

NEOLIBERALIZATION OF CANADIAN OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE
AND ITS IMPACT ON HUMAN RIGHTS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examined Canada's bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) in the neoliberal landscape of Canada from 1995 to 2015. To fulfill its commitment to human rights in its international engagement, Canada adopted the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act (ODAAA) in 2008. The Act mandated all Canadian ODA be used for the promotion and protection of human rights. The main objective of this thesis was to examine how human rights are protected and promoted through the Canadian ODA. Through policy and documentary research as well as primary data collected through interviews, this thesis examined how domestic groups in Canada, especially political, economic and civil society actors, protected and promoted the human rights agenda. The research revealed that domestic variables, influenced by neoliberalism especially political and economic, play a key role in the ODA decision making. Key findings of the thesis indicated that though human rights were protected in Canada, there was a lack of protection mechanisms linked to development through ODA in recipient countries. Specific to promotion of human rights, the research showed that while funds from Canadian bilateral ODA directly advanced human rights, the neoliberalization of ODA reflected in funds allocated to the mining sector. Lastly, domestic political actors and economic interests played a key role in the neoliberalization of ODA, while the civil society actors diligently pushed for the inclusion of the human rights agenda. In light of the findings of this thesis, the Government of Canada could play a much concrete role in the advancement of human rights in both protecting and promoting human rights through Canadian bilateral ODA.

KEY WORDS: CANADA OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE/
HUMAN RIGHTS/ NEOLIBERALISM/ DOMESTIC INFLUENCES

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