

New research initiative

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In 2009, the International Development Research Centre's (IDRC's) Women's Rights and Citizenship (WRC) program has made significant progress in developing a new global research initiative, entitled "Democratic Governance, Women's Rights and Gender Equality."

This initiative will support new research on whether and how governance systems, institutions and processes are responding to women's rights, needs, and interests.

WRC is working with IDRC's Partnership and Business Development Division (PBDD), to build a team of partners with multilateral and bilateral agencies and foundations globally.



Global in scope

The Democratic Governance, Women's Rights and Gender Equality research initiative is global in scope, with a focus on the following regions in the developing South: West, East and Southern Africa; South, Southeast, and East Asia; the Middle East and North Africa; and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The initiative also addresses three thematic areas: women's political participation, rule of law and human rights, and transitional and post-conflict situations. WRC has commissioned eight regional and thematic background papers which will contribute to shaping the conceptual framework of the initiative. The papers are as follows:

Women's Political Participation- Marilyn Waring

Rule of Law and Human Rights- Reem Bahdi

Transitional and Post-conflict Situations- Dyan Mazurana

West Africa- Rose Kutin

East and Southern Africa- Sheila Meintjes

South Asia- Seema Kazi

Middle East and North Africa- Amaney Jamal

Latin America and the Caribbean- Line Bareiro and Isabel Torres García

Building on Previous Initiatives

Through this international research initiative, the WRC program is seeking to build on its support for research on women's rights and citizenship in the developing South, which can contribute to global, regional and national policy debates and agendas on democracy, governance, women's rights and gender equality.

This initiative builds on the previous WRC global initiative on "Decentralization and Women's Rights." The Decentralization initiative supported thirteen research projects in the regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America. The two key themes that emerged from the research findings were:

- 1) Women's political participation and representation in local governance; and
- 2) Women's access to public services in decentralized systems.

The research findings were shared at an international conference held in Mexico City in November 2008 in collaboration with the

Government of Mexico, UNDP, UN-HABITAT, and other global partners.

This highly-attended conference strategically communicated the lessons learnt from WRC's competition series on decentralization and women's rights in the three regions. The outcome document of international policy recommendations can be accessed online at: <http://www.idrc.ca/decentralization/>.

Drawing on experiences from the Decentralization initiative, WRC is well-positioned to lead the new Democratic Governance initiative.

Looking forward...

WRC is preparing for an event entitled, "Democratic Governance, Women's Rights and Gender Equality: Building Partnerships for a New Global Research Initiative," to be held at IDRC headquarters in Ottawa on December 1-3, 2009.

Discussions will focus on topics including: democratic governance; women's rights and the rule of law; the role of political parties in advancing women's political participation and leadership; the policy impact of women's representation in parliament; the opportunities and challenges for gender equality in democratization processes in transitional and post-conflict situations, and cross-cutting themes of civil society and accountability.

Discussions will also address the specificities of democratic governance, women's rights and gender equality in the following regions:

West, East and Southern Africa; South, Southeast, and East Asia; Middle East and

North Africa; and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The meeting aims to build partnerships among key international development agencies to support action-oriented research and research networks that can overcome the current divides between Southern and Northern researchers, as well as between research and policy communities.

Participants will include academics and researchers, and representatives of bilateral, multilateral and donor agencies working on issues of common concern.



Canada's International Development research Centre (IDRC) is one of the world's leading institutions in the generation and application of new knowledge to meet the challenges of international development. For nearly 40 years, IDRC has worked in close collaboration with researchers from the developing world in their search for the means to build healthier, more equitable, and more prosperous societies.

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