

## Addressing Poverty Internationally

Canada makes an important contribution to enabling people living in poverty around the world to achieve sustainable livelihoods through ODA. Canada's bilateral ODA program, managed by CIDA, continues to have worldwide reach.

CIDA works with a wide range of partners. Through its Partnership Branch, a variety of approaches have been used, including the provision of funding to Canadian nongovernmental organizations working with developing country partners at the grassroots level. These projects are generally designed and implemented in close association with local communities.

Poverty-reduction projects are important parts of Canada's bilateral programs in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The percentage of these projects rose from 7.4 percent in 1983 to 34.4 percent in 1993.

Projects aimed at reducing poverty for a clearly identified target group and with a good delivery mechanism is an approach favoured by CIDA. Using this approach, some 13.6 percent of total bilateral projects were targeted to the poor in the 1987-1992 period.

A good example is the Rural Maintenance Project (RMP) in Bangladesh. It responds to two major problems: lack of routine maintenance of earthen farm-to-market roads and the Bangladesh government's inability to provide assistance to destitute women who fall outside existing relief and employment programs.

From 1989 to 1995, the RMP employed 60,000 destitute women to maintain 60,000 miles (96,540 km) of roads in return for wages and assistance designed to reduce their destitution gradually. The RMP's success stems from three main factors:

- it directly assists the most disadvantaged;
- it meets the women's immediate needs for steady employment and an adequate income; it also has a longer-term impact by introducing them to a nontraditional occupation, enhancing their role in the family and improving their community status; and
- it provides a practical solution to the need for better roads.

Canada's strategy in multilateral agencies has been to push for integration of poverty into mainstream programming, with a greater focus on participatory development and specific targeting. Canada has advocated the use of policy dialogue and reforms for poverty reduction. It has worked with other countries to put poverty on the World Bank and United Nations agendas (e.g., Human Development Report, UN World Summit for Social Development).

In reviewing its experience in poverty-reduction programming, CIDA has identified the need for a CIDA-wide strategy on poverty reduction that sets out clear objectives and develops programming consistent with Canadian capacity.