

ACAPAQ follows the Canadian model, with efforts focused on encouraging the involvement of all sectors of society in developing a plan that addresses issues of developing infrastructure, increasing use through capacity building, and developing relevant content for users. To be successful, Canada believes the plan must: benefit from leadership at the highest level; be based on principles of equity, universality and affordability; and be geared to stimulate the production and dissemination of relevant content in critical areas, meeting the fundamental needs of the citizens of the Americas. ACAPAQ has been circulated to all the countries of the Americas. Representatives of multilateral development banks and other international, regional and sub-regional institutions are meeting regularly to advance its progress.

Through initiatives such as Canada's Institute for Connectivity in the Americas and ACAPAQ, Canada is working with national administrations, the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and the OAS to connect people, schools, communities and governments.

"Connecting Canadians" has given Canada a decade's worth of experience in the application of information and communications technology. Innovative policies, programs, products and practitioners are in great demand throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Canadians are working assiduously to meet the demand together with our partners throughout the Hemisphere.

A Future for the Children and Youth of the Americas

Fifty percent of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean is under 18 years of age, and 60 percent of these children live in poverty. One in five of those between 6 and 18 years old is working, often in hazardous conditions. Street kids face hunger, disease and violence. In some countries, children and adolescents are recruited to fight for warring factions or with armed gangs.

Protecting children and youth in the Americas from neglect, abuse, discrimination and exploitation is a top priority for Canada, and a major focus of the Quebec City Summit Plan of Action. Canada recognizes that investment in children and youth will allow them to reach their full potential for lifelong cognitive, social and emotional development and physical health. The Third Summit of the Americas was the first to include the category of Children and Youth within its Declaration and Plan of Action. This was an important acknowledgment that the rights of children remain a concern of all peoples of the Hemisphere. The inclusion of this category was initiated and strongly supported by Canada.

Canada has launched a range of cooperative initiatives to start tackling the enormous challenges that lie ahead. Canada spends about CDN\$4 million every year for child protection in the Americas, especially in the key areas of child labour, street children, and children affected by armed conflict.

For example, in Colombia, Canada is providing CDN\$3.5 million to two projects that focus on children affected by armed conflict. One project, with Save the Children Canada, will address the immediate educational and psycho-social requirements of children displaced by conflict. The other project, with Foster Parents Plan, aims to stop the recruitment of children into armed groups. In Argentina, the Canadian Child Care Federation is working with local partners to improve the quality of early childhood care and development. In Nicaragua, Canada works with Save the Children Canada to promote children as effective leaders in their communities. Canada is

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