

IDRC AT TWENTY

AN ANNIVERSARY OF DEVELOPMENT

The international exposition in Montreal, Expo '67, was one of Canada's first opportunities to play host to the world. The international flavour that surrounded this event led Canada to a much more permanent relationship with several countries.

It was during this exhibition that Canada's then Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson, spoke before the Canadian Political Science Association, planting the seed of what was to become the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). "The challenge of international development," he said, "is to find new instruments for concentrating more attention and resources to the solution of man's economic and social problems on a global basis."

Shortly after this speech, one of these "new instruments" was forged. In 1970, the International Development Research Centre was created through an Act of the Canadian Parliament.

The many proposals for an international research centre came together in the idea that it was to be a place for learning where the latest knowledge would be made accessible to developing countries.

IDRC's uniqueness in international development can be found in its insistence that research be done, whenever possible, in developing countries. A primary goal is the transfer of learning. This transfer has become crucial in the age of technology where indigenous research and modern science possess the tools of social and economic advancement.

A characteristic of IDRC that has helped shape this uniqueness is the organization of the institution itself. An independent, international Board of Governors

makes policies and outlines the directions IDRC should take. The Board consists of 11 Canadians and 10 representatives from both developed and developing countries.

Since its inception, IDRC has operated on the belief that its most appropriate role is in responding to the problems and opportunities of development by supporting indigenous enterprise. Sensitivity, responsiveness, and respect have guided IDRC in its willingness to let countries develop on their own terms.

This principle has stood the test of time. It is just as valuable, perhaps more valuable, today as it was 20 years ago.

In the complex world of international development, IDRC remains observant of areas where it can exploit its comparative advantage to the full. Two major aspects of this advantage are its source of knowledge about developmental research and its ability to change directions to serve the needs of developing countries better.

An example of IDRC's flexibility was the decision to direct more resources to meet the needs of African research. It has increased the percentage of total resources flowing to sub-Saharan Africa and the number of program staff based in the regional offices of Dakar and Nairobi.

To ensure that IDRC meets the needs of African researchers, it has prepared a strategic plan to guide activities in the region. It was distributed widely, and comments were received from hundreds of African policymakers and researchers. This strategic plan is being modified so that IDRC policies truly reflect the priorities of African researchers.

In just 20 years, this institution of modest means has attracted worldwide attention. Other donor centres have shown an interest in the IDRC approach and value IDRC's experience.

Praise for IDRC has come from a number of sources. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has called it "the premier organization in the world tackling one of the most critical problems of our time."

In 1988, IDRC became the recipient of the first ever "Twenty-First Century Award" given by the prestigious United States Scientific Research Society, Sigma Xi. This group said IDRC's "perceptive, imaginative, and generous modus operandi has profound implications for the stability and well-being of the interdependent world of the 21st Century."

IDRC is celebrating with pride its 20th anniversary. Much has yet to be done. Although its resources are modest, the dedication of IDRC is unlimited.


Ivan L. Head
President, IDRC



20
YEARS
OF DEVELOPMENT
THROUGH RESEARCH

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I D R C

REPORTS

VOLUME 18, NUMBER 4, OCTOBER 1990



20
IDRC
CANADA
YEARS
OF DEVELOPMENT
THROUGH RESEARCH

Thirsty Cities



P O B O X 8 5 0 0

IDRC Reports Again

During the course of *Reports* suspension over the past year we were literally inundated with letters from our readers — more than 600 researchers, NGOs, development students, organizations, and government and private-sector companies alike wrote to reconfirm the need for a multidisciplinary view to development that was *Reports*.

To know that we were so well received by those we most wanted to reach and inform is certainly encouraging. We benefited tremendously from the comments and advice. The message from our readers was clear, and we have responded accordingly with the rebirth of a new, reformatted *Reports*. The excerpts that follow are only a very small sampling of our readers' opinions:

Robert Charbonneau, Editor-in-Chief

"Allow us first to thank you for years of useful and enjoyable reading of the publication...we still need to have something like *Reports* which is not too technical, yet adequate for a diversified audience including high school and college students in developing countries who need to get information at their level."

Ruben F. Trinidad, Philippine Social Science Council Inc., Philippines.

"To me, *Reports* was a way of being informed about wider aspects of development work. There are a great number of academic journals but few introduce aspects outside of their specific topics...*Reports* offered a way of broadening both my own and my colleagues knowledge of our work."

Melvin Woodhouse, African Medical and Research Foundation.

"For us in the developing countries, *Reports* contained useful information about development approaches in other countries. Topics of particular interest are the application of science and technology in the process of development."

E.C. Subbarao, Tata Research Development and Design Centre, India.

"To me, *IDRC Reports*' main appeal lay in its interdisciplinary format, as most development issues in the Third World are interrelated. *Reports* has proved to be one of the few publications which presented a holistic viewpoint highly appropriate to understanding and solving problems of poverty."

B.S. Saini, University of Queensland, Australia.

"The information your publication presents gives an overview and a continuity to the appropriate developmental work which we are involved in... learning what projects are being undertaken, which ones work, and what problems are encountered is priceless information that becomes difficult to glean without periodicals like yours."

Michael Manetos, Humboldt State University, USA.

"*IDRC Reports* is a very good magazine in that it is well designed and carries interesting information, especially on agriculture. This information...should reach smaller groups working at the grassroots levels, for example the NGOs, women groups and development workers."

Kabunde Samuel, Kijweka Rural Environmental Education Project, Uganda.

The magazine welcomes letters from its readers. Because of space limitations, letters may be edited or published only in part. Please write to **IDRC Reports**, PO Box 8500, Ottawa, Canada, K1G 3H9.

IDRC REPORTS

IDRC Reports is published quarterly by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada. Its aim is to keep an international readership informed about the work IDRC supports in developing countries as well as other development issues of interest. The magazine is also available in French as *Le CRDI Explorer* and in Spanish as *El CIID Informa*.

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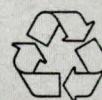
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Through support for research, Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) assists developing countries in creating their own long-term solutions to pressing development problems.

IDRC is a Public Corporation created by the Parliament of Canada in 1970, and it is guided by an international Board of Governors. IDRC has regional offices in Cairo, Dakar, Montevideo, Nairobi, New Delhi, and Singapore. Head office: IDRC, PO box 8500, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1G 3H9. Tel: (613) 236-6163, Cable: RECENTRE OTTAWA, Telex: 053-3753, Fax: (613) 238-7230.

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The rapid population growth of the Third World in the past 50 years has placed an unprecedented burden on water supplies. Unregulated industrial pollution has only added to the water pinch. The increasing problems of poor water availability and environmental degradation are forcing countries from South America to Africa to Asia to take a hard look at their attitude to water.

THIRSTY CITIES

- 4 **Thirsty Cities**
Dwindling water reserves and poor management of resources are becoming acute barriers to development in the Third World. *Danilo Anton*
- 6 **The Atlantis of the Orient**
In Bangkok, an enormous demand for water has actually made the city sink into the Gulf of Thailand. *Craig Harris*
- 8 **Quest for Water**
Mexico City, the most populated city in the world, is facing serious problems in its water supply. *Steven Hunt*
- 10 **A Taste of Salt**
Once known as the "Green Cape," the area around Dakar has become dried out by saltwater intrusion. *André Potworowski*
- 11 **A Tale of Three Cities**
Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, and Cochabamba are three very different cities with one thing in common: water pollution.

12, 13 The Black Plague / Networking for Musa

Black Sigatoka disease in banana and plantain has hurt farmers. INIBAP is working to coordinate research. *Stephen Homer and Craig Harris*

14 Stranded at Sea

The rights of seafarers in Southeast Asia is the focus of a study on international shipping and laws of the sea. *Huguette Young*

15 Mapping Their Future

Ethiopia's domestically produced atlas has become a source of national pride. *Jennifer White*



Developments



Technology

16 The Fertility Revolution in China

Results from fertility surveys in China reveal the effects of planning policies. *Carol Vlassoff and Iqbal Shah*

18 At Arms Length

An implanted birth control device has been developed by researchers from all over the world. *Bob Stanley*

20 Rainwater Catchment Systems

A building material called ferrocement has improved the rainwater catchment systems. *Teresita Bagasao*



Profile



Commentary



In Brief

22 Back to Ghana's Future

Kobina Amoah, a researcher from Ghana and winner of an IDRC Pearson Fellowship, talks about his country. *Craig Harris*

24 Beyond Catch Phrases: What Does Sustainable Development Really Mean?

An expert on environmental affairs tackles the thorny issue of sustainable development. *David Brooks*

26 In Brief

27 IDRC at Twenty