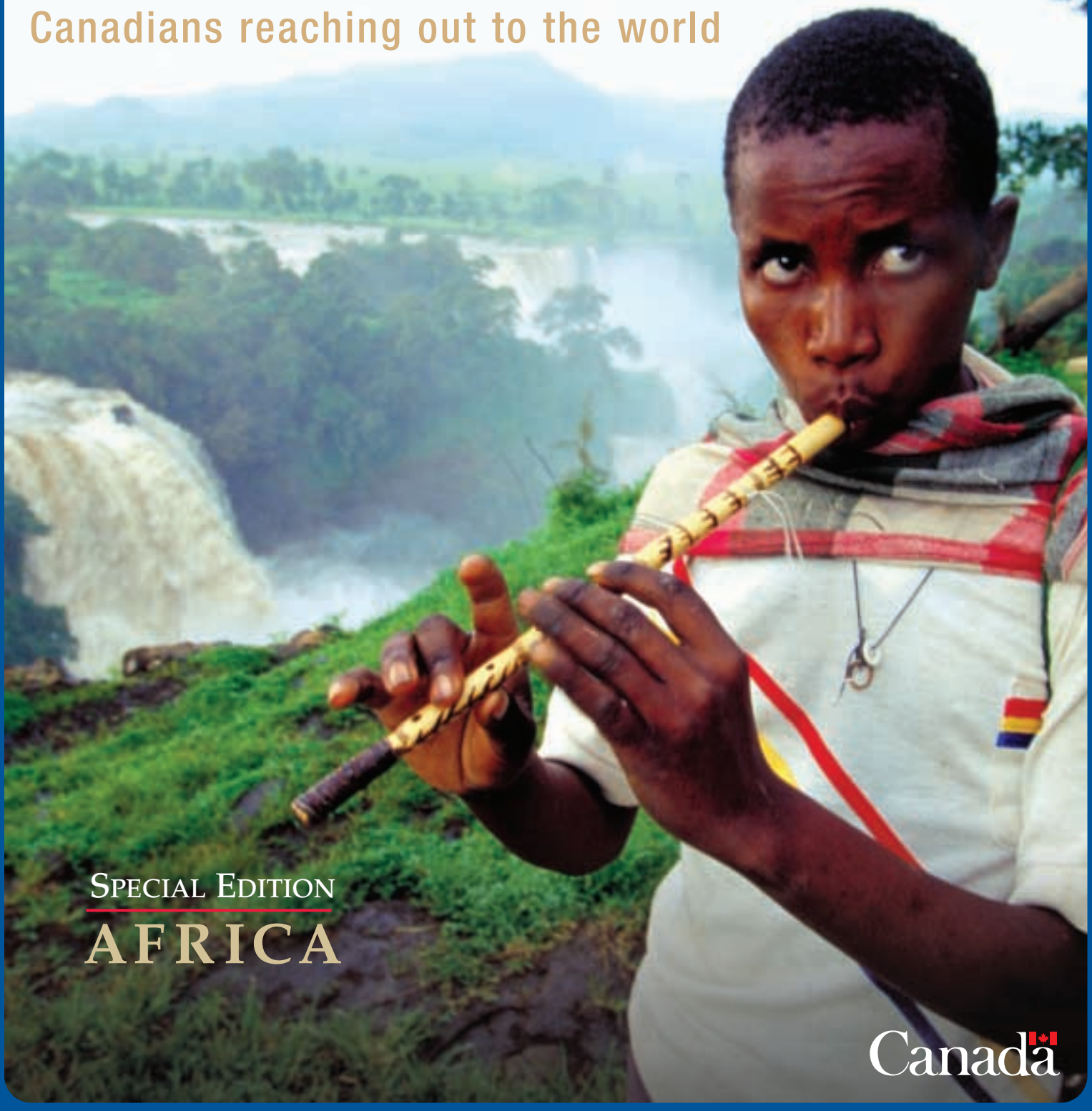
Canadian International Development Agency | Agence canadienne de développement international

Global Citizenship in

ACTION

Canadians reaching out to the world



SPECIAL EDITION

AFRICA

Canada

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Cover photo: A young man plays his flute in front of the Blue Nile at Tissisat Falls, in the highlands of Ethiopia.

Photo: Nevada Wier

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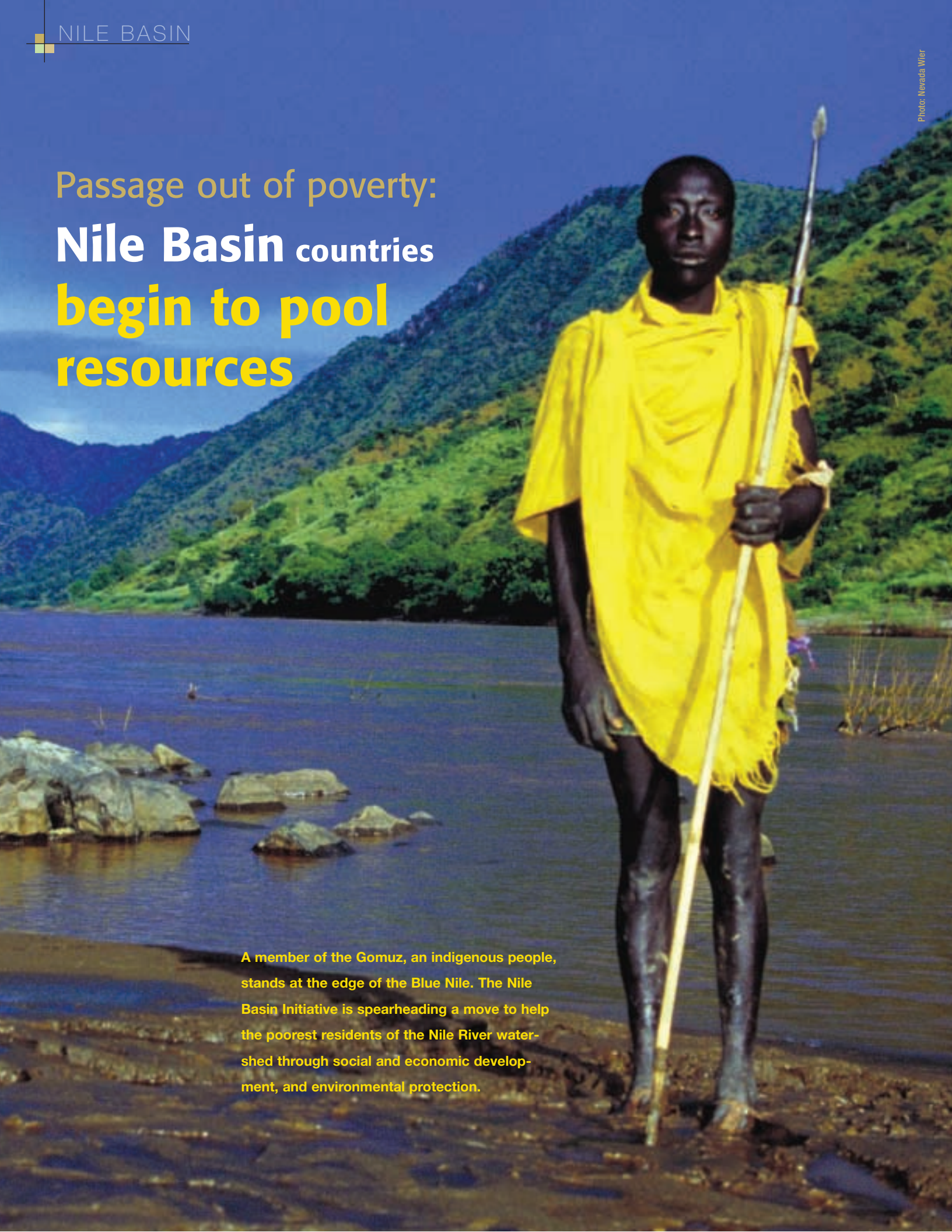
Nile Basin countries begin to pool resources



A member of the Gomuz, an indigenous people, stands at the edge of the Blue Nile. The Nile Basin Initiative is spearheading a move to help the poorest residents of the Nile River watershed through social and economic development, and environmental protection.

Photo: Nevada Wier

Men on Ethiopia's Lake Tana, the source of the Blue Nile, paddle their reed boats to market where they will sell the trees they cut. Removing trees can increase soil erosion—an environmental concern being addressed by a new plan to protect the Nile Basin and its people.

For people living in the Nile Basin, the river is their life. This 6,825 km waterway, whose watershed covers three million square kilometres, courses through mountains, tropical forests, woodlands, lakes, savannahs, wetlands and deserts. Its potential for hydroelectricity, fishing, tourism, shipping, and irrigation is enormous—but so are its challenges.

Water scarcity, already critical in Egypt and Sudan, will soon affect several other countries in the watershed as well. Today, about 160 million people depend on the Nile River for their livelihood. Within the next 25 years, the region's population is expected to double, adding to the demand generated by growth in industry and agriculture. The constant threat of drought adds to the urgency.

Water quality is also an issue. Erosion causes precious soil to wash out to sea, chemical run-off from industry and agriculture creates pollution, higher concentrations of salt affect irrigated soils, and water-borne diseases, like bilharzia, and diarrhea continue unchecked. In the tropical areas, water hyacinths choke off lakes, dams and other sections of the river, hindering fishing and navigation.

CIDA photo: Larry Jackson

Shifting sands bury a village in Sudan. The Nile Basin Initiative will address land conservation problems in the watershed, including desertification.

In Sudan, the encroaching desert is wiping out a way of life centuries old. "The sand movement has exhausted us," says a local farmer. "[It] has buried our agricultural land; and now, it is at the door of my house!"

Like this farmer, thousands of communities along the narrow strip of arable land that borders the Nile River have watched the sand move closer every day. They've seen the riverbanks erode, the river change course, and their only source of water thicken with silt and other debris. They're very poor and have few options.

But a new program, the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), is offering hope—and very practical assistance. The initiative is more than just a water-management project, it's a plan for the social and economic development of an immense region: it focuses on the needs of the poorest of the poor and the environment that sustains them.

These are whole ecosystem problems, calling for joint solutions.

Half the Nile Basin's countries are among the world's very poorest nations; yet, somehow, they must find the resources, skills and political will to overcome these challenges without descending into the conflict and controversy of the past.

Photo: Nevada Wier

Members of the Amajic people make charcoal with trees they cut or pulled from a hillside along the Upper Blue Nile region. This practice, which is against the law, is an Amajic tradition and a significant source of income.

Members of the Nile Basin Initiative's technical advisory committee at their office in Entebbe, Uganda.

Photo: Nile Basin Initiative Secretariat

CIDA photo: David Barbour

Lacking running water at home, women must wash dishes and clothes in the Nile canal near Cairo. A major focus of the Nile Basin Initiative is to improve the water quality of the river.

A shared vision

At a meeting in Tanzania in February 1999, the countries of the Nile River Basin took a giant step toward this goal. They decided to put aside generations of conflict over their shared natural resource, and began to explore common problems and opportunities. That decision by Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and, later, Eritrea, launched the NBI. This unique, African-led program unites all 10 countries in a shared vision to better manage their common water resources in order to fight poverty. "The Nile issue used to be sensitive historically," says Meraji Msuya, executive director of the Nile Basin Secretariat. "But that sensitivity is fading. People are now talking freely about the issues, discussing how to make use of the resources for the benefit of all." According to Mr. Msuya, for the people who depend on the Nile, the river provides the only route out of poverty.

The international community is rallying around the participating countries to support the initiative. In June 2001, donors—including Canada—pledged about $170 million to help develop a strategic action program. The program focuses on the sustainable development of the river, addressing issues such as staple crops, herding, fishing, food processing and soil quality, as well as trade in goods, hydroelectric energy and other services.

Following the African lead

The Nile Basin Initiative is conceived, developed and led by Africans. It reflects the priorities that African countries set out for themselves in their New Partnership for Africa's Development, released in 2001 to wide-ranging international support. It also reflects CIDA's approach to development in Africa, which focuses on coordinating donors around African-led initiatives, favouring regional programs, and strengthening African capacity to meet African-defined challenges.

As an initial "cooperating partner" of the NBI, CIDA's role, along with the World Bank and the UN Development Program, was to help get people talking. In 1992, CIDA began financing a series of conferences for technical experts and governments in the 10 countries along the river—a process that greatly facilitated the launch of the initiative.

CIDA photo: David Barbour

The people of the Nile, like these villagers in Uganda, will benefit from the Nile Basin Initiative, agreed upon by the 10 countries along the great river.

A resident of Khartoum, Sudan, walks beside the confluence of the White Nile and Blue Nile. The countries of the Nile Basin are on the path to protecting the world's longest river and the people who depend on it.

Photo: David Barbour

Photo: Francis Dobbs, World Bank Photo Library

Fishing in a part of the Nile choked with water plants. The Nile Basin Initiative includes a water-management program to reduce such congestion.

CIDA photo: David Barbour

CIDA continues to be actively involved. For example, in collaboration with the Global Environmental Facility, the Agency is providing $16 million to the Nile Transboundary Environmental Action Project. Through a trust fund set up at the World Bank, CIDA will support pilot conservation projects and help community organizations, especially women's, youth and environmental groups, to work with governments in managing natural resources.

Promoting peace and dialogue

The Sudanese farmer struggling against the advancing desert does not want to move. "We need help to find a solution for this," he says, pointing to the sands blowing at his door. Until now, he had few options. But conservation projects like tree planting, restoration of vegetation cover, and improvements to irrigation and water management will provide him with those solutions. And by providing tools and knowledge to the communities themselves, the NBI is making sure those solutions will be sustainable.

"The Nile Basin Initiative seeks to harness the tremendous potential of the River Nile for the benefit of the poor people of the basin, for now and for posterity," says Samuel Mikenga, communications officer for the Nile River Secretariat. "We need to promote peace, dialogue and cooperative action to ensure that the peoples of the Nile Basin speak with one voice in order to address the challenges of the day. We know our problems better and feel that our future lies in our hands." ■

CIDA photo: Pierre St-Jacques

Helping girls make the grade in Ghana

When 21-year-old Olloriak Sawade, an international development student at the University of Guelph in Ontario, first signed up for an overseas program, she wasn't sure how it was going to turn out.

Despite her misgivings, she took a leap of faith, joining the "Trent in Ghana Program," set up by Trent University in Peterborough, Ont., near her home town of Havelock. In the fall of 2000, Olloriak set out for West Africa. She spent two months in Ghana's capital, Accra, taking classes with both Canadians and Ghanaians on the economics, history, and philosophy of Ghana. Afterward, she went to Tamale, in the Northern Region, to study development practices and assess the needs of the local community.

A, B, C—school's for me: Ghanaian girls, who have traditionally taken a back seat to boys in education, are now getting a chance to learn to read and write in the village of Tumu. CIDA funds a World University Service of Canada program to increase the enrolment and retention of girls in Grades 1 to 9 in northern Ghana.

Bringing girls into the classroom

The hot, dry region of northern Ghana is home to the poorest and most disadvantaged communities in the country. Life is hard for everyone—especially women and girls. "Exploitation of the girl-child for economic gain in this part of the country is widespread," says Samuel Zan, an education program manager at the Tamale Archdiocesan Development Office.

Most girls stay home, helping their mothers or aunts at housekeeping, farming or other income-generating activities. A growing number run away to the city in hopes of finding a better life. "I saw first-hand in Ghana how girls' enrolment dropped as the grade levels increased," says Olloriak.

The Trent program included an internship with a local non-governmental organization, and Olloriak's interest in girls' education led her to the World University Service of Canada (WUSC). With support from CIDA, WUSC has been working in northern Ghana since 1997 to improve education for girls.

The semicircle of lamps

Olloriak's internship began on January 16, 2001. She travelled to nearby Tumu, where she was warmly welcomed by her new colleagues at WUSC: Yeshe Smith and Shantelle Marcoux. Her first lesson—how to ride a motorbike—would serve her well as she travelled throughout the countryside to help set up primary school libraries, work at an educational resource centre and be a prop manager at community theatre performances that dramatized the need to educate girls.

Did you know?

Educating girls is the best development investment a country can make. For every year of additional primary education, future mothers can reduce infant, child and maternal mortality rates by 10 percent, increase their own productivity and income potential by anywhere from 10 to 30 percent, and improve the quality of life for their families improves enormously.

Photo: Olloriak Sawade, WUSC

International intern Olloriak Sawade, centre, of Havelock, Ontario, (with friends Matilda, left, and Sandra) in Ghana on a World University Service of Canada internship to improve education for girls.

"The dramas were wonderful," she says. "The audiences were spellbound: they loved every minute of the action. The plays were presented at night under oil lamps, and battery- and solar-powered lamps as well. We held them in varying places, from under the porch of the school to a big field. It was a beautiful sight to see lamps in a semicircle with hundreds of people surrounding the actors in complete silence listening to every word."

"I learned what development *can* be"

Although she's been back in Canada for several months, her memories are still strong: driving a motorbike, trekking to small villages and sitting under mango trees talking with students about how fun reading can be. "I will never forget when an old man from the parent–teacher association pointed to a dragon in one of the storybooks, inquiring what animal it was, as he had never seen anything like it [or] watching one child's eyes light up as he flipped through a book all about dinosaurs."

By the end of her time in Ghana, Olloriak could look back on an internship full of "rewarding experiences and incredible adventures that I am sure to be day-dreaming of in my classes next term," she says. "I learned more than I could have imagined." As she worked with the local communities, she also found that her leap of faith was justified. "This experience allowed me to have a better understanding of what development *can* be, to see the benefits and how people's lives can change through the work you are doing."■

The missing girls

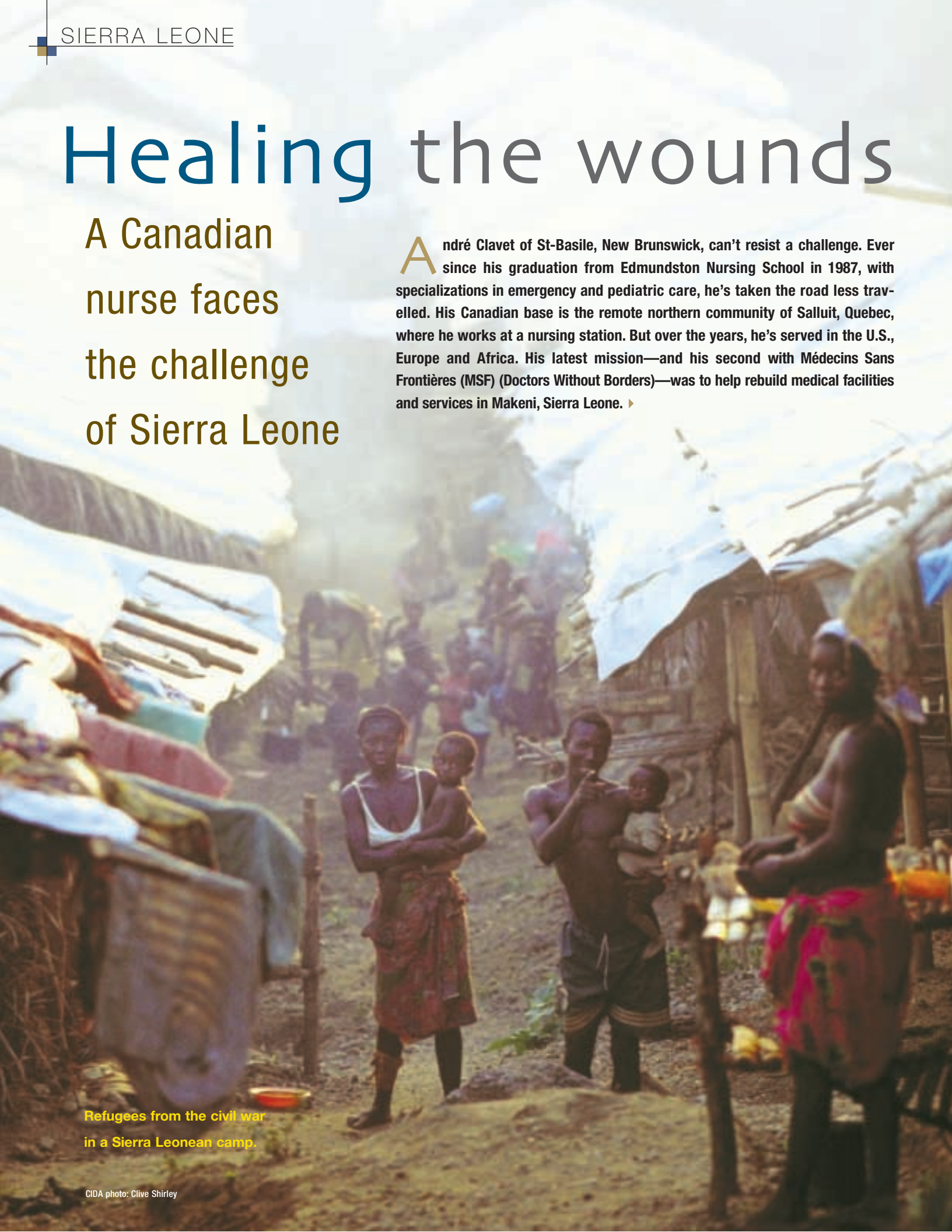
In many of Africa's poorest countries, twice as many boys as girls attend school:

- Girls are needed at home or in the family business.
- Social custom discourages parents from sending girls to school.
- Poverty prevents parents from paying fees, and buying uniforms and books.
- There are no support services, such as reliable transportation and child care, for older students.
- Poor quality or bias against girls in the education system often leads to a high drop-out rate.

Healing the wounds

A Canadian nurse faces the challenge of Sierra Leone

André Clavet of St-Basile, New Brunswick, can't resist a challenge. Ever since his graduation from Edmundston Nursing School in 1987, with specializations in emergency and pediatric care, he's taken the road less travelled. His Canadian base is the remote northern community of Salluit, Quebec, where he works at a nursing station. But over the years, he's served in the U.S., Europe and Africa. His latest mission—and his second with Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) (Doctors Without Borders)—was to help rebuild medical facilities and services in Makeni, Sierra Leone.



Refugees from the civil war in a Sierra Leonean camp.

CIDA photo: Clive Shirley

MSF is an international humanitarian aid organization that provides emergency medical assistance to populations in danger in more than 80 countries around the world. Approximately 2,500 medical personnel—doctors, nurses, anesthetists and other medical specialists and administrators—volunteer to serve for three- or six-month missions. They are paid a small stipend for their services. André Clavet first served with MSF from April to June 2001, when he went to Nigeria to help curb a measles epidemic.

In September 2001, when André arrived in Sierra Leone, the situation was tense. After 10 years of brutal civil war, the rebels no longer controlled the northern areas where Makeni is located, but there were still pockets of resistance in the countryside. Security was tight, and signs of the conflict were everywhere.

"The country was so in need: everything was destroyed," says André. "Sometimes when I travelled around, I thought to myself, 'I'm not in 2001; I'm in 1850.' There were no clinics, no medicines, no equipment, no health care workers in the villages. People were using oil lamps instead of electricity. Everything had regressed, and they had to start all over again. Their number one concern was health."

In October 2001, a disarmament program gave the people of Makeni a new lease on life and the opportunity to rebuild. "People were starting to come back from Freetown [the capital]," André recalls. "There was music playing, kids were playing soccer, carpenters were working again. They knew it wasn't really over yet, but they were hopeful about the future."

"Every day was a different experience ..."

André and his colleagues, another nurse from Australia and a doctor from Sweden, were based at the Makeni Government Hospital, a small one-storey building with three wards—men's, women's and children's—a pharmacy and an operating room. The hospital treated 200–250 out-patients a day and maintained 34 in-patient beds.

"Patients would walk for a whole day to get to us," says André. "For some, it was too late; but we helped many of them. We treated malaria and respiratory tract infections, and dealt with complicated births. We would do small amputations, minor operations, orthopedic care, blood transfusions. There was terrible poverty and malnutrition. As many as one in three kids was anemic, and I had never seen so much high blood pressure, strokes and gastric ulcers in people in their thirties and early forties.

"Each weekday, we would visit one of the five clinics in the area," he recalls. "We'd always come back with the vehicle full of in-patients.

Sierra Leone

Just the Facts

More than 300,000 children under the age of 18 are fighting in conflicts in more than 30 countries worldwide. In Sierra Leone, for example, the members of more than half of all armed groups were under 18. In the past decade alone, wars around the world have killed two million girls and boys, and left another five million children physically disabled.

Photo: André Clavet

Canadian nurse André Clavet, sitting on a wrecked armoured vehicle in Makeni, Sierra Leone, helped bring medical facilities and services back to this area in the fall of 2001.

I did a lot of training one-on-one with midwives, nursing aides, and volunteers. They learned fast and did very well. Every day was a different experience."

Children with guns

Travelling to nearby clinics was a formidable challenge. Although he was never afraid, André knew that despite curfews, checkpoints and heavy security, things were still in flux and highly unpredictable. "The soldiers were really children with guns," he says. "You never knew what they were going to do. If they decided that they wanted the truck or the medicine or money, you gave it to them!"

As part of the disarmament program, André also screened child soldiers to determine who needed treatment or counselling. "Many had been abused by their commanders, given drugs, and been brainwashed," he says."These kids had been soldiers since they were 10 or 11. It was very sad." A local volunteer organization referred those needing treatment to Freetown, and when André went down for a couple of days' rest and recreation, he visited them. "They were at a hostel near the beach," he remembers. "I spoke to many of them. They were very open about what they had done. They looked like any normal group of kids, playing ball and swimming."

"The most challenging three months of my life"

"It changes you inside," André says of his time in Sierra Leone. "It's a beautiful country, and the people are very friendly. One of the things I'll remember the most—it was just like in the movies—[was] going into a small village, all the kids running alongside the truck, just wanting to greet you, to touch you. The adults stopped their work and waved. They trusted us. They knew we were trying to help them. That meant a lot.

"I was only there for three months, but they were the most challenging three months of my life. I made some really good friends. I'll go back, some day, somehow. I know it—no question." ■

Children brutalized by war in Sierra Leone reclaim their lives

Many factors have combined to nudge Sierra Leone along a difficult path to peace: strong military and diplomatic action taken by the British government and its commitment to build up the Sierra Leonean army and police force, the strengthening of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone, the military defeat of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) forces following its attack on Guinea, and the increasingly effective international pressure on diamond smuggling through Liberia in which diamond deposits have enabled the RUF to acquire weapons and support from that country.

Photo: Allan Thompson, *The Toronto Star*

While there seemed to be general optimism about the new developments in Sierra Leone, there is widespread concern about the future. Parents, and even youths themselves, were very concerned about the fate of adolescent children. I share this concern.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees lists 111,000 Sierra Leonean refugees living in Guinea. In the Kissidougou area camps that I visited, a small number of former combatant children were in the first steps of rehabilitation. I met a group of 10 former child soldiers in psycho-social therapy. I was impressed with the capacity of their informal caregivers, who were Sierra Leonean, to establish empathetic connections with these children.

The children, some as young as nine, had been captured, forcibly addicted to drugs, and then kept under control by a perverted buddy system in which each was assigned a watcher and given responsibility to watch another for signs of escape. One older child explained how, after years in the bush, logistical problems with the drug supply had allowed his head to clear. Previously, he had risen to command a Small Boy Unit, playing a leadership role in abusing other children and killing adults. He now seems keen to get an education that would allow him to rejoin the wider society.

Retired Canadian Lieutenant-General Roméo Dallaire travelled to Sierra Leone and Guinea on a fact-finding mission for CIDA December 1–7, 2001. As part of his mandate, he looked at the reintegration of war-affected children into Sierra Leonean society, the impact of current Canadian-supported programs and possible future needs. This article is an excerpt from his report.

Many of these children have been dehumanized by their experiences. Therapy aims to help them through the introduction of mutual respect, storytelling, and opportunities to talk about their experiences, as well as dancing and singing. When accompanied by decent food, medical care and security, this seems to be working for most of the children; but they are still a long way from returning to a "normal" life.

During the war, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) would abduct young girls, forcing them into "marriage." These child mothers, or "bush wives," present a special challenge for reintegration into the community. Some of them are so emotionally scarred that it is difficult for them to love and care for their own children. In addition, most of these girls—some as young as 14 years old—have essentially acquired the status of wives to the RUF commanders: they actually feel safer with them than with other people in the community. It doesn't help that communities find it difficult to accept these unwed child mothers.

Photo: Phil Lancaster

These Sierra Leonean men want to collect a resettlement package after putting down their arms following the defeat of their foe, the Revolutionary United Front.

During my visit to CIDA-funded World Vision projects at Koribondo and Bo in Sierra Leone, I saw training activities for former combatants and single mothers, and a foster parents association that targets child rape victims. Training is difficult in a subsistence farming economy where there is very small demand for services; however, the activities seem to be therapeutic in their own right and may give a number of young people a chance to make a modest improvement to their lives.

In Freetown, I met with the Hon. Shirley Gbujama, Minister for Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs. She stressed that the key to the mid- to long-term care for war-affected children lies with the Child Protection Commission and its leader. The new commission needs to be vigorously supported.

I also visited a child advocacy and rehabilitation project in Freetown run by the International Federation of the Red Cross. It was led by a Canadian, Christine Tokar of Vancouver, B.C. This project is a model of intelligent caring and rehabilitation. Essentially, it combines skills training, group projects and individual counselling to rehabilitate traumatized youths and child mothers.

The project had hard evidence that the six-week interim care standard is insufficient: it can take up to three and a half months to get the girls, in particular, to come out of their shell of shame and loss of confidence. Only then are they receptive to any skills training as serious rehabilitation.

There is a saying in Sierra Leone that it takes a community to raise a child. This is the core precept around which the reintegration of child combatants must be organized. Parents in this country see education as hope for the future. They are willing to suffer the difficulties of economic and political turmoil if they can find in it some hope for their children. While educational opportunities are not, of themselves, a sufficient condition of peace, they are a necessary condition for lasting peace that we ignore at our peril. ■

Franconet offers a window on the world

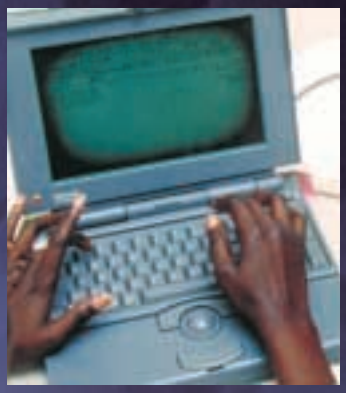
Photo: Tecsult Eduplus Inc.

In Lomé, Togo, local women take over a meeting room at the Federation of Savings and Credit Cooperatives every Tuesday. They come to talk business and use the Internet. Until recently, most had never used a phone or seen a computer. Access to the Internet has motivated many to learn how to read.

In Niamey, Niger, a cybercafé at the Niger Association for Youth has standing room only as young people wait up to two hours for their turn at the computers. "The main problem of the day is getting the doors closed at night," says Bibata Harouna, the association's president.

And in Victoria, Seychelles, just off the east coast of Africa, young craft-makers surf the Net for creative inspiration, market information and business opportunities. They're also developing their own website to market their products abroad.

What do they all have in common? They are all part of Franconet, a CIDA-funded project to make the Internet accessible to organizations working with young people, women, and entrepreneurs in French-speaking countries. Implemented by Tecsult Eduplus of Montréal, Franconet now operates in 13 countries. Most are in Africa, but Romania and Vietnam are included. Participating organizations receive hardware, software, Internet connections, troubleshooting services and training. Each initiative is tailored to meet the needs of the local population, and users adapt the technology and training to their own culture and purposes.



The Internet

Just the Facts

While the Internet continues to expand rapidly in Africa, on-line activity remains concentrated in the cities, where a minority of people live. Each computer with an Internet or e-mail connection usually supports three to five users, putting the total number of users in Africa at about four million. This works out to about one Internet user for every 200 people compared to a North American average of about one user for every 3 people.

"Many Canadians are not sure about the wisdom of investing in projects that bring information technology and the Internet to developing countries," says Christian Lafrance, project director at Tecsult. "There are so many other basic priorities like education, food aid, and health; but this project is yielding results far beyond what we ever imagined in the beginning."

"The whole world is spread out before their eyes ..."

Afi Tsogbe, director general of the Togo Federation of Savings and Credit Cooperatives, couldn't agree more. Her education program for women micro-entrepreneurs—training in health, legal, and social issues, as well as business management—has made a huge difference in women's lives. And the addition of the Internet's resources has brought a whole new dimension to her work. "You really have to see it with your own eyes to understand," she says. "It's clear that the Internet is changing people. They are more open because the whole world is spread out before their very eyes."

Federation staff have benefited as well. Through Franconet, they have greatly improved their abilities to research, link with other savings and credit groups and women's groups, and improve their services to clients. They have since acquired a new building and additional equipment, and their next big project is to purchase a CD-ROM developed in Gabon to use in their literacy classes.

"Everything becomes 'virtually' accessible"

The cybercafé in downtown Niamey, Niger, is packed with young people all day long. Strategically located next to several schools and colleges, plus the two main markets of the city, this nerve centre provides services to students, researchers, business people, the unemployed, and those out of school. There's a youth website, a documentation centre, a cafeteria, and office services available for anyone who walks through the door, and the seven workstations are humming from morning to night.

"It's been a good experience for the young people," says Bibata Harouna. "It's an apprenticeship in management, [allowing them to take] responsibility with clients. And it's a window on the world that allows them to dream: everything becomes 'virtually' accessible to these young people."

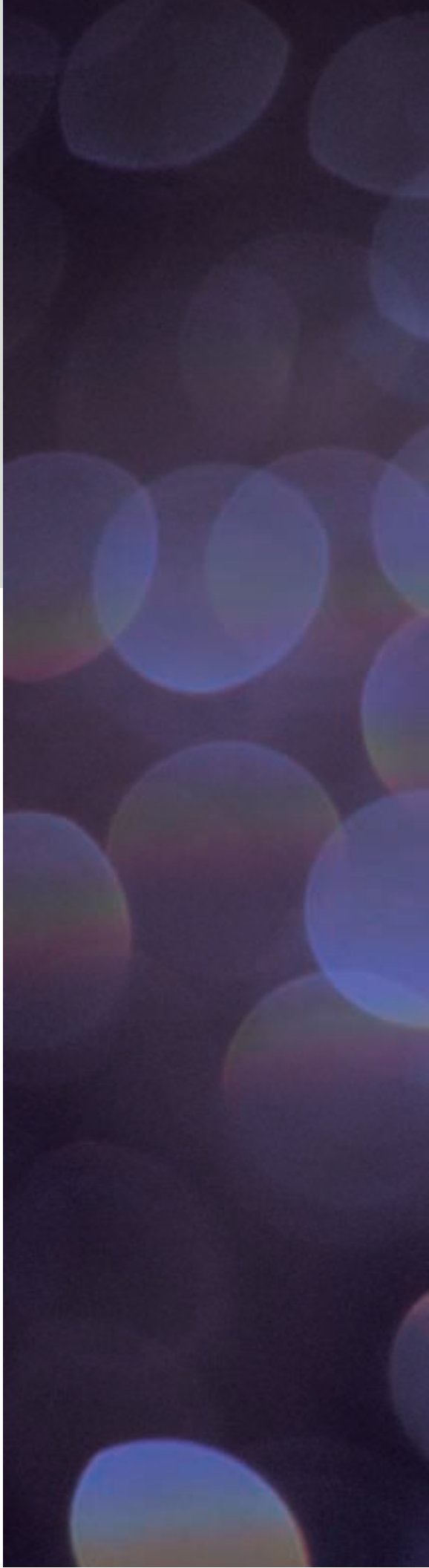
Doing business in the global economy

The Seychelles Industrial Development Corporation (SIDEC) supports, trains, and helps launch new micro-enterprises run by women and young people. For Maxwell Julie, managing director of SIDEC, Franconet has enabled his organization to prepare clients for the global economy—in their language of choice. "We can make the Francophone contents of the Web available to local organizations," he says. "We can also consolidate the links between the French-speaking countries in the Indian Ocean."

Like the other groups involved in Franconet, SIDEC has become IT-literate: it can link with similar organizations, work easily with its branch offices, share its information data base, and carry out training and promotional activities with its clients. It can also generate its own income for further expansion: thanks to the new equipment, its offices in Victoria and Praslin offer word processing, photocopying, filing, research, bookbinding and other services.

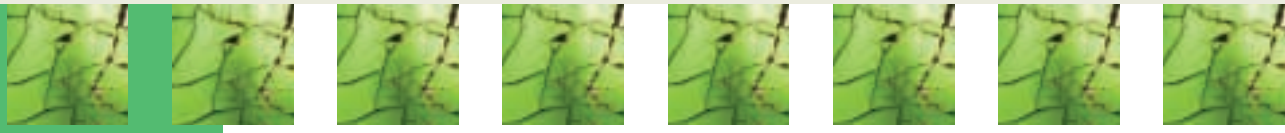
"This is really something!"

Despite the heat, humidity, scarcity of telephone lines, and several virus attacks, all 13 organizations are thriving, and each one is planning to develop new projects and services. Together, they've formed a network among themselves to share experiences and continue upgrading their training and knowledge. Their clients now have access to market information, skills training, financial services and basic education—and they're using it. As one former skeptic, a client at the Lomé women's centre said, *"Eh! Yovo wo gba de dee to,"* which, roughly translated, means, "This is really something!"■



SOMMET KANANASKIS SUMMIT
CANADA 2002

G8 and Africa:
A developing partnership



On June 26–27, 2002, Canada will host the G8 Summit in Kananaskis, Alta., the first time the summit has been held in western Canada. G8 leaders plan to focus on three key issues: strengthening global economic growth, building a new partnership for Africa's development, and fighting terrorism.

In addition, the leaders will review progress since their last meeting in three areas related to global poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals: promoting universal primary education, fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, and bridging the digital divide.

In July 2001, at the last G8 meeting, a delegation of African leaders introduced the New African Initiative, a plan to help them lead the continent out of poverty and conflict to sustainable development. The G8 pledged to develop an action plan to support this initiative, now known as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and to present it at the Kananaskis meeting. As a follow-up to another critical discussion, Canada agreed to lead a Task Force on Education, which would also report to the June meeting.

The G8 recently celebrated its 25th anniversary: in 1975, six developed countries met in Rambouillet, France, to discuss their common economic problems, launching a process that today includes eight members: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the UK and the US. The G8 now meets annually, and the discussions have broadened to include international economic, political and social issues. ■

Tanzania benefits from Canadian support

Photo: CIDA

Minister Whelan with students at Vituka Secondary School in Dar es Salaam.

Soon after her appointment as Minister for International Cooperation, Susan Whelan visited Tanzania to meet CIDA staff and see examples of CIDA-supported projects in the field for herself.

"In Dar es Salaam, I had an opportunity to visit a hospital, a drop-in centre for street children, a school and some small businesses that benefit from CIDA's support," said Minister Whelan. "I saw first-hand the need for continued partnership between Tanzania and Canada, especially in promoting basic education, reducing poverty and encouraging gender equality."

Minister Whelan also met with the President of Tanzania, Benjamin William Mkapa. "I was happy to tell Mr. Mkapa during our meeting that because his government has completed its poverty-reduction strategy—one of the first countries to reach this point—Canada was cancelling Tanzania's $83.6-million debt to our country," she said. "This is one of the largest single debt-relief initiatives ever undertaken by Canada."

"With support from countries like Canada, Africans are taking charge of their own development agendas."

Photo: CIDA

Minister Whelan meets Tanzanian President Benjamin William Mkapa.

She added, "With support from countries like Canada, Africans are taking charge of their own development agendas."

CIDA photo: David Barbour

Over the past several years, supported by the international community, Africa has been working hard to turn four decades of development experience into new opportunities.

African leaders have released the New Partnership for Africa's Development, a blueprint for enabling African countries to lift themselves out of poverty. And the G8, a group of eight developed democracies that includes Canada, is committed to supporting this bold initiative.

There are many hurdles to overcome before the dream becomes a reality: ongoing and bitter conflicts in several areas, the continuing spectre of HIV/AIDS, environmental deterioration, and economic and technological marginalization. But with commitment on all sides, Africa can overcome its challenges. ■

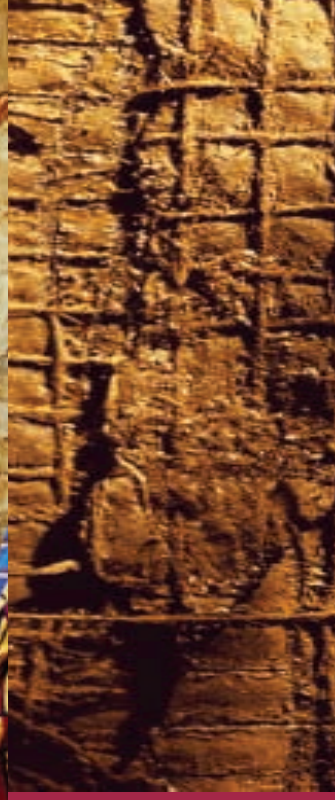
'Widows of the Genocide' lobby for women's rights in Rwanda

In 1994, in a little more than 100 days, more than one million Rwandans were butchered in one of the most intense genocides in recent memory. Among the survivors were thousands of women who had been widowed, raped, and infected with HIV. Their bodies, hearts, and minds had been traumatized. When the killing stopped, they gathered together stray children, and carried on as best they could.

As Rwandan women grapple with the challenge of rebuilding their lives and their communities, Canada is lending a hand through the Canadian Fund for Gender and Development, our primary source of funding to support Rwandan women.

"The fund helps groups tackle the strategic needs of women in our country," says Marie Kagaju, a gender expert with the Canadian aid program in Kigali, the capital. "We help to mend wounds from the past. We also dig down to the root causes of problems, to make real changes that will have long-term effects."

Since 1998, the fund has supported 36 projects, including consultations for new laws to improve the property, marital and labour rights of



Photos this page: Karin Teale, Rwanda Development Trust

Widows and prisoners' wives are part of an agricultural project in Nyantanga, Rwanda. Hutus and Tutsis are encouraged to work together in a spirit of peace and reconciliation.

women; medical and counselling services for abused women; public awareness campaigns to promote social justice and equality for women and girls; information on family planning and AIDS prevention; and voter education for women.

The results are impressive. New laws have improved women's rights in marriage and inheritance. Forced child marriages are no longer legal, and penalties for the abuse and rape of children and babies have been substantially increased. The new regulations against child rape are especially important in an environment where many men still believe that sex with an infant or young virgin can cure AIDS.

A woman working on an agricultural project for widows and prisoners' wives in Nyantanga, Rwanda.

The Association of Widows of the Genocide (AVEGA) is one of the most active women's groups in the country. With support from the fund, AVEGA completed a major survey of services most urgently needed by Rwandan women.

Photo: *The Guardian*, Sean Smith

Her arm savagely cut off—and her life—this HIV-positive Tutsi was raped and mutilated by Hutu militiamen. The Association of Widows of the Genocide is lobbying the Rwandan government to provide urgently needed services to women who survived the horrific 1994 conflict.

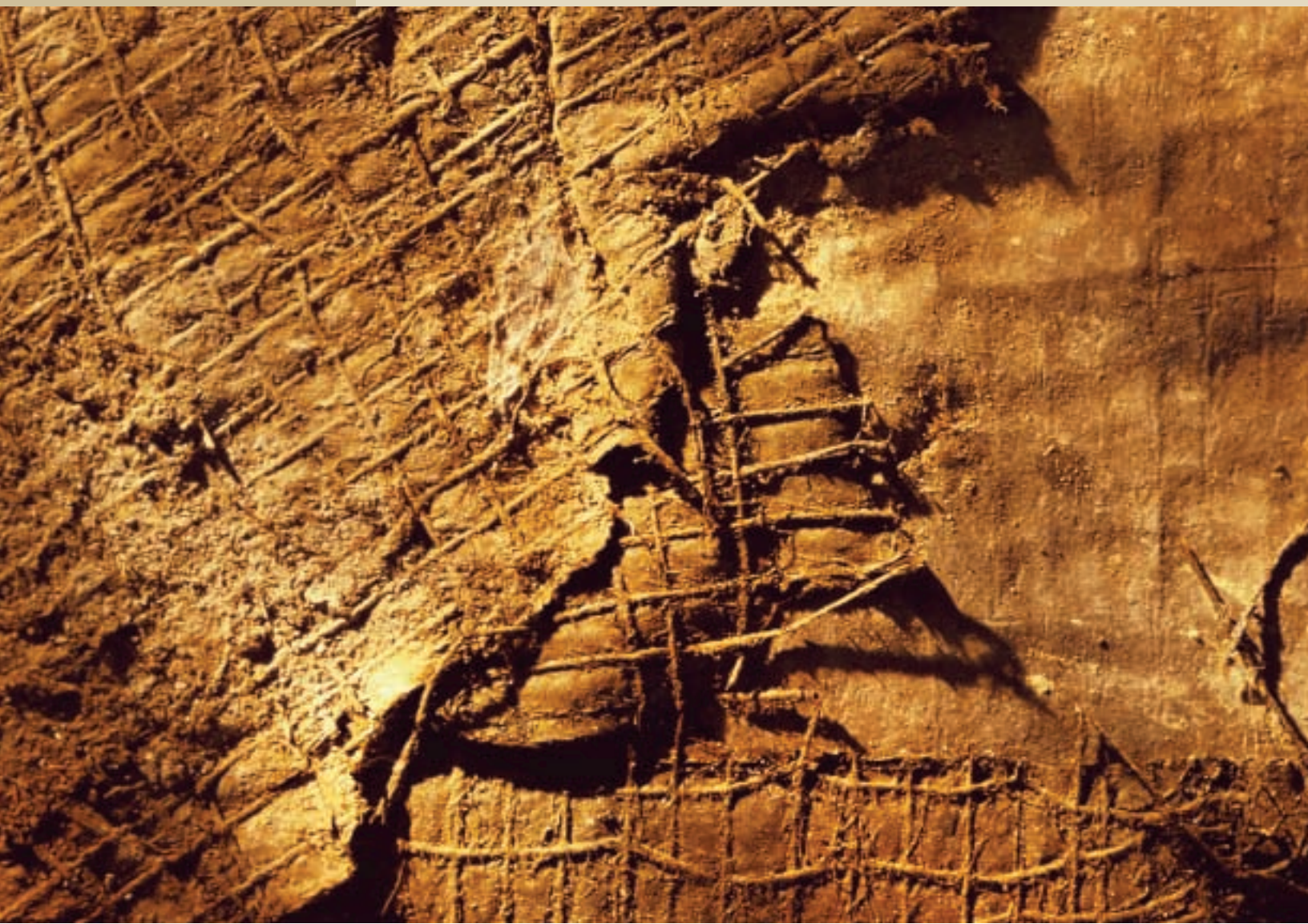
Its agenda is practical: it wants existing laws enforced, more emergency medical services for battered women and children, more female police officers and judges, some financial compensation for the way genocide destroyed their families, and more programs to educate the general public about the value of equal rights for women. "Attitudes are changing," says Ms. Kagaju. "People expect the laws to evolve to meet new realities."

The changes in attitudes toward women are already apparent in Rwanda. A few years ago, women made up fewer than 2 percent of community leaders; however, in local elections last year, more than 26 percent of newly elected officials were women.

Jacques Lepine, Head of Aid at the Canadian embassy in Kigali, sees broad general acceptance of the new moves toward more equal rights for women. "After the upheavals and horrors they've seen in recent years, people here are ready for major change. Rwandans are resilient people," he says. "They want to support a climate of better values and more equality." ■

Just the facts

The majority of the estimated 8.1 million refugees, displaced persons and post-conflict returnees in Africa in 1997 were women and children. War and conflict have increased violence against women and worsened the social and economic conditions under which they live.



From ‘slim’ hopes to brighter futures:

Ugandans get straight talk on AIDS

Photo: Lena Brisman

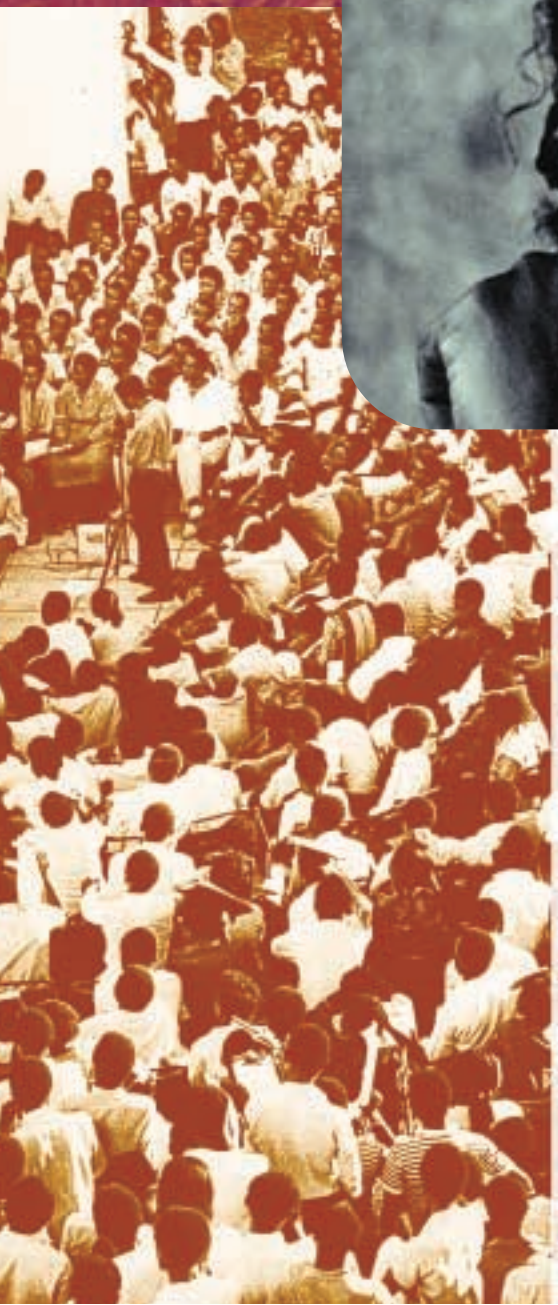


Photo: E. S. B. Kalema/Media Consultants Ltd.

In 1989, Philly Lutaaya—sometimes called the “Bruce Springsteen of Uganda”—announced publicly that he was HIV-positive. Even as the disease ravaged his body, he toured the country, performing his music and educating people about HIV/AIDS, which is known in Uganda as “slim.” Mr. Luttaya’s crusade for openness about the disease helped plant the seeds for a major change in attitude toward HIV/AIDS throughout the country.

Uganda

Following Mr. Lutaaya's death from AIDS in 1989, the next generation of pop stars took up the torch. On December 1, 2001, for example, to commemorate World AIDS Day, a group of Ugandan musicians staged a benefit concert at Makerere University in Kampala, the capital. The concert included performances by the likes of Richard Kaweesa, a young rap artist known for his hard-hitting songs about AIDS.

Getting pop stars onside to pitch the safe-sex message isn't the only reason for Uganda's success in the fight against AIDS; however, it's a key example of how one country has managed to pull together to fight a common threat that was undermining all aspects of its development.

Since the early 1980s, about 1.9 million of Uganda's 22 million people have been infected with HIV, including 67,000 children. Approximately 500,000 people have died of HIV/AIDS-related causes, and 1.7 million have been orphaned. Currently, about 1.4 million people in the country live with HIV/AIDS.

The epidemic has left no one untouched. With fewer labourers to work the fields, for example, there is less food to eat inside the country. Meanwhile, the production of export crops such as coffee has also declined because workers must divide their time between the fields and caring for people living with AIDS. Falling production hurts economic growth, which, in turn, affects the government's ability to finance basic services such as health and education.

By the early 1990s, the government had established the Uganda AIDS Commission to develop a national strategy to fight the epidemic. It involved all sectors of society—from different levels of government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious groups and community associations to lawyers, medical staff, and international donors. This comprehensive approach has made Uganda a major success story: between 1990 and 1999, while other African countries saw infection rates soar, Uganda's HIV/AIDS levels fell from about 14 percent to 8 percent.

"Uganda is an incredible example of what a country can do with limited resources but good leadership, a solid social structure, and people who are willing to speak frankly and work together," says Dr. Allan Ronald, an infectious disease physician and professor emeritus at the University of Manitoba. Dr. Ronald, who has more than twenty years' experience in Africa, recently joined an international AIDS research team at Makerere University.

For Dr. Ronald, Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni is a key figure in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The president's unequivocal commitment to honesty about AIDS has encouraged other community leaders in schools, churches and mosques to follow suit. Many school principals, priests and mullahs make a point of starting their weekly community meetings with updates on local HIV testing clinics and community care services.

Uganda has been particularly receptive to foreign NGOs and international agencies that want to join the country in the fight against AIDS. The government has licensed more than 1,400 agencies to operate in Uganda. Canadian organizations such as CARE and Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief, for example, have a long history of action on AIDS in Uganda.

CARE Canada's Gail Steckley agrees with Dr. Ronald about the impact of President Museveni's leadership. "AIDS rates start to drop when there's support from the very top. Then new ideas really start to spread throughout the whole society," she says. "Uganda has managed a major process of social change on this issue. People now know that if they get tested for HIV and are found positive, they will get compassion and care. This encourages people to seek testing, which is a huge component of both prevention and care. It's amazing what ordinary people can contribute when they know the support is there."

For all its importance, leadership at the top would amount to little without the energy of grassroots groups dedicated to addressing the HIV/AIDS crisis.

One such group is The AIDS Support Organization (TASO), a local association of Ugandans living with HIV/AIDS. More than 23,000 TASO volunteers coordinate nutrition, community care, and education throughout the country, providing counselling services, and delivering nutritional supplements and home care to the sick and dying. TASO also helps community groups use dance, music and drama to spread the facts about HIV transmission, safe sex techniques, and practical ways to help the infected.

Photo: E. S. B. Kalema/Media Consultants Ltd.

Film still courtesy Virginia Starring and John Zantsky

More than a decade ago, as he struggled with AIDS, Mr. Lutaaya recorded a moving song called "Alone and Frightened," which became an anthem for AIDS volunteers in Uganda and throughout Africa. It's a testament to the legacy of Mr. Lutaaya, and the commitment of Ugandans from all walks of life, that many people can now speak openly about the disease. The fight against HIV/AIDS continues, but, more than ever before, Ugandans are getting the facts, making informed decisions about their sexual practices, and treating people living with HIV/AIDS with respect and compassion. In the process, they are working hard to ensure that, ultimately, no Ugandan with the disease is ever alone or frightened again.

Photo: Straight Talk Foundation

Sanyu (left) and Chris are DJs for the English-language broadcast of "Straight Talk," a national radio show in Uganda giving frank information to young people about sex and relationships.

As TASO researchers noted in a report prepared for the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in 2001, people do not always act on their knowledge: many Ugandans are still in denial about HIV/AIDS, and many living with the disease—especially in the central and western regions—still face discrimination from their employers, communities and families.

At the same time, the report notes education programs are starting to make a difference. "In the past, fellow villagers feared to go near that person because they saw him or her as filthy," says one community leader in Kampala, "but after this greater AIDS sensitization over the radio, people have learned how AIDS is transmitted, they no longer treat those infected badly."

Radio is an important educational tool for Straight Talk, another grassroots group in Uganda. From its roots producing a small newsletter, Straight Talk has grown into a registered NGO that delivers frank information about sex and relationships via the national media to15,000 secondary and primary schools, and 600 community groups.

Ugandan youths pay attention because Straight Talk doesn't preach. Instead, it encourages teenagers to think hard about the dangers and benefits of various sexual choices, including condoms and abstinence. "Adolescence is a period of adventure when many things are explored," says Anne Aika Fiedler, Straight Talk's director. "Reliable information is very important."

Straight Talk's national radio show about sex and relationships is broadcast throughout Uganda in English and two local languages. Young radio listeners write in with a constant stream of tough questions about body changes and sexual relationships. "Kids ask us things like 'I heard that my boyfriend's last girlfriend died of AIDS. I have told him we have to use condoms during sex but he refuses. What should I do?' " says Ms. Fiedler. "We tell them that true relationships are about respect, not just sex; and that only condoms can prevent HIV transmission."

In addition to talk shows, music broadcast on the radio remains a powerful vehicle for transmitting values. Ms. Fiedler notes that an increasing number of Ugandan pop songs now highlight women's right to negotiate for condoms, buy condoms themselves or refuse to have sex with a partner they suspect is unfaithful.

More than a decade ago, as he struggled with AIDS, Mr. Lutaaya recorded a moving song called "Alone and Frightened," which became an anthem for AIDS volunteers in Uganda and throughout Africa. It's a testament to the legacy of Mr. Lutaaya, and the commitment of Ugandans from all walks of life, that many people can now speak openly about the disease. The fight against HIV/AIDS continues, but, more than ever before, Ugandans are getting the facts, making informed decisions about their sexual practices, and treating people living with HIV/AIDS with respect and compassion. In the process, they are working hard to ensure that, ultimately, no Ugandan with the disease is ever alone or frightened again. ■

The legacy of landmines

Mozambique clears a path to the future

In Mozambique, one million unexploded landmines remain scattered throughout the country. Often, they've been planted in locations designed to wreak the most damage: in farmers' fields, around schools, near wells and water pumps, and on roads or paths that people use to take goods to market. As a result, landmines maim and kill hundreds of people every year, devastating families and communities, and hindering progress.

CIDA is funding two projects to help Mozambique locate and remove its landmines, and enable ordinary people to rebuild their lives.

Mozambique has 1,000 maps at the 1:50,000 scale, but they are outdated, unreliable and awkward for deminers to use. With CIDA support, Geomatics Canada—an arm of Natural Resources Canada—is digitizing the maps for the Government of Mozambique and demining organizations. The new format will enable Mozambique to add more practical images and markings that are meaningful to local deminers. It also means that the maps will be easier and less expensive to update and reprint.

As part of this project, CIDA also provided funds to the Canadian International Demining Corps, a non-profit organization, to survey the social and economic impacts of suspected minefields. It talked to people across the country about how landmines still affect their lives. Women, for example, have to walk farther to collect water in order to avoid hazardous areas. Entire village economies suffer because their agricultural fields are too dangerous to access.

In another CIDA-supported project, the Canadian Autoworkers Union (CAW) and Handicap International trained more than 32 local crews to deactivate and remove live mines. The project also provides landmine survivors with prosthetic limbs, wheelchairs, and occupational and rehabilitative therapies, all made with locally available materials such as wood and bicycle wheels so they can be easily repaired. In addition, the project helps landmine survivors lobby for disability pensions, and free rides on buses and trains. Finally, it encourages local governments to pass legislation that supports better access for the disabled.

It costs US$3 to manufacture a landmine; it costs US$1,000 to remove one. The human cost of landmines, however, is less easy to calculate.

Photo: Carol Phillips, CAW

A group that includes a member of the Canadian Autoworkers Union, left, returns from a minefield in Mozambique.

Photo: Mark Yarmoshuk, DND

Canadian Forces Master Warrant Officer Luc Lorrain demonstrates Global Positioning System equipment in the field.

The CAW also supports a mine awareness program that has been integrated into the national school curriculum. Toys and games teach children how to recognize the various landmine symbols—crossed sticks or a pile of stones—that different international agencies use to mark hazardous spots. One popular game that resembles Snakes and Ladders features a cartoon character called Rita trying to get to school without stepping on a landmine.

CAW's project provides further long-term benefits by helping villages repair damaged schools and water systems that became mined and were abandoned during the war years.

"It's fine to clear a path to a school or a well, but the community is still in trouble if the school lies in ruins, and the pump is contaminated," says Carol Phillips, international director of CAW's Social Justice Fund Landmine Action Project. "CIDA money and matching funds from our members help us make a lot of public buildings and basic services functional again."

Clearly, the legacy of landmines lives on in Mozambique; but with its partners in Canada and elsewhere, the country is tackling the issue from all sides—from mapping and demining to support for survivors and education programs for children. In the process, Mozambique is taking bold steps down the road to greater security and prosperity. ■

Mozambique

Just the Facts

Every month, landmines kill or injure more than 2,000 people, of whom 30 to 40 percent are children. Some 115 million mines are still lodged in the ground of 68 countries around the world. Each year, another 2.5 million mines are laid, and they remain active for at least half a century.

Sewing up their future

Women **entrepreneurs** in Egypt get resourceful

In a small home in Egypt's Qena district, along the Nile, 600 km south of Cairo, the busy whir of a sewing machine penetrates the stillness of a rural afternoon. Nashwa Fathy is making school bags. She deftly eases the cloth toward the needle's path, putting the finishing touches on another item for this season's stock.

A loan of about $8,000 from a Canadian aid project—the Women's Initiative Fund (WIF)—helped Nashwa buy the sewing machine that launched her business; however, it's her own initiative and drive that has made her a success. Having kept up with her business loan payments, Nashwa has established an excellent credit rating. Through her entrepreneurial savvy, she has kept her fledgling enterprise afloat and helped to support her family—no small feat in a region marked by poverty and scarcity of resources.

Set up in 1990 by CIDA, the Foundation for International Training, and Egypt's Ministry of Social Affairs, WIF is dedicated to preparing low-income women entrepreneurs and their families for the business world.

Photo: Foundation for International Training

Photo: Foundation for International Training

Recycling plastic in Upper Egypt.

A seamstress runs a ready-made garment business in Egypt.

Egypt

Just the Facts

The Women's Initiative Fund is one of five CIDA projects in Egypt designed to spur economic development along the Nile River. Another one is the "Small and Micro Enterprise Development in Upper Egypt" project, which has so far helped create 4,000 new jobs in about 1,000 new businesses. Women own some 40 percent of these enterprises, which range from small chicken processing plants and ice cream factories to steel wool manufacturers and Internet service providers. Small business accounts for almost 75 percent of private-sector jobs in Egypt. As the country moves toward a more open economy, this figure will increase. By 2017, Egypt's government forecasts that small business will create 350,000 jobs.

Between 1990 and 2001, in addition to providing credit to several thousand poor women, WIF helped kick-start more than 200 new small and medium businesses in the Qena and Aswan governorates of Upper Egypt, including Nashwa's sewing enterprise. These start-ups, which generally employ from 2 to 10 people, produce everything from yogurt to plastic pipes to socks.

The project filled an important gap. Although many women like Nashwa had ideas for new businesses, most had limited assets and couldn't qualify for a bank loan. With the help of advisers, they prepared rigorous feasibility and market studies. Based on the strength of their business plans, they could qualify for start-up loans from a revolving credit fund.

The WIF scheme was enormously successful. After it ended in 2001, the project was taken over by two financially self-sustaining Egyptian non-governmental organizations: the Egyptian Association for Community Initiatives and Development (EACID) in Aswan and the Association for Rural and Urban Women's Development in Qena. Soon EACID will offer new types of loans to enable poor families to keep their boys and girls in school, protect children who are drawn into the workplace and help families of working children start their own businesses.

As operators of their own businesses, Nashwa and women like her are breaking new ground in a community that traditionally discourages women from participating in the formal economy. They've become role models, blazing a trail for the next generation. The young Egyptian girls carrying Nashwa's school bags today may well become tomorrow's entrepreneurs. ■