

The Controversy: Questioning DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Questions & Answers

Q1. What is this controversy raised by some groups relative to DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE purportedly funding abortion and pro-abortion advocacy in some countries in the Global South?

A1. In the Spring of 2009, in the midst of our annual **Share Lent** campaign , a militant anti-abortion advocacy organization and several supporting blog sites on the Internet raised unfounded accusations against DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE, alleging that we had been directly or indirectly funding or supporting abortion or other activities that go against Gospel values and our Catholic Teachings.

These attacks against DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE did not arise from any particular event or action by DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE or our partners. They represent a concerted, organized and planned campaign deliberately targeting our organization.

These single-issue militant advocacy groups, particularly those focusing on anti-abortion advocacy, continuously misrepresent facts and distort reality to serve their purpose. They create lots of noise, slander people and organizations and remain relentless in the pursuit of their attacks. Any organization or individual that does not adhere to their dogmatic view of social issues will be kept in their crosshairs, including DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE as well as the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB).

These groups are part of the far right wing fringe element of North American society and have themselves been associated with groups and individuals who have resorted to violence to publicize their cause and achieve their objectives.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE has acquired over 40 years of international development experience in fighting injustice, working with the poor and spreading the teachings of our Church. We take our legacy very seriously. We have been recognized and acclaimed throughout the world for the millions of lives we have touched.

Q2. Are any of these charges against DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE founded?

A2. Absolutely not!

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE has not and will not fund or support any activity that does not meet with our fundamental Catholic beliefs and the teachings of the Catholic Church. We have been clear on this position. We have stated it repeatedly and we will continue to reiterate it.

D&P continues to fight against the root causes of social injustice and poverty, in solidarity with the poor and disenfranchised of the world according to the teachings of the Church. Our work reflects our rich heritage of Catholic Social Teaching, with particular emphasis on the fundamental principle of a *“preferential option for the poor”*.

In this mission, we will not accept that any fringe groups distort and misrepresent our work and values, undermining the good work we have been doing throughout the world for the last 42 years in the name of the Catholic Church of Canada.

Q3. How have these false allegations affected DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE?

A3. Fortunately, our membership and Catholic clergy had the wisdom to give DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE the benefit of the doubt and founded their judgment on facts and accomplishments. The 2009 Lent Campaign was successful, and the financial impact on our organization in terms of reduced support from individual donors has been minimal.

Where our detractors have succeeded is in temporarily diverting the attention and energy of our leadership away from our regular work.

Q4. Who are these groups levying these allegations? What credibility do they have to raise such accusations? They seem to be publicly offering what could be construed as ‘evidence’ to support their claims.

A4. This slanderous attack campaign was initiated by a militant anti-abortion lobbying group *Campaign Life Coalition*, a privately-owned and financed group with offices in Toronto and Ottawa. Using their Website *LifeSiteNews.com*, this group selectively targets and attacks individuals and groups who are not in conformity with their socially conservative political and moral ideology. Campaign Life Coalition is a member of an international network of similar organizations, the *International Right to Life Federation*, which claims membership in over 170 countries as a world-wide federation of autonomous, national pro-life groups and individuals.

Neither Campaign Life Coalition nor LifeSiteNews.com are registered charities or accredited news services, nor in any way affiliated with the Catholic Church. Both are privately-held and financed political action lobbyist organizations promoting a particular political agenda. Despite its name, LifeSiteNews.com is not an accredited news organization, but an Internet forum promoting a specific political agenda.

In their work on this campaign (and in others) targeting Development and Peace and the Canadian Catholic Church, LifeSiteNews.com works closely with and draws on commentary from a few individual independent contributors and Internet blog sites. By their nature, these blog sites are unregulated opinion forums whose contributors have no legal accountability to ensure either factual accuracy of their opinions or commentary nor to adhere to any professionally recognized standards of journalism or reporting.

The majority of visitor “hits” to the LifeSiteNews.com website originate in the United States. The number of registered hits directly to individual blog sites contributing to LifeSiteNews.com varies according to the ‘popularity’ of the blog, but are generally limited to a few hundred individuals. Relative to the Catholic population of Canada (and North America), the numbers of supporters and readers of these sites is insignificant.

Q5. Has DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE answered any of these allegations? Some of these charges seem to pertain to the fact that DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE does not have clear institutional policies on issues of life, abortion, birth control and other matters that are currently controversial within the Catholic Church.

A5. Yes, we have responded to all of them.

At our request, and with our full support and collaboration, the **Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB)** set up a Committee of Inquiry to publicly review the first set of allegations in this controversy, which dealt with five of our partners in Mexico. The Committee visited Mexico, met with the Episcopal Conference of the Bishops of Mexico, as well as with our Mexican partner groups, and submitted a report clearly dispelling the allegations levied against us as without foundation.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE is a lay Catholic organization that works in close proximity with the Conference of Catholic Bishops, other Catholic-based institutions, as well as with government and non-governmental organizations. Our work is done with partners who share our values and commitment to social justice, and always in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Our policies are guided and informed by these values and teachings. Our Catholic faith is the fundamental core of our existence and our work as an organization. We are guided and inspired by the tenets of our Faith, as articulated by the moral and spiritual leadership within our Church.

Our work principles and our commitment to our Catholic faith are intrinsic to every program and project we support throughout our global network. In 2003, we adopted an institutional Policy on HIV/AIDS to guide our work on this important issue affecting international development. This policy was developed in close collaboration and consultation with the CCCB. Moving forward, D&P will continue to shape and adopt any other policies that it feels required as to better support the work we are called to do.

Q6. What about DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE partners in southern countries (Nicaragua, East Timor, Nigeria, for example) who have obviously been “exposed” by the anti-abortion bloggers? What has DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE done or what does DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE intend to do in these cases?

A6. As a fundamental principle, we do not finance or support any partner sponsored activity that does not reflect our Catholic values and Catholic Social Teaching.

Allegations regarding some of our partner organizations being involved in promoting abortion have been deliberately misleading and fabricated on the basis of hearsay, conjecture and selective misinterpretation and misrepresentation of our programs and the work of our partners. Not one of our partners named in any of the controversy has ever promoted or assumed advocacy positions that could be objectively interpreted as “abortionist” or “pro-abortion”.

In their incendiary irresponsible rhetoric, the bloggers have simplistically reduced the work of our partners involved in the support of rights and equality for women to being that of “abortionists”. In many of the cited incidents, our partners have been members of broad-based coalitions of civil society organizations working with their respective governments for improved human rights conditions. The principal advocacy issue which has spurred and fuelled the reactions of our attackers has been the issue of **de-criminalization** of abortion which remains a highly contentious issue in many societies.

The nature of our work in promoting social justice frequently involves us and our partners in situations where established institutions and public policies are openly challenged in the name of greater justice and equity.

When issues and incidents do arise involving the positions of our partners in advocacy for particular causes, we always consider such situations very seriously and ensure that communication channels are always open and that frank dialogue are engaged with our involved partners. Such as been the case ever since these false allegations have been raised.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE will continue to work to ensure that we maintain an alignment of values with all our partners of the Global South.

Q7. Why have certain dioceses and bishops continued to express reservations and given credence to these groups and their frivolous charges? Why have some dioceses withheld the proceeds of their 2009 Share Lent collection? What do they hope to gain by these actions? How have these initiatives affected DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE operations?

A.7 The allegations have had an effect on all of us.

We are a lay organization within the Catholic Church of Canada. We have been staunchly dedicated to fighting poverty, social injustice and violence throughout the world for all of our 42 years of existence.

An attack of this nature on our good faith and reputation is de-stabilizing and troubling and has had an impact not just on the staff of DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE but on every member of our 13 000 strong organization.

Such an impact has naturally disturbed our supporters and donors, so it is not at all surprising that our bishops and clergy have also been affected by reactions in their dioceses and parishes. In many cases, bishops have been approached by parishioners or members of the Catholic faithful in their dioceses who have visited the Websites of those attacking us, and these bishops have contacted us for clarification.

Some of our Bishops have asked that these charges be investigated, others rightly requested clarification regarding the allocation and use of our funds, and others wish to better understand the nature and extent of what we do. We are answering all of these concerns that were raised by our Catholic leaders.

Most bishops of Canada are well aware of the activities of the anti-abortion advocacy movement, as collectively and individually, bishops have been targeted by these groups in various media campaigns.

Q8. Besides the Archdiocese of Toronto, how many dioceses have expressed their ‘reservation’ about sending the proceeds of the Share Lent 2009 collection to DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE?

A8. The Catholic Church in Canada comprises 67 dioceses. When this controversy first arose, 6 dioceses publicly expressed their support of a Committee of Inquiry by the CCCB to establish the veracity of these charges and withheld release of the proceeds of the Share Lent collection until the Committee findings were released.

When the Committee released its report, concluding that the allegations were without foundation, 5 of the dioceses confirmed their engagements towards DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE for the 2009 collection. The Archdiocese of Toronto, because of the unique structure of its Lenten campaign, committed financial support to DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE equivalent to the amount provided in the prior year 2008 collection, subject to some revised project and reporting protocols. We are still in active discussion with the Archdiocese of Toronto on this revised allocation agreement.

Q9. Did DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE follow up on the public recommendations made by the Committee of Inquiry and by some Bishops?

A9. Yes. Our National Council formed a special sub-committee (Working Group) to review the recommendations of the CCCB Committee of Inquiry and to review Development and Peace operating policies to ensure that a repeat of this controversy can be avoided. This Working Group submitted its report and recommendations to the National Council at the November 2009 meeting.

The Theological Reflection Committee of Development and Peace prepared a reflection perspective on several of the underlying issues of the controversy, as well as demonstrating and reaffirming the role of Catholic Social Teaching in the work of DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE and our partners.

In December 2009, the CCCB named an Ad Hoc Committee of four bishops to work with Development and Peace over the next year on a program of institutional reflection and renewal to deepen and strengthen the working relationship between the organization and the bishops of Canada. This Committee will report to the Plenary Assembly of the CCCB in October 2010.

Meanwhile, the bishops of Canada (at their October 2009 Plenary Assembly) unanimously confirmed and endorsed their commitment to Development and Peace for the 2010 Share Lent national campaign.

Q10. Why doesn't DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE report to local bishops' conferences in the countries where it has partners and projects? Why do links with the Catholic Church in our partner countries appear to be weak or non-existent?

A10. DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE was originally set up as a membership-based democratic organization for the laity within the Catholic Church of Canada. We occupy a special position within the Church, as an organization for engaged and active Catholic lay persons to work for social justice as an expression of their Catholic faith.

We work closely with Church organizations and institutions in many of our partnerships. More than 40% of our projects internationally are in partnership directly with Episcopal commissions, national Bishops' conferences, or member organizations of the *Caritas Internationalis* network (the international emergency relief network of the Catholic Church, represented in 162 countries. Development and Peace is *Caritas Canada*).

As an independent lay organization, our responsibility is to our membership, our partners, and our thousands of supporters (both clerical and lay) throughout the Catholic community in Canada. We have a democratically-elected governance structure through our 23-member National Council. Two seats on our National Council (our governing board) are designated for bishops appointed by the Canadian

Conference of Catholic Bishops. These two member bishops provide us with close liaison and communication with the Canadian episcopacy.

In the Global South, our partners are selected on the basis of their professional expertise in meeting the development challenges of their communities and their countries, not necessarily on the basis of their religious affiliation. As noted above, many of these partners are directly involved with the Church, while many others have long-standing Catholic roots from their founding. We also have partnerships with organizations of other faiths, who share our commitment to social justice and our values.

In many countries, our partner network is small, and our level of funding is modest. Hence, in some instances, our work and partnerships are relatively unknown or invisible, lacking public profile. While we make conscious effort to engage and inform local Church authorities of our work, in some countries and dioceses we remain unfamiliar.

Where possible and appropriate, we actively facilitate networking and relationships with the local structures of the Catholic Church.

Q11. Why does DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE use a partnership approach in its work for social justice? Why doesn't DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE directly support the good works of the Church in southern countries by supporting Catholic schools, missions, medical clinics, pastoral works, etc.?

A11. International development for social justice is a complex undertaking. Ensuring that our programs are effective in reaching the poor and disenfranchised and in fighting the structural causes of injustice and poverty requires experience and expertise and involves skills in many areas.

We actively seek out organizations committed to social justice with whom we share our values, and who have the basic expertise and capacity to undertake community-based development projects to transform social structures and peoples' lives.

Social justice and human rights work has been the "niche" of Development & Peace, while other organizations, including many Catholic agencies and charities, have developed expertise in pastoral work, social work, or building and maintaining institutional infrastructure. We openly collaborate on many occasions with these groups in working on common causes of benefit to local communities.

Four decades of development success has been achieved through our partnership model. Through our grassroots-level engagement with civil society, we are close to the communities with whom we work, and responsive to their self-identified needs and self-directed projects.

The Catholic Church has numerous means to offer help and support to the needy and does so through pastoral funds, various initiatives of Catholic religious orders, direct links between dioceses etc... All of these initiatives, as well as the social justice and human rights focus of Development and Peace, are part of the broad spectrum of community-based human development.

We do, in fact, support the "good works of the Church" in affirming our Gospel values and promoting Catholic Social Teaching in all of our projects and partnerships. Development and Peace proudly wears its Catholic identity in all of our projects and programs.

Q12. How are partners selected? How does DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE monitor its partners? How does DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE ensure that funded initiatives and their sponsoring partners are not using money to support causes which are not aligned with Catholic values and Catholic Social Teaching?

A12. DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE partners are selected following an assessment of the overall development context of the countries in which we work and identification of key organizations within the Church and civil society networks who share our social justice mission and objectives.

The assessment of potential partners involves consultation on site with our professional staff, who regularly visit the country and are familiar with the critical development issues and challenges. Potential new partner organizations are referred to DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE by existing partners or through networks of civil society organizations. Discussions are held with potential partners to determine their overall 'fit' in the framework of our program, and then followed by an institutional assessment of partner capacity and orientations.

We adhere to several important partnership principles in our selection of partners. Most prominently is the principle of "shared values". We partner with organizations who share our Gospel-based 'preferential option for the poor', and who have demonstrated commitment to our values of transformative change for social justice.

Among our operational principles are policies of 'modest investment' (i.e. our financial support to any given partner or project is relatively small in comparison to other development agencies); "no dependency" (DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE is never the principal source of financing for any partner group); "long-term engagement" (our partner relationships are built on an institutional basis and designed to accompany partners in their work in a spirit of genuine solidarity over many years).

These principles are the foundation of solidarity relationships that address the root causes of social injustice and inequity, recognizing that meaningful and effective change can only occur over the long term. Our engagement provides partners with the assurance of our long-term core support, to enable them to focus on the major challenges of transformative social change.

Our administrative procedures are rigorous and disciplined – we require quarterly financial reports from partners, annual audited financial statements, and annual results-based workplans developed in close joint consultation and collaboration. These are supported by regular monitoring visits by our professional program staff. Results-based protocols govern the release of project funds – i.e. programs have to be effectively managed and delivering the agreed-upon results before funds are released.

These principles and protocols reinforce the solidarity of our working relationships in the true spirit of partnership. Our close and regular contact with partners is governed by mutual trust and transparency. Where differences arise, these are addressed in dialogue and consultation.

As a result of our approach, and the care taken in partner selection, our partner network is characterized by relationships that we have maintained over many years. We have partnerships that have continued over 20 – 25 year periods, and many of over 10 years of continuous working together.

Q13. Does DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE partner with groups that are not affiliated with the Catholic Church? How much of the total DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE funding goes to non-Catholic groups? What proportion of DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE partners are Catholic?

A13. Yes, of course. We partner with groups who share our values, principles, and professional approach to development, regardless of religious affiliation. As noted above, more than 40% of our partners are directly affiliated to the institutional Church, while approximately another 25% have grown from a Catholic tradition and origin. In many developing countries, the Catholic Church is a “minority faith”, and our outreach to the poor and marginalized is extended to broader populations through our partnerships with organizations of other faiths who share our values and commitment to justice.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE works throughout the world with peoples of all races and religious persuasions. It is one of the fundamental teachings of the Catholic Church to be inclusive, a principle that has always guided the work that we do.

Q14. The CCCB Report of the Committee of Inquiry, recommended that DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE provide in-house training for staff on Catholic Social Teaching? Are DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE staff not Catholic? Are they not versed in Catholic teachings? Why would CCCB make this recommendation?

A14. As with our partnerships, Development and Peace human resource policies reflect inclusiveness and diversity.

Development and Peace staff are recruited for their professional expertise and competence, not on the basis of their religious affiliation. In order to assure that our staff of all faiths are familiar with the values and principles of our work, training on Catholic Social Teaching is provided as part of our professional development human resource programs.

The CCCB Report recommendation is a reaffirmation of this practice and an encouragement to the organization to ensure that all staff are familiarized with this important aspect of our work.

In our open Canadian society, human rights legislation prohibits organizations from hiring practices that might be deemed discriminatory on the basis of race, gender, or religious belief.

Q15. Why has there been so little communication from DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE to the membership regarding this controversy? Why hasn't DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE been more visible in defending itself? What does DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE intend to do to increase communication to membership?

A15. DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE is in the “business” of international solidarity and supporting programs for social justice in the Global South, not fighting unfounded rumors, accusations and innuendo.

We were temporarily blindsided by these attacks, which took the organization completely by surprise and required our immediate and concerted response. This pulled us away from our critical work and

disrupted a number of our regular operations and programs, during a period when we were under-resourced in our Communications department.

We have tried to stay the course and for this reason have been slower in responding to our membership.

We are now active in filling this communication gap.

Q16. This debate has raised issues that bring to the table questions relative to DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE's Mission, Vision and Values as well as its Policies and Procedures? How is the organization answering these legitimate questions?

A.16 Unfortunately this controversy arose in the midst of our annual Share Lent 2009 campaign. If the intent was also to disrupt and distract us from our work, that part succeeded. If another goal was to force DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE to quickly react and change the way we "do business" then our detractors have failed miserably.

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE has already been planning a Strategic Review of its fundamentals as well as its protocols and procedures and as launched a process that will be pursued throughout the year.

Such a review is the healthy part of the normal cycle of any organization.

We have embarked on a disciplined and democratic process that will involve our members and our key stakeholders and we will accomplish this task in the normal time frame that is required to ensure its full success.

Results of the review and planning will be widely disseminated to our membership, our donors, and our southern partners and will be available for all to view.

We continue to value transparency as one of our key organizational values.

A note on ‘code words’

Through a conspiracy-tinted lens...

Many of the communications put forth by the anti-abortion advocates and those contributors to the blogosphere with comments attacking the work of DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE allege that, in describing our projects and our work with our partners in the Global South, we use ‘code words’ to disguise our “true” mission.

According to the bloggers, project descriptions that involve words or terms such as ‘reproductive rights’, ‘gender’, ‘gender mainstreaming’, ‘reproductive health’, ‘women’s equality’, ‘women’s rights’, ‘empowerment of women’, are standardized ‘code words’ among pro-abortionists that simply mean ‘abortion’. This interpretation has led to some bizarre leaps of logic.

For example, Father William McGrattan of London (Ontario) diocese has just been named as a new Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Toronto. One anti-abortion blog site (which has been particularly focused on DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE over the past year) reviewed Father McGrattan’s CV. Among his many activities and affiliations, Father McGrattan was a member of the Board of Directors of a small international development NGO with several projects in South Asia (India).

A review of the NGO’s Website, which included descriptions of its projects, indicated that the NGO was very active in promoting the equality of women and men, and assuring that all of its projects promoted ‘gender mainstreaming’, which is terminology used in international development circles to mean that all projects and activities strive to ensure that both women and men are equal beneficiaries with equal access to the project’s resources. This could involve things such as, in the case of a micro-credit project, ensuring that women and men have the same access to group loans, and that the project ensures that loans are granted on an equitable basis to both women and men in equal proportion.

The blogsite described ‘gender mainstreaming’ as a development practice ‘code word’ for promoting abortion, allegedly on the basis that promoting the equal and equitable status of women undermines the traditional family structure and encourages women to seek abortions. As a result of projects in India administered by a small NGO on whose Board of Directors the new Auxiliary Bishop sat as a member, Bishop McGrattan was labeled as a being a “pro-abortionist”.