



Youth Involvement in International Development: Results from Town Hall Sessions Held at University of Ottawa International Development Week 2018

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Development Week Planning Executive

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1. Introduction

This report contributes to the greater literature around youth engagement in international affairs. As youth become increasingly engaged in international affairs, and specifically international development, it is crucial to examine the youth perception of these topics, the role youth see for themselves in the sphere of international development, and the ways in which their interests are being represented internationally.

As international development programs expand at universities, these contextual factors are vital in understanding the ways in which institutions can cater to the needs of students while creating spaces for them to express their views, and work in the areas that they are passionate about. Creating these spaces can involve helping youth to develop the skills and competencies needed to engage in their chosen field. It is important to combine the education that our youth receive with the agency to apply their skills and explore their interests. However, the current self-perceived role of youth in international development must be evaluated before any actionable steps can be conceived.

This report was created as a follow-up to the International Development Week Conference held at the University of Ottawa from February 5-10 in conjunction with the nation-wide International Development Week, organized by the Government of Canada. This year was the University of Ottawa's 10th International Development Week. The event is organized completely by students, and it is the largest conference of its kind in Canada. The theme for the 2018 conference was "Refocusing Development: Alternative Approaches to Intersectional Challenges." This theme sought to explore the intersectional challenges in international development, shifting the focus from the more traditional homogenous view of development. In intersectional challenges breed innovative and grassroots approaches, which can be considered more sustainable and culturally relevant.

The conference had two components: the pre-conference events and the official conference. The pre-conference events comprised of free events held on the university campus, promoted to both the general public and university students. There were five events focused on the themes of Indigenous authentic nationhood, diplomacy and development in South Korea, art used for advocacy, migration and refugee resettlement, and the implication of gender on food security. An estimated 30-40 participants attended each of these events.

The official conference followed the pre-conference events. The first day of the two-day official conference comprised of a wine-and-cheese networking event and a keynote speaker. The second day of the conference began with panels featuring a variety of speakers. There were two panel time slots, each with two options for participants to select the panel of their choice. The panel themes were: gender, peace and security; ethical production and human rights; international migration and human rights; and education as a tool for development. In the afternoon, participants attended two interactive workshops, run by professors and development professionals. Each workshop session included three options, meaning participants were able to choose two of the following themes: youth-led development initiatives; living zero waste; employable skills in international development; issues facing Canada's northern communities; policy advocacy; and youth entrepreneurship in international development. The conference had 119 participants and 30 volunteers/organizers. The event was targeted to both students and the general public. The majority of these participants were undergraduate students, while there was also representation of masters-level students, young professionals and academics.

After these participatory workshops, youth had the opportunity to discuss the themes of the conference in town hall sessions, led by students who are professionally or academically engaged in the topic discussed. Each of the 6 groups discussed a different topic in international development studies. A brief description of each topic was sent to participants in advance and participants were given the opportunity to select their preferred topic. These groups each had 10-20 participants. The themes

discussed in these town hall sessions were: Canada's foreign relations, trade and human rights; Canada's international development program and policies; gender in development; employment opportunities in international development; responsible youth opportunities to engage in the developing world; and environmental sustainability in international development.

The moderator of each group first read aloud a brief description of the topic, giving background into the major themes to be discussed. Then, the moderator guided participants through a series of predetermined questions to spark discussion. The questions were written so as to understand three major themes within each topic: 1. How students feel about the topic/how much they know 2. How they see their perspective on this topic represented in the field of international development (including policies, institutions and academia) and 3. What spaces they can identify to be able to better engage with each topic.

The town hall sessions were implemented this year for two reasons. The first reason was to enhance the experiential learning of participants. The conference was structured to mirror Kolb's model of Experiential Learning¹. The panel sessions provided a Concrete Experience in which the learners observed experts speaking on a variety of challenges. The lunch break offered time for Reflective Observation for the learners to reflect on the panels and discuss with their peers. The workshops were intentionally themed to be complementary to the morning panels, to create a space for Abstract Conceptualization in which students could interact with the concepts discussed, develop the competencies needed to act, and understand the ways in which the more theoretical panel discussions can be applied in their lives. Finally, the town hall sessions were added as a means of Active Experimentation. In many ways, the format of the town hall sessions was the same as that of the panels: a moderator guided discussion through predetermined questions. However, this time the students were the 'panellists,' giving them the opportunity to voice their opinions on each matter and actively engage with the material they learned. The town hall sessions also focused on future actions and implications of the learning.

The second purpose of the town hall sessions was to facilitate the writing of this report. Throughout the past ten years this conference has seen students have insightful interactions with conference themes. While facilitating spaces for youth to interact and discuss with other youth is very important, it also allows for youth events to operate in a silo. This report was created both as an analysis of the role youth can play in international development, and as a call to action to better understand and implement the suggestions made by the youth participants.

Due to the context of the town hall sessions taking place at a conference, no demographic information was taken as time and resources were prioritized towards creating a space that would be conducive to the learning and sharing of participants. It should also be noted that the remarks in this report demonstrate only a small sample that was not randomly selected. Participants had the opportunity of having their comments redacted from the report, but all other aspects of the discussions have been included. The views expressed by participants are the views of these participants only. The implications and recommendations included in the key findings are the opinions of the conference organizers, formulated after analyzing the town hall sessions.

The report will first begin with a summary of each of the six town hall sessions. For reference, the backgrounder and questions associated with each town hall session can be found in Appendix 1. Next, the report will highlight key themes found throughout the town hall sessions to compile a list of key findings. To understand the ways in which these key findings can be turned to actionable items, the report will pair the implications of the study with each key finding.

¹ [Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle](#)

2. Summary of Sessions

Session 1: Responsible Youth Engagement in the Developing World

Are there ways to work in the developing world without receiving payment that do not constitute voluntourism?

The general consensus of participants was that there are opportunities to engage positively in the developing world. Many students began by discussing ways in which these types of opportunities can have negative impacts. For example, a student noted that certain opportunities can be considered voluntourism if participants are solely interested in improving their CV while traveling, and in return are paid large salaries. Conversely, other opportunities may be more appropriate if they compensate volunteers with a stipend for living expenses rather than a large salary.

Along with the salary, other students noted that the organization itself could play a large role in determining whether an international opportunity is voluntourism. For example, the organization can play a large role in determining the qualifications of the volunteer. Students gave examples of teaching programs and medical programs that allow unqualified volunteers to work abroad. Several students agreed that qualifications and competencies contribute to the overall impact and appropriateness of an international opportunity. Skilled volunteers are likely to be more impactful as they are able to transfer their skills to local staff at the organizations with which they are working.

Beyond qualifications and the organization, students noted that the volunteer must also take some responsibility for the impact that their international experience will have. One student noted that voluntourism is more of a sense than an actual program, meaning that voluntourism can best be defined by the volunteer's intentions. Other participants expressed similar sentiments, noting that many volunteers go abroad to 'feel good' and while they may feel as though they are making a positive impact, this does not necessarily render their work ethic.

A participant also noted that the length of the international experience might contribute to the ethics. For example, a two-week program does not allow for the volunteer to get to know the locals. The length could also mean that participants cannot make a meaningful/sustainable impact.

The concept of white supremacy was also discussed. One participant noted that organizations that simply enter a country and tell the locals what they need are promoting white supremacy in advocating that their ideas are somehow better than the locals'. Thus, it is important to thoroughly research an organization before volunteering for them.

Conversely, one student recounted an International Development Week 2018 Speaker Series event that they had attended in November in 2018 at the embassy of Mali. The Malians at the embassy noted that short term volunteer opportunities can help, as the country itself does not currently have the capacity for the amount of development projects it needs.

Lastly, a student noted that providing funds for locally led development project might be more valuable.

What role does your personal human capital play in deciphering this difference? For example, is there an ethical difference between:

1. *an international development student with basic first aid (versus a minor in social sciences of health) volunteering in administering vaccinations at a health clinic in Ecuador for three weeks, and*
2. *an international development student with professional experience in communications, volunteering with creating social media content for a grassroots English-run NGO in South Africa for three months*

Students began by discussing the difference in qualifications between the two scenarios. There was a consensus that a volunteer should not do a job abroad that they would not do in Canada. Among these qualifications needed was language. In scenario 1, the volunteer will not be able to have a meaningful impact without the language skills needed to communicate with locals.

Students also recognized that there is a higher risk of danger for locals associated with scenario 1. For example, giving somebody the wrong injection could have severely harmful effects.

Another common theme was capacity building. While scenario 2 may also have problematic elements, it allows for capacity building. In training the organization in these skills, the volunteer can leave after three months knowing what the work done will carry on in the future.

Another student argued that both examples are unethical. The capacity to do this work does, in fact, exist in the developing world, but foreigners come in and do the work instead. In doing so, they take jobs away from locals. Meanwhile, a lot of people in developing countries leave their country of origin to find work abroad.

This started a discussion on diaspora and the ways in which diaspora and remittances can contribute to development in a more productive way than voluntourism. For example, nationals of a developing country can go abroad to seek education and training and then return to their home country to work. Nationals may also leave if they are medical professions and are seeking to work in a more developed health system. One student noted that it would be very productive to have systems in place, similar to voluntourism or more long-term international volunteer placements, specifically for facilitating temporary volunteer placements for those who have left their country of origin and would like to return to help.

How can self-reflection and understanding one's own positionality be used in ensuring that international engagement opportunities remain responsible?

Students began by repeating the earlier sentiment that if one is not qualified to work in a certain field in Canada, they are not qualified to do this work abroad.

The way in which one presents themselves as a volunteer is also very important. For example, many volunteers glamorize their volunteer experiences through prioritizing photos over meaningful work. This culture is also present amongst students taking a gap year between high school and university. Voluntourism is touted as being a way to travel while gaining valuable work experience.

Volunteers should also understand their own positionality while abroad. Participants agreed that it is important to understand one's own privilege being from a developed country. In understanding this privilege, it is important to understand the limitations of the work that one is able to do and the impact that this work will have.

It is also important for volunteers to understand the ways in which their host community will view their actions. For example, community members may expect that the volunteer have more skills,

knowledge or experience than they actually have. Participants discussed the concept of Western superiority and how these types of international volunteer trips can reinforce this concept.

Conversely, participants also noted that international development students do have certain talents that are valuable in international development work, but it is important to address personal limitations. This may include dropping one's ego. Participants also noted that international development students have a responsibility to educate their peers on the harm that voluntourism can have. Eliminating these types of trips will take a partnership of actively working together between development professionals and volunteers from outside of the field.

Students also noted that it is not realistic to aim to end all international volunteer work. Even if there are boycotts, this does not fully eliminate demand. Even decreasing the demand will not solve the problem, as those who are seeking voluntourism opportunities *will* find these opportunities. It is more important to find alternatives that have a more positive impact.

Session 2: Environmental Sustainability in International Development

It is important to understand that many indigenous and marginalized populations rely on the natural environment, and that systems of capitalism, colonization and globalization have further marginalized these groups through environmental degradation. In understanding these concepts, how can we engage the role of indigenous populations globally in conversations and action in environmental sustainability?

Participants first discussed concepts of representation and the need to engage with people at the community level to ensure that their concerns can be heard. Then, we need to talk more about the issues these communities face so that people and policy makers understand the contexts better. Participants noted that this type of Indigenous representation could be implemented in spaces such as the one created this week for IDW.

Beyond representation, participants noted that Indigenous people need to have their voices heard. Participants discussed the issue of food insecurity to demonstrate this concept. One of the main issues faced by Indigenous populations is food insecurity. Yet, Indigenous communities are often victims of land grabs, which worsen the situation. Participants argued more actors must be involved for things to change.

Similarly, participants noted that developing countries often face the same problem: they lack fertile land to grow their food on because foreigners buy those lands as an investment/prevision in the case of future food crises. This problem also happens with water sources.

Participants concluded that we must form a global identity and figure out a plan. Indigenous communities, state governments and institutions need to work together and in the same direction. Participants noted that solutions have to be found in cooperation instead of being imposed on communities.

Participants still questioned how traditional ways can be balanced with innovation. In order to balance traditional knowledge/customs with innovation, knowledge needs to be shared from the traditional sector to the modern sector (indigenous knowledge of techniques and ecosystems, cultural aspect of practices, etc.) and the other way around (using innovations to make practices more sustainable, environment friendly, etc.). The participants discussed that getting together to spread the understanding of different practices is the way towards finding an in-between.

Participants argued that we do have adequate resources, but we just don't use them properly. They are not distributed evenly and they are often wasted. To explain this unequal distribution, participants discussed ways in which ethics can be disregarded for economic reasons. However, they also noted that

there are many other factors that impact the distribution of resources and that exacerbate insecurity, such as the fast population growth in many developing countries (women's empowerment is important to slow population growth).

Industrialization has long been viewed as a model for development; however, this model is now being highly criticized. How can countries in the Global South develop economically while incorporating environmental sustainability in this growth?

Participants agreed that development is not going to happen through international aid only. Developed countries need to help developing countries in a more concrete way by bringing them technical support and helping developing countries strengthen their core institutions. Participants considered that it is vital to help form governments that people can trust, along with quality education and health services, an independent and accessible justice system, and an active job market. More importantly, developed countries need to lead the way by giving a better example of equality and adaptation to climate change.

To demonstrate the ways in which countries can develop sustainably, participants discussed urban agriculture (in Cuba for example) as a good example of sustainable growth. It is a way to strengthen food security (easier access to a diversity of products), to share the revenue from food consumption (self-sufficiency, smaller scale production, etc.), to educate people (through the practice of agriculture within their communities) and to increase the amount of green spaces in urban areas, which reduces pollution. Participants concluded that developing countries should definitely invest in urban agriculture.

In order to enhance the discussion, the moderator then asked participants if they think developing countries can start implementing sustainable development strategies or if industrialisation has to happen first. Participants responded that development is not a linear process, and developing countries don't have to follow the northern development model. Processes of development evolve; countries can likely develop just as well in terms of human growth, but in a more sustainable way. Hopefully, by developing in a more respectful way, these countries can avoid the mistakes that were made in the capitalistic model and not become overly attached to material things and thus, end up with more equal societies. Participants agreed that the world cannot sustain development as it happened in the past anymore.

To build on these sentiments, the moderator asked if a country needs to be capitalistic to be part of the global economy. Participants responded that things will change and sustainable solutions will become more in demand. Thus, countries that are more sustainable will likely be more powerful in the future. Developed countries are slowly moving towards more sustainable economies, but they need to adapt faster to respond to environment issues. Participants also noted that favouring south-south trade agreements over north-south trade agreements can allow developing countries to thrive in a bigger market while differentiating themselves from the classic industrialisation model. If foreign investment is the mother of economic growth, it also means that a lot of resources are going out of the developing countries. Participants concluded that a world in which all resources are going to the same place (developed countries) is definitely not sustainable.

Participants thought it important to discuss how the populations being discussed during this town hall session were not present to advocate for themselves (indigenous people or people living in developing countries). The participants discussed the importance of remembering these absences, because we need to find more ways to discuss *with* the people we want to work for. These people want to be able to control their development and do it their way. They often just need the means. Participants concluded that it is impossible for people from the outside, especially if they are from another culture, to understand how a certain community wishes to live (develop). There is a lack of recognition and respect towards that.

Can individual actions in environmentalism have a global impact, or will only a sustained movement make an impact?

Participants began the conversation by noting that it is often difficult to take action against climate change because this involves going against the status quo and that many people will not believe that these actions can have a global impact. Participants agreed that it is important to not get discouraged by that. If many people resist, things are going to change and that small actions (sustainable modes of transportation, waste management, food regime, etc.) can have an impact. Even without broadcasting these changes or encouraging others to join, others will notice and see that it is possible to live differently and still be happy. They might consequently follow the example that they see set (it can have a significantly greater impact on young people who are constantly learning from people around them). Participants agreed that individual action is the first step towards a global change of mentality. Therefore, a change towards more ethical individual consumption and resource management is needed.

In a discussion on ethical consumption, participants discussed that it can be difficult in our technology-based society to not follow technological trends. For example, people want the most efficient phones and laptops as they do not want to waste time. However, it is also important to reflect on one's consumption. Participants discussed how this reflection can involve only buying/owning necessities, purchasing sustainable products that will last longer, decreasing energy consumption and using one's purchasing power to encourage equitable production processes.

To build on this discussion, the moderator asked how society can go from a capitalist and materialist society to a more sustainable one that consumes less. Participants responded that getting away from materialism requires differentiating between the importance of material things and human relations. Society needs to reconnect with what is really important to us. Our minds have been distorted by ads and a culture of the American dream. Participants concluded that things are changing, and this can be seen with movements such as the vegan movement. Participants had hope that this momentum of change would continue and accelerate in future generations.

Session 3: Gender and Development

What is the importance of integrating men and boys into discussions of gender and development?

This discussion began with several of the male participants noting their positionality and how this impacts their role in the gender and development movement. The men in the group agreed that it is their responsibility to understand the issues facing women abroad. More specifically, they noted that it is important for boys to learn at a young age how to put themselves in the shoes of their female counterparts. One of the male participants offered the example of teaching boys in youth shelters about what assault is and how it can be prevented. It was noted that such actions could continue to grow this movement. Another boy mentioned that it can be difficult to acknowledge gender inequality and he himself has been in situations abroad where he wished he had spoken up about inequalities he had seen.

Another participant noted that it is important to acknowledge that we do not all start at the same level. For example, women are often not taken seriously in professional environments, but men have the opportunity to see their advantage and use this to elevate the women around them to be at the same starting point as their male counterparts.

In order for men to be able to elevate the women around them, another participant noted that it is important for men to be included in conversations of gender equality. Previously, women and girls have been excluded from conversations on development. Now that the conversation on the rights of women and girls in development has been started, it is important to ensure that men and boys are not left out. The participants noted that women and girls are more likely to naturally join these conversations and understand the need for feminism, but it is less likely that men and boys will naturally see the need for feminism.

Relating the conversation back to international development, participants argued that a variety of development issues come from gender inequalities. Therefore, engaging men and boys in discussions of gender and development would help to approach the root causes of a wide variety of development challenges. Participants discussed how these challenges are too large to face without men working in collaboration with women. Fundamentally, gender equality cannot be achieved if only one gender is present in the discussion, be that women or men. Moreover, excluding men from feminism could create an “us vs. them” situation where men feel excluded from the discussion and as though it might threaten their rights. Therefore, participants noted that it is also important to consider the male perspective on these issues.

How do dominant discussions of gender and development that focus primarily on women exclude and/or further marginalize other gender identities and expressions?

Participants discussed the multidimensional nature of marginalization and how intersecting forms of marginalization can create layers. In only considering one layer, so much of one’s identity is ignored. A participant noted that in ignoring intersectional identities, one does more harm than good. If not even progressive social movements can include these identities, who will include them?

Another participant noted that it is important to consider discussions of feminism beyond the binary view of gender that sees feminism as equality between men and women, but excludes other gender expressions and identities. Participants agreed, with one participant noting that this binary view can harm certain people while hindering development as a whole because it imposes a westernized view of what development is. The participant noted how much development theorists and practitioners could learn from those with intersecting identities in the developing world.

The participants agreed that it is important to distinguish between sex and gender when doing development work and to create movements and organizations that are inclusive of a spectrum of gender expressions and identities.

Do you believe that Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy addresses gender and development in a way that is equitable? What are the benefits of enacting such a policy? What are some potential problems with the policy?

A participant began the conversation by stating that the policy does not sound equitable. They noted that a major criticism of feminism is that it is only about women, and the phrasing of this policy seems to do just that. However, a truly feminist policy should focus on equality between *all* genders.

Another participant rebutted that, while the name of the policy is directed at women, the body of the policy is far more inclusive. However, the fundamental purpose of the policy seems to focus too much on women.

A participant responded to these remarks by suggesting that the government could put more concrete measures in place to demonstrate the ways in which the policy promotes inclusion for all because the body of the policy does seem to be targeted at equality for all.

Another participant argued that the policy seems to be outcome based, rather than practice based, leading it to be very idealistic. While the desired outcome is clear in the policy and discussions on this new approach, the steps are not well outlined. Therefore, it is hard to see the policy as realistic.

Another participant also critiqued the policy in saying that it creates a very high standard that they may not be able to reach, but it gives the government the opportunity to say that they tried for this

standard, even if they do not reach their desired outcomes. The policy can also be used to ‘prove’ the feminist agenda of the government, even when they are not acting in the best interest of women’s equality. Similarly, a participant said that this policy is likely tokenistic and a way for the government to have a token feminist policy without actually working for equity.

What can Canadian youth do to have a positive impact on the realization of the rights of women and girls, both here in Canada and internationally? (or just in development)

A participant immediately noted that feminism courses should be mandatory for all university students, including discussions of sexual violence. The participant thought that it would be important to teach these topics as any other mandatory course is taught to stress its importance.

Another student discussed the concept of western feminism and the importance of listening to women in the developing world and understanding what feminism means to them.

Participants agreed that education could play a role in dispelling harmful myths about feminism. For example, one participant gave the anecdote of telling a male friend that she is a feminist. The male friend responded by saying that he believes in gender equality, but “not the other stuff,” demonstrating the misconstrued image that society has of feminism. Another participant related this to a male family member saying she is “one of those feminists,” with a negative connotation. This led participants to discuss the ways in which boys can be reached to learn about gender equality before they learn these biases. Several participants agreed that feminism courses should be mandatory in junior or senior high schools.

Participants noted that due to this lack of education, many of the men in their lives do not understand gender issues or are shocked when they do take a feminism course. Many of the participants also gave anecdotes of the boys in their lives not understanding what constitutes harassment or assault. Participants agreed that it is important to have these discussions with friends to educate them and to make sure this is a conversation that matters. It is everyone’s responsibility to educate their friends when they are displaying problematic behavior.

To conclude the discussion, the moderator suggested that the group brainstorm three actionable items relating to the topics discussed. The actionable items chosen were:

1. Educate yourself and others
2. Have open conversations
3. Get engaged
 - a. Join conversations, organization, subscribe to related news sources
 - b. Small actions make a big change

Session 4: Canada’s International Development Policy and Programs

Note: this town hall session took place in French, but the responses have been translated for the purpose of this report.

Do you believe that Canada should increase or decrease the share of Gross National Income that it contributes to Official Development Assistance? Why?

The first participant noted that the answer to this question is dependent on many factors and that Canada’s needs must be understood within the context of Canada’s national and international agenda. For example, Canada’s own needs in education and health must be considered.

Another participant argued that Canada should increase the budget to reach the 0.7% target. However, it is also important that Canada focus on aid efficiency.

Conversely, another participant suggested that there is no transparency in the government when it comes to international development assistance and how the money is spent. A lot of participants agreed with these criticisms and had questions on where the funding is actually spent.

Participants also noted that Canada does a lot of international development work with women, but there is little follow-up with these programs.

The discussion of sectorial funding led participants to discuss geographic regions that may receive more funding than others. While participants noted that Canada does not limit its funding to specific programs, there is a lot of funding that goes to Haiti, among other countries that continue to return to the forefront of Canada's funding agenda.

A participant argued that Canada funds projects, rather than programs. For example, in Haiti, Canada will work on a project with a set time frame and budget. When they do this type of aid, they bring specialists instead of working on transferring knowledge and skills.

A participant contended that aid effectiveness is more important than funding. More specifically, if money is not distributed effectively, the project will not be impactful or sustainable. The participant believes that Canada should contribute a greater share of its GNI to ODA, but this must be done while focusing on aid effectiveness. The participant argued that there must be a bank for developing countries to store this funding, and that there should be increased management of funding.

Other participants agreed, adding that efficiency is more important than the quantity of aid.

A participant noted that a solution to this could be cooperating with INGOs and local NGOs. For example, cooperating with local NGOs could help to avoid government corruption.

Do you believe that the consultation period [as a part of the International Assistance Review] properly included youth voices? Why or why not? How could this be improved upon?

A participant who had worked with Global Affairs Canada believed that the consultations did involve youth, but noted that she would likely not have known about these consultations had she not worked at Global Affairs Canada. She gave a basic summary of the actors present, as many participants had not heard about the International Assistance Review or the consultations that took place. There was a general consensus that these consultations were not promoted very well, and did not seem accessible to the public.

Another participant discussed the works of a theorist who stated that it is problematic to prioritize the youth opinion. However, the participant does not believe that NGOs are listening to this perspective yet and they are unable to differentiate between what people actually need and the politics of prioritizing the youth opinion.

A participant noted that consultations take both time and resources. From an organizational point of view, it can be difficult to invite everyone. However, the participant also pointed out the significance of a group of international development students not knowing about these consultations. Many other participants agreed.

The discussion then had dialogue between participants, clarifying the logistics of the consultations.

The participants found several benefits in the consultations as it allowed for an in-depth discussion on feminist values and the treatment of children in development, which largely reflects Canadian values. However, the participants would like concrete examples of the effectiveness of these consultations and the opinions of individuals consulted.

What are the pros and cons of Canada's Feminist Aid Policy?

In considering aid effectiveness, participants discussed that this policy can be considered very positive because we can see that the aid will be concentrated on gendered projects, thus improving the effectiveness of these projects. However, there can be negatives as well in that it does not address *all* sectors. Conversely, participants also mentioned that gender is a vast subject that does address many sectors, including education and health.

Contrary to these positive statements, another participant argued that the minister made this move as a political statement. This policy is focused on economic outcomes and only sees women as economic agents. Many participants agreed, noting that seeing women as economic actors ignores other areas of their well being. Another participant added that these economic targets might be difficult to achieve without also focusing on educating men.

One participant argued that it is very important to ensure that women have access to the political institutions *already* present in their country of origin.

A participant discussed the harms that tying this type of aid could have and that this distinction is very important in evaluating the policy.

In summary, the group had four major points to note:

1. They would like to see aid become more transparent, with simplified version of the information accessible to the larger population of Canada.
2. The priority of aid should be the efficiency/effectiveness and therefore aid should be results-oriented.
3. There must be a greater transfer of knowledge.
4. There is a need to look beyond economic factors in feminist aid to consider the political context.

Session 5: Canada's foreign relations and trade policies as a catalyst for international development and human rights

Does Canada have a right or responsibility to use its leverage in trade to advance human rights? Does this breach the understanding of state sovereignty? Why or why not?

Participants began the conversation by discussing the role that trade sanctions can play in advancing human rights. For example, a participant explained that sanctions played an important role in affecting Apartheid in South Africa without breaching state sovereignty. However, these sanctions can only be considered 'good' if they were created to help people.

A participant then brought up trade sanctions in the concept of Right to Protect. In this way, trade sanctions are positive because they incite change through incentives, allowing states freedom to create change in a way that will work in their national context. Participants agreed that the neoliberal market system, economic liberalization and a general increase in interconnectedness means that all foreign relations are likely to consider trade.

Participants then discussed trade as a form of diplomacy. Several participants noted that they do not agree with the use of conditionality in general, but that this principle could be utilized to persuade states to take human rights abuses seriously. This is, again, an important tactic that can be used to create change without breaching state sovereignty. However, participants made clear that this diplomacy could be positive or *negative*.

The moderator furthered discussion by asking if there is a point past which one state cannot limit trade with another. Participants responded that the answer to this depends on the extent to which the benefits of trade trickle down to the population.

Throughout the entire conversation, participants noted that trade can be an efficient and effective method to support human rights. Specifically, a participant noted that *Canada* has this responsibility to encourage human rights through sanctions. However, another participant noted that this might not be effective, as the same countries that use the sweatshops that sanctions are trying to ban likely do not have the resources needed to advance human rights.

Ultimately, participants agreed that the answer to this question must be country and context-specific. When trade sanctions are not appropriate, other methods can be used to enforce human rights. For example, participants suggested that while trade can be used as leverage, advocacy, bilateral talks, assistance in policy creation and other methods that do not involve trade sanctions could be used.

A participant noted that it would be interesting to see the dynamic that would ensue if Canada imposed such trade sanctions on the United States.

Another participant discussed the ways in which trade can keep countries accountable to their own international obligations.

Participants then discussed the double standard present in discussions on international human rights. In this way, developed countries can ignore their own human rights issues, but the international community is actively pursuing ways to punish certain countries in the developing world for having a low standard of human rights.

What are some examples of trade agreements in which Canada is or isn't working to advance development and human rights?

Participants began this discussion by contemplating the potential impacts of the current NAFTA negotiations. For example, in the negotiations there is a big focus on gender based analysis, and incorporating human rights. While some participants thought that these priorities might be slowing down trade talks, others argued that it is very positive that Canada is promoting these priorities on the world stage.

Another participant stated that there is absolutely no excuse for the current arms deal with Saudi Arabia in that it does not advance development and human rights.

Participants noted that Canada is currently looking for a very comprehensive trade deal with China. However, this has not yet been successful. These participants argued that while China has committed and continues to commit a variety of human rights abuses, this is not often spoken about in the international sphere, largely due to China's global influence and power. A participant also included that Canada is not likely to be the state to address these human rights abuses in China because Canada is working to develop a strong trading relationship with China.

How are youth voices integrated in trade policy consultation? In what ways could this consultation be improved?

Several participants had seen the online consultations available on the Government of Canada website. A participant commented that they are employing the same method used in creating the development assistance policy by talking to civilians and civil society groups in open discussion.

A participant noted that youth advocacy groups could be important in discussing human rights issues at home and abroad.

None of the participants had directly heard of any trade consultations, and they noted that this demonstrates that there is not enough youth engagement in such consultations.

To continue the conversation, the moderator asked if there are any specific ways in which countries can be pressured without negatively impacting local citizens. A participant responded that working with local NGOs in the broader discourse of development may prove more effective than trade sanctions. No matter the method taken, whether it be funding, advocacy or bilateral talks, it is of vital importance to communicate with local NGOs to ensure that they too can mobilize and advocate. This will also ensure that all policy changes can come through grassroots channels, rather than international intervention.

Another participant contended that incentive programs could be used to improve human rights. This could particularly be done through conditional aid programming.

Conversely, another participant argued that such conditionalities on aid do not work. Conditional aid may appear to be altruistic in nature, but it is also often used to perpetuate certain political strategies. This participant suggested that Canada should form alliances with governmental actors who have similar values to Canada. In this way, Canada can assemble a larger group of people, perhaps even local policy makers, who would like to advocate for change.

Many participants agreed that incentivizing policies through a grassroots perspective will in turn influence trade and benefit human rights.

Session 6: Employment Opportunities in International Development

When looking for your first job in international development, what did you find the largest barrier to finding relevant employment to be?

Many participants noted that employers are looking for “employable skills” and an average of 3-5 years in a job relevant to these skills. Participants stressed that this experience is difficult to get when all jobs in the market require such experience. However, a student also noted that the Employment Outcomes of International Development Studies Graduates written by Dr. Rebecca Tiessen and Dr. John Cameron found that a good portion of students are actually employed within the first few years after their graduation.

Some participants discussed the language barrier and the importance of speaking more than one language when looking for jobs in international development. Other participants experienced employers hiring only those with higher education, such as a Master’s degree.

Participants also noted that employers were looking for applicants with international experience. Participants then discussed unpaid internships and the problematic nature of voluntourism. One participant argued that these internships, while valuable in developing one’s career, may take a field work position

from a local worker. This can be highly problematic in nature and hinders development, even if it is an important step in building the capacity of the development worker.

Many participants agreed that, while there are jobs available after graduation, the field of international development is very broad and many people do not want to end up in sectors, such as finance, where they are unable to apply what they have learned in school.

What skills and competencies did you develop in your undergrad that you found to be valuable in the job market, and what skills and competencies needed in the job market do you wish you had developed during your undergrad?

Several participants cited a co-op program as the most beneficial way in which they developed employable skills and competencies. One participant stated that their co-op placement allowed them to find useful information while developing technical skills. Others added that co-op placements help students to develop important teamwork and cooperation skills (said skills can also be developed through group projects).

Participants also noted that their co-op placements have helped them to better develop skills that they have learned in class. For example, a student had learned how to do a literature review application in class and then completed a similar task in their co-op placement. This allowed the student to have a rich co-op experience in which they had important skills to contribute to the team while also reinforcing and improving upon skills learned in class.

Participants reiterated the value of speaking more than one or two languages.

There were certain elements of coursework that participants also cited as being helpful in developing marketable skills and competencies. One participant noted that group work can improve cooperation and teamwork skills. Another student explained that they learned many important skills from a volunteer placement that they were able to complete as course requirement. Participants also enforced the importance of courses that teach practical models of project management, such as Results Based Management.

As a young professional working in the field of international development, how do you see your perspective being used in the workplace?

Note: As many of the participants had never worked in international development, the conversation largely changed to instead reflect their views on the study of international development.

The first participant to speak explained that their last co-op placement demonstrated the intersectional nature of development challenges as the projects all link to one another. The participant noted that these opinions that they developed quickly crossed over into the workplace, and they were able to integrate this new perspective into more areas of their work.

A participant noted the importance of understanding the context and culture associated with projects, in order to alter one's ideology to meet the needs of the changing contexts of development.

Participants also explained that young professionals in international development are also likely to be aware of the differentiation of cultures, making young professionals fit to work in these changing, cross-cultural environments.

Participants agreed that the general perspective of youth working in development has come from the critical nature of their social sciences degrees. This includes critical thinking and understanding that a one-size-fits-all approach cannot be taken in development.

Considering the changing nature of one's perspective on development, participants agreed that their thoughts and views have changed greatly since high school. In high school, they believed that international development would allow them to save the world. However, university has made their perspective more critical and dependent on an analysis of different perspectives and the complexity of development challenges.

This led participants back to a discussion on the complexities of international humanitarian work as an employment opportunity. They noted that the solution is likely as complex as the challenge.

Participants discussed that they are motivated to study international development by these complex challenges and the critical nature of development studies. However, many undergraduate students noted that the critical and complex nature of development challenges can also discourage them from further pursuing their degree. For example, as well-intentioned development projects continue to fail, it is difficult to be optimistic about the future of development. While a participant noted that being overly optimistic in international development can be harmful, the program can take away *all* optimism.

Participants discussed the ways in which they, as youth working in international development, can begin to address development challenges and to find "that one solution" that might actually work. A student noted that they are in co-op for that very reason, to see different "solutions" in action and to evaluate what is working.

However, not all students are in a co-operative education program or have access to these relevant work opportunities. Participants noted that volunteering at home or abroad can be expensive due to program fees and missed wages. Without this type of practical experience, the program can be very discouraging.

With all of the previous being said, participants agreed that it is better to do something rather than nothing.

3. Key Findings and Implications

While each of the six sessions was vastly different in nature, certain key themes were seen across the sessions. In analyzing these commonalities, certain key findings can be drawn relating to youth involvement in international development.

- Many participants noted that universities have a role to play increasing the agency of youth in international development, while giving them the skills, competencies and understanding of development issues to be effective and appropriate actors in international development. For example, participants noted that mandatory courses in feminism could be beneficial in including men and boys into the gender and development movement. Participants also discussed the ways in which skills and competencies learned at university can make a volunteer more fit to work abroad, making the concept of international volunteer work less problematic. During the session on environmental sustainability, participants noted that increasing the representation of Indigenous peoples in university spaces would better integrate Indigenous values, needs and experiences into discussions of international development. In the session on employment opportunities, participants cited university programs such as for-credit volunteer placements and co-op programs

as valuable opportunities for experiential learning. Participants also noted that courses that teach project management skills or include group projects can help to build employable skills.

These observations clearly demonstrate that students believe that universities have an important role to play in each of the topics discussed. Students have identified institutional changes that could be made to include more people into certain conversations and to teach students that these forms of inclusion are valuable and necessary. In including courses on feminism and Indigenous issues and culture, universities could expose students to concepts of inclusion and equity while also opening up these spaces to increase representation. Universities also have a valuable role to play in ensuring that graduates are well equipped with both work experience and the skills needed to find meaningful employment.

- In several sessions, students recognized a need for greater representation of the groups being discussed in each town hall session. For example, in the discussion on responsible youth engagement in the developing world, participants addressed that, while there are some problematic aspects to international volunteering, it is important to understand the ways in which people from the countries hosting these volunteers view their work. During the discussions on environmental sustainability, participants similarly noted that any approaches to Indigenous engagement must be made in cooperation *with* Indigenous people, by including their representation in these discussions. Participants explicitly noted that they were unable to have an inclusive or fully productive conversation on models of development (alternative to industrialization), as there were no members of the communities discussed present. Similarly, the discussion on gender and development focused largely on the need to integrate *all* genders into the conversation, both to make policy more inclusive and to ensure that the movement has broad and sustainable support. The participants very clearly stated that they did not think it appropriate for them to make assumptions or decisions on behalf of any group. They also demonstrated that they are looking to have more perspective represented in discussions of international development.

These findings have implications for university programs and conferences, such as the conference at which these discussions took place. The participants present valued lived experience in the field of international development and demonstrated a need for these types of lived experiences to be integrated into their learning. Students also expressed that they valued inclusion and representation of a variety of groups and perspectives, another concept that could be applied in the context of universities.

- In line with calling for wider representation within spaces that discuss policies and strategies for international development, participants were very aware of their own positionality of intersecting privileges and oppressions. In many of the conversations, participants stopped to situate their position within the larger scheme of the topic being discussed. For example, in both the session on voluntourism and the session on employable skills, participants clearly demonstrated that their positionality can lead to perpetuating harmful stereotypes, perceptions of the developing world, and micro-level impressions of North-South relations. Similarly, in the discussion on environmental sustainability, participants noted that it is likely not inclusive, or equitable to have discussions about the values of those in developing countries or Indigenous people without proper representation. More importantly, they noticed the harm that can come from having these discussions without proper representation. In the discussions on gender, male participants noted their unique positionality in not facing the same discrimination as their female counterparts, but having the opportunity to use their privilege for advocacy. Similarly, the female participants discussed how their intersecting identities are important to understand the ways in which different women experience femininity, and feminism. During the session on Canada's international development policies, a participant also noted the ways in which youth must realize their limits,

and how this is not the always most important perspective to consider. A similar sentiment was expressed in the discussion on voluntourism with a student noting that young development professionals are very limited in the work that they are actually capable of doing.

These conversations clearly demonstrate that the youth participants are very interested in being involved and engaged in international development, but that they also understand that there are limits to the work that they are capable of doing. Participants stated in several contexts that their own positionality limits their ability to work within the context of international development. Understanding this general feeling and the literature that reinforces these ideas, it is important that institutions working to engage youth in international development also understand the ways in which youth view and interact with their positionality. Not only is there a need for more representation in these discussions, but youth participants also seemed unsure of how to take measures that will allow them to recognize their positionality and move forward in a respectful and appropriate manner. While there were many discussions of the harmful ways in which privilege can monopolize the popular discourse causing the erasure of other voices, participants did not often discuss the ways in which they can work to either minimize the harm caused by their privilege or use their privilege to help amplify the voices of others, bringing these perspectives into popular discourse. Institutions working to engage youth could teach these skills to meet the needs of youth, while also utilizing the strength that they have demonstrated in understanding positionality.

- In both the session on trade policies and the session on Canada's international development policies, participants concluded that there should be greater involvement of youth and the general public in consultations. In both sessions, youth did not have a good understanding of any consultations that were held or how they could get involved. However, in both sessions youth participants also had very concrete examples of aspects of policies they would change or have strong opinions on. Similarly, on the session on gender and development, participants were also very critical of the Feminist International Assistance Policy. This small sample demonstrates that youth do not feel as though their perspectives are being represented through Canadian programs and policies. More than this lack of representation, the lack of knowledge on consultation opportunities demonstrates that youth are not aware of the opportunities available to them to express their opinions.

This lack of representation and lack of consultation demonstrates that institutions looking to engage more Canadians in the development of foreign policies are missing an important group. In order to reach Canadian youth, it is clear that different methods must be employed than those used in the past.

- Through the various discussions, participants demonstrated that it can be difficult to find ways to engage in international development as a youth. For example, in both the discussion on voluntourism and the discussion on employment opportunities, youth expressed that they find most available international volunteering opportunities to be harmful. However, there was also a general agreement that this type of work *can* be done in an appropriate way. This demonstrates that there is a gap between the ways in which youth believe they should engage in the developing world and the opportunities that are currently being made available to them. As participants pointed out, the demand for international volunteer opportunities is not going to go away, but it is the responsibility of institutions such as universities and the Government of Canada who are interacting with young development workers to promote appropriate engagement in the developing world.

Participants also noted that it can be difficult to find a local job in international development without practical experience, which can lead to young professionals engaging in problematic international volunteer opportunities to build their resumes, or to leave the field all together. While these findings represent only a small sample of young professionals, these are important concerns for universities to consider in discussions of retention within the field.

- The participants displayed an overwhelming sense of pessimism towards both international development and their role in the field. International Development students are often pessimistic about the field. In part, they are pessimistic because they feel discouraged by the many problems that they see with international development. Participants demonstrated this in their discussions of failed projects and policies where few successful or positive examples were given. Participants also had very cyclical discussions in which as soon as they seemed on the brink of a solution, another problem would arise, often the base problem they were originally discussing. Many participants even pointed out that this can make them pessimistic. Additionally, students can appear afraid to be optimistic as this optimism is often associated with naivety, a "saviour complex," or a general misunderstanding of the complex reality of the field. Participants noted the ways in which their post-secondary education has made them question prior conceptions of development, making them in turn more pessimistic about the field. It was clear that many students see a correlation between education and pessimism.

Participants made it clear that it is important that youth be critical of mainstream ideas of development that simplify or glamorize development, as discussed in the sessions. It is important that youth continue to question good intention policies and programs and go further to demand intersectional approaches and the inclusion of those being discussed in all discussions and decisions. It is important that youth do not seek to be involved where they do not feel qualified or overstep boundaries created by their positionality. These values were reiterated in every discussion, throughout the conference, and in a variety of literature. But what participants also noted is that they believe that these core values equate to pessimism.

It is the role of institutions, professionals and academics who wish to engage youth in international development to ensure that the central values brought up in these sessions do not equate to pessimism and that this pessimism does not equate to inaction. If young professionals in international development are seeking to avoid an optimistic view of the field, it is important to provide an alternative that does not breed inaction. For example, the opposite of pessimism could be considered an active questioning of international development concepts, an active engagement in civil society, a more critical way of thinking, a willingness to understand more perspectives, or an increased desire for equity, among many different ways in which institutions can harness this willingness to reject optimism and turn these sentiments into a productive and innovative force.

4. Conclusion

While a literature review, larger sample and broader analysis of the key findings could find common themes and causes between the sentiments discussed in this report and the broader literature, this work would be outside of the scope of this project. The purpose of this report has been to identify the perspectives of youth participants of the University of Ottawa International Development Week 2018 in order to understand their views on key issues, how they feel these views are represented internationally, and the role that related institutions can play in ensuring that youth are engaged in international development. Although the findings from each session were often very contextual to participants' opinions on the topic being discussed, the clear key findings demonstrate the ways in which institutions can include the youth perspective in their work. As institutions such as universities and governments seek to increase youth representation, it is important to understand the barriers that youth see and the ways in

which youth would like to engage with international development. The International Development Week conference has run at the University of Ottawa for 10 years, but the danger of a student-run conference is that often students create an echo chamber, and the institutions that are working to represent them do not have the opportunity to gain insights into these discussions. This report is working to do just that, to ensure that these discussions are recorded, and distributed on a broad platform. Such a report can also be useful in creating a benchmark for future studies.

While the views expressed in this report are those of individual students, they do clearly demonstrate key considerations that must be made when understanding how to better engage youth in international development. Youth recognize that institutions such as universities and governments have a role to play in creating programs and strategies that will ensure that they can both become involved in international development, and develop skills that will allow them to act in a meaningful and appropriate way. Youth also recognized the ways in which their own positionality can determine how they can and should engage in international development, leading them to call for greater representation of perspectives, backgrounds and lived experience, emphasizing that discussions cannot take place *about* a people *without* the people present.

Overwhelmingly, participants demonstrated that they recognize the inherent issues with mainstream approaches to development, but they do not see the ways in which they can create appropriate solutions. While participants are clearly passionate about or interested in international development, an assumption that can be drawn from their attendance of a weekend conference on international development, they often did not see ways in which they can engage in international development in a way that is in line with their values. Interestingly, many participants identified themselves as ‘pessimists’ in the field of international development, yet they still attended a conference discussing major themes and innovations in international development. This alone demonstrates that participants are looking for ways to engage in the field. The participants also had well-developed opinions, criticisms and innovative ideas to offer to the field. It is important to ensure that spaces are created for youth to use their perspectives, develop employable competencies, learn from others, and engage in international development in a way that is appropriate and productive.

Appendix 1:

Background information and questions related to each town hall session.

Canada's foreign relations and trade policies as a catalyst for international development and human rights

Trade is a major driver of foreign relations and international influence. Outside of Official Development Assistance, trade is a way that Canada can influence its global partners. To advance international development, trade policies can be created to grant favourable conditions to developing countries, thus allowing them to expand their markets. Trade deals can also be made, or not made, in order to further human rights. However, there are also concerns that these should not be the main goals of Canada's trade agenda. In order to ensure that these varying views are heard, the Government of Canada regularly holds consultations on trade agreements.²

Questions:

Does Canada have a right or responsibility to use its leverage in trade to advance human rights? Does this breach the understanding of state sovereignty? Why or why not?

What are some examples of trade agreements in which Canada is or isn't working to advance development and human rights?

How are youth voices integrated in trade policy consultation? In what ways could this consultation be improved?

² <http://international.gc.ca/trade-agreements-accords-commerciaux/consultations/index.aspx?lang=eng>

Les politiques et programmes de développement international du Canada

Le budget actuel du Canada en matière d'aide publique au développement représente 0,26% du revenu national brut (RNB) du pays. Ce montant est inférieur à la moyenne de 0,32% observée chez les membres du Comité d'aide au développement de l'OCDE et inférieur à la cible internationale de 0,7%. Cependant, la quantité d'aide n'est pas le seul pilier dans la discussion sur les programmes et les politiques de développement international du Canada: il faut aussi se questionner sur "comment" cette aide est dépensée. Parmi les priorités du Canada figure la réalisation du Programme de développement durable à l'horizon 2030 des Nations Unies. Plus récemment, le Canada a adopté une politique d'aide internationale féministe, axée principalement sur les questions de développement spécifiques au genre. Avant la mise en oeuvre de cette politique, le gouvernement du Canada a entamé un examen de l'aide internationale en 2016, au cours duquel plus de 300 consultations ont eu lieu afin d'établir les priorités mondiales en matière de développement international.

Questions:

Croyez-vous que le Canada devrait augmenter ou diminuer la part du revenu national brut qui contribue à l'aide publique au développement? Pourquoi?

Croyez-vous que la période de consultation a adéquatement inclus les opinions et les voix des jeunes? Pourquoi? Comment cela aurait-il pu être amélioré?

Quels sont les aspects positifs et négatifs de la politique d'aide internationale féministe du Canada?

Environmental sustainability in international development

Environmental sustainability is a cross-cutting theme that intersects with many issues in our daily lives. In conversations of international development, considering the intersections between environmental sustainability and international development can ensure that the development works in favour of both people and the environment. Defined, environmental sustainability is:

“...the ability to meet the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The environment is the primary but not the only consideration within sustainability; it is important to also consider human welfare. Therefore, a sustainable society is one that protects natural resources while ensuring social justice and economic wellbeing for all.”³

Another consideration in the conversation around environmental sustainability in international development is the concept of environmental justice. This subject area looks at the ways in which the burden of environmental degradation is often faced primarily by the poor.

Questions:

It is important to understand that many indigenous and marginalized populations rely on the natural environment, and that systems of capitalism, colonization and globalization have further marginalized these groups through environmental degradation. In understanding these concepts, how can we engage the role of indigenous populations globally in conversations and action in environmental sustainability?

Industrialization has long been viewed as a model for development; however, this model is now being highly criticized. How can countries in the Global South develop economically while incorporating environmental sustainability in this growth?

Can individual actions in environmentalism have a global impact, or only will only sustained movement make an impact?

³ <https://sustainability.umd.edu/how-would-you-define-environmental-sustainability>

Gender and Development

In understanding intersectional development challenges, it is important to focus on the ways in which gender inequalities and development challenges intersect and reinforce each other. Conversations about gender and development can focus on certain issues of development that affect women in a more direct way than they impact men, such as maternal health. These conversations can also focus on issues of development, such as lack of access to education, and economic poverty, that disproportionately affect women, as demonstrated by trends in the United Nations Gender Development Index.⁴ Other practitioners focus directly on gender relations in the developing world, focusing on gender-based violence, discriminatory policies and gender inequality. While there are a variety of ways to integrate gender into discussions of development, one of the most widely accepted strategies is “gender mainstreaming” which refers to evaluating the implications of decisions and programming on each gender.⁵ Last year, Canada adopted a “Feminist International Assistance Policy” to empower women and girls in order to reduce poverty and promote peace and inclusion.

Questions:

Gender mainstreaming is defined as: “The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the experiences and concerns of women as well as men an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetrated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.”

a. *What is the importance of integrating men and boys into discussions of gender and development?*

b. *How do dominant discussions of gender and development that focus primarily on women exclude and/or further marginalize other gender identities and expressions?*

Do you believe that Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy addresses gender and development in a way that is equitable? What are the benefits of enacting such a policy? What are some potential problems with the policy?

What can Canadian youth do to have a positive impact on the realization of the the rights of women and girls, both here in Canada and internationally? (or just in development)

⁴ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GDI>

⁵ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/un-system-coordination/gender-mainstreaming>

Responsible Youth Engagement in the Developing World

Voluntourism is a highly contested concept in international development. While the broader literature has identified that voluntourism is harmful and not a practice that should be encouraged, there is still an expectation in the job market that young professionals will have experience in the developing world. A study of international development studies graduates found international experience to be one of the most important competencies needed to find meaningful employment.⁶ Moreover, can one even work in development without having a first hand understanding of the cultural and context in which they are working? How can young professionals bridge this gap in a way that is culturally appropriate and does not perpetuate dangerous complexes of development? This session will explore these topics to address the ways in which civil society and the job market can adapt to these concerns.

Questions:

Are there ways to work in the developing world without receiving payment that do not constitute voluntourism?

What role does your personal human capital play in deciphering this difference? For example, is there an ethical difference between:

- 1. an international development student with basic first aid (versus a minor in social sciences of health) volunteering in administering vaccinations at a health clinic in Ecuador for three weeks, and*
- 2. an international development student with professional experience in communications, volunteering with creating social media content for a grassroots English-run NGO in South Africa for three months*

How can self-reflection and understanding one's own positionality be used in ensuring that international engagement opportunities remain responsible?

⁶ <https://idsemployment.weebly.com/skills-and-competencies-for-employment.html>

Employment Opportunities in International Development

International development can be a vague term, encompassing a variety of careers in both the public and private sectors. While international development as a university program is growing in popularity, it is important to understand the ways in which these programs must respond to the feedback of their graduates in order to create employable skills and marketable competencies. Moreover, if we want to create spaces in civil society and government for youth to engage in international development, we need to ensure that youth have the competencies to fill these spaces.

Questions:

When looking for your first job in international development, what did you find the largest barrier to finding relevant employment to be?

What skills and competencies did you develop in your undergrad that you found to be valuable in the job market, and what skills and competencies needed in the job market do you wish you had developed during your undergrad?

As a young professional working in the field of international development, how do you see your perspective being used in the workplace?