

Small States Facility

At the 1985 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, a proposal was approved that led to the establishment of the Small States Facility — nine Commonwealth countries (mostly island states in the South Pacific, the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean) united through permanent representation at the United Nations. Canada believes that small states must have the means to represent themselves. Canada has provided \$1.5 million to the facility since 1987.

Bilateral Assistance for Africa

The mandate of Canada's Official Development Assistance — to support sustainable development in order to reduce poverty and contribute to a more secure, equitable and prosperous world — is particularly relevant in the African context.

With more than 950 million people living in 63 African and Middle East countries, conditions are extraordinarily diverse. Efforts to promote social and economic reform are producing positive results in a number of countries. Despite progress, 24 of the world's 35 poorest countries are in sub-Saharan Africa, where half the people live in extreme poverty. Rapid population growth, high rates of urbanization, high levels of public indebtedness, and gender inequities are constraints to development.

Sustained poverty alleviation requires social and political stability. Often violence, conflict and anarchy are rooted and flourish where poverty exists. For this reason, reducing poverty and promoting peace and security are at the core of CIDA's programming in Africa, which accounts for 45 percent of CIDA's total bilateral programming.

In western Africa, which includes the Commonwealth countries of Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, CIDA programming promotes social development (including basic human needs such as education, access to potable water and health), the full participation of women in all aspects of development, the management of natural resources with a particular focus on combating desertification, good governance, regional co-operation, and economic growth (including economic reform, private sector and regional infrastructure).

In Ghana, for example, CIDA supports an economic reform program that will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government. This project will have a direct impact on poverty reduction through improved investments by the Government of Ghana in basic human needs. Providing 1,500 communities with access to potable water and rehabilitating and expanding piped water supplies are additional examples of CIDA initiatives in Ghana.