

IDRC in Brazil

IDRC support for research in Brazil dates from 1972, making the country one of the Centre's earliest partners in Latin America. During the dictatorship years, which ended in 1985, IDRC played a key role in keeping serious social science research alive by supporting democratically minded intellectuals. One of these research partners, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, served as Brazil's president from 1995 to 2002.

Brazil has a strong capacity for research and IDRC support to Brazilian researchers has capitalized on this to further national and Latin American development goals. Along with China and India, Brazil is among a new generation of rapidly evolving countries that are developing their industrial networks and scientific capacity. Brazil's influence is growing. It participates in most regional trade agreements and mediates between industrialized and developed countries on the multilateral stage. It is also initiating South-South cooperation, with Latin American and Caribbean countries in particular, on a wide range of issues. But Brazil still faces significant social problems including poverty, inequity, lack of social cohesion, and violence. At this juncture, research is needed to facilitate policy reform and validate development plans and strategies.

Reflecting Brazil's expanding economy, several of IDRC's research partners in the country are

focusing on regional economic integration and trade issues. The Centre's support has fostered the engagement of Brazilian researchers in such regional collaborations as the MERCOSUR Economic Research Network (MercoNet). Four Brazilian institutions are part of MercoNet, which IDRC has supported since its creation eight years ago. The network is helping to ensure that national positions at negotiating tables and the resulting regional economic policies are increasingly evidence-based.

Additional Brazilian contributions to IDRC-supported economic research include a six-country study of the impact of trade reforms and economic restructuring on women. Brazilian researchers with the Latin American chapter of the International Gender and Trade Network are also participating in this effort. As well, Action Aid International's regional office in Brazil is leading an effort to increase the capacity of Latin American farmers' organizations and social movements to participate in current agricultural trade negotiations.

The Centre also supports regional research on health systems. Policies to extend health services are under study in five countries, with support from the Pan American Health Organization and IDRC. The Brazilian team is examining whether new policies are reducing inequities in health services in the Amazon. Another study involves the design and testing of a tool for

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monitoring health system policies in 10 Brazilian, Colombian, and Guatemalan municipalities. The Associação Hospitalar Moinhos de Vento, in Porto Alegre, is coordinating the research in Brazil.

Recent IDRC-supported research on health systems in greater São Paulo raised public awareness of the inequities between the private and public sectors, and of the costs to the public health system of expensive treatments not covered under private health plans. Health authorities have since improved the controls regulating private health service providers. IDRC also supported the creation of the Network for Health Systems and Services Research in the Southern Cone. Coordinated by the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation in Brazil, the network's researchers are comparing health system equity and sustainability resulting from policy choices in different countries.

One of the Centre's priorities in health research is tobacco. Three Brazilian researchers have received grants through international competitions, supported by IDRC and other donors, for research related to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. They are documenting the Convention's approval process — Brazil ratified it in November 2005 — and its implementation.

The participation of youth in politics also figures prominently in Brazil's public arena. With IDRC support, two Brazilian research institutes — Ibase (the Brazilian institute of social and economic analyses) and the Pólis Institute helped identify young people's needs and demands. The research involved two stages: a survey of 8 000 young people followed by 39 group dialogues that brought together 913 youth, using a method designed by the Canadian Policy Research Networks. The activity showed what Brazil's urban youth want, ranging from better quality schooling to safer streets. It has also raised public awareness about youth's invisibility in public life, the lack of avenues for exercising their citizenship rights, and the negative views related to

youth. Results have fed into a new National Youth Policy and discussions are continuing with NGOs, universities, and municipal and provincial governments.

Since the 1990s, IDRC support in Brazil has also reflected growing attention to natural resource management and the environment. For eight years, IDRC has supported joint Canadian and Brazilian research on mercury contamination in the Amazon basin. Over three phases, participating communities have changed their eating habits and farming practices to reduce their exposure to mercury. Researchers are now expanding their work to a wider area in the Tapajós River basin.

Improving the urban environment and reducing poverty is also a focus of IDRC support in Brazil and the region. A Centre grant enabled the Brazilian Institute for Municipal Administration to offer a course on integrated solid waste management to 28 municipal technicians from across Latin America and the Caribbean. Course material reflected findings from past Centre-supported research in the region.

IDRC support in Brazil also helps to promote universal access to information and communication technologies and identify the drivers pushing the development of the knowledge economy. A research centre in Rio de Janeiro, for example, is studying the economic effects of open business models.

Since the 1970s, IDRC has allocated CA\$43.6 million to 202 projects in Brazil, some of which were regional in scope. The current 14 research activities represent allocations of close to CA\$10.2 million.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Policy Analysis for MERCOSUR

Established in 1991, MERCOSUR is the common market formed by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. It has become the hub for efforts to deepen economic integration in the

Southern Cone and compete in the global economy. To further these goals, MERCOSUR's governing bodies and its member countries need high-quality economic analysis and policy-relevant research.

In 1998, IDRC support helped to establish the MERCOSUR Economic Research Network, MercoNet. This network brings together 12 research institutions from MERCOSUR countries, including four from Brazil, to work on key items related to economic integration, such as a customs union and investment policies. As an example, MercoNet produced a regional study on policies to maximize the spillover benefits from foreign direct investments. It was the first such assessment for the Brazilian economy.

Since its creation, MercoNet has consolidated its rapport with government negotiators, the MERCOSUR Secretariat, and its advisory body, the Consultative Social and Economic Forum. MercoNet continues to support research, expand its membership, test new funding allocation mechanisms, and improve communication with key stakeholders.

(Project # 102922, MERCOSUR: Economic Research and Integration, Phase III; Duration: 2005–2008; IDRC allocation: CA\$1 478 900; IDRC allocation to Brazil: CA\$480 000 approx.; IDRC contact: Andrés Rius; Research partner: Carlos Grau, Centro de Investigaciones Económicas, Piso 6, 18 de Julio 1324, 11100 Montevideo, Uruguay; Tel.: 598-2-900-3051; Email: cinve@cinve.org.uy; Website: www.redmercosur.org.uy; MercoNet members in Brazil: Mariano Laplane, Instituto do Economia, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, mlaplane@eco.unicamp.br; Francisco Eduardo Pires de Souza, Instituto de Economia, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, fepsouza@ie.ufrj.br; Ricardo Markwald, Fundação Centro de Estudos do Comércio Exterior, rmarkwald@funcex.com.br; Honório Kume, Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, kume@ipea.gov.br)

Equity and Social Protection in Health

During the last decade, many Latin American and Caribbean governments have concentrated on improving the finances and efficiency of health services. They are now examining ways to

increase equitable access to quality health care and extend social protection in health. But policy-makers and health-care providers need to know if new strategies to achieve this goal are working.

In 2002, the Pan American Health Organization and IDRC jointly launched a competitive grants program on the expansion of social protection in health. This second phase is supporting five research projects that emerged from the proposal selection and development round. Researchers from the Department of Preventative Medicine of the University of São Paulo are analyzing the design and implementation of the Qualifying Health Care Plan for Amazon states and are developing a set of assessment and monitoring indicators for policies that seek to reduce health inequalities.

(Project # 102107, Extending Social Protection in Health in LAC: Bridging Research and Practice — Phase II; Duration: 2004–2007; IDRC allocation: CA\$650 260; IDRC contact: Roberto Bazzani; Research partner in Brazil: Ana Luiza Viana, Departamento de Medicina Preventiva, Faculdade de Medicina/Universidade de São Paulo, Av. Dr. Arnaldo, 455, Cerqueira Cezar, 01246903, São Paulo, SP, Brazil; Tel.: 55-11-3062-6822; Email: anaviana@usp.br)

Solutions to Mercury Contamination in the Amazon

When fish — and people — along the Tapajós River of the Amazon Basin showed high mercury levels, scientists first assumed it was linked to gold mining. The Amazon has experienced a 30-year gold rush, with inexperienced miners using mercury to extract gold from the alluvial soils. In 1994, a team of Brazilian and Canadian researchers discovered that mining was not the culprit; rather it was slash-and-burn agriculture. As the tree cover thins, soil, laden with natural mercury, is washed into the river and accumulates in fish that are consumed by local communities.

In collaboration with the researchers, several communities tested alternative agricultural practices and learned how to reduce pollution and

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avoid eating fish species with high mercury levels. This helped to significantly reduce levels of mercury contamination among residents. As well, sex and age-related health data helped communities understand who was most at risk. In this third phase of IDRC support, Brazilians are scaling up research and intervention, and creating a region-wide network of community members to develop long-term solutions to the problem.

(Project # 101416, Mercury Exposure, Ecosystem and Human Health in the Amazon: Scaling Up Research and Interventions, Phase III; Duration: 2002–2006; IDRC allocation: CA\$555 100; IDRC contact: Renaud De Plaen; Research partners: Jean-Remy Guimarães, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Institute of Urban and Regional Planning, Prédio da Reitoria, Cidade Universitária, Ilha do Fundão, CEP 21941-590, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Tel.: 55-21-2561-5339; Email: jeanrdg@biof.ufrj.br; Donna Mergler, Université du Québec à Montréal, PO Box 8888, Centre Ville, Montréal, Québec, Canada H3C 3P8; Email: mergler.donna@uqam.ca; Tel.: 514-987-3000; Email: mergler.donna@uqam.ca)

Open Business Models

Open business models based on free information or cultural goods represent to many the future in the knowledge economy. Latin America is home to some innovative, informal industries that have embraced the open business concept. Tecno Brega music in Belem, Brazil, is one example; its creators distribute low-priced copyright-free

CDs as marketing tools for weekly music events. These businesses represent a countermovement to restricting access to information content and services. To capitalize on open business models, it is important to demonstrate their advantages over traditional cultural business models.

Researchers at the Centro de Tecnologia e Sociedade (CTS – centre for technology and society) are analyzing and documenting the economics of selected new open business models within the cultural and digital industries in Brazil and other Latin American countries. CTS will present its findings in a guide to open business.

(Project # 103515, Open Business Models (Latin America); Duration: 2006–2007; IDRC allocation: CA\$245 300; IDRC contact: Alicia Richero; Research partners: Ronaldo Lemos, Centre for Technology and Society, Fundação Getulio Vargas, Praia do Botafogo No. 190, 13o. andar, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, CEP 22250-900; Tel.: 55-21-2559-6065; Email: rlemos@fgv.br)

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