



CANADIAN CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION FOR

Development and Peace

As you are likely aware, Development and Peace was the subject of an article on the LifeSite News Website (www.lifesitenews.com), published on Thursday March 12, 2009 under the title ***“Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace Funding Pro-Abortion Groups in Mexico”***. This article was subsequently followed by two additional articles on this same theme in the following days.

The article lists five (out of 11) of our partners in Mexico, who are identified by the article as “pro-abortion groups”. The general inference and tone of the article implies that these groups are actively involved in the practice and promotion of abortion. By association, Development and Peace is being presented as supporting abortion.

We are deeply concerned with this troubling inference. As a Catholic organization, we are in full communion with the Catholic Church in Canada and the Bishops of Canada on all moral and ethical issues governed by the teachings of the Catholic Church. Our work is devoted to social justice in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, promoting a global culture of peace and justice based on our profound belief in the sacredness of all life and the dignity of the human person—including the unborn – as a central tenet of our faith.

It is inconceivable that an organization of the Catholic Church, such as we are, would support any activities that contravene Catholic doctrine or Catholic Social Teaching, particularly activities relating to abortion.

Let there be no mistake:

1. **Development and Peace has never supported abortion services** anywhere, at any time, and can not ever support such projects.
2. **Development and Peace has never and will never enter into partnership with any organization offering such services.** Should we become aware that a partner organization has changed its mandate and begins offering such services, they would be immediately cut off from our partnership support and funding.
3. **Development and Peace is committed to remaining vigilant regarding any partner’s actions that would place us by association at variance with Church teaching.** Should we fail to act on this information, we would lose our raison d’être and the support of our Canadian bishops and Catholic members and donors.

Over the past few days, since the article was published, we have conducted an extensive investigation and consultation with our partners in Mexico to clarify the situation. Our partners are shocked and saddened by these inferences, but have responded in a spirit of partnership to our concerned inquiry. **We are reassured and unequivocally confirm that there is no involvement with abortion in any of our partners’ programs or activities, nor has there ever been over the course of our long-term partnership.**

We acknowledge that the article has brought closely to our attention that our partners participated in a nation-wide consultation by the United Nations Human Rights Council on the human rights situation in Mexico, and that our partners were contributors (along with 100 other organizations) to an omnibus document on human rights issues in various sectors -- *Report of Organizations of Civil Society on Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights in Mexico*.

In this consultation, our partners brought forward their concerns on issues that they promote and defend: indigenous people's rights, protection of the environment, a fair judicial system, freedom of the press, social and economic justice, including fair wages and fair trade, and the promotion of equality between women and men. We fully support these themes in solidarity with our partners and in accordance with our shared values.

Some of the other Mexican civil society groups consulted through the process brought forward their own concerns based on their area of interest. Of course, neither we, nor our partners, have any control over the content or recommendations advanced by these other groups.

At the conclusion of the consultation, the Report was signed by all the organizations who had participated in the process, including a number of religious congregations and religious orders. **This signing represents only evidence of participation, and is not an endorsement of all of the points or recommendations in the Report.**

Faced with the concerns raised recently here in Canada about the implications of participating in this collective process, our partners have all offered us their assurance that **they were not signing on or endorsing in any way the points referring to abortion**, nor do they intend to promote these particular items that are in the global report. In order to dissipate any confusion, they have written to us to **clearly disassociate themselves from these points in the Report**.

Attached is a summary profile of our Mexican partners and an outline of their activities which Development and Peace supports. These partners also receive financial support from other Catholic charitable agencies with whom we are aligned through international Catholic aid agency networks, such as Caritas Internationalis. As is clearly evident, none of these organizations are involved in any activity related to abortion.

In the light of this recent controversy, the National Council of Development and Peace (our governing board) added a special discussion on this issue to the agenda of its meeting on Friday March 20, 2009. This discussion has resulted in a formal process to develop a policy reaffirming our principles and our criteria for selecting and maintaining partnerships. We will be able to feature this policy prominently in response to any possible future allegations and innuendoes of this nature regarding our work.

This issue has required a lengthy and detailed explanation and clarification: it at least gives us the opportunity to clarify the commitment of Development and Peace to the Church's teaching on life issues.

We ask for your continued support for our work, particularly during this crucial time of Lent, when our message of global solidarity and brotherhood in the quest for social justice is prominently featured throughout the Catholic Church in Canada.

We ask for your blessings and prayers to enable us to continue, with the support of our Church and the Catholic faithful, in our mission of solidarity with our sisters and brothers in the Global South.

In solidarity,



Patrick Hogan
President



Michael Casey
Executive Director

March 20, 2009