

South Asia, the AKFC is convening a round table later in 1997 that will bring together people from the government, corporate, and voluntary sectors in Canada and South Asia to discuss relations between Canada and South Asia in such areas as economic development, civil society, sustainable human development, and knowledge partnerships.

Research and policy dialogue are an integral part of some of AKFC's overseas programming. For example, it is using program funds to research best practices in environmental programming, with a focus on both technical feasibility and community organization. It will document the different approaches, draw out conclusions, then communicate this up the policy chain. A similar approach is being used in work on strengthening social sector institutions in Pakistan.

The AKFC's low-key approach to policy dialogue is at the opposite pole to more confrontative methods that have characterized some NGO strategies in the past. It is a good example of the changing views within the community on effective methods of policy advocacy. A few years ago, the Inter Church Fund for International Development (ICFID) published a sharp critique of CIDA's programs, particularly its support for structural adjustment in the least developed countries, in a study called Diminishing Our Future. ICFID has recently been merged with another church body to form Inter-Church Action (ICA) to serve as a forum for the churches on aid issues, particularly ODA and food security. Policy research will be a priority for ICA, but it intends to keep this grounded in its program experience and to develop a strong and credible research capacity in particular areas of development policy, especially sustainable agriculture, gender equity, and democratization. This will serve as its basis for dialogue with government on policy alternatives in the future.

#### 10. Policy Democratization

**Policy goal:** Create new opportunities for citizen participation and engagement in national and multilateral policy-making, reflecting roles and responsibilities for civil societies and political representatives alike, promoting more equitable, transparent and accountable institutions.

#### Current capacity and activities

All policy advocacy work by Canadian NGOs, institutions, and churches carries the implicit demand for a greater role for civil society in the policy process. Several specific proposals are noted in earlier sections, for example for formal consultations on human rights issues prior to meetings of the Francophonie and the