings and policy engagement with government officials and Ministers of the Environment, Finance and International Co-operation, once routine events, are now much less frequent occurrences. Conservative members of parliament routinely boycott all-party events organized by civil society. The Prime Minister’s Office has a stranglehold on external communications and picks and chooses the organizations with whom it consults. Access to information requests are stymied, and even public servants who have attempted to speak out as whistle blowers have been reprimanded or faced other sanction.

In addition to stifling progressive policy promotion, these changes have also had significant impacts on the organizations affected: funding cuts have shut down programs at home and abroad; the sector has lost experienced people; and, the overall capacity of the sector has been seriously diminished. Once a leader and active participant on almost all of the coalitions profiled here, CCIC has had to cut its staff of 26 to eight, with potentially no less expectations about what it can achieve. Other organizations are confronted with similar, sometimes episodic, reductions in capacity. This situation has strained people’s ability to prioritize ever-expanding and competing agendas. Several interviewees raised the possibility that limited financial resources could prompt less collaboration between like-minded organizations, and more direct competition. In fact, recent changes to the Canadian International Development Agency’s (CIDA) Partnerships with Canadians Branch – from responsive programming by organizations to a calls-for-proposal approach – may directly pit one Canadian CSO against the other in bidding competitions to win project funding.

Given this context, one might assume that organizations will begin to focus inward rather than engaging in collaborative coalition work. For many individuals who have been committed to coalition work, time is still the most valuable resource and it is becoming even more precious a commodity. And yet despite

this gloomy outlook, the general impression given by most of the interviews conducted is that coalition work is still very much alive and well, more necessary than ever, and is adapting to these new realities. Space is shrinking, but coalitions such as Voices are working to keep that space open. Groups are extremely innovative and resourceful in finding new means and unexplored or underutilized spaces to continue their work. There may be some tough choices ahead. Many coalitions and organizations are likely to suffer in some way or another as a result. But in spite of everything, Canadian civil society certainly has as much ambition and resolve as at any time in its history.

II. Summary of report findings – shared cross-cutting challenges and concerns

This section highlights some of the key findings that emerged from interviews with staff, participants and observers in the 24 coalitions profiled in this report. Some issues were raised by individuals in almost every coalition as common concerns and challenges, while others are important to mention even though they may have been raised by just one or two individuals.

1. *Human resources are as important, if not more, than financial resources*

Not surprisingly, the most common concern raised by almost all individuals interviewed about their respective coalitions was the lack of money. A quarter (or 6) of the coalitions profiled operate with no separate coalition budget, other than member organizations contributing in-kind resources on an as needs basis; of the remainder, almost 60% (or 14) operate on a budget under \$100,000 and only 4 coalitions have a budget over \$100,000. Limited financial resources are a perennial problem of coalitions, in particular since the well-being all of the coalitions profiled here is to some extent contingent on the availability of their members' money. And yet despite this, many groups still manage to achieve an astonishing amount on very little. The challenge, therefore, is more than one of financial resources.

A second key resource constraint raised by all those interviewed was the lack of time and dedicated human resources to do the work. Many coalitions have addressed this shortfall by using their financial resources to buy time – for example, hiring a coalition coordinator, a consultant for a distinct piece of work or an events coordinator. Many individuals stressed the importance of having paid staff to be able to help manage the work of the coalition and carry out many of the tasks that contribute to the success of the coalition: for example, monitoring policy developments and opportunities, informing coalition members of these developments, responding to those developments through strategic planning processes, keeping Working Groups on task; and carrying out a range of administrative tasks.

But a lack of funds doesn't explain why all of the coalitions profiled don't have staff. In fact, only one third of the coalitions have one full time staff person or more; one third have a part time person (4 days a week or less); and still one third have no dedicated staff person at all. At least two interviewees suggested that the absence of paid staff was intentional – fearing that staff may become a substitute for a more dynamic and engaged membership. This observation was echoed by one coalition staff person, and may be in the thoughts of others. Nonetheless, from this set of interviews, there does not seem to be any notable difference in the level of member engagement between staffed and non-staffed coalitions.

For a coalition to function well, in particular in the absence of paid staff, it needs an active governance structure: a very active Chair, co-Chair, Steering Committee or volunteers (see "Individual and organizational leadership and stewardship matters" below), contributing significant time and energy. In effect, this is a contribution of dedicated staff time, albeit not directly paid through the coalition budget, by individuals or organizations that clearly see the institutional value to such work. This is the case, for

example, with C4D, the FSPG, the Policy Working Group on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, and at one time with the Global Treatment Access Group (GTAG) and the Informal Working Group on Women's Rights (WGWR). And where there is no single person actively dedicating time to a coalition – paid or in kind – there is usually only the ghost of a coalition. Clearly, there is no substitute for dedicated human resources.

2. Limited resources require internal capacity to constantly prioritize and maximize impact

All the groups interviewed were very conscious of needing to continuously prioritize a seemingly endless agenda of issues given very limited time and resource constraints. Of the 24 coalitions profiled in this report, one third (or 8) have Steering Committee meetings at least on a monthly basis and eighty percent (or 20) meet at least on a quarterly basis to review coalitions plans and review strategic priorities. At the same time, as more than one respondent put it, no matter how active, engaged and efficient a coalition and its members are, there are always important “missed opportunities” or “opportunity costs” for choices made. This is true of any work in development. But what seems to differentiate one coalitions’ feeling of “success” from another’s on this front, is its ability and capacity to be strategic, make tough choices, and set priorities that will effectively use time and money to maximize the coalition’s impact and strategic goals. This is where coordination and skills within the group are essential.

3. Governance matters: effective, flexible and representative processes are the key

Eighty percent (or 19 of 24) of coalitions surveyed have some formal governance structure. That said, there is a huge diversity of structures among them. They range from just Chairs or Co-Chairs, to small Executives, to larger Coordinating/Steering Committees or Boards, to a range of internal Working Groups (more commonly ad hoc than permanent). Many of the coalitions with governance structures also have tiers of decision-making that correspond to the degrees of importance, representation and immediacy of the decisions that need to be made. Consequently, a good number of these coalitions also afford a good degree of discretion to staff for making decisions. In many cases, this degree of discretion is strengthened by a menu of policy positions already agreed upon by the broader membership, allowing staff to be extremely responsive to breaking developments.

From the interviews conducted, it is clear that good governance structures and processes matters. Steering Committees, for example, help facilitate the work of the coalition, act as a sounding board and expert reference group for staff, provide input and guidance on the direction of the coalition’s work, and help maintain a regular assessment and reassessment of strategy and corresponding workplans. Steering Committees and Working Groups also represent a way to actively engage more organizations in the current work of the coalition, generating greater ownership among the members and satisfaction with how decisions are made. In some cases, the capacity among members to participate may not be there, as was the case with Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN) who abandoned permanent campaign committees in favour of ad hoc time-specific Working Groups. This is a trend among many coalitions, including the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group (ICLMG), Policy Action Group for Emergency Response (PAGER), and Peacebuild, but not all.

Some individuals also signalled how excessive and cumbersome governance structures and processes (or equally the absence of *any* governance structures) can do the opposite, leading to delays in reaching consensus on issues or decisions, and ultimately to frustration and disengagement by members and staff.

4. Leadership matters - individual and organizational

Interviewees reported frequently that leadership – even of one individual – can make all the difference whether in the form of staff, a Coalition or Working Group Chair, or active members, This was identified

in the case of GTAG, some of the Working Groups in Peacebuild, and the WGWR, among others, where strong leadership by one or two individuals helped propel the work of these respective coalitions forward. Good leadership can provide the vision to move agendas forward, along with focus and purpose for the group. It can mobilize others into acting, bringing more time, energy and money. It can provide a sort of stewardship to the organization.

Recognition by members' organizations of the importance of coalition work is essential to giving staff the time and resources they need to contribute to the coalition. This has been the case, for example, for all the organizations involved in the Policy Working Group on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. For these organizations, the highest levels of leadership have recognized the value of their institutions working together on a common set of goals. It also explains the level of engagement from staff of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank in the FSPG. Organizational commitment to particular coalitions can also generate the financial resources necessary to hire staff or carry out activities. This is true among all the organizations contributing significant portions of resources to the budgets of some of the coalitions.

And where there is organisational support for an issue – not just individual interest – it is possible for this leadership for the coalition to remain, even when individuals leave an organization. More than one interviewee described the challenge of staff turnover in the membership and resultant difficulty of maintaining continuity and ownership. One individual referenced a good approach to this challenge, noting two occasions in which individuals had brought their successors to coalition meetings to ensure a smooth transition of files.

Given all of this, it is both surprising and concerning that more than 40 percent (or 10) of the coalitions profiled currently have no chair, and that many of the individuals interviewed spoke about the challenges of identifying and maintaining individuals to participate in their Steering Committees. Many individuals spoke anecdotally about it being a few individuals who often carried the weight of the coalition work, and often the same individuals in different coalitions. To map engagement by different organizations in different coalitions, Appendix B charts the organizations that have a role as a Chair or in a coalition Steering Committee – a rough proxy of engagement. The chart does show some

BOX 1 - Most active organizations in coalition Steering Committees (number on which they sit)

- Canadian Labour Congress (8)
- Inter Pares (8)
- Canadian Council for International Co-operation (7)
- Oxfam Canada (6)
- KAIROS Canada (5)
- Care Canada (4)
- Amnesty International Canada (3)
- Public Service Alliance of Canada (3)
- Results Canada (3)
- United Church of Canada (3)
- World Vision Canada (3)

concentration of participation in coalition work among Canadian organizations: of the 86 groups active on 20 different coalition Steering Committees, 28 of these are on more than one Steering Committee, but only 11 are on more than two (See Box 1). All 11 are CCIC members. This suggests a concentration of leadership among Canadian civil society organizations for coalition work. Combined with interviewees' identification of the lack of dedicated human resources in the coalitions and their steering committees, this suggests a possible leadership vacuum more broadly within Canadian coalitions.

5. *The importance of finding a “common cause” that groups act on today, but plan ahead for tomorrow*

Not surprisingly, responding to a conjunctural opportunity or concern helps tremendously in bringing together a range of groups with sometimes divergent perspectives or entry points on an issue. It identifies a common cause for the group and motivates different groups to contribute their strengths in different ways. This is not unique to Canada, but it is clear from the interviews conducted that Canadian civil society is highly motivated and mobilized by responding to external policy opportunities or perceived threats. Interviewees highlighted the FSPG’s work on CIDA’s food security policy, the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability’s (CNCA) work on the National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and Bill C-300, and the WGWR’s work on CIDA’s Gender Policy and Plan of Action.

But many spoke also of the struggle to maintain this dynamism once the moment is gone, unable to gel a longer term more proactive agenda, despite the intent to do so. (Some networks coalitions intentionally disband after a specific conjuncture.) This is natural and perhaps even inevitable. It is also true even of groups who may have thought a lot about tomorrow, and need to refocus on what this means for today. Common Frontiers, the Canadian Global Campaign for Education (CGCE), the ICLMG, Make Poverty History (MPH), Peacebuild and PAGER are all going through or have undergone evaluations of their work, to help them identify their focus, and update their policy positions and strategic priorities. Maintaining coalition momentum, it would seem, is about finding a balance between acting today and planning for tomorrow. To a large extent, the Policy Working Group on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health has managed to do this. It developed around a very specific opportunity (the G8 Muskoka Initiative), but is looking forward to a range of other ways of collaborating in a more holistic way to the issue of maternal, newborn and child health.

6. *Consensus building means compromise, but good processes can help move those compromises forward*

One or two individuals felt that the policy development process within their respective coalition often led to an outcome representing the “lowest common denominator”. However, the numerous progressive and forward-looking policy agendas and platforms among Canadian coalitions suggests that this is overstated. Certain more conservative elements within a coalition may lead to greater levels of compromise on positions from the perspective of the more progressive elements. Organizations, like Oxfam Canada, World Vision Canada or Plan Canada, may be somewhat limited in the positions they can take in a coalition due to predefined “international family” positions or the absence of a “family” position on a specific policy issue. This can be challenging for Canadian coalitions trying to make Canadian specific content. Finally, some coalitions, such as the Sanitation and Water Action Network Canada (SWAN Canada), explicitly noted that the positions they took were intentionally more conservative, a pragmatic response to the current political environment. But interviewees also underscored that compromise and consensus are central elements of coalition work.

All of the individuals interviewed affirmed the importance of their coalition’s consensual group decision-making process for defining common policy positions and work priorities. Most participants described it as a fairly dynamic and involved process (in some cases, almost too much so). This is part of the strength of coalitions, and a necessary means of building up members’ ownership in a coalition and their substantive knowledge on an issue area. Coalition positions are also not a static thing. Interviewees noted that as substantive policy content grows, organizations are constantly lobbying one another on their respective positions to try and move the dynamic forward. For example, some groups, like the FSPG, have held workshops to try and build consensus and middle ground around divergent member

perspectives and positions on food security, food sovereignty and the right to food.

Diversity within coalitions can be healthy to challenge and widen perspectives and enable coalitions to think about how to achieve impact and gain membership strength. At the same time differences of perspective or focus in a given thematic area are also reflected and managed through the of creation of multiple networks – for example, consider the existence of Climate Action Network, the Canadian Coalition for Climate Change and Development, and Common Frontiers’ emerging work on climate change, which address different aspects of work in the same area similar to the range of groups working on food security and Maternal, newborn and child health. (See “Overlaps and gaps in coalition agendas” Section.)

7. Policy development capacity is varied

In general, the collective knowledge that coalitions and their members have on their specific issues is deep and wide. Their means and capacities to translate this knowledge into policy interventions varies widely in scope. Some coalitions have an elaborate menu of policy positions on a range of issues that are constantly reviewed, evaluated and nuanced based on political, contextual and policy developments. This gives them a rich range of responses on a number of different issues, allowing them to react quickly to issues that require their immediate attention. This came out clearly in interviews with participants from the Africa Canada Forum (ACF), CBAN, Halifax Initiative, and the ICLMG for example. Many coalitions try to marry practitioners from the field with policy experts to generate policy recommendations grounded in experience, such as C4D, the FSPG, PAGER, and Peacebuild. Since these latter fora engage more actively with government officials in their discussions, there is less of a public advocacy dimension to their work. Most coalitions have at least a basic platform, which sets the parameters for their substantive policy engagement. Some coalitions, such as the CGCE, Common Frontiers, Peacebuild and the WGWR are in a transitional process of elaborating new platforms, a useful process for engaging the membership and contextualizing the work for members. Other coalitions, such as GTAG and SWAN Canada seem to be in flux, looking for opportunities to update their platforms.

8. Mixed record of involving Southern policy partners in development agendas

There is a very mixed record among Canadian coalitions with respect to engaging with Southern policy actors. Some coalitions actively inform their policy positions using the perspectives of their southern partners. For example, in 2009, the Asia Pacific Working Group (APWG) met with the Canadian government to raise concern about the Asian Development Bank profiled in a policy platform developed by the NGO Forum on the ADB. Common Frontiers – the Canadian representative for the Hemispheric Social Alliance – and the America’s Policy Group (APG) are both extremely responsive to partner concerns, shaping their policies around them and raising them in the Canadian context. Other coalitions actively involve southern perspectives in their conferences or policy dialogues – for example, the ACF brought African colleagues to their AGM in 2010 and their policy forum on 2009; CNCA brought southern colleagues to a 2010 conference and to participate in parliamentary hearings on Bill C-300; the Halifax Initiative organized a strategic discussion in 2010 on the G20 with colleagues from 12 of the 20 countries. But in response to the questions about how they engage with southern groups in their policy-making process, most coalitions simply referenced the number of organizational members with partners in the South, with the former expected to bring southern perspectives to meetings.

9. From policy to politics - a weakness of expertise limits potential outcomes

All coalitions engage regularly with decision-makers, both politicians and government officials, in their monitoring and response to government policies, and develop their own positions and policies. But some individuals felt that their interventions or engagement were not necessarily strategic. For many coalitions,

broad policy recommendations are not always translated into a strategic action plan to help influence decision-makers to achieve desired changes. Some coalitions, such as the APG, CBAN, the CNCA, Climate Action Network (CAN), the ICLMG, the Policy Working Group on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health and MPH have an impressive collective breadth of experience in government relations (political and legislative), communications and media work, but these are the minority. Many coalitions have some capacity, or specialize in one particular area of policy work, but do not necessarily have the breadth of knowledge and experience to generate a truly effective plan. Two or three individuals commented that workshops on specific areas of policy influence may help to some extent, but remain abstract unless applied directly to their specific coalition's situations. Many interviewees suggested that being able to tap into some of this expertise would be extremely useful in terms of the institutional development of the coalition and being more successful in achieving some of their respective coalition's immediate policy objectives.

10. A shallow pool of funders in uncertain times

Without exception, all coalitions receive financial support from their members, either on a voluntary sliding scale basis or through membership fees. At least 50 percent of the coalitions profiled are entirely funded by member organizations, with members either contributing to the entire budget of the organization or providing in-kind support for joint activities where there is no official budget. About two thirds of coalitions get more than 80 percent of their budget from its members. The unions, their solidarity funds and faith-based organizations (for example, the United Church and Development and Peace) seem to be a mainstay for many of the coalitions profiled here. Some development organizations (for example, Inter Pares, and Oxfam Canada) also contribute significant resources to some coalitions, but most development NGOs only contribute smaller increments. Only 11 coalitions interviewed indicated having external funding from foundations, government departments or other sources.

This reliance on members does have its benefits, which were noted by many participants. It creates a financial independence and security from government funding that allows coalitions to be more clear and critical in their assessments of government policies. It also generates a level of ownership among the members of a coalition. This is perhaps most true, ironically, of coalitions with no separate budget, and that rely on in-kind member contributions for joint activities.

On the negative side, since over 80% of the organizations profiled (as noted earlier) operate on a budget of less than \$100,000, the impact of even one or two major funders withdrawing their support could have a major impact on already tight resources. This is particularly true given that some coalitions rely overwhelmingly on large chunks from just a few funders – and undoubtedly in some cases, several coalitions rely on the same group of funders (unions and churches). Conversely, many of the coalitions profiled piece their budgets together from small contributions from a large array of funders, ironically making their financial security more stable than the groups that receive larger contributions. In this context, it is perhaps surprising that so few of the coalitions profiled (only one quarter or six) have instituted membership fees – setting a minimum financial contribution for participating in the coalition. The rationale for this was not explored here.

A further potential concern is the proposed doubling of CCIC membership fees. The three CCIC Regional Working Groups all voiced concerns about the impact this might have on their own budgets – drawn heavily from the same CCIC membership. Presumably, the impact may not just be restricted to the Regional Working Groups, since the doubling of fees may more generally reduce the financial resources that CCIC members can contribute to other coalitions and initiatives. On the other hand, membership fees for CCIC come from members' overhead budgets, while support for coalitions often comes from programming resources. The uncertainty for countless groups around future CIDA funding, and the competitive bidding process for CIDA resources is likely to exacerbate this tension.

11. Financial planning for the future – what plan?

In terms of funding, while the state of their coalition's finances is a major pre-occupation to most of the interviewees, surprisingly few individuals spoke of any pro-active plans to address potential budget shortfalls. Many seemed resigned to the fact that budgets ebb and flow, like funders. There will never be enough money, and their respective coalition somehow always manages to make do. In fact, it is impressive just how much all of the coalitions have achieved on such limited resources. Financial security seems to be a source of constant tension, but also something that many coalitions feel they have only limited ability to address.

12. The ebbs and flows of coalition membership and participation

Most coalitions cited their membership as one of their key strengths. If strength and safety comes in numbers, then maintaining or expanding those numbers is key for any coalition. The coordinators of some coalitions voiced a number of frustrations with trying to achieve this goal, including the following: financial contributions or permanent staff becoming a substitute for more active engagement; more passive observing among much of their membership rather than active participation; changing priorities among some of their members leading to reduced engagement. To remedy this, several organizations have set up working groups on specific issues to engage a broader range of members in their work. From those interviewed, working groups with a very current and relevant focus and specific time-bound mandate were much more successful in engaging members, than working groups of a more permanent nature, where energies can quickly dissipate. CGCE found that sending an annual report to the heads of organizational members and partners helped create an institutional awareness of their work at a higher level of decision-making that helped generate more participation from more of its members. While these strategies all seemed to work well, for many of the coalitions interviewed there was also an acceptance that participation was of a cyclical nature, and organizational involvement will always ebb and flow.

13. Individual memberships are an emerging feature in the work of many Canadian coalitions

Approximately two fifths of the coalitions profiled include one or several individual experts in their membership (as members or observers), as well as the standard organizational representatives. These experts include lawyers, academics, and practitioners. While the organizations do not usually look to these individuals to sign on to policy positions or statements, they provide rich, specialized and often on-going expertise and advice on the coalition's work and strategy. The relevance of a coalition to an individual can come with the rising prominence of an issue itself or the rise in profile of CSO analysis on a public issue. Individual experts seem attracted in particular by legislative work. Academics and lawyers have been actively sought out and have contributed to legislative initiatives of the APG, the CNCA, CBAN, ICLMG, and TIRP. Many of these same coalitions are also looking to sustain these relationships as they include a legislative agenda as an active component of their forward-looking work plans. Other coalitions, such as the Food Security Policy Group and Informal Women's Network, have opened membership to a range of issue expert consultants, affording both organizational members and the individuals with mutual benefits.

14. Educating the general public is not a priority for most; mobilizing the public even less so

While many coalitions recognize the importance of education and outreach to mobilize public support around an issue and generate long term change, very few of the coalitions profiled actively engage in public education and outreach. Beyond a few public events, most coalitions dedicate more energy to generating issue and policy briefs in order to promote knowledge on an issue within the coalition and among the decision-makers they are targeting. In the absence of more time and money, the ICLMG is taking a very pragmatic approach to educating the public, seeing their strong focus on the media as a way to reach the broader public. Most interviewees, however, indicated that they left educating the

general public, for the most part, to member organizations that could popularize coalition materials for their own respective constituencies. Some coalitions that have stronger ties to the grassroots still prioritize public education and outreach. Common Frontiers has had a history of developing accessible materials for members' usage. MPH highlighted a shift from e-campaigning to more direct outreach to MPH groups with toolkits that will more actively engage their volunteers in an ongoing way. How coalition members go about both doing this work with the public and sustaining ongoing action remains a key question that many coalitions (and organizations) are still trying to address.

15. Reduced space for working on these issues; but policy dialogue continues

Several individuals voiced strong concern about the current context, and the shrinking political space for raising concerns and voicing opinions that are contrary to the current government's. As already noted, some groups like the SWAN Canada have intentionally developed more restrained demands, avoiding the use of references to the "right to water". Last year's media and parliamentary frenzy around the Muskoka Initiative, and the issue of reproductive rights within Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, saw some groups avoid references to taboo topics like abortion services. Several individuals noted anecdotally that even coalition work was becoming difficult since many groups were not willing to stick their neck out on issues. Groups are generally very concerned about defunding possibilities, about the public sanctioning that may come with speaking out, and about the lack of access to bureaucrats, key decision-makers and government processes.

While this is a significant obstacle for almost all of the organizations and coalitions profiled here, some groups are adapting to the situation and finding spaces for policy dialogue. For example C4D, the FSPG, Peacebuild, PAGER (and the new Canadian Partnership on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health), actively and regularly engage government officials in discussions. For most of these coalitions, these relationships and multi-stakeholder fora pre-dated the current political environment, and have been able to exist within it. Other coalitions continue to work at engaging both industry and government in multi-stakeholder work, for example, the CNCA.

As relations with the government and bureaucrats have become more stilted in recent years, many coalitions are now working much more actively with parliamentarians and opposition parties on policy development and analysis and legislative initiatives. Some groups, in fact, are increasingly becoming engaged around the legislative process, both within Parliament and the Courts, as a more direct way to institute hard changes (legislation) that are better protected (than policy) from the whims of different political masters. This is true of almost all the work done by the ICLMG, the work of the CNCA around Bill C-300, the work of many of the members of GTAG on Bill C-393, CAN on climate legislation, MPH on a private member's bill on developing a Canadian poverty reduction plan, and the APG on bilateral trade agreements. And finally, in the midst of all of this, hundreds of organizations have also coalesced around the Voices platform, documenting the plethora of ways in which freedom of expression and discussion are being silenced across the country, both within government and outside.

III. Overlap and gaps in Coalition agendas

Based on the scan of current priorities for coalitions, this section considers some potential overlaps in issue areas where coalitions might want to consider joint initiatives or delegating the work entirely to existing coalitions. It examines possible issue gaps related to CCIC's ten-point agenda that no single or set of coalitions seem to be addressing sufficiently. In doing so, it also considers the approach used to address an issue in terms of the ability of a coalition to influence the government's agenda (an inside-outside government strategy).

1. Areas of overlap

There is broad thematic overlap between certain coalitions on some issues. (See Appendix C for a grouping of coalitions by themes in the 10 point agenda.) On food security and sovereignty, there are essentially four coalitions (plus the APWG in 2011 and the ACF for the past few years), on climate there are four (if you include Common Frontiers and MPH), on health there are three, on trade and investment there are two, and on the Americas there are two.

In some cases, the networks have quite specific and complementary niche roles, or there is a fairly clear “ecology” of perspectives that provides the rationale for diverse initiatives. For example, the FSPG is focused on food security and CIDA’s policy, engaging in dialogue with government. Food Secure Canada is looking to initiate a food security policy domestically through the “People’s Food Policy Project” (PFPP). CBAN is focused on very specific areas within food security and technology, and the CCIC Working Groups work on these themes geographically but with close ties to the other coalitions’ initiatives. The Working Group on Canadian Science and Technology Policy is a smaller grouping of groups with a specific food sovereignty approach and works to engage the government much more directly from the outside on emerging key issues. All these networks are aware of one another, and in many cases there is overlap in membership enabling communication flow all ways.

Common Frontiers’ emerging work on climate may also be an example of the “ecology” of coalitions, with Common Frontiers seeming to bring different perspectives on climate change rooted in the Cochabamba Declaration and the climate justice work in which groups are engaged in the Americas. This perspective is not immediately obvious in the work being done by either CAN or C4D, and could bring a different perspective that might inform the work of these other coalitions, if there were some crosswalks of communication built. But mergers between the groups would not seem compatible. C4D has taken a strong focus on adaptation and development issues, whereas CAN is the very large network focussed on government relations, media and broad-based public mobilization in relation to the Climate Convention and Canadian targets.

Other examples, however, may highlight a more obvious case for groups working more closely together, in particular where an overlap seems redundant or does not necessarily fit with an organization’s comparative advantage. Here there is a strong case for building bridges between different coalitions to create common understanding, to define separate roles and focus, or to delegate full responsibility for an issue to one group.

- *The Americas Policy Group and Common Frontiers*. Although both groups indicated that the value added of their coalition was in part the different perspectives it brought, these two organizations would benefit from more clearly working out a clear division of labour and clearer roles to distinguish them sufficiently from one another. This will be particularly important as Common Frontiers looks to reinvent itself in the coming year.
- *Make Poverty History and climate change groups*. MPH’s policy position seems more in line with those of CAN and C4D. Given it is looking to do more active public education and outreach – an element which both CAN and C4D would likely welcome in their work – MPH could play a positive complementary role in both coalitions’ work around climate change, development and the broader impacts. MPH is also looking to strengthen its ties to climate groups.
- *Renewable energy* – CAN is looking at investment in renewable technology (it is unclear whether this includes biomass) and reducing subsidies to fossil fuels, in particular coal. The FSPG and the Working Group on Canadian Science and Technology Policy is interested in public subsidies to biofuels/agrofuels. While likely aware of one another’s campaigns, there could be useful mutually reinforcing messaging

around the work on public subsidies and renewable technology. There could also be interesting opportunities for mutual learning, training and capacity development on this topic within C4D.

- Mining and corporate accountability – Common Frontiers is interested in mining within the Americas and certain elements legislative initiatives related to corporate accountability. The CNCA is actively engaged on both of these fronts. It would be useful to more clearly identify complementary roles between Common Frontiers and the CNCA on these initiatives, or explore ways to situate some of this work within the CNCA’s agenda.

2. Possible substantive gaps

As noted above, “overlaps” are not necessarily a bad thing, in particular if the overlaps are not redundant but rather complementary. In most of the cases highlighted above, groups can potentially adjust existing work plans to accommodate overlaps and bring about enhanced outcomes for all parties involved. Gaps are harder to address, since they speak to things that we have either lost the capacity to address or lack the capacity to address. It is an addition to existing workloads. The following are possible gaps in the work of the Canadian coalitions. They arose from both the interviews and the author’s own observations.

- Trade and investment. An area of overlapping interests with a capacity gap. With the collapse of the Doha negotiations, a bi-lateral piece meal approach has emerged both in relation to trade and investment agreements. TIRP is looking mainly at the domestic implications of Canadian commitments on a range of policy issues from services and privatization, to regulation and employment. The focus is on WTO monitoring and the EU-Canada treaty. Common Frontiers is in a period of priority setting and not active on any trade agreement currently, though this has been an area of work historically. The APG is monitoring the human rights dimension of the Colombia FTA including the impact assessment reporting process, as well as monitoring the Central America deals, though with low capacity following cut backs at KAIROS and CCIC. The APWG has indicated an interest in understanding issues in Canadian trade and investment in Asia, but this work is not yet developed. The work on trade and investment, like the agreements themselves, is thus piecemeal. TIRP is an important table to bring more systemic analysis of the broader impacts of trade and investment agreements to Canadian civil society organizations, but has a research rather than advocacy orientation and outside of member input cannot take on the development or human rights dimension of this work. The scale back of commitment to drive the development and human rights side of the work by CCIC, coupled with recent layoffs and changed priorities at KAIROS and Rights and Democracy, has left a leadership and capacity void in this issue area for Canadian coalitions. This is particularly true on the analysis side, while geographic working groups and Common Frontiers retain some mobilization capacity. The community should undertake ways to build back capacity in this area.
- Sustainable Economic Growth. Common Frontiers, APG and APWG may be looking at trade, although within geographic specific areas. TIRP is looking at investment regimes. The CNCA is looking at the development impact of mining. The Halifax Initiative is looking at various elements related to public finance, debt, conditionality, innovative finance and the G20. The North-South Institute has done a huge amount of work around the international financial system and private sector investment. There is growing interest among a number of coalitions and organizations to look at the issues of tax justice. Meanwhile, CIDA has “sustainable economic growth” as one of its key strategic priorities. Yet none of the above organizations – with the exception perhaps of the CNCA – seem to be focusing critically on CIDA’s approach and piecing together the different elements of CIDA’s sustainable economic growth strategy. The community should think of ways to fill this gap, and potentially strengthen the ties between the different organizations focusing on the different elements of the trade, finance and investment regime.

- Integrated health strategy and health system strengthening. For a long period of time, GTAG was the only coalition working on health issues, with a focus primarily on HIV and AIDS, but also on health system strengthening. In the past year and a half, two other coalitions have emerged around the issue of Maternal Newborn and Child Health (MNCH), responding to an opportunity around the 2010 Group of Eight meeting in Canada. This has created some tensions and divisions within the health community, but it also seems to have revealed a growing interest on the part of the government and civil society in working on both a more integrated approach to tackling health (through the MNCH lens), and on health system strengthening. A number of individual organizations and coalitions are very interested in working on this issue (Canadian Partnership on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH), the Policy Working Group on MNCH, GTAG and the Canadian Society for International Health and the Canadian Nurses Association). Other groups would help round out this focus by adding important elements related to sanitation (SWAN Canada), nutrition (FSPG), global health diplomacy (Canadian Nurses Association) and even innovative financing (Halifax Initiative).
- Peace, security and militarization – This is an area that draws regional and thematic interest, but also exposes a central gap. Different groups – APG, ACF, Common Frontiers and the ICLMG – are interested in different aspects of the security and militarization agenda, but largely from a regional perspective focused on the Americas and Africa. Peacebuild continues to help support two NGO reference groups focused on Afghanistan and Sudan, and is also currently undertaking some broader policy development work on next generation peace and conflict issues, women, peace and security issues, NGO peacebuilding practice, resource and environmental conflict and conflict responses, among other things. However, with the demise of CCIC’s program on humanitarian and peace building work, and the current fragile state of Peacebuild, there is no predictable overarching capacity to monitor and respond to Canadian policy on global peace and security issues. It is a delicate, but increasingly important, area with few individual organizations effectively able to make themselves heard, and, with CCIC’s diminished capacity, no obvious replacement to carry on the advocacy role. Some leadership from a new forum, or efforts to bridge the work of all of these groups, might help fill this vacuum.
- Women’s Rights. Despite the emergence of an Informal Working Group on Women’s Rights, and “Promoting Women’s Rights and Gender Equality” as the first pillar of CCIC’s ten point agenda, work on gender issues and women’s rights represents a deep gap in Canadian coalition work, exacerbated further by funding cuts to many women’s groups in Canada. Oxfam Canada, Action Canada for Population and Development, Canadian Crossroads International, CHF and Peacebuild have all played an important role in drawing greater attention to this issue, but there is still not the renewed leadership, financial and human resources necessary to help gel a collaborative approach to this area of work. There needs to be substantial strengthening in the sector for a vibrant coalition to emerge.
- Multilateral reform – “Building a democratic and effective multilateral system” is another of CCIC’s ten point agenda items that only gets sporadic attention. Groups like the World Federalist Movement, the Halifax Initiative, the North-South Institute and climate groups have a solid record of working around various UN processes related to UN reform, the financial crisis, business and human rights, financing for development and climate change. CCIC works around the OECD in the context of aid, and the Halifax Initiative in the context of export credit. CCIC and TIRP monitor the World Trade Organization to varying degrees. The FSPG has monitored developments within the Food and Agricultural Organization and the World Food Programme. The Halifax Initiative continues to monitor the Bretton Woods Institutions, and along with Make Poverty History and CCIC, issues around G20 governance. But as a whole, the work is episodic and siloed. There is no forum to come together more broadly to address questions of multilateral institutional reform and Canada’s agenda and priorities within the multilateral system.

IV. Implications of these findings for CCIC

This section proposes a number of roles – both substantive and procedural – that CCIC could play with regard to strengthening its interaction with coalitions in the future. They are based on some of the common themes and concerns highlighted above, considerations of the government’s current international development priorities, suggestions several individuals volunteered about what substantive value CCIC adds, as well as my own reflections. Some relate directly to CCIC as a coalition. Others would help strengthen certain coalitions that could benefit from more engagement by CCIC as a Secretariat.

1. *CCIC as a coalition*

- *Don’t shy away from advocacy.* At a time when many organizations are afraid to critique the government, CCIC’s independence from government funding gives it an advantage that it didn’t once have. It will still need to gauge its reactions, since defunding isn’t the government’s only strategy to silence voices. However, coming out as a strong voice for the community is likely to be something many organizations will value, even the more conservative ones. CCIC’s “independence”, however, is still tempered by the fact that most of its members continue to receive government funding and that there may be specific opportunities for CCIC to submit proposals to CIDA for funding under its “knowledge partners” window.
- *Remain a progressive voice in the community.* As some interviewees noted, coalition policy generated among an active membership requires constant compromise. CCIC has both nationally and internationally played an important role as a progressive voice on a range of issues addressed by Canadian coalitions. Balancing the interests of its broad membership means that it cannot be the most progressive voice at all times, but it is also far from being the least. The ten point agenda, as the Board has affirmed, should remain its guide. The increased space CCIC now has for advocacy means that on some issues, it can be the voice helping to propel the debate forward.
- *Don’t try to do it all.* The Board and the Policy Advisory Group will help CCIC focus its agenda and clarify its role. However, with more resources coming from CCIC members, and the fact that CCIC is still an integral participant in many coalitions, members may try to encourage CCIC to focus on doing a wide array of work. CCIC will have to make tough choices about the coalitions and steering committees in which to remain active, and which issues to actively follow at any one time.
- *Pick your issue.* The Board has asked CCIC to continue to be both a progressive voice on the whole ten-point agenda for the community (for example, in coalition letters, press releases, with the media), while adding real substantive knowledge and focus on one issue - aid. Several interviewees underscored the vitally important work that CCIC does in monitoring aid and CIDA’s aid policy. All coalitions look to CCIC for tracking CIDA’s aid commitments, for example, on gender, food security, health, education and regional allocations, for monitoring the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act, and for monitoring CIDA’s approach to aid effectiveness.

But CCIC also needs to contextualize this singular focus within broader global developments. One or two respondents felt that rather than following the ripples and waves, CCIC needs to monitor the “direction of the current.” They felt that few organizations were providing a critical voice on the “bigger picture” - that is on the broader structural issues surrounding development – a broader development effectiveness agenda. Just as CCIC needs to remain a progressive voice for the community, it needs to continually connect the dots between the issues, and underscore the structural drivers that are creating and sustaining global inequalities and social, economic and environmental injustice.

- *Be clear on your role.* This is obvious, but worth stating. Respondents highlighted the importance of CCIC being clear with its members on the role and issue focus it is going to have, even if it is at a reduced capacity. This will help set the parameters from what various coalitions can expect from CCIC, and also allow them to adapt to the new circumstances and realities.

2. CCIC strengthening the work of certain coalitions

- *Help catalyze the work of new and existing initiatives.* From the interviews, it is clear that certain coalitions have robust governance structures, active and engaged members, extensive policy menus that are periodically refined and deep legislative and policy experience and expertise. Some are in their infancy and need further nurturing or are still struggling to find a focus. Those in their infancy that could use some help to begin to gel as a coalition are the WGWR (for example, helping them identify institutional leaders, some broad objectives, focused goals for the coming year, corresponding activities, and formalizing some institutional policies and governance). Those that would benefit from re-kick-starting their process are GTAG, SWAN Canada and CGCE (for example, for GTAG and SWAN, by providing financial resources to convene a face-to-face meeting for reviewing a policy platform and establishing a more formal governance structure; for CGCE, some guidance as they develop their policy platform and look to transform this into a strategic plan). Common Frontiers has, on its own initiative, begun an important process of member-led reflection on priorities (noting that a changing context and being very responsive to the interests of partner organizations, has resulted in too broad an agenda). Their process should be supported. In its evaluation process, Common Frontiers might in particular benefit from considering the gaps and overlaps section of this report. All of these initiatives are not necessarily long term investments for CCIC. They are short term commitments to help kick-start and focus current initiatives. (See also “CCIC strengthening the community as a whole”.)
- *Build bridges from obvious synergies.* The “Overlaps” section above identifies a number of possible synergies between different coalitions, where groups could come together and more clearly identify complementary roles and responsibilities within their shared focus on a specific issue. CCIC could help build bridges between these coalitions to help make this happen.
- *Continue to convene sectors of the community.* In the past, CCIC has helped facilitate discussions on emerging areas of common interest among the community with a view to creating a more unified policy voice on these issues, or at least to narrowing the gaps. Several issue areas would benefit from CCIC playing such a catalyst role, conscious of its limitations to not take on work on any of these themes in an on-going way. These include the following:
 - *Health integration and health system strengthening.* This is one of CIDA’s priority areas under its youth and children focus. Out of the G8 Muskoka meeting, the government is looking to convene a reference group for this theme. An increasing number of coalitions, health groups, professional associations and academics are interested in talking about both a more integrated approach to health care and health systems strengthening. Currently these discussions are taking place in several different coalitions and groupings (see “Overlaps and gaps in issues” above) focused on health, nutrition and sanitation. Convening these groups might help kick start a conversation on the potential of a new network or ways of working for Canadian CSOs, help define some common language, understanding, strategies and messages, and/or help clarify different roles for different groups. It may also help heal some wounds, still quite fresh from last year’s experience around the Muskoka Initiative.
 - *Sustainable Economic Growth.* As one of CIDA’s three strategic priorities, it would seem particularly important for CCIC to help play a role in convening a response from the community to this initiative. This could draw on the expertise and focus of a large number of coalitions and organizations in

Canada noted above in “Gaps”. Here, CCIC might simply work with groups to produce a short concept note on the sectors experience and critique around sustainable economic growth.

- Multilateral Reform. In 2009-2010, CCIC worked with a number of groups including MPH and the Halifax Initiative to develop a set of principles around a global leaders forum, in direct response to the new role of the G20 as a “premier global economic forum”. CCIC could expand on this work and the element of its ten point agenda, considering the principles in the context of changes to other multilateral fora and the implications for Canadian government policy in this regard. CCIC could work with groups that have experience in these fora on a learning event or process on this issue. This could add a layer of policy development concerning multilateral fora to a number of the coalitions actively involved in monitoring some of these institutions.

3. CCIC strengthening the community as a whole

- Sell the value of coalition work and encourage new leadership in the membership. CCIC is active in almost all of the coalitions profiled in this report. With reduced staff capacity, this is no longer feasible or practical. CCIC will need to look to, identify and actively encourage greater participation from its membership in many of the coalitions profiled here to fill the vacuum brought on by its departure from some coalitions and to fill the broader leadership vacuum identified earlier. Where CEOs within the membership see the coalition work as adding value to their own organizational development, goals and outcomes, they give staff the space to prioritize coalition work. Staff will already do this internally. But there could be some benefit from a strong message on the importance of coalition policy work for the health of the community also coming from CCIC.
- Establish a strategic reference group. Many coalitions, by virtue of the individuals they bring to the table, have significant government relations, political, legislative, policy, media and communications know-how. Others do not. Workshops on these issues are helpful, but some interviewees noted that they also often remain quite abstract. The benefit comes in directly applying this knowledge to a particular campaign or policy process. Numerous coalitions (as well as their members) could benefit enormously either from directly accessing individuals with different areas of expertise and applying this expertise to their own campaigns with very practical suggestions. This might entail CCIC developing a database of individuals with expertise on different strategic areas who are willing to work with groups to help them develop this area. CCIC could help match the individuals from this strategic reference group with the respective coalition. The individuals and coalitions can then set the terms and parameters of their engagement on their own.
- Strengthen the community’s and CCIC’s capacity through member secondments. An alternate approach to creating a strategic reference group might be to see whether certain members might be willing to second staff to CCIC for a six to twelve month period. This will likely be possible only among the larger institutions whose collective capacity won’t be too seriously impacted by the loss of one staff person. This person could bring the type of strategic expertise that a reference group might offer, and could offer their services more readily to individual campaigns which CCIC is looking to strengthen or convene. This would also help address in the short-term stretched capacity among CCIC staff.