

Realizing Human Potential

Realizing human potential involves creating the conditions required so that all individuals can have more opportunities to develop their potential and contribute to the development of the societies in which they live and work. That means giving them the tools to develop and compete. The objective is to promote inclusion by empowering groups—youth, women, Indigenous peoples, the poor and disabled—who are often forced to the margins of society.

An Education Agenda of the Americas

The Quebec City Plan of Action opened a new chapter in the history of education in the Americas. It set a new Hemispheric education agenda that will focus efforts to reduce poverty, promote economic growth, further develop democratic institutions and advance human potential.

In Uruguay in September 2001, at their second meeting, Ministers of Education adopted a Declaration Against Violence and also agreed to create an Inter-American Committee on Education. This will coordinate the development and implementation of Hemispheric actions of partnership enabling all countries to achieve the education goals identified by Leaders within the framework of the Summit of the Americas. Ministers will meet again in August 2003 in Mexico to review progress.

In the interim, Canada is helping countries in Latin America and the Caribbean improve the quality of education through training and upgrading for teachers and school administrators. Canada is providing CDN\$5 million over five years to help train elementary school teachers in rural areas of northern Peru in order to improve the quality of schooling for poorer, rural communities. In Guatemala, Canada has supported a reform project to improve the national education curriculum and upgrade textbooks at the elementary and secondary levels. A key aspect of this work is finding ways to reduce discrimination against Indigenous peoples.

Canada is also supporting the Inter-American Organization for Higher Education, based in Quebec City, with its College of the Americas program linking post-secondary institutions across the Americas. In addition, Canada is providing CDN\$5 million to four Latin American universities; the funds support their joint efforts to develop entrepreneurship through local cooperatives that are meant to become self-sustaining.

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CIDA Photo: Roger LeMayne

The Quebec City Summit set up the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas to promote the implementation of innovative uses of information and communication technologies in the Hemisphere (see "Connectivity," below). Based in Ottawa, the Institute is currently supporting a number of education-related projects in the Caribbean (including the Caribbean Distance Education Network in collaboration with the World Bank and the OAS), as well as Computers for Schools and Access to Internet projects in both Colombia and Costa Rica.

With these initiatives and others, Canada and its hemispheric partners are helping to empower the peoples of the Americas through education and are helping the Ministers of Education meet their commitment of "educating present and future generations in the development of their capacity to participate in a global environment."