



SUBMISSION TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA'S INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE REVIEW

29 July 2016

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives appreciates this opportunity to provide input into the Government of Canada's International Assistance Review. KAIROS is a national ecumenical organization working for human rights and ecological justice with international partners in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Middle East, as well as partners and networks in Canada. KAIROS brings together 11 Canadian churches and religious organizations from eight Christian denominations.¹

KAIROS was formed in 2001 when 10 ecumenical justice coalitions merged, sharpening focus for greater impact in justice initiatives in Canada and around the world in partnership with like-minded organizations. In total, there has been over 40 years of ecumenical justice cooperation, including global partnership commitments. For most of this period, the coalitions, and then KAIROS, received support for partnerships in the global South from the Canadian government.

KAIROS works with a diversity of civil society partners including human rights organizations, women's groups, Indigenous organizations and churches. Partners' programs focus on ecological justice, Indigenous rights and women's rights, including in contexts of militarized conflict, and have succeeded in bridging transformative change at a community level with effective policy development and advocacy.

To date, KAIROS has actively participated in the International Assistance Review (IAR) and related studies in the following ways:

- Submission to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (SCFAID) on Women, Peace and Security²
- Witness before the SCFAID, focusing on priority countries, Colombia and Guatemala³

¹ KAIROS members are: Anglican Church of Canada, Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Canadian Religious Conference, Christian Reformed Church in North America, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Mennonite Central Committee Canada, Presbyterian Church in Canada, Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and United Church of Canada.

² KAIROS Brief on Women, Peace and Security for the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, April 12, 2016

³ KAIROS Remarks to Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, June 9, 2016

- Participation in the consultation on Governance, Pluralism, Diversity, and Human Rights
- Participation in CCIC Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America Working Group consultations with Global Affairs Canada
- Participation in the Women, Peace and Security consultation with Global Affairs Canada

The following recommendations are informed by and based on evidence from KAIROS' established track record of international partnership and solidarity. We offer principles that should underpin Canada's approach to international assistance, and recommendations on how to put these principles into policy and practice.

COMMITMENTS

KAIROS exists to be a faithful ecumenical response to the call to "do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with Your God" (Micah 6:8). An intersecting commitment is the mandate to preserve and protect the integrity of God's creation. These demands, drawn from scripture shared by Jewish and Christian faiths, shape our principles.

PRINCIPLES

- **Transformative change** –Address the root causes of poverty and injustice and transform the rules and structures of our societies so that the rights and dignity of all peoples, and the integrity of the Earth, are respected.
- **Universality** – Recognize that transformative development requires South- North solutions and global collaboration, working in common cause with partners in Canada and internationally.
- **International human rights-based approach** – Make the protection and promotion of human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights, and respect for Indigenous rights in accordance with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration)*, the cornerstone of Canada's foreign policy.
- **Gender justice** –Support women's rights, empowerment, and equality as both stand-alone and cross cutting priorities, focusing on women as catalysts for change and protagonists in development processes.
- **Indigenous rights and knowledge** – Approach development through the lens of Indigenous rights and the experience of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Canada (TRC). The TRC recommendations provide a comprehensive and far-reaching framework, rooted in the *UN Declaration*, and should inform our relationship with Indigenous peoples globally. Turn to Indigenous knowledge for development alternatives based on living well with enough (*buen vivir*), respect for the Earth, and the rights of nature.⁴
- **Focus on the poorest and most vulnerable** – Focus on the poorest and most marginalized, including Indigenous peoples, women and girls, and youth--what we understand to be a preferential option for the poor.
- **Consultative and collaborative** – Collaborate with civil society organizations in the global South and Canada when creating development policy and priorities to ensure they are based on the experience, expertise, and evidence of these partnerships.

⁴ Indigenous Wisdom: Living in Harmony with Mother Earth, KAIROS, 2014

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Government policies, programming and funding should prioritize, nurture and strengthen long-term partnerships with independent, grassroots civil society organizations in the global South.**

KAIROS has found that such partnerships yield effective and sustainable results, strengthen local capacity and accountability, increase resilience and respond most readily to locally determined needs and priorities. For example, in Colombia, KAIROS partner the Organizacion Femenina Popular (OFP) has been delivering human rights programs for women for 44 years in the region of Magdalena Medio. The OFP has been able to respond to a local and national context, create spaces and proposals for peace, and reach the most vulnerable populations with concrete programs even during the most dire conflict and human rights situations. While their strategies and processes have changed in response to the conflict, the OFP remains a key reference for work on human rights and peace because of its connection to grassroots women and to regional and national movements.

2. **Public engagement should remain an important funded element of Canada's international assistance programming.** We urge the government to develop a public engagement strategy and to expand its support for public engagement activities in international assistance projects. This should include Canadians' advocacy as global citizens. The principle of universality in implementing the SDGs is a strong basis for engaging Canadians in solving global problems, both at home and abroad. Exchanges among and between civil society groups in Canada and the global South promote universality and common values in international development. *KAIROS has considerable experience with public education and exchanges that link global partners with civil society in Canada, particularly Indigenous peoples, diasporic communities, women, and youth. Most recently, KAIROS facilitated the participation of partners in the TRC process as international honorary witnesses. These experiences are critical in the pursuit of pluralism, diversity, and the universality of development goals.*

3. **Funding mechanisms should be more diverse, flexible, responsive, and allow for long term support for civil society partners.** Calls for Proposals should be used only selectively. Funding envelopes must be designed to accommodate small and medium-sized organizations, many of which work directly with the poorest and most vulnerable populations in the global South. This is a very effective way to deliver assistance to those communities. *KAIROS' partnership program is an example of how investing in long term support for partners reinforces democratic processes and builds permanent institutions and capacities, catalyzing long-term and sustainable development.*

4. **The government should support women’s rights organizations and social movements led by women in the global South** through various means including by creating a dedicated fund for women’s empowerment, and through North-South and South-South exchanges, and collaborations on gender equality. KAIROS supports the call for a stand-alone pillar for the advancement of women’s rights. At the same time, gender equality and women’s rights must be cross-cutting priorities in a manner that empowers women as agents of change. *Together with partners, KAIROS has developed its Women of Courage program. This work is rooted in the understanding that while women face many injustices, they are also key catalysts and agents for change when enabled to create and exercise leadership in human rights, peace building, and ecological justice. KAIROS works with partner organizations to respond to the needs of women in their local contexts. In addition, KAIROS builds solidarity relationships with women in Canada who are affected by gender-based oppression, particularly Indigenous and migrant women.*
5. **The government should prioritize the integral role of women in peace processes at all stages and at all levels.** Canada should provide more financial support to women’s rights organizations and grassroots civil society organizations for peace-building efforts in conflict-affected and fragile states. KAIROS supports the recommendation of the Women, Peace and Security Network (WPSN–Canada) and other groups to establish a target of 15% of all development assistance in fragile contexts and all “peace and security” funding. This 15% would go to initiatives that have gender equality/women’s empowerment as the principal objective. *Canada can play a leadership role in this area. KAIROS was very encouraged by Canada’s remarks at the UN Security Council in March 2016 that recognized the critical importance of supporting the participation of local women’s organization in peace building. However, in recent years much of Canada’s official development assistance has focused on large multilateral organizations, such as UN agencies and the World Bank, and less on partnerships with civil society organizations in Canada and internationally. KAIROS’ experience in peace building with partners in Colombia, DRC, Sudan, South Sudan, and Israel/Palestine shows that lasting peace is achieved by supporting the Women Peace and Security agenda at all levels – local, national and multilateral.*
6. **International assistance should be directed according to the priorities and needs of the poorest and most vulnerable populations in the global South, and not tied to Canadian commercial interests in those regions.** In addition, mining companies should be held accountable when they infringe on human rights or damage ecosystems. As a global leader in mining investment, Canada has a responsibility to:
- create an extractive sector Ombudsperson to investigate claims and recommend remedial action to companies and the government;
 - facilitate access to justice in Canada for those who believe they have been harmed by Canadian corporate activity overseas;

- support community-led processes that lead to mandatory mechanisms for independent gender impact assessments of resource extraction projects

Our partners, particularly Indigenous women, have drawn attention to the “gendered impacts of resource extraction,” highlighting the unique impacts of large-scale resource extraction on women. Resource extraction is often associated with increases in violence against women, and negative social, ecological, and economic impacts that women often feel first and most acutely. At the same time, women play a critical role in defending collective rights and the environment. KAIROS works with partners, particularly Indigenous women, to address the significant knowledge and policy gap in this area, and to ensure that the critical perspectives and concerns of women are heard when resource extraction projects are considered.

7. **Support and protection for human rights defenders must be a cornerstone to international development policy.** Many of these human rights defenders are leaders, experts, and practitioners in the development processes that we seek to support. At the same time, Canada needs to invest in mechanisms to protect human rights defenders, including strengthening the implementation of national and international laws that protect the rights of all citizens, and supporting multilateral human rights institutions such as the Inter American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States. Particular attention is needed for the protection of human rights defenders who are Indigenous peoples and women, given added vulnerabilities.

When partners are threatened or at risk, KAIROS works with human rights and Indigenous organizations to respond with urgent advocacy. Partners are currently reporting an increase in threats and assassinations of Indigenous and environmental rights defenders. Some of these partners accompany communities that are responding to the impacts of resource extraction. In some cases, partners have raised concerns that these projects threaten community development and human rights, including Indigenous rights. Sometimes, our partners who raise concerns about human rights violations face criminalization, threats and even death.

8. Consistent with this government’s stated commitment to implement the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, **Canada’s international assistance programming should promote respect for Indigenous rights internationally.** Alignment with the *UN Declaration* should be one of the requirements under the international human rights provisions of the ODA Accountability Act.

Canada has a responsibility and opportunity to share the TRC process internationally. TRC’s far-reaching recommendations call for a reconciliation framework that is rooted in the UN Declaration and which should inform Canada’s relations with Indigenous peoples domestically and globally, including international development. Exchanges between Indigenous partners in Canada and the global South have proven to be an innovative and effective way to share this experience and identify common cause.

9. **To address climate change, the government should move beyond promoting “clean economic growth”** and incorporate Indigenous peoples’ traditional knowledge into its strategies and approaches.

For instance, Canadian climate change regulations should not permit the purchase or trading of international carbon offset. This approach is opposed by Indigenous peoples and several of KAIROS’ global partners who view transforming the world’s carbon absorption capacity into a commodity as a violation of the sacredness of Mother Earth. In addition, KAIROS urges the government to accept and support the proposal coming from developing countries that a mechanism be established for compensation to be paid to those countries, such as small island states, who experience losses and damages due to climate change.