A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

SINCE IT WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1970, THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE (IDRC) HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO COUNT ON THE FRIENDSHIP, SUPPORT AND EXPERTISE OF EACH ONE OF YOU, ALL SPECIALISTS OF RENOWN IN YOUR RESPECTIVE FIELDS. Whether it be as Governor, project leader, scholarship recipient, decision-maker, donor or in any other capacity, you have left your mark on IDRC in various ways. In fact, you are our best ambassadors. Your support constitutes one of the major strengths of the Centre.

It is in this spirit that I will seek to expand contacts with you, the friends of IDRC. Through this newsletter that, by its title, honours this relationship, I will endeavour to guide you and IDRC into the year 2000. Three times a year, I will tell you about the measures IDRC is taking to meet the numerous challenges facing humanity in the next millennium. This will keep you up-to-date on IDRC orientations and programs for the coming years. You will see for yourselves how we have succeeded in forging ahead in our research activities by putting in place innovative partnerships with the private sector and our major donors. Each issue will also showcase, with examples, the positive impact the work of the researchers we support in developing countries is having. On occasion, you will also have news about your colleagues, including the Governors. This winter, in fact, we will be issuing a supplement that will introduce to you the current Board of Governors, whose task it is to direct the work of IDRC.

I invite you to read this first issue, and those that will follow, because they will give you a good idea of the considerable contribution IDRC is making, at the close of this century, to Canadian development aid. We will keep you informed about the activities of an organization that, now more than ever, focuses its efforts on reinforcing the scientific and analytical capacities of southern countries. In the course of the coming years, we will focus on providing equitable access to knowledge, promoting indigenous knowledge and capacities, as well as expanding community participation in development research. True to its mandate, IDRC will continue to help the populations of the South to shape their own future.

Enjoy the read!

Maureen O’Neill
President
LAST JANUARY, THE GOVERNORS HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO FAMILIARIZE THEMSELVES WITH A STUDY ENTITLED **LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS**, WHICH UNDERSCORES THE SUCCESS ACHIEVED BY THE IDRC SECRETARIATS. THE SECRETARIATS ARE A FLEXIBLE AND EFFICIENT WAY FOR SEVERAL DONORS, IN ADDITION TO IDRC, TO PROVIDE FUNDS TO PURSUE A SPECIFIC RESEARCH AGENDA. EACH IS GOVERNED BY AN AUTONOMOUS STEERING COMMITTEE AND IS ACTIVE IN A FIELD RELEVANT TO THE CENTRE’S PROGRAMMING.

The evaluation report reveals that the Secretariats effectively meet numerous and complex development needs. The Secretariats enable IDRC to forge ahead by providing it with an opportunity to undertake large-scale research projects in collaboration with other agencies.

The Economy and Environment Program for Southeast Asia (EEPSEA), established in 1993, illustrates this cooperation well. Financed by a group of seven donors, including IDRC, CIDA and the Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA), this Secretariat supports training and research related to economy and the environment. In six years, the work of EEPSEA has already contributed to strengthening the local capacity to analyze the economic impact of the environmental issues. By assessing the costs associated with environmental problems, this type of research makes it possible to provide decision-makers with judicious advice. Among other things, EEPSEA researchers caught the attention of local governments and, indeed, the whole world, when they published a study on the real costs of the smoke and the forest fires that ravaged Indonesia in 1997. As a result of their findings, preventive projects such as an early warning system, were implemented in the region. Another research project contributed to the development of the mining policy in Sri Lanka. In the Philippines, the results of research supported by EEPSEA made it possible to improve the Manila water supply.

These examples demonstrate that the Secretariats have helped IDRC to become a more flexible, creative and visible organization. By making it possible to integrate research and development activities, the Secretariats provide IDRC with an opportunity to get involved in interesting cooperative projects with other agencies. In fact, through its work with Secretariats, the Centre has enhanced its influence and reputation internationally with donors and others.

Experience has also shown that Secretariats are a successful mechanism for promoting resource expansion for development research and the use of knowledge in the South. Created during a period when IDRC was undergoing budget reductions, Secretariats became an important source of additional funding for the Centre's activities. The ten Secretariats evaluated during this study brought in more than $88 million (Cdn.) in external funding for the period 1992 to 1998. In 1992, 43% of the funding for Secretariats came from external funding. By 1997-1998, that proportion topped 80%.

In response to the *Learning Partnerships* study, IDRC has taken a number of measures to maximize the performance of this mechanism, including the adoption, by the Board of Governors, of a strategic framework for the work of all the Secretariats.
IDRC TAKES PART IN FEDERAL CONSULTATIONS DEALING WITH INTERNATIONAL TRADE

In April 1999, IDRC participated in public hearings held by the House of Commons Sub-Committee on International Trade, Trade Dispute and Investment in respect of major upcoming trade negotiations. Rohinton Medhora, team leader of the Trade, Employment and Competitiveness Program Initiative, presented a brief entitled Issues of Concern to Canada at Future WTO Negotiations. The brief explains IDRC's viewpoint on the role that Canada can play to enable developing countries to participate more effectively in the decision-making process of the World Trade Organization and in global trade in general. Some sub-committee members praised the work of IDRC in the area of trade and the presentation of Rohinton Medhora.

ACACIA AT THE FRANCOPHONE SUMMIT

IDRC used the occasion of the Francophone Summit in Moncton, New Brunswick, in September 1999 to promote the ACACIA program, whose purpose is to adapt information and communication technologies (ICTs) for use in African communities. ACACIA was set up in 1997.

Within the context of a technological showcase for official delegates at the Summit, two Senegalese researchers, invited by IDRC, presented the initial results achieved by the program.

Mohamed Fadhel Diagne and Modou Diouf vividly demonstrated how ICTs are helping communities in Senegal in the areas of electronic commerce, municipal administration, education and the fight against poverty. These demonstrations captured the interest not only of the delegates, but also of the media. The press presented ACACIA as a shining example of changes in the way aid is delivered, focusing on partnerships and reinforcing local capacities.

NORTEL – IDRC ASSOCIATION

The telecommunications giant Nortel Networks announced last June that it would contribute $2 million (Cdn.) to the establishment of two Centres for Excellence in telecommunications in Africa, in association with the IDRC project ACACIA and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The Centres will be established respectively in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dakar, Senegal. Their primary objective will be to increase expertise in information and telecommunications in Africa. In particular, the Centres for Excellence will provide training to high-level private and public sector decision-makers in Africa.

One month before, the South African branch of Nortel Networks and IDRC signed a $250,000 (U.S.) agreement to supply SchoolNet South Africa with three telecentres. The telecentres are key components of the Phumelela Networks Project that will introduce the Internet and computer sciences into schools in three South African provinces. This two-year project will end the isolation of the students and give them access to the information highway.

These two agreements are striking examples of the increasing number of partnerships between IDRC and the private sector, and will serve as models for other initiatives.

Mohamed Fadhel Diagne and Modou Diouf with the Hon. Gilbert Normand, Secretary of State, Science, Research and Technology.
NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

IDRC President, Ms. Maureen O’Neill, and the President of the African Development Bank (ADB), Mr. Omar Kabbaj, signed a cooperation agreement on April 29, 1999 in Montreat that will enable numerous public and private institutions in Africa to benefit from research assistance.

“This agreement is a first for the two institutions,” said Ms. O’Neill. "It will enable several African institutions, which will benefit from financial support from the Bank, to better measure, by means of research, the impact of various local, regional and national development projects."

The agreement will also enable IDRC and the ADB to co-finance development projects in various research fields such as the reduction of poverty, trade and regional integration, private sector development, governance, reconstruction of societies emerging from conflicts, sustainable resource management, and information and communication technologies.

DONORS GET TOGETHER

At the end of last year, IDRC welcomed some key donors to Ottawa to discuss strategic issues related to supporting development research in the South. There were representatives from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Germany as well as CIDA.

Most indicated that the programs in their countries now focus more on supporting activities related to research and knowledge. In the case of the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries, this translated into a 15% budget increase in 1999. A number of participants said that they had undertaken, or planned to undertake, special programs to aid universities in Africa. Carl Dahlman, who was responsible for preparing the World Bank’s World Development Report 1998, was also present at the meeting. Many participants pointed out to him that his report did not give sufficient importance to the research capacity of developing countries and exaggerated the role of knowledge as a tradable commodity.

Bellanet, an IDRC Secretariat, will continue to facilitate electronic discussions and communication between these stakeholders.

$150,000 DONATION TO IDRC

Mr. C. Fred Bentley, one of the first Governors of IDRC and a pioneer of international aid in Canada, donated $150,000 (Cdn.) to the fellowship he established with his wife, Helen S. Bentley. The Bentley Fellowship is called “Forage Crops in Sustainably Managed Agroecosystems.” Mr. Bentley belongs to the first generation of Canadian scientists who have put their knowledge and scientific abilities at the disposal of developing countries.

The purpose of the Bentley fellowship is to assist graduate and postgraduate students and Canadian researchers who are doing applied research in the area of integrating forage crops into the cropping systems of developing countries. The fellowship is in the amount of $20,000 per year. Individuals interested in contributing financial support to this fellowship can contact Chris Smart, Director, Special Initiatives Program, at IDRC. Mr. Bentley’s donation continues a tradition started by another former IDRC Governor, John G. Bene (now deceased), when he set up the IDRC fellowship in Community Forestry.

IN MEMORIAM

Alex MacDonald (deceased in January 1999)
Dr MacDonald served as an IDRC Governor from 1984 to 1992. A sociologist, he also directed the Coady International Institute of St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

William Demas (deceased in November 1998)
Dr Demas sat briefly on the IDRC Board of Governors in 1989 and 1990. Moreover, he served as Governor of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago.

Louis Rasminsky (deceased in September 1998)
Mr. Rasminsky was the Chairman of the Board of Governors from 1973 to 1977. Previously, he was the Governor of the Bank of Canada and the president of the Industrial Development Bank.
DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, IDRC ORGANIZED NUMEROUS CONSULTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH A VIEW TO COMING TO TERMS WITH ITS FUTURE AT THE DAWN OF THE NEXT MILLENNIUM. AMONG OTHERS, IN OCTOBER LAST YEAR, THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD A STRATEGIC SESSION IN MONT-TREMBLANT, QUÉBEC, TO DISCUSS MAJOR GLOBAL TRENDS THAT ARE LIKELY TO HAVE AN IMPACT ON IDRC ACTIONS.

Initially, the Governors identified the principal events that, over the past 20 years, have had an impact on research and the well being of the planet's inhabitants:

- the explosion of new information and communication technologies;
- the realization of the irreversibility of the impact of human activities on the planet;
- the expansion of democracy and the affirmation of human rights, accompanied by the dislocation of the family, the community and the State, and increased ethnic and religious tensions;
- globalization and liberalization, resulting in glaring inequality between nations, with, as a corollary, concern regarding the privatization of science;
- the replacement of physics by biology as the new science paradigm and the increasing power of biotechnologies.

During a second day of reflection, the Governors split into three groups and sought to identify the characteristics of the future environment that will have the greatest impact on IDRC activities.

The first group underscored the imbalances and increasing assaults to which the Earth's ecosystem is subjected, with the inevitable consequences on food, water supply and health. These imbalances also become the roots of social conflict. This group was also concerned about the growing gap in access to knowledge, the raids on the genetic resources of the South and the difficulty the South has in generating innovations. The impact of globalization on employment and training, the increasing importance of good governance and the importance of respectfully seeking ideological and socio-cultural diversity were mentioned as well.

The second group discussed the impact on IDRC of declining aid budgets, which may well compel IDRC to provide leadership through partnerships rather than directly. This group foresaw two other impacts on IDRC: a surge in new pathogenic agents and illnesses as well as the emergence of new conflicts. The Centre should also keep in mind new trends, including the increasing participation of women in scientific activities, the increasing importance of human rights and the emphasis that the government of Canada places on peace-making. Finally, noting the interdependence of humanity and the need to increase biophysical and social resilience, the third group identified two major needs:

- to better define and affirm leadership;
- to set up partnerships with civil society that promote better governance and a more democratic decision-making process.

At the plenary session at the end of their retreat, the Governors were struck by the apocalyptic tone of their analysis. They noted that humanity, with 6 billion people, already seemed incapable of avoiding environmental and social disasters. They wondered what humanity's fate will be when there are 3 billion more, as projected over the next 50 years. From these discussions and other consultations IDRC held with specialists and individuals responsible for policy-making in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the Centre finally retained three major axes that will guide its activities from now until the year 2005:

- environment and natural resource management;
- information and communication technologies;
- social and economic equity.

The next issue of Friends of IDRC will include more details about the new strategic framework which was approved by the Board of Governors at the end of October.
TOUCHING FAREWELL TO RAY AUDET

Last September, IDRC employees bid a fond farewell to Ray Audet, who retired after 28 years of loyal service to IDRC. Ray, who was associated with the Centre since its inception, contributed greatly to its expansion and its evolution over the years. He has been replaced by Johanne Charbonneau, who is now Vice-President, Resources, and Chief Financial Officer.

NEWS ABOUT FRIENDS AND ALUMNI

Last April, the Guelph University Chapter of the Canadian Federation of University Women honoured Dr Janet Wardlaw by choosing her as one of the “Guelph Women of Distinction.” Dr Wardlaw was Chairwoman of the IDRC Board of Governors from 1985 to 1992. The Federation described Dr Wardlaw, a dietitian by training, as a “model in the fields of education and management.”

IDRC BOOKS

Our Continent, Our Future
African Perspectives on Structural Adjustment
Thandika Mkandawire and Charles C. Soludo
Our Continent, Our Future is the very first publication to present the African perspective on the Bretton Woods approach to structural adjustment.
IDRC/CODESRIA/Africa World Press 1999
http://www.idrc.ca/books/855.html

A New World of Knowledge
Canadian Universities and Globalization
edited by Sheryl L. Bond and Jean-Pierre Lemasson
A New World of Knowledge examines how globalization has obliged universities in Canada to reassess and rethink the international dimension of their mission and practice.
IDRC 1999
http://www.idrc.ca/books/893.html

Supporting Democracy
The South Africa-Canada Program on Governance
S.L. Sutherland
Supporting Democracy provides a new window through which to view the transition to democracy in South Africa.
IDRC 1999
http://www.idrc.ca/books/892.html

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