

To mark the United Nations' 50th anniversary, The Friends of the United Nations commissioned an international panel of advisors to choose fifty model communities that had demonstrated an outstanding collective approach to environmental issues and the social development of their inhabitants. Three of the fifty winners were from Canada: the Sanikiluaq Inuit community in the Northwest Territories, the Walpole Island First Nation in Ontario, and the Oujé-Bougoumou Cree community in Quebec.

International Cooperation

Canada has a long tradition of international cooperation. The primary vehicle for official development assistance is the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). For CIDA, the concept of sustainable development rests on five pillars: environmental, economic, political, social, and cultural sustainability. Information on official development assistance may be found in the section of this report on financial resources and mechanisms.

Two other organizations that play a significant role in international development are the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD).

The federally funded IDRC assists scientists in developing countries to find solutions. The focus of this work includes problems relating to food security, technology development and use, the conservation of biodiversity, and the integration of social, economic, and environmental policies.

Created in 1970, IDRC is the world's first research institution devoted exclusively to international development and has served as a model for the establishment of similar organizations in the United States, Sweden, Australia, and Germany. Since its founding as a public corporation, IDRC has funded over 5000 projects in nearly 100 countries; it has offices in Canada, Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Independent organizations such as IISD are an important source of expertise and activity. IISD was created to promote sustainable development in decision making in Canada and internationally. Institute programs focus on identifying and applying principles such as its Trade and Sustainable Development Principles applied to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and to the World Trade Organization; surveying best practices and cases; measuring performance; and establishing measures of sustainable development at the subnational and organizational level and applying them to eco-zones. One of IISD's best-known contributions is the Earth Negotiations Bulletin, which provides daily coverage of UN negotiations related to environment and development.

The Challenges Ahead

There are many challenges that face Canada as it works to meet its sustainable development objectives. Some of the more important ones are described below.

Instilling Environmental Citizenship

Environmental citizenship means changing personal decisions and broadening understanding of sustainable development issues. For example, our challenge is to find a way to balance human consumption and nature's limited productivity to ensure that our communities are sustainable locally, regionally, and globally. This clearly means reducing consumption by Canadians, which will require attitudinal and behavioural change.