

Health for All

Canada and the International Health Network



CIDA/David Barbour

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For many years, Canada has shared its specialized knowledge in health research and development with nations around the world. Today, the country's overall contribution to international health is more than \$100 million per year. This includes assessed contributions and donations to the World Health Organization (WHO), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) programs, health development research carried out by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), global immunization programs for the Commonwealth and la Francophonie, and the more than 600 international health projects administered by Canadian non-governmental organizations.

Canada and WHO

Since its beginning, the World Health Organization has provided Canada with unparalleled opportunities for participating in the international health effort. In fact, the organization began in 1948 under the stewardship of Canadian Dr. Brock Chisholm. His contribution is summarized by his successor Dr. M.G. Candau: "The name Chisholm is . . . [one] that has become identified with the basic ideals of the organization."

Since the early years, Canadians have participated actively in every facet of WHO's activities. In the case of funding, Canada is one of WHO's largest contributors, in terms of both regular budget and voluntary contributions. In addition, Canadians consistently serve on WHO expert committees and study groups. The country is also involved in WHO's extensive network of collaborating centres — organizations cho-

sen for their excellence in research and methodology and for their scientific leadership. Through joint projects, their aim is to overcome the gap created by scarce research facilities and to train research workers needed in developing countries.

Today, there are 15 WHO collaborating centres operating in Canada, all doing research aimed at ensuring that a wide range of products, methods and technologies is used effectively and safely.

Year after year, Canada's delegation to the UN's World Health Assembly contributes to the success of its sessions. In 1987, the Canadian delegation played a particularly active role in co-authoring resolutions on AIDS and the elimination of leprosy, and in drafting a resolution for a World Non-Smoking Day in 1988.

The Commonwealth Connection

Since 1965, Commonwealth health ministers have met every three years to discuss common problems and priorities for national and joint action.

At the 1985 Commonwealth Summit in Nassau, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney announced a major initiative in support of a universal immunization program for children. The government of Canada offered \$25 million for Commonwealth health activities over five years. Now, the program is being administered by the Canadian government, the Canadian Public Health Association and the Commonwealth Secretariat. The program is

directed primarily against diphtheria, measles, polio, pertussis, tetanus and tuberculosis.

Health Co-operation through la Francophonie

Since 1986, heads of state and government of countries using French as a common language have met annually at the Francophone Summit.

At both the Paris (1986) and Quebec City (1987) summits, a number of initiatives were undertaken to help Third World Francophone countries. In 1986, Canada announced a \$10-million contribution to an immunization program for Francophone states, and in 1987, it supplemented its contribution with an additional \$8 million. Canada also announced an experimental communications network to broadcast medical programs to developing countries.

Benefits for All

Although the international health effort is directed primarily at developing countries, they are far from being the only beneficiaries. Health development is a two-way, co-operative process. Monique Tardif, parliamentary secretary to the Canadian minister of National Health and Welfare, supports the view that international co-operation benefits all countries, including Canada. At her address to the 40th World Health Assembly she cited the AIDS epidemic to underline the need for global solidarity in health. "We all share the AIDS problem," said Tardif. "For our preservation, we must share the solutions."