In the 2003 budget delivered in February, the government committed to increase funding for the International Development Research Centre by 8 percent annually over the next two fiscal years. This was a great mark of support for the Centre. We welcome this timely news: it provides IDRC with a unique opportunity to strengthen research conducted in the South to improve people’s lives.

This additional funding will first allow us to invigorate existing programs in 2003–2004. Our priority remains with activities that enhance the links between research and policy in the three program areas identified in our Corporate Strategic Program Framework 2000–2005: environment and natural resource management; information and communication technologies (ICTs) for development; and social and economic equity.

Equally important, the Centre is now in a better position to respond to opportunities emerging from the changing, turbulent world in which we work. In the coming year, IDRC will strengthen existing exploratory activities, including research on knowledge systems in the South, the impact of the biotechnology revolution on developing countries, the role of ICTs in poverty alleviation, and the gender component of policy processes.

New program opportunities will also be seized in response to emerging situations in countries such as Kenya, which held peaceful democratic elections in December 2002, and through international processes such as the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NePAD). New activities will also be developed to build on the outstanding success of IDRC initiatives, such as the Tanzania Essential Health Interventions Project.

Other opportunities include replicating elsewhere in the world the highly regarded Environment and Economy Program for Southeast Asia (EEPSEA). EEPSEA supports training and research in environmental and resource economics. Its goal is to strengthen local capacity for the economic analysis of environmental problems so that researchers can provide sound advice to policymakers. Finally, we intend to expand our programing on ICTs for development in the Middle East and North Africa.
MESSAGE FROM THE HONOURABLE BILL GRAHAM
CANADIAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

On March 27, I had the pleasure of meeting the members of the Board of Governors of Canada’s International Development Research Centre for the first time. Meeting these distinguished, articulate, and interesting governors impressed upon me that three decades ago the architects of IDRC created a remarkable institution. The IDRC Act stipulates that, of the 21-member Board of Governors, only the Board’s Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and nine other members must be Canadian. Therefore, by tradition, the remaining 10 come from developing and OECD countries. The act also stipulates that at least 11 of the governors must have experience in international development, or training in natural, social, or technological sciences. These factors certainly define the Centre’s distinctive character and contribute to its success.

At my meeting with the Board, I emphasized our government’s commitment to increase international assistance by 8 percent a year in order to double our assistance budget by 2010. As outlined in the Budget Plan 2003, we have also pledged to “increase funding for IDRC by 8 percent annually over the next two fiscal years in recognition of its world-class reputation for supporting research aimed at finding innovative solutions to challenges facing developing countries.” As Canada’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, I fully endorse the Budget Plan statement and I am proud to be associated with this world-class institution. IDRC-supported research in the developing world is uniquely effective in providing much-needed support to Southern institutional and university researchers. I look forward to continued fruitful relationships with IDRC, with the Chairman of its Board of Governors, Gordon Smith, and with its President, Maureen O’Neil. The results of your work in the months and years to come will do much to advance Canadians’ commitment to sharing our knowledge and prosperity with the rest of the world.

The Honourable Bill Graham

WATER DEMAND MANAGEMENT:
AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

IN THE LAST YEAR, THE IDRC-SUPPORTED WATER DEMAND MANAGEMENT (WDM) FORUM MADE CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS IN ADVOCATING ALTERNATIVES TO SUPPLY MANAGEMENT OF WATER RESOURCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA.

From March 2002 to February 2003, IDRC supported four regional meetings that facilitated exchange among decision-makers on different yet equally important means to improve the effective use of scarce water resources: wastewater reuse, water valuation, public–private partnerships, and decentralization and participatory irrigation management. These forums were organized in collaboration with partners such as CIDA and the Government of Japan through UNDP’s Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.

With its partners, IDRC promoted the results of those regional meetings in a session on institutional reforms at the Third World Water Forum, held in Kyoto from May 16 to 23. “The Forum was invaluable for the Middle East and North Africa region,” says Eglal Rached, the Cairo-based director of IDRC’s regional office. Qahtan

Abdel Malik, an IDRC partner and irrigation engineer within Yemen’s Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, agrees: “The Forum was an opportunity to see how big our problems are, and it was also a chance to look at the problems of other people and their solutions. This Forum was an opportunity to share expertise and knowledge.”

The results of the four regional meetings conducted by the WDM Forum can be found at www.idrc.ca/waterdemand. IDRC also Web-casted the WDM session and other presentations delivered by IDRC staff and partners: Visit worldwaterforum.idrc.ca.
THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON ECOSYSTEM APPROACHES TO HUMAN HEALTH ENDED IN MONTREAL ON MAY 23. IT WAS A GREAT SUCCESS thanks to years of high quality work contributed by the EcoHealth team and IDRC’s numerous partners.

The Forum is a cornerstone for IDRC which created in 1996 a innovative research program commonly called “EcoHealth”. The EcoHealth approach recognizes the inextricable links between humans and their biophysical, social, and economic environments, and that these links are reflected in a population's state of health. IDRC and its Northern and Southern partners conducting EcoHealth research have already obtained successful results. The Forum allowed more than 300 researchers, decision-makers, and civil society delegates from the Americas, Africa, and Asia to discuss the avant-garde approach, share their findings and their lessons.

“It is fair to say that EcoHealth approaches have advanced this far by altering settled opinions, and disturbing conventional wisdom. We will know that we have succeeded when EcoHealth prevails as conventional wisdom”, said IDRC’s President Maureen O’Neil. That we are on the right path makes no doubt: at the end of the Forum, participants were increasingly convinced that the EcoHealth approach can help tackle the myriad of health problems awaiting us in the South and in the North, problems to which the North can no longer turn a blind eye.

Through the Forum a solid foundation was established to ensure that the EcoHealth approach endures and is available to more countries in the South. A community of practice already exists and was strengthened by the Montreal Forum. Participants said that the Forum validated their management approaches to environment and health. The scientific input of the international program committee, chaired by Dr Donna Mergler of UQAM and Dr David Rapport of the University of Guelph, was key to the Forum’s success.

A number of high-profile speakers participated at the Forum including the Director General of the World Health Organization, Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland. In a opening presentation by video, Dr Brundtland stressed that human and ecosystem health are intimately tied to poverty and insisted that research plays a determinant role in the quest for sustainable development. “Through research” she then added, “we can provide information and solutions to improve human health affected by economic, social, and environmental factors.”

Addressing a closing session, Québec’s new minister for the environment, Thomas Mulcair, also recognized the close link between human health and ecosystems. He noted that Québec’s ministries must stop working in seclusion and start cooperating to make sustainable development a daily reality.

It is important to stress that IDRC could host the first-ever forum on Ecohealth ever thanks to the support and contribution of its partner institutions, notably CIDA, the Biôdome de Montréal, Environment Canada, the United Nations Foundation, the International Society for Ecosystem Health, Québec’s Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, the World Health Organization, the Pan American Health Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), and Health Canada.

During the Forum, IDRC launched a new book untitled Health, an Ecosystem Approach. Authored by Jean Lebel, head of IDRC’s program initiative on Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health, the book explores IDRC’s experience in developing the EcoHealth approach.

The book describes a methodology for research (and development) that not only invites broad stakeholder participation but also offers appropriate solutions that involve both decision-makers and their communities.

In his preface to the new book, Pierre Dansereau, professor emeritus of ecology at the Université du Québec à Montréal, cannot hide his enthusiasm: “For an ecologist of early vintage, the emergence of EcoHealth is an historical step.”

IDRC’s Web site provides the book in full text as well as many other links to case studies, the Forum webcasts, reports, articles, and complementary resources. Visit www.idrc.ca/ecohealth.
THE FACE OF RESEARCH
PROFILE OF DR LIGIA NORONHA

SMILES COME EASILY TO DR LIGIA NORONHA. SHE SMILES WHEN MEETING PEOPLE. SHE SMILES WHEN TALKING OF HER WORK AND OF HER CHILDREN. AND, GRUDGINGLY, SHE SMILES WHEN BEING SPOKEN OF.

The latter is not surprising, as praise from her colleagues and peers is neither scarce nor stingy.

“Exceptional!” was one word used to describe Dr Noronha during her recent visit to Montreal for the International Forum on Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health. “Dynamic,” “wise,” and “skilled” were a few of the others used.

“Humble” should be added to that list. “It’s all very embarrassing,” she says of the lauding words heaped upon her. “I don’t think I deserve them.”

A development economist from India, Dr Noronha received her PhD from the London School of Economics, where she studied both renewable and non-renewable energy resources. Since 1988, she has been with the Tata Energy and Research Institute (TERI), now renamed The Energy Resources Institute, a globally minded organization based in India that conducts research in the fields of energy, environment, and sustainable development. As a senior fellow, she helped TERI establish its Western Regional Office in her native Goa in 1997, and has been running it ever since.

With this educational and professional background, it is not surprising that she is a strong believer in the importance of considering social, environmental, and economic aspects in any development plan. “You can’t get away from the fact that you need some economic growth, especially if you’re living in a developing country,” says Dr Noronha. “The reason is simple: if people don’t have jobs, if they are very isolated, then environment doesn’t become a priority for them.”

Recognizing this, the proponent of the ecosystem approach to human health is doing her best to ensure that people understand that there is a direct link between human well-being and the ecosystem in which we live and work. This Ecohealth approach is but one of the most recent additions to the sustainable development agenda that has shaped her career.

“Right at the beginning of my career, the sustainability debate became the most important issue, and that became my anchor — trying to bring about development that could be sustainable. So whatever I do, and whatever kind of research I’m involved in, I always choose to study those problems and those situations that require some kind of understanding of the context, and call for improving the situation.”

The bettering of circumstances and lives is a driving force behind much of Dr Noronha’s work, and her collaboration with IDRC is a testament to that fact. Beginning in the late 1990s, with support from IDRC, Dr Noronha and TERI looked at human health and well-being in 57 mining villages in the Indian state of Goa over the course of nearly five years. Mining for iron ore is among the region’s most important wealth generators, but mining and associated activities have had considerable adverse impacts on the environment, natural resources, and consequently on the people living and working nearby.

Dr Noronha is quick to point out that the mining situation in Goa is far from one of the worst in the world, but that it provided an effective laboratory to understand the interplay between local people and mining companies, and the factors that determine human well-being in a mining region. “I think the insights that we have developed through our study of mining in Goa are pretty generic and can be used anywhere else,” she says.

Through her work at TERI, Dr Noronha is often required to travel to various research sites, conferences, and gatherings. Her three children, aged 8, 10, and 12, are accustomed to their mother’s frequent travels, and during her absences, Dr Noronha speaks with them every day. “I have a wonderfully supportive family,” she says. “That helps in being a woman researcher, because — and this is true of women everywhere — you are not able to be a professional woman unless you have support from your family.”

Other than maintaining that balance between motherhood and career, Dr Noronha has not found that her gender has had any impact on her professional advancement “I don’t notice that I am a woman. In the industry I’m in, if you’re good, you’re good. If you’re not, you’ll fall by the wayside whether you’re a man or a woman,” she says.

This summer Dr Noronha is transferring to the head office in Delhi, where she will focus on a wider set of development policy issues. Despite her mild trepidation, it’s a move that fits well into her adventurous approach to new intellectual pursuits. “I like to try new things. Getting involved in new projects and new research ideas doesn’t intimidate me. I feel I can take up a challenge and get on with it, and to some extent deliver,” she says. “I’m more adventurous in terms of challenges that are not physical. If you asked me to climb the Himalayas, I wouldn’t do it, but if you asked me to take up a new topic, I would. That excites me.”

And she smiles.
AT THE BEGINNING OF APRIL, WHILE CHAIRING THE XII INTER-AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF LABOUR IN MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY, I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH IDRC STAFF IN MONTEVIDEO AND TO VISIT TWO LOCAL IDRC-SUPPORTED RESEARCH PROJECTS.

This was my first encounter with IDRC-supported work on the ground, in a developing country. In collaboration with the Canadian Embassy in Uruguay, IDRC funds The Street Kids Projects, managed by the nongovernmental organization El Abrojo. The project promotes the use of information and communication technologies as an educational tool to build the self-esteem and survival skills of homeless children. The ultimate goal is to rehabilitate the young people and get them into a more secure environment. The issue of homelessness is very important to me and I was proud to see that the Canadian government, through the Canada Fund and IDRC, is making a small difference in an area of Montevideo.

In the northern part of the city, I also visited some resettlement sites where the IDRC-supported Environmental Management Secretariat is conducting projects. One of those key initiatives is the Differential Collection of Garbage Project. It provides appropriate tools to garbage sorters, mostly poor women without formal income, to dispose of waste in an environmentally sound fashion, thereby preventing waste products from being dumped into waterways and eliminating the creation of new garbage dumps. The project also provides support to these workers to help them build more formal teams or cooperatives that would register and systemize their activity, allowing them a collective identity and a revenue.

It was a pleasure for me to see firsthand the difference IDRC is making in people’s lives!

The Honourable Claudette Bradshaw

MESSAGE FROM THE HONOURABLE CLAUDETTE BRADSHAW
CANADIAN MINISTER OF LABOUR

A cell phone-based market information service that has raised the income of Senegalese farmers; a world of learning possibilities opening to African students with access to the Internet — these were among the community experiences shared at the "Network-Africa’s Future", an international conference, organized by IDRC in South Africa, from April 13 to 16.

This landmark event brought together more than 200 participants, including researchers, practitioners, business people, donors, and government officials. They were united to explore what has been learned in applying information and communications technologies (ICTs) within African communities and to encourage clear-eyed assessments of future directions. This event was the first Pan-African Conference to be hosted by Acacia, an IDRC program initiative that seeks to empower sub-Saharan communities with the capacity to apply ICTs to their own social and economic development.

The conference participants “walked the walk” with their demonstrations of technology. Wifi (wireless fidelity) Internet access was available at the conference venue; participants evaluated sessions in "real time" using electronic polling devices; and a small theatre group punctuated the conference with extemporaneous "development-dramas" that thrilled the audience and kept them engaged.

A broad array of presentations illustrated the numerous development challenges being addressed through creative and effective ICT-based solutions. They also highlighted some of the main obstacles preventing further progress. Outdated regulations were seen to be an ongoing problem, and one conference theme was the need to reform the telecommunications sector.

NETWORKING THE FUTURE OF AFRICA
A LANDMARK EVENT

CONNECTIVITY AFRICA
The Canadian Minister for International Cooperation, the Honourable Susan Whelan, officially announced Connectivity Africa on behalf of the Government of Canada in a video address to the conference.

"I am confident that IDRC, together with its partners at the UN Economic Commission for Africa, as well as its partners throughout Africa, will be successful in implementing this new initiative building on their combined experience in connectivity projects in the region."

"The time has come for governments and ‘telcos’ to join forces in a common effort to improve access to ICTs in Africa, to work together to eliminate barriers to inter-connection and to low-cost solutions that can make a real economic difference to Africans," says Connectivity Africa manager Steve Song, from IDRC.

Connectivity Africa is one of three initiatives supporting the work of the G8 Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force), an international coalition of government, industry, and civil society organizations seeking to help bridge the global digital divide. The DOT force is co-chaired by IDRC President Maureen O’Neill.

You can learn more about the conference at www.acacia.org.za or link to Acacia from the IDRC homepage at www.idrc.ca.
TANZANIA’S HEALTH MINISTER VISITS IDRC

In May, the Honourable Anna Abdallah, Tanzanian Health Minister, shared with Canadians the results of the pioneering Tanzania Essential Health Interventions Project (TEHIP). TEHIP is a joint initiative of IDRC and Tanzania’s Ministry of Health, with financial support from CIDA. The project is experimenting with ways of strengthening health interventions at the district level in the districts of Morogoro Rural and Rufiji.

The Minister showcased the progress TEHIP has made in improving poor people’s health at the IDRC/CIDA International Forum “Infectious Diseases: An Economic Struggle?,” held on May 8, 2003, at the Conférence de Montréal.

Later, during a presentation at IDRC by Tanzania’s Chief Medical Officer, Dr Gabriel Upunda, Minister Abdallah asked: “Now that the entire political family of the country is ready for take-off, how do we scale up TEHIP? We are ready to implement it throughout Tanzania, and part of my visit here is to explore how the Government of Canada can help us to scale up this project.”

For more information on TEHIP, visit www.idrc.ca/tehip.

A NEW VICE-PRESIDENT, RESOURCES

Denys Vermette joined IDRC in April 2003 as its new Vice-President, Resources. Mr Vermette’s many years of experience in six different organizations provide him with a strong background in all areas covered by the Resources Branch. Most recently, he was Vice-President of Corporate Services at the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, responsible for the management of financial, human, information, physical, and information technology assets and resources, as well as communications and strategic planning.

APPOINTMENTS TO IDRC’S BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Graham has appointed Paul Thibault from Canada and Shekhar Singh from India to the IDRC Board of Governors.

Mr Thibault was recently appointed President of CIDA. Previously, he served as Associate Deputy Minister, Foreign Affairs, and Associate Deputy Minister of Industry.

Mr Singh is currently Director of the Centre for Equity Studies in New Delhi. Mr Singh’s main areas of work include government transparency and ethics, and environmental management. He is also the founding member of the National Campaign for the People’s Right to Information.