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# 78-year-old Canadian helps world sleep safely at night.

by Antoine Char

MONTREAL, March 16 (IPS)

They may have never met "Papa Murray," but the 78-year-old Canadian has tucked into bed at least 150,000 children in the Third World.

From his quiet home near Toronto, Canada's most populous city, Murray Dryden the father of two former hockey superstars

ships at least 10,000 bedkits a year to needy children in 27 nations, including Ecuador, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, India and Uganda.

His ultimate goal is to provide one million kids with a bedkit.

"I know it will be impossible; I'm getting old. But isn't it nice to dream" Dryden told IPS in a recent interview.

"I am often asked, 'why bedkits?'," he says. "Unless you have had to go without a bed, it isn't easy to understand. But for children suffering from disease or the pangs of hunger, it helps to be able to just fall asleep and forget for a while."

But why not food? "Bedding is needed as urgently in many places as food," says the tall, robust Canadian

Shocked by the sight of children sleeping on roadsides, on ragged cardboard "and often among rats," Dryden decided after a trip to Pakistan in 1970 to "do something" when he got back home.

He sold one of his Christmas tree farms in Ontario and set up "Sleeping Children Around the World" (SCAW), a charity operated by some 100 volunteers, mostly middle-aged or retired men and women.

SCAW supporters contribute \$28 per child for a bedkit, which includes a small mattress, pillow, blanket, ground cloth, two pairs of pajamas and a towel.

"Kit materials are always purchased in the child's country to help the local economy. We pay people to make the beds and often feed them while they're doing the work," Dryden explained.

SCAW volunteers then photograph each child snuggled in his

or her new bed, holding a card with the donor's name and address.

"Donors receive a copy of the photo of 'their' kid, so they can see the results of their donations," he reported.

"Some donors tell us that they have special albums in which they place the photograph of their new child (or children) each year."

For Dryden, every cent counts: "Since we started SCAW, we've never wasted 10 cents on administration. The full 28 dollars goes directly to the child."

"Often." he noted, "money sent to developing nations through government and other programs fails to reach its target. I want to see the child carrying away the bed."

When Dryden was "a little younger," he "worked on the delivery of 1,000 kits to children living in four remote villages in Nepal. It was in 1980 and over the course of 10 days we delivered 10 tons of bedding supplies up the mountains, hand-carried by 37 porters. I lost six kilos in the

process.

Accompanied by retired friends, Dryden still makes a two to three month trip to Africa, Latin America and Asia each year to distribute slumber kits.

To implement its program, SCAW works with branches of organizations such as the "Kiwanis," the "Salvation Army," the "Rotary Club" and Canadian Jesuits in various countries.

The agencies assemble the kit materials and have them ready when Dryden and the SCAW volunteers arrive for the distribution process.

"They are close enough to the children to know what they need." he explained.

"The essence of sleeping children around the world is to spread hope into the far corners of the earth by showing that someone cares and wants to help alleviate the suffering of innocent children.

"I only wish everyone could see the excitement and gratitude of the children as they receive their gifts from people they have never met." Dryden said.



Adam and Bertha

