



Civil Society Policy Advisory Group (CPAG)

Last updated – December 2018

WHY

In September 2017, after consulting with civil society, the Minister of International Development and La Francophonie, Marie-Claude Bibeau, launched Canada's [Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance Policy - A Feminist Approach \(CSO Policy\)](#). Initially released in February 2015, the new policy was updated to align with Canada's [Feminist International Assistance Policy](#). The CSO Policy outlines the government's approach (through nine thematic objectives) to partnering with and supporting a strong civil society sector in Canada and globally. It [marked a positive step forward](#) in the government's relationship with civil society. In December 2017, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) announced the establishment of an advisory group of civil society representatives and relevant GAC officials to help give shape to the implementation plan for the Policy.

WHO

The Civil Society Policy Advisory Group (CPAG) is a group of eight representative members from civil society organizations (CSOs) and four officials from GAC, with relevant expertise.

CSO membership in the CPAG is for one two-year term. However, at the end of the first year, four CSO representatives will graduate out, to help to maintain diversity among participants and ensure continuity in the membership of the CPAG between successive years. Eight initial CSO members were selected by a committee of peers, through an open call process to members of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) and the Inter-Council Network of Provincial and Regional Councils (ICN). CSO representatives include Executive Directors and Directors of Policy, Partnerships and Programs.

GAC representatives are selected based on CPAG's priority objectives of focus to ensure appropriate subject matter expertise. GAC representatives are typically at the Director-General Level.

As Director-General for the Engaging Canadians Bureau, Marianick Tremblay serves as CPAG co-chair. A civil society representative, selected by the CSO members of the CPAG, acts as the other co-chair (this position is now jointly held by Kimberly Gibbons of the Ontario Council for International Cooperation and Shelagh Savage of the Coady International Institute). The CSO co-chair rotates annually. Other current CSO members include Gillian Barth (CARE Canada), Anne Delorme (Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale), Emrul Hasan (Plan International Canada), Fraser Reilly-King (Canadian Council for International Co-operation), Michael Simpson (British Columbia Council for International Cooperation), and Lorraine Swift (Change for Children).

The secretariat for the CPAG rests within the Engagement and Civil Society Policy Unit of the Engaging Canadians Bureau at Global Affairs Canada. The CPAG reports to Caroline Leclerc, Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM), Partnerships for Development Innovation Branch.

WHAT

The CPAG [first met](#) in March 2018 to develop [Terms of Reference for the Advisory Group](#), and to start giving shape to the implementation plan for the CSO Policy. The work of the group is guided by the [Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness](#), and in keeping with Principle 6, aims to foster a spirit of equitable partnership and collaboration among members. The group meets four times per year, moving elements of the work forward between meetings.

In the first year and a half, the CPAG agreed to develop specific activities for each of the action areas of the Policy's nine objectives. Based on a survey of CSOs, the CPAG elected to focus in 2018 on Objective 1 (Empower women and girls and promote gender equality), Objective 6 (Establish more predictable, equitable, flexible, and transparent funding mechanisms) and Objective 8 (Engage Canadians as global citizens). A second survey of CSOs identified priorities and activities for these objectives. A [summary evaluation](#) of the findings was presented at the [second CPAG meeting](#) (May 2018) and informed the implementation plan for these objectives. Activities for these first three objectives were then developed through conversations among smaller focal groups. The final plan for the first three objectives was presented to the full membership of the CPAG in December 2018 and agreed upon. The interim implementation plan for these objectives is expected to be released in early 2019 once approved by ADM Leclerc.

As the CPAG collaborates on defining the next six objectives in the winter and spring of 2019, GAC will work, in collaboration with civil society, to advance implementation of the activities for the first three objectives.

The CPAG is also mandated to recommend additional action areas for the implementation plan, including CSO-led activities, as appropriate.

Finally, the group is mandated to help design a periodic meeting with civil society on implementing the CSO Policy. CPAG members hope to use the meeting to report on progress, get further feedback from the community, generate learning opportunities, and put into practice key parts of the implementation plan. This first of these meetings is planned for spring 2019.