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By Nabil Ali

Later this year, Canadians will vote in the 43rd federal election. Many non-profit organizations, networks, and coalitions see elections as a critical opportunity to raise relevant public policy issues. Recently, the rules for charities engaging in public policy have become a prominent source of debate and discussion in government and the sector. As we countdown to the next election, The Philanthropist will be asking non-profit leaders what public policy issues are top of mind for them.

Name and organization: Nabil Ali, International Development and Relief Foundation (IDRF)

What current election issues might impact your work?

Although IDRF works in several continents, our programs in Canada that support newcomers, minorities, young women, and at-risk youth are a critical part of our mission to improve people's social and economic circumstances.

There are limited newcomer integration programs that support families and individuals long-term as they plan their futures in Canada. Programs that support at-risk youth and minorities across Canada have taken cuts, which has reduced economic opportunities and, in some neighbourhoods, led to an increase in crime and violence. NGOs and community groups need financial support to help steer vulnerable kids away from violence and foster resiliency.

What issues would you like to bring more attention to in the election?

We must bring more attention to the gender disparity in our labour force. The Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) sector is primarily dominated by men, as too many women are either reluctant or not encouraged to enter the field. Minority groups comprise a low representation as well. As a diverse country, many workplaces and boardrooms do not reflect Canadian multiculturalism.

Canada must also emerge as a global leader for the Sustainable Development Goal of Gender Equality. Millions of women and children face gender-based violence, discrimination, and female genital mutilation every day. We must continue to combat these challenges.

Where can we learn more about these issues?

Empowering women and girls and gender equality, Global Affairs Canada

National Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarking Study, Dalhousie University in partnership with the Canadian Center for Diversity and Inclusion

Canada's response to conflict, crises and disasters, Global Affairs Canada