

# Outcomes and the Factors which Influence Their Realization: A Synthesis of Forty-Two Completed Project Case

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#### **Executive Summary**

In an effort to better understand the results of IDRC-supported research initiatives, the Evaluation Unit managed a global evaluation study of forty-two completed projects. "The Survey and Assessment of Completed Projects" (94-0821/02287) comprised two primary elements: first, the development of a conceptual framework to assess the results of development research; and second, a series of studies on the results of projects in several programming areas including information and communication technology, commercialization of research results, social policy, public goods, and quality of life.

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This report provides a synthesis of the findings of the forty-two case-studies covering forty-nine projects in twenty countries. The objective of this synthesis is to illustrate the results of IDRC-supported research projects, to identify the factors that have influenced the achievement of results in the past, to contribute to the understanding of what can be considered realistic outcomes to expect when funding development research, and to capture process lessons learned about assessing results.

As a whole, the case-studies indicate that IDRC-supported research projects can, and do, make a difference. Various types of results were identified in the case-studies and they have been categorized into five primary types based on the change that occurred in the individual, group, or institution that was reached by the activities and/or outputs of the research project.

Outcome 1: Increased Capacity to Conduct Research

Outcome 2: Continued or Expanded Work in Field of Enquiry

Outcome 3: Expanded Public Debate on Issues Related to the Research Areas

Outcome 4: New Perspectives or Changed Attitudes

Outcome 5: Adoption and/or Utilization of Research Findings

The case-studies identified the factors that influenced, either positively or negatively, the level, degree, and type of outcomes realized by the project. Although the lists of factors are similar, different elements were emphasized depending on whether they were seen as enhancing or hindering the realization of outcomes. The hindering factors include issues relating to the implementing institution, the research team, methods, and results, the planning of the project, elements from the economic social, political, or environmental context, insufficient IDRC inputs, and insufficient funds. The enhancing factors include issues relating to the research area, methods, and results, the implementing institution, the research team, IDRC inputs, and the economic, social, and political context.

## **1. Introduction**

Since IDRC was established in 1970, it has supported over five thousand development research projects. Centre-supported research initiatives go beyond simply generating information, however, and are intended to produce results that benefit people's lives in developing countries. As a result, IDRC has always been interested in knowing what its support to researchers and research institutions has contributed to economic and social development. A recent effort to gather information on the results of its development research initiatives was managed by the Evaluation Unit. "The Survey and Assessment of Completed Projects" (94-0821/02287) comprised two primary elements: first, the development of a conceptual framework to assess the results of development research; and second, a series of studies on the results of projects in several programming areas including information and communication technology,

commercialization of research results, social policy, public goods, and quality of life. A secondary purpose was to identify projects that could be used to demonstrate IDRC's work to the public. A list of these projects is included in Annex 2.

What follows is a synthesis of the findings of the forty-two case-studies covering forty-nine projects in twenty countries. A list of the case-studies included in this synthesis can be found in Annex 1. The objective of this synthesis is to illustrate the results of IDRC-supported research projects, to identify the factors that have influenced the achievement of results in the past, to contribute to the understanding of what can be considered realistic outcomes to expect when funding development research, and to capture process lessons learned about assessing results. There are various types of results identified in the case-studies. Building research capacity among researchers and research institutions is the most frequently cited type of outcome. Other types of outcomes include: continued or expanded work in the field of enquiry; increased public debate on issues related to the research area; new perspectives or changed attitudes; and, the adoption or utilization of research findings.

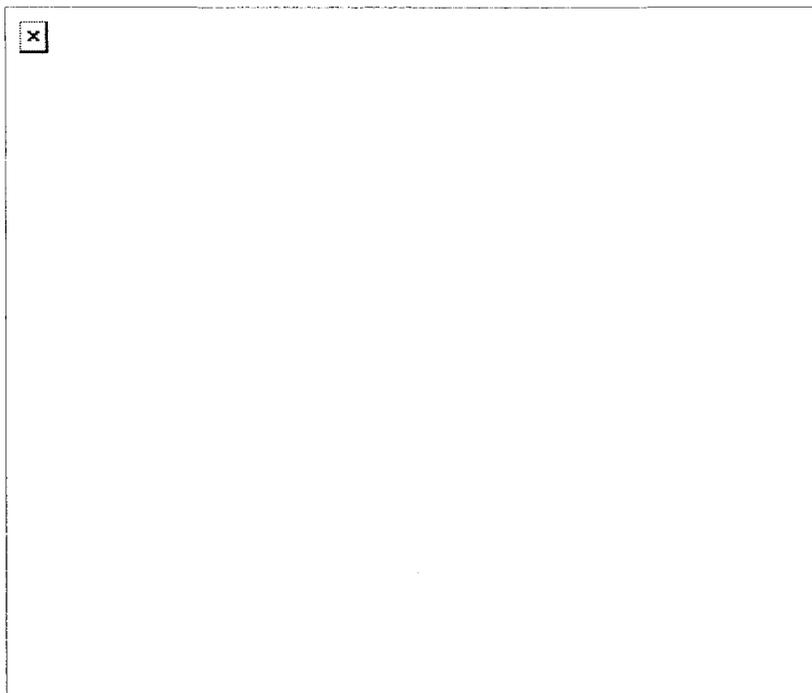
As a whole, the case-studies indicate that IDRC-supported research projects can, and do, make a difference. However, they alone do not produce development impacts. Development impacts constitute fundamental improvements in people and societies' well-being and require the convergence of numerous actors and factors. Development research projects produce information, test ideas, evaluate concepts, set-up processes, or develop technologies. These contributions can bring about important changes among researchers, research institutions, and other actors with whom the project interacts but they tend to be upstream from what is usually thought of as impact. The findings of the case-studies support this conclusion and, as a result, the term "impact" has been reserved solely for development impacts. The results of development research projects have been designated as outcomes. Refining the language of evaluation and our concepts in this way has been important to more accurately reflect the results of development research projects. This re-conceptualisation of results is considered a finding of the case-studies because it has advanced the Evaluation Unit's thinking and has propelled recent methodological work on Outcome Mapping.<sup>(1)</sup>

## **2. Methodology**

In order to facilitate the aggregation of project level data, each of the case-studies included in the study employed the same methodology. To ensure that the methodology was applied consistently in the field, three coordinators, based in South Africa, Egypt, and Ottawa were engaged by the Evaluation Unit to manage the local consultants. Efforts were made to steer consultants away from conducting project evaluations which look primarily at inputs and outputs and towards exploring the nature and dynamics of the intended and unintended results of the research. The purpose of the case-studies was not to find fault with individual projects, recipient institutions, or IDRC but to understand how results came about.

A conceptual framework was prepared by the Evaluation Unit and distributed to the consultants. See Annex 3 for the conceptual paper and the proposed format guidelines for the case-studies and Annex 4 for the terms of reference. It provided them with question areas and categories of issues to explore. The framework was sufficiently broad to permit the consultants to pursue specific outcome areas based on the specific context of each project. Local consultants conducted the case-studies in order to allow their understanding of the social, political, economic, and research contexts in which the projects took place to be brought in and to include their perspective in the analysis of results. Using both interviews and a document review, forty-two case-studies were conducted by nineteen consultants between January 1997 and February 1998 and the findings were consolidated by the coordinators.<sup>(2)</sup>

Projects were selected for inclusion in the study based on year, size, location, sector, result area, recipient, and target user. For pragmatic reasons, the Evaluation Unit also considered whether sufficient information and contact people would be available to carry out an assessment. The projects were selected from among those that IDRC Program Officers and partner institutions believed were successful as it was felt these would provide richer data on how results were achieved. All of the 49 projects studied were completed within the last ten years but they were approved over a longer period: 7 were approved between 1981 and 1985; 15 between 1986 and 1989; and, 27 were approved between 1990 and 1994. Regionally, seventy percent of the projects reviewed were located in Africa, eighteen percent in Asia, and twelve percent in Latin America and the Caribbean. Chart 1 gives the regional breakdown.



### 3. Project Outcomes

The most significant and tangible finding of the case-studies was documenting how

actors were touched, affected, changed, and/or influenced by their interaction with the activities and/or outputs of the project. The actors reached included individuals, groups, and institutions. They can be divided into seven broad categories:

- implementing institution (university, government department, or NGO);
- researchers;
- government officials and policy makers (local, regional, or national level);
- local community (village as a whole or specific groups within villages);
- other international donor agencies;
- NGOs; and,
- private sector organizations.

Not surprisingly, the case-studies found that IDRC projects were more likely to have a substantial effect on the actors who most actively and directly participated in the process.

There were 143 project outcomes identified in the 42 case-studies. They have been categorized into five primary types based on the change that occurred in the individual, group, or institution that was reached by the activities and/or outputs of the research project.

Outcome 1: Increased Capacity to Conduct Research

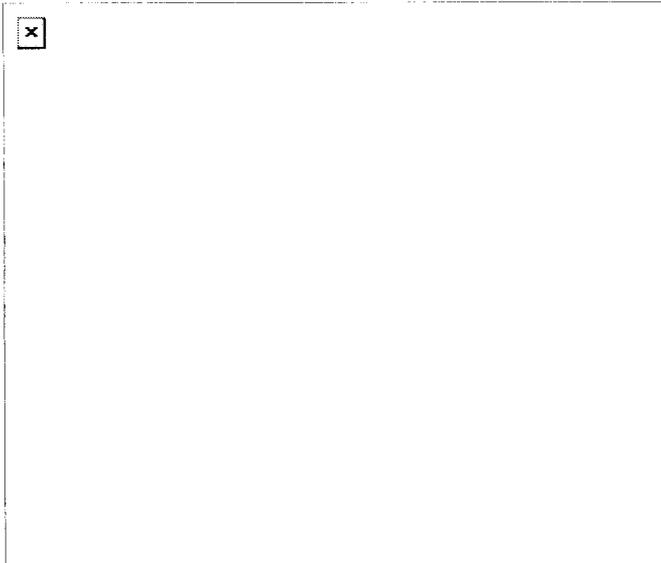
Outcome 2: Continued or Expanded Work in Field of Enquiry

Outcome 3: Expanded Public Debate on Issues Related to the Research Areas

Outcome 4: New Perspectives or Changed Attitudes

Outcome 5: Adoption and/or Utilization of Research Findings

Within the context of a project, these outcomes were often linked, and sometimes overlapped, but for ease of analysis they have been classified separately. Table 1 lists the frequency rates for each type of outcome based on the percentage of the 42 case-studies that mentioned them and the percentage of the total number of outcomes listed in all the case-studies. The description of the five types of outcomes that follows illustrates the kinds of results that are possible within IDRC's sphere of influence.



### **Outcome 1: Increased Capacity to Conduct Research**

The skills of the researchers in analyzing common property regimes are now being applied within the Southern Africa region. The project thereby enhanced the capacity for critical enquiry into the social dimensions of natural resource management at the Centre for Applied Social Sciences at the University of Zimbabwe (CASS) as well as in the Southern Africa region.

*Communal Cattle Management Project (Zimbabwe), 12.*

The most common type of outcome identified, 37% of the total number of outcomes, was an increased capacity to conduct research. This outcome was noted in almost three-quarters of the case-studies. Examples of capacity building in institutions included changes in human resource and physical infrastructure. Among individual researchers, it included increased technical skill and the utilization of new research methodologies and approaches. Both institutions and individual researchers were found to have increased their scientific stature and credibility as a result of their involvement with IDRC projects.

For both implementing institutions and researchers, an enhanced capacity to conduct research was the most often cited type of outcome. It represented almost half of the overall outcomes found in implementing institutions and over three-quarters of the outcomes for researchers. Although increased research capacity did occur among non-researching actors like communities, NGOs, and policy makers, it was much less prevalent.

Only four case-studies noted that the IDRC-supported project had tried, but had had, only a limited influence on research capacity. In two cases it was because the technical skills and resources were not transferrable beyond the project and in the other two cases it was because the type and level of training was inappropriate for the institution's needs.

Field workers gained particular technical experience working with the TSFS project, but seem not to have been exposed to broader skills in community animation and facilitation that would be transferable to issues other than and after the completion of TSFS project.

*Three Strata Forage System (Indonesia), 11.*

## **Outcome 2: Continued or Expanded Work in the Field of Enquiry**

People who participated have been persuaded to commit themselves in their careers to public health. All of the participants were, to some extent, already involved in this, but the project Director and many of the participants say that the new skills obtained in the project have given them a new enthusiasm for continuing to work in this field and to continue to improve their skills.

*Health Research Capacity Building (Cambodia), 7.*

Over one-third of the case-studies identified instances of actors' enhanced ability to continue or expand their work in the research area supported by the project. This type of outcome represented 17% of the total. The case-studies credited IDRC projects for having helped actors access new resources from regional and national governments, the private sector, and other international donors. They also noted the importance of strengthened research networks, enhanced career opportunities, and an elevated status for the research area.

Among the case-studies, there were examples of expanded work in the research area in each of the seven categories of actors. The greatest number of instances of this type of outcome occurred in implementing institutions. Three case studies found that an IDRC-supported research project contributed to an outcome in another international donor agency and two of those noted that it prompted the donor to begin supporting work in the research area.

## **Outcome 3: Expanded Public Debate on Issues Related to the Research Area**

The second objective was the most successful achievement of the project, as the research process brought local communities together, informed and involved them, and initiated a process for the negotiation of land claims and participation in other policy issues in the sub-region.

*Namaqualand: Land Claims and the Future of the Reserve (South Africa), 24.*

17% of the outcomes related to how IDRC-supported research projects contributed,

directly or indirectly, to public debate. In almost half the case-studies, the research results were used by policy makers, communities, or advocacy groups to inform and expand public debates on environmental, health, or social issues. The case-studies indicated, however, that the research findings could contribute to discussions and debates but could not dictate policy formulation. The influence was not direct or linear.

Not surprisingly, government officials and policy makers were the most likely category of actors to use research findings to inform a public debate. Almost two-thirds of the instances of this type of outcome involved government officials and policy makers. However, the projects were not always successful in this area. Five case-studies noted that the project tried, but failed, to get actors to expand public debates based on the research results. Of these, four noted the failure of the project to reach the necessary government official and/or policy maker because its dissemination strategy was too limited or its findings were not packaged appropriately to be useful.

The chief lacunae in the methodology can be described as the lack of involvement of municipal authorities, local NGOs, and pressure groups who could act on the information....Also though the study generated large volumes of very detailed information on the sector, its recommendations were not formulated in terms of specific suggestions or alterations but were in the nature of general, broad guidelines.

*Informal Sector Street Food (India), 2-3.*

#### **Outcome 4: New Perspectives or Changed Attitudes**

Prior to this project, there had been very little collaboration between the National Education Commission (NEC) and the Ministry of Education. The NEC was seen as a rather academic policy institute, removed from the realities of day-to-day planning. ...But this project gave the NEC officers an appreciation of the problems faced by Ministry planners, and improved collaboration between the two agencies for at least a decade.

*Provincial Education Planning (Thailand), 9.*

Over one-third of the case-studies found a change in perspective or attitude in at least one of the categories of stakeholders. This type of outcome represented 16% of the total number cited in the case-studies. These attitudinal shifts primarily related to relationships and the benefits of different social groups working together to solve development problems. There were instances of improved gender relations, researchers giving greater value to indigenous knowledge, and businesses/universities, researchers/farmers, and policy makers/communities collaborating in productive working relationships.

While a change in attitude or perspective occurred in all seven categories of actors, it

occurred most often at the local community level. In two cases, the research projects tried, but failed, to achieve a change in attitude or perspective. In both instances, it was because the research results were not disseminated appropriately for the target audience.

The [e-mail] reveals that the project has not been successful in terms of eliciting the active participation of the NGO in the research process. It was also confided that the NGO 'harbours ill-feeling towards [implementing organization]' for 'using them in a study without ever informing them the results of the research'.

*Sustainable Land and Forest Management (Philippines), 25.*

### **Outcome 5: Adoption and/or Utilization of Research Findings**

Les résultats du projet ont également incité les autorité des organisations internationales travaillant sur le terrain au Bénin (OCCGE, UNICEF, OMS...) à adopter la moustiquaire imprégnée préventive (MIP) comme l'un des moyens les plus efficaces de lutte contre le paludisme.

*Projet moustiquaires imprégnées et le controle communautaire du paludisme (Benin), 25*

Although the least frequently cited type of outcome was the adoption or utilization of research findings, 14% of the total number of outcomes, it was noted in almost one-third of the case-studies. In these instances, communities, small businesses, and farmers attempted to use the approaches and/or technologies developed by the research project to help solve problems they were facing.

The local community was the category of actor who most often adopted and/or utilized the research findings. They represented half the instances of this type of outcome cited in the case-studies. The adoption and/or utilization of the approaches, results, or technologies developed by the research projects were not always successful, however, and five case-studies noted that it was not successfully achieved. The main reason for this was the inability of the project to institutionalize the change so that it could be sustained over time. One case-study noted that local farmers did not adopt the technology tested in the project because it was more expensive and did not yield better results than the traditional approach.

Despite being a pioneer project, the findings of the project were not conclusive and they did not provide clear evidence for the need to adopt the technology being tested. The project did not provide clear evidence that the "improved" granaries were intrinsically better than the traditional methods.

*Grain Storage Project (Zimbabwe), 5*

#### 4. Factors that Enhance and Hinder Outcomes

Each case-study identified the factors that influenced, either positively or negatively, the level, degree, and type of outcomes realized by the project. Here, they are broken down based on whether they enhanced or hindered the research project's ability to promote outcomes in actors. The factors that enhanced did not guarantee an outcome, but they contributed to its occurrence; the factors that hindered did not preclude the possibility of an outcome but they did interfere with progress in some way. The factors, and their interactions with one another, are often context specific therefore no single factor can be deemed more important than the others and no "recipe for success" can be identified. However, these enhancing and hindering factors can provide program staff with a check-list of issues, conditions, and situations which can influence the realization of outcomes. Once identified, they can then be managed, enhanced, supported, and/or accommodated when planning and implementing future projects.

Tables 2 and 3 list the factors that were identified in the case-studies as hindering and enhancing the realization of outcomes in IDRC-supported research projects. The enhancing and hindering factors across the 42 case-studies have been rolled up into broader categories in order to look for trends that could be explored in greater depth in future studies. Although the lists of factors are similar, different elements were emphasized depending on whether they were seen as enhancing or hindering the realization of outcomes. Therefore, the factors are presented in positive and negative terms. They are ordered according to how frequently they were mentioned in the case-studies.

Table 2

Factors that Hinder	No. Of Comments & % of Total Comments (n=130)
<p><b>1. Implementing Institution</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Change in Leadership and Staff</li> <li>b) Poor/No Linkages with Other Actors</li> <li>c) Insufficient Capacity</li> <li>d) Poor Leadership</li> <li>e) Staff Tension/Poor Internal Cooperation</li> </ul>	<p>40 (31%)</p>

f) Administratively or Financially Fragile	
g) Project Unrelated to Ongoing Programming	
<b>2. Research Team, Methods, Results</b>	
a) Inappropriate Presentation and Dissemination of Results	29 (22%)
b) Not Sufficiently Participatory Methodology	
c) Omission of Specialist on Team (e.g. gender, marketing)	
<b>3. Project Planning</b>	
a) Incomplete Planning	28 (22%)
b) Needs Assessment or Feasibility Study Not Completed	
<b>4. Economic, Social, Political, Environmental Context</b>	19 (15%)
<b>5. IDRC Inputs</b>	
a) Insufficient Monitoring & Technical Support	10 (8%)
b) Downsizing/Staff Turnover	
c) Delays in Transferring Funds	
<b>6. Insufficient Funds</b>	
a) For Post-Project Activities & Multiple Phases	4 (3%)
b) For Training Budge	
t	

Table 3

<b>Factors that Enhance</b>	<b>No. Of Comments &amp; % of Total Comments (n=124)</b>
1. Research Area, Methods, & Results	
a) Appropriate Research Methodology	

b) Useful, Timely Research Topic	41 (33%)
c) Effective Dissemination of Findings	
<b>2. Implementing Institution</b>	
a) Capable/Committed Leadership	33 (27%)
b) Good Reputation & Experienced	
c) Established Networks	
d) Independence	
<b>3. Research Team</b>	
a) Academically & Culturally Qualified	25 (20%)
b) Multidisciplinary Composition	
<b>4. IDRC Inputs</b>	
a) Flexibility (Funding & Time-Limits)	19 (15%)
b) Technical Input from Staff	
c) Responsive to Research Area	
d) Taking Risks with Nascent Institution	
<b>5. Economic, Social, and Political Context</b>	6 (5%)

## 5. Lessons Learned

Managing "The Survey and Assessment of Completed Projects", provided the Evaluation Unit an opportunity to implement a global multi-site evaluation study. Through this experience, we have learned some important lessons about implementing such a study:

- Be focussed and clear on the purpose of the evaluation. Beware of trying to accommodate too many agendas in a single study.
- Avoid having the client too distanced from the studies being conducted as this can cause communication problems.
- Make sure that everybody working on the evaluation has a shared understanding of the purpose of the study, the methodology to be employed, and the information to be gathered. Training should be provided and directions should be specific.
- Consultants need to be provided with tools to gather the information, not only conceptual ideas. If it is not clear what information is most important, the consultants may collect data of marginal importance.
- To test a theoretical model, use a small sample of case-studies first to make sure that the appropriate information is being gathered to answer the key evaluation questions. From the

outset, build time into the study for reflecting on, and revising the model.

## 6. Conclusion

The 42 project case-studies were informative both in terms of project performance and the evaluation process. On a practical level, they identified the types of outcomes that a development research project can achieve and the enhancing or hindering factors. On a methodological level, they highlighted some of the difficulties associated with assessing the results of development research projects. The case-studies indicated that looking for the impact of a discrete project is problematic because developmental change is too complex for simple cause-effect explanations and it cannot be attributed to a single actor. IDRC-supported research projects can influence the actors with whom it interacts and this is where its results, or outcomes, should be assessed.

## Annexes

### Annex 1: Project Case Studies

Project Name	Project Number	Author
1. Integrated Pest Management	89-0318	Dr. H. Abou-Bakr
2. Desert Farming Systems (III)	85-0193	Dr. H. Abou-Bakr
3. Labour Information System (I)	86-0182	Dr. G. Abdel-Khalek
4. Structural Adjustment and Agriculture	91-0079	Dr. G. Abdel-Khalek
5. Cast Iron Production from Sponge Iron, Sponge/Cast Iron Technology Transfer	92-0808	Sherif Kandil
6. Industrial Technology Support Unit - Dakahlia	94-8602	Sherif Kandil
7. Environmental Management of Fuelwood Resources in Wadi Allaqi	92-1001	Dr. Aleya Hussein
8. Dairy/Beef Production Systems (Botswana) (II)	87-0225	K.J. Billing
9. Fuelwood Plantations (Botswana) (I & II)	85-0118	K.J. Billing
	89-0068	
	88-0026	

10. Natural Resource Management in Communal Lands (Zimbabwe) (I & II)	91-0408	K.J. Billing
11. Strengthening Capacity of Essential Health Research	90-0095	A.D. Daly
12. Agrochemicals and Farm workers	91-0275	A.D. Daly
13. Schistosomiasis Control: A Community Based Approach (II)	88-0397	A.D. Daly
14. Workers' Participation	90-0080	A.D. Daly
15. Information Provision for Rural Development (INFORD) (I & II) (Botswana)	88-0197 93-8488	Shirley E.Giggey
16. Chambers of Commerce Trade Information Systems (Zimbabwe)	91-0270	Shirley E. Giggey
17. Grant and Debt Recording and Management System Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation and Technical Advisory Group through the Special Fund for Mozambique	89-0230	Shirley E. Giggey
18. Industrial and Technological Information System - Small Industries Development Organization (Zambia)	91-1004	Shirley E. Giggey
19. National Health Documentation and Information Network - University of Zimbabwe Medical Library	89-0033	Shirley E. Giggey
20. Phosphate Rock Blends: Developing Local Alternatives (Zimbabwe)	92-1007	M.I. Murray
21. Grain Dehulling (Malawi) (I & II)	85-0223	M.I. Murray
	90-0267	
22. Starch Adhesives (Malawi)	92-1451	M.I. Murray
23. Gender, Health and Structural Adjustment (Zimbabwe)	91-0043	Gail F. Motsi
24. Namaqualand: Land Claims and the Future of the Reserve (South Africa)	92-8452	Gail F. Motsi
25. Constitutional Initiatives for Gender Equity (South Africa)	92-0902	Gail F. Motsi
26. Industrial Strategy Project (South Africa) (I)	91-0036	Gail F. Motsi
27. Communal Cattle Management Project (Zimbabwe)	86-0188	Richard Hasler
28. The Pasture Improvement Project (Zimbabwe)	87-0022	Richard Hasler
29. The Grain Storage Project	85-0286	Richard Hasler
30. The Groundnut Improvement (III)	87-0038	Richard Hasler
31. Social and Biological Impact Following the Introduction of Household Piped Water in Rural Guatemala	92-1050	Silvio Gomez
		Suhardi

32. Three Strata Forage (Indonesia) (I & II)	30473	Suryadi
33. Sustainable Land and Forest Management Project	91-0074	Rizal Buendia
34. Provincial Education Planning	81-0241	Greg Armstrong
35. Health Research Capacity Building	94-8005	Greg Armstrong
36. Representative Institutions and Public Policy in Argentina	87-0313	Andrés Pérez
Participation and Public Policy in Costa Rica	87-1053	
Participation and Local Governments in Cuba		
37. Towards a Sustainable Development Strategy for the Sierra de los Tuxtlas, Mexico	90-1012 92-0010	Andrés Sanchez and Tricia Wind
38. Projet communication en faveur du monde rural au Cameroun (III)	91-0190	Yawo Assigbley
39. Projet moustiquaires imprégnées et le controle communautaire du paludisme au Benin (I & II)	92-1052	Yawo Assigbley
40. Resource Costs of Under Nutrition and Morbidity, India	93-8300	Manjul Bajaj
41. Informal Sector Street Food, Pune, India	87-0053	Manjul Bajaj
42. Inland Fisheries, Nepal	82-0191	Manjul Bajaj

## **Annex 2: Projects Potentially Suitable for Public Relations**

Case Study 6 Industrial Technology Support Unit - Dakahlia

Case Study 10 Natural Resource Management in Communal Lands (Zimbabwe) (I & II)

Case Study 25 Constitutional Initiatives for Gender Equity (South Africa)

Case Study 26 Industrial Strategy Project (South Africa) (I)

Case Study 33 Sustainable Land and Forest Management Project

Case Study 37 Towards a Sustainable Development Strategy for the Sierra de los Tuxtlas, Mexico

Case Study 39 Projet moustiquaires imprégnées et le controle communautaire du paludisme au Benin (I & II)

## **Annex 3: Concept Paper**

### **Survey and Assessment of Completed Projects (94-0821/02287) May, 1997 - Anne Bernard/Cerstin Sander**

#### ***I. Background***

The Evaluation Unit of IDRC is undertaking several initiatives to assess the impact of Centre-funded research projects. This includes a Survey of Completed Projects, encompassing studies on IDRC's programming across the regions in the following four areas: commercialisation; public good/ quality of life; policy; and information and communication technologies. Another study explores Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA). The approach to impact assessment is multi-pronged, consisting of studies that focus on specific facets of impact as well as geographically-focussed studies. These studies are spelled out in more detail in the terms of reference for the individual studies.

This paper provides a brief background to the context and concepts of this Survey. The concepts presented here and in the Framework for the Evaluation of Use and Impact of IDRC Projects (draft Jan.23, 1997) are being tested with this Survey and will evolve as a result.

#### ***II. Rationale***

It is important for IDRC to understand the impact of the research it supports: to know better the kinds of influences it is having on the development agenda and research capacity of developing countries; to understand better how impact assessment can be done for development research; to use the accumulating knowledge to improve its own practice; and to justify the validity, confirm the quality and raise the profile of its work to the Canadian public.

#### ***III. Goals and Objectives***

The overall aim of this review is to deepen understanding of how development research, as an intervention of ODA, contributes to social and economic development in the Third World, and to do so by exploring the ways in which IDRC's own work has had an impact, and perhaps failed to have an impact, on this process. For whom IDRC has made a difference and how?

The specific objectives of the review are:

a) to analyse the nature, constraints and benefits of development research, including the operational meaning of concepts such outcomes, results, effectiveness, users, utilisation;

b) to document specific case examples of impacts which have been realised through Centre research and identify ones that can serve to demonstrate IDRC's work to the public; and

c) to develop a list of issues and considerations for generating, monitoring and promoting research so as to facilitate better application of outcomes.

#### **IV. Context**

The context of IDRC's mandate is a complex and, in some ways, ambiguous one. While the development goal of improving the lives of people who are marginalised and living in poverty is clear, less clear is who defines and measures improvement, identifies the most appropriate "target" populations, and determines how the problems they face can best be addressed. Who defines impact, for whom and how? And how can we show that IDRC's relatively small grant support has contributed to improvements?

In IDRC's early years, though attention was given to dissemination through publication, there seemed less concern with wider or longer-term impact to the larger community. Few follow-up studies traced wider utilisation.

In the 1980s, questions of research utilisation were more prominent and Centre documents made explicit its fundamental dilemma: a mandate which required research to foster equitable and sustainable development, but real limitations on the degree of influence it could exert over such results. There was fairly high agreement on the distinction between research and development and that IDRC's mandate was the former: support to research and on strengthening LDC capacities to do and use research. Placing greater emphasis on utilisation would require the Centre to: become more knowledgeable about the skills required, provide appropriate training, encourage systematic exchange of utilisation experiences, adjust administrative practices and experiment with specific utilisation-focused funding mechanisms -- on the whole, recommendations not actively or systematically pursued. In recent years there is, however, a growing expectation of approaches that are oriented towards multi-stakeholder and user participation and awareness.

The distinction between research and application is now much more contentious, evidenced by current debates about a more hands-on, Centre-initiated agenda to influence, guide and in some cases manage application and sell results. Any one emphasis, however, has implications for institutional management; each also has its own potential for outcomes and impact, with concomitantly different measures and criteria for declaring "success". The present study is intended to provide evidence of the impacts previous types of project design and application emphases have produced, and a synthesis of lessons learned as input to future policy and design decisions as well as input to how we can best assess and enhance IDRC's contributions to impact.

## **V. Research and Impact**

The search for research impact is problematic in several ways. The nature of research itself makes impact uncertain. No matter how focused on concrete problems, how applied, or how participatory, its role is to investigate, analyse, test and describe, not to implement change (except in the narrow context of pilots). While research can create the awareness, understanding and sense of "critical doubt" which lead to changes in practice, it does not actually make them.

Research is a difficult activity on which to base a search for impact. It tends to produce information and ideas rather than products or action, and to impose disciplinary boundaries which can restrict what is seen as important as impact, or push for impact of limited priority to potential users. Some researchers do not see utilisation as their responsibility, or are inhibited by its opportunity costs. Some work in institutions which lack mandates and resources to engage in application activities.

The decision to act, and thus for the research to have impact, happens elsewhere - in the user community - and the link of research to that community is not automatic or direct. It invariably meanders and often breaks. Even successful products have impact only when someone sees the potential, connects it to a need (not necessarily one initially intended) and has the capacity, inclination and resources to use it (also not necessarily in ways intended).

*Development* research poses particular dilemmas given its specific purposes and parameters, not simply to generate and put new knowledge or technologies to use, but to change the life quality of specific groups and become a part of a society's knowledge fabric. How, for and by whom development research is done is as critical as *that* it is done, and it is important to look for impact within this perspective. The impact of any research remains uncertain until results are used; the impact of *development* research remains uncertain until results are used by those who are most vulnerable in ways which are sustainable. Further complicating impact in this context is that it happens in often unstable and fragile institutional and policy environments, ones with limited ability to experiment and take the risks associated with research application.

## **VI. Definitions**

Questions of research impact become more answerable by recognising the inherent intangibility of research itself, and the non-linearity and unpredictability of results utilisation. Moreover, not only results utilisation can lead to impact but also the process of research and inputs can have effects. Research can have a range of influences realised across a project cycle - as it is developed, during implementation and after completion - most of them difficult both to trace and to judge. Identifying and analysing some key terms is important in sorting through the maze.

(a) **Outcomes** are a project's overall influences, intimately linked to factors such as project design, methodology and the nature, amount and timing of resources provided. Outcomes are the effects of the project's "being there", both positive and

negative, intended and unintended, tangible as products and less tangible as knowledge and skills or processes. Outcomes can include a broad range and timing of impact: changed attitudes, increased researcher status, new relationships, more innovative methodologies, improved research management. Their lifespan or evolution needs to be considered as well as their immediate expression. Outcomes can be defined from the perspective of the research and categorised generally into four areas:

i) *institutional capacity outcomes*, for research centres, policy systems, community groups, NGOs. Capacity outcomes can include improved abilities to innovate, generate and manage knowledge, sustain commitment to continuous learning and evaluation.

ii) *individual capacity outcomes*, for specific researchers, policy-makers or practitioners, to work in sectors or disciplines of development priority, enable them to stay in research-related activity, or to shape public opinion and influence decision-making.

iii) *knowledge outcomes* on the nature, evolution and role of social, economic and biological systems, on how systems change can affect lives of different groups, on how to link research and practice. A knowledge outcome can be far-reaching, but is not easily traceable as it weaves through society. Nor does it have to be new to be a legitimate outcome; it is "countable" where it is considered by potential users as being different and useful to them.

iv) *practice and product outcomes*, typically the most tangible types of outcomes, and so assumed the most able to have impact insofar as it can be described, displayed, piloted and marketed. Unfortunately, quality and rightness have little to do with whether, when, how or by whom a product is used.

(b) **Outputs** are the products (the tangible "things" and the less tangible "processes") which happen as a result of a project's activities. These may include people with new skills, awareness and attitudes, a final report documenting the knowledge gained and data collected, a new technology or adapted method. They tend to be defined as the realized goals of a project, but they can happen at points all through the life of a project, as it is implemented, as well as at its conclusion.

c) **Reach** refers to the groups touched by the project or its activities in some way. This may include clients, beneficiaries, donors, or other stakeholders, etc. The effect may be negative or positive. The reach can be intended (targeted) or unintended. We should also ask who should have been reached and who was not. In the context of development research, two groups may be particularly important to consider:

**Users** are those people who interact with any outcomes of the research, who pay attention to, analyse or interpret the information or ways of doing or considering things in terms of their own knowledge structures, who are sufficiently influenced to change their opinions, values or actions. Users are the ones who experience and define impact, people who ultimately decide to use the product or service.

The range of potential users is large: recipient institutions and researchers, donor partners, academic communities, policy and programme systems, members of the

wider society. They can be distinguished by their proximity to and ability to influence the research process, as well as by whether they gain or lose from it. Researchers are users when they gain status or skills; so too farmers or consumers in deciding to grow or buy a particular crop. Impact will be evidenced when this use causes the researcher to stay in the field or the consumer to become healthier. The multi-dimensional nature of research means that different elements can be used in different ways by different types of users with different types of impact. The range of users will emerge as outputs or other outcomes of the research move through the various environments, and are stopped or used by them.

**Beneficiaries** are users who gain by the experience. All users are not necessarily beneficiaries, where they are disadvantaged by the experience or where new knowledge puts them out of synchrony with previous community norms or practices, for example.

(d) **Impact** is what happens when someone engages with or is influenced by an outcome or result of research. Impact is thus a question also of impact *on whom* or *for whom* and whether it is negative, positive, or lacking. A research project may produce a technically sound technology or a new institutional arrangement for policy integration. Whether either output has the intended impact can only be measured by moving to the perspective of those who decide to try it and determine if it has in some way "made a difference". This shift of perspective is subtle, but important. It may involve looking at the same outputs, *but from the user's point of view*, implying asking different questions of different kinds of people than when looking at or for impact from the research side.

Impact is tricky to measure, happening in times, places and ways often beyond the scope of the project to know about, influence, predict or track. They happen at micro or macro levels, can be more or less tangible, and only partially recognised by those involved. They may be as simple (but perhaps most profound) as a community's increased pride gained from a PR experience or as massive as teachers deciding to mobilise a regional network.

All, or even most, research impact will never be fully known by funders and managers. While it is possible to track application of results over time, persistence per se is not sufficient to establish impact, or define it is positive or complete. Further research would be needed to assess whether results have been taken up, changed or passed along, and with what effect. It is, therefore, important to understand impact not as issues determinable in one-off or end-of-pipe analyses; available data may not be incorrect, but are likely to be incomplete. This is important from a development perspective, the critical question being not whether a particular project created an immediate revolution, but whether the knowledge and capacities generated have enabled the institutions and actors responsible for action to move more effectively toward their own development goals in a progressive way.

## **VII. Factors Influencing Impact**

The range of factors affecting the capacity of development research to realise

outcomes and impact is large, none of them falling easily within the influence of a research project. Some of the most crucial factors involve those who do the research, the project's design and management, the environments in which the research took place, and time.

#### People:

disposition of researchers vis-a-vis promoting the utilisation of their work

degree of institutional support (including leadership commitment), position and linkages to facilitate dissemination, application & influence

champions who take an interest in promoting the research

capacity of users to engage with, adapt and take ownership of results

#### Design of the Project:

early outputs/lessons noted and used later in the project

feedback, application and other impact mechanisms established within the design

results identified, potential impacts foreseen and their reach to users/beneficiaries facilitated

research design and management flexible and iterative, on the part of both researcher and donor

extent of user involvement throughout the life of the project (opportunities to engage potential users during implementation can help them see and create benefits along the way, and establish ownership of eventual results).

facilitative processes and risk-reducing resources available to assist with the adoption of research results

#### Research Environments:

the extent to which researchers define, assess, anticipate and guide their activities in light of the changing social, cultural, economic, political, institutional, and policy environments which surround and influence their research

bureaucratic flexibility

competing national or institutional agendas

Time

length and complexity of project

time since completion

(both of these allow possibility for more interaction with users, opportunity for consideration, adaptation and adoption).

### **VIII. Measurement**

Measurement of research influence or impact is a tenuous undertaking, especially for a donor functioning at arms-length and over relatively short project periods. Measurement is not a neutral or straightforward activity. What counts as a valid or valuable indicator of outcome or impact, for whom and when, is determined as much by philosophy, expectations and perspective, by research context, and by competition with other national priorities, as by the quality of research results.

Different types of research (basic, applied, participatory research (PR)) imply different "distances" between results and application; in how far from the research activity one must look to find impact. Research into improved technologies, while often a quest into the unknown (producing occasional "dry holes") has outputs which can often be identified and assessed fairly easily, but impact which is more uncertain. How much time or variation should be allowed for realising application in order to count as project impact, for example, or when are linkages to producers, marketers, consumers or users sufficient to be considered impact?

Research to generate knowledge, initially less risky (information is presumably out there to be found), produces outcomes which are often more difficult to account for and assess; often subtle and hard to pin down; their "rightness" likely to be ambiguous. How to put such results into public fora is, therefore, a major concern. Recognised or not, impact of knowledge-generation research can be powerful, lasting for years as "pools of information"; ideas travel well, not confined to time or sector.

Measuring impact requires answering difficult questions. Is expressed agreement with research results enough to be called an impact, or is follow-up action required? Even if action fails to materialise, can the research be considered to have had impact if it stimulated a policy system to reflect on goals and methods of its work? Identifying and measuring impact implies looking at a series of outcomes or influences linked one to the other, a chain that is rarely linear, the logic of which is more likely to be evident in hindsight than foresight and to be a function of perspective. A researcher may consider large aggregate numbers of participants an important impact; those participants who leave with feelings of greater dependency may not.

Measurement of impact requires looking over short and long time horizons, at both new knowledge and new capacities, at qualitative and quantitative changes, negative as well as positive, and at social as well as economic and technological issues. It requires being inclusive, looking at the broadest range of groups and institutions which the research, by chance or design, might have touched. It implies looking at influences on relationships which require many types of change to produce beneficial impact. It requires looking at what other actors in the funding and implementing community are doing and thinking, especially whether national systems are committing resources, policies and actions to incorporating results into practice. It requires also looking for impact cumulatively. Any one project may not generate important changes, but together or through several phases, may have impact on sector or institutional research capacity which is significant.

Finally, many linkages between research and change may be so diffuse as to make searching for them not worth the costs and effort involved; results more accurately seen as *catalysts* to development change, than facilitators of it, as other factors intervene to foster, deflect or undo their influence. At some point, it may be necessary simply to assume research, like education, is a public good -- the impact of which is necessary, but to a large degree unmeasurable.

## **IX. Utilisation**

A critical element or perspective in considering impact is the nature of utilisation as a phenomenon. No matter how "good" the research product, there are limits to its capacity to compel change. Utilisation is not simply a matter of someone picking up and applying a research product; dissemination, diffusion and transfer are concepts more part of research than utilisation. A more accurate image describes utilisation as "... a management and a communications challenge" (Potworowski, 1988:1), best captured in the notion of the "communication of innovation": a three way learning and adaptation process by which sender, message (in both content and form) and receiver interact and change. Each dimension matters, in terms of who is involved, how they behave, their other associations and experience, what they expect, or are expected, to do.

The nature of the research product is also critical to utilisation. All innovations make demands on users, from the simple (adding to existing knowledge) to the profound (implying prior knowledge be cast aside). Research outcomes are the *content* of the communication of innovation relationship, often the catalyst to begin the process and with potential to influence the direction and end-point of application. The more *accessible* the innovation is, the more it is divisible and manipulatable by users, the more likely it is to be used. All-or-nothing results are more difficult to adapt or accommodate to existing practices or knowledge and therefore riskier to potential users unwilling to move regardless of the apparent goodness of the innovation. This poses difficulties for researchers who do not always react well to having their results undone, recast, or only partially implemented.

The main agent in the utilisation environment is the user, the individual who makes the effort and takes the risk of interpreting, adapting and integrating the change into

existing knowledge, values and behavioural systems. Users are decision-makers and make impact difficult to assess where they incorporate only partial change; reject results but gain skills and confidence in analysing them; make significant (and to the researcher, perhaps inappropriate) adaptations. Users make certain demands on the research outcomes -- though not always explicitly. A result may have no impact, therefore, not because it is flawed, but because it has failed to communicate its relevance or risk-worthiness.

## **X. Conclusion**

Research impact suggests a particular range of issues and processes, the research project itself playing an intervening and variable role in these, but not necessarily the central one. Realising impact is less one of "moving down the R&D line" than of a set of dynamic and overlapping environments -- of research context, research project and research utilisation. Each relates more-or-less to the other as the research makes connections with those expected to act on its outcomes or results.

*Legend:*

*The boxes are temporally related only insofar as (a) and (e) reflect the context (sector, institution, country) as it is before and after the appearance of the research project.*

*(a) and (e) include, in addition to the situation of the "problem", other institutions, policy systems, social, cultural and economic factors, other donors, knowledge and information bases -- all those elements which can affect whether, how and what the research produces.*

*If the project has made no difference, (a) and (e) would presumably look the same, although time and other factors may well bring changes (which the research (c) may or may not take adequately into account).*

*Both pre and post project environments exist as functioning, integrated systems, and action within each to engage with and apply the research and its outcomes needs to be understood in terms of the conditions obtaining in that box -- not simply as peripheral to or in a linear relationship with the project (c).*

*Within each of (a) and (e), the directions and degrees of influence a research finding or result may have are multiple and largely unknown.*

*(b) and (d) are the areas where the research and its environments interact. It is in these areas that impact occurs over which the project can exert some influence.*

*Either area can extend to a greater or lesser degree into its respective environment. The implication of the size of the overlap is that, the bigger it is, the more the research and the environment influence one another and the more potential there is for outcomes, and therefore impact, to occur as part of the research activity. Thus, the more able the project is to facilitate, or at least trace, impact.*

*The overlaps can be wider or narrower depending on how actively and skilfully the research activity actually engages with the environments in seeking to establish itself or extend and/or apply its outcomes.*

*Typically for IDRC, (b) is the larger of the two areas, POs giving more attention to defining the scientific merits and development relevance of the study than to outcomes expected. Beneficiaries are usually noted, but rarely do projects define a utilisation-focused stage as such (i.e. beyond the plan to publish results or hold workshops).*

*The exiting dimension (d) is typically therefore small. It can be extended where networks are activated, where the research uses a participatory methodology, or where intermediary agents, as users, are involved early on in thinking about how the results will be translated in that or another phase.*

*Impact of the research may well be extensive in (e), but outside of (d) is difficult to track and suggests the need for the kind of separate follow-up project noted earlier.*

*The question of how large (b) and (d) can reasonably be expected to be is important. What can or should the Centre be prepared to do to extend its intervention reach? The answer will differ, inter alia, according to the project, to policy priorities, to budgets. The lines between (a) and (b), and between (d) and (e) are thus movable.*

*They are also porous in that responsibility for and influence over impact can subtly shift from research to application as the project begins and as it evolves (e.g. as interaction between the project and the implementing user changes).*

*The focus of the proposed study will be on what is happening/has happened in (b) and (d); on what actions taken, or not taken, in them serves to make research more or less engaged with its user community and impact more or less significant.*

## **PROPOSED FORMAT**

### **CASE STUDY REPORT**

***(Annotated)***

#### **General Comments:**

Descriptive sections should be kept short and concise. Any detailed information or analysis should be put into an appendix to the report. Summary tables or diagrams could be used to summarise this detailed information in the main body of the report.

*The focus of the report should be on the original and analytical components.*

*The page lengths provided are guidelines and should be viewed as a maximum.*

## **Highlights** (1 page)

*Summarised assessment of the impact of the set of projects in the case study.*

*Summary of the lessons which have been learned in terms of enhancing the impact of projects.*

*Feedback on the impact assessment approach and methodologies.*

## **1.0 Background** (½ page)

*Summary of history, purpose of Survey and particular case study.*

*Source: Terms of Reference, briefing, background documentation.*

## **2.0 Methodology** (½ page)

*Summary of the methodology used for the case study - evaluation framework, concept paper, issue papers, countries visited, people interviewed, documents reviewed, etc.*

*Source: Travel Itinerary, List of People Interviewed, List of Documents Reviewed - to be appended to report*

## **3.0 Project No./Title**

### **3.1 Description of Project** (2 pages)

*A brief description of the project which gives the reader an understanding of what it entailed, and brings up points to be analysed in subsequent sections. The focus is on what actually happened, rather than what was planned to happen since the evaluation is focussing on impact rather than efficiency or effectiveness.*

### **Objectives**

*Overall objective or long-term goal, intermediate objectives.*

*Were the objectives achieved? To what extent?*

*Source: Project Summary, Project Completion Report, Evaluation report, interviews with key participants and IDRC PO*

### **Strategy**

*Summary description of what means or methods were to be used to achieve the*

*objectives - e.g. participatory research or field trials, dissemination of results through focus groups or workshops or publications, etc.*

*Was the strategy appropriate to the achievement of the objectives? What alternative strategies could have been considered?*

*Source: Interviews with project leaders, Project Summary*

### **Inputs/Activities**

*Project inputs - financial, technical assistance, training, information and communication technologies, intangible inputs*

*Recipient inputs*

*IDRC inputs - funds, purpose, advice, other assistance*

*Other donor inputs - funds, for what purpose generally*

*Activities carried out - needs identification, research, workshops, training, etc. - in the project as a whole, and with IDRC funding specifically - if different.*

*Attributes of the inputs, i.e. the adequacy, innovativeness, timeliness of delivery, comprehensiveness, etc.*

*Were ICT's used in an innovative manner within the project?*

*Source: Project documents, interviews with key participants and IDRC PO*

### **Context**

*Short summary of the situation as it existed prior to project implementation and as it related to what the project was trying to achieve - i.e. political, economic, social, environmental, institutional, legal, framework.*

*The capacity and performance of the partner institution, the constraints it faced and the factors which enhanced its performance.*

*Other aspects of the environmental context as they existed or as they evolved over the course of the project which affected the delivery of inputs and the achievement of outputs e.g. changes in government, droughts, restructuring.*

*The role and participation of donors including IDRC and how they helped or hindered the delivery of inputs and the achievement of outputs.*

*Source: Project Summary, interviews with key participants and IDRC PO's, general knowledge of the country, project documents*

### **3.2 Project Outcomes (4 pages)**

#### **Outputs (Products, services, processes)**

*Outputs achieved - research results/publications, development or application of a new technology, people trained, etc.*

*Quantify as far as possible in terms of numbers, scope, duration, etc.*

*The quality, relevance/importance, innovativeness, timeliness, availability, accessibility, cost (production cost and user cost) and sustainability of outputs and how they affected the reach and impact of the project.*

*Source: Project documents, interviews with key participants and IDRC PO*

#### **Reach (Beneficiaries)**

*What was planned in terms of the reach of the project?*

*Was the intended reach achieved? The different types of beneficiaries and users of the project - beneficiaries, users, delivery agents, complementary agents - and the ways in which they benefited - which outputs did they use, were they affected directly or indirectly, were they affected positively or negatively, were they affected in the long, medium or short term?*

*Which were intended to benefit?*

*Which were not intended to benefit but did?*

*Which groups or individuals did not benefit but should have?*

*Which groups or individuals could have benefited but did not?*

*Identify which groups or individuals were involved in project identification, design, implementation, and assessment of results. Were all relevant players drawn in? Who else should have been involved or committed and how could they have been drawn in?*

*What were the factors affecting reach? (In terms of strategies, inputs, outputs, context, etc.)*

*What were the factors affecting use/non-use (attributes of outputs, quantity, etc.)?*

*Source: project documents, interview with project personnel and beneficiaries*

#### **Impact**

*What impact was planned and what impact was achieved?*

*Assess the consequences or influence of the use: increased income, improved quality of life, capacity building, policy changes, the development of new programmes..*

*Assess any negative consequences or influences.*

*Assess the factors which helped or hindered impact.*

*Identify IDRC's role in helping or hindering factors .*

### **3.3 Enhancement of Outcomes (2 pages)**

*What conditions or inputs would strengthen the determinants or contributors of beneficial outcomes?*

*What mechanisms would be the most effective?*

*What support could be provided to enhance outcomes?*

*Is there potential for replication, income generation, commercialisation, etc.?*

*Would the project benefit from an investment in ICT's? (Policy, applications, infrastructure, and/or ICT tools)*

*What role could IDRC play?*

*What lessons are to be learned for future projects of this nature?*

### **3.4 Public Relations (1 paragraph)**

*Is the project potential material for public relations? - do the results enhance the credibility of development research?*

*Can the impact or outcomes be easily communicated to the public?*

### **4.0 Project #2**

### **5.0 Project #3**

### **6.0 Summary**

### **Methodology (2 pages)**

*Comment on the appropriateness and usefulness of the impact assessment framework*

*and methodologies and their implementation to the case study, and propose improvements for future such studies.*

### **Project Components** (2 pages)

*Any summary conclusions which can be made across all of the projects in terms of factors hindering or enhancing impact:*

*Objectives*

*Strategies*

*Inputs - including reference to the use of ICT's*

*Outputs*

*Reach*

*Impact*

*and the inter-relationship among them.*

### **Results** (2 pages)

*Any summary conclusions which can be made in terms of outcomes and impacts in relation to: :*

*Impact area (commercialisation, ICT, policy, public good)*

*Sectors (agriculture, health, natural resource management, ICT, etc.)*

*Recipients (universities, NGO's, government ministries, individuals)*

*Countries*

### **Appendices**

*Terms of Reference*

*Travel Itinerary*

*List of People Interviewed*

*List of Documents Reviewed*

*Other Detailed Information*

## **Annex 4**

### **Terms of Reference For Impact Assessment of IDRC Completed Projects**

*Survey of Completed Projects (94-0821) 02287*

#### **1. Background**

*1.1 Over the past twenty-five years, IDRC has supported over five thousand research projects throughout the developing world. While the Centre has invested considerable resources in evaluating the activities it has funded, there is a need now for IDRC to expand its knowledge of the results that emerge from its projects.*

*1.2 It is important for IDRC to understand the impact of the research it supports: to know better the kinds of influences it is having on the development agenda and research capacity of developing countries; to use this accumulating knowledge to improve its own practice; and to inform its international partners and the Canadian public of the quality of its work. For this, the Centre needs to deepen its understanding of whether and how its support to development research contributes to social and economic development in the Third World.*

*1.3 The Evaluation Unit of IDRC is undertaking several initiatives to assess the impact of Centre-funded research projects. The approach to impact assessment is multi-pronged, consisting of studies that focus on specific facets of impact as well as geographically-focussed studies. This includes a Survey of Completed Projects, encompassing studies on IDRC's programming across the regions in the following four areas: commercialisation; public good/ quality of life; policy; and information and communication technologies. Another study explores Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA). Two geographical studies are being conducted  
- one in Southern Africa and one in Egypt.*

#### **2. Objectives of the Study**

*2.1 The overall objective is to assess the results of IDRC's investments over the years and to enable the Centre to fulfil more efficiently its role as a knowledge broker and a*

*results-oriented institution. We want to learn whether IDRC-support has made a difference, for whom, and how for the purpose of improving future efforts.*

*2.2 Specifically, the objectives are:*

*2.2.1 to document and analyse the outcomes of IDRC-supported development research;*

*2.2.2 to identify factors that have facilitated or hindered the application of research results;*

*2.2.3 to identify research outputs resulting from IDRC funding which have led to or could lead to significant impact on target beneficiaries;*

*2.2.4 to generate recommendations for application, commercialisation and/or for further development of specific research outputs;*

*2.2.5 to identify and document IDRC projects whose results provide material for IDRC's public information strategies;*

*2.2.6 to identify factors which facilitate the beneficial application of research outputs; and*

*2.2.7 to develop a framework for assessing the impact of development research.*

### **3. Main Tasks**

*3.1 Contract a coordinator responsible for overseeing the collection, analysis and synthesis of the impact study as well as for conducting case studies him- or herself. More specifically, the coordinator will: contribute to the identification of team consultants for case studies; coordinate the contracting with IDRC or one of its Regional Offices; ensure delivery of the studies; undertake one study him or herself; and prepare a Summary Report of the findings and contributions to the development of the conceptual framework of impact assessment (see Section 5 below).*

*3.2 Identify with the Evaluation Unit up to a specified number of IDRC funded projects (varying by impact study) that could be the object of case studies. The case studies will be conducted by a team of consultants of which the coordinator is part.*

*3.3 Contract consultants, where possible from the regions, to conduct the case studies and contribute to the synthesis report.*

*3.4 In general terms, each study will seek to identify outcomes of project. This will require identification of: the outputs generated; their use or application;*

*the groups touched by the project; impact that can be discerned; and factors that have facilitated or hindered the application of research results (e.g. commercialisation). On the latter, attention will be paid to the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs). The studies will also determine whether there exists any potential for application/or commercialisation of the research outputs and identify any particular lessons and success stories that could be used by IDRC in its programming and/or public information strategies.*

#### **4. General Approach**

*4.1 Each case will take stock of project impact by identifying and exploring areas of particular interest in that project (e.g. aspects of utilisation of research, commercialisation, information and communication systems or technologies, etc.). The relevant areas will be pursued in more detail. The starting point for the overall evaluation will be: what impact did or did not the project activities have and what factors contributed to or hindered the reach and impact?*

*4.2 Based on a preliminary file review, a review of IDRC Project Completion Reports and existing evaluations, and interviews with Program Officers, the consultants will identify an outline of impact and reach and the most interesting avenues for some more in-depth probing, as well as related key contacts. The field work methodology should allow for flexibility in data collection to explore impact, e.g. the 'ripple effects' of a project.*

*4.3 In addition to seeking findings on the individual projects and case studies, also sought is a synthesis of experience with different types of impact and factors that helped or hindered. The project level information will be aggregated into a larger picture by the Coordinator. This process will be assisted through the holding of a consultant team workshop to verify data interpretation, and to share and clarify findings.*

*4.4 Further details on approach, methodology and activities will be defined in consultation with IDRC staff and the Evaluation Unit. Additional background documentation include: a draft concept paper for the Survey of Completed Projects (94-0821/02287) prepared by Anne Bernard (current version dated March 25/1997); a draft "Framework for the Evaluation of Use and Impact of IDRC Projects" prepared by the Evaluation Unit (Cerstin Sander; current version dated Jan.23/1997); and other documents or methodologies as they emerge from the ongoing set of studies related to impact.*

#### **5. Key Responsibilities of Study Coordinator**

*5.1 The Coordinator will be contracted on a per diem basis for the length of the study. S/he will be primarily responsible for, but not limited to, the following tasks:*

*5.1.1 Using this Terms of Reference, and in collaboration with IDRC's Evaluation Unit and the responsible Program or Regional Office staff, develop a workplan of activities detailing the process for the entire study;*

*5.1.2 Using the draft "Framework for the Evaluation of Use and Impact of IDRC Projects" (see attached), develop data collection instruments;*

*5.1.3 Comment to the Evaluation Unit on the appropriateness of the framework for analysing IDRC's projects;*

*5.1.4 Review the list of completed projects identified for the study and group them for consultant case studies as appropriate;*

*5.1.5 Contribute to identifying evaluators who could carry out the case studies;*

*5.1.6 Recruit consultants and develop and manage their respective terms of reference and contracts (working with IDRC);*

*5.1.7 Undertake the coordinator's case studies (including pretesting of instruments and methodology prior to fieldwork by the rest of the team), data collection, analysis, and writing of case study report;*

*5.1.8 Coordinate case studies (this will include ensuring appropriate methodology and instruments are understood and applied by consultants; liaising with IDRC staff to facilitate relevant IDRC and external contacts during data collection; monitoring progress of consultants' activities and informing IDRC of progress; recommending modifications to methodology as study evolves; quality control over work being undertaken and individual case study reports);*

*5.1.9 Coordinate and facilitate a team verification workshop following the data collection and development of preliminary findings; (may not be included in all studies)*

*5.1.10 Coordinate and facilitate of a feedback and verification workshop with the project partners of the case studies. This will be designed in consultation with the Evaluation Unit and IDRC staff. The format will likely be a half-day workshop with representatives of project institutions, study consultants and coordinator, and Evaluation Unit and IDRC Program staff to discuss aggregate findings and another half day in individual project meetings to provide opportunity to exchange on specific case study findings. This one-day event should, if possible, be held the day following the team verification workshop. (may not be included in all studies)*

*5.1.10 Deliver draft and final reports of the case studies, as well as a synthesis of the findings from all case studies in accordance with the Evaluation Framework;*

*5.1.12 Any additional activities necessary to provide inputs and produce the required outputs for this study.*

*5.2 The Coordinator will be responsible to the IDRC staff who contracted him or her, with ongoing cooperation responsibilities with the Evaluation Unit and supervision responsibilities for the case study consultants.*

## **6. Time-frame and Schedule of Activities**

*6.1 The expected duration of the impact studies phase of the overall Survey of Completed Projects is approximately 9 months, starting in February 1997. The implementation of individual impact studies varies between 4 and 7 months. All studies are scheduled to be completed by October 31, 1997. The studies will subsequently synthesised into an overall report and refinement of the impact framework.*

## **7. Coordinator's Reporting Requirements**

*7.1 In addition to regular reporting on the progress of individual case studies and the use of the framework and methodologies, reporting format expectations are:*

*7.1.1 Delivery of coordinator's and consultant studies' detailed workplan within 2-4 weeks of signing of contract (varies by study);*

*7.1.2 Presentation of a written preliminary report covering progress and initial findings of study by coordinator at least two weeks prior to verification workshop;*

*7.1.3 Submission of draft Study report to the responsible officer at IDRC and the Evaluation Unit (Ottawa) by agreed upon date;*

*7.1.4 Submission of final Study report to same by agreed upon date, but not later than October 31, 1997.*

*1. See Outcome Mapping: A Method for Planning for, and Reporting on, Program Results by S. Earl, F. Carden, T. Smutylo, & C. Sander (Draft October 1, 1999).*

*2. The three synthesis reports prepared by the coordinators include: Impact Study of IDRC Supported Projects in the Areas of Social Policy, Public Goods, and Quality of Life by Anne K. Bernard & Tricia Wind (March 1998). Survey of IDRC Completed Projects in Southern Africa by Gail F. Motsi (November 1997). Evaluation of IDRC Project's Developmental Impact in Egypt by Gouda Abdel-Khalek and Sherif Kandil (November 1997).*

