



Chapter 7

Contributing to the Cause of International Solidarity

The resources and adaptability of developed economies generally allow them to take advantage of the new challenges and opportunities that globalization offers. Many nations, however, are unable to participate in the growth of the global economy. Such is the case with many “have-not” countries, particularly the least advanced. A significant number of these countries are located on the African continent.

Experts agree that, as a rule, these countries do not possess the financial resources to adapt to the rapid rise in the price of oil and precious metals or the drop in prices of the agricultural goods they export. Nor can they deal with exchange rate fluctuations and rising interest rates, which have devastating effects on their debt. In addition, they are ill-equipped to effectively combat the relentless spread of AIDS and other endemic diseases or to deal with such natural disasters as droughts and floods.

The high level of poverty of some countries has given rise to a number of recent international action plans, such as the *Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries*, the *Millennium Declaration*, the *Monterrey Consensus*, the *New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)*, the G8 initiatives, and the *Doha Development Agenda*.

In 2000, the “have” countries recognized for the first time that international solidarity in fighting poverty was of the utmost urgency and that, in this regard, the Millennium Development Goals adopted by the U.N. could be

Millennium Development Goals

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Ensure universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce the infant mortality rate
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Create a global partnership for development

useful in guiding the initiatives of the international community.

To halt and eventually reverse the deterioration of the social and economic fabric of troubled countries, everyone agrees that it is important to mobilize the creative energies of the people and strengthen governance in those countries. However, it is also generally recognized that the process of improving democracy is a slow one, which implies a strong commitment on the part of the countries involved and of their citizens. Outside support is therefore essential. Fighting poverty and bolstering these countries' capacity to take action are the two priorities that characterize present-day development aid. In both cases, human development is the focal point of this aid.

The Need for Solidarity

Québec's involvement in international aid began in Francophone countries, either directly or through the institutions of La Francophonie, particularly in the areas of education and professional training. Québec's membership in La Francophonie was to become a determining factor in its subsequent initiatives.

Over the years, several stakeholders have gained a wealth of practical experience in developing countries by either participating in government initiatives or undertaking projects on their own. They represent the business sector, municipal governments, and public administrations and make up an important pool of experts and individuals with a keen awareness of the problems developing countries face.

With the assistance of Québec' international cooperation organizations, each year the Ministère des Relations internationales contributes to dozens of cooperation projects and, through its "the Québec without borders" program, supports some 400 internships for young people in developing countries.

Québec's international cooperation organizations are also important partners for development aid. Thus, the government directly supports the Association québécoise des organisations de coopération internationale (AQOCI).

For Québec, acting internationally to promote and defend its interests carries with it the obligation to support development objectives for less-advanced countries. It

cannot remain idle while the international community acts to fight the scourge of poverty.

Faced with the inequalities plaguing the world's most disadvantaged populations, Quebecers express strong feelings of solidarity. They respond quickly to requests from organizations working to alleviate the suffering caused by crises and disasters around the world.

Schools and colleges promote openness to international realities through various activities. Young people sign up in large numbers for internships in developing countries. For many, these experiences will fashion their adult lives and, sometimes, their choice of careers. Finally, new Quebecers act in important ways to show solidarity with their countries of origin.

Targeting Initiatives and Developing Partnerships

With the exception of its participation in La Francophonie, the Government of Québec is not a major provider of development aid. Its financial contribution remains modest and it faces the challenge of adequately staking out its areas of involvement.

As one of the few federated states that apply an integrated approach to international solidarity, Québec is keenly aware of the need for action. It seeks to concentrate its efforts in areas where it can offer credible solutions, in partnership with groups having onsite experience and with the support of major international development banks.

Keeping in mind the international community's objectives and its own capacities, Québec will pursue activities that give added value to the global effort, placing top priority on areas where it possesses proven know-how. Québec will therefore focus on two areas of involvement: human resources development and governance capacity-building programs. This choice is based on the expertise Québec has acquired over the years.

By focusing its efforts in this way, Québec can make a unique and tangible contribution to the progress of developing countries.

Furthermore, the Government of Québec intends to devote its energies to helping a limited number of countries. Those belonging to La Francophonie will be among its top priorities, beginning with Haiti, a continental neighbour. To accomplish this, Québec will take advantage of the strengths of its own large Haitian community, which actively supports and bolsters government initiatives.

Québec's commitment to Haiti

- During a mission to Haiti in June 2005, Québec's Premier offered the support of the government's departments, agencies and corporations to help restore the essential functions of the Haitian government.
- Some 75 Québec police officers contribute to the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.
- Hydro-Québec supplies technical support for the production, transportation and transmission of hydro power in certain regions.
- With the École nationale d'administration publique (ENAP), the Government of Québec is preparing a cooperation project aimed at supporting the modernization of the Haitian government, in collaboration with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).
- Since 1997, Québec has contributed more than CAN \$11 million in humanitarian aid and in grants for development projects in Haiti.

Québec's aid will, in large part, be channelled through La Francophonie, an institution to which Québec pledges its continued support. In the case of direct aid, the Government will work in partnership with Québec's international cooperation organizations, since they are highly experienced in development aid and are familiar with the target countries. This will allow Québec to ensure the quality and relevance of its involvement.

Finally, in an effort to increase the volume of its international aid initiatives, the

Government will seek the support of Canadian and international funding sources. It will also work to cooperate with regions and federated states that share the same practices and with which it has already formed international partnerships.

Human Resource Training

Through its “grandes écoles,” universities, and various institutes, Québec is already active in training agronomists, engineers, technicians and managers. Many Québec companies train the personnel needed to run the foreign operations and worksites where they are involved. In a number of fields such as telecommunications, medicine, business management, entrepreneurship, and micro-credit, Quebecers collaborate in training programs with African partners.

For the past 25 years, the program which exempts foreign students from supplemental tuition fees, established through agreements with some 40 countries, has produced interesting results. Over 10 000 students from developing countries have benefited from this program. Québec wishes to make the program even more effective in order to better respond to the development priorities of recipient countries and to place more emphasis on the strengths of its institutions of higher learning.

Human resource training is an essential requirement for any society that endeavours to progress. It is also the best means for successfully dealing with endemic poverty. Based on the expertise it has developed over the past four decades, Québec will make human resource training one of its two priority action areas.

Governance Capacity-Building

The Government of Québec is active in this field, together with the National Assembly, the Chief Electoral Officer, the Public Protector and the Auditor-General, particularly through their involvement in La Francophonie, with the objective of supporting governance and strengthening the rule of law for the benefit of populations and their governments. ÉNAP also makes significant contributions to the training of public administrators and government leaders, initiatives that the Government of Québec directly supports.

Québec provides added value by working with institutions that uphold democracy and human rights, contributing to the development and training of parliamentarians, public administrators, and locally elected officials, aiding in the establishment of national accounting procedures and helping to improve systems of justice, education, public security, health care and municipal management.

Furthermore, within the framework of the international conventions concerning the diversity of cultural expressions and biological diversity that Québec has ratified, the government intends to make relevant expertise available to developing countries, notably with respect to policy-making to encourage the development of cultural industries, to support cultural activity and to foster initiatives for the preservation of biological diversity.

Québec therefore agrees with the observation made by those involved in development aid: without progress in governance, other reforms will have a limited impact. The concept of governance includes citizen participation in the workings of Government. This is achieved by strengthening institutions such as parliaments, local authorities, unions, the judicial system and the media.

A Better Match Between What Québec Has to Offer and the Needs of Developing Countries

Québec's numerous initiatives in Francophone Africa over a period of nearly 40 years and its more recent activities in Latin America have created a large pool of resources and experts in a variety of sectors. Initiatives have also involved several organizations linked to the civil service and institutions of higher learning in Québec.

Nevertheless, putting together the resources and expertise needed to bring projects to fruition remains a complex endeavour. Additionally, the possibility of making public expertise available is limited by a shortage of resources that in turn limits the capacity for action. The Government therefore intends to foster a synergy between the private and public sectors in order for Québec to be more effective on such projects. To accomplish this, it will support an initiative developed by ENAP that is aimed at creating a centre for the international promotion of Québec's expertise to better channel experts and resources from the Québec civil service and respond more adequately to the needs of developing countries.

Also, the Ministère des Relations internationales is seeking to better match these resources with the specific needs of developing countries. Owing to their important ties with Québec, the Maghreb countries, for example, lend themselves well to

partnerships focused on economic development projects—an area in which Québec's know-how is in demand.

Since the Government plans to make its international aid activities more productive in terms of results, it will need to expand and diversify its funding sources. First, it intends to use added leverage to act both directly and within initiatives of La Francophonie. This will help to foster new partnerships. Québec also intends to propose a new partnership to CIDA in order to pool Québec's resources and expertise on the one hand and CIDA's significant funding capabilities on the other. The Government of Canada already extensively calls upon Québec's experts in a variety of fields and this, combined with the converging views of both governments with regard to international aid priorities, points to a mutually beneficial and fulfilling collaboration in the future. Québec also intends to approach international financial institutions involved in sectors where Québec is active.

Aid to Humanitarian Disaster Victims

Aid to victims of humanitarian disasters is a specific and important aspect of international solidarity. Over the past 25 years, Québec has contributed to disaster relief through organizations such as the Red Cross, often in the form of donations. In addition, measures are occasionally implemented to relax immigration regulations in favour of individuals seriously affected by large-scale disasters. Québec intends to continue giving its support during such catastrophes to the extent that its capabilities allow.

The Government has, however, arrived at the conclusion that its most valued contribution in such cases takes the form of experts dispatched to disaster areas. They participate in efforts by governments and communities to regain control once immediate relief has been provided. This is what could be called reconstruction aid.

This assistance must first respond to the specific needs expressed by authorities in affected regions or countries. Second, it should be made possible through effective coordination among Québec's departments, agencies, and government corporations, working in close collaboration with the federal government and Québec's international

cooperation organizations. Third, whenever desirable, this support will be realized by making the appropriate experts and equipment available. Québec's involvement will be geared more toward reconstruction than emergency aid.

Priorities and Key Initiatives

OBJECTIVE CONTRIBUTING TO THE CAUSE OF INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Priority

- Channel Québec's international aid contribution toward human resource training and governance capacity-building

Key Initiatives

- Review international tuition fee agreements to ensure a better match between the needs of countries and the programs Québec institutions offer. Increase the number of foreign postgraduate students and involve educational institutions more closely in the management of the program.
- Through the Association internationale des maires francophones, support Québec's cities and towns that help developing countries.
- Support the development of education systems in African countries.
- Make Québec's cultural expertise available, particularly with regard to public policy, statistics and development of cultural industries to help build the cultural sector in the Francophone countries of Africa.
- In collaboration with ÉNAP's Centre de valorisation internationale de l'expertise québécoise, establish a partnership with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in order to facilitate international access to the Québec government's expertise.
- Initiate a new dialogue with civil society organizations so that Québec's efforts for international development can become even more productive.
- Create a Red Cross emergency response unit in collaboration with experts from the Québec health care system to increase humanitarian emergency response capabilities.
- Mandate the emergency measures committee of the Sécurité civile to coordinate, in collaboration with the Ministère des Relations internationales, the Government of Québec's involvement during humanitarian disasters