

IDRC in Argentina

IDRC began to support researchers in Argentina in 1972. Recently, the Centre's research partners have contributed to Argentinian decision-makers' current understanding of trade and economic integration. They have also fostered urban agriculture as a tool to fight poverty and promoted the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to link Indigenous communities and improve education and governance.

During the military dictatorship of the late 1970s and early 1980s, IDRC's support helped researchers in several institutions continue to work despite the ongoing suppression of social science research. Their work then laid the groundwork for new democratic policies. Indeed, in Argentina's first government after the transition, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Secretary of Planning, and the Under Secretary of External Affairs in charge of International Cooperation had worked in IDRC-supported institutions. Also in the 1970s, IDRC bestowed professional development awards on renowned thinkers Enrique Oteiza and the late Jorge Enrique Hardoy and Ernesto Sábato.

Argentina's experience of democratic transition comes into play as it promotes democratic development in the region, particularly in Haiti. The Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO)-Argentina is participating in an

IDRC-supported effort in four countries involved in peacekeeping and reconstruction in Haiti. Researchers are building national capacity to track cooperation efforts and make them more effective.

Argentina is the second largest economy in South America after Brazil. Since the late 1990s, IDRC began to support research on trade and economic integration. For example, as Southern Cone countries work through the challenges of harmonizing their economies within the MERCOSUR common market, an independent economic research network, MercoNet, is providing evidence to help assess the implications and effectiveness of the proposed measures. With IDRC support, this network has become a source of credible research that transcends competing national interests. Argentinian researchers participate in MercoNet, based in Uruguay and in the Latin American Trade Network (LATN) in Buenos Aires. LATN is a nine-country network of researchers who help bilateral and multilateral trade negotiators create the conditions for sustainable growth and that contribute to poverty reduction.

The city of Rosario, 300 kilometres northwest of Buenos Aires, experienced the full brunt of the country's late 1990 recession and the dramatic devaluation of the peso in 2002. Yet Rosario has since won international acclaim for its approaches to addressing urban poverty while protecting the

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environment. IDRC has contributed to this transformation by supporting participatory research on how to incorporate urban agriculture into city planning. Rosario is now one of three global testing sites in a research partnership with Canada's McGill University that is demonstrating the value of including urban agriculture as a permanent feature in city planning and housing design.

Building on the research it has supported in urban agriculture and environmental services internationally, IDRC has launched a research program to examine the citywide connections between poverty and the environment. Moreno, a municipality of Buenos Aires, became one of the first cities to embark on this new initiative. As in many developing-country cities, rural migration to urban areas has exponentially increased demand for basic services such as potable water, sewage and garbage collection. The Moreno research team is working with the municipal government and community organizations to develop solutions to the problems identified by residents.

ICTs are also the focus of current IDRC-supported research. Their use among the Mapuche, an Indigenous people, has helped to link youth living in urban, semi-urban, and rural areas. IDRC supported capacity building among Mapuche youth to use computers and develop content, thus helping to create conditions for future economic activity and livelihood options especially in rural areas.

Another example is the Argentinean Fundación Evolución's innovative study of seven successful national school ICT networks in Latin America. This non-governmental organization (NGO) is now collaborating with the IDRC-supported network of educational portals based in Chile to consolidate and further promote the integration of ICTs in education throughout the region.

IDRC partners have also addressed privacy issues. The Instituto de Investigación para la Jus-

ticia, in Buenos Aires, sought to balance online access to judicial decisions and the privacy of those involved when a decision contains sensitive information. In collaboration with LexUM, a research centre at Canada's Université de Montréal, it developed the Heredia Rules, voluntary guidelines for judicial bodies in Latin America and the Caribbean to follow when putting information online.

Current IDRC support for research on health focuses on governance issues, such as civic engagement in the health sector and the ways in which the health system puts policy into practice. In another effort, researchers from the Universidad de Buenos Aires are engaged in participatory research to build a community control program for the mosquito that carries dengue.

IDRC also supports research to combat tobacco use. For example, the Instituto de Ciencia y Tecnología Regional, in the Argentinean province of Jujuy, is collaborating with partners in Colombia and the West Bank in the Middle East to identify the factors that lead disadvantaged youth to take up or resist smoking. Past tobacco control research in the country has had an impact. For example, in 2005, researchers who had studied tobacco industry advertising helped legislators develop and approve a bill to restrict the industry's advertising.

IDRC has supported 172 projects in Argentina with a total investment of CA\$35.5 million. Twenty-four projects are currently active, representing IDRC allocations of close to CA\$16 million. Some of them are regional in scope.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Latin American Intervention in Haiti

Shortly after the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) began operations in 2004, Argentinean legislators passed a law contributing troops to the mission. The Government of Argentina also supports development programs aimed at reconstruction in the

troubled Caribbean nation. Policymakers, academics, and NGOs, however, have little knowledge about this type of international engagement, which is relatively new for Argentina. Awareness of the Haitian crisis and the role Argentina can play in reconstruction is low in the general population. The situation is much the same in Brazil and Chile whose armed forces also participate in MINUSTAH and in Mexico, which supports development cooperation in Haiti.

Academic institutions from these four Latin American countries are collaborating in this project to fill the knowledge gap. Each partner will conduct research on the reconstruction effort in Haiti; engage policymakers and civil society representatives in debate; promote their interaction with Haitian academics and policymakers; and raise public awareness about Haiti. The Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO)–Argentina is focusing research and dissemination activities on institutional strengthening in Haiti, productive development and democratic consolidation. It has begun a series of visits from Haitian scholars and public officials who are deepening their knowledge of Argentina’s democratic institutions and promoting dialogue on Haiti among Argentinians.

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Building Knowledge of the World Trading Systems

The Latin American Trade Network (LATN) is a regionally recognized interdisciplinary network of practitioners and scholars, established in 1998 with IDRC support. Working in nine countries, the network aims to enhance experts’ and trade negotiators’ understanding of the implications of

multilateral and hemispheric trade agendas and how they can lead to widespread economic benefits. The Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO)–Argentina coordinates the network.

LATN-supported research helps policymakers and other stakeholders make decisions by producing research in an accessible and timely manner. For example, Argentina based its position on dispute settlement in MERCOSUR on a LATN paper. Network researchers have also been contracted by the Government of Argentina to prepare a manual explaining agricultural agreements to Argentinian negotiators and another manual analyzing agricultural negotiation issues.

The current phase of the research aims to ensure that negotiation strategies and proposals better reflect broad-based national and regional priorities. FLACSO is also working to decentralize LATN’s organizational structure and increase NGO and civil society involvement in its decision-making.

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Social Participation in Health Care

Most Latin American countries are decentralizing health services amidst renewed interest in primary health care. Although governments nominally support citizen participation in healthcare planning, decision-makers have little information or analysis on how to involve people. IDRC supported two workshops, in 2004 and 2005, in which members of Latin America’s trading bloc, MERCOSUR, identified the need for research on the role of citizen participation in planning national and regional health care.

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The Instituto de la Salud, Medio Ambiente, Economía y Sociedad (ISALUD), based in Buenos Aires, facilitated the workshops. It is now coordinating country teams of researchers, decision-makers, and civil society representatives from Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay, (MERCOSUR members) and Bolivia (associate member). They are analyzing patterns of social participation in the health sector and how that participation can improve health care. This effort is also contributing to the proposed establishment of an Observatory of Citizen Participation in Health in MERCOSUR, which would constitute a regional forum for analysis and evidence sharing on health care issues.

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Garden Neighbourhoods in Rosario

Economic crisis combined with rapid urbanization has led to increasing poverty in Argentinian cities. In Rosario, Argentina, some 136 000 people live in 91 squatter communities without basic services such as clean water and sanitation. Previous IDRC support enabled the municipal government to promote urban agriculture through training, access to land, market facilities, and small processing factories. These efforts are providing food security and additional income to participating urban farmers.

Rosario is now one of three global testing sites for the Edible Landscape research partnership, an IDRC-supported project coordinated by McGill University's Minimum Cost Housing Group. The project focuses on architectural design and the formal planning of cities to include neighbourhood gardens. The two other testing sites are Colombo, Sri Lanka, and Kampala, Uganda.

In Rosario, the municipality is using the recommended designs in its program to upgrade some of the city's poorest settlements. In Molino Blanco, one such settlement where urban agriculture has already taken root, McGill researchers are working with local residents to integrate agriculture into district improvement plans. Researchers are also suggesting designs in two other city neighbourhoods.

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