

PART ONE

An Overview of Trends and Challenges Canadian International Co-operation NGOs and Policy

Introduction

For the last two decades, until recently, there has been a fairly constant increase in the capacity of Canadian international co-operation NGOs to involve themselves in policy development, policy dialogue and policy advocacy. Issues during that period included work on geographical regions (e.g. South Africa, Horn of Africa, Central America, etc) and diverse thematic policy issues (e.g. infant formula feeding, bio-diversity, large scale infrastructure). The Review where fully half of the public's participation was that of NGOs.¹ Since then staff capacity has begun to decline but policy continues to occupy more

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FACING NGO POLICY WORK

NGOs have moved from the periphery of public policy to a prominent place in the mainstream of public dialogue on many issues. Today some of the most visible are debt, children's rights and child labour, landmines, gender, environment, and human rights. This evolution of NGO policy capacity has seen NGOs shift from a posture of critique of policies to one of actively proposing policy alternatives.

¹ Canada's Foreign Policy: Principles and Priorities for the Future. Report of the Special Joint Committee of the Senate and the House of Commons Reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy, November 1994, p.36. For an analysis of the role of NGOs in the policy democratization process, see Tim O'Riain and Betty Plewka, "Civil Society and the Democratization of Foreign Policy", in Maxwell Cameron and Mourean Appel-Moist, Canada Abroad: The 1990s, Democracy and Foreign Policy, Carleton University Press, Ottawa, 1995.