ETHICAL PRINCIPLES
for Public Engagement Practice

Acknowledgements

This is a living document. As such, we invite feedback and further resources from organizations and individuals, for possible inclusion. You can reach us at **info@ocic.on.ca.**

Ethical Principles for Public Engagement Practice

INTRODUCTION

OCIC's "Ethical Principles for Public Engagement Practice" are part of a tradition of leadership by the Council and our members in accepting responsibility for ethical practice. They were developed with the support of ADRA Canada, Anne Buchanan, and public engagement practitioners from within OCIC, our network, and across Canada in 2019-2020. The insights add a missing element link to a wider body of work on ethical practice – namely principles specific to public engagement. These additional principles complement and should be read in conjunction with relevant OCIC organizational policies and existing ethical principles, and with other relevant standards adopted and promoted across the Canadian international cooperation and humanitarian sector [1].

Engaging the public is an integral component of how OCIC and our members bring about transformative social change. Global initiatives such as Agenda 2030 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles provide globally agreed goals for these organizations. Effective organizations plan and program the best ways to reach these goals, and then reflect back based on the results. Ethical organizations pay particular attention to the best ways to relate to others and to the environment throughout the journey, and then reflect back on those relationships. It is possible to be effective without being ethical. While often complementary, focusing on both is essential.

These ethical and effectiveness principles and goals are tools designed to guide organizations and practitioners. They require stepping back and reflecting on behaviours and practices, working through challenges and issues, and striving not only to be doing things right, but to be doing the right things.

UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT (PE)

For OCIC, "public engagement" is defined as "the practice of inspiring, supporting and challenging people and groups in dynamic cycles of learning, reflection and action on global issues. Public engagement is a transformative process which works toward more equitable social, economic, environmental and political structures." [2]

Effectively Engaging Canadians as Global Citizens: Public Engagement Position Paper ICN 2010

Working under the umbrella concept of "global citizenship," OCIC and its members' public engagement initiatives assist the Canadian public to have the knowledge and capabilities to care about, understand and be actively involved in local, national and international efforts to build a peaceful, fair and just world for all. Global issues need global approaches and solutions. This means framing global issues in terms of "our/us", rather than "their/them". Promoting strong linkages also involves understanding that individuals and organizations must go beyond reframing issues to also reframe relationships, particularly between settler colonial societies and Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Colour, around the world.

Some sectors treat public engagement as processes to consult their targeted public. Civil society organizations (CSOs) within the Canadian international cooperation and humanitarian sector treat public engagement as processes of shared learning leading to action for transformative change. Public engagement efforts are often developed and carried out through collaborations with organizations globally that are aiming for the same goals. This worldwide nature of CSO relationships broadens the ethical considerations and makes this type of work unique.

Some organizations may use different terms than "public engagement" or PE "practitioners". They may not have staff or volunteers dedicated solely to public engagement. Nevertheless, all organizations involve the public in their work through activities such as organizational communications, educating and awareness-building on issues, global education in schools, seeking financial support, connecting Canadians directly to partner communities, and/or advocating for policy change. These activities all involve building relationships and so these principles apply.

Within Global Affairs Canada (GAC), public engagement activities are currently understood as those that aim to promote global citizenship and engage Canadians as global citizens, and that demonstrate how major global challenges are interconnected, how they impact Canadians, and how Canada's international development efforts contribute to alleviating them. GAC recognizes that public engagement activities take place along a behavioural change continuum which includes the stages of becoming aware and informed of international development issues, deepening one's knowledge on such issues, and taking action and becoming actively involved.

[1] Such as the Organizational Principles, Development Principles and Partnership Principles found in the CCIC Code of Ethics
[2] OCIC Public Engagement Policy April 2013

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PRACTICE

As organizations and practitioners develop, undertake and evaluate their public engagement work they should consider how best to:

1. Respect and Advance Human Rights and Dignity of all People

2. Practice and Promote Equity and Justice

3. Be Truthful and Transparent

4. Be Accountable to Partners and the Canadian Public

5. Facilitate Cooperation and Shared Learning

6. Practice Environmental Sustainability and Justice

Ethical Principles serve to guide organizations and practitioners in making ethical choices about their own behaviours and practices. Public engagement practitioners face so many different ethical questions in their work that it is not possible to be prescriptive and provide narrow rules for what must be done in each case. Such an approach would also remove the ethical agency of these practitioners and their organizations to reflect each situation, taking responsibility to make their wisest decision, and acting accordingly. Therefore, these principles instead serve to assist ethical decision-making by providing more general directions that provide a trajectory toward good practice, acting as an ethical compass.

GUIDANCE FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

This section aims to suggest how each principle might be put into practice: when identifying, developing and disseminating content and approaches, when engaging Canadians, and when assessing the impact of these efforts. These principles are not about what the public needs to know and do as a result of public engagement efforts, but about how public engagement ought to be carried out. This guidance is by no means an exhaustive list. Some of the principles also include resources that provide further ideas and guidance. This document serves as a tool for shared learning that can be added to when organizations and practitioners have opportunities to discuss their experiences together and reflect on how they have been applying these principles.

1. Respect and Advance Human Rights and Dignity of all People

Examples to demonstrate this principle being applied to Public Engagement include:

i. being facilitators for storytelling, not story-takers, ensuring messages and images involve the active involvement, presence, voice and agreement of those most experienced with the issues, and that they abide by international law, standards and protocols related to vulnerable persons, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

ii. respecting cultures without appropriating histories, customs, traditions and ways of knowing. Use correct and respectful names, titles, terminology and language about people, communities and cultures. Practice the self-reflective process of cultural humility, gain knowledge of the complexity and historical context of issues, and ensure public engagement activities are carried out via accessible and culturally relevant sensitive spaces.

iii. asking for preferences on terminology and language: emphasize abilities/agency (e.g.: such as a person who uses a wheelchair); use person-first language (e.g.: person with an addiction, not an addict).

iv. obtaining voluntary and informed consent to take (including who may take) and use images and quotes, and to participate in events, especially regarding youth and minors, and providing for the right to withdraw consent during the taking of images or quotes or participation during events;

v. respecting individuals' rights to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity (e.g.:. using actual names of people in photos or their quotes only when permission has been explicitly obtained). This includes developing or articulating a process to obtain and retain active and continued consent (which can include a formalized process with documentation, or stating at the beginning of an event that photographers can be informed if individuals want to opt out of photos, etc.)

vi. identifying and mitigating against potential and actual risks that might harm individuals, groups and communities; considering harmful effects of public engagement materials and approaches that might relate back to a community's self-perception or beliefs, perceptions of others about the community, or effects on existing or future development work by communities.

For example, running public engagement initiatives on GBV in a community church might be inappropriate in some contexts, due to the implicit or potentially traumatic connotations people from that community may perceive as a relationship between the two [e.g.: spiritual abuse, colonialism, rape as a weapon of war, etc.

vii. providing clear duties and responsibilities to all staff, volunteers and contractors; communicating general and public engagement-specific organizational policies and procedures (i.e. ensuring hired photographers know expectations and their responsibility to provide ethical imagery, and ensuring volunteers know the scope and limitations of their roles).

viii. Making tangible commitments and efforts to hire staff, volunteers and contractors that reflect the diversity and cultural, social, and religious contexts of the communities in which public engagement work is being done, and who can directly impact or influence the community-based approaches of

programming to reflect the local context. ix. valuing the public's participation, experiences, contributions and ability to act by being considerate of their time, using empowerment methodologies (e.g.: adult learning theory/"engaged pedagogy"), and respecting diverse ideas, lived experiences, and worldviews. This includes working alongside staff, volunteers and contractors to determine compensation for emotional labour where and when possible and appropriate, especially when individuals are operating from an intersectional, lived experience perspective.

Tools/resources related to this principle:

- *"Facilitating a Photovoice Project: What you need to know!"* (Nova Scotia Food Security Network, 2012) https://foodarc. ca/makefoodmatter/wp-content/uploads/ sites/3/VOICES_PhotovoiceManual.pdf
- *"The Ethics of Photography in Fundraising and International Development Work"* (Agwa, 2019), http://www. afpinclusivegiving.ca/story/ethics-photography-fundraising-international-development-work/
- *Inclusive Language in Media: A Canadian Style Guide* (Humber College, 2017) http:// www.humber.ca/makingaccessiblemedia/ modules/01/transript/Inclusive_Language_ Guide_Aug2017.pdf
- *Cultural Humility: People, Principles and Practices* (Chávez, 2012) https://www.youtube.com/ watch?v=SaSHLbS1V4w&feature=youtu.be
- *"Culturally Connected"* (B.C. Women's Hospital) https://www.culturallyconnected.ca
- Anti-Racism Framework

2. Practice and Promote Equity and Justice

Examples to demonstrate this principle being applied to Public Engagement include:

i. choosing organizational partners and collaborating with communities that have intersectional lived experiences and are equity seeking, and those that are representative of systemically underrepresented communities.

ii. treating global and local partners as equals by ensuring they contribute to, participate in, and benefit from public engagement programming. Provide fair rather than symbolic compensation for emotional labour that partners, such as Indigenous elders, may provide, and keep partners informed about the results of any public engagement initiatives so that they feel valued in a continuous and meaningful way. Think of groups that may particularly resonate with your organization's work, relate what you are sharing to their experiences, and empower them with practical ways they can take action. Learn about the target group prior to your engagement to ensure you engage them in a way that is sensitive and respectful (see 1.ii above).

iii. integrating power and gender-based analyses informed by an intersectional, human rights framework at planning, implementation and evaluation stages of public engagement programming.

iv. engaging and being relevant to cross-sections of populations and diverse backgrounds , particularly systemically underrepresented groups in specific contexts. This could be accomplished through the direct engagement of members of these populations, recruiting individuals from these groups to be involved with programming and information dissemination, and employing or engaging members of these populations to carry out audits and/or serve in an advisory capacity as programs and initiatives are being implemented.

v. being inclusive by using varied and accessible approaches, removing or compensating for potential barriers to participation, providing fair compensation where appropriate, and amplifying the voices of systemically oppressed communities and populations.

vi. being self-reflective and deliberately addressing inequalities and inequities due to power imbalances; reflecting on whether practices are reinforcing oppressive dominant, (neo-) colonial, Euro-centric, and/or white supremacy cultural frameworks and status quo; taking steps to decolonize and create enabling public engagement practices (including employing or recruiting members of beneficiary communities to inform and refine programming in a contextually relevant and sensitive manner); adapting standardized language to advance gender equality and nation- to- nation respect.

vii. analyzing public engagement content and methodologies to identify and remove discrimination, systemic barriers, stereotypes, and tropes, and ensuring people and communities have and are portrayed as having their own agency, valid knowledge, and legitimate approaches to addressing issues.

Tools/resources related to this principle:

- ICN Global Hive Gender Equality Knowledge Hub: http://global-hive.ca/#gender-equality
- Indigenous Rights, A KAIROS Strategy: https://www.kairoscanada.org/what-we-do/indigenous-rights
- Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) Course. Government of Canada: https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-acs/course-cours-en.html

3. Be Truthful and Transparent

Examples to demonstrate this principle being applied to Public Engagement include:

i. being accurate about the organization, including what it does, what it can do, and what it cannot do.

ii. providing clear, relevant, honest and complete information in plain language throughout the public engagement process to communicate the purpose, expectations and limitations for participants of any public engagement initiative.

iii. portraying issues, community situations, people, and cultures truthfully and in a culturally sensitive manner that is reflective of the community, such as by having local communities be the authors and creators of these public engagement initiatives); recognizing complexity by balancing positive and negative context, and highlighting a diversity of approaches to address the issues.

iv. being clear, honest and specific when obtaining informed consent about the ways and length of time for use of images and quotes, and what implications should be expected (i.e. not assuming unrestricted consent for any future use, or quickly asking for a signature on a form without taking necessary time to fully explain and obtain informed consent).

v. having systems in place to share information and make collective decisions between organizational partners about public engagement activities relating to the partnership. This includes keeping communities and partners informed about the culmination and outcomes of projects, and sharing back final products (see points 2.ii and 2.iv).

Tools/resources related to this principle:

- *Adichie, Chimamanda (2009): "The Danger of a Single Story"*: https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare
- *"Negotiating Consent in Development Contexts"*: https://www.photoethics.org/content/2018/5/31/negotiating-consent-in-development-contexts

4. Be Accountable to Partners and the Public

Examples to demonstrate this principle being applied to PE practices include:

i. nurturing dynamic, trustworthy, equitable partnerships by providing all partners and individuals involved opportunities to co-develop public engagement initiatives (i.e. helping frame the issues, co-developing materials and approaches, telling their story, consenting to their image and quotes being used, providing feedback on how their own contributions are used and what happened as a result, listening respectfully, acting on feedback, etc.).

ii. using resources wisely and conducting public engagement activities in an appropriately and adequately timed manner allowing for soliciting input for content, obtaining diverse representation, undertaking the learning cycle, evaluating and reporting back to participants, partners and stakeholders.

iii. providing the public, partners, and stakeholders with timely information on

how public engagement activities were undertaken overall, and the impact on the organization's work.

iv. raising and answering concerns and disagreements about public engagement practices in a timely and professional manner through sector channels that promote mutual accountability, collaboration, and ethical practice throughout the sector. The public's trust in CSOs in Canada and globally depends on the integrity and high standards of practice of public engagement practitioners.

5. Facilitate Cooperation and Shared Learning

Examples to demonstrate this principle being applied to PE practices include:

i. collaborating with global and local or grassroots partners on the planning of public engagement initiatives (eg: engage global partners in deciding which aspects of their work should be highlighted in public engagement initiatives, and how, so that they have a level of control over the way the narrative is being formed and communicated).

ii. evaluating, reflecting on, and improving public engagement strategies, practices, programmes and policies through internal organizational learning cycles. This should be informed from an intersectional perspective and a human rights framework, and should center the voices of communities, direct beneficiaries, and external consultants/stakeholders operating from a culturally sensitive perspective and lived experiences.

iii. reinforcing OCIC's spirit of collective learning and improving public engagement practices by actively participating in sector opportunities to critically self-reflect and share insights between global partners and with other organizations and stakeholders across Canada.

6. Practice Environmental Sustainability and Justice

Examples to demonstrate this principle being applied to PE practices include:

i. giving weight to environmental impact as a key factor in operational decision-making (e.g.: collaborating with partners and suppliers who share similar environmental stewardship values).

ii. prioritizing technology to minimize total environmental impact of face-to-face events (e.g.: offering webinars and online events on a regular basis to minimize excessive travel emissions, food- related waste and printing).

iii. supporting the development and implementation of management and operation guidelines which enable the principles of this policy (e.g.: factoring environmental considerations into procurement processes; promoting good practices such as recycling; minimizing waste and conserving electricity, wherever possible).

iv. creating a supportive environment that encourages good environmental decision-making (e.g. making available

or using recyclable name badges, online agendas, using glasses and water pitchers instead of plastic cups, etc.).

v. analyzing and taking steps to lower environmental impact and reduce ecological footprint. (e.g.: using venues that are close to target participants; taking public transit; carpooling to public engagement events; offering more plant-based food and beverages; choosing venues and vendors that practice environmental sustainability, such as LEED-certified venues and the TripAdvisor GreenLeaders program; and encouraging team members to coordinate travel dates within regions to minimize the number of individual trips, especially those that involve air travel).

vi. promoting and encouraging environmental educational opportunities for all stakeholders (e.g.: making time for environmental assessments and discussions; offering training, webinars, or other awareness and capacity building sessions).

vii. making use of partnerships, networks and coalitions to support the process of documenting and disseminating information and best practices on the impact of climate change, natural resource degradation and extreme weather events, disaster reduction and mitigation, in Canada and globally.

viii. developing and implementing environmental stewardship audits, reviews, and opportunities for reflection in consultation with local stakeholders, influenced, inspired and guided by practices and knowledge relevant to the local social and cultural context. Recognize that the way these environmental considerations will be implemented will vary from context to context.

Tools/resources related to this principle:

- B Impact Assessment Tool by BLab: https://bimpactassessment.net
- Buying Fairtrade. Fairtrade Canada: https://fairtrade.ca/en-CA/Buying-Fairtrade.html
- The Nature Conservancy Calculate your Carbon Footprint calculator: https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/carbon-footprint-calculator/
- OCIC Environmental Stewardship Policy: https://www.ocic.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/OCIC-Environmental-Stewardship-January2020.pdf

DEFINITIONS

Appropriation: profiting from existing cultures by an individual not from that culture, or the juxtaposition of two different entities to celebrate one at the expense of the other.

(neo-)colonialism: a relationship in which one country imposes its ways of life, belief system, or economic system on external societies (via Nkrumah, 1965)

Emotional labour: The additional 'emotional work' that individuals from systemically underrepresented communities do when engaging in spaces that are composed of people with privilege. This often refers to the emotional energy that individuals from these communities must exert to explain and justify their lived experiences or seemingly 'harmless' microaggressions, manage their own emotions and the emotions of others when navigating sensitive topics, and the emotional energy and care that is required even beyond the instances in which these conversations take place.

- Impossible Burdens: White Institutions, Emotional Labour, and Micro-Resistance
- Black Lives Matter: the emotional toll of speaking up

Eurocentric/Eurocentricism: a biased view of the world that privileges or positions Western/European/white history, culture, knowledge and more as pre-eminent, superior, or more valid than other worldviews.

Intersectionality: Coined by Black feminist scholar Kimberle Crenshaw in her 1989 paper "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics", intersectionality refers to the ways that different identities intersect, compound, and combine to affect a person's privilege (or lack thereof). Hear more from Kimberlé Crenshaw's TED Talk.