Civil Society: A Window on the Future of Partnership?

BY EDWARD T. JACKSON, TIM DRAIMIN AND CHRIS ROSENE *

Non-governmental organizations are "restructuring, reskilling and renewing" in order to meet the challenges of our changed world and are also "regaining a new appreciation of partnerships." There are emerging new relationships between northern and southern NGOs, which move away from the donor-recipient dynamic into authentic partnerships involving shared ownership and decision-making. The authors examine this trend, drawing on the experience of joint ventures or coalitions of Latin American and Canadian NGOs.

INTRODUCTION

At the onset of the new century, partnership is high on the agenda of all social actors engaged in the development enterprise. Governments, civil society and the private sector must all improve their understanding of how to structure and sustain productive partnerships. In today's integrated and volatile world, complex problems increasingly demand rapid solutions based on the knowledge and resources of a multiplicity of sectors and institutions. In this context, multi-stakeholder partnerships that solve real problems are becoming especially valuable.

One source of practical experience with the potential and challenges of partnership is the long and rich history of relations between Northern and Southern non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Joined by their common values of equity, justice and solidarity, and obliged by the uncertainty of their funding base and the breadth of the development issues they seek to address, NGOs have often generated innovative vehicles for collective action. This paper examines lessons on partnership now emerging from one such experience: cooperation between Canadian and Latin American NGOs.

*** See end of the article for brief biographical information on the authors.**

Civil-society organizations are working hard to adapt themselves and their alliances to the world that they are engaged with today. As the power of markets continues to rise and the power of states continues to decline, as the gap between rich and poor grows larger across and within countries, as regional human disasters erupt unpredictably from ethnic conflict, disease or climate change, and as trade and investment regimes become even more integrated, NGOs are restructuring, reskilling and renewing in order to meet the challenges of this new world.[1]

In this context, NGOs are also regaining a new appreciation of partnerships. It is true that, too often North-South relationships have taken on characteristics, driven by the donor-recipient dynamic, that undermine partnership: asymmetries in power, money and information; one-way accountability; and mutual distrust.[2] However, in thousands of cases in every corner of the globe, Northern and Southern NGOs have, in fact, been able to transform their relationships into authentic partnerships involving mutual respect and trust, mutual accountability, and shared ownership and decision-making. For the most part, such partnerships have involved joint ventures or coalitions of NGOs, and have generally remained within the sphere of civil society.

NGOs continue to explore new roles in relation to the state and the private sector, as well. With governments, NGOs have often sought to play several roles at the same time: oppositional political force, policy critic and formulator, program grantee, and program-delivery contractor. Northern and Southern NGOs play all of these roles, to varying degrees, and put much effort into managing the contradictions therein.

In the wake of falling ODA spending, NGOs have also turned to the private sector, and are examining a similar range of often contradictory roles—with evident ambivalence. Many NGOs are long-time critics of corporations, and their cultures are deeply anti-corporate. Others have moved more easily toward business, seeking grants, strategic alliances and even board involvement from business leaders. In addition, many NGOs participate in policy-oriented roundtables and task forces involving the private sector and the state. There is growing recognition that both NGOs and business need new skills and processes in order to interact productively. However, their relationships must also recognize and protect the differences of the respective stakeholders.[3]

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The challenge now before all development institutions and organizations—and civil-society organizations in particular—is to enable the formation and sustenance of effective and efficient, results-oriented, multi-stakeholder structures and processes. These new partnership vehicles are essential in solving the world's problems—not through rhetoric from on high but through hard work on the ground. At the same time, such vehicles must also allow all the parties to maintain their critical perspective and stance, and the freedom to oppose one another on issues where there is not agreement. The world is complex; so is the nature of partnership. And, in the final analysis, partnerships must deliver concrete results for all of the participants; overall, the benefits must outweigh the time and money spent by participants on these relationships.

All social actors would be well advised to follow these developments closely. How civil-society organizations build new and complex relations with the state and with the private sector can teach multilateral and bilateral donor agencies much about how they themselves can become involved in multi-stakeholder partnerships, and what a new division of labour among the various social actors might look like in the near future. It may be that multilaterals, in particular—given their Southern orientation, diplomatic agility, and regional and sectoral expertise—could play a strategic role in convening multi-stakeholder processes and in animating the various parties to achieve concrete results where they matter most.

CANADA–LATIN AMERICA NGO COOPERATION: EMERGING LESSONS ON PARTNERSHIP

One specific experience worth reviewing in some detail is cooperation between Canadian and Latin American NGOs. Instructive lessons on partnership are emerging from recent innovation in relations among these parties.

History of cooperation

Canadian civil-society partnerships in Latin America go back to the early 1960s, when Canada's publicly funded aid program began. Some of the longest-running partnerships are those initiated by church groups and development NGOs in that period or earlier. Unions, cooperatives and universities also established relationships in the 1960s and 1970s. As more funding became available from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canada's official aid agency, the web of linkages expanded. Canadian spending in the region increased steadily until the early 1990s. During the 1970s and 1980s, Canadian NGOs established themselves as distinct from their counterparts in the United States or Europe. Without the political baggage associated with NGOs from the United States, Canadian NGOs often found it easier to build trust with Latin American part-

ners. At the same time, they lacked the resources of European NGOs, obliging them to combine forces or find innovative ways to achieve impact.

Although Canada's levels of official development assistance (ODA) spending fell in the 1990s, its political and economic role in Latin America increased. In particular, Canada has been an active participant in the Organization of American States (OAS), which it joined in 1990. Canada will host both the OAS General Assembly in 2000 and the Summit of the Americas in 2001. Canadian trade and investment have also expanded throughout the hemisphere. The expansion of the nation's political and economic presence has provided opportunities for new Canada–Latin America partnerships.

Declining Canadian ODA spending

During the decade of the 1990s, however, Canadian ODA declined by 30% in real terms.[4] This has translated into significant cuts for Canadian institutions and NGOs receiving CIDA funding, causing project dislocations and contributing to re-thinking of long-term programming goals. The cuts have also led to increased competition among NGOs for donations from individuals, leading them to place greater emphasis on the promotion of their "brand". Fundraising related to emergencies has been seen as one of the greatest opportunities to attract new donors, which one hopes can be encouraged to support long-term development work. Significantly, though, following Hurricane Mitch, the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC—the Canadian NGO umbrella) helped Canadian NGOs active in Central America to undertake *joint* advertising for donations.

Given the remarkable and continuing growth of Latin American civil society organizations (CSOs), relatively static Canadian NGO funding of Southern counterparts is diminishing in relative importance as time goes on. There are several obvious implications of this new situation, including:

- Canadian NGOs have been forced to focus their programs, both geographically (on poorer and/or fewer countries, resulting in dramatic cuts for the Southern Cone in particular) and sectorally, in order to ensure they are operating cost-effectively in a niche where they enjoy a comparative advantage.
- In turn, this forced many Latin American NGOs to scramble to generate earned income and/or reduce programming. The funding pinch on Latin American NGOs, coupled with democratic openings in some countries, has seen a haemorrhage of their talent flow into the state and private sectors. (The positive aspect of this trend is having NGO-knowledgeable people now in those sectors when partners or policy dialogue is being sought.)

- Canadian NGOs are recognizing the need to shift their funding from service delivery (where growing needs can never be met by Canadian funding) towards local capacity building. Key capacity building areas include *advocacy training* (to strengthen Latin American NGOs' ability to influence local, national or multilateral policy-setting) and *resource mobilization* (to help local NGOs take advantage of various income opportunities, ranging from fundraising with local publics through to earned income, multilateral project funding, and even partnerships with local governments or the private sector).[5]
- The fall in aid spending accelerated the focus on results-based programming and professionalization. Expectations have risen regarding how Canadian and Latin American NGOs generate, manage and disseminate knowledge and innovation.

While the decline of ODA has clearly been disruptive, it has also had the salutary effect of sensitizing Canadian and Latin American NGOs to their dependence on ODA funding sources. It has also set into motion a willingness to experiment with once taboo subjects, such as inter-sectoral partnerships and social entrepreneurship.

Changes in the Latin American environment

In the 1990s, Latin American partners of Canadian civil society organizations witnessed a range of changes to their broader external environment. Latin American NGOs saw a drastic reduction in foreign funding, as most Northern donors trimmed their aid programs.[6] In addition, the dominant economic and social policy framework changed. A much greater emphasis was placed on market-oriented approaches, stressing the values of competition, individualism and efficiency. And, as government services were restructured, downsized, or privatized, NGOs acquired a greater role in service delivery functions.

In the political realm, the near-universal presence of electoral democracy in Latin America in the 1990s enhanced, at least theoretically, the legitimacy of civil society groups as actors in the social-policy sphere. Meanwhile, the end of the Cold War changed the terms of international relations for several actors in civil society, most notably the trade unions. Groups that once regarded each other as potential enemies have found a new basis for collaboration. Other global changes, such as rapidly expanding Internet use, have enhanced the participation of Latin American civil-society organizations in international thematic networks (e.g., human rights, women, environment).

Latin American civil-society organizations have reacted to these changes in a variety of ways. On the negative side,

some NGOs have had to put more energy into self-preservation, reducing staff or taking on contracts with government departments or agencies, sometimes distracting them from their core mandates. On the positive side, they have developed a greater appreciation for efficiency, effectiveness and strategic planning, and have learned from the new relationships they have had to establish.

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The decentralization of administrative functions to the municipal level in many countries of the region has caused a shift in focus to local issues and local politics, while global issues become more commonly felt throughout the hemisphere. Latin American civil-society groups are therefore interacting with local governments and businesses, in a way that is actually similar to the context already familiar to Canadian civil society. Issues such as trade liberalization, ecological preservation and gender are just as common in the discourse of Latin American civil-society networks as they are among their counterparts in the North.

However, some analysts have advised caution in interpreting the changed context in Latin America. Some commentators note that, across Latin America, the military still plays a key role, insecurity is very high, poverty levels are unchanged and democratic practices are not institutionalized.[7]

What partnerships have worked?

Against this backdrop of change, Canadian and Latin American NGOs sought to adapt their individual and joint capacities to respond to the new conditions of the 1990s. There has been a consistent and high degree of interest among all parties in how to structure and maintain successful relationships.

In 1996, under the sponsorship of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), a Canadian ODA agency, a meeting was held of NGOs, universities, consultants and ODA agencies to assess their experience with Latin American partnerships. Participants confirmed the importance of shared decision-making, transparency, mutual respect, and compatible values and strategic interests. At the front end, they noted, it is important when choosing partners to undertake due diligence (such as the in-depth exploration which private sector firms make into the business operations of a potential partner). And partnership agreements can useful-

ly set out the objectives and success indicators of the relationship, the financial and other obligations of the parties, and provisions for ending the partnership. During the implementation phase of the partnership, open, two-way communication, administrative transparency, frequent face-to-face contact and continuous electronic contact all can promote a successful partnership. Productive relations between the "champions" of the relationship in each of the participating organizations can also exert a positive influence, participants observed.

Among the obstacles to partnership identified by the meeting were lack of funds for travel and exchange, and lack of time to nurture and build the partnership. Declining markets or funding, lack of communication, asymmetry in the contributions of each of the parties, personality conflicts, and diverging goals were other obstacles noted by participants. Still other obstacles include entrenched vested interests, over-reliance on particular funders, political factors influencing funding, lack of adaptability of one or more of the partners, and lack of a negotiated exit plan.[8]

New forms of partnership

Canadian and Latin American NGOs also experimented with new forms of partnerships in the latter half of the 1990s. These new vehicles have tended to be thematically focused, regional in scope, research intensive and results oriented. Support from IDRC, CIDA and organized labour has been crucial to these vehicles for joint analysis and action. Three cases are profiled here.

1. The Hemispheric Partnership Initiative

Canada's umbrella group for development NGOs, the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, launched a joint research and policy development initiative in 1995, involving Canadian NGOs and their partners in Latin America. This project, known as the "Hemispheric Partnership Initiative", or HPI, was funded by the International Development Research Centre. The initiative was a departure from the traditional work of the Canadian NGO participants to promote community development activities through technical support or funding of discrete projects or programs. Three HPI consortia involving participants in both North and South worked together on themes of common interest, including decentralization of government, rural responses to economic integration and community responses to mining. Each consortium comprised a broad mix of participants from North and South, some of whom had had no previous contact with one another.

By working on a collaborative research and capacity-building initiative, Canadian and Latin American partners in the HPI side-stepped the relationship of financial dependency too often characterizing such relationships. Latin American participants were surprised and

pleased that the Canadians were willing to work together with them in a mutually respectful way, without the usual interchange of project plans and reports in exchange for funding. All participants found that they had much to learn from organizations that were not their "traditional" partners—that is, organizations they would not have met otherwise through the normal course of development-support activities.

Participants also found value in the process of joint reflection on past work or strategies, and in spending time and money to research a relevant theme area. Such activities are too seldom practiced during the regular course of the project cycle, especially in a joint form engaging partners from both North and South.[9]

2. The Hemispheric Social Alliance

In response to what they regard as a common threat from neo-liberal economic policies, civil-society actors in the hemisphere have begun to develop a "common agenda" in response to the drive by government and business for greater economic integration and free trade. In particular, they are responding to the governmental proposal, launched at the Summit of the Americas in Miami in 1994, to establish a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) by 2005. A loosely knit international coalition known as the "Hemispheric Social Alliance" (HSA)—composed of unions, environmentalists, church groups, development NGOs, human rights advocates, women's groups and small farmers' groups—has come together to oppose or influence this plan. HSA members have been gathering at parallel events to the FTAA trade ministers' meetings and at the Second Summit of the Americas in Santiago, Chile, in 1998. They plan to organize another "People's Forum" at the Third Summit, scheduled to take place in Canada in 2001.

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Several aspects of the HSA are interesting from the point of view of North-South partnerships in civil society. First, the coalition has decided not only to oppose what they view as wrong in the FTAA plan, but also to develop their own proposal for hemispheric integration. This has involved research, discussion and debate in order to come up with principles and alternatives that are equally valid for North and South. The first attempt by members of the Hemispheric Social Alliance to articulate their alternative vision was a joint publication by

groups from Canada, the United States, Mexico, Chile and Brazil.[10]

Participants have learned from each other in unexpected ways. Southern groups, for example, have learned that poverty in the North is a serious issue. Environmentalists from Canada and the United States have had to acknowledge the "ecological debt" represented by uneven consumption patterns in the North. Participants in both North and South have been obliged to recognize the different perspectives of large, institutionalized, constituency-based organizations, such as the Inter-American Regional Organization of Workers (ORIT), compared with those of small, research-oriented NGOs or advocacy groups. And women's groups from North and South have found common cause in trying to influence the agenda of both the FTAA, and the hemispheric alliance itself, to become more conscious of gender issues in trade and economic integration. Collective learning and joint ownership characterize this partnership.

3. Horizons of Friendship

Horizons of Friendship is a small Canadian development NGO working only in "Mesoamerica" (Central America and Mexico). It is unusual in many respects, for one reason because it is based in a small town, rather than in the capital or a major city. Started in the 1970s as a charitable response to victims of natural disasters in Central America, Horizons has evolved over the years to become an NGO that emphasizes the quality of partnership as one of its key concerns.

Since the late 1980s, Horizons has worked with a limited group of partners—15 to 20—in Mesoamerica. Part of the work of Horizons is the same as that of many other development NGOs: providing funding for grass-roots development activities via its partners. However, Horizons has also worked with its partners to jointly explore themes of common interest, such as gender and the environment. Along with its partners, Horizons has participated in workshops and analyses in order to develop common policies and action plans of these themes. By jointly developing the policies, rather than establishing benchmarks that must be met as a prerequisite for funding, Horizons has earned a reputation as an organization that values partnership over financial and administrative concerns.

Recently, Horizons and its Mesoamerican partners have begun to explore other areas of common concern, such as how to develop a results-based orientation to programming, and how to use their experience at the grass-roots level for the purpose of policy advocacy. Several partners are also interested in exploring alternative revenue-generation schemes to reduce dependency on ODA funds.

New funding arrangements

While financial *sustainability* remains a long-term goal for civil-society organizations throughout Latin America, most

struggle to maintain a modicum of financial *viability*. This situation has led to new efforts to accelerate market-based income-generating paths and to increase the volume of local fundraising from individuals.

To facilitate the fundraising agenda, a much more favourable enabling environment needs to be crafted. On one hand, this means encouraging national governments to make available tax incentives for donations. On the other it requires local voluntary sectors to clarify and publicize their status as charitable institutions as well as build fundraising programs.[11]

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has recognized these challenges and has begun to engage the United Way of Canada in an exploration of social technology transfer to help promote local fundraising strategies. A small NGO, Pueblito Canada, is involved in similar work, helping counterpart organizations in Brazil build federated fundraising approaches. The skill sets of Canadian grant-making institutions are also recognized as representing an important resource. The umbrella group for Canada's 80 locally endowed grant-making community foundations, Community Foundations of Canada (CFC), is participating actively in the World Initiative for Grantmakers Support (WINGS). Canada's largest community foundation, the Vancouver Foundation, has been assisting in the establishment of a Mexican community foundation. These linkages are expected to grow.

Canadian corporate philanthropy has been embarrassingly lax in its international giving. This is slowly changing as corporations reflect on the fact that their operations have globalized, but their philanthropy has not. The most interesting sector to monitor in this regard will probably be mining, owing to remarkable growth in recent years in activities of mining companies throughout Latin America.

Over the past five years, Canadian and Latin American NGOs have tested new strategies for addressing the fundraising constraints they have identified in the North and the South. These new strategies have involved joint emergency appeal fundraising, blending loans and grants, engaging in partnerships with corporations and mobilizing the membership of trade unions. Four examples are presented below.

1. Americas Policy Group

In the wake of the devastating Central American Hurricane Mitch in 1998, Central American and Canadian NGOs built on long-standing partnerships to work collaboratively on emergency and reconstruction programming and in influencing the aid policies of international donors. Critical to facilitating this collaboration was the existing Canadian NGO inter-agency working group, the Americas Policy Group, a part of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC). Some specific outcomes of this group have included:

- Joint emergency appeal fundraising. The outpouring of public support and the millions of dollars NGOs raised helped to stimulate CIDA's pledge of $100 million for reconstruction over four years;
- Canadian and Central American NGOs, in concert with other Northern counterparts, successfully brought civil-society representation into the donors' group activated for reconstruction, and promoted a critical assessment of existing development approaches;
- Special calls were generated for debt moratoriums or relief for Central American countries;
- Canadian NGOs supported a Central American–led assessment of regional needs and ways to promote alternative patterns of development;
- North-South discussion was promoted on new forms of North-South partnership.This started with a suggestion to establish a Central American regional grantmaking foundation. Its role would be to leverage external and local resources for a locally controlled endowment and act as a mechanism to channel Northern NGO funding in ways which would shift projects into programs.[12]

2. Calmeadow and BancoSol

The Toronto-based Calmeadow Foundation, along with a number of Northern organizations, has been assisting in the creation and development of BancoSol in Bolivia, [See separate article in this issue. –Ed.] Started in 1992, this profitable commercial bank serves 60,000 low-income microentrepreneurs with loans of up to $500. Calmeadow worked with a Bolivian foundation, Prodem, which had been created by local business leaders, to create BancoSol as a more efficient vehicle for scaling up Prodem's microcredit program, originally operated with the American NGO ACCION using USAID funds. Prodem owns over 30 percent of BancoSol. Other partners in the conversion process from the foundation to the bank included the Inter-American Development Bank, ACCION, SIDI of France, FUNDES of Switzerland and the Rockefeller Foundation. These organizations, along with the Calvert Fund, an American ethical mutual fund, the International Finance Corporation and the Swiss government, then together created Profund, a $20 million investment fund dedicated to accelerating the development of sustainable microfinance institutions throughout the Americas.[13]

Notable features of the BancoSol experience include strong local champions, an international group of allied institutions, a specific and targeted focus, a blending of grants and loans, and the use of both non-profit and business structures. These may suggest directions for the future for other Southern civil-society ventures, especially those involving microfinance and philanthropy.

3. CoDevelopment Canada

One innovative cross-sectoral model involving NGOs and corporations is an initiative of CoDevelopment Canada. It works with partners in Nicaragua and Bolivia to assist communities in mining regions in establishing and maintaining effective relations with Canadian mining companies operating in their localities. Some Canadian mining companies are placing increasing priority on the systematic development of mutually beneficial relationships with local communities, recognizing the importance these relationships have on their corporate reputations and operations. Using a community decision-making model, CoDevelopment is piloting the community capacity-building processes with financial support from the International Development Research Centre and from the two mining companies involved.

Among the lessons generated to date by this initiative are that companies should:

- assist communities to address the causes of poverty rather than its symptoms, and to promote sustainable, independent local development strategies;
- provide communities with time and money to create or strengthen structures that can effectively represent communities' interests;
- support a thorough public-education process on the environmental, social and economic impacts of mining activities, providing communities with enough time and money to independently assess company claims;
- engage professional assistance, from local or international NGOs, to help bridge cultural and socio-economic differences, build trust among the parties and put in place a long-term community development approach.[14]

4. Labour International Development Committee

The Labour International Development Committee (LIDC) is an umbrella forum for Canadian labour organizations active in Latin America and other parts of the developing world. Its members include the Canadian Labour Congress, Canada's largest labour centre, and four international development funds run by CLC-affiliated unions: the Steelworkers' Humanity Fund, the Canadian Auto Workers Social Justice Fund, the Humanity Fund of the Communications, Energy and Paper Workers Union, and the Union Aid Fund of the Canadian Union of Public Employees. Between 1995 and 1999, more than half of LIDC-supported projects were undertaken in Latin America with trade union and NGO partners. Projects focused on, among other themes, women in unions, labour education, democracy and the mining sector. During 1995-1998, the three largest labour funds in LIDC raised more than C$7.5 million in private donations from Canadian workers, via

provisions in their collective agreements.[15] These funds were often matched by public funds through CIDA grants. In this era of tight ODA spending, the impressive private fundraising capacity of the labour funds in particular is becoming apparent to Canadian and Latin American partners alike.

Looking ahead

Canada–Latin American NGO cooperation enters the 21st century equipped with the lessons of a decade of experimentation and propelled by the momentum of mutual interest and respect. Underpinning the innovation of recent years is an unshakable common resolve to learn together in order to move forward together. Much can be built upon this foundation of long-term and forward-looking solidarity.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS IN THE SOUTH

While the case of Canada–Latin American NGO cooperation is a very particular one, and is perhaps characterized by some features which may not be fully replicable elsewhere, this experience nonetheless offers a number of lessons for multi-stakeholder partnerships in the South. Among these lessons would seem to be the following:

- *International trade and investment agreements can provide useful frameworks for stakeholder analysis and action*. Global and regional economic integration demands that all stakeholders affected by such agreements come together to debate and solve shared and complex problems. For better or worse, it is these types of agreements—rather than ODA plans or national policies—that frame much of international cooperation today.
- *Knowledge intensity is increasingly important*. The nature of the problems social actors must address in today's world requires knowledge-intensive research and development (R & D). Partnerships that provide new R & D can keep stakeholders "at the table", even if being there is time-consuming and expensive, and moving forward together. Electronic connectivity enhances productivity, as well.
- *Shared ownership and decision-making must be negotiated*. It is both obvious and profound to recognize the need to commit to an authentic sharing of power, money and information. But efforts must be renewed to do so across sectors, regions and issues. Unless these conditions are in place, multi-stakeholder partnerships in particular will not succeed.
- *Labour and business must be dealt in*. The resources and power of organized labour and of the private sector must be mobilized through multi-stakeholder partnerships. Their objectives and cultures are each unique, and must be

understood and addressed. But the state, civil society and ODA agencies on their own will not be able to solve pressing global problems without the participation of these two critical actors. Creative ways must be found to engage them.

- *The North still matters*. The nature of globalization and its associated problems require continued involvement from both the North with the South. But the North's role as donor or funder, at least via ODA channels, is receding. Like their Southern counterparts, Northern social actors seek to both produce and consume knowledge that will enable them to manage change; partnerships can help the parties generate such knowledge together.

In terms of the *substance* of partnerships—that is, the focus of their work—there would seem to be three broad areas suggested by the cases reviewed here:

- holding corporations and states accountable for their actions;
- democratizing decision-making in corporations and in states; and
- strengthening the performance of civil-society organizations.

There are international networks of expertise and analysis in a range of related areas, including corporate social responsibility, corporate social and environmental accounting, socially responsible investment, fair trade, participatory governance and development, and CSO capacity development, among many other things.

The Canada-Latin America NGO experience also underscores the importance of addressing the material basis of multi-stakeholder partnerships in light of declining ODA levels. Civil-society organizations, in particular, must strengthen and diversify their private fundraising and earned-income techniques toward this end. For their part, Southern governments must create a fully enabling legal, tax and regulatory environment to encourage private philanthropy and social entrepreneurship, with the necessary tax incentives to permit individuals, corporations and foundations to make a real difference.

DIRECTIONS FOR MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS AND DONOR AGENCIES

Multilateral organizations and donor agencies have important roles to play in this new era, despite changing economic and political conditions and constraints on aid spending. Both multilaterals and bilaterals, as well as major foundations, should focus their support on corporate accountability, public governance and CSO strengthening. And they should devote serious attention to removing the self-prescribed obstacles (and incentives) that prevent them from coordinating effectively with one another within and across sectors.

The World Bank recently introduced a new concept called the Comprehensive Development Framework, a multisectoral, multidisciplinary approach to

development involving the state, civil society and the private sector. While this idea is being debated and tested, there is little question that resources and strategies from all the key social actors must, in fact, be brought to bear on the process of economic, social and political transformation in the South.[16] How national sovereignty, the profit orientation of business, and the social-justice concerns of NGOs and CSOs can be balanced and resolved within the context of the CDF is going to depend in large measure on the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder partnerships in the South.

In this regard, multilateral organizations may well have a special role to play. In particular, they can be vehicles for dialogue among the key social actors in sectors and regions. Their prestige and resources can give profile and momentum to timely ideas. Most important, multilateral organizations can bring diverse sets of actors to the table to debate, and consider joint action on, issues of contention involving corporations, civil society and governments. Here, though, they will need strengthened skills in listening, facilitation, brokering, negotiation, conflict resolution and coalition management. Globalization has generated a host of critical issues where there are deep divides among the social actors, but also new opportunities for common understanding and joint action. And the mutilaterals must work hard to achieve a rapid, flexible and responsive relationship to multi-stakeholder partnerships; there is no place here for ponderous bureaucracy.

Each of the specialized agencies has impressive sectoral expertise and knowledge to bring to bear on the world's problems and on negotiations among social actors. As the International Labour Organization (ILO) Director-General, Juan Somavia, recently said of that organization: "The ILO is one of the only places where you have employers, workers and government engaging in dialogue, talking things out to find common solutions".[17] Other specialized organizations, to some degree, already provide a space for dialogue on their policy areas (e.g., World Health Organization on health, the Food and Agriculture Organization on food). However, in terms of their governance, these institutions must achieve a feasible balance of representation, perspectives and values across civil society, governments and corporations, if they are to be of optimum use.

And "talkfests" are not enough. Real agreements, with rules, standards and procedures of mutual accountability, must emerge from multi-stakeholder dialogues animated by the multilaterals. Real interests—as expressed by money and power—are at stake and must be negotiated with sophisticated calibration in order that such agreements may materialize and be sustained. The stakes are high and the price of failure is great. But the price of not trying is much higher still.

CONCLUSION

In a volatile and globalized world, the nature of international cooperation is shifting from an ODA-driven, program-oriented enterprise to one which is framed by international agreements, demands knowledge-intensive and integrated solutions, and requires the mobilization of significant private funding. In this context, results-oriented, multi-stakeholder partnerships are increasingly important. And multilateral organizations, in particular, may be able to play an important convening and animating role in such relationships.

How civil-society organizations are redefining and operationalizing anew the concept of partnerships is worthy of the attention of all social actors. The case of Canada-Latin American NGO cooperation is instructive in this regard, offering practical lessons in managing and renewing the partnership process. This experience indicates that partnerships focused on trade-agreement areas can work well. Knowledge intensity is crucial in solving today's complex problems. Shared ownership and decision-making in the relationship are paramount. Ways must be found to deal in labour and business, to the practical advantage of each of those social sectors. And Northern stakeholders should be included, not so much as donors, but more as co-producers and co-consumers of knowledge and co-workers for change.

Many other cases of civil-society partnering can be found in all parts of the world, and they are all worthy of detailed study. There is valuable experience in partnering in the state sector as well, as there is in the private sector. It is time to assess these experiences and draw practical lessons from them. All actors in the development enterprise must learn their way forward—separately and together. ■

About the Authors

Edward T. Jackson is Director of the Centre for the Study of Training, Investment and Economic Restructuring, and Associate Professor of Public Administration, at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, and President of E.T. Jackson and Associates Ltd., a management consulting firm. His e-mail address is etjack@fox.nstn.ca or edward_jackson@carleton.ca.

Tim Draimin is Senior Policy Advisor to the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, an NGO umbrella group, and a consultant in international public policy and civil-society resource mobilization. He has been active in development and solidarity work involving Canadian and Latin American NGOs for nearly 30 years. His e-mail address is tdraimin@web.net.

Chris Rosene is an Ottawa-based consultant to NGOs and labour groups on civil-society policy and programs. A former Director of the Americas Desk and Field Staff Officer in Central America with CUSO, a volunteer-sending

NGO, he is the author of a recent report on the Hemispheric Partnership Initiative, prepared for the Canadian Council for International Cooperation. His e-mail address is crosene@web.net.

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The following sources provide further analysis of some of the issues addressed in this paper:

- Canadian Council for International Cooperation (www.net/ccic-ccci): See Chris Rosene, "The Hemispheric Partnership Initiative", Canadian Council for International Cooperation, Ottawa, 1999, and Brian Tomlinson, "Canadian International Co-operation NGOs: Trends in the 1990s", CCIC, Ottawa, 1998. Contact: Mr. Tim Draimin, Senior Policy Advisor, CCIC (tdraimin@web.net).
- International Development Research Centre (www.idrc.ca): See Edward T. Jackson (ed), "New Linkages for a New Century: Assessing Partnerships between Canada and Latin America". LACRO Discussion Paper Series No. 7, Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office, International Development Research Centre, Montevideo, 1997. See also Paul McConnell, "IDRC and the 'Partnership' Approach: Final Report", International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, 1998. Contact: Mr. Chris Smart, Director of Special Programs, IDRC (csmart@idrc.ca).
- CIVICUS (www.civicus.org): See, in particular, *e-CIVICUS*, the weekly international newsletter on civil-society organizations, issues, meetings and studies. On CSO resource mobilization, see Lesley M. Fox and Bruce Schearer (eds), *Sustaining Civil Society: Strategies for Resource Mobilization*, CIVICUS, Washington, DC, 1997, and Richard Holloway, "Towards Financial Self-Reliance: A Handbook of Approaches to Resource Mobilisation for Citizens in the South", CIVICUS, Washington, DC, 1999 (Beta Edition).
- The authors may be contacted by e-mail: Edward T. Jackson at etjack@fox.nstn.ca or edward_jackson@carleton.ca; Tim Draimin at tdraimin@web.net; and Chris Rosene at crosene@web.net.

NOTES

[1] The work of the Ford Foundation's Michael Edwards, and his colleagues, is very helpful in assessing the prospects of NGOs and other civil-society organizations in the new era of globalization, regional emergencies and smaller ODA budgets. See, for example, Michael Edwards, David Hulme and Tina Wallace, "NGOs in a Global Future: Marrying Local Delivery to Worldwide Leverage", *Public Administration and Development, 19* (2), 117-136.

[2] For critical perspectives on the *lack* of partnership in ODA relationships, see Charles Abugre, "Partners, Collaborators or Patron-Clients: Defining Relationships in the Aid

Industry—A Survey of the Issues", Hull, 1999, and John Saxby, "Partnership in Question: An Issues Paper", Canadian Partnership Branch, CIDA, Hull, 1999.

[3] On the experience of British NGOs, see the work of British Overseas NGOs for Development (BOND), based in London. Also in Britain, the Business Sector–NGO Joint Governance Resource Centre of the Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum has encouraged blunt, unvarnished dialogue among the two groups. Likewise, other commentators have also suggested that, although the two parties need new skills, strategies and processes to productively engage with one another, these "must be developed in a way that protects sector differences, because those differences are the source of benefits arising from collaboration" (Steve Waddell, "Market-Civil Society Partnership Formation: A Status Report on Activity, Strategies and Tools, *IDR Reports, 13*, [5] 1998, p. 2.)

[4] Brian Tomlinson, "Canadian International Cooperation NGOs: Trends in the 1990s", Canadian Council for International Cooperation, Ottawa, 1998.

[5] The Canadian Council for International Cooperation has undertaken a series of research and education activities for interested member organizations on earned income from enterprises, corporate alliances and financial products as new strategies for revenue generation for Canadian NGOs *and* for Southern NGOs.

[6] Corina Villacorta, "Las Organizaciones No Gubernamentales Estan Cambiando: Una Perspectiva desde America Latina," UNRISD, Numero 16, 1997 (www.unrisd.org).

[7] Jorge Nef, "The Politics of Insecurity in Contemporary Latin America", In: Jan Black (ed), *Latin America: Its Problems and Its Promise*, Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1997.

[8] Edward T. Jackson, "New Linkages for a New Century: Assessing Partnerships between Canada and Latin America", LACRO Discussion Paper No. 7, Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office, International Development Research Centre, Montevideo, Uruguay, 1997.

[9] For a full assessment of the HPI, see Chris Rosene, "The Hemispheric Partnership Initiative", Canadian Council for International Cooperation, Ottawa, 1999.

[10] Alliance for Responsible Trade, *Alternatives for the Americas: Building a People's Hemispheric Movement*, Fernwood Books, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1999.

[11] On ways and means of promoting foundations and endowments in Latin America and the South generally, see Tim Draimin and Ian Smillie, "Strengthening Civil Society: The Role of Foundations and Endowments," Synergos Institute, Washington, DC, 1999. The international civil society network, CIVICUS, has also sponsored two books on CSO resource mobilization: Lesley M. Fox and Bruce Schearer (eds), *Sustaining Civil Society: Strategies for Resource Mobilization*, CIVICUS, Washington, DC, 1997, and Richard Holloway, "Towards Financial Self-Reliance: A Handbook of Approaches to Resource Mobilisation for Citizens in the South", CIVICUS, Washington, DC, 1999 (Beta Edition). Another useful manual is Michael Norton, *The Worldwide Fundraiser's Handbook*, Directory of Social Change, London, 1998.

[12] *Au Courant*, "Turning the Hurricane Mitch

Tragedy into an opportunity for human and sustainable development", and "Disaster sparks re-assessment," 8 (1), 1999. *Au Courant* is the newsletter of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation. See also Tim Draimin, "Central American 21st Century Foundation for Civil Society Strengthening and Reconstruction: Fundo 21", mimeo, CCIC, Ottawa, 1998.

[13] Martin Connell, Building Private Philanthropy in Latin America: Challenges and Opportunities. In: Edward T. Jackson (ed). "New Linkages for a New Century: Assessing Partnerships between Canada and Latin America". *Ibid*, 1997, pp. 29-34.

[14] Jim Rader, "Socially Responsible Mining: More Than Just a Firm Handshake", Annual General Meeting, Canadian Institute of Mining, Calgary, Alberta, 1999.

[15] A 1998 evaluation of the Labour International Development Committee for CIDA, led by Canadian consultant Bev Burke, yielded these figures.

[16] See James D. Wolfensohn's 1998 Annual Meeting Address, "The Other Crisis", Washington, DC, 1998 (www.worldbank.org/cdf).

[17] Steven Greenhouse, "Making Markets Work for All", *New York Times*, October 24, 1999.