

Evaluation of the International Development Research Centre's Experience with the Devolution of International Secretariats

Prepared for



Prepared by

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The Governance Network™

June 22nd, 2009



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The contract for the work on this project was signed on March 10th 2009; document collection started two weeks later; interviews commenced on April 20th; the draft report was completed on May 30th; and the final report delivered on June 12th. This incredibly tight timeframe meant that collaboration and extra effort were needed from many people. The 37 key informants are acknowledged for their responsiveness and generosity with their time and information. Individuals who contributed at the workshop on initial findings significantly shaped the report by grounding the findings and pointing us in directions that ensured that the work would be useful. Similarly, the individuals who participated in the review of the draft provided invaluable insights, and comments that improved the report and made it possible to complete within the given timeframe. We would also like to thank The Governance Network's Leanne Imai for diligently scheduling interviews from all corners of the globe, formatting the report and keeping track of the many details involved with the project. The work could not have been completed without IDRC Evaluation Unit's Tricia Wind who assembled most of the documentation, tracked down key informants who had long since moved on and helped us locate essential information. Without the efforts of these people this evaluation would not have been completed successfully.

Jim Armstrong
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ACRONYMS

| | |
|----------|---|
| ADRF | Asia Development Research Forum |
| AERC | African Economic Research Consortium |
| AITEC | Aitec Africa |
| ATPS | African Technology Policy Studies |
| AusAid | Australian Development Assistance |
| BISC | Bellanet International Steering Committee |
| CAF | Corporate Assessment Framework |
| CAP | Centre-Administered Program/Project |
| CCAA | Climate Change Adaptation in Africa |
| CFS | Canadian Forest Service |
| CIDA | Canadian International Development Agency |
| CISERA | The Centre for Institutional Strengthening of Economic Research in Africa |
| COLAD | Center for Organizational Learning and Development |
| CONNAPP | National Environment Policy Transition Project |
| CSPF | Corporate Strategy and Program Framework |
| Danida | Danish International Development Agency |
| DFAIT | Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade |
| DGIS | Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| DPA | Director of Program Area |
| EEPSEA | Economy and Environment Program for SE Asia |
| EHIP | Essential Health Interventions Project |
| EMS | Environmental Management Secretariat |
| ENRM | Environment and Natural Resource Management |
| EU | European Union |
| FORST | Formation à la recherche en santé au travail en Afrique |
| HQ | Headquarters |
| ICCO | Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation |
| ICRAF | International Centre for Research in Agroforestry |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technologies |
| ICT4D | Information and Communication Technologies for Development |
| IDEP | Institute for Development Economics and Planning (UN organization) |
| IDRC | International Development Research Centre (also called The Centre) |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural Development |
| IGLOO | Global Governance Innovation Network |
| IMFN | International Model Forest Network |
| IMFNS | International Model Forest Network Secretariat |
| INBAR | International Network for Bamboo and Rattan |
| ISP | Internet Service Provider |
| IWOKRAMA | International Rainforest Program |
| KS | Knowledge Sharing |
| LAC | Latin America and the Caribbean |
| MAPPA | Medicinal and Aromatic Plants and Programs in Asia |
| MI | Micronutrient Initiative |

| | |
|--------|--|
| MIMAP | Micro Impacts of Macro Economic Adjustment Policies |
| MPRI | Mining Policy Research Initiative |
| NEPED | Environmental Protection and Economic Development |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| Norad | Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation |
| OCEEI | Office for Central and Eastern Europe Initiative |
| PO | Program Officer (IDRC) |
| RAP | Recipient-Administered Portion |
| RITC | Research for International Tobacco Control |
| ROSA | IDRC's Regional Office for Southern Africa |
| SAP | South Asian Partnership International |
| SATRN | Southern Africa Trade Research Network |
| SEE | Social and Economic Equity |
| SIDA | Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency |
| SIFR | Strategy for International Fisheries Research |
| SISERA | Secretariat for Industrial Support for Economic Research in Africa |
| SMC | Senior Management Committee |
| SNSA | Schoolnet South Africa |
| TGN | The Governance Network™ |
| TIPS | Trade and Industrial Policy Secretariat |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| VISED | Vietnam-Indochina Sustainable Development Program |
| WDMF | Water Demand Management Forum |
| WETV | Global Access Television Network |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Almost anything is easier to get into than out of”

Agnes Allen

Over the past two decades, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) has been engaged in the establishment and subsequent devolution or closure of between 15 to 20 international secretariats and quasi-secretariats. As IDRC is currently pursuing the devolution of two program initiatives, Senior Management requested that past experience with devolution be examined to see if there what lessons could be gleaned. Hence, the primary objective of this evaluation is to develop guiding principles that could inform future devolution practice.

Based on the rationale for devolution, geographical location, perceived degree of success, donor makeup, and post devolution longevity, a sample of seven secretariats was selected for study: Micronutrient Initiative (MI), Bellanet International Secretariat, the International Model Forest Network (IMFN), the Trade and Industrial Policy Secretariat (TIPS), the Secretariat for Industrial Support for Economic Research in Africa (SISERA), International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) and the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC).

Devolution of international secretariats: Beginning in 1992, international secretariats were created by IDRC as a modality for incubating innovative research ideas funded by multiple donors. Although the secretariats were “housed” in IDRC they were expected to operate semi-autonomously with their operations subject to IDRC’s administrative policies and practice and their research program closely linked to IDRC’s existing program initiatives. Administrative costs would be *reimbursed* as part of IDRC’s contributions as a donor. Although, each secretariat was managed by a Steering Committee or Advisory Board, including representatives of external donors and experts, as legal entities, secretariats were accountable to IDRC. Devolution requires the creation of separate legal entities. Of 15 secretariats established since 1992, three were spun off as separate legal entities (MI, AIPS, TIPS); one became an international agency (INBAR); one a Canadian corporation (WETV); one absorbed into a department of the Canadian government (IMFN); one became part of a network (ADRF); three were incorporated into IDRC programming (involvement) (EEP-SEA, RITC and EMS); and the remaining five closed.

Good practice from the field: IDRC is a centre of research that tests ideas, not an implementer of development programs. When a concept is proven it generally moves into an implementation phase and the research focus diminishes as was the case for MI, INBAR and IMFN. At this point the initiative no longer fits with IDRC’s specifically legislated mandate. It is in this way that, in the world of international development, IDRC is unique. Therefore it is not surprising that the review of literature revealed that very few donors practice ‘devolution’ like IDRC. The closest approximation was a discussion of donor exit by Levinger and Mcleod (2002) in which ‘phase over’ refers to a sponsor’s transfer of program activities to a local institution or community. Other approximations that had affinity were: the work of Rogers and Macias (2004); Gardner, Greenblott and Joubert, (2005); performance reviews of ‘exit’ completed by SIDA, Danida, Norad (2008); DFID (2007); and the World Bank (2007).

These examinations of donor experience with exit or transition suggest guiding principles, the most significant of which is that exit or transition should be considered and planned at the design phase of the initiative. Early planning facilitates a focus on results including an articulation of the expected outcomes of the initiative based on a defined timeline and resources allocated. This also en-

sure transparency as all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the milestones to be achieved and expected commitments to the project by donors, partners and staff over a specific period of time. These sources also conclude that an exit plan must be flexible enough to ensure that affected parties have enough time to prepare themselves for the end or transition of a program but not so much time as to create dependency. The plan should involve key partners in the design and in ongoing monitoring of the intervention. Clear and timely decision making on 'exit' and ongoing dialogue ensures that the decision to exit or transition does not come as a surprise.

Key findings about IDRC devolution policy and practice: During its two decades of devolution experience, IDRC has not developed formal policies or guidelines related to the formulation of devolution strategies, the management of devolution processes or the sustainability of devolved programs or secretariats. IDRC explicitly refers to devolution in the 2000-2005 CSPF as "...the centre will devolve the responsibility for coordination, administration and management of programs and networks to institutions in the South". The 2005 to 2010 CSPF also states that "...devolution involves the passing of substantive and managerial control of an activity housed within the Centre to an external agency". Key informants generally understood this concept of devolution and acknowledged that devolution was related to Southern empowerment and therefore a core value of IDRC. However several respondents did not necessarily view 'devolution' as a core principle or practice of IDRC but as a 'tactic' implemented to spin off or transition a secretariat or similar program initiative. There was no consistent understanding that secretariats had a finite life cycle and therefore would eventually be 'devolved'. The rationale for devolution of specific secretariats was often unclear and respondents agreed that those decisions were brokered at a very high level. However, the decisions to devolve were based on specific circumstances, changing program priorities and/or emerging opportunities, rather than IDRC's principle of devolution. As such, planning for devolution only arose when the decision to devolve a secretariat was made rather than as an integral part of the secretariat's life cycle. The importance of factors external to a secretariat affecting the approach, timing, level of effort, the success of the devolution process and the devolution itself cannot be overstated. These include: availability of an interested capable recipient; the collective will of external donors; and the availability and predictability of funding.

Key findings about effectiveness of the devolution process: Because of these many variables, it is not surprising that IDRC has a mixed record regarding, 'how well the Centre does devolution'. Devolutions that have been regarded as 'successes' in terms of timeliness of the process, due attention to key components, management of donor relations and ongoing communication with key stakeholders include AERC and TIPS. MI and IMFN were also identified as examples of efficient devolution. Consensus suggests, that the most significant factors contributing to the efficacy of the process relate to a) the experience, skill and leadership capacity of executive directors; b) communication and/or inclusion of staff, donors and partners; c) the clarity and speed of decision making with respect to strategic direction and implementation; and d) the direct involvement of senior leaders. In the cases where the process was less effective, such as Bellanet and SISERA, indecisive leadership and poor communication were cited as the primary contributing factors. Adequate attention to change management and sensitivity to 'people' issues was also identified as a critical element of devolution 'done right'. The TIPS and Bellanet experiences exemplified the importance of paying attention to people in the process.

Key findings about post devolution sustainability and learning: In retrospect, stakeholders agreed that the decision to devolve was necessary and in some cases inevitable as secretariats had ‘outgrown’ or moved away from the Centre’s research mandate. It was certainly anticipated that devolution of these secretariats would benefit both the secretariats and IDRC. In the case of the former, management autonomy, and access to funding from other donors were anticipated benefits, while for IDRC reduced administrative and financial burdens and a more steadfast focus on their mandate were envisaged. As such, devolved entities such as MI, IMFN, INBAR, AERC and TIPS have benefited from increased donor funding, improved relations with a range of partner institutes and/or countries and a positive global brand. However, the post devolution period has also been challenging for several entities. TIPS and INBAR both experienced difficulties attracting ‘core funding’, as donors generally prefer to fund specific program initiatives. The provision of core or legacy funding by IDRC to the devolved entities is therefore highly appreciated. However the Centre would do well to articulate guidelines that would inform either the provision or termination of core funding. Another challenge identified has been the tradition of selecting program officers (PO) to head devolved secretariats, particularly where POs do not have the necessary leadership and management skills to operate without a high level of institutional support. The need for a careful identification of core competencies and an open and competitive selection process for executive directors is a way to mitigate this shortcoming.

Guiding principles: In conclusion, more often than not, the devolution process has resulted in the intended outcome of a legally separate entity with the capacity to build on the innovative idea incubated within IDRC. The seven cases reviewed suggest fundamental guiding principles for effective devolution:

1. **Plan Early.** Early planning is a cornerstone of successful devolution requiring development of a good, well thought out strategy that is solidly linked with IDRC’s mandate, values and strategic direction;
2. **Build Capacity.** In most cases, successful devolution and Southern empowerment requires considerable capacity building that needs to start long before the devolution occurs;
3. **Collaborate and Partner.** Open and transparent communication with staff, donors, and partners has, in each examined case, been a factor in the successful devolutions;
4. **Develop a Transition Strategy.** Once a strategic direction is set and a notion of timing is in place, a transition strategy or change management plan to deal with the human aspects of change becomes essential;
5. **Assure Continuity.** A plan for continued involvement and availability of required intellectual capital is essential as was demonstrated by all of IDRC’s successful devolutions;
6. **Build Good Governance and Management Frameworks.** Taking the time early on in the devolution process to ensure that governance issues are addressed and that management processes (such as recruitment, financial management, program management, accountability, monitoring and evaluation) are developed and implemented: and
7. **Demonstrate Return on Investment and Secure Funding.** Above all the enterprise has to be strong enough conceptually and have demonstrated a positive enough return on investment to attract sufficient donor funding to maintain the newly configured initiative.

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

“Devolution is a process whereby something is moved from within the corporate entity of IDRC to exist on its own or within another host organization. The essential distinction is that it has a separate legal status... The benefits of devolution include: increased attractiveness to donors who are generally more willing to fund Southern based programs; and the fact that devolved organizations do not have to conform to IDRC rules and procedures that are sometimes bureaucratic”

Key Informant

Akutagawa Ryunosuke’s 1922 short story “In a Grove”, is the kaleidoscopic account of seven characters who speak to a magistrate about their knowledge of a man found stabbed in the woods near Kyoto. Each account is dissimilar; each told from a different vantage point, a vantage point affected by relationships, intelligence, memory capacity, value system, self-interest and wishful thinking. The authors of this report expected to find a wide variety of interpretations about the devolution of IDRC-housed international secretariats. Whether one was an initiator of the devolution or not—the leaver or the left—are factors that were expected to affect responses to questions about devolution. Further, it was anticipated that the perspective of one’s discipline or role in the organization (secretariat champion, committee member, legal advisor, human resources manager, auditor, representative from finance, researcher, executive decision maker, etc.) would result in a wide variety of views. Astonishingly, this was not the case. The degree of corroboration with respect to information provided and documented was remarkable. With the exception of one or two outlying interpretations, the information was easily corroborated by multiple sources and verified by documentation. However, wide divergences of *feelings* were elicited. Giving up one’s passion, work focus and relationships involved with a specific endeavor over a many years can be an emotional experience. The more recent the experience, the stronger were the feelings expressed.

Strictly speaking “devolution” is passing responsibilities to a lower level. Webster’s definition of devolution is: “*transference (as of rights, powers, property, or responsibility) to another; especially: the surrender of powers to local authorities by a central government ...*” And Oxford’s is: “*the devolving of power by central government to local or regional administration...*” It is clear that IDRC does not use the word in this sense. When IDRC’s various strategic planning documents refer to devolution as a core value it is more in the sense of “Southern empowerment” than passing an asset or responsibility on to a subsidiary or lesser power. As used in this study, devolution covers the acts of: setting up commercial corporations; establishing new legal entities; graduating from a *proof of concept* stage to an external operation; absorption by a federal department; fragmenting into several parts; and termination. The present examination of devolution refers to the act of transferring primary responsibility for an activity, in parts or in whole, to another entity entailing the passing-off to another legally constituted organization, whether pre-existing or created for the purpose. Further clarity is provided by IDRC’s Corporate Strategy and Program Framework (CSPF, paragraph 117):

“Devolution involves the passing of substantive and managerial control of an activity housed within the Centre to an external agency. Historically, the Centre has housed activities within its structure and then devolved them for three reasons:

- *An activity may have been “incubated” at the Centre until an appropriate final locale, be it an existing institution or a newly created one, was found;*
- *The Centre’s belief in capacity building, and in not “hanging on” to activities; and*

- *A hitherto in-house activity will grow, programmatically and in size, to the point where it would be more appropriate to spin it off as an independent entity or to another institution.”*

1.1 A USER FOCUSED EVALUATION: METHODOLOGY

The principal client for this review is IDRC's senior management who will be the primary users of the findings as will program staff involved in future devolutions. These study patrons indicated that two other program initiatives were presently being devolved (telecentre.org and Climate Change Adaptation in Africa) and that the results of the study were needed relatively quickly. As such, an initial meeting was held between the authors and IDRC's Vice Presidents Rohinton Medhora (Programs) and Lauchlan Munro (Corporate Strategy and Regional Management) at the onset of the project. Individual follow-up meetings, a findings review workshop and meeting with senior officials to review the draft report were held to confirm key findings, conclusions and to ensure that the results would be useful to the primary users.

As observed by the Vice Presidents, IDRC has been involved in a number of devolutions of various initiatives or secretariats during the past two decades. However, each time devolution occurs it seemed as though it was being done for the first time. While this is not entirely surprising because each initiative or secretariat is unique in most respects, it was believed that it was time to encode some of the experiences with devolution and to encapsulate lessons. However, because of the uniqueness and dynamic nature of each situation, the principle users of the evaluation wanted, in capsule form, the vital few critical lessons learned from IDRC's experience with devolution. For the same reason, they made it clear that a “check-list” would not be as helpful as a set of “guiding principles”.

The first step in the study was to select a sample of devolved secretariats to review. After excluding the obvious outliers and considering factors such as reasons for devolution, geographic location, degrees of success, donor make-up and time since devolution, seven devolved secretariats were identified for inclusion.¹ The next step was to review relevant documentation and interview 37 key informants. In addition to 37 interviews, five written responses to the interview questionnaire were provided². Nine people participated in the Findings Workshop and eight contributed to the strengthening of the report at the Draft Review. Details of these processes are found in Appendix A: Workplan and Approach. Appendix B is a list of documents reviewed. Key informants interviewed and individuals participating in the Findings Review Workshop and Review of Draft Report are listed in Appendix C.

¹ Micronutrient Initiatives (MI); Trade and Industrial Policy Secretariat (TIPS); Secretariat for Industrial Support for Economic Research in Africa (SISERA); International Model Forest Network Secretariat (IMFNS); Bellanet; International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR); and African Economic Research Consortium (AERC).

² A number of respondents covered more than one case including headquarters responsibilities.

1.2 CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

The main methodological constraint was the time frame for the study. Engaging key IDRC stakeholders was not difficult. They shared their views and supporting documentation generously. However, interviews with representatives of donor organizations and former members of secretariat Steering Committees were difficult to arrange because of: a) the time frame; and b) the fact that many of the individual donor representatives during the devolution process are in highly mobile positions, are no longer involved or whose coordinates are no longer available. Another difficulty was encountered with obtaining documentation as IDRC's central record keeping for devolved secretariats and initiatives is weak. In many cases transfer agreements could not be found and in others, minutes of devolution deliberations were not kept; went with the devolved initiative or are otherwise not in IDRC's archives. It is clear that the scope of the project limited the depth and breadth of the report. However, there was ample data to fulfill the needs of the principle users of the evaluation and to address their stated objective.

The following section provides a context for IDRC's international secretariats, including a brief overview of each of the cases reviewed in the study. A more detailed description of an "idealized case" of a successful devolution drawn from the seven cases reviewed for this study and Bellanet which is at the other end of the continuum concludes Section 2. Section 3, *Some Evidence from the Field*, provides an overview of the emerging literature on donor exit strategies and experiences of other organizations with processes similar to IDRC devolution. Section 4 is an analysis of IDRC's devolution policies and practices and process. Section 5, highlights lessons learned and guiding principles for successful devolution.

SECTION 2

THE STORY OF IDRC INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIATS

“A Summary of the IDRC Act

The objects of the Centre are to initiate, encourage, support and conduct research into the problems of the developing regions of the world and into the means for applying and adapting scientific, technical and other knowledge to the economic and social advancement of those regions and, in carrying out those objects:

- (a) To enlist the talents of natural and social scientists and technologists in Canada and other countries;*
- (b) To assist the developing regions to build up the research capabilities, the innovative skills and the institutions required to solve their problems;*
- (c) To encourage generally the coordination of international development research; and*
- (d) To foster cooperation in research on development problems between the developed and developing regions for their mutual benefit.”*

IDRC Website

2.1 INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIATS: THE CONTEXT

International secretariats were seen as one way of assisting IDRC to carry out its ambitious mandate. As a modality of research program development and implementation within IDRC, international secretariats have a unique historical context. Established in 1992, Micronutrient Initiative (MI) was the first IDRC international secretariat. The Strategy for International Fisheries Research (SIFR) was a close second with Bellanet coming two years later in 1994. Secretariats emerged as an organizational form capable of more flexibility than IDRC's traditional Program Initiatives. Although the secretariats were “housed” in IDRC they were originally expected to operate in a semi-autonomous fashion. This enabled them to more easily collaborate with development partners and to more easily attract external funding. Each secretariat has a Steering Committee or Advisory Board made up primarily of donor representatives. However, as legal entities, secretariats were appendages of IDRC.

In 1992 IDRC's Board identified three conditions that define the relationship between an international secretariat and IDRC:

1. The secretariat's operations would be subject to the Centre's administrative policies and practices;
2. All administrative costs were to be reimbursed by donor contributions to IDRC; and
3. Objects were to be closely linked to IDRC's existing programs.

IDRC Internal Audit identified six defining characteristics of a secretariat:

1. Their operations are supported by IDRC, but are a distinct entity within the Centre;
2. They are active in a field relevant to IDRC's competence and programming;

3. They are funded by one or more donors, in addition to IDRC funds;
4. Their programming is managed by a Steering Committee, often comprising representatives of the sponsoring organizations and experts in the field;
5. They implement the program of work approved by the Committee; and
6. They conduct their work over a fixed period of time.⁴

Based on a major review of international secretariats in 1998 (*Learning Partnerships*, Armstrong and Whyte), IDRC developed Guidelines for secretariats and a Strategic Framework for secretariats further articulating the role of the advisory/steering committees, accountability relationships between donors and IDRC, and the responsibilities of secretariat executive directors with IDRC's Board.

In July 2005 Whyte and Auger identified 15 organizations that met the defining characteristics of an international secretariat. They point out (as was done in the 1998 study) that only eight of this number had formal approval from IDRC's Board of Governors. Others were considered Quasi-secretariats that were approved as "special projects" rather than secretariats. Table 1 below shows these 15 and their current status: three have been spun off as separate legal entities MI, ATPS, TIPS; one became an International Intergovernmental Agency (INBAR); and one became a Canadian Corporation (WETV). Three were incorporated into IDRC programming (involution) and the remaining four closed.

Resembling these 15 secretariats are several other initiatives that appear on a list of 20 secretariats prepared seven years earlier by the same author. They include: VISED (Vietnam-Indochina Sustainable Development Program; NEPED (Environmental Protection and Economic Development); IWOKRAMA (International Rainforest Program); EHIP (Essential Health Interventions Project; and CONNEPP (National Environment Policy Transition Project).

Whyte and Auger's 2005 report maintains that IDRC policy is unambiguous about the fact that secretariats should not have open-ended time frames; rather, there should be a planned evolution and game-plan. They also come to this significant conclusion:

"Another reality is that today IDRC is implementing many multi-funded projects and programs, some of which have international advisory committees, so that the somewhat unique character of the secretariats as they appeared in the 1990s no longer holds. No new secretariats have been created since 1997."

Like the other initiatives emerging from IDRC mentioned previously, similar entities have emerged since 1997 and are also candidates for devolution. The two current candidates for devolution telecentre.org and Climate Change Adaptation in Africa are examples. It seems that Program Initiatives have developed the capacity to take on secretariat characteristics making the need to understand devolution as relevant now as in the days of rapidly emerging secretariats.

⁴ Six characteristics on page 8 of Dr. Jim Armstrong and Dr. Anne Whyte's "Learning Partnerships: a Review of IDRC Secretariats," Volume 1, November 19, 1998 taken from "Guidelines for Secretariats Housed at IDRC."

Table 1: IDRC Housed International Secretariats⁵

| Start | Acronym | Name | Location | Status |
|-------|-----------|---|--------------|------------------------------|
| 1992 | MI | Micronutrients Initiative | Ottawa/Delhi | Canadian NGO |
| | SIFR | Strategy for International Fisheries Research | Ottawa | Closed |
| 1993 | WETV | Global Access Television Network | Ottawa | Corporation |
| | EEPSEA | Economy and Environment Program for SE Asia | Singapore | Involuted as an IDRC PI |
| | ATPS | African Technology Policy Secretariat | Nairobi | NGO in Kenya |
| | OCEEI | Office for Central and Eastern Europe Initiative | Ottawa | Closed 2004 |
| 1994 | Bellanet | Bellanet Initiative | Ottawa | Devolved/Closed |
| | RITC | Research for International Tobacco Control | Ottawa | Involuted |
| 1995 | IMFNS | International Model Forest Network | Ottawa | Part of Government of Canada |
| | INBAR | International Network for Bamboo and Rattan | Delhi | IGO ⁶ (Beijing) |
| | EMS | Environmental Management Secretariat | Montevideo | Involuted |
| 1996 | TIPS | Trade and Industry Secretariat | Cape Town | S. African NGO |
| | ADRF | Asia Development Research Forum | Singapore | Networked (TRF) |
| 1997 | SISERA | Secretariat for Institutional Support for Economic Research in Africa | Dakar | Closed 2006 |
| | FOODLINKS | Foodlinks | Ottawa | Closed 2003 |

2.2 VARIATIONS ON THE DEVOLUTION THEME

The following examples encapsulate seven stories of the devolution process at IDRC. Each offers unique lessons that, for the first time, are being analyzed and documented.

2.2.1 MICRONUTRIENT INITIATIVES (MI)⁷

The Micronutrient Initiative (MI) was formed in January 1992 as an international secretariat within IDRC. During the first 10 years of its existence, MI worked to raise awareness of malnutrition and hunger in developing countries through advocacy, expanding the application of known solutions (vitamin A supplementation and salt iodization) and on developing innovative solutions, such as products for children and double-fortified salt, to ensure that micronutrients reached vulnerable populations cost-effectively.

At its October 2000 meeting, IDRC's Board of Governors approved the devolution of MI. In 2002, MI was devolved to an independent not-for-profit corporation registered in Canada. Over time, its focus has shifted from an emphasis on global advocacy and product development to more direct country level support. Working in close partnership with governments, the private sector, UN

"In the case of Secretariats that were not devolved [closed], the major challenge was finding the appropriate host. In the case of SISERA, the organization did not have the research or funding capacity to manage autonomously. Although negotiations with IDEP (UN) were started, eventually it was too complex and extensive and there were no other options."

Key Informant

⁵ Table taken from: Robert Auger and Anne Whyte, "Future Directions for Bellanet", July, 2005.

⁶ International Intergovernmental Organization

⁷ For further information on MI go to www.micronutrient.org

agencies and civil society, MI has contributed to global progress over the past 15 years through the provision of support for supplies of vitamin A supplements that benefit over 200 million children annually in 70 countries; increasing the production and marketing of iodized salt to reach up to 300 million people in over 10 countries; and supporting the expansion of fortification of staple foods and condiments in over 20 countries. MI is regarded globally as a significant advocate for policy and program action on behalf of vulnerable populations. MI provides technical and financial assistance; secures services; and supports the development, implementation and monitoring of solutions for hidden hunger.

2.2.2 TRADE AND INDUSTRIAL POLICY SECRETARIAT (TIPS)⁸

TIPS was established in 1996 at the request of the South African Department of Trade and Industry. In the post apartheid period, the need to strengthen Government capacity in the formulation and execution of trade and industrial policy was deemed a high priority. The Secretariat was hosted within IDRC's Regional Office for South Africa, until it became a Section 21 Company in 2001 when IDRC closed the ROSA. TIPS is now an independent, non-profit economic research institution. TIPS was intended to be a source of independent economic policy and research leadership to government and civil society in South Africa and the region. By all estimates, TIPS has been one of IDRC's most successful secretariats, "...the quality and relevance of policy research supported by it has improved steadily as gauged by its principal client, the DTI as well as more distanced observers in South African universities and international knowledge networks."⁹ A 2008 review of TIPS reveals that as TIPS has expanded its research focus outside of its core mandate of trade and industrial policy and its position as an economic think tank has weakened considerably. In addition, its financial situation is somewhat tenuous. There is however still a great deal of support for the organization to revert to its role as thought leader in the fields of international trade, industrial development and economic regulation.

2.2.3 SECRETARIAT FOR INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR ECONOMIC RESEARCH IN AFRICA (SISERA)¹⁰

In July 1997, IDRC, in collaboration with USAID and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), set up SISERA in Dakar, Senegal. SISERA's mandate was to strengthen the economic research capacity of African economic research organizations to facilitate the development of indigenous solutions as well as establish these organizations as internationally renowned centres of excellence. Core grants of up to CAD \$300,000 were provided to partner organizations to cover the costs of research support facilities and projects and to help researchers participate in seminars and publish their work. The Secretariat also awarded seed grants of up to CAD \$50,000 to emerging centres – organizations with less capacity to absorb resources. SISERA was governed by a Steering Committee, including representatives of the Economic Commission

⁸ For further information on TIPS go to www.tips.org.za

⁹ TIPS: Report of an External Evaluation. J. Fine and D.Stryker. March 2001

¹⁰ See 'Learning Partnerships: A Review of IDRC Secretariats' by Jim Armstrong and Anne Whyte, IDRC November (1998) for a comprehensive case study on SISERA as well as 'Building Organizational Research Capacity: SISERA, A Case Study'

for Africa, the African Economic Research Consortium, the Association of African Universities and the African Development Bank. The Steering Committee reported to IDRC's Board of Governors.

For almost nine years, IDRC housed the Secretariat and was the driving force behind its operation in Sub-Saharan Africa. A relatively small staffing complement of six, administered an annual budget that ranged from CAD \$2.1 million (1997-1999) to CAD \$3.6 million (2002/2003), SISERA provided core grants, seed grants and technical assistance to 19 institutions and networks in Africa. In addition to IDRC, USAID and CIDA, other donors included the Cooperation Française, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS), the European Union and the African Development Bank. SISERA ceased operations on March 31, 2006.

2.2.4 INTERNATIONAL MODEL FOREST NETWORK SECRETARIAT (IMFNS)¹¹

IMFN aims to stimulate the field-level application of new concepts and ideas in sustainable forest management in forest ecosystems throughout the world and to create opportunities to demonstrate and share these experiences. Between 1992 and 1994, the program was housed within Natural Resource Canada's Canadian Forest Service (CFS), and was funded by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). In 1995, the management body of the IMFN was reconstituted as a secretariat, within International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The aim of this move was to draw on IDRC's international experience and management to build and secure acceptance of the model forest concept on a global basis. Some 12 years later, IMFN ceased operations as an IDRC secretariat and moved back to the Canadian Forests Service in 2007. Since its devolution from IDRC, the model forests global brand has grown; the network has expanded from 17 to 30 countries and actual model forests sites have increased from 30 (under IDRC) to 50.

2.2.5 BELLANET

Bellonet was created in 1994, as an IDRC secretariat headquartered in Ottawa. Its mandate was to increase the impact of development programming by supporting broader collaboration through more effective use of ICTs. Bellonet's major objectives were to build organizational capacity in the use of ICTs for collaboration, identify and mitigate challenges to effective collaboration, build capacity in developing country institutions and share and apply lessons learned. Among other things, the organization has sustained permanent research processes about topics related to knowledge networks, communities of practice, knowledge sharing, knowledge management, social networking, social tagging, web 2.0 tools, virtual communities, online facilitation, face to face facilitation and moderation, participatory processes and collaborative research, among many others. Bellonet also develops research in tools and techniques such as the peer assist, after action review, open spaces, world cafe, graphic stories, digi-

"IDRC took a brand new idea, incubated it well and when the time was right, supported it to stand on its own. The IMFN has been allowed to grow and thrive and is now a vibrant global network. Senior Management at IDRC was immensely supportive during the period that IMFN was within IDRC and during the devolution process. The management of IMFN was given considerable autonomy and flexibility to pursue its mandate. Other departments of IDRC were also very generous with their time, including HR, Finance. IMFN also benefited (credibility, legitimacy) from IDRC's reputation. IDRC's corporate culture was ideal for nurturing IMFN and would have been impossible in a federal government department. IMFN has also gained benefits from its transition to a federal government department; Natural Resource Management. It has more political clout globally and access to resources. For example, IMFN just secured \$15 million for work in Africa. IMFN is now embraced by other federal departments as 'one of their own' and recognized as a key agency in the Canadian government."

Key Informant

¹¹ See Armstrong and Whyte (1998) for 'International Model Forest Network Secretariat: A Case Study' and www.imfn.net; 2007-2012 Strategy Outline for IMFN, January 2007.

tal story telling, podcasting, and digital documentation (audio, photo and video), among others.

In the years 2003-2004 Bellanet pursued establishment of regional presences through partnerships with existing local organizations. Bellanet Asia is hosted by the South Asian Partnership International (SAP international) in Nepal; Bellanet Africa is hosted by AITEC in Uganda, and in Costa Rica, Sula Batsú hosted Bellanet for Latin America and the Caribbean. The shift to the South occasioned by the establishment of these regional presences was finalized with the closure of the Ottawa headquarters in December 2007. An agreement with Sula Batsú was signed in 2008 aimed at transitioning Bellanet to an independent network outside of IDRC. IDRC has allocated \$200,000 to support staff costs, positioning of the Network, development of its own spaces and establishing partnerships and alliances. Complementary funding is also being provided by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation to support the process of capitalization of the knowledge that was generated over the years.

2.2.6 INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR BAMBOO AND RATTAN (INBAR)¹²

INBAR was initially nurtured as an IDRC secretariat between 1984 and 1997. On November 6th, 1997, nine countries signed an Establishment Agreement creating INBAR as an independent international organization with financial support extended by IDRC, IFAD, the Government of The Netherlands, and The People's Republic of China.

The mission of INBAR as given in Article 3 of the Agreement is to improve the well-being of producers and users of bamboo and rattan within the context of a sustainable bamboo and rattan resource base by consolidating, coordinating and supporting strategic and adaptive research and development. The organization administers three main thematic programs – Environmental Sustainability, Livelihoods and Economic Development and Trade Development with four technical program – Global Bamboo Housing Program, Global Marketing Initiative, Global Rattan Program, and the Non-Timber Forest Products Partnership Program, all supported by the Public Awareness, External Relations and Networking and Partnership Units.

In 10 years INBAR membership grew from 9 to 34 member countries and organizations, Asia (11), Africa (12), Latin America (10), and North America (1). There are now regional offices in Ecuador, India, and Ghana, with country representation in the Philippines, Italy and Colombia, and over 130 affiliates all around the world.

2.2.7 AFRICAN ECONOMIC RESEARCH CONSORTIUM (AERC)¹³

With a history spanning over 20 years, AERC is often referred to as the antecedent to IDRC-housed international secretariats. It began in 1984 when IDRC brought together two groups (academics from universities in East Africa, Nairobi and Dar es Salaam and the economics department at the University of Toronto) determined to revive economic research in Africa and funded the Macro-

¹² For further information on INBAR go to www.inbar.int

¹³ For further information on AERC go to www.aercafrica.org

economic Analysis Network Project for Eastern and Southern Africa.¹⁴ It began by offering small research grants in the region and coordinating a network of economists. The feasibility of devolving the project to a regional institution and assessing funding strategies was formally initiated in 1985. By 1987 the value of the project was proven and, under the inspired vision and leadership of Jeffrey Fine, the idea of a multi-donor funded organization was launched. Later in the same year an International Research Consortium Sponsoring Group, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation was established. This Group decided to create a stand-alone organization. Other donors including CIDA, the World Bank and USAID quickly got on board.

The success of AERC is well documented. During its first two decades of operation some 17 external evaluations and other reviews were carried out giving the organization “high marks for both its governance and its programming, while recommending various improvements.”¹⁵ One of the unique characteristics of this example is the early recognition that independence and good governance were both important. Early on it established a three-pillar governance structure:

1. A Board responsible for fund raising, key appointments, finance and policy oversight;
2. An Advisory Committee responsible for the research agenda and program; and
3. A secretariat to carry out the program.

Another defining characteristic of AERC and a contributor to its longevity and success was the fact that early on, the Board made the investment of time and effort in laying a solid organizational foundation including: African ownership; good governance; committed funding; clear divisions of responsibilities; solid strategies and plans; research independence; leadership; succession planning; technical/managerial processes.

2.3 SUCCESSFUL DEVOLUTION EXPERIENCES

IDRC's mixed experience with devolution has certainly yielded several good practices particularly in the cases of the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), the Trade and Industrial Policy Secretariat (TIPS), the International Model Forest Network Secretariat (IMFNS) and the Micronutrient Initiative (MI).

Even in the case of the Secretariat for Institutional Support for Economic Research in Africa (SISERA) which ‘failed’, a good practice can be discerned in the early efforts of SISERA's Steering Committee to prepare for devolution by commissioning a comprehensive study on the feasibility of creating a new and independent non-profit entity in Senegal. SISERA is in fact, one of the few cases in which deliberate planning for devolution was identified and the current efforts to begin planning for devolution of telecentre.org approximately two years prior to its closure suggests that IDRC recognizes the importance of early planning.

“The history of several other multi-donor networks set up in the 1980s and 1990s shows that continuing to operate under the authority and using the procedures of the “lead donor” can stifle a new organization’s growth and lead to unexpected problems.”

Caroline Pestieau,
AERC History, 2008

¹⁴ Caroline Pestieau. *Twenty Years of Capacity Building in sub-Saharan Africa*. 2008

¹⁵ Caroline Pestieau. *Twenty Years of Capacity Building in Sub-Saharan Africa*. 2008

The importance of investing energy, time and financial resources in planning is further supported by the experience of AERC in developing a three pillar governance structure that, some 20 years later, ensures efficient and effective management of AERC's strategic, administrative and research arms. AERC's entire devolution experience might very well constitute the very 'best practice' in devolution, not only because there seemed to be a unified vision by the consortium of donors on the need for an independent AERC, or because the process was driven by the then Executive Director, Jeff Fine, but also due to the excellent systems that were established by him (in collaboration with the Deputy Director) prior to his departure, 10 years after establishing AERC as an independent entity. Bassey and Yeo (2009) note: "...this devolution, while very rapid in comparison to some of the other experiences...was a success in the short term and remains a success some twenty years later. AERC is widely recognized as one of the most well run, transparent and effective organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa...."¹⁶

In the majority of cases reviewed, early planning for devolution was limited, however, it is certainly significant that even in cases where a 'forced' devolution was initiated, as in the case of TIPS, a project management approach to the process coupled with IDRC's support and excellent leadership 'on the ground', contributed to a well executed devolution experience.

As one of its 'flagship' programs in South Africa, IDRC devoted the necessary support and resources to ensure that TIPS was established as a credible non-profit. One respondent involved in the TIPS devolution noted that, "... IDRC did an immense job in devolving TIPS to a stable, administratively sound entity...this was not a rush job... IDRC ensured that all the elements were covered." Other respondents have noted that the 'arbitrary date' set for the TIPS devolution signified weak 'planning'; however the fact that TIPS was devolved within 11 months of IDRC's decision to close the Regional Office for South Africa speaks to the efficiency of the process. When one considers that the closure of ROSA—the largest Regional office with an estimated 70 staff members—and devolution of Schoolnet were occurring simultaneously with the devolution of TIPS, the achievement is even more astounding¹⁷. A sound project management approach has been credited for the efficiency of the process, "... maybe because I am so obsessive about being organized, a clear plan with tasks and timelines was developed very early in the process".

One of the most significant practices that emerged from the TIPS devolution was the deliberate focus on and sensitivity to "people" issues. As one respondent noted, "people were losing their jobs". The effort invested in clear and ongoing communication with staff of the ROSA, TIPS and Schoolnet at every stage of the process effectively facilitated what could have been a very painful process. Regular weekly meetings chaired by the ROSA Staff Association, open consultations via video conference with Ottawa and staff meetings independent of senior management occurred throughout the process. IDRC's support to the ROSA based staff¹⁸ through the contracting of a recruitment firm was also highly appreciated.

¹⁶ Michael Bassey and Stephen Yeo, "Devolution of the CCAA Program: Experience to Date and Strategic Options". Interim Report, April 2009.

¹⁷ Further investigation into the management of this process may yield additional 'best practices' related to decommissioning of Regional Offices and devolution of programs.

¹⁸ Locally based ROSA staff would have been due for termination with the closure of the office.

In each of the 'successful' devolutions, the process appears to have been the least traumatic when a total transfer of staff was undertaken. This was especially true in the cases of MI, IMFNS, AERC and TIPS. However, this practice is generally associated with the creation of an independent entity, except in the case of IMFNS which involved the transfer to a Federal Department of the Canadian Government. As such, it is a practice that should be based on rigorous analysis of the best 'devolution' option, rather than a practice that should generally be employed regardless of the final option.

The provision of core funding and in some cases legacy funding has been critical to ensuring that the devolved entity has a solid foundation. The provision of core funding in particular has been crucial, since other donors generally only provide program related funding. Until these newly independent entities can devise strategies to generate the necessary revenue to cover operational costs, IDRC's allocation vital.

Finally, there is a link between the success of a devolved initiative and its governance structure. In Twenty Years of Capacity Building in Sub-Saharan Africa (2008) Caroline Pestieau makes a very strong case that AERC's longevity and success is attributable to its well thought out governance structure including clear accountability, decision making, division of labor, and refined management processes.

2.4 BELLANET — LESSONS IN DEVOLUTION

Following a two year collaborative process by a consortium of international agencies, it was determined that there was a need for better ICT coordination and collaboration within the development community resulting in the 1994 creation of Bellanet as a secretariat within IDRC. As such, Bellanet was legally part of and accountable to IDRC. However, a steering committee of donors guided program and budget decisions. During its first five years Bellanet provided advice, technical assistance and capacity building in the use of ICTs for development collaboration among multi-stakeholder partnerships.

In 1997 an internal evaluation focusing on improving the impact and effect of Bellanet's activities on donors of Bellanet's programs and activities was undertaken by Michael Graham. Foreseeing a fatal but persistently unaddressed flaw, the report notes that: *"The donors...are Bellanet's major conundrum. The representatives of the funders endorse and support Bellanet's mandate but the institutions demonstrated very limited buy-in to the philosophy of transparency and sharing of information."* As part of a larger review of IDRC's secretariat Modality, Bellanet was again assessed in 1999 (Armstrong and Whyte). This study confirmed the initial success of the initiative and reflected Bellanet's strategy to raise awareness of its services and activities and to promote its role as an expert in ICT-based collaborative support within the development context.

In 2000 Bellanet moved into its second phase marked by strategic decisions to focus more energy on the dynamics of collaborative processes, learning and knowledge sharing, and increased direct engagement with Southern partners. Several successful initiatives in training for development, workspace collaboration, open standards and knowledge management attracted more strategic partners.

"Thinking on it [devolution of Bellanet] started as far back as 1999. The actual process started in 2004 and has continued until relatively recently. The devolution of Bellanet was generally ineffective and was a 'failure of vision and leadership'. Staff in Ottawa (core staff) and program staff in the regional NGOs were involved throughout the process, however it is psychologically difficult to manage the 'devolution' of something in which you have invested energy and passion"

Key Informant

In 2003 the organization decided that it would undertake an external evaluation to map its directions for the future. This review (The Governance Network™) identified a number of significant strengths upon which Bellanet could build. However, it also pointed out that, from among the many development players with similar or complementary objectives, it was critical for Bellanet to carve out a differentiating niche within its overall mandate. While recognizing Bellanet's significant achievements, there was no consensus or agreement among the many people consulted about what should be Bellanet's specific niche. Rather, it was recognized as a nimble organization able to meet rapidly evolving needs primarily through capacity building and that Bellanet should continually be "*working itself out of a job*". The 2003 report recommended: refocusing activity and resources on the South; and leveraging limited resources. Several specific and strategic management improvements were identified such as the establishment of client service standards, implementation of client feedback mechanisms, formalization of business practices and improved financial management and monitoring and evaluation. The report also identified many potential areas for Bellanet to focus on in the future, for example: sharing lessons learned and best practices, active facilitation, leadership as opposed operations and a number of areas to move away from for example: software development, ISP services, and ICT training.

Based on this study and its recommendations Bellanet organized a strategic planning session and developed its strategic direction for Phase 3 (2004-2009) that was centered upon: a shift to the South; a concentrated focus on exploring open development; and the development of options for devolution.

In May 2005 Bellanet International Steering Committee (BISC) considered six alternatives for Bellanet's future (migration, spin-off, alliance, dispersion, involution and merger) only two of which the BISC found worth exploring further; namely involution or spin off. Based on this decision, another examination of Bellanet was commissioned (Whyte and Auger) to explore future directions for Bellanet. A decision about the secretariat's future was deemed necessary because of the identification of: the fact that Bellanet's programs had become increasingly separate from IDRC's mandate; the loss of one of its core donors; troublesome financial projections (a shortfall of \$880,000 was projected by the end of Phase 3); and notice given by IDRC that Bellanet would not continue in its current form past the end of Phase 3 (March 2007).

Whyte and Auger explored two scenarios for the future of the secretariat: 1. involution into IDRC programming; and 2. spin-off options. The report observed that other secretariats required a 24-36 month period of intensive work to accomplish this type of transition process. Both scenarios would require staff downsizing, a change in programming activities, continuation of some regional presence, commitment of continued funding from donor partners and a \$1.65 million contribution by IDRC over the first three years of a potential Phase 4. Given the deadline set by IDRC, Bellanet had only 20 months. In some cases, like MI, transformation could be done in 18 months because no physical move was involved and no financial commitment from donors needed to be secured. Even then, intensive participation of the President, Vice President, Director of Finance and Administration, and Corporate Counsel were required throughout the period of MI devolution.

The 2005 report correctly predicts that Bellanet's "...transition is going to be a difficult time for management and staff as they wrestle with their own work and deal with the additional tasks of the uncertainty that the transformation will bring."

In March 2007, BISC developed a four year devolution strategy for Bellanet and reconfirmed their commitment to the initiative. During a May Bellanet staff retreat participants focused on developing a program for Bellanet's devolution which, it was decided, would incorporate three elements: a) support to Information Communications Technology and Knowledge Sharing research projects; b) strengthening the Bellanet network; and c) building organizational capacity.

In June a Bellanet Proposal Development Workshop to discuss and refine these proposals was held in Costa Rica. During July and August, the results of the workshop were submitted to and reviewed by IDRC officials whose comments were incorporated into the program plan. With contracts expiring at the end of September, staff continued to believe that at least some of them would have a role within the adjusted program and believed that management was encouraging them to develop program ideas.

In July 2007, IDRC was informed that it would be one of the first organizations to undergo the Government of Canada's new Strategic Review process conducted by Cabinet's Treasury Board. The review began in August. The Strategic Review process called for IDRC to identify its lowest priority, poorest performing programs and Bellanet was in this group and it was decided to close the secretariat. However, Treasury Board took several months to announce the decision. During this protracted period of time, all deliberations were protected by Canada's strict policy on cabinet secrecy covering advice to ministers. Therefore it was the equivalent of putting the entire discussion about Bellanet under a "cone of silence".

It was not until October 31st, that Michael Clarke, IDRC's Director of Information and Communications Technologies for Development had the information to be able to formally announced Bellanet's devolution "...to its Southern partners where it will continue its mission to strengthen networking and innovate in the areas of ICTs for development. The move will be completed by July 5, 2008." In the same memo, staff are informed about the disposition of various activities: Sula Batsú and BISC would be assisted in identifying future collaborations in the amount of up to \$200,000; Knowledge Management for Development would be migrated to a new host; ICCO, a Dutch NGO would be taking over management of the email discussion platform D-groups and that D-Groups would be housed at IGLOO in Waterloo.

Following many months of negotiation and the consideration of four versions of a proposal by Sula Batsú, on June 17th 2008 a transfer agreement between IDRC and Sula Batsú was signed transferring the Bellanet website. Continuing his October 31st memo to IDRC staff, Mr. Clarke wrote:

"This continues a tradition within IDRC of initiating, incubating and promoting new approaches to development that reach a degree of maturity and are then handed off to research partners in the South where they can respond more directly to the needs and realities of the developing world. I am confident that in this case, our Southern partners will be able to continue to pursue the mission of Bellanet successfully and further strengthen it as a functional network operating on a global scale."

In November staff attempted to work towards mitigating a situation of having what they believed to be a three year transition period reduced to two months. The devolution of Bellanet was successful in that the Treasury Board and management decision to devolve parts and close others was implemented relatively quickly. However, from a process point of view, it was a rather messy devolution. Considerable stress was experienced by staff, and to a lesser extent, network partners. Productivity during this period was understandably minimal. All key informants agree that not enough attention was given to the people aspects of the process nor enough sensitivity displayed with respect to the difficulty of working in an environment of uncertainty. As reflected in the documentation, the only mention of a change management strategy dealing with the human element was a passing reference in the 2005 Whyte and Auger report. This was an overlooked area that required considerable management attention. The lack of attention to change management or transition strategy was exacerbated by the slow and lingering decision making process and 10 years of deliberation about Bellanet's devolution. In addition, throughout the long deliberation and decision-taking process, communications continued to be confused or absent. To this date, "... *most people believe that Bellanet is closed, but nobody knows what this really means.*" It is not surprising that some staff were left with the feeling that IDRC reneged on commitments made to staff, partners and donors to support a three year transition strategy.

Another issue reflected in the Bellanet experience is the alignment of the core principles of strengthening research institutions in the South through devolution of research and responsibility versus actual managerial behavior. According to another former official, "... *devolution assumes the surrendering of control and what really made it difficult was that staff within IDRC did not buy into the devolution and resisted letting go.*" As indicated by several informants, neither staff nor partners had bought into the significant change that devolution involves.

Indeed there were many twists and turns along the way to the wrap-up of Bellanet. Following IDRC's decision to "involute" and a great deal of work producing a prospectus for this strategy, donor commitment did not come through as quickly as anticipated and the decision to devolve was taken. It is further reported that Southern partners, who were extensively involved in the involution strategy, were not involved in discussions regarding this change or in the subsequent devolution strategy.

2.5 OVERVIEW OF DEVOLUTION EXPERIENCES

There are a small number of interrelated factors, reported respondents, that led to better or worse experiences with devolution. In no order of importance, these factors include:

1. **Secretariat Leadership:** it was strongly maintained that the strength of the executive director was a critical contributing factor to the success of individual experiences with devolution. Components of leaders cited were vision, access to senior decision makers, subject area knowledge and expertise, and communication and managerial skills.
2. **State of Devolution Planning:** here the use of the term planning is not limited to a detailed set of specific action steps, time tables and responsibility matrices. It refers more to the Mintzbergian notion of

planning as future thinking and a formulated strategy (whether documented or not) encompassing a relatively clear idea of the organization's desired direction: "Planning is not a means to create strategy but one to operationalize strategies already created by other means...Planners are...the analysts of the strategy making system...[They] can also scrutinize the viability of strategies managers intend to pursue..."¹⁹ In several of the cases examined there was evidence that there was a very clear idea about where the organization was headed and why. Strong planning was evident with relative devolution failures such as Bellanet and SISERA; however the plans were changed or not implementable.

3. **Transition Management** was cited as another critical success factor. Transition is used in the sense given to it by Bridges in Managing Transitions: "In the neutral zone²⁰ personnel are overloaded, signals are often mixed, and systems are in flux and therefore unreliable. It is only natural that priorities get confused, information gets miscommunicated, and tasks go undone. It is also natural that with so many things uncertain and frustrating, turnover begins to rise."²¹ In this regard, some devolution examples reflected a much higher level of transition skill and knowledge than did others.
4. **Decision Making**: some cases exhibited a lack of clear and decisive decision making. The better devolution experiences, for example, were acted upon relatively soon after the decision was taken. Indecisive decision making sent a negative message to staff, donors and partners. Further, when donors were involved in the decision making the results of both the devolution process and the outcome appear to be better. AERC, IMFNS, INBAR and MI are examples.
5. **Involvement of members of the Senior Management Committee** had, it appears, a direct bearing on the success of the experiences. Where one or more executive leaders of IDRC were directly involved, the devolution went relatively smoothly. This involvement goes much beyond making decisions and providing check lists. It refers to instances where the President or Vice Presidents invested time and energy in face-to-face communications with staff and donors as well as participation in the devolved entity. INBAR and AERC are examples.
6. **Secure Funding** was naturally, another key factor in both the way that devolution occurred and in the sustainability of the initiative post devolution. Where anticipated funding was in doubt or withdrawn, the devolution experience was most difficult.
7. **Post Devolution Management** refers to both the people and systems in place to manage the initiative following devolution. In the cases of AERC and INBAR, great deal of effort was spent in ensuring that responsibilities and required competencies were clearly defined and the right people were recruited for key positions. Similarly considerable detailed work was undertaken to ensure that effective management sys-

¹⁹ H. Mintzberg. Mintzberg on Management 1980. p 77

²⁰ The time between knowing things are going to change and knowing what that change is and how it is going to affect you.

²¹ W. Bridges Managing Transitions, 1991

tems such as program management, division of labor, personnel, succession planning, finance, audit, reporting, monitoring and evaluation were put in place immediately after devolution.

8. **Good Governance** refers to the accountability and decision making frameworks put in place. As it is used here and by key informants, it also encompasses the structure, composition, capacity and continuity of the oversight board and the continuation of senior involvement of officials from IDRC. Again, AERC and INBAR were unique in that considerable attention was paid to ensuring sustainable good governance.

SECTION 3

SOME EVIDENCE FROM THE FIELD

This section of the report will take a brief look at good practice in donor exit or transition as a proxy for 'devolution' as defined by IDRC. It is important to note that the definition, rationale and approach to devolution within IDRC is characterized by a great deal of variability and is not synonymous with 'exit' or transition as employed by most donors²². However, many of the considerations that generally apply to donor exit have some relevance. Remember too that on several occasions the road to devolving a secretariat has led to closure.

The focus on development aid effectiveness driven by the Paris Declaration and related agreements, has ensured renewed attention to the issue of donor exit and/or transition. Even so, the area is still relatively new. A perusal of the available literature shows that only three significant studies have been completed within recent times: Levinger and McLeod (2002), Rogers and Macias (2004) and Gardner, Greenblott and Joubert, (2005) that speak specifically to the issue of donor exit/transition. These have informed reviews completed by UNESCO and the World Food Program, among others, in assessing their respective approaches to exit and transition. In addition, several donors have conducted studies aimed at informing their respective performance on 'exit' including USAID (1999) SIDA, Danida, Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands (2008), DFID (2007). The World Bank's 2007 publication on evaluating global partnerships devotes an entire chapter to 'Sustainability, Risks and Strategies for Devolution and Exit'.

A range of terms are used to describe the withdrawal or reduction of external funds from a country, program, or project including transition, exit, phasing out, withdrawal, devolution, graduation, closure and closing-out. According to Levinger and McLeod (2002) exit strategies can take at least three forms, which are also interrelated.

- **Phase Down:** a gradual reduction of program activities, utilizing local organizations to sustain program benefits while the implementing agency deploys fewer resources. Phasing down is often a preliminary state to phasing over and/or phasing out.
- **Phase over:** refers to a sponsor's transfer of program activities to a local institution or community which usually involves elements of institutional capacity building during program design and implementation stage.
- **Phase out:** refers to a sponsor's withdrawal of involvement in a program without turning it over to another institution to continue implementation. Ideally a program or activity is phased out when self sustaining changes are achieved, thereby eliminating the need

"Nothing lasts forever.' In recent years, this bromide has become an increasingly apt phrase to describe development assistance flows. As demands on ever scarcer development resources have grown, more attention must now be focused on how donors and implementing agencies best extricate themselves from projects that, in many instances, have been long-standing and well regarded. The challenge, of course, is how to curtail investments of donor-provided resources without shutting down or choking off the benefit stream that, in many cases, years of ongoing activity have generated. In short, how can donors and program sponsors 'exit' from projects without derailing the gains that have been made during their period of active support? A resolution of the tension between the withdrawal of assistance and commitment to the goals of sustainable development lies at the heart of successful exit strategies."

Levinger and McLeod, 2002

²² For example, donor exit or transition anticipates the withdrawal of donor funding, whereas IDRC's Corporate Strategy and Performance Framework (CSPF) specifies nurturing of long term relationships and continued involvement as a donor in the post devolution phase.

for external inputs. This often entails a well articulated transition strategy that states how the outcomes will be sustained.

Rogers and Macias (2004) note that the decision on *'when to exit'* is generally based on criteria such as previously agreed time limits, the extent to which the program or project has achieved anticipated impacts and the extent to which benchmarks or milestones have been achieved. These latter are generally related to the program/project's monitoring and evaluation strategy.

A recent SIDA Concept Note on Exit Strategies (2005) refers to additional reasons for donor exit such as in the event of an unexpected development in the recipient country, program or project. *'Unexpected developments'* could be as simple as a lack of anticipated progress. In this case, the decision to exit might be made unilaterally by the primary donor(s). In another scenario, the decision to exit might be due to a change in donor country development cooperation policy, resources or administrative needs. Given that these latter issues have very little to do with recipient countries, the decision to 'exit' on this basis can be perceived as inherently unfair and therefore these types of exits are particularly sensitive. This type of exit also raises the issue of *'partnership ethics'* regarding for example the circumstances under which a donor's unilateral decision to exit is morally permissible, *"if the exit has an important negative impact on the well being of partners or beneficiaries."*²³ On a related note, a 2002 study by the Cornerstone Consulting Group makes the point that donor obligations are perceived to be particularly strong in cases where the donor created or initiated the proposed initiative, *"...the more active the foundation is in developing and sponsoring an initiative, the greater its responsibility to ensure that sustaining resources are secured."*²⁴

"Exit strategies, when planned with partners in advance...ensure better program outcomes and encourage commitment to program sustainability. ...an Exit Strategy is in essence, a 'sustainability plan'."

Gardner, Greenblott and Joubert,
2005

In the development context, 'exit' is closely related to sustainability and therefore an exit strategy is almost synonymous with a sustainability strategy and should be informed by the same concerns. The importance of sustainability is highlighted in some of the key principles underpinning successful exit identified in the literature. One of the most important principles is that that exit is considered and planned at the design phase of the initiative. *"Planning for exit includes ensuring that there is a shared understanding about when exit should occur and establishing a transparent process for assessing performance and therefore knowing when to exit."*²⁵

When donors get the planning phase right, each of the other principles fall almost naturally into place. That is, early planning facilitates a focus on results including an articulation of the expected outcomes of the initiative based on a defined timeline and resources allocated. The documentation of expectations ensures that all stakeholders are on the same page (transparency) and have a clear understanding of the milestones to be achieved, expected commitments to the project by donors, partners and staff over a specific period of time. Rogers and Macias (2004) note that it is critical that there is clarity of communication so that exit strategies are known and understood by partners and staff. The exit plan must also be flexible enough to ensure that affected parties have enough time to prepare themselves for the end or transition of a program but not so

²³ "Exit Strategies-A Concept Note for a Joint Evaluation", SIDA Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit. 2005

²⁴ The Cornerstone Consulting Group. (2002) End Games. The Anne Casey Foundation. www.aecf.org

²⁵ Nick Davis and Meenakshi Sankar, (2006) "A Practice Review of UNESCO's Exit and Transition Strategies"

much time that dependency sets in. The plan should involve key partners in the design and in ongoing monitoring of the intervention. Such monitoring is critical to the decision making on 'exit' process and would facilitate ongoing dialogue among the key stakeholders. The decision to exit should not come as a surprise.

On the basis of these principles, Rogers and Macias (2004) suggest that developing and implementing an exit strategy should involve:

- Identification of clear exit criteria such as achievement of impact targets, and readiness of the program for phase over. This might include the extent to which the required technical and managerial capacity has been built and the identification of alternative sources of funding.
- Design of an exit strategy that would include performance milestones linked to a clear timeline. This could signal the 'triggers' for exit/transition/devolution;
- The groups, departments and key individuals who need to be involved in the different aspects of the process should be identified from the outset and should understand their respective roles in the process;
- The anticipated time frame for exit should be detailed yet flexible. All stakeholders should receive ongoing communication;
- Clear communications should be maintained with all stakeholders to ensure that they are all 'on board' and are active participants in the process; and
- Where possible, post intervention evaluations should be conducted to assess the extent to which program benefits have been sustained following the donor's exit.

Key recommendations emerging from a 2008 review of 85 country exits²⁶ by four donors²⁷ echoed some of those identified by Rogers and Macias including the need to:

- Develop guidelines which are sensitive to exit processes in different contexts and reflect different management challenges: Exit as crisis management, exiting in a sustainable manner, and exit as transformation of relations;
- Make country specific pre-exit assessments. Bilateral donors do make this kind of assessments, but mostly focusing on qualifications for receiving aid. Now the lens should also be turned on aid exit and transformation;
- Develop a tailor-made approach for each force majeure exit;
- Adopt a more business-like attitude towards aid exit and formulate guidelines for good donorship in exit management based on the concept of mutual accountability in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness; and

Principles Underpinning Donor Exit Strategy

- Early planning
- Results focused
- Transparency
- Sustainability
- Flexibility
- Evidence based
- Learning focused
- Partnership approach

In "A Practice Review of UNESCO's Exit and Transition Strategies", 2006.

"The topic of 'Exit Strategies' confounds and eludes emergency and development practitioners alike. In the dynamic context of Southern Africa, the mere mention of 'an exit'...can cause panic among communities, NGO staff, government and other stakeholders."

Gardner, Greenblott and Joubert, 2005

²⁶ Although this evaluation looked at donor exit from countries, several of the same principles regarding programme exit apply.

²⁷ SIDA, Danida, Norad and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

- Explore options for addressing exit at entry.

Levinger and McCleod (2002) suggest that the following questions and guiding principles should be considered when designing an exit strategy.

Table 2: Key Considerations for Exit Strategy²⁸

| Element of Exit Strategy | Key Questions | Guiding Principles |
|---|--|---|
| Plan for Exit from the Earliest Stages of Program Design | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will we “phase out” activities or hand them off to a local actor? • What is the appropriate time frame? • How will we know we are on track for phase out? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flexibility 2. Ongoing review and revision 3. Transparency 4. Participation |
| Develop Partnerships and Local Linkages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types of organizations should we partner with? • What will our partners bring to the partnership? What will we? • How will the partnership prepare for exit? • To what extent should we partner with public sector actors? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diversity 2. Complementarity 3. Clear and common goals |
| Build local organizational and human capacity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What capacities are needed? • What capacities already exist? • What indicators will we use to monitor progress? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build on existing capacity 2. Model (organizational and individual) behaviors 3. Create environments that support new behaviors 4. Monitor progress |
| Mobilize local and external resources as an exit strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What inputs will we need to maintain services? • Who can provide these inputs? To what extent are they available locally? Externally? • To what extent can benefits be sustained without continued inputs? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to progress toward sustainability. 2. To the extent possible, generate resources locally. 3. Increasingly, bring external resources under local control and management. |
| Stagger phase out of various activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the key elements of the program? Which elements are dependent on others? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider providing new activities or types of support, as financial resources are phased out |
| Allow roles and relationships to evolve and continue after exit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types of ongoing support would be most useful, e.g., advice, mentoring, technical assistance? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prevent slippage by re-entering if necessary |

It is clear that there is a paucity of directly related literature on the topic of this study. If one were to take the more literal definition of devolution, that is, passing management and responsibility to a lower level of government as in the United Kingdom's devolution of programs to Scotland or Wales or a central government devolving service delivery to municipalities, one can find another body of literature about devolution. While much of this literature is not applicable to the subject of devolution of IDRC secretariats, there are two lessons that can be drawn from this source.

The first lesson is that successful devolution requires a recipient that has the social, economic, political and managerial capacity to carry out the devolved responsibilities. This is a reoccurring theme coming from discussions about devolution at IDRC. This chronic problem is aptly captured in the words of one interviewee who stated:

²⁸ Excerpted from Levinger and McCleod (2002), “Hello I must be going: Ensuring quality services and sustainable benefits through well designed exit strategies”. Education Development Center.

“One of the major challenges is to find a suitable institution to devolve the initiative to. For example, the Climate Change Adaptation in Africa project is a very new area to Africa, therefore the problem has been to find a partner in the field. Finding institutions with the required mix of technical and administrative competence is often difficult in developing countries. ... Another challenge is finding institutions that have a research to policy focus similar to IDRC’s. Another issue that needs to be taken into account is the stability of the host/partner. If the program or secretariat is devolved to one institution and that institution collapses one or two years later, the program is lost. The IDRC way of doing things is very difficult to transfer. Capacity building needs to start from the inception of the project.”

The second and related lesson is that successful devolution is seriously hampered if the devolving authority does not provide some level of essential support to the recipients. This is best illustrated by the case of major hand-downs such as Canada’s devolution of one of its largest activities, the multibillion dollar Labor Market Development Program²⁹, when in 1997 and 1998 it passed these responsibilities on to provinces that in turn passed the responsibility along to over 300 communities, municipal governments and a variety of other organizations. In doing so, the government followed the devolution with the elimination of its central capacity to coordinate and maintain the program including its intellectual capacity. Further, it overlooked the need for tools and skills required to effectively manage partnerships and new relationships. These oversights inhibited the early success of the devolution. A little forethought would have ensured that the knowledge and intellectual capital built up over the decades prior to the devolution would have been useful, if not invaluable to the newly configured organizations in delivering this series of programs.³⁰

²⁹ The program included job creation, targeted wage subsidies, employment programs, training, employment assistance, labor market partnerships and much more.

³⁰ Armstrong J and D Lenihan. From Controlling to Collaborating: When Governments Want to be Partners. IPAC 1998. ISBN 0-920715-83-4.

SECTION 4

IDRC DEVOLUTION POLICIES AND PROCESSES

4.1 IDRC's Devolution Policies

This section of the report will discuss IDRC's definition of and rationale for devolution; the extent to which devolution is understood within IDRC; and the extent to which IDRC has developed clear policies to guide devolution.

Finding 1: IDRC explicitly refers to 'devolution' in its CSPF 2000 to 2005 and CSPF 2005 to 2010, but these references are not definitions per se. A proposed working definition of 'good performance in devolution to the South' was developed in 2002, however there is little evidence that it was incorporated into IDRC's CAF or other relevant policy.

A highly valued principle of IDRC is the need to facilitate ownership and build research capacity in Southern institutions. However, there appears to be some confusion about what this means in practice. Documented references, such as the CSPF 2000 to 2005, notes under IDRC's Guiding Principles:

"In strengthening the research capabilities, innovative skills and institutions of the developing regions, the Centre will concentrate on research capacity in terms of human resources, and will strengthen institutions in support of program objectives and of building a sustainable research capacity. We will give priority to existing institutions to carry out their missions more effectively, rather than creating new ones. We will also seek opportunities to contribute to the creation of a more positive and encouraging climate for research in developing countries. Where feasible, the Centre will devolve the responsibility for coordination, administration and management of programs and networks to institutions in the South." (p. 18)

The 'where feasible' is somewhat ambiguous and does not suggest that it is anticipated that all programs and networks will be devolved, but only under certain circumstances. However, the criteria for 'devolution' are never stated. A memorandum from Terry Smutylo, Director of Evaluation, to the Senior Management Committee (SMC) dated August 8th 2002, suggests a working definition of good performance in devolution to the South:

"While recognizing that multiple factors can influence decisions related to the timing and mechanisms involved in planning for the process of devolution, the Centre actively pursues opportunities to devolve responsibilities for research coordination, management, administration, and technical oversight to recipient institutions. As much as possible, the Centre encourages and facilitates devolution of projects, programs and networks to existing, Southern institutions. Fostering an environment of shared responsibility and taking a learning approach to devolution, the Centre develops partnership and support strategies tailored to recipients' evolving contexts, capacities and needs, and enhancing their intellectual and administrative capacities as necessary. The Centre also devotes time and resources to supporting these institutions in establishing more independent relationships with external donors, other Canadian institutions, and indigenous sources

"IDRC's commitment to the principle of devolution/ ownership by Southern partners...was given as the primary reason for wanting to devolve in many of the examples discussed (ATPS, TIPS, SIS-ERA, MIMAP LeaRN LA&Car.Network, WDME, FORST, ADRF) and was usually presented as a given (that is, wanting to have developing countries [as] partners in charge was always in the plan)."

Backgrounder for the Second SMC
CAF Session on the Performance
Area: Devolution to the South, 2002

of support making the process of devolution more sustainable. The Centre works with Southern organizations to plan for devolution, assessing constraints and possible risks, and to reach a realistic time frame for a process of substantive and sustainable devolution consistent with IDRC development research principles and priorities. The Centre monitors devolution processes and outcomes, including the nature of post-devolution relationships between the Centre and its partners.”

This proposed definition was not adopted. The CSPF 2005-2010 paragraph 118 returns to the more open reference of devolution ‘where appropriate’:

“The Centre will continue to devolve activities where appropriate. Devolution involves the passing of substantive and managerial control of an activity housed within the Centre to an external agency. Historically, the Centre has housed activities within its structure and then devolved them for three reasons:

- *An activity may have been “incubated” at the Centre until an appropriate final locale, be it an existing institution or a newly created one, was found;*
- *The Centre’s belief in capacity building, and in not “hanging on” to activities; and*
- *A hitherto in-house activity will grow, programmatically and in size, to the point where it would be more appropriate to spin it off as an independent entity or to another institution.”*

Although this latter reference makes mention of the historical reasons for devolving initiatives, it does not define criteria or approaches to devolution. A documented analysis of ‘devolution’ within IDRC is reflected in Maessen (2002) and “A Short History of “Devolution” and the CAF” (September 2005) that suggests that the definition of ‘devolution’ appears to have evolved over time.

The 2004 and 2007 references mention key areas requiring assessment, in the event that a decision has been made to devolve the initiative, but there is no criteria guiding the decision to devolve, that is what specific milestones would trigger the decision to devolve.

Finding 2: The concept of devolution is generally well understood, with some minor variations that seem to reflect stakeholders’ level of involvement in the devolution process. Mixed views were expressed regarding the extent to which ‘devolution’ was a core principle guiding IDRC operations.

Respondents generally characterized ‘devolution’ as the movement of a secretariat or program, previously managed within IDRC to a Southern institution. This could involve either the total or partial transfer of administrative, technical and intellectual management of an initiative to an existing entity or to a newly created agency.

Respondents also noted that devolution within IDRC is most closely linked to changing the status of secretariats rather than programs, although programs have also been devolved. Several respondents stated that they had never perceived ‘devolution’ as a core principle of IDRC but as a ‘tactic’ that could be implemented to ‘spin off, get rid of or transition’ a secretariat or program, based on the specific context. This latter view seems to be consistent with IDRC practice. Devolution as a ‘core principle or practice’ might be evidenced by early planning or the development of comprehensive devolution strategies prior to the anticipated end dates of secretariats. In the cases reviewed, devolution op-

tions and potential strategies were only identified subsequent to the decision to devolve the secretariat³¹.

Table 3: Changing Definition of Devolution³²

| Year | Definition |
|------|--|
| 2001 | The Devolution performance area is defined in the CAF as: "the devolution of responsibility for management and administration of research institutions in the South where and how we [IDRC] can do so effectively." Three types of devolution were identified: 1. Devolution to Canadian institutions and/or Southern organizations; 2. Enabling recipients to do more in projects; and 3. Devolving regional offices to Southern institutions through partnerships. |
| 2002 | Management revises the categories for the purposes of Maessen's 2002 study on developing a typology of devolution within IDRC: 1. Devolution to existing Southern institutions 2. Devolution to Canadian institutions 3. Devolution to other Northern institutions and 4. Creating a new institution in the South to devolve to. |
| 2002 | In a meeting concerning the CAF in 2002, Michael Quinn Patton suggests that #2, devolving to Canadian institutions, is really more to do with "partnership" and does not really fit in with the typology in the same way; he suggests that it be removed and incorporated into one of the other areas. He also suggests that devolution could be considered only in light of capacity-building. |
| 2004 | Devolution is defined within the capacity-building area through the following good performance characteristic: <i>"IDRC supports a process whereby activities and/or functions can be, when and where appropriate, devolved to existing or newly-created entities in the South. (footnote: This process would include an assessment of: the program's potential for attracting continued donor support; the implications of devolution for the configuration of the programs operations; the institutional capacity of potential host institutions to absorb the program; and/or the need and feasibility of establishing a new institution to house the program)" In programs which have been devolved, IDRC continues to participate in the sustainability of the program as a donor ensuring that the assets and responsibilities of the program are legally transferred to the new host."</i> |
| 2007 | The same definition as above is used in the 'enhancing capacities' performance area as revised by the EU in 2007. |

Finding 3: The overall rationale driving devolution of secretariats within IDRC appears to have evolved over time and can be linked to changes in IDRC leadership, economic situation and strategic direction in the late 1990s.

Although devolution has been explicitly included as a guiding principle informing IDRC's operations since the 2000-2005 CAF, the movement to devolve secretariats seemed to intensify after 1997. Several reasons have been posited for this including:

- **A change in leadership at IDRC.** It is acknowledged that the shift in emphasis away from secretariats as a service delivery modality coincided with the 1997 change in Presidency. A 1998 study by Armstrong and Whyte suggested that the drive to create international secretariats at IDRC as a new service delivery modality spanned the Presidency of Keith Bezanson, (1991-1997):

"...secretariats shared their origin in his concept of an innovative knowledge organization (IDRC) and a flexible programming mechanism (the secretariats).

³¹ Studies were commissioned for Bellanet and SISERA, however there was no evidence of 'devolution' studies on MI, INBAR, IMFNS or TIPS.

³² Excerpted from "A Short History of Devolution and the CAF" (2005). Author unknown.

³⁴ Armstrong, and Whyte, "Learning Partnerships: A Review of IDRC Secretariats" IDRC, November 1998. pg.19

They each owe their establishment to this vision and to his personal support. They also owe their emphasis on the best case scenario and their accountability framework to his leadership style and to the context of budget reduction, down-sizing, and restructuring that prevailed in 1992-97, all of this against a background of concerns about the organizational survival of IDRC.”³⁴

- **Improvement in the economic fortunes of IDRC.** During the difficult economic times of the early to mid 1990s, IDRC was faced with several budget cuts and the need to generate revenue became a key driver of the organization's strategic direction. The thinking at that time was that IDRC could 'hatch' research activities attractive to donors thereby facilitating access to the necessary funding and sharing of risk. The administrative fee charged for hosting these secretariats within IDRC usually formed part of or came from IDRC's grant to the secretariat. A substantially improved economic situation in the late 1990s led to a re-examination of the secretariat modality³⁵.
- As successful as the secretariats have been in terms of facilitating innovation and donor collaboration, they have also been characterized as administrative 'nightmares'. The administrative support services provided by IDRC, including human resources, legal advice, accounting, donor management and grant administration, had become burdensome, added to which the secretariats were no longer perceived to have added value to IDRC's mandate or strategic direction.
- At the same time, donor partners were expressing increasing uneasiness regarding the provision of funds to IDRC, some conveying the view that they were funding Canadian taxpayers rather than beneficiaries in developing countries. Donors began to express a preference for funding Southern based institutions rather than IDRC housed secretariats.
- IDRC's core function was research and many of the secretariats had become more operational in focus, including MI, Bellanet, IMFNS and INBAR. As such, they were no longer a 'good fit' with IDRC's core mandate and in some cases it's program.
- The 2005 to 2010 CSPF formalizes the 'fusing' of the secretariats with Corporate Projects and goes on to state that:

“Partnership and resource expansion is inherent in all three modalities, which considerably diminishes one of the raison d'être of secretariats. Many of the devolutions of secretariats during CSPF 2000-2005 were driven by considerations of (imperfect) program fit and (high) degree of maturity of the secretariat. Partnering can be achieved whatever the modality. It is assumed that during CS+PF 2005-2010 the financial imperative will not be pre-eminent in entering into an agreement. It is likely, then, that the secretariat modality as currently understood would give way to PIs and Corporate Projects without in any way diminishing the advantages of multi-partnering and joint programming.”

Paragraph 117

³⁵ Paragraph 114 of the 2005 -2010 CSPF.

Interestingly, this later point was interpreted as a decision to phase out the secretariat modality as reflected in the ICT4D-Bellanet Prospectus 2007-2011, pg. 9.³⁶

Program initiatives had learned to act like secretariats rendering the need to create them obsolete, a phenomenon also evident in the broader Canadian public sector's experience with special operating agencies where a general consensus emerged that going through all the formalities to create special operating agencies was a waste of time. What they learned was that they could exhibit the characteristics of special operating agencies and derive the benefits without going through the associated bureaucratic hoops.

Finding 4: The rationale for devolution of specific secretariats is often unclear and respondents agree that those decisions are 'brokered at a very high level'. The decision to devolve was often based on 'circumstances, changing program priorities and opportunity' more often than on the core principle of Southern empowerment.

"There can never be a perfect transfer of knowledge – some institutional memory of a Secretariat is lost in devolution"

Key Informant

One respondent noted that, *"Devolution may not be the right word, semantically, for what IDRC does because sometimes, it is just about getting rid of a problematic program..."*

In the cases of Bellanet and SISERA the decision to devolve the Secretariat, seemed to reflect the confluence of changing program priorities and circumstances. By all accounts, the devolution process, in both cases involved comprehensive analysis of the available options. Table 4 below details the reasons given for the devolution of the secretariats included in this evaluation.

In the case of Bellanet, several studies were commissioned including:

- Bellanet: A Mid-Term Review, Michael Graham: November 1997
- Bellanet Evaluation Final Report, Review of Activities and Outcomes 1997-2002, The Governance Network™: May 2003
- Characterization of DGroups in Latin America, Bellanet LAC Final version, Rosa Cheng Lo & Margarita Salas May 2004
- Future Directions for Bellanet, Whyte and Auger July 2005
- Bellanet-ICT4D: Prospectus 2007-2011
- IDRC: Project Approval Document: Bellanet Network Transitional Period, May 30 2008.

The Senior Management Committee agreed with the Whyte and Auger (2005) recommendation for involution of Bellanet and the Director, ICT4D was instructed to implement that option. However, efforts to 'involute' were increasingly frustrating, *"...it was like grafting incompatible tissue"*. The decision to devolve Bellanet was subsequently made. The rationale given was that 'involution' was not the most appropriate option for Bellanet:

"...more effort should have been put into assessing that recommendation....Bellanet was not a good candidate for involution... Involution assumes a high degree of complementarity with IDRC program initiatives... Bellanet did not have the potential to become a conventional IDRC program.... It was fairly autonomous in its operations, self sustaining, often bringing in more funds from sale of services than the ICT4D program allocation...it was in fact a viable business proposition. Given the level of self sufficiency (particularly in funding) the decision should have been to 'devolve' Bellanet."

³⁶ Several respondents also expressed confusion about this evaluation of devolution, given IDRC's decision to phase out Secretariats.

Table 4: Rationale for Devolution of IDRC Secretariats

| Secretariat | Date Estab. | Date Devolved | Rationale For Devolution | IDRC Funding Status ³⁷ |
|-------------|-------------|---|--|--|
| AERC | 1984 | 1987 | A joint decision by donors involved in the consortium. | Core funding provided since 1988 \$2, 987, 980 ³⁸ |
| MI | 1992 | 2002 ³⁹ | Stated reasons included the fact that MI had outgrown IDRC and was more focused on implementation rather than research. MI was 'no longer 'a good fit'. | None |
| Bellanet | 1995 | Sec. closed in Ottawa Transfer of web-site to Sula Batsú 30/06/2008 | Bellanet was always more operational than research focused and was 'never a good fit with IDRC'. The initial decision appeared to be to merge Bellanet with the ICT4D. Later the decision to devolve was made by the VP Programs and Partnerships and the D PA, ICT4D. | Transition funding \$200,000 |
| TIPS | 1996 | 31 Jan. 2005 | The closure of the Regional Office for South Africa, accelerated the devolution of TIPS as well as Schoolnet | Core funding provided since 2005. \$2, 849, 982 |
| INBAR | 1992 | 1997 | INBAR had progressed from pure research to application for development. Stakeholders in the region had been asking for an independent agency since 1987. The interest of the Chinese Government in hosting the agency. | Total Core funding until 2004 \$3, 399,883 |
| SISERA | 1997 | Closed | EU and Dutch donors no longer willing to fund an IDRC housed Secretariat and difficulties experienced finding a suitable host were the reasons for closing SISERA. | NA |
| IMFNS | 1995 | April 2007 | Secretariat at IDRC for 10 years; moved from proof of concept phase to operational implementation; no longer a fit with IDRC mandate. | \$2, 628,600 |
| ATPS | 1994 | 2001 | Driven by Dutch Government's need to fund an 'independent' entity, among other things. | Core funding until June 2006 |

This notwithstanding, the decision to devolve Bellanet appeared to come out of the blue for staff who were under the impression that Bellanet was well on the way to becoming a permanent part of IDRC's programming. Several respondents surmised that Bellanet was not a high priority for the SMC and was never a good fit with IDRC. This coupled with "...*weak leadership unable to chart a strategic direction for the normalization of Bellanet*" led to the final decision to devolve the Secretariat.

³⁷ The rationale for the different amounts of funding or the extension of funding was not clear from the proposals in the IDRIS database.

³⁸ This does not include IDRC's support for a Research Innovation Endowment Fund

³⁹ The only definitive statement on the date of devolution was in the most recent MI Strategic Plan 2008-2013. This suggested that MI spent 10 years as an IDRC Secretariat before it was devolved. Other documentation including emails and board minutes suggest dates for transfer of Oct. 1 2000 and incorporation May 2001; the date the transfer agreement was signed.

The idea to devolve SISERA arose from the concerns expressed by major co-funders, the European Union and the Dutch Government, that SISERA as an IDRC hosted Secretariat did not reflect the “Africaness” that these donors wanted. Initially, the plan was to devolve SISERA to an African NGO that could sustain its mandate. Several studies were commissioned aimed at informing the future direction of SISERA including: SISERA: Study for the secretariat’s Evolution into a Senegalese NGO, (Dakar: Groupe Constanin, August 2002) and Framework and Implementation Plan for the Transformation of SISERA into a Sustainable and African-owned Institution (Stephen Yeo, 2005).

In January 2002, IDRC commenced exploration of the option to devolve SISERA to the Institute for Development Economics and Planning (IDEP) a UN organization. Diéry Seck, SISERA's former executive director, had just become IDEP's director and that organization's objectives appeared complementary to SISERA's. After two years, negotiations fell apart when both parties recognized that SISERA would not have been able to maintain its autonomy within IDEP. Further, staff of SISERA would not be automatically absorbed into IDEP but would have to participate in a competitive selection process for positions in IDEP and would lose seniority. In September 2005, Directors of SISERA's Partner Institutes funded a business proposal for the establishment of a free standing successor (the Centre for Institutional Strengthening of Economic Research in Africa - CISERA), however the initiative stalled when efforts to raise seed funding proved difficult. Finally, IDRC decided to wind down the Secretariat, which ceased operations on March 31, 2006.

Several respondents expressed confusion regarding IDRC's decision to close SISERA after the considerable time and effort that had been expended. As one respondent observed, “...IDRC wound up reinventing SISERA two years later in the form of the Think Tank initiative”. Further, the lack of donor consensus on the strategy for devolution was identified as a contributing factor to the final decision on SISERA. One respondent noted that, “...communication between donors must be clear and ongoing. In the case of SISERA it appears that the USAID representative (on the Steering Committee) was completely unaware of the decision to close SISERA... On multi-donor programs, all donors need to be on the same page.”⁴⁰ It must be observed that there was not secure funding at the time of SISERA's closure. The appearance of a new donor for a much larger but similar undertaking two years later could not have been foreseen⁴¹.

The foregoing suggests that in both cases, specific circumstances gave rise to the decision to devolve the Secretariat, rather than the ‘fixed time period’ over which secretariats were expected to complete their work. Available documentation does not indicate any ‘deliberate’ planning for devolution prior to the decision to devolve the initiative.

“Donors need to be united on the devolution strategy. In the case of ATPS, the Board did what the Dutch Government wanted. ...Regarding SISERA, there did not seem to be any harmony between USAID and IDRC. On multi-donor programs, all donors need to be on the same page.”

Key Informant

⁴⁰ The respondent acknowledged that the decision may have been communicated at a higher level.

⁴¹ This also seems to indicate that IDRC does not need to ‘devolve’ or find a home for every idea it incubates. In some instances, proving the concept might be as far as IDRC needs to go, after which other interested parties might choose to invest or not. IDRC has fulfilled its mandate of successfully incubating an innovative idea.

4.2 Effectiveness of the Devolution Process

This review of IDRC experience with devolution has been constrained by the fact that performance measures related to efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of devolution have not been developed. As such, this section of the report will examine the extent to which past approaches to devolution have been efficiently and effectively implemented taking into account some of the key guiding principles underpinning exit strategy identified in the literature⁴² and respondents assessments regarding 'successful' devolution.

Finding 5: Even though programs and secretariats have been devolved since the 1970s⁴³, IDRC has not developed any formal policies or guidelines to inform the development of devolution strategies, the management of devolution processes or the sustainability of devolved programs or secretariats.

As noted earlier, IDRC has produced a Management Policy Manual that includes a detailed breakdown of key tasks related to the creation and management of secretariats and Externally Funded Programs. This document also notes that all proposals must include, among other things:

1. The anticipated risks;
2. The expected life-cycle during which the secretariat will achieve its goals;
3. IDRC's contribution to the secretariat and its program of work;
4. The anticipated benefits and to whom they will accrue; and
5. The anticipated outcomes and the method that will be used to measure and evaluate program achievements.

Section 4.6.2 of the manual also refers to the "expected duration of the secretariat". Although the manual includes a section on project management considerations for secretariats and externally funded programs, it does not refer to the concept of 'devolution' as an anticipated option for secretariats or externally funded programs and does not include any details relevant to the sustainability of benefits or termination of secretariats.

Respondents were not aware of any formal guidelines detailing IDRC's process for devolution. One respondent noted that every time that IDRC "...does devolution...it feels as if we are reinventing the wheel". Although most respondents suggested that a formal document detailing key operational elements or guiding principles for devolution would be helpful, it was also noted that devolution as practiced by IDRC has tended to be very context specific and therefore a 'recipe' for devolution may not be possible.

For example, MI was devolved as a Canadian non-profit corporation, IMFNS was devolved to a federal department of the Canadian Government, AERC was incorporated as a US non-profit corporation, INBAR was devolved as an international intergovernmental organization, and TIPS as a South African non-profit. Despite a great deal of effort and time invested (an estimated two years) a

"Part of AERC's success can be attributed to the fact that the Board ...took the time to lay strong organizational foundations for the new entity. These foundations were grounded in clear assumptions of institutional autonomy, research independence, African ownership and a clear division of governance and labour...the Board took responsibility for fund raising, key appointments, and financial and policy oversight, and the Secretariat carried out the program. The Advisory Committee continued the work of the old steering committee while assuming explicit responsibility for deciding on the research program."

Caroline Pesticau
AERC History, 2008

"Effective devolution requires a genuine commitment to doing devolution by both the Secretariat staff and the related branches of IDRC. The whole organization has to be committed."

Key Informant

⁴² These would include early planning, results focus, transparency, sustainability, flexibility, evidence based, learning focused and partnership approach.

⁴³ The International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) was legally established in 1978 based on an IDRC study by John Bene. www.worldagroforestrycentre.org

host organization could not be found for SISERA. In each case, the intensity of effort expended was different, ranging from the relative ease of simply changing the legal status of MI to the complexity of negotiating intergovernmental arrangements for the establishment of an international agency such as INBAR.

It is certainly significant that deliberative planning for devolution was considered by the Evaluation Unit in 2002, including how different levels of staff could contribute to good performance in devolution (see Table 5); however, it is unclear as to why these were not institutionalized.

Notwithstanding the contention that a 'recipe' for devolution may not be possible, incorporation of the suggestions in Table 5 would most definitely contribute to implementation of a comprehensive devolution strategy that is context specific and ensures that the necessary capacity and systems are built throughout the life of the secretariat. In particular, staff at all levels would be guided by 'IDRC's goals and processes for devolution...that take into account institutional capacities, contexts and needs...as well as strategic aims'. As such, a proactive approach to 'devolution' that places the needs of IDRC's 'partners' at the centre of the process would be institutionalized over time. This approach would also be consistent with the principles underlying good practices in devolution identified throughout the literature, including the focus on early planning, transparency, sustainability and a partnership approach.

Finding 6: IDRC appears to have a somewhat mixed record regarding, 'how well the Centre does devolution'⁴⁴. Consensus suggests that the most significant factors contributing to the efficacy of the process relate to the experience, skill and leadership capacity of individuals rather than a clearly articulated devolution strategy.

Devolution processes that have been regarded as 'successes' in terms of timeliness of the process, due attention to key components, management of donor relations and ongoing communication with key stakeholders include AERC and TIPS. In both cases, excellent leadership was cited as the key 'success' factor. Significantly, both of these involved the creation of new non-profit corporations based in developing countries. Ironically the creation of new entities has also been identified as the most difficult process among the available devolution options⁴⁵. MI's devolution was also a straight forward process, particularly as it only involved a change in legal status within Canada; the transfer of existing assets and staff; and maintenance of the same location. The next most successful would be IMFNS followed by INBAR. In both these cases, special circumstances delayed the process since devolution from a Crown Corporation to a government department had not been pursued before IMFNS. Creation of an Intergovernmental 'UN' style entity was also a new and very complex process coupled with the fact that the Chinese Government had agreed to host the organization; therefore all negotiations had to be sensitively managed.

"In the case of Secretariats that were not devolved [closed], the major challenge was finding the appropriate host. In the case of SISERA, the organization did not have the research or funding capacity to manage autonomously. Although negotiations with IDEP (UN) were started, eventually it was too complex and extensive and there were no other options."

Kev Informant

⁴⁴ The criteria for successful or less successful 'devolution processes' were gleaned from respondents' qualitative assessments including the timeliness of the process, clarity of decision making, internal and external communication and overall management. This review was constrained by the absence of any criteria related to 'successful devolution' defined by IDRC.

⁴⁵ See IMFNS Board of Directors Meeting Minutes dated Tuesday 24th January, 2006, pg. 6 paragraph 7.

Table 5: Contributions to Good Performance in Devolution⁴⁶

| Contributions by Centre staff to good performance | |
|--|--|
| Senior Management Committee will: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clearly define the Centre's goals and processes for devolution, indicating the appropriate portfolio mix of different degrees of devolution that take into account institutional capacities, contexts, and needs, as well as IDRC's strategic aims, and recognizing the need for a balance between corporate standardization and regional variation; ➤ Make and implement the necessary decisions, policies, incentives and resource allocations to support and manage devolution-related activities. |
| Regional Directors will: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop regional office strategies and capabilities for supporting and monitoring devolution in their regions; ➤ Participate with HQ and regional program staff in identifying and assessing institutional candidates for the different levels of devolution and institutional support needed; |
| Team Leaders / Program Staff will: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support involvement of Southern recipients in increasingly responsible roles; ➤ In cooperation with regional offices, identify organizations for capacity building or devolution; ➤ Increase number of projects and amount of external funding administered from the South (RAP), with selective use of CAP (and reducing certain types of CAP); ➤ Experiment with building relationships with recipients beyond funding single projects; ➤ Develop skills in institutional assessment and capacity building; ➤ Monitor institutional capacities and contexts in order to identify opportunities for devolution to Southern institutions. |
| Program and Partnerships Branch Managers will: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rely on POs' wisdom for assessing and selecting institutions and projects for capacity building and devolution; ➤ Be able to report on practices and trends in devolution within their respective areas. |
| Human Resources (and other responsibility centres) will: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Seek frequent Southern representation in consultants, evaluators, external reviewers of Program Initiatives, program staff, management, and in appointments to the Board of Governors. |
| Administration (Program and Finance) will: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regional Controllers assist program staff with institutional assessments at the regional level; ➤ Build administrative capacity among recipient organizations; ➤ Experiment with building new kinds of relationships; ➤ Identify gaps in capacity falling between research and administration of projects. |

The TIPS devolution appears to have benefited from excellent leadership from the IDRC and the TIPS side, as well as a project management approach to the process. A key informant noted that within two months of the Board's decision to close the ROSA office, a comprehensive task list was developed including completion dates for each task and assigned responsibilities. The committee responsible for the process were involved in all of the decommissioning tasks related to closure of ROSA including transfer of staff to TIPS, termination of ROSA staff, relocation of Ottawa hired staff, negotiation of compensation packages; Financial tasks including auditing ROSA accounts, physical assets, reviewing project accounts; winding up project administration and office administration and the management of all relevant legal issues.

At the same time, the organizational structure for TIPS had to be developed including determination of the staff complement, legal transfer of employment

“On the devolution of TIPS: The video conferencing infrastructure from the Ford the Foundation was used to hold an open consultation involving staff of the ROSA and Ottawa offices to raise whatever issues were of concern to them. The Staff Association of the ROSA office was asked to facilitate the process. This ensured that everyone understood what was planned from the beginning ... There was a great deal of work on the HR issues. IDRC did quite a lot to support locally engaged staff including hiring a recruitment firm, negotiating good compensation packages etc. Regular weekly meetings were held with HR in Ottawa and the Staff Association at ROSA was updated regularly... Communication with donors was handled from Ottawa, by the President. Government departments and embassies were also kept informed throughout the process.”

Key Informant

⁴⁶ Excerpt: Memo from T. Smutylo dated August 8, 2002. “Background for 2nd SMC-CAF Session on Devolution to the South”

⁵¹ See Armstrong and Whyte (1998)



contracts, development of job specifications, and recruitment of new staff. New policies were also developed for TIPS covering HR and Finance. An appraisal process was conducted to identify the most appropriate accounting package for TIPS and a charter of accounts was also developed. All files then had to be converted from the old IDRC accounting system to the new system work that took six months to complete. A comprehensive budget was also developed including restructuring/start up costs and operational costs. The acquisition of office space, furniture and equipment were also finalized.

The legal incorporation of TIPS under South African law was handled by a local law firm. This task was delayed due to the fact that the "TIPS" name was already being used by another organization.

It is noteworthy that a great deal of attention was paid to the 'people' dimension during the process. Key stakeholders including, staff at ROSA, TIPS and Schoolnet were consulted from inception and throughout the process. One respondent noted that:

"...perhaps because of the rainbow nature of the ROSA office...we had staff from Ottawa and South Africa, from a range of ethnic backgrounds at various levels (technical, administrative, clerical)... we were very sensitive to the human side of the process...remember people were losing their jobs."

Regular weekly meetings were held with the HR division in Ottawa and the Staff Association at ROSA was updated regularly. IDRC provided a great deal of support to locally engaged staff including the contracting of a firm to facilitate recruitment for staff negatively impacted by the closure of ROSA. Embassies and ministries and departments were also kept informed throughout the process and donors were kept informed through the Office of the President in Ottawa.

In efficiently devolved cases such as TIPS, the process from decision to devolve to date of effective devolution was approximately 11 months. It is important to note in this case that three processes were being undertaken simultaneously: the closure of ROSA and the devolutions of TIPS and Schoolnet. This experience of 'devolution done right' under imperfect conditions is evidence of the importance of good management, leadership and sensitivity to 'people' issues.

Finding 7: In the cases where the process was less effective, poor management and indecisive leadership as well as weak or inconsistent communication were cited as the primary contributing factors.

Stakeholders observed that, "*confusion... uncertainty... mismanagement... weak leadership*" characterized the devolution process in the cases of Bellanet and SISERA. In the case of Bellanet, interviews conducted as part of this evaluation revealed that former personnel were still quite bitter about the entire experience. In the case of SISERA, stakeholders generally expressed amazement and confusion about the final decision to close the Secretariat, particularly as a great deal of time and resources had been expended up to the time that the final decision was made.

In the case of Bellanet, the thinking around options (involvement vs. devolution) commenced as early as 1999, however the Ottawa Bellanet office was only closed in June 2008. The length of time that elapsed during the process, 'flip flopping in the decision making process', the 'secrecy surrounding the process', perceived ineptitude of supporting services and senior management during the process all contributed to the challenging process.

"Decisions to devolve are inevitable. Under the secretariat modality, there was never the intention that these entities would be permanent fixture; either they would succeed or fail. If they failed, they would be closed. If they succeeded, IDRC had to decide whether the Secretariat could be incorporated as a permanent part of IDRC's programming or whether a home could be found for it."

Key Informant

In the case of SISERA, respondents noted that a comprehensive planning process that included an analysis of the IDEP option would have revealed 'up front' the issues that eventually led to the breakdown in negotiations between IDRC and the UN. *"In retrospect it may have been easier to establish the Senegalese NGO and wait the two years for 'international status', but IDRC had not been willing to wait...subsequently, IDRC decided that the whole process was too complicated and decided to close SISERA completely."* Improved donor communication and collaboration could also have facilitated a positive outcome for SISERA. In the words of one respondent, *"...the decision to devolve must be a mutually agreed on and well thought out. SISERA's devolution and closure was driven by IDRC's internal processes...little attention was paid to other donors' interests."*⁵¹ Perhaps the most important lesson the SISERA experience has to offer is the importance of transparency and open communication. It is clear that key informants were not aware of efforts made to find a host and that communication among stakeholders (IDRC management staff, donors and partners) could have been more effectively managed.

4.3 Post Devolution Sustainability and Organizational Learning

This section of the report will review the situation of the secretariats in the period since devolution, including the extent to which the devolved entities have grown in terms of capacity to generate excellent research, increase delivery of services to its specific constituents, attract and maintain donor funding and sustain program benefits.

Finding 8: In retrospect stakeholders agreed that the decision to devolve was necessary and in most cases inevitable, as several secretariats had 'outgrown' IDRC in terms of reach and fundamental changes in mandate. It was certainly anticipated that devolution of these secretariats would benefit both the secretariats and IDRC. However, the extent to which these benefits have been achieved post devolution is not always clear.

The incubation of innovative ideas, utilizing the secretariat modality assumes that sooner or later, IDRC will be faced with at least three options:

1. The idea has proven 'successful' and is sustainable but is better managed elsewhere;
2. The idea is closely aligned with IDRC's programming and would be best placed within the Centre; or
3. The idea is not sustainable and the secretariat should be closed.

Stakeholder feedback indicates that devolution is a response to the first option as it would facilitate:

- Greater ownership and buy in by Southern partners;
- Increased autonomy in programming and management;
- Introduction of less bureaucratic processes and procedures (at least in comparison to IDRC's processes);
- Expanded access to funding from other international donors; and
- Reduced dependence on IDRC.

From IDRC's perspective, the administrative and financial burden of hosting these secretariats would be alleviated, thus 'freeing up' resources for emerging areas of research. More significantly, successfully devolved agencies should reflect that IDRC had effectively built the capacity required to generate and sustain innovative research linked to policy in developing countries.

"AERC is remarkable in both the length of its history and in its success when compared with most other projects that started out in the 1980s with similar aims. Three important elements contribute to its long-term sustainability: fund raising, performance monitoring and succession planning."

Caroline Pestieau
AERC History, 2008

The most 'successful' devolved secretariats in this review have been AERC, MI, INBAR and IMFN based on the demonstrated growth in their respective programs (reflected in expanded geographic coverage, expanded donor funding, positive international profile/global brand). Only INBAR had experienced some difficulty in generating core funding, after IDRC's allocation ceased in 2004. Core funding is currently provided by the Chinese Government and contributions from member states.

The success of the Bellanet network cannot be assessed given that it has broken up certain functions, eliminated others, and is currently transitioning some activities to other hosts. In a recent 'think piece', Basil Jones compared the pre and post devolution situation of TIPS and noted that changes in leadership and donor funding forced the organization to expand into other complementary, but non-core areas. *"The restructuring forced TIPS to broaden its research themes from trade policy to include industrial policy, economic regulation and small and medium enterprise strategy development. In addition TIPS built relationships with a range of national and sub-national government departments to increase the contribution of contract income from commissioned research."* These changes impacted the implementation capacity of TIPS as well as its image, *"...TIPS is not a thought leader in its field. The research that TIPS undertakes is not held to be cutting edge and TIPS is not seen as an organization that generates new ideas or brings in new perspectives."*⁵³ The financial situation is also precarious with IDRC and AusAID the only consistent donors. Despite ongoing negotiations with the South African Government firm commitments to provide funding have yet to materialize.

Finding 9: IDRC makes every effort to ensure that devolved initiatives have the resources to sustain program benefits through the provision of core or legacy funding. However the organization has not articulated any guidelines or performance indicators that would inform either the provision or termination of core funding.

In each case covered in this review, IDRC agreed to provide legacy and or core funding as well as the required support services to ensure that the devolved secretariats benefited from a good start. In addition, several programs that have been devolved in the past continue to benefit from core funding including AERC. This is completely consistent with IDRC's Corporate Assessment Framework (CAF) in which the organization commits to support long term relationships with its Southern partners and in the case of devolved secretariats, sustained involvement as a donor. However, given the anticipated reduced reliance on IDRC and expanded access to other sources of donor funding as well as the requirement of all donor organizations to optimize the allocation of resources, it is assumed that 'core funding' should cease at some point.

Ideally, this might be linked to the attainment of key performance targets related to research and or policy analysis capacity developed, sustained generation of relevant, high quality 'cutting edge' research, effective demand for the agency's

"Success rarely comes easily, nor is it absolute. Any successful organization continues to face challenges for as long as it remains dynamic."

Caroline Pestieau
AERC History, 2008

⁵³ "Strategic Review of TIPS". David Kaplan and John Howell. December 2008

research services, capacity to attract and sustain funding contributions etc. Respondents identified several attributes of a successfully devolved secretariat including:

- A sustainable organization with the capacity to grow;
- Strong leadership from the executive level at IDRC;
- Meaningful work is produced, *“not necessarily meaningful in relation to IDRC’s initial mission, but meaningful in the context of the host organization and its environment”*;
- Independent and autonomous management; and
- Continued involvement of IDRC *“ensures credibility and sends the message that IDRC still believes in this.”*

If IDRC’s policy is to provide core funding into the foreseeable future, this issue is a moot point. In fact, IDRC’s provision of core funding is highly appreciated by devolved initiatives given that donors do not, as a rule, provide core funding. However, if IDRC needs to optimize its resources in fulfillment of its mandate, guidelines on the provision of core funding would be helpful. This could be based on the attainment of performance targets related to successful devolution, among other things.

Finding 10: IDRC’s tradition of selecting former program officers to head devolved secretariats has presented some challenges to devolved organizations. The need for a competitive selection process for executive directors has been suggested as a strategy to mitigate this shortcoming.

Several respondents noted that executive directors need a range of skills including leadership, team building and coordination skills, organizational management, fund raising capability and the ability to negotiate with international donors as well as technical knowledge of the organization’s area of focus. IDRC program officers often possess the technical capacity, knowledge and experience related to the secretariat; however they may not have the project management or interpersonal skills necessary to manage an organization. The following quote is instructive:

“Better and more prudential management of secretariats and their devolution seems an important lesson from INBAR. Centre management should have been well aware of the management shortcomings of long-serving secretariat management and could have taken steps to recruit more appropriate leadership and management before devolution began. Centre management of these complex devolution processes cannot be effective from the President’s office and should have been retained to a much greater extent in Programs Branch so as to limit Centre and Chinese exposure to the very real risks attendant on such high level, high profile efforts. However, the Programs Branch lack of involvement in the initiative cannot be understood solely as a function of the direct involvement of the President’s office, but also by inference as a direct indicator of its lack of support for the initiative.”⁵⁴

The importance of excellent leadership and management skills to the success of a new entity has been identified in the cases of AERC and TIPS among others. As such, it has been suggested that a more systematic approach to the selection of Executive Directors should be implemented.

“A successfully devolved initiative should be sustainable, have the capacity to grow, the organization should be stronger in its devolved state; leadership must ensure that it remains strong. There should also be an ongoing relationship with IDRC. This should not necessarily involve funding but could be a presence on the Board. This continued involvement would show that IDRC still ‘believed in the initiative’ and would lend credibility to it.”

Key Informant

⁵⁴ INBAR Project Completion Report dated 15/3/2002

SECTION 5

CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This section presents the main lessons learned from IDRC's experience with devolution of secretariats. Some of the lessons have been identified in prior assessments⁵⁵ and reflect recurring themes related to partnership, collaboration, transparency, planning and capacity building. The content of this section aims to inform the thinking and approach to devolution practice within IDRC in the future. It concludes with seven principles to guide successful devolution.

5.1 Lessons Learned

1. Conceptual clarity on 'devolution' is critical to effective operationalization of the concept and nurturing the 'mindset' for devolution

The meaning and practice of devolution needs to be clearly understood by all levels of staff, particularly as it is closely aligned with the principle of Southern empowerment through capacity building. Such a mindset will facilitate deliberative planning and management of initiatives with the aim of devolution.

2. The extent to which an initiative has potential to be devolved needs to be explored during the design phase

In each of the secretariats reviewed, performance indicators related to scientific and managerial capacity developed, effective demand for the specific research 'services' and the extent to which the research generated informed either policy decisions or development interventions could have been developed at the design stage. Examples of indicators include: annual number of requests for research studies; number of research studies produced that meet the standard for peer reviewed journals; number of research studies published in regional or international journals; number of locally engaged staff producing publishable research studies; National policies created based on the secretariats research studies; development initiatives formulated based on research studies. IDRC's "Good practices for capacity development" document could be used to assess qualitatively whether these practices are occurring and whether capacity is being built as a result. Each of these is also consistent with IDRC's mandate to facilitate Southern empowerment through capacity building. As such, their achievement should constitute priority outcomes. The review revealed that questions relevant to these areas are often asked during the decision making process for devolution. If these are issues that would inform such a decision, they should be discussed and agreed with donors and other potential partners at the design stage. This would facilitate a shared understanding, unified vision and approach to devolution.

"It isn't the changes that do you in, it's the transitions. Change is not the same as transition. Change is situational: the new site, the new boss, the new team roles, and the new policy. Transition is the psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation. Change is external, transition is internal."

W. Bridges
Managing Transitions

⁵⁵ For example, Maessen (2002) and Corporate Assessment Framework Discussion Sessions on Devolution.

3. Integration of a devolution strategy during the design phase will also facilitate the identification and implementation of enabling strategies to ensure the achievement of performance outcomes

If the overarching outcome is capacity building in the South, potential partners need to be identified at the outset so that the necessary capacity can be built from inception. The need for specific technical capacity might, for example, require investments to produce Ph.D. graduates in the research area. Recognizing this will inform the length of time that donors may be involved as well as the level of involvement. Capacity in a 'cutting edge' field would therefore have been created from the ground up. As a result, *phase over* to an entity that has grown with the initiative may be possible, rather than the current situation in which finding a suitable host agency continues to challenge IDRC. In the case where the programme may not be sustainable or relevant, partner agencies would have gained the capacity to determine the extent to which modifications can or should be made and chart a course forward based on the needs of their context.

4. The devolution process must be flexible and iterative, however it must not be open ended

The concept of "incubation" of an innovative idea suggests that sooner or later a decision has to be made on the future of the 'idea'. A plan for devolution might, among other things, articulate success criteria and 'triggers' that will signal the need for the initiative to be wrapped up, devolved or retained as a corporate project or program initiative. At the same time, such a 'plan' is not set in stone and should be reviewed and modified based on changes in the national, regional or global environment and changes in donor and recipient organizations.

5. A rigorous assessment of the 'readiness' of the secretariat or program for devolution should be conducted to inform SMC decisions on the appropriate options

Such an assessment would reference the progress achieved on performance indicators related to the technical and managerial capacity built, quality of and demand for the research product as well as the potential to attract alternative sources of funding, availability of funding to support the 'devolution process', quality of governance, leadership and administrative support among other things. An assessment of the performance of the secretariat on these dimensions would in fact trigger the discussion on the readiness of the secretariat for devolution. At the same time, IDRC is well aware that not every "innovative idea" needs to be devolved. Once the idea has moved past the proof of concept stage, options include shelving the concept or promoting it to donors for whom it might prove a 'better fit'. As illustrated in the following inset box, IDRC staff previously documented the need for ongoing planning and assessment of secretariats for devolution.

6. Multidisciplinary approach to planning and execution of devolution

Devolution is most efficiently implemented when representatives from the relevant units across IDRC are involved and are able to bring the knowledge and experience from their respective fields to bear on the process. For example, the

We are monitoring the devolution process to:

- Try to make sure that the responsibility is done to our satisfaction (that is, jointly establish clear objectives of what is expected and then evaluate).
- Try to make sure that the devolution does not deviate from the main purpose (IDRC staff are accountable, that prospectus objectives are met and that activities conform to the CS+PF).
- Understand relationships, changing roles and needs to make adjustments.
- Learn about the sustainability of partnerships/institutional arrangements.

We are prepared not to devolve if we are not ready

In Odilia Maessen (2002), 'A Brief Synthesis of IDRC Devolution Experience'

inclusion of Finance, Legal, HR, IT, Programs Branch, Communications and staff on the 'devolution Committee' is critical to ensuring that each of the transition issues is addressed, taking varying perspectives into account. The 'risk mitigation' perspective of the legal department should therefore be balanced by the tenets of generally accepted personnel management practices, perspectives that human resource management professionals can bring to the table.

Some Characteristics of Good Performance by IDRC in 'Devolution to the South' Suggested by Respondents

If we are performing well then:

- We are striving for a shared responsibility and learning approach to devolution (that is, where control is not an issue) through a continuing partnership between IDRC and the institutions involved in devolutions.
- We are planning for the process of devolution which includes:
 - A very good analysis of whether you really need an institution on that specific topic or not - will it continue to live on its own for a long time or is it just that we want to get out?
 - A commitment to have a capacity building component with the devolution plan (to give donors the confidence to invest and because otherwise we will always be able to say there is no-one with the capacity to take this on), which includes devoting resources to work with partners during the start-up phase to set up offices, develop a plan of action and strategies to engage donors, etc.
 - Developing partnership strategies (with partners) which consider partners' evolving needs and roles for learning and building capacity; arrangements which promote sustainability (e.g. explore arrangements anchored in civil society) and those which facilitate the transfer of research into action.
 - Developing communication strategies (with partners) so that partners can receive feedback early in the process about i) evolving needs and roles for learning and building capacity; ii) about how to be part of the national/regional policy scene; and iii) mechanisms to promote sustainability.
 - Devolving substantive and intellectual as well as administrative responsibility.
 - The involvement of Programs Branch.
 - A realistic assessment of the time frame involved to devolve in a substantive and sustainable way.

In Odilia Maessen (2002) 'A Brief Synthesis of IDRC Devolution Experience

"It is clear that devolution is a complex process rich in variation, tailored to the particular circumstances of the research issue, the key partners involved, the state and level of knowledge of the issue, and the context both internal and external to IDRC at various points in time relative to the life cycle of an initiative."

Background for the Second SMC CAF
Session on the Performance Area:
Devolution to the South, 2002

7. This multidisciplinary approach needs conceptual clarity. IDRC's *mode of operation* needs to better inform managerial practice throughout the organization

It is the case that many, if not most, program initiatives and not only international secretariats, have as their essence the necessity to collaborate, partner, share information, network, engage in *communities of interest* and in various ways build capacity. This important and evolving "way of doing things" is very much part of the IDRC organizational culture. While it is well and good that specific managerial disciplines such as audit, finance, legal and personnel management focus on their areas of expertise, the devolution process requires a broader perspective. Thinking of devolving or closing a secretariat as a "liquidation of assets" alone, or termination of employment contracts alone, or getting rid of a financial risk alone is too narrow a view to take in these situations. The skill and

collaboration of each of these managerial disciplines is in need during devolution. Often individuals from these areas work together in support of devolutions. However, this application of expertise varies from case to case. In some instances such as TIPS, their involvement is very hands on and direct whereas in others, such as Bellanet, their role has been more indirect. Similarly, the role and involvement of executive leadership has varied from situation to situation. AERC, INBAR and MI, for example, had considerably more executive engagement than did Bellanet.

8. A change management strategy must be developed and implemented that treats the 'people' issues in a sensitive and systematic way

Devolution 'done well' versus 'badly' appears to hinge on the extent to which the necessary attention is paid to managing the needs, concerns and expectations of staff, partners and donors. A clear lesson has been that it is fairly easy to plan and implement the 'nuts and bolts' of the devolution process, whether it involves the establishment of a new non-profit or intergovernmental organization or transitioning to an existing organization or winding down/phasing out a secretariat or program. In each of these instances though, 'people' are involved at all levels; people who have invested their passion, time and effort over a fairly long period of time; people who have committed to the creation of something innovative and who are being asked, in some cases, to be actively involved in the closure of that enterprise. A comprehensive change management strategy that prioritizes people issues and ongoing and clear communication, among other things, must be a key component of the devolution process.

"Intense and serious monitoring of the new initiative to which grant funds are being provided remains a challenge. This needs to be improved."

Key Informant

9. Ongoing monitoring and periodic evaluation should be incorporated into the program or secretariat

This lesson is consistent with IDRC's project management approach as it is applied to the management of corporate projects and program initiatives. Monitoring that tracks progress (or the lack thereof) toward devolution 'triggers' will facilitate review and modification of the existing strategy.

10. Periodic evaluation should be incorporated into the programs or devolved secretariats that are funded by IDRC

With the exception of cases like INBAR and AERC where key IDRC officials continued to have direct involvement in a devolved initiative, key informants as a whole had very little information about what happens to initiatives after they were devolved. It appears that there is more IDRC could be doing to periodically look at and document progress. For example, in cases where IDRC provides ongoing funding it would be relatively straight-forward, as a donor, to request targeted evaluations from time to time.

11. Improved information and document management would assist IDRC knowledge retention and transfer

During the data collection phase of this examination, both consultants and IDRC staff had considerable difficulty locating several key documents. For example there seems to be no central repository for transfer agreements and in many cases these documents could not be located. Board minutes are not available electronically making tracking decisions and finding information about specific initiatives difficult and time consuming. Further, in the case of some devolved initiatives, all documentation was transferred to the new entity.

5.2 SEVEN PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESSFUL DEVOLUTION

Seven fundamental guiding principles for effective devolution can be gleaned from the foregoing report. They are:

1. **Plan Early.** Early planning is a cornerstone of successful devolution. This does not mean lots of paper, time lines, check lists and assignment of responsibilities. What needs to be done early on is the development of a well thought out strategy that is solidly linked with IDRC's mandate, values and strategic direction. This strategy needs to be flexible, interactive and able to encompass changing conditions and new lessons.
2. **Build Capacity.** In most cases, successful devolution and Southern empowerment will require considerable capacity building that will need to start long before the devolution occurs.
3. **Collaborate and Partner.** Open and transparent communication with staff, donors, and partners has, in each examined case, been a factor in the successful devolutions. By its very definition, devolution entails collaboration and partnering.⁵⁶
4. **Develop a Transition Strategy.** Once a strategic direction is set and a notion of timing in place, a transition strategy or change management plan becomes invaluable.
5. **Assure Continuity.** A plan for continued involvement and availability of required intellectual capital is essential as was demonstrated by most of IDRC's successful devolutions.
6. **Build Good Governance and Management Frameworks.** Taking the time early on in the devolution process to ensure that governance issues are addressed and that management processes (such as recruitment, financial management, program management, accountability, monitoring and evaluation) are developed, improved and in place.
7. **Demonstrate Return on Investment and Secure Funding.** Above all the enterprise has to be strong enough conceptually and have demonstrated a positive enough return on investment to attract sufficient donor funding to maintain the newly configured initiative.

⁵⁶ The Strategic Review of IDRC by Cabinet's Treasury Board and the necessity of secrecy surrounding advice to Cabinet made this problematic in the case of Bellanet.

APPENDIX A

EVALUATION OF DEVOLUTION AT IDRC: FINAL WORK-PLAN AND APPROACH

Note: the attached Workplan is the final result of a number of meetings with the Evaluation Unit and principle users of the study. There were several drafts between the first rough project outline in the engagement contract and the final framing of the task at hand. JLA and AK

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document constitutes the work plan for “Evaluation of IDRC’s Devolution Experience”. It outlines the Governance Network’sTM most recent understanding of the goals of the evaluation, as well as our proposed approach, methodology, deliverables and timelines.

This draft work plan was developed based on the following:

- Discussions with and contract documents provided by the Evaluation Unit, IDRC
- A review of the initial documentation provided by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC); and
- The interviews conducted by Dr. Jim Armstrong, Team Leader, with key informants at IDRC on 27th February, 2009.

1.2 KEY ISSUES EMERGING FROM THE PLANNING PHASE

The principal client for this evaluation is IDRC and the primary users of the findings will be IDRC senior managers and programme staff involved in future devolution initiatives. Discussions with key informants suggested that the evaluation should assess:

- What does the Centre mean by devolution and how has the Centre done it?
- IDRC’s concept of successful devolution, that is, what would a successful devolution initiative ‘look like’;
- IDRC’s experience with the devolution process including activities undertaken in the pre-devolution phase;
- The factors or variables informing IDRC’s decision to devolve certain initiatives vs. initiatives that are not selected;
- The variables that inform IDRC’s approach to devolution, for example, creation of a new institution vs. devolution to an existing ‘host’;
- The actual devolution process including organization development, capacity building, communication strategy;
- Effectiveness of governance arrangements in the post-devolution period;
- The extent to which the changing environment has affected or is expected to impact the devolution process;
- The extent to which IDRC’s perspective on devolution has evolved over time;
- The results of devolution for IDRC and the devolved program; and

- Significant lessons to be drawn from the devolution process over the period (2000 to 2008) and how these can be utilized to inform better 'devolution' practice.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This section outlines our proposed approach to the assessment. It is comprised of three parts: an overview of the proposed framework, a summary of data sources and methods of data collection, and an overview of methods of analysis.

2.1 FRAMEWORK

On the basis of our discussions with IDRC, we have developed a preliminary evaluation framework that will guide data collection and analysis. The framework in Exhibit 6 summarizes the proposed major evaluation foci, questions and sub-questions. This framework will be adapted, revised and focused as the assessment process proceeds.

2.2 CRITERIA FOR SELECTING SECRETARIATS TO INCLUDE IN THE STUDY

During the interviews with the Vice Presidents that following guide posts for selection criteria were identified:

- Leave out obvious outliers – ones that are on the fringe such as FoodLinks, WETV, and Aquatox.
- Look at a group that has:
 - Evolved for different reasons
 - Different continents
 - Different degrees of success
 - Donor make-up
 - Different longevity (time since devolution)
- Using the above noted criteria, suggested secretariats to include in the study are:
 - Micronutrient Initiatives (MI)
 - Trade and Industrial Policy Secretariat (TIPS)
 - Secretariat for Industrial Support for Economic Research in Africa (SISERA)
 - International Model Forest Network Secretariat (IMFNS)
 - Bellanet
 - International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR)
 - African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) (take a light look at this one only)
- Continuing to use the above noted criteria, suggested secretariats to exclude from study are:
 - African Technology Policy Studies (ATPS) because of current difficulties with respect to relationships
 - Mining Policy Research Initiative (MPRI): an outlier with respect to IDRC's mandate
 - Aquatox
 - WETV: never closely aligned with IDRC
 - Blue Planet:
 - Foodlinks: never really got off the ground...faltering
 - Strategy for International Fisheries Research (SIFR): failing...hardly robust enough

2.3 DATA SOURCES AND COLLECTION METHODS

2.3.1 PEOPLE

During Dr. Armstrong's interview with the two Vice Presidents, the following people were identified to be interviewed. Some assistance will be needed to round out the list and to facilitate the desired number of 30 targeted.

The draft table below identifies the key respondents (individuals and groups) who will be sources of data for this evaluation. TGN will work with the Evaluation Unit during the coming days to round out the information in the table below. Suggested respondents are divided into four distinct categories as displayed in **Exhibit 1: Data Source: People** on the following page.

It is anticipated that an estimated 30 interviews will be conducted, comprising an average of four (4) per initiative and six (6) general interviews. Given that many of the meetings do not require the presence of both team members, meetings can be scheduled in parallel. The selection of participants for interviews will be based on criteria such as length of time involved in the initiative and specific role in the devolution process (planning, implementation, post devolution management). IDRC's assistance will be sought for the identification of additional or different criteria with the aim at ensuring the validity of the participants' selection as well as the validity of the evaluation.

Given the time and budget constraints, it might be necessary to prioritize the interviews with some respondents listed above. In such a case, the prioritization will be determined in agreement with the Evaluation Unit.

2.3.2 DOCUMENTS

Appendix B presents the indicative list of documents to be reviewed for this evaluation. Other documents may be added to this list as appropriate based on further input from IDRC.

2.3.3 FIELD MISSION

The field mission will involve face-to-face interviews and phone interviews as necessary as well as additional document review.

Exhibit 1: Data Source: People

| ORGANIZATION | RESPONDENTS/ CATEGORIES | COLLECTION METHOD |
|--|--|---|
| IDRC (Ottawa) | | |
| | Former President IDRC Evaluation Unit Staff IDRC project managers re the seven selected initiatives Grants administration staff Finance Office of the Secretary and General Council ⁵⁷ | Individual interviews Note: need to agree on face to face vs. phone interviews |
| Devolved Programmes | | |
| a) Micronutrient Initiative(MI) b) Trade and Industrial Policy Secretariat (TIPS) c) Secretariat for Institutional Support for Economic Research in Africa (SISERA) d) International Model Forest Network Secretariat (IMFNS) e) Bellanet f) International Network for Bamboo and Rattan(INBAR) g) African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) | Chairman, Governing Boards/Committees Programme Managers Technical staff Administrative Staff Project Beneficiaries (?) | Individual Interview (Phone and face to face) |
| Other stakeholders | | |
| a) Select list of 2 to 3 unsuccessful 'devolution' initiatives b) Survey of 40-50 individuals following initial interviews | TBD TBD | Phone Interviews On-line survey |

3.0 ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

Analysis will incorporate varied approaches suited to the components of the assessment design, including:

⁵⁷ The recently retired General Council was interviewed. In addition, following the main set of interviews the current Secretary and General Council and her staff discussed general matters with respect to devolution with one of the authors.

3.1 DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

In these methods, reliability will be ensured through data triangulation (using convergence of multiple data sources), the use of standardized instruments and compliance with standard practices in evaluation.

A preliminary outline for the final report is provided on the following page.

Exhibit 2: Proposed Outline for Final Report

| SECTION | SUB-SECTION |
|--|---|
| Executive summary | |
| 1. Introduction | 1.1 Evaluation background and purpose 1.2 Evaluation methodology 1.3 Organization of the report |
| 2. Project Background | 2.1 Devolution: A Brief review of the literature 2.2 Devolution in IDRC: Experience to date 2.3 Project objectives 2.4 Project description |
| 3. Findings | 3.1 Findings 3.2 Analysis and Discussion |
| 4. Conclusions, Lessons Learned, and Devolution Principles | |
| Appendices – TBD | |

It should be noted that the outline above is indicative and will be subject to change as the analysis evolves.

4.0 EVALUATION MANAGEMENT

4.1 EVALUATION TEAM ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Overall, the Evaluation Team will be responsible for the following:

- Developing a workplan to carry out the evaluation, carrying out the evaluation, outlining preliminary findings, and submitting a final report;
- Providing regular briefings to the EU on the progress being made in the evaluation; and
- Notifying the EU in a timely fashion if difficulties or challenges arise that may affect the success of the assignment.

The following exhibit introduces the Evaluation Team members and describes their individual roles and responsibilities:

Exhibit 3: Evaluation Team Members Roles and Responsibilities

| ROLE | RESPONSIBILITIES |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Team Leader – Dr. Jim Armstrong | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall responsibility and accountability for management and conduct of the assignment, including quality assurance and oversight for production of draft and final deliverables. • Clarifying parameters for the assignment and developing the work plan, including the determination of sites and numbers of partners to be met. Client liaison, debriefings with client and other stakeholders as required. • Responsible for day-to-day management of the assignment. Responsible for input to creation of all deliverables and for carrying out data collection and analysis, report writing, and regular progress briefings to the client. |
| Evaluation Consultant – Alexa Khan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying parameters for the assignment and developing the work plan, including the determination of sites and numbers of partners to be met. • Responsible for input to creation of all deliverables and for carrying out data collection and analysis, report writing, and working closely with the team leader. |

4.2 IDRC'S ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is anticipated that input will be required from IDRC re the following occasions:

- To review and provide prompt feedback on deliverables: work plan, data collection instruments, preliminary findings, draft report;
- To help with data collection in terms of providing access to information systems, providing stakeholder contact details, setting meetings during the data collection in Ottawa, assisting in communications and other support as required;
- To assist the evaluation team in identifying key organizations and individuals for interview;
- To assist with identifying contact numbers for interviewees and for assisting in setting up “hard to arrange but critical” interviews;
- To provide email addresses and other logistical information for on-line survey;
- To recommend other individuals or sources of data that the EU feels the team may benefit from contacting; and
- To ensure that IDRC staff involved in the projects are available for individual interviews and debriefing sessions during the proposed mission dates.

5.0 RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Some challenges may interfere with the evaluation process. Exhibit 4 identifies the potential risks and mitigation strategies that we have identified from interviews and our experience with similar organizations.



Exhibit 4: Risks and Mitigation Strategies

| POTENTIAL RISKS | PROPOSED MITIGATION STRATEGIES |
|---|--|
| Unavailability of individuals | Request email and phone contact information to facilitate follow up either during or post mission. |
| Slow or difficult communication processes with stakeholders | Allow for sufficient time in communication by requesting information well in advance of deadlines. Request IDRC's assistance to organize and contact respondents to be interviewed. |
| Ability to collect unbiased and varied views and information. As is the case with many organizations, individuals heavily involved have a propensity to hold a favourable view. | Speak with respondents from different organizations and affiliations in order to get varied views. |

6.0 KEY DELIVERABLES

Exhibit 5 below presents the key deliverables for this assignment and their delivery dates.

Exhibit 5: Deliverable Dates

| DELIVERABLE | DATE |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Draft Workplan | March 17 th 2009 |
| Final Workplan | March 25 th 2009 |
| Interviews and desk research complete | April 25 th 2009 |
| IDRC Findings Workshop | May 20 th 2009 |
| Draft Report | May 29 th 2009 |
| Draft Report Presentation and Discussion | June 6 th 2009 |
| Submission of Final Report | TBD |
| IDRC Information Seminar | TBD |
| Telephone, email, or Face to Face Progress Briefings with the Evaluation Unit | As required |

The above schedule is based on the assumption that timely⁵⁸ feedback will be provided by IDRC on the draft work plan and draft report. The dates might be subject to revision as the evaluation process proceeds.

⁵⁸ The Evaluation Team expects to receive IDRC's feedback on the Draft Work plan within one week from the date of its submission. As for the Draft Report, it is expected that IDRC will provide feedback within one week from the date of its submission.

Exhibit 6: Evaluation Framework: IDRC Experience with Devolution

| Evaluation Issues | Illustrative Questions | Potential Sources of Data | Methodology for Data collection |
|--|---|--|---|
| <p>Existing IDRC Devolution Policies and Practices</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does IDRC define 'devolution'? • Do IDRC staff (head quarters and in the field) and partner organizations have the same understanding of the concept? • If not, how is 'devolution' defined/understood by stakeholders within IDRC? And by partner organizations? • What does 'successful' devolution look like? • What does unsuccessful devolution look like? • What are the expected benefits to both IDRC and its partner institutions? • Are partner organizations as 'committed' to devolution as IDRC? If not, why? • Are there implicit or explicit policies and practices in IDRC related to devolution? • How were these developed? By whom? • Were external partners involved? • If explicit policies exist, are they standard or are they specific to different interventions? • Do they include the rationale for devolution? • Are they an integral part of the project management cycle(s)? If so, are there clear guidelines for making these policies operational? • What types of initiatives have IDRC devolved to date? • What types of organizations has IDRC devolved responsibilities to? • How does IDRC determine whether to devolve to an existing institution versus creating a new entity? | <p>Former President IDRC</p> <p>IDRC lawyers</p> <p>Evaluation Unit Staff</p> <p>IDRC project managers re the seven selected initiatives</p> <p>Grants administration staff</p> <p>Finance</p> <p>Office of the Secretary and General Council</p> <p>Chairman, Governing Boards/Committees</p> <p>Programme Managers</p> <p>Technical staff</p> <p>Administrative Staff</p> <p>Project Beneficiaries</p> | <p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews (phone and face to face)</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Document Reviews</p> <p>Interviews</p> |
| <p>Effectiveness of existing approaches to Devolution</p> | <p>Programme Planning Stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are the issues of exit and sustainability considered during the programme design stage? • Do IDRC and their partners have a shared understanding of objectives to be achieved through the partnership? | <p>Project documents including project proposals, progress reports and evaluations</p> <p>IDRC project managers re the seven selected initiatives</p> <p>Grants administration staff</p> <p>Finance</p> <p>Office of the Secretary and General Council</p> | <p>Document Reviews</p> <p>Interviews</p> |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they have a shared understanding of how the project/programme components and benefits should be sustained when IDRC withdraws? • Have devolution strategies been developed during the planning stage, e.g. expected timeframes of the programme/ project/ activity? • Have these been explicitly stated and agreed upon by the relevant stakeholders? | | |



| Evaluation Issues | Illustrative Questions | Potential Sources of Data | Methodology for Data collection |
|---|---|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they documented? • Have any criteria been established (e.g. performance indicators) for expected results/objectives /goals to be achieved? • Are these linked to the implicit or explicit transition point for the project/ programme? • If devolution strategies have not been formulated during the programme/ project planning stage or at entry point, what were the reasons for this? • Were there special features about the programme/ project/ activity that were not amenable to the development of a devolution strategy? If so, what features? <p>During Programme Delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was the initial expected timeframe for the programme/ project/ activity being followed? • If the timeframe was revised during the programme/ project/ activity delivery, what were the reasons for this (e.g. changing conditions etc.)? • Did these revisions have any implications for the devolution of the initiative? • Were there any systems to monitor performance against any criteria for devolution/ transition? • How effectively did IDRC act on such performance-criteria relationships? (Also relevant at the point of transition.) <p>At the Transition stage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was the decision to devolve the initiative taken? • What was the basis for the decision? Who was involved? • Was devolution the result of a previously established set of criteria in the program's transition strategy? • How was the decision to devolve the initiative communicated? • What kind of dialogue with partners and beneficiaries was facilitated? • Who facilitated the dialogue and how? • What mechanisms were established to enable the transition including communication strategy, capacity building, resource mobilization, governance arrangements, wrapping up of field offices, closing of accounts, audits, transfer of records etc.? | <p>Chairman, Governing Boards/Committees</p> <p>Programme Managers</p> <p>Technical staff</p> <p>Administrative Staff</p> <p>Project Beneficiaries</p> | <p>Document review</p> <p>Interviews (phone and face to face)</p> <p>Interviews</p> |
| <p>Post Devolution Sustainability and organizational</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have been some of the consequences of the decision to devolve specific initiative • Can these be linked to the process of devolution? If not, what other fac- | <p>IDRC project managers re the seven selected initiatives</p> <p>Grants administration staff</p> | <p>Interviews</p> |

| Evaluation Issues | Illustrative Questions | Potential Sources of Data | Methodology for Data collection |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| learning | <p>tors have contributed to the current status of these initiatives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have relevant activities continued (possibly modified) to serve the goals/objectives of the programme/ project/activity? • How have project/programme benefits been sustained? • What were the key factors affecting the sustainability of the programme/project/activity? • Were there any provisions that could be taken to increase the likelihood that interventions will be sustainable in the long run? If so, what provisions? • How does IDRC input feedback on experiences from previous devolved initiatives into the development of policy/principles? | <p>Finance Office of the Secretary and General Council Chairman, Governing Boards/Committees Programme Managers Technical staff Administrative Staff Project Beneficiaries</p> | |
| Good Practices in Devolution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is to be considered “good practice” within development assistance agencies with regard to devolution/transition strategies? How well does IDRC practice compare to such “good practices”? | <p>Review of relevant literature re donor exit/transition strategies Representatives of at least four (4) other donor agencies e.g., Oxfam, DFID, UNESCO, USAID⁵⁹</p> | <p>Document review Stakeholder interviews</p> |
| Lessons Learned | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When, and for what level of programming, is a devolution strategy relevant, and why? • What should trigger devolution? • How can planning for devolution be more effectively integrated into IDRC's programme and project management cycle? • How can IDRC secure credible commitment to an established devolution strategy and alter any perverse incentives that might be created by programming for devolution (e.g. incentives to not achieve objectives since it will lead to the termination of support)? <p>What have been key lessons learned in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systems and procedures necessary to facilitate efficient project devolution; • IDRC's capacity to manage each phase of its devolution strategy • Knowledge built and innovative approaches developed • What would be some of the key recommendations for IDRC's overall approach to devolution in the future? | <p>IDRC project managers re the seven selected initiatives Grants administration staff Finance Office of the Secretary and General Council Chairman, Governing Boards/Committees Programme Managers Technical staff Administrative Staff Project Beneficiaries</p> | <p>Interviews Brief survey</p> |

⁵⁹ Each of these organizations have completed some assessment of their experiences with exit/transition/phaseover/devolution.



APPENDIX B

DOCUMENTS RECEIVED AS OF MAY 25TH 2009

AERC (African Economic Research Consortium)

- Basil Jones, IDRC: Trip Report, Ethiopia, October 30, 2006
- Brent Herbert-Copley, IDRC: Rolling Project Completion Report, August 2, 2006
- Basil Jones, IDRC: Trip Report, Dakar, Senegal, March 10, 2006
- Brent Herbert-Copley, IDRC: Rolling Project Completion Report, December 20, 2006
- Brent Herbert-Copley, IDRC: Trip Report, Nairobi/Arusha, November 5 – 18, 2002
- Caroline Pestieau, AERC: AERC History Chapter 1: Governance, Management and Structure – A Model That Works, 2008
- Marc Wuyts (with assistance from Tausi Kida), Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, The Netherlands: An Evaluation of the AERC Research Programme: 1997 – 2003, July, 2004
- Olu Ajakaiye, Director of Research, AERC to Elias Ayuk, Acting Executive Director, Secretariat for Institutional Support for Economic Research in Africa (SISERA): Request for Financial Support for the African Econometric Society Conference, Nairobi, July 6 – 8, 2005, February 17, 2005
- PAD, AERC Research Innovation Endowment Fund, Ph II

- Rohinton Medhora, IDRC: Trip Report NO. 3-01, Johannesburg, Nairobi and Cairo, September 6 – 21, 2001
- Randy Spence, IDRC: Trip Report No. 5-2001, The Hague, March 14 – 15, 2002
- William Lyakurwa, African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) to IDRC: Request for Contribution to the AERC Research Innovation Endowment Fund

African Technology Policy Studies Network Evaluation

- Daniel Chudnovsky and Lydia Makhubu: Evaluation of the African Technology Policy Studies Network, August 1996
- Jean Woo, IDRC: Rolling Project Completion Report, December 31, 2004
- Jean Woo, IDRC: Rolling Project Completion Report, August 22 2005
- Jean Woo, IDRC: Rolling Project Completion Report, July 1, 2006
- Jean Woo, IDRC: Rolling Project Completion Report, March 1, 2008
-

ATPS (African Technology Policy Studies Network)

- Amitav Rath, Rasigan Maharajh, Kathryn Touré and Moses Mbangwana (with the assistance of Christopher Smart): An External Evaluation: The African Technology Policy Studies Network – Main Technical Report, August 2008

- Jorge da Silva, IDRC: Trip Report, May 28, 2001

Bellanet

- Anne Whyte and Robert Auger, Mestor Associates: Future Directions for Bellanet, July 2005
- Bellanet International Secretariat to Senior Management Committee IDRC: Request for Appropriation of Funds, August 27, 2003
- E-mail from Allison Hewlitt: timeline of key events from January 2007 to January 2008
- Fernando Perini & Angelica Valeria Ospina, IDRC: Project Approval Document: Bellanet Network Transition Period, 2007
- IDRC: Memorandum of Grand Conditions
- IDRC: Project Approval Document: Bellanet Network Transitional Period, May 30, 2008
- IDRC: Application for an IDRC Research Grant, April 28, 2008
- Michael Clarke: Director of Information and Communication Technologies for Development: IDRC Staff Message – Bellanet will be devolved by July 5, 2008
- Michael Clarke: Director of Information and Communication Technologies for Development: IDRC Staff Message – Bellanet will be devolved by June 20, 2008
- Michael Graham: Bellanet: A Mid-Term Review, November 1997
- Program and Partnership Branch, IDRC: Bellanet – ICT4D, Prospectus 2007 – 2011, April 2007
- Rosa Cheng Lo & Margarita Salas: (Fundacion Acceso), Characterization of Groups in Latin America, Bellanet LAC Final version, May 2004

- Sula Batsú and IDRC: Bellanet Transfer Agreement, June 17, 2008
- The Governance Network™: Bellanet Evaluation Final Report, Review of Activities and Outcomes 1997 – 2002, May 2003

Blue Planet

- Christopher Smart, IDRC: Project Completion Report, August 27, 1999

CCAA (The Climate Change Adaptation in Africa Programme)

- Stephen Yeo & Michael W. Bassey, prepared for IDRC, Interim Report: Devolution of The Climate Change Adaptation in Africa Programme: Experience to Date and Strategic Options, April 2009

Center for Global Development

- Satish Chand & Ruth Coffman, Center for Global Development: Working Paper # 141: How Soon Can Donors Exit from Post-Conflict States?, March 7, 2008

COLAD (Center for Organizational Learning and Development)

- Beryl Levinger & Jean McLeod, Education Development Center, Inc.: Hello, I Must Be Going: Ensuring Quality Services and Sustainable Benefits through Well-Designed Exit Strategies, October 2002

C-SAFE Regional Learning Spaces Initiative

- Alison Gardner, Kara Greenblott & Erika Joubert: What We Know About Exit Strategies: Practical Guidance For Developing Exit Strategies in the Field, September 2005

Devolution: CAF (Corporate Assessment Framework), SMC (Senior Management Committee)

- Evaluation Unit: Corporate Assessment Framework (CAF), February 01, 2007 (revised document from "Managing Program Performance" 22/03/06)
- IDRC: A Short History of "Devolution" and the CAF, September 2005
- IDRC: Program Framework
- IDRC: Corporate Assessment Framework – 2nd Session on Devolution
- IDRC: Background Material for the Second SMC CAF Session
 - The Performance Area: 'Devolution to the South'
 - Synthesis of some IDRC Experience with Devolution
 - 'New' RAP-CAP Data
 - Corporate Assessment Framework, August 14, 2002
- IDRC: Update on IDRC's Strategic Approach to Regional Presence, June 2002
- Mark S. Winfield, Director, Environmental Governance, Pembina Institute for Appropriate Development: The Devolution of Local Water Management: Lessons from Ontario and Canada, Policy Workshop on Local Water Management, Ottawa, March 18-19, 2002
- Terry Smutylo, IDRC: Memorandum from to SMC – Background for the Second SMC CAF session on 'Devolution to the South, August 14, 2002 – August 8, 2002
- Terry Smutylo, IDRC: Memorandum to SMC – Defining a CSPF (Corporate Strategy and Program Framework) Performance

Area: Regional Presence, July 5, 2001

ENRM (Environment and Natural Resource Management)

- Jean Lebel, IDRC: Report to the Board of Governors: Environment and Natural Resource Management (ENRM) Program Area, September 2005
- Jean Lebel, IDRC: Report to the Board of Governors: Environment and Natural Resource Management Program Area, June 2007

Environmental Management Secretariats

- Dr. Michael Nelson: Evaluation of the Environmental Management Secretariats 1999 – 2000 Small Grant Research Program

Foodlinks

- William Edwardson, IDRC: Project Completion Report, October 23, 1999

IDRC Secretariats

- Board of Governors, IDRC: The Strategic Framework for Secretariats at IDRC, June 1999
- Dr. Jim Armstrong and Dr. Anne Whyte: Learning Partnerships: a Review of IDRC Secretariats, Volume 1, November 19, 1998
- Resource Policy Group, IDRC: Secretariats Housed at IDRC, Report of a Working Group, May 1998

IMFNS (International Model Forest Network Secretariat)

- Board of Governors, IDRC: Minutes from March 22 – 24, 1995
- Board of Directors, IMFNS: Minutes from January 24, 2006
- Board of Directors, IMFNS: Minutes from December 2005



- Board of Directors, IMFNS: Minutes from November 2005
 - Board of Directors, IMFNS: Minutes from September 22, 2005
 - E-mail, Update on IMFNS Transfer, February 9, 2007
 - E-mail and telephone, Denis Deby discussion with Peter Besseau, June 5, 2002
 - E-mail, Jean Lebel, IDRC: Board of Governors, IMFNS 5 year Strategy proposal, March 21, 2007
 - E-mail, Peter Besseau to Jean Lebel: IMFNS PAD and revised strategy, January 8, 2007
 - E-mail, Jean Lebel to Peter Besseau: IMFNS PAD and revised Strategy
 - E-mail, Peter Besseau to Jean Lebel: NRCan-CFS contact concerning financial mechanism, May 2007
 - E-mail, Peter Besseau to Jean Lebel: NRCan-CFS contact concerning financial mechanism, May 2007
 - E-mail, Bill Singleton to Jean Lebel: Update on IMFNS for SMC, October, 2006
 - IDRC: Memorandum of Grant Conditions: Canadian Model Forest Network, December 19, 2007 – December 18, 2011
 - IMFNS Transition: Property, legal, financial and other aspects
 - Jean Lebel, IDRC: Memorandum to Senior Management Committee, IMFNS Migration to CFS, June 7, 2006
 - Jim Armstrong, Fred Carden, Amanda Coe, Sarah Earl, – The Governance Network™, IDRC: Outcomes Assessment, July 2000
 - Jean Lebel, IDRC: Project Approval Document (PAD), Research Projects, October 2007
 - Peter Besseau, IDRC: Goodbye from IMFNS, 27 February 2007
 - Senior Management Committee: Minutes from the Meeting of June 14, 2006
 - Senior Management Committee: Minutes from the Meeting on October 4, 2006
 - Transfer Agreement, IDRC/CFS
- INBAR (International Network for Rattan and Bamboo Research)**
- Board of Governors, IDRC: Minutes from October 25 – 27, 1995
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APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: IDRC STAFF

Introduction/Background

Name:

Position:

Key Duties:

Years at IDRC Head Quarters:

Years at IDRC Secretariat:

Understanding the Concept of 'Devolution'

- Are you familiar with devolution as it is used within IDRC? Yes No
- If yes, describe your understanding of devolution?
- What does IDRC expect to achieve by devolving programs? What are the expected benefits to IDRC?
- What are the expected benefits to the host organization?
- In your view - what have been the key factors that have influenced IDRC's position on devolution?
- How has the devolution concept been communicated/shared within IDRC?
- How and at what stage of a programme has devolution been communicated to partner/host organizations?

Effectiveness of existing approaches to Devolution

- Have you been involved in the devolution of any program at IDRC? Yes No
- If Yes, state the program/programs:
- How were you involved in the devolution of this initiative? What was your role?
- What was the rationale for devolving the initiative? What criteria, if

any were used to inform the decision?

- What about programs where the decision was made not to devolve? What was the rationale for this?
- At what stage of the program was the decision to devolve made? By whom? How was the partner organization involved in the decision?
- Was a devolution strategy developed? Yes No
- If **Yes**, describe the components of the strategy including aspects⁶⁰ of the project to be devolved, the time frame for devolution, capacity building, activities involved, benchmarks/goals to be achieved prior to devolution, criteria indicating host organization's 'readiness' to manage the program, communication strategy etc.
- If **No**, describe the process implemented to devolve the initiative?
- Was a performance monitoring system created to track progress toward devolution?
- In your view, how effective/ineffective was the devolution process? Why?
- Describe the key challenges experienced in the devolution of the initiative?
- Describe the key enabling factors?
- How can the devolution process be improved? What can IDRC do better? What about the host/partner organization?

Post Devolution sustainability and organizational learning

⁶⁰ Administrative, technical and/or other responsibilities.



(Only to be answered for programs that have been successfully devolved)

- In your view, what have been some of the key benefits of the decision to devolve this initiative? Describe benefits to IDRC and the host organization
- Have there been any negative effects of the decision to devolve? If so, please describe.
- What factors have contributed to either the positive or negative effects on the devolved initiative?
- How have the benefits of the initiative been sustained since devolution?
- What factors have contributed to or hindered the project's sustainability?
- How has IDRC been involved since devolving the initiative?
- Has IDRC compiled any 'lessons learned' from this experience?
- In your view, what does successful devolution look like? What would be some of the characteristics of a successfully devolved project?

Future of Devolution in IDRC

- Should all IDRC initiatives be devolved? If not, what considerations should guide the decision to devolve management of a project to a host organization?
- What considerations should guide the decision to devolve management to a new entity?
- Are there any factors in the international development context that may affect IDRC's decision to pursue devolution? If yes, please describe.
- How can planning for devolution be more effectively integrated into IDRC's programme management cycle?
- What have been some of the lessons learned in terms of the approach, systems and processes necessary to facilitate efficient project devolution; IDRC's capacity to manage each phase of devolution
- What would be some of the key recommendations for IDRC's

overall approach to devolution in the future?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL: IDRC PARTNERS (NGOS)

Introduction/Background

Name:
 Organization:
 Position:
 Key Duties:

Relationship with IDRC

- What is your organization's interest in and relationship with IDRC?
- Have you been involved in/supported this program/project? If so, how?
- What have been key achievements of the IDRC/XXX partnership?
- What have been challenges/less successful areas of collaboration?
- What do you see as the key value added by the IDRC/XXX partnership? What, if anything, do you perceive as special about IDRC's support/collaboration? (What can IDRC do that you or others cannot do?)

Understanding of Devolution

- Are you familiar with devolution as it is used by IDRC? Yes No
- If yes, describe your understanding of devolution?
- In your view - what have been the key factors that have influenced IDRC's position on devolution?
- What have been key factors that have influenced your organization's position on devolution, if any?

Effectiveness of Devolution Process

- Were you involved in the devolution of your this initiative? What was your role?
- What was the rationale for devolving the initiative? What criteria, if any were used to inform the decision?
- At what stage of the program was the decision to devolve made? How was your organization involved in the decision to devolve?



- Was a devolution strategy developed? Yes No
- If **yes**, was your organization involved in developing the strategy? Describe the components of the strategy including aspects⁶¹ of the project to be devolved, the time frame for devolution, capacity building activities, benchmarks/goals to be achieved prior to devolution, criteria indicating host organization's 'readiness' to manage the program, communication strategy fund raising, etc.
- If, **No**, describe the process implemented to devolve the initiative?
- Was a performance monitoring system created to track progress toward devolution?
- In your view, how effective/ineffective was the devolution process? Why?
- Describe the key challenges experienced in the devolution of the initiative?
- Describe the key enabling factors?
- Overall, how would you assess IDRC's approach to devolution? What are the strengths? What are the shortcomings?
- How can the devolution process be improved? What can IDRC do better? What about the host organization?

**Post Devolution sustainability and organizational learning
(Only to be answered for programs that have been successfully devolved)**

- In your view, what have been some of the key benefits of the decision to devolve this initiative?
- Have there been any negative effects of the decision to devolve? If so, please describe.
- What factors have contributed to either the positive or negative effects on the devolved initiative?
- How have the project benefits been sustained since devolution?

⁶¹ Administrative, technical and/or other responsibilities.

- What factors have contributed to or hindered the sustainability of benefits?
- How has IDRC been involved since devolving the initiative?
- In your view, what does successful devolution look like? What would be some of the characteristics of a successfully devolved project?

Future

- In your view, what considerations should guide the decision to devolve management of a project to a host organization?
- Are there any factors in the international development context that may affect IDRC's decision to pursue devolution? If yes, please describe what these might be.
- How can planning for devolution be more effectively integrated into IDRC's programme management cycle?
- What have been some of the lessons learned in terms of the approach, systems and processes necessary to facilitate efficient project devolution?
- What would be some of the key recommendations for IDRC's overall approach to devolution in the future?

SURVEY PROTOCOL: IDRC STAFF

Introduction/Background

Name:

Position:

Key Duties:

Years at IDRC:

Understanding the Concept of 'Devolution'

- Describe your understanding of devolution?
- In your view - what have been the key factors that have influenced IDRC's position on devolution?
- How has the devolution concept been communicated/shared within IDRC?

Effectiveness of existing approaches to Devolution



- Have you been involved in the devolution of any program at IDRC? Yes No
- How were you involved in the devolution of this initiative? What was your role?
- What was the rationale for devolving the initiative? What criteria, if any were used to inform the decision?
- Was a devolution strategy developed? Yes No
- If **Yes**, describe the components of the strategy including aspects⁶² of the project to be devolved, the time frame for devolution, capacity building, activities involved, benchmarks/goals to be achieved prior to devolution, criteria indicating host organization's 'readiness' to manage the program, communication strategy etc.
- If, **No**, describe the process implemented to devolve the initiative?
- Was a performance monitoring system created to track progress toward devolution?
- In your view, how effective/ineffective was the devolution process? Why?
- How can the devolution process be improved? What can IDRC do better?

**Post Devolution sustainability and organizational learning
(Only to be answered for programs that have been successfully devolved)**

- In your view, what have been some of the key benefits of the decision to devolve this initiative? Describe benefits to IDRC and the host organization
- Have there been any negative effects of the decision to devolve? If so, please describe.
- How have the benefits of the initiative been sustained since devolution?
- How has IDRC been involved since devolving the initiative? Is

funding provided? Is a representative on the Board? Are there any reporting requirements?

- In your view, what does successful devolution look like? What would be some of the characteristics of a successfully devolved project?
- Suggest the five (5) most critical performance criteria that should be used to assess IDRC's performance on 'devolution'?

Future of Devolution in IDRC

- What considerations should guide the decision to devolve management to a new entity?
- How can planning for devolution be more effectively integrated into IDRC's programme management cycle?
- What would be some of the key recommendations for IDRC's overall approach to devolution in the future?

SURVEY PROTOCOL: IDRC PARTNERS (DONORS)

Introduction/Background

Respondent Name:

Organization:

Position:

Relationship with IDRC

- What is your organization's relationship with IDRC?
- What have been key achievements of your partnership with IDRC?
- What have been challenges/less successful areas of collaboration?
- What do you see as the key value added by IDRC? What, if anything, do you perceive as special about IDRC's collaboration? (What can IDRC do that you or others cannot do?)

Understanding of Devolution

- Are you familiar with devolution as it is used by IDRC? Yes No
- If yes, describe your understanding of devolution?
- In your view - what have been the key factors that have influenced IDRC's position on devolution?

⁶² Administrative, technical and/or other responsibilities.



- What would you consider to be 'good practice' with regard to devolution or transition strategies?

Effectiveness of Devolution Process

- If you have been involved in the devolution of any IDRC Secretariats, overall, how effective or ineffective was the devolution process? Why?
- Overall, how would you assess IDRC's approach to devolution? What are the strengths? What are the shortcomings?
- How can the devolution process be improved? What can IDRC do better?
- Suggest the five (5) most critical performance criteria that should be used to assess IDRC's performance on 'devolution?'

SURVEY PROTOCOL: IDRC PARTNERS (NGOS)

Introduction/Background

Organization Name:

Respondent Name:

Position:

Number of Staff in Organization:

Relationship with IDRC

- What have been the key achievements of your partnership with IDRC?
- What do you see as the key value added by the IDRC/XXX partnership? What, if anything, do you perceive as special about IDRC's

support/collaboration? (What can IDRC do that you or others cannot do?)

- What have been challenges/less successful areas of collaboration?

Post Devolution sustainability and organizational learning

(Only to be answered for programs that have been successfully devolved)

- In your view, what have been some of the key benefits of the decision to devolve this initiative?
- Have there been any negative effects of the decision to devolve? If so, please describe.
- How have the project benefits been sustained since devolution?
- What factors have contributed to or hindered the sustainability of benefits?
- How has IDRC been involved since devolving the initiative? Is funding still provided? Does IDRC sit on the Board?

Future

- What would be some key recommendations for IDRC's overall approach to devolution in the future?
- Suggest the five (5) most critical performance criteria that should be used to assess IDRC's performance on 'devolution?'



APPENDIX D

LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS INTERVIEWED, INDIVIDUALS PROVIDING WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS, PARTICIPANTS IN: THE FINDINGS WORKSHOP (MAY 20TH 2009); AND MEETING TO REVIEW THE DRAFT REPORT (JUNE 5TH 2009)

Rana Auditto

Director
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Michael Bassey

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Former: Programme Officer, Senegal, IDRC

Peter Bessau

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Shaun Bona

Regional Controller, Finance
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Florencio Ceballos

Program Manager
TC.org

Michael Clarke

Director of Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D)
IDRC

Sylvain Dufour

Director
Finance and Administration Division, IDRC

Colleen Duggan

Senior program specialist
Evaluation Unit, IDRC

Laurent Elder

Program Manager
Pan Asia (another ICT for Development Program)

Jeffrey Fine

Consultant
PERWIT International

Richard Fuchs

Regional Director
Regional Office for Southeast and East Asia
Bellanet

Riff Fullan

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Acting Executive Director, TIPS

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Director General, INBAR

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Senior Program Specialist
Research for International Tobacco

Formerly connected with MAPPA

Stephen McGurk

Director
IDRC's Regional Office for South Asia and China, INBAR

Rohinton Medhora

Vice-President
Programs, IDRC

Lynn Mytelka

Formerly on Advisory Board, SISERA

Lauchlan Munro

Vice-President
Corporate Strategy and Regional Management
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Tavinder Nijhawan

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Mary O'Neill

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Maureen O'Neil

President and CEO
The Canadian Health Services
Research Foundation

Former: President, IDRC

Caroline Pestieau

Chair, Board of Directors, AERC

Former: Vice President, Programs, IDRC

Michael Roberts

Regional Director, North America
Bellanet

Robert Robertson

Newly retired
Senior Program Specialist
Legal Counsel, IDRC

Cherla Sastry

Founding and First Director General, INBAR

Gordon Smith

Executive Director, Centre for Global Studies

Former: Chairman of Governors, IDRC

Steve Song

The Shuttleworth Foundation
Telecommunications Fellow

Former: Senior Programme Officer, Bellanet
International Secretariat

Randy Spence

Director
Economic and Social Development Affiliates
LIRNEasia

Former: Senior Program Specialist, INBAR
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Graham Todd

Formerly worked for Bellanet

Frank Tulus

Senior Program Officer
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Tricia Wind

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Stephen Yeo

Chief Executive Officer
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CEPR, London

Former: Consultant for the Evaluation of
SISERA, 2004

APPENDIX E

BIOGRAPHY OF EVALUATORS

DR. JIM ARMSTRONG is the President of The Governance Network™ (TGN), a private consulting firm operating in Ottawa for the past fifteen years. Dr. Armstrong has lead major consulting projects with Presidents, Prime Ministers, Cabinets and Permanent Secretaries in the Philippines, Vietnam, Egypt, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Belize, Guyana, and Jamaica.

Dr. Armstrong has also worked with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Caribbean Development Bank, and the World Bank. He was the Executive Consultant for Canada's Deputy Minister Task Force on Citizen-Centred Service Delivery. TGN provides a full range of international expertise to Canada's National Defence Department and to the Canadian Forces College, Revenue Canada, Canadian Borders Services Agency and Health Canada and many other national institutions.

Dr. Armstrong's career spanned working in high-level executive positions in three levels of the Canadian government (Municipal, Provincial and Federal). During that time, Dr. Armstrong has been a Department Head in then Canada's largest municipality and has been the Chief Personnel Officer and Chairman of the Public Service Commission in the Province of Saskatchewan. Dr. Armstrong has also served as Vice Principal for the Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD). He was also Director General of Consulting and Audit Canada. He lead Canada's successful bid to host the World University Games and was personally responsible in Edmonton and Saskatchewan for major Public Sector reform initiatives, which included major restructuring, downsizing, budget rationalization and service improvement. He has served on a joint Cabinet and Deputy Ministers Committee on service delivery and chaired an OECD Expert Panel on Organizational Reform.

ALEXA KHAN is a former senior public servant who since leaving the public service has focused her consulting career on Public Sector Reform; Project Evaluation; Policy Analysis; Health Sector Reform; Developing Programme Monitoring Systems; Children's rights; Gender and Development; and Training Facilitation.

As Programme Director for the National Health Insurance System Technical Secretariat (Ministry of Health, Trinidad & Tobago), Alexa coordinated the work of the NHIS Technical Secretariat towards the establishment of a National Health Insurance System for Trinidad and Tobago. During her tenure, she performed the research related to Health Financing in T&T and chaired the NHIS Committee of Stakeholders responsible for developing a proposal for the preferred system of NHIS for T&T.

As Policy Coordinator for Results Based Management (Ministry of Public Administration, Trinidad), Alexa was responsible for facilitating the establishment of monitoring and evaluation systems for key social sector projects, building a culture of 'results based management' within the public sector, and facilitating collaboration among government agencies to ensure policy coherence. She and her team coordinated implementation of several critical initiatives including the Opinion Leaders Panel Survey, a citizen feedback mechanism, the Public Service Employee Survey 2004, establishment and facilitation of the Policy Networking Forum targeting policy makers across the public sector to facilitate integrated policy development, conceptualization and implementation of the Prime Minister's Innovating for Service Excellence Award Scheme .