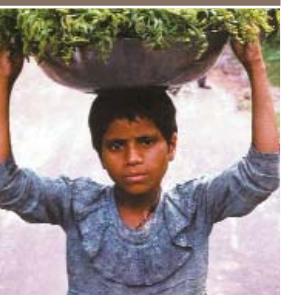




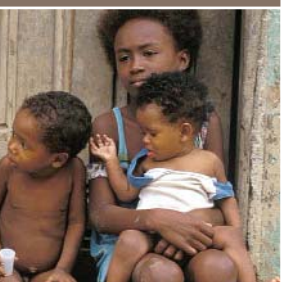
IDRC  CRDI



# The International Development Research Centre



## A Brief History



Canada 

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# The International Development Research Centre

## A Brief History

“This is an idea whose time has come.”

The sentiments expressed by Maurice Strong on the creation of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in 1970 echoed those of many distinguished persons in the decades before the birth of this new Canadian entity.

For some years, it had become apparent that the spectacular benefits science and technology were bringing to the rich countries were not reaching the developing world.

In 1935, after taking note of the global imbalance in scientific development, eminent biologist Julian Huxley called for a truly scientific approach to the problem of development.

United States President Harry Truman declared in his 1949 inaugural address that it was time to mobilize science for worldwide development. He was convinced that the technology that had worked for the developed countries would provide the same benefits when transplanted to underdeveloped regions.

In the mid-1960s, the UN Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development observed that “Only a very small fraction of the world’s scientific and technical resources is devoted to the problems of the developing countries; the overwhelming proportion of the world’s intellectual capital, as well as its physical capital, is applied toward ... the highly developed countries.”

And in her 1966 benchmark essay, *Spaceship Earth*, British economist, journalist, and educator Barbara Ward (Lady Jackson) declared that “... mankind is ... a single, equal and fraternal community” and that “... new technological resources, properly deployed, will conquer ancient shortage.”

By the late 1960s, a climate of disillusion and distrust surrounded foreign aid programs. World leaders found development efforts at a turning point and called for new directions. Canada responded, setting a new course, in creating the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in 1968, and in 1970, establishing IDRC — the world’s first organization devoted to supporting research activities as defined by developing countries.

## A Different Kind of Public Institution

Barbara Ward would play a significant role in the establishment of IDRC, particularly by way of her association with Canadian entrepreneur and humanitarian Maurice Strong. The two shared an interest in international development and, in particular, a concern about the mis-conceived preference for large technical assistance projects and about the fallacy of “trickle down” assumptions. Convinced that the gap between rich and poor countries in research and technical capability was a major hindrance to development, Strong and others decided that a new kind of agency was required.



The Rt. Hon.  
Lester B. Pearson

Strong arranged for Ward to meet Canada’s Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson. The result: Pearson invited Ward to speak at the 1966 convention of his Liberal Party, where she urged Canada to play an

“absolutely crucial” role “in the search for ... a proper global system of economic welfare.”

The 1967 celebrations surrounding Canada’s centenary as a nation — particularly Montreal’s Expo 67 and its theme of *Man and His World* — gave this country greater confidence about its place in the international community. In June, only three weeks before the national birthday, Pearson proposed that Canada establish a research centre for international development, “a new instrument, concentrating more attention and resources on applying technology to the solution of ... economic and social problems on a global basis.”

Minister of External Affairs Paul Martin Sr brought Maurice Strong to Ottawa in 1966 to manage the external aid program. Later appointed president of the newly created Canadian International Development Agency, Strong’s mandate was to “change the shape of Canada’s aid effort” in such a way that it would include more than direct assistance. From his position at CIDA, Strong would champion the creation of Pearson’s “new instrument” to provide the forward-thinking approaches to international challenges that could not be addressed by way of more conventional programs.

After his retirement, Pearson headed the Commission on International Development. Its 1969 report, *Partners in Development (The Pearson Report)*, declared, “Both sides (i.e., the North and the South), have learned that cooperation for development means more than a simple transfer of funds. It means a set of new relationships ... founded on mutual understanding and self-respect ... [and] ... a clear division of responsibilities which meets the needs of both partners.” Pearson’s call for partnership echoed Ward’s call for technical resources “properly deployed” as the best chance for successful development.

Pearson’s successor, the Rt. Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau — invoking the tenets of justice and fairness that made Canada “a just society” — proposed to establish an “international development research centre.” In this organization, the strengths of research, observation, analysis, and collaboration would replace prescription from afar, and would enable countries being assisted to identify for themselves their development

challenges and to mobilize their institutional, financial, and human resources.

The parliamentary debate on the bill to establish IDRC attracted all-party support. The legislation was symbolically strengthened by the deletion of the words “of Canada” from the proposed name of the new organization. The Centre was to be a different kind of public institution — untainted by party politics, self-governing, an aspect of Canadian foreign policy but that was first “*of the world*” and only then “*of Canada*.”

*An Act to Establish the International Development Research Centre* received royal assent on 13 May 1970.

## Gaining Respect

IDRC’s Board of Governors is itself a unique partnership for development: noncitizens help to govern a Canadian public corporation. While the Chair and 11 of the 21 Board members must be Canadian citizens, the remaining positions ensure that the perspective and experience of developing countries will be represented.

At its inaugural meeting in October 1970, the Board approved a mandate that underscored IDRC’s uniqueness. Recognizing that developing countries might also be “aid weary” for “being too long a supplicant suffering the donor’s quiet arrogance and ... implicit denial of sovereign quality,” IDRC offered collaborative partnerships with “a confidence that [the partners], not [IDRC], are the best judges of what is relevant to their circumstances ... content to leave direct management of our support in the hands of ... partners, reserving to [IDRC] only the rights of audit and periodic substantive review.” In other words, the Board risked its resources in countries marked by extreme poverty and by rudimentary research and education infrastructure, countries burdened with colonial and/or donor-dominated origins, and countries subject to the power, pervasiveness, and rapid change of external science and technology.

Regional offices established in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America ensured that the Board had first-hand knowledge of its terrain.

## Partnerships of excellence

IDRC's Board of Governors is a unique coalition of outstanding scientists and leaders from the public and private sectors, from Canada and abroad. Praised by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada as a "model of corporate governance," IDRC has been recognized as a global standard setter. Over the years, members of the Board have included:

- ▶ Gelia T. Castillo: acclaimed pioneer in rural sociology; author, *All in a Grain of Rice*; Professor Emeritus, University of the Philippines; and holder of the rank of National Scientist, one of the Philippines' highest scientific honours.
- ▶ Gerald K. Helleiner: renowned Canadian development economist whose research and writing on trade, finance, and development has advised numerous international bodies, NGOs, and developing-country governments.
- ▶ Sadako Ogata: Japanese political scientist and government advisor, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and former cochair of the Commission on Human Security.
- ▶ The Hon. Flora MacDonald: Canadian politician who held three federal cabinet positions including Secretary of State for External Affairs, and who remains deeply involved in international development work.
- ▶ Sir Alister McIntyre: eminent Grenadian public servant; former Chief Technical Advisor, CARICOM Regional Negotiating Machinery; and Vice Chancellor Emeritus, University of the West Indies.
- ▶ Mambillikalathil G.K. Menon: renowned Indian physicist with an outstanding career in public affairs, including service as science advisor to the Indian Prime Minister.
- ▶ Sir Shridath Ramphal: Guyanese international public servant; former Commonwealth Secretary-General; member of the Brandt and Brundtland Commissions; and cochair, Commission on Global Governance.
- ▶ Marie-Angélique Savané: leading Senegalese advocate for women's rights; former Director, Africa Division, UN Population Fund; and chair, Panel of Eminent Personalities, NEPAD African Peer Mechanism.
- ▶ Vulimiri Ramalingaswami: respected Indian physician, scientist, teacher, and humanist; Professor Emeritus of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences; and former director, the Indian Council of Medical Research.
- ▶ Dame Barbara Ward (Lady Jackson): British economist and pioneer in advocacy on environment and development issues.

## IDRC's mandate

IDRC's objectives, as stated in the *International Development Research Act*, are

"... to initiate, encourage, support, and conduct research into the problems of the developing regions of the world and into the means of applying and adapting scientific, technical, and other knowledge to the economic and social advancement of those regions."

Meanwhile, IDRC staffed four program divisions. The two in the natural sciences — Agriculture, Food, and Nutrition (including forestry and fisheries) and Population and Health — received the larger portion of resources. Even with IDRC's bold perspective on research partnerships, these found a ready fit with national and international agriculture and health research activities.

The establishment of the Social Sciences and Human Resources Division was controversial. It was seen as diverting

funds better used in the search for technical fixes to known problems — a criticism that was answered with an emphasis on applied social sciences. Funding locally designed and managed social science required a deft touch in order to gain support from a wider range of actors outside the research community, especially in political and bureaucratic circles.

The decision to establish the Information Sciences Division was innovative and anticipated the importance that information and communication technologies would come to have for development. From the outset this division steadily established its reputation, as it promoted the partnership dimension and provided funds to assist efforts in data collection, coding, and distribution.

IDRC's support for research rewarded the risks taken in countries that already possessed the personnel and institutions, as was often the case in Latin America and Asia. In countries not so endowed, particularly in Africa, IDRC focused on building capacity — that is, training individuals and strengthening institutions and infrastructure — as a longer-term investment in self-directed development.

Multicountry networks emerged as a hallmark of IDRC's approach. When more experienced researchers mentored their collaborators, networks helped build capacity. Networks fostered comparative research that strengthened data collection and analysis. As vehicles for

## Science for development: Milkfish farming in the Philippines

Milkfish is a major food in the Philippines and — in a rice-based diet — a primary source of protein. Traditional wild capture was characterized, however, by feast-or-famine yields, resulting in unstable prices. Philippine researchers had shown that the fish could be bred in cages immersed in coastal waters, but efforts to breed milkfish and to set up the fish farms failed.

Research funded by IDRC demonstrated that a hormone, gonadotropin, was required to induce spawning. Subsequent research developed a process to isolate the active agent from the pituitary gland of the male and to perfect its inoculation into the female. Milkfish farms based on this scientific work provided managed supplies of an important food crop, plus they brought the added benefits of business development and employment. In 2000, milkfish was the Philippines' second largest crop from mariculture.



N. McKee, IDRC

disseminating results, networks enabled IDRC to make research findings available to a wide range of actors: to other researchers, to policymakers, and to community leaders. In their most advanced form, networks encouraged researchers to create whole new disciplines when “usable knowledge” required contributions from many specialties.

Because the program work complied with the Board’s mandate — that is, to downplay the donor role, to let the researcher come to the fore — IDRC by the end of the 1970s had gained international respect in the developing regions. At home, meanwhile, it remained one of “Canada’s best kept secrets.”

## Agile and Flexible

In the absence of similar organizations with which it could be compared, IDRC undertook its own internal reviews. It monitored its program choices and operational performance, and the changing national and international political environment.

IDRC's reputation was in large measure linked to its support for agricultural research. This research had yielded effective solutions to specific problems, and had increased capacity by training researchers and strengthening institutions. For example, IDRC assisted the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and established new agriculture research centres such as the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF), now the World Agroforestry Centre, and the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA).

An early evaluation found, however, that the application of the scientific method and technology to international development was not necessarily “self-executing.” The use of these methods presumes that the capacity already exists for their effective absorption. This new awareness — that the benefits of technological innovation can only be fully realized when appropriate socioeconomic conditions are in place — crystallized around the concept of “social innovation.” This turning point saw support for the social sciences become central to IDRC programs.

The shift in program direction coincided with a reassessment of the Canadian political environment in which IDRC operated. IDRC's first decade of work overseas — especially when it brought praise for Canada's international relations — was viewed with favour in development and diplomatic circles at home. But by the 1980s, when Canada was challenged by its domestic politics and by the politics of oil abroad, attitudes had changed. What had been regarded as innovative and right in the birthday glow of 1967 now seemed precocious and disjointed.

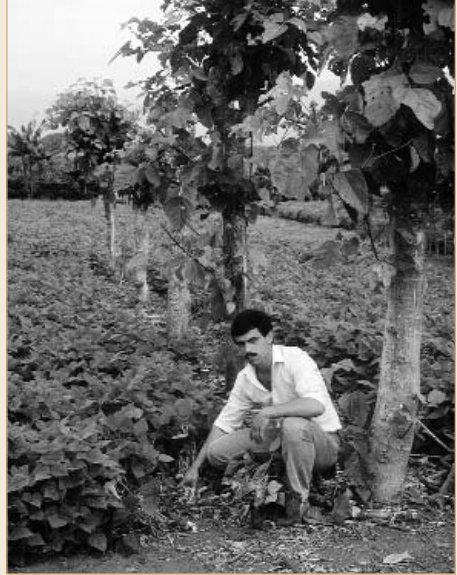
Faced with this change in perception, IDRC repositioned itself within Canada's foreign policy and aid family. As it entered the 1990s, in order to preserve the principles underpinning its reputation in development circles, IDRC redefined itself as *an expression* of Canadian foreign policy.

## Institution-building

The fear of famine remains a core problem for development. In the postwar years, research in new varieties of wheat, rice, and other crops brought the “green revolution” to Asia and Latin America. In 1971, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) was created to extend these victories by way of increased coordination and investment.

Aware that success lay in such intellectual and funding partnerships, IDRC helped create the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) in 1975 and the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) in 1978. These areas mirrored two innovative early programs of IDRC: cropping systems and forestry.

Although IDRC eventually reduced its support for the technical aspects of agricultural research, the organization continues to recognize that such knowledge remains a catalyst for development, and it still supports the CGIAR's work on ecological, economic, and social factors.



N. McKee, IDRC

It was confident that the Board, with its arms-length relationship from government, would ensure that IDRC did not become *an instrument* of Canadian foreign policy. Indeed, the *Act* was explicit in making sure IDRC was not an “agent of Her Majesty.”

A test of this interplay of program and politics had come earlier, in 1980, when the Board responded to the human rights violations by the dictatorship in Chile. While the Canadian government maintained relations with the Government of Chile, IDRC's Board backed the view that the

social sciences can be a liberating force. IDRC's support for local research enabled key social scientists to remain in their jobs in Chile, to do research, and to teach. This helped ensure a plurality of choice for social and economic policy. When democracy was restored, many of these same researchers went on to senior political and administrative positions, meanwhile acknowledging the support of Canada and IDRC.

Similarly in 1986, Canada's official relations with South Africa were based on outspoken opposition to apartheid and a call for sanctions and an academic boycott. Amidst the growth of independent organizations and movements in the country, and the national and international momentum of South Africa's anti-apartheid movement, IDRC began to reconsider its own strategy. In 1988, IDRC made the promotion of democracy and development in South Africa a priority, later funding various research support projects in the areas of health, economic strategy, urban issues, the environment, and science and technology, with the knowledge and consent of the mass democratic movement in South Africa and the African National Congress in exile. It also cosponsored several workshops in which members of the democratic movement came together to discuss policy options for a new government. Ultimately, the Centre established a regional office in Johannesburg in 1992. IDRC's support through the political and economic transition out of apartheid enabled Canada to work outside the confines of strict diplomatic channels.

IDRC's proven sensitivity to diplomatic concerns attracted international recognition. The organization was invited to host meetings of the 1980 Brandt Commission and of the 1984 Brundtland Commission (the archive for the Brundtland report, *Our Common Future*, resides at IDRC). And IDRC organized the fifth international HIV/AIDS conference in Montreal in 1989. These meetings drew upon IDRC's convening power and upon its reputation for bringing knowledge-based arbitration to contentious development issues.

IDRC's political realignment did not limit its sphere of activities. On the contrary, the Canadian government showed its appreciation for the agility that IDRC offered to Canada's foreign relations. In 1989, the government allocated \$10 million to IDRC to assist developing countries in

## Risks and rewards

Support from IDRC for researchers in Argentina, Chile under dictatorship, and in South Africa under apartheid enabled committed and talented researchers to survive and to take up positions of leadership when civil society triumphed.

### Argentina

Eduardo Amadeo: Minister of Social Welfare (1994–98)

Dante Caputo: Minister of Foreign Affairs (1983–89)

Juan Carlos Del Bello: Secretary of Science and Technology, Ministry of Culture and Education (1996–99)

### Chile

José Joaquín Brunner: Minister Secretary General of the Government of Chile (1994–98)

René Cortázar: Minister of Labour (1990–94)

Alejandro Foxley: Minister of Finance (1990–94), and Senator (1998– )

### South Africa

Frene Ginwala: Speaker, National Assembly, Government of South Africa (1994–2004)

Trevor Manuel: Minister of Finance (1996– )

Tito Mboweni: Minister of Labour (1994–98)

planning for sustainable energy supplies. IDRC's scope for independent programing enabled it to fund ground-breaking research across the energy spectrum, including in sensitive areas questioning the politics of oil and the possibility of nuclear power for developing countries. And at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney designated IDRC as Canada's prime agency for working with developing countries on the implementation of Agenda 21. This new "national" assignment was a good fit with IDRC programing: concern for environmental issues had been implicit in much IDRC-funded research.

In the 1990s, IDRC was not, despite the affirmation of its place in Canada and abroad, exempt from the decline in Canada's aid budget. Despite budget and staff cuts, IDRC continued to carry out its mandate. At the beginning of the 1990s, however, faced with diminished resources, the Centre again rethought its program rationales and delivery mechanisms.

## Innovative Management

In the early 1990s, IDRC reassessed its vision of the process of development — “local research for local problem-solving” — and adopted a strategy it defined as “empowerment through knowledge.” To attract collaborators and funding to sustain its primary goals, IDRC mobilized its special strengths: research for development, the international Board, intellectual partnerships with researchers in developing countries, and its own organizational flexibility and agility.

The challenge to reduce overheads while maintaining the largest possible program budget inspired two new approaches to research management: program initiatives and research secretariats.

Program initiatives (PIs) are staff teams comprising multidisciplinary specialists who address specific problems and set their own research agendas. The idea echoed the growing feeling in the international research community that the traditional monodisciplinary approach to science was offering only marginal returns to the impoverished people of the world.

While IDRC’s early work supported problem-solving carried out on the basis of codes of practice relevant to a particular scientific discipline, PIs supported problem-solving organized toward achieving particular goals. This offered a better chance of revealing the right package of technical responses and “social innovation” that would address target problems. Early initiatives reassigned resources to research new approaches to “community-based natural resource management,” on the “effects of macroeconomic policy on the poor,” and for better understanding of “the interaction of ecosystems and human health.”

Increasing awareness of the impact of information and communication technologies on development attracted more support for bridging the “digital divide.” IDRC insisted that research collaboration initiated by developing countries is the key to providing access to scientific information and to ensuring that data and analysis produced by developing-country scientists is captured and shared. Program initiatives for information science took account of the human and social dimensions that would decide what kind of impact the new technologies will have

## Traveling the information highway

Use of the Internet is now essential for anyone involved in national or international development issues. In the developed countries, one particular challenge is known as the “last mile problem,” that is, the challenge of making the benefits of the information revolution available to small populations in remote communities.

IDRC was one of the first donor organizations to anticipate what became known as the digital divide. Its Pan Asia Networking (PAN) program responded to requests from developing countries for help in establishing Internet connectivity.

PAN's project in Mongolia, launched in 1995, introduced software and hardware to establish electronic networking services within the country and links with international networks. This pioneering effort encouraged other donor participation. Lessons learned in Mongolia informed similar projects in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Laos, Cambodia, Bhutan, and Viet Nam.

IDRC has since launched a number of initiatives promoting information communication technologies (ICTs) for community development. Through its Acacia program initiative, the Centre has invested more than \$40 million in research, demonstration, and evaluation projects across sub-Saharan Africa. Community access and services are being provided through telecentres, which offer photocopying and telephone access, as well as email and Internet services.

The Institute for Connectivity in the Americas, Pan Americas, and Connectivity Africa are examples of IDRC's continuing contribution to multistakeholder initiatives promoting research on improved access to and use of ICTs in developing countries.



Z. Mikolajuk, IDRC

on health, education, human rights, and gender relations in development settings. IDRC's support for developing-country researchers and decision-makers allowed them to participate fully in such new forums as the Global Knowledge Partnership and the G8 Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force).

Program initiatives benefited both program and operational priorities. They enabled IDRC to provide its Board with comprehensive plans to assess the promise and risks of a new endeavour, assign staff and budget resources at the outset, improve monitoring over the course of the research, provide better evaluations at the end of each phase, and increase the possibility of the results being applied to the problem under study.

This system of research management has had other important benefits. The team approach to staffing preserved the collegial relationship between program staff and recipients — a hallmark of IDRC programming. It encouraged lower overhead costs by allocating larger fund packages, for longer periods of time, with day-to-day decision-making being passed to the team. And it added another dimension to IDRC's use of research networks.

The secretariats are research consortia of several donors that pursue goals in common with IDRC. They were first devised to attract new funding. This followed staff concerns that fruitful lines of robust IDRC-supported research not be abandoned merely because of budget cuts. Gradually the secretariats demonstrated their potential as incubators for new research that could continue independently. Lessons learned from these mechanisms encouraged IDRC to seek more donor collaboration around research that was high risk and beyond the means of a single funder.

The success of these two innovative mechanisms in research management for development attracted new collaborations for IDRC, including with CIDA, NORAD (the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation), UNDP (the UN Development Programme), the SDC (the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation), the regional development banks, and private sector firms such as Microsoft Corporation and its Unlimited Potential program.

## Cities feeding people: multidisciplinary solutions

Fifty percent of the world's poor live in or near cities, and this concentration is increasing. IDRC's Cities Feeding People Program Initiative (now part of a broader program initiative, Urban Poverty and Environment) supports research to meet the challenges of managing these expanding human settlements and of ensuring their food supply. The initiative aims to provide food security, safe water, a healthy environment, and livelihoods.



This type of research has drawn contributions from a range of disciplines, including economics, urban planning, sociology, geography, public health, and engineering. It has emerged as the new interdisciplinary study of urban agriculture, capable of generating both technological and policy alternatives.

Because urbanization is now a concern in many developing countries — and in some developed ones — research into “city farming” has encouraged networks that encompass household, community, and regional levels, and has attracted the attention of governments, policymakers, and international donors in search of innovative development strategies.

In the mid-1990s — as IDRC adapted within a changing development context — Canada as a whole reassessed its place in the global system and concluded that it is time to see “domestic policy is foreign policy ... foreign policy is domestic policy.” In other words, a merger happened between IDRC's particular concern for science and technology for international development and Canada's mainstream preoccupation with science and technology for national development.

## Increased Commitment

The 2004 Speech from the Throne, and Prime Minister Paul Martin's response, stated that the Canadian government knows it is time “... to devote no less than 5% of [Canada's] research and development

investment to a knowledge-based approach to development assistance for less fortunate countries” and to “... work with the research community to identify additional steps ... to bring the benefits of [Canada’s] research and development to bear on the challenges faced by the developing world ...”

As other Canadian actors move to align their research efforts with the rationale and mission that IDRC had to itself for three decades, IDRC can ensure that those most affected by the problems of development remain full collaborators in Canada’s increased commitment to mainstream research for development.

IDRC is uniquely placed to facilitate Canada’s support for research that will make a difference in the lives of Canadians only if this research can be undertaken in conjunction with scientists working in some of the most disadvantaged parts of the planet. IDRC is actively mediating — through collaborations — a new wave of activity to explore what aspects of the Canadian granting councils’ domestic mandates might align with IDRC’s international program.

Changes in traditional aid practice need IDRC’s vision for knowledge-based development. We return to Lester Pearson: “... aid-providers ... should be able to expect periodic consultations in matters of economic policy central to growth, fulfillment of understandings with respect to economic performance, and efficient use of aid funds. Recipients ... should be entitled to a prompt and reasonably steady aid flow at the level agreed and allocation of additional aid according to explicit criteria emphasizing economic performance.”

With donors ready to accept that “development must come from within,” the implications are clear — donors will expect recipient governments to provide coherent, evidence-based strategic plans and programs, at ministerial and national levels. This demands a capacity for policy formulation that, in turn, requires individuals and institutions to undertake critical research in the national interest and with a focus on the supply and distribution of public goods.

## A road map to better health

In Tanzania, an IDRC project has produced a road map for improving health policies and strengthening health systems in developing countries. Based on simple, cost-effective approaches to planning and managing health services, the Tanzania Essential Health Interventions Project, or TEHIP, aimed to improve health, not by spending more money, but by planning spending more efficiently, according to where the needs are greatest. TEHIP researchers have developed several tools and strategies to help district health teams analyze and use information. These tools provide the evidence that enables the teams to set priorities and allocate resources, rather than merely implementing plans imposed from above.

TEHIP has demonstrated that decentralized government health systems can be revitalized by a financial output of an additional \$1 per person, along with training of district health managers and frontline health workers.

Project results are translating into impressive numbers of lives saved and policies to reduce death rates and the burden of disease. The most recent statistics from July 2003 show a remarkable decline of more than 40% in the mortality of children under five. TEHIP has now moved beyond its original two districts to extend its influence throughout the country and stands to also contribute to better health policy-making in many developing countries.



P. Bennett, IDRC

Two IDRC projects in Africa demonstrate the way that successful development depends on access to and the application of knowledge (see boxes “A road map to better health” and “Capacity building in Africa” on page 20.)

## Strategic goals – 2005–2010

IDRC will strengthen and help to mobilize the indigenous research capacity of developing countries, especially directed to achieving greater social and economic equity, better management of the environment and natural resources, and more equitable access to information.

IDRC will foster and support the production, dissemination, and application of research results that lead to practices, technologies, policies, and laws that enhance the lives of people living in the developing world.

IDRC will leverage additional Canadian resources for development by creating, funding, and participating in partnerships between Canadian institutions and those in the developing world.

In pursuing these goals, IDRC will assess its role and performance in building a favourable environment for research that provides opportunities for individual researchers in the South; supporting credible and methodologically sound research; influencing technologies, policies, and laws that contribute to sustainable and equitable development and poverty reduction; and building explicitly Southern agendas into current international policy debates and developmental decision-making at all levels.

## A Shared Vision

The last word must go to Lester Pearson, a voice from 1967 with a message for our time: “The need to develop more effective and useful relations between the developed and developing areas of the world has become as much a challenge to our domestic policy as it is to our external policy .... The rapidly advancing technology and the complex interrelationships of today’s global society demand that the fundamental problems of man be dealt with on an international and interprofessional basis.”

The founding Act; the foresight to provide a sovereign Board (convening scientists and intellectuals from both the developing and developed worlds); the trust and confidence accrued in the research communities of the developing regions, the convening power for partnerships, and the ability to attract expert and dedicated staff — all these establish IDRC as a proven knowledge bridge between Canada and the developing world.

## A healthy global village

Good health is not only a personal blessing wished for by people everywhere, but also underpins a strong economy. In today's world, only 10% of research funds are allocated to 90% of the globe's health problems — most of which are endemic to the poorest parts of the planet.

Canadians (who regard health as the cornerstone of their national well-being) are increasingly aware of threats of disease and illness that can reach them from distant regions. Canada's Global Health Research Initiative (GHRI) recognizes that one line of defence is to increase the level of support for health care in these regions. The initiative combines the national mandates and resources of Health Canada (the Canadian federal health ministry) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (the lead funding agency for health research) with the international reach of IDRC and CIDA.

GHRI is well placed to achieve several tasks. It can coordinate the allocation of Canada's increased funds. It can enable this country to identify global health research priorities that match Canada's expertise. And it can identify gaps in Canada's capability that can be bridged through international collaboration.

IDRC's special role, meanwhile, is to contribute the strength of its international networks, to ensure the fullest participation of developing-country researchers, and eventually to promote access to the benefits arising from this new knowledge.



D. Marchand, IDRC

## Capacity building in Africa

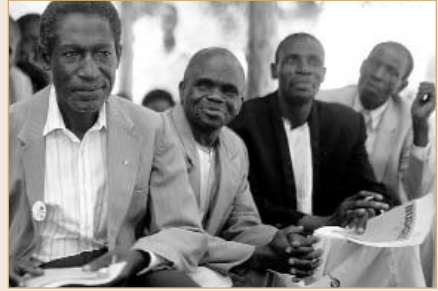
Africa has trained — many times over — the economists it needs to manage its public affairs, but it cannot keep them at home. These experts are lured abroad by better salaries and working conditions in the North and in international institutions, and by the urge to escape the professional isolation that is endemic to policy work at the national level.

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) aims to stem this outflow. Two premises underpin its work: that development is more likely to occur where the economy is well managed; and that management depends on an active, well informed cluster of locally based professional economists doing policy-relevant

research. AERC supports research and training to strengthen the capacity for economic policy research in sub-Saharan Africa and local and international networks to promote the retention of this capacity.

Established in 1988 as an IDRC project, AERC is now an independent consortium supported by 12 donors; its training program brings together a network of 27 universities in 20 countries.

Many African countries would not have been in a position to write the poverty reduction strategy papers, required by donors as a condition of debt reduction and continued financial support, without the economists graduating from AERC training programs. Africa is training — and retaining — a new generation of economists.



P. Bennett, IDRC

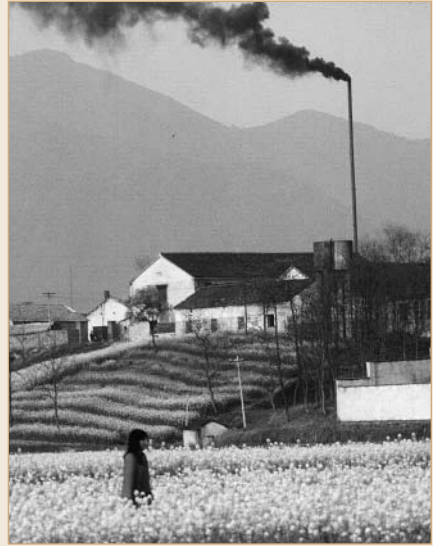
## Collaboration for clean development

Often one hears that “good development is clean development.” Most agree about what is good development. But what is clean development? What is the economic value of environmental goods and services? What is the cost of inaction when confronted by resource depletion and pollution?

IDRC’s research secretariat, the Economy and Environment Program for Southeast Asia (EEPSEA), is a leading effort to explore a new and challenging branch of economics.

Short-term development successes showed that the region had strength in economic fundamentals. People became concerned, however, about the environmental impacts of these successes and about the implications for their long-term economic sustainability. EEPSEA has used a network approach to support comparative research across 10 member countries, and increased the local capacity for environmental and resource economics that now provides sound advice to policymakers.

Since it was established in 1993, EEPSEA has become a “brand,” recognized in academic, policy, and donor circles (CIDA and Swedish SIDA have joined IDRC as major supporters), and it attracts widespread media attention. Its approach is emulated in the South Asian Network for Development and Environmental Economics (SANDEE) launched in 1999.



D. Sing, IDRC

## Corporate milestones

**1970:** The *IDRC Act* is passed unanimously in the House of Commons. The inaugural Board of Governors meeting is held in October, chaired by former Canadian Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson. IDRC's first president is renowned agricultural economist W. David Hopper.

**1971:** IDRC's first regional office opens in Singapore to serve Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

**1970s:** IDRC plays a major role in the creation of several centres that make up the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), a network of international research centres devoted to increasing food production in developing countries.

**1973:** Louis Rasminsky, former Governor of the Bank of Canada, is appointed Chair of the Board of Governors.

**1973:** Regional offices are established in Bogotá, Colombia, and Dakar, Senegal, to serve Latin America and the Caribbean and West and Central Africa, respectively. The regional office for Latin America later moves to Montevideo, Uruguay.

**1974:** A regional office opens in Beirut, Lebanon, to serve the Middle East and North Africa. The office moves to Cairo, Egypt, in 1976.

**1975:** A regional office opens in Nairobi, Kenya, to serve Eastern and Southern Africa.

**1977:** Maurice Strong, former president of CIDA, is appointed Chair of the Board of Governors.

**1978:** Ivan Head, former senior policy advisor to Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, is appointed president of IDRC.



IDRC

IDRC's first Board of Governors' meeting

**1980:** IDRC's Cooperative Program, to promote closer collaboration between Canadian and developing-country research institutions, is established as a result of the UN Conference on Science and Technology for Development.

**1981:** The Office of Planning and Evaluation is created to systematically assess and use lessons learned from IDRC's program of research support.

**1981:** The Hon. Donald S. Macdonald, former Minister of Finance, is appointed Chair of IDRC's Board of Governors.

**1982:** IDRC launches the Doctoral Research Awards program to help Canadian graduate students undertake their thesis research in the field of international development.

**1983:** The Fellowships and Awards Division is created to increase national research capabilities in the South and to provide support to young Canadians working on the problems of developing countries.

**1985:** Janet M. Wardlaw, former Dean, College of Family and Consumer Studies, University of Guelph, is appointed Chair of the Board of Governors.

**1986:** IDRC convenes an ad hoc Committee on South Africa to reassess the Centre's role in South Africa. In 1988, the Centre decides to extend its support to "projects and activities that have the potential to inform the debate on the process of change."

**1987:** The Women in Development Unit is created to support the integration of women into development and to act as a resource for gender research.

**1988:** IDRC becomes the official repository for the Brundtland Commission's documents. Sustainable development is integrated into all aspects of the Centre's work.

**1988:** IDRC receives the first ever Twenty-First Century Award given by the US scientific research society Sigma Xi for its "perceptive, imaginative, and generous modus operandi."

**1991:** Keith A. Bezanson is appointed president of IDRC. Dr Bezanson served as Canadian ambassador to Peru and Bolivia.

**1991:** The Board of Governors approves a four-year corporate strategy "Empowerment through Knowledge."

**1991:** A special unit is created at IDRC with a mission to deepen linkages between researchers in the South and the Canadian research community.

**1992:** The Centre opens a regional office in Johannesburg, South Africa. IDRC's work with the democratic movement in South Africa from 1991 to 1995 becomes the basis for national policies on the environment, health systems, urban issues, trade and industrial strategies, and science and technology. The Regional Office for Southern Africa closed in 2001.

**1992:** At the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, IDRC is designated an implementing agency for Agenda 21. The Centre's first Corporate Program Framework reflects this appointment and articulates new directions in research, planning, dissemination, and decision-making.

**1992:** The Hon. Flora MacDonald, former Secretary of State for External Affairs, is appointed Chair of the Board of Governors.

**1996:** IDRC establishes the Partnership and Business Development Office.

**1997:** Gordon S. Smith, former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, is appointed Chair of IDRC's Board of Governors.

**1997:** IDRC approves its second Corporate Program Framework (1997–2000) and introduces program initiatives — multidisciplinary research teams that address specific issues — as its main programing modality.

**1997:** The Government of Canada appoints Maureen O'Neil as IDRC president. Ms O'Neil was formerly Chair of the Board of the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, President of The North–South Institute, and Deputy Minister of Citizenship for the Government of Ontario.

#### IDRC's presidents



W. David Hopper,  
appointed 1970



Ivan Head,  
appointed 1978



Keith Bezanson,  
appointed 1991



Maureen O'Neil,  
appointed 1997

**1997:** IDRC launches Acacia, its biggest program of research support, to assess whether information and communication technologies can help communities in Africa gain control over their social and economic development.

**2000:** IDRC approves its Corporate Strategy and Program Framework 2000–2005.

**2000:** A Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force) was launched by the G8 at its Kyushu-Okinawa Summit Meeting in July 2000. The DOT Force is intended as a vehicle for the G8 to develop concrete steps to help bridge the international digital divide. IDRC President Maureen O’Neil is appointed a member of the DOT Force.

**2001:** IDRC signs an agreement with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to host the secretariat for the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. Its seminal report, *The Responsibility to Protect*, is a significant contribution to the continuing debate on the role of the broader community of states in protecting citizens from avoidable catastrophe – whether mass murder or starvation.

**2001:** IDRC launches an exploration — “Research on Knowledge Systems” (RoKS) — into the ways that knowledge fosters social and economic development, and its key influence on organizational performance.

**2001:** At the April Summit of the Americas, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien announces the creation of the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas, to be housed at IDRC.

**2003:** The Canadian government launches Connectivity Africa, a program to improve access to ICTs in Africa. IDRC and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa are chosen to implement the program.

**2005:** The IDRC Board of Governors approves a new Corporate Strategy and Program Framework 2005–2010.

## Further reading

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Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is one of the world's leading institutions in the generation and application of new knowledge to meet the challenges of international development. For more than 30 years, IDRC has worked in close collaboration with researchers from the developing world in their search for the means to build healthier, more equitable, and more prosperous societies.



Y. Beaulieu, IDRC

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