

OCIC Community Engagement and Learning Programs - September 2019

This concept note is the first in a series of documents that OCIC will prepare for our members and key stakeholders to share our thinking regarding our community engagement and learning programs supported by our Global Affairs Canada (GAC) funded project, “Inspiring Action for Global Citizenship” (2019-2023). During this period OCIC also seeks to expand and diversify our partners and funding in order to further enhance and grow these and other initiatives of strategic interest and relevance to the Council.

Background

Community engagement and learning are central to OCIC’s [vision, mission, mandate, theory of change and strategic plan](#). Likewise they are embedded within the two intermediate outcomes of our GAC-funded “Inspiring Action for Global Citizenship” project, which focuses on: 1) increasing engagement of Canadians, especially youth, in international development and key global issues in support to Canada’s Feminist International Policy (FIAP) action areas and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and 2) increasing the effectiveness of Canadian development partners to deliver innovative, inclusive programming that advances gender equality in support to FIAP action areas and the SDGs. These two outcomes are aligned with OCIC’s values and organizational policies, in particular [OCIC’s Women’s Rights and Gender Equality Policy](#), and [OCIC’s Public Engagement Policy](#). They are also aligned with OCIC’s 2018-2023 Strategic Plan, which reflects a shift in focus from knowledge delivery to knowledge exchange, and from learning new skills to learning new mindsets and methods.

OCIC believes that a strategic shift towards knowledge exchange will enable program participants to go beyond the acquisition of information and skills to achieve deeper learning and impact. Knowledge exchange opportunities will enable Canadian CSOs and youth to learn from one another and expand to their networks and circles of influence by engaging in multi-disciplinary, multi-generational and multi-sectoral dialogue. Furthermore, expanding the repertoire of mindsets and methods in the sector is a sustainable capacity-building strategy, as it equips us all to adapt to changes over time, rather than limiting us to the delivery of knowledge and skills that may become obsolete.

Program Objectives

OCIC’s GAC-supported capacity-building initiatives (2019-2023) seek to strengthen the ability of:

- Canadian CSOs and youth, to impact advocacy and policy development with regards to these areas/goals;
- Canadian CSOs and youth, to adapt to present and future challenges by learning how to employ different methods and cultivate new mindsets, and engage in multi-sectoral dialogue regarding gender equality in support of FIAP and the SDGs; and

- Canadian CSOs, to design and deliver, expand and evaluate programming towards advancing gender equality in support of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) action areas, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

Rationale

Global problems like gender inequality pose daunting challenges that cannot be solved in isolation. These problems will require diverse mindsets, methods and dialogue. We know there is a wealth of knowledge, expertise and experience within the international cooperation sector and other sectors, as well as with diverse communities across Ontario, Canada and beyond. We believe that our collective impact can be strengthened by diverse ways of knowing and being, through shared learning and collaboration, and in joint advocacy and policy-making efforts. Some of our recent experiences delivering our Global Changemaker Youth Ambassador Program and participating in national and international meetings like Women Deliver 2019 in Vancouver, and the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2018 in New York, have yielded important insights about the value of engaging and supporting the participation of Canadian CSOs and youth in policy and advocacy development.

In order to convene inspiring knowledge-sharing events and to deliver high quality learning programs from diverse perspectives, OCIC will leverage existing partnerships and cultivate new ones with experts and leaders in multiple sectors. This approach is aligned with FIAP's focus on innovation, research and results, and our desired to work in closer collaboration with Canadian universities and other research institutions. OCIC is well poised to pursue such collaborations as we have several academic institutions and individual researchers as members.

We believe that addressing global problems like gender inequality will require both critical and creative thinking. The arts and the media have the power to influence and inspire individual and societal change. For example, storytelling can be an effective community and public engagement strategy for FIAP action areas and the SDGs as it can reach those who would otherwise not have engaged with these issues. As explained below, OCIC's new community engagement and learning program will focus on knowledge exchange, capacity-building, policy and actionable communications strategies, as well as partnerships with the arts, media and academia.

Key terms

Community engagement in the context of OCIC's work refers to our networking and convening, and public engagement and education functions. OCIC can be considered a middle table to gather around to share knowledge and to learn from one another. We seek to engage not only our members and others within the international cooperation and global citizenship education sectors, but also other sectors and diverse communities and individuals from across Ontario. These include people with special needs, as well as diasporic and Indigenous peoples and communities who have historically been under-represented in the work of our sector.

Public Engagement is defined for OCIC as “those activities and processes which enable individuals and organizations to traverse along a continuum from basic understanding of international development practices and the underlying principles directing those practices, through to deeper personal involvement and informed action on sustainable human development around the world. By engaging individuals and organizations in the global fight against poverty, the rights and responsibilities of Canadians are articulated, and individuals and organizations can become active global citizens.”¹

Learning refers to the educational aspect of OCIC’s community engagement, communications and capacity building initiatives. In OCIC’s new GAC-funded program we define **capacity building** as any activities that help to fulfill an organization’s mission as well as the “organization’s structure, policies, processes, and assets (leadership, management, physical and financial) dedicated to the delivery of its services and/or products.”² We refer to Letts, Ryan and Grossman’s (1999)³ widely accepted typology to describe the different kinds of organizational capacities, which include program delivery, program expansion, and ability to adapt to change.

Program Overview

Over the next four years OCIC’s GAC-funded community engagement and learning programs will have an increased thematic focus on advancing gender equality in support of the other FIAP action areas, and the SDGs. This focus on gender will be both targeted, as a specific learning threads of workshop and/or webinar series, and cross-cutting, integrated across all of our activities.

For example, OCIC aims to help strengthen the capacity of Canadian CSOs and youth to incorporate a gender transformative approach to their work through the use of gender equality indicators and Gender-Based Analysis+. We will also aim to provide methods and resources for reducing inequalities through emphasis on equity, identifying barriers to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and developing mitigation strategies and organizational policies.

“Signature” OCIC community engagement and learning initiatives will include:

1) OCIC Gender Equality Hub

OCIC will convene and support a Gender Equality Hub as a means of deepening a gender transformative and intersectional approach to our collective efforts for sustainable development, and to help address current gaps and challenges and be a lever for change. In October-November 2019 we will call for and select 8-10 diverse representatives from our community and beyond to form the core membership of this Hub. OCIC will support regular virtual (online) and in-person meetings over the next two years,

¹ [Inter-Council Network Public Engagement Position Paper: Effectively Engaging Canadians as Global Citizens, 2010, p. 2.](#)

² Fine, Thayer and Kopf, “Echoes from the field: Proven Capacity Building Principles for Nonprofits.” A report published by the Innovation Network, Inc. Retrieved from www.issuelab.org 2001, p. 5.

³ Letts, C., Ryan, W.P, Grossman, A. (1999). *High Performance Nonprofit Organizations: Managing upstream for Greater Impact*. New York, Chichester, Weinheim, Brisbane, Singapore, and Toronto: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

including supporting the Hub in developing Terms of Reference (TORs) and priorities, and in implementing an annual work plan.

We anticipate activities such as:

- developing joint position papers on priority issues (such as in the lead-up to or following the upcoming [Commission on the Status of Women \(CSW\) 64/Beijing+25](#) in March 2020);
- advising the Council on its own policies, practices and programs, as appropriate; and
- collecting and sharing resources, learnings and practices with regards to advancing gender equality in support of the FIAP action areas and SDGs with Canadian CSOs, including SMOs.

2) **OCIC Youth PolicyMakers Hub**

OCIC will convene and support a Youth PolicyMakers Hub as a means of supporting diverse youth from across Ontario in international cooperation policy processes in support of FIAP action areas and the SDGs. In October-November 2019 we will call for and select up to 15 diverse youth (18-35 years of age), and 5-10 diverse “allies” representing organizations with policy advocacy experience and expertise (of all ages) from our community and beyond to form the core membership of this Hub. OCIC will support regular virtual (online) and in-person meetings, and will support the Hub in developing TORs and priorities, and in implementing an annual work plan.

We anticipate activities such as:

- strengthening the capacity of youth to influence policy making and advocacy processes on gender equality and the SDGs;
- supporting 2-4 youth members of the Hub per year to attend relevant sub-national, national or international meetings and delegations;
- advising the Council on its own policies, practices and programs, as appropriate; and
- collecting and sharing resources, learnings and practices for youth-led and youth-focused policy-making work in different ways.

3) **OCIC “Tapestry 2030” Storytelling Initiative**

Building on OCIC’s award-winning *Transformations* photojournalism initiative, OCIC will work in partnership with members and their partners in Sub-Saharan Africa to document and share stories of change related to women’s rights and gender equality, climate change, food security, and/or other issues related to the SDGs, gathered during one documentary visit in Spring 2020.

OCIC’s *Tapestry 2030* storytelling initiative will employ arts-based methodologies such as photojournalism, videography, oral storytelling, sound, music, visual arts and augmented reality. Each year during International Development Week (IDW) we will feature select stories from our 2020 trip, and a prominent speaker/storyteller in a series of interactive exhibits and public activities, both online and in-person. *Tapestry 2030* will be a part of OCIC’s new media partnerships and “actionable” communications strategy intended to increase the visibility of the Council and our members’ efforts on key global issues, to improve Canadians’ understanding of and support for the work.

4) **OCIC Innovation Labs**

OCIC will work with members and other to convene annual Innovation Lab events during IDW. These will focus on promoting multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral and inter-generational dialogue.

5) OCIC Knowledge Exchange and Learning Activities

Building on many years of experience in this area, OCIC will offer virtual and in-person knowledge exchange and learning activities (such as webinars and workshops) that focus on strengthening members capacity to apply a gender transformative approach to their work, including both analytical frameworks and practical methods.

Learning topics may include a focus on feminist and intersectional approaches to monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), and arts-based approaches to public engagement (including use of digital and oral storytelling). These and other topics will be confirmed following dialogue with members and other stakeholders on an annual basis, beginning with two parallel consultations in Toronto (September 18, 2019), information sharing at our Annual General Meeting in Toronto (September 19, 2019), and regional roundtables in October-November 2019.

6) Summer Institute on Community-Based Research⁴

In June 2020, in collaboration with the new [UNESCO Knowledge for Change](#) (K4C) Toronto Hub (of which OCIC is a founding partner), OCIC will pilot a four-day Summer Institute on Community-based Research (CBR) as a means to support individual and organizational capacity-building in CBR. One OCIC staff will take part a Mentor Training Program (MTP) in 2019-2020 in order to be able to jointly offer our Summer Institute and a webinar series.

7) OCIC Global Citizens' Forum 2020

Beginning February 2020, OCIC will invite members and other key stakeholders to co-create our Global Citizens Forum 2020, a three-day event to help share and further thought leadership and implementation strategies for a whole-of-society approach to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from practical, academic, community and polity perspectives.

OCIC's Global Citizens Forum 2020 will convene Canadian and international delegates to:

- connect local and global knowledge as a means to strengthen relationships and present new possibilities for increased collective impact on the SDGs;
- share methods and tools for effective research and policy work;
- enhance good practices and lessons-learned between organizations, institutions, communities and individuals; and
- highlight and celebrate the leadership of key stakeholders in global sustainable development efforts.

⁴ **Community-based research** (CBR) is a "research approach that involves active participation of stakeholders, those whose lives are affected by the issue being studied, in all phases of research for the purpose of producing useful results to make positive changes" (Nelson, Ochocka, Griffin & Lord, 1998, p.12. Nelson, G., Ochocka, J., Griffin, K., & Lord, J. (1998). "Nothing about me, without me": Participatory action research with self-help/mutual aid organizations for psychiatric consumer/survivors. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 26, 881-912-page 12.

8) ICN SPUR Change & FIT Program Capacity Building Activities

Over the next five years OCIC will also offer capacity building activities through Inter-Council Network of Provincial and Regional Councils (ICN)-initiated and supported programs, including the [SPUR Change Capacity Building Program for small and medium-sized organizations](#) (SMOs), and the [Fund for Innovation and Transformation \(FIT\)](#) for SMOs. The topics and timing of OCIC's own activities we take into account the various opportunities presented by different programs, in order to avoid duplication and competition, and to maximize learning and impact for our collective stakeholders.

Guiding Principles

OCIC community engagement and learning program will be guided by: 1) the [Istanbul Principles for CSO Development Effectiveness](#); 2) FIAP's feminist and integrated approach to development, which sees gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in a manner that is both targeted and cross-cutting; 3) OCIC's gender transformative approach, which emphasizes intersectionality⁵ and policies on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, anti-oppression, and public engagement; and 4) research-informed principles of effective capacity-building.⁶

Furthermore, OCIC will strive to ensure that its community engagement and learning programs are:

- **Relevant** to participating CSOs and youth's interests and needs, and developed through ongoing consultation with our members; and
- **Responsive** to participants different learning needs and goals by adopting pedagogical methods that incorporate:
 - diverse ways of knowing and being, such as Indigenous and diasporic approaches;
 - different learning styles, using individual and group learning methods and taking accessibility issues into consideration;
 - multi-modal and multi-media methods delivered virtually and/or in-person; and
 - different levels of complexity and duration, in order to facilitate progressive learning over time.

⁵ **Intersectionality**: a framework that recognizes the multiple aspects of social categorization and identity that combine, overlap and intersect in our lives and experiences, such as class, race and gender, and that compound and exacerbate oppression and marginalization of an individual or a group. It also challenges us to expand our understanding of gender beyond binaries (woman/man, femininity/masculinity). Adopting an intersectional approach allows us to identify and address complex contexts and formulate strategies to best meet the needs of those intended to benefit from initiatives. [Adapted from the definition of intersectionality in A Feminist Approach to Canada's International Assistance, Inter Pares, 2 Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights and Oxfam Canada, July 2016.]" ([OCIC's Women's Rights and Gender Equality Policy](#))

⁶ Fine, Thayer and Kopf, 2001: 1) Every organization is capable of building its own capacity; 2) Trust between the organization and the provider is essential; 3) An organization must be ready for capacity-building; 4) Ongoing questioning means better answers; 5) Team and peer learning are effective capacity-building tools; 6) Capacity-building should accommodate different learning styles; 7) Every organization has its own history and culture; 8) All people and all parts of an organization are interrelated; 9) Capacity-building takes time.

Preliminary Timeline

Fall 2019

- OCIC member consultations (TO and Regional Meetings)
- Call-out for OCIC Gender Equality and Youth PolicyMaker Hubs
- Call-out for OCIC Tapestry 2030 Partners
- Preparations for collaborative International Development Week (IDW) 2020 program
- SPUR Change National Conference for SMOs & Educators (in Edmonton, Alberta)

Winter 2020

- OCIC Knowledge Exchange webinars and workshops
- Collaborative IDW 2020 Program, including Innovation Lab activities, gathering with media partners and prominent OCIC GE Speaker Event

Spring 2020:

- OCIC Knowledge Exchange webinars and workshops
- OCIC Delegation to [Commission on the Status of Women \(CSW\) 64/Beijing+25](#) (tentative)
- OCIC Tapestry 2030 documentary visit to Sub-Saharan Africa

Summer 2020:

- OCIC Annual General Meeting & Symposium
- OCIC Pilot Summer Institute on Community-Based Research, in partnership with the UNESCO Knowledge for Change (K4C) Toronto Hub

Fall 2020:

- OCIC Knowledge Exchange webinars and workshops
- OCIC Global Citizenship Forum 2020

Winter 2021:

- OCIC Knowledge Exchange webinars and workshops
- Collaborative IDW 2021 Program, including Innovation Lab activities, gathering with media partners and prominent GE Speaker Event