

IDRC  CRDI

International Development Research Centre

Supporting innovative research for development



in
South Asia

Canada

"The cornerstone of the Centre's work will be an ever stronger link to the aspirations and needs of the people in the developing countries of the world. Sustainable and equitable human activity depends on men and women's control of their own social and economic progress, on equitable access to knowledge, and on an indigenous capability to generate and apply knowledge."

International Development Research Centre

**Building Capacity
for Development**

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is a public corporation established by the Parliament of Canada in 1970. The Centre was created to help communities in the developing world find practical solutions to the social, economic, and environmental problems they face. Support is directed toward broadening local knowledge and capacity to enable communities to build healthier, more equitable, and more prosperous societies. In essence, **IDRC supports innovation from within the South – creative, effective, long-term solutions to development problems that work in local conditions.** In doing so, IDRC also strengthens the overall capability of researchers and research institutions to generate policies and technologies that can help create more equitable societies.

The International Development Research Centre Act lays out the Centre's mandate and direction: "**to initiate, encourage, support and conduct research into the problems of the developing regions of the world** and into the means for applying and adapting scientific, technical and other knowledge to the economic and social advancement of those regions."

IDRC is funded through an annual appropriation from the Parliament of Canada and works in partnership with other donors to maximize the resources available to its Southern partners for their development research efforts.

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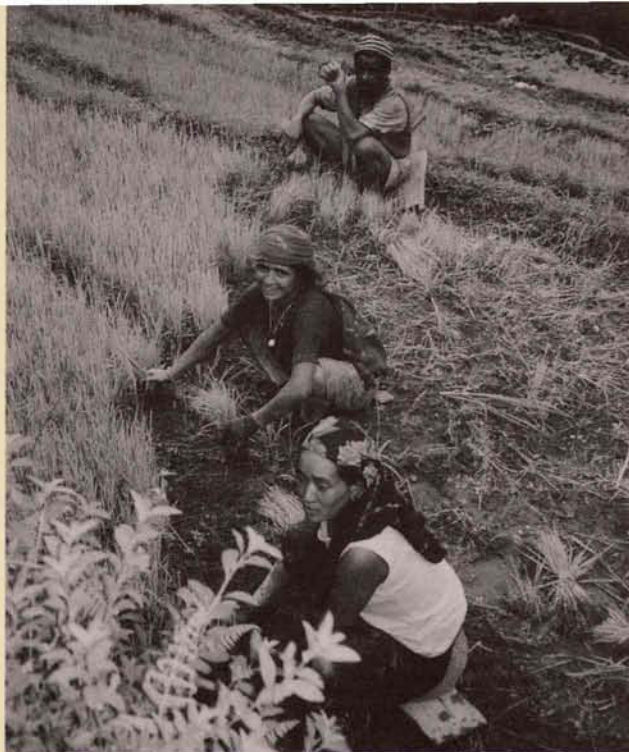
IDRC in South Asia

IDRC initiated program activities in South Asia in 1971 and established the Regional Office for South Asia (SARO) in New Delhi in 1983. The office serves Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. SARO is headed by a Regional Director, who works in collaboration with a small international and national program team. The substantive focus of the South Asia office has evolved over the years in response to the changing needs and priorities of the countries it serves. While the region has made progress on a number of development fronts, many challenges remain:

- More than half of the world's absolute poor live in South Asia. There is enormous unfulfilled human potential in the region. Rates of illiteracy, malnourishment, and infant mortality are very high, while access to health services, safe water and sanitation, and information and communication services are limited.
- Gender inequity and its cultural acceptance are endemic. Not only does this inequity threaten the very survival of women and girls, but it also deprives South Asia of the full talents of more than half its population. The region accounts for 40% of the world's maternal deaths and has the world's worst sex ratio (ratio of women to men in the population).



- With 22% of the population living on only 3% of the world's land, the region faces serious environmental crisis. Many people do not have access to safe drinking water, groundwater depletion is widespread, and the contamination of groundwater affects the health of millions of people.



- Globalization processes may be further increasing inequities in South Asia. The burdens of cuts in government spending on social services such as health care, education, and basic sanitation disproportionately affect the poor.
- Finally, along with a growing disparity between rich and poor, other social conflicts along religious, ethnic, and regional lines foster both communal and international tensions.

IDRC seeks to help local stakeholders find solutions to these and other pressing development problems. The Centre supports an integrated approach to research that looks at technological, social, and institutional innovations for change. IDRC works closely with local researchers and communities so that findings are relevant and applicable. Research is also directed at informing the policy arena, so that decisions can be based on sound research and analysis. To avoid duplication and promote shared learning and transparency, IDRC emphasizes information dissemination and collaboration across the region and globe.

Recognizing that the components of complex issues cannot be isolated, IDRC takes a multidisciplinary approach to tackling development problems through three broad Program Areas:

- **Environment and Natural Resource Management**
- **Information and Communication Technologies for Development**
- **Social and Economic Equity**

In each of these areas, the Centre's expertise and skills intersect with regional priorities, enabling IDRC and the Centre's partners to contribute to sustainable and equitable development.

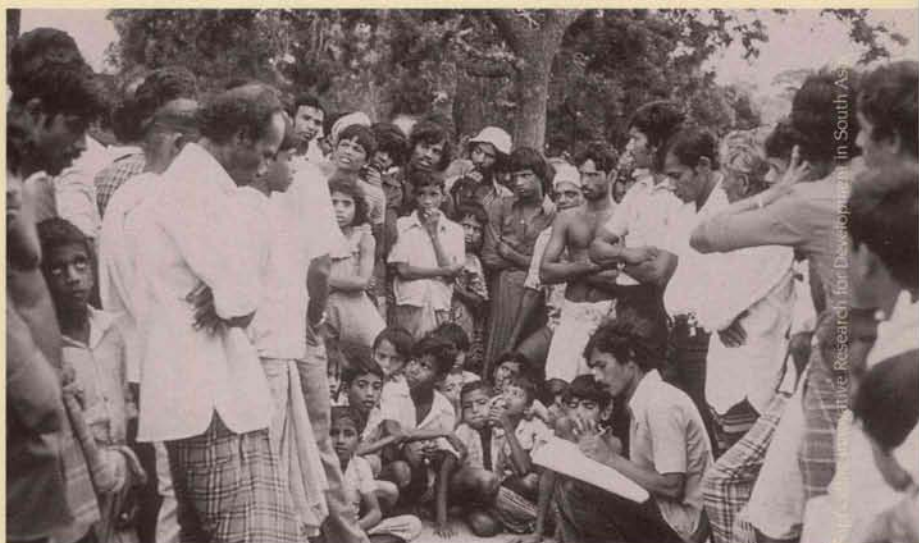
Environment and Natural Resource Management

Local participation for sustainability

IDRC promotes environment and natural resource management in South Asia through activities that support *equitable and sustainable* access to, and use of, natural resources. The emphasis on *equity* calls for an interdisciplinary approach that monitors and evaluates social outcomes of natural resource management interventions. The emphasis on *sustainability* involves targeting vulnerable ecosystems with careful scientific assessment and recognizing the critical role local communities play in managing resources. IDRC recognizes that environmental degradation is inextricably linked with widespread rural poverty and inequitable access to basic



resources. Promoting food and livelihood security, is therefore, a priority. The program supports the role of farmers as innovators in meeting local food needs and acknowledges the importance of medicinal plants and non-timber forest products in local health and livelihood systems. The Centre has also begun to address the health impacts of widespread environmental damage in the region, through research on better environmental management. IDRC builds on community knowledge and participation to inform policy and institutional frameworks that govern resource management.



Information and Communication Technologies for Development

Catalyzing poverty alleviation

IDRC actively explores how communities and researchers can use information and communication technologies (ICTs) to solve development problems in South Asia. Research continues to support better access to, and creation of, locally relevant information and targets remote and disadvantaged groups. Special efforts are being made to ensure that women and the rural poor are not left behind in the digital divide. At the community level, IDRC supports telecentre projects and other interventions that increase opportunities to access, document, and share information. These projects provide on-the-ground models that can inform the development of rural telecom policies and wider-scale implementation plans. Emerging priorities in the region include distance education and ICT use in commerce and employment.

Social and Economic Equity

Equality through governance

Because the income gap between rich and poor continues to grow, IDRC includes issues of social and economic equity in all its activities. The Social and Economic Equity program specifically focuses research on supporting developing-country efforts to participate more effectively in the global economy, while recognizing the micro impacts of national and international economic and policy change. In South Asia, this has



included examining the impact of macroeconomic structural adjustment policies and the changing nature of international trade flows. The program supports research on: the impacts of economic and social reform policies on poverty and household welfare; and developing national and regional perspectives on the current multilateral and regional trade negotiations agenda. This is done through the creation of networks of researchers, policy makers and civil society organizations. Research has examined the impact of these policies on poor communities and marginalized

members of these communities (such as women and those engaged in under-recognized and under-paid work). The program supports poverty reduction by promoting good governance and by informing policy makers with credible economic research, modeling and analysis.

Program Initiatives

IDRC supports research that focuses on specific problems identified by local researchers and works with them to find interdisciplinary solutions. Staff teams composed of specialists from a wide range of fields are organized into Program Initiatives (PIs), which are the driving force of the Centre's programming.

The PI's active in South Asia include:

- Sustainable Use of Biodiversity
- Community-Based Natural Resource Management
- Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health
- PAN Networking
- Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies
- Trade, Employment and Competitiveness

To view the complete list of IDRC PI's please go to the following website: <http://www.idrc.ca>.

Sustainable Use of Biodiversity Program Initiative

Sources of biodiversity are disappearing at unprecedented rates. This loss is compounded by the even more rapid disappearance of local knowledge of

biodiversity. The goal of the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity (SUB) Program Initiative is to promote, through research, the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity by indigenous and local communities. SUB believes that supporting peoples' own technologies, innovations, and management practices, through participatory scientific investigation and policy development, will empower communities to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity. Using gender sensitive and participatory methodologies, the initiative supports research that:

- Promotes the role of farmers as innovators;
- Develops policy and legislation models recognizing indigenous and local community rights to genetic resources;
- Fosters community-based participation in in-situ biodiversity conservation and management; and,
- Supports the creation of income generating incentives for sustainable conservation and management of resources.



MAPPA: Plant Conservation for Rural Livelihoods

SUB Program

The Asian continent is rich in medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) and traditional medicinal practices that support the lives of millions of people. The Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Program in Asia (MAPPA), a joint initiative of IDRC's SUB PI and the Ford Foundation, supports applied research on the conservation and sustainable management of MAP biodiversity, livelihood security, policy and institutional innovation, and safe and effective applications of traditional medical knowledge. MAPPA employs a production-to-consumption and marketing approach to understanding the MAP sub-sector in Asia. The goal is to enhance the benefits of MAPs to the rural poor. The program builds on a network of expertise and institutions in the partner countries of India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Bhutan to:

- Conserve biological diversity and strengthen traditional knowledge systems;
- Ensure livelihood security for the poor;
- Support an accessible health care system; and,
- Enhance social and gender equity.



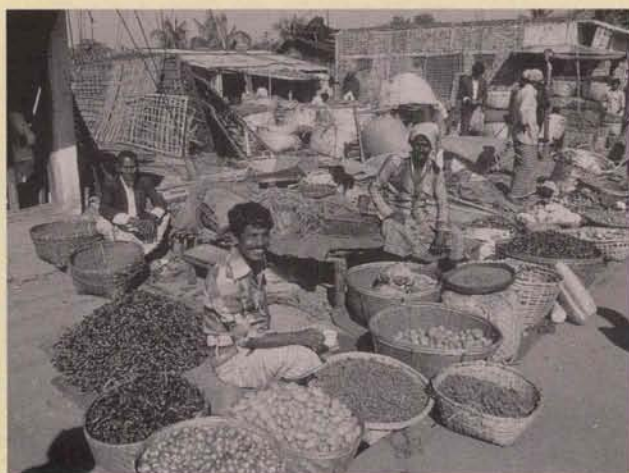
Community-Based Natural Resource Management

Program Initiative

The Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Program Initiative supports research that generates insights and innovations in community-level resource management and leads to more productive, sustainable, and equitable natural resource use. The initiative emphasizes research on sustainable food production and livelihoods, and particularly targets communities in ecosystems facing environmental stress and degradation. In South Asia, this includes the uplands and coastal areas. The CBNRM PI aims to assist local men and women living in these ecosystems, to manage and use their natural resources sustainably. This often includes the poorest of the rural poor and ethnic minorities.

CBNRM supported research aims to:

- Enhance and promote the value of local knowledge;
- Improve production technologies to reduce degradation and increase productivity;
- Support innovative organizational and management systems to foster local decision-making processes, monitoring, and conflict resolution;
- Promote policy innovations which encourage local management mechanisms, incentives, and enforcement; and,
- Foster broader interaction to strengthen communication and information flows.



Local Strategies for Water Supply and Conservation Management

CBNRM Project

The shortage of water supplies is reaching crisis levels in India and Nepal. This is compounded by problems of pollution and salinity. Across India, 70% of all rivers and streams are polluted, while in Kathmandu, only 34% of people have access to safe drinking water. Further, the multitude of stakeholders (government, industry, large and small farmers, households) have diverse and often conflicting interests in water. This project takes an alternative approach to investigating water management by integrating social issues, innovative management systems, and policy change. The project employs a quantitative modeling system which inputs various water supply and demand practices to generate scenarios estimating how these practices will affect the future status of water. This information serves as a basis for a common framework for understanding and discussion among stakeholders, and can inform potential solutions. Emphasis is also placed on demand side management and expanding water supplies. The project is a collaborative effort between five research institutes working in India and Nepal. Project findings have been published in the book

Rethinking the Mosaic: Investigations into Local Water Management (Edited by: Marcus Moench, Elisabeth Casperi and Ajaya Dixit, 1999. Published by: Nepal Water Conservation Foundation, Kathmandu, and the Institute for Social and Environmental Transition, Boulder, Colorado, U.S.A.).

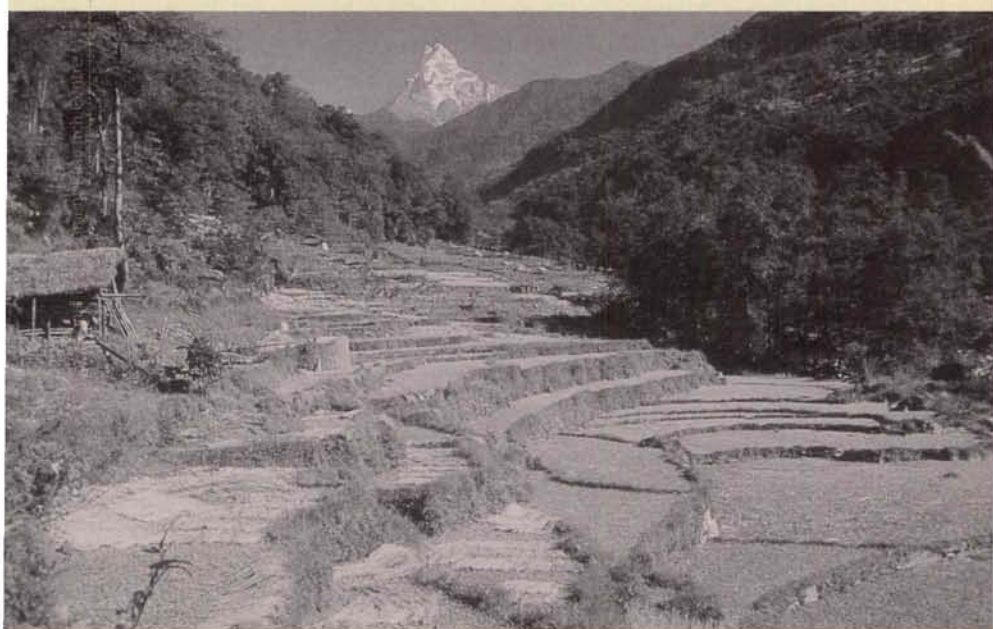


Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health

Program Initiative

The Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health (EcoHealth) Program Initiative is founded on the idea that many complex factors undermine the health of all living beings and that these factors cannot be understood or controlled by medical approaches alone. The EcoHealth approach constitutes a bridge between strategies for integrated environmental management and a global, ecological approach to promoting human health. The

EcoHealth PI supports interventions that lead to better management of ecosystems in order to improve human health and well-being while simultaneously maintaining or improving the health of the ecosystem as a whole. The program supports the use of participatory, transdisciplinary, and gender sensitive methodologies to better understand the local determinants of human health, and thus develop appropriate and effective interventions and policies. The program focuses particularly on agricultural, mining, and urban ecosystems. Funding constraints currently limit expansion of EcoHealth PI activities in the region. However the PI will continue to take opportunities to build on ongoing work in South Asia, in part through partnerships with other donors.



Pan Networking Program Initiative

The Pan Networking (PAN) Program Initiative promotes collaboration in research and development through information access, use, and exchange. It supports research on programs and activities that promote equitable access and democratic use of ICTs while taking advantage of the opportunities for development in the new information economy. The PAN Asia program component emphasizes applied research in e-commerce business models for emerging market partners, and the testing of relevant Internet content and applications (such

as distance education). By partnering with Asia-based organizations and individuals, PAN is able to promote and foster knowledge sharing across the region to:

- Understand the positive and negative impact of ICTs on people, culture, economy, and society;
- Strengthen ICT uses that result in positive outcomes for sustainable development;
- Promote policy environments conducive to socially responsible uses of ICTs; and
- Develop and experiment with innovative applications using leading-edge ICTs for development.

Grameen Telecom Network PAN Project

For "research that directly benefits the poor people we have to be able to get to a situation where people have access to information and communication at the local level," emphasizes Prof. Hashemi, Head of the Program for Research on Poverty Alleviation at the Grameen Bank. In essence, knowledge is a capacity builder: it informs, enables, and empowers people. In partnership with the Grameen Family, PAN Bangladesh is bringing the Internet to rural Bangladesh. PAN Bangladesh will provide villagers, as well as educational institutions and government departments, with affordable access to the Internet through mobile phone links. The development of Internet kiosks, purchasable by villagers using small loans from the Grameen Bank, will allow people to develop and print material, e-mail, and surf the net for valuable information. In this way, rural people will develop both income generating schemes and much needed information and communication services. Grameen Telecom and PAN Bangladesh aim to make this wireless network available in 68,000 villages throughout Bangladesh.

Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies

Program Initiative

In the 1970s, policies, such as reductions in public expenditures, currency devaluation, and trade and financial-sector liberalization, were introduced to change the structure of developing countries' economies and improve long-term economic outlooks. It soon became clear, however, that the poor were bearing the brunt of these adjustments. Although studies criticized the social impacts of structural adjustment, it was difficult for

decision-makers to find alternative policy options that would improve national economic outlooks while minimizing negative impacts on the poor. The Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies (MIMAP) Program Initiative seeks to accurately assess the impacts adjustments are having on the poor so that more equitable policies can be developed. MIMAP focuses support in three main areas:

- Economic modeling that makes a rigorous macro-micro link and generates empirical policy-based results;
- Data-gathering that goes beyond conventional measures of well-being to include other variables that provide frequent and timely information on the status of poorer communities; and,
- Studies that encourage a multi-disciplinary approach cutting across the poverty monitoring theme.

Trade, Employment and Competitiveness

Program Initiative

The Trade, Employment and Competitiveness (TEC) Program Initiative supports developing countries in their efforts to participate more effectively in the global economy. South Asian countries have witnessed dramatic changes in their international trade relations over the last

Health Sector Reform and the Impact on Access to, Utilization and Quality of Health Care in South Asia

MIMAP Project

When Macroeconomic Adjustment Policies (MAPs) indirectly lower people's relative wages, they must work harder and longer hours to earn their income. This allows for less time to attend to the health care needs of children and family, reduces access to and use of health care, and results in lower standards of living for the entire family. The MAPHealth program seeks to understand these kinds of problems by supporting a global team of researchers studying the links between MAPs, health sector reform, household level access to health care, and quality of health care. The South Asian component of MAPHealth, focused research on the Indian states of Orissa and Kerala. By using multi-level modeling, the MAPHealth project has forged new ground in supplementing anecdotal evidence with economic and survey data of the house-hold level impacts of global, national, and state policies.



20 years. As the pace of change in international economic relations accelerates, developing countries find themselves ill equipped to deal with emerging issues either independently by adapting national policies, or as part of regional and multilateral negotiations. TEC works to support the capacity of South Asian institutions to analyze the impacts of change in the global economy and to apply these findings to national and regional trade policies and positions. TEC supports research on the sectoral restructuring required by shifts in global trade; the financial and technological dimensions of international competitiveness; and the consequences of globalization on employment, equity, and environmental concerns. Studies also analyze the impacts of telework and teletrading on economic efficiency.

Telework in India TEC Project

As technological change increasingly affects economies, the importance of teleworking is growing. In this project, supported by the Trade, Employment and Competitiveness PI, Indian researchers are developing policy research to help the country adapt to both the opportunities and constraints posed by technological globalization. Since 1997, the telework project has been analyzing the impact of, and the potential for, teleworking to promote corporate efficiency, foster regional development, and strengthen small and medium enterprises to create sustainable employment (especially for disadvantaged groups such as women). The project is part of a larger initiative coordinated by the United Nations University's Institute for New Technologies.

Secretariats

Providing a Forum to Work Together

Critical avenues of research sometimes require more effort and resources than IDRC, or any single donor, can provide. In such cases IDRC has been instrumental in establishing Secretariats sponsored by a consortium of donors, and subsequently assisting these secretariats to become independent agencies. These Secretariats complement PIs as key program delivery mechanisms at IDRC. Two of these former Secretariats, now fully independent, are based at IDRC's Regional Office for South Asia: the Micronutrient Initiative and the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan.

The Micronutrient Initiative (MI) targets iodine, vitamin A, and iron deficiencies in the region by providing their partners with: technical assistance to develop and / or install fortification technologies; and, assistance in procuring micronutrient products for fortification. It also supports projects aimed at policy development, advocacy, technological innovation, and institutional capacity building. For more information see their website at: www.micronutrient.org.

The International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR), works to improve the social, economic and environmental benefits of bamboo and rattan. INBAR maintains links with IDRC, and is a valuable IDRC partner. The Network's head office is in Beijing, China. For more information see their website: www.inbar.int.

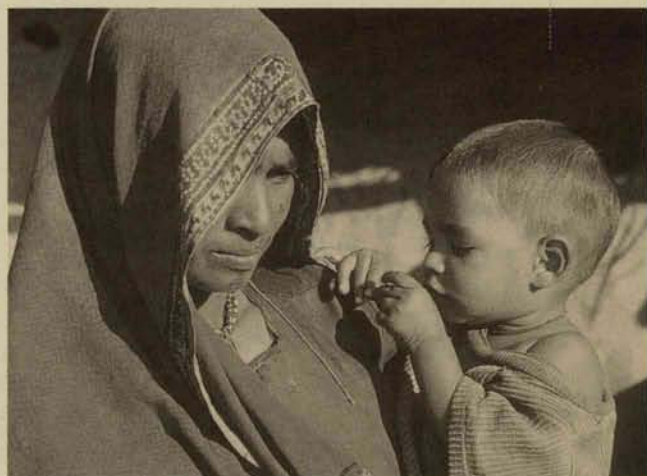
Special Activities

Thinking Outside the Box

IDRC may also take on "special activities". These projects are usually larger than typical projects, and may include research that extends beyond the mandate of any one Program Initiative. Such projects also often include a partnership component with another donor organization.

Swayamsiddha: Women's Health and Empowerment Project Special Activity

"Swayamsiddha" means capable. It characterizes this special project's focus on improving the health of women and girls in rural India, and empowering them to address their own socio-economic and development needs. The project is co-funded by the Canadian International Development Agency and led by IDRC's Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health PI, with support from the Centre's Evaluation Unit. The project incorporates a network of nine like-minded partner organizations working in six Indian states. The BAIF Development Research Foundation is the implementing organization. A key project focus is on building the capacity of BAIF and the partner organizations in gender sensitive and needs based programming, eco-system approaches to human health, and participatory planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Project activities are expected to reach approximately 75 villages across the country and benefit more than 7,500 women and their families.



Partnerships for Development

Given both the scale and scope of the challenges in working toward sustainable development in South Asia, IDRC actively fosters synergistic partnerships with other organizations and donors. These partnerships: help avoid replicating efforts; maximize the development impact and reach of our collective work; and, expand the flow of resources to researchers in developing countries. Our partnerships with other organizations in the region have included: Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Ford Foundation, World Bank, United Nations



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Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). IDRC has also taken a lead role in promoting public/private sector partnerships.

Applying for Funding

IDRC works with a variety of organizations and individuals, including governments, non-government organizations, community based organizations, and research institutions. IDRC publishes an online guide titled *How to Apply for Funding*, which outlines the requirements for completing funding proposals. Prior to sending a complete proposal, IDRC recommends that researchers submit a two page concept note briefly outlining the proposed research. In addition to funding research projects, IDRC also provides support through awards, fellowships, and internships. To access our funding guide and learn more about working with IDRC, please contact our office or visit our website at www.idrc.ca.



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