

being achieved. Social and economic infrastructures are stronger and the most disadvantaged groups have benefitted from programs supported by Canada.

Let me speak briefly of three issues in Bangladesh's current developmental situation which are of particular interest to Canada.

First is the need for graphic and continuous evidence that Bangladesh is facing up to the most basic development challenge -- the growth of your population. The importance of a massive and well-understood family planning campaign cannot be overstated. Canada provides half the birth control pills distributed in Bangladesh, and is active in other family planning activities. We are prepared to do more if appropriate opportunities can be identified.

Second, the rural population must be seen to benefit directly from development. As population grows in a fixed land mass, the plight of the landless can only become more bleak. For a variety of reasons, women have been the principal victims of these pressures, so there must be deliberate programs to ensure that women benefit from development. A more comprehensive strategy and more substantial resources are vital if rural poverty is to be reduced. Over the past two years, we have been impressed by the increased efforts of the Bangladesh government, supported by the donor community, to attack rural poverty.

Third, the development of infrastructure and industry must be soundly based. Donor assistance to major projects must be well planned and the projects themselves must be efficiently executed. This also requires that credit be extended, in a financially responsible manner and that creditors receive repayment of loans and payment for services. I am heartened by the stated intentions of the government in tackling this problem. I was also fascinated to learn that the repayment rate of cooperative loans by the very poorest people was almost 100 percent.

Canada considers the role of non-governmental organizations to be of growing importance in the development process. Such organizations have a unique record in pioneering new concepts and in reaching out to groups in greatest need. It is, of course, essential that non-governmental organizations act in a manner fully consistent with the overall strategy of the host government. It is also important to have an environment which recognizes and encourages their unique capacity to respond to human needs, quickly and with great flexibility. To this end, my government will continue to provide considerable financial support to NGO's in Bangladesh.