

In 1985, the Agency comprised 30 member states, including Canada and the two participating governments of Quebec and New Brunswick, and seven associate states. Its purpose is to develop relationships of mutual co-operation in the areas of education, culture, and science and technology, with a view to encouraging closer relationships between the peoples of the member states through the use of the French language. Thus, without replacing the various types of co-operation that already exist, the Agency aims to serve as the expression of a new solidarity among industrialized and developing countries. It supports its members by assisting in the development and expansion of their respective cultures, fostering mutual understanding among the peoples involved and promoting among them an enlightened outlook toward the cultures represented in the organization.

The Agency is composed of: the General Conference, which directs its activities and approves the program (meeting at the ministerial level every two years); the Board of Directors, which approves and monitors the development of the proposals submitted to it by the members (meeting every year); the Consultative Council, which is responsible for co-operation between the Agency and the many non-governmental Francophone agencies; and finally, the Secretariat, which is in charge of preparing and implementing the program and producing the budgetary and financial reports.

The Secretariat has four Directors General, who are responsible respectively for culture, education and training, scientific and technical co-operation, and administration and finance. The first three are directly responsible for the various parts of the Agency's program: cultural programs (creation and dissemination of cultural property, preservation of traditions, cultural exchanges, etc.), educational and training programs (training sessions, teacher exchanges, creations of data banks and distribution networks and so on) and scientific and technical programs (co-operation with research institutions and universities, renewable energy studies, anti-drought measures and so on).

Canada and the Agency

Canada participates in all the Agency's programs and assists in the scientific and technical fields by developing methods for circulating information rapidly among the members. In addition, Canada desires to maintain the balance between the cultural and technical aspects of the Agency and, inspired by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, proposed the creation of the Special Development Program (PSD) in 1975.

Special Development Program (PSD)

Supported by voluntary contributions, the Program studies and carries out modest technical assistance programs suited to the requirements of members of the Agency, mainly on three main sectors: technical assistance, training and upgrading, and technical and feasibility studies. In the technical assistance sector, cooperation between members is encouraged. Projects have included cooperation in agriculture, national languages, solar energy, the hotel industry, education, radio and television, fisheries, transportation, and arts and crafts. For example, a Gabonese expert was sent to Djibouti to train media announcers; an expert from Benin examined the feasibility of improving freight transport on Lake Tanganyika for the benefit of Burundi; a Tunisian went to the Ivory Coast to advise on the marketing aspect of arts and crafts; and a Canadian specialist was involved in the study of public finance as well as the operations of the Ministry of Finance of Dominica.

The goal of training and educational upgrading activities is the adaptation of technology to local conditions through the provision of study grants. Stressing a practical, or "hands-on" approach these projects are concentrated in developing countries themselves, both to avoid the brain drain to the industrialized world and to encourage the sharing of local knowledge. Training occurs mostly in public health, agriculture, administration and the protection of local cultures. A Central African specialist was seconded to the Ministry of Agriculture in the Ivory Coast; a trainee from Cameroon studied hotel and tourism management in Nice; two Beninians studied project evaluation at the "Institut africain de développement économique et de planification" at Dakar, Senegal; and a technician from the Mauritius Ministry of Health was trained by Atomic Energy of Canada in the maintenance of a cobalt therapy machine.

Technical studies have covered a wide range of regional concerns: tourism feasibility was examined in the "Communauté économique des pays des grands lacs", which includes Burundi, Rwanda, and Zaire; a Canadian legal expert has helped Mali update its legislation concerning petroleum exploration and development; and, as a result of a technical study, a directory of some 500 multidisciplinary training and teaching institutions in Francophone developing countries was produced and distributed.