

Global Citizenship in

Spring 2000

ACTION

Canadians reaching out to the world

**WOMEN ON MOTOR
SCOOTERS:**

**The Road to Success
in Bangladesh**

**THEATRE OF ACTION:
AIDS Awareness
in Tanzania**

**MARKED WITH A "Z":
A Safe Place for Kids**



Canadian International
Development Agency

Agence canadienne de
développement international

Canada 



from the Minister

The challenges of the 21st century are challenges for every person on earth. War, environmental deterioration, economic crises, human rights violations, poverty—these are challenges that affect all six billion of us.

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) works with the world's poorest countries and people to address those challenges. What we have learned over the 30-odd years of CIDA's history is that—from AIDS to armed conflict to hunger and disease—poverty is the common denominator. What we have also learned is that it is the people who are now most powerless in society—poor women and children—who have the greatest power to change it.

Take young girls, for example: in the world's poorest countries, they are only half as likely as boys to be in school. Yet we know that, for every additional year of a girl's education, she will decrease her chances of dying in childbirth by 10 per cent; she will increase her babies' survival rate by 10 per cent; and she will increase her own productivity by anywhere from 10 to 30 per cent. Girls' education is the best development investment any country can make.

What does development cooperation bring to the great challenges of our times? It mobilizes people, knowledge, and capital from every country on earth. And it mobilizes all the people—including the poor, the ill, the marginalized, and the powerless.

The future will be built by ordinary men, women, and children, taking responsibility, creating opportunities, making their own choices. CIDA supports many of the Canadians who are building that future—technical experts, academics, health and education specialists, businesspeople and others—who work with their colleagues in developing countries to reduce poverty and build sustainable development for all.

This magazine tells the stories of just a few of the thousands of Canadians who are actively involved in Canada's official development assistance program. I invite you to read and to share the experiences of these Canadians whose commitment to global citizenship are making a difference, both in their own lives, and in the lives of the communities they serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maria Minna". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Maria Minna
Minister for International Cooperation

Cover photo: Canadian International Development Agency, David Barbour.

Global Citizenship in Action is produced periodically by the Canadian International Development Agency and features stories about Canadians who are making a difference in the world through their work in Canada's development assistance program.

ACTION

Canadians reaching out to the world

The Canadian International Development Agency supports sustainable development in developing countries, in order to reduce poverty and to contribute to a more secure, equitable, and prosperous world.

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Global Citizens in Action

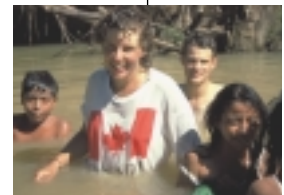


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Women on Motor Scooters The Road to Success in Bangladesh

When Jill Umbach of CARE Canada first visited the Rural Maintenance Program in Bangladesh, she got the surprise of her life. “Women on motor scooters!” She marvels. “That’s how our field workers travelled from site to site. It was a huge break from tradition,” the Etobicoke native continues. “Women in Bangladesh are very strong, but until recently, they’ve been virtually invisible in public life.”

There have been a lot of breaks from tradition in Bangladesh since 1983, when CARE Canada began its program to help rural widows, the poorest of the poor, to earn a living. Their job was to upgrade the earthen farm-to-market roads that form a lifeline for the small producers and traders throughout the country. Working outside the home, in a public place like a road, was unheard of in a country where women were traditionally secluded. In the early days of the program, some of the more conservative members of the community were against it, and tried to discourage the participants. But the women had to survive, and they persisted.

Begum Anwara was one of those women. Her husband deserted her and remarried, leaving her and their three children destitute. She tried to survive by husking rice, but she could not feed her growing family. At her lowest point, she was forced to send one of her sons to an orphanage. Then she heard about the roads project, and she immediately applied to join the program.

Soon she had her son back, her children were all in school, and she began to receive training in literacy, numeracy, and basic life skills, such as how to run a business. She bought a small shoe shop in the local market with her savings and was on her way. Before long, she graduated from the rural maintenance program and she is now running an orchard. When local elections were held in 1997, the village elders encouraged her to run for the local women’s seat. She did, and she won by a comfortable margin.

Anwara’s story is only one of tens of thousands of success stories. Today, this CIDA-funded program, financed

in part by the provision of Canadian wheat, is operating in 90% of the country, and 41,000 women are doing year-round maintenance on 82,000 kilometres of road. Every year, 10,000 women graduate from the program and go into business for themselves, and 10,000 new participants join. More than 70% of the graduates are now earning as much as, or more than, they earned as road workers.

In addition to improving their own standard of living and educating their children, they are also giving local economies a shot in the arm. But their achievements go beyond economic growth: these poor rural widows have increased their own status in the community and opened up new possibilities for women throughout Bangladesh. “We have a whole new cadre of women leaders coming from this program,” says Jill Umbach, “a whole generation of role models who are having an impact on their sons and daughters. In the local governments, they may still be in the minority, but they will have influence. From the home to the roads to the marketplace, these women are making a tremendous change in society.” ■

JUST THE FACTS

A baby born in a developing country like Malawi or Uganda is likely to live only half as long as one born in a country like Singapore or Sweden. Worldwide, 250 million children are being robbed of their childhood because they are trapped in child labour. Every minute, a woman somewhere in the world dies of pregnancy-related causes or in childbirth. National Immunization Day in 1998 protected more than two thirds of all the world’s children under the age of five (450 million children) against polio.

The Progress of Nations Report 1999

For four months last fall, young filmmakers Britt Hamilton of Toronto, Ontario, and Jennifer Rashleigh of Vancouver, B.C., had the assignment of a lifetime: chasing down the stories of their choice in Pakistan. Supported by Canadian Crossroads International and assisted by South Asia Partnership in Lahore, Pakistan, they dressed in the traditional shalwar kameez and set out to document life in Pakistan from a woman's point of view. The two women did not run into any serious resistance. "As a foreigner, you're not a man or a woman in a society

invited them to stay with her family, where two important events were about to occur: parties celebrating the engagements of both Yasmin and her brother. Jennifer and Britt filmed these events and, in the process, illustrated the two very different worlds in which men and women live in Pakistan. The women's world was one of bright, colourful clothes, laughter, children, and warm intimacy. The men's, by contrast, was quiet and withdrawn, as they sat smoking on the floor. The traditional ceremonies stood in sharp contrast to Yasmin's work

as an activist in women's political involvement and in conflict resolution. "Yasmin was very self-confident and assertive, but she still

Working in a Man's World: Filmmaking in Pakistan

where gender roles are rigidly defined," says Jennifer. "Being foreign, you're privileged. You get more access to the larger society."

On a tip from South Asia Partnership, they soon found themselves in Quetta, Baluchistan

respected tradition and played the demure bridal role," says Britt.

As a woman working in a man's world on behalf of women, Yasmin often lives at some risk, as does her family. She is breaking a lot of rules and it takes great courage to defy convention in her village. Maintaining good relationships in the community is an important part of Yasmin's ability to do her work. But perhaps the most important role is played by her family members, who support her wholeheartedly. And that includes the male members of her family. As her father said: "If the children are unhappy, the parents die inside, even though they go on living."

Britt and Jennifer are now editing their film, which will soon be available from Canadian Crossroads International. ■

province, to meet with Yasmin Mughal, a leader of the local coordinating council for a non-governmental organization (NGO). Although women traditionally are not photographed, Yasmin was happy to cooperate with their film project. She welcomed them with open arms and



Photo: Nancy Ourrell McKenna © ACDI/CIDA

A Second Chance for Children at Risk

Children of sex workers are among the most neglected in India, stigmatized by their mother's profession and denied the most basic and fundamental human rights. Vanchit Vikras, a non-governmental organization in Pune that works with sex workers, was aware of the children's situation and began to work with them as well. CIDA, through the Child Development Fund, is supporting Vanchit Vikras' project NEEHAR, which means "dewdrops." NEEHAR is a home where these children, through residential support, vocational training, and non-formal education, can move into the formal education system and break free of their oppressive living conditions. The project began with 15 children and, in just over a year, the number has grown to 80. ■



Photo: Nancy Ourrell McKenna © ACDI/CIDA



Theatre of Action

AIDS Awareness in Tanzania

JUST THE FACTS

World AIDS Day: December 1st

At the end of 1997, an estimated 6.2 million orphans under age 15 struggled to survive after the death of their mother or of both parents from AIDS. More than 95% of these children live in Africa south of the Sahara. Of the 33.4 million people alive with HIV infection or AIDS as of the end of 1998, around a third are young people aged 15–24. Every day, 7,000 young people worldwide acquire the virus. Of the world's young people, 85% live in developing countries, where over nine-tenths of the epidemic is now concentrated.

In Ethiopia, condom use has been promoted as a prevention strategy among young people. As a result, condoms have become more available and less costly, and their use has become a socially accepted norm among young people. Condom sales increased from 3 million pieces in 1991 to 20 million pieces in 1996.

1999 World Aids Campaign, UNAIDS

“I am surrounded by curious eyes — eyes that have never seen outside their local environment,”

writes Erin Forsberg of Vancouver, of her trip to Tanzania as a student representative of the B.C. Home Economics Association. “I can hardly believe I am here, visiting the TAHEA [Tanzania Home Economics Association] Iringa AIDS education projects that have interested me since I first heard of them.”

Erin’s Global Bursary from the Canadian Home Economics Association (<http://www.chca.ca>), which was helping her further her learning and work experience in community health and AIDS awareness, had brought her to this small village to witness a unique method of communicating to young people about AIDS. “A youth group from the village enters the room — singing and dancing. The young people are telling the story of pain and suffering wrought by AIDS. As their performance unfolds, they speak of the birth of a new day which brings together their community to educate each other, to prevent the spread of this destructive disease.”

These young people are not passive sufferers of a global epidemic; they are activists determined to change things. Acting as peer educators, they travel from village to village, educating other young people about AIDS, health, and nutrition through song, dance, and theatre. They are part of a larger alliance of 17 non-governmental organizations working on AIDS-related issues, from vocational skill training centres for children orphaned by AIDS to information-sharing activities such as the one Erin saw. The partnership between the B.C. and Tanzanian Home Economics Associations began in 1995 when they worked together to develop teaching materials for Tanzanian educators. Academic exchanges followed, enabling the Tanzanians to update their curriculum and adapt it to their own needs. The Canadians, in turn, learned a great deal from the Tanzanians about linking professional associations with grassroots groups and integrating their mission with political issues, such as the participation of women in politics. The partnership has been especially effective in increasing the involvement of young people like Erin and her Tanzanian counterpart, Cosmas Happiness Lamosai, in their respective associations.

“Thinking back on my experience in Tanzania,” says Erin, “I know that it has shaped and will continue to shape me as a person, and as a professional home economist. I am keen now to learn more about AIDS education here in Canada, and discover ways to share my stories of Iringa with people in my own community!” ■

Marked “Z” with a “Z”

A Safe Place for Kids

“The life stories of these children... all share one common theme—a very hard and painful past,”

says Carol Ann Spencer, a CIDA youth intern working with a children’s welfare organization in David, Panama.

The Saint John, New Brunswick, native is helping to establish a new “Children’s Village” for the abandoned, abused, and orphaned children of this community. She’s working for the Asociacion de Aldeas Infantiles sos de Panama, which is receiving support from sos Children’s Villages Canada. As an assistant to the Village Director, Jorge Aparicio, known to the sos children as “Dad,” Carol Ann has been doing social work, public relations, volunteer recruitment, and general administration.



Photo: H el ene Tremblay   ACDI/CIDA

A “Children’s Village” is a small neighbourhood built within a larger community for families who provide care and nurturing for needy children until they are grown. The parents receive special training, and the Villages often have a school and other services which are open to the wider community. Among the 23 children staying in the Village in David is a family of four who lost their mother in October to a terminal illness. Others are street kids who left home to get away from sexual and physical abuse. Still others were abandoned or lived with grandparents too old to look after them.

Working six and sometimes seven days a week, Carol Ann and her colleagues at the local sos office have been making rapid progress in setting up the new Village and its administration. One of their major achievements

is the high quality of the recently formed Board of Directors: it includes the Vice-Governor of the province, the Governor’s wife, business leaders, and representatives of community groups and ministries of health, youth, and education.

Despite the long days and all the hard work, there’s still time for some of the important things in life. In November, Carol Ann treated the children and their sos mothers to the movie *La Mascara del Zorro* (The Mask of Zorro). It was a smash hit. “I kept turning around to watch the expressions on the faces of the children,” she says. “Damaso, who is two years old, was especially fun to watch. It seemed like his eyes were being physically pulled onto the movie screen!”

Despite their tragic pasts, these children have not lost the ability to laugh or to love. Says Carol Ann: “It is very rewarding to see how well the children respond to affection and encouragement. And, considering where they came from, this positive outlook is especially impressive... Hope for our children’s future is very much alive here at sos David, Panama!” ■

JUST THE FACTS

Iodine deficiency is the world’s single most significant cause of preventable brain damage and mental retardation. It affects about 14 per cent of the world’s population.

A global campaign to iodize salt was launched in the early 1990s. Since that time, more than 1.5 billion people have started to use iodized salt. Each year 12 million children are spared irreversible mental impairment. Today, more than 60 per cent of the edible salt in the world has been iodized. At the University of Toronto, scientists have been able to fortify salt with both iron and iodine, something which had proven impossible for over 20 years.

World Health Organization

Improving Access to Education for Bangladeshi Girls



Photo: Roger Lemoyne © ACDI/CIDA

In many developing countries, access to basic education is improving for girls. Teachers are being trained to be sensitive to gender and child rights issues, learning materials are being created to adapt to local conditions, and parents and students are being encouraged to participate in the operation of schools. However, in some parts of the world, discrimination and neglect of girls remains and begins at an early age, limiting their choices and excluding them from fulfilling their potential as adults.

Canada, through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), is involved in many projects aimed at addressing the gap in access to basic education between girls and boys. Basic education, which encompasses literacy, numeracy, and life skills, provides all citizens with a learning foundation. In Bangladesh, CIDA supports an initiative by the Unitarian Service Committee (USC) to provide adolescents, especially girls, with literacy, health, and income-earning skills, helping them to improve their future economic and social status.

Teachers will also play an important and active role in this project by fostering the participation of the parents and informing them about the progress their children are making. This will help create a supportive and favourable environment for the girls to achieve independence and open the door to a better future. USC, which has been working with girls in Bangladesh for many years, will implement this initiative over the next five years. ■



Tania Bélisle-Leclerc travelled over 12,000 km to get to Ghana. With her help, the children she's teaching will go even further.

At the Canadian International Development Agency, we think the world of Canadians like Tania. She chose to mark the millennium by volunteering to spend the next six months in Ghana with SOS Children's Villages Canada teaching children basic computer skills. That way, years from now when she looks back at the first year of the millennium, she can do more than just say, "I was there." She can say, "I made a difference."

As a proud sponsor of the *Our Millennium* campaign, CIDA invites you to mark the beginning of the millennium, in your neighbourhood and around the world. For ideas on what you can do, visit www.ourmillennium.ca, or call toll free 1-877-880-6455. And leave your mark.



Canadian International Development Agency

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Our Millennium

An Initiative of Canada's Community Foundations

What are you doing to mark the millennium?



Photo: Benoit Aquin © ACDI/CIDA

A Baby Named Carlota

Charlotte Landry of Gatineau, Quebec, just had a baby named after her. “It is July 17,” she writes in a letter home. “Today is a wonderful day for me. I have just assisted at my first birth in the jungle of Guatemala. The little girl has been named Carlota in my honour. We didn’t realize it, but today also happens to be the day of our saint. Carlota weighs seven pounds and is all pink and her mother is doing well. She is the seventh child, just like me. I hope she’ll become a birth attendant like me, too.”

“Today is a wonderful day for me. I have just assisted at my first birth in the jungle of Guatemala. The little girl has been named Carlota in my honour...”

A CUSO (<http://www.cuso.org>) cooperant working to improve health services for women and children in Guatemala, Charlotte is working with traditional birth attendants, or midwives, to exchange knowledge about modern methods in perinatal care and postnatal care, child care, and family planning. Midwives attend 80 per cent of all births in Guatemala, and have developed a wide body of knowledge and experience that Charlotte is documenting. She’s also helping them form a regional organization to exchange knowledge with their peers, receive assistance, and get the local and national recognition they deserve.

Little Carlota and her mother live in the tiny, remote village of Nueva Generacion Maya, which is Charlotte’s base of operations. Catarina, the mother, will be visited by one of the local birth attendants for the next 20 days; then she’ll be on her own. She will breastfeed Carlota for

about two years—and, if the child survives to the age of five, she will probably make it to adulthood. But not all children are so fortunate; Carlota’s last brother died only a few days after his birth. The child survival rate in this region is low, a problem midwives find hard to address since they often live and work in difficult and unhealthy conditions. They have a real uphill battle.

Charlotte describes the conditions under which Carlota was born: “If only you could have seen the faces of this family when I opened my Doppler equipment to listen to the heartbeat of their baby,” she reminisces. “They were so reassured. It was hot, but there were insects which could transmit malaria, so they had a fire burning. There was a lot of smoke. Catarina made a little room with her skirts and gave birth on the ground. There were no floorboards. There was no privacy, either, but we didn’t hear or see a thing. She stayed dressed, made no sound, and the children just went on eating their breakfast.”

The new baby soon had a special bracelet of red pearls to protect her from ‘mal de ojo,’ a local belief that someone with a piercing stare can cause a baby to cry, Charlotte explained. If this should happen, the only cure would be to undress the baby and rub its entire body with an onion while reciting the appropriate verses. The midwives don’t tell their secrets—and they don’t give up their traditions.

“I sometimes find it difficult to help, because everything in this country is so different,” admits Charlotte. “But it’s easy to understand the people and to appreciate them.” She adds: “All they need to be happy are the few things they love—corn, black beans, water, hot chilis, fruit, their families, visitors, smiles, clothing, medicine—and the music of the marimba.” ■

Credit Unions Helping Vietnamese Emerge from Poverty

ILLUU Thi Xuan lives about 50 kilometres from Hanoi, Vietnam, in the village of Lien Son. She spends most of her day working in the rice paddies; it is intensive and demanding physical labour. The rice production supports her family of eight, earning them the equivalent of about \$200 to \$300 a year. However, she has recently found a way to supplement her family's income in the new village credit union. She has taken out a loan of about \$30 to buy three pigs, which she can raise and later sell at the market for a profit.

She is like many people all over rural Vietnam who are also working to improve their situation through small loans from their local credit unions. This is being made possible through a new cooperative banking system, which is establishing a network of credit unions, or people's credit funds, throughout the country under a project called Rural Finance Technical Assistance Project. The people's credit funds are modelled on the Quebec-based Mouvement Desjardins, Quebec's largest financial institution. Développement International Desjardins (DID) is managing the project, which is being funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and DID. The project is also being supported by the State Bank of Vietnam, through in-kind contributions such as the provision of various resources, services, and training. The credit unions are part of the Vietnamese government's plan to boost agricultural investment, alleviate poverty, and increase its savings rate to enable the country to finance a larger portion of its own development.

About 80 per cent of Vietnam's population live in rural areas, engaging mainly in agriculture for a living. Although agriculture has a large role to play in revitalizing the country's market economy, the level of investment in the agricultural sector is low. Moreover, only 30 per cent of people living in agricultural communities have access to adequate financial services. People need institutions where they can securely bank their money, earn some interest, and take out loans to finance productive enterprises.

The Vietnamese authorities felt that the Desjardins model struck a balance between economic interests and the strengthening of communities. The Desjardins model allows financial services to be consolidated at the grass-

roots level, in that villagers are consulted and involved in each people's credit fund. The fund's board of directors is elected by and composed of fund members. All villagers can deposit money, but only shareholders can borrow money. The cost of a share has been set at 30,000 dong, or about C\$4, and the average number of members per credit union was 654 in 1998 compared to 288 in 1995.

The loans are small (the average amount is about C\$446), mainly geared toward production. They are used to buy fertilizer or seeds, or to contribute to production (for example, raising livestock). More than 95 per cent of the loans are paid back on time, and the system claims there are no defaults on the loans.

The success of the project can be seen in the popularity of the people's credit funds. The Rural Finance Technical Assistance Project began in March 1994 and, in less than five years' time, some 975 credit funds have been established, with close to 650,000 members. There are now people's credit funds in some 53 of Vietnam's 61 provinces, and the project aims to expand into all rural provinces. There is a potential to create about 5,000 people's credit funds.

According to DID's André Hotte, manager of the project, the people's credit funds are playing an important role in helping Vietnam escape from poverty. As he puts it: "Our function is only to accelerate the process of development; the leadership is in their hands. By providing these people with access to credit and enabling them to develop their small-scale local activities, we are helping them to emerge from poverty." ■

JUST THE FACTS

Under the Volcano

Living near a volcano is like sitting on a powder keg. The people of Quito, the capital of Ecuador, know something about that. Only 11 and 150 km away, two active volcanoes regularly spew forth clouds of ash, gas, and smoke, threatening human health and productivity. CIDA has just contributed \$150,000 to the Pan American Health Organization to offer psychological support to those affected, to help prevent the spread of infectious diseases, and to clean up water supply systems.

Since August 1999, the entire population of Quito and its surrounding areas has been threatened by the activity of Guagua Pinchinda and Tungurahua. In addition to the trauma experienced by the population, volcanic eruptions (sometimes up to 30 a day) cause air and water pollution, obstruct water supply systems, block roads, and bring farming activities to a grinding halt.

“Breaking the Silence”

About Romanian Children Living with HIV/AIDS

More than half the AIDS-infected children in Europe are in Romania, and the numbers are rising. According to UNICEF, as of September 1996, there were 4,198 HIV-positive cases in the country. Of these, 3,781 were found in children under 12 years of age. Many of the children became infected with the disease through the use of unsterilized needles in institutions, such as orphanages. Together, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), UNICEF, the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) and the Government of Romania are working to “break the silence” about Romanian children living with HIV/AIDS.

UNICEF, an active advocate of the rights of children in Romania since 1990, is implementing, with the Romanian government, an ongoing program to improve the welfare of children in the country. The program supports community-based projects providing social-medical services and preventive education activities.

Part of the program focuses on educating caregivers, teachers, and medical personnel about the disease and treatments. The program is also helping Romanians better understand the wider social problem HIV/AIDS represents, and that all sectors of society, including the government, have an important role to play. The program is also assisting the Romanian government to take HIV-positive children out of institutions and, where possible, reunite them with their families.

“In a country undergoing profound systemic change, this project is a positive step,” said Jim Chauvin, spokesperson for the International Program of the CPHA. “Where previously government was the only voice, the NGO community and the private sector are now adding valuable input.” ■

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“ I would like to be a lawyer because I want to help people when they are (having) problems, like when a man marries, then dies. If he leaves a will and his relatives want to take the things which do not belong to them, the wives need a lawyer and I could help them. ”

Mukombe Chisunka, Grade 6 student at the Girl Child Education Camp in Lusaka, Zambia

Girl Power!

Laying the Groundwork

It takes courage and a lot of support for a girl like Mukombe to stay in school. Camps like this one help girls build the self-esteem and confidence they need to break with such time-honoured customs as marriage and motherhood by age 14 or 15. It will be hard, but it will be worth it: for every year of additional education, Mukombe will earn anywhere from 10 to 20 per cent more income; she will be far more productive in the workplace; she will have fewer and healthier children; and she will have a chance to realize her dream of being a lawyer and helping others. Mukombe doesn't really know much about the Program for the Advancement of Girls' Education (PAGE), which supports this camp. She doesn't know much about the partners that design and fund it — the Government of Zambia, UNICEF, and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Carefully crafted government programs and policies, ringing declarations at international conferences, and diplomatic manoeuvres by education advocates in corridors and back rooms are alien to her.

But this is the kind of groundwork that makes it possible for programs like PAGE to help Mukombe and millions of girls like her. It's the kind of groundwork that CIDA has been laying since its founding in 1968, when the majority of its assistance to developing countries was through education and technical exchanges. In the mid-1970s, during the UN Decade for Women, this groundwork got

a tremendous boost when CIDA adopted a policy to integrate women more fully into development.

Since then, CIDA has been an international trailblazer in promoting gender equality. It was one of the first agencies to formalize a policy, a plan, and a program that integrated women as agents, beneficiaries, and decision-makers in

development. Over the years, CIDA has funded literally thousands of organizations that provided health care, education, skills training, credit, leadership, and much more to women and girls.

A consistent and powerful advocate, CIDA has influenced international organizations, other donors, and its partners in developing countries to keep gender equality front and centre on the international agenda. At the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, CIDA played a major role in drafting the section in the Platform for Action which deals with the girl child. Diana Rivington, one of Canada's negotiators and now Director of Women in Development and

Gender Equity at CIDA, sums up CIDA's view: "As Lawrence Summers said, when he was the Vice-President and Chief Economist at the World Bank, investment in educating girls may well be the highest return on investment available in the developing world."

Even that statement may not mean much to Mukombe. But the programs it inspires—like PAGE—will make it possible for her to prove it. ■



Photo: David Barbour © ACIDI/CIDA

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

Community Development in Post-War Mozambique

The small villages and towns of the dry, hot northern region of Mozambique are gradually recovering from 16 years of brutal civil war. The challenge is immense—transportation, health, education, agriculture—all have been devastated. A whole generation of young people has been lost. Land mines dot the countryside. “The first thing you notice is the intense poverty,” says Lana Wright, a Toronto-based field monitor working with Cooperation Canada-Mozambique, or COCAMO, in the northern town of Nampula.

Originally from Capetown, South Africa, Lana and her family settled in Toronto when she was six. “After Mandela was freed, I wanted to go back and work in southern Africa,” she says. “When I saw an opening advertised with COCAMO, I was very interested. The more I learned about conditions in Mozambique, especially in the north, and the work that COCAMO does, the more intrigued I became. I saw it as a chance to ‘give something back’ for all the opportunities I had growing up in Canada.”

When she arrived, she found much more than poverty. “People are walking long distances every day without shoes because there’s no effective transport system. Their T-shirts are torn, hanging by threads. There are street vendors selling roasted peanuts, women are wrapped in colourful fabric with head scarves, and lots of children are playing, many of whom are not registered in school. The blind, the disfigured, and the disabled amble along, some accompanied by children and begging. Along with the people, there are chickens pecking for food, stray dogs, and goats.”

What she found was a people determined to rebuild the country that once served as southern Africa’s ocean gateway to the medieval trading empire of the Arabs. COCAMO is working with local organizations to help in Mozambique’s recovery and long-term development. “We’re working with some very dedicated and talented



Photo: Bruce Paton © ACDI/CIDA

people,” says Lana. Young people are working in cholera prevention programs; men and women farmers are working to improve farming methods; women are learning about small-business management; churches are carrying out an arms-for-tools peace education program; and volunteers have fanned out across the country to educate men and women in human rights and political participation in a democracy.

COCAMO’s work in the north focuses on two districts affected by the war which, until recently, were outside most development efforts. One long-time partner is the health organization Salama, which trains groups of community activists in health education and

income generating projects, implements community vaccination programs with the local government authorities, and trains people to teach skills within new community groups.

One of the biggest problems in working in this corner of the country is accessibility; many communities are isolated—roads and bridges have long been neglected and there is no money to rehabilitate them. It’s a problem—but not a barrier.

For Lana, there’s a story that sums up the spirit of the groups with whom COCAMO works. She recounts an official visit to a health project in Mecuassee, an isolated village 180 kilometres west of Nampula. On this special day, the local organization was planning to host a theatrical performance. It was the middle of the rainy season and, after a journey that took at least twice as long as usual, the visitors had to stop short of their destination. The road had washed out and was impassable.

The waiting theatrical group was unfazed by the flood. Says Lana: “They walked the 1.5 kilometres in the intense heat, waded through the four-foot-high water, moved the chairs and the performers to the visiting delegation, and went on with the show.” ■

Two Months in Ndiagianiao

On March, 2, 1998, Valerie Chalifour of Donnacona, Quebec, began a voyage that changed her life. She was on her way to the tiny village of Ndiagianiao, Senegal, to work with youth groups doing environmental projects. Valerie was a volunteer with Club 2/3, an education and international cooperation agency. She raised the money herself, getting donations from social clubs, businesses, religious organizations, family, and friends. After four weekends of training, she was off to Africa.

She stayed with the 16-member Kandji family, who “welcomed me as if I were a member of the family—but with a certain amount of curiosity!” she says. Language was never really a problem. Many of the educated people in the village spoke French, and Valerie picked up a bit of the local language, Wolof, to communicate with the children and the women who had never attended school. “I quickly discovered that there are many ways to communicate,” she declares.

The local youth groups were active in community development projects such as reforestation. While Valerie was there, she travelled from school to school with them to understand the vision that young people had for their

environment and to help formulate concrete projects that would realize that vision. It was a real eye-opener for Valerie as she saw the everyday challenge of obtaining safe water for the people in this drought-prone region. “I lived in a completely different context from the one I was raised in,” she muses. “It made me appreciate what I had so much more when I came back home.”

She returned home with a “whole new vision of the world,” with new values and a new openness to other realities. Some of the values she found in Africa—mutual help, generosity, “where no one is rejected, and where everyone is important”—she saw as “the key that opens the door to solidarity.”

Today, Valerie is still talking about her visit to Africa, still sharing the observations and insights she gained through her once-in-a-lifetime experience. Her two short months gave her a very practical insight into international cooperation and the role Canadians can play. “We need to understand the cultural, social, and physical realities before we can offer our own knowledge,” she says. “Cooperation is our adaptation to their reality.” ■

FRIENDS ACROSS THE WORLD

In 1985, Joan Brown, a farmer in Ste-Élisabeth, Quebec, hosted a teenager from Mali as part of an exchange program between Sanankoroba, Mali, and Ste-Élisabeth. The program was such a success, Joan and a group of her neighbours wrote to the Council elders in Sanankoroba about continuing their cooperation. The next year, 50 farmers from Ste-Élisabeth planted a communal field with barley. The proceeds went to buying cattle and ploughs for the farmers overseas, so that they too could plant a communal field. The Malians produced a bumper crop, enabling them to pay off debts, feed their families, and sell the surplus at a profit. On the tenth anniversary of their friendship, the citizens of Sanankoroba heard about the destruction Ste-Élisabeth had suffered in an ice storm. To help their friends, the Malians raised the equivalent of \$100 to send to Ste-Élisabeth -- enough to feed a family in Mali for months. What started as a one-year exchange has grown into an enduring friendship between communities across the world. “Don't think of it as a donation from poor people to rich people,” says Moussa Konate, a local teacher. “It is from human beings to human beings. Solidarity is not a one-way street.”