

CoDev and HEU: working together to make poverty history

At the start of the 21st century 1.2 billion people live in abject poverty and more than 50,000 people die every day from poverty-related causes. That horrifying reality has prompted a global campaign to end poverty.

As part of their international solidarity work, and to mark their 20-year anniversary, CoDevelopment Canada recently held a two-day conference – “Making Poverty History” – to explore strategies and visions for policy change. Convened at the Unitarian Church of Vancouver and Langara College, the forum focused on four main goals anchoring Canada’s campaign to make poverty history: more and better aid, trade justice, debt cancellation and ending child poverty in Canada.

Two guest speakers – Yolanda Becerra, Nobel Peace Prize nominee and director of the Popular Women’s Organization, and Gerry Barr, President-CEO of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation – reinforced the need for solidarity work across nations.

Through panel discussions and action-oriented workshops, participants from trade unions; community, aboriginal, anti-poverty and student groups; and government laid the groundwork for future action. In the weeks and months to come, CoDev will be following up on the concrete strategy and policy recommendations coming out of the conference.



Joe Knockaert, director of the Canadian International Development Agency’s Pacific regional office, addresses the conference.

The non-profit organization began 20 years ago when two teachers from Vancouver’s Lower Mainland set off to Peru with a translator, enraged by the news of a decertified teachers union that had its offices demolished. The Peruvian teachers stood accused of promoting union rights for its members. The BC Teachers Federation had recently decided it wanted to support international solidarity work, with a focus on women’s rights, and needed an organization to carry out the task.

Thus, in 1985 CoDev was founded. Over two decades, the organization has undertaken a variety of solidarity projects in Latin America aimed at maintaining publicly-funded education, empowering women through education and promoting human and

labour rights for workers.

More recently, CoDev has been involved in efforts to assist communities in El Salvador and Guatemala that were devastated by Hurricane Stan. CoDev’s partners APSIES (Salvadoran Association for Integrated Health and Social Services) in El Salvador and the CCDA (Campesino Committee of the Highlands) in Guatemala are actively working to provide relief through food and shelter programs. CoDev’s relief campaign will direct 100 per cent of its hurricane donations to these long-standing partners. To donate call 604-708-1495.

As an active member of CoDev, HEU encourages members to learn more about the important work of this unique organization. For more information visit www.cODEV.org

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