

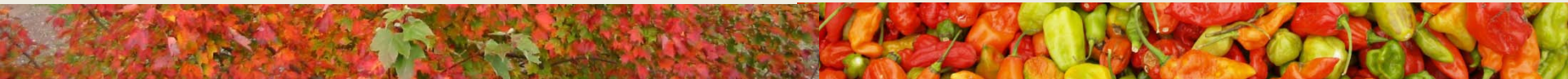
Putting our house in order to build a new Canada – Africa Relationship



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Invaluable wealth. . .

- Africa's many accomplishments and traditional knowledge are largely ignored or denigrated by the outside world, and increasingly, by African themselves.
- Its wealth of knowledge, cultural and linguistic diversity, agro-biodiversity, values of sharing and consensus-building confounds those who need to put a monetary value on wealth.

The 'good life' of five-star hotels and fame?

"It didn't stick to my shoes." . . . the late Ali Farka Toure



Exported mistakes and second-hand 'progress'?





Unquestioned “wisdom” . . .

- Unleashing new, imported technology and predatory capital and investment on Africa will solve all its problems.
- This is the same unchecked free-market system that has created the economic, food and climate crises, all hitting Africa hard.
- So how can this system be a solution for the very problems it has caused?





What Africa still has to some extent. . .formed the basis of the work of Nobel Prize-winning political scientist, Elinor Ostrom

Common-pool resources . . . water, atmosphere, forests, fisheries, grazing lands used by a group of individuals over and over again . . . they are not “public” or “private” goods . . . and Ostrom’s work emphasizes how humans interact with ecosystems to maintain long-term sustainable resource yields. Till very recently, most of these resources in Africa were indeed sustainably managed by the collective.





Other views . . .

*“We are a global community, and like all communities have to follow some rules so that we can live together. These rules must be – and must be seen to be – **fair and just**, must **pay due attention to the poor** as well as the powerful, must reflect a basic sense of **decency and justice.**”*

Economist, Joseph Stiglitz

“Monetarism’s great fallacy is to assume that the world is infinite and growth can therefore be endless.”

Author, Richard Wright





(Painful) Myths about Africa

- Africa is a uniform dark pit of despair, suffering and misery.
- Aid (bilateral and multilateral) has been charitable, always designed to ‘help’ Africa.
- African people need instructions from outsiders to find the ‘right path’ to ‘progress’.
- Africans are helpless and hapless, and imported technology and ideas can always solve their problems.
- Africans are hungry because their farming systems are “primitive”.




In reality . . .

- Africa is a continent of 53 countries, of mind-boggling human, geographical and ecological diversity and complexity.
- Africa has profound knowledge of its own resources, including crop and tree varieties & sustainable farming systems.
- African people (esp. civil society) are best-placed to find solutions, even to problems they did not cause – the economic, food and climate crises.
- To learn why Africa is hungry, look at trade policies, dumping of food from outside and dismissal & destruction of traditional farming systems.
- The world owes Africa action on climate change, and not exploitive investment in their land and resources.



Some Canadian Myths

- Canada (the nation) is “different” – READ “better” and “kinder” - than other wealthy industrial nations.
 - Canada is generous with its aid.
 - Canadian corporations are socially responsible and they can be permitted to police themselves.
 - Canadian media keep Canadians well-informed about their foreign policy, and Africa.
 - The world needs more Canada . . . (?)
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In reality . . .

- Canada, despite its enormous financial assets and natural resources and privileges, has foregone its leadership role on social and economic justice around the world.
- Canada risks becoming not just irrelevant and isolated on the world stage, but a pariah, for its position on climate change and other global issues, and including immigration and treatment of its own citizens abroad.



Reality check
... ?



Q: Is Canada still visible in Africa?

A: Yes, but increasingly . . . like this.




In the past 10 years, Canada's mining
"investment" in Africa has increased 9000%.
Canadian mining companies (and those
registered in Canada) are not *obliged* to respect
Canadian environmental, social or labour
standards . This is called . . .
"The Canadian Advantage".





A rapidly changing context . . .

- How can Canada increase and improve its profile and role in Africa, when Africa is no longer a priority of Canada's foreign policy?
 - Can Canada have a relationship with a whole continent?
 - With whom should Canada forge its relationships in Africa?
 - What does Canada have to offer Africa, with so many other new 'friends' (China, India, Venezuela, etc) moving in on the continent?
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Rapid & monumental changes in Africa

- The new scramble for Africa is on, and this time the whole world is involved .
- Land-grabbing (by the Gulf States, Asian countries, foreign “investors” and agribusinesses / energy and mining companies seeking land for offshore farms (crops or agrofuels for export) or just as investment (“an asset like gold, only better”))
- World Bank, Millennium Challenge Corporation and others helping Africa ‘harmonize’ laws to ‘improve’ climate for investors, threatening Africa’s biosafety, seed and land sovereignty
- Public Private Partnerships = Public Pays, Private Profits?
- New Green Revolution threatens family farms, seed and food sovereignty, aggravates climate change





What can – should - Canada do?

- Put our own house in order, tackle climate change and stop sabotaging international efforts.
 - Ensure Canadian funds for food security in Africa promote sustainable, smallholder systems and agro-biodiversity.
 - Reign in and regulate Canadian mining and extractive companies in Africa (and elsewhere).
 - Put Africa back onto the Foreign Affairs agenda.
 - Promote *fair* trade, not *free* trade.
 - Ensure no Canadian companies use tax havens, push for CLOSING of all tax havens.
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“Seizing Global Advantage” . . . the brave new look of Canada’s foreign policy

<http://www.international.gc.ca/commerce/strategy-strategie/index.aspx?lang=eng>

- *“A Global Commerce Strategy for Securing Canada's Growth and Prosperity” AND “The Government of Canada’s international network and policy tools actively support Canadian engagement and success in global markets.”*
- Africa is invisible . . . effaced by the new focus on “Canada and the Americas”.





Canada's to-do list . . .

- Balance self-interest with international obligations in Canada's relationships with African nations, ensure "investment" and corporate lobbies do not shape foreign policy.
- Ensure Canada is a leader on issues it wants to promote globally. . . gender equality, democratic reform and accountability, human rights, freedom of the press and media openness.
- Increase support for Canadian organizations, institutions and NGOs that work directly to promote environmental sustainability, farmer rights, food and seed sovereignty and responsible investment in Africa.



Putting off our pessimism for a better day

- Canada has a role to play in Africa, but it must put its own house in order first.
- Once that is done, Canada can again become a leader on social, economic and environmental justice.
- The best way to move forward is to learn from our own mistakes, avoid repeating them elsewhere, and learn from each other.
- Canada and African nations can then enjoy a relationship of mutual understanding and respect.
- It's not too late . . .





Thank you!