

IDRC in Colombia

Over the past 35 years, IDRC has supported more than 200 development research activities in Colombia. The Centre has helped develop Colombian research capacity in a number of areas including health, agriculture, peace and conflict issues, natural resource development, and policy related to the economy and information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Social violence and conflicts in the country have led to marked fragmentation of the social fabric and territory of Colombia. It is estimated that internal violence has forced 3 million Colombians from their farms and villages and 1 million more have fled to Canada, the United States, Europe, or neighbouring Latin American countries. IDRC is currently supporting several local research centres and regional and international networks that are working to improve social dialogue, peace, and reparation for losses.

In two other IDRC-supported initiatives, research partners seek to provide policymakers with the evidence to assess and understand the performance of the healthcare system and the means to improve it. This research builds on IDRC's longstanding investment in health in Colombia, which dates back to 1974. For example, the Centre bolstered the efforts of the Centro de Investigaciones Multi-disciplinarias para el Desarrollo (CIMDER — multidisciplinary development research centre) to produce and disseminate health knowledge and train healthcare workers. CIMDER has become a

leading regional health research and reference centre in Latin America and was also involved in implementing the 1993 Colombian Law 100, which reformed the country's social security system for health.

IDRC has also supported a number of innovative uses of ICTs in Colombia. Support in the late 1990s led to the creation of SIPAZ (the communication system for peace), which uses the Internet to link conventional media with national grassroots organizations working for peaceful solutions to conflicts. Thanks to SIPAZ, dozens of radio stations have begun to promote local folk music dealing with subjects such as solidarity and respect for people's differences, and to broadcast stories of hope, peacebuilding, and the antiviolence efforts of communities.

In another successful ICT initiative, Colombia's Fundación Renacer used IDRC support to incorporate the Internet into its rehabilitation program for sexually exploited street kids. Renacer found that controlled use of the Internet can help children develop better communication and language skills, reduce their resistance to learning, and broaden their horizons. Renacer also produced a preventive educational video, featuring the stories of young people in the program.

The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), a key research partner based in Cali, Colombia, has conducted IDRC-supported research in Colombia on topics such as sustainable hillside farming, tropical pastures, and food crops. It is now administering Centre-supported

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research efforts across the globe. These include an assessment of long-term seed aid in Ethiopia and gender research in Asia. Earlier IDRC support for CIAT research in Colombia helped link small farmers with markets, encourage agro-industry, and increased profits for farmers. CIAT is also managing the five-year CA\$750 000 Ginés-Mera Memorial Fellowship Fund for Postgraduate Studies in Biodiversity, to which IDRC has contributed. The fund honours Maria Jesús (Chusa) Ginés and Verónica Mera, the Cassava Biotechnology Network Coordinator and social scientist, respectively, who lost their lives in a tragic airplane accident.

IDRC has also supported a regional research effort coordinated by Canada's North-South Institute that looked at the effects of mining on Indigenous communities in Guyana, Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia. On paper, Colombia has a progressive approach to Indigenous rights in Latin America; however, researchers found communities near mines suffered from environmental effects of mining wastes in the air and water and were seldom consulted before mining activities began. Women also suffered from sexual abuse from transient mine workers. This initiative enhanced the capacities of Indigenous people's organizations in Colombia to produce and use evidence in interactions with the government related to mining regulations.

Research on trade is another area of IDRC support. Colombia is one of several countries under study in a regional analysis of the effects of trade liberalization on gender, and, in particular, on women's responsibilities in child raising and caring for the elderly and the ill.

Since 1971, IDRC has funded 210 projects in or involving Colombia, worth CA\$36.8 million. The regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean was in Bogotá, Colombia from 1971 to 1989, when it was moved to Montevideo, Uruguay. There are currently nine active projects in Colombia, worth CA\$2.9 million.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Fear, Historical Memory, and Displaced Colombians

Forced migration of Colombians is one of the most critical humanitarian crises in the Western hemisphere, not only because of its magnitude, but also because of its geopolitical and social impacts. It is estimated that 3 million Colombians are displaced within their own country. Over the last decade, 1 million more have migrated. By the end of 2002, Colombians accounted for the fourth largest group of refugees in Canada and the number one source of refugees in the Western hemisphere. Despite the scale and gravity of Colombia's migration, the problem has not been a priority for the government, nor has it been recognized internationally, a situation that limits possibilities to deal effectively with this phenomenon.

The Colombian nongovernmental organization, Corporación Región para el Desarrollo y la Democracia (the Región corporation for development and democracy) and the School of Social Work of the University of British Columbia are undertaking a comparative research project to analyze the nature and impact of the three types of displacements currently affecting Colombians: displacement within urban centres, internal displacement, and refugees. The research focuses on the ways social fear and historic memory affect social policies and public perceptions of Colombia's displaced people. In Colombia, research focuses on policies and practices for the reintegration of the internally displaced. In Canada, research focuses on resettlement policies for Colombian refugees in Vancouver. In Ecuador, it focuses on displaced populations along the border with Colombia. Partners are disseminating research results and workshops in each country aim to influence policymakers who are responsible for protecting and assisting forced migrants in the three countries.

(Project # 102661, Forced Migration of Colombians: A Comparative Study on Fear, Historical Memory, and Public Representations; Duration: 2004–2006; IDRC allocation: CA\$247 030; IDRC contact: Alberto Florez; Research partners: Marta Inés Villa Martínez, Corporación Región para el Desarrollo y la Democracia, Calle 55, No. 41 - 10, Medellín–Antioquia, Colombia; Tel.: 57-4-216-6822; Email: coregion@region.org.co, mvilla@region.org.co; Website: www.region.org.co)

Economic Liberalization, Politics, and War

In many countries, the liberalization of foreign trade, foreign direct investment, and deregulation of key economic sectors coincided with larger processes of international integration. The impacts of these policies on conflicts are not clear but have generated a great deal of controversy. This project intends to analyze why liberal economic and political transformations sometimes fail to prevent political violence, societal breakdown, and wars.

The Instituto de Estudios Políticos y Relaciones Internacionales (IEPRI — institute for political studies and international relations), at Bogotá's Universidad Nacional de Colombia, is studying the mixed effects of neo-liberal transformations in Africa and Latin America on organized, large-scale violence. Partner organizations are carrying out case studies in El Salvador, Sudan, South Africa, and Côte d'Ivoire to examine political institutions, transformations, and motivations, and to assess how these may have influenced the “new wars.” IEPRI is carrying out the case study on Colombia and coordinating a cross-national analysis. The objective of the research is to formulate analytical and policy-relevant conclusions and to engage opinion shapers and decision-makers in each of the countries studied.

(Project # 102736-003, Research Competition on Globalization, Conflict and Peacebuilding; Duration: 2006–2007; IDRC allocation: CA\$725 050; IDRC allocation for Colombia: CA\$387 000; IDRC contact: Gerd Schönwälder; Research partners: Dr Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín, IEPRI, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Ciudad Universitaria, Edificio Manuel Ancizar, Tercer piso, Bogotá, Colombia; Tel.: 57-1-316-5246 and 57-1-316-5217; Email: fgutiers@hotmail.com; Website: www.unal.edu.co/iepri)

Restitution for Internally Displaced Colombians

Colombia has had one of the most prolonged internal conflicts in Latin America, and forced displacement is a widely used military strategy. This form of violence breaches international humanitarian law by violating economic, social, and cultural rights. Continuing internal displacement of Indigenous, afro-Colombian, peasant and rural people and the government's inability to solve or prevent it have a serious impact on the reconstruction and long-term development of entire communities.

The Universidad de San Buenaventura is involved in an action-research project to shed light on the transition from conflict to postconflict situations, from a perspective of restorative and gender justice. Researchers are analyzing the trauma caused by displacement and investigating the underlying assumptions about rights, according to a person's gender, generation, and race that may be present in institutional policies and programs aimed at the displaced. Through case studies in three different geographic zones, researchers are developing possible policy scenarios for the restoration of losses and damages. In addition, they are developing educational booklets and videos to help displaced populations better understand their rights and options for reparation when they approach state authorities.

(Project # 102865; Reparation for Internal Displacement in Colombia; Duration: 2005–2007; IDRC allocation: CA\$361 000; IDRC contact: Alberto Florez; Research partners: Sandro Jimenez Ocampo, Universidad de San Buenaventura, Cartagena, Apartado Aereo No. 7833, Calle Real de Ternera, Cartagena–Bolívar, Colombia; Tel.: 57-5-653-9595; Fax: 57-5-653-9590; Email: sjimenez@usbctg.edu.co; Website: www.usbctg.edu.co)

Evidence-based Decision-making in Health

In 1993, Colombia's reform of its social security system set a goal of universal coverage within five years. The reform, however, has failed to fully deliver on its promise. Today only 60 percent of Colombians are covered by the health insurance scheme. Public hospitals and social security institutions are facing serious difficulties. For a developing country with many urgent social and economic challenges, it is critical that the best knowledge on the realistic opportunities and constraints be available for policy discussions about reducing health inequities.

The Asociación Colombiana de la Salud (ASSALUD — Colombian health association) and the School of Economics at the University of Rosario are coordinating this project, which attempts to provide policymakers with evidence on which to base decisions. Researchers have adapted an existing computerized model to input health-relevant variables such as demand for health services and household income and then to project the impact of different health policies and strategies on health coverage

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and inequalities in access and in health. The model's scenarios will be discussed in a series of national and regional consultations with policymakers, academics, community leaders, health professionals, insurers, and healthcare providers. It is expected that these consultations will result in the development of concrete policy alternatives that will be taken seriously by government officials, analysts, civil society organizations, and health sector actors.

(Project # 102228; Governance and Evidence-based Decision-making: A Participatory Formation Process of Health Policies; Duration: 2004–2007; IDRC allocation: CA\$485 731; IDRC contact: Roberto Bazzani; Research partners: Francisco Yepes, Asociación Colombiana de la Salud, Carrera 12 No. 79-98, Bogotá, Colombia; Tel.: 57-1-561-2175 / 76; Fax: 57-1-561-2177; Email: director@assalud.org, franciscoy@cable.net.co; Website: www.assalud.org.co)

Extending Social Protection in Health

Many governments in Latin America and the Caribbean are currently considering alternative strategies for improving access to health services. However, policymakers, healthcare providers, and users in the region continue to express frustration at the lack of evidence-based answers to basic questions.

This two-phased project is working to bridge the gap between research, policy, and practice. Phase I supported the development of nine research protocols through a novel participatory mechanism that involved researchers and decision-makers. Five of the projects were selected for funding for a second phase. This

phase is intended to examine both successful and unsuccessful strategies for expanding social protection and to promote the incorporation of research results into national policies. In one of the five projects, researchers in Bogotá, Colombia, are focusing on improving the effectiveness of social protection policies for populations displaced by violence and on extending health insurance to unemployed workers in the country. It is expected that all five projects will help to bolster the capacity of participating researchers and that decision-makers will become more aware of the potential usefulness of research and mechanisms for promoting research.

(Project # 102107-002/003, Extending Social Protection in Health: Bridging Research and Practice — Phase II; Duration: 2004–2007; IDRC allocation: CA\$650 260; Allocation to Colombia: CA\$285 080; IDRC contact: Roberto Bazzani; Research partners: Román Vega Romero, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Vicerrectoría Académica, Carrera 7 No. 40-52, Cundinamarca, Bogotá, Colombia; Tel.: 57-1-364-9505/9515; roman.vega@correo.javeriana.edu.co; Website: www.puj.edu.co, and Gallego Botero, Corporación Interuniversitaria de Servicios, Calle 10 sur N° 48 A – 55, Medellín–Antioquia, Colombia; Tel.: 57-4-312-4880; Email: cis@cis.net.co, ja@cis.net.co; Website: www.cis.org.co)

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