

Official Development Assistance Accountability Act - Taking Into Account the Perspectives of the Poor

As per section 4.1 of the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act (the Act or ODAAA), "Official development assistance may be provided only if the competent minister is of the opinion that it (a) contributes to poverty reduction; (b) takes into account the perspectives of the poor; and (c) is consistent with international human rights standards".

Taking into account the perspectives of the poor means ensuring that the poor and marginalized groups in communities have their concerns, needs, and priorities integrated in the initiatives meant to address the development challenges they face. In line with aid effectiveness principles, development should be demand-driven and respond to development objectives identified by the poor and marginalized.

For its programming to take into account the perspectives of the poor, the applicant should be able to demonstrate, at a minimum, that such perspectives have been sought and considered when designing the intervention or at the very early stage of implementation. Initiatives that aim to give voice to the poor and marginalized populations would be an even stronger demonstration of adherence to the spirit of the Act.

Background

Canada works to augment the voices of the poor and marginalized people through engagements that strengthen civil society in developing countries [Footnote 1](#), and empower citizens to participate in and assume ownership of their development. DFATD Development's [Policy on Gender Equality](#) (PDF, 1.7 MB, 16 pages) is also a relevant reference in that among other objectives, it aims to "advance women's equal participation with men as decision makers in shaping the sustainable development of their societies".

Taking into account the perspectives of the poor can be done in a variety of ways, and should be ensured throughout the life of programs and initiatives, from identification through design, implementation and evaluation. It is expected that development initiatives will be more sustainable and successful if local ownership begins at the identification/design phase.

Direct methods: Perspectives should be sought, wherever possible, directly from beneficiaries and key stakeholders. This includes the voice of typically marginalized groups such as very poor or rural people, women, children (both boys and girls), persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities. It can be formal, informal, through community meetings, participatory methodologies or through quantitative or qualitative methodologies recognized as collecting such subjective information.

Indirect methods: Perspectives could also be sought by engaging with local civil society organizations which represent poor and marginalized people (e.g. women's organizations,

children's or youth groups, disabled people's organizations). It may also involve relying on secondary sources of evidence, such as action-research that involves community members as researchers, local development plans or poverty reduction strategies that result from credible consultation processes.

Demonstrating that Condition 4.1(b) is Met

The initiative documentation (application form, proposal or bid) should contain the following information:

- What support or endorsement there is for the initiative in the community where it will be undertaken;
- If applicable, what consultation with beneficiaries, stakeholders, groups, and/or institutions has taken place in planning and designing the initiative.

If one or more of the following questions can be answered positively, the condition under section 4.1 (b) is met:

1. Is it clear from the initiative documentation that potential beneficiaries and stakeholders provided their perspectives on needs and plans, and that these were taken into consideration?
2. Do civil society or other groups with which the initiative is working have the capacity, credibility and willingness to represent the rights and interests of the poor and marginalized groups?
3. If the over-arching rationale for the initiative is its alignment with the country's poverty reduction strategy, sectoral strategies or local development plans, can you with confidence state that the perspectives of the poor have been taken into account during a credible consultative process undertaken to elaborate the strategy?

The following additional questions are examples of factors which can help demonstrate whether the condition has been met:

- Have potential beneficiaries and primary stakeholders been directly involved in various events (workshops, town hall meetings, community gatherings) to plan the initiative?
- If consultations have not happened, will they form an integral part of early initiative implementation or of the project implementation plan (PIP) elaboration?
- Do key civil society organizations involved in the initiative align their practices with the [Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness^{Footnote 2}](#) (PDF, 467 KB, 1 page)?
- Are national or local development plans typically developed in an inclusive manner?
- Where initiatives involve exclusively macro-level policies, has a credible consultative process with recognized civil society organizations or umbrella groups been undertaken, or does one form part of the initiative's implementation?

Footnotes

Footnote 1

As an example, Canada is a member of the Community of Democracy's Working Group on Enabling and Protecting Civil Society and of the Informal Donor Group on Civil Society and Development Effectiveness.

[Return to footnote 1 referrer](#)

Footnote 2

The eight Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness are a set of mutually shared values guiding the development work of CSOs worldwide (e.g. human rights, gender equality, empowerment, environmental sustainability, solidarity).

[Return to footnote 2 referrer](#)