

# Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Canadian Cooperation

Challenges and Perspectives

Editors: Rita Soares Pinto, Fréda Thélusma and Julie Martineau



A publication of the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation and Comité Québécois Femmes et Développement (AQOCI).





# **WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY IN CANADIAN COOPERATION**

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**Proceedings and recommendations of the International  
Conference held in Montreal, 19–20 January 2009**

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# FOREWORD

To what extent have the actors of Canadian international cooperation made good on their commitment towards gender equality? What challenges are they facing in their efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment? What lessons have we learned in terms of best practices and motivators of future initiatives? How can we renew the commitment of organizations to gender equality and women's rights in Quebec and Canada ?

These are some of the questions central to "Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Canadian Cooperation: Challenges and Perspectives," an international conference held in Montreal on 19–20 January 2009 that was attended by over 200 people from different organizations and walks of life.

For the participants, this was a privileged opportunity to debate and discuss the issues surrounding the promotion of women's rights and gender integration in Canadian cooperation. It was a time to take stock of our accumulated knowledge, to develop a clearer vision of the challenges facing us, and to obtain mutual guidance on our collective strategies as we move forward.

We are proud to be able to present these conference proceedings in a year that marks the tenth anniversary of the launch of CIDA's Policy on Gender Equality and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Comité Québécois Femmes et Développement (CQFD). We vividly hope that they will serve to prolong our discussion and dialogue with a view to improving our practices in the area of gender equality and women's rights.

We are firmly convinced that debate and dialogue are instrumental to developing new ideas and bringing about a vision that can unite people, beyond their differences, in the pursuit of a broader objective. We encourage you to carry on the dialogue and our concerted action. In this way, we will build the collective power necessary to renew our commitment to gender equality and women's rights and to improve our practices in this area.

May these conference proceedings be a source of inspiration and creativity for our ongoing organizing efforts.



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This document was made possible thanks to the collaboration of many individuals who have a shared passion for the advancement of women's rights and gender equality and whom we would like to honour here.

We would like to thank all those who have spent time writing these texts. Their expertise and creativity have made this publication a document that is essential to a better understanding of the issues faced when integrating gender equality into Canadian international cooperation at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

We would also like to highlight the commitment and dedication of the team of editors who worked on this English version: Debra Bucher, Nancy Guberman, Odette Mc Carthy, Marie-Julie Rivest, Dana Stefov and Sayaka Taniguchi, who managed to maintain the richness of the text despite linguistic challenges. We also want to give a warm thanks to Alexandre Silveira for his commitment and professionalism in his graphic design work.

This document follows the international conference "Women's rights and gender equality in Canadian cooperation: Challenges and perspectives", which was held in Montreal, Québec on January 19 and 20, 2009. This conference would not have been such a tremendous success without the support of the members of the Advisory Committee: Joanna Kerr, Sylvie Perras and Dana Stefov, as well as the members of the Comité québécois femmes et développement (CQFD) particularly: Marie Ginette Bouchard, Katrie Gagné, Linda Gagnon, Suzanne Guay, Molly Kane, Hélène Lagacé, Julie McHugh and Julie Rocheleau. Thank you to Katherine Hébert for her work during her internship and all the volunteers for their enthusiasm and availability: Marie-Pierre Arsenault, Jean-Philippe Émond, Mélissa Felix-Séguin, Véronica Pérez and Hakima Bouasria.

We would also like to thank our esteemed partners for their vital support in putting together the event and the production of this publication: SUCO, the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) and Oxfam-Québec. Thank you to our financial partners for their support: the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canadian Heritage, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Centrale des syndicats nationaux (CSN), Rights & Democracy and the Ministry of International Relations of Québec.

Rita Soares Pinto  
Fréda Thélusma  
Julie Martineau

On a personal level, I would like to thank the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation who believed in this project from the start. Its Gordon Global Fellowship program was an essential catalyst in the accomplishment of this conference and its proceedings. In particular, a very warm thanks to Natasha Sawh, Marjan Montazemi and Patrick Johnston of the Foundation for their trust, intense support and for having put in place such a relevant fellowship program.

Many thanks to Joanna Kerr for having played her role as a mentor with tremendous passion, creativity and generosity. To Fréda Thélusma and Julie Martineau, coordinators of the CQFD of l'Association québécoise des organismes de coopération l'internationale (AQOCI), for their friendship and for being the best co-workers one could wish for on such an adventure. A special thanks to all passionate members of the CQFD and to Sylvie Perras, Dana Stefov and Marie-Pierre Arsenault for their commitment by my side.

I would also like to thank SUCO and Oxfam-Québec, my two employers during this project, for their unconditional support and trust. Particularly to my past coworkers: Linda Gagnon, Suzanne Guay, Bernard Aubin, Tonga Huynh, Bernard Bohmert, and all of the SUCO Mali team, as well as Denise Byrnes, for their collaboration on this project.

Finally, I want to thank all the people who have shared their generosity, their vision and their knowledge in my research activities in Canada and Mali. It would be impossible to list all the people whose commitment to the rights of women and gender equality have been and will continue to be a source of inspiration.

Rita Soares Pinto



# INTRODUCTION

## Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation

**Natasha Sawh**

Program Manager, Global Citizenship

Dear colleagues,

The Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation (WDGF) is delighted to support the conference, *Women's rights and gender equality in Canadian cooperation: Challenges and perspectives*, through the Foundation's Gordon Global Fellowship program. Established in 1965, the WDGF is an independent grantmaking organization dedicated to the development of sound and innovative public policies.

By way of background, the Foundation's Gordon Global Fellowships were created in 2006 to support emerging leaders in Canada who are passionate and committed to enhancing Canada's role around the world. The long-term goal of the fellowship program is to develop a cadre of Canadians with a deep understanding of global policy issues who will exercise leading roles whether in non-governmental organizations or the private and the public sectors. To this end, the fellowship provides a stipend, access to a mentor, as well as opportunities for policy training, strategy development and networking.

Rita Soares Pinto was selected as one of nine Gordon Global Fellows in 2007, and we have been thrilled to see this conference, which was realized through her fellowship work, come to fruition. Her aim to advance gender equality in Canada's international development work – by researching best practices among Northern and Southern partners in development, by collaboratively building a strong community of practice among Canadian development organizations and, of course, by leading the organization of this conference as a forum to exchange best practices, policy recommendations, and actions plans – was and remains critically important in improving Canada's aid and advancing the goals of equality and human rights for all.

As in most social change initiatives, the strength of these efforts lies in the meaningful collaboration of the many organizations and individuals who have contributed to it. Central among these is the Comité Québécois

Femmes et Développement (CQFD) of the Association Québécoise des Organismes de Coopération Internationale (AQOCI), especially CQFD's coordinator and conference co-organizer Fréda Thélusma and Julie Martineau who was instrumental in producing this publication. Also, the conference would not have been possible without the collaboration of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), SUCO, Oxfam-Québec, members of the conference advisory committee and the support of many other funding partners. Finally, Joanna Kerr, who was Rita's mentor during her fellowship, also played a key role in enriching this conference with her vision and dynamism.

While civil society organizations and CIDA have historically played a groundbreaking role in advancing gender equality and integrating it into mainstream development work, much remains to be done to build on these efforts, to learn from each other, and to re-energize and rethink Canada's international cooperation work so that the advancement of women's rights and gender equality are central to it.

And, of course, the work neither begins nor ends here. This conference and its proceedings are part of a larger agenda - in Canada and internationally - to advance gender equality. Among these efforts in Quebec and in Canada is an emerging community of practice (called "Gender in practice") to support development actors in sharing and advocating for the policies, tools and expertise needed to ensure that Canada's development work advances women's rights and gender equality. We hope that this and other initiatives arising from the networks and exchanges at this conference will contribute to a stronger movement for women's rights and better, more equitable development.

For more information about the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation:  
[www.gordonfn.org](http://www.gordonfn.org)



## Association Québécoise des Organismes de Coopération Internationale (AQOCI)

**Brian Barton,**

President, AQOCI



Women's rights and gender equality are major themes for AQOCI and its 69 member international cooperation organizations (ICO).

Our members vehemently denounce the unequal status of women in society. They recognize the importance of defending women's specific rights as well as systematically applying the gender approach in their international cooperation projects. This recognition is contained in the main charters and declarations of principle of our network.

The struggle for gender equality is not new to AQOCI, which has been actively involved in it for 25 years. Back in 1984, spurred on by the many new ideas and initiatives arising out of international forums held in conjunction with the United Nations Decade for Women, a group of activists from different AQOCI member organizations and other Québec community groups founded the Comité Québécois Femmes et Développement (CQFD).

Over the years, CQFD has become a forum for discussion and critical thinking on issues relating to gender in development. It has become a launching pad for a feminist vision of development and a crucible for solidarity among women's groups of the Global South and North.

AQOCI, for its part, has unceasingly strived to influence thought and action while keeping current with new ideas and emerging approaches.

CQFD is proud to have assisted, during its twenty-fifth year, with the organization of a conference that brought together over 200 participants, thus illustrating the necessity of such opportunities for dialogue on the themes of gender equality and women's rights among international cooperation stakeholders.

As is clearly demonstrated by the rich and rewarding discussion that took place during the workshops and panel discussions, a certain number of doubts and questions still plague our understanding of best practices and avenues for advancing gender equality around the world. It is clear that CQFD will have to come to grips with these issues, and also to meet two other significant challenges in the years to come: namely, building the capacity of ICOs as regards cross-cutting integration of gender into their internal practices and development programs, and consolidating the dialogue between donors and ICOs on this subject.

This conference served to highlight just how much remains to be done to remedy the structural causes of gender inequalities in countries of the South, but it also helped identify resources such as CQFD that have a mandate to support ICOs in facing these challenges. Finally, the conference underscored the political will of numerous ICOs to collaborate on the search for processes and practices that can effectively advance the cause of gender equality and women's rights.

It is my hope that this dynamic will bear fruit and that the proceedings of this conference will remind each of us of our achievements in 2009, so that a few years from now, we will be able to look back and contemplate the road we have traveled.

I know that we have a great responsibility not to let things continue along as they have been. I trust that I can rely on you, and on all of us, to change things.

For more about AQOCI:  
[www.aqoci.qc.ca](http://www.aqoci.qc.ca)



# PART

## **INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT:**

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND  
WOMEN'S RIGHTS





# OPENINGS AND OPPOSITIONS: GLOBAL TRENDS FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

■ Joanna Kerr

Director of Policy and Outreach, Oxfam Canada

I stand here as someone who has spent her whole career trying to influence international cooperation to better support the agendas of women's rights activists and organizations in the global South in order to promote and protect human rights, gender equality, and bring about social and economic justice for all. I've been a researcher, an activist, a practitioner and a donor.

With this perspective, I can definitively say how important this meeting is. When was the last time a group like this met for two days to tackle such an important agenda? Why has it taken us so long to do so? And what will be the implications for women and girls around the world if we don't leave this meeting space and change the nature of Canadian international cooperation?

While a major history-making moment is happening south of the border as we speak, I actually believe that history can be made here. It is not unimaginable for us to look three years back and recall the "Montreal Egalité" meeting when the tide turned and women's rights were squarely back on the agenda. Let it be so, and let us get to it!

We open this conference with a panel that sets out the context, the big picture. The goal is to paint a fast-changing landscape of international cooperation and how our efforts to promote the rights of women and girls worldwide are influenced by these global trends.

In order to do so, I will attempt to answer three questions:

1. The first is one I love to ask, and that is simply, "Where is the money for women's rights and gender equality?"
2. What current trends in relation to international cooperation are accelerators or inhibitors in relation to advancing our equality agenda?
3. Thirdly, "What is happening in international cooperation in relation to two key women's rights issues: violence against women and poverty?"

## 1. So let's start with money

As many of you know, I was involved with AWID for many years and that included an important initiative called *FundHer, Money Watch for Women's Rights*. This action research program set out to determine what the funding situation was for gender equality work worldwide. While policies and laws abound, where was the money for the implementation? Anecdotally, we knew that women's groups around the world were in survival mode, but what was the cause? Were governments not putting their money behind their promises? More importantly, could we influence both women's organizing strategies and donor organizations so that more funding could be leveraged?

The data from the research was startling. Of almost 1000 women's rights organizations surveyed in 2006<sup>1</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> Kerr, Joanna, 2007. *Financial Sustainability of Women's Movements Worldwide*, Association for Women's Rights in Development.

- Two thirds had annual budgets under USD 50,000;
- One third had budgets under USD 10,000;
- In 2005, 729 women's rights organizations had a collective income of only USD 76 million;
- Since 2000, over half were receiving less funding;
- Organizations said they needed to double budgets to get the work done – this reflected a vicious cycle with donors who think the groups were too small to get more.

Two years later, in 2008, AWID conducted the research again:

- Organizations had the same small budgets;
- In 2007, 705 organizations had income totaling 114 million (but the increased funds were going to the bigger organizations);
- Bilateral organizations and international NGOs were the largest funding sources respectively;
- The Canadian government (through CIDA and the embassy funds) were 12<sup>th</sup> amongst the donors, providing the most grants to women's rights groups; Oxfam International was 4<sup>th</sup>, Global Fund for Women was number 1.

## **2. What are the trends in funding sectors/ international cooperation that could be accelerators and inhibitors? What can explain this data?**

With respect to inhibitors, diminishing resources have been due to many causes, including:

- The depoliticization and 'evaporation' of gender equality priorities amongst bilateral funders through gender mainstreaming, one-sided approaches;
- New aid modalities were shifting to budget support (government to government) with support to civil society going down;

- The influence of conservative government policy agendas, e.g., here in Canada;
- gender and women's rights issues becoming so-called "passé";
- Foundations who find it easier and more efficient to give bigger grants to organizations that can absorb them.

Accelerators include:

- Institutional funders like INGOs and bilaterals are seeing the relevance of supporting women-focused initiatives and women's organizations (partly because of accepted failures of gender mainstreaming). As such more money is becoming available;
- Increasing presence and role of women's funds;
- Corporate giving is on the rise, especially amongst those working for 'social responsibility' offering huge potential to those who can navigate co-branding pitfalls;
- MDG funds (over 70 million Euros) and the leadership of the Dutch.

Other key trends:

Other important current trends to analyze and consider in this changing context include the importance given to "impact", the increasing role of networks, and the role of celebrities and corporate philanthropists<sup>2</sup>:

### **a) The drive for impact**

The drive for impact is a major growing trend on the agendas of many donors, and certainly a reflection of Canadian aid. While not a new phenomenon, there has been an intensification of focus on evaluation methodologies, methods to enhance impact and how best to learn from our aid efforts. For instance, a considerable

<sup>2</sup> Parts of this next section are drawn from analysis prepared by the author for Mama Cash.

amount of research has shown that grant making that allows grantees to have the most impact involves:

- making larger, longer term, unrestricted grants and providing general operating support;
- giving capacity-building grants and leveraging support from other funders;
- delivering fellowships for organizational leaders to explore innovation;
- offering grants as lines of credit, and/or
- convening individuals and groups with a common purpose across sectors to generate learning and collaboration<sup>3</sup>.

Diana Leat's new book *Just Change: Strategies for increased philanthropic impact*<sup>4</sup> illustrates that longer term change requires persistence and therefore organizations need to support accordingly.

The Centre for Effective Philanthropy has found that foundations improve their impact if they exemplify the characteristics that grantees most value in their funders, namely,

- interactions with donor staff that are fair, responsive and approachable;
- clearly shared goals and objectives of the donor organization with its grantees, and
- knowledge of the field, e.g., women's rights and women's movements globally.<sup>5</sup>

More importantly, according to David Bonbright of Keystone:

"An organization's relationships with its beneficiaries and other constituents is highly predictive of its effectiveness and impact"<sup>6</sup>.

What does this mean for us then? To better support women's rights in international cooperation we need to build in systems of

**When was the last time a group like this met for two days to tackle such an important agenda? Why has it taken us so long to do so?**

learning where we share our learning and apply them into programming. Secondly, relationships matter. How we build relationships between grantees and donors and amongst partners has a direct and positive relationship on the impact of the work.

## **b) The increasing role of networks**

In the pursuit of impact, another major trend found increasingly amongst funding organizations and non-profits is the use of networks. Donors and NGOs are using networks to have more leverage and achieve more impact to support learning amongst themselves and strengthen their grantees through networking methods, among other things. And because of the rise of social networking, knowledge of how networks work best is becoming more important<sup>7</sup>.

In fact, according to a recent Stanford Social Innovation Review,

"[...] networked non-profits are some of the most effective non-profits in the world. They are different from traditional non-profits in that they cast their gazes externally rather than internally. They put their mission first and their organization second. They govern through trust rather than control. And they cooperate as equal nodes in a constellation of actors rather than relying on a central hub to command with top-down tactics<sup>8</sup>."

<sup>3</sup> Clohesy, Stephanie, 2008. "Re-shaping Social Change Philanthropy: Twelve Issues", Women's Funding Network.

<sup>4</sup> Leat, Diana, 2008. *Just Change: Strategies for increased philanthropic impact*, Association of Charitable Foundations in London

<sup>5</sup> The Centre for Effective Philanthropy, 2006. In *Search of Impact: Practices and Perception in Foundations' Provision of Program and Operating Grants to Nonprofits*. Based on a major study and almost 20,000 grantee surveys of 163 US-based Foundations.

<sup>6</sup> Bonbright, David, 2007. "Making social investment decisions: what do we need to know" in *Alliance*, Volume 12, Number 4, December 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Clohesy, Stephanie, 2008. "Re-shaping Social Change Philanthropy: Twelve Issues", Women's Funding Network.

What does this mean for us? The bottom-line is that we need to create and reinforce networks here in Canada and around the world for gender equality. That means building them, funding them, and using them more effectively.

### c) Celebritization

Another major trend that has taken off in the last decade is celebrity engagement with “Third world causes”. Part marketing strategy, part self-enlightenment the Pitt-Jolie, Madonna, Oprah, Bono and Keyes gang are bringing these issues into the mainstream.

While we do need ambassadors to open doors and spotlight the gross injustices in the world today for everyone, there are risks in associating too closely with these mainstream approaches in that, most of them, quite simply are too shallow. In her recent editorial, Women in Development Europe chair Wendy Harcourt opines that:

“There will be no real change if we fail to be rigorously honest about the vastly different contributions of cultures and political economies made by Amartya Sen and Angelina Jolie, by Bill Gates and Ban Ki-Moon. We are living in a world that rewards Al Gore with the Nobel Peace Prize alongside the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Most people will remember the prize went to Al Gore. But critical public engagement in the serious and important work of the IPCC is going to make the difference<sup>9</sup>.”

What *this* means is that we need to recognize that there are more players, with more popular approaches to making change happen. We need to embrace the fact that women’s rights are part of their messaging, but we have to work harder to show that there are, unfortunately, no magic bullets.

## 3. Thirdly, what is happening to international cooperation in relation to

## some key women’s rights issues, for instance, violence against women and poverty?

### a) Violence against women

It seems all the big funders want to fund something on violence against women these days and everyone wants to get behind big campaigns on the issue (Oxfam, Amnesty, UNIFEM, etc). Meanwhile, women’s groups around the world continue to work on a multiplicity of strategies, e.g., building community commitment through outreach and public education, media campaigns, forging partnerships with the police and judiciary and the development of public and institutional support through research and advocacy for legal reform. What international cooperation needs to recognize is that the causes of violence need to be given the funding and attention; violence prevention is about ending discrimination and poverty, about building healthy communities and environments. Unfortunately, because of so much attention on sexual violence vast amounts of funding is going into work in this area without addressing the continuum of violence. We know that there is more violence against women in Rwanda now than before the genocide. Our work in this area therefore has to be much more holistic.

### b) Poverty/economic empowerment

As someone who has been working on gender and poverty issues at the macro and micro level since the early nineties, it is in regard to this focus area that I am the most disillusioned. Institute of Development Studies’ Rosalind Eyben just wrote an article that confirms this trend: “the shift of development policy and discourse away from gender equality and towards market-led growth is a regression that poses new challenges”<sup>10</sup>. The World Bank

<sup>8</sup> Wei-Skillern, Jan and Marciano, Sonia, 2008. “The Networked non-profit”, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Spring 2008

<sup>9</sup> Harcourt, Wendy, 2008. “In hot water: the ecological politics of development” *Development*, March 2008

and many powerful governments have gone back to promoting gender equality “as smart economics”. By doing so, they embolden every microfinance organization who sees all women as entrepreneurs and loan payers and policy makers to instrumentalize women as engines of growth. In the end, these strategies are not tackling the causes of women’s poverty, nor are they supporting women’s labour rights (of which organizing tends to be some of the most underfunded work), nor are they addressing the extremely serious effects of migration. Sadly, there are too few women’s organizations working on these issues. Many of them got de-funded in the heyday of gender mainstreaming, and others have just buckled as a result of weak capacity. Women’s economic justice strategies are not income-generation activities, nor microcredit, though these are essential interim measures in some cases. In this moment, when the financial and economic crisis looms large, there is a serious vacuum of leadership in this area. It is therefore essential to invest in new ways of thinking and bold strategies.

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**Institutional funders like INGOs and bilaterals are seeing the relevance of supporting women-focused initiatives and women’s organizations (partly because of accepted failures of gender mainstreaming).**

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### **Conclusion:**

To quickly conclude, let our work here over the next days and months ahead be grounded in a solid analysis of trends and the global context. Let us think about how to impact differently. Most importantly, let us see the urgency of our mission: women’s rights are critical for ending poverty, creating peace, even stopping climate change. Let this be the moment we revitalize our movement.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/making-women-work-for-development-again>

# GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN CANADIAN COOPERATION: CONTEXTUAL CONCERNS

■ L. Muthoni Wanyeki

Executive Director, Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC)

I was asked to speak about the regional and international context within which work on gender equality and women's rights is taking place and the challenges and opportunities for that work. Before I go on to what I chose to say, a small caveat. I used to work for a pan-African women's rights network and obviously remain connected to feminist organizing on the continent. But now I work for a national human rights organization. So what I will say is less from direct day to day involvement in the women's rights movement in the past, but more from the experiences of human rights and women's rights coalitions, particularly in two recent crisis situations: last year, in my own country, Kenya, and in Zimbabwe (where the crisis is on going). What those crises throws up in terms of women's rights organizing is real reversals, not just in respect of development financing, but also with respect to agendas for transformative change.

Another dilemma that I'm faced with in speaking today is that this audience is geared towards changing Canadian international cooperation. There are certain things that do need to be said with respect to the question of money for women's rights and gender equality. But I want to address also what is an internal conversation for women's right practitioners, and a delicate one to have between the north and the south about southern organizing. However, I'm sure some dilemmas are reflected here also. So it's an inside/outside conversation.

The just concluded five year review of the International Aid Effectiveness Agenda (IAEA) and the on-going Financing for Development

(FfD) process, has predominantly focused on the supply side of development financing with respect to gender equality and women's rights. And, of course, from both of these processes, the review of Paris and the return to Ffd, we've seen much constructive critique of how new aid modalities are affecting gender equality and women's rights work everywhere. Some of this critique has to do with what budget support means and how hard it is to track money going to gender equality and women's rights within government. It has to do with programme based approaches and what they mean, particularly for small women's organizations. But it also has to do with what it means for bigger women's organizations, which have more of an advocacy agenda, as opposed to a service provision agenda. Bringing them into a programme based approach is difficult. In some sectors, we know it's easy for states to work with civil society and women's movements. In other sectors, like the most important framework ones (economics and governance), however, it's obviously harder.

We are also aware of all the reminders coming particularly from the return to FFD of all the issues the Paris Agenda does not address, for example, the persistent yet dropped off question of debt occasioned by bi/multilateral lending, the complexities and contradictions posed by conditionalities, the impediments to concluding the Doha round of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the problems of emerging investment and trade laws and policies from the international level

down. That's all coming back into focus as we move into discussions on FFD. And all of those concerns have specific gender quality and women's rights concerns as well.

But what I want to focus here is on the demand side—as concerns both development financing and the work towards for gender equality and women's rights. I cannot speak for the global south. There are specific development financing issues in Asia and Latin America that are distinct from those in Africa. Especially, if we are looking at where the large bi/multilaterals are choosing to put their money.

Although some of what I say about development financing will have some resonance in those regions, and certainly the gender equality and women's rights concerns are shared, not all of what I'll say is applicable across the board. I'm talking to the African context and, in doing so, I want to return to where we all were at the start of this millennium.

Critical assumptions were made about Africa at the start of this millennium. We had the sense that we had achieved our so-called 'second liberation.' Our movements towards both political pluralism and the liberalization of our national economies was well underway. Of course the latter was challenged by women's movements. But there was a sense that increased political openness was yielding results, including the bringing into power of new leadership in several African countries in every sub region. And this brought about a new confidence and sense of legitimacy, enabling more equal negotiations with suppliers of development financing. This resulted a new deal for Africa, between this new leadership and key suppliers of development financing - particularly those represented within the Group of Eight (G8). The exchange was good governance from us, for substantive increases in development

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**Tools for gender analysis and mainstreaming were not only misunderstood and badly applied, but also consciously de-politicised in a manner that ensured their original women's rights intent would be lost.**

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financing from them. Witness agreements from the Kananaskis summit here on-the G8's Action Plan for Africa and the Commission for Africa Report being key in that respect. This new deal was reflected outside of the G8, in related United Nations (UN) processes and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) processes; with one consequence being the shift of development financing back to the African state from the externally supported civil society organizations, including women's organizations, addressing democracy, governance and human rights that had emerged through the 1990s.

It was from this emergent civil society (autonomous in the sense of being autonomous from the African state, not necessarily from external support) that we had seen the bulk of new demands around democracy and human rights rather than presenting human and women's rights as basic issues of need.

Work on gender equality and women's rights had also, through the Beijing process and its five year review, shifted back to the African state with the advent of gender analysis and mainstreaming as a strategy initially posed to advance women's rights.

Both of these shifts—the shift back to the African state in term of development financing and the shift towards gender analysis mainstreaming posed dilemmas:

- on the one hand, the women movements in Africa has always, like the rest of civil society, advocated for the return of strong (developmental) states, which the shift of back to the state development financing potentially enabled;
- on the other hand, as the Paris process unfolded on the ground, it was clear that the newly democratic states, without an history of long term cooperation with civil society based on constructive criticism, were only capable of working constructively with civil society on issues and within sectors that were not controversial and where civil society could demonstrate added value in terms of service delivery. For instance, if you are working on HIV and you want to do rollout of ARVs, that's fine; if you are working on democracy and you want to raise questions about fundamental reforms and you're not providing legal aid, which is a service, it's more difficult for the African state to engage with you and for you to fit into the programme based approaches being put in place on the ground.

Similarly, while there was no contestation about the fact that the African state has to assume responsibility for movement on gender equality and women's rights, it become clear that the gender machineries put in place to move this agenda forward lacked influence, power, financial and human resources to do so. Even where there were entire ministries dedicated to movement, the capacity of those ministries to cut across every other ministry and every sector did not exist in practice. In addition, tools for gender analysis and mainstreaming were not only misunderstood and badly applied, but also consciously de-politicised in a manner that ensured their original women's rights intent would be lost. It degenerated into a fuzzy discussion with no real sense of content should mean, particularly in some of the most important sectors: again, like the economy.

So there are consequences on both fronts:

- Development financing and the women's movement and what it is trying to do.

First, in respect of development financing, it has been difficult, if not impossible, to get money where reforms are most needed (again in the area of the economy and fundamental democratic transformation).

Second, with respect to gender equality and women's rights, we've seen all kind of consequences, some which are not necessarily bad but again amount to unrealized potential. I'm talking here about the emergence of men for gender equality and masculinities work-potentially helpful but, in practice, focused on 'helping' women's movements rather than having the kind of internal discussions needed about masculinities that would be transformative.

Meanwhile, returning to assumptions about where we were as Africa, we had not anticipated, as this last year showed, the reversals that we've seen on the demand side—both with respect to political pluralism and on the economic front.

For funders, particularly bi/multilaterals that find themselves locked into longer term programme based approaches, with African states that are now fast retreating on gains, the question is what to do.

How do you get out and what do you need to put in place when you are committed to new aid modalities? You want to work with the African state, but the African state is proving itself impossible to work with.

Just to go through some of those reversals to remind us just how grave the situation is. The list is long, fortunately halted by the conduct of Ghana's recent elections:

- We saw in Ethiopia, following their elections, mass arrests of media and civil society people. They've just passed a bill, which will have the effect of outlawing almost all independent civil society organizations, including some of the strongest women's rights organizations because they are externally funded.
- In Uganda, we saw the successful move for a third term for the president (actually an unlimited term). And we've seen how little women's representation in Uganda politically meant in terms of being able to hold the line against this kind of retreat.
- In Nigeria, fortunately the effort for a third term failed but there've been electoral petitions at every level, from the governor to the president and issues of politicized identity, particularly in the north and in the delta regions.
- In Kenya, where I'm from, we saw fraudulent elections, unprecedented violence, and a paralysis within the women's movement in terms of engaging with the mediation process on the reforms being demanded, except with respect to service provision for the sexual violence that happened in the course of generalized violence.
- In Zimbabwe, fraudulent elections, and unconcluded mediation, abductions of civil society workers including Jestina Mokoko, a woman in the peace movement and three of her colleagues. She reappeared last week and finally was brought to court.
- In South Africa, the president to be is back in court on corruption charges.
- In Guinea, we've seen a coup supported by Senegal, which was one of the 'new leaders' of the African continent.
- We've seen the failure of peace processes everywhere, including in the Democratic

**How do you get out and what do you need to put in place when you are committed to new aid modalities? You want to work with the African state, but the African state is proving itself impossible to work with.**

Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Somalia, with gross and widespread violence against women in the DRC, and the dilemmas posed in Somalia by politicized identities (fundamentalisms).

It is not the rosy picture we thought we had painted in the 1990s.

All of these examples demonstrate, in terms of the agenda for women's rights, the limitations of focusing on women's political participation primarily in quantitative terms—which, although necessary in a demographic sense, is simply not sufficient with respect to crafting and moving towards democratic restoration.

That is something we need to focus on at this meeting—how do we help women in the areas and regions we work build common agendas, feminist agendas for democratic transformation.

We've seen reversals on the economic front the recent food and fuel crises, which I won't go in to as there are panels dealing with that later on.

But I will say again that the response from the African state has been problematic. The immediate response is that we need to do something for the poor. We will return to subsidies, but in incoherent ways in terms of the overall economic direction that the African state says it is committed to. These new subsidies come with new modalities outside the reach of the ever more dense layers of anti-corruption legislation and policies (for example,

Kenya, in response to the food and fuel crises, re-introduced subsidies, precipitating two new grand corruption scandals.) Yet, there is still a refusal to recognize we need to engage in changing economic fundamentals—addressing underlying monetary and fiscal policies—or even recognizing they have an impact on being able to sustainably address these crises. Addressing those economic crises is not just about increased allocations—and thinking that is the case has been a key weakness of gender budgeting efforts as well.

We've also seen, for women, a revival of micro credit as a strategy from major national and international credit providers. The position of the woman's movement has always been that micro credit can be important to improve individual women's earnings and livelihood possibilities but it is insufficient, on its own, to shift access and control issues at the household level or to re-distribute nationally.

Where do we go from here ?! On the supply side, if we persist with delivery of development financing through the African state, what are the conditions to ensure that controversial issues and sectors are dealt with? We could use special civil

society baskets, women's rights baskets and so on. But we need to re-think what we do with gender machineries and mechanisms for gender mainstreaming for women's rights in all sectors. We need to retain that focus on women's rights and look at how we fund/support women's political participation beyond numbers. We need to insist that, if we are going to work on men for gender equality or masculinities that work be transformative with respect to women's rights. We need to work on democratic reform, we need to work on the economy (here I'm talking about engaging macro economic frameworks and what should be happening with them at this point in time). We need to also interrogate the implication of new players in development financing: China, India and the Gulf states.

On the demand side, we need to return to a focus on democracy and to a fundamental interrogation (from the international to the national level) of the current economic crisis and what it means for our women's rights agenda.



# AID EFFECTIVENESS IN THE WAKE OF A GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PROMOTION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

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## Introduction

This presentation attempts to look at the aid effectiveness agenda and the challenges for the women's movement, particularly within the context of the current economic crisis and its implications for the promotion of women's rights generally and, more specifically, in Africa.

## Gender equality implications in the new modalities for aid

Similar to other global economic documents, before the Accra High Level Forum III, there was hardly anything in the Paris Declaration which fundamentally addressed the gendered nature of poverty or growth. Many gender activists therefore described the document as gender-blind, evident from a review of the principles of the Paris Declaration. In the area of harmonization for example, three gender gaps were noted:

- If national priorities were contested in the face of the different interests of different donors, it could lead to increased marginalization of gender and social equality concerns,
- The political will expressed for public sector reform does not have a corresponding gender equality commitment as a goal for development,
- There is concrete evidence that there have been decreasing resources for gender

equality and women's rights work in actual budgetary allocations as it is obvious in the case of the national machinery on women in Ghana.

On the principle of country ownership, women's voices and perspectives have largely been excluded at both national and international agendas in the development of policies and processes funded by aid. There were also inadequate preparatory processes for defining the priorities for the national budget in a way that fully included women's needs and concerns.

The alignment pillar has also failed to work to ensure that women's rights priorities are fully integrated into national priorities.

The principle of mutual accountability is working against gender equality outcomes as no accountability frameworks have been developed around the clear commitments in CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Finally, given that the primary focus for aid effectiveness has been on the institutional procedures of disbursement and accounting and not on results or impacts, it has been difficult for women's rights advocates to demand accountability from their governments.

## The Financing for Development Agenda of the UN

Almost concurrent with the Paris Declaration and the Aid Effectiveness agenda has been the UN processes of promoting development. In

March 2002, the United Nations developed the Monterrey Consensus which is seen as one of the most comprehensive and authoritative statements of development principles to which both developed and developing countries have agreed to. The six thematic areas are: domestic resource mobilization, private capital flows, trade, aid, debts and international systemic issues. The first high-level intergovernmental review of the entire Monterrey Consensus was held from November 29 to December 2, 2008 in Doha, Qatar.

Although the Monterrey conference emerged out of a financial crisis in Asia and Latin America in the 1990's, it was also guided by a perceived crisis in development and the need to examine the shortfall in resources that countries need in order to achieve internationally agreed development goals including: the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the reduction of the number of people living in extreme poverty by half by 2015, improved social conditions such as health and education, employment, raise living standards, support for gender equality and women's empowerment, and the protection of the environment. To this end, many civil society organizations argue against strengthening the power of donor countries and institutions and rather call for the establishment of a new financial architecture that is inclusive, participatory and democratically accountable to citizens under the leadership of the UN. They further call for institutions and mechanisms that can utilize international human rights norms and treaties to address issues of debt, harmful policy conditionalities and address the root causes of human distress, gender inequality and underdevelopment.

However, most countries from the North have failed to engage actively in a high-level, comprehensive debate on financing for development —as it was evident in the review conference in Doha in November last year, where many countries reportedly failed to send their heads of State.

## Financial crisis and impacts

It is against this background that civil society groups have been dismayed by the attitude of the global community to the financial crisis. The swift and massive response of governments of the richest countries to bail out banks and private financial institutions with more than three trillion US dollars of public guarantees and funds contrasts sharply with their failure to respond directly and concretely to the unacceptably high levels of poverty, marginalization and discrimination experienced by citizens especially in poor countries particularly in Africa.

## Movement building and demands from women's groups

The important role that civil society organizations have played in the Paris Declaration and Aid Effectiveness processes has been quite significantly pointing to the critical relevance of movement building as part of how change is possible and can happen. Thus, the High Level Forum (HLF3) held in Accra, Ghana from September 2-4, 2008 became the first opportunity for donors, partner countries and civil society organizations (CSOs) to work together to review the progress made on the goals of the Paris Declaration and to agree on a new "agenda for action". Consequently there were processes organized by different CSOs to ensure that their perspectives, experiences and proposals were informing and influencing the implementation of the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness.

In all of these processes, the articulation of the issues of women's rights organizations and networks was minimal. There was also limited knowledge among women's rights organizations on the Aid Effectiveness agenda that would have enabled them to actively engage in the processes. The Network for

Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT) therefore positioned itself strategically and worked with international women's rights groups such as AWID, IGTN, DAWN, WIDE and FEMNET to host an International Women's Forum in Accra on August 30, 2008. Over 200 women's rights organizations, gender advocates and experts from all regions of the world attended the Accra International Women's Forum to discuss the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. At the end of the meeting, a statement was issued with a 14-point recommendation to donors and governments to commit to gender equality and incorporate concrete text in the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA). Women at this forum also developed alternative set of indicators for monitoring progress towards the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment in the Aid Effectiveness agenda. This investment yielded results because women were also able to include gender sensitive language in both the CSO statement and the AAA and to actively participate both in the CSO parallel event of August 31 - September 1, 2008, as well as in the HLF3 (September 2-4, 2008), and engage in the planning and negotiation processes.

This consistency of women's networks and other civil society actors in the engaging with policy processes has also featured prominently in the Financing for Development review process to ensure that gaps in the Monterrey Consensus are addressed to affirm commitments to women's rights and gender equality. Civil society groups have had to work hard to prevent the erosion of the significance of the FfD and the UN in global economic governance. While acknowledging gender responsive language in the Doha Declaration 2008, the women's groups' statement noted the "primacy of the United Nations as the site for an open and conclusive multi-stakeholder process providing institutional spaces for

**Similar to other global economic documents, before the Accra High Level Forum III, there was hardly anything in the Paris Declaration which fundamentally addressed the gendered nature of poverty or growth.**

women's rights organizations and gender equality advocates in the follow-up to the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus".

### **The way forward**

The way forward is to promote an international agenda for gender-responsive development through enhancing participation in critical decision-making by using consultative processes that involve all actors such as governments, civil society, women's rights groups and development partners. In conclusion, aid effectiveness must relate to development effectiveness. We need to continue making the links between international agreements, national realities and the promotion of gender equality. We should also build on our experience of engaging with the Aid Effectiveness and FfD processes, by examining the extent to which donors and governments are complying with internationally agreed commitments and provide invaluable insights about donor-state relationships. By deliberating more critically on issues of national sovereignty, rights, entitlements and responsibilities of citizens and the critical role of the women's movement in advancing gender equality causes, we would be enhancing social well-being, democratic governance and gender justice.



**PART**

**WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER  
EQUALITY IN CANADIAN  
COOPERATION**





# MAKING GENDER EQUALITY A CROSS-CUTTING DIMENSION OF CANADIAN AID EFFORTS: WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO SUCCEED?

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## Introduction

Throughout the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) four decades, the issues of gender equality and women's autonomy have gained importance in the agency's priorities as well as in their strategies to reduce poverty. The culminating point was in 1999, with the adoption of gender equality as a transversal theme that must be applied in all Canadian aid projects and programmes. In this context, my presentation aims to respond to the following questions:

1. How can we assess the implementation of CIDA's policy in terms of gender equality?
2. Do the results of CIDA aid meet their strategic commitment to gender equality?
3. What impact does Canadian aid have on the lives of women in developing countries?
4. How is Canadian aid faithful to the framework of the group action adopted during the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 and to the Millennium Development Goals?

An analysis of CIDA projects and programmes using gender markers, which are supported by testimonies and gathered from different participants, as well as the examination of sample projects, sheds light on the limitations encountered by the gender integration strategy into development projects. The mitigated

assessment demonstrates the need to evaluate the progress made by Canadian cooperation activities in order to transform this policy of equality into a practice that will give rise to significant changes in the lives of women and girls in recipient countries.

## 1. What is the current status of gender Issues in Canadian aid programmes?

Following the first United Nations Conference on Women in 1975, which highlighted the absence of women in development models, CIDA financed projects designed to meet women's needs in terms of income, healthcare, and education (CIDA, 1986)<sup>11</sup>. These relatively low-cost projects were run mostly by NGOs. During the Third World Conference on Women in 1985, activist feminists from developing countries argued for an approach based on the relations between men and women. This "Gender and Development" approach resulted in the obligation of Canadian aid programmes to allocate specific funding to tackle the obstacles preventing women from benefiting from development projects. As a result, the budget of the bilateral programme destined to tackle gender issues grew from 1.5% in 1986 to 15% in 1995 (CIDA, 1998)<sup>12</sup>. The amount of funding dedicated to gender equity by CIDA needs to be highlighted here, as it greatly exceeded the funding allocated to this issue by the majority of donor agencies. In 1995, the Beijing Conference's Action Platform defended the principle of gender equality as a development goal. After consulting women's groups and gender specialists, CIDA

<sup>11</sup> CIDA, 1986. *Les femmes dans le développement. Plan d'action de l'ACDI, Hull, ACDI*, 11 p.

<sup>12</sup> CIDA, 1998. *Women in Development and Gender Equity, 1992-1995. Performance Review Report, Hull, ACDI, Direction Examen du rendement*, 1998, 26 p.

adopted a policy in 1999 that aimed for the integration of gender equality in all Canadian Aid Programmes (CIDA, 1999)<sup>13</sup>.

## 2. From theory to practice in Canadian aid programmes

Ten years later, research was needed to see if the practices of Canadian Aid Programmes met the standards of the adopted gender equality policy. With the help of a gender marker defined by the OECD and used by CIDA, I created a compilation of Canadian projects from the OECD database<sup>14</sup>. According to this marker, each project must indicate during planning if gender equality is:

- i) its main objective
- ii) one of the important objectives
- iii) not included in the objectives

This classification also allows the compilation of projects that are not submitted to the marker identification (i.e., that have not been verified). The database shows that more than half of Canadian projects do not use the marker, and 60% of the projects that included gender equality as one of their objectives belonged to the social sector (education, health, water). Also, while projects in sectors tied to the economy constitute one third of bilateral aid and focus on the largest investments, only a small number of them indicate equality as one of their important objectives. For example, only 14% of agricultural projects include gender equality as one of their main objectives. Some economic sub-sectors are even firmly impervious to the equality dimension (communications, commerce and tourism, actions related to debt). In fact, the only notable exception is the sub-sector of microfinance, where efforts have been more systematic. The analysis of the projects according

to the gender marker highlights the weak integration of gender equality issues into projects that are not directly connected to the Millennium Development Goals. Finally, the report indicates that an integrated approach to gender is better applied and controlled in education and reproductive health projects than in economic, agricultural or environmental projects in all OECD member countries (OECD, 2008, 2007)<sup>15</sup>.

According to testimony acquired by gender specialists involved in Canadian aid programming, the main institutional obstacles are the lack of real political will (demonstrated by the limited amount of resources allocated), and the lack of accountability and/or recognition regarding the results obtained, to name only a few<sup>16</sup>.

## 3. Gender integration practice: An invisible process

Gender equality as a transversal theme in Canadian projects and programmes has proven to be an invisible process. Under the pretext that gender is integrated into all activities, project implementation plans do not provide a further breakdown of the human and financial resources allotted to them. This loss of information is not compensated by the identification of the changes and impacts generated by the projects on the lives of women and girls. The developmental results regarding gender equality are often somewhat hidden or poorly documented in Canadian project evaluation reports. This is due to the fact that often, only operational results are considered in the evaluations (i.e., describing the activities performed: ex.

<sup>13</sup> CIDA, 1999. *Politique de l'ACDI en matière d'égalité entre les sexes*, Hull, CIDA, 1999, 30 p.

<sup>14</sup> This database contains the information annually transmitted by members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD concerning their commitments to Public Development Aid. The members of DAC use the same gender marker to identify the projects that aim for gender equality. The DAC database allows the refinement of the statistical analysis at the level of each donor member.

<sup>15</sup> OECD, 2007. *Égalité des genres et la mise en œuvre de l'aide*, Paris, OECD, Development Assistance Committee, 74 p.

OECD, 2008. *Aide à l'appui de l'égalité homme-femme et de l'autonomisation des femmes*, Paris, OECD, Development Assistance Committee.

<sup>16</sup> The elaboration of a guide on the evaluation of the results indicates that CIDA Gender Equality Division is aware of the problem: *Égalité entre les sexes. Cadre d'évaluation des résultats de l'ACDI*, Gatineau, CIDA, Direction de l'égalité entre les sexes, 2005, 21 p.

the number of women that participated in literacy training, sessions held in the zone of the project on women's rights). Since data relating to gender were not generally collected with the intention of following the progress made during the interventions, it is not possible to know once a project is completed whether the expected changes and impacts relating to the fixed objectives even took place. Also, in certain intervention sectors, it is very difficult to define and measure the results in gender equality, as the pertinent indicators often take time to generate results that provoke real change in terms of gender equality. The short average length of Canadian projects only increases this difficulty.

Studying the impact of Canadian aid on the lives of women in developing countries raises the question of whether the interventions are sustainable and durable (or the fragility of the impact). For example, actions intending to encourage women's participation as candidates in elections have yielded interesting results, but once the women are elected, they are not given the support that is needed in order for them to understand the issues, make an impact, and not be sent back to their homes for incompetence. Coherence and continuity are often lacking in the actions that are undertaken, which affects their longevity. Moreover, as CIDA only rarely performs impact studies several years after the initial outcomes, it is difficult to know if the positive results obtained during an intervention are still visible five or six years later. For example, are women still present and active on water supply committees and in cooperative structures? Have their informal activities led to the creation of businesses? Such information would indicate if there was a positive, real, and possibly lasting change.

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**The analysis of the projects according to the gender marker highlights the weak integration of gender equality issues into projects that are not directly connected to the Millennium Development Goals.**

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As a general rule, there are not enough resources available to strengthen the benefits acquired and to follow up once the CIDA project has ended. Quite often, once the project is finished, the focus shifts to other things, in other domains, in other communities.

As a result, inadequate follow-up of progress and reporting of gender equality in projects and the absence of strict accountability mechanisms to obtain developmental results explains, for the most part, why the announced commitments are not matched by the gender equality strategies put into place by the Canadian Aid Programme. Furthermore, the emphasis placed on governance, HIV/AIDS and the environment as transversal themes that must be included in all bilateral projects may have contributed to gender issues being relegated to the background.

#### **4. How can gender reclaim its importance in development issues?**

One way to bring the transversal treatment of gender in Canadian Aid Programmes to the forefront and to spur decision-makers and practitioners to be in tune with the discourses of gender equity would be to take up the evaluation challenge.

### a) The evaluation challenge

A follow-up system adapted to each project would allow the documentation of the progress made in terms of gender equality and use sex-specific indicators as tools in decision-making during the project. This would help development agencies, feminist organizations and civil society organizations (CSOs) to oversee the progress accomplished following their actions as well as to strengthen their own programmes. In fact, a better understanding of the results obtained and a demonstration of the concreteness and durability of the projects' effects on the lives of women and girls would also enable donors to appreciate the merits of investing in gender equality. Yet development agencies must also recognize that gender integration has costs and therefore they should allocate the necessary resources to study the impact – during the post-project phase – in order to verify that the results obtained during the project are lasting.

### b) Refocus the debate on accountability and the women's rights agenda

The obligation of decision-makers and participants to account for the results of gender equality in each project will help prevent any intervening sectors (economic or governance projects) from being impervious to gender equality. This obligation must apply to multilateral aid as well. CIDA is directly involved in the follow-up of projects bilaterally funded: it can demand that the partner or agency provide progress reports in order to evaluate the progress in relation to the expected results. With multilateral financing, CIDA does not have the right to oversee the planning and organization of the projects run by multilateral agencies (such as UNFPA, FEM, and UNICEF). However, it can demand and ensure that the agencies provide progress reports and

are accountable for the integration of gender equality.

In the spirit of the Beijing Action Plan (1995), the integration of gender equality in all projects goes hand in hand with support for needs specific to women. It is not a matter of choosing between integrated or specific programming. Yet in practice, confusion reigns. This is made apparent by the diminution of funding allocated to women's organizations. Since the adoption of integrated programming, there are fewer projects designated specifically for women in the Canadian Aid Programme.

The Gender Funds are often cited as an example in CIDA documents:

“the [CIDA] Funds for the promotion of gender equality in Colombia has allowed the role of women in decision-making to grow by reinforcing the abilities of the 1,150 women elected to regional, municipal, and local office through training on equality issues, public administration, and civic education” (CIDA, 2006: 54)<sup>17</sup>.

Despite their effectiveness and their proven good practices, these projects continue to receive limited funding. The Gender Funds of the Andes Region (Colombia, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Peru) have relatively small budgets (from around \$50,000 to \$100,000), while projects that integrate the gender equality aspect have funding that total millions of dollars.

Although gender integration takes an interest in the impact of projects and programmes on the lives of women and the strategic interests of women, it seems that efforts are mostly oriented towards the needs of women and there is little proof or indication that

<sup>17</sup> CIDA, 2006. *Rapport sur le rendement 2005*, Gatineau, ACDI, 2006, 141 p.

Canadian Aid activities have contributed in a lasting manner to gender equality in recipient countries.

### **Conclusion: What can we learn from the Canadian aid programmes?**

CIDA's commitment in terms of policy and strategy for gender equality has been concrete. Since 1984, CIDA has appeared to be proactive in the development of analysis tools and employee training. However, the agency presents a rather weak assessment of its capacity to translate its commitments into actions that result in lasting changes in the recipient countries. In practice, the agency is inconsistent – gender integration is not applied in every sector – and the impact of its actions is more or less evaluated or known. Many other development agencies,

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**Since the adoption of integrated programming, there are fewer projects designated specifically for women in the Canadian Aid Programme.**

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such as those from the Nordic countries, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (SIDA, 2002; Reisen, 2005; NORAD, 2006; DFID, 2006)<sup>18</sup> have a similar problem in that their actions and results regarding gender equality do not match the commitments they have made in the past ten years.

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<sup>18</sup> SIDA, 2002. *Mainstreaming Gender Equality. SIDA's Support for the Promotion of Gender Equality in Partner Countries*, Stockholm, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, *SIDA Studies in Evaluation*, 144 p.

DFID, 2006. *Evaluation of DFID's Policy and Practice in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*. UK, London, Department for International Development, Working Paper no 10, 52 p.

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# GENDER EQUALITY IN CANADIAN COOPERATION: A MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY WHOSE TIME HAS COME

■ Rita Soares Pinto

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« In no area of international development is the gap between stated intentions and operational reality as wide as it is in the promotion of equality between women and men<sup>19</sup>. »

**T**o what extent have Canadian international cooperation stakeholders made good on their commitment to gender equality? How can we strengthen this commitment and renew our practices in such a way that they more effectively work to reduce gender inequality and advance the cause of women's rights? These are the central questions that guided my research under a fellowship from the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, and they are equally central to the theme of this conference.

My discussion of these questions in this paper focuses on two Canadian international cooperation actors: on the one hand, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), with specific reference to the challenges facing the agency in the new context of aid effectiveness; and on the other, the civil society organizations (CSO) of Québec and Canada. Following this discussion, I present the idea of strengthening mutual responsibility among these actors as an option for catalyzing a sorely needed renewal of commitment to gender equality in Canadian international cooperation.

## 1. CIDA's commitment to gender equality in the context of aid effectiveness

While CIDA's Policy on Gender Equality is promising on paper, its implementation across

the agency's different programs, sectors, and partnerships has been uneven. Sustained concern for gender considerations is still strongly linked to individual commitment, and there is a phenomenon of "evaporation" whereby policies tend to fade away between adoption and implementation. The main reasons for this phenomenon of evaporation include insufficiently strong political will, the lack of a common vision of gender equality, insufficient human and financial resources, and an inadequate system of accountability. These factors (which may be considered internal) are exacerbated in the prevailing context of aid effectiveness.

The aid effectiveness agenda is governed by the principles of local ownership, alignment with poverty reduction strategies, and harmonization of donor country practices and policies.<sup>20</sup> In keeping with these principles, there has been a major transformation in the way that CIDA aid is delivered to recipient countries. It has moved from a project-based development approach to a program-based approach that more closely ties donor funding to national government planning. This is accomplished by new mechanisms such as sector budget support and general budget support.

<sup>19</sup> UNDP, 2004. *Transforming the Mainstream*, p. 3. In Tiessen, 2005. *What's new about gender mainstreaming ? Three decades of Policy Creation and Development Strategies. Canadian Journal of Development Studies. Volume XXVI, Special issue*, p. 705.

<sup>20</sup> Paris Declaration, 2005.

In this new context, the application of CIDA's Policy on Gender Equality comes up against the aid effectiveness agenda in several ways. I would like to emphasize three main points here:

First, aid is expected and indeed required to have visible results. One of the four components of the Canadian aid effectiveness program is "clear accountability for results"<sup>21</sup>; that is, the emphasis is increasingly being placed on visible, short-term results that are readily demonstrable to the Canadian taxpayer. This emphasis is incompatible with actions designed to bring about a genuine transformation of gender relations, which are, by their very nature, long-term and complex. Moreover, it reinforces a trend towards depoliticizing development work and its intended results.

Secondly, gender equality has been replaced as a priority by a new sectoral focus that has led to a decrease in the number of sectors targeted per country and to heightened competition between sectors. This situation has been misinterpreted – and I stress the word – by certain people, to mean a narrowing of gender equality specific project possibilities. This pattern was further reinforced by a change in the status of gender equality at CIDA: whereas before 2005 it had a dual status as a priority and a cross-cutting theme, as of 2005, it is no longer a priority, only a cross-cutting theme.<sup>22</sup>

Thirdly, in the new aid framework, there has been a trend towards the "evaporation" and weakening of gender equality policy. In a context where the principles of local ownership and alignment are dominant, CIDA staff feels caught between these principles and their attempts to implement the Policy on Gender Equality. The absence of a common vision of the policy's status within CIDA is thus exacerbated, the direct result being a weakening of the policy, which is increasingly being considered optional.

**The emphasis is increasingly being placed on visible, short-term results that are readily demonstrable to the Canadian taxpayer. This emphasis is incompatible with actions designed to bring about a genuine transformation of gender relations, which are, by their very nature, long-term and complex.**

The policy is further weakened by the fact that CIDA now has less control over the ways and processes by which its policy is implemented. With the new aid framework, the agency is dealing with multiple new stakeholders, including the donors and various national government departments. The inconsistency between the gender equality objectives of these stakeholders heightens the risk of eroding the cross-cutting approach. Thus, quite often, current commitments pay heed only to the lowest common denominator. Consequently, and as succinctly summarized by a CIDA staff member, "CIDA is giving millions to projects that utterly ignore gender."

In short, the aid effectiveness context has given rise to new challenges over and above the existing ones. It is urgent that we redouble our efforts to ensure that CIDA's policy produces real results. CIDA, like the other donors, must review its practices to ensure that it is better positioned to seize the opportunities and overcome the challenges raised by aid effectiveness. This work must be done on several fronts:

- within CIDA, where there is a sense that it is critical to bolster political will and to build staff commitment and capabilities, as well as to strengthen mechanisms designed to institutionalize and preserve accountability for gender results;

<sup>21</sup> Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, *Report on Plans and Priorities (RPP) 2007–2008 of the Canadian International Development Agency*, online at <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rpp/2007-2008/cida-acdi/cida-acdi01-eng.asp>.

<sup>22</sup> CIDA, 2005. *Canada's International Policy Statement*.



- in terms of the cross-cutting integration of gender into the agency's programming and, in particular, within the new aid framework;
- in terms of the policy dialogue on gender equality with governments and donors, which must be pursued and enhanced;
- in terms of programming choices; at this level, there is a need to strengthen specific projects such as those supporting national machineries for the advancement of women and gender equality, those supporting national gender equality policy implementation and, most important, those in support of CSOs working for women's rights and gender equality.

Indeed, a fundamental priority in this new environment, one for which CIDA's efforts are still falling short, concerns support for CSOs working for women's rights and gender equality, and more specifically women's organizations and movements. In a context where numerous staff members of international cooperation organizations perceive a loss of legitimacy for their efforts to promote gender equality because of the principle of local ownership, we must encourage the work of local CSOs, which have a decisive role to play in getting these issues on the political agenda and holding their national governments to account on their gender equality commitments. In this regard, CIDA, like the other donors, must play a more active role in marshalling support for women's rights organizations and promoting the establishment of dialogue and consultation forums and mechanisms that allow for more effective participation in policy debates. As things stand, these forums remain too impermeable to CSOs, and even more so to women's rights organizations.

At present, CIDA's support for women's rights organizations takes the form of gender funds managed in the field. These funds generally produce good results, but their value is questioned

by certain CIDA officials who consider them too cumbersome to manage. In addition, CIDA contributes to Canadian CSOs that support Global South organizations.

The role of Canadian CSOs is extremely important: 83% of CIDA funding earmarked for Global South CSOs passes through these Canadian organizations.<sup>23</sup> They are the principal stakeholders in Canadian international cooperation efforts directed at Global South civil society, thus the prime intermediaries between CIDA and Global South civil society. Nor should one ignore the considerable contribution that these Canadian organizations make in terms of their own fundraising. All of which leads to the second focus of this study: the contribution of Canadian CSOs to gender equality and women's rights.

## 2. Contribution of Canadian CSOs to gender equality<sup>24</sup>

It is well known that civil society is often one of the strongest, most powerful sources of support for gender equality in any given country, as well as a source of expertise in this field. To what extent does this statement characterize the work of Canadian international cooperation organizations?

There are over 500 CSOs in Canada that do international cooperation work, including unions, community organizations, religious organizations, and a wide variety of others. In this paper, I focus on the narrower group of international cooperation organizations (ICO) *sensu stricto*.

It is important to mention at the outset that any ICO receiving CIDA funding must obey the agency's Policy on Gender Equality and promote the policy in all its work. As well, many ICOs have adopted their own gender

<sup>23</sup> Réal Lavergne and Jacqueline Wood, 2008. "CIDA, Civil Society and Development: a Discussion Paper," assembled by the authors with input from CIDA's Expert Group on Civil Society, draft of February 26, 2008.

<sup>24</sup> This aspect of the study was conducted in close cooperation with the Comité Québécois Femmes et Développement (CQFD) of AQOCl and with the CCIC.

equality policies. According to recent surveys of a small sample of organizations, 88% of CCIC members and 50% of AQOCI members have adopted gender policies.<sup>25</sup> However, the actual percentages are probably lower due to positive self-selection bias in the survey.

These organizations' commitment to gender equality takes various forms:

- Most organizations have opted for the integrated or cross-cutting approach.
- A smaller number of organizations also have specific or targeted gender initiatives, but the number of these has declined in the last decade. According to the organizations surveyed, the adoption of the cross-cutting approach and, more recently, the sectoral concentration requirement, are the main reasons for the decline in specific women focused projects.
- It is interesting to note that of all the organizations receiving partnership funding from CIDA, only three work exclusively on women's rights and gender equality.

The degree of integration of gender equality varies widely. A large proportion of the organizations have adopted gender terminology and some have adopted gender equality policies, but it is at the level of implementation that the problems arise.

It is true that those ICOs that are furthest ahead on gender share a pool of best practices, know-how, and expertise in terms of both the cross-cutting approach and specific projects (combating violence against women, women's economic empowerment, etc.), but these organizations represent a small minority of the total. For the large majority of ICOs, considerable efforts are still required for them to begin to fulfill their gender equality commitments. A large proportion of the organizations have only superficially

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integrated gender into their work, and the interviews conducted in our survey point to a great need for support and assistance.

Most of the organizations are, in particular, having difficulty institutionalizing the cross-cutting approach to gender. Their success is still highly dependent on the commitment, abilities, and knowledge of individuals. The consequence is that the organization's gender equality policy often tends to "evaporate" between its adoption and its implementation. Factors explaining this phenomenon include:

- a lack of genuine political will;
- a lack of commitment to gender equality, manifesting itself as active or passive resistance;
- a lack of specialized human resources, a lack of tools and/or knowledge, and a certain confusion as to the real meaning and intended results of gender equality;
- an organizational culture that do not put enough priority on gender considerations (and here it is worth noting that positions of power are still held, in the main, by men);
- a need for stronger gender institutionalization procedures and mechanisms;
- a lack of accountability mechanisms.

<sup>25</sup> Rita Soares Pinto, *L'institutionnalisation du genre dans les organismes de coopération internationale au Québec: état des lieux et défis*, study conducted with the support of the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation and in collaboration with CQFD/AQOCI; CCIC, 2008. *Gender Equality, Promise to Practice: A Study of the Progress toward Gender Equality of CCIC Members*. David Kelleher and Rieky Stuart

Another phenomenon that appears to be growing is the depoliticization of gender mainstreaming, reducing this approach to an exclusively “technical” or “mechanical” issue and evacuating its transformative political nature.<sup>26</sup> Thus, in many cases, attention paid to gender integration is largely instrumental in nature (meeting donors’ requirements) and focuses on short-term solutions instead of seeking to alter power relations, a necessary step in achieving durable gender equality.

Having met these and other challenges, a number of ICOs have started to revise their approaches. Some have made women’s rights and gender equality central to the mission of the organization, while others have increased the number of specific projects predicated on a rights-based approach. Many are in the process of adopting or revising their policies, while some are making concerted efforts to find innovative methods for institutionalizing their commitment. Behind most of these initiatives are individuals – women’s rights activists – who are fighting internally for a stronger commitment and greater organizational capacity on gender equality. Acting often informally and on their own initiative, they play a role in monitoring and catalyzing these changes.

### **3. Renewing the commitment and practices of Canadian international cooperation organizations vis-à-vis gender equality and women’s rights**

As we have just seen, both CIDA and the ICOs must see to it that gender considerations are given their due. They must review and revise their practices as regards gender equality and women’s rights. The challenges they are facing demand that they implement processes to strengthen the commitment, skills, and knowledge of their personnel, and also to transform their internal culture and organizational policies. Among other things, these organizational change processes call for measures to develop gender equity within each organization’s structures,

procedures, and culture. I will not enter here into the details of these matters<sup>27</sup>, but instead concentrate on external interactions and catalysts for such organizational changes.

I contend that this process of change must be viewed through the lens of mutual responsibility for gender equality. In my view, this concept is critical to the creation of an environment conducive to gender equality in Canadian cooperation. Central to this concept is the idea that relations between international cooperation actors must be reinforced so that they can influence one another and play a role as drivers of change.

Specifically, and in the first place, CIDA must heighten its positive influence over the ICOs, making sure that they obey and effectively implement its Policy on Gender Equality. Most of the organizations surveyed stated that CIDA requirements were a significant factor motivating the integration of gender considerations into their work. This factor must be emphasized and made more constant, less prone to the influence of individual CIDA managers, and above all more constructive. The following questions must be asked: If gender equality is a priority for CIDA, shouldn’t it be an eligibility criterion for CIDA funding? What role should CIDA play in the creation of an environment favourable to learning, so that those organizations furthest behind on gender equality can make progress on their commitments? How should one go about creating such environments conducive to gender equality?

Second, one remarks that there has been relatively little dialogue on gender equality between the ICOs and CIDA in recent years. It is important for the most progressive ICOs on women’s rights to carry on a sustained

<sup>26</sup> Rita Soares Pinto, 2008. *L’institutionnalisation du genre: de la conceptualisation théorique à la mise en pratique (AQOCI, Comité Québécois femmes et développement)*.

<sup>27</sup> Among other sources : M. Mukhopadhyay, G. Steehouwer, and F. Wong, 2006. *Politics of the Possible: Gender Mainstreaming and Organisational Change: Experiences from the Field (KIT Publishers and Oxfam Publishing)*.

dialogue with CIDA. In particular, they should play more of a monitoring role, present context-sensitive analyses and recommendations, and advocate for CIDA to honour its gender equality commitments. Given the current unfavourable climate towards such policy dialogue, it is important for these organizations to act more collectively and proactively in holding CIDA to account. As an added benefit, such action may create more space for officials advocating for gender equality within CIDA.

As a fundamental condition for instilling such a dynamic of dialogue, there must be more openness on CIDA's part to creating opportunities for interaction with ICOs and for engaging in consultative and participatory processes.

Third, it is important to strengthen ties among CSOs. We must create opportunities for dialogue, mutual learning, and pooling of gender equality resources and tools. Forums such as the Comité Québécois Femmes et Développement (CQFD) must be strengthened and initiatives such as communities of practice must be encouraged. Such initiatives are likely arenas of peer emulation. Moreover, they are highly important in supporting the efforts of women's rights activists who are lobbying within their respective organizations for more sustained attention to gender considerations.

Finally, we must develop and consolidate strategic alliances with the women's movement in Québec and Canada, with

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trade unions, and with other actors who can help us have a stronger impact. Also, it is critical to develop ties with academic researchers if we are to continue to innovate and deepen our understanding of the relevant issues in this changing context. And of course, these efforts must be nourished and guided by an ongoing dialogue and close relations with our partners in the Global South and with the women's organizations and movements in the countries where we work.

Enhancing our mutual responsibility for gender equality will allow us to create an environment conducive to the promotion of gender equality and women's rights through learning, innovation, and peer emulation. It will enable us to establish a sustained dialogue and incentives and to exert mutual pressure in favour of more consistent gender equality integration.

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# THE OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

## A TOOL FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

■ Gerry Barr

President-CEO, Canadian Council for International Co-operation

### A new Act, a new tool

The new Official Development Assistance Accountability Act came into force on May 29, 2008. From our point of view, this law is a blessing. It has the potential to become an important tool to promote an approach to development focused on human rights, and in particular women's rights.

### How Did We Get Here?

This law is the culmination of four years of sustained efforts by the community of civil society organizations (CSOs) whose intent was to give a concrete orientation for demands for increased and improved development aid.

The *Un monde sans pauvreté. Agissons!* and *Make Poverty History* campaigns were the catalysts that sparked this dialogue, given a context where international aid was increasingly being diverted or used to benefit military, corporate, or foreign policy objectives. Several organizations in Canada worked together to envision a legislation that would give teeth to our repeated demands for increased development aid that had the elimination of poverty as its foremost goal. These efforts were pursued behind the scenes with numerous parliamentarians from all political parties, in presentations to concerned parliamentary and senatorial committees, and in the mass of emails from the general public.

### What Exactly Does the Act Say?

The Act provides Canadian Official Developmental Assistance (ODA) with a clear mandate concerning the reduction of poverty, accounting for the perspectives of the poor, and consistency with international human rights standards.

Within a framework based on a human rights approach, human rights standards serve as guidelines to determine the criteria that must be taken into consideration given the realities of the development process on the ground.

The Act stipulates that the Ministers responsible for granting aid (CIDA, Finance, Foreign Affairs) *must be of the opinion* that aid:

- 1) contributes to poverty reduction;
- 2) takes into account the perspectives of the poor; and
- 3) is consistent with international human rights standards.

### A Catalyst for a Human Rights Approach to Development

We believe that only an explicit human rights approach to the implementation of Canadian ODA programming can fulfill the three criteria required by the Act.

The Minister must ensure that aid does not negatively affect the respect and protection of human rights. Also, aid must contribute to the fulfillment of human

rights, including the progressive implementation of economic, social, and cultural rights. The international human rights Conventions, to which Canada adheres, in addition to the General Comments taken from the Conventions and the work of the Special Rapporteurs of the United Nations, serve as a reference for all decision-making concerning Canadian aid.

The application of international human rights standards in ODA will have as much an effect on the results – a reduction in the incidence of poverty and inequality – as on the process of determining ODA's priorities – the means for taking into account the perspectives of the poor. International standards apply to official development aid provided by all Ministries, notably CIDA, Finance and Foreign Affairs.

### **An Approach to Development Founded on Human Rights Assumes that:**

Priority is given to the most marginalized people – non-discrimination relating to access to rights is the first principle of an approach founded on rights. ODA programming must therefore give priority to the needs and conditions of the most marginalized, for example, the duty of states to fulfill certain minimum core obligations including:

- Free and mandatory primary education
- Access to essential medications
- Access to a healthy and sufficient basic nutrition

Furthermore, this means that CIDA programming must avoid taking actions that lead to discriminatory implementation of programming – for example, user fees for essential services for the most vulnerable.

The human rights situation is taken into consideration – ODA programming must identify situations where human rights violations are the cause of discrimination and vulnerability. The Ministers must prove due diligence to ensure that

Canadian aid will not further undermine human rights, including Canadian aid channeled through International Financial Institutions.

Aid must have priority over the donors' interests – ODA allocations intended to favour Canadian strategic interests driven by domestic, commercial or foreign policy, are unlikely to give priority to the most vulnerable people.

Furthermore, CIDA and other Ministries must take into account that recipient countries may use this aid in ways other than to support the fulfillment of universal human rights.

The participation of affected populations is guaranteed – Canadian ODA must be delivered in a manner that builds capacities of affected populations to participate in all dimensions of development affecting their lives, with particular attention to women, girls, and other discriminated populations. Participation is the most important criteria when considering the perspectives of the poor in the Act.

Rights that favour participation must be supported – The right to unionize and freedom of speech, as well as access to development processes, to information, to institutions, and to mechanisms for redress (when rights have been violated) are essential conditions for active citizenship, enabling people to participate in decision-making that affects their lives, and to claim their rights.

Efficient aid policies are founded on rights – The allocation of Canadian aid must be made with transparency and allow for access to relevant information about amounts of ODA allocations, including their purpose, priorities, terms and conditions.

Aid must allow for the reinforcement of accountability mechanisms and avoid

imposing conditions that undermine democratic ownership in recipient countries. It also must avoid imposing conditions that undermine the democratic participation of citizens in processes related to the policies and decisions that affect their lives.

### **What Does the Act Mean for Women's Rights?**

It is still too early to evaluate exactly how the Act will affect the advancement of women's rights. However, the Act could turn out to be a very important tool that reaffirms the commitment to support women's rights and gender equality with respect to Canadian co-operation, notably by reinforcing CIDA's policy regarding gender equality.

The Act demands that ODA is compatible with human rights standards based on international Conventions. For this reason, the General Comments taken from these Conventions and the work of the United Nations Special Rapporteurs is relevant to the understanding of these standards. With regard to women's rights, the Convention on the Elimination of *All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW), Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820, as well as the reports specific to the situation of women will serve as reference. The *Beijing Platform for Action* will also be useful, since it is a seminal document, whose ultimate objective is that all policies and programmes favour gender equality.

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**From our point of view, this law is a blessing. It has the potential to become an important tool to promote an approach to development focused on human rights, and in particular women's rights.**

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The *Beijing +10 Conference* confirmed that which many already knew: the confusion and ambiguity surrounding the conceptual interpretation of gender-specific analysis has damaged women and led to weak and diluted policies. Despite good intentions, this has resulted in institutional cutbacks, a lack of concrete actions and the reproach of discussions that favour women's rights.

The Official Development Assistance Accountability Act opens up the possibility to restart the clock. It allows us to refocus our work and that of CIDA on women's rights.

In doing this, it will also allow us, as non-profit organizations, public officials, academics, researchers, or citizens, to work closely together to promote this important cause.

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LOCAL CONTEXTS AND STRATEGIES  
FOR THE PROMOTION OF GENDER  
EQUALITY AND THE ADVANCEMENT  
OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS

**PART**





# AUTONOMY AND NATIVE WOMEN'S RIGHTS: OBJECTIVES AND CHALLENGES FROM A CRITICAL AND SELF-CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE<sup>28</sup>

■ Flory Yax Tiu

Program Officer, Project Counseling Service

**W**e, the native women of today, heirs to ancient cultures, gain the future by striving to be ourselves. Decades, in fact centuries, of recent history have given us a precious heritage, but they have also left scars, indeed wounds that are still open in the twenty-first century, wounds deepened by long periods of oppression and colonization.

Our present awareness of these wounds carries us back in memory to the Xibalba period, and as the pop wuj tells us, that was a time of pain, darkness, and great hardship. We found ourselves in a tunnel with no end in sight; to get out demanded work, clear-sightedness, and most important, the ability to distinguish between two very different perspectives.

Specifically, as a result of complex processes arising from the system of oppression itself, we have for too long viewed the world through the eyes of our oppressors rather than through our own eyes. As a result, we are but dimly aware of our own history. We struggle with feelings of worthlessness and victimization, with an inadequate sense of our own worth and abilities. In a word, we struggle to believe in ourselves, to see ourselves as beings who have a right to be, as women with a history but also a present-day existence as full-fledged members of society.

In the face of racism, discrimination, and unequal gender relations, it behooves us to develop a critical perspective – on native culture, yes, but also on society at large. Like

women of African descent, we too face racism and discrimination, obstacles that limit our participation in almost every relevant political arena. To overcome these obstacles requires collective thinking. Together, as women, we must envision a set of new foundations for the social conditions and ethnic relations we want to bring into being. We must build new kinds of relationships based on respect, recognition, and mutual affirmation.

Of gender relations, we have learned much from the women's movement; however, that knowledge alone does not provide the total picture of our oppression in multicultural contexts such as that of Guatemala. Here, ethnic oppression compounds gender oppression, with widespread inequalities and disrespect creating tensions between native and ladina women. Given this context, our first task has been to build a diverse, sustained movement of women, a movement with staying power and intellectual constancy.

Our thinking on gender relations has led us to concentrate on revisiting and reshaping the practices, customs, values, and principles underlying our interethnic relations. This revision must be meticulous and subject to clear criteria based on a reemphasis of the importance of women's rights.

Despite the difficulties we face, native women have made headway. Today, there are native women prepared to carry on the struggle for a truer and fairer representation of ourselves, one that is correctly perceived by the wider society and

<sup>33</sup> Text adapted from a speech given in Spanish.

resonates with our own self-perception. Native women have their own organizations, advocating on their own behalf, without other women or men as intermediaries. We have begun to write history from our point of view. This is an immense task, since it entails reconstructing our history without the taint of colonialism, as well as highlighting facts and processes that are deeply rooted in us and our peoples. On this point, it is absolutely essential to keep the cultural and social context firmly in mind, or else our demands can all too easily lose their meaning. These demands must retain a critical perspective as regards our culture, making sure not to devalue it, since without it we would have no name for who we are, no reason to seek to re-create that culture.

Other women's struggles have taught us that the road goes on, that we must continue to make our voices, our thoughts, and our demands heard. When the world refuses to see or hear us, it is all the more important for us to proudly claim our place among the living. Experience makes it clear that little change will happen if we do not make it happen; that no new relations can emerge other than those we build ourselves.

The processes that we create are the threads from which we will weave women's liberation. That liberation – a myth for some, a dream for others – is fast becoming something much bigger, a grand political agenda by means of which we assert our dignity as women and as peoples. One may think of the process of liberation as the possibility to fly, to decide where and with whom to fly and why we fly at all. Through this process we state loudly and clearly our intent to build our own lives (to think, to act, to feel).

Although the individual and collective challenges inherent in liberation are great, it is important to remember, since others have written our history, that we women have had extensive experience with resistance and struggle because we wanted to be. So this is not our first struggle. We tap into

and build upon the experiences and struggles of other women whom history has not always seen fit to name.

In the striving for selfhood and for belonging to a people, it is essential to remain in ongoing dialogue with diverse identities (ethnic, political, organizational, etc.). We must never forget that we are complete and complex beings, just like men, youth, and senior citizens. Starting from the assumption of our completeness eliminates the tendency to act in a fragmented way when formulating our demands and living our daily lives. By building processes of liberation and empowerment, we are able to decide how to live our lives, define ourselves, and be true to ourselves.

The struggle for construction of self goes hand in hand with the struggle to assert our rights. Two types of rights, in particular, are at issue: the collective rights and freedoms of native peoples and, in parallel, the individual rights and freedoms of native women.

Establishing a permanent nexus between these two types of rights, and acknowledging their interdependency, enables us to see that the struggles of native women are always parallel with the struggles of native people as a whole. A long-standing component of our agenda has been to call for the full realization of our rights in two distinct systems of justice within each country, the native or customary system and the national system. Moreover, we seek to entrench our rights both in the public mind and within every one of us.

It is not so difficult to secure the enactment of new laws or the adoption of international conventions: what is much harder is to see to their enforcement. If paper rights are not made effective in daily life, native women will have nothing but the legal text to show for their often frustrating and discouraging decades of struggle for justice. What is more, we must

question our routine practices and collectively create new forms of interaction.

It is an unfortunate fact that the rights won by women throughout history, far from ushering in progress, have tended to stagnate or even erode over time. This is particularly evident in the area of women's sexuality. We are told that certain rights implicitly include native women, but in reality we are not even mentioned, to say nothing of being granted any recognition for our specific rights as a community. To take just one example from Guatemala, parliamentary bills protecting the labour rights of women who work at home (as many native women do) and prohibiting aggravated sexual harassment never made it into law and were forgotten.

As native women, we fight for already-won rights; that is, both fundamental rights and unwritten rights that go beyond economic and property rights to include the right to co-create our culture and identity, to transcendence, affection and understanding, to freedom, creation (and recreation!), and to relaxation.

If we can guarantee the just and proper realization of certain of these rights, not only would this make the well-being of women possible, but it would spread that well-being to the rest of the population, to society, and to the planet. If, rather than seeking compensation, we were to devote our efforts to really satisfying our needs as living human beings, persons with a history, there would be a change in our walk, in our posture, and in our way of contemplating life, and this would take us on a journey towards a purposeful life and a free existence.

Because there is still a long road ahead, it is essential to remember that native women are not a homogeneous group, and we experience these challenges differently. Our realities and the paths we have chosen sometimes diverge.

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**The processes that we create are the threads from which we will weave women's liberation. That liberation – a myth for some, a dream for others – is fast becoming something much bigger, a grand political agenda.**

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Some choose to be active within formal structures (in government, for example), while others focus on trying to challenge the social imagination and the symbolic order. Both these kinds of efforts are important and arduous, and it all enables us to remain conscious of the following issues:

- The building of a political analysis from the perspective of native women goes hand in hand with the building of selfhood and the recognition of oneself as a subject of rights, a person with a history.
- The deconstruction that we have internalized as a result of multiple oppressions necessitates the combination or melding of our personal identity with our collective identity.
- Maintaining the balance between one's priority identification with a people and one's personal identity is a challenge, one that entails a strengthening of the cultural norms that help us achieve our personal and collective well-being.
- We need to strengthen our multi-directional perspectives (me – my people, the physical, the subjective, the technical, the political and strategic, etc.).

- Some of us consider it essential to continue to reflect on how to dialogue and work with ladina women and with native men.
- Our struggle vis-à-vis both the native system and the official system must continue, for they fail to meet women's needs or to take seriously those problems that are specific to women.

In this process of revision, we should not neglect the important role that international cooperation can play. Here are some suggestions and observations:

International cooperation policies are constantly evolving and will continue to evolve as the world goes through various crises, cutting across national societies and national boundaries. The changes in international cooperation policy have not been supportive of social movements, and even less so of native women. They have interrupted certain beneficial processes while force-feeding us a list of new "ingredients" that have obliged us to draw up a whole new "menu." But rather than filling our stomachs, the new diet makes us sick.

This explanation graphically illustrates the need to develop strategies with two dimensions: a) specific strategies for native women; b) strategies

for forums that are multiethnic and/or shared between women and men; native women and women of other identities; older and younger women.

We must also regain the political and financial support that women's movements and organizations are lacking, which is necessary in order to achieve tangible progress.

Women in general, and the feminist movement in particular, have been both critical and self-critical. I think that international cooperation actors must also be critical and self-critical. I am not alluding to those lengthy assessments based on "results" and indicators but to something much simpler, to the ability to look within and ask: Are our actions, whether as individuals or as institutions, satisfactory to us? Do they reflect well on us? And, of course, are they satisfactory to the beneficiaries of cooperation?

In conclusion, I would like to say that while we have come a considerable distance on our road to women's liberation, much remains to be done, in particular in order to re-establish the rights of native women.



# WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO AND THE CONGOLESE WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

■ Bernadette Ntumba

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## Introduction

My presentation focuses on the condition of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as well as on the efforts made to combat impunity for perpetrators of violent sexual crimes in the DRC.

In the DRC, women are still not equal to men. They are not well represented in public institutions or in the management of public affairs either on a provincial level or on a national level. They are also underrepresented in leading positions in public administration and in political parties. Only 8% of elected officials in national institutions and 2% in provincial institutions are women. In the Uvira territory, only two of 14 district chiefs are women, and this has only come about recently.

The poster, *La Femme à Mille Bras* (The Woman with a Thousand Arms), the banner of my organization (Association des Mamans Chrétiennes pour l'assistance aux Vulnérables or AMCAV), tells us how roles are divided between men and women, explaining why women are more exposed to violence and especially sexual violence. (The video is available at [www.rdcviolencesexuelle.org](http://www.rdcviolencesexuelle.org).)

## The Woman with a Thousand Arms

In the DRC, within families and communities, women are at the heart of activities that ensure survival and they focus on supporting their

families. Yet generally, they have no decision-making power over what the family produces, and even less over how their income is managed. These women wake very early in the morning and are constantly searching for something to feed the family while the husbands stay at home. This occurs despite the many dangers that permanently haunt them, living in areas swarming with armed groups, from undisciplined law enforcement officers to insurgents from Burundi. When they return home, it is the women who prepare food for their husbands, who take care of the children and elderly parents-in-law, who clean the house, who wash the dishes, who do the laundry, etc. At night, tired, they are forced to have sex with their husbands, throughout their entire lives. Women live under the yoke of male dominance; they are constantly devalued in communities.

## The Legal Status of Congolese Women

It is a well-known fact that events precede laws. It is therefore natural that the law, following the evolution of the social mentalities that guide customs, gives each member of society the place, or better yet the status, as determined by the current customs. If this rings true for a portion of most societies, it rings even truer for African societies, where customs are predominant in everyday life. In the DRC, customs are at once a substantial source of law and a formal source (after the law, of course). It is therefore not surprising that they heavily influence Congolese women's legal status.

Traditional Congolese customs rank women as inferior to men, which results in a clear division between the rights and social responsibilities of men and women and makes women subservient to men. It is therefore the men who decide and manage their daughters' dowries for marriage; it is the men who select their daughter's future husbands. It is also the men who manage the harvests produced by their spouses.

Congolese law has adopted these customs, making the subjugation of women official and hindering them in their development, be it through the Family Code, the Penal Code, or the Labour Code. However, the new Congolese constitution of February 2006 has brought a glimmer of hope to the future of Congolese women.

These codes have had many repercussions on the lives of Congolese women. The Family Code of August 1, 1987, although it contains many improvements compared to the preceding Free Civil Code I, has many flaws. For example, as soon as women are married, they are subject to the authority of the marriage as if married women are less responsible than single women. The Labour Code places women under the same authority, meaning that married women cannot be employed without their husbands' authorization.

As for the Penal Code, the articles pertaining to infractions make no distinction between men and women in terms of legal proceedings and penalties. One important exception is in the case of adultery, in which every case brought by the husband is punished. But if a man commits the adultery, it is only punishable if it is proven to be abusive (Article 467 of the Family Code).

This article institutionalizes a double standard of justice, meaning that when a woman lodges a complaint as a victim of adultery, the woman who

helped commit the act of adultery is certain to be punished, while the husband may be found innocent if he can prove that his adultery was not accompanied by abusive circumstances, and these circumstances are difficult to define. And yet, if it was the husband who lodged a complaint, the woman who committed adultery is punished every time, with her lover.

As for other Congolese laws, whether it is the Commercial Code, the law concerning the status of public servants, the Property Code, or the Mining Code, it is clear that capacity is applied as stipulated by the Family Code, and severely restricts the development of Congolese women in all sectors.

Fortunately, the new constitution of February 18th, 2006 requires the government to oversee the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and specifies that women have the right to fair representation in national, provincial, and local institutions. The state guarantees the implementation of gender parity in institutions (Article 14 paragraphs 4 and 5).

Hopefully, the options raised by the constitution will be implemented through legislation that definitively puts an end to the discrimination against women that up until now has existed in Congolese Law. In this way, the increased status of women will allow them to effectively face current challenges, which include the fight against sexual violence, HIV/AIDS, and illiteracy, as well as the promotion of women's rights in general.

The unacceptable division of roles between men and women in families and communities is at the root of violence committed against women and girls.

Women of all ages suffer from the consequences of this violence in different forms. The fiercest and deepest violence that the women in the DRC have known is sexual violence committed brutally against them as a weapon of war. Congolese legislation recognizes 16 forms of sexual violence contained in Law number 06/018 of July 20, 2006. All these different forms of violence are present in our communities. Before the new law was enacted, certain customary practices were tolerated by making them legitimate and legal (for example, sexual mutilation and the forced marriage of minors). These forms of violence objectify women further to the detriment of men.

### **Congolese Women Face Many Challenges**

#### a) At the International Level

The international community is entrenched in the fight for gender equality on the local level and is involved in the reestablishment of peace on the national territories. War and insecurity are among the causes of the outbreak of violence perpetrated by different armed groups that continue to operate in the DRC, often against women and children. Peace remains a long way off as several armed groups still spread panic through our communities, including the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR) (the former Rwandan Liberation Army), the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), the National Liberation Forces (NLF) composed of Burundian rebels, the Mai Mai (also called the Mayi Mayi), a generic term designating Congolese self-defence groups, and the Interahamwe (Rwandan militias that participated in the 1994 genocide).

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**In the DRC, within families and communities, women are at the heart of activities that ensure survival and they focus on supporting their families. Yet generally, they have no decision-making power over what the family produces, and even less over how their income is managed.**

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There are several positive points, namely:

- the implementation of the Joint Initiative (JI) (launched by Canadian international cooperation stakeholders), which unites the Congolese government, international and national NGOs, and the United Nations agency system to end sexual violence in the DRC;
- the existence of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the recognition of sexual violence as a crime against humanity or a war crime;
- the support given to local organizations by international partners.

#### b) At the National Level

Local organizations have organized together to promote women's rights and gender equality. There is a new law that cracks down on sexual violence because of a call led by national and local organizations. This law has introduced several new elements to the Congolese criminal procedure as opposed to the Congolese Code of Penal Procedure in place since 30 January 1959. Among these are:



- the expansion of the definition of different forms of sexual violence;
- the definition of perpetrators of violence being men or women;
- the fact that rape can be committed not only by the introduction of the male genital organ into the female genital organ as the 1959 Code of Penal Procedure states, but also by the introduction of any object into female genitals or in any orifice of a man or woman without prior consent;
- the classification of rape as a crime against humanity or a war crime and the stipulation that aggravated penalties will be 5 to 20 years;
- the procedure times will be reduced to four months, of which one month will be for preliminary investigation and three months to render judgment.

The Joint Initiative (JI) has provided for a restructuring of the bodies working in the struggle against sexual violence led by different actors in the field. Hence, there is work accomplished through national, provincial, and territorial commissions against sexual violence that group together the specialized services of the Congolese state, international and national organizations and United Nations agencies.

### **Actions Taken by Congolese Women's Associations Against Sexual Violence**

The following is a list of community actions taken by women's associations to end sexually violent crimes. These actions are often led with few resources and without real governmental participation.

- Awareness campaigns about women's rights are carried out in communities.

- The new law against sexual violence is translated into local languages and disseminated on a wide level.
- Appeals are made to Congolese decision-makers about the integration of women into public institutions and their participation in the management of the state.
- Education and consciousness-raising sessions are held for rural women about self-esteem, their value, and their self-advancement.
- Appeals are made to traditional authorities to ban backwards customs that marginalize women in communities, and for the rehabilitation of the judicial system and basic infrastructure.
- International partners are mobilized to directly support women's organizations in defending and promoting women's rights in their struggle against sexual violence and inequalities linked to gender, so that the women's organizations do not have to pass through an intermediary such as the United Nations agencies or international organizations.
- Monitoring missions are executed with international partners to evaluate the impact of the projects they have financed.

### **CONCLUSION**

Gender equality is far from reality in these communities, given that women's rights are not respected by those in power, and the degrading customs remain in place and are enforced by conservative traditional authorities.

The insecurity caused by armed groups still active in the communities, the fact that certain

rebellious factions linked to the government are not integrated, and the persistence of foreign armed groups are indicators that perpetuate armed conflict. This renders the terrain fertile for different forms of gender based violence, specifically the sexual violence that women are forced to bear. These factors also accentuate the gender inequalities, as the victims most affected are women.

All well-meaning men and women concerned with women's rights need to give material and financial support, as well as their expertise, so that this unforgiving struggle against gender inequalities may one day be won.

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# POLITICAL CONTEXTS AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

## ■ Ariane Brunet

Co-Founder, Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights in Conflict Situations; Consultant, Feinstein International Center

The integration of the cross-cutting approach to women's rights into all UN mechanisms as well as into the machinery of national and regional government, and its application in both the social and economic spheres, raised hopes that social inequalities between women and men would at last be taken into account in all areas and in all planning and decision-making processes. "Gender mainstreaming," to employ the original term since it contains the notion of gender and hence of social construction, is a top-down process imposed from the apex of the bureaucratic pyramid. Its application depends entirely on the political will existing within any given enterprise or institution. In these times, any role or impact that associations and community groups could have in ensuring the vitality of this approach is nearly nonexistent. Faced with this context, what are our responsibilities?

In recent years, a welter of resolutions have been adopted whose wording promotes and advocates for women's rights in conflict situations, in peace negotiation processes, and in transitional justice processes. Awareness raising and lobbying have led to progress in many forums, in the area of women's socioeconomic rights as well as their civil and political rights. However, in daily life women are just as invisible as ever and have very little influence over their immediate environment, even though they have organized admirably with few resources and limited capacities.

In Congo, more than 30 groups have mobilized around a campaign against sexual violence in the eastern part of the country.<sup>29</sup> These women

are demanding better coordination of aid on the ground, recognition for the role of victims' support associations, inclusion of these associations in decision-making processes, and development of working relationships and partnerships with these associations in order to enhance the effectiveness of lobbying and awareness raising efforts. It is unacceptable that campaigns against sexual violence in the Congo have been carried out by the United Nations and international NGOs without involving local activists in their planning and implementation. Furthermore, the meager results achieved on the ground serve as a reminder of the limited capacity of international organizations to do this work without the tactical, numerical, and decision-making support of women in the field.

During Israel's "Cast Lead" offensive against Gaza, far too little was heard about the efforts of Palestinian women in the West Bank to come to the aid of the embattled people of Gaza. Likewise, little news came to us of the tireless work for peace done by Israeli activists before, during, and after the war on Gaza.

For over twenty years now, women have been denouncing the rise of fundamentalisms. This trend is part and parcel of far-right movements and the expansion of neoliberal policies in tandem with unbridled capitalism, whose effects have been evident this year. Fundamentalist movements operate under the cover of religion and culture. The policies they advocate are no longer considered

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.rdcviolencesexuelle.org/site/en/node/35>.

marginal or beyond the pale; one need only think of the influence wielded today by Christian fundamentalists in the United States and Canada, or of the acts of terrorism perpetrated “in the name of Islam.” As stated in the declaration against fundamentalisms produced by Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML)<sup>30</sup>, Muslim fundamentalists have spread their propaganda in both Europe and North America. Their demand for religious courts of arbitration in Ontario, their particular take on the debate surrounding the wearing of religious symbols in the public service, and the confusions arising in the debate around reasonable accommodation are just a few examples of how fundamentalists carrying the banner of “human rights” have perverted notions such as culture, identity, antiracist struggle, diversity, democracy, and universality.

Such cultural relativism emphasizes the orthodox, univocal aspect of an individual, a culture, or a nation. Female Canadians of African, Arab, or Asian descent find themselves being reduced to their religious identity, and thereby set apart from other Canadian women. As such, they risk being ignored or excluded from critical debate and considered unworthy of solidarity. We have made “Muslim women” into a homogeneous category and, in so doing, made it more difficult to consider the multiplicity of discourses, the breadth of lived experiences, or the possibility that ideas, concerns, allegiances, and levels of awareness may be far more multifarious than we suppose. We should ask ourselves the following questions: Where are the women’s movements from different cultures and religious affiliations? Where are the women whose opinion diverges from the orthodoxies of those cultures and religions? How much room have we made for them? Have we even considered the eminently political aspect of religion in our societies (think, for example, of the debate around abortion)? Have we reflected on the

**It is unacceptable that campaigns against sexual violence in the Congo have been carried out by the United Nations and international NGOs without involving local activists in their planning and implementation.**

“religionization” of politics, as illustrated in Obama’s Cairo speech when he instrumentalizes the issues surrounding the wearing of the hijab<sup>31</sup> or refers to women’s choice “to live their lives in traditional roles”<sup>32</sup>?

All evidence suggests that political context colours the promotion and advocacy of women’s rights. In order to think clearly about issues of health, justice, and education, we are obliged to think about the tensions between religion and equality, those famously conflicting rights. And further, we are obliged to give consideration to an even less privileged set of rights: I mean women’s rights, and particularly our right to information, regardless of our social status; or our right to freedom of expression, regardless of whether we personally identify with the religion of the community with which we are publicly identified, or whether we represent a minority or a dissident voice within a minority.

The same considerations apply to the discourse around violence against women. In its last year in power, the Bush administration lobbied for the UN Security Council to adopt resolution 1820, which holds rape to be a tactic of war as well as a threat to international security. It was past due – it was more than necessary – but this resolution imposes no sanctions whatsoever on any government, militia, or party to a conflict that systematically tortures, humiliates, or massacres women during a conflict. The very same Bush administration

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.wluml.org>.

<sup>31</sup> It is worth bearing in mind that it is easy to present yet another criticism of fundamentalism, for historically, culturally, geographically, there has always been a multiplicity of hijabs in terms of their use, ethnic origin, associated social realities, etc. See Marieme Hélie-Lucas, “Veil-s,” 2006, online at [www.wluml.org](http://www.wluml.org).

<sup>32</sup> See, on this subject, Karima Benoune’s analysis of the religionization of politics in Obama’s Cairo speech of 4 June 2009 at <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article13989>.

cut \$300 million from the UNDP budget over a period of seven years because the agency was trying to come to the aid of women who have suffered sexual violence, among other things by offering them access to the morning-after pill or safe abortion in order to deal with their most pressing concern under such circumstances<sup>33</sup>.

Congolese women, for their part, continue to wonder when they will finally see the on-the-ground effects of the UN campaign against sexual violence in the DRC. The political context matters here, for while campaigns against sexual violence in conflict situations are up and running, the same cannot be said for the state of political and financial support for women struggling for their countrywomen's survival and seeking to empower themselves to change their situation. Moreover, in the majority of cases, the public identification of women with their cultural community takes precedence over their identity as national citizens.<sup>34</sup> The primary public concern is to ensure that women have a community of allegiance and are cognizant of their role and responsibility to represent the values of that culture,

rather than to ensure that they, as full-fledged citizens, have a voice in solutions aimed at eradicating violence against women through the development of judicial, social economy, and reparation strategies in which the victims of these crimes are the primary agents of implementation of such rehabilitation policies. I stress again: the political context matters when it comes to advocacy and promotion of women's rights.

"Gender mainstreaming" has admittedly led to a somewhat higher awareness of gender issues in government offices. But arguably, by bureaucratizing feminism, we have taken the risk of leaving aside all those feminists concerned with the implementation of policies that accommodate the multiple economic, ethnic, national, historical, and cultural realities that women experience, not to mention the universality and inseparability of all human rights.

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<sup>33</sup> See Barbara Crossette, "UN Rape Declaration Falls Short," *The Nation*, June 30, 2008, online at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20080714/crossette>.

<sup>34</sup> See Alice M. Miller "Sexuality, Violence against Women, and Human Rights: Women Make Demands and Ladies Get Protection," *Health and Human Rights*, vol. 7, no. 2, 17–45, 2004.

REINVENTING OUR PRACTICES FOR  
EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION OF  
GENDER EQUALITY

PART





# WHAT HAVE WE LOST IN THE MAINSTREAM?

## CHALLENGES, IMPACTS AND NEW APPROACHES TO THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING WITHIN INTERNATIONAL NGOS

■ Sarah Hendriks

Advisor Gender Equality and HIV & AIDS, Plan Canada

I'd like to begin reminding us of what has become, for better or worse, our shared discourse; the very words which make up the lexicon of "gender-ology" that exists amongst us today, especially within international NGOs. Some of these are loaded terms, some words are imbued with meaning and history which reflect struggle and change; others bring to mind confusion, compromise, even loss. I invite you to reflect upon these words, their meaning from yesterday and today, and the impact they might have on your life, work, organization, processes, projects, and partnerships; but especially upon your perspective for transformative feminist change.

Women in development;  
 Gender and development;  
 Gender mainstreaming;  
 Gender equity;  
 Gender equality;  
 Practical gender needs;  
 Strategic gender needs;  
 Strategic gender interests;  
 CEDAW;  
 Beijing Platform for Action;  
 MDG #3;  
 RBA (Rights Based Approach);  
 Gender based analysis;  
 Gender roles framework;  
 Triple roles framework;  
 Empowerment framework;  
 Social relations framework;  
 Gender tools;  
 Gender training;  
 Gender capacity building;

GMS (Gender Management Systems);  
 Gender audits;  
 Gender self-assessment;  
 RBM (Results-Based Management);  
 LFA (Logical Framework Approach);  
 PMF (Performance Measurement Framework);  
 Gender-sensitive indicators;  
 GDI (Gender-Related Development Index);  
 Global gender gap index;  
 Gender priorities;  
 Gender-specific programming ...

This presentation will highlight and analyze how gender mainstreaming has become the main approach or mechanism towards achieving gender equality for most INGOs. We'll then reflect on some of the key challenges that have been faced by institutional actors in mainstreaming gender, both internally in terms of organizational change and externally in terms of programmatic practice. Next we'll turn to asking "How have the process, tools, policies of gender mainstreaming impacted upon actual progress towards gender equality and women's rights?" Where has the theory of gender mainstreaming taken INGOs to in practice, and what have we lost along the way? Finally, we'll ask "So, what next?". Are there any new approaches, adaptations or alternatives to gender mainstreaming that we can collectively consider?

### The Intentions of Gender Mainstreaming

So, let's start at the beginning in terms of the history, aims and key elements of what gender

<sup>41</sup> Référence au concept anglais « Gender mainstreaming », qui est traduit dans l'ensemble du document par « Intégration du genre ».

mainstreaming was meant to achieve. The Beijing Platform for Action prioritized gender mainstreaming as a strategy to work towards the end goal of gender equality. Gender mainstreaming was meant to be:

- A long-term and transformative process and not an end in itself.
- A process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels.
- A multidimensional process that could enable significant rethinking and redefinition of development goals, values and objectives.

In other words, gender mainstreaming would mean that:

- Men, women, boys and girls would all benefit equally from development policies, projects and programs;
- Inequality would not be perpetuated;
- Unequal power relations between women and men, and girls and boys would be transformed.

These were some tremendously lofty goals. No doubt about it, for many INGOs gender mainstreaming became the panacea towards 'doing gender' and 'achieving gender equality'. In other words, gender mainstreaming was meant to enable INGOs (and other actors) to systematically ensure that gender considerations are placed at the centre of policies, programmes, and activities. Women's rights and empowerment were meant to somehow magically flow out of this process.

### The Canadian Reality

So, what of Canadian INGOs in terms of gender mainstreaming? Well, although there is no uniform process for 'doing' gender mainstreaming, the

main elements of gender mainstreaming can be roughly summarized as:

- The adoption of gender terminology (recognizing that women and men have different needs and priorities);
- The development of gender mainstreaming policies; and
- The implementation of gender mainstreaming practice within programming and organizational frameworks.

Implementation of gender mainstreaming practice could include any of the following components:

- **Gender structures:** Clearly defined roles for leadership and support to gender mainstreaming. And thus the 'gender advisor', 'gender focal point' or 'gender specialist' was born!
- **Gender analysis:** Developing gender analysis skills of policy and programs.
- **Gender training:** Building a skilled human resource base which can understand and implement a gender policy.
- **Knowledge resources:** Developing networks and opportunities to share best practices and effective strategies.
- **Gender budgets:** Allocation of financial resources to implement gender policy/ action plans.
- **Monitoring and evaluation systems and tools:** Gender-sensitive indicators
- **Institutionalization:** Gender mainstreaming depends on the skills, knowledge and commitment of staff across the organization. This involves changing attitudes of individuals, organizations and systems.

On the whole, most Canadian INGOs have adopted gender equality discourse, and many have even developed a gender mainstreaming policy or strategy. However, few are actually engaged in implementing gender mainstreaming in practice in a holistic manner. Even fewer are focused on women's rights and empowerment within this process. Outside of the 3 Canadian NGOs which have shifted their organizational priorities to focus intentionally on gender equality and women's rights, the majority of INGOs have, for many years, stagnated or have been inconsistent in the process of implementation. And so policy commitments to gender mainstreaming often evaporate.

### **Facing Challenges in Mainstreaming Gender Equality**

Although with the adoption of gender discourse and policies and the institutionalization of gender structures, there is no longer a fight to legitimize gender mainstreaming, nevertheless significant institutional constraints prevail. The various constraints faced from within the process of institutionalizing gender mainstreaming include:

#### **Gendered context of INGOs:**

The current mainstream international development industry has become a bureaucratic mire that is often antithetical to feminist ways of thinking and being. Canadian INGOs, on the whole, function as highly gendered spaces that mirror a hierarchical and technocratic corporate culture that is in opposition to feminist goals of social transformation. We're talking about an organizational culture which is male-biased, in terms of attitudes, recruitment, working conditions, structures and procedures. Some of this is changing -but it is slow and much is being lost in the process. Gender mainstreaming has focused less on changing

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**Gender mainstreaming became the panacea towards 'doing gender' and 'achieving gender equality'. (...) Women's rights and empowerment were meant to somehow magically flow out of this process.**

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the complexity of the deeper gendered subtext of inequality within institutions and organizations and more on the development of gender tools for programmatic implementation.

On the whole, there is (some) institutional support for gender mainstreaming. Although many staff in INGOs seem to embrace gender mainstreaming from an instrumentalist perspective, especially when it is described in economic terminology (such as the World Bank's newest champion: gender equality as 'smart economics'). In fact, in many ways there has been a corporate embracing of the gender mainstreaming approach, especially in so far as this is linked to increasing an overall project portfolio or achieving increased visibility or favour in the eyes of donors. The link between gender mainstreaming and the achievement of women's rights, however, remains very muddled and the structural causes which generate inequality become sidelined.

#### **Institutional responsibility:**

Gender mainstreaming is still seen as a separate "specialized" process which marginalizes instead of illuminating critical gender issues. Success in gender mainstreaming is still highly reliant on the commitment and skills of *key individuals*.

However, the mystique of the 'gender specialist' can be extremely alienating whereby all the secrets of how to 'do' gender mainstreaming are assumed to be hidden in the grasp of these gender 'experts'. Staff become marginalized from actively supporting gender-mainstreaming processes, and feel intimidated by the complexity and multiplicity of gender analytical frameworks, tools and a gender discourse which is highly alienating. These gender tools then remain irrelevant and inaccessible.

### **The numbers game:**

Gender mainstreaming has, on the whole, become simplified into counting: counting the numbers of women and girls who participate in meetings, committees and organizations.

Gender mainstreaming was meant to go beyond asking the question "how many women participated in this project?" to asking "how can this project reduce inequality between women and men?" It was intended to be more than just achieving equal numbers of men and women. What about promoting the empowerment of women and girls as decision-makers at all levels, having their voices heard and the power to put their issues on the agenda? Gender mainstreaming should not be concerned with simply increasing women's participation, but with the terms of their participation. This would of course involve challenging the fundamentals of power relations and of agency, which not all INGOs are prepared to do.

### **Mechanisms for accountability:**

Gender equality is still not situated within modalities of accountability, so that it remains outside of monitoring frameworks. When results do get identified, they often are about simply ensuring that a project or program brings equitable benefits to women, men, girls and boys or that everyone gets to participate equally. While this is important, this definition of gender equality results

misses the strategic changes in gender relations that transform the structures of power which promote or enable inequality or discrimination to exist. Forwarding social change in gender relations is absent from most accountability mechanisms, including indicators. Measuring empowerment is particularly difficult to define in terms of indicators, especially quantitatively.

### **So, what has been lost in the Mainstream?**

So what has happened? How have the process, tools, policies of gender mainstreaming impacted upon actual progress towards gender equality and women's rights? Where has the theory of gender mainstreaming taken INGOs to in practice, and what have we lost along the way? Have the diversity of activities undertaken under the mandate of gender mainstreaming resulted in substantive changes towards gender equality and women's rights and empowerment?

### **Bureaucratization of gender mainstreaming processes:**

The highly professionalized, technical and bureaucratic context of gender mainstreaming stands in sharp contrast with feminist objectives of social transformation, political analysis, and women's organizing. 'Doing gender' is equated with including 'men, women, boys and girls' in the report, proposal, or framework. Or it involves checking off the boxes on a complex 'gender tool'. Analysis of the deeper context of power relations is often completely absent. Gender mainstreaming tools and systems, while well-intended, can alienate us from listening to the daily lived realities of girls and women in the process of creating complex and inaccessible strategies. There is much to lose when rights become compartmentalized.

### Depoliticized gender analysis:

When gender analysis does get done, it tends to focus on participation rates and quantitative data which identify gender gaps. What we have lost is the focus and capacity to identify the root causes of gender inequality, exclusion and discrimination. We have lost the ability to uncover the deep rooted social, economic, structural and cultural factors lying beneath gender discrimination and inequality (the causes behind the causes of gender inequality). INGOs are part of the paradigm of depoliticization.

### Relationships:

Probably one of the most important losses is that of relationships, relationships with local actors as the process of gender mainstreaming impacts on activism and movement building. Consequently, transformative change towards substantive equality requires long-term changes of complex gender relationships.

### Strategic gender-specific programming is being sidelined:

Programming on issues such as Gender-Based Violence is still marginal, compared to INGOs' emphasis on gender mainstreaming within more 'valid' areas of focus (livelihoods, household economic security, education, emergencies, etc). Gender-specific programs suffer from the illness of 'proctitis' and are given relatively little human or financial resource backing. 'Doing gender' is equated with programmatic mainstreaming and nothing more. Programming around critical issues of concern to women's rights and empowerment become marginalized, and so are complex and long-term strategic gender issues that get to the heart of women and girls' position in society.

**Most Canadian INGOs have adopted gender equality discourse, and many have even developed a gender mainstreaming policy or strategy. However, few are actually engaged in implementing gender mainstreaming in practice in a holistic manner.**

### What next?

Are there any new approaches, adaptations and alternatives to gender mainstreaming which we can consider? I'd like to highlight three:

1. Linking women's empowerment and gender equality with results.
2. Building connections with Rights-Based Approach programming, policy development and practice.
3. Building allies with feminist movements: transforming structures from the outside-in.

#### **1. Building gender equality into results: how results-based management (RBM) can be linked effectively to women's empowerment.**

The pervasive emphasis on RBM can actually be strategically utilized to leverage increased commitment to gender mainstreaming, and can even push the boundaries of gender mainstreaming by enabling organizations to define and then seek to achieve transformative gender equality results.

Part of the reason for such evasive implementation of gender mainstreaming policies in INGOs is that gender equality has remained distinct from

results frameworks. So, all sorts of results are identified around water, sanitation, education, health, livelihoods or HIV and AIDS—and rarely do these include substantive commitments towards changes around gender equality, women’s rights or empowerment.

If we want to re-politicize gender mainstreaming, let’s infuse this within all the processes and tools that dominate institutional processes and structures by making the links between results and social and institutional changes towards gender equality and women’s empowerment. We are trying to shift an entire organization to define gender equality results that are not about numbers or simplistic tools, but about strategic changes in gender relations that transform the structures of power which promote or enable inequality or discrimination to exist at all levels and within all institutions especially, the family, community, economy/market and government.

## **2. Building connections with Rights-Based Approach (RBA) programming, policy development and practice.**

RBA presents great opportunities to shift the discourse and practice away from the technocratic language of mainstreaming towards the rights-based language of emancipation, inclusion and transformation. More and more INGOs are assuming a RBA discourse and programming framework. The Rights-Based Approach can provide a rationale and strong point of connection which enables gender equality, women’s rights and empowerment to become more concretely accepted across organizations, and to be strategically integrated within program frameworks. This would enable programs to more concretely tackle gender issues which address the political, including power analysis.

The RBA to Development includes three important stages:

- i. Link development processes with rights-based international frameworks;

- ii. Link development processes and institutions to rights principles (equality, non-discrimination, participation/inclusion);
- iii. Capacity-building of duty bearers to fulfill their obligations; and of rights-holders to claim rights and entitlements.

The implications of assuming a Rights-Based Approach by organizations go far beyond simply altering discourse; it means having a clear focus on human rights within all aspects of programming. It means building programs that emerge from a comprehensive analysis of rights violations and the causes of these violations. It emphasizes overcoming discrimination against the most-marginalized, the participation of rights holders in all aspects of programs and the accountability of duty-bearers. The potential outcomes are:

- Inequitable power relationships challenged and begin to be transformed; discrimination reduced; greater equity and inclusion;
- Changes in relationships, at individual, group and institutional levels;
- Citizenship becomes more active as mechanisms for mutual accountability are established and used.

The RBA can potentially bring about the kind of organizational paradigm shifts needed to embrace gender transformative changes in INGOs: shifts which challenge the basic rules that determine the deep structures of power relations in terms of both individual and systemic changes. Then, the potential to re-politicize gender mainstreaming can become more of a reality.

## **3. Building allies with feminist movements—transforming structures from the outside-in.**

The presence of politically-minded, feminist-defined advocates is imperative to the reclamation of gender mainstreaming as a transformative philosophy and practice. In many cases, gender equality would not be a priority if these individuals were not present within mainstream INGOs to push a women's rights agenda. Individual discretion and human agency are significant within the context of highly bureaucratized development institutions.

The international development machinery is not impervious, rather it is a contested arena defined by complexity and contradictions that enables some change to occur from within its most marginal spaces. The presence of feminists who build connections with feminist organizing and movements is imperative so that the existing cracks and contradictions within mainstream INGOs can be used to lever spaces for transformative change.

Profound relationships of equality, solidarity, and mutuality between women's organizations and development institutions are imperative to the broadening of feminist spaces in development; INGOs that will never be wholly aligned with feminist principles, goals, or ideas. Consequently, it is imperative to

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**The highly professionalized, technical and bureaucratic context of gender mainstreaming stands in sharp contrast with feminist objectives of social transformation, political analysis, and women's organizing.**

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build strategic alliances with local women's organizations in order to push the boundaries of gender mainstreaming towards re-politicized goals.

Gender mainstreaming can become less about technical checklists and more about political struggle and critical analysis. Even in the midst of bureaucratic, hierarchical, and sometimes oppressive structures of development institutions, we can push the boundaries of gender mainstreaming to embrace the energy and spirit of women's organizing and political processes.

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# GENDER MAINSTREAMING STRATEGIES AND THE PROMOTION OF GENDER JUSTICE IN THE DAY-TO-DAY LIVES OF NGO STAFF MEMBERS

■ Rebecca Tiessen

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## Introduction and Significance

We know quite a bit about gender mainstreaming in terms of the strategies and frameworks developed and implemented by international agencies, national machineries and even NGOs. We've seen the toolkits and understand how we might avoid some of the challenges of gender mainstreaming experienced in the past. However, these strategies frequently fail at changing attitudes, behaviours and cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequality. The information we need requires ethnographic research that tracks the activities of individuals within organizations who are rejecting or embracing gender equality.

My research is concerned with what people are saying about gender mainstreaming; how gender-insensitive behaviour is being reinforced; and whether attitudes and behaviours are changing as a result of gender mainstreaming interventions. In this presentation, I highlight some of the struggles and challenges experienced within NGOs as NGO staff members attempt to adopt gender-mainstreaming strategies. I also examine some of the successes experienced by those who promote gender equality in their work and in their offices. The analysis reflects the day-to-day challenges and opportunities NGO staff members face and why they are important to gender mainstreaming. The study is based on 10 years of ethnographic research I carried out in Malawi between 1996 and 2006 and involved data collection through participant

observation, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and survey data collection. I begin by summarizing some of the challenges of gender mainstreaming followed by a discussion of the opportunities witnessed.

## Gender Mainstreaming Challenges: The Numbers Game

Early efforts (1997-2000) at promoting gender mainstreaming in Malawi were primarily concerned with numbers. Organizations were strongly encouraged to have a better representation of women staff members. In Malawi, in 1997, there were approximately 3-4 male staff members to every female staff member so women were greatly underrepresented in organizations. In follow-up interviews in 2005, it was found that little had changed in relation to the number of male to female staff members in development NGOs in Malawi. Furthermore, the majority of positions held by women tend to be in junior level or administrative positions where they hold little decision-making power. The most common responses to the question: why are there so few women in your organization included: low education levels for women; a perceived lack of commitment among women to do NGO work; a bias determined by culture and traditions in Malawi; and organizational constraints that prevent women from working in NGOs.

Several male NGO staff members reported that they considered the nature of the work at NGOs to be inappropriate for women, particularly those with families and dependents. For example, a male staff member said the significant amount of travel meant that women were “not well suited for the position since it would require women to leave their families for days and weeks at a time.” This is explained, in part, by the attitudes some male staff held towards the kind of work perceived as appropriate for women. Those jobs that are seen as an extension of women’s reproductive role in the home are considered appropriate work for women in the workplace. Thus, decisions around appropriate kinds of employment for women and men in development agencies reinforce public/private divisions.

Social expectations and cultural norms characteristic of family relations were accorded to men and women and determined how women were treated by co-workers. Thus, an organization is not constructed and maintained by gender neutral, rational actors but instead by “people in sexually coded positions and locations”<sup>35</sup> (Burrell and Hearn 1992, 14). There is a gender dimension in NGOs because roles and power are divided along gender lines and these norms reflect wider society’s stereotypes of women resulting in private/public slippage.

### **Transformation and Working Towards Gender Justice**

Transformative change happens when gender mainstreaming efforts get to the core of gendered organizations and challenge the “deep structure” of organizations where daily practices, history and cultural norms generally go unchallenged. Efforts at transformative change within organizations

**Efforts at transformative change within organizations requires change agents who are committed to understanding and linking organizational change, institutional change and gender equality.**

requires change agents who are committed to understanding and linking organizational change, institutional change and gender equality<sup>36</sup> (Rao and Kelleher 2003). Ultimately, my observations suggest that the key to successful transformation comes from the dynamism of key individuals who can put gender justice on the agenda and encourage changes in practice among colleagues and within the organization.

Subtle strategies for gender mainstreaming are activities and day-to-day practices which are designed to transform daily operations and institutional norms. While subversive in their orientation, subtle strategies are carefully planned and discrete activities designed to alter the status quo without drawing a great deal of attention to those who are engaged in the process or to the process itself. Subversive strategies are more likely to address issues of political empowerment and may offer examples of deeper interactions and opportunities to tackle negative attitudes towards women and gender equality. Subtlety is necessary when acting subversively in order to change patriarchal attitudes and behaviors of colleagues.

Day-to-day interaction with NGO staff in Malawi sheds light on some of the strategies of resistance used by female staff to gain or regain power within their organizations. Networking, leadership and mentoring can also play an

<sup>35</sup> Burrell G., Hearn J., 1992. *The sexuality of organization*. In *The sexuality of organization*, ed. Jeff Hearn, Deborah Sheppard, Peta Tancred-Sheriff and Gibson Burrell. 1-29. London : Sage Publications.

<sup>36</sup> Rao A., Kelleher D., 2003. *Institutions, organisations and gender equality in an era of globalization*. *Gender and Development* 11, no. 1 : 142-149.

important role in promoting gender awareness and empowering women and men to promote gender equality in their organizations, in their communities and in their countries.

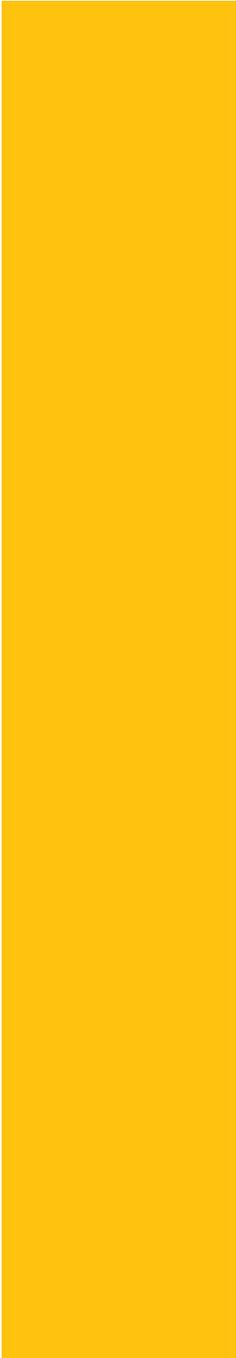
### The Way Forward

We need a better understanding of the day-to-day struggles people encounter in their efforts to promote gender equality. A key way to do that is through more ethnographic research and more opportunities to hear from the staff members themselves about what they see as their obstacles and opportunities for change. In my own observations and research, I found that having key role models, mentors and

strong individuals sharing information and techniques with other staff members on how to promote gender equality in their projects or in their offices is essential. Ultimately, we need to begin by building on strategies that work; strategies that are created locally to solve culturally-specific situations. In order for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to tap into this information, CIDA will need to work more closely with those researchers and practitioners “on the ground” who are familiar with the particularities and practices of different organizations and cultures.

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## **CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK**



# WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY IN CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION: PRINCIPAL INSIGHTS AND STRATEGIES FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

■ Rita Soares Pinto

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The conference entitled “Women’s Rights and Gender Equality in Canadian Cooperation: Challenges and Perspectives” was the culmination of a broader research and mobilization project, carried out with the support of the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation<sup>37</sup>. In this essay, I present a number of important observations, recommendations, and strategies for collective action deriving from my research in Canada and Mali and from the discussions held during the two days of the conference<sup>38</sup>.

The ideas, recommendations, and strategies presented here are divided into four categories as they concern:

- I. all Canadian international cooperation stakeholders, notably CIDA and the international cooperation organizations (ICOs);
- II. CIDA specifically;
- III. Québec and Canadian ICOs specifically;
- IV. Relations among Canadian international cooperation stakeholders.

## **I. Concerning all Canadian international cooperation stakeholders, particularly CIDA and ICOs:**

**1. Despite some progress in the last decade, our success in integrating gender equality and promoting women’s rights in Canadian international cooperation efforts has been somewhat limited. Considerable effort must be made by CIDA, the ICOs, and all partners in Canadian international cooperation to make good on their commitment to gender equality and the advancement of women’s rights.**

Recent studies and analysis highlight the divide, common to both CIDA and the ICOs, between policy and discourse on the one hand and practice on the other. Given this track record, it is incumbent on all Canadian international cooperation stakeholders to rethink our organizational practices and to renew our commitment to gender equality.

<sup>37</sup> For more information on this project : <http://www.gordonfn.org/resfiles/RSoaresPinto.htm>

<sup>38</sup> The author sincerely thanks Joanna Kerr for her advice and for fruitful discussion throughout this study. She also thanks Fréda Thélusma and Sylvie Perras for their judicious comments at the writing stage.

**2. The new challenges confronting international aid, and in particular a new context that is particularly unfavourable to women's rights and the promotion of gender equality both in Canada and internationally, call for a renewal of our strategies and practices, especially where policy dialogue and funding are concerned.**

It is essential for organizations and activists working for women's rights to show creativity and to develop new ways of overcoming challenges old and new if we are to seize the opportunities offered by the new architecture of international aid and Canadian aid policy. Basic ingredients in a recipe for effective action include a solid capacity for policy analysis and critical thinking about trends in the international and Canadian political landscape, enlightened by a strategic vision and by close ties with activists and communities at the grassroots. Furthermore, in this age of crisis, our contextual analysis must consider the effects of the financial and economic crisis, the food crisis, and climate change on the status of women and the exacerbation of gender inequalities.

**3. It is critical for us to repoliticize our work and our discourse, and to clarify the vision of social change and of gender relations change that we are trying to instill.**

We must recentre our work around a bold conception of international cooperation as an instrument of social change. Only this will make it possible to eradicate poverty and social injustice while building a more egalitarian world for women and men. This vision must be constructed in close collaboration with our partners in the Global South and with women's movements. It must be firmly rooted in specific local contexts.

**4. It is essential that we invest in bold strategies to tackle the root causes of women's poverty, violence against women, and power imbalances between women and men.**

These issues must be linked to other struggles for economic and social justice. A determination to tackle the root causes must pervade all of our work, whether it involves women's economic empowerment, women's leadership and political empowerment, education, sexual and reproductive health, combating violence, etc.



**5. Current approaches to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment must be re-examined, politicized, and reappropriated by Canadian international cooperation stakeholders. The political dimension of these approaches must be restored to its central position, and we absolutely must counteract the observed trend towards the bureaucratization, technification, and depoliticization of these approaches.**

More and more people draw attention to the potential of the rights-based approach to reframe the work of the organizations in order to allow for more in-depth transformation of power relations, emancipation, and inclusion; others draw attention to the importance of restoring the feminist analysis to its central position in policies and programs and within the very structures of our organizations.

**6. Levels of investment in gender equality and women's empowerment have not been commensurate with the policy statements and commitments issued by CIDA and the ICOs. New funding approaches are necessary; more particularly, there is a need for better coordination between resources allocated to specific gender equality projects and resources devoted to the cross-cutting approach.**

While contemplated in the Beijing Platform for Action, the idea of coordination between these two strategies has often been misinterpreted. In practice, in the last decade, the cross-cutting approach has tended to dominate while specific projects have declined, and this is true for both CIDA and the ICOs.

**7. The importance of specific gender equality projects must be given more recognition. Funding for these types of projects must be increased and become a key Canadian international cooperation strategy for advancing the cause of women's rights and gender equality.**

Despite the limited resources allocated to these types of projects, experience has shown that they yield the most significant results in terms of advancing women's rights and combating gender inequalities. CIDA must honour and be held accountable to its 2006 commitment to

increase the share of its specific budget. The ICOs, likewise, should re-examine their funding priorities and the place of specific gender-related projects within them. While external funding constraints, especially those imposed by CIDA, wield an increasing amount of influence over the work of the ICOs, the organizations retain some leeway to choose their Southern partners, to prioritize certain types of work and projects, and to inject a transformative vision of gender relations into these projects.

**8. The cross-cutting approach must be reinforced and reinvented if it is to yield tangible results in the area of gender equality and advancement of women's rights.**

For both CIDA and the ICOs, research and experience have shown that in practice, the cross-cutting approach has quite often been marked by a phenomenon of evaporation or invisibility of results. One important cause of this phenomenon is a lack of genuine political will and commitment to gender equality, resulting in an insufficient allocation of financial and human resources to the objective of gender integration. Further problems encountered when implementing the cross-cutting approach are the lack or weakness of gender institutionalization mechanisms, the inadequacy of training and tools for staff members, and the weakness of established accountability systems.

CIDA and the ICOs must recognize that a cross-cutting approach has costs. It is unrealistic to hope that commitments to gender equality will effectively take place without a considerable allocation of resources, particularly for development of staff knowledge, skills, and commitment. To counteract the pattern of evaporation that has characterized the majority of past initiatives, it is important that there be an explicit and visible statement of both the commitments made and the results targeted by the cross-cutting approach as well as the resources required to meet these commitments and achieve these results (notably through gender-sensitive budgeting).

**9. Both CIDA and the ICOs must make efforts to improve their monitoring and accountability mechanisms. They must have reliable methods for measuring changes in and impacts on the lives of women and girls as a result of the projects carried out, especially with regard to the power dynamic transformation between women and men.**

**Efforts to improve accountability should be designed in a spirit conducive to organizational learning and collective knowledge about gender equality.**

It is likewise important to improve accounting mechanisms and systems for budgets allocated to gender-equality-related programs, initiatives, and activities. In particular, a system is needed to improve investment measurement and monitoring in the cross-cutting approach. These accounting mechanisms and systems must go beyond mere statements of intent at the project design phase to encompass genuine financial measures of effort expended as well as assessments of the effective use of resources assigned to gender equality promotion. CIDA and the organizations must publish detailed information on their funding of gender equality initiatives.

**10. Dialogue with Southern partners must be enhanced with a view to constructing a shared vision of the goals, approaches, and activities necessary to the pursuit of gender equality and women's rights.**

In order to engender this dynamic, Canadian international cooperation stakeholders must be more attentive to the realities, points of view, and aspirations of the partners and populations – women and men – with whom they work. In addition, this entails a review of partner selection criteria to ensure more systematic and explicit inclusion of the goal of gender equality. In particular, minimal criteria must include the organizations' openness and willingness to move towards a more in-depth integration of gender considerations into their mandate and work. Ultimately, this requires a firm commitment on the part of Canadian stakeholders to making gender equality central to relations with the partners, and notably to implementing an innovative process of accompaniment that is specifically rooted in cultural realities and specificities. This can only take place if sufficient human and financial resources are specifically allocated to the goal of gender equality.

**11. The importance of the role played by Global South women's organizations and movements in the promotion of women's rights and gender equality must be given more recognition and support.**

Women's organizations and rights advocacy groups play a critical role in inducing changes in mentalities, behaviours, and cultural practices and in the enactment of more egalitarian laws and standards. Despite this important role, they remain underfunded by Canadian international cooperation organizations and other international donors. Their access to decision-making and consultation spheres remains limited. Their role as key stakeholders and interlocutors in the construction of a more gender-equal world must be given more recognition and support by Canadian international cooperation stakeholders, including both CIDA and Canadian CSOs. To sum up, the construction of a strong, diversified, multi-generational women's rights movement that finds its deep inspiration in the grassroots must be prioritized as a key strategy for the achievement of gender equality.

## **II. Concerning CIDA specifically:**

### **12. CIDA must make major efforts to secure compliance with its Policy on Gender Equality and effective, systematic implementation of that policy.**

Results obtained on gender equality to date remain highly variable from one sector, geographical area, and/or partnership to another. CIDA must tackle the many internal obstacles and constraints that prevent it from genuinely institutionalizing gender and cause its policy commitments to evaporate in practice (see paragraph 8). It must also review its mechanisms for channeling Canadian aid through ICOs, national governments, and multilateral agencies, paying close attention to the demonstrated commitment of these entities to gender equality and using any leverage it may have to ensure that a concern for gender equality is incorporated into the projects funded. CIDA's internal review of the Policy on Gender Equality<sup>39</sup> is a golden opportunity to make the changes and reforms necessary to improve the integration of gender equality considerations into Canadian official development assistance.

### **13. CIDA must revisit its commitment to gender equality and women's rights in the current context, marked by an emphasis on aid effectiveness and new aid modalities.**

In this context, CIDA's Policy on Gender Equality has been weakened as a result of more intense pressure for visible results, the concentration of aid in certain sectors, and a tendency for policy to evaporate in program-

<sup>39</sup> The results of this review were made public in February 2009.

based approaches and other new aid modalities. The Agency must revisit the mechanisms by which its policy is applied, strive towards a more cohesive institutional vision and strategy, and develop the knowledge necessary to adapt and act strategically in this new context.

**14. The central role played by both Southern and Canadian civil society in regard to gender equality and women's rights must be recognized and not marginalized in an ongoing context of aid effectiveness marked, in particular, by direct budgetary support and sectoral support. In particular, CIDA must recognize that women's organizations and other organizations working for women's rights are key allies in advocating and lobbying national governments for national policies and plans containing gender equality as an integral component.**

Institutional support to these organizations must be a fundamental component of Canadian aid, and it must be framed within a strategy conducive to greater democracy and active participation by these organizations in public debate. Only under such conditions can women's specific interests be effectively taken into account in national development plans and in aid programs funded by Canada and other donor countries.

**15. The social, cultural, economic, and political transformations necessary to the attainment of gender equality take place over the long term and require greater allocations of physical and human resources.**

Canada's official development assistance tends to put a premium on control, tight timelines, and results-based management. It prioritizes easily measurable short-term changes in place of the complex long-term changes necessary to address the issues of power and of access to and control over resources that are central to eliminating gender inequalities and alleviating women's poverty.

The dominant vision among most donors today is a linear, technocratic, short-term vision that is not capable of producing the results we want. It must be replaced by a longer-term, more politically aware vision comprising more stable and predictable funding, conducive to innovative approaches, and open to a certain amount of risk.

**16. Under the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act, CIDA funding is required to contribute to poverty reduction, take into account the perspectives of the poor, women and men, and be consistent with international human rights standards.**

This act should be considered by both CIDA and civil society as a valuable tool for reaffirming their commitment to women's rights and gender equality in Canadian international cooperation. They can and should draw on it as a catalyst for strengthening the CIDA Policy on Gender Equality.

**III. With specific reference to Québec and Canadian ICOs:**

**17. Firming up political will at the highest levels (ICO management and boards of directors) is decisive in creating an environment conducive to integrating and prioritizing gender equality into the organizations.**

Management has a key role to play in appropriately and effectively supervising the integration of gender equality, which by definition affects every management structure of the organization. Management's role is fundamental in holding all employees and volunteers accountable for their actions in regard to gender equality and in overcoming any obstacles or resistance, which often lead to the above-mentioned phenomenon of evaporation. Management's key role must also make itself felt outside the organization through support for promotion and policy dialogue around women's rights and gender equality.

Collective initiatives to strengthen the leadership role and commitment of ICO management on gender equality must be taken and reinforced, concurrent with the internal advocacy role played by women's rights activists vis-à-vis the management of their organizations. ICO joint board/management meetings on gender equality should be held in order to foster peer emulation<sup>40</sup>, strengthen management's active support for gender equality, and clarify the decisive role played by management in driving the relevant initiatives internally. AQOCI, CCIC, and CIDA have an important motivating role to play in this regard.

<sup>40</sup> The breakfast meeting held during the conference, attended by 30 management representatives of ICOs, human rights organizations, AQOCI, and CCIC (with the participation of CIDA and one speaker from the Global South) is a good example of the sort of gathering that is favourable to peer emulation.

**18. Political will must go hand in hand with the necessary organizational changes, and particularly the taking of measures to develop gender equity within organizational structures, procedures, and culture.**

In order for any organization to effectively promote gender equality and women's empowerment, its organizational culture must be aligned with its mission and be reflected in the expression of consistent values and attitudes on the part of the staff and management, thus creating a conducive environment. Research and experience have highlighted the need for systematic organizational change efforts designed to improve the institutionalization of gender within organizations. Such efforts must extend over the long term; they can be facilitated by establishing gender policies, performing gender audits (also known as gender self-assessments), and implementing action plans suited to the realities of each organization.

**19. Building staff commitment and capacity in the area of gender equality is a basic condition for the effective integration of gender considerations.**

The relatively low priority given to gender considerations and the inadequacy of the funding allocated to the goal of gender equality have translated into a generalized lack of human resources assigned to these considerations. The result is that even where a formal commitment to gender equality exists, organizations and individuals lack the knowledge and tools with which to suitably incorporate gender equality into their mandate and programming.

Furthermore, the unfortunate truth is that training and capacity building initiatives have tended to convey a technocratic vision (e.g., checklists, deliverables, etc.) to the detriment of true ownership of the approach that values its political character.

Thus, it is not just a matter of increasing the number and frequency of training and capacity building initiatives, but also of revisiting their content. They must above all be designed to encourage heightened individual commitment to gender equality and to instill a transformative approach that is genuinely capable of addressing the unequal power dynamics between women and men as well as the structural impediments to

women's empowerment. Moreover, efforts should be made to offer training sessions whose content is pertinent and suited to the job descriptions and mandates of each different staff member. The training must go beyond gender sensitization to equip the participants with the technical proficiency necessary to incorporate gender considerations into their mandates.

Training and awareness raising efforts must be accompanied by an emphasis on recruitment of people with a manifest commitment to gender equality and women's rights. Concurrently, organizations must implement accountability mechanisms and incentives with a view to improving performance in this area.

#### **IV. Concerning relations among Canadian international cooperation stakeholders:**

##### **20. Dialogue and alliances among Canadian international cooperation stakeholders around the advancement of women's rights and gender equality must be reinforced.**

Better and more frequent dialogue can be important in creating an environment conducive to gender equality in Canadian international cooperation.

##### **21. In terms of dialogue among ICOs, it is important to create or strengthen discussion forums that allow for the improvement of organizational capacity, peer emulation, or the development of collective advocacy strategies.**

Existing initiatives (Comité Québécois Femmes et Développement, "Gender in Practice" community, SID gender network, CCIC women's rights group, etc.) must be reinforced so that they can play a more front-line role and rise to the challenges facing organizations as well as the women's rights activists working for them. Networks like AQOCI and CCIC have an important role to play in mobilizing ICOs around this type of concerted initiative.

Collective initiatives should also be envisaged in countries where several Canadian international cooperation stakeholders, and particularly several ICOs, have operations. Forums should be created for discussion and professional development on gender issues among all Canadian

international cooperation partners in a single country, for instance. Such initiatives could be a creative and concerted solution to a situation in which local partners and staff are beset by a lack of funding and staff specializing in gender-related capacity building.

**22. The dialogue between CIDA and CSOs, particularly ICOs, must be reinforced and framed within the perspective of mutual responsibility with a view to strengthening these stakeholders' commitment to gender equality.**

While CIDA has a crucial role to play in compelling the ICOs to effectively apply its Policy on Gender Equality, the more progressive ICOs on gender issues have an equally critical role in eliciting innovation and in urging the Canadian government and CIDA to respect Canada's international commitments to gender equality. Greater openness on CIDA's part and the establishment of consultative and participatory processes are basic conditions for such a dialogue to take hold.

**23. It is critical to reinforce and consolidate strategic collaborations and alliances with a wide range of stakeholders in Québec and Canadian civil society, and particularly with the women's movement, the trade union movement, and academia.**

Such solidarity is crucial to giving a newly politicized impetus to the goal of gender equality, strengthening the development of critical feminist thought, moving into new loci of knowledge, and consolidating the body of knowledge that we need to support our action. In addition, such networking is an essential driver of the mobilization of Québec and Canadian civil society to ensure that the voice of international cooperation that speaks from a place of solidarity, social justice, human rights, and gender equality is heard.

**24. To achieve this level of dialogue, concerted action, and construction of collective power, the stakeholders (ICOs, other CSOs, and CIDA) must devote more time and energy to structured, face-to-face discussions.**

Such structured training and discussion forums are essential to achieving mutual understanding, developing a similar comprehension of the

political context and strategies, negotiating differences, coordinating collective action, and amplifying possible synergies among different areas of work. Successfully carrying out such a process demands the capacity to develop new ideas and a vision that brings people together, in spite of their differences, in their attempts to attain a broader goal; namely, gender equality and the advancement of women's rights.

**25. This dialogue should be a source of inspiration, creativity, and renewal for women's rights activists. It should serve to rally ever larger numbers of people to a full commitment to the movement for gender equality and women's empowerment in Canadian international cooperation. In particular, innovative and inclusive strategies must be adopted with a view to getting more men involved.**

Men are key allies, yet, they remain in the minority both numerically and in terms of the intensity of their involvement in these forums. A thoroughgoing strategic transformation is necessary so that men, just as women, feel concerned, involved, and mobilized around the goal of gender equality. This is a major challenge that women's rights activists will have no choice but to tackle in the coming years. It relates equally to Canadian international cooperation stakeholders, their Southern partners, and the populations and communities with whom we work.

**26. Finally, in order for this work of dialogue and consensus building among Canadian international cooperation stakeholders to take on genuine legitimacy and credibility, dialogue and close collaboration with Southern organizations and networks will be indispensable. In this regard, we must ensure that we can continue to build and reinforce such networks, fund them, and use them more effectively.**

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## CONCLUSION

If one had to briefly sum up the atmosphere that reigned throughout the two days of the conference, there would surely be a consensus around words such as energy, mobilization, networking, inspiration, and passion. After such an intense period of discussion and debate, what will it take to keep the momentum going, to nurture this will to collective action? As we return to our respective organizations and networks, how can we continue to cultivate the energy and creativity necessary to build a more egalitarian world between women and men, girls and boys, in the face of the obstacles we encounter every day?

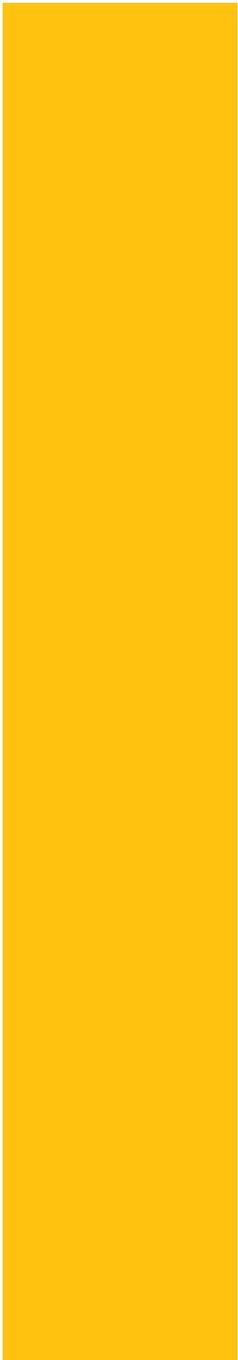
There is evidently a certain tension between those who see gender integration and the building of knowledge and tools as a panacea, and those who would put more emphasis on political commitment, the need to repoliticize our approach and strategies and to call for a vision centering around women's human rights. The convergence of these two paths appears to be the solution to ensuring that every organization and individual has the political commitment, the solid analytical capacities, the know-how, and the passion necessary to effectively incorporate gender equality and women's rights into their development work.

A key observation emerging clearly from the conference is that there is both a need and a desire, expressed by the organizations and especially the women's rights activists who work for them, to pool our efforts towards finding solutions, deriving lessons, exchanging best practices, and carrying out collective initiatives. The conference highlighted a number of ongoing initiatives with which we would do well to engage as a way of renewing our practices relating to gender equality<sup>41</sup>. Judging by the copious energy and commitment expressed during the two days of the conference, we can expect more such initiatives to come into view in the months and years ahead. Each will be a new opportunity for us to devote our efforts to the goal of strengthening the integration of gender equality into Canadian international cooperation and renewing our organizations' commitment to the advancement of women's rights!

And so, the time is ripe for dialogue, for going beyond the bounds of our organizations to implement collective strategies and actions. The strength of our movement resides in the great number of people we represent and also in the vision, the creative energy, the passion we share as a group. Together, and hand in hand with our partners and with women's organizations of the Global South, may we continue to build the very world of social justice and gender justice to which we aspire!

<sup>41</sup> For further information and to get involved, see the appendix for a partial list of these initiatives and resource people.





**APPENDICES**

# THE COORDINATORS

## **Comité Québécois Femmes et Développement (CQFD) of the Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale (AQOCI)**

AQOCI comprises 69 organizations working in Quebec and abroad for sustainable human development.

AQOCI promotes and supports the work of its members and their initiatives in favour of international cooperation. Through the actions of its members, AQOCI works towards the eradication of poverty and the construction of a world based on principles of justice, inclusion, equality, and respect for human rights.

Created in May 1984, the Comité Québécois Femmes et Développement (Quebec women and development committee) comprises members of AQOCI working alongside representatives and/or members of women's groups, universities, trade unions, and community-based organizations.

The CQFD aims to be a place for debate and critical reflection on all issues concerning the role of women in development. It strives to promote a feminist vision of development and to support solidarity between groups of women from the Global North and South.



**For more information: [www.aqoci.qc.ca](http://www.aqoci.qc.ca)**

## **Gordon Global Fellowship program of the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation**

Walter Lockhart Gordon, his wife Elizabeth and Walter's brother Duncan established the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation in 1965. Their passion for a strong, independent Canada and Walter Gordon's belief in the importance of well-grounded public policy as the basis of a strong society gradually emerged as the defining characteristic of the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation.

In 2005, the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation launched a new programme of grant-making called Global Citizenship, focused on young Canadians and members of diaspora communities. One objective of this programme is to support initiatives that educate young Canadians about key international aid, security and development challenges and engage them in the pursuit of practical, just and sustainable solutions.

In 2006, as a complement to its grant-making activities, the Foundation initiated the Gordon Global Fellowship program. The fellowship programme is targeted towards young and emerging leaders in Canada who have demonstrated a commitment to international issues. Rita Soares Pinto, one of the organizers of this conference, was a recipient of a 2007-08 Gordon Global Fellowship.



**For more information: [www.gordonfn.org](http://www.gordonfn.org)**

# THE PARTNERS

**The organization of the January 2009 conference and the production of the conference proceedings were made possible by the support of:**

## SUCO

SUCO (Solidarité Union Coopération) is an international cooperation and solidarity organization whose mission is to empower disadvantaged populations to become more actively involved in their development through capacity building and support for the establishment of participatory democracy, with respect for people and their environment. In Québec, SUCO works to enhance public involvement in solidarity work by contributing to general knowledge of international development issues.



**For more information: [www.suco.org](http://www.suco.org)**

## The Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC)

The Council is a coalition of Canadian voluntary sector organizations working globally to achieve sustainable human development. The Canadian Council for International Co-operation seeks to end global poverty and to promote social justice and human dignity for all. The Council comprises about 100 Canadian voluntary sector organizations working to end global poverty.



**For more information: [www.ccic.ca](http://www.ccic.ca)**

## Oxfam-Québec

Founded in 1973, Oxfam-Québec is a non-profit, secular, nonpartisan organization which promotes international cooperation and solidarity. Oxfam-Québec is a member of Oxfam International (OI), a worldwide organization which comprises 13 affiliates active in more than 125 countries. Oxfam-Québec is dedicated to supporting its partners and colleagues in developing countries in the design and implementation of sustainable solutions to poverty and injustice. The organization also mobilizes the people of Québec in order to allow the expression of their solidarity.



**For more information: [www.oxfam.qc.ca](http://www.oxfam.qc.ca)**

## Financial partners of the January 2009 conference:



Agence canadienne de  
développement international

Canadian International  
Development Agency



Confédération  
des syndicats nationaux



Droits et Démocratie  
Rights & Democracy

Centre international des droits de la personne et du développement démocratique  
International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development



Patrimoine  
canadien

Canadian  
Heritage



# AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES

**Gerry BARR** is the President-CEO of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) a coalition representing about 100 leading Canadian non-governmental organizations engaged in international development. Mr. Barr is a Member of the Order of Canada. He was awarded the Pearson Peace Medal in 1996 and the World Peace Award from the World Federalist Movement in 2008.

He is the co-chair of Make Poverty History (Canada). Gerry Barr is also co-chair of the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group – a national coalition organized to monitor, and promote public discussion of the human rights implications of anti-terrorism laws in Canada and other countries.

Before joining CCIC in January of 2001, Gerry Barr was the Executive Director of the Steelworkers Humanity Fund, an NGO that supports projects undertaken by partner organizations in 13 countries. He has served on several Boards and Steering Committees including those of the North South Institute (1994-2000), the Ethical Trading Action Group (1996-2000), the Horn of Africa Policy Group (1991-1993).

**Ariane BRUNET** was the Coordinator of the Women's Rights Program for Rights & Democracy in Montreal from 1992-2008. Ms. Brunet works on women's human rights in armed conflict situations since 1996 when she contributed to establishing a mechanism to monitor transitional justice system around the issue of impunity on sexual violence, the Coalition for Women's Human Rights in Conflict Situations. Ms. Brunet also played a key role in encouraging the United Nations to establish the office of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women.

Ms. Brunet is a co-founder of the Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights (UAF) established in 1998. She also was a member of the International Advisory Committee for the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual

Slavery, in 2000. She was a board member of the Women's Caucus for Gender Justice and is now on the Advisory Council of the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice (WIGJ).

She is the author of the first international Declaration on reparations for women and girls, *The Nairobi Declaration on Women's and Girls' Right to Remedy and Reparation* (2007). In 2008, she has worked on highlighting the work of local activists in Eastern Congo working on sexual violence, ensuring their security and well-being. Ms. Brunet presently works as a consultant with the Northern Uganda Project People First: Community Response and Responsibility to Building Accountability and Reparation Programs, Northern Uganda at the Feinstein International Center of Tufts University in Boston.

**Myriam GERVAIS** is Associate Professor with the Centre for Research and Teaching on Women of McGill University where she is in charge of a multidisciplinary program on rural women and African poverty reduction strategy. She holds a doctorate in political science.

Ms. Gervais's research focuses on participatory approaches and development aid policy. As an advisor for several development agencies, she works on rural women's empowerment and good governance in Africa (Rwanda, Guinea, Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso). Her research has led to several publications on governance and gender equality in post-conflict situations. She has just published a study in *"L'aide canadienne au développement: bilan, défis et perspectives"* (Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2008) on the integration of a gender approach into Canadian cooperation.

**Sarah HENDRICKS** has worked in leadership positions as an advisor on gender equality policy and program development, particularly in the areas of gender justice, governance, and HIV & AIDS. Sarah is the

Gender Equality and HIV Advisor for Plan Canada. As part of this work, Sarah has co-designed a global capacity development program on gender equality and was the lead gender advisor for Plan's global report on girls' rights *Because I am a Girl: the State of the World's Girls*.

Previously, Sarah has worked as the senior gender specialist for the Institute for Public Administration of Canada-Good Governance Programme. From 2002-2005, Sarah worked in Malawi with Women and the Law in Southern Africa Research and Education Trust (WLSA), an organization distinguished throughout Southern Africa for its work in empowering women. She also worked on the issue of Gender-Based Violence in Malawi for the German Cooperation Agency GTZ and for the Canadian Cooperation Agency CIDA.

Sarah holds a Master's degree in Adult Education and Community Development and a Bachelor's degree in International Justice and Human Rights Studies.

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**Joanna KERR** is the Director of Policy and Outreach for Oxfam Canada. She is the former Executive Director of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). She has been an advisor to Rita Soares Pinto for her Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation fellowship as well as numerous organizations including Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice, Mama Cash, the UN Trust Fund on Violence Against Women and The Stephen Lewis Foundation. In the nineties, she was a Senior Researcher at The North-South Institute in Ottawa where she managed the gender program.

Joanna Kerr holds a Master's degree in Gender and Development from the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK. She is on the board of the Nobel Women's Initiative, the Gender at Work Collaborative, and an advisor to JASS. Some of her recent publications include *Financial Sustainability for Women's Movements Worldwide* (AWID 2007) and *The Future of Women's Rights: Global Visions and Strategies* (2004, ZED press) edited with Ellen Sprenger and Alison Symington.

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**Rose MENSAH-KUTIN** is the Director of the Accra-based West African Regional Office of ABANTU for Development, a women's rights organization that works to promote gender responsiveness in policies in Africa. She is also the current Convenor of the Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT), a membership organization that focuses on economic justice and women's land rights.

Dr. Mensah-Kutin holds a PhD in Gender and Energy Studies from the University of Birmingham, UK. She also holds a Master's degree in Development Studies from the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands.

She worked at the Daily Graphic from 1980-89, where she undertook several socio-economic and political assignments, particularly as they related to women. From 1990-98, she coordinated the unit in charge of assessing the impacts of energy policies, programmes and projects on beneficiary groups and communities at the National Energy Board.

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**Bernadette NTUMBA** acts like a focal point for the territorial Commission on the fight against sexual violence, in the territory of Uvira (CTLVS/Uvira), in the South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo. This Commission (CTLVS/Uvira) was created in 2007 and rises partly from the coalition of NGOs called the "Synergy of associations fighting against sexual violence" founded in 2005 and in which Mrs. Ntumba already took part. CTLVS/Uvira belongs to the "joint Initiatives of fights against sexual violence" which include the government of the DRC and its ministries, its army and the police force, the United Nations agencies, international NGOs and local associations. Mrs. Ntumba is also the coordinator of the Association of the Christian Moms for the Assistance with Vulnerable (AMCAV).

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**Rita SOARES PINTO** is a fellow of the Walter & Duncan Gordon Foundation. Her fellowship project focuses on the renewal of Canadian cooperation actors' involvement in implementing women's rights and strengthening gender equality. In this context, she is the initiator of the conference "Women's rights and gender equality in Canadian cooperation: Challenges and perspectives", and of this publication. She also conducted research in Canada and Mali and is the founder of the "Genre en pratique" Community of practice

among international cooperation organizations on the topic of gender institutionalization.

Rita Soares Pinto is Gender Equality Program Officer at Oxfam-Quebec. Previously, she worked as an advisor and trainer on gender issues for various organizations (among them, CQFD of AQOCI) and worked as Program Officer for SUCO (2002-07). She also participated in various public awareness and advocacy campaigns. She has worked in several countries around the world including Brazil, Peru, Mali, France and Canada. As member of AQOCI's Comité Québécois Femmes et Développement (CQFD) since 2002, she has served on the coordinating committee for several years. Rita holds a Master's degree in development from the Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium) and a Master's degree in rural studies and development from the University Toulouse II-Le Mirail (France).

**Rebecca TIESSEN** is Associate Professor and Research Chair in Global Studies and Leadership at the Royal Military College and Adjunct Professor in Global Development Studies at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario. Her publications include a recent book titled "Everywhere/Nowhere: Gender Mainstreaming in Development Agencies", several journal articles and book chapters on gender mainstreaming in AIDS and environmental programs, and in Canadian foreign policy.

She has carried out gender and development research in Malawi, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. From 1996-1998, Rebecca worked as a Gender Projects officer in Malawi. In 2005 she evaluated CIDA-funded gender programs in tsunami-affected communities in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. Rebecca hosted a workshop on gender, HIV/AIDS and human security at Dalhousie University in August of 2007. Some of her most recent work analyzes gender and food security in Ghana.

**L. Muthoni WANYEKI** is a political scientist who works on development communications, gender and human rights and has published in these areas.

She is currently the Executive Director of the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), a national, non-governmental organization that works for the achievement of all human rights for all Kenyans

through research, advocacy and civic action-the last through 21 community-based human rights networks across the country. The KHRC is also a key member of Kenyans for Peace with Truth and Justice (KTPJ), a coalition of citizens, governance, human rights and legal organizations active during and in the aftermath of the 2007 General Elections and the violence that ensued as a result.

She was previously, for seven years, the Executive Director of the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEmNET), a pan-African membership organization that works towards African women's development, equality and other human rights through advocacy at the regional and international levels, training on gender analysis and mainstreaming and communications.

She is a political columnist with the East African, the sub-regional weekly published by the Nation media Group. And she serves as an advisor/Board member to several organizations including: the African Feminist Forum (AFF); the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) in Accra; the African women's fellowship programme and African Leadership Centre (ALC) of the Conflict, Security and Development Group (CSDG) at King's College London (KCL); Akina mama wa Afrika (AmWA) in Kampala and London; Article 19's Africa programme in London and Nairobi; the Forum International de Montréal (FIM); the Global Fund for Women in San Francisco; the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) in Nairobi; and the Open Society Initiative (OSI)'s Afrimap and Justice Initiative-Africa.

**Flory YAX TIU** is a Mayan Quiche woman from Guatemala. Flory has worked in civil society organizations, especially indigenous women's organizations, for 14 years, and has dedicated her efforts to building and strengthening women's technical, organizational, administrative and political capacities.

She currently works as coordinator of the women's program for Project Counselling Service (PCS), a rights-based international NGO dedicated to accompaniment of local and national organizations as well as

regional networks across Central America and Southern Mexico. This work involves sustaining direct relationships with women's organizations in Chiapas, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, offering them political and technical support, as well as creating spaces for exchange, learning and collaboration among organizations and women's movements throughout the region. Since 2000, Flory has also been an active member of Kaqla, a group of Mayan women that works to build the autonomy of indigenous women. She currently sits on Kaqla's advisory board.

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# CONFERENCE PROGRAM

**DAY 1 – MONDAY, 19 JANUARY, 2009**

**PASCALE FOURNIER**, Moderator

**9:00 – 9:30 OPENING OF CONFERENCE**

- Maria-Luisa Monreal and Fréda Thélusma, AQOCI
- Natasha Sawh, Walter & Duncan Gordon Foundation
- Rita Soares Pinto, Fellow, Walter & Duncan Gordon Foundation, Oxfam-Québec

**9:30 – 11:00 PANEL 1: INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

- Openings and oppositions: global trends for gender equality and international cooperation  
*Joanna Kerr, Oxfam Canada*
- Gender Equality and women's rights in Canadian cooperation: Contextual concerns  
*L. Muthoni Wanyeki, Kenyan Human Rights Commission, Kenya*
- Aid effectiveness in the wake of a global financial crises: implications for the promotion of women's rights  
*Rose Mensah Kutin, Abantu for development, Ghana*

**11:15 – 12:45 PANEL 2: STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES FOR THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

- Autonomy and indigenous women's right: challenges viewed by a critical analysis and self-criticism  
*Flory Yax Tiu, Project Counselling Service (PCS), Guatemala*
- The Congolese women's campaign against sexual violence: Putting an end to impunity  
*Bernadette Ntumba, Focal point for the territorial Commission on the fight against sexual violence, in the territory of Uvira, Democratic Republic of Congo*
- Political context and women's rights  
*Ariane Brunet, Co-Founder of Urgent action Fund for women's Human Rights in Conflict situation and consultant at the Feinstein International Center of Tufts University*

**Discussant:**

Michèle Asselin, President of the « Fédération des femmes du Québec » (FFQ)

**12:45 – 13:45 LUNCH BREAK**

**13:45- 15:30 PANEL 3: WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY IN CANADIAN COOPERATION**

- Making gender equality a cross-cutting dimension of Canadian aid efforts: what will it take to succeed?  
*Myriam Gervais, McGill Centre for Research and Teaching on Women (MCRTW), McGill University*
- Gender equality in Canadian cooperation: fulfilling a mutual responsibility  
*Rita Soares Pinto, Fellow, Walter & Duncan Gordon Foundation, Oxfam-Québec*
- The New ODA Accountability Act: a Framework to Advance Women's Rights  
*Gerry Barr, Canadian Council for International Co-operation - CCIC*

**Discussant:**

Diana Rivington, CIDA  
Molly Kane, Inter Pares

**15:45- 17:30: BREAKOUT SESSIONS: STRATEGIES FOR RENEWING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS ENGAGEMENT AND PRACTICES IN CANADIAN COOPERATION WORK**

**1. In the international context**

Speaker: Molly Kane, Inter Pares

**2. In Canadian cooperation**

Speaker: Robert Fox, Oxfam Canada

**3. In support to Southern organizations**

Speaker: Yolande Geadah, AQOCI



## **DAY 2 – TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2009**

### **8:00 – 9:30 BREAKFAST SESSION FOR ICO MANAGEMENT**

*Institutionalizing gender in ICOs: the role of ICO management*

By invitation only

Facilitator: Rieky Stuart, Gender at work

Speakers: L. Muthoni Wanyeki, Kenyan Human Rights Commission, Kenya ; Diana Rivington, CIDA

### **9:30 -10:30 PANEL 4: REINVENTING OUR GENDER INSTITUTIONALIZATION PRACTICES**

- What have we lost in the Mainstream? Challenges, impacts and new approaches to the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming within international NGOs.  
*Sarah Hendriks, Plan Canada*
- Gender Mainstreaming Strategies and the Promotion of Gender Justice in the Day-to-Day Lives of NGO Staff Members  
*Rebecca Tiessen, Queens University*

### **10:45- 12:30: WORKSHOPS- BLOC I**

#### **A. Reinforcing advocacy for gender equality within organizations: Strategies for creating meaningful change for women from the inside out**

Speakers: Tania Principe and Rieky Stuart, Gender at Work; Hélène Lagacé, CECI

#### **B. Good Practice in defining development results for Gender Equality: interactive session with CIDA**

Speakers: Diana Rivington and Ok-Kyung Pak, CIDA

#### **C. Research community and new practices for Canadian cooperation**

Speaker: Huguette Dagenais, Laval University

#### **D. Women rights in conflict zones (Rights and Democracy)**

Speakers: Bernadette Ntumba, focal point for the territorial Commission on the fight against sexual violence, in the territory of Uvira, Democratic Republic of Congo; Gisèle-Eva Côté, Marie Saint-Louis, Alexandra Gilbert and Micheline Lévesque, Rights and Democracy

Facilitator: Anick Druelle, Rights and Democracy.

### **12:30 -13:30: LUNCH BREAK**

**13:30 -15:15: Workshops: BLOC II****E. Institutional Gender Audits - A tool for measuring gender equity and empowerment within organizations**

Speaker: Karen Craggs-Milne, Gender Equality Incorporated

**F. Good Practice in defining development results for Gender Equality: interactive session with CIDA**

Speakers: Diana Rivington and Ok-Kyung Pak, CIDA

**G. « The power of movements »**

Speakers: Joanna Kerr, Oxfam Canada; Karen Takacs, Canadian Crossroads international – CCI; L. Muthoni Wanyeki, Kenyan Human Rights Commission - KHRC

**H. Climate change and gender equality**

Speakers: Christine Laliberté, Oxfam-Québec; Rose Mensah-Kutin, ABANTU for Development

**15:15 -15:45: Break and networking****15:45- 16:45: Plenary**

- Molly Kane, Inter Pares
- Robert Fox, Oxfam Canada
- Marie-Ginette Bouchard, Co-founder of the « Comité Québécois femmes et développement » and consultant

**16:45 – 17:00: CLOSING**

To read the workshops' presentations and learn more about the conference : [www.aqoci.qc.ca](http://www.aqoci.qc.ca), section Comité québécois femmes et développement.



## ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATING IN THE CONFERENCE

**Over 200 people representing over 100 organizations participated in the conference** (international cooperation organizations, women's organizations, unions, universities, community organizations, governmental and paragonmental institutions, etc.).

The **23 organizations** marked with an asterisk (\*) were represented by their management at the special workshop for ICO management held on 20 January 2009.

- A**  
ABANTU FOR DEVELOPMENT  
ACTION CANADA FOR POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
AID DEVELOPEMENT INTERNATIONAL  
ALTERNATIVES  
AIDE INTERNATIONALE POUR L'ENFANCE  
ALLIANCE FOR LIFE INTERNATIONAL  
AQOCI\*  
AWID
- C**  
CANADA WORLD YOUTH\*  
CANADIAN CROSSROADS INTERNATIONAL\*  
CANADIEN CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATION  
CARE CANADA\*  
CCF-CSQ  
CCIC\*  
CDHAL\*  
CECI\*  
CENTRE DE RECHERCHE ET D'ÉDUCATION À LA VIE FAMILIALE  
CENTRE DE RECHERCHE ET D'ENSEIGNEMENT SUR LES FEMMES, UNIVERSITÉ MC GILL  
CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE AND INNOVATION  
CHF  
CIDA\*  
CISO\*  
COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY, VANCOUVER  
CONFÉRENCE RÉGIONALE DES ÉLUS DE LA MONTÉRÉGIE EST  
CONSEIL DU STATUT DE LA FEMME  
CONSULTANTE PRIVÉE- ASSOCIÉE D'INTERALIA  
CONSULTATION CONTACTS MONDE INC.  
CRÉDIL \*  
C.S. CRIE  
CSN  
CUSO-VSO
- D**  
DANS LA RUE  
DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE
- E**  
ÉCOLE NATIONALE D'ADMINISTRATION PUBLIQUE  
ÉCOLE POLYTECHNIQUE DE MONTREAL
- ENGINEERS WITHOUT BORDERS CANADA  
EQUITAS\*
- F**  
FARM RADIO INTERNATIONAL  
FÉDÉRATION AUTONOME DU COLLÉGIAL  
FÉDÉRATION DES COOPÉRATIVES D'HABITATION INTERMUNICIPALE  
FEINSTEIN FAMINE CENTRE, TUFTS UNIVERSITY, BOSTON  
FEM INTERNATIONAL  
FFQ ET COORDINATION DU QUÉBEC POUR LA MARCHÉ MONDIALE DES FEMMES  
FIQ  
FOUNDATION PAUL GERIN-LAJOIE  
FTQ
- G**  
GENDER AT WORK\*  
GENDER EQUALITY INCORPORATED  
GENIVAR  
GROUPE CONSEIL INTERALIA
- H**  
HANDICAP INTERNATIONAL\*  
HPIC  
HYDRO-QUÉBEC
- I**  
IDRC - CRDI  
INITIATIVES CONSEILS INTERMONDE  
INSTITUT EDS, UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL  
INTER PARES\*
- K**  
KENYAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION\*
- M**  
MAISON D'HÉBERGEMENT- MAISON D'AMITIÉ  
MER ET MONDE \*  
MICRO-RÉCYC-COOP\*  
MINISTÈRE DES RELATIONS INTERNATIONALES DU QUÉBEC  
MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
- N**  
NORTHWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
- O**  
OPERATION EYESIGHT  
OXFAM-CANADA\*  
OXFAM-QUÉBEC\*
- P**  
PEACEBUILD - PAIX DURABLE  
PEEL DISTRICT BOARD & EDUCATION  
PEPINES
- PLAN CANADA  
PLAN NAGUA\*  
PROJECT COUNSELING SERVICE (PCS), GUATEMALA  
PROJET PADESS (HAÏTI) – ACDI
- Q**  
QUEBEC NATIVE WOMEN INC  
QUEENS UNIVERSITY, KINGSTON
- R**  
RELAIS FEMMES  
RÉSEAU DES FEMMES DES LAURENTIDES  
RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY \*  
ROOFTOPS CANADA - ABRI INTERNATIONAL  
ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE OF CANADA
- S**  
SACO  
SAVE THE CHILDREN CANADA  
SCEP  
SECTION LOCALE 145  
SENATE OF CANADA  
SUÇO\*  
SYNDICAT DE LA FONCTION PUBLIQUE DU QUÉBEC
- T**  
TERRE SANS FRONTIÈRES\*  
TERRITORIAL COMMISSION ON THE FIGHT AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE, UVIRA, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO
- U**  
UNIVERSALIA MANAGEMENT GROUP  
UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTRÉAL  
UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA  
UNIVERSITÉ LAVAL  
UNIVERSITÉ MC GILL  
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA  
UQAM
- V**  
VANIER COLLEGE  
VIE DES ARTS  
VOIX SANS FRONTIÈRES
- W**  
WALTER AND DUNCAN GORDON FOUNDATION\*  
WUSK-EUMC
- Y**  
YMCA CANADA

## COLLECTIVE GENDER EQUALITY INITIATIVES OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ORGANIZATIONS

The table below lists a number of forums for discussion and pooling of practices with a view to furthering the integration of gender equality into Canadian and Quebec international cooperation efforts:

Name	Objectives	Contacts
Comité québécois femmes et développement (CQFD) of l'AQOCI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To discuss and reflect critically on all concerns regarding women and development;</li> <li>To reinforce solidarity between groups of women from the North and the South;</li> <li>To promote feminism in development.</li> </ul> <p><b>Open to:</b> International cooperation organization members of AQOCI, individuals from all areas and sectors (international cooperation agencies, NGOs, unions, women's organizations, consultants, researchers, etc.)</p> <p><b>Location of meetings:</b> Montreal</p> <p><b>For more information:</b> <a href="http://www.aqoci.qc.ca">www.aqoci.qc.ca</a></p>	Fréda Thélusma/Julie Martineau, Program Managers, CQFD, AQOCI <a href="mailto:fhelusma@aqoci.qc.ca">fhelusma@aqoci.qc.ca</a> ; <a href="mailto:jmartineau@aqoci.qc.ca">jmartineau@aqoci.qc.ca</a>
Communauté « Genre en pratique » Community of practice focussed on the integration of gender in International Cooperation Organizations (ICO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To create a structured group that will share knowledge, strategies and tools on gender equality issues;</li> <li>To encourage the systematisation and the dissemination of knowledge, tools and good practices regarding gender equality;</li> <li>To strengthen gender analytical skills on current issues affecting development work;</li> <li>To motivate organisational learning and guide organisations through change processes allowing a better integration of gender equality</li> </ul> <p><b>Open to:</b> International cooperation organizations. It is also possible for individual members to join such as consultants, researchers, etc.</p> <p><b>Location of meetings:</b> Montreal</p> <p><b>For more information:</b> <a href="http://www.aqoci.qc.ca">www.aqoci.qc.ca</a></p>	Rita Soares Pinto, Initiator of the Community of practice <a href="mailto:rita.soares.pinto@gmail.com">rita.soares.pinto@gmail.com</a>  Fréda Thélusma/Julie Martineau, Program Managers, CQFD, AQOCI <a href="mailto:fhelusma@aqoci.qc.ca">fhelusma@aqoci.qc.ca</a> ; <a href="mailto:jmartineau@aqoci.qc.ca">jmartineau@aqoci.qc.ca</a>
Informal working group on women's rights  (Rotating chairmanship between members)	To strengthen the political agenda of women's rights in Canadian international cooperation. <b>Open to:</b> International cooperation organizations <b>Location of meetings:</b> Ottawa, possibility to participate by conference call	Dana Stefov, Program Officer, CCIC  <a href="mailto:dstefov@ccic.ca">dstefov@ccic.ca</a>
Gender Network (Professional association)  Society for International Development (SID)	Forum to discuss good practices and challenges; coordination of the integration of gender equality initiatives. <b>Open to:</b> professionals of civil society and public organisations, consultants <b>Location of meetings:</b> Ottawa	Margaret Capelazo, CHF <a href="mailto:Mcapelazo@chf-partners.ca">Mcapelazo@chf-partners.ca</a>







**To what extent have the actors of Canadian international cooperation made good on their commitment towards gender equality and women's rights? What challenges are they facing in their efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment? What lessons have we learned in terms of best practices and motivators of future initiatives? How can we renew the commitment of our organizations to gender equality and women's rights in Quebec and Canada?**

**These are some of the questions central to this volume of essays. Directed at specialists and laypersons alike, it aims to shed light on the challenges and issues that must be navigated as we strive to further the integration of gender equality and women's rights promotion in the twenty-first century. The authors highlight recommendations and strategies for collective action that can serve to guide the efforts of Canadian international cooperation actors in renewing and actualizing their commitments to gender equality and women's rights.**

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**In collaboration with:**

