



## **External Review of the IDRC Evaluation Unit**

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# Executive Summary

## 1. Introduction

This is a brief summary of the results of the external review to assess the contribution of Evaluation Unit to IDRC's mission. The external review was looked at through the lens of the strategy approved by the Board of Governors to guide the work of the Unit, with particular attention paid to the contribution the Unit made during the current five-year planning period 2000-2005.

The external review focused on the Evaluation Unit's three main areas of work:

- Evaluation tools and methods development
- Strategic evaluation
- Evaluation capacity building of boundary partners

A summary of the main findings for each of these main areas of work appears in Section 3, below.

## 2. Methodology

The external review of the Evaluation Unit was conducted by an experienced program evaluator with 30 years experience and a special expertise in internal evaluation. The external review employed a mixed methods approach that combined primarily qualitative methods and selected quantitative methods (bibliographic searches, citations, tallies of Internet hits, and ratings of workshop evaluations).

Given the purposes for the external review and the questions to be answered, the external review relied heavily on qualitative methods. The major source of data was semi-structured individual and/or group interviews with current and former IDRC staff and boundary partners and document/Web site reviews (e.g., evaluation training materials, Performance Review and Assessment Reports). IDRC staff included Evaluation Unit staff, Program Branch staff, program managers, and senior management. Partners included grant recipients, technical collaboration partners, and previous external evaluators. The interview process followed the semi-structured interpretive model. In keeping with this model, the interviewer asked a series of main questions worded to address the purposes of the review, but not to limit the possible responses. Follow-up questions pursued the specific points and understandings of the interview partners.

A total of 105 persons participated in the external review. The external reviewer conducted 31 individual and/or group interviews at IDRC headquarters in Ottawa. Because it was important to involve partners from the South in the external review, two evaluation strategies were employed. For depth, the first strategy involved site visits and

personal interviews with 46 persons in four countries from IDRC's Latin America and Caribbean Region. A researcher/translator who was familiar with evaluation terminology and programs in the region facilitated the Spanish-language interviews. For breadth, the second strategy was an e-mail survey involving 28 IDRC managers/staff and boundary partners from the other five IDRC regions around the world.

The interview data was complemented by a selected review of IDRC documentation and a bibliographic review that included searches of the global literature on evaluation and development research to assess the extent to which the major work/products of the Evaluation Unit, such as Outcome Mapping, can be found to have penetrated or influenced the professional and practice literature.

The main strength of the external review process was the input from over 100 key informants who were familiar with the Evaluation Unit over the period covered by the review. Given that data was gathered from over 100 persons worldwide, it is highly unlikely that the validity of the data was compromised.

Because the review employed sampling and field work could be conducted in only one region, there was the potential for sampling bias. To address this possible weakness, the sampling frame was carefully examined by the commissioner of the review to identify any intentional biases. Another potential weakness was that only one person was responsible for the external review. The original plan was to have a team that included not only the core competence of expertise in internal evaluation, but also a second team member familiar with trends in public sector management in official Ottawa. Unfortunately, the second potential team member identified was not able to devote enough time to the project and so withdrew early on. In view of the time constraints, another consultant could not be found and so the decision was taken to proceed with a modified methodology and scope of work for the review. This potential weakness was counterbalanced by the fact that the external reviewer is a highly experienced program evaluator with special expertise in internal evaluation, which was the subject of this review.

### **3. Summary of Findings**

#### **3.1 Findings Regarding Evaluation Tools and Methods Development**

The interview and complementary data sources (documents, bibliographic reviews, tallies of Internet hits, ratings from workshops) plainly demonstrated that the Evaluation Unit succeeded in conducting and supporting research to improve evaluation tools and methods that would strengthen the use of evaluation for development research. The feedback was clear that the Evaluation Unit had listened to the needs of IDRC staff and partners and, when appropriate tools were not available from other sources, the Unit took the initiative to develop them.

Regarding specific tools, over the last decade the Evaluation Unit has been developing its Outcome Mapping tool. Outcome Mapping addresses the perennial problems of

defining and measuring the results and impacts of projects, programs, organizations, and networks. The data from all sources indicated that Outcome Mapping was seen as an important tool for demonstrating the “attribution” for results and avoiding many of the problems inherent within the conventional logical framework and results-based management frameworks. Outcome Mapping has been well-accepted by IDRC staff and boundary partners alike and it has helped IDRC to achieve a high level of recognition in the development field internationally. Overall, the primary concerns about Outcome Mapping were practical ones: simplifying the model for field application, supplying training and supports, and creating a community of users.

The Organizational Assessment and Capacity Building Tools received less recognition than Outcome Mapping, yet there was general agreement that these tools were essential for strengthening institutions and fostering learning in the development field. Feedback from regional partners underlined the significance of these tools, but the review showed that the Evaluation Unit need to pay greater attention to their dissemination to IDRC staff and training/support for their use by regional partners.

### **3.2 Findings Regarding the Development and Coordination of IDRC’s Evaluation Activities and Systems, Including Strategic Evaluations**

At IDRC, evaluation is decentralized and program initiatives are responsible for their own evaluation work. The Evaluation Unit provides central coordination and support. The Evaluation Unit also carries out strategic evaluations, that is, evaluations relevant to a number of different programs and programming areas in the Centre.

The data collected from all sources clearly demonstrated that the Evaluation Unit had fulfilled its mandate under the Strategic Plan and that its boundary partners were very satisfied with its performance. In my experience as an external reviewer, the performance of IDRC’s Evaluation Unit was exceptionally positive. This positive performance appeared to be related to the Evaluation Unit’s user-orientation and responsiveness to boundary partners, its promotion of a tailored evaluation process rather than a standardized template, its focus on evaluation for learning as well as accountability, and its creation of innovative and relevant evaluation tools. The major concerns related primarily to capacity: Would a relatively small evaluation staff continue to supply the evaluation supports and capacity building so highly valued by IDRC and its partners, while meeting the increasing corporate evaluation needs?

During the period of the 2000-2005 Corporate Strategy and Program Framework, the Evaluation Unit was responsible for designing and coordinating strategic evaluation on important topics, particularly the influence of research on public policy. Designed to provide learning at the program and corporate levels, the policy influence strategic evaluation sought to document what the Centre means by policy influence and to systematically examine how the research IDRC supports influences policy.

The interview data, as well as a review of articles, documents, background reports, presentations, and summaries of workshops all supported the conclusion that the policy

influence strategic evaluation was well-received and that it complemented other “research-to-policy” work in the Centre and its regions. The primary concerns related to the policy study were methodological ones, such as the selection of cases for the case studies, need to expand the theoretical model to include regional and local differences, and the need for thorough cross-case analyses before drawing conclusions.

Coordinating and supporting external reviews is another responsibility carried by the Evaluation Unit. Program initiatives (PIs) are the primary programming modality at IDRC. They have a life-span of five years and after that time they may be extended, modified or discontinued. Near the end of the five year period, each program initiative undergoes an external review. The purpose of external reviews is to provide an independent, informed view about the performance and results of programs that is an important element of accountability for program effectiveness, as well as for decision making and learning. The Evaluation Unit prepares a quality assessment, based on international evaluation standards, on each external review report. The assessment of the role of the Evaluation Unit in managing external reviews was addressed through interviews and by a review of documents, reports and memoranda.

Compared to the strategic evaluations, the external reviews managed by the Evaluation Unit did not receive as much commentary during the interviews. Those that commented on them felt that they were an important part of IDRC’s corporate accountability and learning regimen. Program managers and staff reported that the Evaluation Unit were very supportive during the external review process. Reviews of documents, reports, and memoranda indicated general satisfaction with the external reviews and supported their value. Concerns raised about the external reviews included their costs, occasional difficulties in recruiting external evaluators, and the need for a system of internal evaluation or focused-evaluations to provide ongoing feedback during the long intervals between external reviews.

### **3.3 Findings Regarding Strengthening Capacity for Evaluation**

The Evaluation Unit engages in capacity building both with partner organizations and within the Centre. In Evaluation Strategy: 2000-2005, the strengthening of evaluation capacity with IDRC partners was a high priority.

Feedback from all sources showed that the Evaluation Unit performed very well in developing evaluation capacity within IDRC and with its boundary partners. Senior management in particular appreciated the leadership taken by the Evaluation Unit in developing capacity within IDRC, including strategic evaluations that deepen knowledge across the Centre and its partners and building greater capacity for corporate-level evaluation and learning through the Unit’s work on development of the Rolling-Project Completion Report, Corporate Assessment Framework and Annual Learning Forum processes. The richness of information available on the Evaluation Unit’s website was also recognized and greatly appreciated by IDRC and its partners alike.

The ability of IDRC's Evaluation Unit to support partners and build evaluation capacity was a key issue for both program managers and regional boundary partners. The overall approach appeared to be working well, but there was a need for greater capacity building in the program areas and in the regions. In particular, within IDRC's decentralized evaluation model, the evaluation capacity of programs and regional partners needs to be expanded and deepened. This would appear to require a strengthening of the capacity of the Evaluation Unit to provide training and supports systematically across the system. The steps by the Evaluation Unit to create "regional nodes" appear to be an important initiative in this direction. An Evaluation Unit staff member who spoke Spanish fluently would be an asset to building evaluation capacity in Latin America.

In terms of what has worked well for the Evaluation Unit, there seems to be clear support from interviews, documents, and articles that the Evaluation Unit has built an approach to evaluation that many of the managers, staff, and regional partners have found useful.

In terms of what could work better, senior management continued to demand a more emphasis on accountability and results, more attention to evaluation capacity building within the Centre and across the regions, and more attention to meeting corporate evaluation needs—especially testing and refining the R-PCR, CAF, and ALF processes. For their part, program managers and staff, as well as regional partners, were concerned about receiving sufficient training and support for their evaluation work.

In short, the external review clearly showed that IDRC's Evaluation Unit has met the core elements of its strategic plan. Overall satisfaction with the performance of the Evaluation Unit by key boundary partners was very good. There appear to be significant challenges for the Evaluation Unit, however, in the years ahead as it strives to respond to increasing corporate evaluation needs, while continuing to strengthen the Centre's evaluation systems, as well as provide training and supports for the Centre's program areas and its regional partners.

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## **1. Background Information**

There were two primary reasons for an external review of the Evaluation Unit at IDRC. First, the Evaluation Unit had not been externally reviewed since its creation in 1991, while almost all other program units at IDRC had been externally reviewed (in many cases twice). There was a feeling, not least in the Evaluation Unit itself, that the Unit should submit itself to the same rigorous external review as others. Second, and more importantly, the Evaluation Unit wanted an external review of the Unit that would provide it with useful input into its functioning and future directions, and would assist in the Unit's strategic planning for 2005-2010. The Evaluation Unit must submit to the Board of Governors an Evaluation Strategy for 2005-2010 to accompany the newly approved Corporate Strategy and Program Framework 2005-2010. The time was right, therefore, for an external review of the Evaluation Unit's strategy and performance.

Far from being the reluctant subject of an external review, the Evaluation Unit initiated this external review of itself. The Evaluation Unit will be the primary user of the review findings. Senior Management was fully aware of and supportive of the external review.

The Evaluation Unit asked the Policy and Planning Group to manage the external review, since the Evaluation Unit could not be both the subject of the review and the manager of the review. Consequently, the external reviewer reported to the Director of Policy and Planning. All administrative and logistical arrangements were handled through the Policy and Planning Group.

## **2. Purpose of the Review**

The overall purpose of the review is to assess the extent to which IDRC's Evaluation Unit has contributed to IDRC's mission since the Unit was created in 1991, with particular attention paid to the contribution made during the current five-year planning period 2000-2005. This was looked at through the lens of the strategy approved by the Board of Governors to guide the work of the Unit. The review assessed the relevance of the Evaluation Unit's work, the quality of that work, and how well the Unit's proposed strategy reflects the latest thinking in the evaluation profession. Bearing in mind this overall purpose, the external review is meant to provide concrete and useful insights and suggestions to the Evaluation Unit and IDRC's Senior Management on changes that should be considered for the new Evaluation Strategy 2005-2010, in the light of the latest thinking in the evaluation profession.

## **3. Intended Users and Use of the Review**

There are three sets of users of this external review. First, the primary user is the Evaluation Unit, which proposed the review. The Evaluation Unit's interest is in obtaining an outside perspective on how it is doing and input to assist it in its planning for the future, especially in the crafting of the Evaluation Strategy 2005-2010. Second, Centre management is a user, in terms of providing itself with an external review of the

merits of the approach it has supported through the Evaluation Unit over the past ten or so years. Third, the IDRC Board of Governors will use the review as background material to its consideration of the new Evaluation Strategy 2005-2010. It should be clear that the external review will serve as only one input for the Centre Management and Board of Governors to assess the performance of the Evaluation Unit and the proposed Evaluation Strategy 2005-2010.

#### **4. Issues and Questions for the Review**

During 2000-2005, the Evaluation Unit worked in four main areas:

- i. Evaluation tools and methods development
- ii. Strategic evaluation
- iii. Evaluation capacity building of boundary partners
- iv. Evaluation information systems

The review, however, addressed the first three areas of work. These three main areas of work are explored in detail at [http://web.idrc.ca/en/ev-58122-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://web.idrc.ca/en/ev-58122-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html). The Policy and Planning Group and the Evaluation Unit mutually agreed not to include evaluation information systems in the review because there had been considerable evaluative thinking and several major changes in systems and practices in the Centre on that topic in recent months. Even though evaluation information systems were not included in the terms of reference, I did nonetheless find some materials on that theme to be relevant to the review; I have therefore chosen to include some material on the topic of evaluation information systems in this report. (See Section 10.2.2 below.)

The Evaluation Unit had four key boundary partners in its work in 2000-2005:

- i. IDRC management
- ii. IDRC staff (i.e., program officers)
- iii. IDRC's partners in the South
- iv. Other donors who are active in research for development and evaluation methodologies

This review addressed the first three boundary partners. The boundary partners are defined in the Unit's strategy at [http://web.idrc.ca/en/ev-27678-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://web.idrc.ca/en/ev-27678-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html). The external review addressed the following specific questions with respect to the Evaluation Unit's three main areas of work and its three key boundary partners:

1. How well has the Evaluation Unit addressed its strategic plan? Have there been accomplishments of the Evaluation Unit outside the framework of the strategic plan?
2. How satisfied are the Evaluation Unit's major boundary partners with its performance? In their views, what has worked and what has not worked? How might the Evaluation Unit and its processes be improved?

3. What is the vision for the Evaluation Unit in the longer-term? What should be the Evaluation Unit's goals for the next strategic plan? How can the Evaluation Unit choose among competing priorities to best meet the needs of IDRC management, staff, and partners in the South?

## **5. Values and Principles Guiding the External Review**

The external reviewer was guided by the principles and values of evaluation, especially the norms of the relevant professional societies. The external reviewer had a commitment to the general set of values outlined in IDRC's current Corporate Strategy 2000-2005, e.g., a commitment to sustainable and equitable development, capacity building, mutual respect and working in partnership with people from the South.

Given the importance that IDRC in general, and the Evaluation Unit in particular, attaches to working with partners in the field in building evaluation capacity, it was important that field work be a part of the review and contact be initiated with partners in the regions.

It was also important that the external reviewer should possess expertise in:

- use of evaluation as an internal function in organizations
- development/research evaluation
- Canadian context
- international (specifically Southern) evaluation expertise, organizational development/learning and evaluation expertise
- trends in evaluation worldwide

Another principle guiding the review was that the external reviewer should be independent of Evaluation Unit support. To avoid real, potential, and apparent conflicts of interest, the external reviewer should not include someone whom the Evaluation Unit had recently funded or supported. Further, neither the Evaluation Unit nor the Policy and Planning Group will hire the external reviewer for the two years following completion of this assignment.

## **6. Methodology Employed in the External Review**

As noted in Section 4, the overall approach to the external review linked each of the Evaluation Unit's three key boundary partners to each of the Unit's three main areas of work, forming a 3 x 3 matrix.

The Evaluation Unit's three main areas of work addressed in the review were:

- i. Evaluation tools and methods development
- ii. Strategic evaluations
- iii. Evaluation capacity building of boundary partners

The Evaluation Unit's three key boundary partners identified for the review were:

- i. IDRC management
- ii. IDRC staff (i.e., program officers)
- iii. IDRC's partners in the South

The external review employed a mixed methods approach that combined primarily qualitative methods and selected quantitative methods (bibliographic searches, citations, tallies of Internet hits, ratings of workshop evaluations). Given the purposes for the external review and questions to be answered, the external review relied heavily on qualitative methods.

The major source of data was semi-structured individual and/or group interviews with current and former IDRC staff and boundary partners and document/Web site reviews (e.g., evaluation training materials, Performance Review and Assessment Reports). IDRC staff included Evaluation Unit staff, Program Branch staff, program managers, and senior management. Partners included grant recipients, technical collaboration partners, and previous external evaluators.

The interview process followed the semi-structured interpretive model. In keeping with this model, the interviewer asked a series of main questions worded to address the purposes of the review, but not to limit the possible responses. Follow-up questions pursued the specific points and understandings of the interview partners. Some interviews were more explicitly structured to address problems or issues identified in earlier interviews (e.g., Was it possible to learn and apply Outcome Mapping through self-study using only the Outcome Mapping book and CD-ROM?) or to obtain specific information (e.g., How could regional partners supply the type of results information needed by IDRC senior management?).

A total of 105 persons participated in the external review. The external reviewer conducted 31 individual and/or group interviews at IDRC headquarters in Ottawa (see Annex A for details). This included 10 individual interviews and one group interview with IDRC senior management, 13 individual interviews with IDRC Program Managers and Program Branch Staff, and 6 individual interviews and several group interviews with Evaluation Unit staff.

Because it was important for both IDRC and the Evaluation Unit to involve partners in the regions in the external review, two evaluation strategies were employed – field work and an e-mail survey. The first strategy involved direct field work in a sample of sites in one of the IDRC regions.

Originally, the plan was to do field work in two regions. This was not possible for several reasons: one regional office had Board members visiting it during the review, literally everyone from the east and southeast Asia office was travelling, and a major partner in the West Africa region was experiencing administrative and financial difficulties. There was concern that sending an evaluation team to the West Africa region under those

circumstances would place the office and partner under additional pressure and it might also appear that IDRC was intervening in the crisis. Consequently, the Latin America and Caribbean Region (LACRO) was chosen for the field component of the review. Selecting LACRO for the field work had the advantages of affording the opportunity to visit multiple sites in several countries while still keeping within the time and resource constraints of the review.

During the field work, the external reviewer conducted individual and/or group interviews and reviews of relevant materials with 46 persons in four countries, including partners (grant recipients, technical collaboration partners, and previous external evaluators) and IDRC staff in the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office (see Annex B for details). A Spanish-speaking researcher and interpreter, Kaia Ambrose, who was familiar with IDRC and evaluation terms used by IDRC's Evaluation Unit, assisted with the interviews as needed. The breakdown of interviews by type of interview and country appears in Table 1.

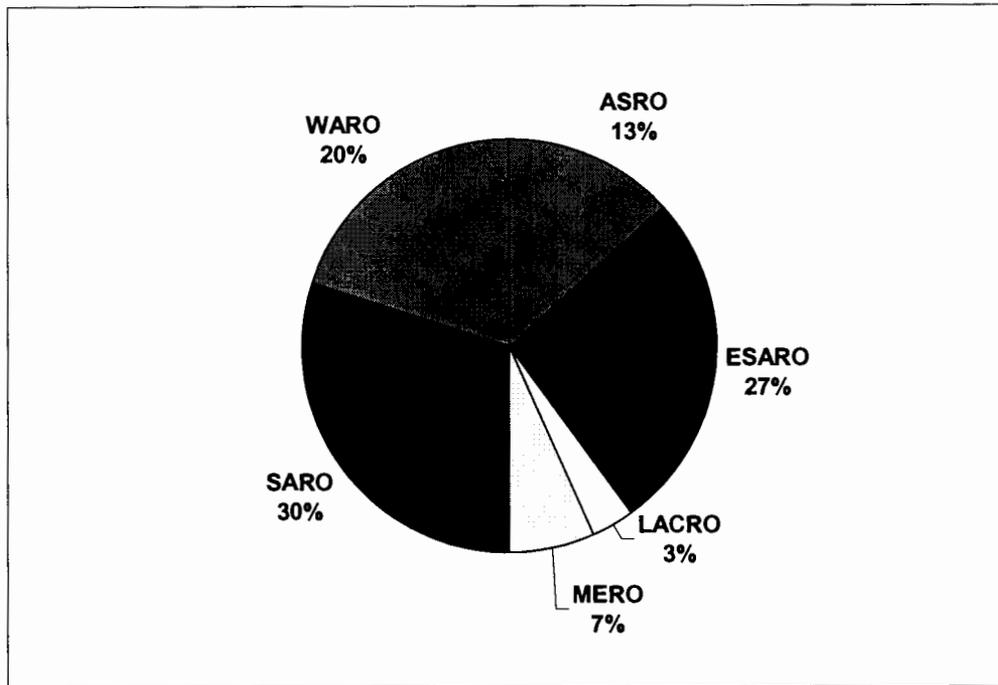
**Table 1. Breakdown of Interviews in Latin America and Caribbean Region by Type of Interview and Country**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Individual Interviews</b>	<b>Group Interviews</b>	<b>Total in Group Interviews</b>	<b>Country Total</b>
Ecuador	13	2	14	27
Peru	3	0	0	3
Argentina	1	1	2	3
Uruguay	9	2	4	13

For the survey component, Regional Directors, IDRC staff, and partners in the other IDRC regions were invited to provide feedback about the Evaluation Unit through a brief e-mail survey. Responses were received from 28 persons including three Regional Directors, six IDRC staff, and 19 partners (see Annex C for details). Figure 1. on the next page shows the regional distribution of the e-mail survey feedback.

The external reviewer took detailed field notes during the interviews. These were supplemented by notes taken by the researcher/interpreter when she was involved in interviews with Spanish-speaking partners. Given time and resource limitations, the interviews were not recorded and transcribed. Within the qualitative paradigm, the evidence relevant to the review was derived from the logic of the stories, events, narratives, and documents or objects (e.g., Arracacha products produced by IDRC partners) supplied during the interviews, rather than from the coded frequency of pre-determined categories.

**Figure 1. Distribution of E-Mail Survey Responses by Region**



In developing the findings of the review, the external reviewer strived to communicate the perspectives of the interview partners and present the findings in a way that made clear the perspectives of the Evaluation Unit's three major boundary partners (i.e., IDRC's senior management, IDRC's program managers and program staff, and IDRC's partners from the South), as well as the perspective of the external reviewer himself. This was done deliberately so that readers could "hear the data" and assess the credibility of the findings from the voices of those participating in the review process.

The interview data was complemented by a selected review of IDRC documentation and a bibliographic review that included searches of the global literature on evaluation and development research to assess the extent to which the major work/products of the Evaluation Unit, such as Outcome Mapping can be found to have penetrated or influenced the professional and practice literature.

The first phase of the literature search involved a preliminary search by a research information specialist from IDRC's Research Information Management Service Division employing Social Science Citation Index and two other scholarly databases, Academic Search Premier and CAB Abstracts. This was followed by a search of IDRC-supported projects through IDRC's IDRIS databases. Next, the external reviewer conducted supplementary scholarly literature searches using resources such as the ISI Web of Knowledge citation algorithm, Scholar's Portal, Extended ASAP, and the Canadian Periodical Index. This was followed by a search of OCLC's Worldcat databases of the collections of academic and other types of libraries worldwide that share their holdings

information with the World Catalog. Finally, to provide a rough assessment of the overall influence of the work of the Evaluation Unit on both scholarly and practice communities, the external reviewer conducted searches using Google and Scholar. Google search engines.

Finally, on 22 April 2005 at IDRC headquarters in Ottawa the draft findings of the external review were presented to and discussed by a group of 17 persons, including seven invited evaluation experts, to obtain their informed and independent assessment about the strategic directions of the Evaluation Unit (see Annex E for the list of participants at that meeting). Many of their comments have been taken into account in subsequent drafts, although any shortcomings of this report remain those of the external reviewer alone.

## **7. Strengths and Weaknesses of the External Review Process**

The main strength of the external review process was the input from over 100 key informants who were familiar with the Evaluation Unit over the period covered by the review. The external reviewer interviewed senior managers, program managers, and program branch staff at IDRC Ottawa, as well as members of the Evaluation Unit and its former Director; completed field interviews in four countries in the Latin America and Caribbean Region with partners and IDRC regional staff; and conducted an e-mail survey with Regional Directors, IDRC staff and partners in the other IDRC regions. This broad sampling of key informants both within IDRC and with its partners helped to counterbalance biases in individual perceptions and, together with a selected review of documents and materials, provide an opportunity to cross-validate responses and triangulate some of the findings.

A potential weakness of the external review was that some interviews in Latin America had to be conducted in Spanish, but this was offset by the participation of a translator who was familiar with IDRC, evaluation terminology, and programs in the region. Because the review employed sampling and field work could be conducted in only one region (see Section 6. for details), there was the potential for sampling bias. To address this possible weakness, the sampling frame was carefully examined by the commissioner of the review to identify any intentional biases. Another potential weakness was that only one person was responsible for the external review. The original idea was to have a team that included not only the core competence of expertise in internal evaluation, but also a team member familiar with trends in public sector management in official Ottawa. Unfortunately, the person identified was not able to devote enough time to the project and so withdrew early on. In view of the time constraints, another consultant could not be found and so the decision was taken to proceed with a modified methodology and scope of work for the review. This potential weakness was counterbalanced by the fact that the external reviewer is a highly experienced program evaluator with special expertise in internal evaluation, which was the subject of this review.

## **8. How the Project/Program Stakeholders and the Intended Users of the Evaluation Participated in the Process**

As the primary users of information from the external review, the Evaluation Unit participated in the process in several ways. First, the Evaluation Unit participated in the early discussions about the review and reviewed drafts of the Terms of Reference. Second, the Director of the Evaluation Unit and the Director of the Policy and Planning Group, who managed the review process, approved the methodology for the external review and the sample of persons and sites to be interviewed or surveyed by e-mail. Third, the Evaluation Unit participated in both individual and group interviews during the external review process. Centre management and the interests of the Board of Governors were represented in a planning meeting to draft the Terms of Reference and by interviews during the external review. Finally, the broad sampling of staff and boundary partners interviewed during the review, including field work in four countries in the Latin America region and an e-mail survey of the other regions, ensured that the viewpoints of project/program stakeholders were well-represented.

## **9. Validity of the Evidence and Any Ethical Considerations**

The external review employed a mixed methods approach that combined qualitative and selected quantitative methods. Given the purposes for the external review and questions to be answered, the external review relied heavily on qualitative methods. As noted in Section 7, a broad sampling of key informants both within IDRC and with its partners in different regions helped to counterbalance potential systematic or unconscious biases in individuals' perceptions and, together with a selected review of documents and materials, provide an opportunity to cross-validate responses and triangulate findings. Given that data was gathered from over 100 persons worldwide it is highly unlikely that the validity of the data was compromised.

Because the review was managed by IDRC's Policy and Planning Group and participants were fully informed about the purpose and process involved in the external review, no ethical considerations were raised.

## **Findings of the External Review**

This section presents the findings of the external review, organized according to each of the major specific review questions. The presentation of the Findings links the Evaluation Unit's three main areas of work, as identified in Evaluation Strategy 2000-2005, with the Unit's three key boundary partners (IDRC senior management, IDRC program managers and staff, and partners in the South).

## **10. How Well Has the Evaluation Unit Addressed Its Strategic Plan?**

Steadily increasing pressure on official development assistance funds and greater demand for public accountability have challenged IDRC to ensure that development

research achieves results. The Centre's commitment to being a results-oriented organization has led to the decentralization of program responsibilities and a shift to programs that cut across sectors and academic disciplines. Such innovations increased the need to monitor performance and measure program achievements. A separate Evaluation Unit was created in 1991—a decade after the evaluation function was established within IDRC as part of the former Office of Planning and Evaluation.

Evaluation at IDRC is decentralized with program initiatives responsible for their own evaluation work. Program Initiatives are required to have performance frameworks and evaluation plans, and to include evaluation results in their progress reporting. The Evaluation Unit provides central coordination and support.

In February 2000, the Evaluation Unit's strategy and major areas of work for the period 2000-2005 were approved by IDRC senior management and the Board of Governors. Evaluation Strategy 2000-2005 identified the major areas of work that cover the core services required by the Evaluation Unit's key boundary partners: tools and methods, coordination, capacity building, and information systems. The external review addressed the first three of these major areas of work. Tools and methods are addressed in Section 10.1, developing and coordinating IDRC's evaluation activities and systems in Section 10.2, and strengthening capacity for evaluation in Section 10.3.

## 10.1 Develop Evaluation Tools and Methods

An important area of work for the Evaluation Unit is developing tools for development research evaluation. Over the last decade, the Evaluation Unit has been responsible for the creation of a half-dozen tools, such as:

- Institutional and Organizational Assessment framework, including a guide for organizational self-assessment
- New methods for assessing the outcomes of Capacity Building efforts
- Outcomes mapping methodology that measures the impact of research on development in terms of changes in behaviour and relationships in boundary partners.

**Senior Management Perspective.** Nearly all of the IDRC senior managers viewed as worthwhile the efforts by the Evaluation Unit to develop evaluation tools and methods. In fact, several senior managers voiced the view that the Evaluation Unit's successful efforts to create tools for organizational development, institutional self-assessment, and Outcome Mapping contributed greatly to IDRC's international reputation for creativity and innovative practice.

In their view, the Evaluation Unit appears to have been successful in developing these evaluation tools for three major reasons:

- The evaluation tools showed a deep and respectful understanding of realities in the development research world

- The tools developed by the Evaluation Unit can be used flexibly to improve program design and implementation, enhance organizational learning, and strengthen institutions and networks
- The Evaluation Unit worked closely with boundary partners in the design, testing and dissemination of these tools

On the other hand, a few of the IDRC senior managers felt that the Evaluation Unit has spent too much time on developing tools and methods, especially before the year 2000. They felt that tool and methods development had detracted from efforts to embed evaluative thinking within institutional practice and to meet IDRC corporate evaluation needs. In the future, they would prefer the Evaluation Unit to achieve better balance in its plan of work by placing less emphasis on tools and more on strengthening evaluation within IDRC and conducting targeted and strategic evaluations.

**Program Manager and Program Staff Perspective.** Likewise, feedback from IDRC program managers and program staff strongly valued the evaluation tools developed by the Evaluation Unit because they were practical and useful. As an example, one program staff reported how the Organizational Assessment tool had been used for helping partners assess themselves, the material in the Evaluation and Capacity Building tool for building a monitoring plan, and the Outcome Monitoring tool to help a team redesign a program so that it produced the desired results. As a group, the program managers and staff felt that the quality of the materials and the support that they received from the Evaluation Unit helped them to understand and apply the tools effectively.

**Regional Partner Perspective.** During the interviews, more regional partners reported using Outcome Mapping than the Organizational Assessment or Capacity Building tools. In general, boundary partners were enthusiastic users of Outcome Mapping. More will be said about this tool in the next section, but it seems that Outcome Mapping fills the need for an evaluation tool that helps partners in complex research programs involving multiple stakeholders to foster a learning environment that enables them to adapt to changing circumstances and achieve their development outcomes.

Those regional partners that used the tools for Organizational Assessment or Capacity Building found them useful. These boundary partners recognized the importance of strong and effective organizations and institutions in development work and they found these tools helped them and their partners.

**External Reviewer Perspective.** One of the persistent issues of debate during the external review was whether the Evaluation Unit should be in the business of creating evaluation tools and, if so, how much of its time should be allocated to tool development and training on the use of tools. In my experience, developing evaluation tools is one of the primary functions of most Evaluation Units, whether it is developing the Results-Based Management Accountability Framework (RMAF) tool for Treasury Board, the Integrated Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Plan (IMEP) tool for UNICEF, or the Logic Model Development Guide for the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. In response to its

mandate to develop appropriate methodologies for development research, over the last decade the Evaluation Unit has engaged in developing tools in important areas, such as assessing organizational performance, capacity building, and measuring the results of research on development. I feel that these tools are addressing methodological gaps regarding tools for the evaluation of development research.

In my mind, the related question about the amount of time the Evaluation Unit has devoted to tool development is a management issue and not one that can be adequately assessed in this review. I feel that it is a question of balancing priorities and those priorities appeared to have shifted during the last five years as IDRC's immediate needs for corporate information increased.

Given the innovative nature of the tools, I feel that the Evaluation Unit's tool development process more closely resembles a research project, rather than a brief one-year process that makes modest changes to existing tools and then refines them during a pilot-test. In my view, the nature of the tool development process should be made clear, because it has serious resource and time implications. Further, evaluation tool development must plan for the dissemination, training, and support of current and future tools developed by the Evaluation Unit. Training and support should be included as part of the planning process. Plans for the sustainability of the tools also should be made, perhaps through arrangements with partner organizations.

### **10.1.1 Outcome Mapping Tool**

During the period of Evaluation Strategy: 2000-2005, Outcome Mapping was an innovative evaluation tool developed by the Evaluation Unit that received wide distribution and promotion within IDRC and its boundary partners in the South. The amount of effort placed on Outcome Mapping by the Evaluation Unit and its partners and the outputs of their work in this area is evidenced by the extensive Outcome Mapping training materials, presentation summaries, articles, and examples of use that appear on the Evaluation Unit's Web site (see [http://web.idrc.ca/en/ev-26586-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](http://web.idrc.ca/en/ev-26586-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html)). Given the interest in Outcome Mapping expressed by the Evaluation Unit and by IDRC as a whole, the external review collected more detailed information about this tool than the other tools developed by the Evaluation Unit.

**Senior Management Perspective.** Overall, IDRC senior management saw Outcome Mapping as a very meaningful approach to evaluation. They said that Outcome Mapping was well accepted by their staff and it had helped them to work more effectively with stakeholders.

Several IDRC senior managers, however, identified the following limitations of Outcome Mapping:

- Introduction of new vocabulary (e.g., boundary partners)
- Amount of time required to implement the method

- Apparent complexity of the methodology in some situations (e.g., multiple boundary partners).

Several senior managers also felt that it was important to remain flexible about the use of IDRC's evaluation tools and to use them in combination with other methods, including sensitive quantitative measures.

**Program Manager and Program Branch Staff Perspective.** Outcome Mapping was the one evaluation tool developed by the Evaluation Unit that was identified immediately by nearly all IDRC program managers and program branch staff during the interviews. Virtually all of the program managers and staff had experience with Outcome Mapping and, as a group, they felt it was a very valuable tool. They noted that Outcome Mapping has had great acceptance by IDRC's partners in the South and that it has boosted the visibility and reputation of IDRC worldwide.

The program managers and staff recognized how Outcome Mapping was uniquely suited to the development field through its attention to the human dimension of development projects/programs. The human dimension included partnership and collaboration, behaviour change, learning, and consideration of sustainability. Here is an example that illustrates the close fit between Outcome Mapping and IDRC-sponsored development research:

*We are not about science or technology per se, but about processes that need to be put into place to get people to collaborate together and technologies needed to support collaboration. With experience, we found that we had to focus on people, including their attitudes and behaviours, and not the technology. Tools developed by the Evaluation Unit, especially Outcome Mapping, support us and our partners in our work.*

Program managers and staff felt that Outcome Mapping has become a powerful tool for program planning and evaluation because it asks staff and partners alike to think about outcomes early in the program, for example:

*Our team was having hard time designing program to produce program results. Outcome Mapping helped us realize that the program itself was not the only way of achieving results. We now ask who will change and what behaviour leads to change? When we train individuals now we also look at changing processes, and look for the antecedents of change: more sessions, more discussions. This also helps the team understand what would be an indicator of doing well at corporate level.*

IDRC program managers and program branch staff felt that the Outcome Mapping training given by Evaluation Unit staff was well-designed, engaging, and effective. They felt that the theoretical foundation of Outcome Mapping was sound and based on solid principles that mirrored the realities of development research. Further, the quality of Outcome Mapping materials and the design of workshop activities and exercises also

demonstrated the careful thinking that served as the foundation for Outcome Mapping. These observations were corroborated by a review of the Outcomes Mapping manual and materials available on the Evaluation Unit's Web site. Finally, program managers and program branch staff felt that support from the Evaluation Unit was important for the successful implementation of Outcome Mapping:

*Evaluation Unit staff met with our team members and fleshed out markers and mapped the program. Outcome Mapping helped us to think about the program and flesh out clear milestones and objectives. It helped us to articulate our expectations better and what we needed to be responsive.*

During the interviews, a few IDRC program managers and program staff did raise some issues, however, about specific aspects of Outcome Mapping. These issues included:

- Because Outcome Mapping is comprehensive, it can be labour intensive. It would be worthwhile to review Outcome Mapping and simplify it, so that can be implemented more easily. This was a point also made by participants in the evaluations of the Outcome Mapping workshops in Mexico, Guatemala, and Peru.
- Demand for Outcome Mapping is increasing steadily. It is difficult to keep up with demand from IDRC's partners. IDRC may need to look at allocation of resources for Outcome Mapping and find a way to sustain its growth.

**Regional Partner Perspective.** During the interviews, IDRC's regional partners repeatedly cited Outcome Mapping as the evaluation tool that they used most frequently. The regional partners interviewed during field work in the Latin American Region found the Outcome Mapping tool to be a very useful method to measure outcomes and track changes in boundary partners. They appreciated the way in which Outcome Mapping considers process and the flexibility of the tool. They observed that Outcome Mapping appeals to partners running programs that have development outcomes, an action agenda, desire to do a better job (i.e., utilization-based), and that are looking for learning. These interview findings were complemented by a document review of the participant evaluations of the Outcome Mapping Training Workshop at The Governance Network (April, 2002), evaluation report of the Outcome Mapping Workshop in Guatemala (April, 2003), end of workshop evaluation of Johannesburg Outcome Mapping Workshop (September, 2003), evaluation report of the Outcome Mapping Workshop in Kathmandu, Nepal (July, 2004), Outcome Mapping Users Conference in Lima, Peru (October, 2004), and the final technical report of the Building Skills for Outcome Mapping Use and Facilitation Workshop in Cuernavaca, Mexico (December, 2004).

In their view, Outcome Mapping is a practical tool that is part of a newer philosophy of development. Outcome Mapping helps redefine poverty and development intervention in terms of opportunities rather than the more common fixation on risk indicators. In the words of one partner:

*Outcome Mapping helps us organize a local network of support. Everyone contributes something: community labour, municipality materials, Ministry of Agriculture contributes the machines. This network contributes to design of machines and private company training on improving quality of the products*

In fact, according to the interviewees, an indirect measure of the acceptance of Outcome Mapping is the demand for training. Outcome Mapping has become so popular in the Latin American Region that the demand for Outcome Mapping in the region appears to have vastly exceeded the ability to meet training requests.

Outcome Mapping might be popular, but is it truly useful? One Latin American partner, who had used Outcome Mapping over a six year period, gave this example of the value of Outcome Mapping for her evaluating her network:

*It was difficult to capture the accomplishments of our network. We had no systematic way of capturing data. We had no way to document achievements and also to catch factors not in awareness because of nature of network. We had hard time even developing a TOR. Outcome Mapping was exactly what we were looking for. It enabled us to track all of the things that usual evaluation does not.*

Another Latin American partner identified the specific ways Outcome Mapping has been used in their projects. These included:

- planning, including developing new phases of the project
- creating alliances
- monitoring activities
- systematizing project by gathering everything together
- training
- promoting new forms of rural development to go from theory to action

Latin America is a region that appears to have embraced Outcome Mapping. Were the findings similar for other IDRC regions? In response to the e-mail survey, an IDRC partner in Africa supplied some details about why Outcome Mapping worked so well in her project. This was a multi-site Southern African health research project with a budget over \$1 million which aimed to influence the policies pertaining to mother-to-child transmission of HIV through infant feeding. It involved an action research design which combines Outcome Mapping with appreciative inquiry and some of the principles of collaborative inquiry. In the view of this key informant, who was both project director and principal investigator, Outcome Mapping worked well because:

- *Outcome Mapping is a logical and transparent approach. This is important for us because the problem is very complex and the first phase findings necessitated us to address the issue on various levels, including sensitizing counsellors, designing an alternative counselling method, and the relationship between the health workers and mothers.*

- *We are an interdisciplinary team with completely different and in a certain sense opposing socializations. In Outcome Mapping we have found a guiding tool (indeed a map) and a language that enables us to stay true to the diversity of our expertise and experience (needed to address the problem in all its complexity), while being able to communicate together and understand each others' focus and purpose.*
- *Outcome Mapping allows for participatory project management while I can still keep my responsibility towards the various governments and the donors. Although I still have the ultimate responsibility for the project, Outcome Mapping has not only mapped our process, it has mapped us and has made my leadership a function of our shared and joint purpose orientation. And the beauty of it is that there is still room for change in and for all of us, the change that is inevitable linked with action research processes.*

An IDRC partner from a government department in India commented:

*OM was the key factor in letting CIDA grant us the second phase of the project because we were able to bring out the strength of the first phase project. Had it not been for OM we would not have been able to document our own achievements.*

Overall, the interview and e-mail survey data showed a high level of acceptance and utilization of Outcome Mapping, especially for those programs and projects with an action-research agenda and social learning component.

**Results of Database and Literature Searches.** A search of the IDRC's IDRIS databases revealed 20 IDRC projects related to Outcome Mapping during the 2000-2005 period. These projects show increased investment by IDRC in developing partners' capacity to use the Outcome Mapping tools through workshops, such as the one held in Guatemala in 2003 and Lima in 2004. Recent projects demonstrate the expanded use of Outcome Mapping for the evaluation of IDRC's program initiatives and evaluation of projects by boundary partners around the world (e.g., evaluation of projects in West Africa and India).

A bibliographic search also supplemented the interview data. Searches of the global literature on evaluation and development research found only one article that referred to IDRC's Outcome Mapping in the peer-reviewed professional literature.

On the other hand, an Internet search using the Google search engine returned over 1,000 hits linking Outcome Mapping and program evaluation, 746 hits to the Outcome Mapping book, and 333 hits regarding Outcome Mapping and methodology. An examination of the hits showed substantial links to universities, journals in the development field, government departments and non-profit organizations, major development organizations and banks (World Bank, IDB), and development Web sites.

Because about half of the hits in a Google search for a book, such as the *Outcome Mapping* publication, are links to book distributors, this form of bibliographic search is at best a relative indicator. To give more reliable indication of the relative acceptance and penetration of Outcome Mapping, comparison searches were made for two popular evaluation “tool books” produced by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The Google search for the Foundation’s *Evaluation Handbook* returned 817 hits and the search for its widely-acclaimed *Logic Model Development Guide* yielded 465 hits. Finally, a direct test of a publication about an evaluation tool in the development field employed a search for the *Compendium of Sustainable Development Indicator Initiatives*. This widely-used publication of the International Institute for Sustainable Development produced 386 hits. These data show that Outcome Mapping fared very well in the comparison tests.

In short, the interview data, IDRIS database search and the bibliographic searches and comparisons, all indicated that the acceptance of Outcome Mapping by IDRC program staff, partners, and others in the development field has been very good.

**Issues Raised About Outcome Mapping.** A number of substantive issues were raised about Outcome Mapping. During the interviews, examination of “Examples of Use” on the Evaluation Unit’s Web site, and a review of the evaluations of Outcome Mapping Workshops in Guatemala, Peru and Mexico. One persistent issue was the difficulty some partners experienced in using Outcomes Mapping at the program planning stage. Their experiences fit with the statements in the Outcome Mapping manual that the methodology works best when the program has made decisions about its strategic directions or its priority program areas. Likewise, the final technical report for Building Skills for Outcome Mapping Use and Facilitation Workshop in Cuernavaca, Mexico (December, 2004) felt that an introduction to planning would be useful prior to beginning the Outcome Mapping training itself.

Several partners in both Latin American and other regions, as well as some workshop participants, raised a second issue regarding the use of Outcome Mapping for monitoring. Overall, they felt that Outcome Mapping could quickly become too time consuming and too complex, if the guidelines in the manual were applied too literally.

One of the key features of the Outcome Mapping model is an emphasis on outcomes rather than longer-term impacts. As a third major issue with Outcome Mapping, several regional partners noted the reality, however, that larger projects/programs and institutions often cannot focus only on changes realized in the boundary partners, but must demonstrate the impacts of those changes on the ultimate target groups (e.g., households, villages, communities, municipalities, ecosystems). These impacts must be measured in terms such as food security, income, health, position of women, and sustainable resource management. These regional partners felt that Outcome Mapping was better suited for smaller action-research projects and programs or for measuring capacity development, policy influence, and learning from experiences.

Despite these substantive issues, the problems raised about the use of Outcome Mapping in both the interviews and evaluations of Outcome Mapping workshops tended to be practical ones, especially the need for:

- Training
- Translation of materials in local languages
- Clarifying terminology, such as “boundary partner”
- Guidelines for using Outcome Mapping together with other evaluation tools (e.g., logframe, baseline surveys)
- Follow-up training using concrete cases, after initial training
- Obtaining ongoing guidance and support (e.g., coaching and online support)
- Forming communities of practice

Although these problems are not insignificant, the value of the tool itself for its intended purposes was not in doubt.

**External Reviewer Perspective.** Outcome Mapping addresses the perennial problems of defining and measuring the results and impacts of projects, programs, organizations, and networks. In particular, Outcome Mapping provides an alternative route around the obstacles to demonstrating “attribution” for results within the conventional logical framework and results-based management frameworks. These problems and obstacles plague virtually all fields of practice, but they are particularly evident in the development field.

In my view, Outcome Mapping meets a genuine need for an evaluation methodology that addresses the important “white spaces” (or processes) that exist between the blocks of the traditional logical framework. Although many of the persons I interviewed referred to the value of Outcome Mapping as a learning tool, I was struck over and over again that Outcome Mapping, especially a) the idea of outcomes as changes in attitudes and behaviours and b) the concept of boundary partners, rapidly produced a form of “enlightenment” that led the interviewees to see their project in a new light. Outcome Mapping presented them with a new way of conceptualizing their projects and working with partners that offered them a broader range of options for influencing change and gave them a set of understandable tools for measuring results. Many of the persons I interviewed were well-versed in basic quantitative evaluation methods. They were missing the qualitative dimension of their work and Outcome Mapping gave them a tool to address this important dimension.

Although the Outcome Mapping materials are professional in their content and systematic in their presentation, I am clear that formal training in Outcome Mapping is essential to derive maximum benefit from the process, in all but exceptional circumstances. Otherwise, even when led in a “learning through doing” exercise by a facilitator, those applying the methodology without the benefit of formal training complained that they missed key points and became confused and frustrated. Usually they needed three or four “learning by doing” sessions to come to a basic grasp of Outcomes Mapping that could have been achieved in one formal workshop.

When delivering Outcome Mapping training, someone who is very familiar with the method should lead the training or co-lead the event. I realize that facilitation is important, but it is not enough. The need for this balance was also recognized in the evaluation of the Building Skills for Outcome Mapping Use and Facilitation Workshop in Cuernavaca, Mexico (December, 2004). More importantly there must be someone who has deep knowledge of the Outcome Mapping method and enough evaluation experience to know how to apply it in different contexts. Concrete examples are also very important, both in the training and for sharing among users of Outcome Mapping. The importance of more case studies that are locally relevant was also raised by participants in the Outcomes Mapping workshop in Nepal (2004). So is a way for users to discuss and debate, whether through a list serve or electronic discussion forum or at a users Conference.

I think that comments about the need to simplify Outcome Mapping and integrate it with other methods need to be taken seriously. I think that the users are already creating these changes or “hacks” to make Outcome Mapping more responsive and convenient to use in different contexts. The Evaluation Unit should take advantage of this knowledge from the field to gather examples of modifications that users have found beneficial.

### **10.1.2 Organizational Assessment and Capacity Building Tools**

During the period from 1999-2005, IDRC’s Evaluation Unit produced several tools to help assess organizations and strengthen institutions. This was in response to the growing awareness that developing local capacity was essential for alleviating poverty and hunger but few organizations had a system in place for monitoring or evaluating the changes taking place during organizational development. The publications that included these tools included were *Enhancing Organizational Performance: A Toolbox for Self-assessment* (1999), *Organizational Assessment: A Framework for Improving Performance* (2002), and *Evaluating Capacity Development: Experiences from Research and Development Organizations around the World* (2003).

**Senior Management Perspective.** Several senior managers stated that the development of tools over the last decade for organizational assessment and assessing capacity building, together with the newer Outcome Mapping tool, has been largely responsible for IDRC’s international reputation.

**Program Manager and Program Branch Staff Perspective.** Only one program manager or program branch staff identified Organizational Assessment as the evaluation tool they used and, likewise, only one identified Evaluation and Capacity Building tools. In both cases, the interviewees were clear that the tools had worked very well for them and their partners.

**Regional Partner Perspective.** Several regional partners said that they used these tools, usually with multiple institutions. For example, a regional partner in Africa singled out the Organizational Assessment tools as being very useful:

*The Organizational Assessment tools were very helpful. They provided a framework for the self-evaluations of several of IDRC African partner institutions. They were practical with specific issues and questions that needed to be addressed.*

Another regional partner, this time from Asia, commented that the tools are well organized and have proven to be a useful resource. She said:

*One of our [university] partners found the book “Organizational Assessment” so useful that they had it translated into Vietnamese and are using it as a reference in their management courses.*

A third regional partner observed that IDRC’s Organizational Assessment tools helped them improve their methodology for assessing local organizations and last year they used the tools for their own institutional self-evaluation.

**Results of Literature Searches.** Compared to Outcome Mapping, the Evaluation Unit’s Web site provided far fewer support materials, documents and project descriptions regarding organizational assessment and capacity building. Searches of the global literature on evaluation and development research found only four articles in the peer-reviewed professional literature that referred to IDRC’s organizational assessment and capacity building tools. Diffusion rates in the professional literature are notoriously slow and it is worth noting that the first book review of the 2002 publication, *Organizational Assessment: A Framework for Improving Performance*, did not appear until late 2004.

Similar to the findings for Outcome Mapping, an Internet search produced evidence of greater penetration of the practice field. Using the Google search engine, IDRC’s organizational assessment framework tool returned over 450 hits. A search for the organizational self-assessment tool produced 344 hits and evaluating capacity development yielded 242. As noted earlier, Google hits tend to be relative indicators of user acceptance. Given that caveat, IDRC’s organizational assessment and capacity building evaluation tools compare favourably with the 465 hits for W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s popular *Logic Model Development Guide* and the 386 hits for the International Institute for Sustainable Development’s widely-used *Compendium of Sustainable Development Indicator Initiatives*.

**External Reviewer Perspective.** In general, during the interviews, the tools for organizational assessment and capacity building did not achieve the same degree of recognition that was given to Outcome Mapping. Relatively few IDRC senior management, program managers or program staff mentioned using these tools. Regional partners, on the other hand, were more likely to say that they had used these tools, often with multiple organizations. Those that had used the tools felt that

organizational development and institution strengthening were crucial for the development field and they found the tools very useful. Some indirect evidence of the importance of the Organizational Assessment tools was the strong participant evaluation feedback for the OA course delivered by the Evaluation Unit in collaboration with colleagues from Universalia Management Group and IUCN at the IPDET development evaluation summer program at Carleton University in 2003 and, on the basis of performance and demand, the invitation to present the course again in 2004.

During the external review, organizational development and related issues such as improving governance and strengthening institutions were repeatedly identified as critical for the success of IDRC's work with its partners. In my own international evaluation practice, particularly in transition and developing countries, I am often asked to give workshops and consultation regarding topics such as organizational assessment, using evaluation for organizational development, and evaluating capacity building efforts. Although these topics are important ones in the management and organizational literature, few well-constructed tools exist to undertake these evaluations.

The Evaluation Unit has developed three tools in this area, *Enhancing Organizational Performance: A Toolbox for Self-assessment* (1999), *Organizational Assessment: A Framework for Improving Performance* (2002), and *Evaluating Capacity Development: Experiences from Research and Development Organizations around the World* (2003). In my opinion, these tools are innovative, based on a combination of theory and practice knowledge, and reflect the changing development focus towards institutions that create of knowledge to enables effective action (cf., Ingemar Gustafsson, SIDA). Monitoring and evaluation are essential tools in this process to increase accountability to stakeholders and increase knowledge about how to produce significant results. The critical gaps and challenges often are organizational (e.g., governance, staff capacity, and linkages between organizational systems). The gaps widen further as organizations work with partners and form networks. In my opinion, IDRC's Evaluation Unit has shown both vision and leadership in developing tools for assessing and strengthening organizational performance and evaluating capacity building in research and development organizations.

I also think that the importance of organizational assessment and capacity building is supported by examining some of IDRC's flagship projects that have received much acclaim in Canada and internationally. As one example, the Tanzania Essential Health Interventions Project has been piloting innovations in planning, priority setting and resource allocation at the district level since 1996. Data from the Tanzania Ministry of Health has shown a dramatic decrease in child mortality rates that researchers attribute to the project. Assessing and then building the capacities of local health authorities to plan and use resources more strategically were at the heart of this high-profile project. In similar fashion, a rapid review showed that building the capacity of organizations and systems is crucial for the success of many research projects across all three of IDRC's Program Areas – Environment and Natural Resource Management, Information and Communications Technologies for Development, and Social and Economic Policy.

My review of IDRC's organizational assessment and capacity building tools raised two issues for me. One issue was triggered by the apparent uptake for the Organizational Assessment tool by academic institutions. A search of Worldcat, for example, showed that it was owned by more than 300 libraries worldwide. Although this is a good sign, it begs the question about the uptake within IDRC and its partners in the field. This raises questions for me about the need for the Evaluation Unit to plan not only for the development of evaluation tools, but to complete the loop by planning for dissemination and training, as well as for ongoing support for users and the creation of a community of practice. I had similar concerns regarding Outcome Mapping. A related issue for me is whether the evaluation tools require more practical examples based on actual implementation. Stephen Morabito raised a similar concerns in his recent review of the Organizational Assessment book (see *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 19 (2), 177-178, 2004).

## **10.2 Develop and Coordinate IDRC's Evaluation Activities and Systems**

At IDRC, evaluation is decentralized with program initiatives responsible for their own evaluation work. Program Initiatives are required to have performance frameworks and evaluation plans, and to include evaluation results in their progress reporting. The Evaluation Unit provides central coordination and support.

The Unit fosters and helps plan the flow of performance-based knowledge to inform and contribute to strategic decisions, strong project designs, effective research utilization, cohesive programs, and significant advances in development theory and practice. It does this by providing technical support to Program Initiatives, Secretariats and Corporate Projects.

The Evaluation Unit also carries out strategic evaluations, that is, evaluations relevant to a number of different programs and programming areas in the Centre. Often these are conducted in consultation or close collaboration with other parts of the Centre. In the past, the Evaluation Unit has conducted strategic evaluations on such topics such as participatory research, development networks, and Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). The policy influence study was a significant strategic study conducted with the timeframe of the Evaluation Strategy 2000-2005; it is reviewed below.

### **10.2.1 Performance of Evaluation Unit in Developing and Coordinating IDRC's Evaluation Activities and Systems**

This section addresses two important review questions:

- How well has the Evaluation Unit fulfilled its mandate under the Strategic Plan to develop and coordinate IDRC's evaluation activities and systems?

- How satisfied are the Evaluation Unit's major boundary partners with its performance?

In addition to the interview data, evaluations of a facilitation workshop and an introductory program evaluation workshop for IDRC's program managers and staff were reviewed. To obtain greater detail about the technical support supplied by the Evaluation Unit, the Performance Review and Assessment Reports for the Evaluation Unit over the period of 2000 to 2004 were reviewed. These reports showed that the Evaluation Unit provided significant support to the Program Initiatives through development of the evaluation component of Prospectuses. The Unit also developed an evaluation manual and a series of guidelines to make evaluation information more available throughout the Centre.

**Senior Management Perspective.** IDRC senior managers were unanimous that the performance of the Evaluation Unit overall was very positive in developing and coordinating IDRC's evaluation activities. In the words of one manager:

*We are blessed with strong evaluation unit. The philosophy of evaluation is shared by the programs: joint goals of learning and accountability.*

Overall, senior managers viewed the Evaluation Unit as being a supportive group for learning and evaluation and an intellectual force in its own right. They felt that program managers and staff supported the Evaluation Unit because the Unit's staff was knowledgeable and professional, and also approachable and helpful. The Evaluation Unit was given credit for creating a pro-evaluation climate within IDRC integrating evaluation into program planning and learning. The Unit had achieved a high level of performance in its coordination and support role by training and coaching effectively and by developing a group of external evaluators who worked effectively with IDRC's partners.

Some senior managers expressed concern, however, that the IDRC evaluation process may be theoretically sound but it is a work-intensive model. They felt that the Evaluation Unit has a small staff but ambitious goals. With a smaller staff, they felt that the Unit may have to develop a process for supporting evaluation more broadly, setting priorities, and managing requests.

Several senior managers expressed concern that the capacity building needs of IDRC are very great and it is very difficult to manage the demand on resources. A few senior managers also emphasized that much evaluation capacity building is in hands of regional teams, but they have few resources and their needs are less well addressed.

**Program Manager and Program Branch Staff Perspective.** As a group, program managers and program branch staff were very satisfied with the Evaluation Unit's performance and contribution to their work, especially support to Program Initiatives in Prospectus development. They felt that the Unit had created an effective team and a

positive evaluation culture within IDRC's programs. A long-time program manager at IDRC attributed the acceptance and effectiveness of the Evaluation Unit to its user-orientation, its promotion of a tailored evaluation process rather than a standardized template, its focus on evaluation for learning as well as accountability, and its creation of innovative and relevant evaluation tools. Many other program managers and staff identified similar factors for the success of the Evaluation Unit during the interviews.

The Secretariats, however, expressed concern about evaluation support. One Secretariat, for example, noted that there was a critical evaluation next year, but it had no evaluation resources. Secretariats also expressed the concern that there would not be adequate support for evaluation now that there were fewer Evaluation Unit staff.

Evaluations of the workshops offered by the Evaluation Unit on the topics of facilitation and utilization-focused evaluation showed that both workshops were highly rated by participants (e.g., rating of 4.7 out of 5 for usefulness of facilitation workshop). The participants felt that the facilitation workshop would be useful for all IDRC personnel, including senior management, program managers and program staff. Participants in Michael Quinn Patton's workshop confirmed the importance of evaluation and demonstrated the significance of utility and making the process inclusive and participatory. Some participants felt that the Evaluation Unit should offer a series of practical workshops that built upon the introductory workshop by Patton. One respondent suggested that there be some sort of regular evaluation discussion or workgroup, where participants could share new information and ideas on evaluation.

**Regional Partner Perspective.** IDRC's regional boundary partners also were very positive about the performance of the Evaluation Unit. They praised the Unit for its collegial manner, knowledge of the development field, responsiveness to requests for assistance and support, excellent follow-up on action items, and the consistently high level of quality of their work. They felt that the Evaluation Unit showed leadership and it was not afraid to develop new approaches to evaluation and try them.

For example, one interviewee described how she was trying to understand how organizations adopt participatory methods for natural resource measurement. The Unit showed her how to apply evaluation in changing environment and helped her group design tracer studies to assess effectiveness of workshops, what people learn, and how they apply that knowledge. She felt that the facilitative approach, ability to ask relevant questions, and incisive tools helped her "access her own intelligence". She is much less nervous about evaluation now and views it as an integral part of learning. Overall, IDRC's boundary partners felt that the quality of IDRC's evaluations was good and that Evaluation Unit's model of support appeared to work well.

Another partner in the South described the effectiveness of the Evaluation Unit's training and support to create a positive attitude towards evaluation so that the project participants now use evaluation to identify and correct problems quickly:

*Evaluation today has ceased to become a word evoking fear...it has created an environment where none of the project partners are afraid of reporting failures. In a recent workshop, some external facilitators posed a question to all 10 partners: Was there any objective in the project, which you would have like to change? All the partners but one replied in the negative – if it needed to be changed, we changed it.*

One boundary partner noted that although they were satisfied with the Unit's support overall, it would be useful to have someone who knew the program content area. Another regional partner from Latin America felt that at least one member of the Evaluation Unit should speak Spanish.

A check of the Performance Review and Assessment Reports showed that the Evaluation Unit also provided evaluation support to partnership projects, such as the Equator Initiative, The West Africa Rural Foundation (FRAO), and Swayamsiddha at the Bharatiya Agro-Industries Foundation (BAIF), and Instituto Internacional de Facilitación y Consenso/International Institute for Facilitation and Consensus (IIFAC) in Latin America. The Unit also helped to build the capacity of partner institutions through workshops and feedback, including those on Monitoring and Evaluation, Outcome Mapping, and Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM).

**External Reviewer Perspective.** There are numerous models of internal evaluation, ranging from highly centralized evaluation units that have direct responsibility for conducting evaluations to highly decentralized models without a formal "evaluation unit" that embed evaluators into programs and project teams to improve performance and foster ongoing learning. One of the axioms of internal evaluation is that the model should match the organizational context.

My personal observations during the external review, as well as feedback from participants, demonstrated that IDRC's decentralized evaluation model matched the organizational context very well indeed. In fact, I expected to see numerous gaps and problems with the model, especially in the regions, far from the direct support of the Evaluation Unit. Despite persistent probing, I did not find serious problems either in my direct field work in South America or from the feedback received from the other regions. Because I did not find the expected difficulties, I questioned my informants often regarding the reasons the model appeared to work so well.

I came to the conclusion that IDRC provides a highly suitable organizational context for the decentralized evaluation model. Unlike many other evaluation settings, IDRC staff is highly educated, many have social science backgrounds (foundational for IDRC's approach to evaluation), many have backgrounds in more than one discipline, and, importantly, they are researchers both by training and position. Evaluation, especially IDRC's model of evaluation for learning as well as accountability, is highly compatible with the skill sets and value orientations of IDRC managers, staff, and partners. They appear to learn evaluation quickly. In essence, evaluation within IDRC is planted in fertile ground and with some careful attention, it grows quickly. Of equal importance,

over the last 20 years, the Evaluation Unit and IDRC management have fostered an evaluation culture within IDRC that has done much to dispel the notion of evaluation as a soul-destroying ritual and replace it with a model that emphasizes the usefulness of evaluation through a utilization-focused approach to evaluation. In the regions, support from the Evaluation Unit to ensure that high quality Terms of Reference are written, provide advice, and supply lists of qualified local evaluation consultants appears to have met their needs very well.

My experience during the external review, however, indicated to me that the decentralization of the evaluation function should deepen and extend in the near future. There is increasing demand for evaluation support both within the Centre and from regional partners. Within the Centre the common concern of program managers is obtaining reliable evaluation support from designated staff member of the Evaluation Unit. Some program managers would like the Unit staff member to develop greater expertise in program/project content areas.

There also was a desire by senior management and program managers for greater evaluation capacity building by having more program staff trained in evaluation at the intermediate/advanced levels. Within IDRC, I think that the evaluation function could be further strengthened and decentralized by building the capacity of at least two persons in each Program Initiative to provide evaluation support and perhaps training. I say two persons because mutual support and independence is enhanced with more than one person and the expertise is less likely to be lost through staff attrition. The Evaluation Unit would remain the same size, but link more effectively with each Program Initiative through trained PI staff. I think that this model would increase the utilization of evaluation and provide conduits for reporting results and outcomes to senior management.

I think that each regional office should have an Evaluation Officer that is directly linked to the Evaluation Unit, but one that has the qualifications, sufficient time, and some budget to work independently from Ottawa to serve the regional needs. The Evaluation Officer should be well-versed in IDRC's approach to evaluation (perhaps through a secondment), linked to the professional evaluation field through national and regional evaluation societies, be able to provide training and guidance on the use of IDRC's evaluation tools, such as Outcome Mapping, and have enough budget to respond to regional requests and initiate training events independently. I think that this strategy may provide more resources in the hands of the regions to help them build the capacity of regional teams.

I believe that this model, especially if coupled with the concept of "regional nodes" or "centres of excellence" could transform the evaluation capacity of the regions within a 5 to 10 year timeframe. The regional nodes could be developed in close working relationship with the Regional Evaluation Officers to ensure that the regional nodes met priority needs. The regional nodes could be independent of IDRC and linked through partnership agreements, which would present attractive funding and collaboration channels.

## **10.2.2 Developing Corporate Evaluation Processes**

During the 2000-2005 strategic plan, the Evaluation Unit was asked to guide the development of corporate evaluation tools such as the Rolling-Project Completion Report (R-PCR), Corporate Assessment Framework (CAF), and Annual Learning Forum (ALF). Although the in-depth assessment of these processes was not part of the mandate of the external review, nonetheless, they are addressed briefly because their ongoing development remains important to IDRC during its next strategic plan and the issues/concerns raised during the interviews are likely to directly affect the Evaluation Unit and its scope of work.

In particular, IDRC senior managers considered corporate evaluation tools and strategic evaluations, such as policy influence and capacity building, to be important and very promising cross-cutting areas for the Evaluation Unit. These tools are especially important in the results-based management environment of Ottawa. The IDRC Board and senior management want readable evaluation reports with clear presentation of results to guide their decisions. There is the overall expectation that the new corporate tools will help fulfill corporate accountability and learning needs.

Overall, IDRC senior managers recognized the potential of the corporate evaluation tools, although there were criticisms about specific aspects of the tool development processes.

### **Rolling-Project Completion Report (R-PCR)**

IDRC's senior managers felt that the R-PCR Working Group had completed its mandate by successfully dealing with a backlog of nearly 300 outstanding PCRs in a cost-effective manner and then developing a new Rolling-PCR process in 2004. This achievement also was documented in the "Final Proposal and Handover from the PCR Working Group to the Senior Management Committee" (December 15, 2004). The Rolling-PCR ensures accountability for results at the project level while capturing learning and lessons as they occur over the project cycle. Although some implementation issues regarding the Rolling-PCR were identified (e.g., workload, organizational support), senior management fully expects that the new Rolling-PCR tool will provide valuable information about the achievement of results and strengthen IDRC as a learning organization.

Several program managers commended the role of the Evaluation Unit in the Rolling-Project Completion Report (R-PCR) process. They believed that it was sound, tested, and worked well. The main concern was finding the time to study the R-PCR results and draw lessons learned.

One IDRC program staff member involved in the development Rolling-PCR process praised the leadership of the Evaluation Unit. The staff member commented that the Evaluation Unit listened carefully to problems, issues, and suggestions for renewing the

PCRs. Then the Evaluation Unit selected methods that fit IDRC values. They felt that this was a very positive process.

Another IDRC program staff member was concerned that the R-PCR process required labour intensive interviews. If the process works, however, the staff member felt that it would create the right mindset with managers being involved as interviewers and pushing for more information. The staff also raised the question about how accessible and searchable the R-PCR database would be.

A few regional partners commented on the Rolling-PCR process. One regional boundary partner felt that the Rolling-PCR pilot-test was worthwhile. This partner felt that the R-PCR was a good way, with the cooperation of Regional Director, to identify a promising flagship project, and then involve Evaluation Unit and Communications in the process of further evaluation and dissemination of results. A second regional partner noted that much better use could be made of the R-PCRs if they were shared more extensively with everyone in the Centre and not just among respective team members.

### **Annual Learning Forum (ALF)**

Several senior managers felt that Annual Learning Forum (ALF) development process was highly successful. A few managers said that they believed ALF could reduce workloads, decrease the need for external reviews, and improve the quality of evaluations by replace external reviews with more systematic self-evaluation coupled with annual self-reflection by teams through ALF. There was the general feeling, however, that the ALF process was still in the formative stages and that it would require further testing and refinement over the next several years. If so, this would have workload implications for the Evaluation Unit.

### **Corporate Assessment Framework (CAF)**

The development of the Corporate Assessment Framework was acknowledged as a monumental work. IDRC senior managers felt that it had great promise to meet corporate accountability needs.

On the other hand, the CAF was the corporate evaluation process that drew the most criticism from IDRC senior managers. About half of the senior managers interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of time invested in developing the CAF and most of those felt it was unnecessarily long and complex. Problems included engaging users and determining performance areas, defining them, measuring performance, data need to be collected, and periodicity of reporting. Even though the CAF has received good response from the IDRC Board and senior staff, several senior managers still felt that the CAF needed to be simplified, so that it could be better grounded in the experience of programs and reduce the demands for resources.

One IDRC program staff member urged patience with the CAF. He felt that IDRC needed to experience of first cycle (two years) to work out bugs and assess its value.

**External Reviewer Perspective.** In the current environment in Ottawa, having effective corporate tools for reporting results and providing accurate information for guiding and correcting corporate strategy is essential. Accountability and good governance are very important for IDRC's senior management. Over its history, IDRC has fashioned an enviable record of probity, as evidenced by the Special Examination Reports of the Auditor General of Canada. A strong evaluation function, together with strong internal audit, is very important to maintain the fiscal and reporting flexibility currently extended to IDRC. I think that the development of strong corporate reporting systems, fashioned to reflect IDRC's values and culture, is a critical area of work for the Evaluation Unit during the next strategic plan.

Feedback I received during the external review indicated that the Evaluation Unit may need to devote perhaps two or three years more to pilot-test, improve, and then streamline these tools. Once accomplished, these tools are likely to make a significant contribution to the fields of governance and corporate management, as well as organizational evaluation and learning.

### **10.2.3 Developing and Coordinating Strategic Evaluations**

As noted above, the Evaluation Unit has been responsible for designing and coordinating strategic evaluation on important topics, such as development networks, project leader capacity building, Internet and communications technologies, participatory research, and project size and efficiency. Providing leadership for cross-cutting studies of strategic importance to IDRC was an important component of the Unit's Evaluation Strategy: 2000-2005.

During this period, the "Strategic Evaluation of the Influence of Research on Public Policy" was a significant effort by the Evaluation Unit. Designed to provide learning at the program and corporate levels, this study sought to document what the Centre means by policy influence and systematically examine how the research IDRC supports influences policy, including the factors that affect the extent of policy influence.

The interview data was supplemented by a review of articles (e.g., interview with Carol Weiss and Evert Lindquist on policymaking and research in *IDRC Reports*), documents (e.g., IDRC President's speech at Queen's University on advancing public engagement in Canada's policy process, Fred Carden's paper on issues in assessing the policy influence of research), background reports (e.g., literature review, development of conceptual framework), presentations, and summaries of workshops in South Africa (2002), Uruguay (2002), Bangkok (2003) and Ottawa (2003), as well as the Public Policy Forum in Ottawa (2004).

**Senior Management Perspective.** Overall, IDRC senior managers recognized that the Evaluation Unit has led important strategic evaluations during the 2000-2005 period, such as the policy influence study. Some senior managers would like to see the Evaluation Unit undertake more strategic evaluations.

*Policy Study was a huge undertaking and very good one. The study had the right amount of resources, involved senior managers, recipients, sufficiently large number of cases so that could be cross-checked. I consider it a great success.*

Several senior managers said that they valued the involvement of world-class academics and policy researchers (e.g., Carol Weiss, Diane Stone, Everett Lindquist) in the policy influence study. They also appreciated the use of case studies, although a few senior managers were concerned about generalizing findings too widely based on a limited number of cases. Several Regional Directors mentioned that the policy influence study was well received and it served to complement and further their own “research-to-policy” work in the regions.

**Program Manager and Program Branch Staff Perspective.** Several IDRC program managers and program staff commented about the policy study during the interviews. All of them felt that the policy study was valuable in terms of a comprehensive review of literature, building theoretical foundations, and providing advice for getting involved with policy makers. They felt that the study expanded their views about policy influence and identified potential pitfalls and common obstacles. The policy influence study was critical in educating agency staff in what was relevant and not.

One program staff, however, expressed some concern that the methodology for the policy study was weak because did not include cases with negative examples and this served to undermine confidence in the conclusions.

**Regional Partners Perspective.** Regarding strategic evaluations, overall regional partners from LACRO felt that the policy study was a good one. They felt that the Evaluation Unit asked the right questions and that having external input from experts in the policy field was stimulating. They also appreciated that the policy study included one of the few case studies done in Spanish.

Although the overall response to the policy study was positive, some regional partners felt that the policy influence study had several problems. One partner felt that initially the policy influence study tried to force reality into theoretical model without including real-world policy experience. The Evaluation Unit, however, was willing to listen to empirical data and acknowledge that reality was more complex than model presented. Another regional partner felt that the Evaluation Unit facilitation process for policy influence seminar assumed that the group did not have any prior knowledge about the topic. A third regional partner felt that the synthesis was useful, but incomplete, because it did not recognize the significant regional, country, government, and infrastructure differences throughout region that affect policy influence. The CBNRM Group Report-Back at the Bangkok Workshop, several participants at the Johannesburg and Ottawa workshops made similar points.

Another comment was that the policy study did not go to the final step to draw practical lessons about how to influence policy through research. This feedback was also found in the reports of the Ottawa workshop in 2003.

Other partners in the LACRO region who were involved in the case study found the process very useful because the external evaluator had a good grasp of the region and identified the importance of micro-issues that the partners themselves had not recognized. They felt that it makes a difference when evaluators know a great deal about region. As a result, the case study illuminated the entire policy influence process for them. They used the report to help design their last project.

One regional partner raised a question about methodology of policy influence studies. He saw difficulties with drawing conclusions based on a limited number of case studies. On the other hand, another partner knew some of the cases and found the conclusions credible. In fact, the incorporation of IDRC research into some new laws was a reflection of her application of the policy influence study.

Another persistent issue raised in the interviews was the capacity of researchers to do both high quality research and to communicate and disseminate the findings in a way that influenced policy. Some of the LACRO interviewees had strong views about this issue: IDRC should expect researchers (especially academic researchers) to concentrate on research. This view also was echoed several times in the reports of the regional policy study workshops. The comment of a participant in the Montevideo (2002) policy study workshop made this point in a humorous way:

*“... I mean, you have to be like Erin Brockovich, no? You have to have the legs, you have to have the looks, you have to be smart, you have to do the research ...dissemination work, strategy work, publication work... I said, come on, I’m a researcher...”*

**External Reviewer Perspective.** In my view, the Evaluation Unit should continue with its work of developing and coordinating strategic evaluations. Strategic evaluations provide a unique opportunity to focus on important issues and key themes that are at the heart of IDRC’s mandate and mission. In this regard, IDRC’s strategic evaluations are in keeping with the recent trend in the evaluation field to placing greater emphasis on strategic (or horizontal evaluations) that closely examine important issues or topics that cut across program areas, jurisdictions, and levels of government or organizations. These strategic evaluations are being conducted in Canada and elsewhere at the regional (e.g., European Community), national, provincial, and local levels. The importance of the policy study to the world community was highlighted by Professor Carol Weiss during her address to participants in the Ottawa policy study workshop in March, 2003:

*It is a subject of considerable concern not only to IDRC but to many other governmental and international funding bodies and to foundations that provide research grants with the aim of influencing policy.*

Strategic evaluations, such as the policy study, offer IDRC the opportunity to develop its own approaches and methodologies to this important new form of evaluation. The feedback showed that the most concerns with the study were methodological ones, especially the use of the case study approach and the selection and range of case studies. Without diminishing these criticisms, in my experience, it is very difficult to obtain high-quality case studies of the policy making or knowledge utilization process and the Evaluation Unit succeeded in assembling together a comparatively large number of cases for the policy influence study. This was a point also made by Professor Lindquist several times in his articles and presentations. Although the policy influence study may have had limitations and gaps, nonetheless I feel that it was an important step forward for IDRC and a contribution to the field.

I find that the value of case study approach is often underestimated by the evaluation profession, as well as those commissioning and using evaluations. When properly designed and implemented, the case study approach can offer many of the advantages of a quasi-experimental comparative design, coupled with the rich detail and sensitivity to context inherent in qualitative designs. I feel that the policy study should be seen as a springboard for further development and refinement of the Evaluation Unit's methodology for strategic evaluations.

Input by recognized experts in the policy field, such as Professor Evert Lindquist from University of Victoria, and in policy evaluation, such as Professor Carol Weiss from Harvard University, helped to elevate the tone and quality of the policy influence study and their contributions were recognized by those participating in the study. I encourage the Evaluation Unit to continue partnering with recognized thought leaders in the field of interest. At the same time, the interviews showed that it was important that the Evaluation Unit seek input from its own internal/regional experts and partners and make every effort to present the viewpoints of both the external and internal/regional in the study.

Another significant reason for the IDRC and the Evaluation Unit to continue strategic evaluations, in my opinion, is that they afford a unique opportunity for IDRC staff and partners worldwide to contribute to the study and then to engage deeply in analysis and self-reflection together with the consultants that were responsible for the study. Perhaps more importantly, strategic evaluations offer a bridge for organizational learning that involves not only IDRC's program staff and partners, but also learning at the corporate level. In addition to the full-blown strategic evaluations, I can envision briefer, highly-focused "rapid response" forms of strategic evaluations as a valuable tool for supplying cutting-edge information about specific topics of strategic importance that is useful for IDRC at both the program and corporate levels.

#### **10.2.4 Managing External Reviews**

Program initiatives (PIs) are the primary programming modality at IDRC. They have a life-span of five years and after that time they may be extended, modified or discontinued. This period is covered by a prospectus that is approved by the Governors

at the start of the program cycle. Near the end of the five year period, each program initiative undergoes an external review. The purpose of external reviews is to provide an independent, informed view about the performance and results of programs that is an important element of accountability for program effectiveness, as well as for decision making and learning. The Evaluation Unit prepares a quality assessment, based on international evaluation standards, on each external review report. The assessment of the role of the Evaluation Unit in managing external reviews was addressed through interviews and by a review of documents that included memoranda, Terms of Reference, synthesis reports of the external evaluations of program initiatives, quality assessments of the external reviews, and presentation "Improving Program Effectiveness: PI External Reviews" (March, 2004).

Compared to the strategic evaluations, the external reviews managed by the Evaluation Unit did not receive as much commentary during the interviews. Several senior managers did state, however, that external reviews were an important part of an accountability and learning regimen for IDRC. The report to the IDRC Governors in 2004 also noted that reviews of the nine program initiatives were generally positive, in terms of the knowledge they had created or disseminated and the methodologies and modalities they had employed. The report also noted that programs were learning from past external evaluations and that program results were now being reported in terms of outputs, reach and outcomes. The synthesis identified the strengths and weaknesses of program initiative strategies. Although most were unique to specific programs, the synthesis also highlighted a set of themes that were nearly universal across all nine reviews, namely:

- need to be clear in achieving a balance between thematic focus and breadth of coverage
- need for the objectives set out in the prospectuses to be clearer and more measurable
- resilience of small and dispersed teams
- importance of scaling up the results of individual activities

The presentation to the IDRC Governors (March, 2004) recognized a series of common challenges raised by the external reviews, including:

- staffing, workload and team resilience
- focus and strategy
- gender analysis
- dissemination, outreach and "scaling up"

A memo from the Vice-President, Program and Partnership Branch (PPB), to the Governors noted that PPB management had found the external reviews most useful in assessing the work of the program initiatives and in designing a program frame for the next corporate strategy and program framework. They acknowledged that there had been some problems with external reviews, but these were being addressed. In keeping with these observations, the document review showed that the report to the IDRC

Governors in March, 2004 regarding the 2003 Program Initiative External Reviews identified one of the nine external reviews not to be of satisfactory quality.

In terms of criticism regarding the external reviews, during the interviews one senior manager noted that the external reviews are periodic and labour-intensive. He felt that in a fast-changing environment they were not sufficient to serve their purpose. At the minimum, external reviews must be complemented with an ongoing system of monitoring and providing rapid feedback for program decision-making and learning.

From the viewpoint of program managers and staff, several IDRC staff members noted that the Evaluation Unit was extraordinarily supportive during the process of external review. They commented on how well the Evaluation Unit staff managed external reviews for all programs. One IDRC staff mentioned that a donor partner questioned the dollar amount and staff time spent for an external review. The partner felt that the expenditure was high relative to the overall budget of the initiative.

**External Reviewer Perspective.** Designing, managing and facilitating external reviews is one of the primary functions of the vast majority of internal evaluation units. In undertaking this role, internal evaluation units ordinarily contribute their expertise in establishing the overall external review plan for the organization in consultation with senior management and program managers, assist with the development of Terms of Reference, recommend evaluation consultants who have the skills to undertake the external reviews, sit on committees to select suitable evaluators, work with the evaluation steering committees, manage the evaluation (e.g., maintain timelines, provide guidance, help solve data collection and logistical problems), coach consultants, review draft reports, and participate with program teams in discussions regarding the interpretation, dissemination and utilization of evaluation findings.

From my interviews, several rounds of discussions with the Evaluation Unit staff and review of documents, the IDRC Evaluation Unit appeared to undertake these typical internal evaluation functions well. I think that there are several factors that contribute to this achievement. Some factors are shared the Evaluation Unit's role in developing and coordinating IDRC's evaluation activities and systems (see Section 10.2.1 for a discussion). These general factors include the good match between the utilization-focused approach to evaluation and IDRC's organizational values and context, the extension of IDRC's decentralized evaluation model to the external review (e.g., responsibility rests with the programs, Evaluation Unit provides support and coaching), and excellent interpersonal and professional working relationships between Evaluation Unit staff and program managers/staff—relationships explicitly required by the Evaluation Unit staff's work objectives. To this may be added competent assistance by the Evaluation Unit in helping program areas to develop TORs and design evaluations, a supply of external evaluators and adequate funds to engage them, and responsive coaching by the Evaluation Unit staff to help manage the evaluation, solve problems and facilitate the interpretation and application of evaluation findings.

I felt that the common set of questions used for the external reviews were well chosen and imparted a structure that focused the reviews on important cross-cutting areas often ignored in external reviews (e.g., strengthening the capacity of researchers, assessing policy/technology influence, gender issues), but of particular importance for IDRC.

In my experience, the quality assessments of the external review reports tend to be neglected by internal evaluation units and IDRC is to be commended for including this assessment and basing it on international standards. In reviewing these quality assessments, however, it appeared that the reliability of the report was often questioned. This set of “reliability” standards referred to the accuracy of the report in terms of evidence used to support findings, agreement with information from other sources, and methodological rigour. A persistent problem was the lack of details of the evidence and clarity in the analytical bases for the findings.

Because this problem appeared so frequently across external reviews of different program initiatives employing different evaluation teams, I believe that it merits closer scrutiny and perhaps a modification of the evaluation guidelines to provide external evaluators with clearer expectations and/or models of evaluations that IDRC considers high quality.

### **10.3 Strengthening the Capacity for Evaluation**

The Evaluation Unit engages in capacity building both with partner organizations and within the Centre. In Evaluation Strategy: 2000-2005, the strengthening of evaluation capacity with IDRC partners was a high priority. In general, this capacity building is carried out through training, testing and refinement of tools and methods, such as Outcome Mapping, in collaboration with partners and with Centre program staff. For example, a large CIDA-funded project with BAIF in India, implemented in collaboration with the Ecosystems Approaches to Human Health (EcoHealth) Program Initiative contained a key capacity building component in monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the Unit participates in Centre program meetings and organizes occasional seminars and workshops on evaluation issues.

**Senior Management Perspective.** As a group, senior managers and staff felt strongly that the Evaluation Unit had performed very well in developing evaluation capacity within IDRC and with its boundary partners. The Unit had taken leadership in developing capacity internally, including strategic evaluations that deepen knowledge across the Centre and its partners, such as policy influence. Over the period of the 2000-2005 Evaluation Strategic Plan, the Evaluation Unit had build greater capacity for corporate-level evaluation and learning through its work on development of the Rolling-Project Completion Report, Corporate Assessment Framework and Annual Learning Forum processes. According to most senior managers, this helped to strengthen IDRC’s accountability and corporate learning.

**Program Manager and Program Branch Staff Perspective.** According to the interviews, the Evaluation Unit had developed very good working relationships with

program managers and staff, both in-house regarding the evaluation of their own programs and initiatives, and with partners to strengthen their evaluation capacity. The richness of information available on the Evaluation Unit's website was also greatly appreciated.

Regarding methods for building capacity, over half of the program managers and program staff interviewed identified the importance of training and support by Evaluation Unit staff. Some representative comments include:

*The Evaluation Unit put together three day training workshop for partners in Zimbabwe. This was well received. Very useful for building capacity for the program and its partners.*

*The Evaluation Unit has worked with one of our partners in developing evaluation methodology. Have brought Southern actors here for training. Very successful.*

*The Evaluation Unit opened our eyes to more a sophisticated approach of evaluation and how to integrate evaluation into our work. We had only known the logframe before and had not been aware that evaluation could be integrated into program design and used for learning.*

In addition to training, one IDRC staff member felt that secondments were a very effective way to build evaluation capacity at a personal level. It took much persuasion, however, to obtain the secondment and there were too many restrictions. Even so, the staff member came back with broader view of organization and contributed to the creation of a few of IDRC's most prized evaluation tools.

The key informants from the Secretariats, on the other hand, felt that they had not been included in evaluation training or capacity building, although they would have liked to have been. They felt that they also had important evaluation needs. The Secretariats would like more frequent contact with the Evaluation Unit.

**Regional Partner Perspective.** The ability of IDRC's Evaluation Unit to support partners and build evaluation capacity was a key issue for regional boundary partners. Feedback from the Latin American Region made clear that the overall strategy was working well. One of the major assets in LACRO was a Spanish-speaking Research Officer who provided support for evaluation in the region. She has close links with the Evaluation Unit and has a list of contract evaluators who can work on IDRC projects and initiatives in the region.

Even so, there remains an issue of support for evaluation in the region. In LACRO, Program Officers and Research Officers are expected to demonstrate evaluative thinking and mechanisms. Although the Research Officer is available for guidance in the use of specialized tools, such as Outcome Mapping, Program and Research Officers are expected to go to IDRC's Evaluation Unit for support on broader topics, such as approaches to evaluation and methodological issues.

This process is hampered by resource constraints and lack of a Spanish-speaking staff member in the Evaluation Unit. Without a Spanish language capacity it is difficult to engage with partners in Latin America.

Several regional boundary partners observed that evaluation in the South requires not only knowledge of evaluation methodology, but also skills in communication, utilization and evaluation of organizational issues. To be sustainable, it is important to delegate responsibility for evaluation to partners and to designate a consultant to support these efforts.

Partners in the South observed that the process of evaluation capacity building can be very slow and networks need to develop strong and deep roots. An important strategy is to identify those individuals working in evaluation capacity building, especially rural poverty projects, and work with them. Another important evaluation capacity building strategy is building alliances, with institutions that share similar approaches to evaluation. Finally, IDRC staff in regional offices would benefit from periodic training to help them strengthen evaluation capacity and utilization of evaluation at the program level.

**External Reviewer Perspective.** The evidence collected in the review showed that the Evaluation Unit had been able to strengthen the capacity for evaluation in IDRC and its regional boundary partners. The review also showed that the program areas within IDRC, the Regional Offices, and the regional partners want to have their evaluation capacity expanded and deepened.

I believe that there are several reasons for the success of the Evaluation Unit in strengthening the capacity for evaluation at IDRC. The Evaluation Unit was one of the early adopters of the utilization-focused approach to evaluation among government agencies. Over the last two decades, the utilization-focused approach has been widely-accepted by the professional evaluation field as a reliable process for designing, implementing and guiding the use of evaluation studies. Many of the principles of utilization-focused evaluation have been entrenched as core evaluation standards by the evaluation profession worldwide. Linked closely with the utilization-focused approach were the concepts of participatory evaluation, evaluation for learning and not only accountability, selection of practical evaluation methods, and evaluation as a tool for organizational development and capacity building. These concepts have been foundational for the IDRC approach to evaluation.

I believe that by identifying the promise of the utilization-focused approach early, over the last two decades the Evaluation Unit has built a solid foundation based on an evaluation process that has proven its value to the evaluation field. Core to this approach is a careful assessment of the information needs of key stakeholders, sensitivity to the program and organizational context, respectful and collaborative working relationships between evaluators and programs (manages, staff, partners), and a carefully developed process of evaluation design, implementation and management.

In Section 10.2.1, I discussed other reasons for success in capacity building, in particular the fact that IDRC staff and regional partners are highly educated researchers, often with multidisciplinary backgrounds that include the social science backgrounds. IDRC's model of evaluation for learning as well as accountability is highly compatible with the skill sets and value orientations of IDRC managers, staff, and partners. In my opinion, they are able to grasp and apply evaluation concepts and methods with greater facility and skill than I typically find in many other organizations.

Based on the external review, I feel that several gaps regarding evaluation capacity remain to be addressed by the Evaluation Unit. Most of these points have already been raised in Section 10.2.1, but they merit repeating for emphasis because they have implications for the staffing and workloads of the Evaluation Unit.

I feel that the decentralization of evaluation should continue, as well as expanding and deepening the evaluation skills of those in programs responsible for evaluation. To do this effectively will require more training of program staff and partners in intermediate and advanced evaluation approaches and methods. I believe that it will also require a strengthening of the capacity of the Evaluation Unit to provide training and supports systematically across the system. The creation of "regional nodes" in my mind is a good step in this direction. I also think that the Evaluation Unit should explore and take advantage of some of the electronic collaboration tools for managing and conducting evaluations as well as for dissemination and capacity building. These are mature tools that have proven effective in leveraging evaluation resources, as well as improving the effectiveness and reducing the costs of evaluations, especially in developing countries (see Arnold Love [Ed.], special 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue of Harvard University's *Evaluation Exchange* publication, Fall 2004, on the topic of "Harnessing Technology for Evaluation" at <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval/issue27/> ).

Coupled with IDRC's impressive ICT capacities, I believe that IDRC has the potential to apply current electronic tools and to create new ones. To take advantage of these opportunities, however, the Evaluation Unit may need to have a staff member, either appointed or seconded, who has an interest and skill in the technology and evaluation nexus.

## **11. Have There Been Accomplishments of the Evaluation Unit Outside the Framework of the Strategic Plan?**

At the time of Evaluation Strategy: 2000-2005, the Evaluation Unit was struggling with problems of measuring the impact of development research. It had been developing a new approach to planning, monitoring, and evaluating development. Outcome Mapping departed from the traditional attempts to measure ultimate development impacts that are ordinarily outside the influence of the program. It focused on measuring the changes in behaviours, relationships, or activities that a program has helped to achieve.

The strategic plan did not anticipate the widespread acceptance of Outcome Mapping both within the Centre and especially among boundary partners. In many respects,

Outcome Mapping was still at a beta-testing stage and suddenly found itself becoming an essential tool for development research evaluation. While this is an enormous achievement, it also means that Outcomes Mapping still requires further development and, given the demand, more resources and supports.

Related to the success of Outcome Mapping, an important accomplishment has been the growing recognition of IDRC's innovative work on evaluation tools and methodologies. This has led to invitations for Evaluation Unit staff to present at special training events for development evaluators (e.g., IPDET) and at national and international conferences for professional evaluators. This level of visibility has heightened the prestige of the Evaluation Unit and IDRC alike.

Another important accomplishment outside the 2000-2005 strategic plan was the important role the Evaluation Unit played in creating IDRC's corporate evaluation tools. In the strategic plan, the scope of the Evaluation Unit's corporate work with senior managers was to develop corporate performance targets and establish a system of rewards and incentives for good evaluation work by Centre staff. The ensuing five years, however, marked a dramatic shift of attention by the Evaluation Unit to participating in the development of important corporate learning and accountability tools, such as the Rolling PCR and the Corporate Assessment Framework.

## **12. What Has Worked and What Has Not Worked?**

**Senior Management Perspective.** In terms of what has worked, senior managers identified the following:

- Patient work with programs to build capacity, embed evaluation, and help them overcome barriers
- Creating a climate of trust around evaluation, so that IDRC's managers, staff, and partners do not fear evaluation, but use it as an accepted part of the learning process
- Evaluation Unit's ability to mainstream evaluation with its partners
- Accomplishing, to a great extent, the goal set over a decade ago by Terry Smytulo, past-Director of the Evaluation Unit, "to have everyone in IDRC *love* evaluation"
- Innovation in developing evaluation tools and processes that are sensitive to the realities of the development field
- Balancing corporate learning and accountability, especially in recent work creating corporate tools with great potential, such as the R-PCR, CAF, and ALF

In terms of what has not worked, several senior managers felt that the Evaluation Unit had adopted a model of evaluation that emphasized learning and organizational development at the expense of accountability. Some senior managers also were frustrated by the emphasis on facilitation and process. Several senior managers expressed concern about the amount of time the Evaluation Unit had spent on developing evaluation tools at the expense of evaluation capacity building and meeting corporate evaluation needs. A few senior managers also emphasized that much evaluation capacity building is in the hands of regional teams, but they have few resources and their needs are less well addressed.

**Program Manager and Program Branch Staff Perspective.** Regarding what worked, several program managers and program staff commented on the learning approach to evaluation employed by the Evaluation Unit. They strongly supported the learning approach for these reasons:

- Reduces the fear of evaluation
- Makes it easier for programs to work with partners
- Thorough evaluation with a learning approach invariably addresses objectives and reasons for results.
- Helps programs understand program and make decisions about its evolution
- Makes program and IDRC stronger
- Accountability is 10 years behind the field and not sure where it would lead IDRC

As noted elsewhere, despite the statement in Evaluation Strategy: 2000-2005 that the Evaluation Unit will focus more attention on developing evaluation capacity within Secretariats, the Secretariats interviewed during this external review expressed concern that they were not receiving the evaluation training and support that they needed and they thought the situation would get worse, rather than better. Furthermore, the Secretariats were not aware of what evaluation supports and services they were entitled to receive from the Evaluation Unit. They needed help with the design of mission-critical evaluations, but had no evaluation resources.

**Regional Partner Perspective.** What has worked well in the region was to have an IDRC staff in the region work with partners to identify needs and develop evaluation plans. Having an IDRC staff member who speaks the regional language is essential for support and capacity building. Where such a person was available, IDRC program managers and staff expressed satisfaction about the quality of the evaluations that were designed and implemented by external evaluation consultants.

Training materials in regional languages also worked well. Capacity building training on evaluation processes and evaluation tools worked better when regional boundary partners could attend and learn also. Regional partners also valued the Evaluation Unit's Web site in three languages.

From the regional partner perspective, what did not work well included:

- Release of evaluation tools before they have been thoroughly tested and refined
- Lack of regional training in the language of the region on the use of important tools, such as Outcomes Mapping
- Poor translations of materials (including both French and Spanish)
- For Latin America, lack of an Evaluation Unit staff who spoke Spanish
- External evaluators who did not know the region
- Lack of inclusion of boundary partners in training

**External Reviewer Perspective.** In my view, “what worked” was consistent with the evidence from all sources that the Evaluation Unit has built an approach to evaluation that many of the managers, staff, and regional partners have found useful. In contrast, the frustration on the part of at least some of IDRC’s senior management is evident and persistent, especially concerning the ability of the Evaluation Unit to understand and then respond to the need for credible and defensible information about results.

In my view, IDRC is at a critical point in its history regarding its mandate and the freedom it has been given under the *IDRC Act*. I believe that important elements of the research creativity and indefinable “magic” of IDRC experienced within the organization and by its partners would be lost if the *IDRC Act* were altered to correspond more closely to that of other government agencies. Being able to report tangible outcomes, not in terms of methodologies or modalities, is essential for IDRC. Having strong accountability systems, including both internal/external evaluations and audit is also crucial.

I feel that senior management appreciates this situation and has felt a sense of great urgency that tangible results be better portrayed. Although the Rolling-PCRs, CAF and ALF have potential as a set of innovative corporate accountability tools, I also share the sense that they must quickly be improved, streamlined and then evaluated to test how well they meet the “usefulness” test within and without IDRC as tools for providing results information.

In my review, I was impressed by the vast volumes of “performance stories” and “results information” the regional partners were able to provide at a moment’s notice from their Outcome Mapping or more conventional evaluation tools. I believe that the data is there but there is a problem somewhere in the pipeline from the field and Regional Offices to communication and dissemination in Ottawa. The mandate and scope of the external review did not permit further diagnosis of this problem, but I feel strongly that it merits special study and solution as soon as possible.

### **13. How Might the Evaluation Unit and Its Processes Be Improved?**

Senior managers, program managers and staff, and regional boundary partners generated a large number of suggestions for improving the Evaluation Unit and its processes. Given space constraints, the following list highlights the main suggestions.

**Senior Management Perspective.** Some of the main suggestions from senior management included:

### **Credible Information about Results**

- Senior managers need credible information that is the result of research to speak with confidence about important problems and issues, even if IDRC is not involved.
- IDRC must establish itself as national/international expert in development research information
- Evidence of research results is needed to defend IDRC

### **Cross-Cutting Evaluations**

- Place greater emphasis on cross-cutting and strategic evaluations
- Launch a series of less ambitious cross-cutting evaluations, some on operational issues that could improve IDRC's systems and operations
- Work with other donors and organizations on cross-cutting evaluations, instead of working alone

### **Embedding Evaluation**

- Evaluation Unit should continue to embed evaluative thinking within institutional practice. Continue to reduce the gap by mainstreaming evaluation.
- Supply regular evaluation training "updates" so that new staff can receive training and older staff can be refreshed.
- Evaluation is ongoing part of Centre operation, so the Evaluation Unit must work continuously to ensure evaluation needs are met and capacity is built.
- IDRC must do better job of orienting senior professional staff when they join the Centre. Concentrate on learning, working across projects, networks. Some program areas may have need for monitoring evaluation. Trying to build adaptive behaviour right from the start.

### **Managing Workloads**

- With shrinkage in Evaluation Unit staff, there should be a plan for managing workloads. The plan should include Evaluation Unit staff and others, such as consultants, who might link to Evaluation Unit to provide other resources.
- Evaluation Unit should focus on core competencies: evaluation and learning support to programs, continuing work on tools and cross cutting studies.
- Would like more a dedicated program evaluation resource – evaluation specialist linked to each program. This would help managers and those they manage not only for reporting, but also everyday decision making.

## **Evaluation Tools**

- Evaluation Unit has done enough with tools and methods and needs to concentrate more on diffusion and use.
- Tools such as Organizational Assessment are not widely diffused within IDRC and need to be embedded further
- Need to simplify Outcome Mapping methodology
- Develop analytic measures that address the major research themes (e.g., poverty reduction).
- Evaluation Unit needs to make greater use of electronic collaborative tools, even if simple ones like SKIPE, collaborative workspaces, chat

**Program Manager and Program Branch Staff Perspective.** The following are some major suggestions from program managers and staff:

### **Capacity Building**

- Need more training to build confidence in evaluation. Need more "how to" – introduction to evaluation processes periodically so that learning can take place ongoing manner. How do you select and implement tools that will be helpful?
- Need more assistance in working with Southern research partners.

### **Support for Evaluation**

- Evaluation Unit needs to define level of support available to programs.

### **Technology**

- With tight resources, how might technology facilitate evaluation? IDRC has pioneered e-tools, long before they were popular, and this expertise might be applied to evaluation.
- Evaluation Unit might benefit from an all-purpose evaluation/technology person.

## **Regional Partner Perspective**

### **Tools**

- Tools need to be thoroughly pilot tested before release to the field.
- Material in regional languages.
- More examples of the application of the tools on the Evaluation Unit's Web site
- Electronic version of tools that walks users through the steps and produces project details at the end.

## **Support**

- Evaluation Unit could use more staff, including regional staff.
- Evaluation Unit should have a Spanish-speaking staff member.
- Having listserv in evaluation for discussion of projects, problems, issue or new materials/studies.
- For Latin America and Caribbean, have a listserv of projects related to region in Spanish and English.
- For large projects especially, the Evaluation Unit should provide active support during the final phase to ensure that an adequate monitoring and evaluation system is in place – it is difficult to insert or change at a later date.

## **Networking**

- More communication between evaluation staff in different regional offices to share experiences and lessons learned.
- A regional network of monitoring and evaluation practitioners would be very useful reference group.

## **Capacity-building**

- Strongly support the Evaluation Unit's idea of regional nodes
- Regional offices would benefit from having an internal evaluator with a position at the same level as Program Officers – one who is seen as part of the Evaluation Unit and not as a clerical assistant to complete evaluation tasks
- More capacity building sessions and Terms of Reference for developing local resource persons
- More communication and exchange between evaluation staff in regional offices to share experiences and lessons learned
- Increasing awareness of importance of evaluation for planning and learning.
- Training workshop for our partners on Outcome Mapping and other tools and their application to regional projects.
- More training and guidance on using evaluation and evaluative information to strengthen institutions and for organizational decision-making
- Annual training session for the local institutions.
- IDRC be pro-active in advocating for a culture of evaluation at policy levels (Governments) and within the arena of the donors.

**External Reviewer Perspective.** In my view, I feel that the Evaluation Unit has built a strong foundation for evaluation within IDRC and its regional partners. I would be careful that any "improvements" would be true improvements and not jeopardize a system that works remarkably well compared with many other organizations.

Most of the suggestions for improvement are not new to the Evaluation Unit. I think that the selection of improvements will depend largely on achieving a balance of interests and then a model of progressive change over the next five years.

If I were to single out one improvement, it would be to take a holistic or “womb to tomb” view of evaluation tool development projects. That is, right from the start of the creation of a new tool, for example, to devise a tighter plan for developing the tool, testing it rigorously, disseminating and supporting the tool (e.g., training, consultation, help desk), and then creating a framework that leads to sustainability (e.g., user groups, periodic conferences, communities of practice, partners who take responsibility for additional training and development). Doing this at the start and thinking through the full development cycle, would help forestall the impression that the tool development process never ends, that tools are unfinished, that they are not subjected to rigorous external evaluation, and that training and support for end users is haphazard, yet use of the tools is often promoted or required.

#### **14. What Should the Vision and Goals of the Evaluation Unit Be?**

This section presents the main views and ideas concerning the vision and goals for the new Evaluation Strategy.

**Senior Management Perspective.** In general, senior managers felt that the current vision for the Evaluation Unit was working well and that it should be fine-tuned rather than completely revised.

*Very impressed with Evaluation Unit. Did IDRC a great service by dragging organization to see evaluation as learning tool. Results have been positive, although a certain amount of the accountability dimension was lost.*

*IDRC has high powered Evaluation Unit compared to other government departments. Uses results to influence decisions and to influence program work.*

Senior managers felt that evaluation at IDRC is about both learning and accountability. Although accountability is very important, IDRC also need information to learn how to change and improve. The fact that IDRC invests in the evaluation function is part of the Centre’s learning and accountability regime. Although accountability is the watchword now in Ottawa, generally they felt that Evaluation Unit should focus, as it has in the past, on high-quality evaluation of programs as part of an overall approach to accountability.

When asked about the relationship between audit and evaluation, several senior managers felt that the current situation was working well. They felt that it was important for IDRC to have a good Evaluation Unit, Internal Audit, and internal controls. They tended to see the evaluation and audit functions as being different, but complementary. There was the perception that a strong audit function would continue to preserve and protect IDRC’s excellent reputation for financial probity, and evidenced in the Reports of

the Auditor General of Canada. Likewise, as recognized by the Auditor General and others, a strong evaluation function was important. While not suggesting that audit and evaluation be integrated, several senior managers expressed the desire to see a more positive working relationship between these two important functions, so that opportunities could be maximized as they arose.

**Program Managers and Program Branch Staff Perspective.** IDRC Program Managers and Program Branch Staff also agreed that the current overall vision of the Evaluation Unit was sound. About half of those program managers and program staff interviewed made it clear that Evaluation Unit should continue using evaluation for learning and creating knowledge within IDRC.

In general, program managers felt that adaptive learning (“learning how to learn”) is crucial for IDRC over the next five-year period. One person, for example, said that the main challenge for future was the systematic tracking of learning at program level without turning into bureaucratic exercise.

In terms of goals, program managers and program staff felt that the Evaluation Unit should continue to respond to corporate and program evaluation issues and needs. They had confidence that the Evaluation Unit would select methods that fit IDRC values, as shown by the Evaluation Unit response to problems with the PCR and the creation of a Rolling-PCR process.

Program managers and program staff felt that the Evaluation Unit should continue focus on utilization, so that evaluation can help to guide the programs. Evaluation Unit should continue its Input into external reviews, strategic evaluations, corporate evaluation and learning. More updates on the findings or interim reports (e.g., "Snapshots") would be helpful.

IDRC Program Managers and Program Branch Staff identified several areas for fine-tuning the Evaluation Unit’s vision:

- Need to track outcomes more systematically. Rolling-PCR is not enough. Perhaps learning through ad hoc evaluations.
- Greater use of technology for evaluation capacity building and building evaluation networks (e.g., mailing lists, moderated d-groups)
- Ongoing testing, improvement, and dissemination of IDRC evaluation products (e.g., Outcome Mapping)
- Deeper decentralization of evaluation with a person in each program taking a part-time evaluation liaison role and Evaluation Unit assigning a specific Evaluation Unit staff to assist each program. The embedded evaluation staff would be seen as a member of the program team.

- Continued training in evaluation that exposes IDRC managers and staff to a broader range of evaluation methodologies and contact with others in the evaluation field. For example, IPDET training has helped IDRC staff see a variety of methods.
- Greater focus on ongoing monitoring and in-house evaluation using simplified methods for better project implementation and learning. Most projects send interim and final technical reports. Would strengthen programs and deepen IDRC learning.

**Regional Partner Perspective.** Overall, IDRC’s regional partners supported the current vision of the Evaluation Unit. They felt that the Evaluation Unit allowed them important margins of freedom for creativity and learning, but they were available to provide guidance and support – similar to a good parent.

The need for the Evaluation Unit to continue and deepen the evaluation capacity of partners in the South and their boundary partners was a major concern. In some regions in the South, the need for evaluation capacity was increasing as governments continued to decentralize. This requires new tools for monitoring change and areas of need as greater responsibility is assumed by municipal and local governments, NGOs, local groups (e.g., co-operatives), and local communities.

Tools developed by IDRC, such as Outcome Mapping, were very useful but there was the need to simplify the tools, provide regional training and support, and have materials available in local languages. Evaluation tools need to be linked to institutional and organizational strengthening to be sustainable. In other words, the evaluation tools created by the Evaluation Unit were highly valued, but they needed to be developed further, disseminated more broadly, and supported by a community of users. Given limitations on the Evaluation Unit staff, IDRC needed to develop resources for training and support at the regional level. When working with regional partners, another point was the need for the Evaluation Unit to help them build their capacity in documenting, publishing and disseminating the results of their work. This would provide more concrete examples about the application of the evaluation tools and share knowledge generated by those tools.

As noted elsewhere in this report, those interviewed in the Latin American Region, both Regional Office and partners alike, felt that having a Spanish-speaking staff member in the Evaluation Unit was essential for many reasons, ranging from training, support, communication and dissemination, and simply processing requests.

**External Reviewer Perspective.** In my view, the interview and document review showed emerging demand from within IDRC and its regional partners for more cross-cutting or horizontal evaluations that examined themes or issues that cut across multiple programs and/or regions, for example, environmental degradation caused by pollution, preventing the further spread of HIV/AIDS, or preventing malaria.

I feel that the demand for these types of studies will increase in the next few years. I think that they can be an important extension of the Evaluation Unit’s strategic

evaluations, such as the policy influence study that have been well received (see Section 10.2.3 for a discussion).

I also think that such studies might provide a solution to the need by IDRC senior management for results-based information by identifying several important and substantive areas of development research and then creating in-depth reports that summarize the state-of-the-art, the results of IDRC's research contributions, and an authoritative platform for future action. I felt that the IDRC Program Initiative Tanzania Essential Health Interventions (TEHIP) and its reports and publications provide a relevant model for these types of studies.

A persistent problem faced by regional partners who received funding from multiple donors was the need for a "broad tent" evaluation framework that would identify the complementary aspects of logframe, Outcome Mapping and other evaluation approaches. I believe that this is not an "either/or" situation. I feel that Outcome Mapping fills in the gaps left by the logframe approach and does much to soften its rigidities. I found that some of the strongest supporters of Outcome Mapping among recognized the usefulness of the logframe approach (and other traditional development evaluation approaches) under certain conditions.

I think that there is much practice wisdom from the field that the Evaluation Unit might use to provide broader guidance regarding the complementary use of a wider set of tools and approaches. I think that this will be necessary once the Evaluation Unit begins to respond to the demand to build intermediate- and advanced-level evaluation capacity with program initiatives and regional partners.

## 15. Conclusions

The external review focused on the Evaluation Unit's three main areas of work:

- Evaluation tools and methods development
- Strategic evaluation
- Evaluation capacity building of boundary partners

**Evaluation Tools and Methods Development.** The interview and complementary data sources (documents, bibliographic reviews, ratings from workshops) showed that the Evaluation Unit succeeded in conducting and supporting research to improve evaluation tools and methods in order to strengthen the use of evaluation for development research. The feedback was clear that the Evaluation Unit had listened to the needs of IDRC staff and partners and, when appropriate tools were not available from other sources, the Unit took the initiative to develop them.

Specifically, over the last decade the Evaluation Unit has been developing its Outcome Mapping tool. Outcome Mapping addresses the perennial problems of defining and measuring the results and impacts of projects, programs, organizations, and networks.

The response from all sources indicated that Outcome Mapping was seen as an important tool for navigating around the obstacles to demonstrating “attribution” for results inherent within the conventional logical framework and results-based management frameworks. It has been well-accepted by IDRC staff and boundary partners alike and a high level of recognition in the development field internationally. Overall, the primary concerns about Outcome Mapping are practical ones: simplifying the model for field application, supplying training and supports, and creating a community of users. The Organizational Assessment and Capacity Building Tools received less recognition than Outcome Mapping, yet there is general agreement that these tools are essential for strengthening institutions and fostering learning in the development field. Feedback from regional partners underlined the importance of these tools, but the review showed that greater attention to their dissemination to IDRC staff and training/support for their use by regional partners is necessary.

**Develop and Coordinate IDRC’s Evaluation Activities and Systems Including Strategic Evaluations.** At IDRC, evaluation is decentralized with program initiatives responsible for their own evaluation work. The Evaluation Unit provides central coordination and support. The Evaluation Unit also carries out strategic evaluations, that is, evaluations relevant to a number of different programs and programming areas in the Centre.

The data collected from all sources showed that the Evaluation Unit had fulfilled its mandate under the Strategic Plan very well and that its boundary partners were very satisfied with its performance. In my experience as an external reviewer, the performance of IDRC’s Evaluation Unit was exceptionally positive. These results appeared to be related to the Evaluation Unit’s user-orientation and responsiveness to boundary partners, its promotion of a tailored evaluation process rather than a standardized template, its focus on evaluation for learning as well as accountability, and its creation of innovative and relevant evaluation tools. The major concerns related primarily to capacity: would a relatively small evaluation staff continue to supply the evaluation supports and capacity building so highly valued, while meeting the increasing corporate evaluation needs?

During the 2000-2005 strategic plan, the Evaluation Unit has been responsible for designing and coordinating strategic evaluation on important topics, particularly the influence of research on public policy. Designed to provide learning at the program and corporate levels, this study sought to document what the Centre means by policy influence and systematically examine how the research IDRC supports influences policy, including the factors that affect the extent of policy influence.

The interview data, as well as a review of articles, documents, background reports, presentations, and summaries of workshops all supported the conclusion that the policy influence strategic evaluation was well-received and served to complement other “research-to-policy” work in the Centre and its regions. The primary issues raised by the were methodological ones, such as the selection of cases for the case studies, need to

expand the theoretical model to include regional and local differences, and the need for cross-case analyses before drawing conclusions.

Program initiatives (PIs) are the primary programming modality at IDRC. They have a life-span of five years and after that time they may be extended, modified or discontinued. Near the end of the five year period, each program initiative undergoes an external review. The purpose of external reviews is to provide an independent, informed view about the performance and results of programs that is an important element of accountability for program effectiveness, as well as for decision making and learning. The Evaluation Unit prepares a quality assessment, based on international evaluation standards, on each external review report. The assessment of the role of the Evaluation Unit in managing external reviews was addressed through interviews and by a review of documents.

Compared to the strategic evaluations, the external reviews managed by the Evaluation Unit did not receive as much commentary during the interviews. Those that commented on them felt that they were an important part of IDRC's corporate accountability and learning regimen. Program managers and staff reported that the Evaluation Unit were very supportive during the external review process. Concerns raised about the external reviews included their costs and the need for a system of internal evaluation or focused-evaluations to provide ongoing feedback during the long intervals between external reviews.

**Strengthening Capacity for Evaluation.** The Evaluation Unit engages in capacity building both with partner organizations and within the Centre. In Evaluation Strategy: 2000-2005, the strengthening of evaluation capacity with IDRC partners was a high priority. In general, this capacity building is carried out through training, testing and refinement of tools and methods, such as Outcome Mapping, in collaboration with partners and with Centre program staff.

Feedback from all sources showed that the Evaluation Unit performed very well in developing evaluation capacity within IDRC and with its boundary partners. Senior management in particular appreciated the leadership taken by the Evaluation Unit in developing capacity within IDRC, including strategic evaluations that deepen knowledge across the Centre and its partners and building greater capacity for corporate-level evaluation and learning through the Unit's work on development of the Rolling-Project Completion Report, Corporate Assessment Framework and Annual Learning Forum processes. The richness of information available on the Evaluation Unit's website was also greatly appreciated.

The ability of IDRC's Evaluation Unit to support partners and build evaluation capacity was a key issue for regional boundary partners. The overall approach appeared to be working well, but there was a need for greater capacity building in the regions. To be sustainable, it is important to delegate responsibility for evaluation to partners and to designate a consultant to support these efforts. In particular, within IDRC's decentralized evaluation model, the evaluation capacity of regional partners needs to be

expanded and deepened. This would appear to require a strengthening of the capacity of the Evaluation Unit to provide training and supports systematically across the system. The steps by the Evaluation Unit to create “regional nodes” appear to be an important initiative in this direction. An Evaluation Unit staff member who spoke Spanish fluently would be an asset to building evaluation capacity in Latin America.

In terms of what has worked well for the Evaluation Unit, there seems to be clear support that the Evaluation Unit has built an approach to evaluation that many of the managers, staff, and regional partners have found useful.

In terms of what could work better, senior management continued to demand a more emphasis accountability and results, more attention to evaluation capacity building within the Centre and across the regions, and more attention to meeting corporate evaluation needs—especially testing and refining the R-PCR, CAF, and ALF processes. For their part, program managers and staff, as well as regional partners, were concerned about receiving sufficient training and support for their evaluation work.

In short, the external review clearly showed that IDRC’s Evaluation Unit has met the core elements of its strategic plan. Overall satisfaction with the performance of the Evaluation Unit by key boundary partners was very good. There appear to be significant challenges for the Evaluation Unit, however, in the years ahead as it strives to respond to increasing corporate evaluation needs, while continuing to strengthen the Centre’s evaluation systems, as well as provide training and supports for the Centre’s program areas and its regional partners.

## **Annex A**

### **Interviews Completed at IDRC, Ottawa**

#### **Individual Interviews with IDRC Senior Management**

- Federico Burone, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean
- Constance Freeman, Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa
- Rich Fuchs, Director, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for Development Program Area
- John Hardie, past-Director, Policy and Planning and Chief-of-Staff
- Brent Herbert-Copley, Director, Social and Economic Policy Program Area
- Jean Lebel, Director, Environment and Natural Resources Management Program Area
- Stephen McGurk, Regional Director for Southeast and East Asia
- Rohinton Medorha, Vice-President, Program and Partnership Branch
- Lauchlan Munro, Director of Policy and Planning Group (multiple interviews)
- Maureen O'Neil, President of IDRC

#### **Group Interviews with Senior Management**

- Denys Vermette, Vice-President, Resources and Chief Financial Officer and Louise Brouzes, Resources Planning and Development Officer

#### **Individual Interviews with IDRC Program Managers and Program Branch Staff**

- Peter Besseau, Executive Director, International Model Forest Network Secretariat
- Lisa Burley, Research Officer, Partnerships and Business Development
- Simon Carter, Team Leader, Rural Poverty and Environment Program Initiative
- Tim Dottridge, Director, Special Initiatives Division (SID)
- Allison Hewlitt, Bellanet International Secretariat
- Martha Melesse, Senior Program Officer, Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies (MIMAP) Program Initiative and Trade, Employment and Competitiveness (TEC) Program Initiative
- Sachiko Okura, Research Information Specialist, Research Information Management Service Division (RIMSD)
- Helen Raij, Research Officer, Latin America and Caribbean Office (via telephone)
- Andrés Sanchez, Senior Program Specialist, Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health (Ecohealth)
- Pamela Scholey, Team Leader, Peacebuilding and Reconstruction Program Initiative

- Steve Song, Manager, Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D), Africa Programs
- Ronnie Vernooy, Program Officer, Community Based Natural Resources Management Program Initiative and MINGA Program Initiatives
- Christina Zarowsky, Team Leader, Governance, Equity and Health PI

### **Individual Interviews with Evaluation Unit**

- Fred Carden, Director, Evaluation Unit (multiple interviews)
- Denise Deby, Senior Program Specialist, Evaluation Unit
- Sarah Earl, Senior Program Specialist, Evaluation Unit
- Amy Etherington, PDA, Evaluation Unit
- Kevin Kelpin, Senior Program Specialist, Evaluation Unit
- Terry Smytulo, past-Director, Evaluation Unit

### **Group interviews with Evaluation Unit**

- Evaluation Unit on 14 February and 17 February 2005

## **Annex B**

### **Field Interviews with IDRC Regional Office Staff, Grant Recipients, Technical Collaboration Partners, and Previous External Evaluators in Latin American Region**

#### **ECUADOR**

##### **Individual Interviews:**

- Susana Alban, Director General, Tejiendo Redes, Grupo Randi Randi
- Kaia Ambrose, Ceja Andina Project, Ecopar
- Homero Cadena Andino, Mayor of Montúfar, Carchi
- Rosemary Borja, Ceja Andina Project, Ecopar
- Emerson Bravo, Coordinator, Municipal Environmental Unit, Montúfar, Carchi
- Adriana Burbano, Coordinator, Tejiendo Redes, Grupo Randi Randi
- Manuel Chiriboga, Network on Farming Systems Methodology Research (RIMISP)
- Kelvin Cuevas, Ceja Andina Project, Ecopar
- Alfredo López, Director, Ecopar
- Luis Ordóñez, Ceja Andina Project, Ecopar
- Susan Poats, Director, MANRECUR Project, Grupo Randi Randi
- Mauricio Proaño, President, Grupo Randi Randi
- Dania Quirola Suárez, Project Coordinator, Manuejo de los Recursos Naturales en la Cuenca Hidrográfica del Rio Pazatz, World Wildlife Fund International

##### **Group Interviews:**

- Ecopar Team, Quito, Ecuador: Alfredo López, Erica Narváez, María Augusta Almeida, Xiomara Izurieta, Kelvin Cueva, Luis Ordóñez, Pool Segarra, Luis González, and Andrea Arias
- MANRECUR Team, Grupo Randi Randi, Mira, Ecuador: Tatiana Castillo, Ximena Tapia, Edwin Revelo, Aldemar Nejer, and Vincinio Mateus

#### **PERU**

##### **Individual Interviews:**

- Ana Bravo, International Forum on Rural Transport and Development
- Emma Rotondo, Program Evaluation (PREVAL), IFAD's Rural Poverty Alleviation Projects in Latin America and Caribbean
- Sonia Salas, Agricultural University De Molina, REDAR Peru

## **ARGENTINA**

### **Individual Interviews:**

- Tracy Tulpin, Consultant and former staff Latin America Trade Network (LATN), FLASCO

### **Group interviews:**

- Miguel Lengyel, Coordinator, and Diana Tussie, Director, Programa de Estudios sobre Instituciones Económicas Internacionales, Latin America Trade Network (LATN), FLASCO

## **URUGUAY**

### **Individual Interviews:**

- Federico Burone, Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean
- Merle Faminow, Team Leader, Minga
- Patricia González (Zenteno), Research Officer, Mining Policy Research Initiative (MPRI)
- Alicia Iglesias, Research Officer, Environmental Management Secretariat
- Luis Macadar, Consultant and External Evaluator of Latin America Trade Network (LATN)
- Ben Petrazzini, Senior Program Specialist, Institute for Connectivity in the Americas
- Helen Raij, Research Officer, Rural Poverty and Environment Program Initiative
- Alicia Richero, Senior Program Specialist, PAN Americas Corporate Project
- Andrés Rius, Team Leader, Globalization, Growth and Poverty Program Initiative

### **Group interviews:**

- Walter Ubal Giorodano, Executive Director and Alicia Iglesias, Research Officer, Environmental Management Secretariat
- Anna Rubio and Lucia Battezzore, Associates, Instituto Internacional de Facilitación y Consenso (IIFAC), Montevideo, Uruguay

## **Annex C**

### **E-Mail Survey Respondents**

#### **IDRC Regional Directors and Locations**

- Constance Freeman, ESARO, Nairobi (response by telephone interview)
- Stephen Mcgurk, ASRO, Singapore (response by personal interview)
- Eglal Rached, MERO, Cairo

#### **IDRC Staff and Locations**

- Vivien Chiam, ASRO, Singapore
- Liz Fajber, SARO, Delhi
- Lamia el Fattal, MERO, Cairo
- Katherine Hay, SARO, Delhi
- Moussa Samb, WARO, Dakar
- Ramata Molo Thioune, WARO, Dakar

#### **IDRC Partners and Locations**

##### **Africa:**

- Leona Ba, Consultant and former IDRC M&E Officer, WARO
- Thierry Barreto, West African Rural Foundation
- Ineke Buskens, GRACE Network Women and ICTs in Africa Research Network
- Uys du Buisson, Managing Director, Digimile (Pty) Ltd., First Inch First Mile Project, South Africa
- Berhane Gebru, Program Officer, SATELLIFE, Uganda Health Information Network (UHIN)
- Holly Ladd, Executive Director, Uganda Health Information Network (UHIN)
- W. Macharia, Project Manager, GEH: African Scholars Program
- Chris Morris, Project Leader, First Inch First Mile Project, South Africa
- Vic Neufeld, Co-Director, GEH: African Scholars Program

## **India:**

- Kishore Birdkhar, M&E, Swayamsiddha Project, BAIF Development Research Foundation, India
- Chozüle Kikhi, Team Member, Nagaland Environmental Protection Project (NEPED), Nagaland, India
- Qutovi Hutovi, Team Member, Nagaland Environmental Protection Project (NEPED), Nagaland, India
- Seema Khot, Project Leader, BAIF Development Research Foundation, India
- Vengota Nakro, Team Member, Nagaland Environmental Protection Project (NEPED), Nagaland, India
- Kalpana Pant, M&E at Chaitanya, NGO partner with Swayamsiddha Project, BAIF Development Research Foundation, India
- Raj Verma, Nagaland Environmental Protection Project (NEPED), Nagaland, India

## **S/SE Asia:**

- Roinita Indra, Program Manager, Graduate Program in Development Studies, Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia
- Henk de Zeeuw, Programme Coordinator, RUAF, RTC, Leusen, The Netherlands and IAGU: A Cities Feeding People Project

## **Central America and Caribbean:**

- Bill Found, Center for Research in Latin America and the Caribbean (CERLAC) at York University (Canada) regarding Mark Hostetler's dissertation research on the use of Outcome Mapping in IDRC-funded Participatory Action Research project in Pearl Lagoon, Nicaragua

## **Annex D**

### **Selected Bibliography of Documents Reviewed**

#### **IDRC Organizational Structure**

- Organizational Charts

#### **Strategic Plans**

- IDRC Corporate Strategy and Program Framework 2005-2010
- IDRC Corporate Strategy and Program Framework 2000-2005
- Evaluation Unit Strategy 2000-2005

#### **Evaluation Unit Activities**

- Evaluation Unit Activities 2000-2004

#### **Evaluation Guidelines**

- IDRC Evaluation Guidelines

#### **Outcome Mapping Participant Evaluations**

- Outcome Mapping Training Workshop at The Governance Network (April, 2002)
- Outcome Mapping Workshop in Guatemala (April, 2003)
- Johannesburg Outcome Mapping Workshop (September, 2003)
- Outcome Mapping Workshop in Kathmandu, Nepal (July, 2004)
- Outcome Mapping Users Conference in Lima, Peru (October, 2004)
- Building Skills for Outcome Mapping Use and Facilitation Workshop in Cuernavaca, Mexico (December, 2004)

## Outcome Mapping

- Ambrose, Kaia. “Constructing Collaborative Learning: Outcome Mapping and It’s Multiple Uses in the Project Cycle of a SUB Initiative.” Quito, Ecuador: Ceja Andina Project, Corporación Ecopar, 2004
- *Directory of Participants and Projects, Outcome Mapping Users Conference*, 18-19 October 2004 in Lima, Peru
- Earl, S., Carden F., and Smutylo T. *Outcome Mapping*. IDRC, Ottawa, 2002 and documents from IDRC Evaluation Unit’s Web site
- Ortiz N., Imbach A., Quirola D., Pacheco J. and Bouroncle C. *Building Skills for Outcome Mapping Use and Facilitation Project: Final Technical Report*. Colombia: Asociación Raíz (ASRAIZ), December, 2004
- *Outcome Mapping Programme Framework*, Nagaland Empowerment of People and Economic Development (NEPED) Project

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- Douglas Horton, Anastasia Alexaki, Samuel Bennett-Lartey, Kim Noële Brice, Dindo Campilan, Fred Carden, José de Souza Silva, Le Thanh Duong, Ibrahim Khadar, Albina Maestrey Boza, Imrul Kayes Muniruzzaman, Jocelyn Perez, Matilde Somarriba Chang, Ronnie Vernooy, Jamie Watts. *Evaluating Capacity Development: Experiences from Research and Development Organizations around the World*. IDRC/ISNAR, 2003.

## Rolling-Project Completion Report Process

- *New Rolling-Project Completion Report (R-PCR) Process, Final Proposal and Handover from the PCR Working Group to the Senior Management Committee*, (15 December, 2004) and associated memos and materials

## **Policy Influence**

- Evert A. Lindquist. *Discerning Policy Influence: Framework for a Strategic Evaluation of IDRC-Supported Research*. Victoria, BC: School of Public Administration University of Victoria, September 1st, 2001
- Macadar, Luis (2004). *The Influence of Research on Public Policy: Overview of The Latin American Trade Network Case Study*. Unpublished presentation.
- Tussie, Diana (2004). *A Study of Policy Influence: The G-24 Research Program*. Unpublished presentation, June 21, 2004.
- *Making the Most of Research: Research and the Policy Process* (CD-ROM format). Includes literature review and theoretical orientation papers, the strategic evaluation of the influence of research on public policy and related case studies. Ottawa, ON: IDRC, 21 June 2004

## **External Reviews**

- Terms of Reference for IDRC PI External Reviews
- Improving Program Effectiveness: PI External Reviews, presentation to IDRC Board of Governors, 24 March 2004
- Summary Report of External Evaluation of Program Initiatives under the "Environment and Natural Resource Management" Program Area, submitted to the Board of Governors of IDRC, 17 February 2004
- PI External Reviews: Synthesis Report for Social and Economic Equity (SEE) Program Area, submitted to the Board of Governors of IDRC, March 2004
- Quality Assessments of nine External Review Reports for 2004

## **Evaluation Findings Annual Report**

- Annual Report on Evaluation Findings 1994 through 2004

## **IDRC Audit Services**

- *IDRC's Evaluation Function*, Report prepared by IDRC Audit Services, 7 January, 2003

## **Office of Auditor General of Canada**

- *IDRC OAG Special Examination Report, 27 March 2003*
- *Response to OAG Special Examination and Management Comments, Report prepared by IDRC Audit Services, 29 August 2003*

## **Performance Review and Assessment Reports**

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- Denise Deby, Senior Program Officer, Performance Review and Assessment Reports for 2004/2005, 2003/2004, 2002/2003, 2001/2002, 2000/2001
- Sarah Earl, Program Evaluation Officer, Performance Review and Assessment Reports for 2003/2004, 2002/2003, 2001/2002, 2000/2001
- Amy Etherington, Centre Internships Program Progress Report and Final Report, 2004

## **Annex E**

### **Participants at Evaluation Unit Strategy Meeting 22 April 2005**

- Jim Armstrong, President, The Governance Network
- Peggy Borbey, Director/Directrice, Evaluation and Analysis/Évaluation et analyse, CIHR/IRSC – Canadian Institutes for Health Research
- Fred Carden, Director, Evaluation Unit, IDRC
- Brad Cousins, Professor, University of Ottawa
- Sarah Earl, Senior Program Officer, Evaluation Unit, IDRC
- Amy Etherington, Professional Development Awardee, Evaluation Unit, IDRC
- Rich Fuchs, Director, Information and Communication Technologies for Development Program Area, IDRC (participation via e-mail)
- Brent Herbert-Copley, Director, Social and Economic Policy Program Area, IDRC (participation via e-mail)
- Kevin Kelpin, Senior Program Specialist, Evaluation Unit, IDRC
- Jean Lebel, Director, Environment and Natural Resources Management Program Area, IDRC
- Eva Lithman, Director Evaluation, SIDA – Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
- Arnold Love, Consultant, Evaluation Unit External Reviewer
- Charles Lusthaus, Partner, Universal Management Group
- Nancy McPherson, Head, Monitoring & Evaluation Unit, IUCN – World Conservation Union
- Lauchlan Munro, Director, Policy and Planning Group, IDRC (participation via teleconference)
- Maureen, O’Neil, President, IDRC
- Ian Smillie, Consultant
- Nancy Smyth, Senior Policy Analyst, Policy and Planning Group, IDRC

## Annex F

### **Brief Biography Arnold J. Love, Ph.D. Evaluation Unit External Reviewer**

Dr. Arnold Love is an internationally recognized program evaluation consultant based in Toronto with 30 years experience in the evaluation field. He earned his interdisciplinary doctorate from the University of Waterloo (Canada). Dr. Love specializes in evaluating public and nonprofit (NGO) programs and in assisting organizations worldwide to develop internal evaluation, that is, the capacity to evaluate their policies and programs using their own staff.

In addition to consulting, for the last 20 years, Dr. Love has taught program evaluation and information systems design at the National Centre for Nonprofit Management at York University and at the York University/Maytree Foundation Management Program for managers of settlement and multicultural agencies. Arnold teaches graduate courses in public sector management, business research methods, evaluation methodology, and international e-government through Athabasca University (Canada's "Internet University"). Dr. Love also teaches courses to professional evaluators, senior government officials, and policy analysts at The Evaluators' Institute in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco. He is an advisor on the development of capacity in evaluation to foundations and donor organizations and a frequent guest lecturer at conferences, universities and think-tanks worldwide.

Dr. Love has served two terms as national President of the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES). During his tenure, he initiated the CES Essential Skills Series that provides systematic training in evaluation throughout Canada. In 1996, Dr. Love received the Canadian Evaluation Society's Award for Distinguished Contribution to Evaluation in Canada. In 1998, he received the American Evaluation Association's first Special Award for his efforts in building a worldwide evaluation community. With two grants from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, he provided the leadership and logistical support that led to the successful creation of the new International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE) that now serves as the umbrella organization for more than 60 national and regional evaluation societies and networks in all continents. In 2004, Dr. Love was honoured by the Canadian Evaluation Society with its second major award for Contribution to Society. He is currently serving as the Conference Co-Chair for the joint American and Canadian International Evaluation Conference that will be held in Toronto during October, 2005.

Dr. Love is a widely acknowledged authority on internal evaluation. He is the author of a chapter on internal evaluation in the recently published *Encyclopedia of Evaluation* (Sage), the author of *Internal Evaluation: Building Organizations from Within* (Sage) and special issues of *New Directions for Program Evaluation* and the *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* on the topic of internal evaluation. He is also the editor of the Canadian Evaluation Society's *Evaluation Methods Sourcebook* series and has served on the Editorial Advisory Boards of the major evaluation journals.