

IDRC in Uruguay

IDRC has supported researchers in Uruguay since 1976, in areas they have identified as relevant for their own development. Early support helped government and industry assess options for technological change in such sectors as dairy and leather production. It also sustained independent social science inquiry throughout the period of dictatorship in the 1970s and early 1980s, thus enabling the Centro de Informaciones y Estudios del Uruguay to inform policy debates during the return to democracy in the mid-1980s.

Recent IDRC support has contributed significantly to decision-makers' current understanding of trade and economic integration issues in this small country. Uruguay is exploring how it can best participate in the global economy and integrate with neighbouring economies through Mercosur, the Southern Cone's regional trade agreement. The Uruguayan capital, Montevideo, hosts both the Mercosur Secretariat and the Mercosur Economic Research Network (MercoNet), which IDRC has supported since its inception in 1998. MercoNet is helping to ensure that national positions at negotiating tables and the resulting regional economic policies are increasingly evidence-based. Two of the 12 institutions that founded the network are from Uruguay: the Centro de Investigaciones Económicas and the Economics Department of the Universidad de la República.

Uruguay is also participating in a six-country study of the impact of trade reforms and economic restructuring on women. In addition, the Faculty of Social Sciences of the Universidad de la República is analyzing the consequences of regional integration on agricultural, financial, and marketing cooperatives in seven countries.

Also with IDRC support, Uruguayan researchers are developing ways to balance the need for economic growth with environmental protection and the sustainable management of natural resources. A key IDRC contribution to this goal is the EcoPlata initiative, a collaborative approach to resource management of the 300-kilometre wide Rio de la Plata estuary. During the past 15 years, multidisciplinary teams made up of government and university researchers from Uruguay and Atlantic Canada have assessed resources and human activities in the estuary and developed an integrated coastal zone management system, which the government has adopted as policy.

The wealth of research and the institutional and professional capacities that EcoPlata has fostered led to the creation of an interdisciplinary Master's program in coastal management at the Universidad de la República. The Canadian International Development Agency supports the program, developed in collaboration with Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

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Environmental and natural resource management are also the focus of IDRC-supported research to find ways to prevent the spread of dengue, led by the Universidad de la República. IDRC has also supported several regional activities, coordinated in Uruguay, to promote knowledge on environmental issues. For example, the Centre supported the Basel Convention Coordinating Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean, located in Montevideo, in developing a classroom and online training program for municipal technicians on how to manage hazardous waste.

Uruguay stands out among Latin American countries for its early development of social service policies and health, educational, and social security systems. Demographic change and budgetary constraints, however, have affected the provision of services. In the 1990s and early 2000s, Uruguayan researchers participated in several IDRC-supported studies on the equity and efficiency in Latin American public health and educational systems. The Centre is now supporting efforts to reduce the health burden of tobacco through the development of a national coordinating body to oversee research on tobacco control and communicate findings to government and civil society representatives.

Applying new communication technologies to development is also an IDRC priority area. Four Uruguayan specialists are participating in the e-government network, Red Gealc, which is managed by the Organization of American States through a facilitator in Montevideo. The Centre is also one of several supporters of the Fund for Digital Innovation in Latin America and the Caribbean (FRIDA). Administered by the Latin American Internet Addresses Registry, in Uruguay, this fund provides small grants for young researchers.

Uruguay is one of six Latin American test countries for the One Laptop per Child Initiative, which aims to provide the world's children with

a specially designed \$100 laptop for use in school and to connect with the world. IDRC and the Laboratorio Tecnológico del Uruguay are coordinating an analysis of the pilot projects involving educational representatives from the six test countries.

IDRC's regional office has been based in Montevideo, Uruguay since 1989. Over 30 years, the Centre has supported 109 projects in Uruguay worth almost CA\$24.5 million. There are currently 11 active projects in the country — several of them regional efforts — worth CA\$5.6 million.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Research to Strengthen Mercosur

Mercosur is a common market initially established by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. It has become the hub for efforts to deepen economic integration among its members and compete in the global economy. To further these goals, Mercosur's governing bodies need high-quality economic analysis and policy-relevant research.

In 1998, IDRC support enabled 12 research institutions from the original Mercosur countries to establish the Mercosur Economic Research Network. MercoNet studies have analyzed, for example, the conditions under which a monetary union would benefit Uruguay's small economy and which policies in Mercosur countries could maximize the spillover benefit of economic growth from foreign direct investments.

Since its creation, MercoNet has consolidated its rapport with government negotiators and the Mercosur Secretariat, Committee of Permanent Representatives, Joint Parliamentary Commission, and Consultative Social and Economic Forum. This third phase of IDRC support enables MercoNet to continue supporting research, expand its membership, 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 contact: Andrés Rius; Research partners: Inés Terra, Presidenta de la Fundación Red Mercosur, Edificio Mercosur, 3er. Piso, Luis Piera #1992, Montevideo, Uruguay; Tel.: 598-2-410-1494; Fax: 598-2-410-1493; Email: coordinacion@redmercosur.org; Website: www.redmercosur.org.uy).

Rio de la Plata Coastal Zone Management

The Rio de la Plata is South America's largest estuary. Most of Uruguay's 3.3 million people live along the coasts, and human activity along the estuary not only creates marine pollution, it also accelerates beach and dune erosion. An economic crisis in recent years has led to more migration to coastal areas. To address these problems, government and university researchers in Uruguay and Canada launched the IDRC-supported Ecoplata program in 1992.

Over the years, this project has involved the Universidad de la República in Montevideo, many Uruguayan government departments led by the Ministry of Housing, Land Planning and Environment, Dalhousie University in Halifax, the Canadian government's Bedford Institute of Oceanography, and Acadia University, in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. In collaboration with Uruguayan residents and policymakers, researchers from these institutions have studied a number of coastal aspects, from fish spawning to water quality and land use. They have surveyed the relative importance of agriculture, tourism, industry, mining, and artisanal fishing in income generation, employment, and use of space. They have tested an integrated coastal zone management system in three pilot areas where local communities have identified sustainable economic activities such as fish farming, helped with land use regulation, and developed conservation plans.

As a result of Ecoplata, national and municipal authorities, coastal police, and tourism institutions are part of a government-appointed Commission, charged in 2001 to manage the Rio de

la Plata coastal area. The government has also adopted a national coastal policy, which embodies a series of development and conservation goals, including the integration of quality control indicators in a national information system. In this last phase of IDRC support, administered by the United Nations Development Programme office in Uruguay on behalf of the Ecoplata's Board of Directors, the program partners are focusing on institutionalizing and consolidating these outcomes.

(Project # 103390; ECOPLATA: Support to Integrated Coastal Zone Management; Duration: 2006–2009; IDRC allocation: CA\$755 500; IDRC contact: Federico Burone; Research partner in Uruguay: Roberto Villarmarzo, Ministry of Housing, Environment and Land Planning, Galicia 1133 Piso 1, Montevideo, Uruguay, 11200; Tel.: 598-2-917-0710 ext. 4164; Email: ecoplata@ecoplata.org; Website: www.ecoplata.org).

Preventing Dengue Fever through Community Action

Dengue is a mosquito-borne disease that has had a significant resurgence in Latin America in the past two decades. Efforts to educate the public and eradicate breeding sites have been largely unsuccessful.

IDRC is supporting participatory research carried out by a multidisciplinary team of scientists and social scientists to prevent and control the dengue vector. Research teams from the Universidad de la República and Universidad de Buenos Aires are working in pilot areas in Montevideo and Colonia del Sacramento, Uruguay and Buenos Aires, Argentina to enlist community participation in determining what social and environmental factors contribute to the proliferation of dengue mosquitos and the spread of the disease.

The communities in the test areas are involved in collecting mosquito samples; visiting household, business, and public sites to detect possible breeding grounds; and in carrying out trials using insecticides as well as bio-control means using one of the larvae's natural predators.

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(Project # 101814; Ecosystem Approach to Dengue Prevention in Argentina and Uruguay; Duration: 2004–2007; IDRC allocation: CA\$393 180; IDRC contact: Roberto Bazzani; Research partners: César Basso, Departamento de Protección Vegetal, Universidad de la República; Address: Iguá 4825 Esq. Mataojo, Montevideo 11400, Uruguay; Tel.: 598-2-356-1215; Email: cbasso@movinet.com.uy; and Nicolás Schweigmann, Departamento de Ciencias Biológicas, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Calle Viamonte 430, 1053 Buenos Aires, Argentina; Tel.: 54-11-4576-3300, Ext. 364; Email: nicolas@bg.fcen.uba.ar)

Better Tobacco Control Coordination

A Presidential decree in March 2006 pronounced Uruguay smoke-free in enclosed spaces, including public and private workplaces, bars, and restaurants. It is the first Latin American country to take this step. Still, authorities have yet to address many aspects of tobacco control, such as monitoring marketing practices and adequate taxation.

With IDRC support and funds from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, researchers in this field have joined forces to create a national coordinating body. The new Research Centre for the Tobacco Addiction Epidemic aims to establish research priori-

ties in support of a national strategy and carry out research on such topics as tobacco industry practices in Uruguay and the cost of tobacco use. The new non-profit organization is also developing a documentation centre, providing training on tobacco control initiatives, and communicating findings to government and civil society in order to improve tobacco control strategies.

(Project # 103993; Duration: 2007–2010; IDRC allocation: CA\$300 000; IDRC contact: Linda Waverley; Research partners: Eduardo Bianco, Research Centre for the Tobacco Addiction Epidemic, PO Box 10601, District 1, Montevideo, Uruguay; Tel.: 598-2-481-0942; Email: biamau@adinet.com.uy)

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