COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT

2023 PULSE CHECK ON PROGRESS TOWARDS ANTI-RACISM BY CANADA'S INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION SECTOR







OVERVIEW

t's been three years since the Anti-Racism Cooperation (ARC) Taskforce released the first <u>Collective Commitment Report</u>, representing a tangible commitment from organizations in Canada's international cooperation sector to reflect on, identify and address systemic racism in the sector.

Since launching the Framework in 2020, there have been notable shifts in global efforts and discourse to confront racism. This past year, an increase in conflict and crisis resulting from war, climate change, COVID-19 and political and economic insecurity have highlighted gross and persistent racial disparities worldwide. At the same time, the world has bore witness to a wave of white supremacy, xenophobia, misogyny, homophobia and transphobia in sociopolitical spheres globally that have further challenged the psychological and physical safety of the most marginalized and threatened to rewind years of progress towards the fulfillment of international human rights.

Against this backdrop, Canada's international cooperation sector has been cautiously working to integrate efforts to rectify global power imbalances in their work. The ARC Framework acts as an accountability mechanism to hold the sector accountable to examining and addressing history, legacy and impact of colonialism and racial injustice in international cooperation. This sector-wide initiative, developed by a volunteer advisory group in collaboration and consultation with stakeholders across international aid and humanitarian work, serves as a starting point for the sector to reckon with and address its history with racism.

The Framework features tangible anti-racist commitments alongside accountability indicators in three sectors of work including (1) administration and human resources, (2) communication, advocacy and knowledge management and, (3) program design, monitoring, evaluation and learning, and operations. Organizations within the Canadian international aid and humanitarian sector are encouraged to formalize their dedication to dismantling systemic racism by signing on to the ARC Framework. In becoming signatories to the ARC Framework, organizations commit to implementing and reporting on comprehensive anti-racist reforms across all areas of their operations.

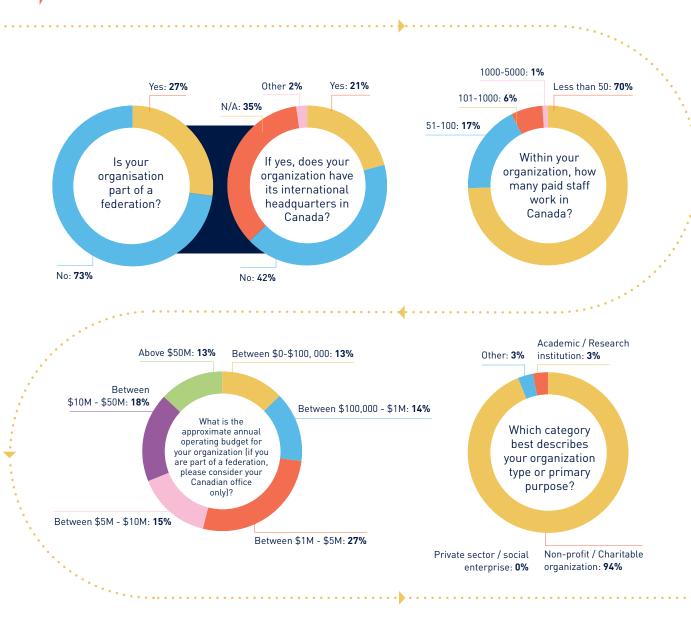
Methodology

The 2023 Collective Commitment Report serves as a check-in, tracking the progress made by signatory organizations to advance ARC commitments and implement recommendations towards equitable transformation. Each year, organizations in Canada's International Cooperation sector are invited to signal their commitment to the Anti-Racism Framework by completing a survey on the state of anti-racist practice in the work they do. The findings from the responses received by signatory organizations form the basis of the annual Collective Commitment report which works to monitor progress and leverage evidence to identify gaps and opportunities towards anti-racist change in the sector.

Recognizing that the deep work of undoing structural racism takes time, resources and support, the ARC Taskforce has adopted a rotating reporting cycle whereby a long-form survey would be administered to signatories every second year with a short-form survey on alternating years. This year, the Collective Commitment report represents the findings from the abbreviated short-form survey. The survey is divided into five sections, consisting of 17 distinct questions and one follow-up question.

It's important to note that there are variations in the number as well as the composition of organizational signatories across the three years of the ARC Framework as well as variations in the survey questions. As such, a direct year after year comparison between survey responses is complex and not entirely reliable. That said, anecdotal comparisons can still offer practical insight on the state of anti-racist change within a sample of the sector.

Snapshot of this year's signatories



Findings:

IN 2023, THE NUMBER OF **SIGNATORIES COMMITTED** TO THE ANTI-RACISM
FRAMEWORK DECREASED BY **13.5 PERCENT** WITH 82 SIGNATORIES IN 2022
AND ONLY 71 SIGNATORIES IN 2023.

2022	2023
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Overview

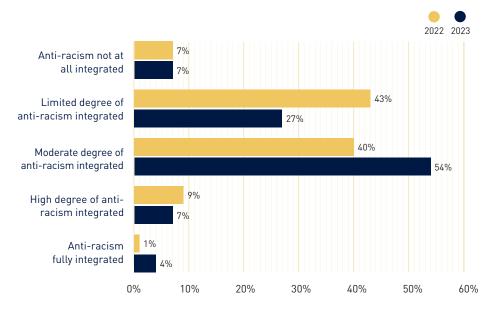
Two overarching survey results offer a unique observation through which findings from the 2023 Collective Commitment survey can be understood.

First, the number of organizations committed to the ARC Framework in 2023 rebounded to levels observed in year one. Despite there being a much shorter survey in 2023, signatory membership decreased from 82 in 2022 to 71 in 2023. Determining the exact reason for the decline in organizations completing the survey is challenging. However, one could speculate that larger shifts in the global landscape may be placing a strain on organizations' capacity to dedicate themselves to this work. Moreover, three years after the events that triggered a global reckoning against systemic racism, organizations grappling with limited resources may no longer view anti-racism work as a top priority. Additionally, organizations may hesitate to reaffirm their commitment to the Framework if little internal progress or change has occurred since their previous sign-on.

That said, in terms of composition of signatories, there has been a steady increase in large organizations in Canada's international cooperation sector signing on to the Framework between 2020 and 2023. While larger organizations may have required more time to initially sign on to the Framework, they may have more available resources to allocate towards implementing commitments year after year. It is important to note, however, that organization size was measured through self-reporting in the 2021 survey which may contribute to perceived differences in organizational representation in subsequent years.

Furthermore, despite the decrease in the number of signatories, those organizations that did reaffirm commitment demonstrated positive progress across several surveyed areas. Most notably, this year, the majority of signatories, 65-percent, reported that they had a moderate to high degree of anti-racist practice integrated within their operations and activities. This represents one of the most compelling shifts since the launch of the framework in 2020, demonstrating encouraging increases in the perceived level of anti-racist transformation occurring in individual organizations across the sector.

Reflecting on your previous answers, how would you rate your organization's current overall integration of anti-racism within your operations and activities? We are looking for an overall impression, based on your self-assessment of your objectives and progress.

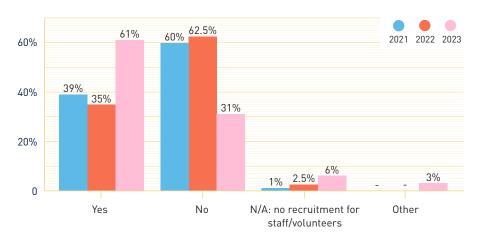


ADMINISTRATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES

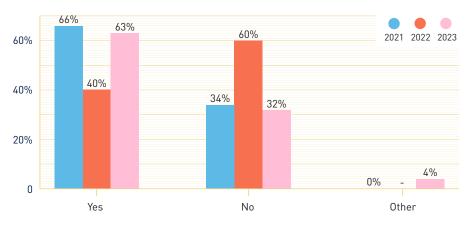
The administration and human resources section of the survey was centrally focused on uncovering how organizations operate to deliver their work. The allocation of financial and human resources within an organization provides valuable insight into its internal priorities from an operational perspective. These resource designations also play a significant role in shaping the organizational culture. By aligning human resource and administrative practices and policies with anti-racist principles, workplaces can foster greater diversity, representation, and equity, resulting in improved racial equity outcomes for employees.

Note from the Taskforce! Over the three years of the ARC report, we have had important variations in number and composition of signatory organizations as well as changes in survey questions! This means that direct year to year comparisons are complex and not entirely reliable. Our team did our best to offer the comparisons when possible.

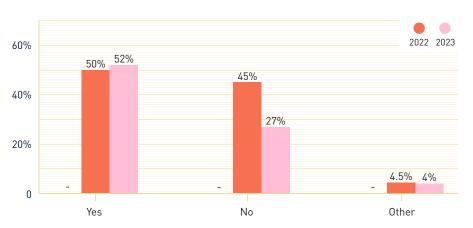
Does your organization have hiring or recruitment policies and practices that include explicit reference to anti-racist principles?



Does your organization have operational policies and practices that include explicit reference to anti-racist principles?



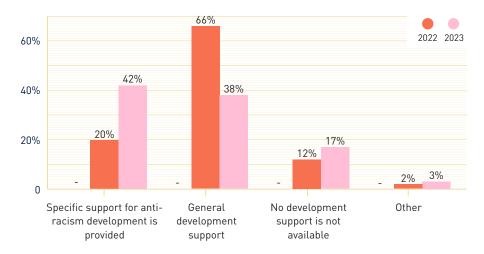
If yes, did your organization consult with Indigenous, Black and/or staff from other communities who have been disadvantaged due to race, to inform these policies and practices?



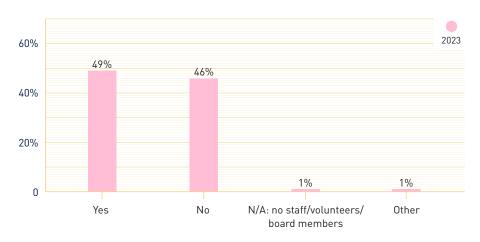
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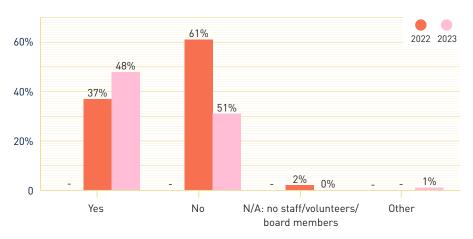
Does your organization provide material support (such as covering costs) for external professional development in regards to anti-racism for staff and/or volunteers? By external, we mean training developed/delivered by a third party.



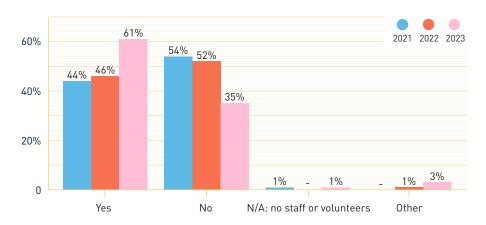
Does your organization formally collect and analyze data on numbers or percentages of: Staff and/or Volunteers at all levels from Indigenous, Black and/or staff from other communities who have been disadvantaged due to race; Staff and/or Volunteers in supervisory / leadership roles from racialized groups; Board members from racialized groups. By formally, we mean record and report, as opposed to relying on assumptions.



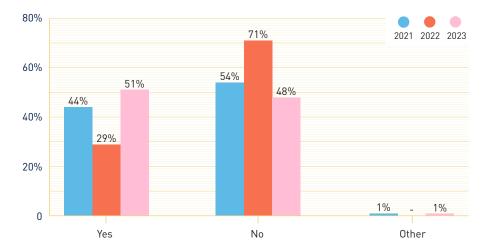
Does your organization formally collect and analyze other identity data on staff, volunteers, and board members (such as gender, ability, etc)? By formally, we mean record and report as opposed to relying on assumptions or your personal knowledge



Do you have dedicated personnel (such as staff, lead volunteers, or consultants) within your organization who promote diversity and inclusion as part of their official duties and responsibilities?



Does your organization have safe, transparent, and formal reporting and redress mechanisms with explicit reference to experiences of racism and racebased discrimination?



Beyond the numbers

Survey findings reveal that there appears to be little headway in incorporating anti-racist principles into hiring policies and practices, with 62.5-percent of respondents in 2022 and 61-percent in 2023 indicating this. However, more organizations now report having dedicated personnel to promote diversity and inclusion, with 46-percent in 2022 compared to 61-percent in 2023. Furthermore, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of organizations that have formal reporting and redress mechanisms that explicitly address experiences of racism and race-based discrimination. In 2022, only 29-percent reported having these mechanisms, while 51-percent reported having them in 2023. Overall, it appears that some progress has been made in advancing anti-racism efforts in human resources and administration.

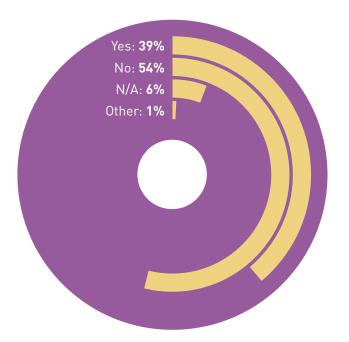
The integration of anti-racism principles and practices across the sector must be supported by investments in human and financial resources. While more organizations now provide material support for anti-racist professional development, nearly a fifth of organizations have yet to meet this benchmark. Additionally, over a third do not currently have staff person(s) internally designated to promote diversity and inclusion in their organizations as part of their official duties.

Further, slightly less than half of respondents formally collect and analyze data on numbers and percentages of staff, board members, and people in leadership roles who are Indigenous, Black, or from a racially disadvantaged community. Increasing internal capacity for anti-racism audits and consistently collecting and analyzing identity-based data is critical as measuring diversity and inclusion within the workforce enables intentional and effective management of equity efforts.

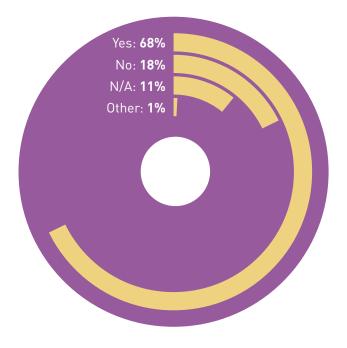
COMMUNICATION, ADVOCACY AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The communication, advocacy and knowledge management section of the survey set out to understand how organizations tell stories related to the work they do and who they engage in the process. Power imbalances on global, regional and local scales have long determined who gets to be the storyteller, whose stories are shared and how a story will be told. A commitment to anti-racism requires organizations to take up equitable storytelling practices that critically examine and undo racial biases in the narratives they share.

Does your organization have explicit reference to anti-racism in policies or procedures that guide: your public communications practices and/or brand guidelines; your fundraising and/or fund solicitation practices; your advocacy and/or stakeholder engagement practices?



In the past 12 months, has your organization shared communications collateral captured directly by in-country content producers (such as national photographers, writers, or staff)? By 'directly' we mean that the original producer retains ultimate creative or editorial control of the final product.





In 2022, 58-percent of organizations reported sharing communications collateral captured directly by in-country content producers. In 2023, the percentage share is at 68-percent of all respondents, and more specifically, 77-percent of organizations who reported working with in-country content producers. This percentage share translated into 48 organizations, suggesting slight progress between 2022 and 2023.

Results from the survey show that a slight majority of organizations do consult with racially disadvantaged groups to inform their policies and practices, however, there remain gaps in the percentage of organizations who have clear references to anti-racist principles in their communications guidelines and practices. Although it is positive to observe an increase in the number of organizations collaborating with in-country partners to document and collect stories, this alone does not effectively address the risk of tokenism, exploitation, bias and harmful racial tropes. Clear and anti-racist communications guidelines can help ensure guardrails are in place to ensure more respectful and equitable dynamics between storytellers and those whose stories are being told.



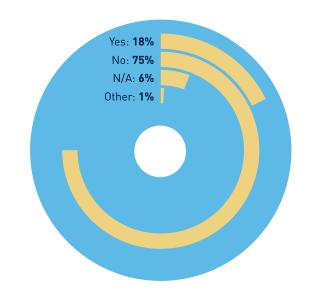
PROGRAM DESIGN, MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

The program design, monitoring, evaluation and learning and operations section of the survey aims to explore both the nature and execution of organizations' work on the ground. Dismantling systemic racism in the sector requires an examination of how racial biases and assumptions continue to underline funding and programming structures. International cooperation organizations have contributed to the entrenchment of white supremacy through programming practices that are rooted in "saviour" attempts that inherently uphold an inequitable power dynamic between aid workers and historically disadvantaged groups. As the primary vehicle through which foreign aid organizations interact with local populations, recognizing power asymmetries within international aid, transforming programming is necessary for the success of broader decolonization and anti-racism efforts in the sector.

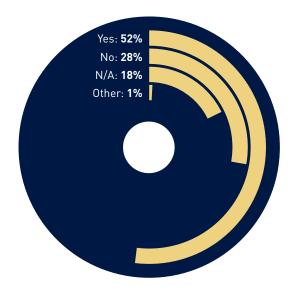
Does your organization have explicit reference to anti-racism in policies or procedures that guide your project or program development practices?

Yes: 35%
No: 61%
N/A: 4%
Other: 0%

Does your organization use monitoring and evaluation metrics which explicitly examine racial justice or anti-racism within your programming portfolio overall? Here, we are talking about the assessment of your work as a whole.



Does your organization have official guidelines or procedures regarding the decision-making roles of local staff and partners in regards to project activities and operations?

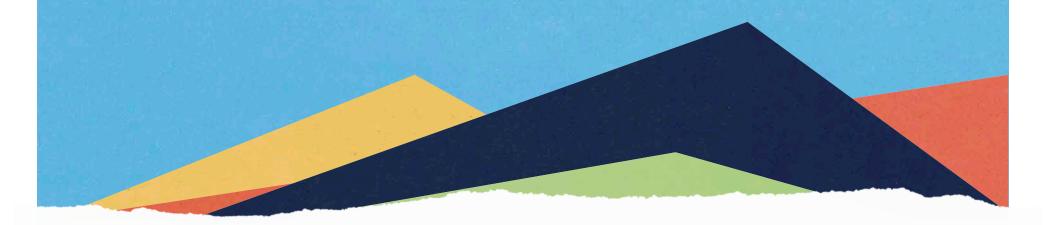


Beyond the numbers

In 2022, just 10-percent or about eight organizations reported using monitoring and evaluation metrics which explicitly examine racial justice or anti-racism within their programming portfolio. In 2023, that number increased to 18-percent, signalling a positive shift. Further, only a third have explicit reference to anti-racism in policies or procedures that guide their project or program development practices. While progress has been made, in comparison to 2022, there remains significant work to be done in this space.

Across the sector, calls for greater localization efforts seek to redress global power imbalances in the sector, challenging the trope of white saviourism by centering the priorities, expertise and approaches of stakeholders with lived experiences in international decision-making efforts. Relatedly, this year, 52-percent of respondents indicated that they have official guidelines or procedures on the decision-making roles of local staff and partners in regard to project activities and operations, representing a 7-percent increase. It is important to note, however, that localization shifts have, in themselves, been critiqued for continuing to uphold the status quo, favouring colonial ideals and overwhelmingly privileging Western perspectives and actors.

As the international cooperation sector continues to work to respond to growing global crises, programming that is not explicitly anti-racist, intentionally culturally-competent and implemented in collaboration with local partners risks upholding systems of harm and reproducing inequitable outcomes.



RECOMMENDATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Addressing centuries-long legacies requires a collective effort from organizations, leaders, staff, and international partners within Canada's International Cooperation sector. This work cannot be siloed.

The the Anti-Racist Cooperation Hub (ARC Hub) has emerged to provide responsive, accessible and open-source resources to support organizations and staff along this journey. Hosted by Cooperation Canada and funded by Global Affairs Canada, the ARC Hub is a dedicated coordination secretariat and a resource center for the sector. The Hub's will continue to help Canadian international development and humanitarian organizations improve their ability to integrate anti-racism and intersectional feminism into their work through the creation of resources, knowledge sharing spaces, networks of support and training. That said, signatory organizations are responsible for proactively taking action, engaging with and making use of the resources provided in order to achieve meaningful anti-racist change.

The recommendations put forth in the 2022 *Collective Commitment: Sustaining Efforts Towards Anti-Racist Change in Canada's International Cooperation Sector* report, can still be understood as critical tools to move this work forward. As the sector continues to tentatively integrate anti-racist change into international humanitarian and development work, the below reiterated recommendations have been expanded to provide the sector with additional guidance on how to achieve the anti-racist change they call for.



Create a collaborative and intentional organizational anti-racism strategy

Many organizations continue to struggle with dismantling ineffective hierarchical structures that have historically reproduced narratives, systems, and paradigms that have been harmful to staff and partners. This has made the process of truly and intentionally creating collaborative structures quite a feat.

Last year the ARC Taskforce noted, "engage your staff at all levels in creating antiracist strategic thinking. This can be as simple as sharing progress internally and creating an anonymous online form for feedback or co-creation" as an important first step under this recommendation.

Recognizing the relationship to harmful structures is a crucial precondition to antiracist work. It involves intentionally defining anti-racism throughout the organization, reflecting on role and relationship and demonstrating the willingness to be held accountable and challenged. In order to advance this recommendation, the report suggests additional steps that organizations may take to progress in this direction.

- 1. Define anti-racism for your organization centering Black, Indigenous, and historically disadvantaged communities. What would it look like and feel like to work in an anti-racist organization?
- 2. Work to be aware of the makeup of staff (i.e. language, background, experience/history, career goals/motivation, age, etc): if you aren't already doing so, periodically collect data to understand your team, and make spaces for relationships and knowing the makeup of staff.
- **3.** Shift power to affected/relevant communities (Black, Indigenous, racially othered) to lead/dictate the process.
- **4.** Challenge the ways in which bias shows up and make sure to build the mechanisms and supports to check it.
- 5. Build an action plan, check-ins, further growth and learning around the strategy to make sure it's actionable and not just a document but a resource that is ingrained in the internal and external workings of the organization.
- **6.** Ensure that the strategy is easy to understand, adapt, and grow.
- 7. Define roles throughout the organization in the actualization of strategy based on experience, positionality, responsibilities, and other factors deemed important by your organization and team.



Investing human and financial resources to create inclusive, safe and sustainable work environments

As this work continues to gain traction, workplaces are becoming more challenging for Black, Indigenous and employees from historically disadvantaged communities to navigate.

As noted last year, it is important for organizations to commit resources to the sustainability of this work. Even more important is a safe and engaging foundation from which this work can grow. It is increasingly important to invest in these processes and to look at how policies, structures, and prioritization models may affect how the investment in this work is viewed.

While of course financial and human resources are still incredibly important pieces of this puzzle, an internal audit of resources and community can provide better insight into how best to make intentional investments that result in real, good, and sustainable change. This is what it can look like:

- Getting to know the Black, Indigenous, racially othered staff, program
 participants, and partners with which the organization engages
 including their backgrounds, expertise, experiences, and more.
 Often organizations will go looking for support in these processes
 instead of highlighting and valuing the skills, tools, knowledge that
 exist internally which can leave communities with a feeling of being
 devalued or further disenfranchised.
- 2. Create spaces (i.e.committees, working groups, feedback forms, knowledge sharing spaces etc) that allow staff, program participants, and partners from Black, Indigenous and historically disadvantaged communities to explore and identify the gaps that need to be filled.
- 3. Be invested in building long-term and short term partnerships and plans to break dependency from funders or funding streams that create barriers or are not inline with decolonial and anti-racist approaches to this work.
- **4.** For leaders that aren't from affected/relevant communities build a long term plan for power shift that informs and allows cycles of accountability around how/what investments are made.



Center affected communities/relevant groups in antiracism work, in all things

The systems the sector operates within are designed to exclude, disenfranchise, and devalue Black, Indigenous, and racialized peoples. To be in an anti-racist process is to acknowledge and dismantle the systems and institutions that create these negative and harmful outcomes. This is why the sector continues to struggle to prioritize the voices, experiences, inherent expertise and expectations of the most vulnerable.

Last year, the ARC Taskforce offered a focus on reviewing existing architecture and giving these communities the space to review and redesign as an easy first step. However, some of these systems can't be easily reviewed and redesigned. As mentioned above, because organizations, leadership teams, people and culture professionals continue to be stuck within the confines of traditionally harmful structures/institutions/systems, it has continued to be very difficult to center/prioritize Black, Indigenous and racialized peoples within traditional/established models of work prioritization. In order to add some context and support to this recommendation, some additional first steps may be:

- 1. Feedback, especially on areas related to lived experiences, should only be collected when organizations are prepared to explicitly demonstrate how that information will be used and responded to. Build formalized structures and/or policies that support and validate the input of staff and partners from Indigenous, Black and/or from historically disadvantaged communities.
- 2. As an organization, define what it means for communities and relevant groups to be centered in programming, communications, budgeting, decision-making, workplace structure, etc.
- **3.** Become familiar with, and build team development plans that directly respond to, the strengths and areas of growth of each individual team member to build inclusion and challenge hierarchies.
- 4. Ensure that there is space for accountability in the workplace structure.

 Breaking down traditional hierarchical structures, intentionally building trust and safety so that global staff, program participants, partners, etc. can provide honest feedback, enabling accountability and effective course correction.
- **5.** Be ready to start from scratch, to rebuild, be held accountable and use the moments where the organization and the affected staff are in conflict or misalignment as opportunities to shift, and further challenge ourselves.



Measure monitor and use qualitative and quantitative data to inform workplace structures, people and culture

Qualitative and quantitative data work together to provide a clearer understanding of experiences and needs. Integrating anti-racist practices and principles into the sector's work requires supplementing numerical data with experiential data to humanize it.

There is still so much data that misses, and sometimes intentionally ignores, the experiences of the most marginalized. The sector needs to continue to be aware of the colonial and racist tools that are so deeply embedded in the daily practices of this work, around people and culture, programming and organizational structures, etc. The following steps offer a way to understand and implement this recommendation:

- 1. Create diverse, consistent and active spaces/points for feedback and structures to ensure that the feedback results in clear shifts.
- 2. Build strategy and processes around establishing trust with communities in order to receive accurate engagement, honest feedback and buy in.
- **3.** Be ready to be accountable to the data, challenge practices and beliefs where the data identifies gaps and areas of concern.
- **4.** Make sure that the way data is collected is comprehensive and that different components are brought in to enrich the numbers. For example, including positionality into how experience is recorded by making sure the data is relatively disaggregated.
- **5.** Evaluate what the organization's data goals are. In other words, ask, "What is the organization trying to prove, identify and address or communicate?"



Redefine communications and reporting strategies and outputs to reverse harmful dominant storytelling, framing and reporting that uphold and are key to racially biased and colonial architecture

International cooperation work is largely understood through organization's communications and reporting strategies. Historically, this has had an incredibly negative impact in establishing harmful power dynamics, institutions, and structures that don't acknowledge violent histories of domination, theft, and occupation. Moreover, dominant storytelling has also affected internal functions, and so it's important that this recommendation is considered both internally and externally. It's important to be aware of and accountable for all the different mediums by which organization's communicate their priorities, goals, ethics, and more.

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- 1. Perform an audit of communications and reporting strategies. Ask, "What is the organization implicitly communicating? Are the organization's communications respectful, authentic and meaningful to those in and around the organization's work?" Leverage diverse and representative focus groups to assess communications.
- 2. Integrate anti-oppressive, inclusive, and DEI focused language guides.
- 3. Learn from globally indigenous communities informed by the makeup of the organization, participants, and partners on traditional means of communications, storytelling, reporting, data collection and more.
- **4.** Challenge what success markers are being used in reporting, ensuring consultation with affected communities.

Reflections

With rising global conflict and crises, the world is at a turning point. Widespread insecurity, uncertainty and shortages are exacerbating existing and imposing new challenges, calling for new ways of approaching work across the international humanitarian-development-peace continuum. An intersectional, cross-cutting and intentional commitment to anti-racism offers a critical pathway through which organizations can work alongside Indigenous, Black and partners from historically disadvantaged communities to respond to growing needs and co-create a more equitable future.

The 2023 Collective Commitment Pulse Check represents a critical juncture in the anti-racism journey of signatory organizations. While fewer organizations reaffirmed their commitment in 2023, the report highlights some promising steps that indicate a deeper and more sustained effort towards integrating anti-racist principles and practices into their work. However, there is still much work to be done. The report underscores the importance of building anti-racism commitment into the core of an organization's approach, not just adding it on to the margins. It is heartening to see the significant investments and efforts made by signatories in this work, which promise to have a lasting and transformative impact on the sector. Canada's international cooperation sector must remain steadfast in its commitment to foster a more equitable future.

Anti-racism work is a complex and ongoing journey and the legacies the sector leaves behind as well as the outcomes experienced by Indigenous, Black, and/or historically disadvantaged communities in the future depend on the sustained and collective efforts made today.



2023 Signatory organizations

(CECI) Centre d'Étude et de Coopération Internationale

Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights

Actions Communautaires pour le Développement de la Femme (ACODEFEM)n

ADRA Canada

Aga Khan Foundation Canada

Alberta Council for Global Cooperation

Association For Promotion Sustainable Development

Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale

British Columbia Council for International Cooperation

Canadian Association for the Study of International Development

Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation

Canadian Feed the Children

Canadian Foodgrains Bank Association Inc

Canadian Lutheran World Relief

Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health

Canadian Red Cross

CARE Canada

Carrefour International

Carrefour international bas laurentien pour l'engagement social

CAUSE Canada

CBM

CHILD & WOMEN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Coady Institute

CODE

Collaboration Santé Internationale

Collectif Inter-Associatif pour la Réalisation des Activités Scientifiques et Techniques Jeunes Au

Cameroun- (CIRASTIC) Cooperation Canada

Cuso International

Doctors Without Borders (Médecins sans frontières)

Emergency Relief and Development Overseas

Equality Fund

Equitas

Fairtrade Canada

Farm Radio International (FRI) Food for the Hungry Canada Grand Challenges Canada
Humanitarian Coalition

Inter Pares

International Development and Relief Foundation

International Teams Canada Jane Goodall Institute of Canada

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

Kentro Christian Network

Manitoba Council for International Cooperation

Mennonite Central Committee Canada Mennonite Central Committee Manitoba

Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA)

Never Again International - Canada

NGen - Future Ready Project

Northern Council for Global Cooperation
Ontario Council for International Cooperation

Operation Eyesight Canada

Oxfam Canada Oxfam-Québec

Partenariat pour le Développement des Communautés (PARDEC)

Partners In Health Canada

PEGASUS Institute

Plan International Canada

Presbyterian World Service and Development

Rayjon Share Care of Sarnia Inc.

Results Canada

Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation

Save the Children Canada

The Atlantic Council for International Cooperation

The United Church of Canada

The Wellspring Foundation for Education
Trade Facilitation Office Canada (TFO Canada)

VIDEA - A BC-Based International Development Education Association

WaterAid Canada World Accord

World University Service of Canada (WUSC - EUMC)

World Vision Canada

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management of surveys signatories had submitted in a confidential manner.

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