

The Canadian Council for International Co-operation *The Case for* **Membership**

Canadian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are strong, diverse and independent. Too often, however, they tend to work in isolation on their own programs and fundraising, while competing for the ear of policymakers and the media. As a result, they can miss opportunities to create synergies and build connections both inside and outside their areas of expertise.

The Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) is a national community of CSOs working globally to eliminate poverty. As a leader in the sector for more than 45 years, CCIC has advocated on behalf of CSOs, both to help them flourish as a community and to gain recognition as independent actors in their own right. CCIC members share knowledge and ideas, pushing each other to achieve ever higher standards of conduct, practice and ethics. Being part of a larger community makes members better and more effective than they would be on their own.

While respecting the diversity of its members, CCIC provides an open space to bring the community together. No one expects unanimity on every issue. At the same time, some issues are so politically sensitive that many CSOs are reluctant to speak out on their own. Through CCIC, Canadian CSOs find the collective strength to speak openly on issues that affect the entire community. In this way, diverse viewpoints and specialties come together in a spirit of solidarity, working together for a better world in a way that is sustainable and dignified.

Here are some ways that CCIC builds its unique community:

- 1 A convener.** CSOs involved in international development are diverse, and need a national organization that brings the community together — both to rally around issues of common interest and to debate more divisive ones. Such a forum is critically important for the community, enabling reflection on policy that leads to well-considered collective action in national and global policy arenas. As a community convener, CCIC is the only organization that can mobilize the collective weight of the sector around shared causes.
- 2 An independent voice.** As an organization free of government funding, CCIC is uniquely positioned to speak plainly on behalf of the entire community when individual organizations are unable to take that risk. In large measure, these conversations take place with government, at both the political and bureaucratic level, but CCIC is also able to represent the sector to other players such as the private sector, research institutions and academia.



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3 A conduit. CCIC creates opportunities for members to meet decision-makers. Through CCIC's work, DFATD has become a renewed space for policy dialogue. CCIC facilitates dialogue between members and officials to raise concerns and help broker better solutions. In recent years, CCIC has worked to further extend its network within government, from partnership branch into geographic, multilateral and policy branches.



4 A forum for knowledge sharing. While CCIC is not an educational institution, it is a contact point for research, knowledge sharing and skills development among members. By engaging other players and experts in the field through workshops and conferences, CCIC brings added synergies to the learning process. Specialized sessions provide members with practical guidance to manage change, such as on regulations governing charities. Through CCIC, humanitarian relief agencies can also learn about the work of counterparts focusing on development, and vice versa, while building crosswalks in between. The result is a greater sense of common cause and a stronger sense of community.



5 A vehicle for civil society. While other organizations work on various aspects of development policy, CCIC is the only body whose mandate is specific to civil society's role in international development. At its core, CCIC advocates for an environment for organizations that enables them to reach their full potential as independent development actors - through diverse and predictable funding mechanisms, institutionalized policy dialogue and supportive legislative and policy frameworks. Armed with this mandate, CCIC represents the concerns of Canadian civil society on the global stage, and brings knowledge and insights from the global stage back to its members.



6 A moral compass. Through its Code of Ethics and Operational Standards, CCIC supports a high ethical standard for the sector. Ongoing capacity building and peer reflection help members to strengthen their own ethical practices and standards. Being part of CCIC allows everyone to be better.

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