

# International Development Week - Open Letter from Canada's Volunteer Cooperation Programs

## **Together stronger**

*From February 7th to 13th, we invite Canadians to celebrate International Development Week - a unique tradition that highlights Canada's commitment to sustainable development around the globe.*

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected our lives in significant ways. We have all been impacted by the closure of schools and businesses, job losses, and the challenges that come with physical distancing. But in Canada and around the world, those who are already the most vulnerable and marginalized are hit the hardest by this crisis.

We all know we are stronger when we work together. A recent UN survey of more than 1.5 million people in 193 countries (including Canada) showed, "97% of respondents believe that international cooperation is important for addressing global challenges". In developing countries, global solidarity and the need to fight inequalities remains urgent, and has grown due to COVID-19.

The coronavirus knows no borders and requires a united response. Many Canadians are stepping up and lending a hand to others around the world. Our international programs, implemented through Canada's Volunteer Cooperation Program in around fifty developing countries, allow Canadian volunteers, whether overseas or remotely, to directly support our partners as they navigate the challenges in their communities that have been amplified by the pandemic. This International Development Week, we wish to showcase Canadians' commitment to solidarity and their continuous efforts to help increase community resilience with our partners and recover together stronger. Today, more than ever, it is crucial that we continue our efforts towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

## **Canadian solidarity in action**

Over the past year we have learned many lessons about the importance of human connections. Canadians have been able to continue to build and maintain important relationships with stakeholders and partners including governments, civil society organisations and citizens around the world despite lockdowns, travel bans, and the collective uncertainty we find ourselves in.

The Volunteer Cooperation Program addresses many social, economic and environmental issues. All of which are tackled by Canadians here and abroad. Volunteers are at the heart of our actions and we would like to underline the invaluable contribution of these actors of change.

Isabelle Ngapa, a Canadian living in Cameroon, collaborates with civil society organizations working to improve access to quality education. Following the upheavals caused by the pandemic, these collaborations will help define the current needs of the education community. Diana Carvajal, a Canadian lawyer, works closely with local partners in Colombia to strengthen the child protection systems, with the aim of promoting the rights of boys and girls regardless of their origin, context or sexual orientation.

There are dozens more stories like those of Isabelle and Diana. Check out our celebration of solidarity on social media to meet more dedicated volunteers. #TogetherStronger

### **A path to global recovery**

Canada's global engagement is not only reflective of the solidarity and values of Canadians, it is also a path to global recovery. The journey has already begun in communities around the world, but there is so much more that needs to be done. With the support and commitment of our partners' abroad and Canadians at home we can build back better to make sure nobody is left behind.

Learn more about Canadian solidarity in action through our #TogetherStronger stories this International Development Week.

List of Signatories:

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