

# CTC Briefing paper

## **Determining Basic Human Needs in the Tibet Autonomous Region:**

### *Reflections on CIDA's<sup>1</sup> Bilateral Development Assistance Program in Chinese-occupied Tibet*

The Canada Tibet Committee is an independent non-governmental organisation which seeks an end to the ongoing destruction of the Tibetan culture and to the suffering of its people by restoring Tibet's status as an independent state within the family of nations. The Canada Tibet Committee is committed to the principle of non-violence and opposes the use of violence as a means of resolving conflict. The Canada Tibet Committee recognizes the Tibetan-Government-in Exile as the legitimate representative of the Tibetan people.

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian International Development Agency

...the expansion of freedom is viewed as both (1) the primary end and (2) the principal means of development. They can be called respectively the “constitutive role” and the “instrumental role” of freedom in development. The constitutive role of freedom relates to the importance of substantive freedom in enriching human life. The substantive freedoms include elementary capabilities like being able to avoid such deprivations as starvation, undernourishment, escapable morbidity and premature mortality, as well as the freedoms that are associated with being literate and numerate, enjoying political participation and uncensored speech and so on. In this constitutive perspective, development involves expansion of these and other basic freedoms. Development, in this view, is the process of expanding human freedoms, and the assessment of development has to be informed by this consideration.

**Amartya Sen**

**Winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences  
From “Development as Freedom”, Anchor Books, 1999**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canada is currently engaged in a bilateral aid project with the Government of China, the first ever with regards to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). The \$5 million (CDN) project, administered by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), is designed to alleviate poverty on the high plateau over a five-year period. The two main locations are Lhoka and Nagchu, with the possibility of subsequent replication in other areas in the TAR and beyond.

After an evaluation of CIDA's project summary, the Canada Tibet Committee (CTC) concludes that the project's preliminary conceptual and methodological approaches lack respect for important principles around development in Tibet. Although poverty alleviation and capacity building are the explicit objectives of the project, there is nothing in CIDA's documentation to suggest that salient political issues characterizing Tibet today have been addressed. The few references made to vital political issues in the summary are insufficient and obscure.

Large-scale development projects in China, such as this one, are designed in co-operation between governments. This tends to support a top-down decision-making procedure that risks excluding the participation of Tibetan locals in the projects and also consolidates Chinese occupation over Tibet. CIDA's report demonstrates that the theme of poverty alleviation and economic co-operation prevail over issues of environmental welfare, human rights and the cultural integrity of Tibetans. The latter provide the groundwork for just and democratic procedures of decision-making around the nature of foreign aid and development initiatives in Tibet and therefore must not be disregarded.

At this time, the CTC neither endorses nor challenges CIDA's bilateral project in Tibet. We believe that the presence of the Canadian government in Tibet has the potential to genuinely contribute to the betterment of Tibetan lives. However, this cannot be accomplished without addressing the following concerns for which the project presently fails to account. Briefly, they are:

- ***Tibet's Political Status:***

Tibet is an illegally occupied country. Foreign government-sponsored projects in Tibet must therefore consider the political realities associated with colonisation. CIDA does not consider or evaluate China's political objectives inherent in this project. The project therefore risks complicity with the expansion of state control over Tibet, a disputed territory. The project fails to confront the systemic violations of human rights in Tibet.

- ***Consultative Process:***

CIDA does not provide the methodology used to consult local Tibetans in the project area. Generally, Tibetans are fearful of speaking freely in the presence of foreigners and Chinese. CIDA has not conferred with the Tibetan-government-in-exile in India and Tibet NGOs in Canada were not consulted until after CIDA's internal project approval process was completed.

- ***Project Locations:***

CIDA's rationale for targeting arable land for test projects to be replicated elsewhere is questionable since only 1% of TAR is arable. Furthermore, Nagchu and Lhoka will likely be stopovers in a recently announced railway line which will connect western China and its primary nuclear research facility with the oil reserves of north-eastern Tibet and military bases in central Tibet. The construction of the railway is seen also as means to further assimilate Tibet into China.

- ***Population Transfer:***

CIDA's project design does not address the grave implications of population transfer into Tibet. Population transfer policies facilitate the immigration of Chinese settlers, both skilled and unskilled, into Tibet, often under the guise of development assistance. Chinese professionals fill technical and managerial positions required for the implementation of development projects. These processes disempower local Tibetans in their country and threaten their existence as a people.

- ***Participants and Beneficiaries:***

The information provided by CIDA does not specify who will be the beneficiaries of the project funds. Even if the project budget clearly indicated local Tibetans as beneficiaries, the problem of adequately monitoring fund disbursement would remain due to corruption and the lack of transparency.

- ***Gender:***

The summary fails to address the fundamental gender-specific problems facing Tibetan women today and does not realistically assess the obstacles confronting Tibetan women in their efforts to participate in and benefit from development initiatives related to health issues. Tibetan women are especially vulnerable to community impacts of prostitution and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS.

- ***Distribution and Quality Maintenance of Water:***

The provision of groundwater via wells is the foundation of the project. Yet an assessment of groundwater capacity in March 2000 failed to account for the potential impact of climate change and regional deforestation on water availability. Further, the scope of tests conducted for groundwater quality is unclear in the information provided by CIDA. Safeguards need to be made to prevent the diversion of project water to non-project uses and to ensure the sustainable extraction of groundwater.

- ***Sustainable Agricultural Production and Marketing:***

Tibet's traditional crop production system, employing organic farming methods, crop rotation, fallow periods and mixed cropping was sustainable and appropriate in the fragile mountain environment. Insufficiencies have evolved only recently due to PRC policies such as population transfer, crippling taxation, production quotas and export-oriented development. CIDA policies threaten the viability of local nomadic lifestyles.

## INTRODUCTION

On December 23, 1999, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) issued a press communiqué announcing that it was in the final approval stages of a project to support basic human needs in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). This will be the first bilateral aid project between Canada and the People's Republic of China with regards to the TAR. The project will take place over 5 years and will contribute an estimated CAD\$5 million to poverty alleviation on the high plateau through a series of initiatives grouped into five "interrelated" components: Access, Distribution and Quality Maintenance of Water; Sustainable Agricultural Production and Marketing; Sanitation, Basic Health and Nutrition; Participatory Community Development; Gender Equality. The project initiatives will be carried out in two locations, Lhoka (Ch: Shannan) and Nagchu (Ch: Naqu), with a view to subsequent replication in other areas in the TAR and beyond.

## BACKGROUND

Chinese forces first entered Tibet via its eastern regions in 1950. Promising political reform and economic development, the People's Liberation Army moved steadily westward and quickly overwhelmed Tibetan resistance, eventually consolidating control in the capital city, Lhasa.<sup>2</sup> In March 1959, with the young Dalai Lama under threat of abduction by Chinese authorities, the people of Lhasa revolted and were immediately and brutally crushed. It is estimated that 10,000 were killed in Lhasa alone and 80,000 more soon followed the Dalai Lama across the Himalayas into exile in neighbouring India. Over a million Tibetans have died since 1959 as a direct result of the Chinese occupation, either through harsh prison conditions, summary execution or starvation.

The United Nations General Assembly passed three resolutions supporting Tibet citing various violations to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Tibetan people, including the right to self-determination.<sup>3</sup> In 1970, Canada officially recognized the People's Republic of China and simultaneously initiated a program to bring several hundred Tibetan refugees from the settlement camps of India to new homes in Canada. Those Tibetans form the core of today's Tibetan community in Canada, now totaling approximately 1000.

Even though Canada officially recognized the government of the People's Republic of China, it did not take any position on Chinese territorial claims. Until 1997, the position of the Government of Canada regarding Tibet's political status was clear:

Canada takes no position with regard to specific Chinese territorial claims; it neither challenges nor endorses them.<sup>4</sup>

During this period of time, Canadian official development aid to Tibet was limited to small-scale projects administered by the Canadian Embassy in Beijing.

Following the agreement which established the Canada-China Bilateral Dialogue on Human rights in March 1997, Canada's position on Tibet was modified to meet Chinese requests. In 1998, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Lloyd Axworthy confirmed the reversal by restating his government's official position on Tibet's status in the following way:

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<sup>2</sup> *Tibet: Human Rights and the Rule of Law*, International Commission of Jurists, Geneva, December 1997

<sup>3</sup> UN General Assembly Resolutions 1353 (XIV) 1959, 1723 (XVI) 1961, 2079 (XX) 1965

<sup>4</sup> Letter to Thubten Samdup, President of the Canada Tibet Committee from Joseph P. Caron, Director North Asia Relations Division, The Department of External Affairs and International Trade, on behalf of Andre Ouellet, Minister. January 6, 1994.

When Canada established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1970, we recognized the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China. Canada does not recognize the Tibetan "government-in-exile" led by the Dalai Lama based in Dharmasala, India.<sup>5</sup>

In November 1999, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), Global Issues Bureau, conducted its first official visit to the TAR. CIDA's bilateral project was announced immediately following, in December 1999. In June 2000 Raymond Chan, DFAIT's Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific, made an official visit to Tibet, the first ever by a Canadian official at the ministerial level. Between 1997 and 1999, there were at least 2 CIDA exploratory missions to Tibet undertaken to assess the feasibility of establishing a government-to-government aid programme in the TAR.

None of these official government visits to Tibet, either by CIDA or by DFAIT, were preceded by consultations with the Tibetan-government-in-exile or with the Canada Tibet Committee. Although various officials assured the Canada Tibet Committee that they had received background briefings from Canada's Embassy in Beijing, requests for copies of those briefing documents through the Access to Information Act, have yielded no results. Despite this apparent lack of preparation for such a politically sensitive initiative, some realities of Tibet could not be missed. When asked upon his return for his overall impression of Tibet, Minister Chan replied, "My overall impression is that there is a very strong military presence."<sup>6</sup>

### **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TIBET'S POLITICAL STATUS**

Although CIDA's stated objectives in initiating the Basic Human Needs project are poverty alleviation and capacity building, and while it is certainly true that many Tibetans are poor particularly in rural areas, the reality of foreign occupation is a significant factor in approving a government-to-government relief program. The political objectives of the Beijing regime must be considered and yet there is no indication that they have been addressed in any of the background documentation provided by CIDA. Many of the problems encountered by CIDA initiatives in areas such as East Timor and the Occupied Territories will surely be replicated in Chinese-occupied Tibet. The recent debacle surrounding the World Bank's Qinghai component of the Western China Poverty Reduction Project, which was eventually cancelled, will surely repeat itself in other Tibet projects which fail to address this reality. Problems with indigenous participation in the planning and implementation of the projects are coupled with the impossibility of valid community consultation, ulterior motivation on the part of the government and competing geo-political forces in which local people are no more than pawns.

In fact, the similarity between the World Bank and CIDA projects is striking. CIDA describes its project goal as the enhancement of "household livelihood security in terms of potable water, food and nutrition, income levels, basic health and sanitation, and social well being of targeted, poor populations in selected counties in Shannan and Naqu Prefectures".<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, the World Bank project is described as assisting "people ... to increase their incomes and productivity in both farm and off-farm activities. It will also improve their health and education services, water supply, the availability of electricity, and the quality of roads used to bring local goods to market."<sup>8</sup>

One can only conclude that both project descriptions shared a common origin, namely the Government of China. In this context, the objectives of China's "Western China Development

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<sup>5</sup> Letter to Tenzin Jimpa, Parliamentary Liaison Officer, Canada Tibet Committee, from Hon. Lloyd Axworthy, Minister, Department of Foreign Affairs & International Trade, December 3 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Raymond Chan, Radio Free Asia, June 10, 2000

<sup>7</sup> *Providing for Basic Human Needs in Tibet Autonomous Region, 1.0 Project Design*, page 1

<sup>8</sup> The Inspection Panel Investigation Report, World Bank, April 28, 2000.

Campaign” are significant. Party leaders consistently remind us in speeches and interviews that the core objective of this campaign is to “strengthen national unity, safeguard social stability and consolidate border defense.”<sup>9</sup>

## CIDA POLICY AND THE PROJECT OBJECTIVES

CIDA defines sustainable development as:

...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs... Meeting human needs, for example, means much more than producing material goods; it includes social, cultural and even environmental dimensions.<sup>10</sup>

The UN Declaration on the Right to Development states that:

The human right to development also implies the full realization of the right of self-determination, which includes, subject to the relevant provisions of both International Covenants on Human Rights, the exercise of their inalienable right to full sovereignty over all their natural wealth and resources.<sup>11</sup>

And:

States shall take resolute steps to eliminate the massive and flagrant violations of the human rights of peoples and human beings affected by situations such as those resulting from *apartheid*, all forms of racism and racial discrimination, colonialism, foreign domination and occupation, aggression, foreign interference and threats against national sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity, threats of war and refusal to recognize the fundamental right of peoples to self-determination.<sup>12</sup>

In July 1994, Canada and China jointly approved the Country Development Policy Framework (CDPF) for development cooperation between the two countries. The CDPF diverges from CIDA’s definition of development in that it prioritizes exchange relationships between China and Canadian business and service sectors, while reducing the promotion of human rights and poverty alleviation to a secondary purpose apparently of lower priority:

...while some specific poverty reduction interventions may be considered, the principal approach will be one of encouraging economic cooperation.<sup>13</sup>

This skewed vision of development goals in the People’s Republic of China brings to mind findings of the World Bank’s Inspection Panel Investigation Report earlier this year. It highlighted the prevalent view among Bank management employees that “in China things are done differently”. This willingness to bend rules when working in China is starkly revealed by the Bank management’s explanations to the Panel:

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<sup>9</sup> China’s New Mass Western Development Campaign, by Gabrielle Lafitte, *Tibetan Review*, June 2000

<sup>10</sup> Canadian International Development Agency website: [www.acdi-cida.gc.ca](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca)

<sup>11</sup> UN Declaration on the Right to Development, Article 1.2

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, Article 5

<sup>13</sup> CDPF, Canadian International Development Agency, Section 2, para.7

The level and quality of preparation and analysis for this Project were very much in line with Bank practice in applying social and environmental policies to projects in China **in the context of its political and social systems** (author's emphasis)<sup>14</sup>

Keeping in mind the sensitivity of Tibet's political status and the apparent willingness of the international community to turn a blind eye to Chinese human rights violations in the interest of market access, we are struck by the partisan nature of CIDA's project objective, phrased as "increasing China's capacity for poverty reduction in poor and remote areas and to enhance its governance capacity for continuing reform".

The terminology in this objective raises a very fundamental question - why should China be the primary beneficiary of the project and what in fact, is meant by the term "Chinese capacity"? If the term refers to ethnic Chinese, it is not appropriate since officially speaking almost no Chinese live in the rural areas of Tibet. If it refers to the Chinese state, why would Tibetans support and participate in it?

The second part of the objective, "to enhance its governance capacity for continuing reform", is equally problematic. In this case, the "its" must actually refer to the Chinese state. The CPDF uses the words "governance" and "reform" in reference to the development of civil society, promotion of human rights and democratic development. It is unclear from any of the background information provided by CIDA, just how the project will achieve these particular goals given that the Chinese state is the agent which outlaws civil society, abuses human rights and denies democratic freedoms in Tibet. Moreover, it is important to remember that Tibet is disputed territory and the objective of expanding the influence of the state in this case is profoundly disturbing.

The constitutional arrangement in China provides for nationality regions to be ruled by their own governments. The Government of Canada does not appear to believe that the Tibet Autonomous Region is, in practice, autonomous. If it did, the project would aim to further the governance and capacity of Tibetans, not the Chinese state. Moreover, the project would address the issues of human rights and self-determination (used here to mean local control of the project design and implementation). Again, the apparent bending of CIDA criteria to win approval from the Chinese authorities for the project, governed by the over-riding objective of economic cooperation between Canada and China is disturbing and requires re-assessment.

## **THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS**

Despite CDPF commitments to a "multi-stakeholder" process in the design of CIDA projects, there is no information provided regarding the methodology used to consult local Tibetans. No data appears in either in the project description, mission reports or any other documents. How many individuals were consulted? What questions were they asked? Were briefing sessions provided prior to the consultations in order to outline long term impacts and mechanisms for local maintenance of project inputs after CIDA withdrawal? Were the consultations conducted in the Tibetan language? None of this information has been provided.

Significantly, the Tibetan-government-in-exile in Dharamsala, India was never invited to comment on the proposal and local Tibet support groups in Canada were kept at arm's length until after CIDA's internal project approval process had been completed. The first documentation received by the Canada Tibet Committee was the December 1999 communique sent also to a number of potential bidding agencies. Almost five months later, on May 8, 2000, the CTC received an 8 page project description. A partial set of background materials was provided only a few days before our first meeting with CIDA representatives which took place in Montreal on June 22,

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<sup>14</sup> *The Inspection Panel Investigation Report: The Qinghai Project*, World Bank, April 28, 2000



2000. These materials included copies of the appraisal mission reports even though they had been completed more than a year earlier and requested in various phone conversations with CIDA mission participants. Representatives of the Canada Tibet Committee were at first invited and then excluded from an information session held at CIDA offices in Hull, Quebec on May 18, 2000. The *Request for Proposals* document (January 2000) and its Addenda (May 2000) were obtained only through backdoor sources.

One assumes from this chronology that the only stakeholder consulted during the project approval process was the government of China. Any other stakeholders who could be imagined to represent the local people in the project area were excluded until CIDA's internal approval process was completed.

Despite this, CIDA brazenly misrepresented the process to bidding agencies. In its addendum 3 to the *Request for Proposals*, CIDA states that its policy regarding project information is "one of openness with all groups interested in the project".<sup>15</sup> It further claims that the Canada Tibet Committee had endorsed the project.

...there have been discussions with some groups including the Canada Tibet Committee. They have indicated support for what CIDA is doing. Discussions with these groups will continue.<sup>16</sup>

The addendum is dated May 19, more than a month before CIDA's first meeting with representatives of the Canada Tibet Committee. Until that time, all communication with the agency had been by telephone. Instead of endorsing the project during these phone conversations, CTC representatives emphasized their need for complete disclosure regarding the project plan. The first time any position was put forward to CIDA was during the Montreal meeting in June 2000 following receipt of the 8 page summary and selected background materials. The Canada Tibet Committee views this misrepresentation by CIDA, as a serious breach of confidence, a violation of ethics and an indication that the promises of transparent consultation are not sincere.

Consultation is a process in which those affected by the project can participate in the decisions which influence its eventual form. Such a process takes on increased significance in a territory which is controlled by an occupying force. In the recent example of the World Bank's Western China Poverty Reduction Project, the impossibility of legitimate consultation contributed to the decision by the Bank's independent Inspection Panel to recommend cancellation of the project. That panel affirmed that local consultation in Tibet is problematic due to the "climate of fear" in which Tibetans live.<sup>17</sup>

This view was reinforced in interviews of recently arrived refugees from the project areas. The interviews, conducted in India by the Canada Tibet Committee in September 2000, revealed that local Tibetans have become accustomed to providing what they perceive to be the desired responses to questions from officials and foreigners.

Whenever we meet a foreigner, we will tell them what the Chinese want us to tell them. If a foreigner comes and tells us that he will bring money and jobs to our village, then we will say it is good. We will always agree with them because we are afraid of what can happen after they leave.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Addendum no. 3 to SEL 00-A-030370, art. 23, Canadian International Development Agency, May 2000

<sup>16</sup> *IBID*, art. 8

<sup>17</sup> *World Bank Inspection Panel Report: The Qinghai Project*, World Bank, April 28, 2000

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Tenzin A, Tibetan Transit Camp, Dharmasala, India, September 12, 2000.

Questioned as to whether or not consultation would be more valid if it was conducted in the Tibetan language rather than Chinese, the refugees told the interviewer that while important, language is not the primary issue.

If we are speaking with foreigners, we will never say what we really think or believe, even if the foreigner speaks Tibetan. It makes no difference, because some foreigners work with the Chinese. We can never say what we really feel to a foreigner or to a Chinese.<sup>19</sup>

The interviewees said that they would be more inclined to speak openly with other Tibetans, even if those Tibetans came from abroad and were working with a foreign aid agency. Even in these cases, they said, they could not speak freely in the presence of foreigners or Chinese.

The refugees who were interviewed said that most Tibetans do not understand the implications various development or growth strategies will have on sustainability or environmental protection. None of the refugees met by the CTC had heard of or taken part in information sessions to educate them on such matters either broadly or in the case of this CIDA project. In this situation, it is difficult to understand how the local Tibetans in the project areas could have provided the CIDA appraisal missions with full and informed responses to whatever consultation process took place.

## **THE PROJECT LOCATIONS**

The majority of western aid projects, including those administered by Médecins Sans Frontières, Save the Children Fund, Tibet Poverty Alleviation Fund, the Red Cross and others, are located in CIDA's two project areas Lhoka and Nagchu. Aid agencies are encouraged by Chinese authorities to carry out initiatives in these locations, for reasons which are not clear. It could be that they support the power base of the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the TAR People's Congress, Ragdi, who originates from Nagchu. Some refugees have reported that that local cadres are engaged in a power struggle in the area which authorities seek to influence through the disbursement of foreign funding.

CIDA's own rationale - that by situating the project in arable land areas, a project model will be developed which can be later replicated in other parts of the TAR and beyond - is confusing. According to the figures provided by CIDA itself, only 1% of the Tibetan Autonomous Region is arable. China is already extensively implicated in programmes aimed at increasing production in these areas, including Lhoka. The notion of "replicability", which CIDA has emphasized, is therefore without validity given that by its own admission, there is little other arable land in the TAR on which such projects can be repeated. Further, the idea that Tibet becomes a testing-ground for unproven development models is disturbing. Surely, the Tibetan people face sufficient obstacles already without being subjected to experimental strategies by the development agencies of western governments.

There are additional concerns regarding the choice of project areas and these address China's strategic interests in Lhoka and Nagchu. A secret report by the United States Central Intelligence Agency, released publicly in 1993, pointed to the lack of a railway as the primary reason why Tibet has not been successfully assimilated into China. That railway is now becoming a reality<sup>20</sup>.

First announced on October 7, 1994, the railway will cost an estimated USD2.36 billion. It enters northeastern Tibet linking China's primary nuclear research facility, the "Ninth Academy" with missile bases in Terlingkha and Gormo and providing a much-needed supply route for the

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Tenzin B, Tibetan Transit Camp, Dharmasala, India, September 12, 2000

<sup>20</sup> China Vows Train to Lhasa, *Tibetan Review*, January 2001

construction needs of the recently announced Petro China/AGIP pipeline which will export Tibet's oil to China. From Gormo, the railroad will extend south through Nagchu and Lhoka then west to Shigatse linking military airbases near both locations.<sup>21</sup>

Tibetans fear, with reason, that the rail link from China will be used to speed up troop movements in the case of civil unrest and to facilitate the build-up of arms primarily for strategic objectives in other parts of Asia, particularly south Asia. The railroad will also link the oil-rich Tsaidam Basin with industrialized areas and facilitate the importation of materials and workers to the proposed oil pipeline, currently the subject of an international protest campaign<sup>22</sup>

Nagchu and Lhoka are the obvious choices for supply stops on the route of the proposed railroad. The growth they will no doubt experience as a result, will require additional resources in terms of food and water supply. The extent to which CIDA's project will facilitate those needs beyond what local Tibetans require for their own use, must be evaluated. The project must not result, even indirectly, in support for the continuing influx of Chinese into Tibet, the consolidation of Beijing's control in the region or the provision of supply networks for the People's Liberation Army.

### **POPULATION TRANSFER**

Modeled on successful policies in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, demographic manipulation is China's "final solution" to the problem of Tibetan resistance - its favoured means of securing the incorporation of Tibet into China. Tibet's capital, Lhasa, is already predominantly Chinese with government administrators, business migrants, military and security personnel (estimated to be as many as 600,000) outnumbering Tibetans 2 to 1.<sup>23</sup> This trend is replicated in other urban areas.

The movement of increasing numbers of Chinese migrants into Tibet results from a policy introduced by the central government in Beijing which accords preferential treatment to Chinese settlers. Components of this policy range from hardship allowances for government cadres to the easing of procedures for Chinese entrepreneurs wishing to procure licenses for investment in Tibet. Together, they amount to a systematic attempt by authorities to swamp the local population with Chinese immigrants.

Similarly in development projects, Tibetans are marginalized in both the decision-making processes and the receipt of benefits such as training and employment opportunities. Because of discrimination in the educational system, few Tibetans are qualified for more than low level manual labour, while technical and managerial positions are routinely awarded to ethnic Chinese brought into Tibet from mainland areas. With them, increased demand for the types of services and goods favoured by the Chinese settlers encourages a second wave of migrants comprised of seasonal workers, petty traders and small-scale entrepreneurs.

The extent to which CIDA's project summary fails to address these concerns is, in our view, a serious flaw in its conceptualization. The policy of population transfer is one of the utmost sensitivity for the Tibetan people.

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<sup>21</sup> *Tibet 2000*, Department of Information & International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, India, April 2000

<sup>22</sup> See Free Tibet Campaign website, [www.freetibet.org](http://www.freetibet.org)

<sup>23</sup> *Tibet 2000*, Department of Information & International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, India, April 2000

## PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

Much emphasis is placed in the project summary and in our conversations with CIDA staff, on the participatory nature of the project design and implementation. The project summary states that the project will encourage sustainability and build capacity through “a strong emphasis on a participatory approach to project planning and implementation.”<sup>24</sup> As already mentioned, there is no information in any of the background documentation provided of exactly how local Tibetans have been involved in planning the project. Methodologies for inclusion of local Tibetans in project implementation are also not provided. Given our earlier concerns around the existing “climate of fear” in Tibet, about the lack of local knowledge regarding long term impacts of development strategies and the non-existence of empirical data about the number, locations and format of local consultations, we can only conclude that local Tibetans did not, in fact, participate in the planning process of this project and likely will have little role in its implementation.

According to the organizational chart which outlines reporting and accountability relationships for the project, local committees and the Canadian Executing Agency all report to the Joint Project Steering Committee (JPSC) which is the liaison with CIDA and the Government of China.<sup>25</sup> This seems to be contrary to the project description which states that local committees and the CEA will be members of the JPSC<sup>26</sup>.

Whatever the eventual composition of the JPSC turns out to be, the project summary itself goes on to state that local committees “will adapt and extend JPSC approved policies”.<sup>27</sup> The potential role that local committees and the CEA could serve on the JPSC is therefore unclear – would they participate as observers with no decision-making role? Since the JPSC is comprised of representatives of high-level government bodies (MOFTEC, DOFTEC and officials of the TAR administration), it is unlikely that local participants will have any ability to proceed along lines other than those dictated by the Chinese government. Moreover it allows the Canadian participants very little scope for flexibility if they eventually decide to attempt to implement a genuine consultation process and participatory approach.

The creation of local committees cannot be relied upon to provide a valid participatory vehicle for local people. There is a growing belief among Tibetans, that local committees created by Chinese authorities or through foreign development agencies, are little more than mechanisms for intimidation and coercion. This belief appears to be justified by the public remarks of Ragdi. In a speech given on January 9, 1998, Ragdi said that an increase in the power of grass roots organisations is fundamental to the patriotic education campaign in rural areas. Justifying the use of village level governance mechanisms to enforce Beijing’s rule, Ragdi referred specifically to Lhoka, explaining:

The agricultural and pastoral areas have gradually become the frontline in the struggle against separatism.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Providing for Basic Human Needs in Tibet Autonomous Region: 1.0 Project Description*. Page 3, Canadian International Development Agency, May 8, 2000

<sup>25</sup> *Request for Proposal SEL: 00-A-030370*, Page 3, Appendix B, Figure 3, The Canadian International Development Agency,

<sup>26</sup> *Providing for Basic Human Needs in Tibet Autonomous Region: 1.0 Project Description*, page 7, Canadian International Development Agency, May 8, 2000

<sup>27</sup> *Providing for Basic Human Needs in Tibet Autonomous Region: 1.0 Project Description*, page 8, Canadian International Development Agency, May 8, 2000

<sup>28</sup> More Party Control, Tighter Security in Rural Tibet, Tibet Information Network Press Release, UK, August 24, 1998

## THE BENEFICIARIES

None of the project information provided by CIDA states that the beneficiaries of the project are Tibetans. The term “participants” can mean local Tibetans but it can also mean recent migrants or the Chinese state. The impression given by the outline of project costs is that the majority of project funds will be spent on moving Canadians from place to place. Moreover, in the very brief budget material provided, the disbursement of project funds refers only to Canadian costs, including “specialist fees, travel, accommodation, meals & incidentals, translation/interpretation, training/workshop expenses, equipment, materials & supplies, visa and other direct expenses”.<sup>29</sup> Other management costs include again “personal costs, travel accommodation’ etc., with the added expense “communications”. Communications is described more fully in the Request for Proposal document SEL: 00-A-030370. On page 10 of this document communications is presented as “communications strategy (within Canada)”. One assumes from this, that CIDA and the CEA will be using official development aid funds to sell the benefits of this Tibet project to the Canadian public. Will any of the project funds be targeted directly for local Tibetans?

The project description outlines China’s contribution (CAD500,000) as provision of land for the project activities, salaries for Chinese staff, in-China travel and accommodation, and expenses for the activities of Chinese specialists. At the risk of stating the obvious, Tibetan land is disputed territory. It is not within Chinese authority to assign it to anyone, especially without the participation of TAR’s own administration, which is not mentioned in this context.

The expenditures, both for Canadian costs and for Chinese costs, include reference to training. The Chinese contribution, which is one tenth of Canada’s contribution, provides slightly more articulation of this line item, even though it remains extremely vague - “expenses for training, extension and educational activities, including language training”. No details are provided, leaving one to wonder exactly who will be trained and to what purpose? Who will receive language training? Will Chinese managers be learning Tibetan or will representatives of the CEA be taught Chinese? Will the training take place in Tibet?

Given the past record of Chinese educational policies in Tibet and unless the training processes are clearly designed to include scholarships specifically and exclusively for local Tibetans, including for tertiary and vocational levels, Tibetans cannot be viewed as beneficiaries of this cost expenditure.

A quick look at other development projects in China and Tibet will reveal that the line item which provides for the purchase of equipment and materials likely refers to the purchase of four wheel drive vehicles which the Chinese will have insisted on. In all likelihood they will be kept by these officials after the project is completed and again, will not provide any benefit to local Tibetans.

Even if a clear project budget is provided by CIDA showing that Tibetans are project beneficiaries, there are still concerns that CIDA will be unable to adequately monitor fund disbursement. This is true not only for projects located in Tibet, but also for projects across China where corruption is widespread and siphoning off of development aid is a common problem. In this regard, the smaller Canada Fund projects offer more hope of reaching local communities and benefiting Tibetans than do larger bilateral projects such as this one. The point is emphasized in interviews with refugees originally from the project areas. They reveal that Tibetans in rural and urban areas clearly understand this principle.

When large amounts of money come from foreign governments, they are controlled by Beijing and they do not help the Tibetan people. The money

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<sup>29</sup> *Providing for Basic Human Needs in Tibet Autonomous Region: 1.0 Project Description*, page 7, Canadian International Development Agency.

goes to the Chinese government. Small donations for local needs, such as building of hospitals, temples and schools are much better for us.<sup>30</sup>

## GENDER

The project lists its activities as well-drilling and management, livestock and farm interventions and community health interventions based on the increased availability of potable water. It includes "improved social status for women" as one of its expected outcomes. Just how the project activities are designed to achieve this desired outcome is described as "creating an enabling environment" for women's participation, improving literacy and development of labour-saving activities for traditional female activities.

Although this is standard development jargon, no doubt required by CIDA's project design criteria, it fails to address the real needs of Tibetan women. Moreover it fails to address the fundamental problems of local participation within this project as already described and the additional obstacles which Tibetan women face related to gender-specific health issues such as reproductive health. Tibetan women are also increasingly confronted with the community impacts of growing levels of prostitution and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS. None of these very important and priority concerns for Tibetan women are addressed in the project activities. The background materials provided do not take these concerns into account, nor do they seek to address them.

In its shadow report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which evaluated Chinese compliance under the Covenant, the International Committee of Lawyers for Tibet revealed continued evidence of state-sponsored forced and coerced abortions, forced or coerced sterilizations and monitoring of reproductive cycles. The report also found evidence that eugenic law is used in Tibet to limit the number of births among Tibetans. It concluded:

The weight and credibility of all the evidence justifies a finding of widespread violation of reproductive rights in Tibet. The measures are coercive, violent and sexually discriminatory.<sup>31</sup>

Viewed together with the policy of population transfer, the impacts of these practices are profound. Interviews conducted by the Canada Tibet Committee with refugee women in 1997 and 1998 exposed a widespread reluctance by Tibetan women living in urban and rural areas, to go to hospitals for any reason. Their fear, based on the experiences of friends and family members, was that any pretext could be used for sterilization and if pregnant, for abortion. Several cases were described in which women who had gone to hospital because of other types of complaints, were sterilized without their knowledge or consent.

In recent years, Tibet has experienced a rapid increase in levels of prostitution in urban and rural areas. One unofficial survey carried out in 1998 counted 658 brothels and 238 dance halls and karaoke bars in 18 main streets of Lhasa. In a city of approximately 200,000 this represents one brothel for every 304 people.<sup>32</sup> The increasing numbers of Tibetan sex workers, as well as Chinese migrant sex workers, have resulted from the growing numbers of mostly male labourers, entrepreneurs and military troops now in Tibet. Former prostitutes, now refugees living in northern India, reported knowing nothing about HIV/AIDS. They had never been treated for sexually transmitted diseases or urinary tract infections. They had no idea of what services, if any, were available for prostitutes who were victims of violence but said that abortions were

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with Tenzin A, Tibetan Transit Camp, Dharmasala, India, September 12, 2000.

<sup>31</sup> *Violence and Discrimination against Tibetan Women*, International Committee of Lawyers for Tibet, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, New York, December 1998

<sup>32</sup> *Social Evils: Prostitution and Pornography in Tibet*, Tibet Information Network, London, 1999

readily obtainable. Several had undergone abortions and some of these had resulted in infertility<sup>33</sup>.

The problems and difficulties faced by Tibetan women are systemic and discriminatory. Special consideration must be given in order to develop strategies to address them. Given this reality, it is difficult to see how CIDA's current project design, administered under the supervision of Chinese authorities, can address the root causes of the problems. We believe that the project could provide an opening for innovative responses to the needs of Tibetan women and we would support efforts by CIDA and the CEA to address these matters in the project's design.

## **DISTRIBUTION AND QUALITY MAINTENANCE OF WATER**

CTC has several concerns regarding the distribution and quality maintenance of water component of the CIDA project.

The provision of groundwater via wells is the foundation of the project. As such, "groundwater capacity was tested in March 2000 and monitors put in place to continue water level measurement through August 2000. The March tests confirmed that there is sufficient water quality and quantity to support the proposed project activities."<sup>34</sup>

The process to determine water availability was flawed. There was an insufficient testing period to "confirm" the quality and quantity of the water supply. The TAR is a highly dynamic area in terms of its water regime. River stage (water level), for example, has been observed to alter as much as a metre within several hours as melt water is released from the perennial snow and ice cover. This diurnal variability is mirrored in seasonal oscillations of freeze and thaw and the attendant curtailment and augmentation of water availability. The regional monsoons are also influential, particularly in the southeast. The monitoring period from March to August 2000 coincided with the high water yield period (melt and monsoons), but excluded the low water yield period (dry season). The year to year variability that is characteristic climate has not been addressed in the testing protocol. This is particularly problematic given the paucity of meteorological records for the area.

As in many areas of the planet, glaciers in the area are experiencing rapid retreat. The release of fossil water from this accelerated melt of snow and ice may cause an erroneous over-estimate of the long-term water availability. There is no indication that the potential impact of climate change and regional deforestation on the water regime has been considered.

The quality of the groundwater was ascertained in March 2000. While this may be sufficient to establish a baseline for comparison, on-going monitoring is needed to determine temporal variability and trends as recognized in CIDA's Project Appraisal Mission Report. A one-time test may also yield aberrant results. It is unclear for which contaminants the water was tested. The quality of the groundwater can be undermined by the leaching of fertilizers and to a lesser extent pesticides, both of which are integral to the project design. Bacterial contamination may occur from livestock and human wastes.

It is now widely recognized that the expansion of water supply by itself is insufficient, that it must be accompanied by provisions for the efficient use of water through demand management. This is particularly appropriate for this project the widespread over-consumption of groundwater that has occurred throughout China, with water tables plummeting in excess of a meter a year over broad areas. This does not bode well for the sustainable extraction of groundwater in the project area.

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<sup>33</sup> Interviews conducted by the Canada Tibet Committee with 14 Tibetan women, Refugee Reception Centre, Dharmasala, India. July 1998

<sup>34</sup> Canadian International Development Agency, May 8 2000. page 6

Spray irrigation that is a component of the project may engender considerable evaporative losses given the high potential evapotranspiration in the TAR.

Safeguards may need to be implemented to prevent the diversion of project water to non-project uses, such as urban demands.

## **SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND MARKETING**

Agriculture (primarily pastoral nomadism and grain production) has traditionally been the foundation of the Tibetan economy...Over 80% of the total population of Tibet is still engaged in primary sector agriculture.<sup>35</sup>

Tibet's traditional pastoral nomadism has been sustainable for millennia (4000 years). The seasonal migration of the nomads and their herds of yaks, sheep, and goats enables the land to recover and replenish its fertility. However, since the Chinese occupation of Tibet this traditional system for the sustainable use of rangeland has disintegrated.

The multi-species grazing system...maximizes the use of rangeland resources (as different) species of animals graze on different plants. Prior to the Chinese invasion, nomadic herdsmen kept 'pasture book' records, which regulated the permitted number of animals on every pasture to (prevent) overgrazing and erosion. Herdsmen exceeding the established grazing limits were penalized. A livestock census was taken every three years.<sup>36</sup> (Tibet 2000, p.46)

CIDA appears to recognize the marginality of the area for livestock with statements such as "a lack of adequate surface water for animal consumption makes some of the grassland unusable for some seasons of the year"<sup>37</sup> and "Just over half of the land area (of TAR) is rangeland although the carrying capacity is low...The harsh climate combined with rapid deforestation and overgrazing makes the rural population (85% of total population) vulnerable to winter snow storms, summer floods, and some drought conditions in selected areas"<sup>38</sup>.

Nonetheless there are concerns regarding the livestock rearing component of the CIDA project, among them are:

- How does the provision of wells relate to the nomad settlement policy?
- What is the relationship between the provision of wells and the policy of 'opening of the west'? The latter includes mineral extraction. Nagchu is one of several areas where major reserves are concentrated.
- In areas already prone to overgrazing, the suggested "means to improve livestock production" (fencing; increased commercialization) may be counterproductive.
- Will indigenous or exotic seed varieties be used? If the latter, what are the ecological ramifications?
- Raising animals for slaughter has cultural implications in this predominantly Buddhist region.
- What is the feasibility of marketing livestock and livestock products?

Tibet's traditional crop production system, employing "organic farming methods, crop rotation, fallow periods, and mixed cropping, was sustainable and appropriate in the fragile mountain

<sup>35</sup> *Tibet 2000*, Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala, India. page 42

<sup>36</sup> *Tibet 2000*, Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala, India page 46

<sup>37</sup> Canadian International Development Agency, 8 May 2000 page 1

<sup>38</sup> Canadian International Development Agency, 8 May 2000 page 2



environment<sup>39</sup>. While output was low, there was a comparably low required input. With a historically small population, this limited output was adequate. Insufficiencies have evolved only recently due to policies of the PRC, including population transfer, crippling taxation, production quotas to increase crop yields, the export of meat and grain to China, and shifting agricultural policies that ignore social and geographical reality. Tibetan refugees have reported that farmers in Tibet are forced to sell produce to the government at less than fair market price or are remunerated in chemical fertilizers.<sup>40</sup>

Concerns regarding the crop production component of the CIDA project include:

- Will the increased production be sustainable both initially during the project and after it is concluded?
- Will the heightened output be sufficient to justify the increased input?
- The staple diet of Tibetans is barley; however, it is only the two grains forming the staple diet of the majority of Chinese immigrants – rice and wheat – that are subsidized. Will the project address this imbalance?
- Petroleum is the base of agricultural chemicals. Is there a link between this component of the project and oil exploitation in Tibet's Tsaidam Basin currently under development by the China National Petroleum Corporation. CIDA has provided CAD\$29 million to the CNPC in order to enhance CIDA's "program capability in China."<sup>41</sup>.
- Have environmentally benign alternatives to the proposed toxic pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides been considered?

## CONCLUSION

Although the Canada Tibet Committee has many concerns about this project, we do not have sufficient information at the present time to either endorse or challenge it. Nevertheless, it is our view that CIDA has developed the project in exactly the way it was proposed to CIDA by Chinese authorities. The project therefore fails to address the complexities inherent in the political reality which characterizes Tibet today. Nevertheless, the Canada Tibet Committee is prepared to participate in a transparent and accountable process with CIDA and the CEA during the initial 12-month project design process. We hope that this process will achieve a consensus which best serves the needs of local Tibetans in the project areas and addresses the concerns raised in this paper.

Once the project design is completed by the CEA and submitted to CIDA for approval, the CTC will evaluate it based on compliance with the recommendations accompanying this document and other subsequent and relevant developments. Depending on that evaluation, we may endorse the project or we may recommend further changes. If we find that the project has no saving merit we will urge its cancellation.

In November 1952, British diplomat Hugh Richardson who had been stationed in Tibet between 1936-1950, spoke about the usefulness of a foreign presence in Tibet. He said:

The new curtain is not completely down. The government of India still has a representative in Lhasa, and I hope that the ostensibly good relations between India and China will allow that arrangement to continue, for so long as there are foreign witnesses the Chinese may hesitate to proceed to extremes in Tibet. On the other hand, the government of India will want to

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<sup>39</sup> *Tibet 2000*, Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala, India 2000 page iv

<sup>40</sup> *Tibet 2000*, Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala, India page 49

<sup>41</sup> Canadian International Development Agency website: <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca>

preserve Chinese good will and is likely therefore not to report anything more than diplomatically selected tidbits of news.<sup>42</sup>

The Canada Tibet Committee believes that the presence of the government of Canada in Tibet during potential periods of future unrest, would be of strategic importance for the Tibetan people. However, for this presence to be useful, it must also be rooted in a clear understanding of Tibet's history and political reality. It is not enough for CIDA to say that these concerns are the preoccupation of other government departments. Development does not take place outside of the political arena.

The Canada Tibet Committee recognizes the urgent need for poverty relief and programmes to assist Tibetans reach their full potential as individuals and as a people. We also search for responses to the devastation of Tibet's pristine environment, violations to its fundamental rights and threats to its cultural integrity. We therefore approach the coming months of collaboration with CIDA and the CEA with good intentions, in a positive spirit and on behalf of the people of Tibet.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The project objective should be revised so that it clearly states its intent as one of increasing the capacity of the Tibetan people. The project beneficiaries should be clearly stated to be local Tibetans.
2. CIDA and the CEA should host an information session focused specifically on the question of discrimination against Tibetan women in terms of race and secondly in terms of gender equity. The session would acknowledge that Tibetan women face these twofold obstacles in their pursuit of improved standards of living. The information session would also look at the ways in which CIDA's project could improve the quality of life of Tibetan women using a holistic, responsive and relevant approach to be implemented via the project design.
3. CIDA and the CEA should ensure that the field team in the project locations include a Canadian of Tibetan origin to serve as liaison between the local Tibetan population and the administrative committees, the CEA and CIDA. The purpose of this field worker will be to establish networks within the local Tibetan community in an effort to gauge levels of support for the project activities and assure adequate local participation. The liaison person will also participate in monitoring project implementation.
4. CIDA and the CEA should consult with the Tibetan-government-in-exile, at its offices in Dharmasala, India, in order to present the project, to negotiate modifications or improvements to the project design and to discuss short and long-term objectives for development in Tibet.
5. Agricultural components of the project design should exclude crop diversification which introduces genetically modified seeds or expands crop cultivation specifically to suit the needs of Chinese in-migration.
6. Animal husbandry programmes should not include involuntary settlement of nomads nor should they encourage the raising of yak and cattle for slaughter and export.
7. The project should include the provision of scholarships specifically and exclusively for local Tibetans through the educational process, including tertiary and vocational levels.

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<sup>42</sup> *High Peaks, Pure Earth: Collected Writings on Tibetan History and Culture*, Hugh Richardson, edited by Michael Aris, Serindia Publications, London, UK, 1998

8. The project fails to address serious concerns about the Chinese policy of population transfer. It should specifically be stated within the project design, that it undertakes not to contribute in any way towards the continuing influx of Chinese labourers, entrepreneurs or military troops in Tibet. The project should be able to indicate precisely the means it has taken to ensure this policy is followed.
9. A complete environmental impact assessment must be completed in order to adequately address concerns related to environmental protection. These include appropriate testing methodologies and monitoring periods. The CIDA should consult with the Canada Tibet Committee throughout this process.
10. As described, the project is neither sustainable nor replicable. Given its high altitude and climate, the TAR is particularly suitable to the development of solar and wind energy and these should be encouraged within this project. Such development would leap frog over the environmentally devastating generation of energy from oil and hydro-electricity.
11. The Canada Tibet Committee should be consulted on an ongoing basis during the initial 12 month project design process which will conclude with the Project Implementation Plan (PIP). This consultation will include timely notice of meetings and field visits as well as access to all materials and field team participants.
12. The Canada Tibet Committee should be included in all reviews of the project which comprise the Project Monitoring Framework (PMF). This includes timely notice of meetings, the provision of materials and reports as requested and access to field team members.
13. Revisions to the Project Monitoring Framework should not be subject to the exclusive approval of the JPSC. The Canada Tibet Committee supports a process in which every effort is made to develop consensus with the JPSC. Nevertheless, Chinese authorities must understand that CIDA is accountable to its domestic constituency which will require CIDA's adherence to international commitments governing the promotion and protection of human rights including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

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