

Global Citizenship in

ACTION

Canadians reaching out to the world



**Hugs for people
living with AIDS**

**Freeze-frame:
Working children's
rights in Nicaragua**

**Teachers of
the Amazon**

**SPECIAL EDITION
Focus on the Americas**

Canada



Canadian International
Development Agency

Agence canadienne de
développement international



From the Minister

Latin America and the Caribbean is a region of rapidly growing economies, new democracies, and vibrant community organizations. But behind the glass skyscrapers and the sparkling beaches is the world's greatest gap between rich and poor. Nearly one-half of the Western Hemisphere's population lives in poverty—and that number is growing. Incomes range from about \$20,000 per person per year in the seven richest countries in the hemisphere, to about \$450 per person per year for the remaining 26 countries.

At the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), we're working to close that gap. We're supporting the efforts of our partners to level the playing field so that more citizens have an opportunity to benefit from the extension of free trade. Our common vision—growth with equity—is built one step at a time. These steps include installing a water pump in a rural village, building schools, supporting small business, and providing healthcare to new mothers. It's all about putting people first.

This issue of *Global Citizenship in Action* tells the story of some of those people—working children, poor rural communities mobilizing to improve their standard of living, and young Canadians working to make a difference after the devastation of Hurricane Mitch. It's an issue about what it means to be a good neighbour. I hope you enjoy it.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maria Minna". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Maria Minna

Minister for International Cooperation

Cover: CIDA photo, Greg Kinch

Global Citizenship in Action is produced periodically by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). You can visit CIDA's Web site at www.acdi-cida.gc.ca.

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Printed and bound in Canada

ISSN 1492-4099

Design: Aubut & Nadeau Services Inc.

Global Citizenship in **Special Edition**

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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Hugs for people living with AIDS

A courageous young woman known only as Sally is changing attitudes about HIV and AIDS in the Caribbean. A native of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Sally's life—and the lives of her children—changed when she was diagnosed with HIV. She faced discrimination at the hospitals where she went for treatment, and her children were ostracized at school and in their village.

But instead of hiding, Sally went public on national television. Her appearance gave AIDS a human face, and the public responded. Support for community groups like the AIDS Action Group in St. Vincent soared.

“Getting people who are living with HIV/AIDS involved is clearly a way to prevent the spread of the disease, because you will empower them,” says Dr. Bilali Camara, Director of the CIDA-funded Caribbean Epidemiology Centre HIV/AIDS Project, or CHAP.



Photo: CAREC

Also Director of the Centre's Special Program on Sexually Transmitted Infections, Camara says the Centre is fighting HIV infection rates second only to those in Africa. “In Trinidad, Guyana, and St. Vincent, between 25 and 30 percent of the beds in the medical wards are occupied by HIV/AIDS patients,” he notes.

But the impact of HIV and AIDS goes beyond the health system, says Camara. It is very much a development issue because of its impact on the economy. The disease hits young people when they are at their most productive: “We have estimated that, in four years,

Jamaica could lose 7 percent of its GDP [gross domestic product] due to AIDS, and Trinidad could lose 4.2 percent of its GDP due to AIDS,” he explains.

CHAP's goal is to strengthen the capacity of Caribbean countries to respond to the HIV/AIDS crisis. CIDA is providing technical assistance through the Canadian Public Health Association to help its Caribbean partners enhance management capacities,



Photo: CAREC

develop health-promotion programs, improve the surveillance system, and upgrade community-based diagnosis, care, and support of both people living with AIDS and others affected by it.

People like Sally who are living with HIV/AIDS have a role to play in prevention and control efforts, thanks to CHAP. CIDA support has strengthened the implementation and growth of the Caribbean Regional Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS, and it is supporting the promotion of healthier sexual behaviour through a variety of measures: peer education for youth; education for secondary school students; research and prevention interventions with men who have sex with men; promotion of safer sex and care for commercial sex workers; voluntary counselling and testing centres; and the sensitization of health-care workers and members of the communications media.

The impact has been tremendous. At one time, people living with HIV and AIDS would have been shunned, says Camara. But things are changing. “For the first time, in Guyana, for example, we have seen the President hugging someone who was living with HIV/AIDS. In St. Vincent, we have seen the Minister of Health hugging someone living with HIV/AIDS. It means the leaders have understood and are moving with us.” ■

Freeze-frame: Working children's rights in Nicaragua

Dateline - Oslo, October 1997: Delegates at an international NGO meeting which is paralleling the World Summit on Child Labour protest adult manipulation of the agenda. Four young activists walk out of the NGO meeting and confront the world press. They are wearing gags in their mouths to symbolize what's going on inside. They present a 10-point agenda to improve conditions of work for working children. They create an international sensation.

One of those young activists was 15-year-old Franklin Alberto Blandon Ocaña, a representative of the Movement of Working Boys, Girls and Adolescents of Nicaragua, known locally as NATRAS. His participation at the Oslo parallel meeting was funded through CIDA's Nicaraguan Children's Fund, which Save the Children Canada administers.

He smiles when he remembers that day. "The adults warned us that we were only hurting ourselves," he says. "They tried to stop us, but we knew we were right. The next day, our agenda was presented to the government conference, and many countries incorporated our points into their own programs."

Franklin learned how to assert his rights the hard way. His working life began at the age of eight, when he hauled fruits and vegetables to and from the market. It was a tough job, and the market was a tough place to work—a wide assortment of criminals frequented it by day and took it over by night. He grew up in the barrios of Managua, amid the legacy of a generation of civil war and economic disaster, and his choices in life were few. He was the only member of his family of eight who was working, and he had little time for school.

When he was 11, he heard about a program for working children run by a local organization called *La Fundación La Verde Sonrisa*. Its goal was to provide basic education to children who had fallen through the cracks of the public education system. *La Fundación* ran regular classes in the morning to finance the special curriculum for street kids in the afternoon.

That curriculum involved the three Rs, skills training in areas like carpentry, welding, sewing, and baking, and instruction in the arts. One of its most innovative programs was puppeteering, which provided a creative out-

let for the children as well as therapy, especially for youngsters who had been abused or abandoned.

Franklin took to the puppets immediately. He was soon performing at various school functions, and recently formed his own company. "He's very skilled," says Marco Antonio Perez, his teacher. When Franklin became involved in NATRAS, which provides support services for working children, he found an outlet for his creativity as a photographer with its magazine, *Hechos y Realidades*.

Franklin's income from puppeteering and photography is modest. He still has to earn his living with odd jobs and general labour. "If it weren't for the program [*La Verde Sonrisa*] and NATRAS, I'd probably be a criminal by now," he says. Like hundreds of other working children in Managua, Franklin has had a second chance at life, thanks to Canadian-supported community organizations.

"I can make about 800 cordobas [C\$95] with a puppet show," he continues. "It's fun. The audience will choose a topic, and I will improvise and make a play. But it's only a hobby. One day, I want to open my own photography studio." ■



CIDA Photo: Peter Bennett

Canadian aid helps Nicaraguans rebuild their lives

Martha Delgadillo was home with her four young children when the monstrously swollen Rio Grande rose up its banks, changed course and roared right through the walls of her house.

The river, fed by the torrential rains of Hurricane Mitch, had wound peaceably until then through the little Nicaraguan community where Martha had lived all of her life. On this night, though, it became the enemy—taking everything but their lives from Martha and her family. She and her children—two sons and two daughters, now ranging in age from six to ten—fled to a nearby cemetery on higher ground.

“The river switched course and that’s how the water went right through the house,” Martha said through an interpreter. “We saw our belongings being taken by the river. We lost everything.”

Martha Delgadillo was one of thousands of people affected when Hurricane Mitch ravaged Central America last October. She stands as an example of all the survivors—men and women who even today are scarred by the memories and struggling to recover from the loss.

She and her family were among about 100 people who took shelter in the cemetery for three months after that terrible night. They lived communally in an open-aired cement building designed as a small gathering place or church. In the midst of this garden of death, people cooked, ate, slept, and mourned their dead. It would be some time before they had homes of their own again.

At first, after moving from the cemetery, Martha and her children lived together in various schools. Finally, the family moved into a new house—a brick structure she helped build herself. The eight-by-eight metre house, located on the opposite side of the cemetery



Photo: The Standard

from the river, is bigger than her first home and on higher ground. Martha feels safe there, she said.

She also feels a sense of community. Other people—many single mothers she previously knew—were similarly transplanted. The women living at Carlos Santi, as the 81-unit housing project is known, receive food in exchange for cleaning the streets and planting vegetation. “It’s up to us mothers to survive here,” said Martha.

Carlos Santi is a place of hope despite the suffering that gave birth to it. It’s also a tribute to the perseverance of local leaders and the compassion of the international community. A local foundation called *Fundación Ruben Dario* has been the driving force behind the project, with support from a variety of sources including the Canadian International Development Agency.

This is Canadian taxpayer money being put to important and effective use. “We’re very happy and thankful for our neighbouring countries that supported us and still support us today,” Martha said. ■

Abridged version — reprinted with permission from *The Standard* (St. Catharines, Ontario)

Teachers of the Amazon

“I left behind the jungle of my classroom in Midale, Saskatchewan, only to find myself in another, slightly more savage, jungle in South America,” said Cheri Koch, in recounting her teaching trip to Guyana.

Koch and her colleagues were participating in the Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF) Project Overseas to teach introductory computer skills to a group of about 40 teachers from throughout Guyana. Designed to reach indigenous educators in all the country’s interior regions, the program offers professional development to Amerindian participants.

The CTF and its members work together through Project Overseas to give professional assistance to fellow teachers in developing countries. Project Overseas began in 1962 with one program in Nigeria, and since then has helped teacher organizations in more than 50 countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and the South Pacific. With the financial assistance of the Canadian International Development Agency and Canadian teacher organizations, as many as 50 volunteers are sent to 12 countries each year.



CIDA photo: Greg Kinch

In Guyana, Canadian teachers taught subjects such as reading, mathematics, science, and computer skills. In Koch’s course, fewer than half the computers had a mouse, which made it rather interesting for the Canadian instructors. But they all learned together, including the local teachers, many of whom initially didn’t even know how to turn the computer on. Koch marveled at the enthusiasm of their pupils, one of whom promptly went to the Guyanese Ministry of



CIDA photo: Greg Kinch

Education and demanded a computer for her school. She was successful in her quest.

The training program helped increase membership of the Guyana Teachers’ Union, and enhanced the union’s image in the eyes of the community and the Ministry of Education. As a result, the Ministry not only provided the teacher with a computer for her school, but also supported the training program by providing a number of co-tutors and by helping with transportation, training facilities, and some funding.

“My time in Guyana was not only a teaching experience, but also a learning experience. I had the opportunity to visit a couple of schools while they were still in session. I saw the obstacles faced by teachers there, such as overcrowding, lack of resources, and extremely high student–teacher ratio,” Koch said, adding that, in one case, a teacher had 50 students in her class.

After completing the computer course in the capital of Georgetown, the team went to the southern area of Lethem, which borders neighbouring Brazil. There, the order of the day was attending drama workshops with about 170 teachers and administrators. Koch recalled how the open-air classroom was held under the shade of a huge mango tree.

“I found it one of the most rewarding experiences of my life,” she says. “I strongly recommend that interested teachers apply to the program—it’s fantastic!” ■

Turning on a tap: Empowering a community

Ana María Cárcamo turns on her tap to fill the bucket below. Located a few feet from her front door, her primary source of water is much closer than it was three years ago. “Before the project, we had to haul water,” says Cárcamo. “We had to carry it a long way on our heads.”

It was backbreaking work that continues for most women in rural Honduras. About 40 percent of the rural population lacks clean drinking water. In the early morning, roads and paths are filled with women like Ana María, balancing on their heads the day’s supply of water for cooking, washing, and drinking.

“Before, my kids used to have health problems like diarrhea and sores on their skin,” says Cárcamo. “We don’t have these problems anymore. Our health has improved because we have clean water.”

Cárcamo lives in La Mina, a small community an hour’s drive along a dirt road from Juticalpa in central Honduras. Along with the neighbouring community of Cayo Blanco, more than 1,100 people have benefited from a CIDA–CARE Canada initiative to provide clean water and sanitation systems in the Central American country.

Water and sanitation are priorities of Canadian assistance because of their impact on the health of a community. More than three million people worldwide die each year from diseases such as cholera, dysentery, and typhoid fever, contracted from drinking water which is unfit for human consumption.

Two CIDA–CARE Canada water and sanitation projects will have made a difference for 41,000 Hondurans by the end of 2001: the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project in the Juticalpa area, completed in 1996; and the ongoing Sustainable Water and Sanitation Project along the Caribbean coast.

The water from Cárcamo’s tap comes from holding

tanks linked by pipes to a small dam built by community members of La Mina and Cayo Blanco.

At the dam, Rigoberto Escalón, CARE Canada’s assistant project manager, stands near a reservoir carved from the deep green tropical environment.

“This is the heart of the water system,” says Escalón, speaking over the sound of the rushing water. “From here, water is pushed by gravity to holding tanks in La Mina and Cayo Blanco.” While Escalón watches, a man climbs into the reservoir. Wrestling with a pipe, the man changes a filter and climbs out soaking wet. “Cleaning is done periodically, more frequently

when it rains a lot,” says Escalón.

While the cleaning of the filter is a relatively simple job, it is important because it contains the integrity of the system. It is a job that a member of the community’s maintenance committee carries out. CARE Canada has trained all of the committee members.

Both the La Mina and Cayo Blanco communities were actively involved in building the water system. CARE Canada provided the expertise, and “the communities supplied about 70 percent of the labour and materials,” says Escalón. That sort of management not only keeps costs to a minimum, it also forces the communities to take ownership of the system, both in legal and emotional terms.

“It wasn’t easy,” says José María Costa, president of the water committee in Cayo Blanco. “It took us six months to get organized,” says Costa. Getting organized required building a community with the political will and savings to take on the project.

Once the communities were committed, CARE provided training in basic hygiene and maintenance. It also emphasized watershed management to ensure the system was not washed away by an eroding hillside.



CIDA photo: Brian Atkinson

► “Now we have a committee that manages the project with help from the whole community,” says Costa. “The water committee is in charge, and the whole community is involved. We have maintenance workers, trained by CARE Canada, in charge of chlorination, cleaning filters, and lubricating valves.”

What emerges is a new community with a new sense of its abilities, says Mauro Tartaglia, CARE Canada’s project director in La Ceiba.

The former resident of Paris, Ontario, says that, since water and sanitation directly affect women and children, women are usually the most vocal advocates for the system. They become a new voice in the community and take on new responsibilities.

“Women have assumed new roles that are not traditional in Honduras,” says Tartaglia. “They have participated very actively in water management committees, even in the repair of the faucets in their own home.”

There is also a new sense of cooperation between communities, says Tartaglia, since a water system can serve more than one community. “Through the project, they have come to work together. So they can join together for other projects.”

For Ana María Cárcamo, turning on a tap in La Mina is simple. However, that action represents a major achievement for the community.

“When water started to flow from the taps, even the children were happy. We will be grateful our whole lives. We never thought that we could have a water project in this community because it was a forgotten community, but now it is developed.”

Cárcamo is clear about its impact on the community and her family. As with many women, she now has more time to pursue money-making activities, and has served on the water committee in a new role of authority and responsibility. In addition, the community itself has attained new skills to maintain the water system since its completion in August 1996.

These new skills were put to the test after large areas of Honduras were severely damaged by Hurricane Mitch in November 1998. Although the water catchment system and main pipeline were damaged by fallen trees and rocks, the community repaired the system themselves.

“All of us take care of it,” says Cárcamo. “We can’t afford to lose it. These things don’t come along often in life.” ■

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Links in the “chain of warmth”

There’s a new bridge in La Gocia, Honduras, because the people decided that too many women were dying in childbirth.

In the rainy season, the river would become treacherous and impossible to cross, cutting the community off from medical help. This isolation cost La Gocia and its neighbouring villages dearly. Like most poor rural villages in Honduras, these communities had among the highest rates of maternal mortality in Latin America.

But when they were given the chance to do something about it, the communities got together, analyzed their situation, and chose their solution. Today, the number of women dying in childbirth has been cut in half.

La Gocia is a small community in one of the eight areas in Bolivia, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Peru that are participating in the CIDA-funded Desaper—or Development of Perinatal Health—project. Implemented by the Pan-American Health Organization’s Latin American Centre of Perinatology in partnership with the University of Calgary, this project is helping the health-care systems and local communities deliver modern medical care to mothers and their babies.

The project’s results have been impressive: in the areas where it has been implemented, maternal mortality has dropped by 50 percent, and prenatal care has risen by 25 percent. Desaper involves training, technical assistance, and institutional strengthening for health-care professionals. But one of the major keys to its success has been its community-participation component. Each community identified its own unique barriers to health-care delivery, did its own problem-solving, and received a small fund to implement microprojects that would improve conditions for mothers and children.

“There are just so many stories,” says Dr. Erick Dillman of the University of Calgary, the project’s Canadian coordinator. “In Lima, the mothers had to pay a small fee when they gave birth at the local health clinics. It wasn’t much, but it was hard for poor people to come up with the money. The national health authorities met with the community to see how these costs could be lowered, and the community presented their plan: for each prenatal visit, a credit would go towards the delivery fee. That way, they encouraged prenatal care and ensured safe delivery at the same time.”



CIDA photo: Greg Kinch

“Then the community raised funds to provide each new mother with a basket full of things for her new baby. And that’s not all. They raised more funds to start a community drugstore. They would buy the less expensive drugs and community members would take turns running the store out of their houses, selling the medicine and using the proceeds to buy more.”

Supporting initiatives like these has not only contributed to the project’s success—it has also mobilized communities and empowered them to take responsibility for their own health. “In another area in Honduras,” Dillman continues, “the women’s circles decided that the most important issue was how to get premature and low-birth-weight babies to a hospital. Their solution was to set up a ‘chain of warmth’—a sort of relay system that allows a portable incubator to travel safely from community to community until it reaches the hospital.”

“They organized the logistics, working with local mayors and community members, and they mobilized taxis, tractors, even mule wagons, to do the job. The chain of

Building community pride through recycling



CIDA photo: Patricio Baeza

“**C**artoneros” or garbage-pickers used to be scorned in Chile. But now, thanks to a CIDA-funded project, they have gained status and a new name—“recicladores” or recyclers. Action RE-Buts, an environmental coalition in Quebec, and the National Network for Ecological Action in Chile have promoted ecological waste management in several communities across Chile.

As these communities learned the value of recycling, they came to appreciate the work done by their local recyclers, half of whom are women. Getting this respect, as well as uniforms and carts, gave the recyclers newfound pride and recognition. They formed a national organization and obtained access to public health insurance for the first time ever in Chile.

In collaboration with the municipal government, the project has also set up recycling bins and composting programs. It provides environmental training for local groups, and raises public awareness through neighbourhood meetings, school visits, videos, newspaper articles, posters, and window stickers that show which households recycle. The small project has managed to have a big impact in protecting the environment and building a better community. ■

warmth has already been used several times—and that was just the beginning. They then decided to build their own clinic, so they worked with the municipality, which provided financing, and they provided the labour themselves to build a facility right there, and the Ministry of Health provided the equipment and the doctors.”

Desaper has just completed its last phase, which involved intensive training and capacity-building to enable the health-care professionals and community workers involved to continue running the model, expand it, solicit funding support from donors, and foster long-term commitment on the part of their governments. Today, its legacy is solid: the Desaper model is part of the national health plan in all four countries, and it is also being applied to other health-care areas beyond mother-and-child services.

But perhaps its greatest legacy is in the heart of the communities who participated—the bridge builders, the community drugstore workers, the links in the chain of warmth, who are creating healthy communities in some of the poorest countries in the hemisphere. ■

JUST THE FACTS

Investing in education makes sense

More than 113 million children in the developing world—two-thirds of them girls—have never seen the inside of a school. Nearly 900 million adults cannot read or write.

Lack of basic education is at the root of poverty, sickness, and conflict. It prevents people from realizing their full potential as productive members of society; it stops people from learning about ways to improve their health, including undermining efforts to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS; and it can contribute to violence and conflict through misunderstandings and intolerance.

Young people make a difference after Hurricane Mitch

“We would pour murky green water from the local well into the filter,” says Jackie Delima, a Youth Action Program Officer at CIDA, “and in only a few seconds, clear water would pour out.”

A simple thing, clean water: but for literally millions of Hondurans affected by Hurricane Mitch, which hit in late October and early November of 1998, clean water was one of the first casualties of the storm. More than two metres of rain fell in a matter of days, drowning people, animals, crops, and homes. Roads and bridges yielded to the roaring floods, and water supply systems collapsed. Wells were contaminated by pesticides, residues from destroyed chemical factories, and animal and human waste. Incidents of cholera, malaria, dengue, and leptospirosis—all waterborne diseases—soared.

The ravages of Mitch are beginning to recede, thanks to the emergency and reconstruction efforts of Hondurans and their partners from countries like Canada. Samaritan’s Purse, a Canadian organization that receives support from CIDA, worked with local organizations to construct houses for a number of communities swept away by Mitch. Three young interns—Beverly Kauffeldt, Nancy Russell, and Jonathan Friesen—were sent to Honduras to help build safe drinking systems for the families there.

“In many of the villages we worked in, the people knew who we were,” says Bev. “As our truck full of filters and supplies would pull up to a village, people would come out to greet us, especially the children, who always enjoyed our visits.” The interns built the filters, installed them, trained the community members on how to use and maintain them, and provided basic health information.

The BioSand Water Filter technology the interns were installing purifies the water as it passes through a layer of fine sand and a layer of bacteria-eating microorganisms. This low-cost filter removes about 98 percent of fecal coliform matter and lasts a lifetime. “After going from house to house,” says Delima, describing a



Photos: Samaritan's Purse



post-installation trip to assess the effectiveness of the filters, “the families all said the same thing—my kids aren’t sick any more, they can go to school now, no one has stomachaches.”

Through this project alone, the interns installed 1,050 filters and helped improve the health of over 7,000 Hondurans. “Though I will not be working with water filters for the rest of my life,” says Nancy, “having had the opportunity to participate in this CIDA internship through Samaritan’s Purse has taught me more than what one could learn in school...or by staying in North America.”

That’s one of the key objectives of the CIDA Internship Program, which is part of the federal government’s Youth Employment Strategy. It helps young people make the transition between education and work, and it’s the opportunity of a lifetime for young Canadians to gain experience in international development.

Jonathan agrees, saying he will always cherish his experience. “This internship has not only provided me with a new perspective on life, it has also exposed me to many different international organizations and what qualifications are necessary for overseas work. One of my goals in life is to make a positive difference in this world through my work and life.”

He’s already taken a giant step in that direction. ■

Retired Canadians help businesses prosper worldwide

After 40 years of working as a furniture maker in Winnipeg, Morley Globerman joined the ranks of a growing group of Canadian retirees who provide technical support to small- and medium-sized businesses around the world through the Canadian Executive Service Organization (CESO).

“After years of running my own business in Canada, I thought I might have some experience to offer,” says Morley.

Morley’s first assignment was to help a furniture manufacturer in Guyana, called Doodnath and Sons. “Having been in this business for more than 40 years, it is relatively easy for me when I come into a factory to be able to spot where the shoe pinches most. Sometimes it’s a problem with the physical manufacturing process, or it could be a marketing problem, or a financing problem, or it could be something as simple as not knowing your costs. So, I help them set up a costing system.”

Morley has just completed his 50th assignment with CESO, and says he would gladly do 50 more. CESO is a Canadian, volunteer-based, not-for-profit organization which supplies Canadian advisers and trainers to emerging businesses and organizations in Canada and overseas.

“I use skills I have accumulated over many, many years in a very positive way. I help to create skills and capacity that were lacking, and the client is most appreciative. I am being helpful and at the same time feeling good about what I’m doing,” says Morley. ■



CIDA photo: Greg Kinch

JUST THE FACTS

Slowing the Spread of HIV/AIDS

Today, over 33 million people are living with HIV or AIDS worldwide. The highest HIV rates are found in the world’s poorest countries, and decades of progress in a country’s development are being wiped out in a single generation by this disease.

Women working the front line

Increasingly in developing countries, AIDS is moving from high-risk groups such as commercial sex workers into the general population. In many parts of the developing world, women’s low status and lack of autonomy make it difficult for them to insist on safe sex, and they are more likely to become infected than men.

Gardens in the south with Canadian roots

If there's one thing Canadian consumers are used to, it's the high prices and less-than-optimal quality of fruits and vegetables in the wintertime. But CAMS Terres Noires has set out to change all that. A small market-garden operation in Sherrington, Quebec, CAMS has formed a partnership with a Mexican firm, Hortamex. The goal of their joint venture is to establish a market-gardening company in Mexico with a food-processing plant that would enable them to serve not only the local market, but the export market—including Canada.

Supported by a contribution from CIDA's Industrial Cooperation Program, CAMS and Hortamex were off and running. Initially, the partners invested about \$600,000 in the project, and CAMS helped transfer Canadian technical expertise in food processing to the plant in Mexico.

Canadian standards in how to minimize environmental impact were also transferred, resulting in a production process that uses minimal amounts of water, pesticides, and fungicides. Two years into the project, inspections in Canada and the United States have found no residue on the products. The plant generates very little waste or spoilage, and what little is generated is composted.

Forty of the 45 employees during the peak season, as well as two of the plant's five managers, are women. In Canada, the project has created four jobs, two of which are the Canadian plant manager and the agricultural technician, who spend the winter months at the plant in Mexico.

The business is growing so rapidly that it's attracting considerable interest from investors, including the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec. In 1998, this joint venture generated about \$315,000 in revenue for other Canadian companies that provided related services such as transportation, storage, and equipment.

Mexico is also reaping the benefits. Hortamex is employing about 25 people at its plant and between 20



CIDA photo: David Barbour

and 45 in the field. It has doubled its sales in three years. About 25 percent of the products were sold on the Mexican market, and the rest went to CAMS Terres Noires for its Canadian customers. So the next cold, blustery February day, when you're shopping for fresh produce, remember the north-south partnerships that make companies like Hortamex Canada's gardens in the south. ■

JUST THE FACTS

Better education systems

One of the biggest barriers to economic growth in developing countries is the skills shortage in the work force. Basic education and skills training are essential if countries are to compete in the global economy of the 21st century. Investing in the educational system—its teachers, teaching materials, facilities, and management—benefits the entire country.