

March 2, 2010

The Honourable Beverley J. Oda
Minister of International Cooperation
200 Promenade du Portage
Gatineau, Quebec
K1A 0G4

Dear Minister Oda:

We are writing to invite you to provide greater clarity on a number of issues and policy considerations affecting continued CIDA partnerships with Canadian NGOs involved in relationships with Canadian Partnership Branch and CIDA's responsive programming.

We appreciate that, as CIDA Minister, you are rightly preoccupied with the Branch's direction and priorities. We are also confident that you believe that the processes used (and the factors weighed) in assessing partnership proposals must, to ensure accountability, be marked by clarity and full transparency.

At the International Forum on Aid Effectiveness, you accurately described the contribution of civil society groups as one which "provides Canada with a vital partner in our efforts to promote human rights, freedom, democracy, the rule of law and accountable public institutions."

Organizations of civil society play key roles in development efforts to link a wide range of Canadians to international efforts for peace, poverty reduction and respect for human rights. For more than four decades, Canadian CSOs have worked hard to strengthen credible long-standing relationships with citizens' organizations in the developing world, based on trust and mutual respect. These relationships provide the knowledge and confidence necessary to work together in uniquely valuable ways.

In doing so, Canadian CSOs have not only engaged a diversity of Canadian constituencies in Canada's aid efforts. They have also enriched Canada's official development programs by contributing their diverse development experience, creating a strong, credible Canadian reputation in many developing countries, and through their specific knowledge, which informs CIDA's current and future priorities.

Over these years, Canadian civil society groups have also taken care to ensure that their own program priorities are directed by the expressed needs and priorities of their Southern partners. Both flexibility and steady partnership are key to building stable capacities that respond to local conditions and produce sustainable results.

CIDA acknowledged the importance of civil society actors when it established its "NGO Support Program," later to become Canadian Partnership Branch (CPB). Partnership Branch has always required that CSO partners demonstrate consistency in their programming with CIDA's overarching development mandate. But, at the same time, the purpose of CIDA's main responsive program was to respond to CSO-determined development needs and directions. These programs amounted to a mere 5% of Canadian ODA in 2006/07.

The ability of Canadian CSOs to achieve effective development results – and the purpose of Partnership Branch – depend upon a sensitive application of CIDA guidelines for country and sector focus that respect need for CSOs to be true to their partnerships in developing countries. If these policies were to be too narrowly applied in the context of CPB's uniquely responsive program, we fear such decisions could seriously undermine the contributions and the effectiveness of Canadian CSOs.

Greater overall strategic focus and clarity for Canada's development efforts, including those by CSOs, is welcome and necessary. In this respect most CSOs would associate themselves with the concerns recently expressed by the Auditor General that CIDA's often changing priorities have hindered the development effectiveness of the Agency. Canadian CSOs have also readily accepted the idea of focus in their own planning. Indeed, when it comes to sectoral focus, Canadian CSOs in 2006/07 were more closely concentrated than CIDA's own bilateral programs in key social sectors such as education, health and agriculture.

Many Canadian CSOs will make contributions within the three thematic areas and in the countries of focus. But the purpose of focus – and of effective management in development – is to make things work and achieve outcomes. In this respect, a limitation of the scope for CPB responsive funding exclusively to three thematic priorities may be counter-productive. With a small investment by CPB in Canadian CSOs (relative to total Canadian ODA), CIDA and the Government of Canada has a window on many countries that are not now among the 20 priority countries, but may be in the future. Achieving results in development is challenging. Through CPB, you are making an investment in Canadian development knowledge that may not be directly applicable today, but we are certain will contribute to effective implementation of future CIDA sectoral strategies.

For example, in the past CPB supported Canadian CSOs working in a number of different countries in support of agricultural development, at a time when this was not a priority for the Agency or for other donors, but is highly relevant now to CIDA's current themes. We are hopeful therefore, that you would not want to limit the effective contributions of CSOs, who are judged today not to "fit" within a narrow application of these newly emerged priorities.

The right focus for Canadian Partnership Branch is CIDA's overarching strategic goal whereby Partnership Branch programs strengthen a diversity of civil society organizations, both in Canada and in developing countries, which are effectively contributing to poverty reduction, democratic governance and human rights.

Canadian civil society is looking forward, Minister, to your consideration and reaffirmation of the purpose and mandate of Canadian Partnership Branch as a focal point for CIDA's relationship with the ideas, energy, innovation and resources of Canadian partners. In doing so, we think it important you clarify CIDA's commitment to responsive programming generally and to clearly set out the processes and standards used when program proposals and contributions agreements with civil society partners are assessed.

We are enclosing copy of a background document entitled "Partners in Progress", which we hope may provide some context for discussion of some of those issues addressed in this letter. We are also providing copy of this correspondence to the parliamentary critics and the CIDA President.

We remain committed to assist and contribute in this discussion.

Sincerely,



Katherine M^cDonald, LL.B., LL.M.
Executive Director



Heather M^cPherson
Executive Director



Michel Lambert
Directeur général



Alex Neve
Secretary General



Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale has signed the French version of the letter which is attached.



Athletes for Africa

Adrian Bradbury
Founder and Executive Director



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jennifer Slood".

Jennifer Slood
Executive Director
Atlantic Council for International Cooperation



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Alibhai".

Shams Alibhai
Executive Director
British Columbia Council for International Cooperation



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Lewenza".

Ken Lewenza
National President
Canadian Auto Workers Union



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jo Anne Ferguson".

Jo-Anne Ferguson
Senior Director, International Development



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerry Barr".

Gerry Barr
President-CEO
Canadian Council for International Co-operation



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Takacs".

Karen Takacs
Executive Director



CESO | SACO

Don Johnston
President and CEO
Canadian Executive Service Organization



Katherine Giroux-Bougard
Chair
Canadian Federation of Students



Jim Dahl
Executive Director



Jim Cornelius
Executive Director



Canadian Friends
Service Committee
(QUAKERS)

Merrill Stewart
Clerk



Ken Georgetti
President



Robert Granke
Robert Granke
Executive Director



June Webber

June Webber
Director, International Policy and Development



Kevin O'Brien

Kevin O'Brien
Executive Director
Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief



Janet Hatcher Roberts

Janet Hatcher Roberts
Executive Director
Canadian Society for International Health



Paul Moist

Paul Moist
National President
Canadian Union of Public Employees



Denis Lemelin

Denis Lemelin
National President
Canadian Union of Postal Workers



Kevin M'cCort
President and Chief Executive Officer



Mario Renaud
Directeur général



Duncan Brown
Executive Secretary



Tony Breuer
Executive Director



Dr. Douglas J. Pritchard
Co-Director
Christian Peacemaker Teams



Bruce Adema
Reverend



Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo

Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo
Director



Laurie Beachall

Laurie Beachall
Executive Director



J Hartman

Joey Hartman
Chair
CoDevelopment Canada



Marie-Dominik Langlois

Marie-Dominik Langlois
Coordonnatrice
Comité pour les Droits Humains en Amérique Latine



Derek Evans

Derek Evans
Executive Director



Michael Casey

Michael Casey
Executive Director



Suzanne Loiselle

Suzanne Loiselle
Directrice



Ian Hamilton

Ian Hamilton
Executive Director



Pat Mooney

Pat Mooney
Executive Director



K. Perkins

Kevin Perkins
Executive Director



Michael Bopp

Michael Bopp, Ph.D.
Director
Four Worlds Centre for Development Learning



Marco Guzman

Marco Guzman
Executive Director



Patricia Rebolledo
Executive Director



Lothar Torheiden
President
The Hunger Project in Canada



Thierry Zomahoun
Chief Executive Officer



Wayne de Jong
Vice-President, International Programs



Nicci Stein
Executive Director



Dr. Cassim Degani
Chair, International Development and Relief Foundation



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rita Morbia'.

Rita Morbia
Executive Director



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Kaczmarczyk'.

Marisa Kaczmarczyk
Executive Director



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary Corkery'.

Mary Corkery
Executive Director



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Hamilton'.

Janice Hamilton
Executive Director



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kim Bulger'.

Kim Bulger
Executive Director



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Don Peters'.

Don Peters
Executive Director



MiningWatch Canada
Mines Alerte

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie Kneen".

Jamie Kneen
Communications and Outreach Coordinator



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane O'Reggio".

Diane O'Reggio
President and Chief Executive Officer



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roy Culpeper".

Roy Culpeper
President



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. Dubelaar".

Jessica Dubelaar
Interim Executive Director



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Fox".

Robert Fox
Executive Director



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pierre Véronneau".

Pierre Véronneau
Directeur général



PHYSICIANS FOR GLOBAL SURVIVAL
MÉDECINS POUR LA SURVIE MONDIALE
CANADA

www.pgs.ca

Dr. Dale Dewar
Executive Director



making space for peace
un espace pour la paix

Christine Jones
National Director
Peace Brigades International



John Siebert
Executive Director



Presbyterian World Service & Development
The development and relief agency of The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Kenneth Kim
Director



50
YEARS

Cheryl Curtis
Executive Director
Primate's World Relief and Development Fund



PROJECT SHELTER WAKADOGO

Nilmin Williamson
Chief Financial Officer



John Gordon
National Director, Social Justice Fund
Public Service Alliance of Canada



Rebecca J.K. Gill
General Director
Queen's Project on International Development



Chris Dendys
Executive Director



Laura Haylock
Executive Director



Sherrie Strathy
Board Chair

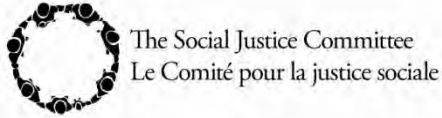


Lesley Porter
Executive Director



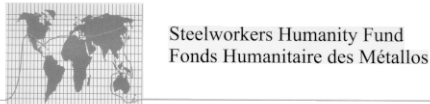
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Morley".

David Morley
President and CEO



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ernie Schibli".

Ernie Schibli
President
Board of Directors



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Olthuis".

Doug Olthuis
Department Head
Global Affairs and Workplace Issues



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert Gonneville".

Robert Gonneville
Directeur général



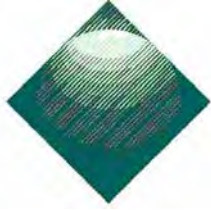
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nora Sanders".

Nora Sanders
General Secretary



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Susan Walsh".

Susan Walsh
Executive Director



Fergus Watt
Executive Director
World Federalist Movement – Canada



Mamta Mishra
Executive Director



Chris Eaton
Executive Director
World University Service of Canada



Dave Toycen
President and CEO



Scott Haldane
President and CEO



Montréal le 22 février 2010

L'Honorable Beverley J. Oda
Ministre de la Coopération internationale
200, promenade du Portage
Gatineau (Québec) K1A 0G4

Madame la Ministre,

Nous vous adressons la présente lettre dans le but d'obtenir des précisions au sujet d'un certain nombre de questions et de réflexions relativement aux politiques ayant une incidence sur les partenariats établis entre l'ACDI et les ONG canadiennes qui se prévalent des programmes de la Direction générale du partenariat canadien ainsi que des programmes réactifs de l'Agence.

Nous nous réjouissons qu'en tant que ministre de l'ACDI vous vous sentiez concernée à juste titre par l'orientation et les objectifs prioritaires de la Direction. Nous sommes aussi persuadés que vous convenez que les méthodes d'évaluation des propositions de partenariat (y compris les facteurs pris en considération au moment de l'évaluation) se doivent d'être claires et entièrement transparentes par souci de reddition de comptes.

Lors du Forum international sur l'efficacité de l'aide, vous avez fidèlement décrit la société civile comme un partenaire stratégique pour le Canada dans ses efforts visant à promouvoir les droits de la personne, la liberté, la démocratie, la primauté du droit et la mise en place d'institutions publiques responsables.

Les organisations de la société civile jouent un rôle crucial, en engageant par leurs activités de développement, les Canadiennes et les Canadiens dans les efforts internationaux pour la consolidation de la paix, la réduction de la pauvreté et le respect des droits de la personne. Pendant plus de quatre décennies, les OSC canadiennes se sont ingénérées à resserrer les liens avec des organisations civiques des pays en développement en misant sur la confiance et le respect mutuel. Il importe d'assurer la crédibilité et la pérennité des relations entre les OSC du Nord et du Sud car elles constituent une source de savoir nécessaire à une collaboration précieuse et unique en son genre.

Ce faisant, les OSC canadiennes ont suscité la participation d'une diversité de groupes d'intérêts aux efforts d'aide internationale. Elles ont aussi enrichi les programmes d'aide publique du Canada de leurs diverses expériences dans le domaine du développement, en établissant sa réputation de nation solide et crédible dans de nombreux pays en développement, et en partageant les solides connaissances acquises avec l'ACDI pour l'aider dans la formulation de ses objectifs prioritaires actuels et futurs.

Au fil des années, la société civile canadienne s'est également assurée que ses propres objectifs prioritaires en matière de programmes se fondaient sur les besoins et les priorités exprimés par ses partenaires du Sud. La souplesse et la constance des partenariats sont des éléments indispensables au développement de capacités éprouvées qui soient appropriées aux situations locales et suffisantes pour dégager des résultats durables. L'ACDI a reconnu l'importance des acteurs de la société civile lorsqu'elle a mis sur pied son « Programme de soutien aux ONG » qui est devenu ensuite la Direction générale du partenariat canadien. Cette dernière a toujours exigé des partenaires des OSC l'élaboration de programmes conformes au mandat général de développement de l'ACDI. Cependant, alors que le but du programme réactif de l'Agence consiste à répondre aux besoins formulés par les OSC en matière de développement et à respecter leurs orientations, il a reçu, pour les années 2006 et 2007, seulement 5 p. 100 de l'APD du Canada.

La capacité des OSC canadiennes à produire des résultats efficaces en ce qui a trait au développement et la raison d'être de la Direction générale du partenariat canadien dépendent de l'application de façon appropriée de lignes directrices touchant les pays et les secteurs prioritaires de l'ACDI qui soulignent l'importance pour les OSC de demeurer respectueuses de leurs partenariats avec les pays en développement. Nous craignons qu'en appliquant avec des œillères les dispositions du programme réactif unique de la Direction, les contributions et l'efficacité des OSC canadiennes ne s'en trouvent gravement affaiblies.

Des efforts en matière de développement déployés par le Canada, y compris les OSC, définis plus clairement et davantage axés sur une stratégie d'ensemble non seulement sont opportuns, mais s'avèrent nécessaires. À cet égard, la plupart des OSC se rangent du côté de la vérificatrice générale qui s'est récemment dite préoccupée par la modification courante des objectifs prioritaires de l'ACDI. Cette modification tend à diminuer l'efficacité de l'Agence relativement au développement. Les OSC canadiennes ont accepté d'emblée l'idée de cibler leur planification. À vrai dire, en ce qui a trait à la concentration sectorielle, les OSC canadiennes, en 2006-2007, l'appliquaient plus fidèlement que l'ACDI dans ses propres programmes bilatéraux touchant à des secteurs sociaux importants telles l'éducation, la santé et l'agriculture.

Bon nombre d'OSC canadiennes s'attachent aux trois secteurs thématiques dans les pays prioritaires. Cependant, le but de la concentration – et d'une gestion efficace en matière de développement – est de faire en sorte que le travail s'accomplisse et d'obtenir des résultats probants. Ainsi, ceux-ci pourraient s'avérer négatifs si la Direction limite la portée de son financement réactif aux trois secteurs prioritaires. La Direction, en investissant une petite somme d'argent (provenant de l'enveloppe d'aide internationale totale) dans les OSC canadiennes, permet à l'ACDI et au gouvernement du Canada de connaître la situation de nombreux pays qui ne figurent pas parmi les 20 pays prioritaires, mais qui pourraient à l'avenir en faire partie. Dans le domaine du développement international, il n'est pas facile d'obtenir des résultats. Par l'entremise de la Direction générale du partenariat canadien, vous investissez dans le savoir canadien en matière de développement et même si cet investissement pourrait ne pas avoir d'utilité directe aujourd'hui, nous sommes convaincus qu'il contribuera à une mise en œuvre efficace des futures stratégies sectorielles de l'ACDI.

À titre d'exemple, la Direction a déjà appuyé le soutien des OSC canadiennes au développement agricole dans bon nombre de pays même si à ce moment-là, l'agriculture n'était pas un objectif prioritaire de l'ACDI, alors qu'aujourd'hui elle est intégrée à ses secteurs thématiques. Nous espérons que vous ne cherchiez pas à restreindre l'apport des OSC qui sont jugées inadmissibles dans le cadre des nouveaux objectifs prioritaires appliqués à la lettre.

L'orientation de la Direction générale du partenariat canadien réside dans l'objectif stratégique général de l'ACDI selon lequel les programmes de la Direction renforcent une multitude d'organisations de la société civile, tant au Canada que dans les pays en développement, qui contribuent efficacement à la réduction de la pauvreté, à la mise en place d'une gouvernance démocratique et au respect des droits de la personne.

Madame la Ministre, la société civile canadienne attend avec impatience que vous vous penchiez sur la raison d'être et le mandat de la Direction générale du partenariat canadien et que vous réaffirmiez qu'elle représente le point central des relations de l'Agence avec les partenaires canadiens en ce qui concerne les idées, l'énergie, l'innovation et les ressources qu'ils apportent. Par conséquent, nous croyons, également, qu'il importe que vous clarifiez l'ensemble des engagements de l'ACDI en matière de programmation réactive et que vous exposiez clairement les processus que vous suivez ainsi que les normes sur lesquelles vous vous basez pour évaluer les propositions de programme et les accords de contribution avec les partenaires de la société civile. Nous sommes disposés à apporter notre soutien et notre contribution au regard d'éventuelles discussions sur le sujet.

Salutations cordiales,



Brian A. Barton
Président.

Note : L'**Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale**, l'AQOCI, regroupe 68 organisations qui œuvrent, à l'étranger et au Québec, pour un développement durable et humain.

The Contributions of Responsive Programming in CIDA's Canadian Partnership Branch to Canadian International Cooperation

January 2010

For millions of Canadians, their families and communities, Canadian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working in international development give expression and meaning to Canadian values of global solidarity, fairness and justice. Over the past 40 years, Canadians have contributed generously with billions of dollars as donors, as volunteers in their communities, and as development workers directly sharing their skills and humanity across the globe to end poverty.

In all these years, CIDA has been a consistent and essential partner for Canadian CSOs, allowing through these organizations, the participation of millions of Canadians on global issues. This partnership has strengthened civil society and organizational capacity in developing countries, as Canadian CSOs have worked closely with organizations of poor people in the poorest developing countries and communities. These relationships have, in turn, supported development innovation and brought positive change in the lives of millions of poor children, women and men.

The Government has acknowledged the importance of CSO partnerships. Minister Bev Oda, during the 2008 International Cooperation Days, underscored the crucial role of CSOs in international development throughout more than 40 years of CIDA's experience. Earlier that year, at an International Forum on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness, she asserted that civil society "provides Canada with a vital partner in our efforts to promote human rights, freedom, democracy, the rule of law and accountable public institutions".

Canadian CSOs, however, are concerned that their ability to achieve these development results on behalf of Canadians in the future could be adversely affected by changes underway in CIDA that, when applied to CSOs, may unnecessarily limit or skew CIDA's support for CSO programs that have stood the test of time and relevance. These changes flow from CIDA's aid effectiveness agenda with its focus on 20 countries and three thematic areas (food security, children and youth, and economic growth).

In 1966, under the remarkable leadership of Lewis Perimbam, CIDA established an NGO support program, now the Canadian Partnership Branch (CPB), which provides funding to hundreds of Canadian CSOs, both national and community-based. Unique among donors, Canada had the foresight in the 1960s to understand and support, as a goal in itself, the critical roles CSOs play in sustainable development focused on poverty reduction, human rights, and locally determined initiatives. These are now the legislated criteria for Canadian ODA established by the 2008 ODA Accountability Act.

With few alternatives available in Canada for large-scale financing for CSOs development work, CPB has contributed more than \$200 million each year for CSO partners with small-project and multi-year institutional program funding windows. CPB was created to respond directly to CSO-determined development needs and priorities. While always consistent with CIDA's overarching development mandate, CPB programs have been judged effective because they have been highly responsive to Canadian CSOs, who in turn have worked closely and over long time periods with overseas partners and people at the community level, staying the course with priorities determined according to local needs and aspirations. Long term and predictable commitment is so essential for Southern CSOs given the nature of social change processes and the volatile and difficult environments in which they work.

Amounting to only 5% of Canadian ODA in 2006/07, this strategic investment by CIDA over the years has not only engaged a diversity of Canadian constituencies in Canada's aid efforts, but has also enriched Canada's official development programs by strengthening Canada's reputation in many developing countries and by contributing CSO specific development knowledge, which informs CIDA's current and future priorities.

Why is CIDA's responsive program for the Voluntary Sector so essential for an effective and focused Canadian aid program?

- **Organizations in civil society have a central role to play in development efforts to build peace, encourage respect for human rights and end global poverty.**

Historically CSOs have contributed to struggles to end slavery, defend the rights of women and workers, improve public health and housing conditions, make education and health care accessible to all, recognize the rights of minority groups, improve access and services for people with disabilities, and to protect the integrity of the natural environment. In all these examples, CSOs, including many Canadian CSOs, have contributed to achieve positive results for people and communities around the world.

- **CSOs are different, but complementary, development actors than official donors and governments.**

The state, the market and the family are critical to development, of course, but civil society has a distinctive role and advantage. Organizations of citizens have historically been, and will continue to be, a compelling force behind government action for development. Canadian CSOs work mainly with citizens' organizations on the ground in developing countries. They work hard to strengthen long-standing relationships that are based on trust, respect and accompaniment over many years. CSOs are innovative and effective because they are rooted in specific countries and respond to the sector priorities and intimate knowledge of partners working directly with constituencies of poor and marginalized people, including women and children.

Subjecting CSO partnerships to the particular sectoral or country focus choices of CIDA and the government of the day, whatever the merit for CIDA's own bilateral programs, can do irreparable harm to these relationships, as it undermines the possibility for responsiveness and long-term accompaniment. Minister Oda identified three new priorities for CIDA in 2008, but to date with little detail in the public realm. Preceding ministers recently have named numerous other priorities. A particular CSO partnership may not fit the focal themes of today, but may be crucial tomorrow for CIDA's future priorities.

Several Canadian CSOs, for example, maintained through responsive funding from CPB a focus and expertise in food security programming during the many years that Canada, among other donors, ignored this important area of work in bilateral programs. Equally, Canadian CSOs have provided a window in countries that are only now priority countries such as Colombia or Sudan, but also have a presence and contacts in others that may be important CIDA partners in the future. Responsive programming from CPB, based on CIDA's assessment of the institutional capacities of Canadian CSO partners, (rather than their alignment to bilateral aid priorities of the day), is not only essential for the programmatic integrity of the CSO, but also for the government's future options for aid directions.

- **A diverse independent civil society is essential for the promotion of democracy in developing countries.**

As the Minister acknowledged in her address to the International Forum, an effective civil society is essential for democracy in developing countries because CSOs champion the voice of the poor. In the same speech she applauded the "diverse roles in which they make a difference in so many countries." Airing a diversity of views is the essence of democracy and is essential to bring to light development needs and knowledge from different parts of a society that shape effective development initiatives for the future. In developing countries, that often have weak public institutions, CSOs are playing an important in publicizing inconvenient truths that affect the lives and livelihoods of the poor. Just as budget support in the context of "ownership" by developing country governments is now recognized by CIDA and all donors to be essential for aid effectiveness, so too donors must support civil society strengthening as democratic actors in these societies. For many Canadian CSOs civil society strengthening is a key focus for their partnerships, to which CIDA's CPB contributes.

While CSOs have roles to play in the 20 priority countries and in each of the current three sectoral themes, Canadian CSOs are generating a rich experience in strengthening civil society in a wider range of countries and sectors. The government should take advantage of this experience in its goal to strengthen democracy. Because these contributions by Canadian CSOs are based on long-standing partnerships, CIDA would significantly diminish such contributions if it were to restrict its support for partnerships by the CPB responsive funding window to the priority countries and the themes where it chooses to work.

Cutting these programs because they do not fit a country or sector profile will significantly reduce the reach of this experience in an area that is vital to Canadian development cooperation. A sustained responsive mechanism in Canadian Partnership Branch based on CIDA's strategic objectives, "to reduce poverty, promote human rights and support sustainable development in a manner consistent with Canadian foreign policy" is an appropriate and essential tool for Canadian initiatives in democracy strengthening.

- **CSOs are changing in response to the current challenges and evolving capacities and realities of their partners in developing countries.**

Greater overall strategic focus and clarity for Canada's development efforts, including those by CSOs themselves, is welcome and necessary. Canadian CSOs have also readily accepted the idea of focus in their own planning. Indeed, when it comes to sectoral focus, Canadian CSOs in 2006/07 were more closely concentrated than CIDA's own bilateral

programs in key social sectors such as education, health and agriculture. Being compelled by CIDA to respond to the Agency's periodically changing priorities will undermine CSOs own responsiveness to their partners' priorities.

Among the lessons from four decades of development experience, the flexibility to change and adapt to complex and changing development circumstances, whether local, national and global, has been one of the most important. If it were easy to end poverty, obviously we would have done so decades ago. All those who wish to contribute effectively to development must continually learn and change.

Canadian CSOs have changed. They have become more conscious of the need to respond to local needs and local change agents in their partner relationships, not their own predilections. They too have become more effective by being more focused geographically, but based on their own unique CSO history of partnerships at the country level, not imposed by outside donor criteria. While several have become part of a global NGO family, such as Oxfam or CARE, with wide development expertise across the family, others have become more sectorally specialized or thematically focused. But in both cases their effectiveness as Canadian development actors arises from their years of particular development experience based on relationships with Southern partners, which will likely be undermined if compelled to respond in the short-term to CIDA's particular, and sometimes changing, sectoral priorities.

For many Canadian CSOs, the responsive multi-year institutional program funding arrangement with CPB provided the assured financial framework within which these changes have occurred. Their improved effectiveness as "actors for change and sustainable development results" has been enhanced by the programming scope allowed for in the responsiveness and multi-year nature of this funding. It has reduced somewhat an unhealthy "competitive environment" between CSOs, and in turn has helped create conditions for greater CSO coordination in coalitions and informal relationships in developing countries. The Canadian Council for International Co-operation has also informed Canadian CSO change with its Code of Ethics, governing not only the standards for these CSOs in their internal operations, but also standards for their partnership relationships.

Greater overall strategic focus and clarity for Canada's development efforts, including those by CSOs themselves, is welcome. While Canadian CSOs can make important contributions in the 20 priority countries and in the three focal thematic areas, to limit CPB *responsive* funding relationships to these priorities will substantially distort and potentially undermine the real and strategic contributions that many Canadian partners, who may not "fit", can make to Canada's overall development efforts.

Given these concerns and the real desire on the part of Canadians to contribute in many areas of development, it will be more appropriate to link CPB *responsive* funding standards and decisions to CIDA's overarching strategic goal and the institutional capacities of the partner CSO. Under this overarching goal, it should be clearly demonstrated that CPB-supported CSOs strengthen a diversity of civil society organizations, in both Canada and developing countries. CSOs are effectively contributing to poverty reduction, democratic governance and human rights, based on the institutional capacities and long-standing track records. Such an approach, when combined with a commitment to dialogue and learning between CIDA and CSOs, will in turn inform and strengthen more focused bilateral programming.