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Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace – *Caritas Canada* conclude joint review of CCODP’s international partner organizations

25 February 2021, Montreal/Ottawa – The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCBC) and the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace – *Caritas Canada* (CCODP) have concluded a review of the latter’s international partner organizations that receive project funding from CCODP. From a total of 205 partners, the review initially identified 52 organizations for closer study and later added 11 more, for a total of 63 that were examined. The review did not examine partner organizations affiliated with *Caritas Internationalis* or part of a Catholic diocesan structure and ministry. Following a number of interim reports, a final concluding report was submitted to the Plenary Assembly of the CCCBC and the National Council of the CCODP and approved by both organizations in September and November 2020 respectively.

Process and Guiding Principles

The report was prepared by a joint subcommittee comprising CCCBC representatives, including its senior management, as well as CCODP senior management. The joint subcommittee was mandated in November 2017 by the Permanent Council of the CCCBC and the National Council of the CCODP to investigate concerns that some of the non-financed activities and positions of international partner organizations might be in conflict with the Church’s social and moral teachings. Through a rigorous and thorough process, clarifications were sought from the partners themselves and from the Bishops of the respective dioceses in which they are based.

In examining the partner organizations, the joint subcommittee focused its work around several questions, including whether the partner supported anything contrary to Catholic moral or social teaching, whether its actions might mislead others with respect to the same, whether the partner’s professed values align with its actions online and on the ground, and whether the partner’s actions could undermine the credibility of the Bishops in Canada or in the host country.

Identity of Partners

Because of the sensitive information contained in the Final Report, and in fairness to the reputations and, in some cases the safety, of the partners, it was agreed to keep confidential the names of the international partners and not to make the full text of the Final Report public.

Summary of Conclusions

The following is a summary of the final decisions based on the recommendations of the joint subcommittee.

Of the **63** organizations identified for further study, the CCODP and the CCCB agreed:

- There were no objections to **20** partnerships continuing. This was the result of satisfactory clarifications received from the partners, as well as communications with the local Diocesan Bishop where the partner is based.
- Since **19** partnerships had already ended or were about to end during the review period, these were not considered and no recommendation was made. If and when any would again apply for CCODP funding, these would be reviewed in the future according to criteria and procedures being further worked on by CCODP and the CCCB.
- CCODP will not continue **24** partnerships following a lack of clarification to resolve serious questions regarding support for positions or actions in conflict with the Church's social and moral teachings.

As it had earlier announced, CCODP, on its own initiative, placed a moratorium on Share Lent contributions for all partners under review, while later determining that, its contractual obligations to the partners in question had to be honoured, which was done with non-Share Lent monies. Now CCODP only has projects with those international partners which CCODP and the CCCB agreed could continue. Funding has completely ended and there are no contracts in place with those that it was agreed would not continue.

Future changes to international partner applications and selection

Following an Organizational Review by Deloitte regarding CCODP and its alignment with the Catholic Bishops of Canada, the following recommendations have been accepted by the CCODP National Council and their implementation is currently being advanced by a joint Criteria Working Group composed of representatives of both organizations:

- The CCODP Partnering Policy is being revised
- New criteria for partner selection and review are being developed
- An International Partnerships Committee, which includes representation from the CCCB, is being established that will be responsible for reviewing, approving all new partners, and will deal with monitoring the partnerships as well as any questions that may arise in the future concerning a current partner.

The work of this International Partnerships Committee will be guided by CCODP's mission to accompany the most vulnerable populations in the Global South. It will also move the organization towards greater transparency on how projects and partner organizations are chosen, as well as to improving communications with the partner organizations and ensuring they are clearly informed of CCODP's Catholic identity, vision, mission and its expectations. As a sign of this greater openness, steps are being implemented so that, in the future, the full list of CCODP's international partners will be made public, except in particular situations (e.g., areas of conflict) where the partner's safety could be endangered.

The lessons learned from the joint partnership review, along with the changes being implemented in the process and criteria for selecting and monitoring partners, will ensure that the work undertaken by Development and Peace will, to use the words of Pope Francis, help “individuals and societies to mature in the moral values that foster integral human development . . . promoting the good, for ourselves and for the whole human family, and thus advance together towards an authentic and integral growth” (*Fratelli Tutti*, n. 112-13).

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