



Submission by Inter Pares to Canada's International Assistance Review

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General Introduction

Inter Pares welcomes the reengagement between the Government of Canada and Canadian civil society through the International Assistance Review (IAR) process and has participated to the maximum extent possible given our size and resources.

Between May and July 2016, Inter Pares has taken part in, or contributed to, 11 consultations related to the IAR¹. Additionally we have contributed to several briefs by coalitions that we are members of: Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), Americas Policy Group (APG), Food Security Policy Group (FSPG), Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability (CNCA) and the Women, Peace and Security Network (WPSN).

Inter Pares also co-organized consultations on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and A Feminist Approach to International Assistance, both of which led to written submissions which we endorsed (former) and authored (latter).

Inter Pares endorses the recommendations made in all of these briefs to the IAR.

This submission gathers together the analysis and recommendations under the five themes of the International Assistance Review. We have also included one additional section, Annex A which outlines how we apply feminist programming methodology to our largest program, *"Inclusive Democracy in Burma"*.

In each section we have outlined what we believe to be the key issues and problems related to each thematic, provided examples of relevant programmatic activities and made policy recommendations.

Introduction to Inter Pares

Inter Pares collaborates with people and organizations who are dedicated to building more just societies and creating positive change. For over 40 years, we have worked closely with courageous activists and inspiring organizations throughout the world to build peace, advance justice, and globalize equality.

Inter Pares is a registered Canadian charity, enjoying the financial support of many foundations, union social justice funds, faith-based organizations, small businesses, and approximately 7,000 individual Canadians who share our values and priorities.

Currently, Inter Pares works in Africa (Guinea-Bissau, Sudan, and pan-African/regional activities based in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Kenya); Asia (Bangladesh, Burma, India, the Philippines, and regional activities based in Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand); Latin America (Guatemala, Colombia, Peru, Mexico, El Salvador and regional activities); and in Canada.

Our programs largely focus on six global issues: women's equality, peace and democracy, economic justice, food sovereignty, health, and migration.

Mandate, Philosophy, and Analysis

Inter Pares was founded in 1975 with a **mandate** to address the root causes of poverty and injustice in Canada and around the world. Our name means “*among equals*” in Latin, reflecting our belief in the inherent equality of all people – North and South, within and among nations, of all identities and backgrounds.

The founding **philosophy** was that rather than set up offices overseas, Inter Pares would build relationships with existing civil society organizations in the global South, supporting their own self-help community-based programs. Development is a long-term process in which people act together, learn together, make political and economic choices together, and struggle for autonomy and emancipation – not a process or vision that is imposed by outside “experts.” By supporting the work of our counterparts, we help communities confront injustice, implement locally adapted solutions, spark innovative initiatives, and occupy the political space that belongs to them.

Inter Pares’ **intersectional feminist analysis** informs our understanding that unequal power structures are at the root of underdevelopment, and that transformative social change is required for true positive development. Women face particular challenges, so our programs make women’s views visible, and nurture women’s social, economic, and political empowerment.

Programming Approach & Roles

Springing from our feminist analysis, the core elements of our approach are:

- **Addressing root causes:** to ensure systemic and ensuring results. Within such a framework, people’s immediate needs are addressed in a way that reinforces their efforts to reduce inequality and tackle problems at the source.
- **Supporting local agency:** through our egalitarian philosophy and our capacity-building work, we reinforce local movements, voices, and leadership.

- **Integrity:** all of our work and operations strive to be as coherent with our values as possible. For instance, Inter Pares is managed non-hierarchically by a team whose members are paid the same salary and who use consensus-based decision-making.
- **Building relationships:** long-term relationships are critical to Inter Pares' success. Enduring relationships build trust, respect, honesty, and mutual accountability. They also enable programs to build on past achievements.
- **Process-based:** we believe in the power of bringing people together to identify solutions that are rooted in their lived experience, and that the process itself of coming together can be transformative.
- **Collaboration:** we encourage, support, and often play a lead role in collaborations, both in Canada and internationally. This approach allows us to better leverage funds, share knowledge, multiply impacts, and reduce duplication of effort.
- **Knowledge- and learning-based:** we place a strong importance on sharing information, investing in people, and in encouraging mutual learning through exchanges and collaboration.

Inter Pares' key programming roles are:

- We offer **organizational support and capacity-building** to our counterparts in the global South and in Canada;
- We **raise funds** to support their work;
- We **advocate** for improved and fairer public policies that are informed by our counterparts' experience and analysis;
- We **support women's leadership** through our feminist approach;
- We **facilitate learning exchanges** by bringing together activists who are struggling with the same issues;
- We **engage and educate** Canadians through public campaigns and sharing stories of social change around the world.

Relationship with the Government of Canada

Inter Pares has received funding for many years from the International Development Research Centre and from Global Affairs Canada and its predecessors CIDA and DFATD, including four consecutive five-year Partnership funding agreements from 1995-2015. CIDA/DFATD program evaluations have consistently praised the quality and importance of our work.

Inter Pares has always viewed engagement with the Canadian government and its policies as an important aspect of our social justice work. Over our forty-year history, in our own name and through a wide array of civil society coalitions, we have engaged at many levels with the federal government, particularly with its overseas assistance program, encouraging it in its efforts to address the root causes of poverty and inequality.

Health and Rights of Women and Children

The section on the “Health and Rights of Women and Children” in the IAR Discussion Paper provides a good synopsis of the challenges facing women around the world and we applaud the breadth of issues covered, from violence against women to women’s economic empowerment to women’s political leadership. We applaud the intention of the Government of Canada’s international assistance to focus on agency and empowerment, as well as the emphasis on adolescent girls.

However, as currently articulated, a focus on the “health and rights of women and children” is too broad to allow either the “rights” or “health” thematic the prominence each requires. By conflating these two issues, it could also be difficult to report concretely on specific funding investments and results, in addition to preserving an outmoded social welfare approach to women’s rights that is counter to a feminist approach. In this submission we have therefore divided our comments into two sections: rights and health.

Women’s Rights and Girls’ Rights

The use of a feminist lens is particularly apt for a thematic focus centring on the rights of women and girls, but then necessitates an analysis of power relations – and a further analysis of programs to review how to support a transformation in power dynamics – in both the private and public spheres. Programs supporting women and girls’ rights, and viewing women and girls as autonomous agents of change have been eroded over the past decade both domestically and internationally, and given the universal nature of Agenda 2030, a coherent approach in this regard would be not only welcome, but more effective.

Inter Pares and Women’s and Girl’s Rights

Inter Pares is a feminist social justice organization. As such, a strong focus of our work is women and girls’ rights. We support both grassroots women’s rights organizations carrying out service delivery as well as advocacy. We support young women’s feminist leadership training. Furthermore, Inter Pares also supports mixed organizations – many of these mixed organizations have a strong gender analysis, and with others, we look for entry points to support the development of such an analysis. In all cases, we share core values with our counterparts operating around the world though they enjoy a diverse thematic and geographic range.

For example, in Latin America, we support organizations working on strengthening the legal framework for women who experience violence (Colectiva Feminista), programs that target the strengthening of Indigenous women (National Indigenous Organization of Colombia), and programs that support women in peace processes and in the implementation of resolution 1325 (Project Counselling Service). In Africa, we support women’s organizations challenging harmful gender-based norms (Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development), those seeking to amplify the agency of young women (SWRC - Sudan) and those challenging political and legal discrimination (Sudanese Organization for Research and Development). In Asia, we support women’s economic empowerment and livelihoods, particularly with respect to food sovereignty (DDS), women’s role in peacebuilding (Women’s League of Burma and Karen Women’s Organization) and violence against women (Likhaan Centre for Women’s Health). In Canada, Inter Pares has been part of collective efforts to promote women’s rights in a variety of ways (including as active members of the Up for Debate Campaign and the Women’s Rights Policy Group).

We have hosted valuable South-South learning exchanges on issues of interest to women's rights advocates such as our 2007 Roundtable on Sexual Violence in Conflict², and north-south learning exchanges such as the 2014 Violence Against Women & Legal Strategies Learning Exchange with the Toronto-based Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic and the Sudanese Organization for Research and Development's legal clinic initiative. There is a range of expertise on women's rights issues both among staff and board members as well. In the past few months, Inter Pares has been a key actor in a number of policy initiatives and dialogues with colleagues at Global Affairs to further understand Global Affairs' notion of a feminist lens and feminist approach as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Recommendations

1. The Rights of Women and Girls should be a stand-alone programming pillar.

Canada should separate the "Health and Rights of Women and Children" thematic focus into two, one focusing on health and the other focusing exclusively on the rights of women and girls. Minister Bibeau has indicated in several public statements of her intention to put "*women and girls at the heart of Canada's international development approach*"³. To reach this goal, targeted and integrated approaches are both necessary preconditions. Hence we propose that a separate pillar be added on the "Rights of Women and Girls".

The UN recognizes "*a continued need . . . to complement the gender mainstreaming strategy with targeted interventions to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly where there are glaring instances of persistent discrimination of women and inequality between women and men.*"⁴ The 2008 evaluation of CIDA's gender programming⁵ stated unequivocally that both were necessary for an effective approach. It was further underscored in the department's own Gender Equality Action Plan Reports for 2010-2014⁶.

This thematic should address root causes such as violence against women, strengthening of feminist movements through support for women's organizations and gender inequality including legal and political discrimination. Certainly, there are areas of overlap and connection with the Health of Women and Girls, as there is with all of the other thematic areas (for example, women's political leadership is both about women and about governance.) Although this may present different tracking challenges, it is actually a necessary outcome of an integrated approach and Global Affairs should welcome these thematically overlapping results.

Inter Pares has had success with direct programming on women's rights in conjunction with both targeted and gender mainstreaming approaches. For a detailed case study of the latter approach in our programming in Burma, please see **Appendix A (Case Study: Feminist Programming in Burma)**.

Given the emphasis on the theme of the Rights of Women and Girls (RWG), we anticipate the need to increase departmental capacity and expertise in this area.

2. Canada's engagement on the RWG needs to be both political/diplomatic as well as programmatic.

Canada has garnered international attention over the past six months for the strides taken domestically to increase gender equality, from the appointment of a gender-balanced Cabinet to the 2016 election of Canada to hold a seat at the CSW for 2017 to 2021. Political and programmatic efforts reinforce each other – political opportunities often come at little monetary cost but can have significant impact. Furthermore, it is not just elected officials but Canadian diplomatic staff around the world that can be engaged and given a mandate to further the agency of women, in whatever

way makes sense in the local context, and in collaboration with local and national women's rights organizations. One example of such an effort is the role played by the Canadian Embassy in Colombia in chairing the Gender Table for International Cooperation in Colombia for the period 2016-2017. The Gender Table currently has 42 members including international development organizations (among them, Inter Pares' counterpart Project Counselling Service), UN agencies and international NGOs. Its current focus is supporting efforts to integrate gender into Colombia's achievement of the SDGs and the integration of women's rights into the implementation of peace accords and post-conflict development initiatives.

Programmatic leadership (i.e. resourcing and supporting programs on the rights of women and girls) is complemented by political leadership, and defined not just by the quantity of resources invested into the RWG, but also the quality of the resources. In this regard, it is important to fund not just service delivery but also advocacy.

3. Programmatic support must focus on root causes, and systemic barriers to the full achievement of women's rights.

In this regard, we would emphasize the IAR Discussion Paper's assertion that *"Canada's international assistance policy must recognize the autonomy and agency of women and girls. Empowering women and girls and promoting their equal rights means making it possible for them to take control of their own lives and bodies."* Approaches that focus on the root causes of inequality for women and girls provide much better development outcomes. As stated by a recent OECD paper, *"it is often incorrectly assumed that addressing immediate needs will lead to longer term desired outcomes, and 'doing an intervention right' will lead to a particular result . . . focusing exclusively on short-term results can get in the way of addressing root causes and building the necessary foundations for sustainable development and resilience."*⁷

Focusing on root causes requires a long-term approach; but it also means that results will be more sustainable. Certainly, the department has been criticized for focusing on immediate results without enough attention paid to root causes as in the recent review of MNCH programming⁸; such attention would strengthen overall results. Furthermore, there is a strong link between supporting Southern CSOs to do advocacy and raising public awareness, with tackling roots causes. In the case of MNCH, these root causes include violence against women, adolescent pregnancy, deeply held discriminatory beliefs, and women's decision-making possibilities. The necessary changes in attitudes, beliefs and norms are effectively tackled by local organizations, often women's organizations that carefully gage their social environment, public opinion and political pressures – and then determine the best approach to changing these. Women's organizations are often at the forefront of these kinds of social change movements, but mixed organizations can also be critical.

Advocacy as mentioned above is a key type of programming that has been underfunded in recent years, and can help build movements for women's rights that result in lasting change. For example, in Sudan, the efforts of women's organizations including our counterparts resulted in a 25% quota for the number of women's seats in Parliament for the 2010 elections – this rose to 30% in the 2015 elections. In the Philippines, our counterparts engaged in a sustained effort for a national reproductive healthcare law which came to fruition in 2012.

4. A significant investment in funding (20% of all ODA) is required to support RWG programming generally and specifically channel support to women's organizations.

The latest figures indicate that programs where gender equality is the principle objective have only represented 1-2% of total program funding over the past 5 years⁹. In recent years (2012-13), donors such as Sweden (17.1%), Spain (15.2%), the Netherlands (10.4%) have allocated relatively high percentages of total allocable aid to gender equality as a principal objective. The principal objective represents a good proxy (along with support to women's rights organizations) for support for gender equality. In allocating 20% to gender equality as a principal objective, Canada would rank as the top donor – manifestly demonstrating its support for gender equality¹⁰.

For Canada to be a leader, it is clear that there needs to be a much a greater investment. Furthermore, with the changes in funding mechanisms (especially in terms of Partnerships Branch and calls of proposals) there has been no systematic analysis of the loss in gender programming – what is no longer being funded, or which competent partners are no longer receiving funds. In the case of Inter Pares, Partnership Branch funding used to support a significant amount of gender equality programming, feminist programming and direct support for programs run by women's rights groups.

Women's rights organizations and gender programming can be supported by a variety of means. They include support through Canadian CSO partnerships. Each mechanism has particular benefits and drawbacks requiring assessment by Global Affairs but a diversity of mechanisms will reach diverse organizations.

Many of our counterparts are at the forefront of change in their countries, and see themselves as part of a global women's movement. This global movement includes Canadian feminist organizations that work internationally. At the moment, these organizations are severely stretched, including Inter Pares. Canada is at a pivotal juncture where feminist perspectives and ideas are regularly sought by decision-makers at Global Affairs but where organizations are not well-supported.

Health

A healthy population is fundamental to sustainable development. Recognised in Goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the interdependence of this goal is perhaps one of the clearest. Canada has made large investments in Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. However the narrow focus of this programming has neglected to address root causes of health issues.¹¹ Hence, the International Assistance Review process requires looking at the broader social determinants of health, the health of women (not only as mothers) and of men, with continued attention to boys and girls. Investments need to be made in universal access - the privatization of healthcare has consistently been proven to undermine access and increase inequality between men and women, rich and poor.¹² In the context of fragile situations, where accountable government systems are limited or non-existent, a conflict analysis needs to be applied to interventions, and innovative approaches should include supporting local health initiatives.

The Ministerial mandate letter for Minister Bibeau states that *"Canada's valuable development focus on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health is driven by evidence and outcomes, not ideology, including by closing existing gaps in reproductive rights and health care for women."* Canada's lack of focus on support for a comprehensive range of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in its international assistance over the past decade has compromised the potential for longer-term, systemic

development outcomes. However, a stated feminist approach, and initial investments in this area¹³ point to the potential for Canadian leadership on SRHR. The global gap in contraception includes an unmet contraceptive need for 225 million women¹⁴, and an estimated 6.9 million women treated annually from complications due to unsafe abortions.¹⁵ Pregnancy is a leading cause of mortality for women aged 15 to 19 in many countries in the global South. A comprehensive investment in SRHR will strengthen and complement Canada's existing MNCH investments; it is also a gateway for women and girls to reach their full potential in many other areas: economically, politically and socially.

Inter Pares and Health

Inter Pares promotes a holistic approach to healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health, that addresses the relationship between health, poverty, equality and social conditions. We work with counterparts to advocate for integrated, accessible, publicly funded healthcare systems that are sensitive to the needs of women and girls. We work with organizations in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Canada that believe healthcare is a collective responsibility, not a market-based commodity. Our allies conduct research, while also educating and mobilizing the public. Overseas, we also help fund health services where they are difficult to access due to conflict or government negligence. As a feminist and pro-choice organization, our approach to women's health emphasizes women's equality. A number of our counterparts also work in the area of adolescent sexual health. In recent years, our health programming has:

- Helped facilitate the adoption and implementation of a Reproductive Health Law in the Philippines that promotes equity and will reduce maternal and child mortality, while also providing reproductive health services to 25,000 women annually.
- Improved the lives of the poor in Bangladesh by mobilizing people to claim their rights to healthcare.
- Supported the advocacy of sexual and reproductive rights in Peru.
- Supported the provision of comprehensive primary healthcare to half a million people in Burma, (with a particular focus on reproductive health) and the development of policies for a future healthcare system.
- Improved services and information in the area of sexual health for adolescents from countries such as Burma, the Philippines and Sudan

Recommendations

1. Canada should promote universal health care as a public good

Universal healthcare is fundamental to Canadian identity and we should promote its value internationally as a public good. The WHO recognizes the importance of universal healthcare in saving lives and reducing poverty¹⁶ and has declared that all nations must ensure equitable access to necessary medicines through pharmaceutical policies that work in conjunction with broader systems of universal health coverage.^{17 18} The commodification of healthcare in countries where we work has led to tremendous gaps in coverage; it has deepened inequalities within countries and has had a particular impact on women and girls.¹⁹ For-profit healthcare can undermine Canada's ability to meet SDG#3, in particular Target 3.8 and 3.b. Furthermore, we see that recent increases in the health budget of countries such as the Philippines and provision for national health insurance for the most impoverished has the potential to significantly improve health outcomes²⁰.

2. Canadian assistance should prioritize robust community-based primary care model with public health leadership

In 2014 we facilitated a study tour of the Canadian healthcare system for a team of health leaders from Burma. We met with practitioners and municipal, provincial and federal policy makers in BC and Ontario. When asked about the challenges of our system, the consistent message was that our system was based upon a hospital-centric curative care model. It was developed before there was much understanding of the social determinants of health and the critical role preventative healthcare can play. Shifting the emphasis and resources from a hospital-centred curative care system, to a robust community-based primary care model with public health leadership providing comprehensive population health programs, is a difficult shift. While Canada continues to struggle to make this shift domestically, this lesson can and should be used in the health system strengthening work we do internationally.

3. Incorporate “demand” side approaches as well as “supply” side approaches in providing healthcare.

All health programming must address the importance of both “demand” and “supply”. In simplistic terms, health is not just about supplying services and commodities such as medicines. It is also about creating a demand for appropriate and high-quality healthcare through information, education and awareness-raising, so that, for example women will demand competent birthing attendants, couples will demand family planning appropriate to their circumstances and families will demand immunizations for their children. This has been a recognized weakness in Canada's approach.²¹ A holistic and comprehensive approach, which includes services, education and advocacy is critical in producing health results, particularly in the area of MNCH/SRHR but beyond that as well.

4. When working in fragile contexts, Canada should invest in local health organizations.

The provision of healthcare can be politically-loaded and can, particularly in fragile contexts, create or perpetuate tensions. In Burma, for example, some international NGOs have initiated projects with the national government to extend healthcare into ethnic²² communities. For the past fifty years, people in these communities have relied on their own local health organizations which are run by trusted community members who speak the local language, are competent and compassionate. Often the only experience these people have had with the national government is through the face of soldiers. For them, an expansion of government services can be seen as an expansion of government control over their lives – something which they have learned to fear. Meanwhile, many donors have invested in the systems and skills of these local health providers over the past two decades, when the national government had no capacity or interest to serve these people. In order to maintain efficient and effective healthcare there is a need to support existing local health organizations and to slowly work towards a convergence of systems. While the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States calls for “nationally-owned and led development plans”²³ it is important to use a conflict analysis when implementing this approach. In the case of Burma for example, it is wise for Canada to take a balanced approach: to help build the state's capacity to provide national healthcare while also supporting local health initiatives and the convergence of the two. Undermining local systems risks fueling conflict and leads to poor health outcomes.

5. Canadian leadership in healthcare, including SRHR, should follow an International Human Rights Framework and international obligations.

Canada's international development strategy should recognize health as a human right. It should pay particular attention to the commitments made in the area of sexual and reproductive health where Canada has a significant gap. During the International Conference of Parliamentarians on the Implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development Program of Action, a target of 10% of ODA was established for SRHR initiatives. We recommend a 10 year plan where 80% of that figure (i.e. \$400 million annually) is dedicated towards a comprehensive, rights-based program on SRHR that includes family planning and abortion, while 20% (\$100 million annually) is focused on advocacy. There is a close link between domestic policy and international policy in these issues and such coherence is critical to demonstrating political leadership²⁴.

6. Global Affairs Canada should engage in a participatory process to create an SRHR Policy that will guide Canada's engagement over the long term.

To embed the importance of SRHR issues into the guidance architecture of Canada's ODA, and to create clarity with respect to expectations for Global Affairs partnerships, it is critical that an SRHR policy or strategy be established. This strategy would demonstrate Canada's commitment, guide programming and funding decisions, and determine areas where Canada could best advocate and show political leadership on the issue.

Conclusion

To summarize our recommendations specifically in terms of the IAR questions on Health and Rights of Women and Children:

Focus areas for Canada's feminist international assistance:

- The Rights of Women and Girls should be a stand-alone programming pillar.
- Programmatic support must focus on root causes and systemic barriers to the full achievement of women's rights.
- GAC should engage in a participatory process to create a long-term sexual and reproductive health and rights policy.

Opportunities for new or continued leadership on women's empowerment and gender equality:

- 20% of all ODA must support the rights of women and girls programming, including specific support to women's organizations.
- Canada's engagement on the rights of women and girls needs to be both political/diplomatic as well as programmatic.

The role Canada can play in advancing health-related SDGs to improve the health of women and girls:

- Canada should promote universal health care as a public good.
- International assistance should prioritize community-based primary care.
- Incorporate "demand" as well as "supply" side approaches in providing healthcare.

- When working in fragile contexts, Canada should invest in local health organizations.
- Canada must apply an international human rights framework and abide by international obligations.

Clean Economic Growth and Climate Change

Economic growth has been a key element of Canada's development policy from the first days of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). But growing environmental concerns, along with new research and understanding of inequality, its provenance and development impact, have created new imperatives. It is therefore gratifying that the Government of Canada has re-focussed the issue to include the effects of economic activity on climate change, and acknowledged the increased inequality that in recent decades has accompanied economic growth the world over.

Nevertheless, the IAR discussion paper continues to focus on growth, with little analysis of the nature of current economic regimes that lead to exclusive growth, inequality and worsening climate change. It also lacks mention of an area in which Canada has an opportunity to take global leadership: extractive industry corporate accountability, a crucial development policy area with significant implications for addressing inequality and creating inclusive economic systems.

In this section we therefore suggest two elements be adopted within Canada's international assistance policy:

- Refocus from economic growth to Economic Justice and Climate Change. Economic Justice can include growth, but the focus is instead on the elements that research indicates is necessary to tackle increasing inequality: economic activity that is inclusive, sustainable and fair for everyone on the planet.²⁵
- Within the economic pillar, include a focus on Civil Society and Corporate Accountability.

Economic Justice as a Response to Climate Change and Inequality

A paradigm shift will be required to implement the commitments made to fulfill both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. As the IAR Discussion Paper clearly states: *"Current patterns of economic growth are unsustainable and contribute to the acceleration of climate change, posing huge risks for the planet, including its people and their prosperity"*.

Climate change is negatively affecting the most vulnerable, including in developed countries like Canada where Indigenous peoples²⁶ are particularly vulnerable. Models indicate that by 2030, 100 million people could be forced into extreme poverty due to climate change.²⁷ It is therefore imperative that climate change adaptation and mitigation be integral to this pillar's implementation. For this to happen, the nature of the economic growth that Canada promotes must be explicitly delineated.

Poverty is perpetuated by a variety of factors, including inequality, vulnerability to natural disasters, social structures, and issues of governance. Economic growth alone does not eradicate poverty.²⁸ While the global economy has grown significantly, the gap between rich and poor is at its highest level in most OECD countries in 30 years.²⁹ Growth with inequality – that is, without policies in place that explicitly ensure equitable distribution of benefits to the entire population – results in an increase in poverty. Experts strongly recommend putting in place redistribution and other social policies to more effectively translate growth into poverty reduction.³⁰ A stark case in point is India, which has strong economic growth accompanied by consistently high rates of extreme poverty, and where the FAO finds that 15% of the population is undernourished.³¹

Despite repeated pledges to reduce the number of the world's hungry in half by 2015, the target was not met. The world still has close to one billion hungry people, and with climate change, this number is expected to increase dramatically unless serious action is taken.

Women constitute the majority of the world's poor, and are affected disproportionately by poverty, hunger, and climate change. Women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change and are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources that are threatened by climate change³². This vulnerability is accentuated by the fact that women are often excluded from decision-making on access to and use of land and resources³³.

At the same time, women often have a strong body of knowledge and expertise that can be used in climate change mitigation and adaption, and are central to agriculture, a sector that plays a significant role in climate change. As well, according to the World Bank, economic growth in the agricultural sector is at least twice as effective at reducing poverty compared to other types of economic growth. Women farmers currently account for 45-80% of all food production in developing countries, and approximately two-thirds of the female labour force in developing countries (more than 90% in many African countries) are engaged in agricultural work.³⁴ Thus, women-driven strategies are vital to effectively address poverty and to respond to the environmental and humanitarian crises caused by climate change.

At the same time, decisions made in other areas such as trade agreements, and regulation and support of the private sector, have an impact on the effectiveness and sustainability of development efforts in eradicating poverty and in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

For instance, in the last decade, Canada has promoted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) by Canadian mining companies as an important contribution to development in lower income countries. Development funds have been used to subsidize costs that would normally be assumed by companies, by providing support for project level Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects.³⁵

However, FDI in natural resources has been found to be unsuited to poverty reduction, particularly within the international financial regime as it currently exists. The World Bank's 2013 Development Report³⁶ noted that, *"In resource-rich countries, massive investments in extractive industries support accelerated rates of growth and connections with international markets but generate little direct (or even indirect) employment and often little poverty reduction."* Instead, it found that in developing and middle income countries, *"micro and small enterprises account for the bulk of employment"*³⁷.

Existing international financial, trade and investment regimes also significantly undermine the potential for sustainable democratic development and poverty reduction in the global South. Among a number of issues, three stand out: Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs), Double Taxation Agreements (DTA), and investment agreements:

1. FDI is often presented as a source of job creation and taxation revenue for developing countries. The reality is that illicit financial flows (IFFs) from developing countries to developed countries and tax havens are greater annually than north-south flows of FDI and foreign aid combined. It is estimated that trade "mis-invoicing" carried out by transnational corporations represents by far the largest component of IFFs (approx. 60-83%)^{38 39}, and extractive industries are responsible for the lion's share of trade "mis-invoicing"⁴⁰. IFFs are facilitated by a lack of financial transparency, and in particular, the widespread use of tax havens.
2. DTAs were originally intended to avoid the same income to be taxed both in the host country and the home country. They have now become, in the words of some of Inter Pares' counterparts, "double non-taxation agreements". Billions of dollars in payments to foreign

shareholders leave poor countries in Asia and Africa each year due to tax treaties that restrict the right of countries to tax profits generated in their markets.⁴¹ Canada has more than 90 tax treaties in effect, including with some of the poorest countries in the world, and more are being negotiated.

3. Trade and investment agreements are enforced by Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanisms that allow foreign companies to sue governments for changes in policy that the investor claims reduce future profits, even if the action is in the best interest of its population. ISDS clauses can bring states into conflict between their international human rights obligations and their investment protection obligations.⁴²

For Canada's action on eradicating poverty and addressing climate change to be significant and sustainable a coordinated and coherent effort is required among multiple government departments. The actions should take the lead from civil society organizations, and be informed by the perspectives of the poor, women, and other marginalized groups.⁴³

Inter Pares and Economic Justice

With more than 40 years of work with partners in the global South, Inter Pares has learned that for economic activity to contribute to development goals, it must be environmentally sustainable, as well as just. Economic growth – no matter how green or clean – that continues to exacerbate inequality cannot be a solution to issues of poverty and marginalization. A coherent approach is required to address these issues. Such an approach must: (1) address the root causes of growing inequality by promoting policies that foster greater equality, and (2) strengthen local communities to become more autonomous and resilient in the face of climate change.

Inter Pares has accompanied farmer organizations on the ground to build sustainable local food systems that are managed and controlled by women. This is the case with Deccan Development Society in India, where for more than 20 years, we have supported innovative work with Dalit women to reclaim degraded lands and turn them into productive, water efficient, drought tolerant and nutritious farming systems. In Guinea-Bissau, we accompanied Tiniguena to develop West Africa's first marine communal protected area. In Guinea Bissau, a country with weak governance, Tineguena's promotion of community control over local resources and building resource management plans from the bottom-up has been effective in protecting biodiversity and ensuring community well-being through sustainable access to local foods. By adding the processing and marketing of smallholder production, through mechanisms controlled by the farmers themselves, we addressed not only environmental sustainability but economic inequality as well. The expansion of women-led, smallholder agro-ecological production is environmentally sustainable – actually mitigating climate change – and works to decrease economic inequality.

Not all measures being proposed to address climate change and promote economic growth will address poverty and inequality in the South. Inter Pares supports counterpart organizations such as Third World Network and Third World Network-Africa that carry out research, capacity building and advocacy to address the issues of fairness and justice in economic systems. In Africa, TWN-Africa significantly contributed to improved government and civil society policies on trade, investment, finance and taxation and the regulation of financial flows. In Asia, TWN is highly respected for providing resources to civil society and advice to Southern governments on climate change, increasing the capacity of Southern countries in climate negotiations.

Inter Pares' innovative approach connects the development action we support in the global South with similar actions and community groups in Canada. A key part of this methodology is the use of South-South and North-South knowledge exchanges, bringing together farmers to learn from each other and improve agro-ecological practices. Inter Pares' program priorities are determined by a process of identifying common cause with our counterparts in the global South and colleagues in Canada, and collaborating with them to achieve our mutual goals. We thus invest significant time and resources in coalition work. We are founding members of the Food Security Policy Group, the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability, and Food Secure Canada. Our approach has been documented extensively through *Does it work? Feminist analysis and practice at Inter Pares*, a participatory research project supported by IDRC⁴⁴.

Recommendations

- 1. To address poverty and hunger within the parameters of climate change, Canada must strengthen farmer organizations and citizen participation, with particular focus on empowering women farmers to play a leadership role in these organizations.**

Strengthening organizations that have the most intimate knowledge of food systems – such as smallholder farmers, small-scale fishers, pastoralists, livestock keepers, indigenous peoples and women – is a strategic investment in long-term food security and climate change mitigation/adaptation. Farm organizations play a key role in giving voice to farmers concerns, and are especially important for farmers with small landholdings. These organizations play a vital role in developing and nurturing knowledge of biodiversity, natural resources and ecosystems *in-situ*. Organizations can help in dealing with other actors, to negotiate prices, procure loans, and influence government policies in important areas such as land tenure (especially avoiding the negative impacts of large-scale land acquisitions), access to credit, trade policies, women's right to land, and seed laws. With its history of strong farm organizations, including agricultural co-operatives, Canada could play a valuable role in promoting Southern farm organizations that lead to long-term food security.⁴⁵ It is essential to empower women farmers so they can play a leadership role in these organizations.

- 2. Canada must invest in agroecology and local food systems to combat climate change and promote sustainable economic development**

Agriculture is central to the economy of most developing countries, with 86% of rural people in the developing world making their living from farming. The most effective way to spur economic growth that benefits the poor is to invest in smallholder agriculture. According to the World Bank, economic growth in the agricultural sector is at least twice as effective at reducing poverty compared to other types of economic growth. To address climate change, supporting the right type of agriculture is critical. At present, despite the fact that small farms use only 30% of the resource base, they are producing 70% of the world's food. In contrast, the industrial food system produces 30% of the world's food and uses 70% of the resource base (arable land, water), while being a major contributor of GhG emissions⁴⁶. To encourage sustainable agricultural development, improve food security and to tackle climate change, Canada should be a leader in supporting a transition from more resource and water intensive forms of agriculture toward innovative agro-ecology as practiced by small holder farmers.⁴⁷

The strategic value of investing both in women's organizations *and* in agro-ecology to reach food security, climate change, and sustainable economic development goals is made evident from Inter

Pares' work with the Deccan Development Society (DDS). For more than 20 years, Inter Pares has been working with DDS, a grassroots organization working with women's groups in 75 villages in Telangana, India. The 5,000-strong women-farmer members (most of them from the Dalit caste) are organized into village-level women's groups and practice biodiversity-based agriculture emphasizing the cultivation of traditional millet crops. These crops have adapted over generations to flourish in dry, rain-fed conditions, without irrigation or chemical inputs, and are highly nutritious. The women grow these staple grains, as well as pulses, vegetables, fruit and medicinal plants – not only preserving, but enhancing biodiversity. During a major drought in 2001-2002, many areas in the region had to receive emergency food aid, but not in the food secure villages of DDS. Research has demonstrated that this cropping system saves nearly 6 million litres of water per acre, a major advantage for agricultural production in a changing climate.⁴⁸ During the last five years DDS has worked to scale up this biodiverse millet production system through like-minded organizations in the states of Gujarat, Odisha and Karnataka. In 2013, after several years of effort, DDS and the Millet Network of India convinced the Government of India to include millets in the National Food Security Act. This will significantly improve food security and nutrition for millions of rural poor in India while also helping India to better respond and adapt to climate change.⁴⁹

- 3. To fulfil the Agenda 2030 commitments, Canada's international assistance funding should not be used to subsidize its own private sector, especially those with problematic environmental and human rights practices and records.^{50 51 52 53 54} All support for developing country private sector actors must be done in alignment with the democratically determined priorities and policies set out by developing countries themselves, and have strict environmental and human rights criteria to select such partners.⁵⁵**

When speaking of a commitment to promote the private sector, it makes a difference whose and what kind of private sector is being referred to. Development assistance should never be used to promote Canadian commerce, and particularly not to support CSR, which is a cost of doing business that should be borne by those making the profit. Rather the commitment should imply an emphasis and a priority on support for developing country private sectors. Most governments and many regional bodies in the global South already have policy frameworks in place to support local private sector development, which generally concentrate on agriculture and industrialization: for instance, CAADP, the African Union's policy framework for agricultural transformation, wealth creation, food security and equitable economic growth. Developing country CSOs are also calling for an emphasis on small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), cooperatives, support for smallholder farmers and marketers, and a focus on the most vulnerable sectors of the society, including women and young people.

For instance, in Sub-Saharan Africa, Inter Pares' counterpart ACORD serves as a bridge between government, civil society and businesses, connecting policy makers to the grassroots, bringing practical solutions to the table, and facilitating the participation of the poor, who are too often left out of decision-making processes. With Inter Pares' support, ACORD participates in and often leads key pan-African conferences and summits on issues affecting the continent, as well as in cross-cutting initiatives, working groups, task forces, councils and other initiatives. ACORD provides a framework for ongoing consultation with civil society, the business community and government; regular communication and collaborative planning; and encourages dialogue and debate on policy-making and legal implementation. Three recent examples are:

- ACORD conceived, developed and implemented “citizen-driven workshops” – consultations on post-2015 development needs and aspirations – which reached 4,600 poor rural and urban Africans in 13 countries, with specific workshops for women in 6 countries⁵⁶.
 - ACORD conceived the idea for an African CSO Secretariat leading up to the High Level Panel meetings on post-2015 to ensure the input of African civil society into the process, helped coordinate the development of the idea into a proposal by African civil society, negotiated it with the office of Liberia’s President Sirleaf, and was a leading member within the process.
 - ACORD was invited by the African Union to host the interim CAADP Non-State Coalition.
4. **Canada should review its policy agenda in all relevant areas of government, particularly foreign affairs, trade, finance and natural resources, to ensure they are consistent with the development commitments Canada has made in its endorsement of Agenda 2030. Here are two significant first steps:**
- i. **Canada should take leadership in international efforts to reduce the opacity in the international financial system, starting with anonymous companies.**
Canada is one of the easiest countries in the world in which to open a shell company, contributing to the lack of transparency that facilitates IFFs. Canada avoided any serious commitment to action on this front at the Global Anti-Corruption Summit in May 2016, and again in its 2016-2018 Action Plan on Open Government released in June 2016. As countries from Afghanistan to the United Kingdom are doing, Canada should commit to establish a public registry of the legal and beneficial (“true”) owners of companies. By making such a commitment at home, Canada will be taking an important step to stemming IFFs that continue to rob developing countries of resources needed for development.
 - ii. **Canada should commit to:**
 - **Removing the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism from the Canadian model of Foreign Investment Protection Agreement (FIPA); and**
 - **Re-negotiating tax treaties that unfairly and dramatically restrict developing countries’ right to collect taxes from Canadian multinational companies doing business in their jurisdiction, and refrain from negotiating future such deals.**

Canada should not provide tax breaks for multinationals at the expense of poor people in the South. It is not only good development practice to allow Southern countries the policy space to mobilize domestic resources and wealth generated within their borders. It would also be a step in the direction the Minister indicated Canadians expect from their government: to “help create a world that is peaceful, prosperous, just and inclusive”.

Civil society and Extractive Industry Corporate Accountability

Extractive industries, particularly mining, exert a significant development impact, especially in developing countries. The nature of extractive projects means they compete with local populations for scarce resources – particularly land and water – and are therefore among the most conflictive. A study commissioned in 2008 by United Nations Special Representative on Business and Human Rights, Prof. John Ruggie, found that the extractive sector generates the largest proportion of complaints of human rights violations of any industrial sector, representing 28% of such complaints in one sample.⁵⁷ IACHR’s recent report on mining conflict in Latin America found over 200 mining related conflicts in Peru, and a

similar number in Colombia.⁵⁸ The report by the United Nations Economic Commission on Africa (UNECA) concerning the same issue on the African continent found similar significant rates of conflict.

With Canadian companies controlling up to 70% of the mining industry in Latin America⁵⁹ and implementing upwards of 8,000 projects in over 100 countries worldwide, Canada plays an important role in the global mining industry. Canadian companies' operations have been identified by human rights organizations around the world with human rights, environmental and labour violations. Canada has an obligation under international law to address these issues. That obligation is not being met by current mechanisms. Over the last decade, and as recently as 2016, various United Nations and other international human rights bodies have informed Canada that its failure to act to address abuses by Canadian mining companies represents a violation of its international human right commitments.⁶⁰

As recognized by Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai, large multinational corporations exert enormous power.⁶¹ Some multinational mining companies have annual budgets larger than those of the national governments of the developing countries in which they operate, which, compounded with diplomatic, trade and financial support from their home governments, represents a significant power imbalance, one that is even greater with respect to impacted communities. This power imbalance also itself exacerbates conflict, as local populations find their views and perspectives ignored, with no recourse for change inside normal democratic mechanisms.

Even with such existing power and capacity disparities, the Special Rapporteur noted that donor governments, developing country governments and multilateral bodies alike still prioritize and devote more resources to creating an enabling environment for the private sector than for civil society.⁶²

Inter Pares and Corporate Accountability

Inter Pares has been working to address the negative impacts of Canadian mining for twenty years. In the mid-1990s, our counterparts from countries around the world began to reach out to us for help, telling desperate stories about how activities of Canadian mining companies in their communities were undoing years of development advancements. In the Philippines, farmers and fishers asked us to help them secure cleanup of a disastrous toxic mine tailings spill that had destroyed their livelihoods and poisoned their water. In Nicaragua where we worked with indigenous communities on sustainable use of the rainforest, exploration activities despoiled the fragile ecosystem despite opposition by all the municipal councils in the area. And counterparts in the Peruvian highlands requested assistance to resist Canadian mineral exploration that had expanded into their communal alpine pasture and dug up farmlands over the protests of indigenous communities.

Inter Pares collaborated with other Canadian organizations to create capacity to help us and our counterparts address these issues. These collaborations resulted in the creation of MiningWatch Canada, and later, the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability. We have since continued to work closely with both these coalitions. In this way, we have helped to create significant capacity to respond to our counterparts' calls for Canada's accountability and mandatory regulation of its mining companies, and to be able to support our counterparts in their efforts to identify, monitor and address the harms done to them and hold the responsible parties accountable.

As discussed in more detail in the section on Governance, without a strong, informed and empowered civil society, no government will be accountable to its citizens. While this is true across the policy spectrum, it is our experience that such an informed and empowered civil society is particularly urgent and pertinent with respect to extractive industry policy and regulation. Informed by our lessons learned

from our programming action, over the years, Inter Pares has supported counterparts in Africa, Asia and Latin America to build civil society capacity to address the environmental, social and human rights impacts of mineral extraction, to use that capacity to hold their governments and the companies to account, and to develop proactive policy and legislative proposals to optimize the economic benefits that might be gained from mineral exploitation and mitigate the environmental, social and economic harms.

Recommendations

- 1. Support capacity building and locally-determined efforts by civil society – with special attention to indigenous peoples', women's and youth organizations – to hold their governments and multinational mining companies to account for violations of human rights, indigenous rights, labour rights and environmental damage.**

The Government of Canada has an opportunity to show leadership in a significant way by prioritizing and supporting civil society efforts to regulate and monitor mining in the public interest and hold companies to account for harms, thus both improving the human rights and well-being of the most vulnerable, and ensuring a good business environment.

Indeed, the Special Rapporteur is worth quoting at length here:

“...[T]he presence of a robust, vocal and critical civil society sector guarantees, almost without exception, that a State also possesses a good business environment (*the converse does not hold: a good business environment does not guarantee a good civil society environment*). The rule of law is stronger, transparency is greater and markets are less tainted by corruption. Indeed, the presence of a critical civil society can be viewed as a barometer of a State's confidence and stability — important factors for businesses looking to invest their money... The interests and opinions of each sector may diverge in many respects, but this is to be expected in pluralistic and democratic societies.”⁶³ [emphasis added]

In this, Inter Pares agrees with both the Special Rapporteur and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who both observed that the element that marks a strong democracy is whether it can effectively address competing interests and perspectives and facilitate informed democratic debate in public discourse and policy.^{64 65}

Canada is well placed to play a leadership role in responding to the challenge of the Special Rapporteur for donor governments to use international assistance to right the imbalance of power between business and civil society.⁶⁶ A strong civil society, allowed to play its democratic role, can be the central factor in reducing harm, maximizing benefits and so reducing conflict. While this imbalance is a challenge across the development spectrum, a special focus on efforts by civil society to deal with the extractive sector is warranted due to its propensity to generate human rights conflicts, and to Canada's leadership position in the sector worldwide. In making a special effort to support civil societies' monitoring and accountability efforts, such a priority would also affirm that Canada is serious about ensuring Canadian companies are held to the highest standards in their operations in developing countries.

Women and children, particularly indigenous women and children, face the greatest barriers to justice, and have the greatest difficulty making their voices heard. As extractive industries affect indigenous people, women and youth differentially, programs must incorporate specific interventions to ensure their inclusion.

2. Create new and effective corporate accountability mechanisms in Canada to prevent harm and offer remedy to victims of rights violations by Canadian extractive industries operating overseas.⁶⁷

Sustainable Development Goal 16 prioritizes access to justice, as does the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). In many developing countries, there is little or no access to effective justice, particularly for Indigenous, women and rural people, and particularly up against powerful multinational companies. Neither does *Doing Business the Canadian Way*, Canada's existing policy on extractive industries, provide effective access to justice to those harmed by Canadian extractive companies. With Canada's dominant position in the sector most prone to human rights violations and conflict worldwide, Canada has the possibility of regaining international leadership in issues of justice by ensuring access to remedy for those harmed by Canadian extractive industries overseas.

Urgent first steps are comprised of the following two elements:

Establish an independent Extractive Sector Ombudsperson

Existing non-judicial mechanisms – the National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines and the Office of the Extractive Sector CSR Counsellor – are ineffective for prevent harm and offering remedy for victims of extractive industry projects overseas. Neither mechanism undertakes investigation, assesses whether standards have been breached, or provides solutions or remedies to victims.⁶⁸ Neither mechanism is transparent or independent, nor are there sanctions for non-compliance with standards.⁶⁹ Both are voluntary – if the company refuses to participate, the case will not advance.⁷⁰

Inter Pares has worked in collaboration with the members of the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability⁷¹ to develop a legislative proposal for an independent Extractive Sector Ombudsperson, which would be able to investigate and compel testimony, balance commercial confidentiality with transparency in accordance with principles of administrative justice, bring remedy to victims, and recommend sanctions for non-compliance with standards. Upholding the human rights of the most vulnerable will be the priority of the Ombudsperson, who will be able make recommendations to government to address systemic problems and prevent future harm.

Facilitate access to Canadian courts for those who suffer corporate abuse overseas by Canadian extractive companies

Vulnerable people from developing countries face significant hurdles accessing courts, even beyond the onerous financial cost and travel required to bring a case to Canadian courts. Of the few cases to make it to Canadian courts, all have been rejected on jurisdictional grounds. The only set of cases that have not been rejected for this reason are related to HudBay Resources, which withdrew its arguments on jurisdiction.

Policy initiatives can be undertaken that make clear that Canadian courts are appropriate fora for claims against extractive companies registered in Canada. This would again bring Canada back into line with such initiatives currently taking place on the international stage, and would demonstrate Canada's firm commitment to advancing human rights around the world.

3. **To ensure Canadian commercial activity does not undermine the Sustainable Development Goals to which Canada has committed, this International Assistance Review should lead to the development and implementation of a human rights centred Corporate Accountability Strategy, focussed on vulnerable and impacted individuals and communities, and on the protection and promotion of their rights.**⁷²

The existing CSR Strategy focuses on supporting Canadian companies to understand their responsibilities with respect to human rights. A Corporate Accountability Strategy (CAS) would instead be clearly situated within a development lens, oriented toward individuals and communities affected by extractive industry projects, and prioritizing protection of their rights, prevention of harm, rights-based decision-making around natural resource governance, the creation of effective accountability mechanisms and provision of remedy to impacted people and communities.

It would include the following elements:

- ***Access to remedy for victims of harm by Canadian extractive industry operations overseas:***
Establishment of the Ombudsperson and removing barriers to access to courts for foreign claimants, as outlined above, would be the first urgent and necessary steps, becoming the cornerstone for the development of the CAS.
 - ***Effective regulation of Canadian companies and their subsidiaries operating overseas:***
Voluntary codes of conduct are known to be ineffective as a tool to ensure accountability. The CAS would mandate human rights due diligence, establish parent company liability, and lift other obstacles that victims face in accessing justice and remedy. Other jurisdictions in Europe are exploring similar legal reforms and policy changes.⁷³
 - ***Condition government support to companies on respect for human and labour rights, the environment, and Indigenous rights, including FPIC.***
This would achieve two important goals: first, it would ensure that Canada is not inadvertently complicit in predictable human rights and environmental abuses; secondly, as referenced above, business, civil society and nations benefit when treatment of business and civil society is made more equal. An important re-balancing can be done by ensuring that businesses are held to account for agreed human rights standards in a clear, transparent and predictable way, reducing conflict and increasing social cohesion and business stability.
 - ***Clear guidelines for gender analysis and program prioritization:***
A feminist lens on all programs is particularly important for interventions concerning extractive industries, which tend to be seen more than many sectors through a gender-blind lens.
4. **Conduct an evidence-based review of the proposed new Development Finance Institute to determine its effectiveness and efficiency in promoting development. Should a DFI be established, it must include robust, transparent mechanisms to safeguard and prioritize human rights, indigenous rights and environmental protection.**

CSOs and others have been highly critical of development finance institutions elsewhere. European DFIs, on which the proposal for a Canadian institution is largely modeled, have been found to profoundly distort the use of ODA toward subsidizing home country corporations rather than prioritizing development goals.⁷⁴ They have also found the use of DFIs tend to work contrary to donors' obligations to align development priorities with the policies and priorities of the developing

country. Before Canada finalizes the creation of such an entity further consultation with civil society both in Canada and the global South is necessary.

Should the Government of Canada eventually develop a DFI, it must include robust, transparent mechanisms to safeguard and prioritize human rights.

Conclusion

Inter Pares welcomes Canada's commitment to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. These two commitments are part of the same coin, and tackling one will necessarily mean tackling the other. We believe the discussion questions in the GAC IAR Discussion Document are all effectively covered by the recommendations above, with significant overlap between questions. Some of the key issues raised by GAC in the discussion document are as follows:

To make sustainable economic growth more inclusive and green [and] support developing countries to mitigate and adapt to climate change and

To further focus international assistance on niche areas within climate change and the environment (e.g. water, biodiversity, land use, agriculture, energy):

- Canada must invest in agro-ecology and local food systems to combat climate change and promote sustainable economic development.

To focus economic growth and climate change policy and programming to demonstrate leadership on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls:

- Canada must strengthen farmer organizations and citizen participation, with particular focus on empowering women farmers to play a leadership role in these organizations.

To target efforts to maximise the development benefits from investments, taking into consideration the interconnections between different sectors – agriculture, financial and other services, infrastructure, natural resources, education etc.:

- Canada should review its policy agenda in all relevant areas of government, particularly foreign affairs, trade, finance and natural resources, to ensure they are consistent with the development commitments Canada has made in its endorsement of Agenda 2030. In doing so, Canada should :
 - Reduce the opacity in the international financial system, starting with anonymous companies;
 - Remove the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism from the Canadian model of Foreign Investment Protection Agreement (FIPA); and
 - Re-negotiate tax treaties that unfairly and dramatically restrict developing countries' right to collect taxes from Canadian multinational companies doing business in their jurisdiction, and to refrain from negotiating future such deals.
- Canada should create new and effective corporate accountability mechanisms in Canada to prevent harm and offer remedy to victims of rights violations by Canadian extractive industries operating overseas, the most urgent of which are the creation of an Extractive Industry Ombudsperson, and facilitation of access to Canadian courts for those harmed by Canadian extractive industries overseas.
- To ensure Canadian commercial activity does not undermine the Sustainable Development Goals to which Canada has committed, this International Assistance Review should lead to the development and implementation of a human rights centred Corporate Accountability Strategy, focussed on vulnerable and impacted individuals and communities, and on the protection and promotion of their rights.
- To ensure that scarce ODA funds are not diverted to other ends, conduct an evidence-based review of the proposed new Development Finance Institute to determine whether such an institution is the most efficient and effective means to promote development. Should a DFI be established, it must include robust, transparent mechanisms to safeguard and prioritize human rights, indigenous rights and environmental protection.

To build the right partnerships in this area and work more innovatively with our partners in this space:

- Support capacity building and locally-determined efforts by civil society – with special attention to indigenous peoples', women's and youth organizations – to hold their governments and multinational mining companies to account for violations of human rights, indigenous rights, labour rights and environmental damage.
- All support for developing country private sector actors must be done in alignment with the democratically determined "priorities and policies set out by developing countries themselves", and have strict environmental and human rights criteria to select such partners.
- Canada should work with Canadian civil society and their partners in the global South that have a proven track record of working with small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), cooperatives, smallholder farmers and their organizations, and whose work is focused on the most vulnerable sectors of the society, including women and young people.

Governance, pluralism, diversity and human rights

Many of the counterparts with which Inter Pares works are engaged in struggles aimed at pressing their government officials and institutions to be more responsive and accountable to the needs of their populations. In many places we see limited and often shrinking space for citizens to participate in economic and political decision making, and serious gaps in the promotion and defence of human rights by state and non-state actors.

Far too often international assistance aimed at strengthening systems of governance has a top down approach concentrated principally on building government institutions. Where trade interests of the donor country are a strong driving force, support for governance can often be self-serving, involving the promotion of regulatory regimes that will be most beneficial to the foreign investors, at the expense of the needs of the local populations.

For Inter Pares, governance does not refer simply to government; in fact government is not the primary element. Rather, good and effective government flows from and is in function of broad, active, mature and responsible citizenship. It is precisely for this reason that individuals, associations and institutions within civil society have to be central to any development strategy and international programs to support local development. Any program that emphasizes good governance, in the sense of formal government, must include the development of citizens and citizenship as a first priority. The focus should be on strengthening the authentic participation of all people - in particular those who have been historically excluded - in forging solutions to the conditions of their lived lives. And the promotion and protection of human rights must be central to that effort.

Strengthening the capacity of marginalized people to influence the social, economic and political structures that govern their lives – even as forces of globalization, government decentralization, repression and militarization threaten the basis of civil society – remains a central focus of Inter Pares' work.

Inter Pares and Governance, pluralism, diversity and human rights

Since its inception more than 40 years ago, Inter Pares has been supporting civil society organizations in developing countries to engage with their governments, within their societies and globally, to address poverty and inequality, gender inequality and human rights issues. We believe that our counterparts are the best placed to define their own priorities and develop appropriate strategies to make their governments and institutions accountable in terms of governance, pluralism, diversity and human rights.

Inter Pares' programs (including Partnership Branch and Bilateral Branch-funded programs) have contributed to building organizations in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Canada, many of which are now CSO leaders in governance, civil society participation, and the construction of citizenship - especially for the most marginalized, who are often neglected in policy-making and in their access to public services. The examples below are reflective of some of this work.

In Latin America, the interventions of Project Counselling Service (PCS), our main counterpart, have mostly taken place within post-conflict societies, specializing in a human rights-based approach toward governance. PCS has accompanied groups and communities – particularly women and Indigenous peoples – through peace agreements, resettlement and Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in four countries (Peru, Colombia, Guatemala and El Salvador).

In Asia, counterparts such as Nijera Kori in Bangladesh assist the most marginalized in over 1,150 villages, forming groups that undergo training on human rights and their rights under Bangladeshi laws. There are now over 200,000 group members (more than half are women) who are improving local governance, strengthening the rule of law and defending human rights, in particular the rights of women in a society that is facing increasing religious fundamentalism.

In Africa, our counterpart ACORD has deepened its methodologies in community dialogue and negotiation, exemplified in its Community Social Peace and Recovery model. This process recognizes that a divided and conflictive citizenry creates a vicious circle with weak governance systems. It brings together members of the community in conflict to assess the root causes of the conflict, promote dialogue, acknowledge injustice, and jointly construct and monitor social contracts to avoid future conflict.

Recommendations

1. Focus on civil society, and recognize its existing capacities

It is difficult if not impossible to think of a case where human rights have improved, or governance has become more inclusive or accountable, without strong domestic civil society input. Improving governance should, therefore, primarily focus on supporting civil society, with building government (and/or parliamentary) capacity comprising an important but smaller component.

Inter Pares has learned over the years that the most effective and accountable civil society groups are those created by people in affected communities. These local grassroots groups have more accountability to their communities. They have the trust of community members, and the historical and contextual knowledge essential to understanding sensitivities and identifying needs in ways that outsiders can never replicate. They have ideas about how to address pressing issues and members with expertise to carry out plans. International development efforts should provide funding and resources, and in some cases political and technical support. Organizational development is one area where Canadian technical advice can be useful.

For years our partners throughout the global South have witnessed and experienced an increasingly vertical “projectization” of aid that refuses to cover rent, salaries, institutional strengthening, or costs for locally identified needs. With little core funding available, they tell us, they are forced to accept funding for inappropriately constrained “projects” just to survive, and try to fund work that directly aligns with their mandate from whatever cost recovery they can gain through these projects. With flexible core support they can act on needs they have identified themselves. Defining needs from Canada and assuming we are the experts and they are the students is not compatible with a feminist approach to development. We need to recognize local capacities and let them indicate the needs and agenda, rather than treating them as subcontractors.

Work on governance and human rights is highly political. While Inter Pares does not support partisan political activity, demanding political neutrality of partners is naïve and counterproductive. The key is not to avoid partners who are politicized, but to seek those most connected and accountable to local public aspirations.

Inter Pares’ work with grassroots ethnic civil society organizations in Burma’s conflict zones illustrates many of these points. When Inter Pares began our relationships with these groups over 20 years ago, they were few, small and nascent, growing out of communities directly affected by armed conflict, human rights abuses, ethnic marginalization and vulnerability. They grew on their

own with very limited outside support at first. The Canadian government, through CIDA/DFATD, has been almost alone among governmental donors in supporting these groups over the past 15 years, and most importantly, this support contributed to core costs and organizational strengthening rather than narrowly defined short-term projects. The result is a highly professional, vibrant, and well-networked ethnic civil society today, with groups addressing highly complex issues. CSOs from Burma are capable, for example, of providing draft policies for peace negotiations, and have shown significant achievements in the areas of human rights, environmental protection, women's rights, and independent media.

2. Support the most marginalized within civil society

The dynamics of power and exclusion have left many people, groups and communities on the margins, subject to fundamental violations of their human rights. International assistance must take every precaution to ensure that its interventions not only do no harm but are aimed at building more inclusive and pluralistic societies. Canada's international development programming should create space for marginalized voices and strengthen the agency and participation of civil society actors that have been historically excluded on the basis of their sex, race, ethnicity, colour, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or other factors.

Frequently the experiences of marginalized people are also characterised by resistance and resilience. The very fact of being oppressed, of having fundamental rights denied or diminished, often leads to attempts to press for positive change and the creation of innovative, collective action and community-based movements. These movements and initiatives require political and financial support.

As noted above, Inter Pares has been supporting ethnic-based civil society groups in Burma for over 20 years. These groups were formed by displaced people of marginalized ethnic groups, and by women who are further marginalized within those groups. Despite the challenges of working under government scorched-earth campaigns, they have thrived due to determination and long-term, flexible core support. Since 2012, Burma has become more open to international assistance, and international donors are entering the country, keen to work with the government and with civil society based in central Yangon. Many bypass independent civil society based in the ethnic conflict zones, and seek instead to extend development to these areas from central Burma, usually in partnership with government or with Yangon-based civil society. By ignoring locally-based civil society, and the history of people in these regions resisting government abuses and central control for over 60 years, many of these interventions are seen locally as vehicles for government/military control. They are exacerbating mistrust, tensions, increased conflict and duplication. To its credit, Canada recently committed to continue support for ethnic community-based civil society through a 2016-2020 program with Inter Pares, while simultaneously supporting other work in central Burma toward governmental accountability and civil society strengthening. This helps Canada retain its reputation as a politically balanced partner in a country still divided. It also helps the country move toward a more pluralistic democracy, which is the only way to end armed conflict and make democracy sustainable in this multi-ethnic context.

3. A human rights framework for international assistance as a tool for coherence between government policies

In line with the International Assistance Review discussion paper's call for greater policy coherence, Global Affairs Canada should put the full-range of human rights (including economic, social and cultural rights) at the centre of its international agenda, not limiting itself to development, but also

trade and diplomacy. Adopting this framework would mean that concerns for human rights have precedence over other types of interventions that could impact those rights negatively. The IAR discussion document notes that Canadian law requires all development assistance to be “*consistent with international standards of human rights*” and proposes adopting a rights-based approach to development⁷⁵. Yet Canada’s current policy explicitly makes development and humanitarian aid subservient to trade interests, with Canada’s Global Markets Action Plan designed to “*ensure that all the diplomatic assets of the Government of Canada are harnessed to support the pursuit of commercial success by Canadian companies and investors in key foreign markets*”⁷⁶. The Plan states that Canada will “*leverage development programming to advance Canada’s trade interests*”⁷⁷.

Free trade agreements are a good example of how, in certain contexts, Canadian trade interests effectively have the upper hand over human rights concerns. Since the 2009 coup, Honduras has been accused of widespread impunity by respected international organizations such as Human Rights Watch⁷⁸, with homicide rates peaking at 84 per 100,000 people in 2013⁷⁹. Nonetheless, this did not prevent the Canadian government from ratifying a free trade agreement with Honduras in 2014, and providing technical assistance for a new mining code (passed in 2013) that provides little protections for people and the environment⁸⁰. The situation has only been worsening since then with one of the latest instances being the murder of high-profile environmental and Indigenous rights defender Berta Cáceres. In the past, Canada limited its economic and diplomatic ties with countries that have been known to violate human rights, whether through their inaction or deliberately, but the Honduran example demonstrates how currently Canada’s economic interests trump those concerns.

Minimally, Canada must ensure the existence of conditions for the free, prior and informed consent of the communities located in areas hosting projects that receive Canadian investment. Canada should establish new corporate accountability mechanisms in Canada, which are both non-judicial (such as setting up an ombudsperson for the corporate sector) and judicial (legislated access to Canadian courts), to prevent harm and offer remedy to victims of Canadian economic activities abroad when local justice mechanisms are deemed inaccurate to process those demands (see section on Clean Economic Growth and Climate Change).

4. Support process-oriented outcomes with predictable and flexible core funding

Supporting human rights, pluralism and good governance is not like delivering relief supplies or building infrastructure. Claiming human rights, creating space for marginalized voices, establishing mechanisms to hold governments accountable: all of these are politically contentious projects that encounter resistance, and depend on contextual and external factors. Expecting time-bound, quantifiable impacts is risky, naïve, and can be counterproductive. Positive outcomes may take years, depending on political will. However, one thing is almost always certain: without making the effort, things will not change. The challenges involve identifying a path to change and setting appropriate goals.

When concrete contextual changes are difficult to predict, the best way to ensure progress is to focus on *processes*. Helping grassroots organizations to become stronger, more democratic and inclusive, and networked with other like-minded organizations is setting them up to achieve positive impact over the medium and long term. Setting up and supporting a political forum, an independent media outlet, or a mechanism for addressing complaints will create change that will respond to the evolving context and needs. All of the specific impacts cannot be defined *a priori* in a

logical framework; but by identifying the sustainable process itself as an outcome, a path to positive results in the medium and long term can be created.

For processes, mechanisms, and the organizations that manage them to succeed, they need to plan strategically into the future with some confidence of their continued existence. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights recently reported that *"Predictability of core funding is fundamental for civil society organizations to work effectively and independently, undertake long-term planning and adapt to evolving situations"*⁸¹. He therefore recommends that to *"optimize civil society's transformative potential"*, UN member states must *"provide core flexible funding to civil society organizations, with simplified procedures, and channel any funding for civil society activity via open and transparent processes"*⁸². This requires multi-year, flexible core funding arrangements. Support the organizations and the processes they set up, and the impacts will follow in their own time dependent on contextual variables.

Inter Pares therefore sees the establishment and maintenance of coalitions as a significant result. Many of the coalitions we have helped to establish have gone on to achieve impacts we could not have predicted when a program began. For example, we supported the formation and ongoing activities of the Burma News International coalition so that independent ethnic media groups could share skills and gain greater recognition for their work, but one of its unanticipated outcomes in recent years has been to counter hate speech between Buddhists and Muslims by establishing guidelines for journalistic ethics and training journalists on these.

In Peru, Inter Pares' counterpart DEMUS worked hard to pursue processes that exposed the forced sterilizations of indigenous people that took place between 1995 and 2000, when under the pretext of combating rural poverty, the Fujimori government sterilized an estimated 300,000 women and 20,000 men. Beginning with an emblematic case taken to the Inter-American Court on Human Rights in 1999, this paved the way for over 2,000 women to come forward with their own stories and demand justice nationally. Growing public pressure, nurtured by an effective public campaign by DEMUS and other Peruvian organizations, led the Peruvian government to announce in December 2015 the establishment of a national registry for persons affected by forced sterilizations.

Neither of the above outcomes could have occurred without the ongoing core support these organizations needed to maintain these contentious processes, and the local knowledge deployed to identify needs and possibilities throughout. Assistance tied to narrowly-defined quantifiable outcomes would never have allowed these examples to happen.

Conclusion

The IAR Discussion Paper raises several issues of concern to GAC regarding this pillar, which are addressed by the above recommendations as follows:

Implementing Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda—to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels:

- Canada should recognize that good governance and accountability come from the grassroots up, not from the government down, and should therefore focus its support on civil society more than on government.

Promoting inclusion, advancing respect for diversity and upholding human rights:

- Canada should focus its governance and human rights assistance on the most marginalized groups in society, particularly women, indigenous or ethnic groups, and people marginalized due to race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or other factors.

Maximizing impact of Canada's international assistance:

- Interventions should recognize local capacities, not assume that we are there to build their capacity, and let them indicate the needs and agenda, rather than treating them as subcontractors.
- Whenever possible, assistance should be multi-year, flexible core funding that strengthens local civil society.
- Human rights and governance assistance should focus on creating and strengthening processes, local organizations, and coalitions.
- Canadian international assistance should be driven by a human rights framework that should also be the guiding framework for trade and foreign policy.

Peace and Security

Inequality is a major root cause, and can be both a driver and consequence of conflict. Class, race and gender inequities (to name just a few) are further exacerbated by insecurity. Despite a general growth of macro-economic indicators in many parts of the world, wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of few. According to the UNDP, the richest eight per cent of the world's population now earns half of the world's total income.⁸³ Inequalities in income, deeply exclusionary policies and the failure to build inclusive and pluralistic societies are contributing to new, or exacerbating existing conflicts.

While there are many commonalities between conflicts around the world, each situation has complex root causes, factions and fault lines and the impacts can be experienced for generations. As outlined in the 2030 Agenda, there is a need for interlinked solutions within this complex terrain⁸⁴. In order to address inequality, international assistance in fragile situations requires normative and structural change, and these are very long-term processes.

At a workshop on working in fragile states followed by a GAC consultation, the keynote speaker asked an important question: have we privileged the government to donor relationship over a state's relationship and responsibility to its people⁸⁵? To promote inclusive governance, to establish accountability mechanisms and to build trust in emerging or weak democracies, an independent and competent civil society and engaged public is critical.

It is also important to note that peace is not merely the absence of armed conflict. In order to create and maintain national peace and security, women, men and youth need to be key actors. Too often donor countries direct the bulk of their resources to building state systems and pay much less attention to strengthening civil society. A lack of policy coherence with Canada's approach to a nation can also be detrimental to achieving peace and security results. Indeed, there have been times when Canada's trade interests in particular have undermined development results.

In looking at peace and security with a feminist lens, it is important to look at the continuum of violence across societies in which there is little or no respect for women and girl's rights and gender equality⁸⁶. Gender-based sexual violence during conflict does not occur in a vacuum, the problems are systemic and therefore the solutions need to be too.

Inter Pares and Peace and Security

Inter Pares' counterparts in many parts of the world have responded to social, political, and armed conflict in ongoing and "post-conflict" settings. In Burma for example, the Women's League of Burma promotes the participation of women and marginalized communities in peace processes; the Karen Human Rights Group strengthens local strategies to resist human rights abuses; the Health Convergence Core Group researches and develops policies on healthcare issues such as healthcare and natural resource management; and The Border Consortium supports refugees and displaced people. All thirty-eight partners in our Burma program work for the accountability of their governments and push for social and economic policies that protect and promote the interests of all. In close collaboration with our counterparts, we have been creating possibilities for a local development that responds to people's needs and promotes broad participation in the construction of peace.

Inter Pares works with many grassroots organizations led by women in Central America that have responded to situations of social, political, and armed conflict. Their voices are far too often absent in formal settings when armed actors come together to negotiate peace. We are currently supporting

organizations that work in ongoing and “post-conflict” settings, in countries such as Colombia and Guatemala.

In several African countries, our counterpart ACORD made use of innovative methodologies to address the underlying causes of violence and to build meaningful peace at a grassroots level. The Community Social Peace and Recovery Model, originally developed in Burundi, was subsequently used in Guinea, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi and Central African Republic.

Recommendations

1. Canada should provide long-term, flexible, predictable, institutional funding

This kind of support allows Canadian civil society to build relationships with local civil society in fragile situations and enables them to respond to the opportunities, challenges and needs as they arise. Peace and reconciliation cannot be expected to happen within a restrictive timeframe, and the directions of conflicts are at times unpredictable. Programming frameworks that offer reliable and long-term funding facilitate innovative adaptation and redesign.

We have seen significant results from this kind of support. For example, over a decade ago, with support from Partnership Branch, Inter Pares began supporting the Guatemalan “Breaking the Silence and Impunity Alliance”. This alliance of three civil society women's organizations combined efforts to provide psychosocial, awareness-raising and judicial support to an emblematic case involving a group of women from the rural community of Sepur Zarco. During Guatemala's armed conflict in the 1980s, the women's' husbands were murdered by the military. The women themselves were subsequently held as slaves at the local military base where they were required to wash the soldiers' clothes, provide food and prepare meals. Throughout this time, the women were repeatedly raped.

It would have been impossible to imagine the outcome of the support provided to the women at the beginning of the process, much less the timeframe for results, when they were barely able to speak about what they had been through. However, it ultimately led to historical precedents on the judicial front, most notably the first trial for sexual violence during Guatemala's internal armed conflict; the first ever sexual slavery case to be heard by a national court⁸⁷; and the precedent-setting sentences in February 2016 to the accused former military officers. It is hoped that not only will this contribute to Guatemalans' efforts at truth, justice and reconciliation, but will serve as a deterrent from such crimes ever being committed again.

By responding to the needs identified by our counterparts and their innovative use of various democratic mechanisms at the national and international levels (including the Inter-American Human Rights Commission), Inter Pares was able to use Canadian public funds to contribute to ending two decades of impunity.

2. Canadian assistance must invest in local civil society

In conflict and fragile situations, the root causes, factions and fault lines are complex and it is therefore important to work with local expertise. This is also fundamental to the sustainability of any peacebuilding efforts. Local civil society that is rooted in conflict-affected communities can play an instrumental role in governance accountability, citizenship participation and building trust in emerging democracies.

Since our founding over 40 years ago, Inter Pares has sponsored numerous South-South exchanges between women on issues related to peace and security to debate, discuss, learn, strategize, and work collectively. These exchanges have enabled local organizations working in different contexts to benefit from each other's expertise. We have convened roundtables on the issue of sexual violence in countries in conflict or in post-conflict situations and we have supported programming targeting women's involvement in peace processes and political decision-making in countries such as Burma, Guatemala, Sudan and Colombia.⁸⁸

For example, in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Chiapas (Mexico), grassroots women's associations have played a central role in struggles for truth and reconciliation, exposing the issue of sexual violence, and promoting women's political participation and their access to justice. In order to share this experience and lessons learned with the women's movement in Colombia, that is currently witnessing historic peace negotiations, Inter Pares' counterpart recently brought together a group of Central American women and over 200 women from across Colombia. This exchange enabled participants to reflect on the meaning of peace for their communities, while learning lessons from "post-conflict" countries. A key lesson from these exchanges was that signing peace accords does not mean the end of conflict. In fact, given that the international community's gaze often moves elsewhere after accords are signed, many communities have seen a backtracking in the gains made in women's or indigenous rights.

3. The promotion and protection of universal human rights should be the cornerstone of Canada's aid and foreign policy objectives through a coherent, whole-of-government approach

The Global Markets Action Plan, adopted by the Canadian government in 2014, reinforced a trend towards the prioritization of Canada's trade interests, often at the expense of human rights protection. Describing the plan as "*a sea change in the way Canada's diplomatic assets are deployed around the world*", (then) Minister of International Trade Ed Fast stated that the plan would "*ensure that all Government of Canada diplomatic assets are harnessed to support the pursuit of commercial success by Canadian companies and investors.*" International assistance is referred to in the plan as "*leverage...to advance Canada's trade interests.*"⁸⁹

This approach has had a negative impact on Canada's reputation globally as a human rights advocate. The pursuit of Free Trade Agreements with countries that have serious human rights concerns and in which there have been no prior human rights impact assessments has raised profound concerns among civil society actors in Canada and abroad.

Countries that are in conflict situations are particularly vulnerable, given the variety of actors involved and these contexts are often characterized by volatility. A case in point is Colombia, a country with which Canada signed a Free Trade Agreement (CCOFTA) in 2008. Civil society organizations in both countries expressed fears that an agreement would increase and protect the kind of investments most associated with the armed conflict, violence and forced displacement. Moreover, in such a context, there were fears of the real potential that Canadian companies could actually benefit from human rights abuses. Particular concern was expressed that the agreement's investment chapter would restrict the ability of governments to put in place the types of public policies and regulations needed to benefit their citizens.⁹⁰

These fears are proving to be well-founded: according to recent reports, Eco Oro Minerals, a Canadian mining company, has announced its intention to sue Colombia under the investment chapter of CCOFTA over measures that Colombia has taken to protect the Santurbán wetland and wetlands around the country from the harmful impacts from large-scale mining.⁹¹ These wetlands are

the source of 70% of the fresh water that is consumed in Colombia and are essential for mitigating climate change. This lawsuit has the potential to undermine Colombia's capacity to respond to the needs of its people and to address root causes of the conflict.

The mandate letters issued by Prime Minister Trudeau to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of International Development highlight the new government's approach "to champion the values of inclusive and accountable governance, peaceful pluralism and respect for diversity, and human rights including the rights of women and refugees."⁹² Along the same lines, the discussion paper for the International Assistance Review suggests the possible adoption of a "rights-based approach to development". We would welcome such an approach and urge a refocusing of Canada's aid and foreign policy objectives with a prioritization on the promotion and protection of human rights through the adoption of a human rights framework for international assistance. This framework is entirely compatible to a feminist approach.

4. Canada must promote women's rights and support the four pillars of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda.

According to a study by UN Women that reviewed 31 peace processes over two decades, nine out of ten negotiators and signatories were men.⁹³ In addition to being combatants, women are impacted by armed conflict in a variety of ways. It is often women who have to provide food, clothing, and shelter to sustain their families and children during and after conflicts. Sexual and gender-based violence is used as a weapon of war; women experience physical and psychological trauma, sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, and stigmatization. At the same time, women are always at the forefront of efforts to press armed actors to lay down their weapons and engage in peace talks.

Canada has taken some commendable symbolic steps in the past six months towards gender balance and women's rights. Canada's emphasis on re-engagement with the multilateral system, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding offers multiple entry points to continue this work. As a member of the Women's Peace and Security Network-Canada⁹⁴, Inter Pares urges the Government of Canada to address the full range of the four WPS pillars:

1. **Participation** - supporting the full participation of women in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peacebuilding and recovery.
2. **Protection** - addressing gender-based violence.
3. **Prevention** - investing in conflict prevention, and
4. **Relief and recovery** - ensuring attention to women's rights and gender equality results in humanitarian assistance and "post-conflict" recovery initiatives.⁹⁵

Conclusion

To summarize our recommendations specifically in terms of the IAR questions on Peace and Security.

Specific strengths Canada should build upon to respond to peace and security challenges

- The Foreign Affairs and International Development mandate letters and the IAR Discussion paper highlight the importance of human rights and this should be the cornerstone to a coherent whole of government approach.

- In the past six months, Canada has taken some commendable symbolic steps towards gender balance and women's rights and must champion this issue by investing in the four pillars of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda.

Aligning Canada's international assistance efforts in peace and security with international approaches, including the 2030 Agenda

- As outlined in the 2030 Agenda, there is a need for interlinked solutions within this complex terrain. Funding mechanisms used to exist within Partnership Branch to support innovative long-term programming – these mechanisms for institutional support should be reinstated.

Partnerships that Canada should pursue to achieve its peace and security goals

- An independent and competent civil society is critical to any democracy. Canada must take a balanced approach to fragile situations, supporting the building of State systems, while at the same time prioritizing support to local civil society.

Responding to Humanitarian Crises and the Needs of Displaced Populations

UNHCR recently reported that over 65 million people worldwide were displaced at the end of 2015 – an increase of almost 6 million in the space of one year.⁹⁶ The number of people targeted by UN Global Appeals has risen from 53 million in 2011 to 88 million in 2016.⁹⁷ The frequency and scale of natural disasters seem to be increasing, with climate change a growing factor. Land grabs for resource exploitation, land speculation, corporate agribusiness or conservation areas are displacing increasing numbers of people. Armed conflicts are continuing or resuming, driving and driven by displacement. Increasing global needs are being met by donor fatigue and a lack of political will, as donor countries become more inward-looking and seek to balance domestic budgets and reduce immigration. As crises outnumber the ability to respond, more and more of them become chronic emergencies that seem to elude sustainable solutions.

The sheer scale of need created by issues like the Syrian conflict is pulling resources away from other situations, leaving vulnerabilities unaddressed in ways that can reignite conflict and create fresh emergencies. These challenges require a reassessment of how crisis funding is distributed, how decisions are made and how responses are designed.

Inter Pares and Humanitarian Crises

Inter Pares is a social justice organization, not a humanitarian relief organization. However, we recognize the role that humanitarian aid can play in enabling displaced people to claim their rights, and the ways that such aid can impact social justice positively or negatively. For over 20 years we have supported refugees from Burma in camps in Thailand with our partner The Border Consortium (TBC), a group of 11 international NGOs (including Inter Pares) that currently oversees humanitarian assistance to over 100,000 refugees in nine camps. This aid currently totals CAD\$1,250,000 per year, but it is not simply relief; these are some of the only camps in the world to be run by refugees themselves, creating possibilities for civic participation and capacity building well beyond the norm in humanitarian crises. We also support Mae Tao Clinic, a refugee-run health centre serving refugees and migrants along the Burma-Thailand border, which also serves as a hub for medic and midwife training. For over ten years we have provided significant support to Backpack Health Worker Teams, an organization of displaced people with medical training who deliver primary health care to over 300,000 people in conflict-affected villages or internally displaced in conflict zones throughout Burma. We have also supported humanitarian assistance delivered by displaced people to displaced populations scattered throughout Burma's armed conflict areas for many years. All of these interventions follow the principle of supporting displaced people to manage their own responses.

Inter Pares has also worked with displaced populations in Central America and Colombia, including a CIDA-funded program from 2002-07 that helped internally displaced Colombians to form and sustain their own organizations in order to access government services and advocate for policy improvements.

Recommendations

1. Let affected people design and manage the response

It is commonly said that relief aid can lead to dependency, and with many modern emergencies becoming chronic situations, this is a serious concern. In our experience, however, it is not aid itself

that is disempowering, but the conventional top-down model of delivering it. The importance of allowing affected people and local organizations to design their own interventions is already recognized in human rights and community development; it is time to recognize it as well in responses to humanitarian crises and displacement.

Affected communities are always the first responders to crises, disasters, and forced displacement, but their power over their own lives is often taken from them as soon as international organizations arrive on the scene. This takes management of the response away from the very people who best understand the needs, and immediately makes aid disempowering. If affected people and their local organizations are engaged to lead the decision making and management from the beginning, receiving relief aid can be a very empowering experience, strengthening local capacities, democratic structures, and empowerment. It gives people ownership, and a sense of identity and partial control over their lives, which is crucial in situations where people may have lost almost everything. This also facilitates a seamless transition from emergency relief to recovery and development.

A growing body of research supports this approach. The UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee's *Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons* recognizes that *"IDPs must be consulted and participate extensively in the planning and management of the processes supporting a durable solution. All parts of the IDP population, including women, children (according to their age and maturity), persons with special needs and persons who are potentially marginalized, must be fully included. Local communities that receive IDPs and other affected populations also need to be consulted."*⁹⁸ Similarly for refugees, *"Incorporating refugee-run organisations into development programmes ... provides a means to capitalise on refugees' skills, reach refugees who may not be affiliated with international organisations, and take steps to close the relief-development gap in protracted refugee situations."*⁹⁹

Inter Pares' own experience with displaced people in Burma and Thailand concurs with these findings. By working with refugees who design and manage their own relief and programming, our partner The Border Consortium has gained international recognition for overseeing one of the most efficient and cost-effective refugee programs in the world. The overriding working philosophy is to maximize refugee participation in program design, implementation, monitoring and feedback. Refugees elect their own camp committees that manage the camps (including justice and education systems), run their own self-reliance livelihoods programs, monitor vulnerability, and oversee distribution of supplies to refugee families.

A 2012 joint AusAid/CIDA evaluation of TBC noted that *"enabling refugees to exert as much control as possible over their own lives and livelihoods through self-management is an important affirmation of the essential humanity of refugee populations."*¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, the *"building of leadership skills in political decision-making and in public administration through the hands-on experience of camp management could serve refugee populations and receiving communities well... camp management structures have functioned as 'public administration schools.' And, for the broader refugee population on the Thai border, camp management structures have animated an experience of citizenship."*¹⁰¹ Now that repatriation appears to be on the horizon, the democratic structures and skills refugees have established will help a great deal with their resettlement and reintegration.

Similarly, our health support in Burma works with Mae Tao clinic and Backpack Health Worker Teams, both of which are managed and staffed by displaced people. Serving a target population of over 500,000 people between them, their delivery of primary and clinic-based health services is

extremely cost-effective and reaches people who have no other access to health care. But just as significantly, they see their role as not simply relief but development: as part of their work they gather health-related data which they have used to draft policy proposals for a decentralized health system in Burma, and now that the government is becoming more open to civil society interaction they are seeking points of convergence between government and non-government systems. The vision is for existing ethnic health departments and community-based organizations to be part of a new federal, decentralized, devolved system with extensive local participation.

2. Design responses that respond to root causes

To address humanitarian crises we need to look at root causes rather than simply treating symptoms. The IAR Discussion Document notes that humanitarian crises “have the potential to reverse much of the development progress made in recent decades”;¹⁰² but this relationship also works in the other direction. Development projects, particularly those involving land grabbing and destructive environmental practices, have frequently contributed to the natural disasters, dispossession and armed conflict that create and prolong humanitarian crises. In Burma we have seen cases where road construction brought in more government military, which preyed on the population forcing them into displacement; forcible confiscation of land to set up mining or plantations drove thousands to refugee camps; and the establishment of nature reserves displaced villagers and fueled armed conflict. Most of today's humanitarian crises are demonstrably human-created, so it follows naturally that the best humanitarian intervention is one which prevents the crisis. Canada should first and foremost apply the “do no harm” principle¹⁰³ across its trade and foreign policy, to ensure that it is not a net contributor to humanitarian crises. Applying a strict rights-based framework to development, trade and foreign policy would be a positive step, reversing the tradition of placing trade interests above all else.

The former Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator at the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Dr. Catherine Bragg, recently stated with regard to humanitarian aid that *“We provide people with what we want to give them, not what they need, and certainly not what they ask for.”*¹⁰⁴ Humanitarian responses should be (as the Discussion Document notes) “needs-driven”, not driven by trade, diplomatic, or immigration policy objectives. Humanitarian aid should never be allocated based on trade and investment priorities, yet this is what current Canadian government policy promotes in the Global Markets Action Plan.¹⁰⁵ Nor should refugees be subject to blanket labels as “bogus” or “trafficked persons” simply to justify xenophobic immigration policies. Responding to refugee crises with walls of enforcement, as the European Union is now doing by launching military strikes on the boats of traffickers and financing the construction of detention centres in countries like Sudan, may well make matters worse. Such approaches will never address humanitarian crises because they are driven by self-interest and ignore root causes.

3. Apply a feminist lens to aid in humanitarian crises

When facing time and logistical constraints in delivering humanitarian aid, it is too easy to ignore the gendered impacts of crises, and the potential for aid itself to exacerbate gender inequality and gender-based violence. Targeting relief aid to women is not enough, and in some cases can even lead to male resentment and domestic violence if not accompanied by mitigation measures. Addressing the gendered impacts of crises and the potential gendered impacts of aid itself must therefore be designed into any intervention from the beginning. These should also be incorporated into ongoing monitoring mechanisms as the situation, and the response, evolve.

A feminist approach also requires us to look at power and marginalization in all situations and at all levels, including marginalization based on ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or other factors. Similarly to gendered impacts, we need to consider the impacts of the response on these forms of marginalization.

The most effective way to achieve this is by working with women's groups and other marginalized groups among the affected population from the beginning. If these groups have been undermined by the crisis, support should be provided to strengthen them, and they should take the lead in designing and managing the response along with other groups from the affected population.

4. Don't rob development to fund emergencies

Recent years have seen a significant global shift of funding away from development work to fund emergency humanitarian relief, and many Inter Pares partner organizations have been told by international (particularly governmental) donors that funds available for development have been taken to cover the Syrian refugee crisis. This is a dangerous path, because development funding is already well below UN-recommended guidelines. Further reductions will allow increased vulnerabilities to conflict, human-created and natural disasters, which can then lead to fresh crises requiring even greater humanitarian response. Economist Amartya Sen famously noted in 1999 that the impact of humanitarian crises and the likelihood of armed conflicts are far less in societies where human rights are respected and development indicators are stronger.¹⁰⁶

In the past, Canadian government policy limited humanitarian assistance to a specific budget within Overseas Development Assistance, and it is necessary to re-establish a strong separation between development and humanitarian assistance budgets. This could come with higher humanitarian *and* development budgets: at just 0.28% of GNI in 2015,¹⁰⁷ Canada's overseas aid budget is well below the UN-recommended target of 0.7%, and also below the OECD-DAC average of 0.3%. There has been a significant decline in real Canadian aid dollars since 2011, and in 2015 Canada ranked 14th of 28 OECD-DAC member countries in ODA/GNI ratio.

Chronic emergencies are also suffering due to donor fatigue and a tendency to divert funding to the latest emergency grabbing international media attention. Response should be driven by need, not by media attention or political posturing at home. Inter Pares works on long term rights-based partnerships, and as a result we lose some donations when there is a public outpouring to finance the latest emergency. It is demonstrably much easier for charities to raise funds from the public for responses to the latest tsunami or earthquake, to the extent that in some cases they raise more funds for these events than they have the capacity to manage. Part of the government's role should be a less reactive response, providing essential longer term support to less popular international needs. Instead, we see the government creating special matching funds to match public donations to the very causes that are already popular with the public, and not those that are less popular but may cause more lasting positive change. While the government matches public donations to earthquake survivors, to our knowledge it has never offered to match public donations for women's rights or sustainable livelihoods.

Conclusion

We believe the discussion questions in the GAC IAR Discussion Document are all effectively covered by the recommendations above, with significant overlap between questions. Some of the key issues raised by GAC in the discussion document are as follows:

To ensure that Canadian humanitarian assistance is “needs-driven [and] effective”:

- Canada should support displaced people's organizations to respond to their own needs. They are the first responders, the most locally knowledgeable, and the most cost-effective and needs-aware form of intervention. Supporting them also creates community ownership and capacity, making a seamless transition to recovery and development.

To “better support the protection of vulnerable populations”:

- Canada should identify and support women's rights groups and other marginalized groups among the population and ensure that assistance will increase equality while foreseeing potential negative impacts of aid such as gender-based violence.

To “facilitate more comprehensive and coordinated responses”:

- Canada should reverse the components of its Global Markets Action Plan that place international assistance at the service of Canadian trade and investment interests, and instead place trade and diplomatic policies within a human rights framework to prevent them from undermining human rights, causing displacement and creating humanitarian crises.

To provide “predictable yet flexible support”:

- Humanitarian assistance should operate from a separate budget from development, and neither should undermine the other; otherwise, the result can be a downward spiral where lack of development breeds new crises.
- Support should be needs-driven, avoiding donor fatigue in chronic situations and not reacting to the latest media focus.
- Multi-year, core and flexible funding should be provided through timely and transparent processes to ensure the survival of local partners.

Delivering Results

The “how” of international development is a critical component of Canada’s program and Inter Pares welcomes the opportunity to comment on this aspect of international assistance. In Inter Pares’ experience, there is a strong and inextricable relationship between programming results and delivery mechanisms.

It is our belief that a feminist lens includes the “how” and that process is as important as outcomes. A feminist international development assistance would emphasize collaboration and learning. It would allow program focus, design and implementation in a way that gives decision-making power to those who are most affected and those who will be most intimate with implementing the program. This approach would also accept that complexity is a key feature of social change and development outcomes. In 2011, Inter Pares documented our feminist analysis and practice in an Occasional Paper called *Does It Work?* The research paper draws the conclusion that our feminist analysis and practice helps the organization to achieve impressive outcomes in terms of both achievements and our effectiveness.

Inter Pares has collaborated with Global Affairs Canada, and all its former incarnations, for more than 20 years. We deeply value the relationship of trust and partnership that has developed over the decades. The programs we have implemented have been evaluated by external, government-contracted firms – all of which have made strong conclusions regarding the programs’ success.

The 2009 evaluation by John Saxby of E. T. Jackson and Associates Ltd confirms our particular methodology, *“This evaluation reinforces what we already know about North/South relationships: **the value of long organizational relationships based on solidarity, respect, and common cause, both requiring and creating trust, close mutual knowledge, reciprocity and mutual accountability.**”*

The following is a list of ongoing and recent Inter Pares programs funded jointly with the Government of Canada:

- Innovation in Reducing Maternal Mortality in the Philippines, 2015-2020
- Inclusive Democracy in Burma, 2015-2020, Bilateral Program
- Enabling Local Ownership of Development, 2010-2015, Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Canada, Governance Directorate, Canadian Partnership Branch
- Burma Border Assistance Program, 2005-2010, CIDA/Geographic Programs Branch (Asia)
- Towards a New Internationalism: A Values-Based Program for Life and Justice, 2005-2010, Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Canada, Canadian Partnership Branch
- Inter Pares Five Year Program, 2000-2005, CIDA NGO Division
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Recommendations

1. **Global Affairs Canada should embrace long-term funding commitments (10+ years) on the understanding that social change takes time and commitment.**

Inter Pares’ vast programming history provides ample evidence that development outcomes take time, and that the trajectory of change is not always predictable. A long-term approach is also

compatible with a feminist lens that examines power dynamics and seeks to shift the balance in favour of those who are marginalized. Transforming power relations requires time and commitment.

It took our counterparts in the Philippines more than 14 years of pointed advocacy to pass the Reproductive Health Law. Various counterparts who have been part of the Burma pro-democracy movement for decades could not have predicted the 2015 national elections in their country resulting in Aung San Suu Kyi as the de facto leader. The groups we relate to in Colombia worked towards peace for decades before the recent ceasefire agreement was signed. And the brave women who testified in the Guatemalan Sepur Zarco case persisted for years before they witnessed justice in 2016, with the men who ordered their enslavement during the conflict sentenced to many years in prison.

Furthermore, a time-frame of 10+ years would take a program approach, which is more sustainable and effective than a project approach; a program approach is more capable of addressing underlying issues of underdevelopment and root causes than a shorter-term project approach. A long-term program approach allows Canadian CSOs to better establish relationships, including with southern CSOs who are often the most experienced expert in their thematic area. In Inter Pares' experience, stronger relationships with Southern CSOs, who are our implementing partners, has meant a better ability to manage risk and more effective interventions due to deeper knowledge of the context and social, political, and economic dynamics at play.

2. Canada's international assistance should be responsive and flexible

The importance of responsiveness in Canadian assistance cannot be overstated – Canada's responsive program was seen as amongst the most innovative in the world. Like other Canadian CSOs, the relationship between Inter Pares and its southern CSO counterparts is a key component of our development effectiveness. More than 40 years of social justice action has underscored for Inter Pares the fundamental importance of supporting and responding to the expressed needs of our southern counterparts. This is true for many Canadian organizations¹⁰⁸. Long-term engagement with partners enables sustainability, the building of expertise, trust and consequently decreases risk. This leads to better development programming.

Responsiveness can nurture Northern and Southern CSO relationships. It allows Canadian CSOs to focus on areas appropriate to their expertise, and ultimately deepens Canadian contributions to development outcomes in a variety of thematic and geographic areas, any of which may, in the future, become more significant. Funding diverse, responsive programs is an investment in future geographic and sectoral strategies.

Responsive programming also respects local ownership of development, a central tenet of the aid effectiveness agenda¹⁰⁹. It can cultivate and strengthen nascent social justice movements and actors working at the grassroots in the South. These movements are critical to keeping their own governments accountable – a precondition for lasting change in a variety of areas and an important governance and democracy outcome in its own right.

One of Inter Pares' main methodologies is to establish relationships with Southern CSOs and support their social justice actions in a diverse range of areas. A key lesson learned from our 40-year history of working this way is that it leads to sustainable development outcomes. This occurs through strengthened southern institutions; a greater level of expertise through programming in areas where we and our counterparts have knowledge and experience; a reduced level of risk and

greater accountability through the establishment of trust and understanding of where our counterparts weaknesses lie; and a diverse range of geographic and sectoral programming, allowing Inter Pares to scale up programs when the opportunity or need arises. All of our geographic desk-funded programs have emerged from an original investment in valuing responsive programming (often funded through Partnership Branch in one of its earlier incarnations as a place where the government of Canada nurtured Canadian CSO partnerships and programs).

Responsive program is necessarily flexible, and flexible funding arrangements have a number of benefits. They allow those directly implementing the programs to address changing circumstances and mitigate risk. They allow programs to take advantage of unexpected but legitimate and sometimes significant results. Flexibility in timeframe is equally important.

3. Canada's funding for international development should be predictable; serious changes are required in the Calls for Proposals mechanism

At the moment and for the past few years, Global Affairs Canada funding of partnerships with civil society has been very unpredictable. There is no indication of when there will be future calls for proposals and no timeline for a response when unsolicited proposals are submitted. Even when successful, the timeline from proposal approval to signing a contribution agreement can be uncertain and often very long.

As an example to illustrate this point, Inter Pares was successful in the latest MNCH Call for Proposals – we submitted our application January 2015, were told our proposal was successful in June 2015, and signed a contribution agreement at the end of March 2016. A five-year program now has to be completed (with the same number and quality of results) in four years, the significant exchange rate fluctuations in that time have not been to our advantage and for the communities in which we work, the uncertainty in program initiation has been logistically difficult and resulted in some lack of trust with respect to Government of Canada funding.

Part of the difficulty has been the Calls for Proposals mechanism itself. Not only does it foster competition and compromise a culture of learning and collaboration amongst Canadian CSOs, but the flood of proposals at one particular moment, given there is no indication when the next such opportunity will arise, has resulted in a situation where even hard-working Global Affairs Canada staff cannot process proposals and the subsequent follow-up in a timely fashion. We have heard this feedback directly from GAC employees and have experienced the implications organizationally.

Furthermore, the initial investment of time in crafting a response to the Calls for Proposals mechanism is extremely labour-intensive, with no guarantee of a successful outcome. The Calls for Proposals mechanism should be seriously revised based on feedback from the international development sector. It should also not be relied on as the main vehicle to solicit Canadian CSO programming ideas. In many Calls for Proposals, the indicators and results are pre-established by Global Affairs. This may have a place in development programming when very specific results are sought, but overall, it stifles creativity and innovation.

4. Canada's International Assistance Should be Evidence-based and Accountable

Effective development programming is built on a foundation of evidence that includes research and experience. To this end, Inter Pares welcomed the Prime Minister's assertion in the mandate letter to Minister Bibeau that MNCH programming was to be *"driven by evidence and outcomes, not ideology"*¹¹⁰ and Inter Pares welcomes Canada's impending increase in support for sexual and reproductive health and rights. It should be noted that an IDRC-funded study found Inter Pares'

long-standing feminist approach to be highly effective.¹¹¹ In the sector, there are a number of leading feminist organizations that have a proven track record in feminist programming. We would urge the government to consider the history of programming as an important piece of evidence in allocating support.

There are many aspects to accountability. Accountability for results and sustaining results often depends on the nature of the programming. However, it is critical to consider that political accountability for systemic changes in Southern government policy and practice require strong southern CSO involvement. Accountability for programming is based on a Results-Based Management framework. RBM has several weaknesses including an emphasis on quantitative indicators. Though data collection is a critical part of evidence-gathering, it should be meaningful without placing an undue burden on those directly implementing the program. The cost of data-collection should be recognized, compensated and kept modest. A mix of qualitative and quantitative data collection will give a more holistic picture of development results. RBM is not conducive to tracking social change which rarely follows a linear trajectory nor is it compatible with a feminist approach which emphasizes process as much as it does results. Evaluations should be done on a routine, predictable and planned basis; they should be paid for by Global Affairs as part of the cost of project monitoring and evaluation particularly with long-term funding.

Transparency is a core part of the Canadian government's accountability to its citizens and partners. More efforts could be made in this regard. For example, no public documents have been released related to the Civil Society Partnership Policy, nor have there been public releases of the Gender Equality Action Plan annual reports except when asked through a formal Access to Information Request. The latter is a learning document that other actors beyond the department could learn from or contribute to.

5. Preserve and Implement the Civil Society Partnership Policy (CSPP)

Inter Pares, along with many other Canadian civil society organizations including the leading voice in the sector, CCIC, invested heavily in the consultations around the CSPP. We were pleased with the end product and strongly urge the Government of Canada to lay out next steps and implement the policy in its entirety.

6. Global Affairs Canada funding should be accessible to a diverse range of Canadian CSOs

Increasing the accessibility of Global Affairs Canada funding will enable a diverse range of Canadian CSOs to carry out programs and enhance Canada's partnership portfolio. There are a variety of ways to do this. For example, many organizations are concerned about the level of cost-share required to implement programs; it is proving to be a barrier to good programming with a particular segment of valued partners for Global Affairs, namely small and medium-sized organizations who are effective development actors.¹¹² Furthermore, the up-front investment in submitting full proposals for consideration is labour-intensive and privileges larger organizations.

7. Canada should support public engagement initiatives as a critical part of international development

Public support for international development is critical to its sustainability. In the past, the Canadian Government provided support to its partners to undertake development education in Canada. Canadian CSOs are particularly well placed to undertake this work as they have the direct links with members of the public who have an active interest and concern for global development and who view themselves as global citizens. In order to maintain and broaden the engagement of Canadians,

it is urgent that GAC reinstate its funding of development education, building on the concept of universality of the Agenda 2030.

8. Canada should support innovation in programming by providing long-term, stable and flexible funding

Innovation has become a popular term in current international development discourse. As with many other such terms it depends on what is meant by it. For over than four decades, Inter Pares has supported many programs that we and GAC, through its evaluations of our programs, consider to have been very innovative.

An important aspect of innovation is the willingness and capacity to take risks and to explore new ways of doing things. In our experience this is often closely related to the issues of long-term, stable and flexible support – something we and others have been calling for in terms of Canadian international assistance. When assistance is “projectized” and tightly tied to a rigid Logic Model and Performance Measurement Framework the result is commonly a lack of innovation and a focus on complying with the activities set out at the start of the project and nothing more. When assistance is committed for longer terms and where it is clear that there is flexibility in activities, the result is that Canadian NGOs and their Southern partners feel able to innovate.

Innovation in our experience is also the result of communication and collaboration among development actors. It is important to have a reciprocal relationship between funder and fundee that allows for flexibility and innovation. It also depends on Southern organizations having learned from past experience and developed the analytical capacity to reflect on it – what has worked and what has not?, under what conditions?, why has it been effective or not? – all of which, once again, is tied closely to the issue of long-term, stable and flexible funding.

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¹⁰⁹ Accra Agenda for Action. 2008. OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/45827311.pdf>

¹¹⁰ Prime Minister's Mandate Letter to Minister of La Francophonie and International Development. <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/minister-international-development-and-la-francophonie-mandate-letter>

¹¹¹ Does it Work? Feminist Analysis and Practice at Inter Pares <https://interpares.ca/resource/does-it-work-feminist-analysis-and-practice-inter-pares>

¹¹² Brian Tomlinson. Small and Medium-Sized Canadian Civil Society Organizations as Development Actors. InterCouncil Network. April 2016.

Annex A: Feminist Programming in Burma



Background

Burma has suffered under fifty years of military dictatorship and over sixty years of armed conflict, characterized by systematic human rights abuses and mass displacement. Political reform began in 2011 and while there has been much excitement over the 2015 election results, the fault lines in this transitioning Burma are still deep.

Canada, like many countries, responded to the 1988 massacres of democracy activists by cancelling its bilateral aid program to Burma. Unlike other countries, Canada did not immediately 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. In 2013 Canada opened an embassy in Yangon, and in 2014 Burma became a country of focus for Canada's international development efforts.

Inter Pares first became involved in Burma in 1991-92, when we began to develop a relationship with the Burma Relief Centre (BRC) based in Chiang Mai, Thailand. We were able to do this in part because we had funds from Canada's Partnership Branch, which provided us with institutional support as well as long-term flexible support, enabling us to be innovative and responsive to needs and opportunities. We also have the support of over 8,000 individual Canadians. In the early 90s, we secured funds from the humanitarian unit to support some health programming on the Thailand/Burma border and in 1997 CIDA agreed to also provide support for the renewed influx of refugees into Thailand. In 2000, in collaboration with other NGOs, Inter Pares secured funds from CIDA for a five-year Burma program. In 2005, 2010, and 2015 Asia Branch approved funds for Inter Pares' multi-year programs.

Our current program, supports the work of almost forty community-based organizations in health services, human rights, environment, free media, and displaced people's needs. A key focus of this program is to promote the inclusion of ethnic and religious minorities in the building of democracy in Burma. Throughout these years, Inter Pares has used an intersectional feminist approach to our work with people from Burma and achieved significant results.

Integrity and Process

Feminist programming values both achieving results and the process used to achieve them. The importance of process at Inter Pares manifests itself predominantly in three areas: in our internal practice, specifically our co-management structure; in how we relate to our Burma program counterparts; and in how we relate to other organizations with which we collaborate.

Practicing equality on a daily basis within Inter Pares is an on-going process, one in which we are constantly challenged to unlearn hierarchical ways of being and be accountable for the power relations that exist between us. This structure nurtures skills for working collaboratively and by consensus, and has facilitated deep collaborative relationships with our Burma Program colleagues. We learn from our colleagues in Burma and they learn from us.

Our co-management structure systems facilitate the cross pollination of ideas – across thematic and geographic sectors. This has led to the sharing of experiences and strategies from Colombia, Guatemala, Burundi, Peru, India, the Philippines and others, with our partners in Burma on healthcare, peace processes, refugee repatriation and drug policies, to name just a few.

The negotiation of a long-term commitment from the Government of Canada for program activities has had extremely positive results for local groups who had the time and space to engage in the slow and methodical work of social mobilization and capacity-building. Working for structural change, particularly in a fragile context, is long-term work. To date, GAC has recognized this and the five-year funding mechanism has facilitated the building of enormous capacity and change.

Our two main partners in the Burma program, The Border Consortium (TBC) and Burma Relief Centre (BRC) both receive institutional support from us, as do most of our thirty-eight CBO partners. This provides the organizations with the flexibility to respond to the emerging context and seize opportunities as they arise. We are able to do this because we share a common analysis of the root causes of the conflict in Burma, because we have long-term trusted relationships and because we share the same vision to address structural issues. We have also developed our programming plans together – each of us providing the wisdom of our own expertise. The context in which we work in Burma has at times changed dramatically, shifting from cease-fires to outright war, or a military regime to a “civilian” government, but as noted by all of the GAC evaluations of our program, this feminist approach has enabled us to achieve significant results in all of these contexts.

Analysis and Knowledge

At the root of our feminist approach to our programming work is a power analysis. In the context of Burma this involves looking at the structural causes of oppression and ensuring that we are always working towards systemic change. We choose to work with organizations that share this analysis – they may or may not name it as a feminist approach, but our common analysis enables us to bring cohesion to a broad program and work towards long-term impact. For example, the health organizations we work with are providing comprehensive primary healthcare to half a million people. At the same time, these groups are collaborating to develop policies to implement their vision of a national federal healthcare system that will provide access to all.

Feminist methodology values learning and knowledge creation. Inter Pares often describes itself as a learning organization because of the high priority placed on knowledge-building and analysis in every aspect of the work. For this reason we seek out opportunities to bring people and organizations together to debate, discuss, learn, strategize, and work collectively. Exchanges between local organizations working in different contexts, have always been rich and produce both anticipated and unexpected results. For example, in 2002 we led an exchange between women from Guatemala and Burma. This exchange led to strategic ideas for maintaining a women’s movement through the process of post-conflict repatriation that are still being used to this day (refugees from Burma again expect to be repatriated soon); as well as unexpected strategies for addressing violence against women perpetrated by the State or within the home. More recently we have brought a team of leaders within our health program to Canada to study our national federal health system – and lessons from Canada have directly fed into a draft health policy for ethnic health organizations.

Together with BRC, we also promote learning specifically on gender amongst our partners. Some of this participatory training has led to adaptation of programming, which in turn has led to greater women’s participation in, for example, our community development and health programs. Partners working on human rights, environment, and media are now regularly including a gender analysis in their research, writing and policy development. Internally, many of our partners have developed gender policies which in turn has led to increased understanding among staff and in communities of the need to address inequality.

Finally, our work in building knowledge extends here in Canada with the public and with our government. It is important to us that Canadians learn about the situation in Burma for many reasons, including because there are Canadians with ancestral connections to Burma, Canadian tax-payer funds are being spent there and Canadian foreign policy towards Burma needs to be grounded in accurate information. Over the past twenty years of military rule in Burma, some of the only accurate information about the health context, the human rights abuses, the use of rape as a weapon of war and the pillaging of the countries resources came from local civil society. Many Canadians are aware of what is happening in Burma in part because of the investment Canada is making in our partners and our program.

Collaboration

Building connections and working in collaboration as a community are key feminist approaches. As an integral part of the program right from the beginning, Inter Pares formed the Canadian NGO Committee (CNC) on Burma comprised of Canadian organizations with an interest in Burma. A small projects fund was incorporated into the program design to support CNC members to conduct educational activities in Canada as well as to facilitate the bringing of expertise and

resources from other parts of the world to border-based groups. As with all coalition work, this allowed us to have a bigger impact with fewer resources, reach more Canadians and have more linkages with expertise to bring to the program.

When we started programming in Burma, given the context of oppression of ethnic nationalities¹, there was a need to support ethnically-based organizations. Over the years, as these groups developed sophisticated capacities, our program began to support an evolution towards multi-ethnic and cross-sectoral collaboration which further facilitated trust-building and understanding. These coalitions are now at the forefront of policy development feeding into Burma's peace process. Many of our partner women's organizations, for example, have come together to form an alliance that serves as a collective platform for action. The Women's League of Burma (WLB), can be credited in large part for the Government of Myanmar² reluctantly agreeing to a 30% minimum women's participation in all stages of the peace dialogue process.³

Agency

In Burma, discrimination against women remains pervasive, with the entrenchment of the military posing a huge structural obstacle to the political advancement of women. Perhaps the best known aspect of feminist programming is the investment in women's leadership and empowerment, and this has been a thread throughout our Burma program. We have provided support to women's organizations to develop community-based initiatives, mainly in marginalized ethnic areas, to address the lack of services in these areas and enable women to take on leadership roles. The program has also supported these groups to carry out documentation and education on gender abuse and discrimination at local and national levels and to develop appropriate policies. Our health program also has a very large focus on reproductive health.

In 2002 two of our partners together published a report on the use of rape as a weapon of war and the authoring women's rights organization led an advocacy campaign on the findings. This report was held up in parliaments and written about in media around the world. The unprecedented global attention to Burma, harnessed by women, motivated some men in the democracy movement to start altering their patterns of discrimination and recognise the power of women's voices. This was a significant entry point for women's agency within the movement.

WLB and its members have continued to take the lead in documenting and speaking out about the systematic nature of sexual violence committed by Burma Army personnel. On June 6, 2014 the Government of Myanmar signed the UK-sponsored Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, something WLB had specifically campaigned for. This was seen as a significant victory for Burma's women's movement.

In recent years, our partner women's groups have played a key role in documenting not only sexual violence, but also other issues such as displacement, large-scale development impacts, human rights abuses, trafficking and the drug industry, exposing structural injustices and promoting community-led responses and policy solutions.

Together with BRC, we provide funding for internships for women within many male-dominated fields. Due in large part to this initiative, there are now female ethnic journalists in Burma, when there were almost none when our programming began. We have also helped partners develop gender strategies which have led to some establishing quotas for their leadership. When we started working with Ethnic health organizations, Dr. Cynthia Maung (the head of Mae Tao Clinic) was just about the only female health practitioner in a leadership position. More than half of the leaders in our health program are now women.

¹ Burma has many different ethnicities and the majority people are known as Burman. Non-Burmans identify as being from an Ethnic Nationality.

² The former military regime, and the constitution they drafted, refers to the country as Myanmar. The democracy movement, and all of the organizations with which Inter Pares collaborates, refer to the nation as Burma. Since about 2013 the choice of name has grown less politically loaded. Inter Pares will continue to follow the lead of our partners and refer to the country as Burma and refer to the military-dominated government, as the Government of Myanmar.

³ Women's groups initially campaigned for the Ethnic armed groups to accept this target and eventually succeeded, they then included this in their negotiations with the government who resoundingly rejected the idea. In final negotiations after the initial agreement, the government acquiesced to this quota.

Conclusion

Inter Pares' feminist approach to our work with people from Burma has led to dramatic results. These results include the gender disaggregation of health data facilitating complex reporting and targeted programming; female journalists reporting in local languages on national issues; human rights and environmental research conducted with a gender analysis; women advocates leading international campaigns; and ethnic civil society developing policies to be tabled at peace negotiations – policies which have been developed by and with women, and have specific gender content. It has also meant that colleagues in Burma and Canada have benefitted from each other's expertise, and that members of the Canadian public are informed about the context in Burma and proud of our contribution. Through a careful and conscious process of long-term collaboration, in which we are always learning from each other and from strategies explored in other contexts, feminist programming in Burma has been, and will be, a significant contribution to the country's transition to a peaceful and democratic nation.