

IDRC Bulletin

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IDRC's Strategy in a World in Transition

by Keith A. Bezanon

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Dear Friends,

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of IDRC, an institution born of a noble ideal and an inspiring vision. Until IDRC was established in 1970, development organizations were based essentially on "short-term" solutions (i.e. capital and the transfer of technical solutions from the "developed West"). IDRC was built from a different mould and was predicated specifically on the view that most development solutions would have to come from developing countries themselves through their own research systems and the application of their own scientific and technological capabilities. In some very fundamental respects, IDRC was a quarter century ahead of its time. Today, the dominant development view has changed to one that holds that problems must be solved "from within".

This organization has so much for which to be very, very proud. Across a vast horizon, IDRC's unique approach of enabling others to address their own problems has reaffirmed the wisdom of the architects of this organization and has confirmed the validity of Lester B. Pearson's vision of true "partners in development."

To be justifiably proud of our accomplishments is one thing; to rest or become complacent on that basis is quite another. Enormous differences mark today's world of international development as compared to when IDRC was founded. The shift of most immediate

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consequence for us is the dramatic alteration in the climate for international cooperation. It appears in most quarters that the "aid fatigue" that Lester Pearson referred to in 1970 has turned to outright exhaustion and that the development assistance experiment of the last 50 years, at least as we know it, is coming to an end.

The nineties have given little weight to continuity and constancy. Institutions that are to survive and prosper, and do justice to the purpose for which they were established must show agility and flexibility and perhaps even an unashamed degree of opportunism. And this is what IDRC is doing. Throughout the nineties, while reaffirming IDRC's vision and mission, we have had to experiment with new elements of strategy. Most recently, our Board of Governors gave the go ahead to a major institutional overhaul, including a sharper and more focused program and a reduction in staff positions by up to 15% over the next three years.

The vision to which we aspire remains one where global inequity is redressed through research, and people are able to choose their own destinies via the acquisition of appropriate knowledge and the creating, maintaining and enhancing research capacity. Indeed, our Board of Governors has asserted strongly that this vision is more appropriate and necessary today than ever before in a world in which the disparities in the capacity of nations and communities to acquire, generate and utilize knowledge are becoming more acute.

In setting its strategy for the future, the Board of Governors

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has drawn attention to some of our significant comparative advantages - some related to the very nature of the institution - such as our governance structure as set in the Parliamentary Act, and the arms length relationship with government; others we owe to the wisdom of those who worked with IDRC in earlier years - the Centre's prestige and considerable reputation in most parts of the developing world; its in-house assets of research expertise and development experience; the broad network of institutional and individual contacts; and the convening power and credibility it has built over time.

Four aspects of the Centre's role have been underscored by the governors as key to the consolidation of our leadership over the next five years. First, IDRC is exceptional (dare we say unique?) in being able to act as knowledge broker and catalyst across continents and between a whole host of research, development and funding institutions. In a world where geographical borders are becoming increasingly meaningless and where the role of knowledge in development has become unquestionable, IDRC finds itself in a privileged position.

The second aspect involves the credibility and trust we have built with recipients and donor agencies, based largely on our style of operation. This has allowed and will allow increasingly the application of our own resources as a lever to multiple sources of funding in support of essential development research.

The fact that IDRC has become an Agenda 21 organization, geared to support the generation and utilization of knowledge for sustainable development is a third aspect that will help us to maintain and consolidate our leadership.

Since being given special responsibilities at the Rio Summit in 1992, the Centre has initiated and learned from a large array of research endeavours which emphasize the linkages between physical sciences, environment, health, information and social sciences. The significant human problems of today and tomorrow are not found in or understandable through a single academic discipline, but at the intersect of society, science and technology.

Finally, a fourth aspect emerges out of the fact that the Centre has remained a flexible, agile and learning organization, and that it has adapted continuously to the demands imposed by a changing context. IDRC has shown itself able not only to explore new research themes and areas, but also to establish entire new modes of operation.

Building on these factors, the strategy which was recently mandated by the Board of Governors emphasizes the following:

- **Diversified Funding:** the publicly-funded experiment in international development which has endured for almost fifty years is in rapid decline. Yet so much remains to be done and if IDRC is to remain true to its purposes it must catalyze essential resources with our research partners throughout the world. The continued support of the Canadian government, expressed primarily through the Parliamentary grant, is essential for IDRC to carry out its mandate and its mission. But it has become imperative that we raise significant levels of financing from other sources; we need to be more responsive to what may be considered a "market" for IDRC products and services. In recent years, we have had considerable success in attracting funds for specific initiatives; this must continue even as we seek alternative funding that is available to the Centre's program as a whole and not for a particular purpose. We are very clear that raising funds is not "our business", but it is now an essential part of how we must finance our business.

- **Multidisciplinarity:** our experience tells us that to make a meaningful contribution to development through science, we must promote its application in poor countries at the intersect of S&T and society. Human well-being is only enhanced when science advances in the context of human considerations of community, gender and social innovation. Thus, we



"The significant human problems of today and tomorrow are not found in or understandable through a single academic discipline, but at the intersect of society, science and technology."

must foster research in an integrated, holistic and multidisciplinary fashion. This determination means that our own organizational structure and practices must function in support of multidisciplinary programs and problem-solving teams.

● **Program Focus:** our program initiatives will increasingly centre upon a small number of universal development concerns, which we will address at the intersect of science and society. Since we introduced a four-year Corporate Program Framework in 1993, we have been devoting over 50% of our program funds to six central themes oriented towards environment and development. Experience now impels us to concentrate further because that experience has shown that it is principally through such concentration that we can "make a difference." Much of our concentrated effort will be based on establishing and maintaining full research networks, an area in which IDRC has a wealth of experience.

● **Working With Others:** during the last four years, the Centre has increased substantially its involvement with Canadian organizations, and has strengthened its support base among academic, government and non-governmental organizations. We now need to expand our involvement with other research cooperation agencies, international financial institutions, private foundations, new sources of philanthropy in developing countries and the private sector. It is in these larger coalitions that the results of research will be best transformed into essential public policy.

In all of this, one thing above all is clear: IDRC must maintain the very highest standards of intellectual excellence (perhaps the most enduring and essential element of IDRC's strategy!) as the base for multidisciplinary problem-solving. Foresight and a capacity to anticipate new developments have been essential to the Centre's success over time; they become even more important in the turbulent times that our world has now entered.

That intellectual excellence requires that we reach out, as never before, to all the partners and friends that have been part of our quarter-century voyage. The creation of a Friends of IDRC Network, beginning with former governors of the Centre who shaped us over the years, is both vital and timely in this regard. It is in this spirit that I am especially delighted that you have agreed to "keep in touch" and to share with us your suggestions and insights as IDRC embarks on its second quarter century. ✱



IDRC Bulletin

IDRC Bulletin is the primary vehicle for exchanging information among all the friends of IDRC. The objective is to strengthen ties with a group of like-minded individuals who have IDRC and its well-being as a point in common. The bulletin will provide friends with timely corporate information, and encourage constructive dialogue on the global challenges and their effects on the international development community. Please address your comments or questions to: Danielle Vinette, Special Assistant to the President, IDRC, P.O. Box 8500, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1G 3H9. Tel: (613) 236-6163; Cable: Internet: dvinette@idrc.ca



Geoffrey Oldham has been part of IDRC since its conception - he helped prepare the draft Act of Parliament in 1969. Following a stint as the Associate Director for Science and Technology Policy during the 1970s, Geoffrey left the IDRC. He returned to the fold in 1992 as Science and Technology Advisor. Here he reflects on the Centre's first twenty-five years.

IDRC: The first 25 years...

In October 1970, the first board meeting of IDRC took place under the chairmanship of Lester Pearson. This meeting brought into formal existence a truly unique organisation which, over the past 25 years, has grown in reputation and accomplishments to become one of the most respected aid organisations in the world.

The origins of the idea which led to the Centre are unclear, but probably lie in the wish on the part of some Canadians to see the success of EXPO '67 caught in a more permanent expression of Canadian internationalism. Several ideas were on the table, but the one which most appealed to Mr Pearson, then Prime Minister, was Maurice Strong's idea for an organisation which would do research and help develop technologies appropriate for the needs of the developing world.

Wynne Plumptre, a respected former civil servant and then Principal of the Scarborough campus of the University of Toronto, was asked to test out this idea. He was to consider what types of research might be included and whether the organisation would do research itself or fund others to do research. Plumptre reported positively on the idea and recommended that the research be focused on science and technology. The Government then set up a task force of civil servants to review the idea. They too reported positively and in 1969 Maurice Strong brought together a small team under the direction of Stu Peters to design the organisation and prepare a draft Act. I was invited to be a member of this team.

There was a good deal of debate on whether the new organisation should be a think tank doing its own research in Canada (like the Institute of Development Studies in England), or whether it would fund research. If the latter, should the research be carried out in Canada or in the developing world. As the design team took soundings and canvassed views from American, British and French aid officials, there was a strong consensus that the research would have to be done in Canada. "There simply is not the absorptive capacity in the developing world" we were told. However, a number of us who had worked in the developing world were sceptical of that view and argued that the new organisation should have, as a principal objective, the building of research capacity in the developing regions of the world. We played it safe however, and just in case there was not the absorptive capacity, the Act permitted the new organisation the right to build and operate its own laboratories.



IDRC Science and Technology mission personnel meet their South African hosts. From left to right: Dr. Dreni Jinwala, Speaker of the House of Commons for South Africa; Dr. Thomas Odhiambo, Director, International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology, and President of the African Academy of Sciences; Nelson Mandela, President of South Africa; Dr. Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri, Executive Director, Education Trust for South Africa; Dr. Deanna Ashley, Principal Medical Officer, Secondary and Tertiary Care, Ministry of Health, Jamaica; Geoffrey Oldham, Science and Technology Advisor to the President of IDRC; Marc Van Ameringen, Regional Director for the IDRC Regional Office for South Africa; James Mullin, private consultant; Mr. Tony Trew, ANC Department of Research.



The other novel dimension of the organisation was to be its international board. This too was greeted with great scepticism in Washington, London and Paris. "No country will agree that its taxpayers' money will be allocated according to policies set by an international board", was the standard comment. On this also the sceptics were proved to be incorrect. The Canadian Government endorsed the idea enthusiastically. The only debate on this issue at the second reading of the Act was whether there should be a majority of Canadians on the Board. We had suggested there should, but some Members of Parliament argued for the appointment of the best people in the world regardless of nationality.

Then there was the question of a name. At one point we had a list of 150 possible names. The 'International Development Research Centre' was a compromise with a fierce debate over every word. We had tried to find a name which would have the same initials in French and English, but obviously failed in this regard. In the draft Act, we had called the organisation "The International Development Research Centre of Canada". The Parliamentarians removed 'of Canada', arguing that it sounded too parochial.



In the end, the Act was very permissive. It provides for great flexibility to the Board to steer the IDRC in the direction it thinks will provide the greatest benefit to the developing world. It commits the organisation to the creation of new knowledge to enable developing regions to solve their own problems. The Act also provides for a focus on innovation, recognising that development occurs when new knowledge is actually used to solve problems.

The Board strongly supported the first President, David Hopper, in his suggestion that the Centre in its early years concentrate its resources in building research capacity in a few selected themes in the developing world.

For the first five years, the Centre was a truly remarkable place to work. Never before or since have I experienced such an atmosphere. The program officers were kings and queens - whatever program staff thought was appropriate was implemented. There were few rules. Anything was possible. But, bit by bit, this freedom was

abused by some individuals and rules had to be introduced. Eventually the IDRC, like all government organisations, became bureaucratised.

When I returned to the Centre in 1992, Ray Audet reminded me of the occasion in the late 1970s that I had gone to see him to complain about the increasing bureaucracy. I had been to Nepal to monitor a project in a remote region. It had meant a two day hike from the nearest landing strip. My expense claim had included a .23 cents claim for the night I had spent in a Nepalese Inn where I had shared a room with other travellers. The claim had been disallowed as it had not been supported by a receipt!!

After ten years with the Centre I left to take up another post in England and so I did not have much personal experience of the years of Ivan Head's Presidency. I know, however, that during this time the Centre developed a thriving program of collaboration with China and also instituted a new Canadian program, whereby Canadian researchers who worked with developing country partners were eligible for Centre support. There were also changed priorities in program activities, and over the years the Centre's budget was increased by the Government.

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In 1991, Keith Bezanson became the Centre's third President. The environment within which he took office was vastly different from the early years. In the first place, there now exists a substantial research community in most developing countries, in part thanks to IDRC. These communities are not necessarily thriving however as national governments have cut back on their own research budgets. Nevertheless, other donor countries, notably Sweden and the Netherlands, have also spent substantial sums of money in helping to build this research capacity. IDRC itself has spent more than \$1.5 billion on research over 25 years. It has supported 20,000 researchers in 1,000 institutions in more than 100 countries. The knowledge about development which has flowed from this investment is prodigious, even if the number of radically new technologies to

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IDRC in the region: Making a difference in South Africa

IDRC's presence in the region has continued to be a long-lasting, significant comparative advantage. Since 1970, we have established offices in 10 different countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Though none exist now, small offices have also been created in North America and Europe over the years. Today, IDRC has a formal regional presence in 7 countries; Egypt, India, Kenya, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, and Uruguay.

The origins of the opening of an IDRC office in South Africa relate back to a decision in 1989 to establish a new policy that would allow the Centre to support research and policy aimed specifically at preparing South Africans for a post apartheid era. This was to be achieved through strengthening the capacity of those disadvantaged by apartheid to engage in research and to encourage

constructive linkages in the Southern African region. Early in 1992, the IDRC Board of Governors agreed to establish a new regional office for Southern Africa based in Johannesburg.

Soon after the approval of the new IDRC strategy towards South Africa, the Centre began to run into the obstacle of a hostile government that declared the Centre an organization non grata. IDRC members were denied access to South Africa until Nelson Mandela's release in early 1990. However, during this time, IDRC established a good working relationship with the Democratic Movement based in Frontline States and began working on preparing them for government in areas of economic policy, urban governance and health. The unbanning of extra-parliamentary organizations including the ANC and the beginning of negotiations with the existing government in Pretoria, lead the Democratic Movement to request IDRC's constructive presence ranging from supporting the negotiations process through assisting in drafting key documents, including the interim constitution.

process.

IDRC responded to increased requests from the Democratic Movement and expanded programmes into other sectors such as education, land reform, science and technology restructuring, environment etc. During this process, IDRC was viewed as an honest intellectual broker that could draw upon expertise in Canada and globally to aid the Democratic Movement in the transition process.

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Since the election of President Mandela and the ANC government of national unity, IDRC was asked to assist the new government in its Reconstruction and Development Programme which focuses primarily on issues of governance; small, medium and micro enterprise (SMME) development; environment; science and technology; information and telecommunications; and Southern African regional integration.

From the outset, the Regional Office of Southern Africa (ROSA) has been successful at attracting external funding that has permitted a significantly greater impact in the Southern African region. In 1992, CIDA requested that IDRC act as executing agency for three large programmes focusing on supporting the Democratic Movement in the areas of economic policy; education; and governance totalling CA\$10 million. More recently, IDRC has signed an agreement with the Minister of Trade and Industry (a former IDRC recipient) to deliver the major pillar of the government's new programme to empower black-lead SMMEs. This is expected to generate up to CA\$ 15million in contracts over the next 2-3 years.

The onset of IDRC's regional presence in South Africa is based on unprecedented circumstances in the Centre's history. Its early knowledge of the economic, social and environmental conditions in that country played a significant role in fostering networks and sub-contracts to deliver the Centre's programme. With one Ottawa based staff member located in Johannesburg, the Centre has been disbursing CA\$4-5 million per year. The success of the office builds on the forward-looking decision of IDRC's Board of Governors to establish a policy and open an office at a time when few other donors were willing to take the risk. This decision enabled the Centre to take the lead in establishing a relationship of trust and respect with the Democratic Movement during a crucial period of time. ✱

Marc Van Ameringen
Regional Director
Regional Office for South Africa

IDRC: The first 25 years...

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have emerged and be in widespread use is disappointingly small. The most dramatic of the recent changes which impinge on IDRC has been the change in attitude towards aid, linked inevitably with the world's economic situation. This has affected all donor countries and Canada has been no exception. There seems to be little in common between the Canada of 1995 and the Canada of 1970 (except that at both times the issue of Quebec separation dominates the political agenda).

The Parliamentary Grant to IDRC has been cut in real terms by 35% over the past 5 years. The size of the national deficit means that further cuts are likely. Under these circumstances there has been a need for a major re-appraisal of the role of the IDRC. This has recently been carried out and the Centre's 25th anniversary marks the initiation of a vastly changed IDRC.

The mission to help developing countries use scientific and technological knowledge to solve their own problems remains. But there will be greater emphasis on problem solving, as distinct from building research capacity per se. This means greater concentration of effort on fewer topics. It will also mean building new types of partnership with other donors and the private sector. In addition, new sources of revenue are being sought to broaden the financial base. One of the most promising is the Blue Planet lottery idea, where international airline passengers will be offered the chance to participate in a lottery. The proceeds would be used to support projects on environment and development, and in return for helping to finance the feasibility study, IDRC will be allocated 10% of the net proceeds.

IDRC starts its second 25 years with much of the same anticipation as it faced its first quarter century. The world has changed, but the basic problems of poverty, hunger and disease remain. Will the new IDRC be able to find innovative ways to make a major contribution to the solution of at least some of these problems? The next five years will provide an answer. ✱

Board of Governors

To better reflect the community it was designed to serve, the 1970 IDRC Act called for the formation of an international Board of Governors comprising 11 experts from Canada and 10 from other countries.

Over the years, the governors' broad and varied knowledge of the developing world has ensured a synergy between the Centre's mission and its program delivery. By endorsing the 1993 Corporate Program Framework, the Board made a marked shift away from approving individual research projects, to a more active participation in the strategic directions of the Centre.

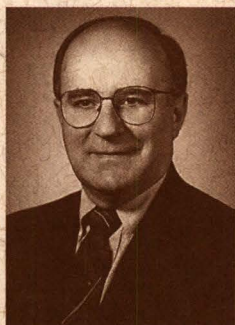
More recently, the governors have taken a strong interest in seeking alternative sources of funding to complement the Parliamentary Grant. They have established a target of 50% of total cash requirement from non-parliamentary grant sources within three years. As the Centre charts a new course towards the next millenium, the support of board members, past and present, will continue to ensure IDRC's success as an institution of scientific excellence. ✱



The Hon. Flora MacDonald, Ottawa, Canada. Chairperson of the Board of Governors. Former Member of Parliament and Cabinet Minister.



Keith A. Bezanson, President of IDRC. Ottawa, Canada. Development expert, and former senior Canadian diplomat.



Herb Breau, Ottawa, Canada. Businessman and former Member of Parliament from 1968 to 1984.



José J. Brunner, Chile. Minister Secretary General, Office of the Prime Minister of Chile.



Albert J. Butros, Jordan. Professor of English at the University of Jordan. Advisor to King Hussein and former Ambassador of Jordan to the United Kingdom.



Saisuree Chutikul, Thailand. Special Advisor to the Prime Minister of Thailand in issues related to women, children, youth, education and social development.



Jocelyne Côté-O'Hara, Ottawa, Canada. President and Chief Executive Officer of Stentor Telecom Policy Inc., a Canadian telecommunications company.



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Pooling Resources, Fulfilling a Need

IDRC is now home to several international secretariats. The global Micronutrient Initiative, the Strategy for International Fisheries Research, Bellanet and WETV are concrete examples of how the Centre has used its 25 years of accumulated experience to diversify its funding base. Drawing upon its partnership brokering and project management skills, IDRC has acted as a catalyst for the funds and human resources needed to undertake research in areas that have been globally recognized as critical. In concert with its many partners, the Centre is establishing the research priorities that will ensure the efficient use of donor funds and the success of each program.

Strategy For International Fisheries Research

Fisheries provide the main source of animal protein for more than one billion people and employ 100 million. As illustrated in the recent fishing disputes that Canada has been confronted with, fisheries exploitation has major social, economic and environmental repercussions. The need for an integrated resource-management approach based on socioeconomic and sustainability principles is critical to the preservation of living aquatic resources.



Strategy for International Fisheries Research
Stratégie sur la recherche halieutique internationale

The Strategy for International Fisheries Research (SIFR) was established in 1992 to develop mechanisms for matching the research priorities of developing

countries with the interests of donors. SIFR is guided by a Steering Committee composed of representatives of the World Bank, UNDP, FAO, Commission of European Communities, IDRC, and NORAD. SIFR established a secretariat at IDRC headquarters in 1993 to assist in the implementation of the SIFR strategy.



SIFR seeks to encourage the coordination in fisheries research for the sustainable development of living aquatic resources. High priority is given to strengthening the capacity of research institutions in developing countries to conduct applied research at the local

and regional level. In addition, SIFR seeks to encourage support for strategic research through the CGIAR centres, primarily ICLARM (International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management), involved in living aquatic resource management.

Brian Davy is the Executive Secretary for the Strategy for International Fisheries Research

WETV Secretariat

WETV is a new international satellite network created by a consortium of public and private sector interests following the 1992 Earth Summit. It is being guided by an international steering committee served by a Secretariat housed in IDRC. The consortium includes agencies and programs of the United Nations, bilateral development agencies, foundations, non-governmental organizations, broadcasters and private-sector investors. They came together in response to Agenda 21, the Plan of Action from the Earth Summit, which called for countries to "establish ways of employing modern communication technologies for effective public outreach." The result was the creation of WETV, an alternative global public service television network in which audiences can find programs which inform, enrich and entertain. The service will harness this powerful educational medium to encourage an informed understanding and balanced debate on issues of social, cultural and economic development.



Prior to its full launch early in 1996, WETV, in collaboration with other donor organizations and broadcasters, will provide a special preview of its service to coincide with the fourth World Conference on Women. For the duration of the conference, WETV's Beijing project will provide daily satellite coverage from the conference site to an estimated audience of 170 million. They are also distributing in advance pre-packaged programs on issues of gender and development.

David Nostbakken is the Executive Director of WETV

Introducing the Micronutrient initiative

Micronutrient deficiencies are a major impediment to the health, nutritional status, and development of a significant proportion of the world's population. Recognizing that cost-effective solutions are available to eliminate these deficiencies, the World Summit for Children (1990) and the International Conference on Nutrition (1992) endorsed goals for their elimination or significant reduction by the year 2000.

The Micronutrient Initiative (MI) was established in 1992 as an international secretariat within IDRC by its principal sponsors: the Canadian International Development Agency, International Development Research Centre, United Nations

Children's Fund, United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank. It was created to help harmonize global activities, to be responsible to immediate and longer term needs for implementation of national programmes to eliminate and control micronutrient malnutrition.

The mission of the MI is to provide the impetus to strengthen, expand and accelerate operational programmes to achieve the goals of the World Summit for Children that called for the virtual elimination of iodine deficiency disorders, vitamin A deficiency, and the reduction of iron deficiency anemia in women by one-third of the 1990 levels.

In the endeavour to control micronutrient malnutrition, a combination of interventions involving the promotion of breast feeding, dietary modification (eg., improving food availability and increasing food consumption), food fortification and supplementation will need to be emphasized and implemented. Solutions to overcome micronutrient deficiencies need to go well beyond traditional health and nutrition systems. Support is guided by national strategies and expert consensus regarding viable and sustainable interventions for each of the three micronutrients. Working with, and through, other institutions has been the Secretariat's strategic approach in establishing priority topics and actions for support.



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The centrepiece for the medium-term efforts of the Micronutrient Initiative is the focus on sustainable interventions, with fortification of commonly eaten foods with essential micronutrients. Food fortification is a multi-sectoral endeavour, calling for collaboration between national governments, private industry, consumer groups, international organizations and international expert groups. Issues to be dealt with include technology development, food processing and marketing, free-market approaches with minimum price support mechanisms, standards, quality assurance, product certification, social communications support, and monitoring and evaluation. A guiding principle for programme development will be support for sustainability and equity.

The MI programme framework for 1994-1997 provides for support in five areas considered critical to national and global efforts in eliminating micronutrient malnutrition (MM): advocacy and partnership; development of sustainable interventions; support for effective programmatic actions; capacity building; and resolution of key operational issues of global relevance.

Venkatesh Mannar is the Executive Director of the Micronutrient Initiative

Bellanet

A Global Forum for Sustainable Development Research and Capacity Development

In 1992, when key issues of constrained financial resources and a huge global research agenda were brought into sharp focus, a group of development assistance agencies met at Bellagio to discuss the need for more effective inter-agency collaboration. The outcome of these meetings was a three-year pilot project, the Bellanet initiative. Its objective is to improve the performance of donors and others in the development community by facilitating the sharing of ideas, information and experience concerning program planning, delivery and evaluation through the innovations in computer-mediated communications technology. The project commenced activity in February 1995.

Bellanet functions include the provision of communications services and support for multi-level, computer-based dialogues on issues and topics identified by the

member agencies; technical, logistical and process support related to computer-based connectivity and the use of group communications techniques; investigation of the role of these technologies as a catalyst for appropriate organizational change; and the capturing and dissemination of lessons learned from the processes supported. Governed by an International Steering Committee drawn from the member organizations, the initiative is implemented by the Bellanet International Secretariat, housed within IDRC, and consisting of five persons when fully staffed. An important component of this project is the Advisory Group on Information Needs (AGIN), scheduled to begin activities at the end of 1995. AGIN, an electronically connected group of representatives of recipients and Southern-based networks, will be tasked with contributing to ensuring the relevance of donor support and Bellanet activities to the recipient community. It will be supported by one staff person based at UNEP in Nairobi.

Current funding members of Bellanet include IDRC, CIDA, Rockefeller Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida/SAREC), and UNDP. An agreement is imminent with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (DGIS). Discussions concerning membership are under way with UNEP, UNESCO, NRI/ODA, UN DPCSD, ORSTOM, USAID, the World Bank, GEF, Ford Foundation, UNFPA, UNICEF, and Carnegie Corp. Other bilaterals, multilaterals and foundations will be invited to join in the future. Development agents and recipients, while not formally members, will be able to participate in some of the dialogues as well as being sources of information and the beneficiaries of some of the project's outputs.

Access to information is an undisputed necessity of today's volatile environment. Bellanet is one of the means the Centre has chosen to apply its comparative advantages for the benefit of the development community. This secretariat has been established to increase the relevance and impact of the development assistance community, and to accelerate the process of change required for organizational survival in the twenty-first century. ✱

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