

Concept

Topic:

- “cutting edge”, emerging, global topic; SAP was first to bring this discussion to the NGO community in Canada; a focus on South Asia, but generated interest beyond those working in South Asia
- explored many facets of a single issue, versus last year’s forum which gave an overview of multiple topics
- issue is relevant to SAP: now using the terminology, participating in international civil society networks and describing work in terms of strengthening civil society

Regions:

- Coady had good participation but highly dependent on 54 Coady students
- Calgary had lower than anticipated attendance
- good idea to expand the Annual Forum to the east and west, although stronger partnerships with our regional hosts in the design and promotion of the workshops may have resulted in larger audiences and made the workshops more effective

Program

The workshops aimed to:

- explore the diversity of concepts of, and attitudes towards, strengthening civil society, particularly in Canada and among South Asian countries
- share information on approaches to strengthening civil society and identify appropriate strategies towards this end for Canadian and Southern NGOs

Results:

- good exploration of theory, concepts and issues; less clear outcomes of tool/direction-building exercises
- wealth of publications, information generated which will be shaped into a practical resource book/primer on civil society for NGOs
- expanded constituency
- good visibility for SAP
- new international/local institutional connections

Process:

- an early start to planning was an improvement over last year, but should start even earlier for next year: have topic by December, partners by February, speakers before the summer
- more time and structure was needed for the discussion group sessions
- 4 month full time contract for workshop coordinator to manage promotion, registration and logistics was key to successful implementation