

# WHAT IS IDRC?

**T**he International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is a corporation created by the Parliament of Canada in 1970 to stimulate and support scientific and technical research by developing countries for their own benefit.

The fields of investigation to which IDRC gives its financial and professional support affect — directly or indirectly — the day-to-day lives of people in the developing world. These areas include: farming; food storage, processing, and distribution; forestry; fisheries; animal sciences; energy; tropical diseases; water supplies; health services; education; population studies; economics; communications; urban policies; science and technology policy; and information systems.

Although IDRC is funded entirely by the Canadian Parliament, to which it reports annually, its operations are guided by an international 21-member Board of Governors. Under the IDRC Act, the chairman, the vice-chairman, and nine other governors must be Canadian citizens; in practice, 6 of the remaining 10 governors are from developing countries.

## Who benefits?

Three-quarters of the population of the developing countries live in rural areas. These people are usually the last to benefit from the advances of science and technology and it is to them and to the betterment of the quality of their lives that most IDRC-funded projects are directed. Some support, however, goes to research on the problems of urbanization, particularly rural-urban migration, housing, and sanitation technology for squatter settlements.

## The IDRC approach

IDRC emphasizes the role of the scientist in international development and encourages Third World countries to draw on the talent of their own scientific communities. Building a strong local base for future research is an important



objective of most Centre-supported work.

Research projects supported by the Centre are identified, designed, conducted, and managed by developing-country researchers in their own countries, to meet their own priorities.

IDRC helps to create and supports international research networks through which developing countries can learn from each other, share common experiences, and conduct similarly designed studies in areas of mutual concern.

The Centre also promotes cooperation between developing-country researchers and their counterparts in Canada.

## Research Programs

**Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Sciences Division** — In this group of related sciences, emphasis is on crops, farming systems, and afforestation in arid and semi-arid lands. Other major areas of support include: previously neglected food sources such as root crops, food legumes, and oilseeds; agroforestry

(growing trees and crops together); multiple cropping systems; improvement of pasture lands; use of agricultural wastes and by-products in animal feed; artisanal fisheries and fish and shellfish farming; post-production systems for the protection, processing, and distribution of food crops, fruit, and fish; and the needs of the rural homemaker and family.

**Health Sciences Division** — The division's support is concentrated in applied research in five broad program areas: water supply and sanitation; maternal and child health; tropical and infectious diseases; occupational and environmental health; and health operations research. The latter involves every facet of health systems research such as the training of personnel and health economics.

**Social Sciences Division** — Research supported by the division is designed to improve understanding of the social and economic issues related to international development, permitting researchers and policymakers to formulate policy options in several thematic areas. These include: education, population, science and technology, energy, urban development, economics, and rural development. Support is also given to a limited number of national and regional institutions in the social sciences, and to research on problems of special regional concern.

**Energy** — The worldwide effects of unstable energy supplies and prices in recent years have underlined the urgent need for increased research on the energy problems of those most adversely affected — the developing countries. One of IDRC's major activities in this area has been the coordination of an international Energy Research Group comprised of 10 energy analysts and policymakers from developing countries. Funded jointly by IDRC and the United Nations University in Tokyo, the Group is working to identify energy research priorities for developing countries and to suggest how national, regional, and international research resources can be better allocated.

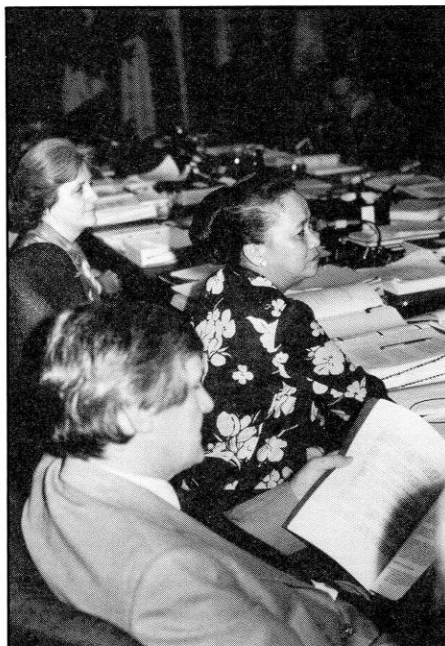
## Information Programs

**Information Sciences Division** — Support given by the division helps developing countries to: establish regional and national information systems and improve library infrastructures at these levels; participate in international information networks; create specialized information centres (serving the region or world) on development-related subjects, especially in agriculture, health, population, industry, the environment, cartography, and social issues; and develop information tools and methods. The division's computer systems group provides internal services and distributes MINISIS, a software package designed by IDRC, to developing countries. In addition, a library and micrographics unit serve IDRC staff, the Canadian development community, and IDRC-supported projects.

**Communications Division** — Services provided by the division include: the publication and dissemination of the results of IDRC-supported research via print and film media; public affairs; and translation. The division also supports projects aimed at strengthening the ability of research institutions and communications media in developing countries to prepare and disseminate scientific and technological information.

## Collaborative Programs

**Cooperative Programs Division** — The division promotes collaboration between scientific research groups in developing countries and their counterparts in Canada — whether academic, governmental, or private. The first area of specialization created was the Earth Sciences program. By establishing channels of communication among scientists, the division helps improve the transfer of research results from Canada to the Third World. Project support is open to all disciplines that contribute to Third World economic or social development and in which there is recognized Canadian expertise. It is important, however, that the developing-country research



IDRC's work is guided by an international Board of Governors.

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

Section 4.(1)  
*International Development  
Research Centre Act,  
May 13, 1970*

group play a significant role in formulating a scientifically sound project proposal and in planning and executing the project, thereby strengthening its research capacity.

## Fellowships and Awards Division

— The division provides support to train junior and senior Third World scientists, managers, and planners working in sectors covered by IDRC's program divisions. The emphasis is on support to individuals from the least developed countries and on professional upgrading rather than basic training. In addition, the division supports non-degree group training to improve technical, research, and administrative skills of individuals through practical courses. A portion of the division's funds is also used to encourage the involvement of young Canadian researchers in scientific areas of concern to IDRC, and to expose them to the problems of the developing world. These doctoral students are posted to a Third World country for studies, research, or placement.

## For more information . . .

IDRC's Communications Division produces a number of publications for the general reader, such as this quarterly magazine, *IDRC Reports*, and *Searching*, the annual review. In addition, the Centre publishes scientific monographs, technical studies, proceedings of meetings, bibliographies, and booklets for policymakers. Films describing the Centre and some of the areas of scientific research it supports are also available. Briefings for interested groups or individuals can be arranged on request.

For further information, contact IDRC at the following address: (or any of the other addresses listed on page 3):

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