

**Canadian North-South Collaboration through the UPCD Lens**  
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**Current Context**

In light of the recent Canadian foreign policy consultation and the subsequent development of an International Policy Statement for Canada it is clear that Canada will increasingly focus on some key countries and sectors in an attempt to bring greater coherence to its international policy as articulated through specific policies and program across the key Canadian government ministries with international mandates, notably its foreign affairs, trade, development, and defence ministries. It is also clear that with these new priorities there are opportunities for new programming approaches and directions.

In the discussions that led to this new International Policy Statement the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada in its mandate as the national collective voice – both in Canada and abroad – for the 91 member universities and degree-granting colleges across the country, and in its numerous efforts to surface the role of higher education in this broader discussion raised many points specifically as concerns international cooperation which will be addressed later in this paper.

The International Policy Statement implications for Canada's Official Development Assistance are not yet fully understood as policy-makers in government and specifically the Canadian International Development Agency deliberate on how the broader statement will be applied and made operational within its agency. However, we do have a sense of the policy direction to be taken. According to the CIDA web site by 2010 at least two-thirds of CIDA's direct country-to-country assistance will be focused on 25 developing countries – of which more than half are in Africa – that are among the poorest but have the capacity to use aid effectively. The criteria used to select the development partners included level of poverty, ability to use aid effectively and sufficient Canadian presence to add value. The target sectors will be governance, health (with a focus on HIV/AIDS), basic education, private-sector development and environmental sustainability, with gender equality as a cross-cutting theme that is integrated across programs.

Also by 2010 CIDA maintains its commitment to doubling its ODA budget and that at least half of that commitment will be for Africa. The Millennium Development Goals are also expected to continue to play a key role in guiding Canada's ODA as well as CIDA's Policy Statement on Strengthening Aid Effectiveness which was published in 2002. The later includes several key principles for effective development including: local ownership, improved donor coordination, greater coherence and an increased use of programming approaches versus the traditional project-based approaches for delivering development assistance.

More specifically this paper looks at the application of Canadian official development assistance through the specific lens of the University Partnership in Cooperation and Development program designed to enable Canadian higher education to work hand in hand with higher education in the South through this linkage program to strengthen higher education in the South. The goal of the program is “to increase the capacity of developing country education and training organizations to address their country’s sustainable development priorities.” It is further clarified that the purpose of the program is “to increase the capacity of the developing country education and training organizations, in collaboration with Canadian universities, to address the development needs of the communities they serve.”

It is clear from the recent International Policy Statement that change is in the air, that CIDA is going to be focusing its efforts both in terms of countries and sectors and that this new direction will eventually touch all CIDA programming. According to the International Policy Statement CIDA works in 155 countries but 18% receive more than \$10 million annually, while almost 90 countries receive less than \$5 million annually and 54 received less than \$1 million for 2003-04. As our Canadian university data has shown they too have been working in broad and varied sectors and in over 135 countries in the South. Through the UPCD alone universities have worked in over 65 countries. But in 2003 when the UPCD program was required to ensure that 50% of any new projects were in African countries, up from 25% historically, as well as to focus on key CIDA priority sectors, universities were able to respond and meet the targets given their very deep and broad capacity. We suspect that the same will happen here and that although they will need to align their efforts with CIDA’s priorities when working specifically with CIDA, that the depth and breadth of their capacity will allow them to quickly and effectively respond to these changes too. Universities have also adjusted and evolved in many other ways since the inception of the UPCD program in 1994 as will be discussed further and make-up the core of my paper.

Having completed the first half of the second phase of the UPCD program, a mid-term evaluation of the program is scheduled to begin in 2005. It is therefore especially timely and important that AUCC ask some strategic questions on the effectiveness of the UPCD program and to consider seriously how the program might be strengthened through some adjustments and/or more significant rescoping of the program, especially given the current policy context and the lessons learned to date.

Since the launch of the first phase of the UPCD in 1994 and even the second phase in 2001 the understanding of the potential role and benefits of a HE partnership program have become better understood, including: the unique role of HE in international development; the role of research; the nature and extent of the benefits of the teaching component of projects; the place of community in HE partnerships; the potential of policy development and influence; the potential for leveraging both UPCD resources and results; and the role of students and of internationalization. AUCC has begun to gather data on each of these broad issues of the UPCD through annual face-to-face interviews with the

Canadian project directors of each Tier 2 UPCD project over the past two years. This data was drawn upon from two program studies, one focus on program results and the other on research within the UPCD. However, several of these broad strategic issues will need further analysis to ensure a more fulsome understanding of their nature, extent and value. In the meantime, we can nonetheless comment on the general understanding of each of these broad strategic issues in the context of the UPCD which are discussed briefly below.

### **Institutional Strengthening for Community/Sectoral Results and Impact**

A major change from Phase I (1994-2001) to Phase II (2001-2007) of the UPCD program was the need to ensure that the institutional strengthening that occurred through UPCD projects was not for its own end but for the benefit of the broader society in which the overseas partners are situated. More specifically this meant that project outcomes were now to be focused on effecting change at the community level as well as within the institution. Higher education institutions, however, served as the conduit or mechanism by which community-level and institutional change could effectively occur. Higher education institutions provide the long-term infrastructure which houses the change mechanisms, such as new programs and curriculum, etc. Through program monitoring it is increasingly evident that institutionalizing project learning and outcomes, especially higher education institutional strengthening outcomes, be they new teaching methods, upgraded programs, new curriculum, applied research capacity, new institutional or government policy, etc., are more likely to be effective and maximize sustainability when housed in an academic institution. Although working with and for the benefit of the community helps to ensure that UPCD programming is ultimately contributing to the reduction of poverty, it has also become apparent that maintaining a clear anchor in the higher education institution is key to the sustainability of these macro-level human resource development results sought.

Our analysis has revealed that 78% of UPCD Tier 2 project directors feel that there has been an increase in management capacity at the overseas partner institution. This is an important contribution to institutional strengthening coupled with enhanced teaching and research capacity to be discussed below.

### **Role of Research**

Despite the under-valuing or lack of recognition of the merit of university research for development generally, AUCC's recent exploratory research on the research dimension of UPCD projects, carried out by Denise Beaulieu, a doctoral student at the Université de Sherbrooke, has clearly shown that there has been research activity in about two-thirds of UPCD projects which generally represents approximately 5% of a project budget. Thirty-three of the 52 Tier 2 projects examined were involved in at least 64 different research initiatives in various areas of health (17), economic development (16), education and research (11), environment (7) and social issues affecting women (4).

In addition, it was found that institutional research capacity was strengthened through: new research programs created; research centres strengthened; research used to solve concrete local problems; researchers' capacity to conduct research adapted to local needs; new research methodologies; and the dissemination of research findings through publications and conferences.

More importantly the exploratory research study suggest that research has in fact increased the relevance of the projects and their ability to address locally identified problems and ultimately to produce indigenous knowledge and local solutions. When research is undertaken, it is generally carried out in a culturally sensitive and locally-driven manner which leads to increased local ownership and ultimately better overall outcomes.

These third-party research findings brought greater credibility to the ongoing case made by AUCC of the merit and value of research in UPCD projects, not just because it is a central element of academic endeavour and higher education institutions' mandate but because, as the research suggests, research makes for better development. These findings contributed to the recent change in policy at CIDA concerning the research dimension in these projects. For the first time, there is an explicit recognition of the value of research which can now represent as much as 12% of the overall budget of all new Tier 1 (\$360,000) and of Tier 2 (\$120,000) projects. All research, however, must be deemed to contribute to the advancement of the overall project goal and therefore must relate to the developmental problem being addressed by the project. Previously there were no clear guidelines on the extent of research permitted which created a certain hesitance on the part of proposal proponents who feared that the research proposed would put their proposal at risk in the selection process.

For the UPCD program to effectively contribute to institutional strengthening projects it should ideally work on all 3 central pillars of the mandate of higher education institutions – research, teaching and community service. While research may not even be present in some projects it is important to recognize that in most instances it is an essential component for ensuring meaningful local analysis, engagement, and solutions to problems of the South. Without this component projects are at risk of being founded on questionable assessments of need and subsequently designed on less than adequately understood local contexts. The ability to effectively generate local solutions hinges on a deep understanding of the local context in assessing need and capacity, wherein lies the need for at least some basic applied research.

### **Role of Teaching**

We also now have a better understanding of the reach of UPCD projects, both in qualitative and quantitative terms. In purely quantitative terms, we know that approximately 35,000 people in developing countries (between 350-400 individuals per

project), including 1,200 faculty who will continue to train large numbers of university students during their careers, as well as significant numbers of community-based trainers, have benefited from and participated in the teaching component of Tier 2 UPCD projects since its inception in 1994. We understand more than ever the value and nature of the teaching strengthening elements of UPCD projects, of the numerous teaching related capacity development activities that occur within projects, and of the transformative nature of this component with faculty, trainees and students. These knowledge transfer projects are fundamentally about effecting institutional and individual change in a higher education institution that ultimately will contribute to transforming civil society

Although UPCD projects have involved students in varied ways the nature of that student participation as well as its particular value is just beginning to be explored. The UPCD program has not provided any specific guidance to UPCD project directors and proposal proponents concerning student participation and involvement in the UPCD projects. While AUCC has not discouraged the involvement of students in projects, it has not encouraged it either. However, a cursory look at students' role(s) in the research component of UPCD projects suggests that there may be enormous potential in further harnessing their contributions, both in terms of overseas and Canadian students' role(s) in research, but also their role(s) in public engagement and internationalization. In order to better harness this potential of projects AUCC has been looking more closely at this question through its various data gathering and reporting mechanisms.

### **Policy Impact**

The expectation of policy influence was not explicitly built into the UPCD program as a primary or secondary objective, neither in Phase I or Phase II of the program. However, in order to capitalize on an increased awareness of the potential of UPCD projects, over the past two years AUCC, with the project directors and their project teams, has made significant efforts to increase the understanding of the potential for policy influence. These efforts may have contributed to a growing understanding and attempt on the part of project teams to capitalize on the project mechanism and the results generated through their projects to influence government policy.

Our most recent analysis has shown that 78% of projects have attempted to influence government policy. Although we have no past data with which to compare we suspect that policy influence has been growing. The Université de Sherbrooke results study completed in 2004 revealed that while policy impact is often a potential outcome of a UPCD project, it does not necessarily occur naturally; it needs to be planned. The desire for policy influence ideally should be introduced at the project conception and/or design phases. As our deliberate campaign to broaden the UPCD project reach and impact through policy influence and development only began approximately two years ago it has not likely shown its full effect yet.

Other organizations, such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), with even smaller project envelopes, in the order of \$100,000-200,000 dollars, are expected to effect change at the municipal policy level, for example. Canadian technical college projects, also funded through a UPCD-like linkage program, also with small envelopes of less than half a million dollars while not required to have policy influence have had success in influencing policy in the respective sectors of project intervention. It is not the size of the envelope but the extent to which the project is designed and planned to effect government policy that is key. Strategic interveners outside of the institution invited to participate in the project can and have had very meaningful impact. With municipalities and colleges working closely with government and the community, respectively, for many years, it has been a natural reflex for them to include non-institutional stakeholders in their initiatives.

### **Leveraging results and resources**

The results study completed by the Université de Sherbrooke found that many of the UPCD projects were able to bring additional external resources to the project for research or institutional strengthening related activities, as well as to leverage the project results and infrastructure into other collaboration opportunities. This important leverage potential of the program, however, needs further exploration as our data is very limited. Too often we have discovered that what is not explicitly a targeted result of the project does not get reported. Yet when provided an opportunity to explore one on one the secondary results of projects much rich material is unearthed. Data on these kinds of secondary results of projects needs to be pried from Canadian and overseas partners. AUCC is attempting to access and mine this data in order that it will feed into the mid-term evaluation process over the course of 2005 and 2006.

### **Internationalization**

Despite the fact that internationalization has not been a primary objective of the Phase II UPCD projects, unlike Phase I projects, we know that internationalization is an important outcome of the UPCD projects. We should not forget this in our assessment of the value and contributions of the program. Canadian universities have noted the following key benefits of internationalization in UPCD projects:

#### Teaching

- Programs often include new international courses
- New international development studies programs developed
- Course curriculum or syllabus includes an international dimension
- Improved programming and expertise

#### Research

- Projects lead to new research initiatives for students and faculty
- Students and faculty use international experience in their research
- Research capacity strengthened by partner input

#### Community

- Projects lead to involvement in other related activities
- Canadian students and faculty increasingly engaged with community
- Canadian communities have increased access to international cooperation activities

Overall the credibility of Canadian academic programs and their international development research is heightened through participation in a UPCD project, as well as that of the department and university, both internally and externally. These benefits of internationalization need to be better understood at AUCC so that they may be more effectively defended at CIDA. As internationalization is seen as being a Canadian institutional benefit, and in light of the increased concern that resources should be for the primary benefit of the overseas partner, we do not expect a change in policy at CIDA on internationalization will come easily. However, we would want, at the very least, to maintain the current agreement that internationalization related expenses are acceptable within the universities' financial and/or in-kind contribution to UPCD projects, for cost-sharing purposes. We may also want to examine some best practices of how – if UPCD projects are defined within an institutional strategy for internationalization – they might be more effectively leveraged to serve Canadian universities' strategic objectives.

#### **Canada's First Nations reach out to Chiapas**

North America's indigenous peoples reaffirmed their common heritage and kinship through a CIDA-funded university partnership between the First Nations University of Canada, in Saskatchewan, and the Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas, in Mexico. To address the higher education needs of the impoverished and marginalized Chiapas indigenous communities, the partners developed a culturally sensitive curriculum for a bachelor in management and indigenous self-development – the first of its kind – as well as a master of indigenous education at the Mexican university. Canada's First Nations and student population stand to benefit as well, since the master's program developed in Chiapas will serve as the model for a new master's program at the First Nations University of Canada.

#### **Possible UPCD “Repositioning”**

In light of the current Canadian government's International Policy Statement and its attempt to heighten the coherence in government policy and programming and CIDA's expected desire to align its own programming AUCC will want to take advantage of the mid-term evaluation to reflect on how the UPCD program might be more strategic in addressing both the current government's priorities and to effectively respond to overseas' universities' needs, while mindful of the Canadian university's institutional capacity.

As we think about possibilities there are some facts and observations that may help set the stage:

- We know that Africa is a main focus and will continue to be the main focus for Canadian ODA programming and that Canadian universities have been able to more than adequately respond to the government's shift towards Africa, as witnessed through the

significant increase in meritorious Africa proposals to the UPCD proposal selection processes. Recently about 50% of proposals have been for Africa and at least 50% of the recommended proposals were for Africa while historically only about 25% of proposals received and funded were for Africa.

-We know that in addition to the 25 focus countries listed in the IPS the UPCD eligible countries will be in the order of 70-80 countries, of which we will know more in the coming months.

-We know that there is a concentration of UPCD activity in middle countries, namely China, Vietnam, Mexico, Cuba, India, Chile, Brazil and South Africa. If you were to tally up the distribution of countries, approximately 40 percent of UPCD projects have been in the aforementioned mid-level economies or countries in transition.

-We know that Canadian universities have capacity in all of the new priority areas but have been particularly active in the areas of health, governance and the environment.

-We know that Canadian universities have enormous untapped capacity through the 266 meritorious proposals that have gone unfunded since the launch of the first Phase of the UPCD program in 1994.

-We know that universities are very committed to international development having brought nearly \$90 million dollars in financial and in-kind contributions to the CIDA-funded UPCD program since its inception in 1994. This amount represents a cost-sharing contribution of over 40% per project, 10% more than the required 30% cost-sharing requirement.

One approach might be to consider a continuum of varying types of intervention with overseas partners. A more flexible mechanism or UPCD infrastructure may be required where some (likely most) programming is focused on the CIDA target countries, Africa, the CIDA five priority sectors and Millennium Development Goals while other programming is more targeted at the mid-level economies left on the ODA list. The first type of intervention could involve partnerships with countries where there are limited human and financial resources and capacity and where there is a higher risk therefore warranting a greater financial contribution by CIDA, and limited expectation of cost-sharing. In the case of the second type of intervention, these partnerships could involve economies where there is already some evidence of greater mutual benefit for partnerships between Canadian and overseas counterparts and therefore an appropriate use of a cost-sharing model. Universities are already very active, beyond the UPCD, in mid-level countries and prepared to invest in these types of more mutual relationships. Such an approach may be more advisable, as opposed to a single mechanism, in order to effectively respond to the varying levels of overseas higher education needs and contexts.

### **Mid-Term Evaluation**

In order to structure the discussion and reflection around the impending mid-term evaluation, in addition to the questions already raised in this paper, AUCC will consider some broad questions for the university community to reflect on. Some of issues to be considered arise specifically out of the context set by the new International Policy

Statement, as well as CIDA's Policy Statement on Strengthening Aid Effectiveness mentioned earlier. More specifically some of the questions could include: What were the key lessons from Phase I to II, as well as within Phase II? How might we strengthen the program? How do we increase the relevance of programming? How do we specifically increase the project relevance in an increasingly Millennium Development Goal-driven environment? What have been the key impediments or challenges to maximizing program impact and results? What do we understand about sustainability, the related challenges and opportunities? What level and type of policy influence can we expect through such a program?

### **Broader Programming Context**

In addition to engaging in international cooperation through the UPCD, Canadian universities have been involved in work with other CIDA programming as well as with the International Development Research Council, the International Financial Institutions and foundations. Canadian universities have a long tradition of cooperation with developing country higher education institutions to generate, apply and transfer knowledge for sustainable human development – in areas ranging from health, education, governance, sustainable livelihoods to the environment. According to AUCC's Canadian University Projects in International Development (CUPID) database, since the 1970s, Canadian universities have been engaged in some 2300 international development projects and at least 265,000 people in developing countries have improved knowledge and skills as a result of these international cooperation efforts. Approximately one-third of these have been with partners in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The scope and nature of Canadian universities' international engagement underpins a range of foreign policy objectives including finding solutions to global development challenges. These university partnerships have been motivated by a shared belief that knowledge is essential to development. Canada has shown leadership in supporting higher education and research to ensure a strong foundation for its own economic, cultural and social development. Likewise, developing countries are calling for increased investments in their own knowledge infrastructures and are looking actively for partners in countries like Canada to help strengthen their knowledge capacity, particularly when it comes to addressing the complex Millennium Development Goals.

As the training grounds for future political and business leaders, policy-makers and professionals, higher education institutions are critical to fostering the intellectual leadership and good governance skills necessary for developing countries to drive their own development processes. Moreover, as key centres for research, training and teaching, they are critical to building local capacity to generate and adapt knowledge for community and national development, as well as to forming links with the private sector for long-term wealth creation through innovation.

**Research with Kenya helps fight AIDS and SARS in Canada**

Before HIV became a threat in the early '80s, the University of Manitoba was conducting research on sexually transmitted diseases with the University of Nairobi in Kenya. This work soon gave way to research on HIV, which began as soon as AIDS was identified in Kenya in 1985. The Manitoba-Nairobi research group is famous for observing that some commercial sex workers do not acquire HIV despite intense exposure to the virus, a finding that may lead to a long-awaited vaccine against AIDS. But already, their research is benefiting Canada, as several Manitoban researchers have returned from Kenya and helped develop public health policy to prevent the spread of HIV in our country. They were also among the leaders internationally in identifying the virus that caused the 2003 SARS outbreak.

Canada's own efforts to support knowledge partnerships for poverty reduction are not capturing their full potential. As noted earlier, since the inception of the UPCD program in 1994 there have been a total of 266 projects deemed meritorious by a rigorous peer-review process that were not able to receive funding due to a lack of resources. Likewise, there have been few mechanisms for engaging Canadian university research capacity to help solve pressing global challenges, despite the strong convergence between Canadian universities' research strengths and interests on the one hand, and Canada's priorities for its international cooperation efforts on the other. While the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) provides some welcome opportunities for Canadian university researchers' involvement in its projects, and CIDA supports a limited number of applied research initiatives, there has been no mechanism squarely focused on leveraging Canada's research capacity for development in a comprehensive fashion. By contrast, a number of other countries such as the UK, Australia, the Netherlands and Nordic countries have recognized the value of a strong focus on research in their development cooperation efforts.

As the International Policy Statement suggests, "Universities and colleges are critically important players in a 'whole of Canada' approach and the partnership between universities, colleges and government in international policy will be broad and deep". In a world where cutting-edge knowledge and know-how drives economic and social development, tapping into the expertise of higher education institutions is important to developing countries and their partners addressing global development challenges.

Higher education and the exchange of ideas, people and knowledge can bring a critical human dimension to foreign policy. Indeed, as the need for a more sophisticated approach to international relations and for strong partnerships becomes more pressing, the influence that comes with knowledge cannot be underestimated. Canada's universities stand ready to contribute their expertise and enthusiasm to help make knowledge partnerships a key building block of Canada's international relations. In order to make knowledge partnerships a building block of Canada's approach to development, AUCC recommended the following measures:

- The importance of strengthening higher education and research institutions in the South should be explicitly recognized in Canada's international policy, just as it is in Canada's domestic policy. Such a focus is a strategic and sustainable way to help foster the intellectual leadership and sense of empowerment our developing country partners need to drive local development and reduce poverty.
- CIDA should work with Canadian universities through their national association, AUCC, to develop a strategy for the transfer of cutting-edge knowledge in each of Canada's official development assistance priorities.
- Funding for the University Partnerships in Cooperation and Development program – supported by CIDA's Canadian Partnerships Branch and Canadian universities – should be increased in order to harness the untapped interest and capacity of Canadian universities and their Southern partners.
- In its efforts dedicated to development in Africa, Canada should make strengthening Africa's own knowledge infrastructure a priority. One approach which takes the Canada Research Chairs program as its model is a program of Africa-Canada Research Chairs for Development. Under this approach, two research chairs (one senior and one junior, in order to strengthen sustainability) would be awarded on a competitive basis to a limited number of leading African institutions to carry out research in areas of priority under the New Partnerships for African Development (peace and security, governance, knowledge and health, trade and investment, agriculture and water). The African institutions selected would cooperate with one or more Canadian partner universities with complementary research expertise. This approach could be targeted to Africa or broadened to include other developing regions.

## Conclusion

In this context, Canadian higher education institutions are prepared to embrace all the world has to offer and to draw on its strengths to exert a positive influence on global events through their international cooperation work, including the UPCD program. One of the most valuable resources is intellectual capacity and knowledge partnerships are an important element of any international policy – whether in relations between key established or emerging markets, as a means to build capacity in developing countries, or in efforts to solve pressing global challenges.

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