

Story of change from the Quebec Association of International Cooperation Agencies (AQOCI)

*Intermediate outcome 1100: **Increased engagement** of Canadians (Quebecers), particularly young people, **in international development and key global issues** in support of the areas of action of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy and the Sustainable Development Goals*

The language we use is imbued with values and with relationships of power. This is certainly the case with the terms used in the field of international solidarity, such as "development," "sustainable development," "donor," "beneficiaries," "countries of the Global South..." These terms have been used for a long time, but where do they come from? Who established them? As Solange Musanganya says, "Don't these terms bring a certain supremacy, depending on where you are? We are talking about a feminist government. The person who says "feminist" evokes a certain horizontality, a certain equality, a certain consensus in the approach. Is there consensus and equality in these terms?" Our understanding of the world, our aspirations, evolve over time: we are therefore also called upon to review the language we use so that it can best reflect the values that we wish to achieve through international cooperation.

This is the issue that led AQOCI to develop an [International Solidarity Glossary](#). The process to develop the glossary took more than two years and involved in-depth dialogue with several members of AQOCI and some forty international cooperation actors from Quebec, Africa and Latin America. This culminated, in June 2023, in the publication of the [glossary in French](#), with a total of 84 definitions. Then in January 2024, AQOCI published the 23 co-constructed definitions in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

Ms. Musanganya was one of the participants in the co-construction process. A Quebec transgender woman originally from Rwanda, former coordinator of the Queer African Youth Network (QAYN), she brought a perspective informed by her international cooperation experience in Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Haiti, among others. Solange explains that she was able to bring to the dialogue the decolonial terms used by QAYN and others, to create as much horizontality as possible. "There was this love of contradiction," she says of the process, "this love of divergence, which, paradoxically, enabled convergence. Everyone was satisfied, because we had the impression of having been listened to, of having listened to others, and of having found common ground.... We found a humility that is often missing in the language we use in international cooperation."

Solange is already seeing the effect of the glossary on discourse. In November 2023, for example, she was a panelist at the Annual Conference of the International Francophone Alliance for Equality and Diversity (Égides). During the preparatory meetings, she expressed sensitivity to certain terms that had been discussed during the development of the glossary. Then, during the conference—which was aimed at the entire LGBT francophone world—she realized that certain terms, such as "donor," were no longer being used, and that terms proposed by the glossary, such as "financial partner," were used instead. "The fact that we had talked about it during the development of the glossary gave me additional strength to influence the use of these terms in the conference. It's not just me: AQOCI and the glossary are with me."

The glossary has only recently been launched. The next step, according to Ms. Musanganya, is to disseminate it worldwide, to distribute it in the most strategic locations. It needs to be used in radio and television broadcasting, to become a reference in schools, for students and university researchers, and for all those who work in international cooperation. In addition, the hope is that it will change the everyday language not only of Quebecers and Canadians, but also of the average citizen in the French-, English-, and Spanish-speaking worlds. We will now be able to say, says Solange: "There is an international solidarity glossary. Go consult it, and go update your terms!"