Programme on Innovation, Higher Education and Research for Development (IHERD)

Background document

OECD Development Case Study: Canada International Development Research Centre

A Review of Canadian support for capacity development initiatives that support research in developing countries

Discussion draft
Data to be updated with new information from IDRC

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Introduction
This Case Study is one of several international contributions to a larger OECD review of the current trends in development assistance for research and capacity building in research and innovation policy. The Terms of Reference for this Case Study specify that it should examine: i) the priority-setting process for support to research as well as the specific support to capacity development in research and innovation policy; ii) the focus areas of the support and the motivation behind it; iii) modalities of the support/assistance (bloc-funding to selected institutions, projects, programs, etc.) and the reasons behind the choice of modality; and iv) resourcing (how much money and for how long) in order to ascertain the sustainability of the initiatives.

The Canadian Context
Canada’s development assistance is delivered through two agencies:

- Program and project support for research and capacity building in developing countries through the International Development Research Centre, IDRC
- Government-to-government development assistance through the Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA. Note, however that CIDA initiatives involving the support of research and capacity building are delivered through IDRC (e.g. the Global Health Initiative)

IDRC is the prime focus of this report on Canada, but there is also a short discussion of CIDA’s relationship with IDRC and overall role in development assistance for research and capacity building in science and innovation.

Canada’s Prime Instrument for Development Assistance for Research and Capacity Building - IDRC
A key part of Canada’s aid program since 1970, IDRC supports research and capacity building in developing countries with the overall goal of reducing poverty through innovative, lasting local solutions that aim to bring choice and change to those who need it most. It does this through seeking to answer questions related to food security, environment, health and economic development pertaining to developing countries. It seeks to promote growth and development and encourage sharing knowledge with policy makers, other researchers, and communities around the world.

IDRC’s head office is in Ottawa, Canada. Regional offices are situated at strategic locations in developing countries to ensure communications and relevance of the IDRC programming.

IDRC at a glance - 2010-2011

- $248M in revenues ($195.66 from the Government of Canada; $50.9M from other donors; $2.3M other revenue)
- 3.9% of Canada’s international assistance
- $210.2M for new research activities
- 16 donor partners
- 924 research activities
- 766 institutions supported; 103 of them Canadian
- 150 awardees
A simple recitation of goals and a snapshot of statistical data on the organization does not, however, provide an effective profile of IDRC. Understanding its values, its program philosophy and its evolution over time are necessary precursors to understanding its thematic orientations (priorities), the modalities of support that it offers and its influence on development. Hence, a short historical introduction is provided.

IDRC’s founding mandate and values derived from a conviction that a new type of development agency was required – one that recognized that:

- research, the creation of new knowledge, and innovation in science and technology, including the social, economic, and cultural fields, are and will remain vitally important determinants of humanity’s ability to grapple with the challenges of development;
- rather than prescription from afar, the strengths of indigenous research, observation, analysis, and collaboration would enable countries being assisted to identify for themselves and tackle their development challenges. They are the best judges of what is relevant to their circumstances.

Those involved in the creation of IDRC also acknowledged that research takes a long time to pay off and it can be a high risk venture.

The IDRC Act received royal assent on May 13, 1970 following a unanimous vote of support from the Canadian Parliament. Its objectives articulated at that time – and still valid today – are:

“...to initiate, encourage, support, and conduct research into the problems of the developing regions of the world and into the means of applying and adapting scientific, technical, and other knowledge to the economic and social advancement of those regions.”

The mandate has remained constant (Appendix 1), but over time the way in which IDRC has delivered on this mandate has evolved.

For IDRC, the 1970s were a period of constructing the organization and building credibility in development. While there were four broad themes around which programming was organized, the program delivery was very much along traditional academic disciplinary lines and the focus on research projects that were relatively reductionist in nature. Two innovative features of the original design were the inclusion of a division of information sciences (before the real onset of ICTs) and a division of social sciences, reflecting the need for the social/human dimension in innovation.

Over time, during the 1980s to the present, the theme areas evolved to reflect international and Canadian priorities. The modalities of delivery became much more inter-disciplinary and nuanced, with attention to the specific characteristics of the receptor that offered promise for results, and there was more attention to mentoring and support to better enable the development of indigenous capacity. Research training was recognized as a key component of development activity. Innovative experiments were run to test out new programming concepts (e.g. inclusive development).

Inevitably, fiscal pressures within Canada (in particular the in the mid-1990s and in 2012) resulted in budgetary reductions that in turn led to programming reductions, but they also catalyzed an outreach to donor partners to collaborate in the design, governance and management of major development
initiatives. Partnerships became a significant part of the business model. The focus on developing research capacity broadened from researchers to embrace organizational capacity.

Throughout this period, IDRC has encouraged reflexive activity and publication on the part of its staff complement. Many of the resulting publications, including the results of the funding and IDRC analyses of its activities have been placed in an open access repository for global access. IDRC’s core values are highlighted in its most recent Strategic Framework 2010-15 and reproduced in Appendix 2.

Figure 1. IDRC’s evolution – an overview (IDRC at 40; 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Decade</th>
<th>The Priorities and Operational Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970s</td>
<td><strong>Constructing IDRC and building credibility</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Themes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Agriculture (including forestry and fisheries), food, and nutrition;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Health and healthcare delivery, including water and sanitation;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Information sciences (to tackle the knowledge gap); and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Social sciences The success of any innovation depends also on social, economic, political, and environmental factors; research needs to take account of these “soft” issues as well as “hard” science and technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Policy directions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reliance on an academic disciplinary framework within the themes</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Initiatives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• One large multi-disciplinary initiative involving 10 countries to develop indigenous self-reliance in science and technology; most other projects relatively small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s</td>
<td><strong>Reflection and adaptation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Themes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Continuation of original themes with increased focus on urban issues and food security</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Energy problems of developing countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Evolving policy directions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More engagement with policy makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increased collaboration between research groups overseas and in Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use of IDRC’s political neutrality to promote democracy and development in countries undergoing political unrest (e.g. Chile and South Africa)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Growing attention to urban, not just rural issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Investment in fellowships and awards, not just research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Sample initiatives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Energy research (requested by Can government; a 4 year 10M$ program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) housed in IDRCs Kenya office for many years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• International Network for Bamboo and Rattan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Asian Fisheries Social Science Research Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s</td>
<td><strong>Empowerment through knowledge</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Themes</strong> – no longer delivered by discipline, but through “program initiatives” by multi-</td>
</tr>
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</table>
disciplinary teams (radical restructuring). *Influenced by Agenda 21*

- Food security/food security
- Equity in natural resource use
- Biodiversity conservation
- Sustainable employment
- Strategies and policies for healthy societies (including an increasing focus on urban issues including food security and sanitation)
- Information and communication

**Evolving policy directions**

- Working in fiscal constraints; radical transformation in ~1996 to emphasize an interdisciplinary approach to research
- Address global and regional research issues,
- Additional funds from non-traditional sources,
- Affiliations expanded in both developed and developing regions
- Focus on ensuring that the products of research are actually used, and to understand “what works” in development research.

**Sample initiatives**

- IDRC designated Canada’s “prime vehicle” for working with developing countries on implementing Agenda 21.
- International Secretariats involving multiple donors
- Increased focus on self-assessment and measuring results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2000s</th>
<th><strong>Innovation, communication and Agenda 21</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Themes** | Environment and natural resource management  
ICTs for development  
Social and economic equity |
| **Evolving policy directions** | Translation of research into policy and practice  
Governance, and understanding what types of institutional environments most effectively create knowledge for development become more important  
Gender issues |
| **Sample initiatives** | Research on Knowledge Systems (RoKS) which in turn informed a new program area, begun in 2005, called Innovation, Policy, and Science  
2001 - launching of the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas  
2003 - launch of Centre for connectivity in Africa managed by IDRC  
Strengthened domestic alliances with Canadian agencies and organizations  
2008 - IDRC lead agency in new Development Innovation Fund to search for breakthroughs in global health and other areas  
2008 – Think Tank initiative together with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation  
2009 - Canadian International Food Security Research Fund (Joint with CIDA)  
Strengthened alliances with other international donors (e.g. UN, UK, Carnegie Foundation, Gates Foundation) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2010s</th>
<th><strong>Innovating for development</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Themes</strong></td>
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Reductions in funding levels (during the 1990s and most recently in the fiscal downturn of 2012) have been an ongoing challenge for IDRC, a challenge that it has addressed by restructuring its mode of program delivery and seeking donor partnerships within and outside Canada. Program cuts and staff reductions have also been an inevitable consequence of the most recent “Deficit Reduction Actin Plan” in Canada. It is somewhat early to assess the full impact of those latest adjustments as yet.

At the same time, IDRC has been positioning itself to deal with new development challenges in a changing world, described recently by Rohinton Medhora (Blog posting), former VP Programs at IDRC:

“The terminology and language used to describe development is increasingly inadequate to describe the world one sees ... As a result of the current mutability in the field, the time appears right for a new take on development. This approach would recognize the integrative nature of the process of development (across disciplines and values); the increasing accord among scholars and practitioners alike around the constituents of development (if not the weight that might be attached to each); and the existence of a plurality of views on what “works” and what does not, across time and place.”

Looking forward, IDRC foresees the following evolution:

- **Outreach** - Outreach out to non-research audiences, particularly policymakers and other stakeholders in policy debates, including the interested public in Canada, in developing countries, and elsewhere.
- **Partnerships** - A larger role in facilitating partnerships and other forms of collaboration between and among its various stakeholders and research and funding partners. This includes connecting researchers in different regions with others working in complementary disciplines elsewhere, as well as the creation of links between researchers, policymakers, civil society groups, and other development donors, wherever these make sense.
- **Efficiency** - Increased resilience and nimbleness through enhanced efficiency, streamlined internal procedures, and an increased share of its resources devoted to research programming and research support.
The IDRC Priority Setting Process (for Research and R&I Policy)

There is an annual process for review of priorities and programs that is associated with the annual budget cycle; this tends to produce relatively modest directional changes, although external government priorities can cause more major shifts. It is the formal planning process at approximately five-year intervals that tends to provide more substantive change. This is a structured planning activity that normally results in a strategic framework for a five-year period - a fairly detailed document approved by the Board and published.

To arrive at the ultimate plan, the process involves (not necessarily in chronological or priority order)

- **IDRC Board discussions** – The Board provides an overall framework for the planning activity. For example, whereas in the past, it has normally been initiated by an environmental scan, in the last planning cycle, attention was initially focused on the internal workings of IDRC – its business model and staff competencies. Later on in the process, the Board reviews the proposed directions and initiatives from the IDRC Management Committee, acting as a sounding board, challenge function and as appropriate source of refinement of the proposed course of action.

- **Staff assessment** – Staff self-assessment of the outcomes of ongoing program delivery, including exploratory discussions, focus groups and conferences, monitoring visits etc is a significant part of the process. This includes integration of the outcomes of formal evaluations and the discussions at the IDRC Management Committee (which includes regional directors) of the environmental context for development assistance, the relative success and failure of recent programming initiatives, staff competencies, and the suitability of the IDRC business model for the coming five-year period.

- **Selective regional consultations** – There are “bottom-up” consultations with regional players in developing countries who have been identified for their breadth of perspective. Triggered by the IDRC convening powers, these consultations tend to focus primarily on issues and thematic topics rather than program modalities. While these actions influence future directions, they also result in many more ideas than can be accommodated within the program structure. Regional representatives on the Board provide a valuable perspective from the developing world that is not influenced by Canadian pre-occupations – helping maintain a balance.

- **Interactions of senior officials within Canada** - Interactions of senior IDRC officials with senior and elected officials in other government departments have become an increasingly important two-way communications channel in recent years. There has been an active involvement of IDRC in the “forum of ideas” within the federal government in order to position itself as a solution to federal issues with a global development dimension.

- **External overtures and contingencies** - There are occasions in which IDRC initiates a new program modality in response to an overture external to the federal government. This may be from funding partners, or ideas emanating from developing countries. It also maintains a contingency budget of some 10-15% of the program allocation in order to respond to rapidly evolving situations that it had not foreseen.

The evolution of programs and larger initiatives can often be driven from outside the walls of IDRC – with highly placed individuals having ideas that have resonance with parliamentarians and then those initiatives work their way through the system (e.g. Global Health; Regional Centres for Connectivity). These may be assigned to IDRC with an incremental budget allocation as an outcome of such processes. As an example, in 2001, the Centre was assigned the responsibility for launching the Institute for Connectivity in the Americas announced by the Canadian government at the Summit of the Americas in Québec City.
The Focus Areas – What and Why

The policy context for priorities

There are several considerations in setting policy, thematic and regional directions:

1. **Issues framed by developing countries** - Issues articulated by developing countries where significant knowledge gaps exist and where the potential is high to have an impact on research and decision-making capacities (sometimes high risk, high impact) in those countries.

2. **Congruence with the priorities of Canada’s policies** for international development, innovation, and science and technology (S&T), while recognizing that balancing parliamentary and governmental concerns in Canada with priorities of developing-country partners is an ongoing challenge.

3. **Staff capacity** – the competencies and capacity of the IDRC staff complement to manage the overall program portfolio, in particular proposed new thrusts. Some initiatives require more staff intensity than others.

4. **A balance between continuity in programming with change** - Building capacity, in particular, requires prolonged and dedicated attention if it is to be durable. But continuity does not mean more of the same. Rather it is about using existing platforms and current niches to build on demonstrated strengths in enduring themes. It contributes to deepening areas of support, so that the results are better grounded and more sustainable.

Additionally, IDRC looks to its own internal assessment of what works and why, tailoring its approach to delivering on priority thrusts with an understanding of the factors most likely to lead to success. IDRC has invested heavily in the evaluation function in the past, and has, as a result, significant evidence on the factors for success and failure.

Funding Partnerships

The objectives of IDRC’s partnerships with donors and international organizations are to:

- Promote greater collaboration among research funders and enhance effectiveness in development research;
- Increase the flow of resources to and build the capacity of researchers in developing regions of the world; and
- Facilitate information and knowledge sharing on research for development.

Those partnerships can take three forms:

- **Co-funding**, where one or more donors fund all or part of a project or program that is managed by IDRC.
- **Parallel funding**, where resources allocated to a project that is initiated or co-initiated by IDRC go directly to the research recipient.
- **Knowledge sharing**, where the focus is on exchange of information through various individual or institutional activities not involving financial commitments.

Managing partnerships and the relationships that underpin those partnerships has become a part of the core activities of the Centre. A set of established principles guide the development and management of partnerships to ensure that IDRC:

- Collaborates in ways that are consistent with or complementary to its priorities and programming;
- Invests its own financial resources as a genuine partner and not as an executing agency for other donors;
• Builds relationships based on a shared vision, open communication, mutual respect, and joint ownership;
• Recognizes fully the different contributions, obligations, and accountability of each partner; and
• Rigorously assesses potential risks associated with project implementation and collaboration.

Initially driven by funding pressures in the 1990s IDRC sought partners for a broad spectrum of activities. During the 2000s a more strategic approach was taken to the forging of partnership – eliminating small ones (setting a $2 million threshold for the partner funding in recognition of the high transaction costs of partnerships) and seeking opportunities where the priorities, objectives and values of the partner organizations were fairly well aligned with those of IDRC. This is also seen as a way to deliver on the third element of the IDRC mandate - to “encourage generally the coordination of international development research”.

Since the 1990s, IDRC has been actively expanding its network of donor partners with the result that there is a very significant leverage of IDRC funds through partnered initiatives. Donor partners are both international and Canadian (over 175 donors to date). In 2010–2011, IDRC recorded CA$46.3 million in co-funding contributions, in addition to its annual appropriations (CA$172.8 million) from the Parliament of Canada.

In the current environment it has become very important to ensure that anything IDRC does is highly relevant to the IDRC vision, values and priorities. This naturally creates an ongoing tension and challenge, but not necessarily in a negative way. On the one hand, partnerships direct some of the IDRC funds and reduce flexibility. On the other hand, partnerships can bring in many new ideas and can challenge established thought and ideology. This is an asset to any organization.

Ultimately, funding partnerships deal with managing a diversity of sources of funding. Single source funding results in considerable vulnerability, especially if from a single governmental source. But with a wider range of funding partners, including multiple governmental sources, private foundations and other international development agencies there is some buffering and protection from rapid funding perturbations.

Successful partnership initiatives require managing different expectations – and sufficient investment in exploring those expectations at a level that there is real clarity of how an initiative will unfold, what are the end objectives and what success would look like. Two factors are key for success – i) each partner having some “skin in the game” and ii) reasonable alignment of expectations, recognizing that.

Among the partnerships that IDRC is currently involved in are the following (see also text boxes in the later pages of this report):
• Think Tank (TT) initiative – a $133 million partnership initiative involving the Gates Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and The Netherlands Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS) and that evolved from a meeting of the minds on the importance of developing sustainable organizational capacity.
• Canadian International Food and Security Research Fund (CIFSRF) – a five year $62 million collaboration between CIDA and IDRC focusing on pulses as sources of protein and income.
• Global Health Research Initiative – a partnership with CIHR, CIDA, Health Canada and PHAC The program funds health research and research capacity-building in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean.
• IDRC is the lead agency for the federal $225 million Development Innovation Fund launched in 2010 – bringing together researchers in Canadian and developing countries and the private sector to tackle persistent health problems facing poor countries. Partners are CIHR (for peer review) and Grand Challenges Canada (that implements and manages programs supported through the fund).

• International Community University Research Alliance program – a partnership with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council that fosters alliances of universities and community organizations to tackle global issues

**Thematic priorities**

The current thematic priorities for IDRC investment are:

• Agriculture and environment, including food security, climate change and water, ecosystems and health, and environmental economics

• Global Health Policy, dealing with health care, health information systems, and the understanding and control of chronic diseases

• Science and Innovation, focusing on reduction of poverty through new technologies and the application of science and innovation, including information and communication technologies

• Social and Economic Policy, aiming to inform debate on key public policy issues that will promote inclusive growth, accountable government, and public security.

Within this thematic portfolio some specific areas of evolution were identified in the five-year strategic framework:

• **Agricultural productivity, nutrition, and food security issues** will gain greater prominence;

• Programming on **climate change** will continue to concentrate on **adaptation** rather than mitigation. Building on work started in Africa, it will continue to extend to Asia, and to Latin America and the Caribbean;

• The environment and human health research agenda will focus mainly on **new and emerging diseases and pandemics**, and on both developing and disseminating **new ecohealth research methodologies**;

• Work on **energy** will be covered through programs in several areas, such as agriculture, climate change, economic growth, and S&T policy;

• Continued support for **economic policy reform** will continue, including elements of rule of law (including work on poverty and inclusion).

Each thematic or sub-thematic area would typically have its own program prospectus that would provide context and guidance for potential applicants – in particular laying out the development challenge and the situational analysis as well as providing information about the specific approach to programming deemed suitable for the theme/sub-theme. Among the issues addressed would be:

• Program goals – the overarching goal and what program characteristics are seen as appropriate top deliver on that goal (e.g. interdisciplinarity of approach, policy research, impact-oriented research)

• Intended outcomes – e.g. advancing knowledge, shaping policies, building research capacities, managing risks

• Program strategy and approach – the duration of the program, frequency of funding cycles, proportion of resources to different program components, what different program modalities will be employed, e.g. open competitive calls for proposals, responsive programming and proactive proposal development by program officers.
• Regional and thematic priorities – e.g. the characteristics and challenges of each target region that would be addressed through the research supported in the sub-theme. Program delivery is customized and tailored to the thematic area and the specific context and development goals articulated.

Regional focus

Until 2012, IDRC maintained six regional offices across the developing world—in Latin America, the Middle East, Africa (2), and Asia (2). Recent budgetary reductions within the Deficit Reduction Action Plan implemented by the federal government in 2012 have led to a number of changes designed to streamline IDRC practices and improve efficiencies of operation, including:

• Consolidating its presence in Asia in one office in New Delhi, while maintain a senior representative in Southeast Asia;
• Consolidating its presence in Sub-Saharan Africa into the Nairobi office, while maintaining a senior representative in West Africa.
• Introducing more shared systems and services among all IDRC sites.

Even with this consolidation of regional offices, IDRC adheres strongly to the importance of an on-the-ground presence in the countries it serves.

Research activities funded in any one year incorporate i) new initiatives that are funded in a responsive mode within the advertised program themes and ii) ongoing commitments to established programs (recognizing the importance of sustained support for a period of time). As such there is significant continuity of IDRC presence in countries and regions over time.

Other than those countries proscribed by the Canadian government, all countries listed by OECD for ODA are eligible for support from IDRC. Canadian partners may be included in a proposal, but require a primary proponent from a developing country.

The challenges of fragile states - Like most development agencies, IDRC has wrestled with how best to engage in fragile, low income areas where societies are weak and/or in conflict, research capacity low and policy communities are weak receptors. How do you invest when there is not a local partner to engage with, when the policy audience is distracted and undertrained and without the capacity to implement solutions? Three approaches have borne some fruit – i) working through other agencies that have close relationships with the target states as an early stage of a longer-term strategy; ii) taking a “generous” interpretation of research for development, e.g. repatriating seed banks in Afghanistan (bringing genetic material from abroad and putting it into the hands of local farmers) is not technically the creation of new knowledge, however it can be very effective; iii) building capacity and experience in junior people and linking them with researchers in other areas. There is also the role of intermediary countries.

Intermediaries - Brazil, India, and China (as well as several other Latin American, African, Middle Eastern, and Asian countries with advanced research capabilities in some sectors) are of growing importance to the Centre’s work, given their economic growth and potential role as catalysts and collaborators among Southern research and policy communities. While not necessarily being major beneficiaries of future IDRC support, they may play an important role as anchors for broader regional or cross-regional research initiatives.

Graduates - IDRC recognizes that for many countries, e.g. India, Southeast Asia, China, and some Latin American countries, the impetus for further growth and progress must come from within. It sees its
particular impact as being in less advanced countries, where external players such as IDRC, can help local actors within a framework of greater aid efficiency and shared accountability for results. Hence, helping to develop human capabilities and institutional capacities remains fundamental to that goal.

Table 1. Research activities and allocation by region 2010-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Allocation ($000)</th>
<th>No of Research Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Global</td>
<td>28,095</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>80,655</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>49,296</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America and the Caribbean</td>
<td>46,042</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
<td>6,075</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Canadians - IDRC’s regional focus does not preclude the participation of Canadian researchers in development collaborations. Three areas of activity are explicitly designed to maintain the active engagement of Canadian researchers and research trainees in development, subject to the availability of resources:
- The Development Innovation Fund (DIF) and several programs that partner with Canada’s science granting agencies, supporting research in the natural and physical sciences along with the social science dimension of S&T
- Young and mid-career Canadians supported by means of fellowships and awards for research related to development
- Strengthening research and debate within Canada’s development community (limited support).

IDRC Modalities of Support/Assistance

A key feature of the IDRC business model of support for research and research training is a customized “grants-plus” approach that is designed to build opportunity, engagement, and access (IDRC Annual Report 2010-11).
- **Opportunity** - Providing financial support to researchers and institutions in developing countries for applied research on problems they identify as crucial to their communities.
- **Engagement** - Engaging with researchers throughout the research process, sometimes as a mentor but increasingly on a peer to peer basis.
- **Access** - Acting as a research broker to further networking among grantees. IDRC facilitates access to research materials and services, as well as to other researchers and policy-makers, increasing the impact of the research it supports.

This “grants plus” approach and the customized application of the three components to any one program and/or project is a defining and distinctive characteristic of the IDRC business model. Depending on the nature of the initiative and its context, the three components of this “grants plus” approach are adopted and tailored by program staff to fit the initiative.

**Funding modalities** - Most initiatives use a combination of responsive programming, proactive proposal development involving IDRC staff and the potential recipient and increasingly in recent years
competitive calls for proposals. Block funding is not normally used as a modality of support; however support through the Think Tanks initiative involves core budget support to allow the grantees to invest in long-term planning rather than offering shorter-term funding for projects.

**Competitive funding modalities** - IDRC has forged its international reputation on innovative and forward looking programming delivered with flexibility and with significant intellectual engagement by its program officers and senior officials (the “grants plus” approach). But pressures for increased efficiency of operations and managing some of the recent partnerships have led to an increased level of competitive programming (still less than 50% of overall programming). The impact of this evolution has yet to be ascertained. What difference will this make? There is evidence that the real involvement of agency personnel boosts success level of projects (specialists in their own right own right who can engage with the material and distinguish the good from the marginal). Agency personnel interaction can also contribute markedly to capacity building, inculcating better skill sets in the region at the end of the day. So much of what IDRC is about is setting up and nurturing relationships. But in competitive scenarios there is not the same time spent developing those relationships. Rather the relationship tends to rest on the proposal, the review and the cheque, unless there are alternative means of nurturing relationships within the competitive program design – a feature that would necessarily reduce the “efficiency”. For IDRC, retention of the “retail not the wholesale” value is critical, while engaging a diversity of funding modalities. IDRC’s continued impact will rely on it being a conduit to flow capacity, not simply money.

One of the approaches that IDRC is exploring to get beyond the constraints of the simple competitive mode of funding is engaging researchers in a thematic area to interact together – especially following award of funding in a theme/sub-theme area. There are early indications that this has been at least partially successful.

**Role of IDRC staff** - Ideally, IDRC staff functions as peer, mentor, and adviser, engaging with grantees in framing research problems, improving research designs, and choosing methodologies. Staff and funded researchers are expected to collaborate as peers to contribute new ideas and theories, influence practice and policy, and strengthen research networks. Grantees are brought together with IDRC staff to share research results and insights on practices that work. This mode of functioning is labour and cost intensive, meaning that the administrative costs of IDRC are higher than many development agencies. However, this is the prime factor in the success of the IDRC investments, and hence has been carefully protected by IDRC Management and its Board, even with the increased presence of competitive funding modalities. However, the capacity to retain this mode of action is fragile. There are significant differences in the level of staff engagement by program and questions as to the extent to which there is time and internal incentives for the necessary reflexive activity (research and writing) for staff to deliver on this model.

**Reflexive activity** – For IDRC, staff reflection, research and writing is absolutely vital. Personnel are hired for their expertise and intellectual capabilities; however, that capacity can only be retained with ongoing engagement in reflexive activity. Is this happening?

Staff publish, write articles and blogs, publish books (often as editors), and attend conferences – all seen as important to improving the practice of development research. But the time available to staff to undertake these activities is under pressure as a result of “new public management” considerations. Managing an effective balance of efficiency and staff learning and engagement will be important for the IDRC model to be sustainable and for continuation of the international solicitation of IDRC advice and
partnerships. There are some activities internal to IDRC that contribute to making it a learning environment. IDRC continues to have visiting fellows - small numbers, but very active in the program areas that they are associated with. There are regular “brown bag lunch” seminars in which staff participate (as speakers and participants). The recent reductions in evaluation staff will require program teams to be more actively engaged in assessing the progress and outcomes of their programs and how they got to where they are.

*The IDRC publishing ethic* - There is an ethic within IDRC that where possible the actual credit on a publication goes to the partner researchers, even with substantive contribution from the Centre. This has been a very important element of capacity building; IDRC staff will normally be very active players on the editorial team, reflecting the mentoring and counseling role that they play in so many of the projects and delivering on program objectives.

**Types of research activities supported**
IDRC is generally very eclectic in the activities it supports, in keeping with its “grants plus” model. Rather than being prescriptive in defining the types of activities it will support, a program prospectus lays out clearly the goals and objectives of the initiative and within that explores the types of initiatives that would contribute to achieving the objectives. Key elements of programming include:

- **Contributions to knowledge** - A broad spectrum of types of research are funded with an overarching goal of enhancing evidence-based policy development and implementation. Research supported is often methodologically and theoretically interdisciplinary, and includes both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Support can be provided for field-oriented research, tool development, survey research, risk assessment, case studies, cross-case comparisons, conceptual and policy research, policy analysis, impact assessment, key informant interviews, document analysis, ethnography, and participatory action research. A common focus is to develop and implement concrete measures to meet local needs. Research will typically include in-depth analyses of the topic’s gendered dimensions, and will disaggregate its policy recommendations by gender whenever appropriate.

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**Ecohealth - Emerging Infectious Diseases Research Initiative (Eco EID)**

*The Issue:* Southeast Asia and China have been named “hot spots” for the emergence of such diseases as avian flu, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), and severe dengue.

*The funding partnership:* In 2010, IDRC, the Global Health Research Initiative, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) launched the Ecohealth a multi-million dollar research collaboration in Southeast Asia and China aiming to improve knowledge and capacities to prevent and control new and re-emerging infectious diseases.

*The funding strategy:* A competitive call resulted in the selection of three research projects involving researchers from China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos.

*The research focus:* Examination of how new diseases emerge and identify what can be done to prevent their spread among vulnerable populations. Researchers are collaborating across scientific disciplines, government departments, and social sectors to apply an ecosystem approach to health. The research will help address how poverty, gender, and environmental degradation contribute to disease emergence. The initiative supports researchers’ efforts to guide decision-makers on how to use their findings to improve the health and well-being of people.
• **Research capacity development** - Building research capacity in developing countries – in both individual researchers and research organizations – has been an ongoing feature of the IDRC programming since the beginning. Historically, attention has been focused on the individual, but increasingly is moving towards the organizational level in recognition that without a supportive environment, the potential of individual capacity is unlikely to be realized. Hence the importance of the Think Tank initiative. Capacity is also interpreted broadly and developed in the context of the program themes, incorporating attention to capacity gaps in relevant methodologies such as policy evaluation or impact assessment, and gender analysis. See next section for a more extensive discussion of capacity development.

• **Knowledge translation** – The support for knowledge translation is designed to enable the IDRC research partners in developing countries to influence policy and practice, and help build constituencies for change. It is generally delivered in a program and project-specific context and may engage international donors, regional organizations, and the Canadian policy community. Programs utilize the grants-plus model to work with recipients to develop effective communication plans and synthesis tools tailored for specific audiences and purposes (e.g. ethical challenges of doing research in violent contexts, the utility of locally-grounded research for policy influence, etc.). Strategic, issue-based workshops and expert group meetings enhance dialogue and knowledge transfer.

**Case Study - the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)**

**Objectives**: to carry out policy-oriented research activities, disseminate findings, train a new generation of African economists, and foster links among scholars and practitioners

**Outcomes**: a platform that is both successful and flexible, the AERC is tackling new issues on the continent, such as policy responses to climate change and the role of the so-called “Asian drivers” in Africa.

• **Networking** - Networking involves building a diversity of formal and informal relationships. Traditional in the IDRC approach have been the intra-regional networks such as those facilitated by the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) and the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (see text boxes), as well as building less formal connections among IDRC grant recipients and others working in similar and complementary disciplines elsewhere. The Think Tank initiative links researchers, policymakers, civil society groups, and other development donors. Other S-S linkages will involve anchor states like Brazil and India as bridges to poorer developing countries. Recently there has been a move to develop more N-S linkages involving Canadian researchers. The 2010 Strategic Framework suggests that increased networking is a priority element of the IDRC programming.

**Case Study - the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR)**

**Genesis**: Two IDRC Workshops i) Singapore 1979 - leading rattan scientists from half a dozen countries; ii) Singapore 1980 - more than 20 forestry scientists from bamboo-growing countries.

**Evolution**: i) In early 1980s IDRC forestry programming in Asia oriented to non-wood forest products (NWFPs); ii) Following a workshop in 1984, IDRC set up a newsletter to facilitate communication among bamboo and rattan scientists in the region and to provide a backdrop for an informal network; iii) Within
two years, IDRC hired a coordinator to manage the informal Bamboo and Rattan Research Network.

*Creation of the INBAR Network:* INBAR was formed in 1993 through grants from IDRC and started operations from IDRC's South Asia Regional Office in New Delhi, India.

**Mandate:** To explore i) the crucial role of NWFPs, especially bamboo and rattan, in the socio-economic well-being of the predominantly rural population of developing countries; ii) the potential of bamboo and rattan for conserving tropical forests and for curtailing the rapid decline of forest genetic resources by offering alternative solutions to wood-based products.

**Structural issues:** Other donor funding difficult to access because of the INBAR status as an “IDRC project” with a time-limited mandate. Approach to problem – i) to extend the network’s range of activities to Africa and Latin America, and ii) to deepen and broaden the network’s commitment to strategic, development-led research on bamboo and rattan.

*The independent Institute:* Following a significant period of discussions by various advisory groups there was a decision to establish an autonomous, international, scientific, philanthropic organization to replace the existing network. More consultations on the venue resulted in China agreeing to host INBAR as the first international organization to have its headquarters in the country. On 6 November 1997, the formal creation of INBAR as an independent organization was launched by China and eight other nations - Bangladesh, Canada, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Peru, the Philippines and the United Republic of Tanzania.

http://www.fao.org/docrep/x2450e/x2450e0a.htm

The IDRC business model entails more than simply providing support for the full project or program cycle, from conceptualization to dissemination and application. Program learning and evaluation are part of the on-going process of program renewal and evolution - evaluating what has and has not worked and revisiting strategies and funding instruments. Metrics and communications are important, as are measuring results and mapping and communicating the outcomes of development activities. Annual program meetings, documenting lessons learned and writing the “meta narrative” as the program evolves are part of the ongoing operations.

**Capacity development**

IDRC’s capacity development activities are intended to create and strengthen the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for good quality, relevant and useful research – at the level of the individual and organization. Support for such capacity development may be a direct objective and/or collateral benefit of project support, or the objective of a targeted program.

The types of capacity development supported through IDRC research projects can be grouped into five broad capacity categories, each reflecting something an individual or institution is expected to be able to do or to do better as a consequence of the intervention. These are

- conducting research,
- managing research activities and organizations,
- conceiving, generating and sustaining research with respect to a sector/theme or country/regional priorities,
- using/applying research outcomes in policy and/or practice (research translation and uptake), and
- mobilizing research-related policy and program “systems” thinking.
In addition to a focus on established researchers, IDRC offers a variety of fellowships and awards to fund innovative work by research trainees – master’s, PhD, and post-doctoral students in developing countries and Canadians involved in development related projects. This funding is designed to assist in building a solid research capacity in developing countries. It also gives a new generation of Canadians the opportunity to participate in international development and an understanding of the distinctive issues in development.

A recent initiative with a dominant capacity development objective was launched in 2007 - the International Research Chairs Initiative (IRCI), a partnership between the Centre and the well-regarded Canada Research Chairs (CRC) program delivered by the three research councils in Canada. Following a rigorous peer-review of more than 100 applications, eight teams have been awarded up to CA$1 million over five years. A key feature of this initiative is the partnership between established researchers in Canada holding CRC awards and IDRC Research Chairs in developing countries. These awards, announced earlier in 2012, involve researchers working at universities in Brazil, China, Ghana, India, Morocco, and Uganda, where each IDRC Research Chair is pursuing a five-year research program in collaboration with a Canada Research Chair. Each team will address a key development challenge, including infectious diseases, pollution, child nutrition, and wireless communications. These IDRC research chairs will also play a key role in mentoring the next generation of scholars and practitioners.

**Partnerships in Development**

IDRC considers partnerships key to its business model. The combination of a focus on research as a developmental instrument and the demonstrated capacity of the IDRC staff (in Ottawa and the regions) have triggered overtures from various international organizations to turn to IDRC as a partner in funding, delivery and knowledge sharing.

**International Partners**

Among the international partners are:

- **Bilateral aid agencies**: Australian Aid, UK Department for International Development (DFID); Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SADC); Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)
- **Multilateral organizations**: International Fund for Agricultural Development, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Health Organization, UN-HABITAT
- **Foundations**: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- **Private sector**: Microsoft Corporation

One of the high profile international partnerships is the Think Tank Initiative – now in its fourth fiscal year of operation. While a minor funder, IDRC manages the initiative and sustains the international governing structure. The following figure provides a high level overview of the initiative and its reach into developing countries.

**The Think Tank Initiative**

The overarching **objective**:
- to strengthen the capacity of independent policy research organizations in the developing world

A **partnership** of five organizations that have committed CA$113 million funding for the first phase and that share
in the governance of the initiative:

- $42 million – William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- $42 million – Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- $14 million – IDRC (and manager of the initiative)
- $9 million – DFID
- $6 million – DGIS

**Funding**, in the shape of core grants, is combined with dedicated technical support in three broad areas:

- research methods and skills,
- policy engagement and communication,
- general organizational development

Among other activities, the Initiative supports peer-to-peer review, learning and exchange by bringing together the funded institutions and outside experts.

**Current recipients** – 51 Think tanks in 23 countries that meet specific criteria such as a degree of both political openness and policy research capacity.

- East Africa: Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda
- West Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal
- Latin America: Bolivia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, Peru
- South Asia: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka

A diverse set of **research themes** being pursued in these Think Tanks:

- Development
- Economics
- Environment & Natural Resources
- Evaluation
- Food & Agriculture
- Governance
- Health
- Information & Communication
- Science & Technology
- Social Policy

**Canadian Partnerships**

There are also many donor and strategic partnerships within the Canadian government. IDRC reports to Parliament through the Minister of Foreign Affairs. It collaborates frequently with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Canada’s two international development organizations complement one another in many ways, allowing them to accomplish more than either agency could on its own.

The interface between CIDA and IDRC is characterized by

- The President of CIDA being a Board member of IDRC.
- Peer-to-peer relationships between IDRC and CIDA staff.
- Collaborative funding relationships in which CIDA provides funds for programming that IDRC delivers.
- Complementary actions in which IDRC supports the research and capacity development, CIDA the implementation.
Currently, IDRC and CIDA are partners in the Canadian International Food Security Research Fund and the Global Health Research Initiative, as well as other projects. IDRC leads the African Adaptation Research Centres Initiative, supported by Environment Canada.

### Canadian International Food Security Research Fund (CIFSRF)

A partnership between IDRC and CIDA launched in 2009

The **goal** - To help alleviate poverty and significantly improve the lives and livelihoods of the world’s poor. Also, to support organizations and institutions that will contribute significantly to sustainable development.

The **focus**:  
- Applied research projects that can significantly affect agriculture and nutrition in developing countries.  
- Innovations, including new skills and tools, improved farming practices, and novel ways to increase sustainable agricultural productivity and the nutritional value of crops and livestock in developing countries.  
- Helping inform policy in Canada and in developing countries.

The **governance**:  
- The Governance Committee oversees the direction, strategy and main priorities of the CIFSRF. It is composed of members, from CIDA and IDRC. It reviews and approves any funding recommendations made by the Scientific Advisory Committee.  
- The **Scientific Advisory Committee** has the overall responsibility for scientific evaluation and funding recommendations. It consists of two co-chairs from CIDA and IDRC, and eight Canadian and international members with expertise in food security and experience in academics, policy-making, civil society, and the private sector.

IDRC works also with other federal research funding agencies including the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and the Canada Research Chairs program. In partnership with CIHR and other bodies, for example, IDRC manages the government’s Development Innovation Fund to search for breakthroughs in global health.

In recent years IDRC has collaborated with Environment Canada, Health Canada, Natural Resources Canada, and Statistics Canada. Given its international remit, IDRC routinely consults with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, for example on issues such as Canada’s contribution to the G8 summits. IDRC’s regional offices also maintain close contact with Canada’s diplomatic missions.

### A novel governance model – the Development Innovation Fund

**Tackling grand challenges in global health**  
Triggered by the emerging public dialogue on a number of critical global health challenges, the Government of Canada announced the establishment of the Development Innovation Fund (DIF) in February 2008. As announced in that year’s federal budget, the Fund aims to:
“... support the best minds in the world as they search for breakthroughs in global health and other areas that have the potential to bring about enduring changes in the lives of millions of people in poor countries.”

As the Government of Canada’s lead on the DIF, IDRC was instrumental in developing the policy framework and providing policy advice for the Fund implementation. The Fund was formally launched in May 2010 and is managed by a three-party consortium:

- IDRC administers the DIF funds and accounts directly to the Canadian government for the DIF.
- CIHR is responsible for issuing Requests for Proposals. It also oversees and administers the peer-review of all proposals received.
- The new entity – Grand Challenges Canada - implements and manages research programs supported by the DIF.

This is a novel implementation model, deriving from the desire to better align domestic and international parts of the portfolio, while facilitating co-stewardship of Canadian resources and coordination of international resources.

Grand Challenges Canada (GCC)

GCC is an independent, not-for-profit organization hosted at the Sandra Rotman Centre in Toronto, Ontario.

Vision - To develop a consortium of world-leading Canadian and International scientists, research organizations, and leaders from the business sector to develop breakthrough solutions to global challenges and ensure that these solutions are available to those who need them the most.

Mission - To identify global grand challenges, fund a global community of researchers and related institutions on a competitive basis to address them, and support the implementation/commercialization of the solutions that emerge.

Its Board of Directors is Canadian; its Scientific Advisory Board is international.

The program philosophy

GCC has developed an approach\(^1\) to delivery of its research programs that includes technical, commercial, and social issues as critical for the development of global health. Other key aspects of its philosophy include:

- A grand challenge is a specific critical barrier that, if removed, would help solve an important health problem in the developing world, with a high likelihood of global impact through widespread implementation.
- Effecting solutions requires the engagement of developing countries. Their challenge is not the existence of talent, but the extent to which innovators are enabled to pursue their ideas.
- Risk is an integral part of innovation.
- Developing capacity should be done in the context of problem solving.
- Partnerships and collaborations are important - no entity can solve critical global health challenges alone.

The GCC programs are managed within the framework of “integrated innovation” and currently focus on:

- Stars in Global Health – This initiative focuses on the development of innovator capacity through projects

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\(^1\) This approach is called Integrated Innovation\(^\text{TM}\) – “the coordinated application of scientific/technological, social and business innovation to develop solutions to complex challenges. This approach does not discount the singular benefits of each of these types of innovation alone, but rather highlights the powerful synergies that can be realized by aligning all three. Integrated Innovation recognizes that scientific/technological innovations have a greater chance of going to scale and achieving global impact and sustainability if they are developed from the outset with appropriate social and business innovations.”
that tackle inequalities in health aligned with four of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG):
  o MDG 1, eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
  o MDG 4, reduce childhood mortality
  o MDG 5, improve maternal health and
  o MDG 6, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases
Funding may be awarded to innovators in Canada and/or developing countries. Already awarded - 100
Phase I proof-of-concept grants, each at $100,000 CAD; The Phase 2 competition for transition to scale
activities will award up to $1,000,000 CA, subject to 50% matching.

• **Point-of-Care Diagnostics** - In partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 22 initiatives have
  been funded to develop and integrate best-in-class diagnostic components into one or more
  interoperable ‘plug-and-play’ point-of-care platforms capable of running a menu of tests from different
  developers. The intent is to put into practice point-of-care diagnostics that are sensitive, specific,
  affordable, simple to use and amenable to use in low resource settings within 3 years.

• **Women’s and Children’s Health** – Recognizing the high mortality of children within the first 72 h of birth
  and of mothers within one month, as well as cognitive deficits resulting from poverty-related risk factors,
  this initiative focuses on:
  o **Saving Lives at Birth** - designed to leapfrog conventional approaches for prevention and
    treatment services to women and newborns in poor, rural communities. This program is
    delivered in cooperation with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the
    Government of Norway, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the Department for
    International Development (DFID)
  o **Saving Brains** - focused on identifying and developing effective solutions for promoting cognitive
    development and long-term human capital formation in the face of poverty.

• **Global Mental Health & Non-Communicable Diseases** – This component of the programming targets two
  non-communicable diseases that are increasingly the focus of attention in global health.
  o **Integrated Innovations in Global Mental Health** - Recognizing that 13% of the global burden of
    disease is attributable to mental health, this initiative seeks innovative solutions for improving
    treatments and expanding access to mental health care in low- and middle-income countries.
  o **Implementation Research on Hypertension** – Recognizing that some 7.5 million deaths are caused
    globally by hypertension per year (WHO estimate), this program aims to support innovative
    solutions for the implementation of high blood pressure prevention and control in low- and
    middle-income countries and aboriginal communities in Canada and abroad. This program is
    being delivered In partnership with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the International
    Development Research Centre and the Canadian Stroke Network.

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**IDRC Resourcing**

**Funding sources** - There are five sources for the IDRC funding:
• Parliamentary appropriations (80.1%)
• Donor contributions (17.3%)
• Recovery of administrative costs (1.2%)
• Investment income (0.2%)
• Other income (0.2%)
There are several categories within the parliamentary appropriations from the Government of Canada, including a share of the government’s ODA envelope, funding from other federal sources (e.g. CIDA), funding allocated to the Development Initiative Fund, and transfers from other departments and agencies.

Revenues from donor sources include funds for shared programs and projects.

**Funding deployment** – The outcomes of IDRC's funding decisions provide a valuable profile (using forecast allocations for 2011-12) of the relative shares of research capacity building (24.5%) and research projects (64.1%), as well as the operational costs of supporting the activities (11.4%). The proportion of donor and IDRC funding by program area is indicative of the variability of donor interests across program areas.

**Figure 2.** IDRC and Partner Funding by Objective (§000) Source – IDRC Annual Report

**Figure 3.** Research project expenses by program area 2010-11 (§000)
Funding duration - IDRC is a believer in “persistence” – that there is a need to carry a research endeavor to the point at which the outcomes can be adopted into policy and practice, assuming the practical utility of the research findings. To enable this, IDRC provides support for the full project or program cycle, from conceptualization to dissemination and application. At the same time, the Centre remains “ahead of the curve,” looking beyond short-term crises and supporting research that has the potential of making a lasting difference in the future. This implies a steady turnover between existing — and often long-standing — research support activities and new projects or programs, with a constant “tug-of-war” in investment prospects. The overall ratio between existing and new research support activities is held at approximately 2:1.

CIDA

CIDA’s mandate
CIDA is Canada’s lead agency for overseas development assistance (ODA). CIDA’s aim is to:

- Manage Canada's support and resources effectively and accountably to achieve meaningful, sustainable results
- Engage in policy development in Canada and internationally, enabling Canada's effort to realize its development objectives.

There is a strong alignment among CIDA’s priorities, those of IDRC and Canada’s aid effectiveness agenda:

- CIDA’s mission - to lead Canada's international effort to help people living in poverty.
- Canada’s aid effectiveness agenda:
  - Increasing food security
  - Securing the future of children and youth
  - Stimulating sustainable economic growth
CIDA’s programming
While CIDA addresses its remit through more traditional government-to-government ODA approaches, IDRC uses the lens of research and capacity development to address the same objectives. CIDA utilizes IDRC as its delivery vehicle for initiatives that involve research and training.

CIDA works in coordination with other government departments and key humanitarian partners such as the World Food Programme and the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM). It responds to a variety of critical humanitarian needs around the world.

Under food security, support is focused on:
- Food aid and nutrition
- Sustainable agricultural development, particularly for small-scale farmers and women
- Research and development

For children and youth, CIDA is focusing its support on:
- Child survival, including maternal health
- Access to quality education
- Safe and secure futures for children and youth

CIDA’s sustainable economic growth thematic strategy focuses on:
- Building economic foundations
- Growing businesses
- Investing in people

CIDA also continues to integrate three crosscutting themes in all of its programs and policies – i) increasing environmental sustainability; ii) advancing equity between men and women and ii) helping to strengthen governance institutions and practices.

The Larger Canadian Context
Canada has made a number of international commitments that frame the activities of IDRC and CIDA. Among them are:
- The global commitment, through the G-8 Muskoka Initiative to reduce maternal and infant mortality and improve the health of mothers and children in the world's poorest countries.
- G-8 development commitments in five key areas—international assistance, economic development, health, food security, and peace and security.
- The eight UN Millennium development goals. Canada has prioritized basic education for its direct and proven impact on poverty reduction and sustainable development. Canada has also announced five priority themes for its international assistance envelope:
  - Increasing food security
  - Securing the future of children and youth
  - Stimulating sustainable economic growth
  - Advancing democratic governance
  - Ensuring security and stability
- The Federal Sustainability Development Initiative that in turn responds to a number of international commitments Canada made to produce such a strategy, including the Rio Earth Summit in Brazil, in 1992, and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in South Africa, in 2002.
IDRC represents 5% of Canada’s official development assistance

Distilling the Canadian IDRC Model

IDRC has forged its international reputation for Canadian development support based on innovative and forward-looking programming delivered with flexibility and with significant intellectual engagement by its program officers and senior officials. The key attributes of its programming that work and its current pre-occupations are captured below:

- **Program delivery** – IDRC is known for its customized approach to program delivery – one that structures the nature of activities funded and the involvement of the IDRC staff in a way that reflects the needs and context of the project/initiative.

- **Staff capabilities** – IDRC hires staff for their depth and breadth of expertise (e.g. for their brains, and not to simply push paper and issue grants). The technical expertise and interdisciplinary orientation of IDRC staff is seen as critical in achieving success. Reflection, research and writing are absolutely vital to maintaining these capabilities.

- **Staff role** – IDRC staff have traditionally played a large role in negotiation of funding parameters and interaction with the partners, including project development, design of the research approach etc. With funding pressures driving a higher proportion of the activities to competitive modes of program delivery there is concern that this may erode the capacity for engendering success.

- **Project focus** – technological innovations are not that is needed; IDRC integrates social/business elements.

- **Essence of staff success** – so much of what IDRC is about is setting up strong relationships between technical expertise of IDRC and the researchers in the field.

- **Challenge of competitive funding** – in a competitive scenario the same amount of time is not spent in developing relationships as in the traditional negotiated mode; those relationships also tend to be based on the proposal, the review and the cheque, rather than on a shared interest and commitment to achieving the agreed outcomes.

- **Challenge of individual projects** – IDRC has worried about “death by projectization” – too many individual projects that are not framed in lateral thinking about larger system issues or means to integrate. This has been a factor in the decision to include core grants for organizations targeted at strengthening their capacity.

- **Challenge of local/country focus** – IDRC started with a focus on the local level, but has increasingly found value in a stronger orientation towards the national and regional level.

- **Enhancing impact** – Biggest bang for buck is where there is some researcher and receptor capacity, but the biggest need is often where there is little capacity of either type. Hence the importance of engaging intermediary countries and funding organizational capacity development (not just researchers)

- **Recipient partner roles** – IDRC is increasingly allocating to recipient partners a role in managing brainstorming meetings and small conferences in which people from developing countries come together to explore future projects and to share experiences and outcomes.

- **Target regions** – Biggest bang for buck is where there is some capacity, but the biggest need is often where there is little capacity. There is a benefit of comparative learning across boundaries –common problems, different tactics.
• **The role of funding partnerships** – multiple funding sources are both a strength and a vulnerability. They bring new perspectives and opportunities that would not otherwise exist. They also bring transaction costs.

• **Managing funding partnerships** – rather than chase every dollar, focus on the alignment of objectives, values and expectations among all partners. Ensure a shared understanding of these. Make sure that all partners have skin in the game and that the organization is not simply an implementing agent for another organization’s program.

• **Capacity building** – researchers require a strong institutional home for sustained returns on investments in building capacity.

• **Political pressures** – longer-term and intangible impacts do not always sit well in a culture of short term and measurable results. It is important to balance the shorter term outcomes with longer-term perspectives, even if difficult to argue.

• **Future opportunities and directions** – dealing with global challenges and wicked problems; bringing knowledge to policy (few researchers know how to communicate their ideas to others; few public policy makers know how to interrogate researchers); research into doing, including an emphasis on building ideas, advocacy and the policy receptor side.

• **Assessing impact** – there are many different forms of impact, and IDRC uses a breadth of perspective to look at this. For example, consider the impact on people and their careers, not just the technologies; the legitimacy that IDRC has imbued in researchers through their involvement in IDRC funded projects; the creation of new research fields – e.g. ecohealth; the behavioural change that has been inculcated in research groups, organizations and receptors through IDRC projects.

• **The time delay** – IDRC can be characterized as exemplifying “the Kodak moment”. If you dig into something that is a success IDRC will have been there 10 years before. When the picture is being taken, IDRC has already exited.

**Acknowledgements**

The author acknowledges with thanks valuable discussions with a number of IDRC staff and external partners. These have been invaluable in providing an in depth understanding of the motivations for and modus operandi of the IDRC activities, as well as a feeling for its trajectory of success over the last 40 years.

**References**


Appendices

Appendix 1. IDRC’s Mandate and Governance
IDRC is a Crown corporation established with the unanimous support of Canada’s Parliament in 1970 to fund research into solving the problems of the world’s developing regions. As was intended, its arm’s-length status has given the Centre the latitude to pursue this mandate with flexibility and creativity.

IDRC was established in 1970 by Canada’s Parliament. The IDRC Act states:
“The objects of the Centre are to initiate, encourage, support and conduct research into the problems of the developing regions of the world and into the means for applying and adapting scientific, technical and other knowledge to the economic and social advancement of those regions.”

The IDRC Act empowers it to
- enlist the talents of natural and social scientists and technologists in Canada and other countries
- assist the developing regions to build up the research capabilities, the innovative skills, and the institutions required to solve their problems
- encourage generally the coordination of international development research
- foster cooperation in research on development problems between the developed and developing regions for their mutual benefit

The Centre is mainly financed by appropriations made annually by Parliament. As a corporation, IDRC can contract and receive funds from other agencies where that is considered desirable to further its objectives. In 2010–2011, 78.6% of IDRC’s revenues came from Parliament, the balance from philanthropic foundations and other organizations interested in research or international development. About 15% came from sources outside Canada.

IDRC is guided by a Board of Governors comprising a chairperson, a president, and not more than 16 other governors. The board provides IDRC’s strategic direction, reviews all Centre activities, and approves budgets. The Canadian government appoints governors on the basis of their concern for and expertise in science, management, and development issues.

The IDRC Act requires that a majority of board members be Canadians; the rest, however, can be citizens of other countries. The international governors keep the Centre’s programs relevant to the developing world while setting them within a broader global context.

The chairperson of IDRC’s board presents an annual report to Parliament through the Minister of Foreign Affairs.
Appendix 2. IDRC’s Core Values (Strategic Framework 2010)

- A conviction that knowledge and innovation can effect positive change in the social, economic, environmental, and political conditions of the poor, marginalized, or otherwise excluded peoples of developing countries.
- Sustainable development must meet the needs of the present (which, in many parts of the world, include a degree of sustained economic growth) without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- Equitable development encompasses inclusive economic growth.
- Poverty reduction addresses economic and non-economic forms of poverty, including poverty’s social, cultural, political, environmental, ethical, and other roots.
- Human rights encompass civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights.
- Intellectual pluralism and diversity, and space for debate and dissent, are key ingredients of a rights-based political culture and are critical for innovation.
- Human rights continue to be challenged by different forms of social discrimination, including along gender lines.

The IDRC Strategic Framework lists the following program themes that were subsequently operationalized through a more restricted set of program areas, that reflect the “art of the possible” within the existing budget envelope. For example, the ICT theme was integrated across the program map, while other themes – health, science and innovation - re-emerged under somewhat modified titles.

Agriculture and the environment
  Health and the environment
  Agriculture and food security
  Climate change
  Energy supply and use

Science, technology and innovation
  STI Granting Councils in Developing Countries
  The role of the university in the national innovation system
  Creative industries

Information and communication technologies
  Knowledge economies, information societies
  Collaborative technologies and social change
  Policies for networked societies

Social and economic policy
  Inclusive, sustainable growth
  Accountable governance
  Inclusion of marginalized groups

Health and health systems
  Health systems, governance, and access to health
  Health information systems
  Health human resources
  Understanding the emerging chronic disease epidemic
  Demographic changes
  Biomedical research