A Review of IDRC Documentation on the
Intended Results of IDRC's Support of Networks (1995-2004)


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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Supporting research networks has been a distinctive IDRC feature since the Centre's inception. For more than thirty years, IDRC has invested funds, time and intellectual attention to the development of networks. The Centre's substantial experience with networks, some of which is formally captured in program and project level documentation, has led it to recognize that networks are an important way to organize resources for development research (Bernard 1996, 7).

Given IDRC's extensive experience and interest in networks as a program modality, the Centre's Evaluation Unit is currently undertaking a Strategic Evaluation of IDRC-Supported Networks. The evaluation looks to capture the Centre's collective experience with networks and to use this accumulated experience and insight both to enrich the Centre's understanding of networks and to inform and strengthen Centre efforts to support healthy, active and effective networks where and when appropriate. As part of this Strategic Evaluation, the Evaluation Unit commissioned three document reviews on themes of interest to the Centre's Network Working Group; these included 1) intended results of IDRC-supported networks, 2) network sustainability, and 3) network coordination and governance. The reviews are intended to capture the tacit and documented knowledge that exists within the Centre literature. The findings from the document reviews will be supplemented through research with, and reflection by, network coordinators and IDRC staff through key informant interviews and a survey to be undertaken by the Evaluation Unit in the near future.

The purpose of this review is to offer some preliminary discussion regarding IDRC's "intent" vis-à-vis networks. Specifically, it explores the intended results IDRC seeks to achieve by supporting networks. The design and methodology of the review have been qualitative, with data collected and analyzed in terms of a series of questions identified by the Evaluation Unit and approved by the Centre's Network Working Group. The three principal questions guiding this review are: 1) what have been IDRC's intentions in supporting networks during the period in question (1995 to the present); 2) what have been the objectives of IDRC-supported networks; and 3) is there continuity between the corporate intent and the project network objectives? To explore these questions, this study involved the review of a range of IDRC literature including selected corporate, program and project level documentation and selected literature from outside the Centre in order to situate the questions and study findings within the broader theorizing on networks.

The review finds that IDRC supports networks to achieve a diverse set of outcomes. In the broadest sense, it observes that the Centre looks to capitalize on the qualitative features of networks to develop more coordinated, comprehensive and coherent approaches to supporting international development research. Specifically, this paper provides an overview of four intended results that IDRC seeks to achieve through its support of networks: 1) improving the effectiveness and reach of Centre support; 2) enhancing research quality; 3) advancing the utilization of Centre-supported research results; and 4) strengthening regional ownership of research and development agendas. Each of these is briefly summarized here.

The review finds that IDRC's increasing interest in networks derives from two broad and intimately connected trends; the first relates to the emergence of new ideas about what development research means and how to both conduct it, and support it, more effectively, while the second is grounded in IDRC's own experience and circumstances. The "new ideas" are derived from a recognition of the inadequacies of the traditional monodisciplinary

approach to science and the deficiencies of this Western scientific model both for IDRC and for small and materially poor countries looking to address development problems of a complexity and magnitude that exceed the capacities and mandate of any single discipline, institution or sector.

At the same time, during the 1990s, IDRC's financial resources declined considerably as a result of significant successive reductions in Canada's Parliamentary grant to the Centre. This new financial reality, combined with new ideas about how development research should be organized, "made change in IDRC an imperative" (IDRC 1991a, 16).

Among other things, the Centre came to believe that it would have to concentrate its dwindling resources on fewer development problems in order to remain effective. It sought to nurture a more integrated, multidisciplinary, and problem focussed approach within the Centre, emphasizing the "connectedness" of the various elements of development and the concomitant need for greater "coherence" in IDRC programming. The review finds, first, that networks are supported by the Centre to *optimize its limited resources by enabling support for larger, higher profile programmes of research with the cooperation of other donor institutions and, in so doing, to improve the visibility, reach and impact of the Centre in a more coordinated, efficient and effective way*.

Second, the review finds that IDRC supports networks to enhance the *quality* of Centre-supported research. It does this in several complementary ways. Networks are used to implement comprehensive capacity building initiatives at national and regional levels and, less formally, to create networking opportunities for peer learning and mutual support among researchers and other stakeholders working on common or complementary issues. IDRC also supports networks to promote collaboration and coordination of research efforts across disciplines, institutions, and sectors, again at different levels, in order to strengthen the comprehensiveness and coherence of IDRC-supported research. And finally, networks are used to facilitate the inclusion of key stakeholders in Centre-supported research efforts. Strengthening the participation of, for example, civil society actors and policymakers in the research process is intended to improve the relevance and usefulness of research to end users. Taken together, these network strategies are intended to promote a deeper, shared understanding of development problems among research communities and other stakeholder groups and to contribute to the generation of knowledge that is more rigorous, comprehensive, relevant, and useful to intended users.

Third, IDRC similarly supports networks as a means to increase the *utilization* of Centre-supported research, particularly in policymaking. Networks are used to expand the policy capacities of researchers to carry out and create policy relevant research. This includes supporting capacity building initiatives at different levels, and promoting greater coordination of research efforts in order to build a critical mass of researchers and expertise in a particular field and encourage greater interdisciplinarity and cross-sectoral collaboration. The latter is intended both to expand policy capacities and to broaden policy horizons by increasing the quantity, quality and comprehensiveness of research and the stock of policy relevant knowledge available to inform policy. Networks are also intended to broaden policy horizons by promoting more meaningful engagement between research and policy communities in order to improve the relevance and responsiveness of research to the pressing needs of policymakers/ing. The review also finds that the Centre uses networks as means to support more systematic and comprehensive documentation and dissemination efforts, as well as advocacy initiatives, again with the intent to improve the reach, utilization, and hence impact of IDRC-supported research efforts. And finally, though not directly related to

"utilization" but of immediate import in terms of policy influence, IDRC supports networks as a mechanism to improve policy development processes and outcomes by creating spaces for civil society in policy fora. The intent is both to strengthen democratic processes in developing regions and to ensure that policymaking is more responsive to the needs and interests of different stakeholder groups in society.

And finally, though implicit in the literature reviewed, support for networks in developing regions is intended to address the issue of *research "ownership"*. Because networks provide spaces for exchange and learning, strengthening capacities, building researcher, research-policy and institutional alliances, and promoting engagement among relevant stakeholders, they are considered an effective mechanism for encouraging the emergence of locally/regionally defined research priorities and agendas.

The review concludes by suggesting that although IDRC's support of networks is best understood in relation to the Centre's intent to improve the quality and utilization of the research it supports and to enhance local ownership of research and development in the South, it may also be seen more broadly as an attempt to support the creation of more effective and sustainable research relationships in developing regions.

*Problems of research quality and utilization are the result of more systemic weaknesses in the research environment of many developing regions*. In many regions where IDRC supports research, individual researchers and their institutions tend to work in isolation due to limited intra and inter-institutional mechanisms for communication and collaboration, and an institutional culture that is often sharply divided along disciplinary lines. IDRC has found this to result in unnecessary duplication of research and development efforts within national and regional systems and, in turn, sub-optimal use of already scarce donor resources. Given that many research institutions in the South are small, significantly under-funded, poorly resourced (e.g. libraries, equipment and other infrastructure), and often lack a critical mass of research resources in any discipline, failure to collaborate in turn undermines the ability of Southern institutions, and research systems more broadly, to address critical development challenges.

*Networks, in the broadest sense, are intended to address these systemic challenges.* Networks contribute to building more effective and sustainable research relationships by providing a mechanism for building researcher, inter-institutional, and inter-sectoral alliances leading to greater coordination of research efforts. They are also a mechanism for more comprehensive capacity building and peer learning, which serve not only to strengthen the skills of individual researchers but to build "research communities" in developing regions. And they provide a forum to integrate important stakeholders (civil society, policymakers, the private sector) into research and policy systems in a more coherent and meaningful way. Support for strengthening research systems is, in the end, intended to promote and ground local ownership for research and development within developing regions; it is intended to enable developing countries to define and implement local research and development priorities and to translate their research outputs into creative and effective policies and programs.

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Supporting research networks has been a distinctive IDRC feature since the Centre's inception. For more than thirty years, IDRC has invested funds, time and intellectual attention to the development of networks. The Centre's substantial experience with networks, some of which is formally captured in program and project level documentation, has led it to recognize that networks are an important way to organize resources for development research (Bernard 1996, 7).

Given IDRC's extensive experience and interest in networks as a program modality, the Centre's Evaluation Unit is currently undertaking a Strategic Evaluation of IDRC-Supported Networks. The evaluation looks to capture the Centre's collective experience with networks and to use this accumulated experience and insight both to enrich the Centre's understanding of networks and to inform and strengthen Centre efforts to support healthy, active and effective networks. As part of this Strategic Evaluation, the Evaluation Unit commissioned three document reviews on themes of interest to the Centre's Network Working Group (NWG); these included 1) intended results of IDRC-supported networks, 2) network sustainability, and 3) network coordination and governance. The reviews are intended to pull together the vast amount of disparate documentation on networks produced by IDRC in terms of the three priority areas identified by the NWG. The findings from the reviews will be supplemented by research with, and reflection by, network coordinators and IDRC staff through key informant interviews and a survey to be undertaken by the Evaluation Unit in the near future.

The purpose of this review is to offer some preliminary discussion regarding IDRC's "intent" vis-à-vis networks. Specifically, it explores the intended results IDRC seeks to achieve by supporting networks. Based on a review of selected corporate, program and project level documentation from IDRC and selected literature on the theme of networks from outside the Centre, the review finds that IDRC supports networks to achieve a diverse set of outcomes. In the broadest sense, it observes that the Centre looks to capitalize on the qualitative features of networks to develop more coordinated, comprehensive and coherent approaches to supporting international development research. Specifically, this paper provides an overview of four intended results that IDRC seeks to achieve through its support of networks: 1) improving the effectiveness and reach of Centre support; 2) enhancing research quality; 3) advancing the utilization of Centre-supported research results; and 4) strengthening regional ownership of research and development agendas. Following a discussion of the review methodology, each of these is explored in turn in the body of the paper. The review concludes by suggesting that although IDRC's support of networks is best understood in relation to the Centre's intent to improve the quality and utilization of the research it supports, and strengthening local ownership of research and development, it must also be seen more broadly as an attempt to support the creation of more effective and sustainable research systems in developing regions.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

The review is intended to serve as a background piece for the Centre's current Strategic Evaluation of IDRC-Supported Networks. For the purposes of the evaluation exercise, the Evaluation Unit has elected not to impose a singular definition of "networks". Rather than focus on structures or typologies, it has drawn on definitions provided by Bernard (1996), Creech and Willard (2001), and Church et al. (2003). In this review, "networks" are defined by the following key characteristics:

1. networks are social arrangements made up of individuals and representatives of institutions based on establishing and building relationships, sharing tasks and working on mutual or joint activities, enabling new learning and mobilizing alternative action;

2. networks add value to work that would have otherwise been done individually;

3. networks are forums for social exchange, which allow members and users to interact directly with one another so that this interaction influences the way they think or what they do;

4. networks open opportunities through shared work to raise the profile of research results, foster cross fertilization, influence the policy community, build research and policy capacities, and build a case for a new research agenda;

5. network members maintain their autonomy as participants.

The concept of a "network" is not intended, at least for the purposes of this paper, to necessarily denote a social arrangement with a formal structure, as many of the projects included in the review are not formal networks but nevertheless have a strong networking dimension to them.

This review excludes information or access networks intended to provide electronic and data exchange arrangements to facilitate the storage and movement of information. These networks are not intended to facilitate social interaction and relationship building toward the realization of shared goals, and it is for this reason that the focus here is on those networks concerned with enabling people to work together to generate and utilize knowledge and develop skills; networks characterized by the broad range of connective mechanisms they use and their support to direct interpersonal exchange (Bernard 1996, 13).

The design and methodology of this review have been qualitative, with data collected and analyzed in terms of a series of questions identified by the Evaluation Unit and approved by the Centre's NWG. The three principal questions guiding this review are:

1. What have been IDRC's intentions in supporting networks during the period in question (1995 to the present)?
2. What have been the objectives of IDRC-supported networks?
3. Is there continuity between the corporate intent and the project network objectives?

To explore these questions, this study included the review of a range of IDRC literature including selected corporate, program and project level documentation and selected literature

from outside the Centre in order to situate the questions and study findings within the broader theorizing on networks.

## 2.1 Document Review

In order to examine IDRC's "intent" vis-à-vis networks – that is, the intended results IDRC expects to achieve by supporting networks – several types of documentation were identified by the Evaluation Unit as potentially useful sources of specific information. The review includes a range of corporate, program and project level documentation produced between 1995 (when the last Centre evaluation of networks was undertaken) and the present[1]. Though the documentation was not intended to address the questions posed by this evaluation, the following document types were reviewed to explore and capture "what IDRC already knows" (and has documented) in terms of its support of networks.

*Corporate documents* reviewed include IDRC Corporate Strategy and Performance Frameworks (CSPFs), Programs of Work and Budget (PWBs), IDRC Annual Reports, Board of Governors (BoG) minutes, speeches and papers by IDRC presidents, and other internal documents and discussion papers that deal with the issue of networks.

*Program documents* reviewed include Program Initiative Prospectuses, External Reviews, Regional Director's Reports to the BoG, and Director's of Program Areas Reports to the BoG.

*Project documents* reviewed include a sample of Project Approval Documents and proposals for projects approved since Fiscal Year 1994-1995. The sample was derived by producing an EPIK report of all active and closed projects and research support activities (RSPs) approved since April 1994 (from fiscal year 1995) to the present that had 1) 'network' in the project title; 2) used 'network' as a keyword; and/or, 3) identified 'network' as the project type. Out of a total of 451 projects, a sample of 80 was selected for the review. The Evaluation Unit ensured that the projects selected were more or less evenly distributed by Program Area, by geographic region, and by fiscal year.

The review also included selected literature from outside IDRC to situate the questions and issues explored in a wider context.

## 2.2. Methodological Observations

The purpose of this study was to explore IDRC's intentions in supporting research networks. To do this adequately required reviewing Centre literature at different levels. Corporate documentation including corporate strategies, PWBs, IDRC Annual Reports, BoG minutes, and other relevant internal literature were reviewed to explore IDRC's corporate understanding of, and position on, supporting research networks and, more broadly, to situate the review findings within the Centre's institutional context. IDRC's corporate strategies were a particularly useful source for information on the Centre's research priorities and strategic orientation and how these have changed over time in response to, for example, the new budgetary imperatives of the Centre in the 1990s.   However, the vast majority of

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[1] For a complete list of all documents reviewed for this study see Appendix B and C.

corporate documentation revealed very little about IDRC's understanding of and position on networks specifically.

Several program level documents, such as PI prospectuses and external reviews provided some insight on the theme of networks. While prospectuses present a relatively broad perspective of PI goals and strategies, external reviews, in many cases, offered more substantive information about the types of research supported by PIs, PIs' understanding of networks as a programming modality and the kinds of results PIs expect to obtain through networks. Several external reviews also provided some detail about specific networks supported by the different PIs, including the network's objectives, achievements to date, and factors supporting and/or inhibiting the success of the network.

By far the most detailed information on IDRC's intentions in supporting networks was gleaned from the review of PADs. In many cases, the appraisals provided useful information about the types of networks and networking arrangements supported by the Centre, the kinds of intended results IDRC programs expect to achieve through their support of different network projects, the rationale for supporting networks in lieu of other programming modalities, the objectives and networking approaches utilized by different projects and so on. PADs are, however, an imperfect tool for analyzing the Centre's intentions vis-à-vis networks. Many of the PADs included in the sample did not offer useful information either because the document itself was incomplete (for example, some PADs did not provide a complete appraisal but rather included only the objectives of the proposed project and the signature of responsible Program Officer), the networking component of the project was insufficiently elaborated (very common), or the project itself did not fall within the study's definition of a "network" (see Section 2.1). In several cases, for example, projects were intended to support electronic information exchange only and did not have a social exchange function, therefore they fell outside the parameters of this review.

As part of this study, the review sought to explore, among other things, the qualitative features of networks (e.g. the social exchange function of networks, their horizontal and "democratic" features etc.) that IDRC looks to capitalize on in order to achieve specific intended results. In other words, the review considered how the Centre's understanding of networks (ideas about what they can do) shapes the intended results that IDRC looks to achieve through this programming modality. Because the majority of program and project documents reviewed were planning-oriented (to capture "intent"), much of the discussion was of a normative nature – idealizing the many qualities of networks. In the future, IDRC might consider a companion review to examine some of the assumptions held about networks and to determine if and how these ideas hold in the actual establishment and functioning of Centre-supported networks.

The study also looked to determine and document any discernable trends related to the intended results of IDRC's support of networks. In particular, the review analyzed if, and the extent to which, IDRC's support of networks differs by region, by programming area and/by network type (e.g. policy networks, capacity building networks). Though it was anticipated that specific patterns might emerge, the review could not identify any discernable trends in these areas. From the project appraisals reviewed, it appears that IDRC's three program areas support similar types of networks with comparable intended results that differ little by region. It is worth noting, in fact, that the reviewer had some difficulty with the idea of a "network type" as *the vast majority of networks reviewed were "multifunctional"* (see Soderbaum 2001, 153), having a number of different aims and activities that they strive to

achieve simultaneously (e.g. capacity building, collaborative research, dissemination, policy influence).

As requested by the Evaluation Unit, the review also sought to explore and document any relevant connections between the three themes under review in the Centre's strategic evaluation: intent, sustainability, and governance and coordination. Though not exhaustive, this review highlights, where feasible and appropriate, such areas of thematic overlap. Upon completion and presentation of the three document reviews, the NWG is likely to discover additional interconnections among these themes and issues.

Though many of the documents included in the study yielded useful information about the Centre's support of networks, *it is important that this review be read as a preliminary and partial exploration of this theme*. It does not provide a comprehensive overview and analysis of the Centre's diverse intentions in supporting networks, but rather is intended to glean and synthesize what is captured in selected Centre documentation to inform the key informant interviews and the survey to be implemented as part of the larger strategic evaluation undertaken by IDRC's Evaluation Unit.

# 3.0 FINDINGS: INTENDED RESULTS OF IDRC SUPPORTED NETWORKS

## 3.1 Improving the Effectiveness and Reach of Centre Support

IDRC's increasing interest in networks derives from two broad and intimately connected trends; the first relates to the emergence of new ideas about what development research means and how to both conduct and support it more effectively, while the second is grounded in IDRC's own experience and circumstances. As will be discussed throughout the body of this paper, the "new ideas" are derived from a recognition of the inadequacies of the traditional monodisciplinary approach to science (Hardie 1998, 2) and the deficiencies of this Western scientific model both for IDRC and for small and materially poor countries looking to address development problems of a complexity and magnitude that exceed the capacities and mandate of any single discipline, institution or sector.

At the same time, during the 1990s, IDRC's financial circumstances changed. Throughout the decade, IDRC's financial resources declined considerably as a result of significant successive reductions in Canada's Parliamentary grant to the Centre. According to Maureen O'Neil, IDRC's President, core funding from the Canadian Parliament declined by 25% between FY 1993-94 and 2000-01, though the figure is probably closer to 45% in real terms (O'Neil 2001a, 2). This new financial reality, combined with new ideas about how development research should be organized, "made change in IDRC an imperative" (IDRC 1991a, 16).

During the 1990s the Centre implemented a number of strategic shifts – both organizational and programmatic – intended to ensure that the Centre remained effective. IDRC's transition to the Program Initiative system in 1995, for example, was intended to nurture a more integrated, multidisciplinary, and problem focused approach within the Centre, emphasizing the "connectedness" of the various elements of development and the concomitant need for greater "coherence" in IDRC programming (Hardie 1998, 2). The cuts to the grant from Parliament, and the consequent need for staff reductions, lent further support to this shift as the Centre came to believe, early in the 1990s, that it would have to concentrate its dwindling resources on fewer development problems in order to be effective under these new circumstances. The level of fragmentation and dispersion in Centre programming, prior to the transition, was deemed to be unproductive, and in May of 1995 IDRC's Board instructed management to produce a plan for "… a more focussed program that will lead to measurable results…" (Hardie 1998, 3).

The Centre simultaneously redefined its funding priorities to reflect a shift from supporting individual discipline rooted and relatively small research activities to those of a larger, more integrated and interdisciplinary nature, with a greater emphasis on support for research networks. IDRC's *Completing the Transition: Strategic Adjustments for IDRC* (1995) argues the following:

> *Since its inception, focusing on research networks has been a distinctive IDRC feature. Many of our most notable successes have derived from such networks. We need now to move in this direction with even greater determination than suggested in "Empowerment Through Knowledge" [IDRC 1991]. This will require greater selectivity of institutions and researchers, emphasizing core centres of excellence*

*that are prepared to form genuine partnerships with programs in other countries as well as in the home country. It will also serve as a catalyst in the application of information and communication technologies to link, support and allow for mutual learning from otherwise disparate efforts. ... We will need to focus even more sharply on a few problem areas or fields of activity that cut across disciplines and professions, and where the Centre can play an increasingly role of knowledge broker and catalyst. This requires mobilizing a critical mass of researchers and financial resources in each of the chosen problem areas, concentrating them to have greater impact and to obtain visible results. ...*

*Quite clearly, it also requires a move away from small, stand-alone projects, unless they will join existing networks, or are potential growth points for future networks. However, we must be aware that creating and maintaining networks involves relatively high coordination costs; to be serious, we must budget for these from our own resources and broker the essential additional resources from other sources.* (IDRC 1995, 13-14).

Though somewhat implicit, it is clear that IDRC's intentions in supporting networks are grounded in a complex set of concerns related to improving the effectiveness of Centre programming and the research it supports. As will be discussed in greater detail throughout the body of this paper, support for networks is intended to improve the quality and utilization of IDRC-supported research by, for example, enabling more coordinated and coherent approaches to capacity building and greater research collaboration across disciplines, institutions, and sectors within developing regions. Networks, however, are simultaneously intended to maximize the efficiency, effectiveness, and ultimately impact, of IDRC programming and support in light of the new institutional sustainability and budgetary imperatives of the Centre.  As Anne Bernard explains,

*Networks constitute prime vehicles for program delivery in times of decreasing development assistance resources precisely because they have the potential to improve coordination, enhance information exchange, support human resources development, and decentralize management* (Bernard 1996, 7).

Increasingly oriented towards partnerships, joint ventures, and international cooperation, networks are used by the Centre to enable larger, higher profile programmes of research, advocacy and action, with greater administrative efficiency; to draw in multiple sources of funding; to widen opportunities for disseminating and applying research results all as a means to extent the reach and impact of IDRC support. These emphases are clearly reflected in the Centre's Corporate Strategy and Performance Framework for 2000-2005, which reads as follows:

*During the next five years, directed by the aims enshrined in the IDRC Act of 1970, the Centre will pursue the following strategic goals.*

*1) IDRC will strengthen and help to mobilize the indigenous research capacity of developing countries, especially directed to achieving greater social and economic equity, better management of the environment and natural resources, and more equitable access to information.*

*2) IDRC will foster and support the production, dissemination and application of research results leading to policies and technologies to enhance the lives of people in*

*developing countries.*

*3) IDRC will build selectively on past investments and explore new opportunities within its program framework and will:*

a.  **foster the development of program initiatives to consolidate or establish regional and interregional networks of research institutions** *that are focused on specific problems and are connected among themselves and with the broader Canadian and global knowledge communities;*

b.  **develop a variety of partnership arrangements with donors and research institutions, including the management of consortia and secretariats**, *which are dedicated to generating and applying knowledge to major development issues in particular topics, ecoregions, or countries* (IDRC 2000a, 19).

IDRC's increasing support for networks can thus be seen as a conscious strategy intended to achieve two intimately connected goals. Networks are used by the Centre to optimize its limited resources by enabling support for larger, higher profile programmes of research with the cooperation of other donor institutions and, in so doing, to improve the visibility, reach and impact of the Centre in a more efficient and effective way. Support for networks is, simultaneously, intended to improve the coordination and comprehensiveness of its capacity building and research support in developing regions. As will be discussed in the remainder of this review, IDRC looks to capitalize on the qualitative aspects of networks in order to advance the quality and utilization of Centre-supported research and, more broadly, to contribute to the creation of more effective and sustainable research systems in the South.

## 3.2 Enhancing Research Quality

IDRC invests considerable time, energy and resources in activities and strategies aimed at improving the quality and usefulness of the research it supports. By "research quality" IDRC is, by and large, referring to the rigour and comprehensiveness of research and its relevance and usefulness to intended users. IDRC uses networks to enhance research quality in several complementary ways. *First*, IDRC supports networks to strengthen and sustain research capacities. Networks are used to implement comprehensive capacity building strategies among individuals, institutions and/or sectors and, less formally, to create spaces for learning among researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders working on common or complementary issues. *Second*, IDRC supports networks to promote collaboration and coordination of research efforts across disciplines, institutions, and sectors, nationally and regionally, in order to strengthen the comprehensiveness and coherence of IDRC-supported research. *Third*, and finally, it supports networks as a mechanism to facilitate the inclusion of key stakeholders in Centre-supported research efforts. More effectively linking research to, for example, civil society and policy communities is intended to improve the relevance and usefulness of research to end users. Taken together, these network strategies are intended to promote a deeper, shared understanding of development problems and to contribute to the generation of knowledge that is more rigorous, comprehensive, relevant, and useful to intended users.

### 3.2.1 Strengthening and sustaining capacities

From the beginning, capacity building has been one of the cornerstones of the Centre's mandate, and is today one of the most distinctive features of IDRC's support for development research in the South. IDRC uses networks to promote and enable capacity building in different ways, including support for networks with a comprehensive capacity building focus and support for less formal networking intended to facilitate peer learning and mutual support among development researchers, practitioners and other stakeholders in developing regions.

## Capacity building networks

Networks provide a unique opportunity to support capacity building in a more responsive, comprehensive, and coordinated manner. Organized regionally, networks are positioned to take a more holistic approach to research capacity building which "breaks free from the obsession with national research capacity" recognizing that national research structures are not autonomous or independent but are closely integrated into a larger transnational research system (Soderbaum 2001, 158). Where they work best, these networks are designed and managed with sufficiently long time-lines and consistent mandates to allow staff to identify and adapt training needs, and create learning opportunities which support and address the evolving needs of members in reasonably coherent ways (Bernard 1996, 16).

Among the PADs reviewed, networks are often used to introduce and mobilize interest in new research concepts, methods and approaches, to build the skills of partners in these areas, and are often intend to promote their mainstreaming across institutions and sectors at the regional level. Because many of the new concepts and approaches to research have emerged from Northern donor and research institutions, these networks are intended to foster North-South collaboration and exchange. The concept of "ecosystem health", for example, emerged from Canadian research efforts and as such the Ecohealth PI supports capacity building approaches based on partnerships between Canadian academic institutions, NGOs and government departments and IDRC's collaborators in the South. To enable developing countries to take ownership of these ideas and to refine and adapt them to their own conditions, however, the PI equally encourages collaboration and capacity building opportunities among regional actors, institutions and sectors (Ecohealth Prospectus 2000, 7).

Networks intending to implement comprehensive capacity building programs commonly employ diverse strategies including, for example, funding graduate program development, scholarships, small grants programs, training courses, and networking opportunities among researchers and practitioners experimenting new methods and approaches. An example of such a capacity building network can be found in the Community Based Costal Resource Management (CBCRM) Learning and Research Network (LeaRN) (RP 100953). CBCRM LeaRN aims to develop and enhance a learning community of CBCRM practitioners and advocates in the Philippines, Cambodia, Vietnam and other Asian countries in order to further evolve the theory and practice of CBCRM and Sustainable Livelihoods approaches. The network supports a comprehensive capacity building program within the region including a small grants program for research to support, encourage and enhance field initiatives and innovations in CBNRM and Sustainable Livelihoods approaches; a training program in these approaches intended to form in-country pools of trainers; project staff exchanges and study tours and the publication of case studies and other materials. The network is intended to enhance the capacity of researchers and practitioners to adapt, improve, and utilize these approaches in order to improve the quality and relevance of their

research and development efforts in coastal resources management (RP 100953 PAD, B. Davy, 2001).

In many cases, these networks intend to promote the mainstreaming and institutionalization of new concepts and approaches within national and/or regional research systems and in policymaking at different levels. Particularly (though not exclusively) in Environmental and Natural Resource Management (ENRM) fields, where new methods and approaches to research are continually evolving, networks are used to reach out, in a coordinated and concerted way, to actors and institutions at all levels and in all relevant sectors. Networks provide a useful mechanism for bringing together research institutions, universities, government agencies, non-governmental and community based organizations, and potentially other relevant stakeholders to learn about, experiment with, and promote new ideas and approaches and apply them in their research, development and policy making work[2].

IDRC's experience suggests that networks are a crucial programming mechanism for projects with mainstreaming goals. Mainstreaming and institutionalization processes often require relatively long time horizons as many of the new concepts, methodologies and approaches promoted by the Centre (e.g. participatory research) constitute a fundamentally different way of understanding and undertaking research and often require a significant change in institutional culture to be effective. As the Animal Production Systems Network in Latin America (RP 02758) explains:

> *Systems research represented a "change in culture" in most research and academic institutions in developing countries. Its holistic, interdisciplinary and participatory nature did not fit traditional approaches and methods. The RISPAL network represented a big step in the promotion of those changes. .... [The network] has linked 17 institutions in 11 countries of the region. It has refined methodologies for farming systems research, including rapid rural appraisal techniques, statistical design and analysis of on-farm experiments, use of simulation models, etc. ... Meetings, publications, practical manuals, training activities, and the development of concrete technologies helped to achieve significant gains. As a result, there is now a critical mass of scientists in Latin America who, at present, are systems practitioners ...(RP 02758 PAD, H. Li Pun, 1995).*

Introducing new concepts and approaches to research is not just about imparting new skills to researchers and practitioners in the field; it is about influencing established (and often firmly held) paradigms, practices, attitudes and behaviours at all levels and in all sectors. For one IDRC-supported network, promoting a more farmer-demand driven and CBNRM-oriented national agricultural research system in China meant, for example:

> *... challenging the long-existing predominant policy model of "transfer of technology" and the corresponding institutional system in China and underlying assumptions that farmers are simply farmers, that they are by definition male, that they know nothing about technology and that they are just passive receivers. ...*

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[2] Network projects with mainstreaming objectives include, for example, the Animal Production Systems Network for Latin America (RP 02758); CBCRM LeaRN (RP 100953); Strategic Initiative on Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture's Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Training Course on Urban Agriculture (RP 101640); the Farmer-Centred Research Network in China (RP 102005).

> *China's political environment and key policies, including agricultural and rural development policies and the national (agricultural) research system, are undergoing changes, although slowly and with certain back and forth movements. Top-down planning and decision-making remain important features at the various levels of government, but it is also clear that certain spaces are created/opened up. ... Developing a coherent and persistent long-term strategy to fill these spaces is central to the new research efforts* (Farmer-Centred Research Network in China, RP 102005 PAD, R. Vernooy, 2003).

Networks are thus not only used to bring together key stakeholders across institutions and sectors, they are also intended to enable IDRC and its partners to take a longer-term view of capacity building and to attract parallel funding to support these initiatives. In this way, networks enable a far more comprehensive and coordinated approach to capacity building than support for "stand-alone" research projects might allow.

The review also finds that because the research environment of many developing regions is especially weak, networks are often intended to serve a broader goal of creating "research communities". Networks are intended to develop not only skills, but a sense of community and commitment among members, through joint training exercises, guided peer review, monitoring of fieldwork, cross-project exchange and other opportunities for professional engagement (Bernard 1996, 17). The Economic Research Forum for North Africa and the Middle East (ERF) (RP 60050), for example, was established to bring together research economists in a region that has been characterized by severe researcher isolation, linguistic and other divisions, a weak research environment and poor links to policymakers. The Forum seeks to "encourage the development of the economic research community in the region" by creating opportunities for interaction and engagement among regional scholars and for mentoring between senior scholars and junior researchers. In doing so, the Forum intends to increase the quantity and quality of economic research produced in the region and to increase the stock of policy relevant knowledge available to policymakers (RP 60050 PAD, M. Saade, 1994).

These examples suggest that networks are intended to provide a far more comprehensive and coordinated approach to capacity building in order to improve the quality, relevance and comprehensiveness of research supported by the Centre and, in many cases, the strengthening of research systems as a whole.

What is striking among the network projects reviewed is that comparatively little attention appears to be directed toward strengthening research management and resource mobilization capacities of network partners (crucial aspects of network sustainability) etc. It is not clear if this is an oversight in Centre reporting or, rather, that IDRC programs are not yet exploring these areas of capacity building in their programming. Particularly if IDRC intends to move toward greater devolution of network leadership and coordination to regional partners (and this is emphasised in many corporate and program level planning documents), attention to institutional capacity building in these areas may be warranted.

### Promoting peer learning and mutual support

Both within and outside of formal network structures, IDRC looks to capitalize on the social exchange function of networking (Bernard 1996, 14). The Centre actively encourages opportunities for networking to connect isolated developing country researchers, many of whom are both geographically and institutionally dispersed, in order to facilitate the sharing

of knowledge and experience among them. IDRC's intent is to capitalize on what people already know, and the experiences and insights they have gained, by fostering relationships between researchers working on common or complementary development problems. Networking of this type is also intended to serve a catalytic function by promoting idea building in areas of shared interest and creating a foundation for future collaboration where it had not previously existed.

*Networking Projects*. A strategy shared by many PIs is to promote networking between projects sharing similar objectives, or working on issues of common concern. Networking of this kind is intended to connect researchers and research teams often working in isolation and facilitate the sharing of experience, knowledge, insights, methodologies, technologies and other innovations, and research results among them. PAN-Asia's Telecentre Learning and Evaluation Group, for example, provides a forum for both face-to-face and electronic exchange among networked project teams working on common themes:

> *The PAN-Asia Telecentre Learning and Evaluation Group (PANTLEG) aims at bringing telecentre projects into a closer partnership. ... The objectives of PANTLEG are to provide an opportunity for the members of the Group to meet regularly, support methodological explorations and joint comparative evaluations, and to facilitate exchange of research results and researchers between individual projects (PAN Prospectus 200-2004, 8).*

From the network experiences reviewed, mechanisms for promoting peer learning include, *inter alia*, exchange visits, study tours, project learning sites, seminars and conferences often in conjunction with electronic exchange through listserves and web-based media. Creating opportunities for exchange and learning is intended to build individual capacities, to add-value to the efforts of otherwise isolated and dispersed projects, and to extend the reach and potential impact of IDRC-supported research.

Networking is also meant to serve a catalytic idea-building function (Carden 1995, 9). In many developing countries, Fred Carden explains, "there are so few researchers in any one field that they need the interaction with colleagues with similar problems in order to generate the creative energy to come up with effective and relevant solutions" (1995, 9). Further, the review finds that support for networking is meant to enable researchers to put these ideas to work in creative and collective ways. In the CBNRM Case Study and Networking Initiative (Cambodia), for example, networking was intended to harness the efforts of individual CBNRM projects into a forceful national presence for advocating a national CBNRM agenda. A recent external review of the CBNRM PI explains that:

> *Through its capacity building activities, [the project] facilitates the exchange of lessons among many Cambodian projects on Community-based NRM enabling them to raise their voices together in unison to influence a change in national policies and regulations for community forestry, community fisheries, participatory land use planning and participatory management of protected areas (CBNRM External Review 2004, 42).*

In this way, networking is intended to serve both a capacity building and capacity utilization function. It provides important opportunities for researchers to share information, experience and skills, it is a catalyst for idea building among them, and it enables researchers to collectively put these ideas to use. Networking, in this way, can become a vehicle for

enhancing local ownership of research and strengthening research communities in developing regions.

*Mentoring*. Networking is also intended to fulfill a mentoring function in many of the projects reviewed. The Economic Research Forum (RP 60050) discussed earlier, for example, encourages networking among junior and more established, senior scholars, to support more critical peer review in the region:

> *It is expected that ERF will have substantial capacity building effects. ERF's research program will be designed so as to ensure a balance between younger researchers and the more established scholars. The senior scholars will serve as coordinators, referees, and discussants, thus leaving ample room for junior researchers as authors of papers. Junior researchers will be exposed to critical peer review, many for the first time, and will get indirect methodological training through exchange in informal workshop settings* (RP 60050 Proposal, 1994, 3).

Promoting exchange among researchers of different experience and calibre is intended to improve the quality of research produced by junior, or otherwise less experienced, researchers[3]. While the ERF proposal explicates that this is to be achieved through the mechanism of guided peer review, a significant number of appraisals make reference to promoting mentoring with little or no explanation of what this is intended to mean and the kind of engagement it might involve in practical/operational terms.

Similarly, some IDRC-supported projects seek to build individual and institutional capacities by networking weak and strong *institutions* to undertake joint research. This approach seems to be founded on an assumption that pairing strong and weak institutions in collaborative research efforts will strengthen the capacities of the latter. However, as Stephen Yeo (2004) emphasizes, it is not clear whether networking institutions is an effective way of building capacity unless the institution which serves as the hub of the network has specialized expertise in research capacity building, and is focused on coordinating this task:

> *Merely bringing institutions together in a network for joint research projects does not, in practice seem to be the way to build capacity in the weaker members of the network, for two reasons: there is unlikely to be any institution in the network with expertise in capacity building, or even the institution assessment necessary to design capacity building interventions. While there is a clear need for capacity building in the South, networks of institutions may not be the most effective way to build this capacity* (Yeo 2004, 5).

Networks have strong potential as capacity building agents, where the objective is clearly specified, however, it is not a given that networks will support capacity building (Carden 1995, 5). To ensure that IDRC-supported networks are effective, it might be worth exploring the assumptions that motivate networking strong and weak partners as a capacity building strategy and engaging network members to assess their experience with these approaches.

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[3] The TEC-supported project entitled "Competitivite sectorielle des enterprises maghrebines: Analyse et systeme de suivi" (RP 101115) provides another example. The project aims to improve research quality on key trade and competitiveness issues by, among other things, promoting capacity building. The PAD expresses the intent to "engage strong researchers to train weaker ones (some researchers of the project have good experience in applying these methodologies and will play a mentoring role with regard to the less experienced researchers)" (RP 101115 PAD, L. Savard, 2001).

*Networking stakeholders*. Networking is also intended to create opportunities for exchange and learning across institutions and sectors on issues of common concern and shared responsibility[4]. MINGA, for example, promotes multistakeholder approaches throughout its programming and supports networking to enhance social learning among stakeholders working on shared development problems:

> *Building learning alliances with Bolivian NGO's, academics, government departments, and other international cooperation agencies may also prove extremely useful in order to complete the cycle of social learning on water regulations and management in Bolivia* (MINGA External Review 2003, 27).

Networking stakeholders is intended to facilitate communication of their varying needs, interests, perspectives and experience in an effort not only to enhance learning but also to contribute to creating a deeper, shared understanding of a given development problem. It is used to encourage lateral thinking and cross-fertilized practice (Bernard 1996, 44), and to build the kinds of working relationships needed to promote greater inter-institutional and cross-sectoral collaboration.

Networking is thus supported by Centre PIs towards a diversity of ends. It is intended, first and foremost, to facilitate the sharing of information and insights, skills and experience, and in some cases, methodologies, technologies, and research results among isolated and often institutionally and geographically dispersed researchers working on issues of common interest. The process of networking is meant to capitalize on what people already know and the learning that takes place through IDRC-supported research and to harness and use this for building capacity. Networking, in this way, enlarges the pool of ideas and experience from which developing country researchers can draw, with the potential to greatly enhance the quality of their research. It is also clear from the projects reviewed, that networking is intended to serve as a catalyst for building "research communities" through which researchers, practitioners and other key stakeholders can collectively generate new ideas and put these ideas into practice in their research and advocacy efforts. In this way, networking is intended to serve both a capacity building and capacity utilization function.

From the reviewer's perspective, networking developing country researchers and practitioners, and the creation of *de facto* communities of practice, whether alone or in coordination with other capacity building efforts, may also be understood as an attempt on the part of IDRC PIs to ensure that support for capacity building is more informed by regional experience and therefore more relevant to participants. Though North-South partnerships will continue to provide valuable capacity building opportunities, the promotion of peer learning and mutual support within developing regions may well reduce partners' dependence on IDRC for technical and research support (which is significant given the heavy workloads of IDRC program staff and the often limited funds available for research support), by creating a more enabling environment for regional capacity building strategies and research collaboration in national and regional research systems.

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[4] Surprisingly little is mentioned in the documents about networking stakeholders for the purposes of "enhancing learning" per se. Most discussion of "networking stakeholders" refers more to encouraging multistakeholder approaches to research and policy dialogue.

### 3.2.2 Fostering Collaborative Research

*Networking has been at the core of IDRC's mandate and philosophy from the start, operationalizing the idea that development, and the research to support it, are necessarily cooperative undertakings between North and South, South and South, among people and institutions working together to advance and utilize knowledge (Bernard 1996, 11).*

IDRC's support of networks is intended to transform how research is conceptualized, organized and undertaken in developing regions. This includes, especially, fostering greater collaboration and coordination of research efforts among researchers and institutions in national and regional research systems.

In many of the developing countries where IDRC supports research individual researchers and their institutions typically work in isolation due to limited intra and inter-institutional mechanisms for communication and collaboration, and an institutional culture that is often sharply divided along disciplinary lines. IDRC's experience suggests that this has tended to result in the unnecessary duplication of research and development efforts within national and regional research systems (Burone 2002; Freeman and Forget 2002; Rached 2002; also see Goldsmith 1995, Hardie 1998). Given that many research institutions in the South are small, significantly under-funded, poorly resourced (e.g. libraries, equipment and other infrastructure), and often lack a critical mass of research resources in any discipline, failure to collaborate undermines the ability of Southern institutions, and research systems more broadly, to address critical development challenges.

Networks are supported to provide a mechanism for linking, coordinating and facilitating collaborative work (Church et al. 2003). Logistically, the intent is to reduce the often-serious duplication of research by promoting greater coordination of efforts among research institutions and other stakeholders, and the pooling of scarce financial, material and intellectual resources towards common research goals. This is meant to improve both the efficiency and effectiveness of research systems and the potential for development impact in IDRC-supported work.

IDRC's support for collaborative research through networks is also derived from evolving ideas about what research means and how it might be conducted more effectively. IDRC has learned, through 30+ years of experience, that development problems are extraordinarily complex, rich with social, economic, political and ecological dimensions that exceed the mandate and capacity of individual institutions. With this understanding, significant efforts have been made to shift the balance of IDRC-supported activities from individual, discipline-rooted and relatively small research activities to those of a larger, more integrated and interdisciplinary nature (IDRC 1995; Rathgeber 2001).

Likewise, the Centre recognizes that development challenges are often shared by different countries within a region, and to a lesser (though not insignificant) extent, between regions, and between North and South. Not only do countries encounter similar challenges in the areas of, for example, natural resource management, health, employment, post-conflict reconstruction and ICT development, but many development problems are uniquely regional in nature and so cannot adequately be addressed by institutions "going it alone". Networks are intended to foster collaboration across disciplinary, institutional and sectoral boundaries not only to reduce duplication of work and the consequent wasting of scarce resources, but

also to encourage a deeper, shared understanding of developing problems and to support more collective and sustained efforts to solve them.

## Promoting regional perspectives and approaches

In many cases, network-supported collaborative research is grounded in the development and implementation of a shared research agenda often based on common terms of reference, common or complementary research objectives, and shared methodological approaches meant to enable comparative analysis of issues under investigation. Among the network projects reviewed, those with a collaborative research focus appear to target their work at coordinating national research efforts towards a common regional research agenda.

Among IDRC-supported networks, one of the primary intended outcomes of collaborative research is to introduce or strengthen a *regional perspective* on issues of interest. Though implicit in the documents reviewed, this regional emphasis appears to draw attention to a perceived gap in dominant development approaches that focus, first and foremost, at the country level (supporting research within national borders). Since many development challenges are shared among developing countries, networks are intended to provide opportunities for regional, and in some cases inter-regional[5], comparative analysis. The former ASPR PI, for example, supported the Regional Network of Education and Work to compare and contrast the experiences of different countries in Latin America related to education and training policies for youth in the region:

> *This has been identified by policymakers and researchers as one of the most critical issues which currently face most countries in the [LAC] region… This project will examine experiences in three countries from a set of six selected to reflect a variety of policies and programs. … It is expected that the three cases will cover an illustrative range of experiences.*
>
> *The regional project has been defined as a cooperative research project among the participant countries. Even though the national research activities would differ in terms of the specific subject population, program under study, agent institutions, and fields of application, it is expected that this diversity will enrich the analysis of the research problematique in the broader Latin American context.*
>
> *The project will involve a comparative regional analysis presenting an integrated view of the national case studies, including a summary of lessons learned and recommendations on the desirable characteristics of the institutions that need to be involved, the pedagogical approaches utilized, and the desirable links with the private and governmental sectors.*
>
> *The regional coordination of the Education and Work Network will define the general research framework for the project … Based on this framework the Coordination will prepare common terms of reference for the research to ensure that the case studies are based on common objectives, follow a common methodology and the results are comparable. … Part of the role of the coordination, working with the*

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[5] The Comparative Watershed Study (RP 100700), for example, seeks to compare research results and formulate lessons learned through innovative communication and cooperation linkages between IDRC projects conducting watershed studies in mountainous environments in Latin America (Andes) and Asia (Himalayas) (RP 100700 PAD, R. Vernooy, 2000).

*national teams will be to arrive at regional conclusions with different application on specific contexts.*

*This approach to carry out comparative analysis across several countries has proven to be effective in previous work of the Education and Work Network. … The results of this research indicates that the comparative analysis allows to cover a far wider set of issues than those shown by individual country experiences* (RP 03463 Proposal, 1997, 7-17).

Support for regional research networks is intended to strengthen the quality of Centre-supported research by exposing partners to a far greater diversity of experience and expertise than national level studies tend to allow. This is furthered among networks using interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral approaches to research and analysis. Through the Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research's Systemwide Initiative on HIV/AIDS and Agriculture, for example, IDRC supports a regional network project in Eastern and Southern Africa to build collaborative research partnerships between research and development institutions working in agricultural and public health sectors in order to conduct research aimed at building understanding the reciprocal relationship between HIV/AIDS and agricultural systems (RP 100776 PAD, C. Zarowsky, 2001). Bringing together researchers and practitioners working in different disciplines and sectors to undertake comparative regional analysis is intended to create opportunities for learning across these boundaries enabling a more integrated and comprehensive view of development problems to emerge and to facilitate a more collective search for solutions that can be adapted to suit specific national contexts.

IDRC also supports regional research networks to address development problems that are uniquely (eco)regional in nature and cannot be adequately addressed through country-level initiatives. Development challenges requiring a regional perspective and regional solutions can be found in the areas of NRM, trade, and Peacebuilding and Reconstruction (PBR) to name only a few. In the field of security, for example, researchers and policymakers are increasingly aware that conflict is often regional in character and in effect and thus requires a regional approach to ensure resolution and reconstruction. The proposal for a PBR-supported network project studying security issues in the Horn of Africa offers some elaboration. The regional focus of the project emphasizes that:

*The traditional understanding of security which has, to a large extent, been viewed as the security of sovereign states and their borders, needs to be expanded to deal with the increasingly complex and inter-connectedness of threats to peace and security that countries in the region are facing … The project will generate increased attention to regional conflicts frameworks and dynamics, and to the regional relationships, resources and complementarities available to address conflicts at local, national and regional levels. An increased understanding of regional institutions relevant to conflicts within the region will also emerge, along with increased public discussion of the development of regional institutions and regional measures needed to address conflicts in constructive and sustainable ways. The result will be greater levels of cooperation and regional confidence building in pursuit of shared conflict management responsibilities* (RP100913 Proposal, 2002, 5-15).

Likewise, in the area of trade research and policy, phenomena such as economic globalization, the development of common standards in trade and economic relations, and regional integration efforts such as Mercosur, are forcing countries to address common problems and find common solutions. The *regionality* of such development challenges complicates the mandate of any single organization, creates risks of inefficiency (given the duplicity of efforts that often takes place) and demands important resources and time. As such it is not only logical, but in many ways imperative, that research into such issues be handled by several institutions, acting in an orchestrated manner, capitalizing on each other's expertise and resources, with a promoting and facilitating entity responsible for the coordination of research efforts.

IDRC supports networks to promote and coordinate collaborative research aimed at developing regional perspectives and programs of work to address issues that are distinctly regional in dimension.  A number of the network projects reviewed were of this character. Shared among them was the intent to bring together leading research institutions in order to produce high quality, regionally-based research and analysis to inform on-going policy processes in regional fora. For example, IDRC's Trade, Economic and Competitiveness (TEC) program supported the establishment of the Mercosur Economic Research Network, a consortium of nine top research centres of the four core member countries of the regional bloc, intended to provide a mechanism for institutional collaboration to support the production of regionally oriented policy research to inform the regional integration process in Latin America:

> *The project seeks to establish a network of leading economic research institutions from the MERCOSUR countries, and to produce urgently needed knowledge supportive of new vision on the regional integration process. These visions should promote a regional approach to research and policymaking and contribute to improving these countries' performance in international markets. The production of rigorous studies, backed by authoritative and competent local institutions, will both enhance the legitimacy of independent research in regional policy debates, and create greater local and international support that can make research production sustainable in the medium term…*

> *The MERCOSUR Network will produce timely and relevant regional studies that will contribute to the advancement of international negotiations and the adoption of an effective regional mechanism for rapid response to the knowledge needs created by regional integration...*

> *This project's three research topics … will all benefit from rigorous knowledge that is produced with political independence and regionally shared methods and information bases. This type of research may illuminate policy options that could otherwise remain unseen* (RP 50292 PAD, A. Ruis, 1998).

Networks of this type are focused on the promotion of collaborative research initiatives that, again, build on the diverse experience and expertise across disciplines, institutions and sectors yet are not driven by narrowly defined national interests enabling the production of high quality comprehensive research results intended to inform national and regional policymaking.

While networks are seen as an increasingly important and necessary project modality to ensure that donor resources are put to efficient use, to promote more integrated approaches to

development problems, and to address pervasive weaknesses in Southern research systems, what is less clear is whether there may be trade-offs associated with supporting networks of this type. With few exceptions, this question is given little consideration in the IDRC literature reviewed. However, an external evaluation of the Sustainable Uses of Biodiversity (SUB) PI provides provocative discussion of one potential drawback associated with support for networks intended to promote collaborative research:

> *SUB has used global, regional and sub-regional networking to great effect in its program strategy. ... The question is perhaps not so much about the benefits (although some better specification of their value-added would be useful) but what are their costs? These costs particularly accrue to the coordination and "animation" of the network, but also may relate to perceived or real constraints in freedom of action, or over-conformity in conceptual and methodological approaches at the cost of innovation. This is not to imply that the SUB networks have any problems of this nature, but simply to indicate that there are probably some downsides to networks that any future strategy needs to take account of. Networks do sometimes go wrong and work against some of the very purposes for which they were started and it is important to consider what the indicators of impending difficulties might be as well as the more common measures for success and failure (SUB External Review 2004, 5).*

Moreover, as the reviewers go to explain:

> *The experience of the CBDC [Community Biodiversity Development and Conservation program] has shown that while the existence of the network has helped facilitate the sharing of experiences and the harmonization of some conceptual and methodological tools, some of the members feel that the diverse situations where they are located made it difficult to conform to these. Even their capacity to use their experiences to influence policies at the global level are very limited because their main work is really at the local level and the arrangements they created to influence global processes have not worked very well (SUB External Review 2004, 28).*

These comments are striking and may warrant reflection within the Centre. While the potential benefits of promoting greater coordination of research efforts at all levels are many, could the push to towards greater conformity in conceptual and methodological approaches (to ensure the comparativeness of results), and an emphasis on regional perspectives, stunt creativity and innovativeness? Could it hamper the ability of researchers to address the specificity and nuance of the diverse contexts in which they work? And, could it consequently undermine the relevance of research at the local or national level and the usefulness of research results?

In summary, what can be said with some confidence is that based on the documents reviewed, networks are intended to more effectively link researchers and institutions working on common or compatible issues and encourage and facilitate collaborative research among them. Given that researchers in developing countries often work in isolation from one another at both intra and inter-institutional levels, and given the limited research resources available to many institutions, support for networks and collaborative research among member institutions, has the potential for far reaching impact. Support for collaborative research is intended to improve the quality and comprehensiveness of research and knowledge and to strengthen research systems as a whole by consolidating previously disparate research efforts and pooling limited human and financial resources toward a

collective search for solutions. Further, more effectively linking coordinated research initiatives to policymaking has the potential to ensure that research is more demand-driven and relevant to policymakers. Having said this, according to the reviewer it may be worth considering and exploring with partners the possible costs of greater coordination and conformity in research efforts at various levels, and whether networks involve other drawbacks that might undermine IDRC-supported research in the regions.

## Scaling-up

IDRC also supports regional research networks as a vehicle for scaling-up research undertaken within national research systems to other countries within a region. Though similar in organization to the collaborative research approaches discussed above, the intent is somewhat distinct. Scaling-up through networks is intended to capitalize on already successful research approaches and results developed in one place and to test and apply these more broadly in countries addressing the same issues, and working in a similar context. Phase two of the PBR-supported Judicial Observatory (RP 102608), for example, seeks to scale-up the observatory methodology developed in Guatemala (Phase one) to other countries in Central America as a means to strengthen advocacy efforts for the transformation of criminal justice throughout the region. In phase two, in addition to widening the scope of its work in Guatemala, the project seeks:

> *To nurture the initiation of a judicial observatory network by building upon and strengthening the partnerships its established with other research institutions in Central America, particularly in El Salvador and Nicaragua…*

> *To strengthen advocacy efforts for the transformation of criminal justice in Central America through permanent monitoring and oversight of the administration of justice in the three countries … [part of the work of the project will be to] develop guidelines for consolidating the observatory methodology between the three participating countries. This will expand possibilities to widen the network to include other organizations in other Central American countries, with a view to better integrating the Central American Observatory into efforts taking place in other parts of Latin America, under the auspices of CEJA [Chilean-based Justice Studies Centre of the Americas]* (RP 102608 PAD, C. Duggan, 2004).

Taking methodologies, results and lesson-learned derived from specific cases and applying them elsewhere by networking institutions working on common issues is intended to both to capitalize on already successful research efforts supported by the Centre and to extend the reach, and potentially the utilization and impact, of this work.

## 3.2.3 Stakeholder collaboration

> *IDRC was revolutionary in that it turned development back to people in developing countries, albeit very particular people: the small band of trained scientists dedicated to finding solutions to problems which plagued poor countries as they emerged from colonialism" (IDRC President, Maureen O'Neil 1997, 1).*

Since the Centre's beginnings in the early1970s it has held that "development cannot and should not be imposed upon a society from outside", and this defined its mandate to support efforts to ensure people have the power, in terms of adequate knowledge and capacity, to

decide what is best for them and to act accordingly in fulfilling their own destinies (IDRC 1991a, 8). But as Maureen O'Neil's comments above suggest, in the early days of the Centre attention was directed, first and foremost, at supporting "very particular people", namely the scientific community in developing countries. IDRC's strategy, however, has shifted considerably over time as ideas about what research means and how to conduct it more effectively have changed (Found 1995; Hardie 1998). "Research" is no longer solely the guarded domain of "a small band of trained scientists" but is being increasingly expanded to include different stakeholders such as local communities, indigenous groups, NGOs and other civil society actors, and policymakers.

The movement toward greater multistakeholder participation in development research "reflects the fact we no longer feel that there is only one single source of knowledge for dealing with a given problem, but rather that there may be as many sources of knowledge as there are people involved" (Engel 1993 cited in Kassam 1995, 4). The unmasking of the dominant development discourse, argues Gross Stein and Stren has opened up the possibility for "a new relationship between research, policymakers and civil society, that is more interactive, more open-ended, more horizontal" (1999, 177). They explain, "we are in a new world where collaboration replaces domination, and where diversity and convergence are far more attractive alternatives to homogeneity" (Gross Stein and Stren 1999, 179).

As a project modality, networks are particularly well suited to promoting multistakeholder approaches to research; "Networks horizontalize and democratize the processes of concept construction, operationalization, and research, they erode traditional hierarchies of knowledge and expertise" (Gross Stein and Stren 1999, 179). As Church and colleagues argue:

> *Networks have the power to change existing power relations by enabling a greater diversity of voices to be heard, especially the historically marginalized, poor and powerless. … Dialogue occupies a central position as inquiry … by making it possible for participants to create a social space in which they can share experiences and information, create common meanings and forge concrete actions together (Park 2001 in Church et al. 2003, 7).*

Networks focus on "relationship-building" among diverse actors from research, civil society, business, and government sectors (Creech and Willard, 2001, 36), and their distinctive power comes from "true diversity working as a whole, differences leading to coherence, the messy power of complexity" (Church et al. 2003, 15). Findings from a recent external review of the MINGA PI supports this theorizing about networks:

> *Partnerships and networking have proven to be extremely useful approaches that imply a willingness to incorporate other social actors and institutions and uncover the relationships between stakeholders in order to reach common goals (MINGA External Review 2003, 17).*

IDRC supports networks as a mechanism to facilitate greater engagement and collaboration between research, civil society, policymaking, and sometimes the private sector. Networks are intended not only to "democratize" Centre-supported research by rendering it more open, inclusive and participatory, but to improve research quality, relevance, and ultimately, utilization.

IDRC-supported networks focus particular attention on expanding the role of civil society (farmer's associations, indigenous organizations, NGOs etc.) in research. Some Centre-supported networks, for example, focus on integrating stakeholders into the process of research to ensure that research priorities and outputs, such as new technologies, reflect the needs and interests of different users and are subsequently adopted and utilized. One of the predominant emphases of the Cassava Biotechnology Network (CBN), for example, has been to ensure that end users have a real voice in decision-making in the development and implementation of biotechnologies:

> *CBN's strategy has been to link the different stakeholders so that biotechnology R&D efforts – ranging from needs assessment through strategic and applied research to technology transfer, impact assessment and feedback to researchers – can be targeted and transferred effectively to intermediate users such as cassava researchers in national agricultural research and development institutions (NARDIs) and staff in non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and through them, to end-users, the small cassava farmers and processors* (RP 100386 Proposal, 2000, 4).

The primary objective of the program is to determine the potential for upstream participatory research and methods development for biotechnology applications. The network makes a case for active user participation (in this case, farmers' organizations and NARDIs) not only in the downstream stage of technology development, but also in the upstream stage, to help researchers and decision-makers to set priorities, define criteria for success and determine when an innovation is ready for on-farm testing by farmers. CBN's proposal emphasizes that the development of methods to promote dialogue between scientists and end-users is intended to contribute to a better understanding of the needs and interests of farm communities, and to integrate local knowledge and experience into formal research processes, as a means to improve the quality and relevance of CBN-supported research and, in turn, the utilization of research outputs (RP 100386 Proposal 2000, 4-13).

Based on the documents reviewed, IDRC also supports civil society networks to undertake research[6]. PBR, for example, supports a consortium of indigenous civil society organizations (including campesino organizations, development NGOs and local land committees) in Guatemala to undertake research on the causes and potential legislative and administrative solutions for land-based conflict in the country (RP 101068). The project involves, among other things, implementing field research to gather knowledge and perspectives from representatives of indigenous and campesino organizations and to use findings to draft a legislative proposal to regularize land tenure and use in Guatemala (RP 101068 PAD, C. Duggan, 2001). Supporting civil society networks is intended to promote more locally-informed, stakeholder-driven research processes and to better ensure that research results, and the policies they inform, address the needs and interests of the poor and historically marginalized.

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[6]Another example of IDRC-support for civil society-driven research and advocacy is the Environmental Policy Initiative (RP 003746). The project aims to strengthen the capacity of the two key policy NGOs in the South Africa to work together in a coordinated manner on environmental policy issues. The aim of this joint initiative is to provide communities with the information they need to participate more effectively in policy processes and to help bridge the gap between communities and policymakers.

Promoting linkages between research and policy stakeholders is also central to IDRC-support of networks. Many of the projects reviewed seek to improve the relevance and responsiveness of Centre-supported research to policymaking by, among other things, more effectively integrating members of the policy community into research processes. However, because this theme is closely tied to the issue of "utilization", it is addressed in the next section of the paper.

In summary, the review finds that IDRC supports networks in order to improve the quality of the research it supports. Networks are used to create spaces for learning among researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders working on common or complementary issues and to support more comprehensive capacity building initiatives within developing regions. IDRC also supports networks to strengthen collaboration and coordination of research efforts across disciplines, institutions, and sectors, nationally and regionally, in order to strengthen the comprehensiveness and coherence of IDRC-supported research. And finally, it supports networks as a mechanism to facilitate the inclusion of key stakeholders in Centre-supported research efforts as a means to improve the relevance and usefulness of research to end users. Taken together, support for networks is intended to contribute to the generation of knowledge that is more rigorous, comprehensive, relevant, and useful to intended users and which, in turn, is intended to improve the utilization of research results, particularly in policymaking.

## 3.3 Research for Policymaking: Advancing the Utilization of Research

For research to have an impact, it must be used, whether by other researchers, as part of the process of knowledge-advancement, or by other research users, including civil society, and members of policymaking circles in or out of government. Since the early 1990s, IDRC has committed increasing attention, and resources, toward ensuring that IDRC-supported research results are better, and more broadly, utilized (IDRC 1995), with a particular emphasis on "research for policymaking" (IDRC 2000c, 34). Findings emerging from the review of project documentation suggests that research outputs from IDRC-supported projects may be under-utilized for two reasons: 1) research outputs do not reach intended users as a result of ineffective communication and dissemination strategies; and/or 2) research outputs lack the quality and relevance needed to ensure their application and use.

In Centre literature, the concept of "utilization" refers especially to the application of research results in policymaking, though it is also used more broadly to refer to, for example, the use of research results to inform research efforts in other contexts or at other levels (scaling-up), and/or the adoption of technologies (e.g. cassava biotechnology, NRM approaches, poverty monitoring tools etc.) by different intended users. Based on the kinds of information provided in the documentation reviewed, this section focuses primarily on networking intended to enhance the utilization of research in policymaking.

Though strategies for promoting greater utilization of research outputs are found throughout the Centre's programming, networks are seen to provide unique opportunities for improving the influence of research on policy in different ways. The Centre's recent strategic evaluation of policy influence developed a typology that effectively captures the different kinds of influences that IDRC-supported research has on policy and is a useful devise for exploring IDRC's intentions vis-à-vis its support of networks. The typology, developed by Evert Lindquist, and cited from Carden and Neilson (2003, 6-7), includes:

*Expanding policy capacities* focuses particularly on improving researcher capacities to carry out and create use for policy relevant research. This includes, *inter alia*, supporting new research, the development of new fields of research, enhancing researcher capacities to work on problems or issues as distinct from carrying out disciplinary research, as well as enhancing their capacities to communicate knowledge and ideas to diverse audiences.

*Broadening policy horizons* again focuses on the perspective of the researcher. Generally, it has to do with increasing both the availability of knowledge, as well as the comprehensiveness of this knowledge. For example, the accessibility and completeness of knowledge increases through multi-country networks of researchers or through networks bringing together researchers and others in the policy community: increasing the stock of policy relevant knowledge; introducing new ways of thinking into the policy arena; making sure knowledge is available to policymakers in forms that make it possible for them to use it. Essentially, broadening policy horizons is about the means and relationships that translate research into knowledge which policy makers can use to change policy.

*Affecting policy regimes* about actual use of research in the development of new laws, regulations or structures. It is typically considered "real" influence and is often considered a key indicator of influence.

The review finds that IDRC supports networks intended to improve the utilization of research in policymaking both by enhancing policy capacities and broadening policy horizons[7]. It also finds that networks seek to enhance utilization by supporting systematic and comprehensive documentation and dissemination efforts and advocacy work intended to expand the reach and impact of Centre-supported research. Though not immediately connected to the issue of research utilization, this section also explores briefly an additional function networks serve vis-à-vis policy influence. Specifically, the review finds evidence that IDRC supports networks intended to improve policy development processes and outcomes through the promotion of dialogue between policymakers and key stakeholders, with a particular emphasis on expanding the role of civil society in policy fora.


## 3.3.1 Expanding Policy Capacities

As discussed earlier, IDRC's support of networks is intended to improve researcher capacities to undertake, and produce, high quality research that has the potential to inform and influence policy. Given that many research communities in the South are small, fragmented and significantly under-funded, networks are useful and viable mechanisms that enable researchers to carry out their research as well as provide them funding opportunities, information sharing and mutual learning, technical support, and training (Guilmette 2004, 50). Networks enable more comprehensive approaches to capacity strengthening which serve not only to build the skills of individual researchers, but whole professions within a region. As stated earlier, one of the goals of the Economic Research Forum (RP 60050) was to encourage the development of the "economic research community" in the North Africa and Middle East region. The intent of these networks is to create a strong, supportive and enabling research environment by pooling the financial, material and intellectual resources of

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[7] Though many of the networks reviewed seek to have a direct impact on policy ("affecting policy regimes" in Lindquit's typology), the emphasis in this review is placed on "how" IDRC seeks to influence policy through its support of networks.

otherwise isolated institutions towards a common research agenda. The implications for policy influence are expressed well in the proposal for the Agricultural Policy Research Network for West and Central Africa (RP 65305):

> *Considering the relative scarcity of experienced policy researchers in the West and Central Africa region, the network will provide an opportunity to draw on their expertise across national boundaries and give rise to research output of a quality that would be difficult to achieve on a national level* (RP 65305 Proposal, 1998, 5).

Networks are intended to build a critical mass of researchers and expertise that is often not available within individual countries, to encourage mutual learning among them, and to foster more coordinated, collaborative research efforts through which to produce research of a quantity and quality far greater than would otherwise be possible. The project documentation reviewed suggests that coordination of research agendas and efforts has the potential to ensure better coverage of the full range of researchable policy issues, to improve inter-institutional debate, exchange and cooperation and greater professional consensus on leading policy issues (see, for example, project proposals and PADs for RP 50292, RP 60050, RP 65305) .

Also mentioned earlier, networks also serve to enhance the quality of research by enabling greater interdisciplinarity and cross-sectoral collaboration. The Regional Research Program on Social Policy Assessment (RP 50140), for example, employs a network approach in order to address the segmentation found in the social policy field in Latin America. It seeks to bring together a series of leading research institutions working in the areas of employment, health, education, social security and retirement systems, shelter and anti-poverty programs in order to develop their capacity to formulate a common research agenda based on a deeper, shared understanding of social policy challenges in the region (RP 50140 PAD, M. Torres, 1996). This not only has the potential to expand policy capacities by enhancing partners capacities to work on problems in a more integrated way, it also serves to broaden policy horizons by enhancing the comprehensiveness of knowledge, and providing a more holistic understanding of social policy issues and their interconnections.

Though not discussed in the project documentation reviewed, expanding policy capacities may also improve the utilization of results by enhancing the visibility, credibility and reputation of the network and the research it produces. As policymakers recognize the quality of the research (and associate it with the identity of the network) they are likely to become more accepting of research results and inclined to use the information in developing new policies (Guilmette 2004, 51).

The review finds that comparatively less attention is given to enhancing the capacity of policymakers as a means to influence policy. Though the reason for this is not explicated, it may reflect a sense that research networks are better placed to address capacity building issues in the research sector than in the policy sector.

### 3.3.2 Broadening Policy Horizons

Networks like MERCOSUR (RP 50292) and the Economic Research Forum (RP 60050) discussed earlier are intended to consolidate the dispersed efforts of researchers and institutions in order to increase the quantity, quality and comprehensiveness of their research and, in so doing, to increase the stock of policy relevant knowledge available to inform policy. They also seek, however, to address concerns about the relevance and responsiveness

of research by more effectively integrating members of the policy community in the research process. As one TEC-supported project appraisal suggests, the under-utilization of research results in policymaking often relates to questions of relevance, timeliness and responsiveness of the research to the pressing needs of policymakers:

> *This project ... aims to correct the deficiencies of many past projects in the area of competitiveness in the region. Many previous studies have not been used by policy makers because they did not respond to pressing questions, or their results were produced much too late to be used in decision-making. There have been many sectoral surveys done by other projects and ministries but they lacked the internal/national expertise to do the work well and reposts prepared by foreign consultants were not found to be very useful* (RP 101115 PAD, L. Savard, 2001).

According to IDRC's corporate strategy *Empowerment Through Knowledge*, efforts to ensure that research results are better utilized must include intended beneficiaries of research taking a more active part in the research process, determining what research is required, and, if appropriate, deciding on the research process itself (IDRC 1991b, 22). Many of the IDRC-supported networks reviewed aim to facilitate greater dialogue among researchers and policymakers from the outset of their projects in order to increase the "exposure" of researchers to policymakers and to policymaking needs and processes. In the case of the project mentioned above, for example, housing the project in a hybrid institution which includes members from both government and the private sector, and which is headed by a board of governors represented by several ministries involved in trade issues, was a deliberate strategy aimed at ensuring that policymakers are more involved in the research process and, in turn, that the research supported by the network is relevant and responsive to their needs. The project appraisal supported this strategy suggesting, "the institution housing the project is in a good position to play a bridging role between research and the policymaking community" and ensure that the project produces up-to-date research that can be communicated directly to trade negotiators (RP 101115 PAD, L. Savard, 2001)).

Similar strategies are employed by other network projects reviewed for this study. To more effectively link research and policymaking, the Agricultural Policy Research Network for West and Central Africa, for example, proposes to:

> *...create a research forum through which key agricultural policy issues will be the focus of research whose output will be utilized by policymakers. It will also provide an opportunity to enhance the policy debate on related topics. The proposed governance structure was designed to reflect the variety of stakeholders who stand to gain from implementation of appropriate agricultural policies. ... In addition to the regular research program of the network, expert groups will also be set up on an ad hoc basis to address key issues identified by the Conference of Ministers that need to be researched in response to urgent policy changes* (RP 65305 PAD, D. Seck, 1998).

Interestingly, in both networks *governance and coordination* structures were intended to include significant representation by relevant policy communities to support the production

of high quality research that is relevant and responsive to the often-pressing information needs of policymakers[8].

Networks also broaden policy horizons by introducing new concepts, approaches or "ways of thinking" into research and policy fora. The goals of Regional Equity in Health Research Network (EQUINET, RP 04378) in Southern Africa, for example, are to support research intended to refine concepts and issues around "equity in health" in the region, to promote dialogue on the critical dimensions of equity in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, and to promote policies that address equity within and across the region (RP 04378 PAD, D. Deby, 1998). The concept of equity in health constitutes a significant paradigm shift in health research and policy and as such, EQUINET has the potential to both expand the policy capacities of researchers and broaden policy horizons in the health field. In a recent external evaluation of EQUINET, Blair Rutherford explains:

> *... it is important to note that networking helps to expand policy capacities as EQUINET participants improve their knowledge of ideas and actors and broadens policy horizons as researchers, policy-makers, and policy entrepreneurs are provided with new opportunities and concepts to frame debate and learn about equity in health (Rutherford 2004, 12).*

IDRC-supported networks also seek to broaden policy horizons by bringing the perspectives of interested stakeholders to bear on policymaking. The Centre uses networks, for example, to support NGOs, indigenous organizations, even farming communities, to more effectively communicate their ideas, views and interests to research and policy communities and, in so doing, to introduce new ideas and ways of thinking into these arenas. As will be discussed in more detail in a later section, creating spaces for civil society in policy fora is also intended, in many cases, to improve policy development processes as a whole in developing regions.

### 3.3.3 Dissemination

Networks also serve to enhance the utilization of research results by providing mechanisms for more systematic and comprehensive documentation and dissemination efforts. Networks often have considerable resources available to support the production of materials of high quality and quantity and which can be tailored to the specific needs, interests and capacities of different end users (e.g. mass media, NGOs, policymakers). They also tend to have far greater "reach" than individual institutions or projects enabling them to disseminate ideas and outputs to a much wider audience.

In many cases, networks seek to disseminate materials to research communities (both intra and inter-regionally) working on similar or complementary issues in order to contribute to the process of knowledge advancement in a specific field. As the SUB-supported TRAMIL Network explains:

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[8] The examples provided here should not suggest, however, that networking researchers and policymakers is a strategy confined to particular IDRC program areas. Several networks, supported by different PIs, expressed the intent to promote dialogue between research and policy communities in order to ensure that research results are relevant, responsive, and in the end, are utilized to inform and influence policymaking in some way. The PLAW-supported Water Demand Management Research Network is but one example (see PLAW External Review 1999, 17-18).

*Dissemination activities are an integral part of the network's activities (TRAMIL-DIFUSION). A Traveling Kit for dissemination workshops has been produced, as have five videos on different aspects of the program, and a variety of pamphlets and monographs giving detailed information on the status, safe use, and preparation of specific plants have also been produced. TRAMIL has also been involved in helping establish "home gardens" for medicinal plants as well as demonstration gardens such as the Agro-ecological Garden in Limon, Costa Rica* (SUB External Review 1999,11).

Electronic and web-based media further extend the reach of network dissemination efforts as this excerpt from CFP's recent external review highlights:

*The Resource Center on Urban Agriculture and Forestry (RUAF) was conceived in 1996, and setup in 1999 in response to the expressed need of organizations and local governments in the South for effective mechanisms for the documentation, exchange and discussion of research data and local experiences on urban agriculture ... RUAF runs electronic conferences in English, French and Spanish on behalf of the Support Group on Urban Agriculture. These have included discussions on research methods, policy agendas and urban wastewater. Through RUAF, CFP has outsourced much of its information dissemination activities, including electronic conferencing. This seems to us to be a good strategy for a small PI with very limited human resources that is working in an emerging field where access to resources and networks are crucial to capacity building* (CFP External Evaluation 2003, 26-30).

Dissemination through networks is often intended to expand the marketplace of ideas where research findings become, for example, a vehicle for further innovation elsewhere or a catalyst for policy dialogue at home. Through workshops, seminars, and the production of policy briefs networks can package and target research outputs to inform and influence policymaking. Especially where the credibility and identity of networks are well established, networks may have far greater convening power than individual institutions further enhancing the reach and policy influence potential of its research results through conferences, workshops and other face-to-face opportunities.

### 3.3.4 Policy advocacy

Within IDRC-supported projects, networks also serve an advocacy function (Carden 1995; Carden and Neilson 2003). As discussed above, networks supported by the Centre, for the most part, look to influence policy by, for example, expanding the capacities of researchers to produce high quality policy research, by improving the comprehensiveness of policy relevant knowledge, and by improving linkages between researchers and policymakers to ensure that research is relevant and responsive to the pressing needs of the latter. Though less "direct" forms of policy influence, it is in these areas that most research networks appear to have a strategic contribution to make.

A number of the projects reviewed, however, do have an advocacy component. Among them, advocacy includes, for example, efforts to promote changes in traditional concepts, paradigms, attitudes, and behaviours of policy communities in developing regions. Like the CBNRM-supported network in China discussed earlier, the SUB-supported, NGO-based South Asia Network on Food, Ecology and Culture (SANFEC) seeks to engage government

officials and people's representatives (politicians) in all five countries of the region on issues related to regional stability, food security and biodiversity-based agriculture:

> *The purpose will be to influence the discourse on food and agriculture and specific policy debates linked to food security, bringing to bear both farmer perspectives and regional analysis by the network* (RP 101681, Proposal, 2002, 23).

In most cases, it appears that such advocacy efforts are directed at "promoting policy dialogue" of different kinds (though, interestingly, most of the projects expressing this intent do not explain what this is meant to involve and the intended results it is expected to yield). The SANFEC network takes an interesting approach to advocacy; contrary to "confrontational approaches to political advocacy", the network promotes policy dialogue that builds on farmer-based cultural events and presentations, "to make a more direct appeal to the popular imagination and to contribute to the formation of an alternative social discourse" (RP 101681, Proposal, 2002, 23).

IDRC also supports networks advocating changes in the priorities and spending of Northern and global research institutions to include the problems of developing regions. The Global Forum for Health Research  (RP 101042 and 102037), for example, is intended to correct the 10/90 gap in global health research, which is one of the main causes of the staggering health inequities in the world: less than 10% of global health research spending is dedicated to the problems and conditions affecting 90% of the world's population (RP 101042 PAD, C. Zarowsky, 2001).  The Global Forum seeks to:

> *...bring key actors together and creating a movement for analysis and debate on health research priorities, the allocation of resources, public-private partnerships and access of all people to the outcomes of health research"* (RP 102037 PAD, C. Zarowsky, 2003).

Among other things, it looks to influence the priorities of Northern donors, research institutions, and global institutions such as the WHO and World Bank in order to contribute to and coordinate efforts intended to increase the allocation of global health research funding to the health priorities of developing countries. It also seeks to support the early development of public health research networks of Southern institutions collaborating on regional and global scales. In this case, the network targets its advocacy efforts at a broad range of stakeholders working in different geographic regions and at different levels because "Each of these approaches is essential for a concerted effort at correcting the 10/90 gap. Work at any single level is insufficient" (RP 102037 PAD, C. Zarowsky, 2003).

Though advocacy is important to ensuring the utilization of research in policymaking, the experience of EQUINET in Southern Africa, suggests that, in some cases, research networks may not be best placed, or even inclined, to engage in *direct* policy advocacy. Rather than assume responsibility for advocacy efforts itself, EQUINET engages with established advocacy groups to ensure that research results might more directly inform and influence health policy in SADC countries. In establishing a relationship with civil society organizations active in the area of health, EQUINET's intentions were two fold. The network sought to capitalize on their strengths and experiences in policy advocacy and to support (and add value to) their on-going efforts by sharing with them the results of EQUINET research and building their capacity to advocate health policy issues from an equity perspective. At the same time, Rutherford (2004, 34) explains, devolving responsibility for policy advocacy to civil society organizations also appears to be an explicit political strategy

on the part of EQUINET to avoid the danger of being seen to adopt "party lines" which might in turn threaten the identity and credibility of EQUINET as a "research network". As he goes on to suggest,

> *The aim here is for EQUINET to do the research in the background, or 'under the water,' while the civics in the partnership use the research in their campaigns. ... By networking with and sharing its research evidence with civics, EQUINET can also feed into explicit policy advocacy for greater equity in health without it necessarily being viewed as the enunciator of this position* (Rutherford 2004, 34).

The experience of EQUINET suggests that networks provide unique opportunities to include a range of stakeholders in network activities, in which each takes on those roles for which they are most capable and best positioned. It emphasizes the usefulness of including civil society stakeholders in research networks as a means to both enhance the research process itself (drawing in new stakeholder perspectives, experiences, ideas), while capitalizing on the strengths of civil society groups who are often better positioned and therefore better able to take research results and use them to influence policymaking. Moreover, in policy environments that are deeply fractured and/or where policy issues are highly contentious, EQUINET's experience suggests that devolving responsibility for policy advocacy to civil society stakeholders might be a useful strategy to maintain the identity, credibility, and effectiveness of the network.

The network experiences reviewed might suggest that network-based advocacy works best when it is an explicit goal of the network and where responsibility for advocacy has been specifically delineated to particular stakeholders who are both well positioned and capable of assuming an advocacy role.

### 3.3.5 Improving Policy Processes

Given IDRC's commitment to supporting research that is inclusive and participatory in its approach and that prioritizes equity and sustainability as research and policy objectives, it is not surprising that many IDRC-supported networks seek to promote dialogue between policymakers and often-marginalized stakeholders from civil society. The intentions of these networking initiatives are both process and outcome oriented.

Networks are increasingly used to address the systematic exclusion of the marginalized and less powerful from the decision-making processes that affect them; creating spaces for civil society in policy fora is intended, at least in part, to strengthen democratic processes in developing regions (see Michaud 1995). At the same time, strengthening the voice(s) of civil society in policymaking is intended to bridge the gap between the production and utilization of knowledge and ensure that policymaking is more responsive to the needs and interests of different stakeholder groups.

The PBR-supported project "Towards a Regional Security Architecture in the Horn of Africa" (RP 100913) highlights these complementary goals. The project aims to address the pressing need to strengthen regional security arrangements that can help to manage and resolve existing conflicts, as well as prevent new ones from occurring, in the Horn of Africa. The project's approach emphasizes the importance of "democratizing the security debate" and nurturing the meaningful participation of civil society in any new security architecture in the region. As the project proposal explains:

*The project aims to strengthen existing – and largely incipient – regional security arrangements in the Horn of Africa by creating greater public consciousness and involvement around these issues. Starting from the grassroots, it also seeks to involve policymakers and members of the armed forces from the start, bringing them together in a Preparatory Consultation.*

*The resolution of such conflicts, in fact, has much less to do with the settlement of particular disputes than with the restoration of relationships, with the recovery of reliable and participatory processes for social discourse, and with the restoration of public institutions for collective decision making that are fair and have the confidence of the people ... it is much more involved in rebuilding relationships and public confidence, and in building social, political and economic conditions conducive to stability. ...*

*Creative, constructive alternatives emerge from the indigenous situation and civil society. Building local capacity for peacebuilding is not fundamentally about skills training and financial resources. African scholars and professionals, NGOs, religious communities, and so on, are as attuned to creative peacebuilding and conflict management possibilities and methods as are their counterparts elsewhere, but they frequently operate in political environments that are heavily constrained. Political space is severely limited, especially in security matters, which means that the first priority of the IRG [International Resource Group on Disarmament and Security in the Horn of Africa] is to* **expand the political space for civil society groups** *in the Horn sub-region...*

*The second priority is to* **promote a political culture of openness, transparency, and inclusion***... the project will contribute to a developing regional political culture in which it is understood that security – local, national, and regional – is enhanced by public discussion and involvement. The project will advance the recognition that a skilled civil society sector capable of detailed research and analysis, the development of credible policy alternatives, and the promotion of responsible public concern is an invaluable aid to the pursuit of durable peace and human security* (RP 100913 Proposal, 2002, 3-5, 15).

Particularly in regions where democracies remain fragile (or non-existent), the promotion of a political culture of openness, transparency and inclusion can be seen as a development outcome in its own right. In this project, supporting the creation of more democratic processes is seen as both a crucial aspect in the creation of an enabling environment for peacebuilding and a necessary precondition for addressing other development goals in the region. At the same time, "expanding the political space for civil society" is intended to lead to the production of creative policy options that might otherwise remain unseen.

Of course, strengthening the voice of civil society in research and policy fora does not guarantee, for example, that the policy priorities and recommendations forwarded by civil society will influence policy formulation. Though many of the projects reviewed do not raise this as a concern, two projects stand out as notable exceptions. The PBR-supported project "Regularization of Land Tenure in Guatemala" (RP 101068), for example, looks to strengthen multi-stakeholder negotiations on land tenure issues in Guatemala by promoting *coalition-building* amongst civil society organizations in Guatemala both to ensure that the diverse interests of civil society are represented in land tenure negotiations and to consolidate

and strengthen the voice and negotiating power of civil society in policy debates (RP 101068 PAD, C. Duggan, 2001). Similarly, the IDRC-supported Environmental Policy Initiative seeks to strengthen the voice of civil society in policy fora in South Africa by building coalitions among environmental policy NGOs and grassroots environmental organizations in the country (RP 003746 PAD, W. Leppan, 1997). Both emphasize the importance of building partnerships among civil society stakeholders to influence policy.

In summary, the review finds that IDRC supports networks intended to improve the utilization of research in policymaking by enhancing particular policy capacities and broadening policy horizons in different ways. It also finds that networks seek to enhance utilization by supporting more systematic and comprehensive documentation and dissemination efforts, as well as advocacy work, intended to expand the reach and impact of Centre-supported research. Though not directly connected to the issue of research utilization, the review also finds evidence that IDRC supports networks as a means to improve policy development processes and outcomes through the promotion of dialogue between policymakers and key stakeholders, intended to promote more democratic policy development processes and the production of creative policy options that better reflect the needs and interests of civil society groups.

## 3.4 Strengthening Local Ownership

Though implicit in the literature reviewed, support for networks in developing regions is also intended to address the issue of research "ownership". Part of IDRC's interest in supporting research networks can be understood as a response to emerging critique of the dominant development discourse of the 1970s and 1980s that saw development agendas, at least for the most part, defined by Northern donors. Growing concern over the effectiveness and equity of donor-driven development models throughout the international development community in the latter part of the 1980s and the early 1990s has impelled IDRC to pay increasing attention to issues of "local ownership" in its programming. The Centre's corporate and program level documentation over the last decade and a half emphasize the principles of local ownership as crucial dimensions of building more effective, relevant, and sustainable research systems in the South.

But, what does IDRC mean by "local ownership"? By and large, IDRC's use of the concept of local ownership denotes the importance of ensuring that Centre-supported research is locally (or demand) driven. Past experience of the donor community suggests that donor-driven research agendas may not address the most pressing needs and interests of researchers, policymakers and other local stakeholders, often resulting in the underutilization of research results and limited development impact. Because networks provide a forum for exchange and learning, strengthening capacities, building researcher, research-policy and institutional alliances, and promoting dialogue among relevant stakeholders, they are considered an effective mechanism for encouraging the emergence of locally/regionally defined research priorities and agendas.

The IDRC documentation reviewed suggests that the Centre supports networks as a means to reorganize and redefine relations of power between North and South giving a real voice to partners in setting research priorities and agendas. However, IDRC's experience suggests that local ownership is by no means ensured through support for research networks. A previous evaluation of IDRC-supported networks, found network coordinators cautious about the potential of networks, and concerned about the importance of local control over the

research agenda. According to Fred Carden of IDRC's Evaluation Unit, these findings suggest:

> *...a very clear need to ensure a full participation by all parties in discussing potential networks. It also confirms the need expressed by evaluators, academicians, donor representatives as well as recipients, to build on local expression of issues rather than create anew. Local ownership of the problem is critical to the success of the network. It is therefore incumbent on donors to define their roles in funding terms understood and owned by the groups being assisted: the network will not create ownership, but rather is a vehicle through which to meet an expressed and understood need"* (Carden 1995, 3).

While there is certainly evidence to suggest that IDRC supports networks intended to respond to locally expressed needs, this review cannot confidently comment on the issue of network/research ownership as the majority of project appraisals reviewed provide surprisingly little information about, for example, where the impetus for forming new networks originates, and how, and in whose interest, the networks are established and maintained[9].

Though several of the network projects reviewed are coordinated and managed by IDRC PIs or other Northern partners, the review does find, however, increasing interest within the Centre to explore opportunities to devolve to developing country institutions the leadership role in administering networks. The *intention is to encourage networks, where possible, to assume responsibility and authority for defining, planning, executing and controlling the network's agenda*. Where networks have sufficient capacity to take on leadership and coordination roles, devolving network management to regional partners may contribute to greater local ownership and sustainability of networks.

In 2001, for example, PAN-Asia devolved the governance of the ICT R&D Grants Programme (RP 101060) to a committee of people exclusively from the Asia-Pacific region and representatives of the partner organizations, while the management and administration of the Programme was transferred to an Asia-based organization that, to quote the proposal, is "not only interested in but also deemed appropriately mandated and organizationally ready to manage it" (RP 101060 Proposal, 2001, 3). The intent was to encourage greater regional ownership of the Programme enabling "the new Committee [to] make any adjustments or modifications or overhaul the present grant guidelines, criteria, conditions and processes as it sees fit, in order to ensure that they promote regional initiatives and developments" (RP 101060 Proposal, 2001, 4).

Interest in devolving networks to regional partners is founded, in many cases, on the belief that regional partners are not only capable but often best placed to manage networks effectively. As MIMAP explains:

> *Another move that can be expected to improve MIMAP's reach is the intention to devolve the leadership and coordination role in the MPIA [Modeling and Policy*

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[9] This is not to suggest that IDRC is necessarily imposing network building on its partners, but rather to highlight the need for greater elaboration and clarity in project documentation regarding network origins and ownership. This might be an area that the Evaluation Unit consider exploring in the key informant interviews and survey activities to follow shortly in this evaluation exercise.

*Impact Assessment] and PMMA [Poverty Measurement, Monitoring and Analysis]
networks under PEP [Poverty and Economic Policy thematic network] to developing
country institutions, as is already the case with CBMS [Community-Based
Monitoring Systems]. Developing country-based institutions are likely to be more
familiar with the academic research communities in the developing countries. This
puts them in a better position to identify all appropriate research partners worthy of
MIMAP support, and would make it less likely that key experts would be omitted from
the reach of the research network* (MIMAP External Review 2003, 36).

Devolving network management to regional partners is intended both to ensure that
networks, and the research and policy development they support, are regionally owned and
driven and, in the longer term, to reduce the dependence of networks on the financial and
human resources of IDRC programs (though the process of 'devolvement' might in fact
demand extra resources from program initiatives in the short term).

If IDRC is intent to look for opportunities to devolve networks to regional partners it may
require, in some cases, that program initiatives put additional time and resources into
developing institutional capacities in the areas of research management, resource
mobilization and the like. The review found little to suggest that capacity building of this
type is yet widely supported within the Centre.

The question of devolving networks to regional partners also raises an interesting tension
between the importance of promoting local ownership of the research agenda on the one
hand, and IDRC's needs and interests as donor organization on the other. Returning to
MIMAP's recent external review, the evaluators noted, for example:

*As the devolved institutions start to really get hold of the networks and to gain in
autonomy and self-reliance, the role of MIMAP project officers will have to undergo
a delicate redefinition, impacting on the nature of their relationships with the
managers and members of the devolved networks, and indeed on the relationships
between MIMAP as a whole and its networks* (MIMAP External Review 2003, 29-
30).

As the findings of this paper suggest, IDRC's work as a donor organization goes far beyond
funding development research. Through networks and other programming modalities IDRC
seeks to positively influence how research is undertaken and organized, and the kinds of
issues and approaches explored and utilized by partners. If devolving network leadership and
coordination is intended to confer responsibility and authority for defining, planning,
executing and controlling the network's agenda onto regional partners, the insights of the
MIMAP evaluators are well founded. And yet, because IDRC, as a donor, will continue to
"hold the purse strings" it is not clear how devolving networks will play itself out.

## 4.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS: Networks, Strengthening Research Relationships in the South

To summarize, the review finds that IDRC looks to capitalize on the qualitative aspects of
networks in order to improve the effectiveness and reach of Centre support, to enhance the
quality and relevance of Centre-supported research, to improve its utilization particularly for
policymaking, and to strengthen regional ownership of research and development agendas.

Below are the main conclusions drawn from the document review and discussed throughout the body of this paper. I conclude by suggesting that while IDRC's support of networks is best understood in relation to the Centre's intent to enhance the effectiveness and reach of IDRC's investment in development research and to improve the quality and utilization of the research it supports, it can also be seen more broadly as an *intention to support the creation of more effective and sustainable research relationships in developing regions*.

- The review finds that as ideas about what research means and how to conduct it more effectively have changed over time, and in response to the Centre's new budgetary imperatives of the 1990s, networks have been used by the IDRC to optimize its limited resources by enabling support for larger, higher profile programmes of research with the cooperation of other donor institutions and, in so doing, to improve the visibility, reach and impact of the Centre in a more coordinated, efficient and effective way.

- The review finds that IDRC uses networks to enhance *research quality* in several complementary ways. Networks are used to implement comprehensive capacity building initiatives at national and regional levels and, less formally, to create networking opportunities for peer learning and mutual support among researchers and other stakeholders working on common or complementary issues. IDRC also supports networks to promote collaboration and coordination of research efforts across disciplines, institutions, and sectors, again at different levels, in order to strengthen the comprehensiveness and coherence of IDRC-supported research. And finally, networks are used to facilitate the inclusion of key stakeholders in Centre-supported research efforts. Strengthening the participation of, for example, civil society actors and policymakers in the research process is intended to improve the relevance and usefulness of research to end users. Taken together, these network strategies are intended to create a deeper, shared understanding of development problems and to contribute to the generation of knowledge that is more rigorous, comprehensive, relevant, and useful to intended users.

- IDRC similarly supports networks as a means to improve the *utilization* of Centre-supported research, particularly in policymaking. Networks are used to expand the policy capacities of researchers to carry out and create policy relevant research. This includes supporting capacity building initiatives at different levels, and promoting greater coordination of research efforts in order to build a critical mass of researchers and expertise in a particular field and encourage greater interdisciplinarity and cross-sectoral collaboration. The latter is intended both to expand policy capacities and to broader policy horizons by increasing the quantity, quality and comprehensiveness of research and the stock of policy relevant knowledge available to inform policy. Networks are also intended to broaden policy horizons by promoting more meaningful engagement between research and policy communities in order to improve the relevance and responsiveness of research to the pressing needs of policymakers/ing. The review also finds that the Centre uses networks as means to support more systematic and comprehensive documentation and dissemination efforts, and to support advocacy work, again with the intent to improve the reach, utilization, and hence impact of IDRC-supported research. And finally, though not directly related to "utilization" but of immediate import in terms of policy influence, IDRC supports networks as a mechanism to improve policy development processes and outcomes by creating spaces for civil society in policy fora. The intent is both to strengthen democratic processes in developing regions and to ensure that policymaking is more responsive to the needs and interests of different stakeholder groups in society.

- Finally, though implicit in the literature reviewed, support for networks in developing regions is also intended to address the issue of research "ownership". Because networks provide spaces for exchange and learning, strengthening capacities, building researcher, research-policy and institutional alliances, and promoting dialogue among relevant stakeholders, they are considered an effective mechanism for encouraging the emergence of locally/regionally defined research priorities and agendas.

Though IDRC's support of networks is perhaps best understood in relation to the above-mentioned intentions, it can also be seen, more broadly, as an intention to support the creation of more effective and sustainable research relationships in developing regions.

*Problems of research quality and utilization, for example, are often the result of more systemic weaknesses in the research environment of many developing regions*. As mentioned earlier, in many regions where IDRC supports research, individual researchers and their institutions tend to work in isolation due limited intra and inter-institutional mechanisms for communication and collaboration, and an institutional culture that is often sharply divided along disciplinary lines. IDRC has found this to result in unnecessary duplication of research and development efforts within national and regional systems and, in turn, sub-optimal use of already scarce donor resources. Given that many research institutions in the South are small, significantly under-funded, poorly resourced (e.g. libraries, equipment and other infrastructure), and often lack a critical mass of research resources in any discipline, failure to collaborate in turn undermines the ability of Southern institutions, and research systems more broadly, to address critical development challenges.

*Networks, in the broadest sense, are intended to address these systemic challenges.* Networks contribute to building more effective and sustainable research systems by providing a mechanism for building researcher, inter-institutional, and inter-sectoral understandings and relationships leading to greater coordination and coherence of research efforts. They are also a mechanism for more comprehensive capacity building and peer learning, which serve not only to strengthen the skills of individual researchers but to build "research communities" in developing regions. And they provide a forum to integrate important stakeholders (civil society, policymakers, the private sector) into research and policy systems in a more coherent and meaningful way. Support for strengthening research relationships, in the end, is intended to promote and ground local ownership for research and development within developing regions; it is intended to build the relationships and mechanisms necessary to enable developing countries to define and implement local research and development priorities and to translate their research outputs into creative and effective policies for change.

## APPENDIX A   ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| ASPR | Assessment of Social Policy Reform (former IDRC program initiative) |
| BoG | Board of Governors |
| CBCRM | Community-Based Coastal Resources Management |
| CBDC | Community Biodiversity Development and Conservation program |
| CBN | Cassava Biotechnology Network |
| CBMS | Community-Based Monitoring Systems |
| CBNRM | Community-Based Natural Resources Management |
| CBO | Community-Based Organization |
| CEJA | Chilean-based Justice Studies Centre of the Americas |
| CFP | Cities Feeding People |
| CGIAR | Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research |
| CSPF | Corporate Strategy and Performance Framework |
| Ecohealth | Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health (IDRC program initiative) |
| EQUINET | Network for Equity in Health in Southern Africa |
| ENRM | Environment and Natural Resources Management (IDRC program initiative) |
| ERF | Economic Research Forum |
| ICTs | Information and Communication Technologies |
| ICT4D | Information and Communication Technology for Development (IDRC program area) |
| IDRC | International Development Research Centre |
| IRG | International Resource Group on Disarmament and Security in the Horn of Afric |
| LAC | Latin America and the Caribbean |
| LeaRN | CBCRM Learning and Research Network |
| MIMAP | Microeconomic Impacts of Macroeconomic Adjustment Policies |
| MINGA | Managing Natural Resources in Latin America (IDRC program initiative) |
| MPIA | Modeling and Policy Impact Assessment |
| NARDIs | National Agricultural Research and Development Institutions |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NRM | Natural Resource Management |
| NWG | Networking Working Group |
| PAD | Project Appraisal Document |
| PANTLEG | PAN-Asia Telecentre Learning and Evaluation Group |
| PBR | Peacebuilding and Reconstruction (IDRC program initiative) |
| PEP | Poverty and Economic Policy |
| PI | Program Initiative |
| PLaW | People, Land and Water (IDRC program initiative) |
| PMMA | Poverty Measurement, Monitoring and Analysis |
| PWB | Program of Work and Budget |
| R&D | Research and Development |
| RISPAL | Animal Productions Systems Network in Latin America |
| RSP | Research Support Activity |
| RUAF | Resource Centre on Urban Agriculture and Forestry |
| SADC | Southern African Development Community |
| SANFEC | South Asia Network for Food, Ecology and Culture |
| SEE | Social and Economic Equity (IDRC thematic area) |
| SSA | Sub-Saharan Africa |
| SUB | Sustainable Use of Biodiversity (IDRC program initiative) |
| TEC | Trade, Employment and Competitiveness (IDRC program initiative) |

| | |
|---|---|
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| TRAMIL | Application, Research and Dissemination of the Use of Medicinal Plants in the Caribbean |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

## APPENDIX B   LITERATURE REVIEWED

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# APPENDIX C   IDRC PROJECT APPRAISAL DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

| Year | Program Area | Project title | Project Number |
|------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1995 | BIO | Gender, Environment and Sustainable Livelihoods | 95-8008/02177 |
| | BIO | TRAMIL: Central American Network on Medicinal Plants | 94-0020/01930 |
| | BIO | Medicinal Plants and Biodiversity (Uganda) | 94-8489/55041 |
| | FSUS | Animal Production Systems Network, Latin America (Phase 3) | 95-0010/02758 |
| | FSUS | Food Systems Under Stress in Africa (Phase 2) | 00768 |
| | SE | Economic Research Forum (North Africa/Middle East) | 94-8603/60050 |
| | ICED | PAN-Sri Lanka | 95-8012/40279 |
| | ICED | PAN-Information Networking and Services (PINS), Philippines | 95-8011/40320 |
| 1996 | FSUS | People and Resource Dynamics in Mountain Watersheds | 96-1300/40340 |
| | FSUS | Resource Management (Ecuador) | 96-8751/50193 |
| | IESEP | Research Network in Health Systems and Health Policies for Central America … | 96-0205/02851 |
| | IESEP | Needs Based Technology Assessment Tool Kit (Global) | 95-1053/02915 |
| | IESEP | Regional Research Program on Social Policy Assessment (Phase 2) | 95-8762/50140 |
| | ICED | PAN-Bangladesh | 96-8003/40345 |
| | ICED | Connecting IDRC's Program Partners: A Capacity Building Project | 96-0006/03192 |
| | T&E | SMME Support Institutions Network – Southern Africa | 95-8906/02842 |
| | SIP-Cdn | Innovation and Change: The Canadian NGO Experience: | 96-0805/03195 |
| 1997 | BIO | Program for the Protection and Promotion of Biodiversity and Community … | 97-8006/03353 |
| | HSOC | Reseau de recherche sur les politiques en Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre (Phase 2) | 97-0227/03930 |
| | HSOC | Environmental Policy Initiative (Phase 1) | 97-8904/03746 |
| | HSOC | Education and Training Policies and Programs for Youth in Latin America | 97-0206/03463 |
| | SE | MIMAP Training and Technical Support (Global) | 97-1055/03773 |
| | ICED | Enhancing Women's Participation in Governance Through Increased Access to Civic.. | 97-8546/55394 |
| | ICED | Virtual Information Centre for Management Development (India) | 97-0027/03946 |
| 1998 | BIO | Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Program in Asia (MAPPA) | 98-0019/04359 |
| | BIO | Plantes medicinales (Maurice) | 98-8558/55499 |
| | SE | MERCOSUR: Economic Research and Integration | 50292 |
| | SE | Reseau Entrepreneuriat | 98-0004/04256 |
| | SE | Agriculture Policy Research Network for West and Central Africa | 98-8162/65305 |
| | HSOC | Equity and Health Policy Reforms (Southern Africa) | 98-0218/04378 |
| | HSOC | An Ecosystem Strategy for Water Quality Monitoring at the Municipal Level | 98-0226/04464 |
| | ICED | Strengthening Networks of Researchers on ICTs in Latin America and the Caribbean | 98-0203/04235 |
| | ICED | Experimentation d'espaces cyber-jeunes dans l'enseignement moyen et secondaire.. | 65256 |
| | ICED | PAN-Mongolia (Phase 2) | 98-8003/40439 |
| 1999 | BIO | Farmer Based Strategies for Enhancing Community Seed Wealth and Agrobiodiv… | 100232 |
| | ICED | InforCauca Community Telecentres | 100231 |
| 2000 | BIO | Strategies for Integrating Small-Scale End-Users in Cassava Biotechnology Research | 100386 |
| | ENRM | A Comparative Watershed Study (Andes-Himalayas) | 100700 |
| | SEE | South Asian Regional Cooperation on International Trade (SARCIT) | 100472 |
| | SEE | MIMAP – Finance Network | 100473 |
| | ICT4D | Strengthening Community-Based Organizations through ICTs in Uganda | 100224 |
| 2001 | ENRM | AIDS, Food and Nutrition Security: Supporting Innovation | 100776 |
| | ENRM | CBCRM Learning and Research Network (CBCRM LeaRN) | 100953 |
| | ENRM | Greywater Treatment and Reuse, Tufileh, Jordan | 100880 |
| | ENRM | Optimizing Use of Vacant Land for Urban Agriculture through participatory planning … | 100983 |
| | SEE | Global Forum for Health Research/Alliance HPSR | 101042 |
| | SEE | Regularization of Land Tenure in Guatemala | 101068 |
| | SEE | Asia Development Research Forum V | 100709 |
| | SEE | Globalization and Labour Markets in South Africa: A Value Chains Perspective | 100793 |
| | SEE | Competitivite sectorielle des enterprises maghrebines: Analyse et systeme de suivi… | 101115 |
| | SEE | Budgeting for Defence in Africa: the Process and Mechanisms of Control | 100870 |
| | SEE | Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic Adjustment Policies (MIMAP) Philippines VII | 101154 |
| | ICT4D | SciDev.Net: Start-Up Grant | 101040 |
| | ICT4D | Reseau d'information et de communication pour une agriculture durable en Afrique | 101172 |
| | ICT4D | Gender Evaluation Methodology for ICT Initiatives (Phase 2) | 100994 |
| | ICT4D | ICT R&D Programme for Asia and the Pacific: An APDIP-IDRC Partnership | 101060 |
| | ICT4D/CA | Mozambique Acacia Advisory Committee and Secretariat Project (Phase 2) | 100868 |
| 2002 | ENRM | Promoting Peace and Food Security by Strengthening Biodiversity-Based Livelihoods | 101681 |
| | SEE | Rural Poverty Monitoring Vietnam (Phase 3) | 100961 |
| | SEE | Towards a Regional Security Architecture in the Horn of Africa | 100913 |
| | ICT4D | Community Information Network for Southern Africa | 101635 |
| | ICT4D | Digital Inclusion: Telecentre Network in LAC (Phase 2) | 101390 |
| | ICT4D | Innovative Public Access Strategies: Enhancing ICT Services in Mozambique's … | 101560 |
| 2003 | ENRM | CBNRM and Farmer-Centered Research Network, China (Phase 2) | 102005 |
| | ENRM | International Forum on Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health | 100840 |
| | ENRM | Anglophone Africa Training Course | 101640 |

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|---|---|---|---|
| | ENRM | Participatory Research for the Promotion of Ecological Agriculture | 102140 |
| | ENRM | Equator Initiative (Phase 2) | 101923 |
| | SEE | NEPAD-Science and Technology for Africa's Development | 102135 |
| | SEE | Eradicating Poverty in South Asia Though Empowerment of the Poor | 101947 |
| | SEE | Strengthening Leadership to Improve the Production and Use of Health Knowledge | 102145 |
| | SEE | Community Justice and Conflict Management in Colombia | 101749 |
| | SEE | Global Forum for Health Research and the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems … | 102037 |
| | ICT4D | Open Source in Latin America and the Caribbean | 102201 |
| 2004 | ENRM | Increasing the Impacts of Soil Fertility Research in Southern Africa | 102673 |
| | ENRM | Adaptive Management of Seed Systems and Gene Flow (Mexico, Cuba and Peru) | 102563 |
| | SEE | Judicial Observatory (Phase 2) | 102608 |
| | SEE | Building Canadian Support for Global Health Research | 102660 |
| | SEE | NGOs, Gender Social Entitlements and Active Citizenship: Shaping future policies … | 102202 |
| | ICT4D | Comparative Study of "first-mile" and "first inch" Technologies in different low-density.. | 101981 |

**APPENDIX D        TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The consultant was commissioned to review selected corporate, program and project literature, as well as selected external literature on the subject of networks and to synthesize and document the intended results IDRC seeks to achieve by supporting networks, focusing on the period of 1995 to the present.

The design and methodology of the review is intended to be qualitative, with data collected and analyzed in terms of a series of questions identified by the Evaluation Unit and approved by the Centre's Network Working Group. The three principal questions guiding this review are:

1) what have been IDRC's intentions in supporting networks during the period in question (1995 to the present);

2) what have been the objectives of IDRC-supported networks; and

3) is there continuity between the corporate intent and the project network objectives?

Documents for review include:

*Corporate documents* reviewed include IDRC Corporate Strategy and Performance Frameworks, Programs of Work and Budget, IDRC Annual Reports, Board of Governors (BoG) minutes, speeches and papers by IDRC presidents, and other internal documents and discussion papers that deal with the issue of networks.

*Program documents* reviewed include Program Initiative Prospectuses, External Reviews, Regional Director's Reports to the BoG, and Director's of Program Areas Reports to the BoG.

*Project documents* reviewed include a sample of Project Approval Documents and proposals for projects approved since Fiscal Year 1994-1995.

The review also included selected literature from outside IDRC to situate the questions and issues explored in a wider context.

## APPENDIX E    BIOGRAPHY OF THE REVIEWER

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