

In example after example, the evaluators heard of the effective role Inter Pares is contributing as chair or co-chair, or committee chair... and of the ability through networking and linkages and reputation, to draw in other members and other financial contributors.

It is our finding that Inter Pares maximizes its leverage by applying its own experience, reputation and analysis towards the achievement of financial, operational and substantive viability of the coalitions in which it engages.<sup>49</sup>

Challenges exist, especially with larger 'big tent' coalitions – those that include many organizations of varying sizes, constituencies, and differing objectives – where it may become difficult to agree on the analysis and the required action.

There have been a number of times when people want to join with different objectives. That is when the tensions can arise. [In one case], people wanted to join for reasons that the coalition was not set up to do. When you set up a coalition you have to be more or less clear what your common interests are as a group, what your objectives are. It's more a conflict of diverging objectives and interests, rather than divergence of membership in the group. [Furthermore,] there are politics involved in who participates. People may not want to participate if other groups are there, for safety issues. It is supposed to be a space where people trust each other and are mutually accountable.

– Staff member, Inter Pares

In Mining Watch Canada, there are a number of organizations that are front-line communities affected by mining. There are a few organizations that are institutional like Inter Pares. There are a bunch that are NGOs but really tiny, aboriginal communities, some of which have resources, some not. Quite a mixture in the membership and on the Board. That has always been a tension. One of the ways we try to deal with it is to even out the resources, give funds to front line organizations, understanding that they were giving volunteer time. Ensuring that community organizations were able to get funding to do research on effects of mining.

– Staff member, Inter Pares

Broad-based coalitions have proven to be well worth the time and resources invested to multiply the possible outcomes. The best way to illustrate the concrete results that have been achieved through coalition work is to

share some of Inter Pares' coalition experience. Using interviews, evaluation data, and staff's own experiences, we share two case studies that describe Inter Pares' work in coalition, the role the organization played, and the results that were collectively achieved.

### 3.2 Case study: Women organizing for health and justice

Inter Pares was building broad-based coalitions to mobilize the public, gathering women's experiences from the North and South ... it was truly the most remarkable experience of my life.

– Board member, Inter Pares

#### Listening to women's stories

In the early 1980s, building on relationships established in Canada and in Bangladesh, Inter Pares organized a women's exchange tour. Two women social activists from Bangladesh were invited to tour Canadian cities and communities to meet women, learn about their concerns, and see how they were organizing. In preparation for the tour, a staff member travelled across Canada to talk about Inter Pares and our work (internationally and in Canada), and to learn about how women were organizing in their communities. We wanted to see if there would be any interest among these Canadian groups in learning more about the realities of women overseas. Inter Pares had a history of organizing exchanges among groups in the North and South in order to build synergistic relationships based on common cause, to identify whether a mutuality of interest existed, and to identify areas for cooperation and action.

In preparation for the tour, I went to all these communities, and just sat down and talked to people. It was very open-ended. I described the work of Inter Pares and our work in different countries and shared what women were working on in Bangladesh. There was lots of interest from people. In those days that kind of an exchange was unusual.

– Staff member, Inter Pares

A report was prepared on each visit, and shared and discussed with groups in Canada and Bangladesh, informing the planning of the tour.

Health was a major issue for women in Bangladesh who, in addition to demanding basic health care and nutrition, were part of the struggle for an essential drug policy in the country that would allow for generic drug manufacturing and, thus, low-cost medicines. Inter Pares had heard stories about how long-acting, hormonal contra-

ceptives were being imposed on women in Bangladesh without their knowledge or informed consent and how women were forcibly sterilized as a result of population control measures. But we didn't start out knowing how this situation might link to women in Canada.

The two women activists invited to tour Canada were well educated, middle-class Bangladeshi women, and while not representative of the majority of women in Bangladesh (and certainly not claiming to be), Khushi Kabir and Shireen Huq had been part of their country's struggle for independence. They then helped organize women in urban and rural areas to fight for their rights. The organizations they represented were also involved in policy advocacy work, something Inter Pares saw as a strength.

You can't do strong policy work without it being rooted in what's happening at the local level. Inter Pares was always reluctant to just fund policy groups or just fund grassroots organizations. We believe in praxis ... It was important for us to work with organizations that resembled our own: organizations with sound relationships at grassroots levels that were helping to build policy and strategies based on people's lived experiences and knowledge. Inter Pares never claimed to be a grassroots organization. We supported community development work in Canada, we spoke with people, we supported and learned from their work, and tried to connect it to the work overseas, and vice versa, building policy on that.

– Staff member, Inter Pares

When the tour began, our guests from Bangladesh were very curious to know what the situation was like for women in Canada, and how they were organizing.

The three of us would arrive in a community, we'd introduce ourselves. I'd give a little spiel about Inter Pares, our relationship to the organizations the women worked for, why we had come, and present a slide show on women and Bangladesh. Khushi and Shireen would introduce themselves, and then open it up and we'd have discussions. We didn't try to direct or steer the discussion in any way. I mean, Khushi and Shireen were so knowledgeable and so interesting and so funny and engaging, they just took over. And everybody loved them, just loved them. It was great. I loved them ... There was real dialogue. And that's how we'd get to a point where there seemed to be some commonalities there, things that maybe we could pick up and build on later.

– Staff member, Inter Pares

The methodology Inter Pares used was geared towards breaking down separations and dichotomies among people. It was a very process-oriented approach. While many workshops were facilitated, many meetings also happened informally, across people's kitchen tables, or in community coffee shops, etc.

When we developed relationships, we would do so on the basis of parity and mutuality of interest – by not only taking an interest in their work, but also determining if they were interested in the work that Inter Pares was doing domestically and overseas ... It's also important to get to know people on a more personal, and not only political, level, which for me was also part of being a feminist, and part of what I learned from other feminists ... In many of the gatherings, when we went to people's homes, or when we went to community centres or churches, we talked about our own experiences. That was so important, that's where you started. And then made links to the wider world. It wasn't that linear, but you know what I mean. It was always, always based on our own stories, and our own experiences.

– Staff member, Inter Pares

The tour in Canada was eye-opening. It was open-ended – this is important in our process. It's not that we don't have a sense of what we'd like to achieve, but it's important that the process is organic. Our agenda is to find out what the real situation is for women and people who are living in poverty.

– Staff member, Inter Pares

*While many workshops were facilitated, many meetings also happened informally, across people's kitchen tables or in community coffee shops.*

Inter Pares and the Bangladeshi counterparts were hosted by native people in different locales, by local women's organizations and health clinics, by economic development groups, by immigrant organizations and unions, as well as by the National Farmers' Union, the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation, and British Columbia Council for International Cooperation, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), and many others. When the tour ended, Inter

Pares had discussions with our colleagues from Bangladesh about the links that were made, and organized a feedback session for the Ottawa community, inviting all those who had met the women. There was a lot of mutual learning.

We were so excited at the end; exhausted, but excited about the possibilities for linking to some of the groups that we'd met. The dominant theme that emerged from the tour, the one that was talked about most, was women and health. Khushi and Shireen were shocked to learn that Canadian women didn't always have access to birth control or safe and effective forms of birth control or even adequate health care in rural and native communities ... They were surprised to learn that women were also critical of some of the drugs being used here, including tranquilizers for what were clearly social and economic stresses and problems faced by women.

They were surprised at the situation for women in Canada, the poverty that they saw, the violence against women that they learned about. They were surprised by the lack of cohesive, sustainable, agricultural policies. There were some parallels that they could see, particularly around women's health and also around pharmaceuticals, as they were actively involved in a campaign in Bangladesh to promote the adoption of a generic drug policy, and locally produced drugs. Inter Pares and other Canadian organizations were criticizing the Canadian government for proposing changes to drug patent protection legislation in ways that would assist the multinational pharmaceutical industry to the detriment of Canada's generic drug industry. Another thing the women came away with was the realization that there was a need in Bangladesh for a feminist organization that worked on women's rights in health, pharmaceutical use, violence against women, and other concerns. Nari Pokkho, the organization they started following the tour, is still active today.

– Staff member, Inter Pares

Inter Pares' practice of listening to women's stories and of bringing people together without imposing a pre-conceived agenda was inspired by feminist consciousness-raising. Staff members associated with the work on women and health believed in the power of feminist consciousness-raising to effect lasting social change.

### Women's stories as the starting point for a play

As a follow up to the solidarity tour, Inter Pares organized a workshop in Aylmer, Quebec called *Women and Pharmaceuticals*. Participants from several organizations were present – women's groups, immigrant service organizations, NGOs – many of which had met with our Bangladeshi counterparts. The Great Canadian Theatre Company, nurses, NGOs, NAC, social justice organizations, medical students, doctors, local development education centres, addictions centre representatives, union people, and a Health Canada policy advisor attended, among others. The workshop solidified a common desire to connect those working on women's rights and health. The idea of a network came up, as did the idea of a play, both of which generated a lot of excitement. Out of that workshop was born Women's Health Interaction (WHI), an organization based in Ottawa that would act on women's health issues with input from women across the country. Subsequently, WHI sister groups formed in Winnipeg and Kingston, acting locally and provincially.

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Collecting and documenting women's stories was an important methodology for WHI and Inter Pares, and this process was used in creating the script for a play about women and pharmaceuticals. With the support of Inter Pares, two Canadian women – an Inter Pares Board member and a WHI member – travelled to Bangladesh to document women's stories related to these issues. They were hosted by and worked with our Bangladesh counterparts, who introduced them to a variety of women's and health organizations. One of the researchers described her experience in this way:

When I was sent to Bangladesh to gather women's stories, we originally set out to do a project on pharmaceuticals and drug dumping. But when we were in the field, we got a lot of stories on forced sterilization – Inter Pares took on these issues because it was part of women's issues. It was a constant process of gathering info, validating all

kinds of information – not just the written word, the intellectual word, but the lived experience of women, the lived experience of poor women, marginalized women. Taking that as real knowledge that needed to be thought about and analyzed and then going back and checking with the women ... asking: Did we get this right?

– Former staff member, Inter Pares

Our counterparts had described the population control measures in Bangladesh, but during this trip we were able to talk to women and document their stories in a more systematic way. Some women had been given high risk contraceptive drugs with no follow-up care. Inter-uterine devices that were taken off the market and drugs that were restricted for use in Canada were still being promoted in Bangladesh by multinational corporations and through Northern aid programs, including Canada's. High-risk contraceptive drugs and methods were also being prescribed to women in Canada, particularly to aboriginal women, immigrant women, and women with disabilities. Portions of many of these stories and those of Canadian women who had been part of the exchange tour were also included in the script for the play.

We sent out letters to all the groups we'd met across the country, saying, if you had one or two ideas, one or two points you'd like to make through this play, about women and pharmaceuticals, what would they be? We got lots of ideas back, great ideas, including: we have to link what's happening in Canada with what's happening in Bangladesh and internationally.

– Staff member, Inter Pares

Through collaboration between the Great Canadian Theatre Company, Inter Pares, WHI, and Ottawa's World-Interaction-Mondiale (a local development education centre), a draft script was produced, actors were engaged, and a performance was workshopped in Ottawa, attended by a broad cross-section of individuals and community groups. People were invited to provide feedback, which was largely positive, and which formed the basis for revisions to the script. The script was also reviewed by the two Bangladeshi women in the exchange tour, as well as by select women Inter Pares and our Bangladeshi colleagues had met in Canada.

*Side Effects: A Play on Women and Pharmaceuticals*, linked women's stories across borders. Inter Pares and WHI raised funds from government and foundations, and *Side Effects* went on tour across the country, building on and nurturing women's community organizing. Each

performance of *Side Effects* was hosted by local groups and followed by a discussion with audience members, led by a panel involving the Bangladeshi women, the national tour coordinator (from WHI) and local facilitators. WHI and Inter Pares produced a *Side Effects* 'kit' that included logistical information, media packages, posters and postcards, background information on the issues, fundraising tips, and possible questions for discussion. It included everything organizers might need to know about hosting the tour in their own community. No single organization had the capacity to host its own event – an endeavour that included finding venues for the play, organizing accommodation, fundraising, selling tickets, and media outreach. Groups were encouraged to work in collaboration, and did.

Some of the groups knew each other already, and some didn't at all. So you had a range of community groups in different places that got together and formed their own planning committees. They talked about the goals that they wanted to achieve. It was a shared project.

– Staff member, Inter Pares

### *Side Effects: A Play on Women and Pharmaceuticals, linked women's stories across borders.*

The play was a success by all accounts. It was staged 45 times in 37 communities. It garnered positive reviews from national and local media and led to many new opportunities.

People had a real stake in it. They could see that this was going to support their public outreach and their collaborations ... Later on the script was translated into French and there was a French tour that our sisters in Quebec organized. We had a lot of requests for the script from around the world as people heard about it. At the same time, we were pushing policy change using the tour. And the local and national organizations we met used the play to make their own work better known to the community, to publicize the issues, and to undertake policy advocacy. It generated interest in policy change. The process was important. It wasn't just the play.

– Staff member, Inter Pares

The connections made through the play allowed all participants to strengthen their advocacy efforts. The Women's Health Clinic in Winnipeg, WHI-Manitoba, the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation, NAC, the Canadian Consumer's Union, the Medical Reform Group, Inter Pares and many others took action on drug policies and legislation, challenging the power of the pharmaceutical industry and drug patent protections, and bringing a women's rights perspective to bear on international development assistance. Side Effects was an impetus for groups to come together to create a women's health network in Canada, an idea that had been percolating among women's groups for some time. Part of Inter Pares' and WHI's strategy had been to deepen the effort to build a Canadian women's health network through the creation of the play and the vast outreach and networking involved, as well as to support organizational development and generate media attention about women and health. Another goal was to use the play as a popular education tool that would touch individual women (and men) at emotional as well as intellectual levels. Inter Pares played a key role in organization, coordination, and communications throughout the entire process and follow-up.

I think the one big gift that Inter Pares gave to WHI ... was my time. When we started working more concertedly on women and health issues, women and pharmaceuticals, reproductive rights, particular drugs, almost all of it was connected to WHI. My time was basically seconded. I was seconded by Inter Pares to do work that would strengthen WHI and the work we were doing together.

– Staff member, Inter Pares

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### **Speaking out on women's health and reproductive rights**

WHI began writing and distributing newsletters to all the people who had been on the tour. There were articles on drug legislation in Canada, in Bangladesh, and in other countries, and ideas for action were provided to readers. Inter Pares, World-Interaction-Mondiale and WHI also produced a booklet entitled *For Health or For*

*Profit?*, an exposé on the pharmaceutical industry in Canada and in the South. In the years that followed, Inter Pares and WHI, in collaboration with counterparts in Canada and in the South, followed up on this work by producing other educational materials, including a *Canadian Bill of Rights on Women's Reproductive Health* (in English, Spanish and French); *Uncommon Knowledge: A feminist critique on reproductive technologies and contraceptive devices*; a booklet documenting Canadian women's stories about the use of Depo Provera; a video on new reproductive technologies; and several policy briefs to government on these issues.

*Advocacy and policy work drew on women's experiences. It was a feminist approach.*

The groundwork that had first been laid through the women's exchange tour, Side Effects, and WHI, also contributed to the formation of the Canadian Women's Health Network (CWHN), based in Winnipeg, allowing women in Canada to have a powerful voice in proposing and advocating for policies that would secure women's control over their health and reproduction. From the start, the CWHN sought, where possible, to link the concerns of women in Canada to those of women internationally.

Research was an important part of what Inter Pares and WHI were doing in Canada, and it complemented the work of Inter Pares' counterparts in Bangladesh who were producing research and documentation on top-down, coercive population control measures. Inter Pares and WHI were challenging the dominant medical model, making links between women's own experiences of health and the medical system. Advocacy and policy work drew on women's experiences. It was a feminist approach.

Inter Pares and WHI changed the population discourse in Canada. We built relationships in the Philippines, in Indonesia, in Latin America, in Africa, with women's groups and health groups. We helped build women's health networks and coalitions in South Asia and in South-East Asia, people who were campaigning against unsafe IUDs, DepoProvera, Norplant and forced sterilization, and the lack of basic health services in their own countries.

– Staff member, Inter Pares

WHI and Inter Pares prepared a policy brief on population control and new reproductive technologies in Canada and overseas. In it they challenged population control policies, the tactic of using incentives and disincentives to encourage women to be sterilized or, alternately, to have more children, and the unsafe contraceptive technologies that were being distributed to women.

We were challenged to look in our own backyard in a sense. We knew a lot about what women were fighting for here and so on, but when we got involved with population issues and reproductive rights issues, we did some research and found out that drugs like Depo-Provera were being given in Canada to immigrant women, native women, women of colour and...there was sterilization and population control happening in Canada too. So we worked with women's groups here to advocate for women's control over their own bodies, just as our overseas counterparts were doing, and we fed each other's analysis, and campaigns and advocacy work.

– Staff member, Inter Pares<sup>50</sup>

Inter Pares, WHI, WHI-Manitoba, The National Action Committee on the Status of Women, the DisAbled Women's Network, representatives from aboriginal women's groups and immigrant women's groups – almost a dozen groups in all – met with government officials at the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). They challenged the government's dumping of high-dosage birth control pills in Bangladesh through its contribution to the World Bank population control program, arguing that Canada was facilitating access to dangerous drugs in a context where access to health care was limited. They called on the government to stop sending drugs deemed unsafe for women in the North to women in the South, stating, "If these drugs and devices are not good enough for us, they aren't good enough for our sisters in the Third World either." (Staff member, Inter Pares) As a result of these advocacy efforts and continued efforts on the part of Inter Pares and Canadian and Southern counterparts, CIDA insisted on the use of low-dosage birth control pills as part of its contribution to the World Bank population control program in Bangladesh.

This kind of work by Inter Pares and its partners, along with that of other like-minded groups is having an effect on thinking and practice among population programmers. This effect can be seen at several levels. At the level of project/program design and implementation, it is easier to identify links as a result of Inter Pares' advocacy activities.

UBINIG's reports have helped to persuade a major donor to cancel support for use of Norplant technology. CIDA's shift to low-dose pills may have been influenced by Inter Pares' representations on this issue.<sup>51</sup>

Inter Pares, along with our Canadian and international counterparts, also challenged the use of population control as an anti-poverty strategy. Major funding bodies in Canada, including the Canadian government, were funding population control measures under this premise.

In Canada Inter Pares mounted a number of advocacy and educational activities, including the preparation of an independent brief ... to the Cairo Conference [United Nations International Conference on Population and Development]. They established a committee of women activists from across the country to develop the brief, which was subsequently endorsed at a meeting of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, and by a number of other women's/health groups across the country. The brief was aimed at urging Canadian government delegates to the Cairo Conference to adopt a pro-woman stance that does not separate population from other aspects of development.<sup>52</sup>

This led to some significant results:

The Cairo Conference reflected a new rhetoric by large actors in the population debate, moving away from prophecies of demographic disasters toward the end for women's empowerment and reproductive health ... The Ford Foundation has completely re-oriented its approach from support for family planning to support for women's reproductive health and empowerment in the last five years. There has been donor pressure to lower coercive fertility control practices and curtail incentive systems in Bangladesh Family Planning. The pressure for change which has been gradually working its way through the population establishment and the large donor community stems from small groups like Inter Pares and UBINIG and others around the world which have been able to claim public attention for their concerns.<sup>53</sup>

Feminist consciousness-raising and popular education were at the heart of Inter Pares' work on women's health and reproductive rights. They created opportunities for women to construct knowledge together, from their own experiences, and to share and use these to work for social change. Women's stories, shared in informal settings in

Canada and in Bangladesh, later led to a more facilitated process of popular education through the Side Effects play. From this collective mobilization, policy and advocacy initiatives were born that ensured women were giving voice and their voices were heard on health and reproductive issues.

### 3.3 Case study: Movement-building for Burma

#### Background

In mid-1988, thousands of people in Burma took to the streets to demand democracy. General Ne Win, the dictator who had taken power in a 1962 coup, abruptly resigned and promised a return to democratic rule. Shortly thereafter, the army took control of the government. Troops were sent into the streets and thousands of demonstrators were massacred. A group of army generals, calling themselves the State Law and Restoration Committee (SLORC), came into power.

By 1991, the military junta believed it had the country under control and called a snap election. To the dismay of the generals, the National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi, won the majority of parliamentary seats. The generals, however, were not about to hand over power to the NLD. Rather, they stepped up their repression against the democracy movement, arresting and jailing elected MPs and democracy supporters. Over the next few years, the junta also escalated the war against Burma's ethnic nationalities, creating a major humanitarian crisis as tens of thousands of people sought asylum in the neighbouring states of Thailand, India, Bangladesh, China and Malaysia.

Canada, like many countries, responded to the massacres of 1988 by cancelling its bilateral aid program to Burma. Unlike other countries, Canada did not re-allocate aid funds to support the democracy movement or provide humanitarian assistance to refugees. The Canadian government expressed concerns about the political and human rights situation in Burma within the UN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Asia Regional Forum. There were few Canadian NGOs with experience in Burma and thus few advocates for a more robust Canadian role in responding to the Burmese crisis.

#### Movement-building in Canada

In 1991, Peacefund Canada organized a seminar in Ottawa to raise the profile of the human rights and refugee situation in Burma. An important outcome of the Ottawa seminar was the founding of the Canadian Friends of Burma (CFOB) with a mandate to educate

Canadians about Burma and promote a more active Canadian role in response to the political and humanitarian crisis. Inter Pares, along with Peacefund Canada and the Montreal-based Rights and Democracy (International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development), became involved in an advisory committee to CFOB. This committee became a locus of collaboration for groups and individuals concerned about Burma, and was the precursor of the Canadian NGO Committee on Burma which formed in 2000.

Inter Pares first became involved in supporting activities with people from Burma in 1991-92, when we began to develop a relationship with the Burma Relief Centre (BRC) based in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Through BRC, Inter Pares supported the work of Dr. Cynthia Maung, a Karen physician providing medical services to displaced Burmese on the Thailand-Burma border. Seeing the conditions under which Dr. Cynthia, herself a refugee, was working, Inter Pares secured funds from the humanitarian unit of CIDA to support Dr. Cynthia's health activities. In 1996, following a renewed influx of refugees into Thailand, Inter Pares asked CIDA to support the Thailand-Burma Border Consortium (TBBC), an organization providing humanitarian assistance to the Burmese refugee camps in Thailand. In 1997, CIDA agreed and has supported the humanitarian program ever since.

In the decade following CFOB's founding, the advisory committee of Canadian organizations working on Burma organized several public conferences and campaigned against Canadian investments in Burma. Working as an *ad hoc* coalition, we brought representatives from refugee and displaced people's organizations and the democracy movement to Canada to meet with officials and testify before Parliamentary committees. Several Members of Parliament were quite aware of the situation in Burma and lent their political support. The coalition submitted policy papers to the federal government and participated in several foreign policy roundtables on Burma. In 1999, Inter Pares and CFOB nominated Dr. Cynthia Maung for Canada's John Humphrey Freedom Award; she came to Canada to accept the award and was introduced to parliamentarians at a reception on Parliament Hill.

In 2000, Inter Pares worked with CFOB and the Burmese Relief Center to develop a concept paper and proposal to support organizations based in countries neighbouring Burma. These were accepted by CIDA and a five-year program was launched in June 2000, with Inter Pares acting as the executing agency. In 2005 and 2010, CIDA's