

Africa-Canada Forum Backgrounder – Overview

# Africa Matters

Time for a  
Renewed Commitment to  
Economic and Social Justice  
for Africa

The Africa-Canada Forum (ACF) is a Working Group of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) and brings together NGOs, churches, unions, and solidarity groups from across Canada that have a specific interest in development issues and social justice in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Its purpose is twofold: (i) to improve the quality and impact of the work of participating groups through reflection and analysis of current programming relationships in Africa; and (ii) to improve the coordination of policy development and strategies for joint action and advocacy, in dialogue with African counterparts and colleagues.

All or part of this document may be reproduced and used for non-profit purposes, provided that CCIC is credited as the source. Use of any part of this document for commercial purposes is forbidden without prior written permission from CCIC.

For additional information, contact:

Canadian Council for International Co-operation  
450 Rideau Street, Suite 200, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 5Z4  
613-241-7007 • [info@ccic.ca](mailto:info@ccic.ca) • [www.ccic.ca](http://www.ccic.ca)

All rights reserved.

© Canadian Council for International Co-operation 2010

# **Africa Matters: Time for a Renewed Commitment to Economic and Social Justice for Africa**

---

In the coming months Canada's foreign policy, including the agenda for the June 2010 G20 and G8, must give the highest priority to actions that promote human rights and end poverty and injustice in Africa. A renewed commitment to economic and social justice for Africa includes:

1. **A renewed long-term Canadian ODA commitment to address growing poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa**, with increased resources at least equal, each year, to the percentage increase of the International Assistance Envelope (IAE). At least 50 per cent of CIDA's bilateral and multilateral disbursements combined should be allocated to Sub-Saharan Africa, guided by the Canadian ODA Accountability Act.
2. **Greater priority to strengthening Canada's role in support of peace processes and peace keeping** on the continent, in Sudan, the DRC, Somalia, ensuring women are included in all levels of peace making and peace keeping.
3. **The establishment of a Canadian Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Framework** that includes the adoption of policies and laws based on the highest environmental and human rights standards for corporate behaviour of Canadian extractive companies.
4. **The focus of CIDA's agriculture strategies on African small-scale farmers, including women food producers**, to strengthen their livelihoods, while sustainably increasing their food production for household consumption and local markets.
5. **Collaboration with African governments to ensure trade rules reflect poorest countries' concerns** for more stable prices for basic commodities, such as food – whether through basic tariffs or more complex international supply management arrangements – not just market access for advanced exporters like Canada.
6. **A strong commitment to effective finance for African adaptation to climate change**, in addition to ODA, by strengthening African states and civil society capacities to apply African climate change and sustainable development knowledge to their own development paths.

## **Background**

African citizens and their governments have been working to strengthen African leadership to address urgent development challenges for Africa's peoples. This agenda was expressed in the *New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development* (NEPAD) first set out by African leaders just prior to Canada's 2002 Kananaskis G8 Summit, and since then was complemented by development initiatives in many African countries.

Africa achieved some success since 2002. African governments mobilized domestic resources to finance their own development and called upon international donors to live up to the many high profile commitments made to Africa in 2005. Progress was being made, with economic growth averaging 6 per cent per year between 2001 and 2008, and with advances in several African countries on the Millennium Development Goals to reduce widespread African poverty.

But on the eve of the Canadian-hosted G8 / G20 summits in 2010, the impact of the global economic crisis threatens once again to push more Africans into conditions of extreme poverty and hunger. African leaders and citizens bear no responsibility for this crisis. Yet African-led development will experience slower growth, increased poverty, in part induced by renege promises by international donors, long after the rest of the world recovers.

G7 countries are failing Africa, with several not likely to meet their 2010 commitments to double aid to Africa, at a time when the global economic crisis is deepening an already urgent African development crisis. UNESCO estimates the poorest 390 million working people in Africa will see their incomes drop about 20 per cent – far more than G8 countries. Child malnutrition is expected to cause an additional 200,000 to 400,000 infant deaths a year in Africa. Setbacks in universal primary education are expected to affect numerous countries, including Mozambique, Ethiopia, Mali, Senegal, and Rwanda, all of which have made substantial progress in recent years.<sup>1</sup> The recent food-price hikes have caused an additional 28 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa to return to extreme poverty.<sup>2</sup>

The Huntsville Summits provide Canada with an important moment to galvanize the G8 and G20 agendas with bold new initiatives that strengthen the capacities of Africans and their governments to weather this economic storm and resume strategies to overcome poverty and growing inequalities on the continent. Canadian civil society is working closely with counterparts across the continent to make this a reality.

The way forward in African development is also rooted in African civil society. Citizens increasingly engage with their governments to influence national policies and bring attention to their impact on the most marginalized and poor populations. HakiElimu is one example of a Tanzanian organization that creates opportunities for ordinary Tanzanians to get involved to make a difference in education and democracy. It has exposed the rural realities for many Tanzanians and the challenges of the education sector to ensure schooling really means learning. Canadian civil society brings the results of this independent monitoring and analysis to the attention of CIDA, which is supporting Tanzanian education efforts.

Economic gains for Africa have also been affected by poorly conceived economic growth policies, often pushed by donors as conditions for their aid and debt relief. These policies may sometimes produce growth, but they have not translated into significant benefits for the poorest and most marginalized, but rather resulted in increased social inequalities. For example, Uganda's 4 per cent growth over the last decade has not led to significant reductions in rural

---

<sup>1</sup> EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009 – *Overcoming Inequality: why governance matters*. <http://www.unesco.org/en/efareport/reports/2009-governance/>. See also the MDG report 2009 at [http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2009/MDG\\_Report\\_2009\\_En.pdf](http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2009/MDG_Report_2009_En.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> See African Monitor 2009 Report at [http://www.africanmonitor.org/Site/docs/EXEC\\_single\\_lowres.pdf](http://www.africanmonitor.org/Site/docs/EXEC_single_lowres.pdf).

poverty or child mortality. In Benin, years of growth have also been combined with growing number of poor in that country.<sup>3</sup> With economic and trade policies determined by the IMF or the WTO, African governments have rarely had the “policy space” and sustained aid resources needed to pursue African-designed and implemented economic policies to tackle poverty.

Official Development Assistance (ODA), as a stimulus for African development, is only part of a complex mix of donor policies affecting African development. Failure to address long-standing impacts of donor trade, investment, finance and foreign policies often have had greater consequences for African-led poverty-focused development strategies.

Is Canada ready to play a leadership role in addressing Africa’s poverty? Will the government bring proposals to the G20 Summit for reform of global trade and investment rules that take into account the needs of the poorest countries? These countries have been offered no seat at the G20 table to make their own proposals. Will the government set standards for Canadian private sector actors so that African countries benefit from Canadian foreign investments in their countries? And when it comes to Canada’s aid package – will our donor performance show steadiness and continued commitment to build on the doubling of aid or are we abandoning Africa?

For more information on the enclosed short background documents, please contact:  
Sylvie Perras, Coordinator, Africa-Canada Forum,  
tel.: (613) 241-7007, ext. 321,  
email: [sperras@ccic.ca](mailto:sperras@ccic.ca)

---

<sup>3</sup> Le Développement face à la pauvreté. Réseau analyse économique et développement. Under the direction of Fouzi Mourji, Bernard Decaluwé and Patrick Plane; Economica Paris 2006, p.4.