

# Canadian Development Assistance Program to the Commonwealth

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## Introduction

Canada has been a major aid donor within the Commonwealth since the launching of the Colombo Plan in 1950. In the context of the Plan — the first large international initiative to help developing countries — Canada provided \$25 million for projects in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The Special Africa Assistance Program and the Commonwealth Caribbean Assistance Program, which followed shortly after, ensured aid to other continents.

Since then, Canadian official development assistance (ODA) to Commonwealth and other developing countries has grown immensely, to total over \$3 billion (1991-92), of which Africa receives 45 percent, Asia receives 34 percent and the Americas region receives 17 percent. Over 28 percent of Canadian ODA goes to some 45 Commonwealth countries. (See the table at the end of this chapter.)

Official development assistance to the Commonwealth is provided in many forms: grants, technical assistance and policy support through Commonwealth institutions (principally the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation); scholarships and special programs in immunization and distance education; bilateral (government-to-government) aid to individual Commonwealth countries; multilateral support for individual nations through the United Nations system and international financial institutions; and support for initiatives by Canadian non-governmental organizations and businesses working in Commonwealth countries.

Canada aims to maintain its position as a leader in the Commonwealth and an active contributor to geopolitical and global economic issues; this will ensure that the Commonwealth's capacity to face the challenges of the 1990s and beyond is enhanced. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) views the Commonwealth development programs (and particularly the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation) as valuable tools in effectively meeting country requests for assistance.

## Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-Operation (CFTC)

Since 1971, the CFTC has provided the most important multilateral channel for development co-operation among Commonwealth countries. While the original budget was just over \$1 million, it is now close to \$50 million, with \$14.6 million (or 29 percent) coming from Canada for the 1993-94 period. The organization is unique among international donor bodies in that voluntary contributions are provided by both developed and developing Commonwealth countries.

In addition to being the CFTC's largest donor, Canada is a member of the Board of Representatives and a Canadian is currently the fund's managing director.

The fund's success lies in its ability to meet the needs for technical assistance of its member countries by responding quickly, innovatively, and with low administrative costs. Such responses include the provision of experts and consultants on a short-term basis, funds for education and training, and economic feasibility studies in industrial and export market development. Wherever possible, the expertise is drawn from developing Commonwealth countries, whether in the form of services or the provision of training.

For example, through the CFTC's General Technical Assistance Program, developing Commonwealth countries may benefit from the expertise of professionals for a period of four to 24 months. To facilitate this service, the CFTC maintains a small group of in-house experts in high-demand areas such as development economics, finance, taxation, law and statistics.