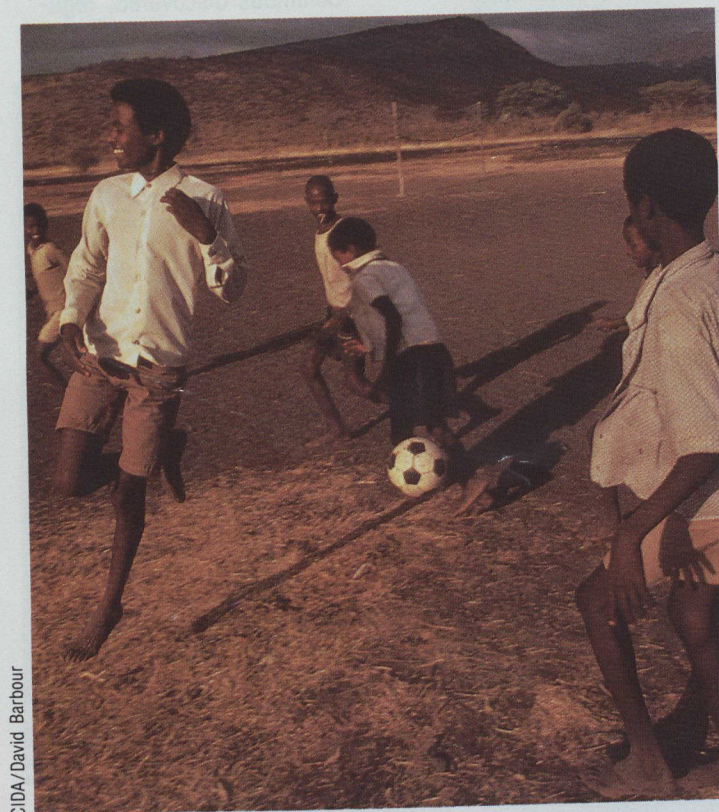


# S PORT DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL

**C**anadians have almost limitless opportunities to participate in physical activity and to pursue excellence in sports. But not all countries are as fortunate. In the developing world, resources are scarce and little money is available for sport development and physical education. These countries frequently lack many of the basic building blocks of sport development: equipment, access to facilities, coaching expertise, sports programs, sports administrators and access to regional and national competitions.

*Sport development assistance is the most basic and most important contribution in helping developing countries to strengthen their sport infrastructures, increase participation and improve performance levels.*

Sometimes the absence of a critical element in the sport development process can impede progress. In one urban area in Zimbabwe, for example, tennis is on the verge of becoming a popular sport. Tennis courts and coaches are available, and there are promising youngsters interested in learning the game. But the equipment is prohibitively expensive — tennis racquets can cost about C\$400. As a result, few can afford to own their own racquet. Tennis coaches loan racquets to students for the duration of the lesson and retrieve them until the next session. Needless to say, progress is slow and frustrations many.



CIDA/David Barbour

The results of uneven levels of sport development around the world are reflected on the playing field: there is a tremendous disparity between the developed and the developing world. A small handful of developed countries usually walk away with the lion's share of medals at major international competitions.

But winning medals is the least important part of the story. Physical fitness and participation in sports are essential ingredients in building a healthy dynamic society. Sport, mass fitness and physical education are now readily recognized as intrinsic to nation-building, forming an important part of community development and social progress.

At the August 1989 meeting in Canberra, Australia, of the Commonwealth Committee of

Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa, the Canadian government brought forward a series of proposals aimed at strengthening the Commonwealth Games and intensifying sports relations among member states.

The main thrust of the initiative was to work towards a broader concept of the Games, with emphasis on respect for the pursuit of excellence rather than on medal totals. Also underlined was the importance of camaraderie and friendly competition rather than national aggrandizement.

Said Joe Clark, Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, "Commitment by Commonwealth member countries to the Canadian initiative — or to similar proposals — would provide us with Games geared to

present and future needs, not just the old realities and worn-out habits."

Canada, indeed, has been concerned for some time about the inequality in international sport. In 1986, a sport development assistance program was established by the Government of Canada designed to respond to the needs of developing countries in the area of sports, physical education and fitness.

Sport development assistance is the most basic and most important contribution in helping developing countries to strengthen their sport infrastructures, increase participation and improve performance levels. It can take a variety of forms, including:

- sports equipment, coaching and technical aids, and manuals;
- communication, administration and office equipment;
- coaching clinics and seminars in the recipient country;
- short to medium-term coaching and training programs abroad;
- multi-year coaching certification programs;
- provision of expertise in sport-related areas such as promotion and marketing, communications, management and administration; and
- facilities improvement and maintenance.

The scope of sport development projects under the program can vary from providing equipment such as soccer balls to building stands around a soccer field. In one