

**Marjolaine Côté**

**Internship Technical Report**

Mentor: Simon Carter

Program Initiative: Rural Poverty and Environment

Topic of Work: Climate Change Adaptation in Africa

Dates of internship: Sep. 14<sup>th</sup> to Dec. 23<sup>rd</sup> 2005 & Jan.1<sup>st</sup> to Oct. 31<sup>st</sup> 2006

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*The goal of an internship award is to give individuals an opportunity to utilize their existing knowledge and develop skills and experience in the area of international development.*

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My two internships covered three objectives: first, to assist the Rural Poverty and Environment (RPE) staff to set up the new Climate Change Adaptation in Africa Research and Capacity Development (CCAA) programme; second, to coordinate and centralize all information regarding IDRC's participation in the 4<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum (Mexico, March 2006); third, to undertake research that would provide background information for the devolution of the CCAA programme.

**I. Setting up the Climate Change Adaptation in Africa Research and Capacity Development (CCAA) programme**

My involvement with in climate change began at the onset of my internship, while preparing IDRC's participation in an IDRC-IISD-TERI side event at COP11 (Montreal, 2005). IDRC's presence at the COP11 included attending numerous side and parallel events and meeting with the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) to develop a joint program on climate change, which was to be hosted within IDRC.

Thereafter, I provided significant assistance to Simon Carter, Program Manager RPE and CCAA, and Jean Lebel, Director Environment and Natural Resources Management, in establishing the new CCAA programme. I drafted documents that led to the partnership between IDRC and DFID, and to the formulation of CCAA's apparatus; I provided support to CCAA's first Advisory Board meeting; I administered the program's first call for concept notes and coordinated the subsequent assessment of these notes by twenty-five experts in Naivasha, Kenya.

In May, I acted as the Advisory Board secretary and supervised the logistical support for the CCAA Advisory Board meeting (Ottawa, May 10-11, 2006). Guided by my supervisor, I wrote the formal minutes of the meeting, which led me to be appointed Secretary to the Board during the Second Advisory Board meeting (Naivasha, Kenya, November 20-21, 2006). My work with the Advisory Board also involved drafting and submitting documents to them in a timely manner for discussion at meetings and coordinating their travel plans.

The launch of CCAA's first call for proposal ran between May 25 and July 15 2006 and aimed at exploring the extent, readiness and interest of African and international researchers to engage in adaptation to climate change in Africa. The activity was very successful with a total of 280 concept notes received. I was responsible for receiving these notes, reading through them to assess the extent to which they corresponded to CCAA's objectives, and building a spreadsheet to record each

concept notes and categorize them by main research topic.

I was the main organizer of the Technical Experts meeting that took place in Kenya (Naivasha, September 18-20, 2006) to review the results of our first call for concept notes and make recommendations on the best for full proposal development. This involved: assisting in the selection of the 25 experts who would review the 214 eligible concept notes received based on their expertise in the areas relevant to adaptation to climate variability and change in Africa; developing evaluation guidelines and scoring sheets for the concept notes; responding to experts' queries; overseeing the logistical aspects of experts' travel and contracts; and providing support to the experts during the conference. This task also included writing a team report and a 'lessons learned' document.

This experience has strengthened my confidence in organizing such events and has developed further my ability to provide administrative support. It has also given me the great opportunity to learn from the discussions surrounding the process of concept note selection, selection criteria, priority themes for CCAA, and strengths and weaknesses of proposals in general.

Finally, I took part in the October team building (Ottawa, October 2-13, 2006) and Outcome Mapping workshops, which allowed me to become more familiar with the newly appointed CCAA team and begin the work of the CCAA as a cohesive unit.

## **II. Coordinating IDRC's participation in the 4<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum (4WWF)**

My first long-term assignment when joining the RPE Program was to assist Ann Thomas in preparing for IDRC's presence at the 4WWF (Mexico, March 16-22, 2006). I coordinated the preparation of our partners' session, the Communication Division's work, and that of two consultants hired in Mexico to ensure the timely execution of the tasks at hand. IDRC convened three thematic sessions, hosted a formal reception, a booth at the Water Expo, and organized a call for proposals on GIS and water management. In addition, a total of 51 researchers were sponsored from LAC, MENA, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa to attend the Forum. There was no doubt that IDRC's presence at the 4WWF was a success, especially with IDRC's researcher-based approach in the water sector. I also assisted in writing the final report. The coordination of this event tested my organizational skills and my ability to respond to tight deadlines. I received an IDRC Appreciation Award for my efforts in coordinating the 4WWF in Mexico.

## **III. Background research on devolution**

The goal of my research project was to research devolution successes and failures to provide options for the devolution of CCAA. The information was meant to serve as a basis for debate and discussion for the Programme Management Unit (PMU). The research sought to assess IDRC projects by reviewing documentation and investigating corporate experiences related to devolution; examine international funding agencies in their approach and experiences with devolution; and assist IDRC and CCAA staff in the conceptualization of the devolution process by providing material and options for the AB to discuss and general pointers to the PMU on how to proceed to implement and monitor devolution.

Due to other challenging and rewarding programme-related tasks, I have not been able to dedicate much time to the proposed internship research. I conducted some research on a part-time basis between April and June of 2006. This involved doing an internal review of IDRC's projects using the IDRC Development Research Information Service (IDRIS) and discussing with IDRC staff to identify projects related to devolution. Few IDRC projects with devolution experience were actually identified as such in IDRIS. This presented obstacles in obtaining relevant information on each project. Nevertheless, I was able to identify 44 projects with a devolution component, from which a sub-set of

6 projects were identified as being particularly relevant for further investigation and examination to extract lessons learned and possible options available for CCAA. This sub-set was selected based on the information gathered in the database and from discussions with the ENRM director. I have tracked the names and main characteristics of the projects in a spreadsheet.

## **Conclusion**

I have gained numerous skills and have learned much from my IDRC internship and from my IDRC and CCAA colleagues. Their dedication, intellect and spirit have inspired me.

The specific skills that I have gained include:

- improved organizational skills, in my daily activities and in organizing events;
- an improved ability to adapt to deadlines when multiple tasks are due at the same time;
- the ability to write minutes of formal meetings;
- an capacity to provide travel and logistical support to a group of people;
- increased awareness of IDRC's internal mechanism necessary to undertake its mandate (RSPs, RPs, PADs, contracts, etc.) and all the tools that are used by the Center (IRIMS, Oracle, GANTT charts, etc.);
- better equipped to convey messages to the public through the IDRC Web site;
- clearer and more concise writing as a result of my experience of drafting documents, writing reports, communicating with consultants, and preparing minutes; and
- the ability to manage complex projects with multiple stages and components that are crucial to the final result (the 4WWF, the first call for concept notes, and the Technical Experts review and meeting).

I have no doubt that the significant skills developed and the general knowledge gained will have a long-term impact on my career choice and my professional capabilities. My internship experience was crucial in preparing me to be a Research Officer for the CCAA. I also expect that the ability to work with individuals from diverse international backgrounds and to coordinate international conferences will certainly be valuable professional skills in the years to come.

## **For further information, refer to the following IRIMS folders:**

- Climate Change Adaptation in Africa (Technical Experts Selection 1<sup>st</sup> Call)
- Climate Change Adaptation in Africa (1<sup>st</sup> Advisory Board Meeting - Ottawa - May 9-10, 2006)
- Climate Change Adaptation Support Programme for Action-Research and Capacity Development in Africa
- Climate Change Proposals and Concept Notes – 1<sup>st</sup> Call
- Trip Reports – Coté, Marjolaine
- IV World Water Forum (Mexico)