

Appendix D

Nigeria's leadership, both military and civilian, has largely ignored these issues in the past. If the newly elected leadership continues to ignore the basic needs of much of the country's population, then a great opportunity will have been missed and a new cycle of military takeovers and incompetent government will threaten.

The Nigerian government, Nigeria's dynamic, sophisticated civil society and its enterprising business community have a common interest: a stable, prosperous country. It is therefore in the government's interest to foster partnerships among these participants in public life.

Canadian Assistance

While primary responsibility for bringing about improvement lies with Nigerian leaders and their people Nigeria's foreign friends can and should help. This is not only a matter of generosity toward a great nation and fellow Commonwealth member, it is in our own long term interest. A prosperous and democratic Nigeria can become a valued trading partner. It can be a partner in dialogue and action on a variety of issues ranging from environmental degradation to peacekeeping and human security.

Nigeria is a complex society and the Canadian government has had no representation at all there for a period of a year-and-a-half. Prior to that, during the time of General Abacha, the relationship had become largely unproductive. The Canadian International Development Agency felt constrained to withdraw from bilateral activity in Nigeria. As a result, and in order to be genuinely helpful in the present situation, officials of the Canadian government must place themselves on a steep "learning curve". Our objective will be to find the ways in which Canadian capabilities match Nigeria's most urgent needs.

During the dark years of the Abacha regime Canada, through CIDA, continued to assist Nigeria with Democratic Development Fund projects administered by CUSO, Inter-Church Action and the Canadian Labour Congress. The DDF reserve was used for small projects. More recently we have assisted with the elections.

CIDA recognizes the Canadian foreign policy interest in Nigeria and the importance for Canada to assist Nigeria during this transition and the even more critical post-transition period. With this in mind, CIDA will send, by mid-year, a programming mission to Nigeria. They will be examining partnership, multilateral and bilateral channels as well as a variety of programme possibilities. The latter could include activities such as: financing initiatives designed specifically to address the needs of the poorest; supporting Canadian institutions and firms through partnership programs like INC; or, exposing new Nigerian parliamentarians to Canadian democratic parliamentary processes and working with civil society to strengthen the foundations upon which democracy can be sustained.

Given the Agency's, and indeed the Government's, commitment to consultation, I know that CIDA will welcome suggestions from this group on how we should focus or orient our future development cooperation with Nigeria.