

equitable and prosperous world." Through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canada reaches out to help people in developing countries and countries in transition. In 1994/95, about one-third of CIDA's ODA funding – or nearly \$660 million annually – was spent on programs that support children and their families and help meet end-of-decade goals. Projects include support to immunization programs in the Philippines, Pakistan, and across Africa as well as programs focused on improving access to potable water to reduce water-borne diseases. To help meet the nutrition needs of children and their families, more than one-third of CIDA's assistance to children in 1994/95 consisted of food aid.

Other CIDA programs are directed at protecting and promoting the rights of children, particularly those in difficult circumstances. Projects include, for example, the Native Street Youth program in Bolivia and a similar one which established safe houses for Vietnam's street children in Ho Chi Minh City. Additional funds help the victims of war, a situation in which children are particularly vulnerable as they are exposed to death, violence and the fear of separation.

Child Labour

Canada has also undertaken initiatives to combat abusive child labour practices. In February 1996, Canada contributed \$700,000 to the International Labour Organization's (ILO) International Program for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). IPEC supports programs aimed at protecting and assist exploited child workers, improving awareness of child labour issues, and encouraging governments to adopt appropriate minimum-age requirements. Also in February, Canada contributed \$700,000 to a UNICEF project in Haiti to provide health and education services, as well as to protect some 10,000 children from abuse. Canada is also a party or signatory to a number of international conventions that have child-labour prohibitions, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Slavery Convention, the North American Agreement on Labour Cooperation, and the International Labour Organization's Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour.

Canada has also encouraged and supported the efforts of individual Canadians, the private sector and non-governmental organizations working against the exploitation of children, including Free the Children, the group spearheaded by 13-year old children's rights activist Craig Kielburger.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a heinous form of child abuse that thrives in the forms of prostitution, child pornography and trafficking in children. In large measure, the commercial sexual exploitation of children takes place in developing countries where limited education and economic opportunities offer stark alternatives. However, it is by no means, confined to the developing world. Recent events, such as the discovery of a child pornography ring in Belgium and the horrific deaths of several of its young victims, have served to focus international attention on this disturbing practice.