

FH Canada's Response
Global Affairs Canada International Assistance Review
July 2016

Food for the Hungry (FH) Canada is pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this International Assistance Review (IAR) lead by Global Affairs Canada. We are grateful to Minister Bibeau and the new Liberal government of Canada for their openness to consult with Canadians and especially with organizations like ours that work directly in international communities toward poverty relief and well-being for the most vulnerable – the children.

FH Canada participates with the global FH family of 6 funding countries and 20 operational field countries. Our purpose is to end poverty, one community at a time through an integrated development methodology called Child Focused Community Transformation. With a focus on holistically improving the well-being of children, programs in health, education, livelihoods and leadership training with cross cutting themes of gender equality, protection, environment, worldview and disaster risk reduction move the entire community from stuck to thriving within 10 years while equipping them to continue their development after FH leaves the community. Holistic, sustainable change requires a relational approach that centers on “walking with” rather than “doing for” the communities with whom we work. Local leadership and beneficiary input in setting a community transformation plan and prioritizing community needs and programs is central to the work.

We believe Canada has been gifted in many ways to significantly contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. Canada's international reputation built over many years of both international involvement and domestic peace and security, not in spite of but because of our diversity and pluralism, gives us a unique and privileged position to be leaders in making our world a better place for all. We stand in agreement in principle with the five themes presented in the IAR discussion paper as Canada's areas of focus. We appreciate the opportunity to offer our input to improve this framework.

OVERARCHING COMMENTS

While there is mention in a few places in the IAR paper of the need for assistance to align with country goals and be informed by local governments and civil society we suggest that there is need for greater local community ownership of development programs and activities.

- Consultation with community leaders on priorities, activities, and methodologies is key to sustainable change and effective programs.
- By including local leaders in planning and implementation cultural nuances that may affect implementation can be discovered to avoid ineffective missteps in implementing activities.
- Taking advantage of leaders' position and influence in the community can accelerate the participation of community members in activities.
- By working through community leaders, building capacity in leaders to solve their own problems, sustainability of not only program impacts but ongoing development impacts will be possible after the program is completed and external facilitation is removed.

Assistance efforts must also recognize and take advantage of the assets already in developing communities. The global development sector has learned some hard lessons about the hurt it has caused over the past decades by providing “things” to communities, all with good intentions. While best

practises are by and large implementing those lessons learned we believe a stronger focus on working with community leaders and organizations to recognize, develop and better utilize physical, economic and human resources at their disposal will contribute to sustainability and build capacity of local leaders and organizations. Such a focus requires “walking with” communities, assisting them in developing and implementing activities based on their own resources. Building capacity and taking advantage of existing civil society groups and faith based organizations is key to sustainability and successful exit strategies.

We suggest that a focus on the most vulnerable should not exclude those living in poverty that may not fit the definition of “extreme poverty” as living on less than US\$1.90 a day. This neglects to care for many vulnerable people in dire poverty while living on less than US\$3.10 a day. While great strides have been made in reducing those living on less than \$1.90 a day (down 37% from 1990 to 2012 and 44% since 1988) there has been only a 27% decline in the number of people living on only \$3.10 a day from 1990 to 2012. There are still 2.1 billion living on less than US\$3.10 a day, including 896 million people still living on less than \$1.90 a day.¹ The United Nations defined extreme poverty as “severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information.” This is most certainly the case for those living on less than \$3.10 a day as it is for those living on less than \$1.90 a day.

The integrated nature of the sustainable development goals needs to be applied to program planning, implementation and evaluation. Prioritizing funding for programs that leverage program activities to impact several sectors of development or causes of poverty will serve to improve the ROI in terms of sustainable impact per dollar. Programs that are focused too narrowly on one sector, cause, problem or issue leave vast opportunities untapped and thus are not achieving the best outcomes for Canadian dollars invested.

While Canada has shone, and no doubt will continue to shine, on the international stage for its humanitarian and development assistance (ie. the leadership role taken on the issue of MNCH) the mire in our domestic “backyard” is a growing tarnish on our international image. Maintaining levels of international assistance are important but not to the exclusion of those sectors of our own population that live without the basic necessities life. In particular the many Indigenous communities in Canada that live without clean water, adequate shelter, and means for livelihood must be addressed. There is a great moral incongruence in exporting our development assistance while needs within our own borders are inadequately met.

The IAR paper states a “need [for] a “data revolution” and [the] need to continue to invest in local research and knowledge so decisions are based on the best available evidence and we can better monitor progress.” Accessing this local research and knowledge is a relational process. It depends upon the ability to listen respectfully to our community partners. Strong relationships of mutual respect and trust with community leaders, and community ownership of programs that enables leveraging of their own assets, are necessary if we are to improve development programs through best practices and contextualised knowledge. Further, there is a need to make both local community experiences and those of Canadian NGOs working in communities widely available. We suggest that there be more transparency and sharing of results (success and challenges) of GAC funded programs and that GAC

¹ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>

facilitate building a database of experiences and best practises from both public and privately funded projects that can be accessed by any Canadian registered charity. This could be a significant resource to the many organizations that are doing similar work. Likewise, in sharing monitoring and progress indicator methodologies organizations can improve their internal program monitoring to elevate the effectiveness of their programs. In this way organizations can learn from one another providing opportunity to increase the impact of Canadian dollars invested, whether from government or private sources.

We believe that food security is missing from the five areas of focus outlined in the IAR discussion paper. Chronic malnutrition contributes to poor health and has been proven to compromise children's education. Furthermore, climate change is affecting food production further destabilizing already fragile communities and regions. Without assistance to mitigate, adapt, and build resilience to changing weather patterns and increased natural disasters, subsistence farmers face increasing difficulties to feed their families. Food security may be seen as fitting into health or economic development but we suggest that this cause and effect link is backwards. Without prioritizing food security other initiatives toward health (vaccinations or clean water) and economic growth (income generating activities) will be marginalized and unsustainable. By prioritizing food security beneficiaries will be building physical strength and well-being to sustain good health and be active in income generation. Food security is also important in building a sense of security at the micro (family) level and building resilience to risks that affect food security (drought, flood, climate change) will serve to increase community and regional stability and security.

We agree that the empowerment of women and girls and the protection and promotion of gender equality is very important to prioritize in our international assistance activities. However, we would encourage the government to more carefully define a "feminist lens". We strongly suggest that in the implementation of this "feminist lens" the importance of including men and boys in all activities not become secondary. It will only be through the changing of cultural norms and accepted practises that gender equality will be achieved and sustained. Where in many developing communities cultures and practises have been built on a history of elevating men over women it will be imperative to focus on changing the minds of men to achieve lasting change for women. It is perhaps more important that boys, starting from a very young age, be taught that women are of equal value and gifting and need to be treated and respected as equal partners. This will be achieved not only through education but more so through example in the home, community and civil society organizations. To this end we must be careful not to segregate women from men (women's savings groups, women's coops) but emphasize that a fostering of gender partnership in all areas of life be accomplished.

We must also be careful that the "feminist lens" does not serve to allow discrimination against men and boys. While there is much to be done to bring equality to women with the status of men in developing communities, equality is not served by ignoring the fact that the causes of poverty affect men and boys as well. In most developing communities the family unit is primary. Including men and boys in programs addressing education, food security, agriculture, and economic growth will have an impact on women and girls as participants in the family unit. Such actions will foster social cohesion and assist in broader efforts to bring lasting peace and security in high risk communities.

The government should also be cautious that in promoting the empowerment of women the positive aspects of strong reliance on family that is prominent in many non-western cultures is not thwarted. Strong family relationships are an extremely helpful asset upon which development can thrive. In our development work identification of the “most vulnerable” in a community consistently involves consideration of single parent homes. Development policy that seeks to promote equitable gender partnerships rooted in mutual respect and dignity should be seen as tool to undermine the harmful forces of that place women in these vulnerable situations. It is our suggestion that government funded programs focus on gender equality partnerships which encompasses the improved empowerment of women in relationships that respect their dignity and inherent self-worth but do so in a way that harnesses the strong family and community networks within their cultures as forces for good.

HEALTH AND RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

We believe that the primary “focus” of international assistance needs to be a holistic, integrated approach. It cannot be emphasized enough that an integrated approach is needed to achieve sustainable impact and maximize the impact for our investment. For example, the preamble of this section of the IAR paper mentions access to high quality education. While education infrastructure and well-trained teachers are a huge need, investments in these areas will be mitigated if malnutrition affecting children’s ability to learn is not also addressed as a primary concern. In turn malnutrition cannot be addressed in a sustainable way without addressing food security, household incomes, and the effects of climate change. Gender equality cannot be impacted without changes to health and nutrition, economic opportunities, education, home and community leadership and cultural norms. Equally important, a whole person approach is needed to address physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of life. The government must recognize these inextricable relationships of cause and effect and *take a whole community, whole family and whole person approach to programs.*

Furthermore, behaviour change has been proven to be key to any sustainable development. To invoke behaviour change of an individual, and more so a community, takes a long term relational commitment. For example, the preamble of this section mentions the millions of girls forced into childhood marriage every year. In many developing communities and regions this is a historically long held cultural practice that will only be sustainably changed with worldview and behaviour change. Such changes take years of highly relational work to take effect. The government must consider that issues concerning the rights of women and girls, and sustainable development of a community as a whole, will need longer term programs than what has been traditionally funded. Thus in considering a “focus” for Canada’s international assistance the government should structure funding commitments over a 7 to 10 year period.

We feel it is also important that youth be engaged in community development as a hands on education of future community leaders. Building leadership capacity and a culture of community care will improve development sustainability and begin to create social structures that will allow for continued care of the most vulnerable and build resilience in communities to shocks of disasters.

CLEAN ECONOMIC GROWTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Recognition must be given to the fact that economic growth is not a stand-alone determinant of improved well-being or improved quality of life. We must be careful not to project western culture in this respect into our international development programs. It is important to have community input into program priorities and methodologies to preserve the community's vision of a quality life and measure development achievements from their perspective. This may also require flexibility of results indicators to capture more qualitative aspects of community life.

Many of the most vulnerable living in poverty are subsistence farmers. We believe agriculture needs to be more prominent in this IAR as it relates both to food security, environmental protection and climate change. Sustainable agriculture techniques must provide a key ingredient in programs addressing these issues. For many subsistence farming areas rehabilitation of the land is necessary to support any kind of sustainable improvements in well-being. From there techniques to mitigate and adapt to environmental changes like climate are also important.

In both economic growth and climate change it is important that programs are developed in consultation with local stakeholders including community members, existing CBOs and CSOs, local government agencies, and existing businesses. Local innovation and solutions will encourage use of local resources, forging of local partnerships, and ownership of problems and solutions.

The government needs to review international trade policy with a lens of international assistance. Trade activities that hinder the existing or emerging markets are working directly against development assistance.

GOVERNANCE, PLURALISM, DIVERSITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Canada is in a unique position to lead by example in this area. However, as mentioned earlier there are some aspects of inclusive society that are not being upheld within our own borders, especially with respect to Indigenous populations. To improve our ability to lead by example and speak from experience on the international stage we must address our issues at home. Public engagement and education through transparency of government is needed to correct ill-informed opinions of Indigenous communities particularly from the point of view of government funding and special treatment.

To promote inclusive societies the government must be open to funding programs that facilitate development activities through civil society organizations, including faith based organizations (FBOs). In Canadian history Christian churches played a key role in the development of Canada's social support framework and today with growing diversity of the Canadian population other faith groups join in meeting many social support needs (food and shelter for homeless, addiction recovery programs). Faith based organizations have a role to play in sustainable community development.

- o FBOs often have a connection with the wider community and thus are a natural choice through which to disseminate a wide variety of development messages from agriculture to reproductive health and family planning.

- o FBO leaders often carry a level of respect in the community such that working with these leaders alongside or as a component of community leadership brings an acceleration of acceptance of new ideas.
- o FBOs can play a key role in the sustainability of development as they take on responsibility to help care for the most vulnerable in the community – orphans, widows, single parents.

The government is missing a key opportunity for increased impact and sustainability by refusing to fund programs which make use of established FBOs and promote the role of religious institutions in society.

Furthermore, most religious organizations involved in development work do not discriminate along religious lines in carrying out their programs. Beneficiaries are drawn from the community without consideration of their religious affiliation. In many cases FBOs have been an agent of reconciliation between religious groups that have not historically coexisted easily together. FBOs teach and facilitate development programs from a strong moral worldview which is based in religious teachings, both Christian and Muslim. The religious nature of the foundation of the principles is not necessarily included in messages (and in fact cannot be included in some countries where they work) but the aspects of self-worth, giftedness, personal and community potential, peace, service to others and hope for the future are required to address spiritual needs along with physical and emotional needs for holistic development of people and communities.

Toward building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions programs dealing with leadership training and development facilitation need to include evaluation and tracking of metrics toward goals set by the community for the community. Accountability of leadership to the community as a whole needs to be facilitated. Concepts of results based management should be *in* the program as well as a monitoring tool of the program.

In many developing nations national and regional governments are fraught with corruption and self-interest rendering government to government assistance ineffective. Cultural norms create an acceptance of this type of behaviour and is the only example of leadership known. The cycle needs to be broken by focusing on community level governance, working with community and civil society organization leaders to bring about behaviour change by teaching and facilitating inclusive and accountable governance. A cultural change is needed where leadership skills prioritized on honesty, service and humility become the new norm. Modeling such leadership/governance will impact youth and upcoming leaders. A grassroots movement employing good governance and expecting this level of operation from higher levels of government may slowly bring change at higher levels.

Further emphasis is needed on youth leadership, building tomorrow's leaders from a young age. Programs that provide opportunities for youth to be involved in community governance and community social care through civil society organizations and faith based organizations will bring a sustainable change to cultural norms.

PEACE AND SECURITY

We suggest that this theme lacks an emphasis on community level peace and security. The effects of threats to peace and security are multiplied for those living in poverty. It is our belief that development efforts (improving well-being) need to be infused with efforts to maintain peace and build resilience.

Building social networks through savings groups, cascade groups, cooperatives and other local CBOs and FBOs builds the fabric of a community to stand together and support one another. Teaching and facilitating good governance and leadership that values and uphold local peace and security strengthens the community to withstand outside threats. Local economies that are not solely dependent on regional or neighbouring city economies helps to provide insulation from instability in higher levels of government or larger scale economies.

Building resilience in communities is also a mitigating factor to threats. Specific training in disaster risk reduction and disaster response planning at the local level can reduce the level of insecurity and instability when outside events, especially natural disasters, rock the community. It is also important that development programs work with community and regional leaders in building conflict resolution, negotiation, and problem solving skills.

Achieving and maintaining peace and stability requires a focus on children and youth to build their understanding and appreciation of peace and stability. This education begins at home elevating (and integrating!) the need to address domestic violence and promote parental partnership built on respect and equality. School environments and community cohesiveness that values the input and participation of children and youth will also foster these lasting impressions.

RESPONDING TO HUMANITARIAN CRISES AND THE NEEDS OF DISPLACED POPULATIONS

The government needs to be flexible with funding to take advantage of SMOs that are already on the ground, have local partners and networks, and have relationships with those affected. A database of organizations, locations and programs would facilitate quick identification of such organizations.

Wherever possible assistance materials should be sourced from local suppliers.

In most humanitarian crises children are the most vulnerable. The government should establish with a small group of organizations a prearranged program to address the immediate and midterm needs of children that can be activated and implemented quickly - a child friendly spaces program that provides a safe place for children to gather, provides psychological and emotional support, and will in the midterm provide educational resources.

The government should be prepared to take a long term approach to crises situations. Often crises morph into development whether originating in natural disaster or political/social unrest. Such an approach would be best facilitated and implemented by organizations that are already on the ground and are flexible and have capacity to shift from emergency response to development initiatives.

DELIVERING RESULTS

GAC needs to give attention to small and medium sized organizations which tend to be more efficient, flexible, have established local networks on the ground, and have specific expertise that could be scaled up for increased effectiveness. There are three major barriers for small and medium sized organizations that GAC must address:

- o Evaluation of programs to assess effectiveness and report results to donors is a hurdle for many Canadian organizations operating overseas. Although GAC has been using a results based framework for funded programs for years, many organizations have limited or no exposure to such evaluation tools. It would be beneficial as a service to SMOs, regardless of their funding sources, for GAC to offer education on the use of RBM, how to collect data, and how to interpret results.
- o GAC needs to consider the complexity of their proposal and reporting processes. The current level of detail involved in the proposal process is not only a waste of organizational resources when proposals are rejected, but is much too onerous on small and medium sized organizations that do not have capacity or resources to put into a full program proposal with no commitment of funding. We would like to see a graduated application process that narrows the pool of bids before substantial resources are invested. Such a process should allow for interaction with GAC especially for SMOs with limited experience in applications, RBM frameworks, and formal program evaluations.
- o GAC needs to have more flexibility in levels and forms of match funding. For many SMOs the match requirement is prohibitive with their current donor base and fundraising capacity, and funding requirements of existing programs cannot be abandoned.

Perhaps different application, reporting, and funding mechanisms could be considered for different sizes of organizations.

Longer term funding is required in assistance efforts. There are two impacts of the current 3 year funding model:

- o As mentioned earlier sustainable behaviour change in a community takes longer than three years to achieve. Short term funding without renewal abandons impacts of short term funded programs – impacts will be lost as communities return to cultural norms when programming ends before change is firmly embedded.
- o SMOs are at a significant disadvantage with short term funding models. For many SMOs a government funded program is significant in relation to other funding raised such that the SMO does not have capacity to replace government funding if contracts are not renewed.

The funding application process needs to be accelerated. Waiting six months from the time of application to notification of results is long enough that either the programs has had to go ahead with other funding or significant changes may be necessary to adapt to a changing context. Similarly, reapplications for continued funding of an ongoing program need to be done in advance of final evaluations and reports to avoid funding gaps that loose staff, capacity, relationships and momentum.

More flexible funding is needed to allow for course corrections to achieve targets and encourage more innovative approaches. A more consultative partnership between GAC and funded organizations would foster respect, trust and sharing of ideas that would enhance program outcomes. To facilitate course corrections and partnership consultations M&E must be done more often (annually) to ensure intermediate outcomes are producing the desired results. More flexible funding structures would empower the GAC and CSOs to learn together, providing contextualized knowledge around best

practices, information that is necessary to inform future policy and practice. Furthermore, flexible funding must support the fundamental principle that our efforts to enhance efficiency must never compromise effectiveness. Budgetary restraints should not be an obstacle to scaling programs that are proving effective. Flexibility to rework budget allocations to take advantage of successes would enhance program impact.

Effectiveness and efficiency would be enhanced by a database of programs: successes, failures, evaluations, indicators, best practises, a knowledge base for innovative attempts.

Particularly with respect to development and trade, coordination to ensure that trade is not harmful to development is imperative. Canadian goods should not be going into a developing country if they are in competition with locally made goods. In this respect development programs should not include GIKs that could be sourced locally.

Innovation should not be limited to being born on our shores. Community driven development is sustainable development so consideration of community leadership plans and vision and facilitation of development of community ideas will capture true innovation. Furthermore, innovation must consider local resources to ensure sustainable application of the idea.

We suggest that innovation be defined. What makes an idea or program innovative? Is an improvement of an existing practise or methodology innovative? Effectiveness and efficiency demand continuous improvement of programs but incremental improvements are not generally considered innovative. Innovation often carries the assumption that innovative solutions are necessary for effective and impactful programs. We suggest that this assumption is incorrect. There is a wide body of “best practises” in development which are tried and true methodologies. A policy requiring innovation does not allow for current best practises to continue to be used. A program void of “innovation” may still be the most efficient and effective.

To find new innovative solutions that are in fact more efficient and effective there must be allowances for failure and improvement. Current GAC funding structures and evaluation criteria do not allow for such failure. If innovation is desired then GAC must be willing to accept a level of risk inherent in trying new solutions. Indeed, the GAC should reward carefully calculated risk taking, encouraging organizations to learn from failures that are small in scope, detected early in the process and that are unexpected-- that is failures that may not be anticipated in advance.

We suggest that there needs to be proven effective programs alongside new trial innovations such that one can offset the other - create room for failure without doing harm to the beneficiaries, losing their trust and participation. Innovative programs may have unintended negative effects for the beneficiaries and we need to be careful that this does not undermine the work already done with beneficiaries especially in respect of social capital.

There has been a lot of talk about private sector partnerships. The view seems to be toward private sector organizations that can offer input to programs directly through expertise, product, systems or innovation. We would suggest that the private sector also has huge potential to partner financially. Corporate social responsibility is quickly becoming a key part of marketing strategies for corporations

and small businesses alike. Philanthropic business owners are stepping up to influence their employees, vendors and competitors toward global citizenship. The government could play a role in encouraging these trends through various means such as an improved business charity tax credit, media recognition of partners in matching funds for projects, or public engagement funding targeting new business donors.

There needs to be more transparency with the public on global assistance commitments (how match funds work and if a declared match is in addition to or included in already committed funding to a specific effort), where money is spent, contracts awarded, and the outcomes of funded programs.

There needs to be a platform devised for sharing of information between organizations to take advantage of best practises, lessons learned, and build on proven innovation and/or proven methodologies. A data base of CSOs, projects, innovative trials with both government and private funding would be helpful to bring organizations together in new partnerships and learn from each other's success and failures.

There needs to be better defined regulations around how charities are evaluated and operate to create a standard for all charities and create a common base to enable easier partnerships. Specifically better definitions of what is administrative costs versus program costs and what type of program costs can be included for percentage calculations (ie including commodity values as program costs raises the dollar value of administration funds available for an organization putting charities not dealing in commodities at a disadvantage).

Funding for domestic programs that build poverty awareness and promotes global citizenship is needed. Public engagement funding and strategies, in coordination with CRA, need to be more accessible and flexible to allow discussions of financial support since this is a primary mode of engagement for many Canadians.

Thank you for this opportunity to share our views and ideas. This review process has been a great learning and networking opportunity as we have participated in webinars and consultations with ICN, BCCIC and CCRDA. We are excited with the discussions that are taking place and are hopeful that Canada's combined international assistance efforts will be improved as a result.

Sincerely,



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