

countries in the developing world, internal challenges to stability soared, with groups fighting for control over valuable resources and the apparatus of the state itself, creating cycles of poverty, crime, corruption and authoritarianism. Conflicts fuelled by long-standing historical disputes, the re-emergence of ethnic rifts and the proliferation of secessionist movements caught countries and surrounding regions in a vortex of violence, conflict and human suffering.

Addressing the problem of failed states is a foreign policy priority internationally, with the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union and the UN developing new approaches to deal with reconstruction, stabilization and civilian crises.

Managing emergencies entails first focusing on prevention, identifying the early warning signs of states lurching toward crisis and understanding when and how to act to change the trajectory of escalation. When problems do erupt, rapid intervention and the right mix of assistance are crucial, especially in areas such as policing, demining and the re-establishment of courts, to protect people

and enable them to rebuild their lives. Finally, the re-establishment of post-conflict societies requires sufficient resources and time to allow for reconstruction, reconciliation and peacebuilding.

“Providing costly, long-term support—even in some cases putting Canadians in harm’s way—is not just a moral obligation, but a strategic imperative,” says James Wright, Assistant Deputy Minister of the International Security Branch and Political Director at FAC.

“If we are not immediately threatened by the collapse or implosion of these states, our values as Canadians and our responsibilities as global citizens must invariably compel us to action in the face of the victimization, human suffering and misery that are the inevitable result,” he adds. “We have a long way to go and the challenges are many, but we are making a difference.” ❁

**For more information on Foreign Affairs Canada’s initiatives on global issues, peace and security, see [www.international.gc.ca/foreign\\_policy/global\\_issues-en.asp](http://www.international.gc.ca/foreign_policy/global_issues-en.asp).**

## Adding value to humanitarian missions

John Davison got the call last fall as he was settling into a new job as a deputy director in the Northern Europe Division at Foreign Affairs Canada in Ottawa. Canada’s Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) was preparing to respond

to the earthquake that had devastated northern Pakistan by providing clean water and medical care in the region. A diplomat was needed to provide political advice, analysis and support to the mission.

With experience serving at the High Commission of Canada to Pakistan and having worked through the aftermath of the 2003 earthquake in Bam, Iran, while posted to Tehran, Davison

was a good candidate for the task. He found himself on a flight to Pakistan a couple of days later.

For six weeks on the ground in Kashmir, Davison, along with Carmen Tremblay and Nancy Foster from CIDA, epitomized

the so-called “3-D approach,” bringing together defence, diplomacy and development capabilities to deal with the disaster.

“Our interest in the area was to be there to help and to make sure that our help was effective,” says Davison, 43, a native of Winnipeg. Trained as a historian and teacher, Davison worked for six years at Parks Canada before joining the foreign service in 1996.

His experience serving in Pakistan from 1997 to 2000 gave him a valuable understanding of the politics, history and culture of the earthquake area. As part of the DART mission, he was able to share his knowledge with his Canadian Forces colleagues while helping them to reach out to the local community in the Jhelum Valley where the DART was stationed.

Davison met with government officials and religious and community leaders to enhance their understanding of DART and support for its activities. All around him he saw devastation. Schools, mosques and homes perched on mountainsides were flattened, only their roofs intact. People were terrified to go into the few buildings that remained standing, frightened by the constant aftershocks—which left Davison equally disconcerted. “I could see the results of the quake all around us.”

The conditions were austere, with Davison sleeping on a cot in an army tent on the grounds of a girls’ school in Garhi Dopatta that had been damaged in the earthquake.

“I just had to walk down to the medical clinic to see the human consequences of the disaster, people who had walked kilometres down from the mountains to bring their kids in to be cared for by the Canadians,” he says. “I didn’t mend bones or provide clean water, but by giving advice based on my knowledge of the region to DART members, and through the connections I made in the local community, I played my part.” ■



John Davison at a collapsed secondary school where 30 students died when the earthquake struck.

photos: Cpl. Kevin Paul, DART photographer