

Government Response to the Report of the Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

elementary), with particular consideration given to the quality of education and to programs supporting gender equity. Canada's development assessment indicates that while there has been considerable progress in increasing school attendance in Pakistan in recent years (especially at the primary level), there has been insufficient efforts to improve the quality of classroom education. Pakistan lags behind developed countries in implementing child-centred and activity-based learning techniques, which continues to limit the educational achievement and performance of children attending public schools.

Strengthening the quality of classroom teaching in Pakistan is largely a function of improving teacher education. Pakistan's approximately 115 teacher education colleges, which are operated by provincial governments, are significantly under-funded. In the absence of considerable external assistance, these colleges are unable to manage transition from rote-based teaching techniques to more advanced forms of instruction. The Canadian debt proceeds will be directed to these institutions to improve teacher college facilities, teaching resources and programmes delivered for pre-service and in-service teacher education. The Canadian debt proceeds represent a small contribution towards the significant and challenging improvements needed. However, international experience consistently indicates that improving teacher education is an effective approach to improving student performance and educational outcomes in developing countries.

Education is one of Canada's four priority sectors for development programming in Pakistan. The debt conversion exercise will make education the Government's largest sectoral commitment to Pakistan's development in coming years. The Government will also work with other donor countries to engage the Government of Pakistan on madrassa reform and curriculum improvements. These difficult and domestically sensitive reforms require encouragement from the international community, and the Government will actively support this effort.

RECOMMENDATION 26

The Government of Canada should continue to pursue its current policy of re-engagement with India, and, where possible, support Indian government efforts to provide adequate education for the most disadvantaged groups in society. Canada should also support efforts to decrease inter-communal tensions.

Founded initially on the Commonwealth connection, Canada-India bilateral relations are traditionally broad based and characterized by straightforward and constructive cooperation and dialogue.

The announcement of the Partners for the 21st Century: Joint Statement by India and Canada, in October 2003, signalled an important evolution in the bilateral relationship. The Joint Statement clearly articulates Canada and India's shared interests and lays out a framework to increase trade and investment, address security concerns, and strengthen civil society links. The 2005 India-Canada Joint Statement, announced during Prime Minister Martin's January 18, 2005 visit to India, underlined India's support for Prime Minister Martin's L20 initiative and reaffirmed both Canada and India's commitment to enhance their dialogues on international, regional and global strategic issues.