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Annual Report on Evaluation Findings 2004

Evaluation Unit
International Development Research Centre

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Annual Report on Evaluation Findings 2004

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Introduction

In addition to the eleven project and program evaluations which are reported on in this year's report, the Centre has conducted eleven external reviews (reported to Governors in March) and has also received twenty-two case studies as part of the study on the influence of research on public policy. Overall, this reflects an important year for evaluative thinking and reflection across the Centre. As in previous years, there is considerable overlap in the issues raised in these evaluations. **Part 1** of the report highlights findings in three dimensions of the Corporate Assessment Framework: capacity building, policy/technology influence and strategic intelligence. These were selected for their prevalence in the reports; further, the first two represent the core mandate of the Centre and the third has not yet been reported.

On **capacity building**, three key points emerge. Learning-by-doing fosters innovation and builds capacity over the long-term. At the same time, it requires considerable intensity of time inputs by Centre staff. The reports suggest that capacity building through networks remains key to our work, and is a social process that is manifest through a wide variety of network arrangements. Devolution of projects and programs to partners is seen as essential in capacity building, and does reduce the administrative burden on the Centre for project management; at the same time, it may well increase the demands on professional staff time for support to the project.

In addition to the major strategic evaluation on policy influence, almost all of the project and program evaluations received this year considered issues of **policy influence**. From the strategic evaluation we have highlighted the importance of context. This report summarizes the contextual framework that emerges from the cases and helps us to understand the place of dissemination and communication, advocacy, institutionalization and other factors in the research-policy interaction. From the project and program evaluations, we have reflected on this framework and also highlighted the importance of credibility in the policy process: the quality of research and the international reputation brought to processes by the Centre's involvement highlight the responsibility the Centre has in fostering high quality research.

The third area of corporate performance discussed in the report is **Strategic Intelligence.** Here, policy environment was a key dimension raised in several reports which stress the need for researchers to understand the policy environment in which they work.

Part 2 of the report provides an update on the Centre's evaluation system. The Centre has developed a decentralized evaluation system that has as its primary goal useful evaluation:

> *Utilization-focused evaluation does not advocate any particular evaluation content, model, method, theory or even use. Rather, it is a process for helping primary intended users select the most appropriate content, models, methods, theory and use for their particular situation.*[1]

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[1] *Utilization-Focused Evaluation Checklist*, Michael Quinn Patton, 2002
http://www.wmich.edu/evalctr/checklists/ufechecklist.htm

Use implies both accountability and learning: accountability around what we achieved and learning about how we achieved these ends in order to improve on a continuous basis. Both learning and accountability are critical in a utilization-focused evaluation system and both demand rigour.

The emphasis on learning in the development of the Centre's evaluation system over the past twelve years has resulted in active engagement by staff at all levels in the evaluation process as well as an insistence that evaluation should not be *pro forma*. The support and active engagement of Centre management and Governors has played no small part in fostering this approach and has resulted in an evaluation system with an increased ability to account for Centre performance. The adjustments to the system this year are, first, the inclusion of the Corporate Assessment Framework, which represents a significant advance in accountability of the Centre as a whole; second, the replacement of the evaluation planning manual developed by the Unit in 1997 with a series of guidelines for staff on evaluation planning and implementation; and third, in an active partnership between Programs and Partnership Branch and the Evaluation Unit, the Centre is addressing the project reporting challenge noted in the Auditor General's report of 2003.

Part 3 provides a profile of evaluation at IDRC, through an examination of the quality of the reports as well as a profile of the evaluators. The Evaluation Unit has now presented this overview in each report for the past three years. Over this period, we see an increase in the number of women evaluators, however it remains a challenge for the Centre to make use of Southern evaluators in its work. Where we make a specific effort to contract southern evaluators in a group of studies, such as the external review or the policy study, we do achieve a balance. However, in studies commissioned on an individual basis, the tendency is to have a much higher proportion of northerners. A more conscious effort is required if the Centre wishes to shift the balance.

The **final section** of the report highlights the changes in the Centre's evaluation system and expansion in evaluative thinking Centre-wide over the past several years. It reviews the Centre reporting responsibilities on evaluation and invites comments on the redesign of the AREF over the next two years.

The **Annexes** to this report present a full list of the reports received, the quality assessment guidelines, and a revised outline of the evaluation system. The final Annex presents the Management Response to the issues raised in this report.

1. Learning from Evaluation

The Evaluation Unit received eleven program and project evaluation reports this fiscal year[2]. These reports were commissioned by Program Initiatives, Secretariats and Programs and Partnership Branch to respond to specific needs. This section presents highlights of the findings from those evaluation reports grouped under three of the Corporate Assessment Framework (CAF) performance areas (see Box 1). Findings are synthesized under Indigenous Capacity Building, Research Results for Policy and Technology Influence, and Strategic Intelligence. The first two performance areas are selected because they were the most frequently addressed; and Strategic Intelligence was selected because it has not been reported on in previous Annual Reports on Evaluation Findings (AREFs).

Table 1. CAF Performance Areas Addressed in 2003-04 Evaluation Reports							
	Capacity Building	P & T Influence	Gender	Evaluative Thinking	Strategic Intelligence	Donor Partner.	Canadian Partner.
Project Evaluations							
• CBDC	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
• Crucible I & II	✔	✔					
• E-commerce	✔	✔			✔		
• FONTIERRAS	✔	✔	✔		✔		
• RUAF	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
• SDCN	✔	✔	✔				
• VEEM	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	
Program Evaluations							
• Bellanet	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔	
• CFP in LAC	✔	✔	✔				
• Minga Gender	✔		✔	✔			
• SGM	✔	✔					
▢ Performance Areas that are highlighted in this report							

1.1 Indigenous Capacity Building

IDRC's mandate is to help create, maintain, and enhance research capacity in developing countries. Capacity refers to the ability of a collective or individual to achieve its goals. IDRC contributes to research capacity by providing resources and support that allow new and established researchers to do work relevant to the development needs of their country and by providing them with other opportunities to enhance their skills.

The Centre's corporate philosophy on capacity building encourages staff to be flexible in developing context-specific strategies to support relevant functions and capacities where they are most appropriate. The array of strategies identified and discussed in the evaluation reports is an indication of this. These strategies can be divided into three broad categories: learning-by-doing, networking and devolution. These categories are used to present the evaluation findings below. The projects and programs evaluated in the reports all used multiple strategies, but a small number of reports are used to highlight experiences in each category.

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[2] Refer to Annex 2A for full list

1.1.1 Learning-by-Doing

Learning-by-doing is fundamental to IDRC's approach and was discussed in all of the evaluation reports received this year. 'Hands-on' learning builds capacity of partners and target groups through their ownership of and involvement in the research. The *Review of Small Grant Mechanisms* (SGM) was commissioned by Programs and Partnership Branch (PPB) in an effort to improve understanding and definition of this mechanism. The report emphasized that IDRC uses small grants (SGs) for many purposes including to develop the capacity of researchers.

SGs are defined as "the appropriation of funds within a standard project format to be dispersed as small individual grants" (p.1). This format of fund allocation allows for the creation of spaces for specific kinds of learning and research in areas of interest that PIs want to explore or push ahead. The following characteristics of SGs emerged from the review: malleability, innovation, labor intensity, and building capacity for the long term.

A) Malleability

Through document reviews and interviews, the *Review of SGM* found that SGs are an efficient and effective way to familiarize researchers with methodologies and to build research capacity in a hands-on manner through consultation and networking, rather than training (p.7). The examination of numerous SGs revealed that they are a very flexible mechanism. They are not an end in themselves; rather, they can be viewed as a means to build research capacity while enabling programs to adapt to realities on the ground. As stated in the review, "there is no one Small Grants style. You cut the Small Grants cloth according to your needs." (p. 8)

> **Box 1. "Cutting the SG Cloth"**
> "We can understand [Small Grant Programs] SGP's as a flexible instrument to express IDRC's mandate creatively. They do not provide a template…but rather a means to respond to needs that the Centre perceives to be pertinent to the evolution of its interests and objectives"
> *Review of the SGM* (p. 19)

B) Innovation

One of the chief findings that emerged from the small grants review was an emphasis on the introduction and testing of new theoretical approaches and methodologies. From the sample of SGs examined, "participatory community-based action-research, integration of gender issues and promoting multidisciplinarity figured prominently in the design and implementation of projects" (p.13). This push for innovation is balanced with a concern for maintaining strong research standards. SGs help to "keep the Centre open to new ideas [and] to new people" (p. 12).

> **Box 2. Small Grants Promote Innovation**
> "All the responding POs indicated that Small Grants prove to be a very effective and efficient way to introduce both junior and senior researchers to new methodologies, or to provide them a way to learn and test them, at a very low direct financial cost...They can also be used to explore new methodologies."
> *Review of the SGM* (p. 5)

C) Labour Intensity

The review emphasized that SG programs are labour intensive. This is consistent with other evaluations, which indicate that learning-by-doing approaches to capacity building can

> **Box 3. SGs Workload**
> "Small Grants [are] more intensive, that is, they require an effort comparable to what is given to a regular grant, but compressed into a shorter time period."
> *Review of the SGM* (p. 17)

require a great deal of staff time and effort. At the same time, the Program Officers interviewed for the *Review of SGM* unanimously thought the investment was "well worth the benefits of developing more extensive networks of partners, identifying innovations more readily, promoting collaboration…and minimizing risk" (p. 12).

D) <u>Building Capacity for the Long-term</u>

The *Review of SGM* finds that the demanding nature of SGs pays off. They can "yield considerable results, often of greater…proportion to the amount invested than regular project grants."(p.15). These benefits are contributions towards building capacity for the long term despite their heavy short-term demands. For example, all of the SGs examined included provisions for networking among the grant recipients. These efforts were found to be very effective: "small grants empower networks of researchers and help to develop centers of excellence" (p. 7).

The Viet Nam Economic and Environmental Management Program (VEEM) provides another example of investing in capacity over the long term. VEEM's principal focus was on research capacity building in the policy-relevant research areas of economic reform and environmental management. The goal was to strengthen the Vietnamese government's capacity to develop and implement sound and equitable policies. In an assessment of performance and effectiveness, evaluators of VEEM concluded that capacity building was its principal achievement. The evaluation found that significant progress was made in strengthening capacities in research design, coordination/networking, implementation, and in reporting. This "has left Vietnamese researchers and research institutes far more capable of undertaking effective applied research post-VEEM than they were prior to the implementation of the program" (p. 40). Despite the fact that the evaluation also found that VEEM was able to influence policy decision-makers, it was noted that the primary focus on capacity building at times compromised the timeliness and quality of research results, as explained in Box 4.

Box 4. Challenges in VEEM's Learning-by-doing Approach

"IDRC has perceived one of its roles in VEEM to be the provision of assistance to the research teams, rather than necessarily the provision of direction. This perspective has led IDRC to not intervene on all occasions when methodological shortcomings have been identified. Such an approach has allowed the VEEM researchers to learn from their mistakes, yet at the same time has increased the length of time required to complete the research, and impacted negatively on the value of the results themselves. This trade-off between capacity-building and value of results is in many ways inevitable in research programs with a capacity-building component, and must be taken into account in the development and planning of such programs."

Evaluation Report: VEEM Program (p. 16)

Other evaluations looking at learning-by-doing also noted timeliness and quality as challenges. They suggest that these should be viewed as short-term challenges with a focus on the long-term benefits of increased research capacity. As noted in the VEEM report, the 'hands-on' experience for partners often requires IDRC to take a 'hands-off' approach, to create space for learning-by-doing. Rich learning experiences are not easy or simple processes; difficulties have to be faced and problems solved as part of the capacity building process. These aspects of learning-by-doing initiatives may introduce challenges

and trade-offs in the short term, however, if they are viewed as an investment in capacity building for the long term, they take on a positive dimension.

1.1.2 Networking

Networking aims to actively engage partners in partnerships, combining learning-by-doing and learning through collaboration. The evaluations of networks received this year portrayed wide variety in purpose, structure, and nature of participation. All of the 2003-04 reports discussed some form of network/networking. At one end of the spectrum were formal, highly structured networks[3] and at the other, a range of less-formal/structured 'communities of practice', associations, partnerships, links and connections. This range of network arrangements indicates that networking remains an important tool for the Centre, which is adapted to a variety of needs.

One example of a formal network is the Sustainable Development Communication Network (SDCN), which focuses on moving the sustainable development agenda forward globally. Now in its second phase, the SDCN aims to strengthen electronic communications and collaboration practices within and among member organizations (85% from Southern countries) and an extended participating community (over 450 organizations and individuals). Building communication capacity has been a particular focus involving workshops, peer mentoring and consulting arrangements. The evaluation of the SDCN reported: "members all commented on how much they valued the opportunity to share their communication practices (challenges, barriers, and successes) with other organizations" (p. 25).

> **Box 5. Effects of External Changes**
> "Staff turnover within the member organizations had significant impact on the network, leading to spurts and stalls on the various work programs over time."
> *The SDCN, 1996-2001: An Evaluation* (p.37)

Four of the evaluations[4] indicated that effective collaboration in networks required members to be engaged and actively contributing, as discussed in the examples below. Among other factors, workplace pressures and changes can adversely affect collaboration in networks (see Box 5). A recurring discussion point in the evaluations of networks was the need for strong coordination and member ownership.

A) <u>Need for Strong Coordination</u>
A strong coordinating and facilitating body can help maintain the momentum of a network and protect it from the inevitable fluctuations in participation of members. This was one of the findings in a report documenting lessons from multi-stakeholder processes including IDRC-supported Crucible Groups. The Crucible Groups I and II were made up of diverse individuals with a common concern for the conservation and enhancement of plant genetic resources. The mandate of Crucible I was to identify key issues and options for addressing intellectual property rights in the management of plant genetic resources. Crucible II was launched to move the international policy agenda forward with a larger

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[3] For example, Resource Centre for Urban Agriculture and Forestry (RUAF) network, Sustainable Development Communications Network (SDCN), Community Biodiversity Development and Conservation (CBDC) network, and the Crucible Groups I and II

[4] The SDCN: 1996-2001: An Evaluation (p. 37), Multi-Stakeholder Policy Processes (p. 32), Bellanet Evaluation (p. 5), Evaluation Report: VEEM Program (p.26)

cross-section of stakeholders. Both of the Crucible Groups had formal structures including an IDRC-hosted Coordinator, which according to the report, "has proven essential to support the process" (p. 32).

The evaluation reports suggest that capacity building through collaboration is a 'social' process that requires active participation from the members. The SDCN evaluation found that the coordinator had been key for efficient operations of the network, however, it further benefited from an equally important 'busybody' or "the person who keeps the conversations going around the network." (p. 37).

B) <u>Member Ownership</u>

Member ownership is also important for maintaining collaboration and capacity building, as discussed in the Bellanet evaluation. Bellanet was originally created to promote coordination and collaboration within the development

> **Box 6. Active Collaboration**
> "Dgroups has been the result of equal partners combining resources and energies to improve the technology and to evolve the use of this method of collaboration both within their organizations and among their respective partners"
> *Bellanet Evaluation* (p. 44)

community using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Now in its second phase, Bellanet focuses on the dynamics of collaborative processes, learning and knowledge sharing through increased engagement with Southern partners. Bellanet's Dgroup partnership facilitates online communities and allows for web-based information sharing in a simple fashion and at an individual pace. Dgroups create neutral spaces for collaboration, which allows all parties involved to contribute freely and maintain ownership. The evaluation found that while Bellanet is credited with taking the lead of the Dgroups initiative and maintaining some of its momentum, the seven organizations involved all share ownership and are actively working toward a common goal in this partnership. One interviewee noted the importance of this in overcoming the obstacle of competition amongst organizations in open collaboration, "Dgroups provides a neutral solution at no cost so that organizations can work together without disputes over recognition or ownership." (p. 42).

1.1.3 Devolution

Successful devolution of projects and programs to partners in the South is one aspect of IDRC's capacity building and one in which all Program Areas are actively involved. A short description of 'Devolution to the South' was drafted by Senior Management Committee (SMC) at the April 2001 Evaluation Retreat as follows "Devolution of responsibility for management and administration of research to institutions in the South where and how we can do so effectively."[5] Four of the eleven evaluation reports addressed issues of devolution, as discussed below.

A) <u>South-South Collaboration</u>

One line of reasoning behind recommendations for devolution revolved around the point that partners in the regions are better located for effective South-South collaboration.

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[5] Final Report on the Development of the Corporate Assessment Framework (CAF), Evaluation Unit, January 2004 (p. 58)

Minga's Gender Mainstreaming evaluation recommended that the Program Initiative (PI) devolve some of the mainstreaming activities to regional partners, as they are better placed to link projects in order to facilitate peer learning and project-to-project monitoring (p. 23). The Pan Asia E-commerce report discussed the possibility of devolving along the same lines. This report suggested that partner organizations with on-line 'shops' selling publications, videos, CD-ROMs, photos and handicrafts in Pan Asia's 'e-commerce mall' may find it beneficial to work with e-commerce providers in their own countries (p. 20).

B) Increased Workload and Cost

The *Review of Small Grant Mechanism*[6] (SGM) found that devolution of program/project management was one of the salient characteristics of the intentions appearing in the design of Small Grant projects. Comments received in interviews with POs indicated that while devolution transfers the administrative burden in Ottawa, it does not decrease the work of program staff (p.7).

Of the twenty-one SG files reviewed, nine were Centre-Administered (CAP), nine were Recipient-Administered (RAP) and three had split administration. In the RAPs, recipients managed varying program activities, however "Devolution of management… only occurs when the Program Officer judges that the receiving institution or organization has the capacity at least to manage the disbursement of funds" (p.4). The SG review reveals an underlying assumption that SGs are a time and cost saving mechanism.

> *The Centre's policy on devolution finds logical expression in SG programs…in the files reviewed, the documentation which refers to devolution as an aspect of the SG mechanism…refer to assumptions about the rationale for devolution - that it will transfer day-to-day work and administrative costs from IDRC to local or regional institutions and organizations, and so reduce the proportion of Centre overhead to project and program disbursements. (p.11)*

Similar statements were made in the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Resource Center for Urban Agriculture and Forestry (RUAF), a network focusing on information and communication supported by Cities Feeding People (CFP). The evaluators felt that the program had matured to a point where devolution of activities to partners could be enhanced, but cautioned that the process would require increased attention and resources, "especially with the proposed devolution of responsibilities to the Southern partners, seeking ways to support these partners with staff, funds, and training will become increasingly important" (p.12). Although local skills had been developed through project activities[7], more work remained to be done. A suggested increase in funding was thought to be inevitable as increasing responsibility and accountability is shifted to RUAFs' partners (p.20).

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[6] See section 1.1.1 for further discussion of this report

[7] For example RUAF partners are responsible for printing and distributing regionalized language versions of the *Urban Agriculture Magazine* and are actively engaged in production decisions (p. 10)

1.2 Research Results for Policy and Technology Influence

The Research Results for Policy and Technology Influence performance area refers generally to IDRC's effectiveness at supporting research whose results lead to positive developmental changes, or research that is relevant and useful to local practitioners and decision-makers. A strategic evaluation of policy influence has provided data for monitoring how IDRC is building the capacity of researchers and institutions to undertake and use policy relevant research. This section presents initial findings from the cross case analysis of the strategic evaluation. In particular, the findings below focus on an analysis of the contextual factors that either support or inhibit policy influence. Issues of context and credibility addressed in the project/program evaluations are also presented below, looking at three examples of IDRC supported research that influenced policy decision-makers.

1.2.1 IDRC-Supported Research and its Influence on Public Policy

Beginning in 2001, the Evaluation Unit (EU) carried out a strategic evaluation to examine whether and how the research the Centre supports influences public policy and decision-making. The study is based primarily on case studies that provide vivid narratives. A key element of the case study methodology was the use of common interview questions, which encouraged both depth and richness in each qualitative case, while still allowing for effective cross case analysis. The EU received and finalized twenty-two case studies carried out as part of the strategic evaluation.

A preliminary analysis of the case studies was carried out through a series of four workshops with staff and partners. From these workshops, a number of key elements were selected for analysis across each of the cases. The issues examined include:
- Intent to influence policy
- IDRC's conception of its role in the project
- Personal qualities and interpersonal relationships including project strategies (e.g., networking, partnerships)
- Time horizons including the timing of the intervention as well as the timing of the outputs and products from the research
- Communication and dissemination
- Gender
- Centre inputs

These issues were complemented by an analysis of the contextual factors that either facilitated or limited the project's influence on, or potential to influence, public policy. Below we highlight the findings on context, as this is the fundamental influence on all the other elements of analysis.

A) Policy-Research Context
Analysis of the context in these twenty-two cases leads to two prevailing conclusions. The first is that there are no "best practices" when it comes to research influencing public policy. Rather, it is about the confluence of factors that interact in a variety of ways

leading towards, or away from, influence. The second is that projects are both successes and failures depending on when and from what perspective they are viewed. The purpose of the strategic evaluation was not to assess the overall success or failure of each project but to look at them through the lens of whether and how they had an influence on public policy.

The analysis of context revealed the relationship between the government's need and its expectation as a critical dimension. Characterizing this relationship is useful in defining the nature and elements of policy influence by helping to answer the questions:

- Is the relationship focused primarily on knowledge generation to aid a decision process?
- To what extent does the project have to address the institutionalization of ideas and knowledge as part of its policy influence objective?
- To what extent and what type of leadership is demanded of the project?
- What is the nature of the advocacy connected with the research and affecting its potential to influence?

Five types of relationships between "government need" and "research interests" are proposed. These are dynamic types and we see evidence of projects moving among them. Viewed from the perspective of the public policy agenda, these can be characterized as follows:

1. Policymakers know they need knowledge
In this case there is a government need for knowledge in a policy decision process. To make an effective contribution, the researchers generally need to have built a strong relationship of trust with the decision-makers and have a reputation for high quality research and timeliness. The researcher or research group needs credibility but not an agenda of its own. Policy-friendly presentation of findings may be less important here given the policy makers intention to act. There is little or no need to consider institutionalization of the issue as the decision-makers have determined to proceed and are considering how to do so. This is illustrated by the Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies (MIMAP) Senegal case where the research group was asked by the government to play a central role in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper process in Senegal. They were brought in based on the reputation and relationships of the head researcher and were contributing to a government decision process.

2. Government Interest: The issue is on the public and policy agendas but the government does not know what to do.
In this context, the issue is well known, and it is clear that there are public policy implications. But there is a leadership gap and no clear decision process at play. In this situation, the research group has the opportunity to play that role in articulating the issue. In addition to high quality research that is communicated clearly to policy makers, the project must also consider the institutionalization of the issue, or research tools developed to address the issue. This element is critical since if there is no place in the system, the research findings do not have a place to make their mark. The Tanzania Essential Health Intervention Program (TEHIP) case study is instructive: a gap in leadership resulted in a

lack of coordination among the various players in the health sector. The challenge was how, and at what point, to institutionalize the TEHIP tools within the central Ministry of Health. In the Philippines, the need to increase poverty monitoring in order to be able to address the poverty gap was articulated by the MIMAP researchers and their work resonated with policy makers. As with TEHIP, the challenge here is to move beyond the local level contribution and to institutionalize a well-regarded poverty monitoring system at the national level.

3. Research Interest: The issue is clear but the government is not yet ready to act.
In this context, the issue is generally known but the research agenda clearly sits with the research project. The project has a strong sense of purpose and need; the government is committed to addressing the issue in the future, or would like to address it now but does not have the resources. The links to decision processes are generally weak in this case and the nature of institutionalization is unclear. Leadership by the research team is critical. Advocacy becomes more important in initiating projects in this context. The Environmental Management Development in the Ukraine program working in the Dnipro river basin fit with the government's expressed interests to address environmental issues in the Ukraine. The project played a strong role in advocating the importance of using data and evidence in policy formulation and decision-making and in bringing forward issues the government saw as important but for which it did not have the resources.

4. Emergent Issue: There is no government involvement but a strong research agenda.
In this context, there is no government involvement or interest in the issue but a strong research agenda. While individuals in the government may know of the issue, it may be either controversial or it has not yet affected a key public constituency. The research group has to create the agenda in the policy and public domains by drawing attention to the issue. Here, advocacy is central, the communication and dissemination of the issue to diverse audiences is important. The research group/community must not only create interest in the issue, but must also create the institutional structures to move the issue forward. Potential for failure is high. In the case of financing education reform in Guatemala, the researchers were clearly taking a leadership and advocacy role to ensure that the education budget reflected the country's indigenous population and gender differences within the education reforms. Although the project team was able to map out the various government ministries that they needed to address, the team failed to recognize the importance of timing in policy processes, since the timing of the project's results was not in sync with the timing of the education budget.

5. Government disinterest and/or hostility: The public sector does not want to deal with this issue at the moment.
In this context, the public policy system is 'actively disinterested' and may be hostile to the issue. The research team must therefore have a strong sense of its purpose and a clear recognition that the project is very risky. The disinterest on the part of government may occur for a number of reasons including political and economic changes (e.g., reforms), change in leadership. Therefore it is the least easily managed of all these relationships. This situation is best illustrated by the High Altitude Mining case in which it was found that mining at high altitudes in Peru adversely affected the health of miners and their

families. However, the national Ministry of Health was not receptive to these results, which challenged the traditional notion of the ability of people to adapt to living and working at high altitudes. Shortly after this project was completed the Peruvian government underwent political and economic reforms. This resulted in a new policy agenda and further hampered any kind of influence the research may have had.

1.2.2 Policy Influence in the Project and Program Evaluations

Almost all of the evaluation reports this year looked at policy influence as a result. Three of the projects evaluated had especially strong intent to influence policy: VEEM, FONTIERRAS, and the Crucible Groups. These evaluations reinforce the initial findings from the cross-case analysis.

The goal of the Viet Nam Economic and Environmental Management Program (VEEM) was to support the country's reform process by strengthening the capacity of the government to develop and implement sound, equitable, and environmentally sustainable economic and social policies. This case fits into the first type of policy-research context outlined in section 1.2.1 above, *Policymakers Need Knowledge.* In this case there was a government need for knowledge in the policy decision process. The VEEM evaluation concluded that significant contributions had been made to Viet Nam's ability to conduct research supporting economic and environmental policy development, with "Vietnamese policy-makers requesting research from VEEM institutes and team members, having access to research results, and using those results to develop policy." (p.26)

Similar circumstances were found to exist in the evaluation of the Peacebuilding and Reconstruction (PBR) project 'FONTIERRAS, Structural Adjustment and Access to Land in Guatemala'. The goal of this project was to study the World Bank designed Land Fund (FONTIERRAS) in Guatemala and then use the results to influence land access policies. The project was successful in generating new understanding and discussion of land access and the policies of the World Bank among organizations involved directly with FONTIERRAS of the issue of land access in Guatemala (p.13). The data supported the argument that aspects of the market-assisted model were not appropriate for the Guatemalan context given the lack of capacity of rural farming communities in various aspects of the model, such as negotiation and marketing and the lack of institutional mechanisms (p.4). The evaluation found that the recommendations for changes to the operation of FONTIERRAS were well received by a variety of sectors, including the Fund, government entities and Multilateral Financial Institution. The findings were also very timely as the Directive Council of FONTIERRAS was simultaneously conducting its own investigations of allegations of corruption and mismanagement within the Fund (p. 10).

The Sustainable Use of Biodiversity PI (SUB) commissioned an examination of multi-stakeholder policy processes in the context of their experiences with the Crucible projects, which used multi-stakeholder processes to identify

> **Box 7. Authoritative Policy Voice**
> "The Crucible projects developed a reputation for frank, balanced and in-depth policy debate on contentious issue. Building on this, IDRC, together with its partners, has earned an authoritative "seat at the table" in international forums addressing genetic resources"
>
> *Multi-stakeholder Policy Processes* (p.38)

plant genetic resource issues, explore a range of perspectives and identify policy options. The report found that these processes helped raised the credibility of IDRC and the Crucible Groups themselves (see Box 7).

1.3 Strategic Intelligence

The Corporate Assessment Frameworks (CAF) definition of good performance for Strategic Intelligence states;

> *The Centre facilitates the gathering and use of knowledge and feedback to help ensure that Centre strategic and programming planning decisions respond to the needs of developing countries in ways that are sensitive to the local realities and circumstances of the various regions.*[8]

One type of knowledge related to strategic intelligence that was frequently addressed in the project and program evaluation reports was the policy environment. The policy-research context discussed in section 1.2.1, relates to this more general discussion in that it is an important aspect that needs to be considered within policy environment as a whole.

1.3.1 Policy Environment

The Community Biodiversity Development and Conservation (CBDC) Program is an agrobiodiversity network primarily made up of Southern members. The program has been recognized for its pioneering role in raising awareness of farmers and indigenous communities' knowledge of plant genetic resources and biodiversity and integrating this indigenous knowledge into formal scientific knowledge and institutions. The *Mid-Term Evaluation of* CBDC found that in response to changing international political and economic trends and issues, CBDC has increased its focus on the policy environment and developed a "stronger political voice" (p. 1).

The 'Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration' (ETC) coordinates CBDC's policy work and has been instrumental in equipping partners with critical information for understanding various trends and phenomena that affect biodiversity conservation, development and use. ETC and CBDC partners strengthen policy environment awareness by focusing on trend monitoring and issue education, information dissemination, training and advocacy. These actions facilitate internal CBDC debates and positions in selected topics and policy arenas.

The *Mid-Term Evaluation of CBDC* reported that policy work in Africa varies in forms and levels of involvement among partners depending on the prevailing circumstances and policy environments. In countries with policy environments that are favourable to the CBDC efforts such as Sierra Leone and Burkina Faso, government authorities support and encourage CBDC community activities. However, in response to international trade pressures, African governments are increasingly adopting policies with potentially devastating implications for locally controlled rights and food security. This, in turn,

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[8] *Development of the Corporate Assessment Framework (CAF), Report to IDRC's Board of Governors*, Evaluation Unit, March 2004 (p.27)

could seriously reduce the capacity of communities to build sustainable livelihood systems based on biodiversity. The evaluators noted that in reacting to this trend, the policy work of CBDC's Western African partners is oriented towards increasing awareness at the community level. In Southern Africa, policy work is focused on advocacy at regional, national and international levels through debates, workshops and publications in response to agricultural policy that "actively discourage farmers' local plant genetic resource management" (p.21) through, for example, subsidizing prices and tying loans to the purchase of modern varieties.

The *Synthesis of Results and Lessons Learned: IDRC funded Urban Agriculture Projects in Latin America and the Caribbean* examined selected Cities Feeding People (CFP) projects with the purpose of informing the design and implementation of future Urban Agriculture (UA) interventions. The report drew out some examples of projects also being influenced by the policy-research contexts in which they were

> **Box 8. UA Policy Environment**
> "The overall challenges faced by UA are mainly determined by socio-economic, political and environmental conditions in each context. However, the development and mainstreaming of UA practices is most often affected by political-economic agendas at the national level."
> *Synthesis of Results and Lessons Learned: IDRC Funded UA Projects in LAC* (p. 132)

operating and confirmed the need for adaptation to context. One of CFP's research activities in Cuba, "Evaluation of Urban Agriculture as a Component of the Local Economy in Two Zones of Havana", aimed to assess and examine the potential of UA activities. UA in Cuba emerged as a response to an economic crisis and became a highly politicized and bureaucratic activity managed and controlled by the government. The evaluator reported that implementing this project, therefore, required "a series of time and resource-consuming strategies…including lobbying with central and municipal governments and community organizations" (p. 24).

Another CFP project examined in the report was "The Management of Solid Waste and UA in the City of Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic", which aimed to address the management of solid waste and food insecurity through the adoption of UA practices. The policy environment surrounding this project had negative effects on its functions. Researchers faced "major difficulties during the work and collaboration activities with municipal authorities…occasionally, caused by conflicts among political parties". Also research results were politicized and "manipulated in order to advance political agendas" (p. 12).

These examples from CFP and CBDC reinforce the importance of strategic intelligence about the policy environments in which projects operate. These environments have the potential to assist or hinder project efforts. Partners need to be able to continually adapt to their context. IDRC has to be prepared to support them to gather contextual knowledge for a broadened understanding. Through this work, partners can also help IDRC understand regional contexts and together they can adapt strategies and directions.

2. Update on Evaluation Systems

IDRC maintains a decentralized system in which users determine the evaluation questions. The system consciously balances learning and accountability (See Annex 4 for a full description of IDRC's evaluation system). By focusing on the process by which evaluations are carried out, and by monitoring the quality of evaluations, the Centre has been successful in mainstreaming a use and learning-oriented approach to evaluation.

This section provides an update on the evolution of the system over the past year. Since the external reviews were presented to the Board of Governors in March 2004, the Evaluation Unit has conducted an After Action Review with program staff. In addition an external evaluator interviewed senior managers in order to reflect on the external review process. These activities were undertaken with a view to improving the process for the future. The second part of this section describes the Centre's progress in developing a new project reporting process to address the criticisms raised by the Auditor General in 2003. The third part of this section updates Governors on the materials for monitoring and evaluation that the Evaluation Unit has created this year.

2.1 External Reviews

Between February 2003 and March 2004, external reviews were undertaken of nine Program Initiatives (PIs) and two Corporate Projects[9]. The reviews served three purposes: accountability, informing future programming decisions, and providing teams with information to improve programs. The reviews examined each program's progress towards meeting its objectives, its results, and its thematic approach and strategies in relation to the state of the field.

At the Board of Governors (BoG) meeting in March 2004, Programs and Partnership Branch (PPB) Management presented an overview of the findings of the PI external reviews, and the Evaluation Unit (EU) reported on its assessment of the quality of the review reports. Governors also received the full PI review reports and a summary of each. Since March, the Centre has reflected on the review process.

2.1.1 Improving Future External Reviews

The EU has been assessing the external review process, with a view to improving future external reviews. This assessment suggests that:

- *Reviews by external experts provide a useful perspective on program performance and results.* The reviews provided insights and/or verified existing information about program effectiveness for PPB management and program teams, both of which are using and reflecting on the review findings. At the same time, the costs of the reviews in terms of staff time and effort need to be considered in relation to the usefulness of the reviews.

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[9] See Annex 2B for full list

- *The external review process needs to be formalized as part of the corporate cycle.* Specifying external reviews as an explicit part of the Corporate Strategy and Program Framework and programming cycle would improve implementation and use. The reviews could then be incorporated into corporate, Branch and program work plans, based on identification of the stage in the corporate program lifecycle at which the reviews would take place. The timing of the reviews needs to be based on program cycles and the information needs of the BoG and PPB management.

- *External reviews require substantial time for planning and implementation.* Initial estimates from an After Action Review suggest that the External Review process takes twelve to eighteen months. The quality of review reports is affected by, among other things, the expertise and capabilities of the reviewers, the relationships between reviewers and program teams, and among reviewers. Sufficient time is needed up front for identifying and engaging top external reviewers, and for program teams to prepare for the reviews. Sufficient time is also needed for reviewers and teams to interact, for reviewers to make field visits, for Centre staff to comment on draft reports, and for reviewers to prepare final versions of reports.

- *The engagement of well-qualified reviewers does not alone ensure high quality review reports.* PPB management, the EU and the programs themselves all need to put considerable time and effort into the design and implementation of the reviews. These inputs should ensure that the program is clearly explained and evidence is presented on its progress. The EU's assessment of the quality of the review reports is important in providing a lens through which to consider the reports.

Steps are underway for improvement to the next cycle of external reviews. The process of designing the ICT4D External Review is ensuring adequate time for the identification of consultants and preparation of the Terms of Reference. Staff at all levels are engaged in this process, are committed to ensuring quality, and recognise the utility of external perspectives. At the same time, the process of external review is being formalized within the evaluation system of the Centre.

2.2 Rolling-PCR Beta Testing Phase

Over the past year, a working group composed of staff from all branches of the Centre has worked toward the development of a new process for staff to generate and share project level experience. This redesign is a response to the 2003 Auditor General's Special Examination of IDRC, which noted the unacceptably low completion rates of Project Completion Reports (PCR). This process was stimulated by a backlog of 580 PCRs, of which Senior Management Committee (SMC) amnestied all PCRs except those where the PO and program are still active. The process is called the Rolling-PCR and, until September, it is in its 'Beta phase' being tested by three PIs: TEC, EcoHealth, and Pan Americas. Building on the oral culture of IDRC, the intended uses of the information, and the need to manage workload, the R-PCR involves interviews, a survey, and an Annual Learning Forum. In December 2005, based on the findings and

recommendations of the testing phase, SMC will decide whether and how to implement the R-PCR process more broadly.

Currently IDRC has a system where PO learn through their own experience with projects ('learn-by-doing') but, formally, that knowledge seldom goes further. This results in inefficiencies and susceptibility to knowledge drain when staff leave the program or organization. The proposed R-PCR process attempts to both deepen the learning for the individual PO and ensure that others in the organization also benefit by finding ways to generate and capture individual learning in a more dynamic way so that it can be shared collectively. Based on focus-groups and interviews, the working group realized that refining the PCR process involves more than coming up with a set of questions or finding the right technology. It is about changing the way programs and management generate and use project information in order to make programming more effective. It is also not just about managers changing. POs, Research Officers, and the Evaluation Unit are also going to have to work differently to create this new culture.

2.3 Guidelines and Publications

A) Evaluation Guidelines and Highlights
In consultation with PPB the EU has replaced its (1997) Evaluation Planning Manual with a series of guidelines for Centre staff and partners on key issues in evaluation, ranging from the format for an Evaluation Plan to guidance on elements of setting up an evaluation (see Box 9). As needs arise, guidelines will be extended and modified. The guidelines are complemented with highlights, which provide summaries of key issues for evaluation in the Centre. The Guidelines and Highlights are available on the EU website at: http://web.idrc.ca/en/ev-32492-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html.

> **Box 9. Evaluation Guidelines and Highlights**
> Guidelines
> 1. Searching for Evaluation Reports
> 2. Evaluation Planning in PIs
> 3. Formatting Evaluation Reports
> 4. Quality Assessment of IDRC Evaluation Reports
> 5. Writing TORs for an Evaluation
> 6. Identifying the Intended Use(s) of an Evaluation
> 7. Identifying the Intended User(s) of an Evaluation
> 8. Selecting and Managing an Evaluation Consultant or Team
> 9. Preparing Program Objectives
> Highlights
> 1. The Question of Attribution in Evaluation
> 2. The Corporate Assessment Framework

B) Publications and Translations
The book *Evaluating Capacity Development: Experiences from Research and Development Organizations around the World* was published in 2003 as a collaborative effort of the International Service for National Agriculture Research (ISNAR), Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), and IDRC[10]. This book is a collection of experiences and views from evaluations conducted for the 'Evaluating Capacity Development Project', which used an action-learning approach in an effort to improve capacity development initiatives in research and development organizations.

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[10] Available online at http://web.idrc.ca/ev_en.php?ID=32194_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

Box 10. *Evaluating Capacity Development,* **by Douglas Horton et al., 2003**

"The perspective that informs this important book is that *every evaluation of a capacity development effort should itself contribute to the capacity development effort and ultimately to the organization's performance*. This is a revolutionary idea in evaluation. With the idea have come the questions: Can it be done? And, if it is done, what will be the consequences?

This book elucidates and deepens the idea, shows it can be done, and examines the consequences, both intended and unintended, of engaging in capacity development evaluation."

Michael Quinn Patton, (foreword) *Evaluating Capacity Development*, 2003 (p. v)

Two previously published books were translated this year:

- *Learning from Change: Issues and Experiences in Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation* (2000), edited by Marisol Estrella was translated into Spanish, *Aprender del Cambio: Temas y experiencias en seguimiento y evaluacion participativos,*[11] and co-published with Plaza y Valdes.

- *Organizational Assessment: A Framework for Improving Performance* (2002), jointly published by Inter-American Development Bank and IDRC was translated into French, *Evaluation Organisationnelle: Cadre pour l'amélioration de la performance,*[12] and co-published with Les Presses de L'Université Laval.

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[11] Available online at http://web.idrc.ca/ev_es.php?ID=32195_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC
[12] Available online at http://web.idrc.ca/ev_fr.php?ID=30161_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC

3. Overview of Evaluation in 2003-04

IDRC's Evaluation Unit gathers data about the evaluators employed by the Centre, assesses and monitors the quality of the evaluations produced, and monitors how evaluations are used. This is undertaken as part of on-going efforts to improve the quality and utility of the Centre's evaluation work. The findings from these activities generate relevant information for the Corporate Assessment Framework, are reported annually in this report, and are used to refine the Centre's evaluation practice.

Over half of the evaluations reported on this year examined activities of the ENRM program area (see Table 2). Of the eleven program and project evaluation reports received during 2003-04, four were completed during 2002,

Table 2. Program Area of Evaluation Reports 2003-04				
Program Area		Project/ Program	External Reviews	Policy Case Studies
ENRM	23	6	8	9
ICT4D	8	3	0[13]	5
SEE	12	1	3	8
Corporate	1	1	0	0
TOTAL	44	11	11	22

and six in 2003. Most of the External Reviews were received in November of 2003, and two came in early 2004. The Policy case studies spanned late 2002 through March 2004. All of IDRC's programming modalities were represented across the different evaluation activities, with the majority coming from PIs. One of the project/program evaluations came from secretariats. Two of the External Reviews and four of the Policy Influence case studies examined corporate projects.

3.1 Profile of Evaluators

In 2003-04, a total of fifty-five evaluators were represented by forty-four reports (see Table 3).

Table 3. Sex and Country Affiliations of 2003-04 Evaluators						
Evaluators		Project/Program		External Reviews		Policy Case Studies	
		North	South	North	South	North	South
Male	30	4	1	8	7	5	5
Female	23	5	1	3	4	4	6
Unknown	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	55	11	2	11	11	9	11

The project/program evaluations were conducted by thirteen evaluators, two whose authorship is attributed to consulting agencies (hence gender is classified as "unknown"). Of the six women evaluators, five were external [14] and one was internal[15]. All of the male and "gender unknown" evaluators were external. Based on the organizational affiliation of the evaluator, almost all were from developed countries. The majority of evaluators are independent consultants, most of whom are based in Canada. One of the

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[13] ICT4D External Reviews are scheduled to take place later this year.

[14] "External evaluator" refers to evaluators that are not employees of IDRC or of the project/program under examination

[15] "Internal evaluator" refers to evaluators that have a connection to the project or program, either by being an employee of IDRC, or by virtue of their direct involvement in the project/program under examination.

evaluators was a staff member of IDRC, two were on the staff of NGOs, and one was from a donor agency.

All of the External Reviews, except for one, were conducted by teams of two or three evaluators, resulting in twenty-two evaluators in total. There is equal North-South representation amongst them, with the majority being male. Almost all of the evaluators were working as independent consultants (many of whom were based in academic or research institutions), while two were affiliated with private firms, one each with a government institution, an NGO and a University.

The majority of the evaluators for the Policy Influence case studies were contracted as individuals. Some of the evaluators worked in teams and some produced multiple reports. There was equal representation between men and women evaluators and just over half were working in southern countries. A female evaluator in Ukraine, which is classified as a transitional country, wrote one report.

Overall, the data from these three profiles of evaluators shows that in larger evaluation initiatives such as the Policy case studies and External Reviews where there has been an effort to hire as many Southern evaluators as possible, a more balanced profile has been achieved. The numbers from the project and program evaluations indicate that a greater effort is needed to include more Southern evaluators in the individual project or program evaluations. This finding is reinforced by looking at the data collected in the previous two AREFs, where in 2003 there was a North-South balance of 12:8, and in 2002, 25:10 (see Table 4).

Table 4. North-South Affiliation of Evaluators 2001-04				
Evaluators		**2003-04**	**2002-03**	**2001-02**
North	68	31	12	25
South	42	24	8	10
Unknown	3	0	3	0
TOTAL	**113**	**55**	**23**	**35**

The Centre helps build the capacity of southern evaluators. One mechanism for that is using them to conduct evaluations. By making a conscious choice to identify and assign lead roles to southern evaluators, IDRC can foster partnerships with the growing body of evaluators who are capable of conducting quality evaluations from a regional perspective. This choice may affect time and resources necessary for evaluations. For example, ensuring strong communication between the evaluator and the user may increase travel costs and time required for the evaluation. There is also a need for Canadian perspectives in some circumstances. Decisions surrounding recruitment of evaluators should be explored and assessed on an individual basis depending on availability and capacity and should reflect the specific project needs and resources. However, it is clear that if the Centre wishes to shift the balance in evaluators, a stronger effort is required. The Evaluation Unit will continue to build capacity with partners in the South and promote their services to Centre programs.

The gender balance has improved over the last three years. In 2002, IDRC hired twenty-five male and eight female evaluators. In 2003, fourteen of the evaluators were male and eight female. This year, the project and program evaluations were conducted by five

males and six females (see Table 5). The policy case studies achieved a balance in the gender profile of evaluators. The gender balance for the External Reviews was not optimal at fifteen men and seven women. This was affected by availability and the need to balance gender with other

Table 5. Sex of Evaluators 2001-04				
Evaluators		**2003-04**	**2002-03**	**2001-02**
Male	69	30	14	25
Female	39	23	8	8
Unknown	5	2	1	2
TOTAL	**113**	**55**	**23**	**35**

considerations. As well, female evaluators filled many of the 'lead reviewer' roles.

3.2 Quality of Evaluation Reports

The Evaluation Unit (EU) assesses the quality of evaluation reports against criteria that have been created from the standards for program evaluation endorsed by the American Evaluation Association. These require that evaluations be utility-focused, feasibility-conscious, accuracy-based, and propriety-oriented (see Annex 3 for further details on these areas of quality)[16]. This section reports only on the quality of the project/program evaluations received by the EU; quality assessments of External Reviews were reported to the Board of Governors in March 2004.

The overall quality profile of the eleven evaluation reports is presented in the table below. It shows that, on average, evaluation reports scored positively on 59% of all indicators of quality. The quality of evaluation reports was uneven across each of the four separate dimensions of quality (utility, feasibility, accuracy and propriety). The 2003-04 evaluation reports tend to be strongest in the areas of feasibility (77%) and accuracy (66%), and weaker in terms utility (52%) and propriety (45%).

Table 6. Summary of Quality of 2003-04 Evaluation Reports					
Evaluation Reports (n=11)		**Variation in quality of evaluation reports: Frequency of reports falling within quality range**			
Aspect of Quality	**Average Score**	**0-24%**	**25-49%**	**50 – 74%**	**75 – 100%**
OVERALL	59%	0	3	6	2
1. Feasibility	77%	0	0	5	6
2. Accuracy	66%	1	3	1	6
3. Utility	52%	3	2	3	3
4. Propriety	45%	0	8	2	1

Evaluation reports were feasible to the extent that, in the majority of cases, the methods and approaches were well matched to the questions and issues they set out to examine. Accuracy here means that they presented conclusions and recommendations that were supported by evidence, and which had been derived through the application of solid research methods. Weaknesses in propriety tended to derive from evaluation reports not describing the ways in which they sought to add value to the project/program by building the evaluative capacity of either the users of the evaluation or those being evaluated.

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[16] "The Program Evaluation Standards", http://www.eval.org/EvaluationDocuments/progeval.html

It is recognized that in looking exclusively at evaluation reports, the current quality monitoring system can under-represent the true quality of evaluation. Evaluation reports do not always provide a full description of evaluation processes and procedures, and as a result, the system will sometimes fail to register positive scores on indicators of quality when evaluators may have employed sound evaluation processes. This is demonstrated by the low marks in Table 6. This data is an indicator to the EU that further effort is required to encourage evaluations commissioned by the Centre to include this information. One aspect of this effort has been the production of Evaluation Guidelines and Highlights discussed in section 2.3 above. This material is being promoted and disseminated throughout the Centre. The EU will continue to assess future evaluations and collect data on quality. This will help ensure that a richer understanding of the process and use of evaluation in IDRC-funded projects is captured by the evaluation system.

4. The Future of Evaluation Reporting at the Centre

Over the past two years, the evaluation system at the Centre has undergone considerable evolution. As intimated in this report, there has been considerable expansion of evaluative thinking Centre-wide. The introduction of the Corporate Assessment Framework (CAF), the evolution in our reporting on projects and the normalization of a process for external review, have all contributed new features to our evaluation system. At the same time, the introduction of a more systematic approach to reflection and program development means that many of the existing reports (such as the reports of Regional Directors (RDs) and Directors of Programming Areas (DPAs)) take on renewed significance in evaluative terms. All these reports play a role in our reflections on Centre progress and as such need to be more clearly recognized in the evaluation system and in the way Centre management reports on that system to Governors.

The recent changes in the Centre's evaluation system suggest that management should also consider some changes to how it reports on evaluation to Governors. The current report prepared by the Evaluation Unit (EU) relies not only on the work commissioned by the Unit, but also on the findings of studies commissioned by various programming and management units in the Centre. It attempts to consolidate the decentralized evaluation function into a centralized report. Inevitably this results in generalizations and exclusion of some aspects. It has also meant that, given the volume of evaluation reports produced across the Centre, these have been the priority in building the consolidated annual report. Our thoughts will turn for the next report to a new structure. No decisions have been taken, and input is welcome on the directions reporting should take.

As part of our push for utilization-focused evaluation, it is perhaps more appropriate to think about a new structure for evaluation reporting that situates the reporting closer to the intended use. This suggests scenarios in which the DPAs and RDs make more direct use of evaluation findings from their areas of responsibility in the reports they prepare rather than the EU consolidating findings as we have done in the first section of this report.

Changes in the evaluation system, notably the introduction of the CAF, suggest other modifications. Various responsibility centres might take on elements of CAF reporting, such as the Special Initiatives Division on Canadian Partnerships. The EU might report most effectively on evaluative thinking across the Centre. Evaluation reports are only one expression of evaluative thinking: the use of the findings and other reflective events are central to a dynamic reflective process across the organization. Evaluative thinking is expressed in many ways throughout the Centre through: After Action Reviews, program meetings with an evaluation agenda, project presentations, reflections on particular projects or areas of activity, reflection on a program area based on outcomes of major events (such as implications of the World Summit on the Information Society), invited speakers, and so on. These expressions of evaluative thinking are not well captured in the current AREF. Our intention is to experiment over the next two years on the presentation of findings to Governors. Centre management invites Governors' active participation in that experiment and in reflections on modifications to the evaluation reporting system.

ANNEX 1. Acronyms

AREF	Annual Report on Evaluation Findings
BoG	Board of Governors
CAF	Corporate Assessment Framework
CAP	Centre Administered Portion
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBDC	Community Based Biodiversity Conservation
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resources Management
CFP	Cities Feeding People (PI)
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CTA	Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation
DPA	Director of Program Area
EcoHealth	Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health (PI)
ENRM	Environment and Natural Resource Management
ETC	Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration
EU	Evaluation Unit
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ICT4D	Information and Communication Technologies for Development
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
ISNAR	International Service for National Agriculture Research
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MENA	Middle East and North Africa (Region)
MIMAP	Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies (PI)
MINGA	Alternatives to Natural Resource Management in LAC (PI)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PBR	Peace Building and Reconstruction (PI)
PCR	Project Completion Report
PI	Program Initiative
PLaW	People, Land and Water (PI)
PO	Program Officer
PPB	Participatory Plant Breeding
PPB	Programs and Partnership Branch

PVS	Participatory Varietal Selection
RAP	Recipient Administered Portion
RD	Regional Director
RO	Research Officer
R-PCR	Rolling Project Completion Report
RUAF	Resource Centre for Urban Agriculture and Forestry
SDCN	Sustainable Development Communications Network
SEE	Social and Economic Equity
SG(M)	Small Grant (Mechanism)
SMC	Senior Management Committee
SUB	Sustainable Use of Biodiversity (PI)
TEC	Trade, Economic and Competitiveness (PI)
TEHIP	Tanzania Essential Health Intervention Program
TOR	Terms of Reference
UA	Urban Agriculture
VEEM	Vietnamese Economic and Environment Management Program
WDM	Water Demand Management

ANNEX 2. Reports Received by the Evaluation Unit

A) Project and Program Evaluation Reports, Received 2003-4

Title, Author(s), Date	Program Area/PI	Projects Covered	Period Covered	Country/Region
1. *The Sustainable Development Communications Network, 1996-2001: An Evaluation*, IISD, 2002	PAN	003819	1996-2001	Global
2. *Synthesis of Results and Lessons Learned: IDRC Funded Urban Agriculture Projects in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Gioconda Ortega-Alarie, 2002	CFP	002759, 03753, 00921, 03152, 002748/9, 403764, 04155, 100641, 100123, 100503, 04486	1996-2002	LAC
3. *Evaluation Report: Vietnam Economic and Environment Management Program*, Gary Miller, January 2002	MIMAP/CBNRN	003099	1997-2002	Vietnam
4. *Multi-Stakeholder Policy Processes, Lessons for Genetic Resources Policy Development*, Stratos Inc., March 2002	SUB	004015, 100647	1993-2001	Global
5. *PAN Asia E-Commerce: Action Research on E-Commerce for Small Artisans and Development Organizations*, Anicento C. Orbeta, Jr., December 2002	Pan Asia	100483	2000-2002	Asia
6. *Mid-Term Evaluation of the Community Based Biodiversity Conservation (CBDC) Programme during its Second Phase*, Monica Moore & Melaku Worede, February 2003	SUB	100356	2000-2002	Global
7. *FONTIERRAS: Structural Adjustment and Access to Land in Guatemala*, Kimberly Inksater, March 2003	PBR	100581	2001-2003	Guatemala
8. *Resource Centre for Urban Agriculture and Forestry (RUAF): A Mid-Term Evaluation*, Alex Drescher & Michael Graham, April 2003	CFP	003154	1999-2003	Global
9. *Bellanet Evaluation Review of Activities and Outcomes 1997-2002*, The Governance Network, May 2003	Bellanet	No project numbers – Secretariat, see report for details	1997-2002	Global
10. *Mainstreaming Gender in IDRC's Minga Program Intitiative: A Formative Evaluation*, Abra Adamo, June 2003	Minga	37 projects covered – see report for details	1994-2003	LAC
11. *Review of Small Grants Mechanism*, George Tillman, June 2003	Corporate	21 Small Grants covered – see report for details	Not stated	Global

B) 2003 External Reviews

Title	Author(s)	Date
1. *Final External Evaluation Report, Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health Program Initiative*	Rachel Nugent, Roberto Briceño-León	November 2003
2. *External Review of the Program Initiative People, Land and Water (PLaW)*	Kethline Garoute, Fatoumata Sow	November 2003
3. *Peacebuilding and Reconstruction (PBR) Program Initiative, External Evaluation Report*	Rex Brynen, Stephen Brown, Evan Fox-Decent,	November 2003
4. *External Review of IDRC's Community-based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Program Initiative (PI) in Asia,*	Julian F. Gonsalves, Lorelei C. Mendoza,	November 2003
5. *Sustainable Use of Biodiversity External Program Review, April 2000-March 2003*	Anne Whyte, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz	November 2003
6. *Managing Natural Resources in Latin America and the Caribbean (MINGA) Program Initiative External Review*	Bernardo Reyes, Dario Pulgar	November 2003
7. *Cities Feeding People External Review April 2000 – March 2003*	Anne Whyte, Axel Drescher	November 2003
8. *Mining Policy Research Initiative External Review*	David Szablowski	November 2003
9. *IDRC EcoPlata Corporate Project External Review*	Peter F. Walton, Emilio Ochoa M.	November 2003
10. *The TEC Program Initiative: Report of an External Evaluation,*	Swapna Mukhopadhyay, Jean-Paul Azam	January 2004
11. *External Review of the MIMAP Program Initiative*	Cielito F. Habito, Dominique Njinkeu, André Saumier,	January 2004

C) Policy Influence Case Studies

Title, Author, Date	Program Area	Projects Covered	Period Covered	Country/ Region
1. *The Influence of Research on Policy: The case of MIMAP Senegal,* Tracy Tuplin, March 2004	SEE	100121	2000-2003	Senegal
2. *Bridging policy and poverty: MIMAP Bangladesh,* Marìa Pìa Riggirozzi, March 2003	SEE	91-0235, 93-8305, 002550, 100713	1992-2003	Bangladesh
3. *The Influence of Research on Policy: MIMAP Philippines,* Marìa Pìa Riggirozzi & Tracy Tuplin, January 2004	SEE	90-0354, 92-8020, 002884/ 95-0410, 003394/ 98-0205, 100746	1990-2003	Philippines
4. *The Impact of Research on Public Policy: IDRC's Programs in Vietnam,* André Saumier, March 2003	SEE	920011, 003099, 002790, 002695	1993-2002	Vietnam
5. *Latin American Trade Network LATN,* Luis Macadar, August 2003	SEE	03392	1998-2001	LAC
6. *A Study of Policy Influence: The G-24 Technical Support Services,* Dr. Diana Tussie, February 2003	SEE	880121, 000336, 002881, 100381	1988-2003	Global
7. *Project: Financing of Education in Guatamala: Research, Proposal and Advocacy,* Dr. Bienvenido Argueta, November 2002	SEE	100437	2000-2002	Guatamala
8. *The TEHIP 'Spark': Planning and Managing Health Resources at the District Level,* Stephanie Neilson & Terry Smutylo, April 2004	SEE	001047	1996-2004	Tanzania
9. *The Influence of IDRC-Supported Research on Water Demand Management in Syria: Case Study on the Supplemental Irrigation with Brackish Water Project,* Bryon Gillespie, March 2004	ENRM	060001	1997-2001	Syria
10. *Society for Research and Initiatives for Sustainable Technologies and Institutions (SRISTI): A case study,* Leanne Burton, January 2004	ENRM	93-0013, 3267, 100421	1993-2003	India
11. *Greywater Reuse – Jordan,* Eman Surani March 2003	ENRM	003740, 004211, 100618, 100880, 100980	1998-2003	Jordan
12. *East and Central Africa Program for Agricultural Policy Analysis (ECAPAPA) Case Study,* Chris Ackello-Ogutu, May 2003	ENRM	101621, 055024	1998-2002	Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania
13 & 14. *The Cases of High Altitude and Mining, and the Impact of Copper Mining on Water Resources in Southern Peru,* Fernando Loayza Careaga, PhD, January 2003	ENRM	89-0247, 91-0041	1990-1993	Peru
15. *Case Study of Sustainable Improvement of Marginal Land in Arsaal, Lebanon: Phases I and II,* David Brooks, December 2002	ENRM	002627, 100360	1995-2004	Lebanon
16. *A Case Study Analysis of the Asian Fisheries Social Science Research Network (AFSSRN),* Dr. Bob Pomeroy, November 2002	ENRM	82-0164, 84-0211, 87-0190, 93-8019	1983-1996	Asia
17. *Environmental Management Development in Ukraine,* Iryna Lyzogub, October 2002	ENRM	930905, 003695	1994-2004	Ukaine

18. *Information and Communication Technologies for Development (Acacia): The Case of Mozambique,* Dr. Zenda Ofir, January 2003	ICT4D	003752, 100868, 97-892201, 100737, 101112	1997-2001	Mozambique
19. *Information & Communication Technologies for Development (Acacia): The Case of Uganda,* Dr. Zenda Ofir, January 2003	ICT4D	055475, 100572, 100577, 101134,	1999-2002	Uganda
20. *Information & Communication Technologies for Development (Acacia): The Case of South Africa,* Dr. Zenda Ofir, January 2003	ICT4D	004381, 002294	1995-2002	South Africa
21. *Information & Communication Technologies for Development (Acacia): The Case of Senegal,* Khamate Sene & Ramata Thioune, January 2003	ICT4D	98-815001, 100695, 65199	1997-2003	Senegal
22. *The Development of Nepal's IT Policy: A Case Study,* Leanne Burton, January 2004	ICT4D	98-0006	1999-2003	Nepal

ANNEX 3. Guide for Assessing Quality of Evaluations

1. UTILITY		2. FEASIBILITY	
1.1 Were the users identified?[17] Yes ☐ No ☐	Who were the identified users? Comments?	2.1 Were the evaluation issues/questions identified? Yes ☐ No ☐	What were the evaluation issues? Comments?
1.2 Were the uses identified? Yes ☐ No ☐	What was the planned use? Comments?	2.2 Given what could have been done in the evaluation, was the design of the evaluation adequate to address those issues/questions? (e.g. resources allotted, timing, perspectives represented, information sources consulted) Yes ☐ No ☐ Insufficient detail to assess ☐	If no, in what way was the design inadequate? Comments.
1.3. Did the report describe how users participated in the evaluation process?[18] Yes ☐ No ☐	How did users participate? Comments?		
3. ACCURACY		**4. PROPRIETY**	
3.1 Given what was actually done in the evaluation, did the evaluation use appropriate tools and methods? Yes ☐ No ☐ Insufficient detail to assess ☐	If no, in what ways were the tools and methods inappropriate? Comments?	4.1 Was there an expressed intent to enhance the evaluative capacity of the user(s) of the evaluation as a result of this evaluation? Yes ☐ No ☐	What was the intent? What was the result? Comments.
3.2 Did it apply the tools and methods well? Yes ☐ No ☐ Insufficient detail to assess ☐	If no, how were the tools and methods inappropriately applied? Comments?	4.2 Was there an expressed intent to enhance the evaluative capacity of those being evaluated as a result of this evaluation? Yes ☐ No ☐	What was the intent? What was the result? Comments?
3.3 Is the evidence presented in the report? Yes ☐ No ☐	Comments?	4.3 Did any of the content of the evaluation report raise ethical concerns? Yes ☐ No ☐	If yes, what are those concerns? Comments?
3.4. Overall, does the evidence substantiate the conclusions/ recommendations? Yes ☐ No ☐	Comments?	4.4 Was this evaluation a part of the PI, Secretariat, or Corporate Project's evaluation plan? Yes ☐ No ☐	Why? Why Not?

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[17] *User* is different from the *audience* of the evaluation. *User* is more specific and requires an action on their part.

[18] This differs from assessing whether the evaluation was participatory or not.

ANNEX 4. IDRC's Evaluation and Results Reporting System

IDRC's evaluation and results reporting systems are designed to promote ownership and use of evaluation findings at all levels of the organization. The Centre has mainstreamed a use- and learning-oriented approach to evaluation. It has done so by: 1) maintaining a decentralized system of evaluation in which the users determine the evaluation questions; 2) focusing on the processes by which evaluations are carried out; and 3) monitoring the quality of evaluations.

For there to be sufficient space for learning to take place, accountability mechanisms must be clear and functioning. IDRC's accountability for results at the program level is achieved through the combination of evaluations carried out by the programs themselves and the external reviews that are commissioned by PPB Management of a PI, Secretariat, or Corporate Project. At the project level, IDRC's accountability for results is achieved through the Project Completion Report (PCR).

The Centre's evaluation function has evolved over the past ten years from a system concentrated on building demand for evaluation at the project and program levels to one that fosters the use of evaluation processes and findings at all levels. Table 1 summarizes the evaluative mechanisms that are in place at each of the three levels of the organization. Additional details about those mechanisms are provided on the following two pages.

Table 1. Summary of Evaluation Mechanisms		
Level	**Evaluative Mechanism**	**Timing**
Corporate	Annual Report on Evaluation Findings	Annual
	Corporate Assessment Framework	Annual
	Strategic Evaluation	Various
Program	Regional Director (RD) Reports	Every 2 years – alternating with DPA Reports
	Director of Program Area (DPA) Reports	Every 2 years – alternating with RD reports
	External Reviews	Once per program cycle
	Program Monitoring and Evaluation	Various – determined by program teams
	Annual Learning Forum	Annual
	Project Evaluations	Various – determined by program officers
Project	Project Completion Reports	All projects over CAD 150,000
	Project Monitoring	Various - determined by program officers
	Recipient Reporting	Specified project milestones

Org. Level	Reporting Mechanism	Content/ Focus	Responsibilities	Primary Users and Uses	Timing
Corporate	**Annual Report on Evaluation Findings**	Synthesis of findings from the year's evaluation reports	**EU**: Prepare report **SMC**: Receive, review and prepare reaction to report	**SMC**: Review and formulation of actions to be taken **BoG**: review and react to findings	Annual
	Corporate Assessment Framework	Variable: Strategic topics relevant to IDRC's mission that are determined by SMC to assist in decision-making	**SMC**: Determine questions/ issues to investigate; **EU**: Coordinate individual studies; package data for SMC discussion **PPG**: Archive findings; package data for SMC discussion; keep records of SMC decisions based on CAF-generated data	**SMC**: Use data in deliberations and decision-making	Annual
	Strategic Evaluation	Variable: Investigations into cross-cutting issues emerging within IDRC Programming	**EU**: Conduct Studies	**PPB & SMC**: Learn about programming issues from studies **EU**: Develop tools to assist programs in addressing issues	Variable: dependent on size of study
Program	**Director of Program Area (DPA) Reports**	Variable: Outline progress and directions of program areas	**DPAs**: Prepare reports	**SMC**: Review developments **BoG**: Review and react to program area developments	Every other year – alternates with RD reports
	Regional Director (RD) Reports	Variable: Outline developments in IDRC regional programming	**RD**: Prepare reports	**BoG**: Review and react to regional developments and strategies	Every other year – alternates with DPA reports
	External Reviews	Summative Evaluation of PIs, Secretariats, Corporate Projects	**PPB Management**: Set Terms of Reference **EU**: Assist in drafting ToRs; coordinate studies **PIs**: Work with reviewers	**PPB Management**: Use data to make decisions about program structure and resource allocation to programs. **Program Teams**: Demonstrate results achieved by the program; identify areas to improve program in subsequent phases	Once per program cycle
	Program M&E	Variable: Formative evaluations addressing themes, processes, or component of program	**Program Team**: Design and Conduct Studies **EU**: Provide technical support	**PIs**: To assess progress and generate information to assist in adjusting program directions	Variable: dependent on program cycles and perceived needs
	Annual Learning Forum	Findings from PCRs	**PPB**: Present findings from PCRs **EU**: Coordinate and organize forum	**PPB & SMC**: POs share and learn from experience of POs in other programming areas	Annual

Org. Level	Reporting Mechanism	Content/ Focus	Responsibilities	Primary Users and Uses	Timing
Project	**Project Evaluations**	Variable	**PO**: Design and implement evaluation.	**PO**: Learn and make decisions regarding project activities **Partner**: Learn and make decisions regarding project activities **Program**: As part of team processes to determine programming directions	Variable: dependent on project cycles and perceived need
	Project Completion Reports	Summary of outcomes and activities (projects over CAD 150,000)	**PO**: Complete PCR	**IDRC**: Basic accountability to Auditor General for public resources **PO, PI, PPB Management**: Project learning (project design, implementation, management, results)	At project completion
	Project Monitoring: Trip reports	Variable	**PO**: Monitor projects through visits, email and telephone contact. Prepare trip reports	**PO**: Keep up-to-date on developments within project **Program Team**: Keep colleagues up to date on activities within program	Variable: dependent on determined need
	Recipient Reporting: Technical Reports; Financial Reports	Technical Report: summary of results obtained Financial Report: summary of expenditures	**Recipient (project leader)** Responsible for producing reports. **PO/TL**: Reviews and negotiates revisions	**Recipient (Project Leader)**: Accountability for completion of research, achievement of objectives, and expenditures **PO and Team**: summary of results obtained within project **GAD**: financial and administrative milestones	Specified milestones within project

ANNEX 5. Management Response

The Senior Management Committee has reviewed the *Annual Report on Evaluation Findings (AREF) 2004.* The report reminds us of the extensive evaluation and learning activities that are conducted at the project, program and corporate levels in the Centre. During the past year, a significant portion of these activities included the completion of the strategic evaluation on Research to Policy, and the external reviews of nine Program Initiatives. These two items have already been discussed at past Board meetings.

Last year, the *AREF* noted that the quality of evaluations was mixed, and this year the results remain so (Table 6 in section 3.2). Based on an (admittedly smaller than normal) sample size of eleven evaluations, one third set out to do more than was possible ("feasibility"), slightly more than a third scored low on the degree to which conclusions were supported by the facts in the report itself ("accuracy), and half scored low on their "utility". It is not clear how these numbers compare with assessments of the evaluation reports of other agencies, but we do support the recommendation in *AREF 2004* that the Evaluation Guidelines be applied in a more determined manner in the Centre than they have been in the past. Program managers and staff will pay more attention to this dimension of evaluations than has been the case in the past.

Finally, we note that this is the last year that the AREF will be produced in its current form. The *AREFs* are an important point in the nexus of issues that connect research to development in the Centre's organization and work. As section 4 of *AREF 2004* describes, the process of evaluation and continuous learning will be refined, indeed enhanced, in future. Much evaluative learning and thinking is not captured by the snap shot nature of the *AREF*. The Corporate Assessment Framework, a new and innovative approach to assessing projects upon their completion and the institution of an Annual Learning Forum at the Centre will all contribute to this enhancement. We endorse the spirit of the final section of *AREF 2004*, that the time is ripe for a reflection on evaluation reporting at the Centre, on which Governors' views would be appreciated.