

DIVISIONAL STRATEGIC PLAN

**Office of Planning and Evaluation
IDRC**

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TABLE 1: OPE RESOURCES

I. INTRODUCTION

At the outset of the nineties, the Centre is operating in a complex environment characterized by rapid change. Heterogeneity between countries of the developing world has accentuated, not least in the area of developmental research and the capacity to find solutions to problems. The obstacles to progress in some countries seem to be increasingly intractable; others have shown that they can provide useful experience from which industrialized countries can learn. At the same time, all developing countries are being drawn, in some fields at least, into a global view of the research agenda.

On the supply side, there is an increasing range of actors involved in developmental research - both in terms of research institutions in the Third World and of donors more and more aware of the potential that can be unleashed by a judicious application of resources to developmental research. More than ever, this requires an understanding of a "global research system", comprising national research in developing and industrialized countries, and an array of regional and international institutions and mechanisms.

To make the most effective contribution, the Centre must be flexible, aware of new opportunities and conscious of its own comparative advantage. The Centre is already embarked on an exciting period of innovation - as shown, for example, in initiatives relating to the Centre as a learning community; the quest for greater coherence in programming; and the work currently underway to formulate a Strategic Framework. Much of the reflection required for initiative and innovation is **information intensive**.

IDRC can be a tremendous source of knowledge and leadership in the area of developmental research - indeed, it has already proved its worth in this regard. First and foremost, however, it requires the **best possible information** for its own purposes of **ensuring the relevance and effectiveness** of the activities it undertakes and supports. Strategic information is a vital ingredient in Centre decision-making for the future and to provide a basis for strengthening its constituency in Canada and overseas. While no organization can ever have all the information it requires for taking decisions, and no ideal set of information can remove all uncertainty, the Centre does require **a systematic set of information to enable it to have a broad view of its achievements, its goals and the policies for achieving them**. It has a responsibility to its clients, to its funders and to itself to obtain the best possible and most complete information on a cost-effective basis.

The Office of Planning and Evaluation (OPE) plays a major role in gathering, evaluating, analyzing and disseminating knowledge that is critical to enhancing the Centre's effectiveness, its influence and its public image. It is far from being the sole actor in this area - these activities are of interest and are undertaken throughout the Centre. But it has special responsibility for ensuring coordination and that a "corporate view" is adequately reflected. Its principal service should be to decision-making in the Centre - but it must also ensure adequate information is available to a wider public on such issues as the Centre's effectiveness and the role of research in the development process.

**Examples of Centre need for Planning
and Evaluation information**

Development problems & research priorities:	What are the key research entry points and priorities?
Resources:	What human and financial resources are available from developing countries and external sources?
Organization:	How can research be organized and managed most effectively - and how can external support be most effective? What can be done to ensure that research is used?
Efficiency:	How efficient is the use of resources for research - what combinations can provide better results?
Output:	What is the output from research and how is it used?
Effect:	What are the social and economic effects ("impact") associated with research.

This Divisional Strategic Plan seeks to identify the major priority areas in which OPE should work, the way in which it should work and the resources that will be required. It recognizes that the Centre's needs for information and analysis in planning, policy and evaluation are far greater than it alone can provide.

The Centre context in which OPE functions to provide information and analysis remains that shown in earlier Centre documents and

reproduced here as Annex I. The Centre's planning and evaluation system is summarized by four boxes related to planning information, policies, allocation decisions and program delivery. The information required by the Centre is both **exogenous** - about the environment in which the Centre operates, such as economic, social and political conditions in the Third World, the supply of resources flowing to research through national, regional and international institutions, including from other donor agencies; development and research needs and priorities; and the ways in which the "research for development" process works. **Endogenous*** information covers the distribution, nature and effectiveness of the Centre's own efforts and interventions.

II. PRODUCING AN OPE PLAN

Since its creation in 1978, OPE's structure, responsibilities and role have undergone considerable change, usually reflected by presidential decision or through the narrative of the Program of Work and Budget. The changes have modified patterns and priorities for the production and use of planning, policy and evaluation material. OPE has felt for some time that it would benefit greatly from the clarity of purpose and common understanding that could come from producing a longer-term statement of its work for discussion and agreement with Centre management. A first internal draft was produced by OPE in 1987, but due to the pressure of other business, the idea was not pursued. A more formal proposal for the preparation of a Divisional Strategic Plan was made to Centre management at the time of the preparation of the Two-year Resource and Operational Plan (TYROP) in the fall of 1989 and this was accepted. The purpose of this document is to serve as a basis for discussion of OPE's work with Centre management.

OPE has greatly benefitted in the process of preparing this plan, and reviewing its past, present and future role, from the collaboration of Nihal Kappagoda, an ex-Regional Director and Vice-President, Planning, of IDRC. Nihal has provided a refreshing "external" view tempered with all important knowledge of the Centre's internal environment. Since OPE is providing a service to Centre management, his ability to combine a critical approach with adequate knowledge of OPE's working environment was essential. He has reviewed past OPE work, and has met with all Centre officers and a certain number of program staff to explore IDRC's needs in the planning, policy and evaluation areas and the role that OPE can play.

Nihal Kappagoda's consultation with Centre officers underlines that **few of those interviewed have an overview of the entire range of OPE activities.** This shows a failing by OPE to provide adequate information on the full scope and purpose of what it is involved in. The result is that most are aware of particular exercises or activities which have been of some direct service to them - either on an individual basis or through participation in Centre management committees; but do not see the importance or priority of OPE work which is not serving them directly. This overview is critical since OPE attaches great importance to the synergy and linkages between many of the activities in which it is engaged. The present document should contribute to providing better information, and will also suggest OPE's overall work program be discussed regularly and approved by Centre management. The myriad

demands that can be and are made of a division like OPE will require tough decisions on the **actual** range of activities that can be undertaken, given that an increase in resources is unlikely at present.

There is never an "ideal" time for writing a strategic plan; **two factors** complicate the task for OPE at this moment:

1) As a major actor in contributing to the study of new initiatives for the Centre, and in providing information and analysis for Centre policy, a substantial part of OPE's work over medium-term will depend on **decisions taken as a result of the Centre Strategic Framework**. The orientations that result from this process will determine major information and analysis requirements for the future. One thing is certain: the need for information and analysis for strategic decision-making will not diminish.

2) As pointed out by a number of officers interviewed by Nihal Kappagoda, a period of organizational budget cuts and restrictions is not the most auspicious for providing a challenging vision and discussion of future work. Nevertheless, a plan must look beyond immediate circumstances, and it is important that management decisions reflect the weight that **should be** attached to planning and evaluation work in the Centre and the role of OPE. If the resources available for required work are judged inadequate, but cannot be supplemented in the short-term, this will nevertheless provide signals for future resource allocation decisions. In the short-term, it will point to the need to make decisions about the work program that can be realistically and successfully undertaken with available resources.

There are reasons that make this a favourable moment for looking at the range of future activities and for getting clear guidance from Centre management on the priorities for OPE's work:

1) Centre demands and expectations of OPE have been increasing and far surpass its ability to deliver. A clear sense of **where** management feels it can get the best pay-off from OPE's limited resources is critical. In making choices on the range of activities, trade off between the **quantity** of tasks and the depth and **quality** of work will have to be considered;

2) The sense that IDRC has taken major steps to establish effective planning and evaluation systems, and it is now important to chart new directions for their development and for undertaking work on key issues.

Past Reviews: There were two reviews of the Centre's planning and evaluation functions during the eighties - the first was carried out in 1982 as part of the **comprehensive audit** of IDRC undertaken by the Auditor-General of Canada. Although the system was in the process of evolving, the report made several comments and recommendations that endorsed the work of OPE and provided new directions to its activities.

The second broad-ranging review was the **internal audit conducted in 1988**, with the participation of consultants from Price Waterhouse. This again gave broad support to the Centre's planning and evaluation system. Specific recommendations concerning components of the planning and evaluation system and their linkages have received attention from Centre management - one element, for instance, led to the study on streamlining the Centre's planning system.

The aim throughout the OPE planning process has been to produce a document which could provide for manageable discussion by Centre management. The sections on the various areas of work (Chapter IV, sections i-v) will provide some review of past work and present status, but the emphasis is very much on looking at the future and how OPE's contribution can be most appropriate and effective.

III. OPE: AN EVOLVING ROLE

The Office of Planning¹ was set up in the fall of 1978 when it was recognized that IDRC needed a capability to undertake corporate planning, policy analysis and the evaluation of activities that it had supported. These functions could best be performed by a single unit to ensure adequate feedback between its related tasks. The Centre was composed of a number of programs that had been established along divisional lines quite independent of one another, and that had to some extent developed different procedures. OPE, in spite of its limited size, had a potential to contribute to drawing together some of the disparate elements in an organization that was at that time disbursing annually some \$40 million from Canada's envelope for Official Development Assistance. More particularly, it could ensure a common **approach to planning and evaluation** by the independent elements. Accordingly, the President gave the Office the mandate to design the structure and methodology for Centre-wide project and program evaluation and to prepare a long-range policy for the Centre including the preparation of medium-term forecasts.

Based on this mandate the objectives and functions undertaken by OPE have evolved over the years - some illustration is given in the three "cuts" shown in Figure 1. Evolution has taken place in the framework of a **consistent effort to improve the Centre's access to high-quality information** for taking strategic decisions and has followed a consistent philosophy for the manner in which OPE could best serve the Centre. This has meant that it has been possible in most cases to accommodate to major developments in the Centre's need for, and capacity to deal with, information and analysis while maintaining a sense of continuity.

In the mid-eighties, this evolution owed much to a **better understanding of the type of information that could be useful** to the Centre in its planning and policy considerations; in some cases, this coincided with the recommendations proposed by external review, such as the 1982 comments of the Auditor General that the Centre require better information on the research environment.

Evolution also took place as a result of the recognition that **resources for this work in the Centre would remain limited**, and that there was a need to build on those planning and evaluation information needs that are common to IDRC, as a donor, and to the developing countries, wishing to manage their own research agenda. Common interests could cover lessons from research funding, charting development effects associated with research and mapping the research environment and use of resources available for research.

¹ Renamed the Office of Planning and Evaluation (OPE) in 1979.

OPE'S FUNCTIONS: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

A. In 1978

1. Centre Management of all aspects of the operations of Regional Offices;
2. The design of the structure and methodology for project and program evaluation;
3. The preparation of a long-range policy for the Centre involving the preparation of medium-term forecasts for periods not exceeding three years.

B. In 1984

1. Studying critically and independently the role of research in development, with particular respect to the Centre and its relationship with developing countries;
2. Development and coordination of a planning and evaluation system appropriate to IDRC;
3. Promoting and supporting research planning and project activities in developing countries;
4. Providing assistance to the President's Committee on strategic policy questions.

C. In 1990

The primary responsibility of the office will remain to facilitate and inform strategic decision-making on Centre policies and programs, by:

1. Designing and maintaining the Centre's planning and evaluation system;
2. Analyzing and reviewing program and research policy issues relating to Board and Centre concerns;
3. Initiating and coordinating research planning and evaluation studies;
4. Collecting, evaluating and analyzing the relevant qualitative and quantitative data; and
5. Disseminating planning and evaluation information.

- SOURCES:**
- ° The Introduction of a Planning & Evaluation System in IDRC. "September, 1979"
 - ° Program of Work and Budget 1984/85
 - ° Two-Year Resource and Operational Plan, 1990/91, 1991/92

Evolution in OPE's functions was also determined by structural changes in the Centre:

- in 1984, the responsibility for management of the operational aspects of regional offices was transferred to the President's Office, with OPE maintaining responsibility for the coordination of planning and evaluation activities of regional offices;

- also in 1984, OPE assumed special responsibility for undertaking study of "strategic issues" for the newly-created **President's Committee**;

- in 1987, the Board of Governors established a **Program and Policy Committee (P&PC)** as a mechanism for monitoring and discussing more closely the Centre's program and policy development; and,

- in 1988, Centre management created the **Program Committee (PRO)** as part of a more fundamental restructuring of the Centre's committees.

Throughout these changes, OPE has continued to report directly to the President, while carrying out substantive work for Centre committees, particularly the PRO. The effect of the structural changes in Centre's committees has been to provide OPE more readily with "client" groups - firstly, through the creation of the President's Committee, then with the establishment of a Board committee, and most recently with the introduction of PRO. These changes underscored OPE's natural role in providing a service to the Centre in planning, evaluation and policy. They created the necessary conditions for more productive use of OPE's resources since they had specific responsibility for commissioning, receiving and discussing policy, planning and evaluation studies.

In view of the vast potential range of needs for information and analysis, there is probably still further scope for harmonization and rationalization of the agendas of the various committees. Certainly given OPE's continuing limited resources, there is a need for clear prioritization of subjects requiring in-depth work, both for committees and more generally in maintenance and development of the Centre's planning and evaluation systems. There is clearly a limit to the number of policy issues that can be tackled by OPE or the Centre at any one time. PRO has already produced a plan for policy issues and this needs to be further developed as a major means for identifying OPE priorities.

OPE's present orientation is well in evidence in the fact that, at the time of writing, 11 of 15 documents or presentations scheduled for the next five meetings of PRO involve OPE either as main or part actor.

Though the consultation process, it is clear that some actors see that the corollary of OPE having Centre management committees as major clients, as being a reduction in its ability to function as a "think-tank" studying broader trends in developmental research not related to impending management decisions. OPE's links with regional offices have also become more distant; this is partly a natural result of the increased responsibility and resources accorded to those offices, and partly a consequence of OPE's closer attention to the agenda of Ottawa-based committees.

OPE Performance: some major accomplishments will be reported in the specific sections. Overall, one of OPE's major accomplishments has been to **assist management in establishing viable, effective systems for planning and evaluation.** IDRC has shown considerable leadership and innovation in these fields, and its achievements have been acknowledged by other research funding agencies as well as by the two audits mentioned earlier.

Planning and evaluation systems are not established "once and for all". They cannot be static, just as the organization itself is not. They must reflect the changing structure and needs; this has been and continues to be the case in the Centre, where the systems created in the late seventies and early eighties have been reviewed and renewed, and subject to frequent new developments. Later sections will give some illustration of the direction that future developments could take.

The planning and evaluation system exists in the Centre and has started to function well to provide Management and the Board with strategic information and analysis. With all program divisions now showing considerable enthusiasm for systematic evaluation and all having participated in a cycle of in-depth divisional reviews as major components in Centre planning, the initial challenge of creating and breathing life into these systems is far behind. In **evaluation**, much developed as a result of OPE's earlier direct involvement with divisions in project evaluations; program divisions are now increasingly taking over responsibility for this. ~~The interest in policy work has seen similar increase~~ here again, demands could easily outstrip the ability of OPE to deliver (and quite possibly the Centre's capacity to absorb!).

Other major developments in the Centre have resulted from OPE's work. The history of ideas is always complex, and just as IDRC has difficulty claiming cause and responsibility for development effects "associated" with its support, the effect of policy and other work contributing to more effective debate is also difficult to trace in linear fashion. OPE has been part and parcel of the process by which the Centre has striven to take a **more corporate approach to its activities** - first, through ensuring greater commonness in approach, but subsequently in ensuring greater attention to strategic decision-making - through policies raised in the PPR's, contribution to clearer definition of the Centre's mandate and mission, and to looking at IDRC's position in the

overall environment in which it functions. Greater interest in broad strategy in Centre management and in the Board have been well-served by OPE's work; at the same time, OPE's work have played some role in encouraging change in these directions.

These developments put the Centre in good stead to pursue activities in the future and to respond to new challenges. There is an increasing interest in looking at broad strategic directions and the "macro" effect that IDRC can have, in addition to the micro effects at which it has been so successful through project support.

IV. THE WAY AHEAD

Nihal Kappagoda's consultation of Centre officers on the planning, policy and evaluation functions in the Centre and OPE's role showed that there is overwhelming recognition and support for the continued importance of these functions in IDRC. As was expected, however, there is considerable **divergence** in the management group as to which are the **priorities for OPE work**.

The preparation of the OPE Strategic Plan provides an opportunity for Management to comment on issues that are central to the activities of OPE and to indicate priorities in the range of functions and activities that OPE can undertake.

A. OPE Working Style Concerns:

As a result of the consultation process, particularly with Centre officers, it became evident that there was a **range of opinion** with respect to some major aspects of OPE's work. These can be stated under the following six headings:

- 1) **Clients:** a number of officers commented that OPE's work in past years has been too much oriented towards the Board of Governors. OPE has been aware that its evolution had led it away from work of **direct service to individual program officers** (such as was possible, for instance, with involvement in individual project evaluations). The expectation is that OPE's work should serve **Centre management as a whole** through PRO and PC and, where possible, officers and divisional directors, directly. Ideally, for a broad range of work, there should not be a discrepancy between Board and management needs. Greater attention will be required to the way in which OPE's program of work is determined -this is dealt with later. OPE must also seek to ensure that it remains credible and relevant to the concerns of program staff. They continue to be an invaluable source of information and opinion for OPE in carrying out its work.
- 2) **Systems Development vs. Activities:** OPE has played a major role in the development of the Centre's planning and evaluation systems. While they are now well established, considerable time could still be spent in maintaining and controlling these systems on management's behalf. OPE suggests that the preponderance of its work should now tilt toward substantive activities and studies and away from systems development and maintenance.
- 3) **Program Policy vs. Resources:** OPE is seen as having been part of an accentuated distinction between Centre deliberations on

matters of program policy and those on resources. Questions relating to program policy (institutional support, for example) usually have resource implications. Those dealt with in resource terms, such as the Centre's presence in regions, have clear linkage with the effectiveness and style of the Centre's program. OPE will endeavour to provide a more balanced approach and be of service as required. More active OPE involvement in resource questions will depend on management decisions on its priorities.

- 4) **OPE Agenda:** some officers think that "OPE has its own agenda". Not surprisingly, this is not felt to be the case in OPE. As mentioned earlier, however, consultation showed that many do not have a complete view of what OPE is working on, and may tend to view matters which are not of direct service to them as being "OPE's agenda". For this reason and to ensure clarity in the specification of the "client" and purpose of various work items, OPE proposes in the future to **lay out a more detailed work program with time allocation**, in so far as is possible, to distinct tasks and functions in each area of activity. **This should be approved by the President's Committee.** The proposed program will be the result of prior consultation in the Centre. This procedure should increase management's understanding and endorsement of the directions taken. It may also reduce the need for ad-hoc requests; at present, OPE spends a significant portion of its resources each year working on issues which cannot be anticipated at the start of the year.
- 5) **Think Tank vs. Service:** a number of useful initiatives have resulted from OPE initiatives, such as the study undertaken by John Lewis and the meetings which have followed from this. At the outset, these were not seen as directly serving the needs of any particular division. There is however a broader Centre interest that has to be considered. To what extent does IDRC wish to see itself as a leader in knowledge about developmental research and its funding? What kind of activities does this require? What kind of overview? Clearly any work of this kind should be covered in the work program presented to the PC. Management's view on the importance of this kind of work would be valuable in discussing the OPE plan.
- 6) **OPE "Program" Activity:** OPE has endeavoured to reflect IDRC's principles of responsiveness and support for developing country priorities and needs. This has been a hallmark of the way that it has undertaken evaluations and used consultancies. On three occasions in ten years, OPE has organized workshops designed to discuss developing country experience in research planning and evaluation; two on existing systems and priorities for research evaluation as part of broader range

of management functions in agricultural research. These have resulted in publications which have been very well received.

The consultation with program directors shows that they do not feel that OPE should play a role in building research planning and evaluation capacity. Management may wish to consider what contribution the Centre should make to these critically important areas, and how it should be managed.

Future directions for OPE should not preclude the organization of this kind of workshop. It has the potential for considerable pay-off (in developing countries and with IDRC peer organizations) for a relatively small investment.

B. OPE Working Principles:

In addition to taking account of the issues raised in the consultation, there are **five principles** which OPE has evolved to guide its work and which will assume increased importance in the future:

- 1) **Synergy:** The value of mutual advantages and learning between various strands of OPE's activity was recognized and embodied in the way in which OPE was established - linking planning and evaluation. OPE has consistently built on this approach to exploit the potential for making the most of its own complementary activities, and those of others generating useful information within and outside the Centre.

One example of this synergy was in the **policy work for sub-Saharan Africa**. Evaluation work - such as CIRES or CODESRIA - was always available. Previous research environment work on small country research systems had delineated some key issues - such as that of "critical mass" - and looked at some of the responses to "smallness" in research terms. An earlier study by John Lewis laid the groundwork for a more focused study on External Flows to Developmental Research in sub-Saharan Africa.

- 2) **Value Added:** OPE sees much of its future work as taking advantage and adding value to the generation and collection of information in other parts of the Centre. With the decentralization of project evaluation, for instance, and the projected increase in evaluation activity by program divisions, OPE will service and take advantage from increased information flow.
- 3) **Corporate Memory and Systematic Building:** Related to the notion of value-added, is the one that **the value of a total body of information is greater than its component parts**. Much of OPE's initial work has been on components of a total body of information: these now start to build towards a larger, more

productive whole. The information from the Lewis study on External Support for instance, or specific country data on research resources, says little by itself. As many such elements or components are combined, however, patterns emerge which allow for greater insight. Access to information and

BUILDING ON INFORMATION: THE DAKAR AGENDA

Generation of an agenda of key policy issues and of background information for the High-level seminar on External Support to Developmental Research in sub-Saharan Africa was based on combining insights from many different information sources:

- The IDRC paper on Strategic Choices for the Region;
- The first account of the Centre's regional consultative meetings organized by EARO and WARO;
- ISNAR data;
- SPAAR data and policy deliberations;
- IDRC (OPE) research environment work on small countries research and multilateral research centres;
- USAID policy paper on agricultural research;
- Sharing Knowledge for Development - IDRC's Information Strategy for Africa.

the potential for combining data from different sources is enhanced by the growing development of computer-based systems and the increased interest in collecting information on the research environment (eg. by ISNAR). IDRC should aim to remain on the leading edge for analyzing and clarifying issues relating to broad policy and strategic choices.

- 4) **Standardized Production - Customized Product:** To make the best use of OPE resources, OPE will move further to standardize production i.e. to ensure that generic information is available, but to customize the product in the sense of being able to provide particular analysis or information for specific purposes. This will be possible, for instance, through OPEIS, and the

output of the Statistical Support function and as a result of the proposed development of the evaluation system providing a standard methodology for a group of studies.

- 5) ***Combining Interests with Developing Countries:*** For reasons outlined above (responsiveness and support for developing country research priorities) and to maximize the output from scarce resources, OPE will continue to try and combine efforts to take advantage of similar information needs between IDRC and developing countries. If we can contribute towards developing countries own agenda for study and information collection, then we may be able to get a substantial product quite out of proportion of the size of our investment. Equally, overall IDRC activity in evaluation has been quite limited up to now and at this limited level it has been relatively simple to ensure adequate sensitivity to partners' involvement and that they obtained information that was useful to them. As the volume increases, the Centre will have to guard against reverting to the more donor-agency focused evaluation that prevails in the organizations and that has been criticized by developing countries.
- 6) ***Public Awareness:*** OPE increasingly sees the areas in which it is active as generating material that will be of importance not just to the Centre and its peers, but to a broader public: studies of development effects, capacity building and the developmental research process all have this potential.

C. Proposed Mission, Objectives and Functions for OPE:

A mission statement for OPE is proposed as follows:

OPE mission is to contribute to maximizing the effectiveness of Centre-supported activities in fulfilment of IDRC's mandate and its statement of mission and objectives.

The Objective of OPE should be to ensure that the Centre-wide system for policy analysis, planning and evaluation provides the Board and Centre management with information required to make well-informed decisions on strategic directions, policies and allocation of resources.

To achieve this objective, OPE should fulfill the following functions:

- a) undertake, on behalf of Centre management, the establishment, maintenance and coordination of the Centre's policy analysis, planning and evaluation system;
- b) initiate, coordinate or undertake policy or evaluation studies, usually of Centre-wide concern, and the

identification of key issues relating to funding developmental research;

- c) undertake or liaise with agencies involved in studies of the allocation of resources to national research in developing countries and monitor the activities of other donors supporting developmental research, as required for the Centre's policy and planning activities;
- d) ensure that the Centre's information databases can adequately serve the general information and policy analysis needs of management;
- e) coordinate and monitor the Centre's planning process including the preparation of the Centre's Strategic Framework, Regional Strategic Frameworks, Divisional Strategic Plans and other long-term planning documents;
- f) ensure that the Centre's planning and policy documents reflect previous decisions and available information, and contribute, as required by Centre management, to resource allocation decisions.

OPE will work closely with the President, Vice-Presidents, PC and PRO in accomplishing its objective. A detailed OPE work-plan will be endorsed by the President's Committee so that there is no ambiguity in its functions or the work undertaken.

OPE's activities are reported in the following sections in more detail under the following headings:

- Evaluation
- Planning
- Policy
- Research environment
- Information for planning and policy

V. FUTURE OPE ACTIVITIES

A. Evaluation:

- 1) ***Centre Needs and Present System:*** Reliable and timely information from evaluation is essential to the Centre to know what has been achieved with its support and to learn from past experience how future activities can be made more effective.

Evaluation, in the Centre, means examination of completed or nearly completed activities i.e. ex post. It involves the production of information which, in our environment of perpetual change, can help identify new approaches, improve existing ones and indicate the most promising areas for allocating either growing or shrinking resources.

The Centre has now developed an evaluation system that has the potential for it to become **a leader in the evaluation of developmental research**. In addition to providing **high-quality information on lessons and results from Centre-supported activities for inclusion in IDRC's improved future policy and planning**, it should also generate material that will be of interest to the organization's peers and to a broader public. The essentials of the evaluation system were discussed and approved by Management in 1986 (and have recently been described in a brochure), though there have been some refinements since. Its main characteristics are:

(i) **responsibility** for undertaking evaluations is **decentralized** to program divisions, with OPE as the hub of the **Centre's evaluation network**. (This decentralization was again endorsed by Centre officers in interviews with Nihal Kappagoda).

(ii) evaluation activity is largely determined by the **need for information for future decision-making**. There are two "fixed", obligatory elements - Project Completion Reports and Divisional Reviews at the time of Divisional Strategic Plans. The broad range of project or program evaluation is facultative and decided on by divisional requirements. OPE ensures, through coordination and through its own activities, that questions of Centrewide importance are adequately covered.

The main elements of the evaluations system are as follows:

Project Completion Reports (PCRs): OPE is the Centrewide depository. They are not reviewed by OPE systematically but

used when appropriate as sources of information. At Management's request, OPE undertook a review of the PCR system in 1987 which confirmed its usefulness. Another review may be undertaken in 1991.

Evaluation plans: each division is responsible for indicating its evaluation plans. In future, they will be requested to indicate **why** each evaluation is planned and **what information** it is expected to yield so as to provide for a better overview of planned evaluation activity and the opportunity to build on divisional intentions.

Project/program evaluations: divisions are expected to forward a copy of all evaluation assessments and evaluation reports to OPE. This should enable it to monitor evaluation activity identify the primary policy issues being addressed and areas of common concern, and bring results to the attention of a wider audience. **OPE's capacity to comment on individual evaluation assessments and evaluation reports will be surpassed** in the future with the planned expansion in Centre evaluation activity (see annex II).

Disseminating evaluation results: OPE keeps an inventory of Centre evaluation studies. It is responsible for ensuring that the Centre's evaluation results are disseminated through Evaluation Abstracts, when appropriate, and through inclusion in OPEIS. This data base, which is now being finalized for use by OPE and others in the Centre, will enable users to search for particular evaluation reports which cover specific issues or to compare the findings of all reports in the database on a broad range of questions. The Centre also needs to be able to tap into external sources of information on research evaluation and this feature may be added to the OPEIS system after its current capabilities are verified.

Methodology development and training: with increasing decentralization in the Centre's evaluation activity, there is a corresponding need to ensure that the broader range of actors now involved or to be involved in evaluation receive adequate support. OPE is responsible for this, and has given advice, on an ad hoc basis, when requested. With the expected volume of evaluations, it will not provide consulting or training services to individual studies. The first stage in a more feasible route is nearing completion, the production of a reference manual on evaluation methods. OPE will work with Management and program divisions to determine the priorities for further stages.

Development effects: the publication of "With Our Own Hands", prepared by OPE in 1986, was the first attempt to document the development effects associated with the Centre's funding of research. Information in this area, **both for publication and for Centre learning**, continues to be important. OPE is

providing backup to a series of studies which will be commissioned by the Regional Offices in collaboration with program divisions. Some degree of commonness in approach by program officers and by IDRC consultants will ensure that there is a greater chance of achieving a collection of comparable studies worthy of publicity and publication.

Capacity-building: the Centre has played a major role in contributing to the development of research capacity in developing countries. It has provided much less support to the development of major critical functions of research management. OPE has taken some modest, but well-received initiatives in this area (eg. 1986 Singapore workshop). The Centre should seek areas in which there is a clear **identity of need in terms of information** between developing countries and the Centre.

- 2) **Past Performance:** In addition to designing and refining the Centre's evaluation system, OPE has been actively involved in specific studies many of which have contributed directly to Centre decision making, program planning or policy formulation.

Decisions on whether to continue funding to particular categories of recipients were based, in at least three instances, on evaluation information. Programs of support to institutions in the Southern Cone of Latin America, three Canadian area specific learned societies, and the International Foundation for Science were all evaluated and the results informed the decisions taken. Policies governing the use of small grants programs, networks and support for training are based on evaluations designed for that purpose. There were also less formal efforts to assess and refine support to particular national and regional institutions and to obtain indications on how to proceed in the future. IDRC support to projects in Ethiopia, the SoKoine University of Agriculture, the Chinese Academy of Forestry and the Centre ivoirien de recherches Economiques et Sociales (CIRES) was studied by separate international evaluation teams. The results were used by both IDRC program staff and the recipient or coordinating institutions. In the case of CIRES, the evaluation findings became available in time to influence a large institutional grant from CIDA.

Evaluation reports have been the basis of Centre accountability both to the board of Governors and to the Canadian public. OPE has regularly reported to the Board on evaluation results. The publication of the book With Our Own Hands made available, to a large public readership, analyses of the extent to which the utilization of research results from a small sample of IDRC-supported projects had an effect on the lives of the intended beneficiaries.

- 3) ***Future Developments and OPE's Role:*** OPE's future role in evaluation should be to **enhance and add value to the ongoing activity in the Centre**, and ensure that adequate studies and information are forthcoming on key Centrewide issues.

With a well-planned agenda for future policy studies, and divisional evaluation plans that make it possible to identify what issues planned evaluations will address, OPE will be able to build on and provide service to evaluation activity elsewhere in the Centre. The trigger for major OPE evaluation activity will be management policy interest. OPE will use a **matrix** showing Centrewide issues on one axis and planned evaluations on the other to monitor which evaluations can be expected to contribute to study of these issues. On key issues, identified with management, OPE will undertake general backup work - literature search, methodology review, training - to provide a formal framework for the decentralized activity. The first case where this approach will be used is for **networks** which serves as an illustration of how the proposed system will help to the evaluation resources more efficiently and make better information available for Centre policy decisions. Annex III and IV show schematically how the new system differs from the old.

For individual program or project evaluations, OPE's work of "**quality control**" on behalf of Centre management will be severely limited - particularly if the volume of evaluation activity increases as rapidly as divisional plans indicate. For the time being, it will be greater in the case of **development effects evaluations** commissioned through regional offices.

The quality of all evaluations is nevertheless clearly critical to the usefulness and reliability of the information collected. OPE should examine with Centre management and program divisions how this role can be fulfilled in a cost effective way. One suggestion is to submit a random sample of Centre evaluation assessments and reports to PRO or P&PC, or have some reviewed by external evaluation specialists.

OPE will play a key role in assembling and, where appropriate, **disseminating** the Centre's evaluation information. It will also continue to **monitor the evaluation activities of other organizations**, particularly in developmental research, and draw the attention of management to useful material.

Given the limited resources available for evaluation, and the frequent criticism that evaluation is an activity undertaken by donors purely for their own interests, the Centre should continue to **seek cost-effective opportunities to promote evaluation of research in developing countries**. One area

where information interests are common is the study of development effects. It is suggested that the Centre, through OPE and the regional offices, endeavour to collaborate with a small number of countries to ensure that they study, say, one case arising from a Centre-supported project each year.

A few exceptions to OPE's more limited role in evaluation will be necessary. The office will respond to requests from the Board or senior management committees where, for particular reasons, its involvement in an evaluation is required. OPE will work on indicators to measure comparative costs and benefits associated with different styles of funding (multi-disciplinary vs. disciplinary projects, for example) and aim at more comparative evaluations. Also, in the interests of maintaining skills and program sensitivity, each staff member will be required to become involved in one evaluation activity per year, in a "hands-on" capacity.

It is suggested that OPE allocate 1.5 p.y to this area.

B. Corporate Planning and the Planning Process:

- 1) **Centre Needs:** The Centre's planning requirements and process were the subject of a study produced for Management by OPE in 1989. The main elements are:

Corporate Planning: the first element in ensuring a corporate view of the future is the **Centre Strategic Framework** which is at present being produced "based on a visionary assessment of our external and internal environments that includes our mission, objectives, guiding values and philosophy, major policies and strategic priorities." OPE is acting as the manager and secretariat of the process.

The second element of planning at the corporate level is the **Two-year Resource and Operational Plan**, which includes IDRC grant reference levels for four years, and indicative planning figures for Centre appropriations for a similar period. This replaced the former annual Program of Work and Budget, which was the responsibility of the Resources sector, and the Planning section of the Program and Policy Review, which used to be produced by OPE. OPE does not play any role in the preparation of the TYROP.

Nihal Kappagoda has pointed out that "the original mandate given to OPE required it to develop a capability to prepare medium-term forecasts for the Centre. Given the uncertainties in resource availability, the implications of different scenarios could be worked out as in every other organization based on the best available information." He recommends that OPE be responsible for a forecasting exercise, in the context of preparing a Corporate plan every five years. This kind of

**EVALUATION COORDINATION:
A REVIEW OF SUPPORT TO NETWORKS

Among the dozen or so major policy issues of current concern to IDRC, support to networks is one which will be addressed in a large number of divisional evaluations over the next two years.

Divisional evaluation plans indicate that five divisions have eight evaluations planned focussing on support to networks activities. OPE has also been asked by PRO, on two occasions over the past two years, to pull together existing information on networks. By building up a dossier on this issue, OPE is providing a service to the divisions (and management) in several ways. Based on a review of the existing literature and Centre evaluation data (OPEIS, PCRs, Post-Project Abstracts) a framework of the main concepts and central issues has been produced. This will help standardize definitions, provide a checklist of the major questions and identify the few key issues on which all studies should try to address. Lessons learned from previous work on these issues has also been summarized as a foundation for future studies. Background information in the form of Centre statistics (funding patterns by division and other baseline data) could be part of this dossier and once assembled would be useful for all networks evaluations.

Information on methods used for evaluating networks and experts in this field could also be included as a section in the dossier.

This reference document also includes an inventory of network related activities (projects and evaluations) across the Centre. This increases the potential for sharing of resources among related studies. The standardized study components and linkages among network evaluations will yield higher quality, more comprehensive information which can readily be integrated in a major policy paper.

The dossier currently available in OPE on networks contains the following sections:

- 1) a literature review comprised of a full bibliography, an annotated bibliography and research notes on the major articles;
- 2) an analysis of the lessons learned, information in PCRs and OPEIS;
- 3) a preliminary listing of Centre support to networks (to be updated by the divisions);
- 4) a summary of the seminal conceptual approach to evaluating networks;
- 5) a guide to the major networks issues and questions.

corporate plan would also include qualitative aspects dealing with how the Centre conducts its business. The Centre's planning system as discussed and approved in 1989 does not include a corporate plan; many would be reluctant to see any additions to the system, considering that the Centre already has a full slate of planning activities. There may, however, be a need to produce a document which goes some way towards "operationalizing" the vision of the Strategic Framework, and this would be the responsibility of OPE.

The third element of the Corporate planning process is that of **Resource allocation**, which is not a discreet part of the process since decisions are taken through the TYROP. The 1989 paper recommended that the President's Committee should re-examine the adequacy of the process and the information provided for making resource allocation choices for Board consideration. OPE is involved with the PC in this work. **OPE's role in resource allocation is, however, now marginal** - it assisted the President's Allocation Committee in reviewing divisional submissions for the TYROP in the fall of 1989; other than that, it has not been involved in any allocation work or review of alternatives.

Nihal Kappagoda and his consultation in the Centre suggest that **OPE should play an increased role in studying and presenting allocation alternatives** for Centre management. Management should consider whether it feels this is desirable or required. For the time being, it could decide to make OPE contribution to the budget/planning process more systematic by regularizing and expanding the role played in last year's TYROP. It should also decide whether work of a longer-term nature is required in order to strengthen OPE's contribution to the linkage between the consideration of program and resource issues.

Divisional Planning: In addition to determining their two-year plans for the TYROP, divisions are to prepare, approximately every six years, a Divisional Strategic Plan (DSP). This provides the overall divisional framework within which shorter term plans are written. OPE plays no role in the division's work. OPE is in charge of managing, on behalf of Centre management, the review process once the division has produced its draft plan, through to presentation to the Board. The new process will require OPE to play a more active role than in the past, in terms of providing comments on divisional plans to the PC and in managing the external review process.

Regional Strategic Frameworks (RSFs): Regional offices are now expected to produce a RSF every three years. OPE plays no role in the preparation of these, nor, for the time being in their review. A number of those interviewed by Nihal Kappagoda have suggested that OPE should have a special

rigorously, either by PRO and PC, or by OPE acting on their behalf.

Linkages/Monitoring the Planning System: The planning process supposes considerable linkage between the main planning documents of the Centre. The DSPs should reflect the Centre strategic framework, the RSFs, relevant evaluations, and policy and research environment studies. The divisional TYROPs should in turn reflect the DSPs and the RSFs as updated. The role of the latter has yet to evolve, as has the degree to which program allocations suggested in the DSPs and TYROP reflect regional statements. The Centre could, through OPE or elsewhere, expend considerable resources on monitoring the consistency of planning documents and actual outcomes. Guidance is required on the priority to attach to this work.

External Factors: The Centre's planning process can only reflect the information available to it. Divisions are responsible for collecting and analyzing information in their respective areas. OPE must serve the planning process in synthesizing available information and bringing to it an overview and critical awareness of issues that affect activities on a Centre-wide basis. Much of this work is carried out under the other categories of its activities eg. evaluation, research environment, information, and is covered elsewhere.

- 2) **Past Activities:** OPE has worked consistently with Management in designing and implementing an effective planning system for IDRC. The 1989 paper was the most recent of a number of substantial contributions to the process of building and reviewing Centre needs and performance.

In the Past, OPE has had a more direct input into planning though participation in the President's Allocation Committee, responsibility to the President for representing IDRC in ODA grant negotiations, production of the Program and Policy Review. It has also been the manager of the In-depth Divisional Review process.

- 3) **Future Developments and OPE's Role:**

Corporate Planning: OPE is playing a leading role in preparation of the CSF. This has required the full-time attention of one OPE staff member.

OPE should provide regular briefings to the President's Committee as part of the budget review process, as was done in 1989. The office will examine with the PC how this can be most effective in their work.

Divisional Planning: OPE will play a more active role than in the past in divisional reviews, particularly since these will not be undertaken by a Board panel, where there was less need for briefing. It is expected that a divisional review will take up 3 person/months each year.

Regional Strategic Frameworks: No role in RSFs is at present suggested for OPE. Present plans would see two produced each year. It may be that smaller regional offices will require some assistance in this area. Management should decide what degree of quality control and monitoring might be required, and who should undertake it.

Linkages and Monitoring the System: The role of ensuring consistency in the Centre's planning documents and system could take up considerable resources. In addition to the 3 p/m s allocated to divisional strategic plans, OPE expects to allocate a further 3 p/m s to "managing" the Centre's planning process. Priorities should be accommodated within that allocation.

External Factors: OPE is responsible for broad analysis of key Centre policy issues, for lessons from evaluation etc. It will continue to have responsibility for ensuring that this material is brought to the attention of Centre management and adequately reflected in Centre plans.

C. Policy Analysis:

- 1) **Centre Needs:** Policy studies and analysis are designed to serve primarily an internal purpose, but can also be used to serve an external one. The Centre requires policy studies and analysis of issues that are of concern and that are expected to affect its actions. As one of the world's leading agencies funding developmental research, it can also expect that its policy studies will be of interest to others (e.g. the study on Strategic Choices for sub-Saharan Africa).

Policy is most often used to mean "a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in the light of given conditions to guide and determine future decisions" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary). As such, it is to be expected that a good proportion of Centre policy studies will lead to specific decisions. As the notion of IDRC as a learning community evolves, however, obtaining and sharing knowledge and information about key issues is increasingly recognized as a priority, **whether or not a formal policy is ultimately developed.** Policy analysis should also cover studying the effect of the implementation of previous policy decisions.

Policy studies in the Centre should cover **both program and resource policy.** Frequently the two elements should be **present in a single study** though the consultation in the Centre reveals the impression that this has been inadequately reflected in OPE policy work undertaken to date. OPE has a comparative advantage in being able to deal with both elements, and this has been under-exploited.

The policy analysis function of OPE is now geared primarily to **serving the needs of PRO and the P&PC of the Board,** and to a lesser extent the PC. Since these committees are the main policy making bodies on program issues, servicing their needs

has taken priority over other activities of OPE. Their existence has given much greater focus and effectiveness to OPE policy work than could be the case earlier. Success, however, depends on determining a feasible medium-term program for policy studies and limiting, as far as possible, ad hoc requests. The balance between a well-defined medium term work program and some, but limited, flexibility to respond to short term requests is vital.

Much policy work relies on information that may be available in the Centre and generated by other activities such as evaluations. OPE also relies heavily on the goodwill of Centre program staff as a source of information; consulting them has been an essential and valuable element of all studies. Centre management strengthened OPE's capacity to use information from Centre and external databases by the creation in 1989 of a Support Function that allows it to handle the information requirements of policy and planning studies more systematically. In line with wishing to ensure value-added and maximum pay-off to information gathering, the **policy agenda of the Centre should have a major influence on the Centre's evaluation plans and on any special research environment work that OPE might undertake.** One problem for studies is that all the information required is seldom available during their preparation. The lags involved in collecting primary (or even in some cases secondary) data for use in policy analysis are substantial - studies triggered by the preparation of the Strategic Framework for sub-Saharan Africa were received twelve months later, six months after the submission of the study to the Board of Governors. An effective system for identifying future policy studies will go some way to overcoming this handicap.

- 2) **Comments on Past Activities:** Policy studies produced by OPE have been well received in the Centre and in some cases widely circulated outside. Some have assisted the Centre to develop stated policies, such as on training, sub-Saharan Africa, IDRC mission and objectives. The **small grants study**, for instance, led to decisions about when and how the Centre should fund such activities.

The office has also stimulated and contributed to Centre learning about networks, utilization of research results, the evolution of IDRC, Centre-wide units, non-governmental organizations, decentralization, modalities of support, "themes", integrated support to research institutions (ISRI).

Over its last few years, the policy section of the Program and Policy Review (PPR) became more and more geared to specific areas in which management had decisions to make. Earlier, the selection of issues discussed in the PPR was less directed at specific decisions, but nevertheless had considerable effect on thinking (eg. the discussion of persistence vs. seed money in PPR V, 1983). With the discontinuation of the PPR, policy papers will now be produced and presented to Centre Committees "in their own right".

The consultation of Centre officers regarding OPE's role in policy studies identified some ambiguity in policy setting, leading to a lack of clarity on policy issues even after "decisions" have been taken. This suggests that the **purpose of policy studies** needs now to be **more carefully spelled out** by OPE and the various committees for which it is working. After discussion of relevant documents, OPE should work more closely with the Secretariat and the Committee chairpersons to ensure that clear decisions are arrived at (where warranted and desired) and recorded in such a way that they are indeed incorporated into "Centre policy".

The consultation also showed that program directors feel that some policy studies are too general and do not take matters far enough for them to implement them in the program division. This should be discussed with program directors, probably at PRO. OPE's capacity to "customize" policy work for each program division is severely limited by its resources, but it will look at all suggestions for making policy recommendations more easy to implement. The priority and resources that it should devote to monitoring the implementation of policy decisions should also be discussed.

- 3) ***Future Developments and OPE's Role:*** quality policy work is vitally important for the Centre both to ensure the effectiveness of its activities and to maintain its profile as a leader in the developmental research field. OPE will continue to play a leading role in coordinating and undertaking policy studies for the Centre. There is a substantial range of issues in which the Centre continues to be interested (see annex V as illustrated). Policy work is "seldom one-off"; major issues affecting the Centre's operations require re-visiting from time to time. Studies will continue to be both for decision-making and general contextual clarification. The problem is not to find enough challenging and relevant issues. Rather it is to tailor the policy agenda to the available resources and to the Centre's capacity to absorb information.

OPE will work with PRO and PC to ensure that there is an adequate rolling plan for study and analysis of policy issues. OPE will recommend a set of long-range issues of Centre-wide concern on the basis of broad consultation in the Centre. Those that are selected as priority will also be major triggers for OPE's involvement in evaluation and research environment work, in such a way as to ensure that work in other areas **builds towards better information in the priority policy areas**. OPE will continue to rely heavily on program staff and regional directors for their opinions and information. Program staff should be seconded to OPE for work on specific policy studies.

PC will be requested to indicate whether OPE should take more account of resource issues than to date (e.g. should OPE include subjects such as regional offices on its agenda?).

The OPE role in ensuring that the results of policy studies are reflected in policy manuals will be examined with the

Secretariat, as will the degree to which OPE can be involved in monitoring implementation. OPE will also work with the Communications Division to ensure that IDRC policy work is adequately publicized, where warranted.

In the past two years, policy studies have required an average total of x months of OPE staff time (note earlier the time required. e.g. the SSA paper was the subject of discussion at PRO on y occasions etc.).

D. Research Environment:

- 1) **Centre Needs:** Information on the research environment is vital for an organization requiring a broad overview of the major parameters and developments that affect the area in which it is working. The experience of recent exercises, such as the Centre Strategic Framework or Strategic Choices for sub-Saharan Africa, give evidence of the importance of having better information and analysis of broad issues affecting the Centre's operating environment. The Centre has indicated that it wants increasingly to take a **strategic overview of developmental research** and to take major programming decisions in that "macro" context, the corollary being a requirement for information and analysis at that level. With an increasing number of actors, both funding and carrying out developmental research, the need to understand the complex relations and differing comparative advantages is essential.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR THE ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

What should be the balance between funding to create new research capacity and that to make existing researchers more effective?

What are the development areas neglected by research funding? Should research on transport, for instance, reflect the importance of that sector in GNP? How cyclical is research funding to some areas (eg. energy)?

What is the feasible research mass in small countries?
What research should IDRC fund in these countries?

What is the research capacity required to "import" and appropriate research from elsewhere?

The Centre has already shown leadership, among other agencies funding research, in addressing and illuminating major strategic issues. It has seen that it can get a **major external pay-off from undertaking well what is required for its own purposes**. In maintaining its leadership, it can also influence other organizations by ensuring that study and discussion of the research environment and key issues take adequate account of the views of the developing countries; and by remaining in a position to propose, with considerable authority, major new initiatives for developmental research.

Information on the research environment covers at least five areas and is a sub-set of total information required for planning and policy:

- information about general conditions (social, cultural, economic etc) prevailing in a country or region, particularly as they affect the conduct of scientific enquiry;
- information about the resources that are being or could be employed in developmental research activities - the **supply** of resources to research;
- information on the **demand** for developmental research resources and allocation criteria;
- information on the **output**, the product from research;
- information on the developmental research process and its **effects**, i.e. the effects from research product being used.

The Centre is active to some extent, through program divisions and regional offices, in all these areas. OPE has been able to take a more aggregated approach, but has worked almost exclusively on the "supply side" with studies of donor and developing country resources devoted to research, and some types of research institutions. Recent years have shown an increased interest by others in obtaining a clearer view of research resources - ISNAR in agriculture, and the International Health Commission, for instance. Compared with efforts to get a "macro" view in other major development areas by the World Bank and UNDP, this still remains an underexplored field - "the least researched multi-billion dollar industry in the world".

- 2) **Past OPE Activities:** this has been and remains an area to which OPE has been able to devote relatively limited resources. Nevertheless the major studies which have been carried out

have had major pay-off. Five studies have been published in their own right:

- International and Regional Research Institutions, Searching, IDRC 1985.
- Multilateral Research Institutions in the Third World - A Directory of Multilateral Research and Research-Complementing Institutions Based in the Third World - 1985, May 1986, IDRC-MR 129;
- Research in Small Countries, Searching, IDRC 1987;
- External Funding of Development-Related Research: a Survey of Some Major Donors, John P. Lewis, September 1987, IDRC-MR 160;
- Development Research Donors in Sub-Saharan Africa - A Review of Selected Agencies, Andrew O. Asibey, March 1990, IDRC-MR 256;

and have also provided substantial material and identification of issues for two High-level meetings of donors, in Ottawa in 1988 and Dakar in 1990. These have ensured a leadership role for IDRC in addressing strategic issues related to funding developmental research. Donors have expressed the hope that the Centre will continue to play this role and organize further meetings to ensure a better common understanding of the problems and issues, and more exchange on possible approaches.

These studies have also provided some of the background for Centre studies such as the Strategic Framework, though one of the preliminary conclusions might be that the data available to that exercise has shown how much more needs to be done.

In view of the paucity of data for past analysis, OPE has been involved more than it would have liked in **encouraging better data collection**; it has experimented, in collaboration with the regional offices, with different ways of obtaining reliable information - country studies, using secondary data, by researchers for the series of small country studies; country data surveys, working with national authorities in West and Central Africa; surveys of institutional resources, allowing some national aggregate view, for East and Southern Africa using the FAMESA network. Some data collection, based on the Centre's own efforts such as that undertaken by OPE and the regional offices on multilateral research

institutions in the Third World, has given a major pay-off for a fairly small IDRC investment.

Centre management has examined in the past the feasibility and desirability of the Centre assuming a major role in creating and maintaining a permanent database on research resources, based either in IDRC itself or in regional institutions (GRADE was one example). This would have been linked to the regular publication of reports on the research environment and specific issues affecting the developmental research process. The increased capacity that the Centre and OPE now have through the Information Support Function to arrange data and take advantage of others' efforts will certainly be of great help in this regard. Nevertheless, data availability and the need to undertake data collection are likely to remain important concerns in this area.

- 3) ***Future Developments and OPE's Role:*** IDRC is uniquely well-placed to play a leadership role in mapping the research environment with respect to major developmental research issues. Through the activities of program divisions, regional offices and the knowledge of program staff, it has excellent formal and informal channels for providing an overview, and accompanying analysis.

With the Centre's present activities, great opportunities exist for pulling together sectoral (divisional) and regional data and analysis. (With their increased DAP funds and the preparation of more complete regional strategies, regional offices are likely to be involved in more analysis of the research environment.) OPE's role will increasingly become one of aggregating, synthesizing and building on information generated elsewhere. It will have to be involved in coordinating Centre information collection so that some comparability and complementarity of coverage is obtained.

Areas for focus of information compilation and analysis will be identified in discussion with Management and taking account of the Centre's planning and policy agenda. OPE will also monitor all research environment studies planned by the Centre - the Science and Technology Policy Technical Advisory Committee should make this easier than in the past - and endeavour to identify common areas of concern. As in the past, OPE will maintain a close relationship with regional offices and provide backstopping to their work to ensure high-quality and some complementarity in information collection.

In addition to playing a role as coordinator and synthesizer, OPE will initiate studies as required. One critically important area is that of an overview of donor resources and

strategies for funding developmental research. IDRC has already indicated to donors that it will update the Lewis study and publish the results.

In the research environment area, it is vital to ensure access to external databases. The Centre may also play a role in promoting better data collection and analysis on research funding in developing countries.

Given the limited time that RD'S can devote tot this area, need still to be involved.

E. Information for Planning and Policy:

Analysis of the Centre's activities and its operating environment is information-intensive. Qualitative information, such as that available from much evaluation activity, helps to feed planning and policy analysis; the OPEIS data base will play a major role in capturing and disseminating relevant evaluation findings. **Quantitative information** is crucial both on the Centre's own activities and on the external environment. The substantive side of information requirements and provision have been dealt with under specific headings. This section looks briefly at how information for planning and policy purposes can best be managed in the Centre.

The first objective for policy and planning information should be to ensure that Centre Management has access at least to a minimum range of necessary data; ease and timeliness of reference are key. The second is that information is available or can be collected when required for **specific** studies. With the suggestion that IDRC seek to retain its leadership role in some areas of analysis, this enhanced capacity to handle information will serve a public purpose as well.

OPE's capacity to generate and manage information was markedly strengthened by Centre management in 1989 with the creation of a Statistical Support Function by transferring a new person-year (p.y.) to the office and reallocating the best part of a further existing p.y from planning and evaluation activities to information management. The original estimate for starting up this new area was that **three person-years** would be needed. Although the organization and scope of this new activity are still developing, proposals for the future can take some account of the experience to date.

The large quantitative databases that have been set up in the Centre, such as PROMIS and FINMIS, were designed to serve primarily the needs of financial and project administration. EDP, divisions and user-groups have undertaken much important work in the last few years towards standardization and accuracy of

information. Relevant data can now be extracted but need to be supplemented with information from other sources to provide a more complete database. The most cost-effective approach to responding to information needs for policy and planning purposes is to **create the necessary database on a specific topic or area as and when it is required**. A comprehensive database would have to cover all the policy questions that might eventually be asked of it and would require a much larger investment.

During the last year, OPE has undertaken a pilot exercise to group together all information on the **Centre's experience in providing support to training**. Data has been compiled from PROMIS, FINMIS, FADMIS, MINISIS(Post Project Abstracts) and the Secretariat's MINUTES data base; information has also been completed by reference to original project summaries. This has required in excess of 12 person months(Lynn or Andrea to correct). While some of this time is due to the start-up of a new function, it is an illustration of the amount of work required. Tapping different databases, identifying missing information and entering the data has resulted in an improved package of data for policy-related analysis. **Centre Management will need to consider who should be responsible for maintaining a database such as this once it has been created.**

The pilot study on training data has two purposes: first, to make available information for analysis of this important area; second, to provide a basis for discussion and decisions on how best to handle the compilation of information on policy subjects.

The experience with the study on training shows that the Centre must make the best use possible of its information resources. One possibility is that **databases created for future studies rely more on the network of information users and specialists** in the program divisions to undertake some of the necessary work under OPE coordination. This would mean, however, that they would have to make a substantial commitment of resources. This approach could be tried on a pilot basis for the next study (on networks, for instance, which has already been identified by PRO as a priority area for future policy and evaluation work).

OPE will examine whether the creation of policy-related databases is warranted for future analytical purposes, and will study the alternatives for doing this in a cost-effective manner. It will also ensure, in cooperation with others, that the Centre's information resources for possible use in policy studies are better "mapped" so as to give an overview of what is available. It expects to make considerable call on the expertise available in EDP and elsewhere in the Centre, such as in the PROMIS Users' Group. OPE must play a major role in looking at Centre-wide policy information and their satisfaction.

A demonstration has already been given to Management of software that could provide easy access to a set of strategic information on IDRC activities. OPE has created a database on Centre-support over the last six years. This can be expanded and made available more readily. Annex VI shows a very preliminary chart with the suggestions of a number of dimensions that should be covered in considering Centre support. IDRC recognizes that computer and software technology is changing rapidly and it would be a reflection on the Centre, given the nature of its mandate, if it is not in the forefront of developments in this field and is not able to provide Management with the information needed in the most effective manner.

IDRC already plays a leading role in information exchange between actors in the developmental research area, through the management of IDRIS by the Information Sciences division and its contribution to other databases such as SPAAR. It may be that the Centre can play a leading role also in the area of assembling evaluation information and data on the research environment. The experience of preparing the Centre's Strategic Framework has shown that though some quantitative data exists on the external environment (developmental research funding by other donors; investment in research by developing countries) and can be used by the Centre, it is not available in a form that can be easily exploited. The Centre, through the SSF in OPE, should seek to ensure that it has access to outside data (e.g. the ISNAR database on Human and Financial Resources in agricultural research) and, where necessary, that it provides the necessary framework for the systematic storage of what is available.

Within OPE, the work of the SSF, after its initial pilot period, will be tied closely to ongoing planning and policy analysis work decided by Centre management and to developing OPEIS. This area will continue to take approximately 1.75 p.y's per year for the next two years; it should then be the subject of a special review to determine future developments on the basis of the experience of its initial three years.

F. Other OPE Tasks:

OPE has been given special responsibility or has initiated a number of Centre-wide activities. By their nature as "ad hoc" tasks, they have not been planned, but they serve as a reminder that there is on occasion need for an office with Centre-wide responsibility to manage activities on behalf of the Centre. The two most recent such cases have been the development and implementation of the Canadian Natives Peoples Program in IDRC, and initiating the University of Ottawa/IDRC course on development research.

VI. RESOURCES

The Centre faces major challenges and considerable opportunities for the future. It should continue to build on links and collaboration with similar research-funding agencies, and be prepared to take initiatives in ensuring greater effectiveness in using the resources that are available for developmental research. Much of this requires more "macro" policy analysis than it has undertaken in the past.

Within the Centre, the Strategic Framework exercise and other management discussions are confirming the trend towards wanting to see IDRC's programs and opportunities in a larger, global context. Work of this kind is already supported by program divisions (review of allocation of resources to fisheries research by AFNS; the work of the International Health Commission by HSD; SSD support to research on global change).

A critical role must be played in IDRC by a central office responsible for coordinating, synthesizing and undertaking work in the evaluation, planning and policy areas. Given present trends in the organization, one might expect to see this area assuming more importance. In fact, IDRC's allocation of resources to OPE has tended to drop as a proportion of major Centre measures (total staff size, total DAP funds) over the last decade. Clearly in a period of budgetary restraint, it is difficult to argue for a tilt in the relative resource balance towards this area. If new resources are not available, then novel means must be explored to increase the volume of resources devoted to planning and evaluation, such as the secondment of staff from other areas. It also becomes more important to take decisions about the priorities on which OPE should work; some functions may have to be reduced or dropped.

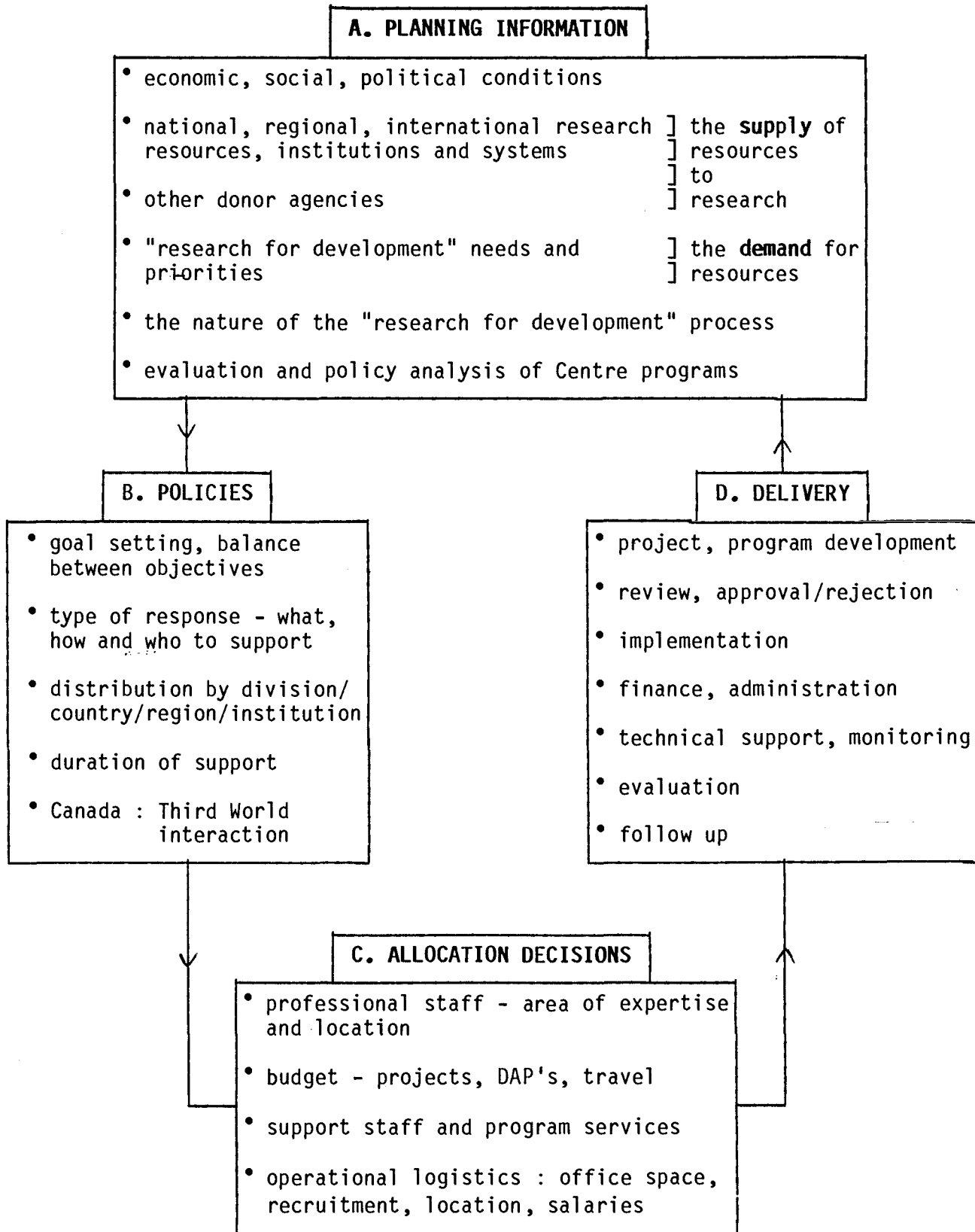
Human Resources: as seen in table 1, OPE's share of total Centre staff has tended to fall during the eighties from a high of 2.3% in 1981/82. In the last year, almost two person-years have been devoted to the new information function, effectively reducing the allocation to planning and evaluation to ten, which is only 1.6% of total Centre staff. There is no "right" number, but this shows that there has, relatively, been a reduction in the importance allocated to this area, at a time when one might expect the opposite.

In CIDA, policy branch has 44 persons, plus another 12 in the Development Information Centre and International Economic Analysis. This compares with a total complement of - for the entire agency (Karima has requested the figure) or a percentage of----- . And

as in most areas, CIDA has considerable recourse to consultants in these areas - the pilot DAC evaluation database, for instance, is managed by a consultant.

DAP Funds: OPE's share of Centre-wide DAP funds has droppped fairly constantly from a high of 9.7% in 1980/81 to a low, in the most recent year, of 3.9%. This underscores the need for OPE to "tap" into the funds available to others by ensuring coordination of work in some areas. Regional Offices' funds, for instance, have grown immensely as part of the move to put greater authority in those offices. From being less than OPE funds in 1981/82, they grew to be 6½ times greater in 1989/90. Since one third of these funds has been notionally allocated to planning and evaluation activities (Louise Brouzes to check that this is still in force), the Regional Offices have well over twice as much as OPE for funding planning and evaluation activities. OPE will work more closely with those offices to ensure coordination.

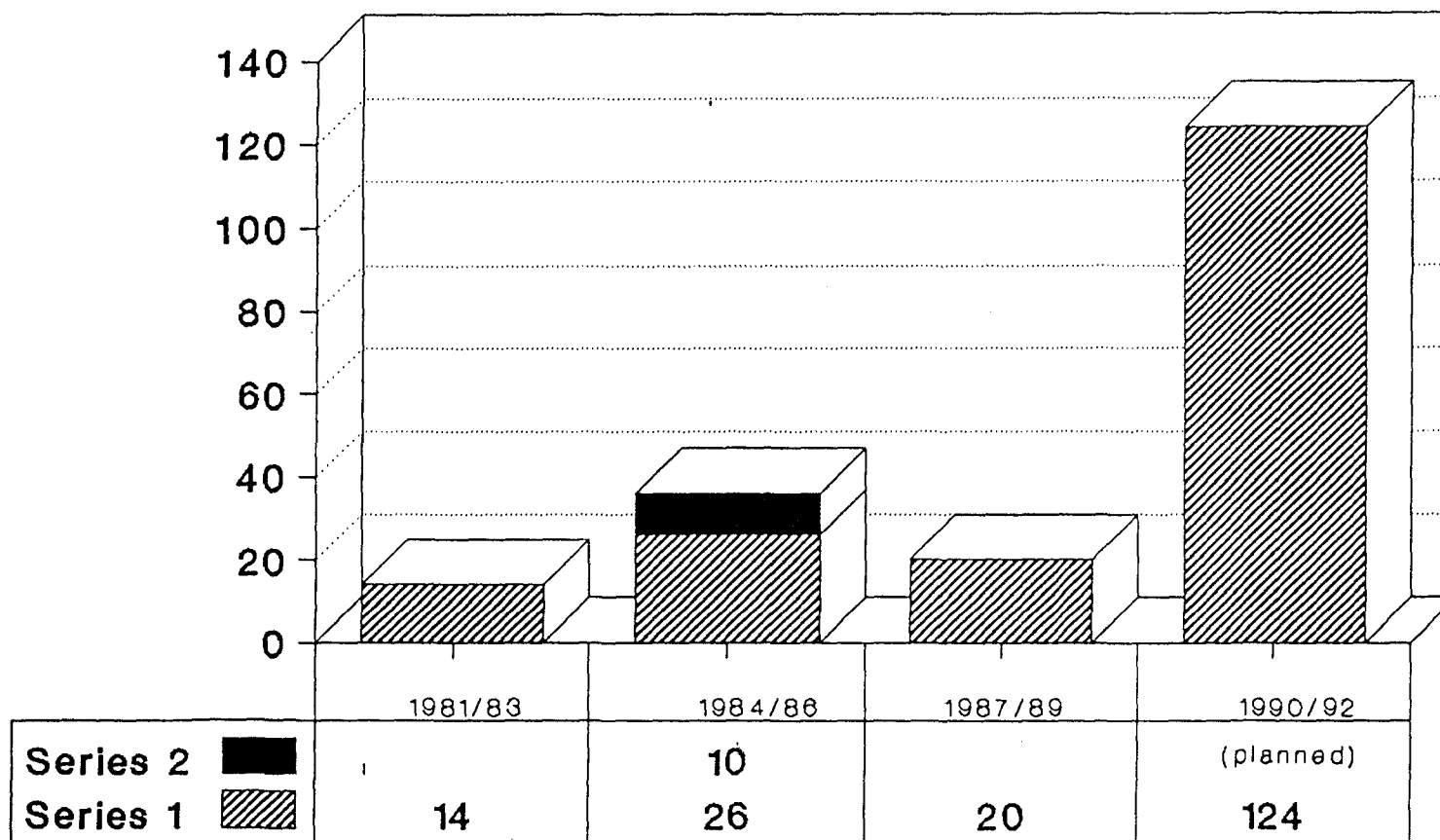
IDRC'S PLANNING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM



PAST AND FUTURE EVALUATION ACTIVITY:

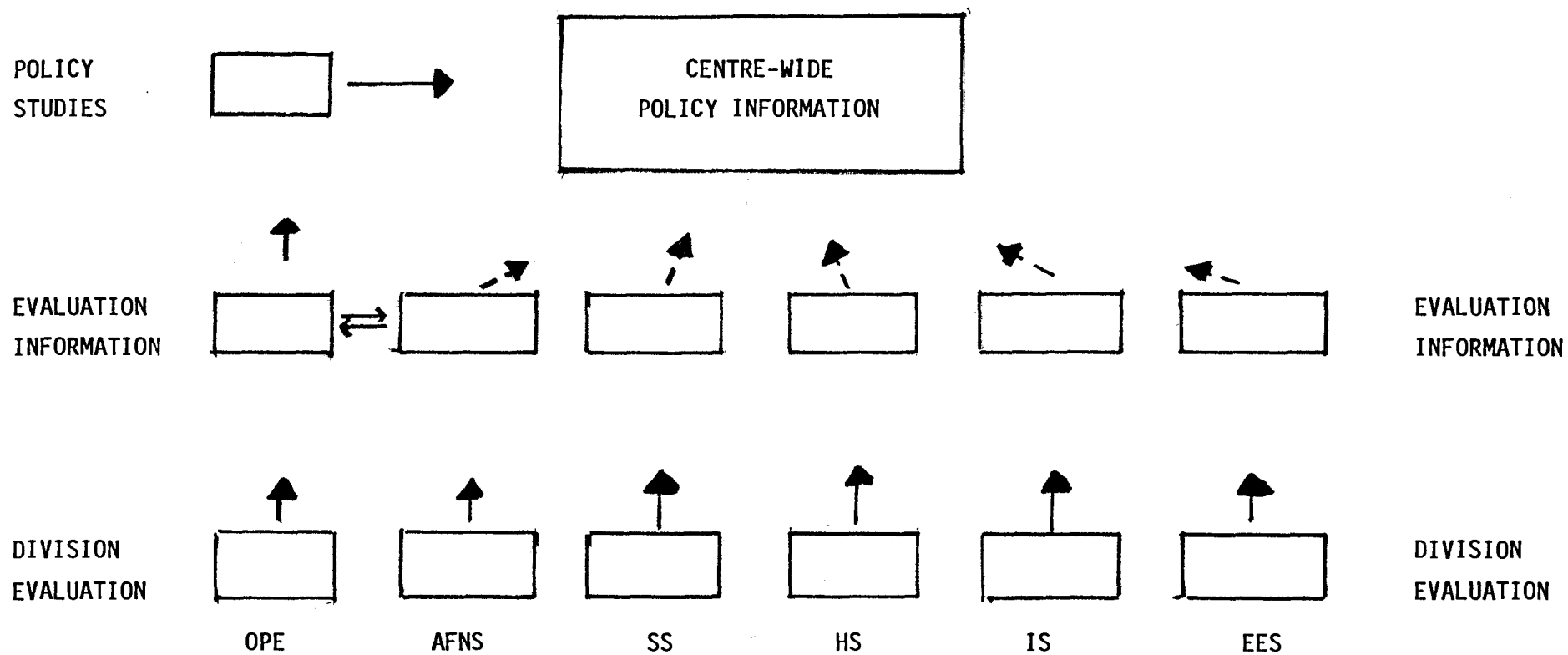
EVALUATION REPORTS

1981-92

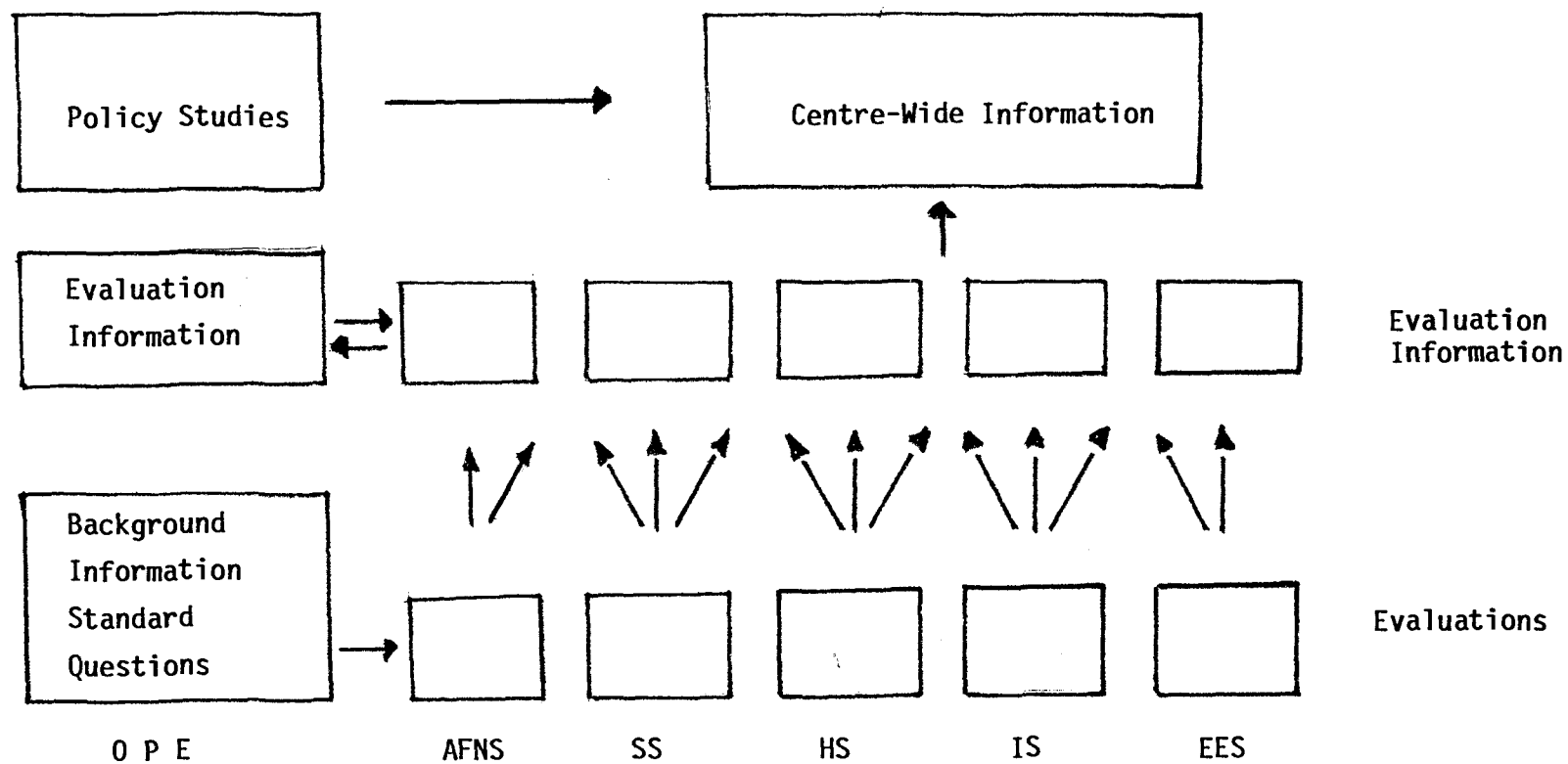


Series 2 1984/86
WOOH studies

OLD CENTRE-WIDE EVALUATION SYSTEM



PROPOSED CENTRE-WIDE EVALUATION SYSTEM



ANNEX V

LIST OF POLICY ISSUES : POSSIBLE INCLUSION IN EVALUATION STUDIES

Discussed by PRO

1. Defining and understanding the research-for-development process;
2. Utilization of outputs from Centre-supported activities;
3. Research capacity building;
4. Concentration/persistence of support;
5. Effectiveness of Centre support in Africa;
6. Research systems in small countries;
7. Research categories (interdisciplinary, participatory, basic, applied, etc.)
8. Research networks;
9. Decentralization/devolution of responsibility;
10. Balance between program delivery and administrative support.

Other Issues

- Post project follow-up.
- Countries supported.
- South/North flow of benefits from research.
- Fields of research.
- Modalities of support.
- Types of institutions.
- Institutional assessments.
- Role of non-national institutions in national research systems.
- Research management.

BASIC DATA SETS — OF IDRC

appropriations
of number of project phases
↓

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
A. TOTAL (1970 - date)										
B. TIME SERIES	✓									
C. BY DIVISION	✓	✓								
D. BY REGION	✓	✓	✓							
E. BY COUNTRY	✓	✓	✓	✓						
F. BY INSTITUTION (international, regional, national)	✓	✓	✓	✓						
G. BY NATIONAL INSTITUTION TYPE (university, ministry, NGO, etc)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
H. BY REGULAR / COOP	✓	✓	✓	✓						
I. BY NETWORK	✓	✓	✓	✓						
J. BY TRAINING	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
J. BY PHASE II or +	✓	✓	✓	✓						
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J

	1980/81	1981/82	1982/83	1983/84	1984/85	1985/86	1986/87	1987/88	1988/89	1989/90	1990/91
1. HUMAN RESOURCES (PYs)											

OPE	8	9	10	10	10	10	11	11	11	12	12
CENTRE STAFF	410	429	477	526	584	608	618	625	632	621	
OPE AS % OF TOTAL	2.0	2.3	2.1	1.9	1.7	1.6	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.9	
PROGRAM STAFF	69	79	114	132	162	176	173	166	153	149	
2. DAP FUNDS (\$000)											

OPE	150	250	240	325	375	250	300	300	300	216	
IDRC TOTAL	1,539	2,670	3,375	4,406	5,438	5,245	5,871	5,580	6,382	5,515	
OPE AS % OF TOTAL	9.7	9.4	7.1	7.4	6.0	4.8	5.1	5.2	4.7	3.9	
3. OPERATING BUDGET											

OPE											
IDRC											
OPE AS % OF TOTAL											

Not including 1 py for regional offices or DAP funds earmarked for regional offices when OPE had administrative responsibility.