

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF AFRICANS

**B**y definition, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) will transform the nature of the relationship between African countries and the industrialized world. The new vision takes a fresh look at issues such as governance, peace and security, education and health, and trade and investment. In the process, it puts Africa firmly in the driver's seat to combat the continent's economic marginalization.

At the same time, the international community has an important role to play. The Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), for example, has continued to promote a variety of groundbreaking programs—from support for a special court in Sierra Leone, to training for human rights activists in Sudan, to community-based conflict resolution efforts in Liberia. DFAIT, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play equally important roles.

In fact, Canadians from all walks of life are contributing to an African renaissance.

## Tackling polio in Nigeria

With support from people like Dr. Ali Outtara, Canada is helping to rid Africa of an ancient scourge: poliomyelitis, commonly known as polio, a paralyzing disease.

Dr. Outtara, who arrived in Canada from Côte d'Ivoire in 1998, spent three months in Nigeria in 2001 to help with its massive National

Immunization Days campaign on behalf of the Canadian International Immunization Initiative. This program, which supports the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF on different aspects of the global polio eradication campaign, is managed by the Canadian Public Health Association with financial support from CIDA.

In addition to preparing for the campaign, Dr. Outtara helped train doctors, nurses and "vaccinators" to administer the oral vaccine. He also evaluated the results.

The campaign posed different types of challenges. Polio vaccine, for example, needs to be kept cold, but refrigerators in rural areas are hard to find. When they do exist, they often don't work, or there's no electricity. Despite these technical obstacles, the various teams largely managed to maintain the "cold chain."

Throughout the campaign, an army of volunteers went door to door. When the children had been vaccinated, the volunteers marked a cross on

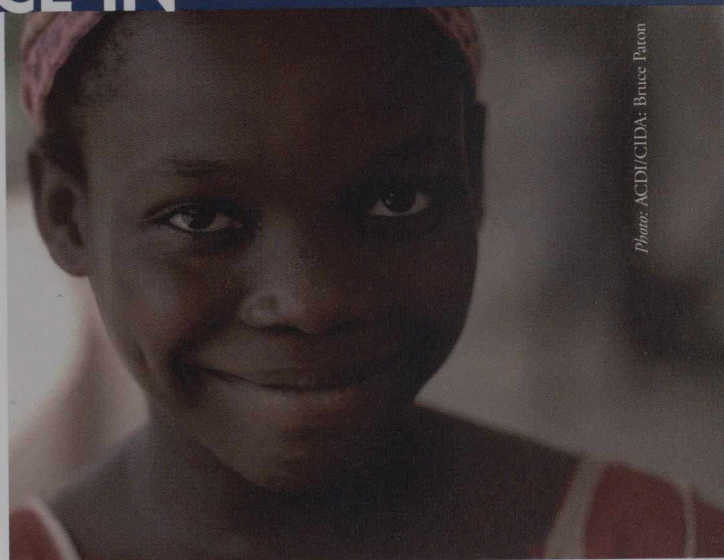


Photo: ACIDI/CIDA - Bruce Paton

Nigerian village girl

the house. In this way, they were able to keep track of their work. Ultimately, they reached about 90 percent of children: In a country with approximately 21 million children, that's a huge accomplishment.

"Our goal was to reach all children from zero to 59 months," says Dr. Outtara. "We didn't completely succeed, but we did make a lot of progress."

## Promoting the rights of girls and women

Kerline Joseph and H el ene Dion may be at different stages of their academic careers, but the two women are both putting their education to work toward a similar goal: protecting the rights of girls and women in Africa.

Ms. Joseph, who is completing her PhD at the University of Montreal, volunteered with CUSO for one year.