Il existe également une édition française de cette publication.

La edición española de esta publicación también se encuentra disponible.
Introduction to IDRC

The International Development Research Centre is unique among international institutions. Funded by an annual grant from the Parliament of Canada, the Centre is an autonomous organization whose policies are set by an independent board of governors representing Canada, the industrialized nations, and the Third World.

In 10 years of operations, the Centre has funded more than 900 projects in 100 countries. With its headquarters in Ottawa, the Centre has regional offices in Africa (Dakar and Nairobi), Asia (Singapore), Latin America (Bogota), and the Middle East (Cairo).

The Centre's aim, according to its statutes, is to "initiate, encourage, support and conduct research into the problems of the developing regions of the world and into the means for applying and adapting scientific, technical and other knowledge to the economic and social advancement of those regions". It does this through providing support for Third World scientists and institutions to carry out research on subjects they feel are important in their own national context. Centre staff provide guidance in identifying and developing research projects, and assistance where necessary in the execution of the research.

There are four program divisions in the Centre, one of which is the Social Sciences Division. The other three are Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Sciences, Health Sciences, and Information Sciences.
To date, the Social Sciences Division has been directly involved in close to 350 projects, disbursing some $40 million in grants. This represents about 30 percent of the Centre's project budget.

The Division has at any time approximately 15 professional staff at the Centre's headquarters in Ottawa. In addition, it has regional liaison officers to represent it in each of the Centre's regional offices. The role of the regional office staff is crucial for it is often the first point of contact for any institution or individual approaching the IDRC with a research proposal. Most projects must eventually be approved by the Board of Governors, but it is at this early stage that much of the important development work is done, often in conjunction with program officers based in Ottawa.

So far, projects in Asia have absorbed about 30 percent of the Division's project funding, with Latin America and the Caribbean receiving about 20 percent, and Africa and the Middle East slightly less than 10 percent. IDRC's budget is not allocated on a regional basis, however, and these figures are likely to change in the future as increasing research activity is evident in Africa and the Middle East. Other resources go to regional or global projects, often networks of research projects studying the same problem in different parts of a particular region, or sometimes in different regions of the developing world.

The IDRC is fundamentally concerned with supporting research aimed at better meeting people's essential needs, particularly those people living in the rural areas of developing countries. In the broadest terms the role of the Social Sciences Division is to help societies gain, through research, deeper understanding of the processes of development and their effects on people and social institutions. As such understanding grows, problems and solutions can be more clearly identified, and effective policies formulated to contain them.
At present the Division focuses its research support in four broadly defined and flexible program areas: economics; education; population and development; and science and technology policy. Until recently a fifth program area concentrated on development management, but activities in this field are now integrated into the work of the other four programs.

Economics

The title economics provides a unifying theme for a program that is, in fact, an amalgam of many topics and issues. In common to the projects supported under this program is an emphasis on the importance of economic goals and objectives.

Historically, the program has concentrated much of its research support in the field of rural development, through studies at both the micro and macro levels of analysis. Principal project areas have included research on the economics of production, resource allocation, and employment. Although the agricultural sector has been the focal point of this support, increasing attention is now being paid to such non-farm activities as fisheries economics and small-scale industry.

Savings and capital investment represent another field in which the economics program activity is expanding, again with particular emphasis on the rural areas. Support has been given to projects investigating such areas as savings and asset acquisition, and the workings of informal and experimental lending operations.

Domestic marketing research is a relatively new field of support for the economics program. Project activities in this area focus on the broad impact of domestic pricing, marketing and storage policies with emphasis on the effects of these policies on producers and consumers in different socio-economic groupings. International trade and marketing research with reference to the agricultural sector is an area of possible support in the near future.
Macro-economics is also a relatively new field of support for the economics program, but one which is seen to be of increasing importance. Research in the area is designed to improve the quantitative basis for macro-economic decision-making in developing countries.

Cost-benefit analysis of public sector investments and policies with particular emphasis on impact studies is yet another area of continuing interest to the economics program. This reflects the increasingly apparent need to increase indigenous research skills to carry out social and economic assessments of large-scale development projects.

Education

The Division's education program began some years ago with a highly regional focus and attention in particular to mass delivery of primary education in Southeast Asia. That was and remains an important and highly successful undertaking. In the past two years the program has diversified considerably in terms of geographical spread and of subjects on which research is focussed. The program today is involved in a wide range of educational concerns that can be grouped loosely into three major areas of research.

Research related to the basic cycle of education remains an important focus, not least because a few years of primary school is still the only education that most people in developing countries can expect. In addition to research projects studying innovations within the primary school system, other projects are concerned with topics such as the retention of literacy skills, relations between pre-school education and subsequent achievement in primary school, non-traditional roles for teachers, and teacher effectiveness. Also recognized as important are studies of the implementation of costly universal primary education programs.
A second major focus is on the transition from school to work. In addition to research on the crucial transitions from school literacy to adult literacy, and from primary school to training and the workplace, this element of the program includes studies on apprenticeship policies, technical and vocational training, education and the labour market, education and self-employment, and tracer studies of graduates from different levels of the formal school systems.

The third area of concentration is encouragement and utilization of educational research itself. IDRC was a leader in establishing the Research Review and Advisory Group to investigate the role of educational research in solving educational problems in developing countries, and continues to be concerned with the furtherance of research training and research practice in the Third World.

A new and related initiative is the implementation of a small educational research awards scheme intended to provide young researchers in developing countries with the minimal financial support necessary to undertake small-scale research projects. One arm of this awards scheme is intended to apply particularly to researchers in West Africa.
Science and Technology Policy

IDRC defines science and technology policy research for development as any research that adds to the body of knowledge on how science and technology contribute to development. This knowledge should lead to better decisions and policies, and benefit not only government policymakers, but all those who use technology in their work — from factory managers to farmers, from urban decision-makers to peasants. It is to be noted that an interdisciplinary approach to the issues of technology and development is a relatively new phenomenon, and continues to be particularly relevant to the needs of developing countries as they face employment, management and market choices that are affected directly or indirectly by the selection and performance of technology.

Broadly speaking, research activities supported by the program can be divided into two categories: technology policy for industrialization and technology policy for meeting the needs of the rural areas.

Thus with IDRC support, the Andean Pact investigated a range of technology policy issues including the effect of relatively simple changes in production techniques on medium-sized firms; the use of skilled and unskilled labour in specific industries; and the sources of information about foreign technology which are needed in the bargaining process with a foreign investor. Another large activity receiving IDRC support was a nine-country study on Science and Technology Policy Instruments (including Latin America, Central America, Asia and Europe). This was designed to collect and to provide information to government policymakers about the effectiveness of different policy instruments which might be used to improve the application of science and technology to socio-economic development, as well as to examine policies designed both to promote indigenous technological skills and to ensure the greatest benefits from foreign technology.
Other activities which illustrate the scope of the program to date include an examination undertaken by the University of the West Indies and the University of Guyana of the ways technology has been transferred to the Commonwealth Caribbean and an assessment of the effects of this transfer. Institutions in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Korea, Bangladesh and the Philippines have explored ways in which imported technology, principally in the industrial sector, is transferred and used by national firms. The University of the South Pacific received a grant for research into the existing and potential energy needs of rural Fiji.

The researchers are examining alternative sources of energy to determine economic costs; and evaluating the likely social impact of various innovations in energy supply. This study also includes an evaluation of the feasibility of biogas production using alternative sources of raw material and the effects on health of using such raw materials.

Careful consideration is also given to proposals from researchers in developing countries to investigate such areas as national technology choices, the effects of technical change, the diffusion of technology and markets for technology. The program also is expected to respond to the needs expressed by the Third World in the period following the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology.
Population and Development

Two of the Centre's other program divisions also support research in the field of population. The Health Sciences Division funds research on contraceptive development and maternal and child health care, while the Information Sciences Division supports the development of national and regional population information systems. The Social Sciences Division's program for population and development research is primarily concerned with the policy aspects of population and development.

One concern of the program is research into population redistribution policies, including transmigration, colonization, and rural settlement. Special emphasis is given to the agricultural development potential of settlement schemes, and to related factors such as credit, technology, and administrative support.

Research on the social, economic, and cultural determinants of both fertility and mortality are important parts of the program. Projects already funded include studies of the value of children to parents, cultural factors in marriage and birth planning, and evaluation of health and population program policies.

Administrative and organizational studies of family planning programs are also a priority, and deal with such factors as cost, effectiveness, and the perception of such programs by individuals, couples and community leaders.

A significant new element of the program deals with urban accommodation policies, including the problems faced by towns and cities in attempting to accommodate poor rural-urban migrants. Research is concerned with devising strategies to meet this influx, and studying the social, economic and political factors inhibiting their success.
In order to obtain funding from IDRC, any proposal for a research project must meet certain criteria. These are kept as flexible as possible in order to permit consideration of a wide range of research proposals, but the following questions give an indication of the Centre’s basic funding philosophy.

- Does the proposal fit within a priority expressed by a government or research institution in a developing country?
- Are the research findings likely to have useful application beyond the country in which the project is carried out?
- Will the research help close gaps in living standards and lessen the imbalance in development between rural and urban areas?
- Will the project make the fullest possible use of local resources and research workers from the region?
- Will the project result in better trained and more experienced researchers?

Funding is naturally limited by the Centre’s program of work and budget, which are drawn up in consultation with developing country researchers and policymakers, and is subject to approval of the Centre’s annual grant by the Parliament of Canada.

Institutions receiving an IDRC grant are themselves expected to make a substantial contribution to the project, proportional to their ability to provide such support. This often takes the form of staff time, and use of facilities and support services.
Before a project is submitted to IDRC's Board of Governors for final approval it goes through several stages of development, involving both IDRC program staff and the institution presenting the proposal.

Preliminary enquiries and proposals often reach IDRC through one of the regional offices, which serve as the Centre's link with the researchers and policymakers of the developing countries, and actively encourage and assist the development of research proposals.

Once the initial request has been evaluated, a formal proposal will be prepared, often in collaboration with IDRC staff. At this stage the Centre may also provide additional assistance if it is needed, such as a pre-project development workshop. Each program division has special budget allocation for such activities.

When the research proposal is in a final form satisfactory to all concerned, a project summary and budget are prepared and placed before IDRC's Projects Committee for discussion. Having received approval in principle from the committee, the project finally goes before the Governors at one of their regular meetings.

This entire process, from initial contact to the receipt of a grant, may take months, even years if a considerable amount of project development activity is required. Much depends on factors such as the state of the initial proposal, its complexity, the need for pre-project activity, and the availability of local resources, facilities, and of course staff. Under normal circumstances, however, a written response to a preliminary proposal or enquiry can be expected within a matter of weeks.
Further information about IDRC in general, and the Social Sciences Division in particular may be obtained from any of the offices listed below.

**Head Office**
IDRC
Box 8500
Ottawa K1G 3H9
Canada

**West Africa**
IDRC/CRDI
B.P. 11007, CD Annexe
Dakar
Senegal

**Asia**
IDRC
Tanglin P.O. Box 101
Singapore 9124
Republic of Singapore

**Latin America & Caribbean**
IDRC/CIID
Apartado Aéreo 53016
Bogota D.E.
Colombia

**East Africa**
IDRC
P.O. Box 30677
Nairobi
Kenya

**Middle East & North Africa**
IDRC
7 Aflaton Street
Heliopolis, Cairo
Egypt