

Hard Choices: Eligibility and Human Rights

1. A Fresh Approach to Eligibility

The population of the entire developing world is just over four billion. If Canada's aid were divided equally among them, it would amount to about 65 cents per person per year. Common sense tells us that this would not make much of a difference in anyone's life... and that it would be a better idea to deliver Canada's aid in the form of programs and projects that concentrate efforts and thus have enough impact to change people's lives for the better.



CIDA photo: Ellen Tolmie, Colombia

Choices must be made.

Providing development assistance involves tough decisions. There are more than a hundred developing countries. Each has real problems, and almost all of them would welcome the closest possible development relationship with Canada.

Should Canada help those countries trying hardest to help themselves? Or should it assist the poorest, even if their governments have difficulties carrying out development programs? Should Canada's traditional friendships be taken into account? Should aid decisions be based on how useful a country is, or may become, as a market for Canadian exports? Should all countries be treated equally no matter how good or bad Canada's diplomatic and political relations with them? Does it matter how they treat women? or religious minorities? or political dissenters? What should be done about human rights, an issue that Canadians care deeply about?

There are more really poor people just in northeastern Brazil, and far more in India, than in all of Francophone Africa. How should this fact be dealt with when deciding which nations Canada should cooperate with? Should Canada stick with countries that are starting to be 'winners' in some of their development battles — or should

Canada leave them aside when success begins, and concentrate on the poorest? Should Canada stop aid if it does not like their internal policies, or if they are not serious about eliminating poverty?

Canadian policy must deal with all of these questions, and many more, in deciding which countries should be eligible for our help.

For the past several years, the Government has published a five category eligibility structure, including specific developing countries under these categories. The category under which a specific country was listed indicated the channel and type of Canadian ODA it might receive, such as: bilateral (government-to-government), multilateral (UN agencies and institutions, development banks), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and institutions (NGIs), the Industrial Cooperation Program (INC), development crown corporations, humanitarian assistance, food aid, and international humanitarian assistance.

Canada's new aid strategy abolishes that system, and takes a fresh new approach. From now on, all eligible developing countries will receive some assistance from the people of Canada through one or more of the Partnership Programs (NGO, NGI, multilateral organizations and development