

**Engaged or Entangled ?
NGO and the Private Sector on an
Agenda to End Poverty**

Summary Report of CCIC Learning Circle

Acknowledgements:

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Engaged or Entangled ? NGO and the Private Sector on an Agenda to End Poverty

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Preface

In Canada and internationally among developing actors, there is a renewed interest in the role of the private sector in development. Debate is intense. Some see the private sector as the primary engine of economic growth that will bring prosperity for all, particularly those now living in poverty. Others see exploitive corporate behaviour as one of the greatest sources of impoverishment in the world. A growing number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are attempting to influence corporate behaviour and to promote corporate accountability. Their methods range from confrontational advocacy to dialogue, strategic alliances, and co-operation in programming.

As part of its efforts to support the learning and policy dialogue of its members, CCIC organized a learning circle, with participation from organizations in both the North and South, on NGO engagement with the private sector with particular attention to an agenda to eradicate poverty¹.

The learning circle was a co-operative effort in which all participants were both learners and resource people. Our aim was to increase our knowledge of this critical issue in order to improve the effectiveness of our work in eradicating poverty. The learning circle began in January 2000 with an in-depth, two-day workshop to define the issues. It continued with a five-month period of research and reflection and concluded with a second two-day workshop in June.

The participants came from several different kinds of organization: foundations, businesses, business associations for corporate social responsibility, research and networking organizations, government agencies, Northern NGOs, Southern NGOs, advocacy groups, and union-related groups (see Appendix 1 for the list of participants).

¹ The Learning Circle informs strategies to achieve CCIC's *in common* 10 Point Agenda to End Global Poverty.

This document is a synthesis of the important lessons learned in the process. It draws mainly on three documents: a back ground paper prepared for the learning circle by Moira Hutchinson, and the two workshop reports.²

Starting Points

At the outset, members of this learning circle held diverse views and starting points:

- Some saw corporate power increasing rapidly, and felt that there was a need to find effective ways of engaging with corporations to influence them to behave responsibly.
- Others were skeptical about the value of any form of NGO engagement with the private sector. They felt that the focus should not be on the private sector as such but on the system in which corporations operate. They believed it would be more effective to focus on having governments and international organizations change the rules around production and trade than to pressure corporations directly.
- Several had experiences that made them cautiously optimistic about co-operation between NGOs and the private sector on strategies to eradicate poverty.

The common ground across these points of view is a shared commitment to justice and equity. **The differences reflect different assumptions about how social change takes place and what kind of social change is needed for poverty reduction.**

Many NGOs, people's organizations, and development activists work from the assumption that it is people living in poverty and their social organizations who are the primary agents for ending poverty. Their work in relation to corporations, governments, and international institutions like the World Bank and the IMF aims to open political space for the poor and their allies. These organizations can be confrontational in relation to sectors of society which they see as protecting vested interests. But they do not exclude dialogue when there is empowerment of those who are marginalized or excluded.

Others believe that change occurs as a gradual and constant process of mediation of social and economic interests. This leads to a different approach to engagement with the private sector, one that sees real potential for positive social change in dialogue and co-operation with corporations.

The participants recognized their common concern with achieving social justice and put aside their differences in order to learn from one another.

² Moira Hutchinson, "NGO Engagement with the Private Sector on a Global Agenda to End Poverty: A Review of the Issues." A Background paper for the Learning Circle on NGO Engagement with the Private Sector. Ottawa: CCIC, January 2000. The Background paper, the two workshop reports are available on the CCIC Web site at <http://www.web.ca/ccic-ccci> as well as the case studies and annotated bibliography prepared for the Learning Circle.

Early in the learning process, it became necessary to clarify the phrase “private sector.” To be precise, the private sector includes everything from large corporations to the smallest enterprise. It includes the household economy in the agricultural sector, small, struggling co-operatives, worker-owned factories, and a rich variety of small and medium-sized businesses. Even among large corporations, the ownership structures are complex and differentiated. Some are privately held, while others are public corporations, listed on the stock market, owned by hundreds of thousands of people. The private sector is the whole complex of individuals involved in the business of generating wealth. When we equate “private sector” with large corporations, we fail to see the complexity of economic organization and undermine our capacity to put forward alternative ideas about the ideal society and economy.

Large corporations, however, are a particular concern for several reasons. Their power is private, derived from their access to capital, not from citizens. This power has been growing in recent years as the power of states has waned. They are accountable to their shareholders, not to an electorate or even to national governments. To some extent, they must be accountable to consumers, but the degree depends on the sector in which they operate. Moreover, the majority of their consumers may be in the North while their main impact is in the South.

Keeping these points in mind, participants in the **learning circle focused on the question of NGO engagement with corporations in the private** sector on an agenda to eradicate poverty – the potential, the dangers, the strategies and methods.

Modes of Engagement

“Engagement” was another term that demanded clarification. Participants agreed that the term should mean the whole spectrum of relationships, from demonstrations in the street through dialogue to cooperation and strategic alliances. Much of the work of the learning circle considered the effectiveness of these different modes of engagement and their efficacy for the eradication of poverty. These should not necessarily be seen as distinct or competing strategies, for a process of engagement can, and frequently does, include more than one of these modes. They are moments on a continuum of engagement that may be adopted at different stages, or by different actors, ideally within a comprehensive strategy.

Advocacy

There is experience, going back to the mid-1970s, of direct advocacy with corporations by Canadian NGOs. The Taskforce on the Churches and Corporate Responsibility has engaged corporations on a variety of issues, using tactics such as shareholder action. Church shareholders pressed banks and corporations directly about loans for and investment in South Africa, Chile and other countries where there were systematic violations of human rights, about international debt, and about environmental impact. Other groups engaged in research and public education on the implications of Canadian-based multinational investment. Recent campaigns include the work of the Rural

Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) with respect to Monsanto, human rights groups on Shell's activities in Nigeria, an NGO-church coalition on Talisman Energy in Sudan, and unions, churches and NGOs on manufacturers and retailers' responsibilities for sweatshops in the apparel industry.

Southern NGOs have also begun to develop their own policy and advocacy organizations and networks to engage directly with corporations. For example, the South Korean NGO, Citizens Alliance for Consumer Protection (CACP), organizes high-profile media events to get large corporations to sign environmental agreements. In some cases, Canadian organizations provide support for southern NGO and union engagement with corporations. For example, groups in the Philippines have engaged in direct pressure on Placer Dome, with the help of information and advocacy within Canada provided by the Calancan Bay Villagers Association and Mining Watch Canada. Canadian union-related organizations assist unions in the South to strengthen their capacity in negotiating with companies. Canadian NGOs along with unions are also exploring the ways in which they might channel resources to southern unions and NGOs for worker training related to the implementation of codes of conduct.

All participants agreed that frequently some form of confrontation in advocacy is necessary when NGOs, concerned about poverty eradication and social justice, engage with the corporate sector. Confrontation is necessary when dialogue has been exhausted or is non-viable, and when corporate behaviour is contributing directly to the creation of poverty, for example through environmental destruction or exploitive wage levels and working conditions.

Advocacy of this kind requires good research, to ensure that facts are right, and to know the capacity of the corporation in relation to our own. When engaging in advocacy, it is especially important to keep one's constituency informed and involved. If there is a community or group of people who are directly affected and at risk, we need to be certain that they agree to the action and are themselves prepared to act.

The confrontational aspect of advocacy requires the use of a "credible threat", a point of leverage that promises to be effective. A large corporation producing brand name consumer goods, such as Nike or Gap, is susceptible to threats to its market share when its name is associated with exploitive practices. A mining company may be vulnerable to a campaign to recognize indigenous land rights or to introduce and enforce environmental regulations. Bad publicity may undermine the morale of crucial elements of a company's work force. The trend towards "ethical investment" may threaten the share price of a company that is seen to be violating common moral standards.

The nature of a "credible threat" will vary according to the sector, and will change over time as a corporation adjusts to the strategies used to influence it. Whenever we engage in advocacy, involving campaigning, we need to assess its results carefully. A primacy concern is the impact the campaign activities have on the community or group directly affected. Does the community become more confident in asserting its rights? Is local

leadership developed? Is a knowledge base developed in the community? Are the numbers of people active in campaigns and demonstrations increasing?

Beyond the community immediately affected, we also need to ask whether the campaign is succeeding in putting the issue on the public agenda. For example, we should assess whether political parties in Parliament take it seriously. Ideally, campaign advocacy should succeed in framing or re-framing an issue in the public discourse that highlight the underlying concerns for social justice.

A successful campaign should also have a clear impact on the company, in terms of its market share, share price, or the company's relationship with its employees or other business partners. In the medium and long terms, the action should lead to real change in corporate behaviour that might also be the result of other forms of engagement that change the internal value structure for corporate behaviour.

Participants agreed that campaigning advocacy should be part of a broader, multi-pronged strategy. For example, it may be necessary at the early stages of work on a particular issue in order to focus attention. At another stage, it may be more effective to engage in dialogue and negotiation. Some participants made a strong case for working closely with corporations to foster organizational learning, to develop new management practices, and to change corporate values. Without this kind of follow-up, they believed advocacy campaigns were likely to result only in short-term changes in corporate behaviour. A key question that was explored in the learning circle was the conditions (if any) that made these “transitions” in the mode of engagement effective.

Dialogue

In the right circumstances, dialogue can be valuable for building relationships with corporations, for learning from them, and for making progress towards goals. Even when it fails, it allows an NGO to impart and to acquire information. But reaching agreement among NGOs allies on the “right circumstances” can also be divisive.

Going into dialogue, it is important to be clear about the goal. Is it just to learn more about the corporation, or to have the corporation hear your point of view, or is there a more ambitious agenda?

Dialogue needs to include an element of capacity building within our constituencies. It raises the question of who speaks for whom. Are community leaders directly involved, or are the NGOs attempting to represent them? Whatever the case, from the perspective of empowerment –so important for sustained poverty reduction—the capacity for self-representation must be strengthened as a result of dialogue.

Dialogue can consume vast amounts of time for key participants and communities. Is it worth the time, or are we in danger of immobilizing ourselves? We also need to consider when dialogue is best done in public and when in private. Both may lead to valuable outcomes. But under what conditions?

In dialogue, there is always the danger of a serious power imbalance. We should seek reciprocity of risks. For example, if we give priority to transparency and communication with our constituencies, and the company has no such commitment on its side, that may leave us in a weaker position at the table.

Dialogue may at a certain point change into negotiation, which should operate by agreed rules, with positions and procedures for presenting them. Those engaged in dialogue need to be conscious of moving from one to the next. Not all negotiation can be done in public. Even in the most open process, it is physically impossible always to have all interested parties at the table. Negotiators have to be accountable to the community or communities for whom they work or whose interests they express at the table. At the same time, they have to negotiate, and this demands a lot of skill. On the other hand, it may not always be necessary to conduct negotiations in closed sessions.

There is a danger of co-optation in dialogue. Dialogue spread over a long period of time may give the illusion of making progress, while in the end the other side was not serious. Corporations may use dialogue as a method of absorbing the time and resources of NGOs without any intention of changing their behaviour.

Finally, it is important to keep the moral high ground in dialogue, so that we can walk away from it if necessary, confident that we were genuine, forthcoming, and accountable even if the dialogue partners were not.

Co-operation

Co-operation between NGOs and corporations with respect to poverty reduction can take many forms. The most basic is a straightforward, untied, charitable donation by a corporation to an NGO for its programs. Such contributions are negligible in Canada. Less than 0.3% of Canada's corporate donations go towards international development. A review by The North-South Institute of 46 civil society organizations working in international development concluded that businesses and foundations were their least significant source of revenue.

Examples of other forms of co-operation include:

- Skill transfers from a company to an NGO, for example when a company helps an NGO to set up a micro-credit scheme.
- Skill transfers from an NGO to a company, for example when an NGO helps a company with expertise on bringing people with disabilities into the workplace.
- Project-based partnerships, for example when an NGO and an engineering firm co-operate to carry out an activity combining community capacity development with technical objectives.

- Sponsorships and “cause-related marketing,” for example that of Citizens Bank’s “Shared Interest” Visa card to support groups such as Amnesty International, Inter Pares, and Oxfam.
- Joint government lobbying for changes in legislation; for example, in Kenya, corporations lobbied to give NGOs charitable tax status.

Several forces have been driving a trend towards greater co-operation between NGOs and corporations. Governments have encouraged corporate involvement in private sector development programs in developing countries. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), in particular, has sponsored programming partnerships between private companies and NGOs. Some corporations recognize that their interests are best served by embracing the concept of the “triple bottom line” of profit, environmental quality, and social justice, and have chosen to work with NGOs on programs that aim to eradicate poverty. NGOs, for their part, have looked to private companies for financial support and expertise. Some NGOs and individual activists have come to see co-operation as necessary to achieve long-term changes in corporate values and behaviour.

In Canada, it is the mining sector that has shown the greatest interest in co-operation with NGOs. The impetus in many cases comes from CIDA as well as from the World Bank and regional development banks. Typically, mining companies have looked to NGOs to conduct impact assessments and to facilitate consultation processes and capacity-building activities in communities where they propose to start up mining operations. This practice dates to the mid-1990s, when a series of environmental disasters led to intense community hostility towards Canadian mining companies in several countries.

NGOs with experience working in co-operation with mining companies in this way have suggested the following guidelines:

- Respond only to invitations from communities, not from companies.
- Work only in partnership with a local NGO.
- Do not work in situations where it is clear that the majority in the community do not want mining to proceed.
- Work with indigenous communities and with the legally defined representatives of those communities, or with local governments.
- Disclose any financial relationships with the company and CIDA to the community.
- Assist in training of communities to empower them to conduct the actual negotiations with the company. Do not attempt to act on behalf of the community.
- Build the capacity of groups in a region to network with each other and with groups in the North regarding issues of mining in development.

Another area in which co-operation between NGOs and corporations can arise is in the monitoring of codes of conduct. When negotiations with a corporation or an industrial sector succeed in establishing a code of conduct, some form of co-operation may be required to ensure the establishment of a credible monitoring and certification system over the long term.

This can raise several issues. Who should do the external monitoring and verification of compliance? If local NGOs are involved, how are they affected by the various types of financial relationship between them and companies or code organizations? The same question applies to Northern NGOs that may be involved. Since there has been very little experience dealing with such issues, there are as yet no clear answers to these questions.

Codes of conduct, draft agreements, statements of principle, investment screens, and suchlike mean little in themselves. They depend entirely on the implementation process, the means of enforcement, the quality of local legislation, and the degree of empowerment of local communities and groups to monitor and enforce compliance. A code of conduct is an immediate victory for the corporation, in that it strengthens its reputation as a responsible corporate citizen, but its value to the community depends completely on how it is implemented.

Most participants felt that co-operation between NGOs and corporations could be beneficial under certain circumstances. There should be due diligence on the part of the NGO, a careful review of a company's history, and good potential for building a relationship of trust and mutual respect. Where there is a community or group directly affected by the relationship, its agreement to the arrangement is essential. There should be clear goals, preferably written down and formally agreed upon, as well as indicators that clarify expectations for achieving those goals. There should also be a larger system for evaluating the contribution of the partnership to long-term poverty reduction. Finally, the relationship should be assessed in terms of whether it has stimulated learning and cultural change within the company, and within the NGO, in a manner that contributes to the effectiveness of work to eradicate poverty.

"Partnership," the participants felt, is seldom the correct term to describe these relationships. Partnership implies a collaborative relationship where there is a reasonable balance of power between the parties and shared responsibility, accountability for the results and risks arising from the partnership. This may sometimes be the case, but more typically it is not. "Collaboration" and "co-operation" are more accurate terms.

Transitions between modes of engagement

A success or a setback may lead to a situation in which an NGO must move to a different mode of engagement with a corporation. For example, pressure on corporations can lead to a point at which an NGO, or a coalition of NGOs, is invited to be involved in the corporate decision-making process. This is a critical moment that could lead on to greater effectiveness. It might also lead to a split in an NGO coalition that undermines its influence.

A transition from the task of getting an agreement to the task of implementation, for example in the enforcement of a code of conduct, may be especially difficult. NGOs must ask themselves what capacity they have to take part in the next stage. Should they co-operate in implementation, or should they step aside and allow some third party to play that role? Participants agreed that the key success factor in such situations is empowerment of the local group or community. Whatever role the NGOs play in implementation, there is little likelihood of long-term benefit if the people directly affected do not have the capacity to monitor implementation themselves.

A similar situation arises when a goal is only partially achieved and members of a coalition disagree on next steps. This is a time to review the strategic plan, recognizing that there may be other civil society players outside the coalition. There are merits to being flexible in this situation. It may be best for members of a coalition to adopt different modes of engagement at a critical juncture. Complementary strategies may be more effective, but only if they do not undermine one another.

NGO Accountability

The power of civil society organizations and NGOs depends entirely on their legitimacy. Their legitimacy derives from the experience of living and working with communities that are struggling for justice. Being accountable to these communities is essential to their legitimacy and power. Lack of accountability results in the loss of legitimacy and hence the loss of influence and power.

Accountability, however, can be a difficult issue. NGOs typically have multiple accountabilities. Northern NGOs are accountable to their boards of directors, to their members and donors, to other Northern and Southern NGOs with whom they work, in addition to the communities and groups who are meant to benefit from their efforts. These multiple accountabilities can sometimes conflict. Moreover, Northern NGOs often do not have direct relationships with communities in the South. The legitimacy of Southern NGOs derives from similar sources, but is often compromised by dependence on external funding.

These considerations point to the central importance of transparency and good communication among NGOs as well as between NGOs and the communities and groups with whom they work. In particular, North-South accountability is critical. This is true whether NGOs are engaged in advocacy, dialogue, or co-operation with corporations. Although much of the action is in the North, many of the outcomes are in the South, in the factories, mining communities, and free trade zones. If Southern NGOs, communities, and groups are not involved in making decisions, there is serious danger of doing harm to them. At the same time, Northern NGOs are at risk of losing their legitimacy.

Boycotts provide a good example. Activists in the North may believe that boycotts are an effective “credible threat” when engaging with corporations. Workers in the South, however, are almost always opposed to them, for they often have no alternative

employment. The demand in the North for a "living wage" for workers in the South also poses difficulties. When the call comes from the North, it may be seen in the South as thinly veiled protectionism or a threat to tenuous job security. The same arguments may apply to corporate codes of conduct promoted by Northern NGOs.

It is also important to recognize and respond to the Southern concern that they are seldom able to influence events in terms of their own agenda. From the perspective of NGOs in Nairobi, for example, the events in Seattle looked very far away. There was considerable unevenness in the sense of ownership and participation in the process leading up to those demonstrations. This demands further reflection. We need to think about how to balance an emphasis on mass campaigning with one of building good quality relationships. In the aftermath of Seattle, the legitimacy of Northern NGOs is under attack by governments, corporations and media. We need to give serious thought to how legitimacy is established and strengthened; it is not only in the quality of our information or our organizational ability, but also in the quality of our North-South relationships.

A tough issue for NGOs and their role arises when a significant part of the affected community does not want to resist. This should be a sign that NGOs do not understand and are framing the issue wrong. The willingness to resist is essential (even if there is limited capacity) if we are going to engage with a corporation on an issue.

To engage a group or community in an action to promote corporate social responsibility, the first step must be to help the community understand the issue. This will lead NGOs into local capacity building. The goal is to work with a group or community to permit it to speak for itself, without intermediaries.

Instead of attempting to act and speak on behalf of other groups and communities, NGOs can focus on roles for which they are particularly well suited. For example, it is critical to have good research and to provide strategic information to the community. The role here is to perform a bridge function and to demystify technical matters. At the same time, an NGO can also be working to create a new public discourse on an issue.

Another valuable role is to provide a "safe space" where a community and a corporation can engage in dialogue. Depending on the circumstances, this space may be arranged by an NGO, by a government, or by an international agency. The process of developing a code of conduct, for example, may be one way of creating the space for workers to start to dialogue. International forums, like the Commonwealth, may also be places where a safe space can be created.

There are many practical issues that arise, including language, timing, access to information and documentation. Participants noted that discussions almost always take place in English; materials are produced in English; Southern NGOs have to choose people who speak English to represent them at conferences. More attention to translation – both in conferences and of materials – would help to make these processes more inclusive.

Donor agencies should also be accountable for their methods and decisions. Problems can arise when donors are too eager to be on the cutting edge, moving to the issue-of-the-moment, then leaving it when something more current arises. Donors should also be open to participation from the South in their decision-making.

Participants agreed that the development of a code or set of guidelines for NGO accountability in work engaging the private sector, incorporating many of the points raised above would be useful. If such guidelines could avoid imposing rigidity on decision-making, they would help to keep critical issues on the agenda, especially the imbalance of power between North and South.

Towards an Agenda for North-South Collaboration

In the course of the learning circle, participants worked to clarify the responsibilities of the different groups involved in poverty-focus NGO engagement with the private sector.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the private sector in the eradication of poverty should be:

- to create jobs and income using appropriate technologies and value-added production;
- to play a catalytic role in the economy, particularly by using local suppliers and raw materials;
- to link local economies to national and international markets;
- to respect the natural environment and support sustainable development;
- to pay taxes to provide a source of state revenue for health and education and other basic social services;
- to contribute to democracy and to the accountability of governments to citizens;
- not to be involved in corruption and cronyism, manipulating public policy processes, or taking over and killing local businesses;
- to support local community-based organizations, involving its work forces and families in community development activities;
- to engage in partnerships with national and regional research institutions; and
- to reinvest locally.

Much of the poverty in the world is a consequence of private sector organizations, particularly large corporations, not meeting these basic responsibilities in the orientation

of their investments. We should keep in mind that all corporations operate under charters. For a state to grant such a charter implies that it expects the corporation to make a positive contribution to society. When an NGO engages with a private corporation, it does so on the assumption that the corporation has a social responsibility that goes beyond the private gain of its shareholders. If it does not make a positive contribution to society, it has no right to exist.

For their part, NGOs and other civil society organizations have a responsibility:

- to be clear about their values and missions, and to communicate them effectively;
- to develop clear, practical, and realistic strategies to realize these missions;
- to assess, critically and regularly, the impact of their work on the eradication of poverty;
- to be transparent and accountable to members, donors, other NGOs in the North and South, and above all to the people their work is intended to benefit;
- to engage effectively with other sectors, including the private sector, in ways that are appropriate to fulfilling their missions and contributing to the eradication of poverty.

Foundations, researchers, facilitators, and other catalysts of NGO strategies of engagement also have responsibilities. They are:

- to identify and support the key actors on important issues, helping to coordinate different but compatible strategies and to avoid duplication;
- to support capacity building at the local level, especially leadership training and other critical skills, such as economic literacy and the ability to do the kind of monitoring that is required by codes of conduct;
- to support both vertical and horizontal networking, including not only NGOs but also media, bureaucrats, and politicians; and
- to support the development of the next generation of managers and leaders, in NGOs, in businesses, and at the community level.

Shared Agenda

At the conclusion of the learning circle process, the participants developed the following set of follow-up actions. They are recommendations that go out to their own organizations and to the corporate accountability movement as a whole. Taken together, they may be seen as the beginnings of an agenda for North-South collaboration.

1. Build the corporate accountability movement. This may be seen as the overarching task, involving all modes of engagement, and all of the specific actions that follow, in both North and South.
2. Develop a set of guidelines on NGO engagement with the private sector. Survey the guidelines that already exist, including those being developed by companies and industry associations, and develop a draft for widespread circulation and consideration. This is a task for a facilitating organization, such as a foundation or the CCIC.
3. Networking, information sharing, and debate among groups working on corporate accountability. Several ideas were suggested that cut across the North-South divide.
 - Resource sharing by participants. Set up a system whereby members of the learning circle and others can send updates regularly on activities, resources, strategies, and insights, to be compiled and distributed to all group members. These could be posted to the Learning Circle section of CCIC's Web site for wider distribution.
 - Sectoral networks, for example on the mining industry. There is also a detailed proposal in circulation that invites Canadian NGOs to become involved in a process of North-South cooperation in monitoring the apparel industry.
 - Planning and linking of efforts globally to synergize our efforts on particular strategies. Examples include holding corporations liable for their actions through work to revoke corporate charters, to hold directors personally liable for the damage caused by their corporations, to force complete disclosure of corporate books, to develop ecological accounting systems, to enshrine stakeholder rights.
 - Further discussion and debate among groups working on corporate accountability. A group like CCIC or Canadian Business for Social Responsibility could facilitate this kind of networking. Debates and discussions would be very helpful to see how our different approaches can inform one another.
4. An advocacy manual to advise us on how to engage corporations, ways and means to change them, influence curriculum in business schools, and other issues.
5. Work on changing the Canadian regulatory framework. There is a window of opportunity to work on this, as new legislation will be coming up over the next year. The Canadian government is currently reviewing various policy options, including a new corporations act and new tax policy. It is important to bring in Southern perspectives.

6. Identify critical research gaps and conduct research in these areas. For example:
- Collect and share information on various strategic ways of changing corporations. It would be useful to assess, for example, "Right to Information" campaigns, or regulatory initiatives, for the kind of impact they can have. Which strategies can bring substantial change to the behaviour of corporations?
 - Seek out positive examples of NGO-business, and community-business engagements. Find examples where these engagements have worked, identify the critical success factors, and examine what role was played by states, and by NGOs.
 - Case studies on best practices in engagement with communities.

Participants in the learning circle are themselves taking up many of these actions. They also recommend them to the broader community of organizations and individuals who, in diverse ways, aim to engage corporations on an agenda to eradicate poverty.

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The **Canadian Council for International Co-operation** is a coalition of over 100 Canadian non-profit organizations who seek to change the course of human development in ways that favour social and economic equity, democratic participation, environmental integrity and respect for human rights. CCIC conducts research, disseminates information and creates learning opportunities for its members, co-ordinates their collective efforts to shape new models for world development, presses for national and international policies that serve the global public interest, and builds a social environment for global citizenship in Canada.

In 1998 the Canadian Council for International Co-operation and its 100 member organizations launched ***in common***, a Canada-wide campaign, to move global poverty from the margins of the Canadian public agenda to the very centre of that agenda. The campaign seeks to mobilize all Canadians in a single unstinting effort to end poverty. The centrepiece of the campaign is a 10-point international policy agenda for global action against poverty. It analyzes the forces that conspire to keep 1.3 billion people in conditions of extreme poverty, outlining concrete steps that individuals, corporations, organizations and the government can take to turn the situation around.

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