



FOCAL

Canadian Foundation for the Americas
Fondation canadienne pour les Amériques
Fundación Canadiense para las Américas
Fundação Canadense para as Américas

FOCAL Civil Society Survey (CSS) Preliminary Report and Overview of Findings

With the objective of providing feedback on the proposed content of Summit discussions, FOCAL collected the views and opinions of a broad range of civil society actors in Canada and Latin America. This is a preliminary report and overview of the responses collected from the online survey summarizing the priorities in each thematic area, highlighting potential execution strategies and "best practices" that may be used by national governments and multilateral organizations to guide implementation efforts. The final report will be submitted in written form to the Government of Canada.

The three thematic areas identified by Summit organizers are:

- Economic Growth with Equity
- Social Development
- Democratic Governance

The ideas presented by the respondents to the FOCAL CSS may be grouped as follows:

Economic Growth With Equity

Priorities

- Improve access to labour markets for marginalized groups including indigenous persons, women, rural inhabitants, the very poor, and the disabled.
- Improving investment climate for foreign direct investors (reduction of bureaucratic obstacles and corruption) – but at the same time recognizing that foreign investors have to be socially responsible.
- Strengthen small firms and micro-enterprise (as key employment generators) through access to financing and improving the functioning internal markets
- Support for some kind of debt forgiveness, or debt-for-reform program that recognizes that debt is slowing development in Latin America.
- Support for free trade (FTAA) when it is fair trade (including access to Northern agricultural markets).

Mechanisms to Meet Priorities

- Marginalized groups need to be able to participate in key decision making bodies at the local, national and hemispheric level.
- Increase provision of micro-credits to small entrepreneurs and flexibilize access to credit in general.
- Public and private sector partnerships in economic development projects.
- Create an investment fund or regional development fund similar to that used by the European Community

Social Development

Priorities

- Improve access to economic opportunities for marginalized groups including indigenous persons, women, rural inhabitants, the very poor, and the disabled.
- Focus on alleviating poverty for the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of society.
- Universalize access to health services and education at all levels

Mechanisms to Meet Priorities

- Plans of Action need to have more concrete goals, clear time frames, implementation be measurable, denote and fund organizations that are responsible for collection of data, follow-up and measurement of implementation.
- Civil society participation and oversight in the development of social programming needs to be encouraged.
- Improve access to information and communication technologies in higher education, increase cooperation and exchange programs between educational institutions in Latin America and Canada.
- Strengthen cooperation between the inter-American family of regional organizations
- Focus on sustainable agricultural development and improving rural living standards, and study the impact of trade liberalization in agriculture on small farmers.
- Improve condition of migrants building on "Puebla Process" and Chapter X of the ICPD.
- Social development values should be given equal weight as trade promotion by the Canadian government.

Democratic Governance

Priorities

- Summit process must be more inclusive of civil society in the early stage of agenda-setting (so that consultation is not simply validation of government policy).
- Accountability must be promoted in the institutions of the Americas (governments, multilaterals, and corporations) through the involvement of civil society stakeholders.
- Strengthen the institutions of the state after the weakening promoted by rapid economic liberalization (especially in the area of justice).
- Work toward promoting the adoption of a real social security net and universal access to education and essential services.

Mechanisms to Meet Priorities

- Incorporate civil society in the early stages of policy and agenda-setting at the Summit, and increase participation of groups usually outside the Summit process.
- Promote the development of access to information legislation.
- Pursue institutional reform, fiscal reform, and anti-corruption measures at all levels of the state.
- Create mechanism to monitor transparency and corruption in the Americas.
- Operationalize the Inter-American Democratic Charter through strengthening the UPD and involving civil society as watchdogs.
- Pursue campaign finance reform

Best Practices

Respondents identified a number of best practices worth considering as examples for future emulation: OAS civil society consultations resulting in the Bogota Statement and Declaration of Managua; existing joint collaboration with Canadian universities in education and research; the work of La Asociación Nicaragüense para la Integración Comunitaria and la Red Juvenil in cooperation with Ética and Transparencia in promoting youth participation in the 2001 election; the Canadian social security system; independent office of the ombudsmen as in Peru; Democracy "Auditors" in Costa Rica; the World Bank's rural development projects in Indonesia;

the regional development fund of the EU; the participatory budget process of Porto Alegre Brazil; confidence-building measures between Ecuador and Peru; corporate social responsibility programs in health by Canadian mining firms in South Africa; community work in barrio El Salvador in Peru; the current work of the OAS Unit for the Promotion of democracy.

Based on this internet consultation, some general observations can be made regarding the responses to the FOCAL CSS:

1. There was very strong support for a Summit Process that better addresses poverty and inequality – even among business respondents, this was a clear priority. In particular, a focus on poverty alleviation, targeted assistance on the poorest and most disadvantaged sectors of society including indigenous peoples, the very poor, rural poor, and the disabled was considered important.
2. Importance of universalizing access education and health services for the poor.
3. Support for continued efforts at improving civil society participation in national and multinational fora
4. Support for a “just” FTAA including access to US agricultural market – but also issues such as promoting socially responsible corporations and debt forgiveness were important
5. Make Latin America a more business-friendly environment, more public-private partnerships in development programming (mostly from business respondents).
6. Last but not least, an important finding was the strong support for the need to limit Summit objectives to a feasible list – complete with a real timetable for implementation, clear measurable goals, and provisions to collect reliable data on whether goals are being met afterwards.

Table 1: CSS Responses by Country and Region

Country	(#)	(%)
Canada	24	44%
Latin America	25	46%
Argentina	3	6%
Bolivia	1	2%
Chile	2	4%
Colombia	2	4%
Dominican Republic	2	4%
Ecuador	2	4%
Guatemala	1	2%
Guyana	1	2%
Honduras	1	2%
Mexico	6	11%
Nicaragua	1	2%
Peru	1	2%
Spain	1	2%
United States	4	7%
Venezuela	2	4%
TOTAL	54	100%

Table 2: CSS Responses by Civil Society Sector

Sector	(#)	(%)
Academic	15	28%
Business	14	26%
CSO	21	39%
Individual	3	6%
Multilateral	1	2%
TOTAL	54	100%