



INTER PARES SUBMISSION TO DFATD CONSULTATION DRAFT CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

Inter Pares welcomes the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development's (DFATD) consultative process on its new Draft Civil Society Partnership Policy. We welcome the opportunity to build a relationship between Canadian civil society organizations (CSOs) and DFATD that is based on mutual respect, and that recognizes the commitment of Canadian CSOs, and ultimately their Canadian constituencies, to building a world that is peaceful, equal and just.

CSOs have long made important contributions to global development and North-South understanding, long engaged the Canadian public as global citizens, worked collaboratively with government and have given Canada visibility through our programs around the world. CSOs have raised billions of dollars from the Canadian public in supporting their respective missions and mandates.

Furthermore, we recognize many instances where CSOs have had a strong and collegial relationship with the Canadian government. We appreciate that DFATD and its predecessors have supported and do support CSOs in changing the world for the better. We hope that this process will lead to better understanding between government and CSOs and greater trust.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Inter Pares supports many of the aspirations and commitments by the government in the Draft Civil Society Partnership Strategy document. We recommend the following modifications:

- a.** Commit support for responsive programs addressing the stated needs, goals and priorities of CSOs.
- b.** Commit to funding mechanisms for the work of Canadian CSOs that are predictable, but also conducive to long-term, responsive programming.
- c.** Commit to an accompanying public action plan to implement the policy.
- d.** Make an explicit commitment to regular, open dialogue with Canadian CSOs.
- e.** Recognize the legitimacy of Canadian CSO interventions in domestic debates that are within their mandate.
- f.** Acknowledge Canadian CSO contributions to development as "knowledge-builders".
- g.** Ensure the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act (ODAAA) is foundational, non-negotiable and privileged compared to other instruments, given it is a Canadian domestic legislative requirement.

- h. Show a renewed and strengthened commitment to the promotion of women's rights.
- i. Provide greater recognition to CSOs as development actors in their own right, independent of their alignment with government policy.
- j. Remove objective 7 or expand it to include other relevant development actors.

RECOMMENDATIONS: DRAFT CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIP POLICY

RESPONSIVE PROGRAMMING:

Inter Pares believes DFATD's policy could better recognize the rich history, relevant experience and dynamism of Canadian CSO relationships with their Southern counterparts and their ability to act together for change. More importantly, **Inter Pares recommends DFATD commit explicitly in the policy to supporting responsive programs.** This would translate into support for funding mechanisms that favour addressing the stated needs, goals and priorities of Southern CSOs as formulated jointly with their Canadian counterparts. It would include ensuring a permanent departmental home for an entity responsible for "Canadian Partnerships" as well as openness to collaboration outside of this departmental unit. For smaller and medium-sized or even newer organizations, Canadian Partnerships would be an important place where organizations could seek to establish relationships, including funding relationships, with DFATD.

PREDICTABLE & TRANSPARENT FUNDING MECHANISMS FOR RESPONSIVE PROGRAMS:

While Canadian CSOs continually seek funding from a diverse range of sources including individuals, foundations, the private sector as well as various levels of government, since 2010-2011 Canadian civil society organizations in Canada have been operating in an environment in which CIDA/DFATD's funding mechanisms have been dismantled, with a lack of transparency as to future funding possibilities¹.

The Draft Civil Society Partnership Strategy states:

DFATD is committed to providing predictable funding opportunities, recognizing that CSOs are accountable to the communities they represent and require time to plan their programming.²

Furthermore, Minister Paradis stated on April 17, 2014:

Canada intends to provide predictable, equitable and transparent funding opportunities through different modalities that support the diverse roles of civil

¹ CCIC. June 2014. *Lack of timely and predictable funding from DFATD having detrimental impact on developing countries as well as Canadian organizations.* http://www.ccic.ca/files/en/media/2014_06_12_news_release_report_on_ee_for_csos.pdf

² DFATD. June 2014. *Draft Civil Society Partnership Policy.* <http://www.international.gc.ca/development-developpement/cs-policy-politique-sc.aspx?lang=eng>

*society; and to promote a multi-stakeholder dialogue to inform and facilitate a diversity of perspectives and approaches.*³

We support the stated commitment to provide predictable funding opportunities for CSOs. **Inter Pares recommends that funding mechanisms through DFATD for the work of Canadian CSOs must be not only predictable, but also conducive to long-term, responsive programming.** We also support the Minister's commitment that this support will extend to equitable and transparent funding opportunities through different modalities that support the diverse roles of civil society. Supporting a diversity of CSOs requires flexible and diverse funding mechanisms that are both responsive and directive to different organizational needs and capacities.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY:

As stated in the OECD-DAC peer review, **Inter Pares echoes the call for an accompanying public action plan** which includes:

- Clear and measureable objectives
- Identified departmental mechanisms
- Funding channels
- Provisions for periodic review

COMMITMENT TO DIALOGUE:

Inter Pares recommends that the policy should make an explicit commitment to regular, open dialogue with Canadian CSOs.

As Minister Paradis stated on April 17, 2014:

*Canada has committed to 'deepen, extend and operationalize the democratic ownership of development policies and processes' and to make multi-stakeholder partnership models the norm. Inclusive development, underpinned by democratic ownership, is essential to building a Post-2015 Development Agenda that delivers results.*⁴

Democratic ownership of development policies and processes can only be achieved through dialogue with CSOs to discuss development policies and processes, and to enact funding mechanisms that enable CSOs to effectively plan and implement innovative approaches to address development challenges at the local, regional and global levels.

³ DFATD. April 2014. *Statement by Minister Paradis on Canada's Commitment to Protect and Promote an Enabling Environment for Civil Society* <http://www.international.gc.ca/media/dev/news-communiqués/2014/04/17c.aspx?lang=eng>

⁴ DFATD. April 2014. *Statement by Minister Paradis on Canada's Commitment to Protect and Promote an Enabling Environment for Civil Society* <http://www.international.gc.ca/media/dev/news-communiqués/2014/04/17c.aspx?lang=eng>

CANADIAN ADVOCACY ROLE:

There must be recognition that the advocacy role played by Canadian CSOs includes collaborative actions with Southern CSOs to hold Southern governments responsible for their policies and actions, as well as directly holding the Canadian government responsible for its policies and actions. CSOs have a range of experience that is relevant to Canadian policy issues in the areas of foreign affairs, aid and trade. As advocates, CSOs have an explicit responsibility to discuss and debate the coherence of Canada's positions impacting poverty alleviation, democracy, peacebuilding and human rights. **Inter Pares recommends that the DFATD policy recognize the legitimacy of Canadian CSO interventions in domestic debates that are within their mandate.**

KNOWLEDGE-BUILDING:

Inter Pares suggests another stated role for civil society in addition to implementers, advocates, innovators and convenors. **We suggest that DFATD acknowledge Canadian CSO contributions to development as “knowledge-builders”.** Many organizations including Inter Pares support or conduct research activities, documentation and learning exchanges as part of their methodology. At times, this is done in conjunction with academic institutions. It is a role complementary to the idea of CSOs as “innovators” but also one that explores best practices and fosters continual learning.

PRIVILEGING THE ODAAA:

This draft policy lists a number of instruments, guiding DFATD's relationship and engagement with civil society. However, some of these instruments relate more to the government of Canada's aid commitments in general, while others relate to CSO commitments in the area of North-South relations. Inter Pares believes that there should be clarity in the policy on the relative importance and differing application of each. **Inter Pares recommends that the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act (ODAAA) should be foundational, non-negotiable and privileged compared to other instruments, given it is a domestic Canadian legislative requirement.**

RECOGNIZING WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS:

We welcome recognition of the Istanbul Principles, which are an important aspirational set of principles guiding the practices of civil society organizations globally. Inter Pares would particularly emphasize Principle #2: *Embody gender equality and equity while promoting women and girls' rights*. Though it may seem out of place to include “sectoral” or “thematic” priorities in a CSO policy, Inter Pares believes that given the centrality of women's/girls' rights in social justice work and in fact, in CIDA/DFATD's history, it is critical to do so.

Canadian CSOs continue to do internationally-recognized work in the area of promoting women's rights⁵. We believe the government of Canada should strengthen its support of this work. Recognition of the importance of this issue in the CSO strategy would aid in giving women's rights greater weight within DFATD priorities. It would also signal to CSOs that the government is serious about ending the marginalization of women in all its forms. **Inter Pares recommends that the policy should show a renewed and strengthened commitment to the promotion of women's rights.**

Though we welcome the importance given to the role of CSOs in democratic governance and poverty alleviation, we also feel that the promotion of human rights is also essential and should be mentioned more often as appropriate. As the policy currently states, "DFATD's support to civil society is a tangible expression of Canada's commitment to the core values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law."

ALIGNMENT WITH GOVERNMENT POLICY:

Throughout the draft strategy, there lies a tension between recognizing and supporting CSOs as development actors in their own right versus support only where there is alignment with government policy.

Canadian CSOs should be recognized by DFATD and treated as autonomous and independent. Canadian CSOs are not recipients, channels, contractors, or technicians-for-hire, but agents for change working in the international field alongside DFATD, as co-professionals and colleagues. Though the work and perspectives of CSOs can be complementary to those of the government, they can also reflect a differing opinion or strategy; in addition, they may simply be outliers to what the government deems integral to a stated geographic or thematic focus.

If innovation and new ideas are to flourish, the policy must recognize the need to support diversity of CSOs in all their forms. It must recognize the ability for CSOs and DFATD to engage in authentic debate and dialogue. It is not always convenient to support CSO diversity with its many voices and perspectives, but it is critical to the health and well-being of a functioning democracy and indicating as much is critical to the legitimacy of the DFATD policy statement.

Inter Pares recommends that DFATD provide greater recognition to CSOs as development actors in their own right, independent of their alignment with government policy.

PRIVATE SECTOR:

Objective 7 of the policy, *Foster Effective Partnerships Between the Private Sector and Civil Society Organizations* is inappropriate in a document about civil society. The private sector represents one actor, amongst many, and CSOs have collaborated with a range of different actors coming from various sectors. It should be mentioned alongside these other actors, such

⁵ For recent case studies detailing Canadian CSOs work on women's rights, see: http://ccic.ca/what_we_do/IP-case-studies_e.php

as multilateral agencies, diaspora groups and southern governments, not in isolation. **Inter Pares recommends that Objective 7 be removed or expanded to include other relevant development actors.**

INTER PARES

*Inter Pares - which means **among equals** – believes in solidarity as an approach to international cooperation. For 40 years, we have worked closely with courageous activists and more than a hundred inspiring organizations throughout the world to build peace, diminish poverty, advance justice and globalize equality. We work in over 20 countries including Canada.*

We work on six global issues: food sovereignty, women's equality, peace and democracy, economic justice, health, and migration.

Inter Pares is dedicated to empowering people to assert their own agency. By building relationships with, and supporting the work of civil society organizations, we help communities confront injustice, implement locally-adapted solutions, spark innovative initiatives and occupy the democratic space that belongs to them.

We are also committed to engaging Canadians in the struggles for justice and equality that people face around the world. We have over 7,000 committed donors across Canada and raise \$1.5 million from the public annually. Inter Pares is a member of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), and we believe profoundly in the value of coalition work.

Inter Pares believes that the relationship between DFATD and Canadian CSOs can be one which is mutually beneficial, one where both parties are open to debate, dissenting opinion and discussion on issues of mutual concern. The actions of CSOs must continue to be autonomous of government though there can be many areas of complementarity and collaboration.

Contacts:

Rita Morbia, Executive Director, rmorbia@interpares.ca

Jack Hui Litster, Fundraising Manager, jack@interpares.ca

Inter Pares

221 Laurier Ave. East

Ottawa, ON K1N 6P1

Tel: 613-563-4801