

Attention: Assignment Editor

**Afghanistan needs development that is coordinated, not co-opted:
CARE, Oxfam, and World Vision respond to Independent Panel Report.**

Ottawa, ON (January 22, 2008) – Three Canadian organizations working with Afghan communities expressed concern with the development recommendations contained within the Independent Panel Report released today. Afghans desperately require effective, community-owned development that is coordinated, not co-opted by military strategy, said CARE, Oxfam, and World Vision. Afghan priorities must be at the heart of Canada’s development approach.

The three agencies welcomed the report’s emphasis on making Canadian aid to Afghanistan more effective. However, they were disappointed in the report’s emphasis on rapid-impact development projects. Such projects, chosen for military reasons, provide few lasting benefits to Afghans and too often endanger civilians and aid workers.

Furthermore, the agencies expressed disagreement with the report’s recommendation that more project-based bilateral aid should go to Kandahar at the expense of other regions. They emphasized that Canada needs to support a whole-of-country aid strategy, not a Kandahar-driven one.

“We must re-orient the focus of Canadian aid in Afghanistan. The humanitarian and development needs are extreme throughout the country,” said Dave Toycen, President and CEO of World Vision Canada. “The current uneven distribution of aid to the areas of insecurity in the south and east is creating grievances in other parts of Afghanistan. I’ll certainly be asking members of Parliament to go beyond the recommendations of the panel to ensure our aid is allocated primarily by the needs and priorities of the Afghan people. This means a broad, strategic approach, with an overall country perspective in mind. That’s the only way to find lasting security and hope for the future of Afghan children and families.”

Mark Fried, advocacy coordinator of Oxfam Canada added that, “The military has neither the expertise nor the staying power to engage in the long-term development that Afghans need and want. Quick impact projects are all too frequently synonymous with ineffective aid.”

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