

Promoting Gender Equality Across the Hemisphere

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At Quebec City, the Leaders endorsed the Inter-American Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity and Equality. They committed to advancing gender equality through various activities, including: strengthening national machineries responsible for the advancement of women; integrating a gender perspective into all OAS organs and agencies; and promoting women's human rights by strengthening and fostering women's full and equal participation in political life and decision making at all levels in their countries.



CIDA Photo: Greg Kinch

Canada actively promotes gender equality at the domestic and international level, not only as a human rights issue but as an essential component of democratic development. True development will be achieved only if women are able to participate as equal partners, decision makers and beneficiaries of the development of their societies. These principles are explicitly recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Canadian efforts focus on three key goals: improving women's economic autonomy and well-being; eliminating systemic violence against women and children; and advancing women's overall human rights.

At home, the Government of Canada adopted the Agenda for Gender Equality in 2000. The Agenda aims to enhance voluntary sector capacity, engage Canadians in the policy process, undertake and promote gender-based analysis, address critical gaps that prevent the further advancement of gender equality, and meet Canada's international commitments with respect to gender equality. For instance, the Gender-Based Analysis (GBA) training program developed in 2001 has trained federal and provincial government employees and some NGOs in GBA. Further, since 1999 approximately CDN\$10 million has been invested annually to support civil society activities seeking to improve women's economic status, eliminate violence against women and children, and advance issues of social justice.

At the hemispheric level, Canada is also active in promoting women's human rights and economic autonomy. For example, for the period 2002-04 Canada is serving as Vice-President of the Executive Committee of the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), and it supports the role of the CIM as the primary policy-making body on women's human rights and gender equality in the inter-American system. Canada has provided CDN\$500,000 for a gender mainstreaming training program with the OAS General Secretariat.

In October 2002, Canada acceded to the CEDAW Optional Protocol, which provides an additional mechanism for Canadians to advance their human rights.

Working Together: The Indigenous Peoples of the Americas

The Quebec City Summit Declaration and Plan of Action focused the attention of governments within the Americas on the importance of Indigenous issues. As Chair of the Summit process, Canada persuaded its partners to provide strong support for the Indigenous Summit, which took place in the lead-up to Quebec City. The event provided Indigenous peoples from across the Hemisphere with an opportunity to prepare a declaration; this was then circulated to Leaders at the Quebec City Summit.