

INTERNATIONAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIPS

CNA POSITION

The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) believes that nurses¹ and the nursing profession in Canada must contribute to the advancement of global health and equity.²

One way this goal can be achieved is by establishing partnerships³ with nurses and nursing associations around the world, notably in developing countries.

CNA values its investment in international health partnerships and believes that these partnerships increase the capacity of nurses and national nursing associations to strengthen the nursing profession, and hence health systems, in their countries.

CNA believes that justice is a value central to ethical nursing practice. The *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses* specifies that nurses uphold the principles of equity and fairness in order “to assist persons in receiving a share of health services and resources proportionate to their needs and promoting social justice.”⁴ Encouraging and establishing international health partnerships to advance global health and equity is part of CNA’s commitment to social justice.⁵

CNA also believes that development is a “social, cultural and political process and not merely a set of economic investments.”⁶ CNA supports the view of the International Council of Nurses (ICN) that sustainable development is concerned with “providing a framework whereby groups, communities and individuals have access to resources and opportunities, and exercise their rights, using them to create infrastructures that promote healthy communities.”⁷

CNA believes that effective development assistance can only be attained through truly collaborative partnerships with national nursing associations, other civil society organizations⁸ and governments. CNA therefore endorses the partnership principles of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation,⁹ which state:

- a. partnerships should be vehicles for long term accompaniment that support the right of peoples to determine and carry out activities that further their own development options, through their civil society organizations;

¹ *Nurses* refers to registered nurses throughout.

² (CNA, 2003)

³ Partnership is “a concept based on the principles of an equitable sharing of rights, roles and responsibilities” (CIDA, 2002, p. 11).

⁴ (CNA, 2002, p.15)

⁵ Social justice refers to “the fair distribution of society’s benefits, responsibilities and their consequences. Social justice focuses on the root causes of disparities and what can be done to eliminate them” (Davison et al., 2004, p. 3)

⁶ (Canadian Council for International Co-operation [CCIC], 2004, p. 5)

⁷ (ICN, 2000)

⁸ Civil society is “the collective name for all kinds of organizations and associations that are not part of government but that represent professions, interest groups or sections of society. It includes (for example) trade unions, employers’ associations, environmental lobbies and groups representing women, farmers, people with disabilities and so on” (European Union, n.d.).

⁹ CCIC, (2004, p.7).

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- b. partnerships should advance and exemplify the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms, social justice, equitable distribution of global wealth and environmental sustainability;
- c. partnerships should be built on shared visions and goals for society which imply mutual support and solidarity beyond the implementation of specific programs and projects;
- d. partnerships should be formed in a spirit of inclusiveness that respects and promotes the value of diversity;
- e. partnerships should embody equity. Acknowledging that inequalities often exist as a result of power dynamics, especially in funding relations, partners should strive for equitable partnerships;
- f. partnerships should be dynamic relationships built on respect and honesty, in which partners strive for better understanding and appreciation of one another;
- g. partners should be transparent and accountable to one another;
- h. partners should respect one another's autonomy and constraints and strive to foster a climate of mutual trust in all their partnership activities; and
- i. partners should endeavour to learn from one another and facilitate the sharing of knowledge.

CNA values the contribution of its member organizations, as well as national and international organizations, in sharing professional and technical expertise and resources to support capacity development among its international health partners.

CNA believes that nurses in Canada contribute their clinical, administrative, educational, research, regulatory and policy expertise to strengthen the nursing profession internationally and, at the same time, learn from experiences with international health partners.

BACKGROUND

The United Nations *Declaration on the Right to Development* states that “the right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.”¹⁰

In the global development context, there is currently a movement to focus initiatives on eight Millennium Development Goals set out in the Millennium Declaration adopted by the member states of the United Nations in 2000. These goals are eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development.¹¹ Achieving these goals requires “a comprehensive approach involving a wide range of stakeholders and strategic collaboration amongst partners globally.”¹²

¹⁰ (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations, 1986)

¹¹ (United Nations, 2000)

¹² (CNA, 2004, p. 4)

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The Canadian government acknowledges that reducing global poverty is one of the most significant challenges facing the world¹³ Canada is committed to supporting “sustainable development in developing countries in order to reduce poverty and contribute to a more secure, equitable and prosperous world.”¹⁴ Objectives of sustainable development include economic well-being, social development, environmental sustainability, good governance and gender equality.¹⁵ CNA’s international health partnerships support the Millennium Development Goals and are consistent with the objectives of sustainable development.

Through funding from the Canadian International Development Agency, CNA has been creating partnerships with national nursing associations in developing countries for over 30 years. The goal of the partnership is to increase the capacity of national nursing associations to strengthen the nursing profession, including the quality of nursing and health services delivered to their populations.

In partnership with CNA members, national nursing associations are supported in their efforts to increase knowledge and influence health, nursing and regulatory policies and legislation as well as to reinforce the value of nurses’ contribution to the health sector and the leadership position of women in their societies.

CNA values the contribution that the Canadian government and other funders have made in support of the international work of CNA and its partners and encourages governments and other organizations to initiate and fund programs and projects that strengthen health-system infrastructure.

Approved by the CNA Board of Directors, November 2005

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¹³ (Government of Canada, 2005).

¹⁴ (CIDA, 2004, p.4)

¹⁵ (CIDA, 2004, p. 16)

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Also see:

Related CNA Position Statements:

Registered Nurses and Human Rights (2004)

Peace and Security (2003)

Ethical Nurse Recruitment (2001)

Related International Council of Nurses Position Statements:

Health and Human Rights (1998)

Nursing and Development (2000)

PS-82

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