



Africa Study Group | Groupe de réflexion sur l'Afrique

Comments on International Assistance

Review Discussion Document

Commentaires sur le document de discussion de la Revue de l'aide internationale

The Africa Study Group (ASG), affiliated to the National Capital Branch of the Canadian International Council, provides an Ottawa-based forum for exchange on African issues and for raising the sensitivity of Canadians and the Canadian government to the importance of Africa, its potential as well as its needs. As such we welcome the opportunity to provide the comments below on the Government's International Assistance Review Discussion Document. We look forward to the Government's response to the inputs from the consultations, and to continuing our dialogue with the Government.

Le Groupe de Réflexion sur l'Afrique (GRA), affilié à la branche de la capitale nationale du Conseil International du Canada, est un lieu de rencontres basé à Ottawa qui offre un forum pour des échanges sur les différents sujets touchant l'Afrique. Le GRA a pour mandat de renforcer la prise de conscience des Canadiens et du Gouvernement canadien de l'importance stratégique de l'Afrique, de son potentiel de même que de ses besoins. Ainsi, nous sommes heureux d'offrir les commentaires ci-dessous sur le document de discussion de la revue de l'aide internationale du Canada. Nous attendons avec un grand intérêt la réponse du Gouvernement aux commentaires qu'il reçoit dans le contexte de ces consultations, et nous espérons poursuivre notre dialogue avec le Gouvernement.

MAIN POINTS:

- A. The international assistance policy resulting from this consultation process should be part of an effective overall development policy, which, since aid plays only a relatively small role, should also include trade, private sector investment, immigration, defense and diplomacy, aligned with Canada's broader international agenda. Global Affairs Canada also needs to develop and implement a much more effective communications strategy, particularly with respect to engaging young Canadians. This would improve the effectiveness of both our international development assistance and our foreign policy.
- B. We welcome the clear indication that poverty alleviation is the main driver for Canada's work, along with human rights, including the feminist approach. However, the notion of a feminist international assistance policy, a feminist foreign policy needs to be better explained to Canadians and developing countries - it really amounts to gender equality, but is often perceived as putting women first. What will be different from the existing policy?
- C. The new policy should provide a general framework, addressing *where* we will work (countries and regions), the *what* in broad terms (identifying sectors or themes, excluding humanitarian assistance, or treating it separately from development assistance), and *how* (with which partners and, over time, with how big a budget). It should encourage innovation and risk taking, but the details need to be developed with developing country partners based on their needs and Canada's value added.
- D. Given the critical importance of education for economic as well as social development in the poorest countries, particularly in Africa, Canada should maintain its traditional joint focus on health and education. In terms of economic development, and not withstanding the potential role of foreign investment, it is vital to support the development of the African private sector. With respect to climate change, it is critical to emphasize the importance of adaptation for Africa, as the potential for mitigation there is much smaller.
- E. In the area of humanitarian assistance we need to break away from the CNN effect, going beyond help for refugees from the Middle East to recognize the even bigger needs of the internally displaced in sub-Saharan Africa.

POINTS SAILLANTS :

- A. Considérant le rôle modeste joué par l'aide, la politique d'aide internationale qui résultera de ce processus de consultation devrait faire partie d'une politique globale de développement efficace qui intègre également le commerce, les investissements du secteur privé, l'immigration, la défense et la diplomatie, alignée à notre agenda international. Affaires Mondiales Canada doit également élaborer et mettre en œuvre

une stratégie de communication plus efficace visant en particulier à promouvoir un plus grand engagement de la jeunesse canadienne. Ceci confèrerait une plus grande efficacité tant à notre aide internationale au développement qu'à notre politique étrangère.

- B. Nous sommes heureux de constater la priorité clairement exprimée à la réduction de la pauvreté dans la programmation canadienne, ainsi que les droits de la personne, incluant l'approche féministe. Cependant, il y aurait lieu de mieux expliquer aux Canadiens et Canadiennes, ainsi qu'à nos pays partenaires, ce qu'on entend par une politique féministe d'aide internationale, et par une politique étrangère féministe – on comprend qu'elles visent à soutenir l'équité en matière de genre, mais elles sont souvent perçues comme favorisant d'abord les femmes. En quoi diffèrent-elles de la politique actuelle?
- C. Une nouvelle politique d'aide au développement devrait contenir un cadre général de références qui indiquerait le où avec quels pays et régions le Canada souhaite travailler (*le où*), les grandes lignes sectorielles ou thématiques envisagées (*le quoi*), les types de partenariats à considérer, et avec quelle enveloppe budgétaire, du moins à moyen terme (*le comment*). L'aide humanitaire devrait être traitée séparément. La politique devrait encourager l'innovation et la prise de risques. Le choix de secteurs devrait être arrêté suite à des discussions avec nos pays partenaires et être basé sur leurs besoins et les capacités canadiennes.
- D. Compte tenu de l'importance de l'éducation et de la santé pour le développement économique et social des pays les plus pauvres, surtout en Afrique, le Canada devrait maintenir sa concentration traditionnelle en éducation et santé. Nonobstant l'apport potentiel de l'investissement privé étranger, le renforcement du secteur privé africain demeure critique pour assurer son développement économique durable. En matière de changement climatique, il faut surtout reconnaître l'importance pour l'Afrique d'investir dans des mesures d'adaptation puisque les possibilités d'atténuation des effets y sont limitées.
- E. Nous devrions transcender l'effet CNN en matière d'assistance humanitaire. Ceci devrait se traduire par une volonté de venir en aide non pas surtout aux réfugiés du Moyen Orient mais de tenir compte aussi des besoins encore plus importants des populations déplacées de l'Afrique sub-saharienne.¹

1. GENERAL COMMENTS

¹ Les commentaires ci-dessous sont rédigés uniquement en anglais – notre organisation étant relativement petite, nous n'avons pas les moyens de fournir l'ensemble de notre présentation dans les deux langues officielles.

We welcome the idea of an international assistance review, especially after ten years when the subject received little official attention. However, we are concerned that, as presented in the discussion document, the approach taken is too narrow, and does not recognize that international assistance plays only a limited role, albeit an essential one, in development. The policy should focus more on the ultimate goal, which is poverty reduction and security through effective and sustainable development. The paper misses some important issues such as the role of Canadian private sector investment, particularly in extractive industries, and the level of ODA.

The consultation paper's structure does not facilitate discussion as it mixes cross-cutting themes (human rights, women's rights), substantive programming areas (health, clean economic growth, governance) and methods (partnerships), as well as insufficiently distinguishing between development and humanitarian assistance. This submission therefore does not follow the exact structure of the consultation paper.

In the past, CIDA was never able to tell Canadians what it was doing and why, partly because it was often not allowed to develop an effective communications strategy. This should be a vital part of the forward agenda, an important aspect of which would be to show Canadians that international assistance is also in Canada's interest. The communications strategy should in particular seek to engage young Canadians, who have the most to gain from a more dynamic and more rapidly developing world. In this regard, it also needs to be careful not to create unrealistic expectations (or inflate those already existing) of large numbers of jobs for young Canadians in international development.

We welcome the attention to the poorest and most vulnerable, and to fragile states, but the document does not recognize that, unless we, with our selected country partners, build states that can manage their own development and look after their own citizens, our aid dollars are unlikely to produce sustainable, permanent development results. Building such states requires improved governance in developing countries, but also requires correcting the uneven playing field they face in international economic relations.

Once the review is completed the Government needs to show how it will have a whole-of-department approach to international assistance. The document briefly mentions the whole-of-government approach to fragile states but never talks about how Global Affairs Canada will work as a team in support of our international assistance strategy. The role of Canadian trade and investment, particularly in extractive industries, can play in providing opportunities for sustainable economic development is ignored. At a political level our commitment to democracy and human rights and our membership in the Commonwealth and la Francophonie provide challenges and opportunities for engagement.

The majority of the poorest do live in middle-income countries, but they cannot be the focus of most of our international assistance, as spending there, without the buy-in of their government, will not produce sustainable results. We can and should provide policy advice to those governments so that they can better serve their citizens. At the same time, our broader international strategy (on trade, investment, migration, remittances, etc.) should be brought into play to foster development in these countries. It is important to note that, although fragile states need our help, not all fragile states are poor. It does not make sense to use a lot of our scarce programming resources for fragile middle-income countries – help there should also primarily take the form of policy advice.

We need to work with our partner countries, and with other donors, to determine where and how we should work. It needs to be the partner countries who decide with us in which areas we should work, in order to get the best results. We recognize that the Minister and the government are actively consulting on this paper, but in its present form it suggests a continued top-down approach with yet again a revised set of priorities. All our experience suggests that such an approach is not conducive to effective development.

2. WHERE

In recent years Canada's international assistance has become more concentrated, although there has at times been confusion about which countries are "in" and which are "out". (The distinction of focus and partner countries in the current policy is quite strange and leads to misunderstandings. Some countries that are "out" receive more bilateral aid than some that are "in".) Maintaining a relatively concentrated effort makes sense given our limited resources, as it allows our aid to be at a scale that should ensure efficiency and effectiveness. To the extent possible, stability in the choice of partners should be a goal. In addition, for over a decade a relatively small number of countries of focus, particularly several in Africa, have received very significant Canadian development programming year after year. Canada should be examining this experience for lessons going forward.

A renewed international assistance policy, or preferably an international development policy should differentiate its approaches according to three types of countries: i) middle-income, emerging economies, where Canada's relationship should be based on trade and investments with policy advice where needed and demanded; ii) fragile states requiring the full spectrum of foreign policy tools – developing a whole-of-government approach; and iii) poorer countries striving to become more democratic, developing and implementing better policies, requiring a whole-of-GAC approach. As Canada selects a limited number of partner countries, it should also work with regional and sub-regional organizations, as well as the multilateral system, to

compensate for the limited number of countries with active Canadian development programming.

Africa is often wrongly seen as homogeneous, when in fact it is a huge continent with 54 very different countries. In Africa working with the regional and sub-regional organizations is particularly necessary, not only because that is in fact the African governments' own preferred approach, but also because many of the 54 countries are too small for programming in one country to be effective.

3. WHAT

As noted above, the *what* should be determined primarily in close consultation with our selected partner countries and with the full range of donors working in those countries. Decisions should be based on partner country needs, the programming capacity of Canada and of other donors, and, where possible, maintaining some stability in programming. Canada has tended to change areas of programming concentration far too often, given the long-term nature of development. Some areas of programming should be central for the poor countries of Africa, notably water and sanitation, land management and agriculture. When Canadian expertise directly relevant to Africa is not available, they can and should be supported through partnerships with other donors and multilateral organizations with relevant capacities. However, we also note two areas not mentioned in the consultation paper but clearly critical for Africa's future: infrastructure in all its forms (transportation, energy, etc.) and adaptation to the rapid urbanization of Africa. As we probably do not want to multiply the number of priorities, these could be addressed multilaterally and through the innovation agenda.

A. The rights agenda: human rights and gender equality – a feminist approach.

The work to support improved governance and greater respect for pluralism and tolerance for diversity can be seen as a direct application of the broader rights agenda.

Human rights in general and women's rights in particular have been and should continue to be at the heart of international assistance. It should be both a serious cross-cutting issue (not just a box to be checked off), and a specific area of programming under governance. In recent years other rights, such as those of indigenous peoples and those of gender minorities, have received much more attention. It is good that the new government had endorsed the Declaration of Indigenous Rights and we are proud that Canada has been a leader on the rights of gender minorities, though there is much more to do in that area, including preventing sexual and gender-based violence. In fact, as evidence suggest, we should recognize that human rights education is the best way to reduce abuses of all kinds over time and to do so sustainably.

Women's rights as such should be part of the broader rights agenda - dividing the rights we support into two themes will inevitably confuse, and we will need to better explain the difference between the new feminist approach and the old gender equality approach.

B. Health and Education

Women's health is clearly at the heart of the feminist approach identified by the Minister. We fully support Maternal, Child and New Born health programming as it is crucial in Africa, - and we applaud the Government's extension of Canada's already substantial efforts in reproductive health to contraception. We also congratulate the government on the decision to host the next replenishment meeting of the Global Fund, and to increase our contribution substantially. It is critical, however, not to lose sight of the need to strengthen health systems as a whole (including in terms of reproductive health) in individual partner countries. These can sometimes be weakened by "vertical initiatives" that try to respond to particular threats. This is even more of a risk in health emergencies like the Ebola crisis.

The document notes the importance of girls' education, but given Canada's long-standing emphasis on health and education, it actually leaves the impression that education is being downgraded. This does not make sense. Girls' education, particularly at the secondary level, has been shown to have multiple benefits in terms of health and well-being, in addition to being an important means of reducing population growth where it is still excessive. Moreover, unless education outcomes in the poorest countries in Africa can be raised towards middle and secondary school levels, as well as vocational and technical training, it will be very difficult for those countries to benefit from the demographic dividend that will potential await them as labour force growth slows elsewhere. In addition, we need to help young people, and to the extent possible, all citizens participate in the development of a 21st century society through the use of new technologies.

C. Clean Economic Growth and Climate Change

Although Africa can look towards green technologies to provide some of the additional energy it desperately needs, the greatest attention in terms of climate change programming should be on adaptation to the effects of climate change, some of which is inevitable. The impact of climate change will be much greater in Africa than elsewhere. To date most "climate change" funding as such has been directed at mitigation, but Africa does not have much to mitigate. The challenge with spending on adaptation is that it amounts to sensible development

programming, which may be one reason why our “climate change” spending has been heavily oriented towards mitigation, and thus tended to neglect Africa, the most affected region.

The development of a vibrant private sector in poor countries faces many challenges - we should look favourably on efforts to encourage entrepreneurship and innovation - while recognizing that we need to be careful - even in Canada it is easier to spend money than to ensure it actually produces incremental entrepreneurship and innovation.

And finally, supporting the Africa Mining Vision and developing African capacities to better manage their resources is a moral obligation, as Canadian investments in the extractive industries in Africa are very large and bring many benefits to Canada. We should not just ensure that Canadian mining industries do not harm fragile socio-economic and ecological systems, but also help poor countries leverage resource investments to achieve sustainable economic development, as we have done in Canada.

It is important to encourage sustainable and equitable growth everywhere, and particularly in poor countries, but rich countries should be careful of lecturing poor countries, for whom economic growth is an imperative.

D. Governance, Pluralism and Diversity

We noted above that sustainable progress requires capable states that want to look after their own citizens. Canada has a lot to offer in terms of federalism, effective parliaments, external scrutiny, tax collection, statistics, communication with citizens, transparency, and consultation with civil society and interest groups, particularly over budget planning and effective public service delivery. All of which is much needed to build strong, responsible governments. African countries are often very centralized - British and French influence. Even when democratic, they often have a winner-take-all approach. Given the very diverse populations (in ethnic, religious and cultural terms) this can lead to a lack of respect for pluralism and to the type of civil strife that creates humanitarian problems. Canada's generally successful experience with diversity gives us a chance to contribute to strengthening governance in our partner countries. In doing so we need to recognize that our ways are not the only route to good governance, and support appropriate local and traditional practices.

E. Peace and Security

As a theme for international assistance, peace and security are above all what are missing in fragile states, and becomes an overarching goal, rather than a programming theme as such. It has more to do with the *where* and *how* we want to support fragile states to become stable and

secure societies. We will need to make decisions on the extent to which we want to use limited overall resources for this work, and where it should be spent. We cannot be effective if we try to be in all the (far too numerous) fragile states. Therefore, a very limited number of countries should be selected for a significant engagement in terms of peacekeeping (subject to decisions in the current defense policy review), military and police training, state building support to follow, or be extended simultaneously with humanitarian assistance. In other countries, Canada's support should be limited to strengthening regional organizations and/or providing very targeted, limited support.

We have also seen that there is clearly a need for peacekeepers to be appropriately trained to prevent sexual and gender-based violence, which has often been used as a weapon in the civil wars that afflict some developing countries. In this area the limited programming attention has understandably been on victim support, but attention to prevention will help reduce the number of victims.

4. HOW

Partnerships

Canada has a long tradition of working with civil society in support of international development. In many ways the engagement of so many Canadians with NGOs working in developing countries reflects our values and our interest in the outside world. Canadian CSOs often link our programs to the work of CSOs in partner countries and international CSOs, which can extend the reach of our work. Because they can experiment with different approaches, they can be a vehicle for innovation. Moreover, they should be an avenue for the increased engagement of young people with our international development work. In the future, GAC's funding schemes for CSOs should be more predictable, designed both to support Canadian CSOs' programming and to assist them in building the capacity of their developing country partners. Nevertheless, they must not create a culture of entitlement or automaticity.

GAC, and CIDA before it, have always worked with other parts of the Government - Canadian expertise is often greatly valued in developing countries. We should encourage partnerships between similar departments, such as Statistics Canada with African statistics organizations. However, we need to remember that to be effective and to produce sustainable results we need to work in the areas that the developing countries themselves want us to work in.

As noted above, the creation of Global Affairs Canada offers an opportunity to find ways for Canada's development assistance to work with the Canadian private sector so that its investments in developing countries are of greater value to those countries. Best practices on environmental issues, employee training, technology transfer and other areas can make a big

difference. At the same time, Canada also needs to pay attention to the reputational impact of Canadian investment overseas, particularly in extractive industries.

Multilateral development institutions are also key partners for Canada – as are the multilateral humanitarian organizations (which can ensure that our emergency support reaches the needy more quickly). Supporting multilateral institutions has at times been controversial, with complaints about the visibility of Canadian contributions. This in part ignores the key roles that Canada and Canadians can play, and have played, in the work of those organizations. Moreover, their universal approach is a perfect complement to the increased concentration of our bilateral aid. But we need to continue to work with the institutions to improve their effectiveness, and to build that work into our own communications strategy. We should not simply treat the multilateral institutions as a tap we turn on (or off) when we want to ramp up (or reduce) spending. We should also provide more support for Canadians working in or aspiring to working in the multilateral system. (Support for a merit-based approach to human resources should not be confused with indifference to Canadians' success, as has at times been the case. We also need to look at ways to facilitate qualified young Canadians gaining experience with these institutions.)

How much.

If Canada is going to make a real difference in the global effort to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, it will need to increase its overall spending significantly in the future. We are at risk of seeing our ODA/GNI ratio fall to an all-time low. We should start by ensuring that our Paris COP 21 commitments are new money. Otherwise, Canada risks losing credibility just as it is trying to regain it.

5. HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE VERSUS DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Humanitarian assistance needs to be treated differently - it is not the same as development assistance - it is part of our international responsibilities, and we need to live up to our commitments under the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative. It is the one area where we do spend money in middle-income countries. It is important to avoid the risk of the "CNN effect" and to remember the "forgotten emergencies" - many of them in Africa. Indeed, at the moment, Canada and most of the rest of the world is illustrating the risks of the CNN effect, as our concern for the refugees from the Middle East has almost completely crowded out attention to the larger humanitarian challenges of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in sub-Saharan Africa.

Humanitarian assistance does not lead to development, it merely repairs some of the damage from man-made and natural disasters, but it can undermine development. It should not be treated as a development theme, although development programming can in particular cases look to rebuild systems weakened or destroyed by emergencies – e.g. the health systems as a result of the Ebola crisis. Moreover, the very long-term refugee and IDP situations need themselves to be looked at through a development lens. The world’s humanitarian commitments do not stop with food and shelter – they include, *inter alia*, providing education and health services to those stuck in camps, as the Secretary-General reminded the Istanbul Humanitarian Summit.

One goal of Canada’s international assistance should be to reduce the risk and magnitude of such disasters and thus the amount we need to spend on humanitarian assistance. It can do this by using development assistance to help, with partners, to build stronger, better governed states that are more tolerant of diversity among their populations and by helping the poorest countries adapt to the climate change that is inevitable, to moderate the impact of stronger storms and more frequent floods and droughts.

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