

Opening Remarks at the Policy Study Workshop

Cases, Concepts and Connections: IDRC-supported research and its influence on public policy

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Good morning, and welcome to IDRC's workshop: **Cases, Concepts and Connections: IDRC-supported research and its influence on public policy**. This is the fourth such workshop in a series of regional workshops. The first was held with the Acacia team in Johannesburg in November; the second was in Montevideo with the LACRO office in December; and the third was a joint workshop with the ASRO and SARO staff and partners in Bangkok in January. These workshops provide IDRC staff and partners a valuable opportunity to look at what kind of work has been done in IDRC's sphere of policy influence and to share the experience and lessons across project and programming areas.

Looking at how research influences policy is a complex task, and one which is being undertaken by several Canadian and international organizations, agencies and donors. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), for example, has generated studies and tool-kits to measure the impact of research on policy; the Netherlands Development Assistance Research Council (RAWOO) is sponsoring evaluations to see how their research supported activities feed into policy and knowledge management; DfID, the Global Development Network (GDNNet) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) are also undertaking large studies to examine the influence of research on policy.

Diane Stone, who joined the study Advisory Committee for a retreat a couple of weeks ago, noted that what sets us and our study apart from the rest is that we are being very self-reflective in this process; that we are looking backwards at ourselves and our work to look at what worked **AND** what didn't work.

This study, and especially this workshop, is **important for the Centre**:

- **For Program Staff – it documents the IDRC experience, so that recommendations are informed by experience; and because it provides them an opportunity to be directly involved by providing input into the study itself, highlighting where IDRC needs to position itself to influence policy;**

- **It is important for management – because this study will clarify where IDRC has an advantage in terms of where we work – IDRC is not a policy think tank; our strength is in working with partners in the South on their issues and problems. Inevitably that leads us to policy in some of our work. This study will illuminate, legitimize and validate where we do work in the policy process.**

This workshop is a bit different from the others as it is almost completely made up of IDRC staff (others were half-and-half IDRC and partners); this is very much your opportunity to hear experience from the field and to provide input into the study.

We will be hearing about several of the case studies today. These cases are instructive both in their successes and their setbacks. They will be presented by the consultants who carried out the research.

We will also have the opportunity to work with two of the leaders in this field over the next two days, Carol Weiss and Evert Lindquist.

I invite you to participate actively in the discussions over the next two days, take full advantage of the presence of your colleagues as well as these experts and to take away some ideas you can begin to use even before the study is complete.

Fred and Stephanie will give us an overview of the study as a whole.

[**Maureen:** after we briefly outline the main elements of the study & methodology, we will turn the floor back to you to introduce Carol Weiss. We will also ask you to moderate the discussion following her presentation, "Studying Research Utilization." Her bio is attached.]