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Sent: March 24, 2020 9:28 PM

Subject: COVID-19: An update for our partners

Dear Partners,

These are difficult times for all of us. The COVID-19 pandemic has already brought significant changes to our work, our families, and our daily routines and of course our ability to deliver international assistance in the field.

Despite this, many aspects of our work continue. At Global Affairs Canada, a large number of our employees are engaged in answering the phone and providing consular advice and support to Canadians who are trying to return to Canada. In addition, staff are continuing to review project proposals and manage your operational projects from home, including reviewing partner reports and processing payment requests. As of today, the Department has processed over 80% of all project payments to be made this fiscal year.

Our highest shared priority is the health and safety of your project staff, volunteers, and interns. The Government of Canada's advice is for Canadians to return to Canada. This is very difficult in some countries, so please make your decisions without waiting for specific project advice. As we have already conveyed, Global Affairs Canada will ensure that there are no financial barriers to prevent you from repatriating Canadian project participants. We will provide flexibility with respect to covering costs, reallocation of budget or increases in project value, and the extension of agreements to facilitate repatriation and other COVID-19 related costs. We will also authorize financial support to cover costs associated with the quarantine of project participants while they are overseas and/or once they return to Canada.

We very much appreciate your efforts to continue to deliver assistance where you can, but we also recognize that many project activities and events will need to be cancelled due to travel restrictions and the need for self-isolation. In this context, we will treat cancellation fees as eligible expenses. We will also authorize up to 30 days salary for staff of those projects that need to cease operations due to the impact of the pandemic. This transition measure should help to support your operations while you assess other options. Many of you are also concerned about how your organizations will meet current project reporting deadlines during the pandemic. To relieve this pressure, we will be delaying the annual reporting exercise as well as the deadline for submitting project narrative reports. Changes to the way we manage contribution agreement advances during this period will also help to relieve some pressure on your organizations.

After consultation with organizations participating in the second stage of the **Small and Medium Organisations** Call for Concept Notes, we will also be further delaying the deadline for the submission of proposals to April 9th. Similarly, the deadline for submissions to the **Women as Agents of Change in the Americas** Call for Proposals will be extended by a month to June 30th.

Information on these measures and others to come will be provided on the Global Affairs Canada website in the coming days.

We are still in the early days of the pandemic, and it remains difficult to know what we will need to respond to both during and after the crisis and how we will adjust our development programming portfolio to take into account new challenges and realities. That work remains ahead of us.

In the meantime, I would ask you to please continue to communicate with your Global Affairs Canada project team leaders on a regular basis and to jointly document any project financial decisions that you are taking with respect to covering costs or reallocating budget. Please let us know if there are other ways we can help. We will continue to demonstrate as much flexibility as possible.

Please look after yourselves, your family members, and your staff during this difficult time. We will get through this.

Caroline Leclerc
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