

FUTURE FOCUS

*Ultimately, the
focus remains
on people*

The year 1980 is much more than the 10th anniversary of IDRC. In both international attitudes and international relations it reflects a striking departure from the past. That contrast was marked in the first sense by the report of the Brandt Commission; it was marked in the second sense by the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Development.

Mankind faces disaster of global proportions, said the Brandt Commission. Because the ingredients of that disaster are problems of worldwide dimension, solutions will be effective only if they are equal in scope. In the pursuit of survival, the concepts of "we" and "they" have been replaced by "us".

At the Special Session, the developing countries — those that are home to some 72 percent of humanity — made it clear that their commitment to remedial measures jointly with the industrialized states is conditional on an equal commitment from the latter. The frustrations endured by those countries as a result of continued injustice have led to a dangerous schism even as the perils of division are overwhelmingly apparent.

Disaster, said the Brandt Commission, may proceed from several sources: from an epidemic of political instability spawned by economic deprivation; from a sequential collapse of industrial and financial institutions brought about by maldistributed wealth and resources, by the disappearance of confidence, of credit, of markets; from a deteriorating biosphere suffering from the disappearance of forests and arable soil; from nuclear holocaust prompted by a reliance on armaments rather than cooperation.

Injustice along the North-South axis of the international community is more



Ivan L. Head, IDRC President

a product of indifference than of greed, more of inertia and ignorance than of intention. Yet its results are appalling whether measured in terms of human misery or of planetary degradation.

Disaster will not be averted, nor justice achieved, without a series of actions involving sectors as basic yet distinct as food, population, and health, and sectors as complex and interrelated as terms of trade, monetary practices, and transfer of technology.

There are many reasons for economic disparity between North and South but it is clear that resource transfers, no matter how large, will not by themselves lead to any appreciable change. The structures of the international monetary, financial, and trading communities will not permit it. The lack of human competence and institutional capacity within the developing countries will continue to deny it. To overcome these defects and deficiencies, a number of prescriptions are required, a variety of

actors needed.

IDRC is one such actor, its activities one such prescription. Over a period of ten years it has attempted to discharge its mandate of supporting development-related research in a fashion that enhances the indigenous human and institutional competence of the developing countries. It has done so in ways that were, in the Centre's infancy, oft-times innovative and sometimes unprecedented. It has experienced the satisfaction both of successful results and of emulation by other organizations created in its image. It has every reason to be proud of its accomplishments.

Yet in the decade to come the Centre will undoubtedly change far beyond our present ability to anticipate. Just as in the past 10 years developmental theory has proved to be critically flawed, so will the next 10 open new avenues of research, new techniques of research management, new methods of coordination and cooperation. Forecasting and planning will become essential elements in Centre processes. The insistence of the public and the Parliament of Canada on effective expenditure of tax revenues will increasingly require IDRC to engage in evaluation and accountability exercises. The shifting priorities of the developing countries will demand of the Centre flexibility and ability to respond.

In one respect, however, there will be no change. IDRC will continue to focus its attention on people, will continue to insist that their welfare be the central goal of all Centre projects. Human beings are not only the beneficiaries of development activity, they are the only true engines of the development process. They have been the *raison d'être* of IDRC for the past 10 years. So will they be for the next 10. □

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1720 Reports 1720

THE IDRC



**SPECIAL
REPORT**
**IDRC's
first
10 years**

LETTERS

April Reports

I found myself reading nearly every item of the April issue with interest. The ten predictions of the *New Internationalist* are stimulating discussion-starters. It took Dr El-Sawy an unconscionably long time to get the damsissa plant accepted to fight bilharzia. One wonders how many other good answers to unsolved problems are held back by the 'tyranny of the status quo'. Dr Laquian in "Jambo" was able to break the shackles of the conventional wisdom.

As an amateur propagandist for birth control over many years, I liked your emphasis on age at marriage in "The family factor". I have always found it a common ground-starter with church leaders. I first used it about 15 years ago with the Archbishop of Costa Rica who pushed it and *paternidad responsable*, so I feel much in tune with your article.

I have been to Bangladesh, but not seen before your figures for higher death rates for girls under five. What a shocking corroboration of the masked infanticide which has been so hard to put a figure on!

Rupert Buchanan
St. Catharines, Ontario
Canada

Women's status

As someone somewhat concerned with feminist issues in education and science, and as a visitor to Turkey where I have lectured and been a consultant on science policy, I am curious about the Turkish data referred to in "The family factor" (April

1980). You may not know, but Turkey is a peculiar pathological instance in statistics of professional females. It has, in fact, the world's record largest proportion of women in university faculties, and even a near equality of women with men in full professorships.

I was long curious about this phenomenon in a very non-liberated country, until I discovered it was partly due to a prejudicing Ataturk revolution against letting women into Jewish-dominated businesses and male-dominated trades. The only places the women could go were the higher professions, especially education. Furthermore, the large proportion of peasantry in the cities gave Turkey a larger access to servants and babysitting than in most other developing countries. It follows from this that you can't always trust the statistics to tell you about the true status of women.

Derek de Solla Price
Avalon Professor of History of Science, Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut
USA

New journal

Reports readers may be interested in the *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, a forum for encouraging the dissemination of new ideas and alternative strategies in all fields of development studies.

The first issue of the bi-annual *Journal* was published in May 1980 by the University of Ottawa Press. It is designed to serve scholars and professionals engaged in

development studies in Canada and developing countries, and is particularly focused on the policy applications of innovative theory and research for the promotion of international development, and the role of countries such as Canada in fostering a more equitable world order.

We are now calling for papers and subscriptions. Preference will be given to thought-provoking papers based on empirical research, field work, or case studies having significant implications for development planning and policy in the following problem areas: poverty; basic needs; regional disparities; agrarian reform; unemployment; technology transfer; population; manpower and educational planning; development administration; trade; aid; and industrialization.

While English and French are the principal languages of the *Journal*, papers in other languages may be published occasionally.

For information, please write: International Development Studies Group, Institute for International Cooperation, University of Ottawa, 190 Laurier East, Ottawa, Canada K1N 6N5.

Maxime A. Crener
Ozay Mehmet
Co-editors

Canadian Journal of
Development Studies
Ottawa, Canada

Hope for change

What a wretched world this is that so many people have to depend on cassava

to survive. Not only does it appear to be poor in protein and vulnerable to the attacks of insects and diseases, but now it is implicated in goitre and mental deficiencies.

I think your organization deserves credit for efforts to improve the crop, but I wonder if people in the Third World aren't still being gypped somehow. Why should they have to eat what is a pretty poor potato, no matter how much it is improved, while the rest of us grow fat on meat and wheat?

And it's hard not to be cynical about aid when Barry Nestel traces the origins of Canadian support for work on cassava back to the opposition of grain producers in this country to other plans that might have bolstered Third World cereal production.

But I guess miracles are still possible in a world where ex-Chancellor Willy Brandt and his fellow ex-heads-of-state on the Brandt Commission can become "born-again" development believers. After all, they were pretty determined to side-step the problems when they were in power and could have done something about them. Maybe there is hope for change yet.

Linda M. Kulesha
Willowdale, Ontario
Canada

Letters from readers are welcomed, and should be addressed to:

*Editors, IDRC Reports,
PO Box 8500, Ottawa,
Canada K1G 3H9*

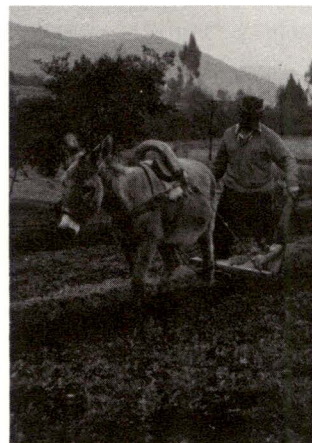
Reports

THE IDRC

The IDRC Reports and companion editions *Le CRDI Explore* and *El CIID Informa*, about the work of the International Development Research Centre and related activities in the field of international development, are published quarterly and are available on request from the Communications Division, IDRC, P.O. Box 8500, Ottawa, Canada K1G 3H9. *Editor-in-chief* Michelle Hibler. *Associate editors* English edition: Rowan Shirkie; French edition: Jean-Marc Fleury; Spanish edition: Stella de Feferbaum. *Staff photographer*: Neill McKee.

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The International Development Research Centre is a public corporation created by the Parliament of Canada in 1970 to support research designed to adapt science and technology to the needs of developing countries. The Centre's activity is concentrated in five sectors: agriculture, food, and nutrition sciences; health sciences; information sciences; social sciences; and communications. IDRC is financed solely by the Parliament of Canada; its policies, however, are set by an international Board of Governors. The Centre's headquarters are located at 60 Queen Street, Ottawa, Canada (P.O. Box 8500, Ottawa, Canada K1G 3H9). Regional offices are located in East Africa (P.O. Box 30677, Nairobi, Kenya); West Africa (B.P. 11007, C.D. Annexe, Dakar, Sénégal); Asia (Tanglin P.O. Box 101, Singapore 9124, Repub-

lic of Singapore); Latin America (Apartado Aéreo 53016, Bogotá D.E., Colombia); and the Middle East (7 Aflaton Street, P.O. Box 685, Huriia, Heliopolis, Cairo, Egypt).

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Unsolicited manuscripts and other editorial materials are welcomed and will be considered for publication.

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Cover: Caqueza, Colombia. Improving the well-being of the rural poor has been a focus of IDRC-supported projects during the Centre's first 10 years. This emphasis will continue in the coming years. Our special report, starting on page 9, reviews some of the work accomplished to date and looks ahead into the 80s.