

Annual Corporate Evaluation Report 2010

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Evaluation Unit
International Development Research Centre

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Introduction

The Annual Corporate Evaluation Report (ACE) is presented to the Board of Governors each year in June. The report presents highlights of evaluation across the Centre for the past year and documents both evaluations completed and evaluations planned for the Centre. The 2010 ACE report coincides with the presentation of the External Review of the Evaluation Unit as well the proposed Centre's Evaluation Strategy to the Board of Governors, both of which provide a corporate overview of the evaluation function at IDRC. As a result, this report presents an in-depth analysis of selected evaluation topics.

The purpose of evaluation at IDRC is to help the Centre deliver better programming. To contribute to that goal, the Evaluation Unit works in three main areas: conducting strategic evaluations and supporting external reviews of Centre programs (programs themselves also carry out evaluations); programming in the development of evaluation tools and methods; and, finally, strengthening capacity for carrying out and using evaluation both with program staff and with researchers supported by Centre programs, for which there is an ongoing need. It is this range of activities that makes the evaluation system at IDRC unique and resulted in a strong evaluation function. This report covers Centre-supported work in each of these areas over the past year.

Overview of the Report

The introduction sets out the structure of the report, provides highlights of the external review of the Evaluation Unit's work over the past five years, and address changes to the external review process.

The first section of the report presents findings of two strategic evaluations completed this year. One study looked at IDRC's support to large conferences, notably those where the Centre played a key role. The second looked at the Centre's experience in the devolution of activities from Centre programs or secretariats to independent entities. While both of these studies highlight some major successes, both evaluations note that a lack of explicit intent in some cases reduces the potential for success in the Centre's efforts.

The second section of the report presents findings from a program evaluation of telecentre.org, a program hosted until recently by IDRC and developed and managed in partnership with Microsoft and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The program—now called the telecentre.org Foundation—was devolved to the Commission on Information and Communications Technologies of the Government of the Philippines on March 3, 2010. The findings from the evaluation are useful to both the future development of the Foundation, and the future management of large multi-donor partnerships programs undertaken by IDRC.

The third section of the report presents the Unit's exploration of web analytics tools as they can be used to evaluate the influence and use of research as it diffuses across the Internet. As the uses of the Internet expand, it is important to consider how this information medium can effectively contribute to evaluation. The Unit's initial findings are presented here; additional work will be carried out over the next several years.

The final section of the ACE Report presents an overview of evaluation practice at the Centre. It includes an overview of the quality assessments of all evaluations conducted by the Centre and highlights recent evaluation publications from programs and evaluation training events provided by the Evaluation Unit to Centre staff.

The annexes include a summary evaluation plan (Annex 2) and lists of all evaluations submitted to the Centre this year (Annex 3).

External Review Endorses IDRC Approach to Evaluation

The external review of the Evaluation Unit conducted this year strongly endorses the approach the Centre has taken to evaluation and the roles that management, program staff, project partners, and the Evaluation Unit have played in making it work. The review supports the decentralized nature of the Centre's system and recognizes the importance of locating evaluation where it can best be used within the Centre. In particular, the report notes the importance of the Centre's efforts in searching for improved approaches to evaluation and addressing the challenges inherent in evaluating research for development. The reviewers address the question of balance between the internal service role of the Evaluation Unit and the research and development component of its work. The review notes that the Evaluation Unit spends the majority of its time on internal support activities with Centre program staff and managers and finds that in addition, the Centre itself is the key beneficiary of the research and development activities of the Unit. The review notes that the Unit needs to strengthen the communication of its work to the rest of the Centre. These and other issues raised in the review are addressed in the evaluation strategy being presented to Governors.

External Review Process Changes

As part of the program-cycle at IDRC, each program is externally reviewed every five years. This year in March, Governors received external reviews of the programs within the Social and Economic Policy area and the Canadian Partnership program located within the Special Initiatives Division. These reviews are now being used in the development of new program prospectuses. This year, external reviews were initiated with five programs¹ and will be presented to Governors in October. These reviews will complete the third cycle of external program review at the Centre.

¹ The three regional Information and Communication Technology for Development (ICTD) programs are under review (Acacia, PAN Asia, and Connectivity and Equity in the Americas (CEA)), as well two other programs, Governance, Equity and Health (GEH), and Innovation Technology and Society (ITS).

This year, the Evaluation Unit led a review and revision of the external program review process. Governors will recall that this new approach was tested in the review of the Peace, Conflict, and Development program and, with modifications, was used in the review of the Evaluation Unit and the five reviews now underway.

The approach has two parts. First, it calls for a report—written by the program—that summarizes key accomplishments in the prospectus period. Second, this report serves as the starting point for an independent external review panel to verify the achievements through its own independent review of the evidence presented, as well as an assessment of the quality of the research outputs supported by the program. Panel members are all experts in the field of study, with one panel member having strong program evaluation credentials. This approach is consistent with the approach used by a number of research organizations, whose experience the Evaluation Unit drew on as it proposed a new approach at the Centre. Programs have strongly endorsed the approach and the opportunity for reflection offered through the prospectus report preparation process. Management has endorsed the approach as a lighter, but nevertheless rigorous, approach to external review. The Evaluation Unit will continue to assess how well the new process is working and how well it meets IDRC and Board of Governors needs.

Looking Ahead

The Centre looks forward to an exciting year in evaluation. The external review of the Evaluation Unit affirmed the appropriateness of the Centre's approach to evaluation. The Unit will therefore strive to strengthen the quality and depth of evaluative thinking and evaluation activities within the Centre, as well as in the research communities with which the Centre is active. This year sees the launch of the new Strategic Framework at the Centre and, following Board approval, implementation of the evaluation strategy. This past year saw the completion of all ongoing strategic evaluation activities. In the upcoming year, time will be devoted to consultations with Centre staff and management on relevant topics for new strategic evaluations, particularly ones that will inform the implementation of the Centre's Strategic Framework for 2010–2015. The Evaluation Unit will manage five external program reviews through to completion and will continue to work with programs on their evaluation activities. As the evaluation strategy highlights, the Unit anticipates a strong focus on building the field of evaluation this year. Strengthening and professionalizing evaluation in the global South is an essential element in building strong research organizations that contribute to development.

Strategic Evaluation Highlights

Strategic evaluations are undertaken to broaden the Centre's understanding of issues of concern to the organization as a whole and to contribute to programming across program areas and regions. They relate directly to the primary goals of the Centre (such as building capacity for research in the global South) or to the mechanisms in use at the Centre to achieve these ends (such as devolution of programs).

Strategic evaluations fulfill several objectives. First, they provide evidence of the success and/or failure of Centre efforts in a particular area. Second, they provide insights into how the Centre can improve the way it works. Third, they strengthen the evaluative culture of the Centre through building a common approach that is results-oriented, reflective, and uses evidence to test assumptions.

In 2009, IDRC received the final reports of two strategic evaluations that it had commissioned—one on IDRC's participation in large conferences and the other on its experience with the devolution of programs and networks. The highlights of these evaluations are presented here. For a list of strategic evaluations over the past five years see Annex 4.

The Large Conference Re-Imagined: Strategies, Dynamics, and Systems to Strengthen IDRC's Convening Capacity²

Background

Vast amounts of funds, effort, time, resources and energies are invested in large conferences in the development sector. This does not only refer to the funders or organizers of conferences, but also to the participants who travel across the globe to take part in these events. Concerned about the investments going into these events and wanting to take full advantage of the opportunities they provide to support research for development, IDRC commissioned a team of researchers from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) to conduct an evaluation of the nature of the Centre's engagement in large conferences and related opportunities and challenges. The primary audience for the evaluation were program staff who would be organizing conferences in the future, therefore many of the findings are operational.

The report draws on the experience of IDRC's involvement in 13 large conferences as co-convenor and/or initiator and included a literature review; a review of IDRC's institutional memory (which included interviews with key IDRC staff and a review of internal documents related to conference planning and participation); and an ethnographic study of the International EcoHealth Forum, held in Mexico in 2008. The

² This report is a summary. The full report is available online: [The Large Conference Re-Imagined: Strategies, Dynamics, and Systems for IDRC's Convening Capacity](#).

practical suggestions and recommendations included in this report were developed from extended discussions with organizers, participants, team members within and external to IDRC, and the evaluation team. They are intended to help stakeholder groups within IDRC learn from each other's experiences. A workshop was held in Ottawa in 2009 to disseminate and support the uptake of findings amongst program staff.

Key Findings

IDRC demonstrates a progressive approach to conference planning, delivery, and assessment, but lacks a Strategic Framework for decision-making, planning, and evaluation.

This lack of a Strategic Framework for engagement in large conferences has contributed to:

- uneven practice in planning and assessing large conference participation;
- an inability to assess impact and outcomes based on established criteria; and
- a lack of data and documentation needed to monitor and assess the cost-benefits of large conferences.

Although it is true that any conference can offer enough generic value to the Centre's mission to be worth supporting, there is some evidence, however, to indicate that an explicit commitment to **policy entrepreneurship** would support a more purposeful and strategic involvement in large conferences and allow IDRC to address its weaknesses and leverage its strengths (as assessed by the evaluation and summarized in Table 1).

Table 1: IDRC's Strengths and Weaknesses in Engaging in Large Conferences

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>A wealth of institutional knowledge about what works and the learnt capacity to innovate within the system.</p> <p>An awareness that large conferences generate significant moments for showcasing or mainstreaming innovative ideas and practices.</p> <p>Flexible practices for engaging with conferences in funding, planning, facilitation, and reviewing. This supports opportunities for innovation, which are taken up sometimes by some organizers.</p> <p>Awareness across the Centre and its partners of the potential for more systemic learning. This demand for reflexive practice is the first step in building capabilities to manage large conferences more effectively.</p> <p>A strong sense that conferences are not stand-alone events. This comes from a sophisticated understanding of influencing as non-linear and relationship driven.</p> <p>An awareness amongst a significant number of staff of the diversity of objectives that can come to bear on a single conference.</p>	<p>A lack of articulated strategic direction, which would facilitate innovation, guide institutional collaboration, and rationalize efforts.</p> <p>IDRC staff and managers do not use planning tools (such as the critical path) strategically, linking activities and events to the Centre's mission.</p> <p>There are few standards across the Centre that would support or encourage innovation in areas critical to maximising the perceived success of conferences.</p> <p>Evaluation frameworks still assess conferences as stand-alone events and do not track outcomes over time or in relation to a larger strategy. This is important if IDRC is to make a bolder assertion of the value of large conferences for its global mission. There are no guidelines to monitor the costs of large conferences.</p> <p>Staff are not sure how to support their insights about the complexity of conference dynamics and tend to revert to inadequate practice, such as over structuring and reducing the diversity of spaces.</p>

Policy entrepreneurs are agents who occupy “in-between” spaces concerned with introducing, translating, and helping to implement new ideas into public practice (Kingdon 1995; Corbett 2003). From a policy entrepreneur perspective, large conferences provide a number of strategic opportunities for IDRC to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of its investments as a funder, convener, or co-convener in large conferences. These include addressing:

- the opportunity costs;
- the adaptive learning opportunities;
- the opportunities for capacity building;
- the investment required to affect long-term change; and
- the carbon costs.

This report identifies the need for more conscious planning across the Centre in the early stages of engagement to maximize efficiencies and to make it easier for the Centre to monitor the real costs and associated outcomes of large conferences

Evaluation of the Devolution of International Secretariats³

Background

Since the 1990’s IDRC has been engaged in the establishment and subsequent devolution or closure of international secretariats and quasi-secretariats. International secretariats have been created by IDRC as one modality for incubating innovative research ideas funded by multiple donors. As IDRC continues to pursue the devolution of two program initiatives, Senior Management requested an examination of the Centre’s past experience with devolution to see what lessons could be drawn. The Governance Network™ was commissioned to study IDRC’s devolution practice and to develop guiding principles that could inform future devolution processes. Senior management has since used the findings in the planning and implementation of the devolution of Telecentre.org, which was successfully completed in March 2010.

Based on the rationale for devolution, geographical location, perceived degree of success, donor makeup, and post devolution longevity, a sample of seven secretariats was selected for study: Micronutrient Initiative (MI), Bellanet International Secretariat, the International Model Forest Network (IMFN), the Trade and Industrial Policy Secretariat (TIPS), the Secretariat for Industrial Support for Economic Research in Africa (SISERA), International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR), and the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC).

Devolution of International Secretariats

Although the secretariats are “housed” in IDRC they are expected to operate semi-autonomously with their operations subject to IDRC’s administrative policies and practice and their research program closely linked to IDRC’s existing program

³ This report is a summary. The full report is available online: [*Evaluation of the International Development Research Centre’s Experience with the Devolution of International Secretariats*](#).

initiatives. Administrative costs are covered as part of IDRC's contributions as a donor. Although each secretariat is managed by a steering committee or advisory board, as legal entities, secretariats are accountable to IDRC. Devolution often requires the creation of separate legal entities. Of 15 secretariats established since 1992, three were spun off as separate legal entities (MI, ATPS, TIPS); one became an international agency (INBAR); one a Canadian corporation (the Global Action Television Network, WETV); one was absorbed into a department of the Canadian government (IMFN); one became part of a network (Asia Development Research Forum); and three were incorporated into IDRC programming (involution) (the Economy and Environment Program for South-East Asia, Research for International Tobacco Control, and the Environmental Management Secretariat). The remaining five closed.

Good Practice from the Field

IDRC supports innovation and research; it does not *implement* development programs. When a concept is proven, it generally moves into an implementation phase where the research focus diminishes. At this point, an initiative no longer fits with IDRC's legislated mandate (as happened with MI, INBAR, and IMFN). In this sense, IDRC's mandate is unique and it was not surprising that the review of the literature revealed that very few donors practice "devolution" like IDRC.

However, examinations of donor experience with exit or transition do suggest guiding principles for devolution, the most significant of which is that exit or transition should be considered and planned at the design phase of the initiative. Early planning facilitates a focus on results, including an articulation of the expected outcomes of the initiative based on a defined timeline and resources allocated. This also ensures transparency, as all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the milestones to be achieved and the expected commitments to the project by donors, partners, and staff over a specific period. Good practice also includes an exit plan flexible enough to ensure that affected parties have enough time to prepare themselves for the end or transition of a program, but not so much time as to create dependency. The plan should involve key partners in the design and in ongoing monitoring of the intervention. Clear and timely decision making on "exit" and ongoing dialogue ensures that the decision to exit or transition does not come as a surprise.

Key Findings

About IDRC Devolution Policy and Practice

During the past two decades of devolution experience, IDRC has not developed formal policies or guidelines related to the formulation of devolution strategies, the management of devolution processes or the sustainability of devolved programs or secretariats. IDRC explicitly refers to devolution in the 2000–2005 Corporate Strategy, where it states that: *"...the Centre will devolve the responsibility for coordination, administration and management of programs and networks to institutions in the South."* The 2005 to 2010 Corporate Strategy also states that: *"...devolution involves the passing of substantive and managerial control of an activity housed within the Centre to an*

external agency.” Key informants generally understood this concept of devolution and acknowledged that devolution was related to Southern empowerment and therefore a core value of IDRC. However, several respondents did not necessarily view devolution as a core principle or practice of IDRC, but as a “tactic” implemented to spin off or transition a secretariat or similar program initiative. There was no consistent understanding that secretariats had a finite life cycle and therefore would eventually be “devolved.” The rationale for devolution of specific secretariats was often unclear and respondents agreed that those decisions were brokered at a very high level. However, the decisions to devolve were based on specific circumstances, changing program priorities, and/or emerging opportunities, rather than on IDRC’s principle of devolution. As such, planning for devolution only arose when the decision to devolve a secretariat was made, rather than as an integral part of the secretariat’s life cycle. The importance of factors external to a secretariat affecting the approach, the timing, the level of effort, the success of the devolution process, and the devolution itself cannot be overstated. These include: availability of an interested capable host; the collective will of external donors; and the availability and predictability of funding.

About the Effectiveness of the Devolution Process

Because of these many variables, it is not surprising that IDRC has a mixed record regarding, “how well the Centre does devolution.” Devolutions that have been regarded as successes in terms of timeliness of the process, due attention to key components, management of donor relations, and ongoing communication with key stakeholders include AERC and TIPS. MI and IMFN were also identified as examples of efficient devolution. Consensus suggests that the most significant factors contributing to the efficacy of the process relate to a) the experience, skill, and leadership capacity of executive directors; b) communication and/or inclusion of staff, donors, and partners; c) the clarity and speed of decision making with respect to strategic direction and implementation; and d) the direct involvement of senior leaders. In the cases where the process was less effective, such as Bellanet and SISERA, indecisive leadership and poor communication were cited as the primary contributing factors. Adequate attention to change management and sensitivity to “people” issues were also identified as critical elements of devolution “done right.”

About Post-Devolution Sustainability and Learning

In retrospect, stakeholders agreed that the decision to devolve was necessary and, in some cases, inevitable as secretariats had “outgrown” or moved away from the Centre’s research mandate. It was certainly anticipated that devolution of these secretariats would benefit both the secretariats and IDRC. In the case of the former, management autonomy and access to funding from other donors were anticipated benefits, while the benefits for IDRC included reduced administrative and financial burdens and a more steadfast focus on its mandate. As such, devolved entities such as MI, IMFN, INBAR, AERC, and TIPS have benefited from increased donor funding, improved relations with a range of partner institutes and/or countries, and a positive global brand. However, the post-devolution period has also been challenging for several entities. TIPS and INBAR

both experienced difficulties attracting “core funding,” as donors generally prefer to fund specific program initiatives. The provision of core or legacy funding by IDRC to the devolved entities is therefore highly appreciated. However, the Centre would do well to articulate guidelines that would inform either the provision or termination of core funding. Another challenge identified has been the tradition of selecting program officers to head devolved secretariats, particularly where the program officers do not have the necessary leadership and management skills to operate without a high level of institutional support. The need for a careful identification of core competencies and an open and competitive selection process for executive directors is a way to mitigate this shortcoming.

In conclusion, more often than not, the devolution process has resulted in the intended outcome of a legally separate entity with the capacity to build on the innovative idea incubated within IDRC. The seven cases reviewed suggest fundamental guiding principles for effective devolution:

Devolution Guiding Principles

- 1. Plan early.** Early planning is a cornerstone of successful devolution and requires the development of a good, well thought out strategy that is solidly linked with IDRC’s mandate, values, and strategic direction.
- 2. Build capacity.** In most cases, successful devolution and Southern empowerment requires considerable capacity building that needs to start long before the devolution occurs.
- 3. Collaborate and partner.** Open and transparent communication with staff, donors, and partners has, in each examined case, been a factor in the successful devolutions.
- 4. Develop a transition strategy.** Once a strategic direction is set and a notion of timing is in place, a transition strategy or change management plan to deal with the human aspects of change becomes essential.
- 5. Assure continuity.** A plan for continued involvement and the availability of required intellectual capital is essential, as was demonstrated by all of IDRC's successful devolutions.
- 6. Build good governance and management frameworks.** It is important to take the time early on in the devolution process to ensure that governance issues are addressed and that management processes (such as recruitment, financial management, program management, accountability, monitoring, and evaluation) are developed and implemented.
- 7. Demonstrate return on investment and secure funding.** Above all, the enterprise has to be strong enough conceptually and have demonstrated a positive enough return on investment to attract sufficient donor funding to maintain the newly configured initiative.

Program Evaluation

Program evaluations contribute to learning and accountability of programs at IDRC. They are useful for planning future activities and also for assessing performance. The program evaluation of Telecentre.org is one such evaluation intended to inform future practice and programming direction.

Telecentre.org Program Evaluation Summary **Background**

Founded in 2005 by IDRC, Microsoft, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and housed at IDRC, telecentre.org is a “worldwide network of people and organizations committed to increasing the social and economic impact of tens of thousands of grassroots telecentres by making telecentres stronger and better at what they do. By investing in the networks and organizations that work with telecentres directly, [telecentre.org] empowers people who want to use technology to promote community development however they chose, wherever they live.”⁴

Telecentre

A telecentre is a public place where people can use computers, the Internet, and other technologies to join the knowledge society on their own terms.

In 2009, IDRC commissioned a program evaluation⁵ of the telecentre.org program to a) inform future program direction and improve operational and management strategies as it was transferred to the new telecentre.org Foundation in the Philippines; and b) develop a set of recommendations for IDRC that could be used in the future to manage large multi-donor partnership programs, and particularly those that involve a private sector partner. The evaluation included document reviews, interviews with key stakeholders, analysis of online presence, a network analysis of stakeholders attending events and engaging online, and case studies in three countries— Mali, Bangladesh, and Colombia.

Key Findings

The evaluation found that telecentre.org contributed to creating a consensus around an umbrella concept—the telecentre—under which most of the people and institutions working on public access to information and communications technologies (ICTs) were comfortable. Telecentre.org helped strengthen the telecentre community by creating a convergence on goals. It helped to create networks for telecentres to make them stronger, and pool their efforts. Because telecentre.org understood the need to strengthen linkages among individual telecentres, and the fact that it addressed them in a very straightforward way, contributed to the view held by many involved in the evaluation that the program is a success.

⁴ telecentre.org.

⁵ See [this link](#) for the full report.

Five Pillars

The business plan for telecentre.org evolved into a structure based on **five pillars**—Networking, Academy, Content and Sustainability, Research, and Knowledge Sharing. The evaluation examined outcomes around these pillars and found that:

- telecentre.org contributions allowed many new **networks** to be formed, which also then strengthened the telecentre movement;
- while the **academy** pillar, designed to facilitate learning, was a “late starter” and not explicitly named in the original business plan, it brought considerable potential added value to the telecentre movement;
- pillar objectives supported the development of **content and services** for telecentres that could potentially generate revenue to support the financial and social **sustainability** of telecentres and telecentre networks, but there was little evidence that this happened;
- the creation of the **research** pillar generated a greater awareness of the need for planning more focused research activities in the program and the reports from funded research—notably the Global Impact Study of Public Access to ICT co-funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation—were well received; and
- while achieving the **knowledge sharing** pillar outcomes were initially hampered by rapid changes in Internet availability and usage and inappropriate software and management processes, the end result has been an active online community presence (<http://www.telecentre.org>) with broad participation across the telecentre movement.

Face-to-Face Events

For each of the pillars there was considerable expenditure on convening **face-to-face events**. Many of those involved with telecentre.org (including staff, close associates, and IDRC) believed that investment in face-to-face events was key to forming networks and engaging the telecentre movement globally. The evaluation found that:

- Face-to-face events were important for engaging a wide range of people involved in the telecentre movement and helped to identify the key players.
- Telecentre.org engaged predominantly with NGOs at face-to-face events; other mechanisms were used to engage with government representatives and the private sector.
- Face-to-face events contributed to national networks; however, while the *idea* of networking spread through events, the establishment of networks seemed more strongly influenced by the presence of champions and external factors.
- Events also help to establish and strengthen online presence.

Partnerships

Three key social investors were part of the program—IDRC, Microsoft, and Swiss Development Cooperation. An analysis of the partnership confirmed what has already been documented by IDRC in other studies on partnership: that partners often operate under different pressures and IDRC often fails to anticipate and plan communication

strategies that take into account private sector donors' needs. While the initial stages of a project often work well, challenges arise in the implementation process. While the **partnership** of the social investors has at times had its stresses and strains, the three core social investors were able to steer a program of work that has contributed to its original vision: that telecentre.org would invest in efforts that strengthen the entire telecentre ecosystem.

Monitoring and Evaluation

There is a strong need to improve systems to monitor, evaluate, and assess impact in order to provide policy makers with an evidence base that shows how telecentres assist their citizens, and in the longer term, the research pillar promises to deliver this.

Program Management

Despite overlap, collaboration between pillars has been scarce, with some exceptions in the Telecentres Leaders Forum and other events by the Networking and Knowledge Sharing pillars. This isolation also hindered building a strong brand for telecentre.org and contributed to a community based on a sense of partnership rather than on a sense of *collegiality*.

Cost Benefit

The cost benefit of the program is not clear cut. In most people's view funding was sufficient. The strong financial support may have helped in the creation of short-term momentum, however, there was concern about a trade-off between rapid growth and growth based on strong relationships built on trust and joint effort.

The Future

The telecentre community and, specifically, the telecentre.org community faces two opposing forces: a centripetal one, working towards convergence, homogeneity, and a genuine sense of sharing and working together—arguably the most successful outcome of the program—and a centrifugal one, where differences in perceptions and goals work towards the balkanization of the global telecentre movement. Strong leadership by the telecentre.org promoters and the funding made the centripetal force much stronger than the centrifugal one. Devolution and a progressive decrease in funds are likely to put severe stress on its continuity.

The report makes 20 recommendations for implementing details of telecentre.org Foundation, and for IDRC, the private sector and other donors regarding similar partnerships.

Tools and Methods Development

Evaluating development research is challenging and as such requires appropriate tools and methods. The Evaluation Unit is continuously seeking out improvements to existing evaluation tools and methods that can support the Centre's efforts in programming. While work on evaluation tools and methods was carried out on several fronts this year (such as on mainstreaming outcome mapping), this report focuses on an important new area - that of using web analytics – both as a marketing tool and as an evaluation device.

Web Analytics in Evaluation

As technology becomes more pervasive in all aspects of society and we conduct more activities on the Internet, computing permits us to track, analyze, and store records of these activities. Through analysis of this data (or web analytics), we can observe the flows of information and ideas in much more detail than has ever been possible. This enables us to gather real-time information and infer trends in society. While web analytics were developed originally to understand website traffic and activity, they can also provide evaluators with a unique set of tools that contribute to a better understanding of the dissemination and uptake of research.

Gone are the days when a library is the first point of discovery for new topics, fields, and ideas. Instead, the Internet has become an ubiquitous platform upon which we can search for, access, share, and promote research. Increasingly, IDRC-funded research outputs, and the ideas behind them, are being shared in a digital form on the Internet. Books, reports, ideas, and even conversations are made available through IDRC program websites, third-party websites, the IDRC Digital Library, and increasingly through social media. As this research is accessed and shared online, web analytics can be used to understand and describe aspects of this use.

Web analytics tools offer IDRC an opportunity to be more strategic in its mission to support the uptake of development research. When these tools are considered within an evaluative process, they become a useful source of data and information, which can be used to understand and optimize the promotion, knowledge translation, and communication of research.

Purpose

This research, conducted by Matthew Walton, an intern with the Evaluation Unit, was an exploratory study to determine the usefulness and applicability of web analytics tools for evaluating the diffusion and uptake of research and innovations. It focused on outcome mapping (OM)—which has recently been devolved by the Evaluation Unit into an online learning community—as a case study. Using web analytics, it explored the extent to which information about OM is currently spreading around the world and how it is being accessed.

Methodology

The data for the study was obtained through Internet monitoring software applications such as Google Analytics, Google Insights, White Noise, and LexiURL. Each application provides different types of Internet tracking data for: website analysis; aggregated Google searches; social media monitoring; and URL network mapping, respectively.⁶ In addition to Internet data, the study also included interviews with OM users and a survey of OM community members.

Applicability of Web Analytics for Evaluation: Key Findings

Finding 1. Interest in research can be assessed by trends in Internet activities.

Illustration. After discovering OM for the first time, roughly 68% of people seek out more information about it online. Hence, online usage trends measured through web analytics can be used to represent the overall interest level in OM. By examining metrics such as the number of new registered members over time (Figure 1), Google searches for “outcome mapping,” and, visits to the outcomemapping.ca website that arrived via search engines (Figure 2), these figures suggest that interest in OM, although inconsistent, is increasing over time.

Figure 1. New member registrations per month on outcomemapping.ca. 2005-2009

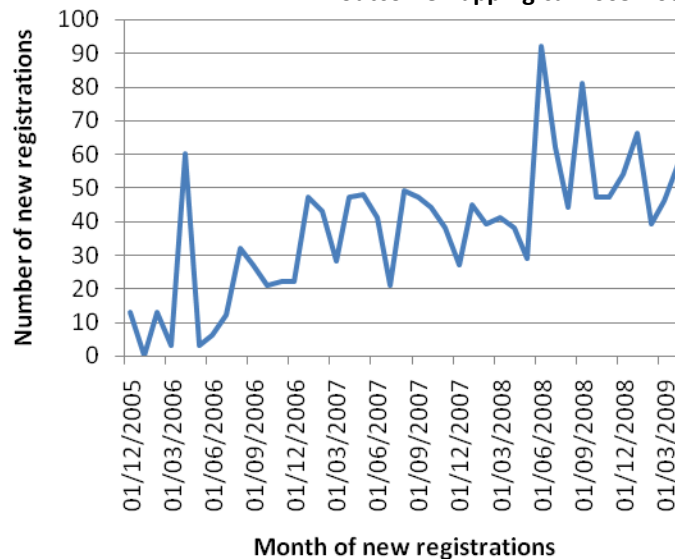
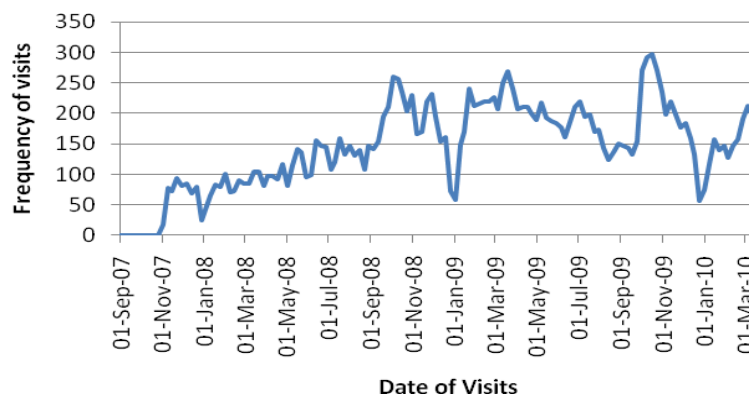


Figure 2. New visitors that entered outcomemapping.ca via search engines

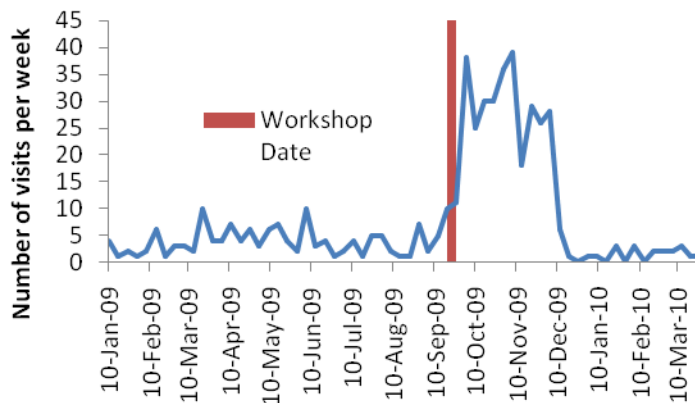


⁶ For details of these applications, see the entire report: [Using Web Analytics Tools to Evaluate the Diffusion of Outcome Mapping](#).

Finding 2. Filtering website visits by region provides useful information about the activities (known and unknown) that contribute to the geographic diffusion of research.

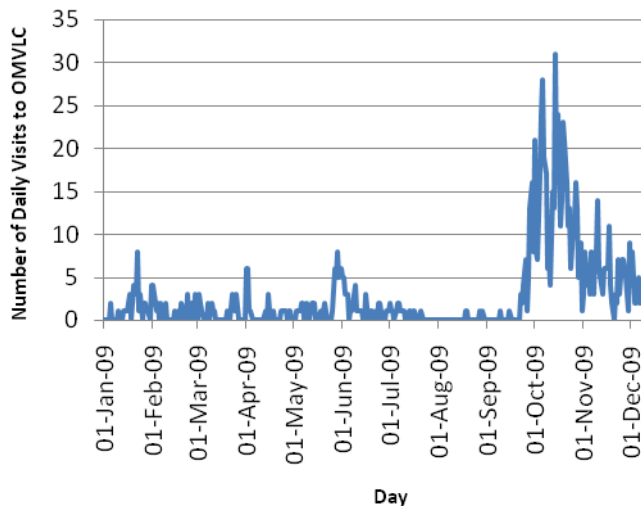
Illustration. This study points out that trends within a geographic grouping of web analytics data can be a useful indicator of the impact of *known* offline activities. For instance, during this study, there was a four-day Outcome Mapping training in Vancouver, from September 21–24, 2009. This workshop resulted in an increase of visits from Vancouver to the outcome mapping website over the next two months (Figure 3). This trend demonstrates that an increased engagement with OM, initiated by the training, can be captured through web analytics. Although this is a single case, proper benchmarking of this data, as it relates to activities such as training workshops and conferences, would enable evaluators of these activities to gauge the relative success of events.

Figure 3. Visits to outcomemapping.ca from Vancouver, Canada



Date of visits to outcomemapping.ca from Vancouver

Figure 4. Daily visits from Venezuela to outcomemapping.ca in 2009



Secondly, trends found within a group of website visits originating from the same region can be an indicator of *unknown* activities. For instance, during this study, there was a significant spike in visits from Venezuela (Figure 4). The trend suggests that there is a level of dialogue around OM occurring in the country. Since OM is intended to improve the planning and evaluation of development

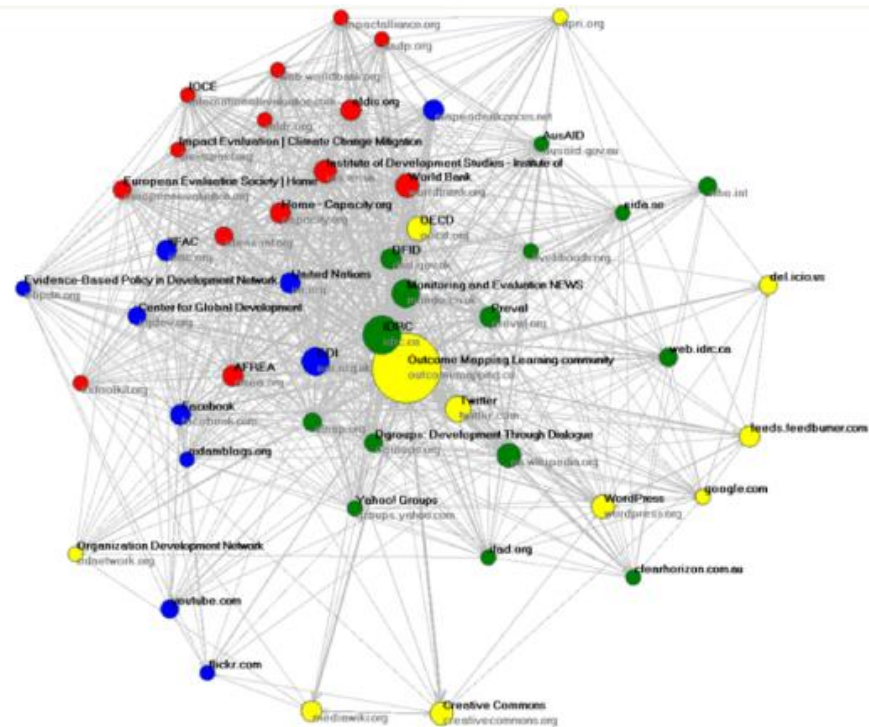
activities, knowing that it is being discussed in developing countries is a useful sign that it is being supported effectively.

Finding 3. Virtual connections and online discourse demonstrate the audience to whom research is relevant.

Illustration: The following diagram (Figure 5) represents a network of websites (each website is represented by a circle) that link to outcomemapping.ca. Each colour represents a group of websites that have links to each other, in addition to their connection to OM.

The themes that emerge from these groups, based on the content that they host, are: evaluation, international development, international organizations, and social media forums. Since the themes are closely related to the ideas behind OM, this suggests that the diffusion of OM has reached relevant audiences on the Internet.

Figure 5. Outcomemapping.ca Hyperlink Network



Implications for Evaluation

Typically, web analytics tools are used to measure website performance. However, when the Internet is used as a repository of research and ideas, web analytics can be used to infer meaningful information about their spread, use, and potential influence.

When this information is considered evaluatively, it can be used to validate strategic goals of research use and to learn about how these goals are being fulfilled. The tools can help to answer the following questions:

- Is the research being accessed? And if so, to what degree?
- Are the intended users of research accessing it? If so, through what means have they discovered this research and how can these means be further improved?
- To which audiences is research relevant? To what degree can these audiences further contribute to the outcomes of this research?

In other words, by providing answers to these and similar questions through an evaluative process, web analytics tools can help organizations such as IDRC and its project partners be more strategic in their efforts to encourage the effective uptake of research.

Evaluation at a Glance

Building evaluation capacity is the final element of the Evaluation Unit's work. This section describes the Unit's contributions made this year to capacity building and its reflection in evaluation planning at the Centre.

Each year the Unit reviews evaluations and looks at several issues. First, we look at who conducts evaluations at the Centre. In line with Centre practice to bolster Southern leadership in international development practice, we strive to achieve a balance in evaluators from the North and from the South; we also strive to achieve a balance between male and female evaluators. No data is presented in the report this year because there is no significant change over the past several years. There remains a slight emphasis on evaluators from the North and a slight balance towards male evaluators. Both of these factors are reflective of the overall state of evaluation practice so do not warrant special attention here.

Evaluation Reports Quality Assessment

A decentralized evaluation system at IDRC means that evaluators are not only contracted by the Evaluation Unit, but also by management, programs, regional offices, and project partners. In 2009–2010, the Evaluation Unit received 22 project- and program-level evaluation reports from various stakeholders of IDRC.

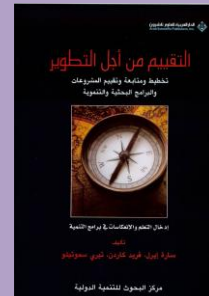
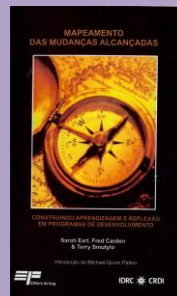
The Evaluation Unit assesses the quality of each report against four criteria that are based on standards endorsed by international evaluation associations:

- **Utility** measures the extent to which the evaluation explicitly identifies the users and uses of the evaluations and describes how the users participate in the evaluation process.

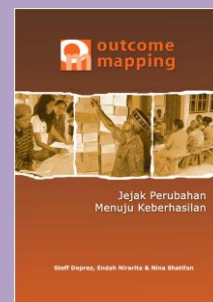
Outcome Mapping Highlights 2009–2010

Developed by members of the Evaluation Unit in 2000, outcome mapping continues to influence evaluation in the development community and beyond. The online learning community, supported by the Evaluation Unit, has now reached 2,200 registered members and online interest continues to rise.

In support of increased global uptake of outcome mapping, *Outcome Mapping: Building Learning and Reflection into Development Programs* has recently been translated and published in **Arabic**, as well as in **Portuguese**, making the book available in six different languages.



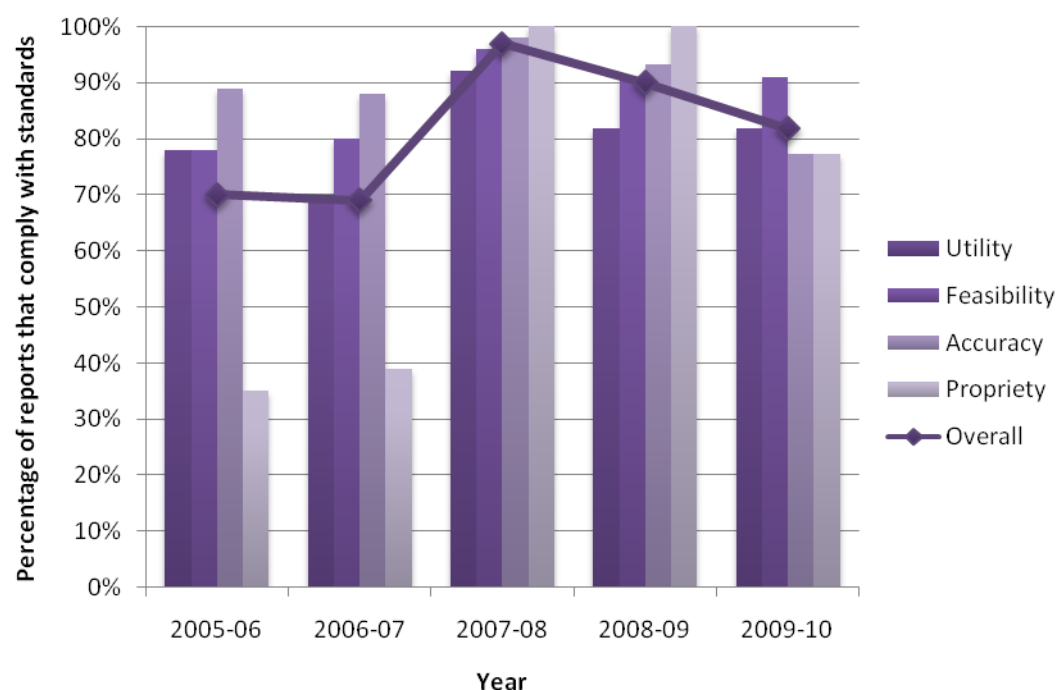
Indonesian users of outcome mapping have also written a new book. This book by S. Deprez, E. Nirarita and N. Shatifan, acts as a guide to using outcome mapping based upon their experiences using the methodology.



- **Feasibility** measures the extent to which the methods and approaches are matched to the questions and issues the evaluation set out to examine.
- **Accuracy** measures the extent to which the evaluation report presents conclusions and recommendations that are supported by evidence that has been derived through the application of appropriate and solid methods.
- **Propriety** measures adherence to ethical standards.

Figure 6 presents a summary of the quality of evaluation reports over the previous five years at IDRC. It shows the average quality ratings for all project- and program-level evaluation reports across each criteria as well as the overall average for each year.

Figure 6. Evaluation Quality Assessments 2005–2010



Based on the quality assessment reviews conducted by the Evaluation Unit and other IDRC staff, 17 out of the 22 reports received in 2009–2010 were deemed acceptable.⁷ In comparison with the previous two years, this represents a *drop* in the overall percentage of acceptable reports, with five reports being assessed as unacceptable.⁸ In both of the previous two years, 100% of the reports were rated as acceptable.

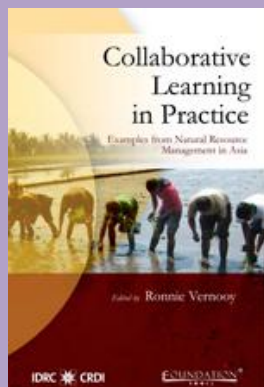
Given the decline in quality over the past two years, the Evaluation Unit sees this as an important issue to follow up with programs in the coming year. The Unit will continue to support improvements in evaluation quality and monitor progress.

⁷ A report is considered acceptable when it receives an acceptable ranking in two or more of the assessment categories.

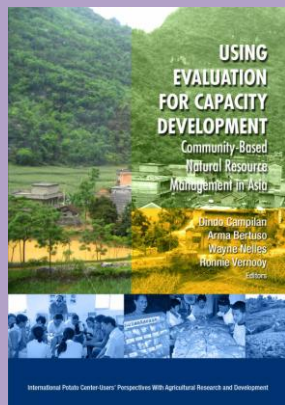
⁸ When a report is deemed unacceptable, the Evaluation Unit follows up to provide detailed feedback to support improvements to future evaluations.

Evaluation Publications at IDRC 2009–10

Collaborative Learning in Practice, edited by Ronnie Vernooy. Drawing on research and practical experiences from China, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, this book presents and analyzes novel approaches to collaborative learning and communities of practice. Case studies show how, through joint efforts with researchers and other actors, local communities address and learn from challenges in managing natural resources.



Using Evaluation for Capacity Development, edited by Dindo Campilan, Arma Bertuso, Wayne Nelles, and Ronnie Vernooy. This monograph shares experiences and results of nine Southeast Asian evaluation case studies undertaken by the Evaluating Capacity Development Initiative. The publication's central theme is that capacity development efforts become more effective when evaluation is integral to the process and is embraced by all relevant stakeholders.



Evaluation Planning

Each program at IDRC submits a work plan for the coming year to Programs branch. This work plan includes current and upcoming evaluations for the year. Annex 3 provides a summary of the evaluations that were received by the Evaluation Unit this past year and Annex 2 lists program evaluation plans for the coming year.

Evaluation Learning Across the Centre

Innovation in Evaluation: Ideas Worth Sharing is a series of presentations and workshops on evaluation coordinated by the Evaluation Unit for IDRC staff and leading experts in monitoring and evaluation. This past year we held three events:

Practical Implications of Complexity for Evaluation with Patricia Rogers (May 5, 2009)

In this presentation to IDRC, Dr Patricia Rogers, Professor of Public Sector Evaluation at The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, laid out a framework for understanding degrees of complexity in evaluation. She identified a three-part typology for interventions, or aspects of interventions as: simple, complicated, and complex. From this framework, she suggested implications for evaluation in terms of governance, causality, evidence, and accountability. Dr Rogers demonstrated the need to approach evaluation with appropriate strategies that reflect the complexities of a given situation.

Talking Evaluation with Michael Quinn Patton: Taking Use to the Next Level (June 25, 2009)

Dr Michael Quinn Patton is a leading evaluation expert and author of the highly influential *Utilization Focused Evaluation* (2008). In his presentation to IDRC, he challenged the Centre to improve evaluation use through continued organizational learning and reflection. He emphasized the importance of differentiating between belief and knowledge through an understanding based on triangulation and addressed several sources of triangulation.

Impact Evaluation Seminar (November 20, 2009)

Because of the importance of the impact evaluation debate in development and the range of perspectives that are part of this debate, the Evaluation Unit organized a half-day seminar on impact evaluation. The panel included three leaders in the fields of international development and impact evaluation: Lant Pritchett, Harvard University; Sanjeev Khagram, University of Washington; and Sanjeev Sridharan, University of Toronto. The three experts shared their thoughts and perspectives on how impact evaluation supports and affects development research. The seminar was intended to help IDRC staff better understand impact evaluation in the context of development research and to give them the opportunity for reflection so that they can integrate these ideas into programming at IDRC.

Annex 1. Acronyms

ACE	Annual Corporate Evaluation Report
AERC	African Economic Research Consortium
AHEAD	Association for Higher Education and Development
ArtNeT	Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade
ATPS	African Technology Policy Studies
ATSA	African Tobacco Situational Analyses
AUCC	Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
CCAA	Climate Change Adaptation in Africa
CEA	Connectivity and Equity in the Americas
CICT	Commission on Information and Communications Technologies
CIFSRF	Canadian International Food Security Research Fund
CRED	Competition Research for Economic Development
DECI	Developing Evaluation Capacity in ICT4D
DFID	UK Department for International Development
EcoHealth	Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health
EEPSEA	Environmental Economics Program for Southeast Asia
ENRM	Environment and Natural Resources Management
FCTC	Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
FMOH	Nigerian Federal Ministry of Health
GEH	Governance, Equity and Health
GGP	Growth, Globalization and Poverty
GHRI	Global Health Research Initiative
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
GRACE	Gender Research in Africa into ICTs for Empowerment
HDCN	Human Development & Capability Network
HRCS	Health Research Capacity Strengthening
ICA	Institute for Connectivity in the Americas
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IMFN	International Model Forest Network
INBAR	International Network for Bamboo and Rattan
IPS	Innovation, Policy and Science
ISIF	Information Society Innovation Fund
ITS	Innovation, Technology and Society
LACREG	Canada-Latin America and the Caribbean Research Exchange Grants
LIRNEasia	Learning Initiatives for Network Economies in Asia
MI	Micronutrient Initiative

NEPED	Nagaland Empowerment for People through Economic Development
OM	Outcome Mapping
PA	Program Area
PAN	PAN Asia Networking
PANACeA	PAN Asian Collaboration for Evidence-based e-Health Adoption and Application
PARSEP	Project to Support National Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks for Poverty Reduction strategies
PBDD	Partnership and Business Development Division
PCD	Peace, Conflict and Development
PI	Program Initiative
PICTURE	Poverty and Information and Communication Technology Systems in Urban and Rural Eastern Africa
RITC	Research for International Tobacco Control
RPE	Rural Poverty and Environment
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SEP	Social and Economic Policy
SIRCA	Strengthening ICTD Research Capacity in Asia
SISERA	Secretariat for Industrial Support for Economic Research in Africa
TIPS	Trade and Industrial Policy Secretariat
TTI	Think Tank Initiative
UPE	Urban Poverty and Environment
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas
WETV	Global Action Television Network
WRC	Women's Rights and Citizenship

Annex 2. Evaluation Plan 2010–2011

Agriculture and Environment

Program Initiative	New Evaluations	On-Going Evaluations
Climate Change Adaptation in Africa (CCAA)	<p>Focused evaluations to assess lessons learned from CCAA experience on capacity building</p> <p>Focused evaluations to assess lessons learned from CCAA experience on PAR approach</p>	None at this time
Agriculture Food and Security	None at this time	Water Demand Management Initiative (WaDImena) (\$30,000)
Climate Change and Water	None at this time	None at this time
EcoHealth	COPES Auto-Evaluation	Collaborative study on M&E in Ecohealth projects (\$138,000)

Social and Economic Policy

Program Initiative	New Evaluations	On-Going Evaluations
Think Tank Initiative (TTI)	<p>Policy Community Surveys—Latin America and South Asia (with GlobeScan) (\$300,000)</p> <p>Peer Review—Latin America and South Asia (\$30,000)</p> <p>TTI External Review Preparation (an external consultant will be contracted to help design TTI activities in order to better prepare the program for the upcoming 2013 external review) (\$80,000)</p>	<p>Policy Community Survey (with GlobeScan)—Africa (\$182,000)</p> <p>Peer Review—Africa (\$21,000)</p>
Women’s Rights and Citizenship (WRC)	<p>Capacity building in Africa on Women’s Rights and Citizenship (\$30,000)</p> <p>Feminist research methodology</p> <p>Policy influence of project 105463 : La protection sociale des migrantes sénégalaises évoluant dans les activités agricoles et les services particuliers en Espagne</p>	<p>104909: Training Institute: Women’s Rights, Citizenship and Governance in sub-Saharan Africa</p> <p>Decentralization, Women’s Rights to Land, and Citizenship</p> <p>Sexual and Reproductive Rights, Social Inequality and Politics in Latin America</p>
Globalization, Growth and Poverty (GGP)	<p>104241 CRED project (forward-looking evaluation)104247 ARTNeT II Evaluation</p> <p>104071 HDCN</p> <p>Web analytics for GGP website (with Evaluation Unit)</p>	<p>PARSEP Project</p>

Program Initiative	New Evaluations	On-Going Evaluations
Peace, Conflict, and Development (PCD)	<p>Evaluation of the Research Competition on Globalization, Conflict and Peacebuilding</p> <p>Evaluation of the Upeace Capacity Building Project</p> <p>Strategic Evaluation of the Journal of Peacebuilding and Development</p>	None at this time

Research for Health Equity

Program Initiative	New Evaluations	On-going Evaluations
Governance, Equity and Health (GEH)	<p>GEH Ph II (April 2006-2011) external evaluation</p> <p>SDC/GEH Partnership (\$59,600)</p> <p>Strengthening health systems governance in Latin American countries—Phase 1 (\$12,000)</p> <p>Knowledge Translation Partnership Mexico-Canada (\$20,000)</p> <p>Development of a Governance Analytical Approach to Health Systems</p> <p>HRCS Learning—evaluation of first three years \$(50,000)</p>	NEHSI various evaluations: proof of influence; proof of impact; mini-organisational assessment of FMOH Monitoring & Evaluation unit.

Program Initiative	New Evaluations	On-going Evaluations
Global Health Research Initiative (GHRI)	<p>Study on GHRI in relation with partner agencies and departments (\$20,000)</p> <p>Special study: Mapping out of health topics in which GHRI is involved</p> <p>Study on what project teams funded by the GHRI perceive as the value added of the GHRI compared with other funding agencies they are familiar with, and why? (\$15,000)</p> <p>Study on GHRI learning from its activities and results</p> <p>Study on how the GHRI identifies, documents, and shares lessons learned and best practices</p> <p>Case study to compare and contrast the various collaboration models applied by the GHRI programs</p> <p>Case study on ethical issues and challenges in global population health research partnerships (\$100,000)</p> <p>Global Health Research Initiative Formal Review 2010 (\$55,000)</p>	<p>Teasdale-Corti case study on capacity building approaches in global health research (\$250,000)</p>
Research on International Tobacco Control (RITC)	<p>IDRC-ATSA-RITC-Gates Process Evaluation (\$50,000)</p> <p>Content Analysis of Outcome Mapping Data of RITC FCTC Small Grants Competitions (\$20,000)</p>	<p>External evaluation of the RITC Program (\$57,000)</p>

Information and Communications Technology for Development (ICT4D)

Program Initiative	New Evaluations	On-going Evaluations
PAN Asia Networking	None at this time	All DECI evaluations (ISIF, LIRNEasia, Mega Mongolia, PANACeA, SIRCA)
Connectivity and Equity in the Americas (CEA)	Developmental Evaluation (\$125,000) Development of an integrated M&E system (\$80,000)	Utilization focused evaluation of e-procurement project
Acacia	RIA! GRACE (\$100,000) PICTURE (\$100,000) ICT and Health Study on Findings and Strategic Direction Moving Forward (\$100,000)	Network Evaluation

Innovation Policy and Science (IPS)

Program Initiative	New Evaluations	On-Going Evaluations
Innovation, Technology and Society (ITS)	Building community of practice; outcomes from individual projects (\$10-15K)	Impact on policy; extent to which the project results reflect a balanced and non-biased view on genetically modified organisms
IDRC Challenge Fund	Progress report	None at this time

Other Program Units

Program Initiative	New Evaluations	On-going Evaluations
Fellowships and Awards	<p>Management Review of the Fellowships and Awards program, 2000-2010</p> <p>Update of the Canadian Tracer Study</p>	Building Peace and Security Research Capacity in Eastern Africa
Canadian Partnerships	<p>Tracer study of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada</p> <p>Tracer study and review workshop of U of Saskatchewan</p> <p>Tracer study of LACREG 2010 cohort CUSO-VSO- AHEAD</p>	None at this time
Middle East Special Initiatives	N/A	<p>The Middle East Good Governance Fund</p> <p>The Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee</p>

Other Program Units

Program Initiative	New Evaluations	On-Going Evaluations
Communications	None at this time	None at this time
Evaluation Unit	None at this time	External Review of Acacia External Review of PAN Asian Networking External Review of CEA External Review of GEH External Review of ITS
Donor Partnership Division	None at this time	None at this time

Annex 3. Evaluation Reports Received by the Evaluation Unit in 2009–2010

Project- and Program-Level Evaluation Reports

Date, Title, Author(s)	Related PA, PI	Projects Covered	Period Covered	Country
May 2006, Pan Asia ICT R & D Grants Programme—Final Report , Richard Labelle	ICT4D, PAN	101060	2002 –05	Asia
December 2006, Monitoring and Evaluation of Pilot Project: Child Support, Poverty and Gender Equality in the Caribbean , Lynette Joseph-Brown	SEP, WRC	102617 / 105493	2004–08	Caribbean
October 2007, African Virtual Open Initiatives and Resources (AVOIR)—Internal Evaluation , Philipp Schmidt	Acacia	102509	2004–07	Sub-Saharan Africa

Date, Title, Author(s)	Related PA, PI	Projects Covered	Period Covered	Country
February 2008, Evaluación Participativa: del Sistema de Monitoreo y Evaluación de la Campaña Nacional de Diálogo Interétnico ¡Nuestra diversidad es nuestra fuerza! , Nathalia Ortiz	NA	104666	NA	Guatemala
April 2008, Knowledge Access for Rural Interconnected Areas Network KariaNet—A Self-Assessment Study , Zaid Moussa and Rathin Roy	Acacia	102206	2005–07	Middle-East and North Africa
September 2008, Training Institute: Women's Rights, Citizenship and Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa—Evaluation , Shamim Meer	WRC	104909	2007–08	Sub-Saharan Africa
October 2008, Independent Review of the African Network Operators Group (AfNOG) , Lyman Chapin and Chris Owens	ICT4D, Acacia	104973	1999–2008	Africa
October 2008, Regards croisés sur l'excision à l'heure des TIC : jeunes et genre, au coeur de la citoyenneté—Rapport d'évaluation du Projet de recherche "Contribution des TIC à l'abandon de l'excision en Afrique francophone, rôle citoyen des jeunes," Marie-Hélène Mottin-Sylla and Joëlle Palmieri	ICT4D, Acacia	N/A	N/A	West Africa
November 2008, The IDRC Tracer Study on NEPED , Amba Jamir	ENRM, RPE	105412	2008–09	Nagaland, India
December 2008, Final Report Gender Evaluation: Summary and Way Forward/Next Steps of Governance Equity and Health	GEH	N/A	2008	Global, Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), and Latin

Date, Title, Author(s)	Related PA, PI	Projects Covered	Period Covered	Country
Program , Neena Sachdeva and Dana Peebles				America and the Caribbean (LAC)
December 2008, Evaluation of the African Transitional Justice Research Network , Brandon Hamber	PCD	105353	2006–08	Africa
April 2009, Strengthening Resilience in Tsunami-affected Communities of India and Sri Lanka—Project Evaluation Report , Julian F. Gonsalves	ICT4D, PAN Asia	103594	2006–09	India and Sri Lanka
April 2009, Investment Climate and Business Environment Research Fund—Evaluation Report , Simon White	PBDD	104211	2006–09	Africa
April 2009, Evaluation of Peace, Conflict, and Development (PCD) Research Support in Countries and Regions Affected by Violent Conflict , Emery Brusset, Clotilde Gouley, Mark Hoffman, and Annina Mattsson	PCD	104848	2002–09	Uganda, Sri Lanka, Palestine, and Colombia
May 2009, WFSJ Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Project (SjCOOP): Evaluation and Recommendations , Michael Graham	IPS, ITS	103349	2006–07	Africa and the Middle East
May 2009, Rapport d'évaluation de Projet: Institutionnalisation du genre, des droits et de la citoyenneté des femmes dans l'enseignement supérieur à l'UCAD , Dr Cheikh Tidiane	N/A	N/A	0	Global

Date, Title, Author(s)	Related PA, PI	Projects Covered	Period Covered	Country
October 2009, Evaluation of the Project Biosafety Management of Genetically Modified Crops—China: Final Evaluation Report , Dr. Jose Falck-Zepeda	IPS, ITS	103783	2006–09	China
November 2009, Evaluation of the IDRC Project on Capacity Building in Resource Mobilization , Michael W. Bassey	PBDD	102564	2003–09	Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East
November 2009, Mid-Term Review: Sustainable Management of Algerian Steppes: A Participatory Learning Approach , Marielle Dubbeling	ENRM, RPE	104555	2007–09	Algeria
November 2009, A Community of Practice in EcoHealth – Toxics in Latin America and the Caribbean: Advancing Ecohealth in Latin America , Terri Willard and Jacobo Finkelman	GHRI, Ecohealth	101818	2003–10	Latin America and the Caribbean
January 2010, Asian Partnership on Emerging Infectious Diseases Research (APEIR) , Chun Lai	ENRM, Ecohealth	104320	2005–09	Asia

External Review Reports

Date, Title, Author(s)
November 2009, Growth, Globalization and Poverty (GGP) Program , Christopher Scott, Yazid Dissou, and Kunal Sen
December 2009, Canadian Partnerships Program , Dal Brodhead and Wendy Quarry
February 2010, Peace, Conflict, and Development (PCD) Program , Luc Reychler, Cheyanne Scharbatke-Church, and Philip Thomas
February 2010, Women's Rights and Citizenship (WRC) Program , Janet Billson-Mancini, Shoa Asfaha, and Ranjita Mohanty
March 2010, Evaluation Unit , Ailish Byrne, Ian C Davies, and A.K. Shiva Kumar

Strategic Evaluation Reports

Date, Title, Author(s)
June 2009, Evaluation of the International Development Research Centre's Experience with the Devolution of International Secretariats , Jim Armstrong, Alexa Khan
November 2009, The Large Conference Re-Imagined: Strategies, Dynamics, and Systems for IDRC's Convening Capacity , Nick Ishmael Perkins, Nancy Okail

Annex 4. Overview of Evaluations Conducted 2005–2010

Fiscal Year	Strategic Evaluations	External Reviews	# of Project- and Program-Led Evaluations
2005–06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connectivity in the Americas (ICA) • PAN Americas • PAN Asia Networking 	23
2006–07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive Grants 		19
2007–08	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity Building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connectivity Africa 	14
2008–09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge to Policy • Strategy Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Poverty and the Environment (UPE) • Rural Poverty and the Environment (RPE) • Environmental Economics Program for Southeast Asia (EEPSEA) • Ecohealth 	23
2009–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large Conferences • Devolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace, Conflict, and Development (PCD) • Women’s Rights and Citizenship (WRC) • Canadian Partnerships • Growth, Globalization and Poverty (GGP) 	22 ⁹

⁹ See Annex 3 for a full list of project and program-led evaluations for the fiscal year 2009–10.

Annex 5. Senior Management Response

Management Response to the External Review of the IDRC Evaluation Unit 2010 and to the Annual Corporate Evaluation Report

Overall Comments

IDRC management has read with satisfaction the report of the external review of the Centre's Evaluation Unit, conducted by Ailish Byrne, Ian C. Davies and A.K. Shiva Kumar and submitted in April 2010. Management acknowledges the overall positive assessment as well as the issues raised by the review team. Management has also read with satisfaction the Annual Corporate Evaluation Report produced by the Director of Evaluation.

IDRC's Approach to Evaluation

Management remains committed to utilisation-focused evaluation; that is, evaluations should have clearly defined users and uses. IDRC is committed to methodological pluralism in evaluation, since the intended use to which an evaluation is to be put should drive the choice of methods. Management's approach to evaluation values both accountability and learning for improved performance. Accountability for the results of IDRC's programs and operations, and for reporting on those results, remains the responsibility of management. The evaluation function in IDRC has a significant role in providing and analysing the evidence (or pointing out the lack of evidence, as the case may be) of results and performance, whether they be good or bad.

Balance between Service to Clients and Evaluation Unit's Own Programming

IDRC's Evaluation Unit has in the past split its time between two lines of business: providing evaluation services to its clients (principally Programs and Partnership Branch) and doing its own programming on the development of various evaluation tools and methods. As part of its support to clients, the Evaluation Unit has provided support to external reviews of programs, advised Program staff and grantees on evaluation questions, and sponsored strategic evaluations, for example. Under development of tools and methods, the Evaluation Unit has developed and disseminated tools such as Organisational Assessment and Outcome Mapping, and has helped develop a community of practice in evaluation in South Asia, for example.

IDRC management remains committed to an Evaluation Unit that addresses both lines of business well, and in ways that strengthen and reinforce each other; in the 2010-15 Strategic Framework period, the Evaluation Unit will track the amounts of time devoted to each of these two lines of business. The Evaluation Unit will continue to manage the balance of its work to ensure adequate and timely support to program evaluation activities.

Evaluation Tools and Methods

The Evaluation Unit will give priority to developing tools and methods that are aligned with the needs of Centre programs. In this way, the development of tools and methods will reinforce the Evaluation Unit's service role to Programs.

Evaluation tools and methods, like many things, have a life cycle; similarly, IDRC's support to the development, testing, dissemination and use of a tool or method will follow a life cycle. As an individual evaluation tool or method reaches a state of maturity and uptake within the broader evaluation and/or development community, the Unit will adjust its support to move into other areas and will modify (and usually reduce) its role in relation to that tool or method. Such has been past practice; witness, for example, the shift in IDRC's role with respect to Outcome Mapping in recent years from a previously large role as developer, promoter and trainer to a now much more modest and back-seat role. In line with the observations of the external review panel, such changes in IDRC's role need to be well communicated within and outside the Centre. In 'letting go' of an evaluation tool or method developed in, by or with the support of IDRC, the Centre will experience a loss of control; IDRC accepts that it will no longer control, and indeed will lose influence over, how and where that tool or method is used and how it evolves.

Quality of Evaluations

Management notes some inconsistency in the quality of evaluations in recent years and commits to taking steps to ensure a more consistently high quality of evaluations in the future. Recent cases have been discussed at Senior Management Committee and lessons have been learned.

Assessing Corporate Performance

Management notes the external review panel's concerns about accountability for performance at the corporate level in relation to the Evaluation Unit. The comments under "IDRC's Approach to Evaluation" above are pertinent in this connection.

During the 2005-2010 Evaluation Strategy, IDRC experimented with a Corporate Assessment Framework (CAF). While some thought that the CAF was a valuable exercise in that it provided evidence not found elsewhere, the main user of the CAF, IDRC's Senior Management Committee, was never fully convinced of its utility. Consistent with the Centre's belief in utilisation-focused evaluation, the CAF was therefore not renewed. IDRC management remains convinced that it has at its disposal other tools for assessing corporate performance, such as the President's annual assessment by the Board of Governors, IDRC's relative success in competing for funds from the International Assistance Envelope and from outside donors, and the Centre's reputation with grantees and stakeholders as measured in various independent surveys. IDRC will continue to follow the debates in official Ottawa and elsewhere on how to measure corporate performance, and remains open to new frameworks and tools.

Evaluation and Communications

Management maintains that, while evaluations may contain material that is useful for IDRC's corporate communications, the Evaluation Unit must remain independent of both IDRC's programs and communications. The Evaluation Unit must be able at all times to speak freely on questions within its domain of competence, based on the best evidence it can gather.

At the same time, the external review panel notes that the Evaluation Unit "has not communicated what it does and its achievements, particularly within IDRC and to the Board" in a fully satisfactory manner. The Evaluation Unit will more clearly communicate to internal and external stakeholders its achievements and its intentions. The accompanying Evaluation Strategy 2010-15 initiates this process.