

CANADIANS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Two years ago when the world's attention was on the defeat of the Taliban, the focus of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) was on what would come next. For organizations and individuals working in the areas of humanitarian assistance and economic reconstruction, the challenge was—and is—to help countries to make the precarious voyage from war, through peacekeeping and peacebuilding, to sustainable peace, order and good government.

Afghanistan had been devastated by decades of war and natural disasters. Eighty percent of the population lives in rural areas, but much farmland was rendered unusable because of landmines and other destruction. Four years of drought added to the misery and starvation and contributed to abysmal health conditions. Maternal mortality was the second highest in the world and a quarter of all children died before their fifth birthday. Three quarters of the population had no access to safe drinking water. Schools were not functioning; hospitals were destroyed; roads were in ruin. There was no peace, no order and no government.

In a land with 50 ethnic groups and 32 languages, the challenge of creating a functioning government was immense, if not insurmountable. It was not easy to

communicate the message that help was at hand and that there was room for hope. CIDA is in the business of hope.

Canada was already familiar with Afghanistan. Throughout the Taliban era, CIDA had been independently providing some \$10-\$12 million annually in humanitarian assistance. Immediately following the crisis that began on September 11, 2001, Canada delivered \$16.5 million in humanitarian aid.

In December of that year, working with partners such as United Nations agencies, the World Bank, NGOs and other countries, Canada promised another \$100 million, and was proud to be among the very first to deliver assistance on the ground.

In a sense, CIDA was prepared for the Afghanistan crisis as a result of experience elsewhere in the world, in places like the Balkans, Rwanda and Somalia. A special team

Injecting Hope

It could save their lives, but these children don't exactly appreciate being vaccinated. Every year, millions of children around the globe die from vaccine-preventable diseases. Canada is a leader in the effort to prevent these tragedies through support for initiatives such as the World Health Organization's tuberculosis-control programs in Afghanistan.

Just the Other Side of the Fence

Refugees returning to Afghanistan face many challenges and barriers. The barbed wire fence at the Pol-é-charkhie refugee camp, south of Kabul, is the least of them. CIDA supports the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees through the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. The UNHCR contributes to assistance and protection for refugees and internally displaced people and helps their reintegration into their homeland.

