

**PCR CONTENT ANALYSIS STUDY**

**FINAL REPORT**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction	3
2.0	Methodology	3
3.0	Results and Discussion On The Content of PCRs	4
3.1	Question by Question Content Analysis Across PCRs	4
3.2	General Observations About The Sampled PCRs	5
3.3	What We Can Learn From PCRs About Research	7
3.3.1	Objectives	7
3.3.2	Results	8
3.3.3	Outputs	9
3.3.4	Development Impact	9
3.4	What We Can Learn From PCRs About The Process Of Doing And Managing Research	11
3.4.1	Who Was Involved/Participated	11
3.4.2	Research Methodology	14
3.4.3	Project Design	16
3.4.4	Project Management	17
3.4.4.1	Financial And Timing Issues	17
3.4.4.2	External Factors Which Affect Project Management	18
3.4.4.3	IDRC Management Issues	18
3.4.4.4	Recipient Management Issues	19
3.4.4.5	Evaluation Issues	20
3.5	What We Can Learn From PCRs About Institutional Aspects Of Doing and Supporting Research	20
3.5.1	Recipient/Other Institutional Issues	20
3.5.2	IDRC Corporate Issues	21
4.0	Observations And Reflections On The Design and Use Of PCRs	23
4.1	Observations On The Suitability Of The Design Of The PCR To Its Joint Objectives Of Accountability For Use Of Public Funds And Corporate Learning	23
4.2	Reflections On The Analysis And Use of PCRs	25
4.3	The Current Status Of Completing PCRs	27
5.0	Conclusions And Recommendations	28
Appendix 1:	PCR Question By Question Content Analysis	
Appendix 2:	Possible Data Integrity Issues	
Appendix 3:	List Of The 75 Sampled PCRs Randomly Selected For The PCR Content Analysis Study	

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Evaluation Unit is currently considering how Project Completion Reports (PCRs), the Evaluation Information System (EVIS), and the evaluation report inventory fit into the Centre's overall evaluation and reporting systems in order to determine whether adaptations are required. There is anecdotal evidence that the systems are not fulfilling the roles that they were intended when they were designed, particularly that of program and corporate learning, however this has not been systematically studied. The purpose of this study was to analyse the data that has been put into the PCR system over the past three years in order to assess the status of completing PCRs, and to examine the contents of PCRs with the intent to assess their contribution to corporate and program learning.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

Data on the status of PCRs in the updated Windows-based PCR system for the period January 1, 1997 to September 21, 2000 was obtained from the Client Services Group (CSG). This data was the basis for observations and calculations made for the Centre as a whole and for administrative units and regional offices on:

- The number of PCRs which became due during the period of study January 1, 1997 - September 21, 2000.
- The number of PCRs which were completed and reviewed during that period.
- The average number of days from PCR due date to completion date.
- The average number of days from PCR completion date to closure date. And,
- The average number of days outstanding PCRs have been outstanding.

PCRs for this content analysis study were randomly selected from the total batch of 225 PCRs completed between Jan 1, 1997 and September 21, 2000 to represent the contents of PCRs done on the updated Windows-based PCR program. To qualify as a semi-quantitative analysis where the sample group of completed PCRs could be considered representative of all PCRs within a 10% margin of error 95% of the time, a sample size of one third (33%) of the total population of completed PCRs (ie, 75 PCRs) were randomly selected for analysis (Personal communications, Hugh Gough, Statistics Canada). This would allow, for example, one to say that if 16% of the PCRs in the sample indicated the need for more monitoring of the project, between 6-26% of all PCRs would likely address the need for increased monitoring of the project 95% of the time. As the level of analysis gets more specific, however, the population sample size gets smaller, and the inferences to the population as a whole become less and less significant statistically. As such, the analysis and interpretation become more qualitative than quantitative in nature the deeper one goes. For example, in discussing the contents of those comments which referred to the need for increased monitoring as used in the example above, we would be referring to some proportion of 16% of 33% of the total population size of 225 PCRs. Caution must be used in making statistical inferences at these secondary (or greater) levels, although the results do represent trends which can be expected in the total population of PCRs. In this report, percentages and proportions are provided

in some cases for secondary level reporting as a source of data for the benefit of the Evaluation Unit, and only with the understanding that its statistical limitations as outlined above will be respected in any interpretation of the data. The list of randomly selected sampled PCRs can be found in Appendix 3.

The analysis of the content of the PCRs involved a number of quantitative and qualitative steps. Responses to questions were first analysed "across" PCRs, where all responses in the 75 PCRs pertaining to Question 1, Question 2, and so on were examined. For each question, statistics were compiled on the number of responses for each radio-box category (for example in Question 1 these would include the number of responses of each rating given to each project objective in all projects represented by the sampled PCRs). Statistics were also obtained for the number of comments associated with each radio-box response. This data is tabulated and presented in Appendix 1 of this report. The contents of comments were then grouped into subject area categories to identify trends and lessons learned.

All 75 individual PCRs were then each read in whole ("down") one at a time in order to get a sense of the contents and 'depth of reflection' in each individual PCR, to see if it was possible to make any observations about the 'depth of reflection' in comments and the relationship of the PCR author to the project or IDRC, and to make observations regarding the relative merits of analysing the contents of a large number of PCRs "across" and "down".

Finally, observations on any data integrity issues revealed during the course of the analysis were noted and are listed in Appendix 2.

## **3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ON THE CONTENT OF PCRs**

### **3.1 QUESTION BY QUESTION CONTENT ANALYSIS ACROSS PCRs**

A question by question analysis of the content of each of the 19 questions in all 75 sampled PCRs is provided in Appendix 1, where the following specific information on each question can be found:

- The number of responses for each radio-box (ratings, yes/no responses, etc).
- The number of comments associated with each radio-box response.
- Categorization, description and quantification of the contents of the comments associated with radio-box responses; and
- Observations and discussions on the significance of the above.

This grouping and analysis of the contents of the radio-boxes and the notes fields as presented in Appendix 1 provide a thorough and easily accessible summary and discussion of the contents of each question in the PCRs. Numerous text boxes providing quotations from the notes fields of many PCRs are provided to illustrate points and substantiate conclusions. The question by question analysis was the basis for the discussion which follows in the main body of this report on the value of PCRs and focuses on the six key issues of relevance to IDRC in the context of PCRs:

- What can we learn from PCRs about research?
- What can we learn from PCRs about the process of doing and managing research?
- What can we learn from PCRs about institutional aspects of doing and supporting research?
- What is the relevance of the design of the PCR to its joint objectives of accountability for the use of public funds and corporate learning?
- What was learned from this study about the analysis and use of PCRs? And,
- What is the current status of completing PCRs?

## 3.2 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE SAMPLED PCRS

The most striking observation about the 75 sampled PCRs is the variation in how they are filled in. Some PCRs are very detailed and their comments indicate a good deal of reflection on what happened during and as a result of the project, and why. Other PCRs are remarkably empty in terms of the number of radio-box responses, and the number and contents of the notes field. In-depth comments provide opportunity for learning from experience and often reflect on both the outcomes and the processes involved in the various aspects of a project. Such comments often provide insight into the significance of these outcomes and processes, and on how positive aspects can be facilitated and negative ones prevented or minimized. A single PCR may be full of such in-depth comments, or as more typical, may contain a few such comments associated with those questions in the PCR which had particular relevance to that project. These are the gold-nuggets. There are many of them, scattered about in many PCRs and are what make PCRs a valuable (although arguably as designed an inefficient) learning resource.

Variation in the level of reflection and lessons drawn from a project and incorporated into a PCR are in part a function of the project itself and the author's time, background, personality and relationship to the project. As such, the level of reflection can be expected to vary among PCRs especially given that POs may delegate the task of filling in a PCR and that POs or their delegates complete PCRs for orphaned projects with which they had no or very little involvement. The information provided and the amount of effort placed in completing a PCR may also very well reflect the perceived importance and use of the information presented in the document. Finally, there is evidence to indicate that the structure and format of the PCR and the questions themselves negatively affect the effort to provide substantive comments and the content of the comments themselves. These points are discussed in more detail later in this report. While obviously a subjective assessment, only about half of the sampled PCRs indicate reflection on lessons learned about the outcomes and processes of the project.

It is difficult to know with any certainty whether the responsible POs themselves or their delegates actually completed most of the sampled PCRs. Based on explicit statements in the notes associated with the responsible POs name on the front cover of the PCRs, we can know with certainty that:

- 19/75 sampled PCRs were completed by an identified individual other than the responsible PO and were then reviewed by the responsible PO;
- 1/75 sampled PCRs was completed by an identified individual other than the responsible PO (unknown to me if individual is a consultant or intern/other);

- At least 11/75 sampled PCRs were completed by consultants;
- The authors of 32/75 sampled PCRs were not explicitly identified (although it is likely that some of these at least were done by the named responsible PO);
- At least 12/75 sampled PCRs were completed by the responsible PO (this number is believed to be conservative as some of the 32 PCRs for which the author was not explicitly indicated were likely completed by the named responsible PO. However, there is no way of knowing this with certainty).

The PCR author is not a reliable predictor of the depth of reflection provided in a PCR although some trends are apparent. For example, while completion or review of a PCR by a PO does not guarantee an in-depth PCR, the majority of PCRs known to be completed by the responsible PO were considered highly reflective of lessons learned through the project experience.

Five PCRs under the same responsible PO in the responsibility centre LACRO (but whose authors are actually unknown) had "no response" with no associated comments for an average of 14 of the 19 questions in the PCR. Indeed, the only "no response" answers which showed up in the 75 sampled PCRs are attributable to these 5 PCRs. No comments were provided on development impact or recommendations in any of these five PCRs, and no ratings or comments were provided for any objectives in 3 of them and are provided for only a few of the objectives in the remaining 2 PCRs.

There is evidence that PCRs completed by individuals assumed (by me) to be unfamiliar with the project and IDRC do not usually provide much insight into the research or the research process. For example, 10/11 PCRs explicitly identified as having been completed by a consultant were for projects under the responsibility centre ASRO and were completed after the responsible PO's departure, although with some input from the PO prior to departure. None of these 10 PCRs had any comments associated with Question 1: objectives (with the exception of one remark under one specific objective only), with Question 3: involvement of others; or with Question 16: recommendations. As a reviewer of one of these PCRs put it: "Again, minimal information provided by a consultant without much insight into the project objectives and implementation. Not very informative, I am afraid!" (Enis Baris, 040137).

As one would expect intuitively, the number of comments in a PCR is not a good indicator of the level of reflection - in other words a PCR with comments in every notes field may in fact reveal little about the research or the research process while another PCR may reveal much by its few 'gold nuggets'. Finally, the 'depth' of the PCR does not necessarily reflect the quality of the project or vice versa.

### 3.3 WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM PCRs ABOUT RESEARCH

#### 3.3.1 Objectives

Information about some aspect of research objectives can be found in the responses and comments of at least seven questions in the PCR (ie Questions 1, 5, 8, 14, 15, 16, 17). From Question 1 we learn what IDRC supported researchers set out to do and how well they did it for 93% of the sampled projects (the missing 7% are attributable to the five LACRO PCRs mentioned earlier). How the researchers set out to achieve the objectives is described in a general way for about 66% of the rated objectives under Question 1, although more specific detail about methodology comes out elsewhere in the PCR. The achievement of most of the objectives of the sampled projects was considered to have met or exceeded expectations (~80%).

The significance of the achievement of an objective is provided for about 30% of the rated objectives in accompanying comments in the notes field in Question 1 (although the significance of the project as a whole or its parts is referred to in other questions of the PCR including the final reviewers' cover comments). While not provided for all objectives, insight into the significance of the achievement of an objective is very interesting and useful. It is also highly variable in terms of what aspect of 'significance' is addressed and what can be learned from this. For example, comments from the sampled PCRs address:

- ▶ Country and subject specific research intelligence (eg. There is a lack of an adequate data base for quantitative analysis of tradeoffs between growth, fiscal revenues, and environmental protection in Peru, Chile, and Bolivia; there are geopolitical difficulties of working in Tibet and Cambodia; collaborative research is possible between Nepal and Tibet despite otherwise poor relations; professors in the Philippines often delegate work to junior staff negatively affecting quality of work; external factors such as time, geography, and weather conditions factor heavily into research on vegetative processes and biophysical measures such as land degradation; information management of primary health care is critical to the implementation of health programs).
- ▶ Factors which foster and hinder the ability to carry out country and subject specific research (eg. the political climate, specific national policies, regulations and bureaucracy).
- ▶ The importance of the findings of the research (eg. the development of the first birth control vaccine in the world; an important scientific demonstration of the relationship between malaria risk and iron supplementation; a milestone in information sector developments in the newly emerging Laos; intellectual contribution in developing an analytical framework to study the social and political implications of globalization in Latin America; pioneering research in a country; the release of two new promising cassava varieties and 4 sweet potato varieties; improving enterprise efficiencies; development of a local user pay system which is globally applicable).
- ▶ The importance of the impact of the research (eg. the first introduction and subsequent wide spread use of an information and communication technology by a variety of sectors in several regions or even globally (eg. NGONET); developing significant research capacity in general, in some sector of the population, or sometimes developing the only national research capability in a subject area; successfully influencing policy (in the health, education, economic and social

sectors in several countries); promoting the use of environmental economics in Bolivia, Chile, and Peru; influencing national health research planning; bringing researchers and/or policy makers together to tackle a development issue; the successful implementation of planning and management schemes and tools (wetlands, cattle, solid waste, fisheries); the creation of a national park with minimal conflict among stakeholders).

### 3.3.2 Results

Different aspects of the results of research are addressed by at least four questions in the PCR (ie, Questions 1, 5, 8, 16). Actual research results, however, are provided for only about 16% of the rated objectives under Question 1 and an estimated 10% of the comments associated with Outputs in Question 5 provide information on the findings contained in the listed research reports and papers. This is unfortunate, since a brief description of what was found would complete the picture of the project with very little extra effort on the part of the PCR author relative to the effort required by an interested reader who would need to track down and read the project final report. The provision of general results would also help the reader relate better to any remarks about the significance of the objectives or the findings themselves. Finally, since the reports of many IDRC supported projects remain unpublished, provision of the results completes the PCRs' ability to serve as an important source of information on the current state of the art in international development research, by not only providing information on what is being studied in international development research, but also on what is being discovered and/or achieved.

25% of the sampled PCRs provide recommendations on project results and dissemination in Question 16. This may be considered low since this is an area that is relevant to almost all projects. The recommendations provided touch on a broad range of issues from the design of projects for results, to modes of dissemination and specific action recommendations, and can be summarized as follows:

- ▶ Many comments flag the importance of the existence of, or need for, a dissemination strategy which defines users and mechanisms at the outset of the project (such as signing publishing agreements, including clauses in the MGC, translating of project reports into local languages).
- ▶ Over a quarter of the sampled projects specifically addressed dissemination in their objectives.
- ▶ PO support in monitoring and evaluating results can enhance opportunities for dissemination.
- ▶ The impact of a number of the projects will depend on specific follow-up action on dissemination.



### 3.3.3 Outputs

What is most striking by the responses in Question 5 is the high quality and variety of unique and important outputs produced through IDRC projects, and the varying level of detail provided to describe them. Four hundred and fifteen outputs were explicitly identified in the 75 sampled PCRs, with 95% of those rated satisfactory or better (there are in fact many more outputs as, for example, a single entry may refer to as many as 50 study papers collectively).

The significance of the output or its impact is described for only about one quarter of the outputs, although, as with the objectives above, they are impressive. Comments on the significance of outputs can be grouped as follows:

- ▶ Many "firsts": for example the first time bringing together a unique group of individuals (researchers and/or policy makers for example) to discuss results/issues and solve problems; the creation of new knowledge (for example the development or introduction of a new information and communication technology; the first demonstration that women can be vaccinated to prevent pregnancy; new knowledge on the risks of malaria; the development and use of equilibrium models in that country);
- ▶ A large number of publications significant because of the personal accomplishment to have done so and/or because of their contribution to the state of knowledge in the field of study.
- ▶ An increased visibility of IDRC or IDRC funded projects and project personnel often leading to new funding or networking opportunities.
- ▶ The use of a new planning tool, technology, or policy recommendation developed through an IDRC project at the community, municipal, national, or international level.
- ▶ Significant capacity building of researchers, graduate students, government employees and community members developed through the research project itself or training.

Access to outputs may be limited by incomplete citations and limited information provided on the location of many of them. A rough calculation suggests that less than half of the "citable" outputs (ie, project reports, workshop proceedings, published articles, and videos for example) have been properly referenced in the sampled PCRs. Full citations for reports were often not provided in PCRs completed by consultants or 'others'.

### 3.3.4 Development Impact

As indicated by the number and distribution of responses, development impact was reported to have occurred or could be expected to occur as a result of 89% of the projects and represents all 18 'development' categories listed in Question 8. The number of responses in each category ranged from 59% under "Utilization of Results" to 5% under "Employment", although this distribution can not reveal with any certainty the area where IDRC had the most or least impact for example, only where the most or least impact was reported. Unfortunately, as many as about a third of the responses in some categories say "See data on file" or "See final report" or provide an "X"/"Yes" under the relevant category. Some comments refer to other parts of the PCR where the development impact is not always apparent, address the focus of the research rather than its

impact, or are obscure to the point that it is not clear whether the impact is expected to happen, did happen, or in fact what happened at all.

While impact is clearly very difficult to measure or predict, and as several comments suggest it takes time to have an impact, one might have hoped for more reflection on how and on what the research may have an impact, the significance of that impact, and features of the project or its context which may have influenced the process. Only a handful of comments specifically address the significance of the identified impacts, although the importance of many of the impacts are evident by their definition. Specific areas where positive development impact has occurred as a result of the sampled projects include:

- ▶ Influence on integrated interventions in health policy in Ethiopia and Sri Lanka,
- ▶ Development of a national park and reserve policy in Nepal and Tibet.
- ▶ Mining policy reform in Bolivia;
- ▶ Education policy reform in Argentina.
- ▶ Indirectly influencing the peace process and accord in South Africa.
- ▶ Capacity development among researchers and policy makers.
- ▶ Development and/or introduction of technologies including: state-of-the-art GPS-based survey systems, spacial data technology and related information systems; new root crop varieties; milk data collection system; remote sensing tools.
- ▶ Enhanced knowledge of natural resource management technologies, tools, issues; of socio-economic development and peace building in urban development activities; of the effects of globalization on indigenous populations, social services and the corresponding public policies; community-level processes.
- ▶ Creation of employment opportunities and improved livelihoods for fishers, farmers, and local people.
- ▶ Influence on social services policy in the agricultural sector, urban development and national housing, and family planning.
- ▶ Improved health status through disease control, human and animal waste management, water management.
- ▶ Enhanced research skills, competence, access to funding, visibility/networking, collaboration and communication among researchers and institutions in developing countries and in Canada.
- ▶ Improved womens' equality status.

Several key features and mechanisms which may/did help or hinder development impact were provided in some comments, and almost all of the points address project design issues and are provided later in this report in Section 3.4.3. The features which were identified as able to help or hinder development impact which are not project design issues include:

- ▶ Access to reliable and up to date data.
- ▶ Access to information and communication technologies in general.
- ▶ The reputations of the researchers.
- ▶ Understanding of the issues.
- ▶ Popular media attention.
- ▶ National policies and regulations in place.
- ▶ The political environment (security, war, attitudes).

- ▶ Ability to communicate with users, decision makers.
- ▶ The inability of an institution to make money by making the link from research to policy.

Only 11% of the sampled PCRs had comments under Recommendations on Development Impact in Question 16. Considering this is the ultimate *raison d'être* of IDRC, and that 89% of the projects indicated potential or actual development impact under Question 8, this seems to be a disappointingly low response rate.

## **3.4 WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM PCRs ABOUT THE PROCESS OF DOING AND MANAGING RESEARCH**

### **3.4.1 Who was Involved/Participated**

A number of PCR questions address different aspects of the involvement of various players in the research process (eg. Questions 3, 4b, 12, 13, 16).

From the radio-boxes in Question 3 we learn that, not surprisingly, IDRC staff are frequently involved in project idea identification, project design, and the review of research results but not often involved in project implementation or result utilization. Beneficiary involvement in project idea identification, project design, and the review of research results is considerably less than that of IDRC staff, but more so in project implementation and result utilization. Beneficiaries were involved in idea identification and project design in 10% and 13% respectively of the projects which answered this question (69/75). This number increases to 22%, 23% and 35% of the projects which answered this question for the review of research results, project implementation, and involvement in utilization of results respectively.

Many of the comments associated with the radio-box responses in Question 3 identify the IDRC staff, research user or beneficiary group involved while less than half of the comments identify what specific role the participant played in that particular area of the research process. Provided comments suggest that:

- ▶ Users in Information and Communication Technology projects were often involved in some kind of feasibility analysis (market, applicability, benefits) and the actual development or testing of the products.
- ▶ Users in Training Development projects were often involved in the design, pilot testing and evaluation of developed courses or curricula.
- ▶ Users in other research projects:
  - Were involved in setting research priorities and testing ideas or reviewing survey questions.
  - Were research subjects.
  - Monitored and peer reviewed results; and
  - Identified priority actions to undertake during project implementation.
- ▶ Beneficiaries were involved in:

- Expressing needs.
- Identifying research priority areas.
- Project design in general.
- Field research/testing.
- Discussion of results; and
- Identifying actions to be taken during project implementation.

About 28% of the comments in Question 3 address the 'mechanism' of participant involvement (eg. workshops, advisory Boards). The impact or significance of the 'involvement', or lack thereof, is infrequently addressed here, and often reports on the impact IDRC staff had on redefining objectives or redirecting the approach of the research. Comments elsewhere in some PCRs, however, indicate that the significance of the user or beneficiary participation was critical to the success of the project design or outcome, and a few projects are flagged for having particularly successful or 'ground-breaking' participatory approaches which have been or should be emulated (see Appendix 1 for examples).

Question 13 asks to "indicate the type and quality of external assistance to this project". There is evidence to suggest that caution is needed when interpreting the radio-box responses and also that there is some ambiguity in the question. Of particular importance is the revealed confusion over 'external to what', as identified "external assistance" partners included: institutions identified as the recipient, IDRC, other donors, consultants hired for an external review of one thing or another for IDRC's 'benefit' and/or for the recipient's 'benefit' (see Appendix 1 for a full discussion). Fewer than half of the PCRs indicating Canadian/Other Donor Collaboration under Question 13 provided recommendations under Question 16 in this category. Those recommendations which were provided were both project specific and general and include:

- ▶ The need to coordinate externally funded projects to avoid duplicating and wasting resources.
- ▶ The need for research funded by donor agencies to focus on a country's identified needs.
- ▶ The need to develop specific and detailed tasks for each partner at the project design stage to prevent conflict of who does what between Canadian and Southern partners.

36% of the PCRs indicated in Question 4b that the project was "genuinely participatory" and 81% of these experiences were rated satisfactory, although some caution should be taken in interpreting these responses. There appears to be some confusion among PCR authors as to who is participating in what, and the radio-box responses sometimes indicate that the project was planned to be participatory (and then was or was not) or that it was or was not participatory, planned or otherwise. Perhaps there is some ambiguity in the question, for if the project was indeed "genuinely participatory" as the question asks, it seems that the only possible rating would be "satisfactory".

A broad range of interpretations of participation are reflected in the comments and include:

- The involvement of various country-based multi-member teams of researchers.
- Close cooperation between researchers and government agencies.
- In-depth interviewing of patients and households.
- The fact that half of one project activities were carried out by other organizations; and

- The adoption and development of culture methods and the collection and evaluation of crop varieties by farmers.

A few comments did indicate that while community input was sought at various stages of the project the community had no control over the research process, thereby making a distinction between "responsive involvement to project initiatives" and "participation". Another comment suggested that research projects can never be totally participatory if they are to be efficient and effective.

Insight into why unsatisfactory participatory experiences did not manage to be more participatory is not provided. A few comments identify features which did/may facilitate participation or collaboration. Most of these are project design issues, the remainder more general in nature and include:

- ▶ Design national and international workshops to be informal, thereby encouraging small groups to perform or discuss specific problems.
- ▶ Conduct cross-sectional surveys and discussions with community representatives such as NGOs or women's groups using communication techniques that reach the public and convey information in a form that is understandable to the people.
- ▶ Design workshops to include users of the product to discuss 'modus operandi' and several monitoring and evaluation exercises.
- ▶ Design training courses to function in a participatory manner emphasizing group work and discussions, problem-solving sessions, and hands-on exercises while minimizing lectures.
- ▶ A strong beneficiary oriented philosophy and operating principles at the institutional level; and
- ▶ A positive political climate for collaboration and participation.

Only 9% of the PCRs had recommendations under Beneficiary Participation in Question 16 although 36% of the projects were identified as participatory in question 4b. Most of these recommendations address the need to have better incorporated beneficiary participation into the project design.

On a somewhat different aspect of participation, participation of female researchers in the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC, 000882), while designed explicitly to give full access to women, was still low and is reported to be reflective of a continent-wide situation. AERC was reported to be at the leading edge of change in this area, and also held a workshop back in 1994 on impediments to female participation in economics research and the profession more generally.

### **3.4.2 Research Methodology**

Responses addressing research methodology show up in several questions in the PCRs (eg. Questions 1, 2a, 2b, 4a, 5, 6, 16, 19). Responses in Question 2a indicate that 43% of the sampled projects had developed or tested a new or innovative methodology, although the percentage may actually be closer to 50% since five of the comments associated with an answer of "no" indicated that the project involved a well known methodology that was new to the country or sector or was applied in an innovative way - conditions which were often used to describe a "new or innovative" methodology.

All responses indicating that a new or innovative methodology was used were accompanied by comments. From the comments we can learn what the new or innovative methodologies were for all but one of the projects, and in what way the methodology was novel for about three quarters of them.

There was a huge variety of innovation in methodology. About half of the new methods for which such information was provided were known methods but new to the region or country, the remainder were new methods or approaches to addressing a problem per se. Not surprising given the mix of projects represented by the sampled PCRs, some of the innovative methods involved 'hard technologies' (internet, GIS, remote sensing), while some were 'soft methodologies' such as innovative ways to involve beneficiaries into the project process or accessing local knowledge or information, and innovative ways of analysing a problem by combining disciplines, individuals or analytical tools in new or unconventional ways (see Appendix 1 for specific examples).

While the description of the novelty in many cases provides an indication of the importance and "cutting edge" nature of the methodologies employed and of the research itself, it also suggests an element of risk. However, less than a quarter of the comments indicate whether the 'innovative methodology' was appropriate or successful. Several of these do indicate that the methodology is worth replicating. Indeed when this information is provided, the importance or impact of the new methodologies are impressive (see Appendix 1 for examples).

It seems PCRs present a great opportunity to benefit from hindsight and as such questions addressing the use of new or innovative methodologies should actually request that comments provide a general assessment as to whether, in fact, the innovative approach was a good choice for that application and if not, why not.

Just over a quarter of the PCRs indicated that changes had been made to the originally proposed methodology during the implementation of the project, although it is difficult to have confidence in this number as many of the comments accompanying a 'no changes' response referred to minor changes or shifts in emphasis which were also used to support a 'yes' response. All responses indicating that changes in methodology occurred had accompanying comments, although little information is provided in most cases.

When the information was provided in the comments, the reasons given for changes in the methodology can generally be grouped into two categories: 1) adjustments to factors external to the project and 2) adjustments to internal project planning or management issues. Comments under each include:

1) Causes external to the project:

- ▶ Difficulties obtaining data from unavailable written reports.
- ▶ Changing political conditions required a change to survey structure.
- ▶ A lack of collaboration with government approval body required a change in selected test site.
  
- ▶ The rise of the internet provided opportunities for different methodologies and objectives.
- ▶ The entry of more private networks in the country required adjustment to the network's

planned market niche from an informatics network to an information network.

2) Causes internal to the project:

- ▶ Inadequate flexibility and incompatibility of selected software.
- ▶ Difficulties among members of a collaborating team lead one group to adjust work to what their team was capable of and needed to accomplish.

56% of the sampled projects were identified in Question 4a as interdisciplinary, and most of these experiences were rated as satisfactory. Most of the satisfactory ratings and all of the unsatisfactory ratings were accompanied by comments. The comments reflect a broad 'representation' of interdisciplinary research including collaboration by: people in different sectors (academia, government, private industry), researchers in different disciplines, researchers from different countries with different research hypotheses and underlying theoretical models, different types of NGOs (aid, relief, humanitarian), and researchers from different parts of the economic discipline, for example. Two projects are flagged as being good examples of interdisciplinary research, although details about what makes them good is not provided.

Some responses and their associated comments indicate that there may be some confusion in the understanding of Question 4a in that the radio-box responses sometimes indicate that the project was planned to be interdisciplinary (and then was or was not) or that it was or was not interdisciplinary, planned or otherwise. As in the case of participatory research, perhaps there is some ambiguity in the question, for if the project was indeed "genuinely interdisciplinary" as the question asks, it seems that the only possible rating would be "satisfactory".

Reflection on what fostered good interdisciplinary collaboration or why more collaboration did not occur, or on the significance of the interdisciplinary approach to addressing the problem is not asked for in Question 4a and is generally not provided, although one comment describes in some detail the mechanism which co-ordinates and promotes a multi-disciplinary and inter-sectoral research strategy within the health sector and another comment indicates that the disciplinary mix was instrumental in ensuring a successful project. A few comments suggest that in some cases IDRC may have pushed too far in insisting on an interdisciplinary approach and not paying close enough attention to the direction of that approach. This lead two final reviewers to comment on the issue of IDRC "encouraging" interdisciplinary research and cautioned that success requires buy-in by the recipient, and that the integration of social science into biophysical/engineering type projects must not be done at the expense of neglecting the core science, which was identified as trend common to some recent IDRC projects.

23% of the sampled PCRs provided recommendations on research methodology in Question 16. Many of the comments refer to project specific shortcomings in methodology, which although not framed as such, general recommendations can be inferred in many cases. The need for training was identified as an explanation for some of the shortcomings. Other recommendations address general and research field specific strengths of a methodology or an approach to research, as well as suggestions and lessons learned on the process of developing methodologies.

### 3.4.3 Project Design

About 12% of the sampled PCRs specify that a gender and equity component/analysis was lacking (sometimes despite involvement of socio-economic experts in the project design). One project is flagged as having important implications from its gender approach/concept, however no further details are provided.

About 31% of the PCRs suggest that project design could have been better. Specific recommendations for improved project design include:

- ▶ The need for explicit objectives which help in rigorous evaluation of the project.
- ▶ The need for more attention to participation at the design stage.
- ▶ A preparation workshop can aid project design.
- ▶ Give more attention to plans for achieving cross-disciplinary objectives.
- ▶ Caution and sensitivity is needed by POs when developing an 'optimum research activity' through add-ons during project development to keep in mind the researchers' capacity and time commitments.
- ▶ The need for more attention to dissemination plans in the project design was raised in 11% of the PCRs. These plans should include the dissemination of both methods (especially when qualitative and quantitative work is combined) and the results achieved.
- ▶ The need for more attention to dissemination content and tone, and to encourage content that holds the capacity to invoke positive and equitable social change.
- ▶ The need for more attention to the political context of the project (to give voice to 'popular' involvement to foster democratic (as opposed to state-run) development process in Mongolia, for example).
- ▶ Institution/project/program sustainability should be addressed in the project design.
- ▶ Evaluations should be planned for in the project design.
- ▶ Project objectives and design have to be 'formulated and evaluated' on a regular basis, involving POs and recipients.
- ▶ A useful approach was to begin the project with a concept paper which researchers read, discussed, and developed.
- ▶ Front-end support by IDRC and thorough risk appraisal is especially important in novel areas of research.
- ▶ It is very important to build on existing networks and rely on local initiative.
- ▶ Pay attention to software compatibility.
- ▶ Have a plan in place for marketing training modules overseas.
- ▶ Success of training projects depends on two factors: the need felt by participants for what the training offers, and the content and pedagogical skills of the trainer.

Many comments indicate that there is a need for improved networking among projects of formal networks and among related projects in general, and this is seen as an important role for IDRC. Mechanisms to improve networking are provided in some comments and include one suggestion that more 'one shot networks' be tried rather than the traditional indefinite-life networks, where large percentages of the budget are spent on communications, rather than research. One comment



provides the results of an evaluation which highlighted 11 exemplary network design and management practices.

Key project design features which may/did help to bring about development impact include:

- ▶ Project targeted to the demand for the results by direct and indirect users.
- ▶ Dissemination of results (training, publications, workshops, community meetings, academic fora, to numerous policy and political groups in a variety of local, regional, and national policy fora).
- ▶ Training (in general; of students who become government officials).
- ▶ Capacity building to understand/influence public policy.
- ▶ Researchers participating in policy reform discussions.
- ▶ Developing links between researchers, policy makers, decision-makers, business, international institutions, and stakeholders.
- ▶ Using a participatory approach involving local people.
- ▶ Improved access to information and communication technologies.
- ▶ Collaboration among other researchers and institutions.
- ▶ Having a senior woman researcher on the team.
- ▶ Providing equal access of men and women into programs.
- ▶ Development of tools (models, better technologies, standards, remote sensing).
- ▶ Demonstration of value for proposed change.

### **3.4.4 Project Management**

Information addressing project management issues is revealed in at least 8 questions in the PCR (ie. Questions 6, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17).

#### **3.4.4.1 Financial and Timing Issues**

Financial data reveals that 60% of the sampled projects finished under-budget and that an estimated \$1,765,000 were tied up in these projects but never used. 71% of the projects were longer than planned by an average of 20 months. Less than a third of the under-budget projects were accompanied by comments, thereby providing explanations for only about \$122,000 of the under-runs. No comment, for example, is provided to explain the discrepancy of close to a million dollars in the budget of a single project. The two projects which had an overrun were explained.

#### **3.4.4.2 External Factors Which Affect Project Management**

Just over half of the PCRs reported no impact of external factors on project management, while 33% reported a negative impact. The remainder experienced either a positive impact or both a positive and negative impact.

Almost all of the comments associated with a positive impact identified a positive political climate as fostering collaborations or the interest for carrying out research per se. One PCR referred to

higher than expected external funding as creating a positive impact, and another referred to the positive impact that the publicity over a questionable informed consent process had in focussing the projects' attention to this issue and increasing the female representation on the protocol screening board.

A small grants network approach was suggested as one way to minimize the risk of having negative external impacts on the project by spreading the risk across many countries which minimizes IDRC's dependence upon the situation in individual countries. This approach also means that researchers receive their grants directly, thus by-passing sometimes problematic institutional environments where they exist (000882).

All but one of the PCRs which reported a negative impact described the external factor which caused the impact in the notes field and these can be grouped into three categories:

- ▶ Problems with recipient staffing or institutional affairs (addressed by more than half the comments).
- ▶ Political instability or war (addressed by about one-third of the comments); and
- ▶ Bureaucratic difficulties, weather, change in national policies affecting utilization of results, and changes in IDRC programming and staffing as having a negative impact on project management.

### **3.4.4.3 IDRC Management Issues**

90% of the sampled projects were considered to have been satisfactorily managed by IDRC both technically and administratively, although comments associated with these ratings from Question 12a reveal that management could have been better in several cases. All unsatisfactory ratings were accompanied with comments which explain the rating and provide some insight into why management was unsatisfactory and how it might have been avoided or improved upon. Many insights on factors which facilitated or hindered satisfactory management of a project by IDRC are provided in comments associated with this question and several others in the PCRs. These insights are relevant at both the program and corporate level and are listed in Appendix 1, under Question 12.

Several trends regarding project management by IDRC emerge from the comments in the various questions in the PCRs and can be summarized as follows:

- ▶ The need for increased monitoring was identified in 16% of the sampled PCRs.
- ▶ Some projects require a higher degree of monitoring than IDRC has been able to provide in recent years.
- ▶ Lack of monitoring was related to: loss of interest or priority of a project due to changes in programming or changes in the responsible PO; heavy workload; budgetary constraints; and difficulty of access (geographical, political, or security issues).
- ▶ The inability to monitor adequately was considered to have done a disservice to a number of projects.

- ▶ Monitoring, and in some cases more than usual monitoring, was critical to the success of some projects.
- ▶ There have been conscious decisions based on the high quality of the researchers and the expense of monitoring not to monitor projects which probably should have been monitored.
- ▶ 31% of the sampled PCRs indicated that project design could have been better.
- ▶ The need to have better addressed the dissemination of results from the onset was raised in 11% of the PCRs.
- ▶ The need to have better addressed the sustainability of a project or institution at the onset was raised in 5% of the PCRs.
- ▶ The need to increase networking/linkages among projects, regardless of whether they were part of a formal network or not, was expressed in 11% of the PCRs.
- ▶ Changes in programming was reported to have had a negative effect on 9% of the projects.
- ▶ The transfer of project management from one PO to another or of technical and administrative responsibilities from one unit to another was reported to have had a number of possible negative effects in at least 9% of the projects.
- ▶ It was suggested that there is a need for better management of project documents/files, and for a formal pass-over process between officers.
- ▶ Projects can be managed successfully despite numerous changes in the responsible PO as was reported in 7% of the PCRs.
- ▶ The importance of PO/IDRC involvement to the success of the project was explicitly highlighted in 16% of the projects.
- ▶ The contracting of a local specialist was a successful way to expand the reach of a project beyond the capabilities and capacity of the recipient.
- ▶ Attention must be paid to recipient 'buy-in', the establishment of a clear work plan for achieving cross-disciplinary objectives, and to the 'balance' of emphasis placed on the various disciplines in the design of inter-disciplinary projects.

#### **3.4.4.4 Recipient Management Issues**

81% of the projects were rated as satisfactorily managed both technically and administratively by recipients. A few comments explain in what way the management was satisfactory or not and identify a few factors which facilitated or hindered management which are listed in Appendix 1.

#### **3.4.4.5 Evaluation Issues**

Three questions in the PCR address evaluation issues (ie. Questions 15, 16, 17). 25% of the sampled PCRs report that the project was formally evaluated and all of these responses were accompanied by comments. A little more than half of the comments associated with these projects give very general reasons why an evaluation was done or provide the basic outcome of the evaluation (eg. "It was positive"). The full citation for completed evaluations is not provided in most cases. One comment identified the evaluation itself as a model of an ideal evaluation (000882).

Several PCRs indicate that an evaluation would contribute significantly to IDRC's corporate knowledge, although these responses sometimes refer to evaluations which have already been done and ones which need to be done, indicating possible ambiguity in the understanding of the question (see Appendix 1 for details). Suggested issues for evaluation can be grouped into the following categories:

- ▶ To learn from unique project design and research methodologies.
- ▶ To learn lessons about project sustainability.
- ▶ To better understand support mechanisms.
- ▶ To identify and understand impact/utilization of results.
- ▶ To help understand poor project performance.

Recommendations regarding evaluation were provided in 12% of the PCR and include:

- ▶ The need to think about longer term measurement of impact (eg. on policy making).
- ▶ The need to define markers of success that move beyond activities-oriented indicators to include qualitative and quantitative measures of success.
- ▶ In the case of proposals which go to the ethics review committee, there could be a clause put into the MGC and a contingency line in the budget which requires the research institution to perform an evaluation in partnership with IDRC should any issues arise.
- ▶ That evaluations should be planned for in the project design.

### **3.5 WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM PCRs ABOUT INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS OF DOING AND SUPPORTING RESEARCH**

#### **3.5.1 Recipient/Other Institutional Issues**

A great deal of institutional intelligence can be gleaned from the contents of the PCRs. Valuable and in some cases quite detailed information is scattered throughout PCRs on the expertise, capabilities, and strengths and weaknesses of both IDRC supported and various other northern and southern collaborating institutions and their personnel. This information could serve as an important resource for POs during project and program planning, and networking activities.

PCRs reveal that a great deal of capacity building in research skills, research management, capacity to sustain research, and capacity to link research to utilization of results at both the institutional and individual level occurred as a result of the projects. Much less research capacity building was reported for marginalised groups and women.

Some insight into what facilitated or hindered capacity building is provided in accompanying comments. For example, capacity building in research skills was very often attributed to specific training through degree programs or workshops while the ability to link research to utilization was enhanced through concerted efforts at the project design stage often with the involvement of users or beneficiaries.

On the other hand, building capacity in the ability to link research to utilization is reported to be

hindered in Africa by a lack of any relationship between research and policy circles.

Data and comments associated with Question 6 tell us about the extent of capacity building which occurred as a result of IDRC projects as a whole (and as such is useful for corporate level reporting and insight into how the Centre is doing under this mandate) and also can provide intelligence on the ability of recipient institutions and individuals to carry out research for future reference. Several associated comments address the significance of the capacity building and the current status of the institutions/researchers in a particular field or country (see Appendix 1 for specific examples).

### **3.5.2 IDRC Corporate Issues**

Several IDRC corporate issues emerge from the analysis of the sampled PCRs and their contents. Some of these have already been presented in previous sections of this report, others are taken from the analysis in Appendix 1. Examples of issues which may be of interest for discussion, investigation, or action might include some of the following:

- ▶ The question of who should fill in PCRs given the above discussion on the 'depth of reflection' that can be expected in a PCR vis a vis who fills it in?
- ▶ The efficiency and effectiveness of the current format of the PCR relative to both filling them in and using them as a resource for corporate reporting and learning, and for learning and as a source of intelligence at the program/project level (more on this in Section 4 below).
- ▶ How to encourage the awareness and use of the valuable information contained in many of the PCRs? (more on this in Section 4 below).
- ▶ The possible implications of some of the project management issues raised earlier in Section 3.4.4 on travel budget policy, risk management strategies, staffing decisions, quality control measures, programming decisions, and training/professional development.
- ▶ The contention that there may be disproportionate emphasis on social science relative to 'core' science in inter-disciplinary research projects and the suggestion that perhaps IDRC sometimes pushes inappropriately for inter-disciplinary research.
- ▶ The issue raised by a reviewer on the risk that rating objectives of a project which has a second phase could badly reflect on IDRC or on the researchers simply because the objectives may not have progressed as far as expected in the first phase and the PCR author is forced to rate its achievement poorly even though the project may be on track producing good results.
- ▶ The point made of the importance of long term support to develop capacity to a point where it could have an influence on national policy decisions.
- ▶ On the point made that inconsistencies in IDRC programming 'bedevilled' all Latin American urban water projects from the start and that a number of projects were neglected due to the demise of a program.
- ▶ The contention that current workload and budgets preclude POs from adequately monitoring ambitious (ie, high risk, high return) projects.
- ▶ The contention that IDRC was unable to establish a system of formal cooperation with a

project through the provision of information the Centre had generated through its experience because IDRC lacks the institutional structure to participate in that way, and the possible relevance of the PCR system to this.

- ▶ The observation that a lack of resources and recent changes in programming will prevent the follow-up on a number of successful projects.
- ▶ The possible implications of the observation that building of research skills capacity in women and marginalised groups was reported in only 29 and 25% respectively in the sampled PCRs on an institutional basis, and in about 44 and 28%, respectively in the sampled PCRs on an individual basis.
- ▶ The evaluation which was identified as a model of an ideal evaluation (000882).

77% of the projects rated in Question 18 of the sampled PCRs were considered worthwhile or very worthwhile. A little more than half of these ratings were explained with comments. Worthwhile was generally described in terms of:

- ▶ Providing an opportunity (eg. for the introduction of a technology or research area to a region, for an institution to attract funding).
- ▶ Responding to a need (eg. as inputs for national policy or planning, curriculum development).
- ▶ Significant capacity building.
- ▶ Useful outputs (eg. results, networks, a methodology, or a technology).

16% of the projects rated were considered of neutral worth, questionable worth or not worthwhile at all. Neither of the two 'not worthwhile' ratings were explained. The explanations given for the 'lack of worth' focus on:

- ▶ A lack of attention to the sustainability of newly created institutions or the research per se
- ▶ Limited interdisciplinary cooperation among collaborating institutions or researchers.
- ▶ Poor project design and execution.
- ▶ A lack of progress in general.
- ▶ Significant delays increasing 'hidden' costs to IDRC.

As many of the comments themselves point out, a number of the identified shortcomings are project design and management issues which might have been addressed and possibly minimized at the project development/decision making stage.

## **4.0 OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS ON THE DESIGN AND USE OF PCRS**

### **4.1 OBSERVATIONS ON THE SUITABILITY OF THE DESIGN OF THE PCR TO ITS JOINT OBJECTIVES OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS AND FOR CORPORATE LEARNING**

Since the reports of many IDRC supported projects remain unpublished, PCRs would seem to be an important source of information for POs and researchers on the current state of the art in international development research. That this information can be found in conjunction with the

project officers' assessment of the significance of the research and its outcomes and impact, and in the context in which the research was carried out (ie political, institutional, financial etc) adds significant value. Unfortunately, the significance of objectives or their achievement, actual research results and their quality and significance, the significance and impact of the research outputs, and a specific description of the actual or expected developmental impact, its scale, and significance are not provided in many of the PCRs. That this information is provided at all, however, can be considered somewhat of a bonus given that no questions addressing these aspects at the project specific level in the PCR actually ask for it. For example, Questions 1 requests a list, a rating and comments on objectives - but does not ask for or suggest what to comment on. Question 5 requests a list, a rating and a description of project outputs, but not for a discussion about the significance of the output or factors which could influence the quality or dissemination of the output. Question 8 asks the author "to indicate the area" where impact may occur - an "x" satisfies that request; it does not go on to ask how the impact might be influenced or why more impact didn't occur. Incidentally many of these aspects are prompted for in the "PCR Management System Activities" guide, however guides must be considered supplemental to and not fundamental to the understanding of the objective of a question - apparently the suggestions in the "guide" had little influence on the contents of many comments. Oddly, it seems to me that no question in the PCR actually asks about project research results per se, for no question asks for the results to be summarized or rated, and the rating of an objective does not necessarily reflect the quality of the research results nor does a rating of the report which presents them.

On who was involved/participated in the research process, the four questions which address this at the project specific level (3, 4b, 12, 13) ask for participants to be indicated, or for participation to be rated, but asks nothing about the significance or impact of any participation, or what may have fostered positive participation or collaboration. Similarly, while many questions provide opportunity to discuss project specific research methods (1, 2a, 2b, 4a, 5, 6,) none ask whether the innovative methods or the changed methods, for example, were appropriate for that application and why. Question 2a and 2b are closed questions (ie, "Did..." and "Have...") requiring only a yes/no response. While space for comments is provided, there are no prompts or specific requests on what to address in accompanying comments. Even in Question 12 on project management the request is to rate the management - it does not go on to explicitly ask for an explanation as to why it was unsatisfactory if rated as such. Indeed the words "why" and "how" do not occur once in the PCR.

Learning through POs' experiences with projects and their knowledge of the international development research arena about what may have helped or hindered the achievement of project objectives, or the quality and dissemination of research results and outputs, or the efficiency and quality of project management, or how to facilitate the process of influencing development is prompted for in Question 16 (Recommendations). The many thoughtful comments described in this report illustrate the potential for learning that is possible. Unfortunately, these recommendations on lessons learned from project specific experiences which can be applied at a corporate level are asked for late into the PCR (Question 16), after many of the issues have been (superficially) addressed by questions in the PCR at the project specific level. I believe there is evidence of "PCR fatigue" in many PCRs as comments from which recommendations could easily be formulated often show up early in the PCR but don't seem to 'make it' to Question 16. This fatigue is also apparent for

questions other than 16, for example evidence of development impact is often given in comments in a variety of questions in a single PCR where no response is given in Question 8 which specifically addresses development impact. Prompting to go to Recommendations directly after a project specific question on a theme may reduce the risk of 'PCR fatigue', and some experienced PCR authors apparently do jump around the PCR filling in recommendations as they go along (David Brooks, personal communication). It is not known how common this practice is, however. Easier still would be to have a general recommendation follow project specific reflection on the same topic.

There is evidence that there is ambiguity in the meaning of several PCR questions which makes their value questionable and may also lead to a sense of frustration in the PCR author as some questions may appear to be the same or irrelevant to the issue at hand. Ambiguity with the two questions addressing participatory and interdisciplinary research is indicated by the responses and may stem in part from different understandings of these two approaches and in part from the use of the word "genuine" in the question (see section 3.4.1 above). There is also evidence in the comments that there may be some confusion over Questions 6e and 6f (in terms of who is gaining the capacity and in what), Question 13, and in the difference between Questions 15 and 17 addressing evaluation (see Appendix 1 for a full discussion).

As highlighted in earlier sections of this report, information about any one of the 'themes' used in this report to discuss the contents of the sampled PCRs can be found in comments under several PCR questions. These questions are usually not consecutively sequenced. It seems that consolidating related project specific questions around similar themes or topics, having requests for generic corporate level recommendations immediately following related project specific reflections, and rewording PCR questions to be opened-ended and specifically ask for the information required to address the objectives of the PCR, may have a number of positive effects such as :

- ▶ Improve the efficiency of effort by helping the PCR author to concentrate effort and reflect on the many aspects of any one issue (for eg. Who are the stakeholders? What was their role? How was their input solicited? How did their involvement affect the overall research process? What was the significance of this input? How can the process be improved upon?), all at one time.
- ▶ Allow for deep reflection at the project level and then immediately transform that reflection into broader, corporate level recommendations.
- ▶ Reduce the number of questions in the PCR.
- ▶ Minimize any possible negative effects of "PCR fatigue" caused by a possible perception that the same question is being asked several times or by the fact that several themes are revisited more than once in the course of filling in a PCR.
- ▶ Make it easier to analyse and draw lessons from a batch of PCRs if responses to 'different aspects of one issue' are all in one place.

## **4.2 REFLECTIONS ON THE ANALYSIS AND USE OF PCRs**

A lot of different information and knowledge can be obtained from PCRs. In fact, the range of information provided on so many aspects of a single theme in so many different places in a PCR



made the analysis and consolidation of this information for consumption quite time consuming. There seems to be sufficient evidence to suggest that the format of the PCR and the structure of the questions not only makes PCRs inefficient to fill in, but also inefficient to analyse or use.

Reading across PCRs question by question allows one to get a sense of the range of responses raised on an issue and also of the frequency of any single response. While a response which is made repeatedly may indicate the importance of the point, a lone comment can be just as important - it may have only come up in that PCR because of the circumstances and nature of that project and that PCR author. There is some risk associated with reading across PCRs as comments can be obscure, and often get more and more obscure as one gets to the last few questions of the PCR (possibly reflecting that the author assumes you are reading along in the same order as it is being filled out and/or reflecting "PCR fatigue"). Furthermore, reading across does not allow one to pick up the many gold nuggets hidden in 'misplaced' comments (for example in one project it was revealed under Question 6 - Capacity Building that one of the researchers became the Minister of Finance and implemented one of the projects' major policy recommendations - this information was not provided in Question 8 under Development Impact). Reading down a PCR allows the reader to get the whole story of the project and also avoids the above problems, although it is a less efficient way to tally up points about a single issue. Restructuring the PCR can only make "bulk" analysis easier. Better still would be to read each PCR as it is produced.

The radio-box/narrative structure is useful. The multiple choice response can focus initial thoughts about the presence or quality of something which can then be elaborated on in the narrative following open-ended, but specific, questions or prompts to provoke reflection. Radio-box responses are quick and easy to analyse for corporate reporting and intelligence gathering purposes.

PCRs in general are a valuable resource and learning tool. However, their overall value is limited by their current design, the limited information provided in some, and by the limited number of completed ones available (see Section 4.3 below on the status of PCRs). I believe that it will be critical to demonstrate the value of PCRs in order to promote their completion and use.

PCRs serve as a record of the project and as such can be an important resource for information about the current state of the art in international development research. In order to fulfill this role, the structure and the content of the questions of the PCR will need to be modified to include results for example, as discussed earlier in this report. Some of this information and the institutional intelligence contained in many of the PCRs, could be valuable input into project appraisals.

As a learning tool, PCRs must contain reflection, and therefore the questions need to be modified to solicit this, as discussed earlier in this report. In-depth and reflective recommendations will likely only be provided if there is evidence that their provision will lead to something. As such, the reading of PCRs must be compulsory for all program and corporate staff and be both acted upon and seen to have been acted upon. 'Action' may be following up on the many project specific action items or through discussion of more general recommendations and implementing change. PCRs could

provide an interesting mechanism to provoke debate on subject specific research, process, and IDRC programming and policy issues. Perhaps PCRs could be circulated as they are produced and discussed over a brown bag lunch or in a Program meeting once a month or so. Initial interest in PCRs could be sparked by getting POs to read a couple of good ones to illustrate their potential value, whatever the final format may become.

PCRs should also be useful to Communications/Public Relations staff at IDRC as several projects in the sampled PCRs were explicitly flagged as success stories which IDRC should be proud of or as a good example of one thing or another.

Finally, PCRs could easily serve as a monitoring tool where: achievements and difficulties for example with the research and its management, external factors, and institutional issues (eg. capacity baseline data against which to measure development) etc could be noted in the field and as reports and correspondence are received and reviewed over the course of the project. As such a PCR could also fulfil the role of a "formal pass-over tool" to other POs should the need to transfer a project arise.

As an aside, it is possible that the requirement to complete PCRs may have the positive side-effect of improving project design (for example the definition of objectives and expected outputs, mechanisms to influence dissemination of results and development impact, explicit plans to enhance collaboration in interdisciplinary projects), for if you know you have to evaluate your project on all these aspects, you may try to design it in such a way as to make that easier to do.

### 4.3 THE CURRENT STATUS OF COMPLETING PCRs

Table One in Appendix 1 contains statistics on the status of PCRs between January 1, 1997 and September 21, 2000, grouped by administrative office, branch and division based on data obtained from RADIUS. The following observations and conclusions can be drawn from the table:

- 1) Less than a third of the PCRs due to be completed were completed as of September 21, 2000.
- 2) There were about 474 outstanding PCRs Centre-wide as of September 21, 2000.
- 3) About 42% of these are assigned to HQ staff, and the remaining 58% to RO staff.
- 4) Proportionately, more than twice as many PCRs were completed at HQ than in all ROs taken together, although when the distribution of completed PCRs among ROs is accounted for, it is evident that not all ROs contributed equally toward the completion of PCRs.
- 5) As of September 21, 2000 ASRO and MERO had each completed 38% of their PCRs and LACRO 29%, while EARO, ROSA, and SARO had not completed any and only 3% of WARO's PCRs had been completed.
- 6) On average Centre-wide, it takes about 1.6 years to complete a PCR once it becomes due (although this number is conservative as the computer 'took' the September 21, 2000 parameter date and used it as the 'completion' date for those PCRs not yet completed. Using only completed projects in this calculation would have grossly underestimated the amount of time between due date and completion date as it would not have accounted for the period of time still running on outstanding PCRs).
- 7) Not all completed PCRs have been reviewed; Centre-wide 7% were in need of review as of September 21, 2000, although the percentage of PCRs in need of review varies quite a bit among ROs with, for example, 20% in need of review at MERO and none needing review at ASRO.
- 8) There is a Centre-wide average lag time of 80 days from the time of completing PCRs to reviewing them. This number is highly variable however, particularly among ROs, with MERO for example having an average lag time of 250 days and ASRO an average lag time of 61 days from PCR completion to review.
- 9) As of September 21, 2000, outstanding PCRs were on average more than 1½ years overdue Centre-wide, although this ranges greatly among administration offices from a low of about 280 days at ROSA to 693 days overdue at SARO.
- 10) All PCRs assigned to the 'old' divisions (ENR, HS, ISS and SS) have been completed and reviewed.

## 5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ There is currently a large back-log of uncompleted Project Completion Reports.
  - ▶ The detail and level of reflection in comments varies greatly among the 75 sampled PCRs.
  - ▶ PCRs in general are a valuable resource and learning tool. However, their overall value is limited by their current design, the limited information provided in some, and by the limited number of completed ones available.
  - ▶ Many of the sampled PCRs contain many 'gold nuggets' - valuable lessons, recommendations, and intelligence - which are useful at the project, program and corporate planning, management and policy levels.
  - ▶ PCRs can be useful to identify projects appropriate for publicity purposes.
  - ▶ The current design of PCRs is an insufficient and inefficient way to collect the information needed for it to meet its joint objectives of accountability for the use of public funds and for corporate learning.
  - ▶ It is recommended that PCR questions be reorganized and consolidated along themes, and reworded to be self explanatory and ask specific open-ended questions prompting for the desired information in order to:
    - Reduce ambiguity in understanding of the objective of a question.
    - Request for the information necessary to allow the PCR to meet its design objectives.
    - Improve the efficiency of effort by helping the PCR author concentrate effort and reflect on the many aspects of any one issue all at one time.
    - Allow for deep reflection at the project level and then immediately transform that reflection into broader, corporate level recommendations.
    - Reduce the number of questions in the PCR.
    - Minimize any possible negative effects of "PCR fatigue" caused by a possible perception that the same question is being asked several times or by the fact that several themes are revisited several times in the course of filling in a PCR.
    - Make it easier to analyse and draw lessons from PCRs.
  - ▶ It is recommended that information contained in any PCR guide be supplemental, and not fundamental, to the understanding of the objective of a question in the PCR.
  - ▶ To encourage the completion and use of PCRs, it is recommended that steps be taken to illustrate their potential value and that systems be put in place to ensure that PCRs get read by all staff, and are acted upon by the appropriate parties in an appropriate forum. Some suggestions for ways to promote the value and use of PCRs are provided in Section 4.2.
-

## APPENDIX 1: PCR QUESTION BY QUESTION CONTENT ANALYSIS.

**Question 1. Please list and comment on all project objectives:**

Data:

# of Ratings	# of Comments
Fell well below: 18/491 (4%)	18/18 ( 100%)*
Fell below: 51/491 (10%)	50/51 ( 98%)
Met: 331/491 (67%)	220/331 (66%)
Exceeded: 58/491 (12%)	54/58 (93%)
Greatly Exceeded: 5/491 (1%)	5/5 (100%)
No response: 28/491 (6%)	0/28 ( 0%)
Total: 463 ratings/491 objectives (94%)	343/491 (70%)

\* three notes fields were blank but adequately explained in comment under a previous objective.

### Content analysis:

94 % of the objectives in all 75 projects sampled are provided with achievement ratings. About 2/3 of these ratings are either explained or accompanied by evidence to justify the ratings in associated comments, although both the explanation and the evidence to support the rating are only provided together about 60% of the time.

### **Examples of comments that explain or provide evidence to justify the rating of an objective:**

Objective: "To make a series of policy-oriented recommendations."

Comment: "The pitfalls of privatization and some remedies to counteract their negative effects on service utilization are highlighted in the final chapter". (001051)

Objective: "To support a small grants programme for a network of researchers and consultants in Canada and in developing countries to execute baseline studies on opportunities for developing country products to meet the market needs of Canadian companies in the food industry."

Comment: "Researchers and consultants were employed from both Canada and developing countries to examine and evaluate opportunities for various products such as honey from Mexico, mangoes from Guatemala, etc." (002643)

Text Box 1

Most of these comments also describe, in general terms, what the researchers did or how they went about achieving the objective, although, as the following examples show, this was done with varying amounts of detail.

**Examples of comments providing a general description of how an objective was achieved:**

Objective: "To determine of health care services utilization in each of the three countries."

Comment: "Through household surveys". (001051)

Objective: "To study the appropriateness of the contents, quality and relevance of workers' education in Ecuador to the needs of technological change in small industry sector."

Comment: "This objective was satisfactorily achieved through a series of analysis of the social, psychological, pedagogical, technological and institutional factors involved in the provision of technical education. These analysis were complemented with the study of small enterprises needs and the opinion of managers. (928757)

Text Box 2

Actual results of an objective are only provided for about 16 % of the rated objectives, and again are provided with varying amounts of detail as illustrated in the following examples:

**Examples of comments providing the results of an objective:**

Objective: "Using the methodology of a randomized placebo-controlled trial, where one treatment group receives oral iron supplementation and the other treatment group receives a look-alike placebo: To compare the proportion positive for malaria infection between the treatment groups."

Comment: "Objective was met. Excess risk for malaria by all parameters of malaria infection was approximately 10% for anemic pregnant women and children between 6 months and 7 years. For school children in the second research site, the trend toward increased malaria risk was not statistically significant". (000236)

Objective: "To define the requirements for the establishment of viable small-scale food processing enterprises in rural areas".

Comment: "Applied research and training in the agroindustry centre produced the following results: technical improvement in the 4 centre processing plants; improved quality and presentation; increased sales; a well-trained team in FIDAR; a self-sustaining operation in FIDAR with respect to enterprise operations and maintenance; income was not sufficient to carry the research, training and monitoring activities of FIDAR; it was not possible to reconcile simultaneous commercial operations and community service considering the required investments in capital items, more dedicated personel, advertising etc.; feasibility studies and the establishment of a small maize milling plant, the products of which are in demand by a group of women who make and sell 'arepas' commercially and the use of the byproducts for animal feed; some outputs are sold to supermarkets in Cali; feasibility studies and the establishment of a grain cleaning and packaging plant to supply chain stores and supermarkets in urban areas; feasibility studies of processing and marketing aromatic and medicinal plants. The above activities were documented and contributed to a better understanding and promotion of the requirements for establishing small rural food processing enterprises." (890119)

Text Box 3

The relative significance of an objective and/or of its level of achievement is provided for a little over 30% of all rated objectives.

**Examples of comments addressing the significance of an objective and/or of its level of achievement:**

**Objective:** "To undertake an indepth analysis of the three way trade-off between growth, fiscal revenues, and environmental protection in the Andean countries of Peru, Chile, and Bolivia."

**Comment:** "Although the project produced some useful outputs, this objective was not systematically addressed. One reason for this was the lack of an adequate data base for quantitative analysis of tradeoffs in any of the three countries, particularly in Bolivia and Peru. As a result, the projects focused to a greater extent than anticipated on descriptive work and on analytical treatment of the use of market based incentives for pollution control. (000351)

**Objective:** "Promotion of GIS activities in Bihar and other states in India."

**Comment:** "Promotion was carried out in a number of ways, including presentations at various meetings and conferences. The two main tools of dissemination were workshops and lectures. Two state-level workshops were held on GIS and economic development. Both were well attended (For more details see Section 5, Project Outputs). As well, a series of lectures by eminent professionals and experts was organized. The lectures were attended by administrators, practitioners and the like. Moreover the series generated positive media coverage. (For more details see Section 5, Project Outputs). As a result of all these activities, GIS technology is now known all over Bihar and is being used by planners of the state." (920611)

Text Box 4

Alt

though almost all of the 'Exceeded' or 'Greatly Exceeded' ratings had notes associated with them, the comments were not very detailed. Explanations of ratings that were provided refer in general to a high quality and/or quantity of outputs, the significant impact of the outcome (e.g. capacity building, influencing policy, introduction of a technology), and achievement beyond expectations given the socio-political or institutional environment, or the objective itself.

About 14% of all objectives carried out in the 75 sampled projects were rated below 'Met'. 'Fell Below' or 'Fell Well Below' ratings were found to be scattered occasionally among successfully achieved objectives within the same project or were clumped where all or most of a single project's objectives were not achieved. Indeed, almost half of the below 'met' ratings belong to only 8 projects, or put another way, most or all of the objectives for each of these eight projects were not achieved. Comments were provided in all eight projects which offer some explanation to the systemic limited achievement of many of the projects' objectives and they are:

- ▶ a lack of an adequate data base to carry out research (reported in 2 projects: once reported for a quantitative analysis of environmental protection and fiscal policy for a comparative study in Bolivia, Peru, and Chile; and once for primary data on environmental and natural resource information in Columbia);
- ▶ IDRC project management shortcomings (reported in 4 projects but for several objectives) (e.g.

overly ambitious objective relative to time/capability of researchers - 3x); inappropriate objectives as identified by IDRC -1x, inadequate project monitoring -1x); insufficient project support from IDRC (needed more linking with other projects -1x));

- ▶ no substantive reports ever received (reported in 1 project);
- ▶ closure of university delayed training component by 9 months (reported in 1 project);
- ▶ implementing agency of the project ceased to exist during project, reasons not understood (reported in 1 PCR);
- ▶ too early in the process for the objectives to be achieved (reported in 1 project).

Indeed this last observation led to the cautionary remark by the final reviewer in his comments which state:

**Excerpt from final reviewer's comment regarding rating scheme of objectives:**

"...However, the review does raise an issue with respect to the rating scheme for specific objectives. Note that in several cases Enis was forced to indicate that the work to date fell below expectations, but that this rating was not meant to reflect badly on the project but merely to indicate that work had not progressed far enough to meet the objective. This suggests that we may need a category (applicable only to projects for which a second phase is planned) of "In Progress". Among other things, I fear that in today's world of quantified everything, someone might tally up all the projects that did not meet objectives, and that this could badly reflect on IDRC or on the researchers." (David Brooks, 000378).

Text Box 5

Of the comments addressing the remaining poor ratings, about half provide some kind of explanation for the lack of achievement while the remaining comments simply state that the objective was not done or that it was difficult to determine the level of achievement. Notes which attempt to explain the lack of achievement refer to :

- ▶ responsible project member left (2/17);
- ▶ recipient or IDRC research management issues (9/17) (e.g. ran out of time - e.g. project workload or workload from other commitments (3x); integration of social science required to achieve objective didn't occur (2x); poor project design (2x); poor research team dynamics and lack of commitment by researchers (1x); recipient unable to secure external funds (1x));
- ▶ inadequate project monitoring (1/17);
- ▶ capacity development did not occur as fast as expected (2/17);
- ▶ lack of cooperation/communication with collaborators (3/17).

None of the 'No Response' ratings had notes associated with them. All 28 'No Response' ratings occur in only 5 PCRs, all of which have the same responsible PO assigned. In two of the five PCRs,  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the projects' objectives have no rating while in 3 other PCRs none of the projects' objectives were rated.

**Question 2a) Did this project develop or test a new or innovative methodology?**



Data:

# of responses	# of substantive comments*
yes: 32/75 (43%)	32/32 (100%)
no: 37/75 (49%)	9/37 ( 24%)
no response: 5/75 ( 7%)	0/5 ( 0%)
no checkmark: 1/75 ( 1%)	1/1 (100%)

\* substantive meaning comments provide more information than the checkmark.

#### Content analysis:

43% of the PCRs identified the project as having developed or tested a new or innovative methodology, although the percentage may actually be closer to 50% since five of the comments associated with an answer of 'no' indicated that the project involved a well known methodology that was new to the country or sector or was applied in an innovative way - conditions which were often described for 'new or innovative' methodologies.

All of the 'yes' responses were accompanied by comments. All but one of the comments associated with 'yes' responses describe/identify the 'new' methodology (for eg. "The project contributed to the comprehensive analysis of educational reform processes by including in the study of the changes in education being implemented in the country areas of curriculum development, analysis of teachers training systems, and school administration and management" (920415)), although only about 72% of the comments explain the novelty of the methodology (for eg. "The project produced the first economic general equilibrium model in Columbia dealing with environmental issues..." (000763)).

Of those comments which provided the information (22 comments), about half of the methodologies were known methods but were new to the country, region, or sector of application and the other half were new methods or approaches to addressing a problem per se. As far as I can tell, about half of the 'innovative' methodologies involved hard technologies (internet, software, remote sensing) and the other half were 'soft' research methodologies (in part reflecting the mix of subject areas represented by the PCRs). About half of the described 'soft' research methodologies involved innovative ways to involve beneficiaries into the project process or accessing local knowledge or information, and the other half involved innovative ways of analysing a problem (e.g. combining disciplines or analytical tools in new or unconventional ways).

**Examples of comments addressing innovative methodologies:**

- "The project design of a group of researchers acting in their personal capabilities was a hypothesis of the Social Sciences Division which was to test the innovativeness and creativity of a body of researchers, not restrained by bureaucratic policies and institutional structures." (870207);
- "Expert systems are a new technology worldwide" (890262);
- "On-farm research and participatory breeding and evaluation work not widely known in Vietnam before the start of this project and similar IDRC projects" (900342);
- "It was innovative in two ways. First it brought researchers together who were looking at a problem from a long-run and a short-run perspective. Second, it placed great emphasis on political economy and administrative problems." (921100);
- "The project has developed a participatory and collective working method, which is rare in the area of NICT. Highlights are the stress placed on tutoring, role models and support for participants, and women training women." (001269).

Text Box 6

While the description of the novelty in many cases provides an indication of the importance and "cutting edge" nature of the methodologies employed and the research itself, it also suggests an element of risk. Only about 9% of the comments indicate whether the 'innovative methodology' was appropriate or successful.

**Examples of comments describing the appropriateness of an innovative methodology:**

- "At the time the original project (89-0077) was conceived, the whole notion of developing parks and reserves policy in collaboration with local people was new. (The formal evaluation refers to the approach as 'ground-breaking'). However, this approach was the core of the strategy on the Nepal side and, from everything that I can learn, it was followed to the greatest extent possible. (Participatory approaches were less relevant on the Tibet side of the reserve; although much larger in area, it is very lightly populated because of the altitude). Suffice it to say that the evidence for gain lies in the fact that, when the area became the newest national park in Nepal, it was the first park created without the need for the Nepalese army to intervene)." (910076)
- "The concept of marketing is well known, however, it was not known if it could apply as such to management literature and if income could be generated from these products. Although conventional marketing techniques were found to be applicable to the marketing of information products and services and these very techniques were applied during the project, it also made use of e-mail to market its information products." (920618).
- "Lao PDR was just opening up to other countries at the beginning of the project. The methodology was very innovative because it was the first project of this kind in Lao PDR. The dpt software development enabled organizations in Laos to publish using microcomputers for the first time in the country. The first government science and technology periodical was issued. Database management software cds/isis was introduced in Laos libraries." (910178)

Text Box 7

It seems this is a great opportunity to benefit from hindsight and actually request that comments for question 2a provide a general assessment as to whether, in fact, the innovative approach was a good choice for that application and if not, why not.

**Question 2b) Have there been any changes in the originally proposed methodology during the implementation of this project?**

Data:

# of responses	# of substantive comments*
Yes: 20/75 (26%)	20/20 (100%)
No: 50/75 (67%)	18/50 ( 36%)
No response: 5/75 ( 7%)	0/5 ( 0%)

\* substantive meaning comments provide more information than the checkmark.

Content analysis:

Half of the 'No' comments indicate that changes in methods were only "minor" in nature or that methods didn't change per se but were adapted or refined as required by the implementation of the project. The remaining half refer to a shift in the emphasis of the research, dropping objectives, reducing sample sizes, or objectives simply not getting done - changes which were used to describe a 'yes' response.

Not a lot of detail is provided in the comments of this question (eg. "The methodology was adjusted to conform to the more modest objectives pursued in practice by the project." (000351). About three quarters of the comments do briefly describe how the method was modified (eg. "The development and implementation of Freenet was not foreseen in the original proposal" (910146), while about a third of them describe the extent of the changes, at what stage in the project the modifications occurred, or why the changes had to be made ("The original project design involved a larger survey, but was modified to consist of smaller surveys and interviews in several "case study" areas. This enabled the researchers to do comparative analysis, and to adapt the field work to changing political conditions and opportunities in different parts of the Greater Durban region" (900087)).

The reasons given for changes in the methodology can generally be grouped into two categories: 1) adjustments to factors external to the project and 2) adjustments to internal project planning or management issues. Comments under each include:

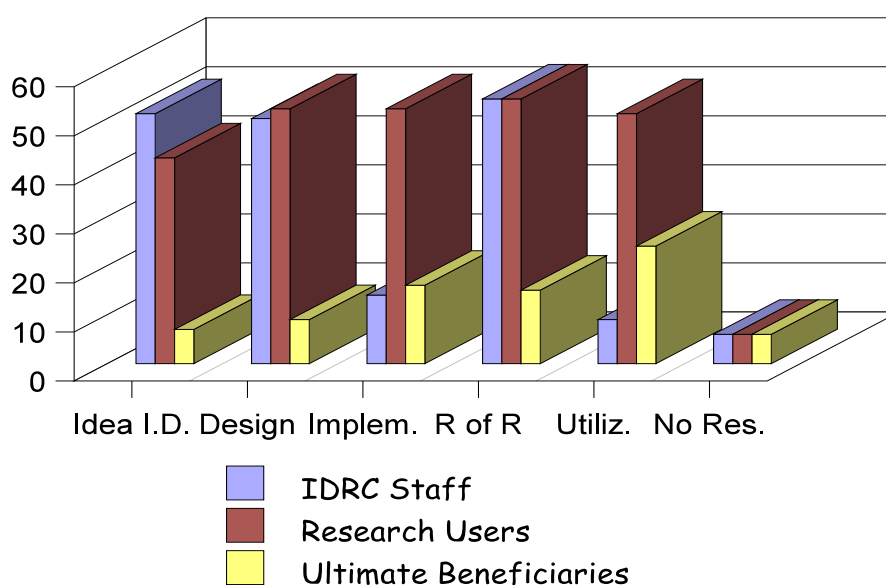
- ▶ External causes:
  - ▶ difficulties obtaining data from unavailable written reports;
  - ▶ changes to survey structure to adjust to changing political conditions;
  - ▶ change in test site required due lack of collaboration with government approval body;
  - ▶ changes to take advantage of the rise of the internet;
  - ▶ the network changed its market niche from an informatics network to an information network to address the sustainability of a developed independent informatics network with the entry of more private networks in the country.

- Internal causes:
  - inadequate flexibility and incompatibility of selected software;
  - difficulties among members of collaborating team lead one group to adjust work to what their team was able and needed to accomplish.

It is interesting to note that “a valuable methodological work aimed at measuring education quality” (928757) was highlighted in the sixth specific objective of a project, although no reference to this worthwhile methodology was mentioned under Question 2 - methodology, Question 16 - recommendations on methodology, Question 18 - worthwhile or Question 19 - other.

**Question 3. Please indicate the areas in which people other than the research team were involved in this project:**

Data:



**Figure 1:** Comparison of involvement of IDRC staff, research users and ultimate beneficiaries in various stages of the project cycle for 75 selected projects (modified from M. Balcom's PCR report 24/08/2000, Evaluation Unit).

**# of responses:** 69/75 (92%)

**# of comments:** 50/75 (66%)

#### Content analysis:

Not surprisingly, Figure 1 shows that IDRC staff are frequently involved in project idea identification, project design, and the review of research results, and not often involved in project implementation or result utilization. Beneficiary involvement in project idea identification, project design, and the review of research results is considerably less than that of IDRC staff, but more so in project implementation and result utilization. Specifically, beneficiaries were involved in idea identification and project design in 10% and 13% respectively of the projects which answered this

question (69/75). This number increases to 23% for beneficiary involvement in project implementation and to 22% involvement in the review of research results. Beneficiaries are involved in the utilization of results in 35% of the projects which answered this question.

About 70% of the comments identify the IDRC staff, research user, or beneficiary group involved in the various project phases (eg. "The main congress of trade unions, COS ATU, was actively involved in the early stages of project design and again in the review of results." (910036); "The main participants throughout the project were policy makers, school official and teachers. They participated at various stages of the project implementation (920415)).

Not quite 40% of the comments identify "what the participant did" in more specific terms than the categories in the table to be checked. (eg. "The participants in the training workshops were involved in the pre training work on the issues to be addressed in the curriculum, and the TORs for the instructors. The Centre enabled one of the designers to attend a session in Toronto..".(920618); "IDRC staff: were involved in proposal design and in review of reports. Research users: researchers claim to have consulted community managers on the survey design and municipal authorities provided material and human resources. Ultimate beneficiaries: volunteered for the pilot project, participated in a survey, were given an opportunity to suggest preferred option for collection (wagon, truck or waste collection piles); community involved in final waste collection program." (920017).

Comments suggest that:

- ▶ users in Information Communication Technology projects were often involved in some kind of feasibility analysis (market, applicability, benefits) and actual development or testing of the products;
- ▶ users in Training Development projects were often involved in the design, pilot testing and evaluation of developed courses or curricula;
- ▶ users in other research projects were involved in:
  - ▶ setting research priorities and testing ideas or reviewing survey questions;
  - ▶ were research subjects;
  - ▶ monitored and peer reviewed results;
  - ▶ and identified priority actions to undertake during implementation;
- ▶ beneficiaries were involved in:
  - ▶ expressing needs;
  - ▶ identifying research priority areas;
  - ▶ project design in general;
  - ▶ field research/testing;
  - ▶ discussion of results;
  - ▶ and identifying actions to be taken during implementation.

Only about 28% of the comments identified 'the mechanism' of participant involvement. Workshops and surveys/evaluations were the most commonly used mechanism for involvement for both beneficiaries and user groups, while advisory committees, Boards, in-depth interviews, and focus groups were used less frequently.

While there are a few passing comments stating explicitly that beneficiaries were not involved or should have been involved, the impact of the 'involvement', or lack thereof, is rarely addressed in comments (~6%). Most of the comments that do refer to impact refer to the impact that IDRC staff had in, for example, redefining the goal of an initiative based on previous IDRC experience, or redirecting the approach of research from a uni-disciplinary to multi-disciplinary one or from one of description to analysis of alternatives. In one case another Donor was identified as heavily involved providing advice and leadership. Only one comment offered critical comment as to the impact of identified involvement and is provided among other comments in the text box below (although more on this impact and on the impact of several other cases of involvement is offered under Questions 4a, 16, 18, and 19 - without cross reference - which suggests implications for reading longitudinally, text search capability, and the proximity of questions to each other to focus reflection). Some examples of comments reflecting on the impact of involvement follow:

**Examples of comments reflecting on the impact of "others" involvement:**

- "Directly and indirectly (through support to two consultants), IDRC contributed to the development of the proposal. In particular, IDRC attempted to "push" the project to include cross-disciplinary linkages with the social sciences. Two workshops were held with local farmers to share research results and encourage adoption of successful techniques. No clear users of the research are identified in the proposal or the reports, nor are there any linkages with potential users (such as local gov't extension agencies) apparent. Comments in various reports indicate that some perceived the university-operated station to be operating in isolation, and that "turf" conflicts were involved between the university and the Ministry of Forestry." (910094).
- "In terms of course design and implementation, the Chinese worked closely with University of Toronto in designing a course that would be responsive to their own needs and assisted with the execution of the course in China. Through-out its support to the HCEMS program , IDRC has provided inputs geared at strengthening course content. In terms of review of results, the course is constantly modified in response to student evaluations. In terms of utilization, it is anticipated that graduates will utilize the skills acquired through the course to positively affect health policy creation in their own countries. A subset of graduates is invited each year to attend the INCLEN annual meeting to address how they are actually applying the skills acquired thorough the program." (910241).

Text Box 8

It is difficult to draw many lessons from the comments in Question 3 for a few reasons:

- ▶ there is very little reference to the impact of the identified involvement given in question 3 (although as will be discussed elsewhere in this report some of the "involvement" was in fact identified in later questions as significant to either the success or under-achievement of some projects and as such there are lessons to be learned);
- ▶ the inconsistency in the contents of the comments - sometimes the participants and the mechanisms are identified but not the purpose of the involvement, or the purpose is identified but not the mechanism or the impact of the involvement - makes it difficult to come to any

conclusions.

It is interesting to note that the involvement of IDRC/POs was highlighted as critical to the achievements of the project in various questions of 12 different PCRs.

**Question 4a) Please indicate whether this project was genuinely interdisciplinary and whether the experience was satisfactory or not:**

Data:

# of responses	# of substantive comments*
Yes interdisciplinary: 42/75 projects (56%)	38/42 (90%)
Not interdisciplinary: 28/75 projects (37%)	4/28 (14%)
No response: 5/75 projects (7%)	0/5 (0%)

\* substantive meaning comments provide more information than the checkmark.

Of the projects identified as interdisciplinary, # of responses for the experience	# of substantive comments*
Satisfactory: 38/42 (91%)	34/38 (89%)
Unsatisfactory: 3/42 (7%)	3/3 (100%)
Not rated: 1/42 (2%)	1/1 (100%)
Total: 42/42	38/42 (91%)

\* substantive meaning comments provide more information than the checkmark.

#### Content analysis:

A little over half of the comments list the collaborating disciplines involved in the project. The wide range of disciplines and 'manifestations' of interdisciplinary collaboration are reflected in the following comments:

- ▶ "The project involved groups from the sectors academia, government, and private industry." (000014);
- ▶ "Country research teams, research hypotheses, and the underlying theoretical model made of this study a truly interdisciplinary project." [sic] (001051);
- ▶ "This project represented a collaboration between the Social Sciences and the Information Sciences." (870207);
- ▶ "The project represented a collaboration between information communication technology specialists and social scientists." (003001)
- ▶ "For this kind of training the interdisciplinary character was provided by the mix of NGOs (aid, relief, humanitarian) and by the range of sectors (aid, arts and culture)." 920810).

- ▶ "It was interdisciplinary in bringing together different parts of the economic discipline which rarely work together." (921100)
- ▶ "Multi-disciplinary involving economists, sociologists and biologists all working together." (910299)
- ▶ "The authors of the papers have varying academic backgrounds, spanning from economics to library science." (928456).
- ▶ "This research assessed the epidemiological, entomological, biomedical, and sociological aspects of malaria control through impregnated bednets. As such, individuals from all of these disciplines were represented on the research team." (920232).

One note explicitly identifies the project as a good example of collaboration between disciplines and another as a good example of an interdisciplinary approach to research, however details about what makes those projects good examples are not provided in either case. About 7% of the comments briefly address the roles of the disciplines in the research (eg. socio-economic research allowed for the appropriate application of the spatial data technology tools to existing local and regional conditions) and another ~7% referred to the significance of the experience. Examples of such comments follow:

**Examples of comments which address the significance of the interdisciplinary experience:**

- "The project came to IDRC as a proposal from the Environmental Research Centre at RRS, but this group interpreted 'environment' strictly from a biological perspective. We insisted that the newly formed social sciences group at RRS also be involved, and it eventually fell within the purview of the Industrial Studies Group. As we understand it, this was the first such natural science/social science collaboration at RRS. Thus to say that the results were not entirely satisfactory is accurate, but probably not relevant. In fact, a great deal was accomplished." (910045).
- "Significant attempts were made by IDRC to push the project to take a more interdisciplinary approach toward the study of local land resource management. These expectations (of IDRC) are clearly reflected in its project appraisal: e.g. "This will be the first University programme to provide staff and students in the biological sciences with training in social science." However, little collaboration took place with other University faculties or departments, and the research remained focussed on biophysical aspects of resource management." (910094).

Text Box 9

The two comments in the text box above may indicate a need to use caution in interpreting the radio-box responses for this question. The first comment in the box had a "yes interdisciplinary" checkmark and an "unsatisfactory" rating; the second comment had a "not interdisciplinary" checkmark and an "unsatisfactory" rating. Comments provided elsewhere in the PCR for the latter case indicate that the project was intended to be interdisciplinary. This indicates there may be some ambiguity in the question.

The issue of IDRC 'encouraging' the integration of disciplines, very often social sciences into biophysical sciences, prompted the following comments from final reviewers:



**Final reviewers' comments on risks associated with the approach sometimes used lately at IDRC to integrate social sciences into scientific and engineering projects:**

- "...Specific objective 1 - "to determine the appropriateness and sustainability of the pond and wetland treatment option in Battambang." was met, but only barely, because the project reveals few scientific or technical lessons about engineered wetlands. Waste stabilization ponds are a well-established technology, which were a necessary upstream component of the project. The innovative component really worth studying was the downstream wetland. But insufficient attention, and budget (lab tests) was devoted to a methodological study of it. Only three sets of water quality tests were performed....Much of the final report discussion of water quality is taken straight from a text book. Helminths, or their eggs, major indicators of wastewater reuse, were not measured in these ponds....In my opinion, these shortcomings arise mainly because the PO who originally developed the project had no experience in wastewater treatment and thus project methodology, budget, and monitoring did not adequately address this aspect of the project.

This finding reflects a trend common to some recent IDRC projects - as POs ensure that social aspects, formerly neglected in scientific or engineering projects, are explored, insufficient attention or budget is paid to the core-science or engineering research methodology, central to the project. And if the science is done wrong, the validity of the social lessons-learned are questionable." (Naser Faruqi, 001575).

- "Note the careful monitoring required and failure due to the lack of buy in by the institution to IDRC's imposed goals." (Joachim Voss, 910094).

Text Box 10

About 9% of the comments vaguely explain how (ie, in what way) the interdisciplinary experience was satisfactory or not (eg. group worked well together; results were obtained; a full and meaningful integration of social science expertise was not achieved; little collaboration occurred). Reflection on what fostered good collaboration or why more collaboration did not occur is not provided. Even for a project which is described as "A good example of collaboration involving engineers and economists." (000351), no insights are provided as to what fostered this strong collaboration. It seems this is a great opportunity to benefit from hindsight and actually request that comments for Question 4a provide insight into mechanisms/factors that facilitate or hinder interdisciplinary collaboration.

One comment associated with a satisfactory interdisciplinary experience does provided a detailed description of the mechanism which co-ordinates and promotes a multi-disciplinary and inter-sectoral research strategy within the health sector. Three institutions in Uganda are highlighted for their multi-disciplinary and community oriented approach to health research (000378).

As an aside, it is interesting to note that the term multi-disciplinary was used in about 8 comments. Three of these made an explicit distinction between a multi-disciplinary approach and an interdisciplinary one.

**Question 4b) Please indicate whether this project was genuinely participatory and whether the experience was satisfactory or not:**

Data:

# of responses	# of comments
Yes participatory: 27/75 projects (36%)	23/27 (85%)
Not participatory: 43/75 projects (57%)	11/43 (26%)
No response: 5/75 projects (7%)	0/5 (0%)

Of the projects identified as participatory, # of responses for the experience	# of comments
Satisfactory: 22/27 (81%)	18/22 (82%)
Unsatisfactory: 3/27 (11%)	3/3 (100%)
Not rated: 2/27 (7%)	2/2 (100%)
Total: 42/42	23/27 (85%)

#### Content analysis:

More than half of the 'not participatory' comments either substantiated or restated the checkmark (eg. "The project not designed to be participatory."). A few of the 'not participatory' comments suggest that those projects would have benefited from being participatory, and a few others indicated that while community input was sought at various stages of the project, they had no control over the research process - making the distinction between "responsive involvement to project initiatives" and "participation". The broad range of interpretations of participation is reflected in the following comments:

**Examples of comments which reflect the broad range of interpretations of participation:**

- "This project involves various country-based multi-member teams of researchers coordinated from the University of Western Ontario in Canada. In this light the project was participatory." (000300);
- "The project involved fairly close cooperation with government agencies responsible for environmental issues." (000763);
- "It was participatory in the sense of indepth interviewing of patients and households with Tuberculosis." (900149);
- "About half of the project's activities were carried out by other organizations." (910146);
- "The adoption and development of culture methods came from the farmers. Biographical sketches of farmers were used to determine key informants' perception to changes around them, especially changes in the livelihood activities of the people within the community." (910299);
- "Farmers involved in helping with collections and in an evaluation of these." (900342)
- "...this question may not be entirely relevant as this is not a research project. However, I will formulate my reply by saying that the courses were designed to function in a participatory manner and were structured in such a way as to maximize learning through participatory mechanisms. Each course emphasized group work and discussions, problem-solving sessions and hands-on exercises, while lectures were minimized. Daily evaluation meetings were held with facilitators and participants. Attempts were made to foster a sense that participants were learning from each other - for example, during the Health Research Methods Course, a resource room was set up so that students could share other resources that they found to be particularly useful to their studies. Following conclusion of the Basic Concepts in International Health module pilot-tested in Ethiopia in 1995, many workshop participants reported that it was their first exposure to participatory methods and many indicated that they were committed to introducing into their own work, the methods, specific exercises and content learned through the course..." (000394).

Text Box 11

Comments associated with unsatisfactory ratings do not address why the experience did not manage to be more participatory. (Rather they indicate that either the rating of the experience is actually unknown, that participation was achieved to varying degrees, or that users were not involved).

About 61% of the comments associated with satisfactory ratings identified who participated in the research. Participants were identified as potential users, communities, farmers, decision-makers, beneficiaries, women, government agencies, payers of health care, providers of health care, fisherman and their associations, and researchers.

About 39% (7/18) of the comments associated with satisfactory ratings refer to the stage at which there was significant participation. All phases of a project were represented.

The relative level of satisfaction of the experience was referred to in only a few comments, with one stating that the project was especially successful in this regard, and goes on to describe a workshop design which facilitated that participation.

Perhaps of more relevance from a lessons learned perspective are the eight notes which focus on aspects other than those suggested in the "PCR Management System Activities" guide and address i) what was done to facilitate participation ii) what lessons were learned about the process of participation and iii) the significance of the participation.

Project activities and factors identified as facilitating participation include:

- ▶ designing a projects' two national and one international workshops to be informal, thereby encouraging small groups to perform or discuss specific problems;
- ▶ cross-sectional surveys, discussions with community representatives such as NGOs or women's groups, and communication techniques that reach the public and convey information in a form that is understandable to the people;
- ▶ workshops to include users of the product to discuss 'modus operandi' and several monitoring and evaluation exercises;
- ▶ in a training context courses designed to function in a participatory manner emphasizing group work and discussions, problem-solving sessions, and hands-on exercises while minimizing lectures;
- ▶ a strong beneficiary oriented philosophy and operating principles at the institutional level.

One comment goes into considerable detail discussing lessons learned about the process of participation - for example in health research, representatives of the people are the most difficult to bring into an effective working partnership and furthermore, that experience to date reveals that countries with existing research structures and reliable health information systems tend to consult and involve the people in a later stage in the process than those countries with little or no research structures and information (000378).

**Comment on balancing the role of participation:**

"Research projects can never be totally participatory if they are to be efficient and effective. This project probably came as close to achieving the ideal as is possible because of the strong beneficiary oriented philosophy and operating principles of FUNDAEC." (890119).

Text Box 12

Only one comment in Question 4b provides details on the significance of the participatory experience:

**Comment on the significance of the participatory experience:**

"...The Philippines is an interesting case in point which clearly demonstrates the importance of involving the community at the beginning of the ENHR process. The initial determination of the country's health research priorities was made by a set of five "expert" groups, composed of policy makers, health professionals and researchers. Consultative meetings were only later held with community groups and the result was the identification of a different set of priorities than those determined by the experts. Consequently, the country's ENHR group had to be reorganized to reflect adequate representation by all three constituencies and the two sets of priorities had to be consolidated." (000378)

Text Box 13

As stated earlier in this report, sometimes the stakeholders and their role in a project are identified in Question 3 but the significance of this involvement is referred to in Question 4b or Question 16. (For example, one comment under 16d) Beneficiary Participation, states that the "Consultation of the local beneficiaries in defining the research agenda (arriving at acceptable waste management solution) was key to the project's immediate success" (920017). While this involvement was identified in both Question 3 and Question 4b, the importance of this involvement did not come out until Question 16).

Finally, caution should be taken in interpreting the initial checkmarks as to whether the project is "genuinely" participatory or not. It seems that the radio-box responses can indicate that either the project was planned to be participatory (and then was or was not) or that it was or was not participatory, planned or otherwise.

**Question 5: Please list and describe all project outputs:**

Data:

# of responses*	# of comments
Very good: 57/415 (14%)	About 60% of the outputs have comments associated with them (this provides only an approximate picture as sometimes comments are included in the description field, or the same comment is "implied" for a large number of outputs under the same project, although the comment may not actually be written out each time ).
Good: 216/415 (52%)	
Satisfactory: 123/415 (30%)	
Poor: 13/415 ( 3%)	
Very poor: 1/415 (<1%)	
No response: 5/415 ( 1%)	

\* these numbers are only approximate as sometimes one rating would correspond with several outputs, for example several papers which were not listed discretely.

What is most striking by the responses in this question is the high quality and variety of unique and important products produced through IDRC projects, and the varying level of detail provided to describe them. Four hundred and fifteen outputs were explicitly identified in the 75 selected projects, with 95% of those rated satisfactory or better (note: these numbers are only approximate as sometimes one rating would correspond to several outputs not listed discretely, for example 'one' output referred to 50 study papers collectively and in another 25 journal articles were referred to collectively).

Outputs range from analytical and decision frameworks, the development of methodologies and hard and soft technologies, establishment of information and communication systems, the creation of multi-disciplinary research teams and networks, the development of a birth control vaccine, publications of books and journal articles, videos production, national curricula development, to the reporting of research results and training of students, researchers, politicians and community members.

While comments are provided for a around 60% of the outputs, the content of these comments range from multiple page analysis of the results of research papers (eg. 002588; 000351) to a comment such as "see file for report".

About 30% of the ratings are explained, and information on the significance of the output or its impact is provided for about one quarter of the outputs.

The significance and impact of reported outputs are impressive and include:

- the training of large numbers of project personnel, graduate students, government employees and community members;
- many 'firsts': first time bringing together a unique group of individuals (researchers and/or policy makers for example) to discuss results/issues and solve problems; creation of new knowledge (for example the development or introduction of a new information and communication technology; the

first demonstration that women can be vaccinated to prevent pregnancy; new knowledge on the risks of malaria; equilibrium models);

- a large number of publications;
- an increased visibility of IDRC or IDC funded projects and project personnel, leading to new funding opportunities or networking;
- the use of a new planning tool, technology, or policy recommendation developed through an IDRC project at the community, municipal, national, or international level;
- significant capacity building, for example as the result of a project the group is now able to carry out the supported activity independently (for example produce regular State of the Environment Reports); or a project workshop resulted in improved output (papers or databases) and increased understanding of development/research issues.

A rough calculation suggests that less than half of "citable" outputs (ie, project reports, workshop proceedings, published articles, and videos for example) have been properly referenced. I also estimate that only about 10% of the comments provided information on the findings contained in the listed research reports and papers.

Four comments provide some insight into what helped or hindered the quality of the output:

- ▶ In the case of a course on health care, the participant/course fit was not always optimal. The participant selection process was described as a function of dual funding and reflected the different priorities of the two funding agencies (IDRC and Rockefeller). The recommendation is that future courses be organized around the priorities of a single funder ( 910241).
- ▶ The number of participants in an informal workshop should not be allowed to exceed 30 in order to keep it manageable (000032).
- ▶ The success of one project was attributed in part to the wide dissemination of reports in the country and their translation into local language (ie, Nepalese) which ensured outreach to groups and individuals often left out of national and economic policy discussions, particularly of externally funded projects (002588).
- ▶ Institutional and local level workshops as well as a national workshop were held for the various recipients of a Small Research Grants Program. This enabled the recipient agencies and their women-beneficiaries to present the results of their chosen income generating projects (individually or as a group) to their local government units, their families and friends, as well as SEARCA, which facilitated such activities (900046).

**Question 6. Please indicate the overall impact that the project had or can reasonably be**

expected to have on enhancing the capacity of recipient individuals and institutions in the following areas:

**6a: Research skills:**

Data:

Institutional - # of responses	Individual - # of responses
none: 1/75 (1%)	none: 1/75 (1%)
limited: 15/75 (20%)	limited: 4/75 (5%)
significant: 40/75 (53%)	significant: 38/75 (51%)
very significant: 12/75 (16%)	very significant: 23/75 (31%)
n/a: 2/75 (3%)	n/a: 4/75 (5%)
no response: 5/75 (7%)	no response: 5/75 (7%)

**#substantive comments: 62/75 (83%)**

Content analysis:

Close to 90% of the PCRs reported some level of capacity building in research skills at the institutional level and 87% at the individual level. Furthermore, 69% and 82% of this capacity building was considered significant or very significant at the institutional and individual level respectively. However, if 'non applicable' projects and PCRs which gave no response are excluded from this calculation, we can say that of the relevant projects which reported on capacity building, ~99% reported some level of capacity building in institutional research skills and 98% for individuals.

This question had a high response of comments, with 83% of the PCRs providing comments. As indicated by these accompanying comments, capacity building in all aspects of a research project cycle (design, research methodology, implementing, data analysis and report writing) was represented by the projects. Some comments specifically identified the research skills strengthened and included:

- writing, data analysis skills;
- specific skills in a certain field of research (eg. the application of spacial technologies, electronic networks, epidemiology, biostatistics; use of a general equilibrium model);
- skills in the approach to research in a specific field (looking at public policies from a political analysis perspective, policy oriented social science research, raised awareness of the issues, RRA); and
- skills in research process (networking, interdisciplinary research, and involving end-users).



Several comments address the significance of the capacity building and the current status of the institutions/researchers in a particular research field or country. Some examples are provided below:

**Examples of comments which describe the significance of the capacity building:**

- "UCV and IFOP are now internationally recognized in remote sensing related fisheries applications." (920610).
- "The contribution from IDRC to FLASCO allowed the institution to create one of the strongest teams of educational researchers in the country. Before the project FLASCO did not include education research as part of its programs. As a result of sustained support from IDRC, FLASCO became one of the main sources of technical support to the Federal Ministry of Education and Culture and several of the researchers became Ministry officials, including the project coordinator." (920415).
- "For both the institution and the individuals concerned, this was a useful experience. For probably the first time in their lives, the natural scientists had to develop and present results in a way that was useful to economic analysis of alternatives. At the same time, the economists involved had to base their analysis on specific options for and costs of treatment. The two teams learned to work together over the course of the project. In a more limited way, the natural scientists gained some skills in dealing with eutrophic environments." (910045).
- "...One of the researchers...completed his undergraduate and honours degrees during the project, and began a Master's degree. According to the project leader, this researcher "has emerged as one of the most skilful fieldwork coordinators in the country"." (900087).
- "Institution: While the project had institutional capacity building elements such as lab equipment, it is likely that a stronger impact was due to having a project with such world class research results and a world class researcher such as Dr. Talwar...Dr. Talwar was awarded the Order of the Legion of Honor (France's highest civil award), the Padma Bhushan prize by the President of India and a congratulations certificate signed by the Prime Minister of Canada following the publication of IDRC Books, "In Person" in which Prof Talwar was featured. Such reputation building accolades must contribute to attracting further research opportunities." (890041).
- "...APROSC's role as the leading social sciences research and policy institute is stronger as a result of this project than it would have been without it." (002588).

Text Box 14

Capacity building was most often attributed to:

- ▶ specific training activities through degree programs or workshop style training courses for researchers;
- ▶ the experience of carrying out the project itself or teaming with more experienced researchers; and
- ▶ the sharing of methodologies and experience through collaborations with other researchers/institutions.

Very often significant individual development occurred in students or 'young' researchers. In one case the improved access to relevant literature was flagged as contributing to increased capacity in

research skills.

Only one project was rated as having had no capacity building impact and as explained in the comment, this was because the institution ceased to exist during the life of the project. And only one 'N/A' rating was explained (the project was not a research project). The other 'N/A' ratings were either not accompanied by comments or were not explained in the comment. None of the 'no response' ratings were accompanied by comments.

While only a few comments addressed this issue, factors identified which possibly hindered or limited capacity building included:

- ▶ the informal structure of the group such that members could only conduct research outside their regular working hours;
- ▶ communication or 'other' problems within the research team;
- ▶ and situations where project members could not fully commit to the project.

#### **6b: Research management capacity:**

Data:

Institutional - # of responses		Individual - # of responses	
none:	1/75 (1%)	none:	3/75 (4%)
limited:	20/75 (27%)	limited:	14/75 (19%)
significant:	36/75 (48%)	significant:	41/75 (54%)
very significant:	10/75 (13%)	very significant:	7/75 (9%)
n/a:	3/75 (4%)	n/a:	6/75 (8%)
no response:	5/75 (7%)	no response:	5/75 (7%)

**#substantive comments: 52/75 (69%)**

#### Content analysis:

As with the ratings for research skills, significant institutional and individual capacity building in the area of research management skills was reported for about 88 and 83% of the projects, respectively, although the proportion of ratings better than 'limited' is less than that reported for research skills. Again, the picture improves when "not applicable" and "no response" ratings are excluded, when the percentage of relevant projects reporting some level of capacity building in research management skills approaches 99% and 97% for institutional and individual growth, respectively.

Interestingly, one project reported that the research management capacity gains occurred with the Canadian collaborating institution.

Comments for 6b addressed similar points as outlined above for 6a. Not surprisingly, a high degree

of capacity building in research management skills is often attributed to two factors:

- ▶ the project was complex and tough to management [and therefore much learning occurred]; or
- ▶ the project was not particularly difficult to manage but the team started with little to no experience in this area [and therefore much learning occurred].

Often, the explanation given as to why more capacity building didn't occur was simply because the project wasn't inherently difficult to manage.

One detailed comment refers to a report created through the project to assist countries in their research capacity strengthening efforts in the health field which draws on the accumulated experience of current and past capacity strengthening programs in developing countries and highlights successes and failures (00378). Two projects identify the importance of newly accessed information technologies in helping to manage research (e.g. shared databases, internet).

None of the 'no response' ratings were accompanied by notes.

#### 6c. Capacity to sustain research after cessation of IDRC support:

Data:

Institutional - # of responses	Individual - # of responses
none: 5/75 ( 7%)	none: 6/75 ( 8%)
limited: 24/75 (32%)	limited: 17/75 (23%)
significant: 27/75 (36%)	significant: 29 /75 (39%)
very significant: 10/75 (13%)	very significant: 7/75 ( 9%)
n/a: 4/75 ( 5%)	n/a: 11/75 (14%)
no response: 5/75 ( 7%)	no response: 5/75 ( 7%)

**#substantive comments: 53/75 (71%)**

#### Content analysis:

Building of institutional capacity to sustain research after the cessation of IDRC support was reported to have occurred to varying degrees in 81% of the projects. This was reported to have occurred in only 71% of the projects on an individual basis. Again, when "not applicable" and "no response" ratings are excluded, the percentage of relevant projects reporting some level of capacity building to sustain research increases, to 92% and ~90% for institutional and individual growth, respectively.

Explanations for the ratings included:

- enhanced skill development as a result of the project experience thereby increasing the researchers "marketability" and thereby improving their chances of successfully attracting funding;
- enhanced status as a result of disseminating project reports or publications thereby improving

- researchers/institutions chances of successfully attracting funding;
- the institution/individual already successfully obtained new funding; and
- the institution already was self-sustaining.

Several comments report that sustainability of the institution/project/program was identified as a key aspect of the project at some point in the projects' life and was addressed in a variety of ways including:

- ▶ hiring a consultant to determine the future of the institution;
- ▶ including sustainability as part of the project objectives (though this was identified in two projects here under question 6 it was identified elsewhere in the PCR for two more projects);
- ▶ creating an umbrella organization to coordinate and attract resources;
- ▶ integrated as a fundamental principle of a program;
- ▶ address through a marketing strategy between phases; and
- ▶ one group addressed this issue during the project by charging for some of its information management services.

One particularly detailed comment elaborated on the three main constraints to sustainability of the "Essential National Health Research Strategy" as identified through experience to date (000378).

#### 6d. Capacity to link research to utilization of research results:

Data:

Institutional - # of responses	Individual - # of responses
none: 2/75 ( 3%)	none: 4/75 ( 5%)
limited: 15/75 (20%)	limited: 13/75 (17%)
significant: 32/75 (42%)	significant: 27/75 (36%)
very significant: 16/75 (21%)	very significant: 16/75 (21%)
n/a: 5/75 ( 7%)	n/a: 10/75 (14%)
no response: 5/75 ( 7%)	no response: 5/75 ( 7%)

**#substantive comments: 53/75 (71%)**

#### Content analysis:

Institutional and individual building of capacity to link research to utilization of research results was reported for 84% and 74% of the projects respectively. Because of the number of projects identified as not applicable, these proportions increase markedly when this category and 'no response' ratings are excluded and bring the percentage of "relevant" projects reporting institutional and individual capacity building to link research to utilization of research results to 97% and 93% respectively.

Successful building of capacity to link research to utilization of research results was most commonly assessed on the basis:

- of the direct applicability of the results, usually by design and with the input of users or beneficiaries (21x);
- that utilization of results occurred (7x);
- that the experience of linking research to research during the project itself indicates a potential for increased capacity to link (7x);
- that efforts to link were made (eg. through seminars and reports dissemination (6x).

Three comments provided some insight into possible limitations to capacity building in this area and factors mentioned were:

- complexity and unexplored nature of the research problem itself [and therefore its application is unclear] (2x); and
- the lack of relationship between research circles and policy circles in Africa specifically.

Reasons for no capacity building included:

- the institution probably has the capacity but not the will (one possible reason given was the lack of opportunity for the institution to make money from the results of the research);
- there was no evidence of links; and
- the institution ceased to exist.

#### **6e. Research capacity of marginalised groups (eg. Minorities, etc.):**

Data:

<b>Institutional - # of responses</b>	<b>Individual - # of responses</b>
none: 26/75 (35%)	none: 26/75 (35%)
limited: 10/75 (13%)	limited: 7/75 (9%)
significant: 8/75 (11%)	significant: 11/75 (14%)
very significant: 1/75 (1%)	very significant: 3/75 (4%)
n/a: 25/75 (33%)	n/a: 23/75 (31%)
no response: 5/75 (7%)	no response: 5/75 (7%)

**#substantive comments: 29/75 (39%)**

#### Content Analysis:

Only 25 and 28% of the projects reported any research capacity building on an institutional and individual basis respectively, for marginalised groups. A large number of projects are considered not applicable to this category, and most associated comments indicate that the reason for this was that those groups were not targeted or not included in the project. When the 'not applicable' and 'no response' ratings are excluded, we can say that of the 'applicable' projects which reported on institutional and individual research capacity building for marginalised groups, only 42% and 45% respectively reported growth, reflecting the large percentage which reported that no capacity building occurred (ie, more than half of the 'applicable' projects reported no capacity building in this

area at either the institutional or individual level).

Not all ratings indicating capacity building had associated comments, but those that did identified building of research capacity in the following groups:

- young black researchers, research assistants, women and non-white researchers in South Africa;
- visible minorities in Canada (during pilot testing of courses);
- a 'southern researcher' who was achieving enviable results [considered 'marginal' in that others pursuing this research issue are working in state-of-the-art labs the world over] in India;
- local marginalised researchers in Tibet;
- indigenous people (were familiarized with electronic discussions globally);
- tribes, the landless and women in India.
- women and farmers in Asia.

Capacity building for marginalised groups was occasionally said to be expected to occur indirectly through, for example, access to information made available to them through the (non-marginalised) target groups.

Some of the comments indicate that there may be different understandings of what the question is asking in terms of who is gaining the capacity and in what. The following comments illustrate my point:

- two comments stated that no equity analysis was incorporated into the project design [what we don't know is whether this means equity issues were not considered in the research question to be studied or in the participation of marginalised researchers/others in carrying out the research];
- one comment describes the experience gained by recipient researchers by working with marginalised groups [as opposed to what the marginalised groups gained working with the researchers] (rating=s/s);
- two comments seem to address the target beneficiaries as opposed to capacity building (eg. "Rootcrops are the staple foods of marginalised groups and hence AFNS gave this priority." (900342);
- "Gender issues were brought up and the women became aware that they do play a significant role in their community, even though it was traditionally not recognized as such." (910299).

#### **6f. Research capacity and skills of women:**

Data:

Institutional - # of responses	Individual - # of responses
none: 20/75 (27%)	none: 13/75 (17%)
limited: 13/75 (17%)	limited: 16/75 (21%)
significant: 9/75 (12%)	significant: 16/75 (21%)
very significant: 0/75 (0%)	very significant: 1/75 (1%)
n/a: 28/75 (37%)	n/a: 24/75 (32%)
no response: 5/75 (7%)	no response: 5/75 (7%)

**#substantive comments: 43/75 (57%)**

#### Content analysis:

Building of research skills capacity in women was reported in only 29% of the projects on an institutional basis and about 44% on an individual basis, although associated comments suggest that this data needs to be interpreted carefully. As with question 6e related to marginalised groups, a large percentage of the projects were considered not applicable to this question. The explanations for the 'not applicable' rating were that:

- the women's involvement was unknown;
- the project design did not incorporate a gender component [it is unclear whether this refers to the research question or the research team];
- the project design did not address women's issues; or
- no women researchers were involved in the project.

However, the fact that no women researchers were involved in the project was also the reasoning given to explain a rating of "none" (ie, no capacity building). Furthermore, while almost half of the comments associated with a rating indicating some level of capacity building refer to the involvement of women as part of the research team or included in a training program, a few comments suggested that the positive rating was based on inclusion of a gender analysis in the research per se or the projects' impact on or involvement of women as users or beneficiaries.

14 "none" ratings had no comments associated with them. Three others had comments which didn't explain the "none" rating. One comment explained that no capacity building occurred because the female researcher was already very experienced. None of the 5 'no responses' had comments, so we cannot be sure of the involvement of women in these cases.

**Question 7. Did this project have any significant negative impacts on individual or institutional capacity?**

Data:

# of responses	# of substantive comments*
No: 69/75 (92%)	8/69 ( 12%)
Yes: 1/75 ( 1%)	1/1 (100%)
No response: 5/75 ( 7%)	0/5 ( 0%)

\* substantive meaning comments provide more information than the checkmark.

Content analysis:

The comment for the single "yes" addresses the nature and degree of the project's negative impacts, provides some substantiation of the negative impact, and discusses how these impacts might have been avoided.

**Comment addressing a significant negative impact of a project:**

"The principal investigator comments that during proposal development stage she was encouraged to take on additional components to the project and tasks at the encouragement of the IDRC officer. The operations in the end greatly exceeded the task which the investigator had set out to manage in the context of other work commitments. The activities, for a period of 4 years, were in her words "heavily and exhaustingly controlled by the processes involved." As well, due to budget limitations, the researchers negotiated with a private chemical company to receive the insecticide in return for field testing of the product. This left the researcher with a continued obligation for which they have no resources" (920232).

Text box 15

While this is the only "yes" response that such a comment triggered, the suggestion that IDRC "pushed too hard" may be emerging as a trend as it is referred to in various sections of a number of PCRs in the context of interdisciplinary methodologies, perceived 'interference' in research team selection, and adding what were considered by one PCR author as 'inappropriate' objectives".

Comments associated with 'no impacts' generally suggest that any impacts are unknown, not significant or not relevant, such as for example: internal institutional conflicts which could not be specifically attributable to the project, feelings of resentment and frustration in the participating institution resulting from the project consultation process and project design, and a loss of credibility on the side of IDRC in the institution's and project leader's ability to carry out research.

**Question 8: Please indicate the areas in which this project can reasonably be expected to have a significant, positive development impact:**



89% of the PCRs had responses in this question.

#### **8a) Utilization of Results:**

59% (44/75) of the PCRs had responses under this heading.

Almost a third of the comments said 'yes' and not much more.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact has already occurred include:

- ▶ on integrated interventions in health policy in Ethiopia ;
- ▶ in the creation of national park;
- ▶ indirectly influenced the peace process and accord in South Africa;
- ▶ capacity development in mapping skills in Argentina;
- ▶ influencing anti-malarial campaigns in Sri Lanka.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact may occur include:

- ▶ feeding into a \$600million world bank program about to be launched in the country;
- ▶ filling an information gap in country;
- ▶ use of results in practical programs and training;
- ▶ planning engineered wetlands;
- ▶ product development in Canada;
- ▶ milk planning in Egypt;
- ▶ in development planning by various levels of government, multilateral agencies and NGOs.

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may/did help to bring about the development impact include:

- ▶ project targeted to demand for the results by direct and indirect users;
- ▶ dissemination of results (training, publications, workshops);
- ▶ proposed policies and curriculum;
- ▶ linkages between researchers and policy makers.

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may hinder the potential utilization of results and thus development impact include:

- ▶ limited dissemination of results;
- ▶ changes in national policy

A couple of PCRs explicitly identify the project as a good example of development impact in this area but no details are given here. Only a few addressed the significance of the impact.

#### **8b) Technology Development & Management:**

37% (28/75) of the PCRs had responses under this heading.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact has already occurred include:

- ▶ development and/or introduction of technologies including:
  - state-of-the-art GPS-based survey systems;
  - spacial data technology and related information systems;
  - new root crop varieties;
  - milk data collection system;

- remote sensing;
- ▶ enhanced knowledge;
  - for management of wetlands;
  - for management of water treatment plant;
- ▶ purchase of capital equipment.

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may/did help to bring about the development impact include:

- ▶ project targeted to demand for the results by direct and indirect users;
- ▶ interactive coaching, based on learning about the user community's concerns, and an understanding of provincial and national regulations of cadastral agencies;
- ▶ training in general.

Two comments address the significance of the impact. One comment states "approach solid and important" but no details given.

#### **8c) Social Services:**

12% (9/75) of the PCRs had responses under this heading.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact has already occurred include:

- ▶ how waste management can be administered;
- ▶ engagement in various livelihood activities;
- ▶ increased understanding of social issues (eg. by communities and practitioners (housing providers, architects) on how to address both socio-economic development and peace building in urban development activities; of understanding the effects of globalization on social services and the corresponding public policies);
- ▶ influence social services policy related to milk production.

The specific area identified where positive development impact may occur was:

- ▶ capacity building for women.

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may/did help to bring about the development impact include:

- ▶ training.

Two comments address the significance of the impact.

#### **8d) Public Policy:**

37% of the PCRs had responses under this heading.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact has occurred include:

- ▶ Ministry of Health adopted a policy of integrated interventions for malaria and anaemia;
- ▶ policy reform in the mining sector in Bolivia;
- ▶ influence on urban development, national housing, and peace policy in South Africa;
- ▶ increased understanding of the issues by policy makers and researchers.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact may occur include:

- ▶ waste management;
- ▶ water use;
- ▶ fisheries;
- ▶ aquifer management;
- ▶ wetland management re user pay issues;
- ▶ issues related to the use of health care technologies.

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may/did help to bring about the development impact include:

- ▶ access to more reliable and up-to -date data (through developed ICTs);
- ▶ capacity building to understand/influence public policy;
- ▶ researchers participating in policy reform discussions;
- ▶ dissemination of results via academic fora (eg. University courses);
- ▶ training of students which become government officials;
- ▶ links between researchers, decision-makers, and stakeholders (eg. Internship programmes for students);
- ▶ wide-spread dissemination of results to numerous policy and political groups in a variety of local, regional, and national policy fora;
- ▶ participatory approach of involving local people;
- ▶ strong reputations of researchers.

Four projects mention the significance of the impacts. Two project are identified as models, one for its participatory approach with locals, and the other for its collaborative involvement of NGO and other grass root groups in consultation and policy development processes at the global level.

#### **8e) Public Health and Safety:**

13% (10/75) of the PCRs had responses under this heading.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact may occur include:

- ▶ water use issues;
- ▶ waste management;
- ▶ improved health status through:
  - disease control, human and animal waste management; water management.
- ▶ family planning.

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may hinder the potential development impact include:

- ▶ regulatory changes.

#### **8f) National Research System Capacity:**

31% (23/75) of the PCRs had responses under this heading.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact has already occurred include:

- ▶ development of a regional centre of excellence;
- ▶ better understanding among various sectors and stakeholders about the issues;
- ▶ enhanced capacity of national researchers in:
  - multi/inter-disciplinary research, ICTs, health, economics, agro-industry research, research management;

- ▶ building of a research supporting infrastructure.

The specific area identified where positive development impact may occur is:

- ▶ improved research environment .

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may/did help to bring about the development impact include:

- ▶ training;
- ▶ the research itself;
- ▶ improved access to ICT;
- ▶ collaboration among other researchers and institutions (such as between "a historically disadvantaged" university and a well established university in South Africa);
- ▶ dissemination of results.

Two projects addressed the significance of the impact.

#### **8g) International Cooperation:**

37% (28/75) of the PCRs had responses under this heading.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact has already occurred include:

- ▶ enhanced development of individual institutions involved in collaborations;
- ▶ developing sustainable development promoting strategic alliances;
- ▶ communication and exchange among NGOs,
- ▶ build links with other institutions.

The specific area identified where positive development impact may occur include:

- ▶ promotion of R&D for international marketing of agro-food products from developing countries.

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may/did help to bring about the development impact include:

- ▶ as the mandates, charters and agendas of donors are reconciled with the priority needs expressed by individual countries in the health field;
- ▶ linkages with business and international institutions;
- ▶ ICTs;
- ▶ through dissemination of results (eg. at international fora and publications in other languages).

No PCRs addressed the significance of the impact.

#### **8h) Information Management:**

13% (10/75) of the PCRs had responses under this heading.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact may occur include:

- ▶ better and more reliable health information;
- ▶ improved capacity of researchers to gather and analyse health-related information;

- ▶ more use of research results;
- ▶ improved information sharing and management systems.

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may/did help to bring about the development impact include:

- ▶ ICTs;
- ▶ dissemination of information;
- ▶ capacity building in information management skills;
- ▶ technical assistance;
- ▶ collaboration among institutions;

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may hinder the potential development impact include:

- ▶ limited resources for building library facilities for information management.

Significance of the impact was addressed in one comment.

#### **8i) Household economy:**

12% (9/75) of the PCRs had responses under this heading.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact may occur include:

- ▶ improved livelihoods of fishers, farmers, local people;
- ▶ education about waste management at the household level.

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may/did hinder the potential development impact include:

- ▶ politics and geography in Tibet (limiting potential for revenue generation from Park).

One comment stated: "strong impact because of approach" but no details provided (9000342).

#### **8j) Governance:**

7% (5/75) of the PCRs had responses under this heading.

The specific area identified where positive development impact has already occurred was:

- ▶ modest effect on the peace processes/peace accords and urban restructuring at national and local levels.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact may occur are:

- ▶ enable municipalities to register land and the ownership of land on which to base land taxes and thereby increase revenues to provide services;
- ▶ enhanced participation of NGOs in government programs.

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may/did help to bring about the development impact include:

- ▶ researchers participation in metropolitan development fora.

#### **8k) Gender Equity:**

9% (7/75) of the PCRs had responses under this heading.

Several of the answers addressed that gender was explored, but not impact.

The specific area identified where positive development impact may occur was:

- womens' equality.

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may/did help to bring about the development impact include:

- having a senior woman researcher on the team;
- providing opportunity to voice views;
- providing equal admission of men and women into MSc program.

### **8l) Ethnic Equity:**

4% (3/75) Of the PCRs had responses under this heading (One comment addresses women).

The specific areas identified where positive development impact may occur include:

- understanding of the effects of the changing role of the state and globalization on indigenous populations;
- inform general public that advanced, "cutting-edge" science is occurring in the South;
- creating opportunities for marginalised groups (not described).

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may/did help to bring about the development impact include:

- popular media attention.

### **8m) Environmental & Resource Management:**

28% (21/75) of the PCRs had responses under this heading.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact has already occurred include:

- improved environmental quality and resource management at the local level;
- SCADA has become a centre of excellence for village level resource mapping.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact may occur are:

- increased availability of data and knowledge;
- increased capacity to understand the issues and undertake research;
- increased understanding of the issues/systems;
- possibly influence policy;
- creating and managing a system of environmental indicators in urban areas;
- increased incentive to improve management of environmental and natural resource management.

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may/did help to bring about the development impact include:

- ICTs, remote sensing;
- development of tools (equilibrium model, better technologies, standards);
- demonstration of value for sound management (sustainable products, alternative uses,
- dissemination of results.

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may hinder the potential development impact include:

- ▶ limited funding;
- ▶ communication difficulties within Ministry.

#### **8n) Employment:**

5% (4/75) of the PCRs had responses under this heading.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact has already occurred was:

- ▶ job opportunities were created.

#### **8o) Economic Productivity:**

20% (15/75) of the PCRs had responses under this heading.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact may occur include:

- ▶ agrarian reform through introduction of property tenure secured through land titles;
- ▶ improved access of SMEs to international markets;
- ▶ increased capacity to improve economic productivity of various sectors;
- ▶ increase in credit flow through establishment of location specific banking.

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may/did help to bring about the development impact include:

- ▶ provision of information and resources through project;
- ▶ access to information through ICTs;
- ▶ improved understanding of cooperatives;
- ▶ improved understanding of the issues.

#### **8p) Community Processes:**

13% (10/75) PCRs provided comments under this heading. impact.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact may occur are:

- ▶ raising awareness;
- ▶ improved community health research;
- ▶ improve skills for assessing situations and opportunities at the community level;
- ▶ improved community-level negotiating processes.

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may/did help to bring about the development impact include:

- ▶ involving schools, municipalities and communities;
- ▶ training;
- ▶ researchers participating and presenting findings at numerous community meetings;
- ▶ empowerment of groups is central to the work.

Significance of the impact: One comments states that the participating fishermen praised the

project for its participatory approach and flags it as a model. No details are provided here or elsewhere in the PCR on what the approach was.

#### **8q) Canadian Research and Development:**

9% (7/75) of the PCRs had comments under this heading. Two of the comment address the role of Canadians but not impact.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact has already occurred include:

- ▶ improved skills and competence among Canadian researchers;
- ▶ increased visibility/networking among Canadian researchers;
- ▶ improved access to funding among Canadian researchers.

The specific areas identified where positive development impact may occur are:

- ▶ a couple of potential opportunities for Canadian R&D in product/technology development.

Key features/mechanisms mentioned which may/did help to bring about the development impact include:

- ▶ participation at international fora ;
- ▶ collaboration with others;
- ▶ receiving project reports.

It is interesting to note that of the 8 projects identified in the tombstone data page as having Canadian collaboration, only 4 of them provided comments under this question.

#### **8r) Other Development Impacts:**

(7%) 5/75 of the PCRs had comments under this heading.

Other specific areas identified where positive development impact has already occurred included:

- ▶ enhanced networking both within countries and regionally;
- ▶ increased political and financial commitment of national governments to support health research;
- ▶ the capacity to conduct day-to-day administrative evaluation of health programs and impact evaluation of health/health care policies;
- ▶ two of NGONET's databases are the basis for the on-going publication of the Earth Summit CR-ROM (93-0606) which documents NGO input into the UNCED process;
- ▶ project may encourage discussion and subsequently more research in the same area.

#### **8s) Overall notes:**

16% (12/75) of the PCRs had comments under this heading.

- ▶ Potential for impact high provided centre follow-ups on results and assists with dissemination;
- ▶ long term development impact takes time - several projects have successfully laid the foundation to address the first steps which feed into the larger process of development;
- ▶ development impact was overly ambitious and project not designed properly to achieve it;
- ▶ the immediate translation of these three research cases into teaching material demonstrates the high utility of research outputs.
- ▶ project had side-effect of developing agriculture in marginal area through the use of incentives



for the farmers.

- ▶ despite efforts to broaden the scope of the research, the field work of these Future Kenyan decision makers seems to continue to take an overly "technocratic" and "uni-disciplinary" approach to development problems that are complex and integrated.

#### Question 9. Did this project have any significant negative impacts on development?

Data

# of responses	# of substantive comments*
No: 70/75 (93%)	5/75 ( 7%)
No response: 5/75 ( 7%)	0/75 (0%)

\* substantive meaning comments provide more information than the checkmark.

#### Content analysis:

No projects were considered to have had any significant negative impacts on development. Comments generally refer to unknown impacts, or relate to some kind of negative impact which presumably could not be considered significant (eg. In one project one internet provider complained that the IDRC project had an unfair competitive advantage of subsidized service as a result of IDRC support (000014) ; and in another project researchers were perceived suspiciously by political groups (900087)). In the case of a project with complex ethical implications and issues, a discussion of the causes and implications of several possible negative impacts associated with the development of a birth-control technology under varying philosophical contexts is presented. How the project might have averted these 'potential' negative impacts and lessons for the future are provided elsewhere in the PCR (890041).

#### 10. Financial status of the project:

Data:

# of responses	# of substantive comments*
Under-budget: 45/75 (60%)	14/45 ( 31%)
On budget: 22/75 (28%)	3/22 ( 14%)
Over-budget: 2/75 ( 4%)	2/2 (100%)
Missing RADIUS data**: 6/75 (8%)	1/6 ( 17%)

\* substantive meaning comments provide more information than the checkmark.

**\*\* Data provided on actual cost only**

Content analysis:

About a third of the substantive comments explain the financial discrepancies in terms of specific project activities or events, while the remainder provide financial or timing details only. According to associated comments, the data from Radius was incorrect for two projects. Of the two projects that were identified as actually over-budget, one was significantly so (ie, \$20,000) and an explanation of the need to provide funding to bridge the project over to a next phase was provided. The other project was over-budget by less than \$1,000.

Data on projects which finished under budget indicate that an estimated \$1,765,000 were tied up in projects but never used. Projects were under budget by a range of \$175.00 to \$977,145.00.

No comment is provided to explain the discrepancy of close to a million dollars in the budget of a single project.

Indeed, of the approximately \$1,765,000 allocated to but not used by projects, only about \$122,000 of the under runs are explicitly explained (ie, some specific activity did not occur). Of the 45 projects which finished under budget, about half were less than approximately \$10,000 under budget, a little over a quarter between approximately \$10,000 and \$20,000 under budget, and a little less than a quarter were more than around \$20,000 under budget.

**11. Duration of the project:**

Data:

# of responses	# of substantive comments*
Shorter than planned: 4/75 (5%)	2/4 (50%)
On time: 18/75 (24%)	39/53 (74%)
Longer than planned: 53/75 (71%)	10/18 (56%)

\* substantive meaning comments provide more information than the checkmark.

Content analysis:

Seventy-one percent of the samples projects were reported to have been longer than planned. Almost two thirds of the comments associated with these projects provide reasons for the delays experienced, while the remainder provide dates only. Reasons provided for delays include:

- ▶ late submission of reports (about one third of the identified delays);
- ▶ difficulty with field work, project design and data analysis;
- ▶ delays in preparing publications;
- ▶ delays caused by the political situation/security of a region or its bureaucracy; and
- ▶ problems within recipient institutions, research team management and over-committed project personnel.

Three projects were extended to allow the project to take advantage of supplementary funding, make use of savings, or to seek out additional funds while still an IDRC project.

The average length of time a project was longer than planned was 20 months. Disregarding the 82-month late project which was extended for the purposes of obtaining a patent, the average drops to 18 months. More interesting would be to calculate the % over due each project was relative to its planned duration, however I was unable to see any correlation between the tombstone data provided on planned and actual duration and the data provided in question 11.

**Question 12a) Please rate IDRC's management of the project:**

Data:

# of responses	# of comments
Both technically and administratively satisfactory: 67/75 (90%)	33/67 (49%)
Either technically and/or administratively unsatisfactory: 8/75 (10%)	8/8 (100%)

**Content analysis:**

90% of the sampled projects are considered to have been managed satisfactorily by IDRC, although a few comments suggest that management could have been better with more monitoring, better project design and more qualified staff assigned to the project, for example.

While many of the comments associated with satisfactory comments restate or qualify the ratings, a few comments do address factors which facilitated satisfactory management of a project by IDRC and include:

- ▶ IDRC's active involvement as a Board Member of the recipient institution/program;
- ▶ close monitoring and communication with project;
- ▶ the PO received extensive support from throughout the Centre on the management of project (eg. in the area of project development, review, as well as on patenting issues, coalition of womens' groups, and management of information flow);
- ▶ having an on site project manager in sites difficult or expensive to monitor;
- ▶ having an "Advisor" to provide technical input to a number of related small IDRC projects in a region.

All unsatisfactory ratings were accompanied by comments. The following points taken from the comments explain the unsatisfactory ratings and shed light on factors which hindered the satisfactory management of a project by IDRC:

- ▶ no or not enough technical monitoring of a project;
- ▶ the cost (time and money) and difficulty of monitoring projects (for eg. The "dynamic situation" for IDRC in Phnom Penh);
- ▶ transfer of project management from one PO to another or the transferring technical and administrative responsibilities from Ottawa to an RO were reported to have a number of possible negative effects including:
  - disrupting not only the continuity of communication but also the technical co-operation which

- may have occurred between a PO and project team;
- some recipients have difficulty accepting a new PO;
- creating a problem of dealing previous verbal promises made to the project team;
- difficulty for a new responsible PO when dealing with inadequate documentation or management of files (twice it was mentioned that for convenience POS sometimes put important original project documents in their personal files in their offices for 'easy access');
- loss of enthusiasm and motivation for continued close monitoring of project;
- ▶ flawed project design both technically and administratively;
- ▶ late disbursement of funds to project;
- ▶ misplaced project reports within IDRC;
- ▶ insufficient technical expertise in house to review technical report.

**Examples of comments regarding IDRC project management issues: (from several questions)**

- "...with hindsight at least, it should be noted that the schedule of installment for this project provided for 73 out of the 94.8K going to one recipient, and 46 out of the 54K going to the second recipient, to be disbursed within six months of project approval, no questions asked: the first technical and financial reports would only be due on the 12<sup>th</sup> month. Not only was the PS slim on risk assessment, but the schedule of installments ensured that most of the grant would go to recipients within six months of approval, on the basis of little if any information on progress and with little if any leverage remaining with IDRC if something went wrong during the remaining 18 months of the project." (910132)
- "As pointed out in the final report, the design of the project was flawed. Instead of letting the implementing agency choose its own project leader, a person was selected by IDRC. In addition, this person was located in Geneva, whereas SAPES is located in Harare. This arrangement made communication difficult between the parties and led to high administration costs. It also led to a feeling of resentment by SAPES which felt that IDRC did not think they had to capacity to independently manage the project." (928456)

Text box 16

**More Examples of comments regarding IDRC project management issues: (from several questions)**

- "This project can be considered a worthwhile investment of IDRC funding because it was able to bridge the gap of technical economic expertise (that could not be provided by the limited number of IDRC program officers and consultants) needed in the region..."(900046)
- "...Another point to note is his contention that current IDRC workload and practices preclude POS from adequately monitoring ambitious (high risk high return) projects such as this one."(Rohinton Medhora, final reviewer comment (000351).
- "More serious for project support were the successive 180 degree shifts in IDRC programming from regional to a central focus. This project was conceived under one system, managed under another, and then brought to a close under still a third. These changes made it difficult for both PO's and recipients to know how to proceed and how to get the most out of their activities. Inconsistencies in IDRC programming bedevilled all the Latin American urban water projects from the start." (000845)
- "Direct monitoring was very important for this project. Of the several monitoring visits that Centre staff conducted for this project, at least three (two visits by the PO and one by the Regional Comptroller) were additional to what one might have normally expected for a project of this size. Such direct monitoring probably saved this project from falling apart several times. The Centre might wish to bear this in fact in mind in its deliberations on travel budgets, risk management strategies, and (regional+Ottawa) office staffing." (002588)
- "The project did not get as much monitoring as it deserved, but this was an explicit decision based on the quality of the researchers and the great expense of monitoring. In addition, IDRC had made the decision to drop out of the wild biodiversity area of programming, so the project become intellectual if not actual orphan." (910076)

Text box 17

**Question 12b) Please rate the recipient's management of the project.**

# of responses	# of comments
Both technically and administratively satisfactory: 61/75 (81%)	30/61 (49%)
Either technically and/or administratively unsatisfactory: 14/75(19%)	13/14 (93%)

Content analysis:

Most projects were considered to have been satisfactory managed both technically and administratively by the recipient. About 36% of the comments explain why (ie, in what way) the management was considered satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

The following points taken from the comments explain satisfactory ratings or shed light on factors which facilitated satisfactory management of a project by the recipient:

- ▶ regular updates to IDRC on progress of activities (the introduction of e-mail was identified as facilitating, or will facilitate communication and management in a couple of projects);
- ▶ good budget management and seeking approval from IDRC before changing lines items;
- ▶ creation of an active advisory group composed of experts from different disciplines (for an interdisciplinary project) and the diligent follow-up of its recommendations.

Almost all unsatisfactory ratings had comments. The following points taken from the comments explain the unsatisfactory ratings or shed light on factors which hindered the satisfactory management of a project by the recipient:

- ▶ lack of communication between project members and IDRC;
- ▶ lack of scientific and managerial direction (including PLs overcommitted with other tasks; limited ability of PL to lead and co-ordinate an integrated treatment of a complex research problem);
- ▶ poor quality of outputs (eg. reports, workshop);
- ▶ late or missing reports;
- ▶ prolonged illness of the project leader;
- ▶ internal conflicts and human resource changes within the recipient institution (resulting in administrative disruptions; defections of team members);
- ▶ technical shortcomings of project members (resulting in flawed experimental methodology);
- ▶ ineffective project advisory board;
- ▶ poor financial statements and financial management.

**Examples of comments addressing project management by the recipient:**

- "The project was perturbed by the fact that none of the researchers identified in the proposal (page 19) ended up working in the project..." (000763);
- All evaluation and audits have noted the high quality of the AERC's substantive and administrative operations, all the more commendable given the bewildering variety of reporting requirements and procedures that the AERC must put up with among its several donors." (000882);
- "One potential problem in recipient management was the time lost due to the initial decision during the planning stage to use a software program that was incompatible with the equipment used in Cairo." (880285);
- "...Despite reviewers of the original proposal having stressed the Thai proponents' use of a conceptual paper produced by an Australian expert, despite the Thai researchers' pre-project involvement in proposal development activities with Australians, despite even the involvement of an Australian expert in the project, the Thai' project co-ordinator's own capacity to actually coordinate the application of such an approach by a team of qualified academics representing a range of expertise seems to have been grossly over-estimated. It could be that the quality of the proposal largely was attributable to Australian inputs and that, with the Australian involvement being confined to a consultancy as opposed to remaining central, this very much undermined the potential of the project to meet original expectations...(910132)

Text Box 18

**Question 13. Please indicate the type & quality of external assistance to this project:**

**13a. Canadian partners:**

Data:

# of responses	# of substantive comments*
Fell below: 1/21 ratings ( 5%)	1/1 (100%)
met: 13/21 ratings (62%)	11/13 (85%)
exceeded: 6/21 ratings (29%)	4/6 (67%)
greatly exceeded: 1/21 ratings (5%)	1/1 (100%)
Total: 21/21	17/21 ratings (81%)

\* substantive meaning comments provide more information than the checkmark.

### Content analysis:

Based on the following examples of configurations of responses in the radio-boxes, I do not have much confidence in what they are indicating:

- in the same question, the 'Type of Partnership' is checked, a rating is checked, and "No Response" is checked;
- in some questions the 'Type of Partnership' is checked and no rating and no check for "No Response" is given, while in other questions nothing is checked [do they both mean no partnership, or does one suggest a partnership but provides no rating?]

There may also be some ambiguity in this question:

- ▶ The first aspect of ambiguity may be: "external" to what? Identified "external assistance" partners included: institutions identified as the recipient, IDRC, other donors, consultants hired for an external review of one thing or another for IDRC's 'benefit' or for the recipient's 'benefit'.
- ▶ Secondly, if (as the 'PCR Guide' states but not the question in the PCR itself), "A rating implies involvement", it is unclear why one is able to check the "Type of Partnership" box at all (ie, Canadian, Northern, or Southern) if this does not indicate anything.
- ▶ Furthermore, it is not clear what the difference is between the 'Not Applicable' and 'No Response' radio-boxes, since the "No Response" does not seem to be working as the default (see example above). It seems therefore quite possible that there were more partnerships than the ratings themselves indicate.

Most of the ratings for this category of partnership are "Met". Only 17 ratings are accompanied by substantive comments, although interestingly two of these refer to IDRC's role in collaboration. Indeed, the only rating less than 'met' (in this case 'fell below') was given to IDRC and the associated comment follows:

#### **Comment on IDRC's inability to provide information on its experiences:**

"If IDRC is considered a Canadian partner to the project, its contribution must be evaluated as having fallen below IISD's expectations. This, because IDRC was expected to establish a system of formal cooperation with the project through the provision of information the Centre had generated through its experience. IDRC was unable to do so as it lacks the institutional structure to participate in this way". (003001).

Text Box 19

This is sad statement. If it is true, then it may be an area to investigate further to get sense as to how wide spread this perception is (perhaps both in-house and out), and then figure out what to do about it. If it is not accurate, then it may reflect a need for training.

About half of the comments named the partners involved and half of those included a description of the nature of the support. One comment elaborated on the qualifications of the collaborating group



(ie, world-wide recognized leader in GPS technology). Most of the collaborating institutions identified are universities, with Canadian government departments and a couple of research institutes (affiliation unknown to me) represented. All of the roles describe an active role of providing some kind of direct technical support in a range of disciplines (eg. information sciences, chemistry, and economics) and modes (eg. collaborative research, direct training, seminars, thesis supervision, or technical review of various aspects of a proposal or project output).

Some of the comments then, allow a link to be made between specific individuals' or institutions' with roles and positive collaborative experiences for future reference. One comment states that the project is a good example of collaboration between a Canadian institution and researchers across the Latin American region, but no details are give here or in question 16 under recommendations for Collaboration. Not much more can be learned except that the involvement was often referred to as "critical" or "valuable" and attributes assigned to some partners of successful collaboration included constructive, supportive, and respectful attitudes toward the work and their developing world research partners.

Given the way the question is structured it is difficult to imagine what other knowledge could be expected to be obtained from answers. The word "who" does not occur in the question, nor are authors prompted, for example, to indicate what, in their view, made the collaboration 'work' or not, or whether there are any key elements, minimal requirements, or particular attributes other than expertise that one might look for in creating or avoiding certain partnerships, or to address any specific working mechanisms which might facilitate good inter-institutional collaboration.

### 13b. Other Northern partners:

Data:

# of responses	# of substantive comments*
Fell below: 0/15 ratings (0%)	0/0
met: 9/15 ratings (60%)	8/9 (89%)
exceeded: 5/15 ratings (33%)	4/5 (80%)
greatly exceeded: 1/15 ratings (7%)	1/1 (100%)
Total: 15/15	13/15 (87%)

\* substantive meaning comments provide more information than the checkmark.

### Content analysis:

All ratings provided for this category of partnership are positive. Collaborating institutions include European, American and Australian National government aid organizations, United Nations organizations, private donors, the World Bank and a few universities. About half of the roles identified were financial support only and the other half included some form of technical or 'intellectual' support, advice or joint research collaboration. No particular trends or lessons learned emerge.

### 13c. Southern Sources:

Data:

# of responses	# of substantive comments*
Fell below: 0/19 ratings (0%)	0/0
met: 1/19 ratings (5%)	1/1 (100%)
exceeded: 12/19 ratings (63%)	10/12 (83%)
greatly exceeded: 6/19 ratings (32%)	6/6 (100%)
Total: 19/19	17/19 (89%)

\* substantive meaning comments provide more information than the checkmark.

#### Content analysis:

Unlike the previous two questions, almost all of the ratings provided in this category are above the 'met' rating. Collaborating institutions were named in more than half of the comments. The most often identified institutions were universities, follow by various southern government or international research institutions, and NGOs. Nine comments elaborated on the nature of the support, which was financial and/or administrative in five cases, and technical in the remainder. Technical support took the form of collaborative research, training, and technical assistance in project planning and implementation. One project is identified as an excellent example of cooperation among NGOs in setting up a communications network. No particular general trends regarding type of institution and the type and quality of collaboration is evident. At minimum it would be useful to benefit from hindsight to learn who/what institutions were or were not able to develop fruitful relationships with others, what the relationship was, and why it worked (or didn't), by specifically asking/prompting for it.

### Question 14. What impact did external factors have on the management of this project?

# of responses	# of substantive comments
No impact: 42/75 (56%)	2/42 ( 5%)
Negative impact: 25/75 (33%)	24/25 (96%)
Positive impact: 6/75 (8%)	6/6 (100%)
Negative and Positive impact: 2/75 (3%)	2/2 (100%)

\* substantive meaning comments provide more information than the checkmark.

#### Contents analysis:

All projects identified as having 'Positive' or 'Positive+Negative' impacts had substantive comments associated with them. Almost all of the comments associated with a positive impact identified a positive political climate as fostering collaborations or the interest in carrying out research per se.

One PCR referred to higher than expected external funding as creating a positive impact, and another referred to the positive impact that publicity over questionable informed consent process had in focussing the projects' attention to this issue and increasing the female representation on the protocol screening board.

All but one of the 'Negative' impact responses had comments, and all comments describe the external factor which caused the impact and include:

- ▶ recipient staffing or institutional issues (such as frequent staff changes, researchers efforts diverted to other work, and illness (reported for more than half the responses));
- ▶ political instability or war (about one-third of the responses);
- ▶ several comments refer to bureaucratic difficulties, weather, change in national policies affecting utilization of results, absence of key project personnel, and changes in IDRC programming and staffing as having a negative impact on project management.

**Examples of comments addressing impacts associated with external factors:**

- "The final report notes the "mind boggling" bureaucracy in Argentina, which made the project a challenge to manage. Specifically each of the project team's dealings with the custom authorities (to import donated equipment), the UNLP authorities (to accept in writing the donation of equipment), the telephone company (to install a telephone line needed for the System base system was "frustrating and time-consuming." The project leader estimated that 20-30% of the groups' time was spent negotiating with authorities to resolve bureaucratic problems." (000032).
- " One of the advantages of a network like AERC is that it spreads the risk across many countries, and minimizes our dependence upon the situation in individual countries. The small grants approach means that researchers receive their grants directly, thus by-passing sometimes problematic institutional environments where they exist." (000882)
- "The project constantly had to deal with fighting in and around Battambang, and with uncertainties and disorganization in the Government of Cambodia. In various ways, these problems limited the flexibility of the research and slowed progress, but they did not to my knowledge vitiate the final research results...Most difficult of all however, and possibly an area where IDRC could have played a stronger role, was the absence of key project personnel, including the socio-economic consultant and the environment planner, for extended periods during the course of the project." (001575)
- "A group called the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights launched a campaign calling for a stop of research on anti-fertility vaccines. This campaign focussed attention upon the NII research and upon IDRC as the donor. Much negative media attention was brought upon IDRC and the research. This attention was predominately in Canada and specifically in Ottawa. However, the attention did little to interfere with the research, in fact, it may have had a positive impact upon the researchers at NII as they were forced to defend their informed consent procedure. The campaign brought to the researchers attention the rigorous attention that must be paid to assuring informed consent. Dr. Talwar commented that following a meeting with representatives of the Women's Network, he had two advocacy women join the NII protocol screening committee... ..This project was developed in 1989, but the phase 1 trials and the inception of the vaccine occurred at least a decade earlier. Within this time the need for birth control methods that also offer protection against STDs, specifically HIV has increased. The vaccine does not offer this protection." (890041)

Text Box 20

**Question 15. Was this project formally evaluated or is an evaluation planned?**

# of responses	# of substantive comments
Yes: 19/75 (25%)	19/19 (100%)
No: 56/75 (75%)	7/56 (13%)

\* substantive meaning comments provide more information than the checkmark.

#### Content analysis:

24% of the projects have had one or more evaluation done, and an evaluation was planned for one project. All 'yes' responses had comments associated with them.

A little more than half of the comments for completed evaluations give the reason for the evaluation. These 'reasons' are not very detailed however and do not provide much insight into the purpose behind the evaluation or what was expected to be gained by it. These comments refer to doing an evaluation:

- in preparing second phase or granting an extension;
- as part of PhD examinations;
- part of the standard monitoring of a larger program the project is involved with;
- evaluate research program and all operations;
- evaluate a technology development;
- to develop a framework for assessing the impact of projects on peace and conflict;
- to assess how the reformulation of goals and targets were done in relation to a whole series of activities;
- for self-correction.

A little more than half of the comments for completed evaluations give the basic outcome of the evaluation (eg. evaluation was positive) while only a few comments provide detailed results of the evaluation. The full citation is not given for most of the completed evaluations although in many cases the author's name and/or affiliation is provided, or only the physical location of the evaluation report.

Of particular interest to the Evaluation Unit may be the remark in one comment that "The evaluations themselves merit praise and are models of what such evaluation should be." (000882).

(Question 16 follows Question 17 below)

**Question 17. Do you feel that an evaluation of this project would contribute significantly to IDRC's corporate knowledge?**

Data:

# of responses	# of substantive comments*
Yes: 16/75 (21%)	15/16 (94%)
No: 54/75 (72%)	34/54 (63%)
No response: 5/75 (7%)	0/5 (0%)

\* substantive meaning comments provide more information than the checkmark.

#### Content analysis:

The contents of the comments indicate that there is confusion both on the difference between this question and question 15, and on the meaning of this question itself, as evidenced by the following

configuration of responses:

- the response to question 17 is "yes" [to the question would an evaluation of this project contribute significantly to IDRC's corporate knowledge] and the comment indicates that as mentioned in question 15 an evaluation has been done.
- the response to question 17 is "yes" and the comment indicates that to do an evaluation would be useful.
- the response to question 17 is "no" because as indicated in question 15 an evaluation has already been done.
- the response to question 17 is "no" because it is not expected to contribute much for whatever reasons.
- the response to question 15 [Was this project formally evaluated or is an evaluation planned?] is "no" but the response to question 17 [Would an evaluation of this project contribute significantly to IDRC's corporate knowledge?] is "yes" but then provides a reference of an evaluation that was done. (If searching question 15 for completed evaluations, this would not show up).

More than half of the notes recommending an evaluation do indicate why an evaluation would be interesting and what knowledge it might contribute, and a few suggest how such an evaluation might be best organized. Suggested issues for evaluation are:

- ▶ learning from unique project design and research methodologies:
  - one case involves an innovative project set within a non-traditional research institutional context and dealt with contradictions between a participatory NGO community philosophy and development ideas based on commercial economic concepts (890119);
  - a second case involves a project which was "remarkably successful in 'plugging into' official circles in the country [Nepal]" (suggested in the context of a larger evaluation of the relevant IDRC PI). (002588)
- ▶ lessons about project sustainability:
  - to draw lessons which might constitute a model of project sustainability based on a project experience where a government agency was brought into the project to take over once pilot project terminated (880285);
- ▶ understanding support mechanisms:
  - drawing lessons from a project on how to support work in a politically unstable environment (002588);
  - identify the strengths and weaknesses of the design of a project/institutional technical support mechanism and to identify ways to improve its effectiveness (900046);
  - examine the effectiveness of sustained IDRC program support to an institution (920415);
- ▶ identifying and understanding impact/utilization of results:
  - to identify whether any project results were implemented (928759);
  - to study the impact of an information technology at the micro-level to help understand its strengths and inadequacies which may also lead to better understanding and improvement of the interdisciplinary research approach used to develop it (000074).
- ▶ to help understand poor project performance (040081).

**Question 16. From your experience with this project, what recommendations can you provide in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of future IDRC support? (Please include any**

recommendations for follow-up on this project.)

72% of the PCRs provided one or more recommendation under question 16.*
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All 14 topic areas for recommendations had one or more recommendations.
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\*10/21 PCRS which did not provide any recommendations were completed by a consultant from ASRO, and 5/21 were from PCRs under the same responsible PO (LACRO, authorship unknown).

#### 16a) Methodology:

23% of the PCRs had comments under methodology. Comments addressed a variety of aspects of project methodology and include:

- ▶ many comments on project specific shortcomings in methodology, which while usually not framed as general recommendations, these can be inferred in many cases. The need for training was identified as an explanation for some of the shortcomings;
- ▶ general and research field specific strengths of a methodology or approach to research;
- ▶ two project methodologies were explicitly noted as worthy of replicating;
- ▶ recommendations and lessons learned on the process of developing methodologies.

#### Examples of recommendations addressing methodology:

- "The design and methodology of this project is worth replicating as a case of public policy analysis from a political economy perspective." (000300).
- "The project should have focused more sharply on the needs of the small farmer and provided them with the information required to make herd management decisions. Closer attention should have been made to gender considerations. Closer attention should also have been paid to software compatibility at the outset of the project." (880285).
- "The Advisor's involvement in the different IDRC supported projects in the Asian region could have been more beneficial and produced more evident impact if it was provided from conceptualization to implementation and analysis of results. Since the Advisor's services were rendered at varying stages of the life of the different projects she assisted, monitored and evaluated, some of the intended modifications and/or improvements were impossible or futile to incorporate and implement." (900046).
- "When introducing multi-disciplinary approaches to groups that have not previously used them, ensure that a well-developed plan with specific assignments (by individual or at least by group) are included in the project methodology." (910045);
- "It is important to look at the short-run impacts of long-run policies, if you are to assess their possibility of successful implementation." (921100).

Text Box 21

#### 16b) Canadian/Other Donor Collaboration:

11% of the PCRs had comments under this topic. A few were project specific while more general comments included:

- ▶ the need to coordinate externally funded projects to avoid duplication and wasted resources;
- ▶ the need for research funded by donor agencies to focus on a country's identified needs;
- ▶ the need to develop specific and detailed tasks for each partner up front to prevent conflict of who does what between Canadian and Southern partners.

Note: There were 8 recommendations here under question 16b although 21 ratings indicating partnerships were presented in question 13a (although as discussed under question 13, there were likely even more partnerships than indicated by ratings).

#### **16c) Results and Dissemination:**

25% of the PCRs had comments under this topic. The comments touch on a broad range of issues from the design of projects for results to modes of dissemination to specific action recommendations and can be grouped as follows:

- ▶ many comments flag the importance of the existence of, or need for, a dissemination strategy which defines users and mechanisms at the outset of the project;
- ▶ the value of PO support right through to monitoring and evaluation which can enhance opportunities for dissemination;
- ▶ identified as having high potential for utilization;
- ▶ project specific recommendations for follow-up actions for dissemination (001575; 040081; 000378; 880285).



**Example of comments addressing results and dissemination recommendations:**

- "A network such as this needed to have clear publication targets well established from the start and should work systematically towards those targets. This was not done under this project. I would go further to say that for projects where the bulk of the budget is for honoraria, as was the case here, a significant part of the honoraria should be withheld until certain publication targets are met." (000351).
- "The results from this project are useful for any group or city planning an engineered wetland. However, to now I have seen no indication that project results will be disseminated. We should perhaps engage Doug Titus to write up the results and bring them out in some way. The technical and financial aspects can be noted, but the key issues to emphasize are the broader institutional and social lessons, plus the specific issue of the feasibility (in the broadest sense) of user pay systems for engineered wetlands. Further, CIDA is planning a major effort at use of engineered wetlands for the Jordanian side of the Jordan River valley, and they should be given the project results (Jonathan Laine)." (001575).
- "The data collected from the small farms should have been disseminated back to the farmers. A full report of the research findings should be prepared and disseminated to experts working in the area, perhaps in the form of a journal article." (880285).
- "The impact the results of this project had on educational policy in the country was to a large extent due to a well developed dissemination strategy implemented throughout the duration of the project." (920415).
- Heavy emphasis was placed on dissemination right from the start. A contract with Macmillan was obtained before work had begun. This made collaboration very enticing for many leading researchers." (921100).

Text Box 22

**16d) Beneficiary participation:**

9% of the PCRs had comments under this topic although 36% of the projects were identified as participatory in question 4b (and as discussed in this report under 4b that estimate is likely conservative due to some perceived ambiguity in the understanding of the question). Comparing the comments from question 4a and those here in question 16 I would say there is evidence of "PCR fatigue" since many recommendations given earlier are not cross-referenced let alone restated here in 16. This also speaks to the risks associated with analysing across PCR question by question only as opposed to reading down.

Most comments addressed the need to have better incorporated beneficiary participation (including ensuring that research capacity was delivered to indigenous people) into the project design.

One comment stated that consultation of the local beneficiaries in defining the research agenda (arriving at acceptable waste management solution) was key to the projects immediate success (920017).

**16e) Networks:**

15% of the PCRs had comments under this topic.

Not all PCRs for projects identified as networks in the tombstone data provided recommendations in this question, and several PCRs whose projects were not identified as networks in the tombstone data did provide comments. Not all projects which had network in their title (and seemed to function as a network from what I can tell from the PCR) were identified as a network project in tombstone data (ie, 89225 and 910023), as well one PCR refers to the project as a 'one shot network' but it is not identified as a network in the tombstone data for that project (92100).

Many of the comments address the need for improved/better assisted/more networking among projects of a formal network or among related projects in general. One goes on to suggest that post-project networking would still be beneficial.

Some suggested mechanisms to improve networking and one suggested more emphasis be placed on 'one shot networks' rather than the traditional indefinite-life networks, where large percentages of the budget are spent on communications, rather than research. (921100).

**Example of a comment addressing recommendations on Networks:**

- "I think that the eleven steps identified by the CGIAR/TAC External Review (see question 15 for reference) as exemplary ways to manage the INIBAP Information and Documentation Network are likely applicable to other networks and are worth listing here again: creating a participative network; defining roles clearly; practising client-orientation; forming an advisory group; developing a challenging yet feasible vision; fostering interdependent relationships with other organizations and having shared common goals; offering an integrated package of products and services; adopting an integrative planning approach in which long-, medium, and short-term plans dovetail into each other; adopting planned reviews; demonstrating a willingness to learn from both successes and failures; taking proactive measures to minimize financial uncertainties." (910023)

Text Box 23

**16f) Development impact:**

11% of the PCRs had comments under this topic.

Considering this is the ultimate raison d'être of IDRC, and that 89% of the PCRs made comments about development impact under question 8, there are surprisingly few recommendations on this topic. This may be a function of "PCR fatigue", of who filled in the PCR, or may reflect how difficult it is to determine or predict impact. Not all of the comments provided are recommendations (eg. one refers to the significant developmental impact the project had on new educational policies in Argentina (920415)), and some comments refer to comments elsewhere in the PCR.

Some of the recommendations made include:

- "Be realistic about what a project can hope to accomplish, specially in a case such as this where the project design is limited in scope." (000394);
- "We should encourage the widest possible dissemination of the general results of this work, as they show all but conclusively the importance of scientific aquifer monitoring and management. The point is not so much dissemination of research results themselves as achieving gains in urban public water policy." (000845).
- "Support of grassroots (as opposed to state-based) organizations, specifically those involved in sustainable and equitable development activities (as stipulated in objective 7) might give a much needed voice to 'popular ' movements and groups in the country. As such, the project could foster a more democratic (versus state run) development process." (040224).

#### **16g) Project management**

19% of the PCRs had comments under this topic. Several comments were project specific comments rather than recommendations.

A few key points emerge:

- ▶ some projects require a higher degree of monitoring than IDRC has been able to provide in recent years;
- ▶ a lack of coordination, continuity and communication among consultants and divisions within IDRC lead to uncoordinated contact to the recipients and resulted in confusion and problems related to the use of their research results;
- ▶ need for better management of project documents/files;
- ▶ the contracting of a local specialist was successful in expanding the reach of the project beyond capabilities and capacity of recipient;
- ▶ the need for a formal pass-over process between officers.

#### **16h) Gender/Equity Issues:**

20% of the PCRs had comments under this topic.

Many of the entries are project specific comments rather than recommendations. However:

- ▶ about 60% of the comments specify that a gender and equity component/analysis was lacking (sometimes despite involvement of socio-economic experts in project design).

One comment states that there were important implications from the approach/concept but does not elaborate.

#### **16i) Info services and management:**

5% of the PCRs had comments under this topic.

Half of the comments were project specific next steps. The remainder suggest to:

- ▶ include awareness building in target communities in future projects; and
- ▶ address the sustainability of information exchange between and among providers and users regardless of the presence of facilitating agencies or donors.

#### **16j) Evaluation:**

12% of the PCRs had comments under this topic.

Many of the comments refer to the need to do an evaluation or not or whether one was planned.

Recommendations include:

- ▶ the need to think about longer term measurement of impact eg. on policy making;
- ▶ the need to define markers of success that move beyond activities-oriented indicators to include qualitative and quantitative measures of success;
- ▶ in the case of proposals which go to the ethics review committee, there could be a clause put into the MGC and a contingency line in the budget which requires the research institution to perform an evaluation in partnership with IDRC should any issues arise (this could get around the limitations of using an external evaluator that confidentially issues present);
- ▶ that evaluations should be planned for in the project design.

#### **16k) Research project sustainability:**

16% of the PCRs had comments under this topic.

Few if any recommendations on how to enhance project sustainability. Most of the comments provide project specific recommendations or actions required by IDRC, donors, or developing country governments to address project/program sustainability (eg. Should fund or help to find funding). Other comments address the need for more attention to address sustainability in project planning, and one emphasizes the importance of long term support to develop the capacity to a point where it could have an influence on national policy decisions.

#### **16l) Project Objectives and design:**

24% of the PCRs had comments under this topic.

Recommendations include:

- ▶ A need for better project design (addressed by half of the comments):
  - need for explicit objectives which help in rigorous evaluation of the project;
  - more attention to participation;
  - more attention to plans for achieving cross-disciplinary objectives;
  - caution and sensitivity needed by POS when developing 'optimum research activity' through add-ons during project development to keep in mind the researchers' capacity and time commitments;
  - more attention to dissemination content and tone, and to encourage content that holds the capacity to invoke positive and equitable social change;
  - more attention to political context of project (to give voice to 'popular' involvement to foster democratic (as opposed to state-run) development process in Mongolia);
  - project objectives and design have to be 'formulated and evaluated' on a regular basis, involving POS and recipients;
- ▶ a successful approach was to begin the project with a concept paper which researchers read, discussed, and developed.
- ▶ front-end support by IDRC and thorough risk appraisal especially important in novel areas of research;
- ▶ very important to build on existing networks and relying on local initiative.

**16m) Technology transfer:**

4% (3 /75) of the PCRs had comments under this topic.

Recommendations include:

- ▶ COHRED should identify knowledge and skills required for carrying out each of the seven elements of the ENHR strategy and incorporate them into a tool kit to be used for training material for ENHR planners;
- ▶ have a plan in place for marketing training modules overseas;
- ▶ future project should pay closer attention to software compatibility.

**16n) Other:**

9% (7/75) of the PCRs had comments under this topic. One comment provided a detailed description of the institutions future expansion plans of information network and support and another was a project specific follow-up.

Recommendations include:

- ▶ a project of this size requires the involvement of senior research staff which was not available in this case;
- ▶ project took more than 10 years - developing capacity and producing important scientific results take time;
- ▶ project well designed and benefited from a preparation workshop;
- ▶ success of training projects depends on two factors: the need felt by participants for what the training offers, and the content and pedagogical skills of the trainer;
- ▶ project suffered from poor project appraisal, design, and monitoring.

**18. All in all, do you consider this project a worthwhile investment of IDRC funding?**

Data:

# of responses	# of substantive comments
Not worthwhile: 2/75 (3%)	2/2 (100%)
Questionable worth: 4/75 (5%)	3/4 (75%)
Neutral: 6/75 (8%)	5/6 (83%)
Worthwhile: 41/75 (54%)	20/41 (27%)
Very worthwhile: 17/75 (23%)	10/17 (13%)
No response: 5/75 (7%)	0/5 (0%)
Total: 75/75	40/75 (53%)

Content analysis:

77% of the projects rated were considered worthwhile or very worthwhile. A little more than half of these ratings were explained with comments.

Worthwhile is generally described in terms of:

- providing an opportunity:
  - for the introduction of a technology or research area to a region;
  - for an institution to attract funding;
- responding to a need (ie, as inputs for national policy or planning, curriculum development);
- capacity building;
- useful outputs (results, networks, a methodology (eg interdisciplinary approach), or a technology).

16% of the projects rated were considered of neutral worth, questionable worth or not worthwhile at all. Neither of the two 'not worthwhile' ratings were explained. The explanations given for the 'lack of worth' focus on:

- ▶ a lack of attention to the sustainability of newly created institutions or the research per se;
- ▶ limited interdisciplinary cooperation among collaborating institutions or researchers;
- ▶ poor project design and execution;
- ▶ a lack of progress in general;
- ▶ significant delays increasing 'hidden' costs to IDRC.

As many of the notes point out, a number of identified risks or 'shortcomings' could have been addressed and possibly minimized at the project development/decision making stage.

**19. Finally, please note any aspects of the project which you feel should be recorded or**

emphasized but which have not been covered in other sections of the Project Completion Report:

Data:

33% (25/75) of the PCRs had substantive notes.

Content analysis:

If we omit the one comment which restates the development impact of the project as stated earlier in question 8, notes under this question fall under 7 main themes:

- ▶ Specific remarks about the project (six responses);
- ▶ Recommendations for specific follow-up on dissemination (2 responses);
- ▶ Flagged projects (4 responses);
- ▶ Questions or recommendations on the direction of IDRC programming (3 responses);
- ▶ Observations /questions on IDRC corporate policy issues (4 responses);
- ▶ Specific comments about institutions/regions/researchers (6 responses);
- ▶ Specific lessons learned/observations about research methodologies/results/subject area (5 responses).

**TABLE 1: Data on the Status of PCRs Between January 1, 1997 and September 21, 2000, Grouped by Administrative Office, Branch and Division.**

	# of PCRs which became due between Jan '97 and Sept 2000	% of PCRs completed as of Sept2000	% of PCRs reviewed as of Sept 2000	⌘ # of days from due date to completion date *	⌘ # of days from completion date to closure date**	⌘ # of days the outstanding PCRs have been outstanding
all of IDRC	694	32%	93%	585	80	600
HQ	350	43%	92%	564	65	629
all ROs	344	20%	96%	606	97	580
PB/DGP	305	40%	90%	513	80	608
CSB/DGSI	25	32%	100%	635	24	650
ENR/ERN	10	100%	100%	1332	214	n/a
HS/SSA	1	100%	100%	1176	0	n/a
ISS/SSI	3	100%	100%	1418	71	n/a
SS/SSO	6	100%	100%	1059	0.5	n/a
ASRO/BRASI	105	38%	100%	709	61	669
EARO/BRAFO	66	0%	n/a	646*	n/a	646
LACRO/BRALA	80	29%	87%	527	78	567
MERO/BREMO	13	38%	80%	662	250	679
ROSA/BRAFS	22	0%	n/a	280*	n/a	280
SARO/BRASU	18	0%	n/a	693*	n/a	693
WARO/BRACO	40	3%	100%	549	0	518

\* calculation includes PCRs not completed and for those uses the number of days from due date until September 21, 2000, for the calculation.

\*\* calculation based on projects actually completed and reviewed only.



## APPENDIX 2: POSSIBLE DATA INTEGRITY ISSUES

1. Nine PCRs which were identified as closed in Radius and selected for this study were marked as drafts on the PCR printout.
  2. It is unclear to me how PCRs could be closed under the following conditions:
    - ▶ No project objectives rated in Question 1 (3 PCRs);
    - ▶ One half of the projects' objectives not rated Question 1 (1 PCR);
    - ▶ One third of the projects' objectives not rated Question 1 (1 PCR);
    - ▶ No outputs listed (5 PCRs);
    - ▶ An empty "yes/no" radio box for Question 2a (1 PCR);
    - ▶ No rating given to an interdisciplinary project in Question 4a (1 PCR);
    - ▶ No rating for a participatory project (2 PCRs).
  3. In the Radius printout of completed PCRs, dates for when two PCRs were reviewed are provided but no dates for when the PCRs were completed (90034, 928011).
  4. Four PCR completion dates are listed as the year 1900 (901039, 920612, 000095, 040307).
-

### APPENDIX 3: LIST OF THE 75 SAMPLED PCRS RANDOMLY SELECTED FOR THE PCR CONTENT ANALYSIS STUDY.

00014	000014	940602 Sustainable Development Network (SDN) Pakistan	PB/DGP	00032
000032	931150	GPS for the Development of Mapping Infrastructure	PB/DGP	00058
000058	930600	Development Alternatives Informatics Network	PB/DGP	00074
000074	930603	Spatial Data Technologies for Local Level Planning	PB/DGP	
00194	000194	930041 Community Management of Fishery Ecosystems and Potab	PB/DGP	
00236	000236	931050 Micronutrient Supplementation and Malaria Risk (Cana	PB/DGP	
00300	000300	941101 Globalization, State Power and Social Policy (IHRDD	PB/DGP	00351
000351	930408	Growth, the Environment and Fiscal Policy in the Min	PB/DGP	00378
000378	930201	Facilitating the Essential National Health Research	PB/DGP	00394
000394	930210	Canadian University Program in International Health	PB/DGP	00484
000484	930019	Environmental Monitoring (Peru)	PB/DGP	
00763	000763	940400 Economics and the Environment (Colombia)	PB/DGP	
00845	000845	931550 Latin America Urban Water Management Network	PB/DGP	00882
000882	940401	African Economic Research Consortium - Phase III	PB/DGP	01051
001051	950209	Comparative Health Care Policies (Latin America) II	PB/DGP	01269
001269	940609	Gender and Information Technology (APC Women's Netwo	PB/DGP	01551
001551	938763	Municipal Management of Social and Environmental Pol	PB/DGP	01575
001575	940012	Engineered Wetlands for Urban Water Management (Camb	PB/DGP	01609
001609	940215	Couverture vaccinale par l'implantation du logiciel	PB/DGP	
02033	002033	940205 Medical Technology (Uruguay)	PB/DGP	
02126	002126	948752 Integrated Policy Research : Capacity Building - Pha	LACRO/BRALA	
02588	002588	950400 CT-MIMAP (Nepal)	PB/DGP	
02643	002643	951001 Product and market research network	PB/DGP	
03001	003001	950614 Expanding Audience & Capacity of Electronic Networks	PB/DGP	
03945	003945	970015 SME Support Organisations Network - Asia	PB/DGP	
40081	040081	948010 Policy Reform and Advocacy	ASRO/BRASI	
40137	040137	948005 Health Research Capacity Building, Cambodia	ASRO/BRASI	
40224	040224	948008 PAN - Mongolia	ASRO/BRASI	
40341	040341	960010 PAN - APCC Coconut Information Network	PB/DGP	
83199	830199	830199 Root Crops (Sri Lanka) - Phase II	ASRO/BRASI	
87207	870207	870207 Regional Research Review and Advisory Program in Edu	ASRO/BRASI	
87277	870277	870277 Rice-Fish (Indonesia)	ASRO/BRASI	
88074	880074	880074 Cooperatives (Burkina Faso)	WARO/BRACO	
88134	880134	880134 Marine Fish Disease (Malaysia) - Phase II	ASRO/BRASI	
88285	880285	880285 Pilot Cattle Information System (Egypt)	ISS/SSI	
89041	890041	890041 Anticonceptive Technology - NII (India) - Phase V	PB/DGP	
89119	890119	890119 Rural Food Processing (Colombia) - Phase III	ENR/ERN	
89158	890158	890158 Fish Parasites (Malaysia) - Phase III	ASRO/BRASI	
89225	890225	890225 DEVINSA (Development Information Network for South Asia II	ASRO	
89262	890262	890262 Southeast Asian Weed Information Center (SEAWIC) -II	PB/DGP	
90046	900046	900046 Post Harvest Economics Advisor (Asia) - Phase III	ASRO/BRASI	

90087	900087	900087 Black Urbanization, Class Differentiation and Politi	PB/DGP	
90149	900149	900149 Tuberculosis Control (India)	PB/DGP	
90236	900236	900236 Promotion of Sheep Production (Indonesia)	ASRO/BRASI	
90275	900275	900275 Bulk Storage of Grain (Thailand)	ASRO/BRASI	
90342	900342	900342 Root Crop Germplasm Collection (Viet Nam)	ASRO/BRASI	
91023	910023	910023 Banana and Plantain Information Network - Phase II	ISS/SSI	
91036	910036	910036 Industrial Strategy (South Africa)	SS/SSO	
91045	910045	910045 Socio-Economic and Environmental Study of King Talal	ENR/ERN	
91076	910076	910076 Conservation and Development of the Mt. Everest Ecos	PB/DGP	
91094	910094	910094 Dryland Ecosystems Management (Kenya)	ENR/ERN	
91132	910132	910132 Urbanization and Environment in Bangkok (Thailand)	PB/DGP	91146
910146	910146	NGONET: An NGO Communications Support System for Env	PB/DGP	91178
910178	910178	Developing Information Services and Infrastructure	ASRO/BRASI	91218
910218	910218	Duck-Fish Integration (Thailand) - Phase II	ASRO/BRASI	91224
910224	910224	Mountain Environmental Management (Nepal)	PB/DGP	
91241	910241	910241 Health Care Evaluation and Management Skills (Canada-V)	PB/DGP	
91272	910272	910272 Crop-Animal Systems (Indonesia) - Phase III	ASRO/BRASI	
91299	910299	910299 Community Fishery Resource Management (Philippines)	ASRO/BRASI	
92017	920017	920017 Solid Waste Management (Morocco)	PB/DGP	
92232	920232	920232 Community Control of Malaria (Sri Lanka)	PB/DGP	
92403	920403	920403 Education and Urban Labour Market in Mexico	LACRO/BRALA	
92415	920415	920415 Secondary Education Policies (Argentina) - Phase III	PB/DGP	92610
920610	920610	Remote Sensing in the Artisanal Fisheries of the Val	PB/DGP	92611
920611	920611	Geographic Information System, Bihar (GIS Bihar)	PB/DGP	92615
920615	920615	Community Information Network (Ecuador)- Phase I	LACRO/BRALA	92618
920618	920618	Research for Product Design and Test Marketing of Ma	PB/DGP	92810
920810	920810	NGO Leadership and Management	CSB/DGSI	
92100	921100	921100 Fiscal Reform and Structural Change	PB/DGP	
92456	92456	928456 Information, democracy, development and security in	PB/DGP	
92751	928751	928751 Social Policy Research Priorities in Latin America	LACRO/BRALA	
92757	928757	928757 Education and Small Industry in Ecuador	LACRO/BRALA	
92759	928759	928759 Information System for Municipal Administration	LACRO/BRALA	
93501	931501	931501 Support Centre for Agro-Food SMI (Morocco)	PB/DGP	
93755	938755	938755 Communication and Sustainability of Social Policies	LACRO/BRALA	