

IDRC in Haiti

In Haiti, IDRC is exploring ways to expand support for local researchers and their institutions to help them find sustainable solutions to the country's development challenges. The explorations follow the political crisis that led to the intervention of United Nations peacekeepers in Haiti in 2004. The international community is supporting state reconstruction, and Canada is working with Haiti, alongside other donors, to strengthen democratic institutions and the rule of law and improve living conditions.

Research to guide development is all the more crucial in a country emerging from conflict. While Haitian research capacity needs to be rebuilt, many researchers have left the country and policymakers, who are concentrating on restoring basic services, have limited opportunities to learn about and implement research recommendations.

IDRC-supported research involving Haiti, which dates back to 1975, now reflects the current research environment. One effort focuses on strengthening the contribution Latin American countries are making to Haiti's development efforts (see Research Highlights below for more details). Activities are also underway to explore how information and communication technolo-

gies (ICTs) can help the Haitian government make significant gains in efficiency and service provision to the poor while enhancing democratic governance and modernizing the public sector (see Research Highlights below).

IDRC, in partnership with the Global Health Research Initiative, is planning a research grants initiative to strengthen health systems through immunization programs and improve the overall health of the population in Haiti. This initiative will contribute to improving child survival rates in the country and will also examine how to increase vaccination coverage in Haiti, where only 54% of children under the age of one receive vaccinations for measles, compared to over 90% for the rest of Latin America, and 66% in sub-Saharan Africa. These grants are part of the Canadian International Immunization Initiative which is a broader Canadian International Development Agency-funded initiative in partnership with the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the Pan American Health Organization, and the Canadian Public Health Association.

Several multi-country activities include research on Haiti. IDRC supports research on the migration of women that includes a study of Haitian women in the Dominican Republic, and other migrations in Central and South America. Researchers throughout the region, led by the

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Centre for Studies in Social Justice at the University of Windsor, Canada, are analyzing what induces women to migrate, the conditions they face in host countries, and how civil society groups in those countries can better protect their rights. The researchers will engage non-governmental and multilateral organizations to discuss the policy implications of their results.

Since its transition to democracy began in 1986, Haiti has been struggling to reform organizations in the security and justice sector. Beginning in 2004, the Haitian government and the international community renewed their efforts toward that goal. For example, the Canadian government's Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force strengthens Haiti's national police force so that it can fight corruption, impunity, and human rights violations more effectively. The North-South Institute, a Canadian non-governmental research organization that receives core funding from IDRC, is identifying partners in Haiti to study security sector reform. In a project that also includes Burundi and Sudan, research teams will formulate policy recommendations on reforming each country's security sector, including the police force.

From 1998 to 2001, IDRC supported research on governance and security in Haiti through the Humanitarianism and War Project, based at Tufts University in the United States. IDRC supported the third phase of this wide-sweeping policy research initiative on humanitarian emergencies, in which researchers produced a case study on the impact of food aid in Haiti. The study, published in *Patronage or Partnership: Local Capacity Building in Humanitarian Crises*, showed how humanitarian assistance can undermine local efforts to bring about positive change. It called for new strategies that harness the knowledge and energy of affected populations, transforming them from victims to actors. In this way, external support could link humanitar-

ian assistance more closely to capacity building at the community level. This publication has generated intensive debate among aid providers to failed states and has contributed to IDRC's current approach in Haiti.

Food security has long been of concern in Haiti. In IDRC-supported research led by CARE Canada during the late 1990s, local partners showed 1 100 Port-au-Prince residents in 11 neighbourhoods how to grow vegetables in confined areas. An evaluation showed that the experience improved diets and health, created social bonds in communities, and increased women's self-esteem. It also reduced household expenditure on food, and improved attitudes toward waste management. This experience and IDRC's extensive support for pioneering research on urban agriculture in many other countries have helped to shape current donor support in Haiti, including a joint Canadian and Argentinean communal garden project.

In 2007, as part of its efforts to build a body of research-based evidence on development in Haiti, IDRC awarded grants to two doctoral students at the Université de Montréal to conduct field research of interest to Haiti. Thierno Baldé is studying the country's surveillance system for infectious diseases and how to improve it. Meanwhile, Haitian-born Ilionor Louis developed case studies on the capacity of marginalized populations in Haiti, Mexico, and Montréal to obtain public services and land ownership through collective action.

All told, IDRC has supported 19 research activities involving Haiti representing allocations of nearly CA\$2.6 million. Four projects, worth close to CA\$1.2 million, are underway, some of which are regional in scope.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Regional Collaboration to Build Peace in Haiti

Haiti has endured long periods of internal strife and social breakdown, a cycle that culminated in the rebellion of 2004. Haiti's subsequent efforts to rebuild are supported by other countries in the hemisphere, including Canada, but notably also by some Latin American neighbours with their own experiences of conflict and recovery.

Because of Haiti's acute needs, its reconstruction has posed special challenges — including for those neighbours who wish to help. These countries enjoy only a short history of peacekeeping and international cooperation, and as they begin to assist Haiti, they need to establish a domestic foundation for embarking upon this kind of development program. Starting in 2007, therefore, IDRC has supported a key research effort linking specialists in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico.

Each contributing country has launched complementary studies addressing specific issues: Argentina looks at investment promotion and food security; Mexico analyzes local economic development, partnerships, and the role of remittances; Brazil concentrates on human rights, culture, and democratic decision-making; and Chile explores the role of civil society organizations in building democracy.

Activities also include study tours and training in the four countries for Haitian researchers, policymakers, and development practitioners as well as public conferences on Haiti's reality.

In addition this project fosters cooperation among the four research institutions as well as between Latin American and Canadian research centres. Given the potential for future peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction efforts by the four participating countries, this project's impact could go well beyond its initial objectives to inform debate on cooperation in Haiti.

(Project # 103985; Reconstruction of Haiti: Research Capacity Building in Latin America and the Caribbean; Duration: 2007–2009; IDRC allocation: CA\$594 836; IDRC contact: Federico Burone; Research partners: Andreas Feldman, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile; Email: afeldmann@uc.cl; Tel.: 56-2-661-8440; Ricardo Antonio Silva Seitenfus, Faculdade de Direito de Santa Maria, Brazil; Email: independencia@viavale.com.br; Tel.: 55-55-3220-2500; Gustavo Vega Cánovas, Centre for International Studies, Colegio de México; Email: gvega@colmex.mx; Tel.: 52-55-5449-3015; and Miguel Lengyel, Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences – Argentina; Email: mlengyel@flacso.org.ar; Tel.: 54-11-5238-9300)

ICTs for Democratic Governance

IDRC is supporting Haiti's efforts to explore the vast potential for harnessing information and communication technologies (ICTs) to stimulate development. The Government of Haiti recognizes that ICTs can play a key role in strengthening the economy and the health and education systems and promoting transparency and dialogue with citizens.

In August 2007, IDRC supported a Haitian delegation, led by Franz Verella, Minister of Transportation, Public Works and Communications, to attend a two-day meeting in Ottawa of international and Canadian e-government experts. The goal was to discuss Canada's experience in e-government and the lessons learned from IDRC-supported initiatives in Africa.

The Government of Haiti has access to a variety of ICT tools and expertise through the Network of Electronic-government Leaders in Latin America and the Caribbean (Red-GEALC), initiated in 2003 with IDRC support. Haiti became a Red-GEALC member in May 2007.

(Project # 104408; Strengthening Democratic Governance in Haiti through the Use of Information and Communication Technology; Duration: 2007–2008; IDRC allocation: CA\$53 000; IDRC contact: Angelica Valeria Ospina).

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A Virtual Community Gains Strength

Although Haiti is geographically close to other Caribbean islands, cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic differences often impede communication and cooperation that could help alleviate poverty. In this context, different groups — from civil society to government — view ICTs as a means to break down those barriers. The Caribbean ICT Virtual Community (CIVIC) has become an important venue to share information, hold discussions, and link ideas, actors, and initiatives.

The Association haïtienne pour le développement des TICs joined three other organizations — Fundación Taigüey (Dominican Republic), Jamaica Sustainable Development Network, and DevNet (Guyana) — in an effort to strengthen CIVIC and extend its reach in French- and Spanish-speaking Caribbean countries. This IDRC-supported initiative, known as CarISnet, set up discussion groups and a clearinghouse of ICT-related policies, initiatives, skills, resources, and opportunities in the Caribbean. A 2006 meeting in Haiti raised awareness about CIVIC in the country: as a result, several additional French-speaking members joined the network.

With support from IDRC and the Canadian International Development Agency, CarISnet II is strengthening the capacity of ICT actors in the Caribbean to lead and promote online collaboration, dialogue, and consensus building. The project is also developing a two-year work plan for collaboration on education, health, democratic

participation, and economic competitiveness. In this way, Haitian educators and health specialists, for example, could learn about successful strategies in neighbouring countries and adapt them to their own institutions.

(Project # 103823; CarISnet II: Strengthening the Caribbean ICT Virtual Stakeholders Community; Duration: 2008–2009; IDRC allocation: CA\$87 197; IDRC contact: Angelica Valeria Ospina; Research partners: Valerie Gordon, Jamaica Sustainable Development Network Limited, 89½ Half Way Tree Road, Kingston 10, Jamaica; Email: gordon.valerie@gmail.com; Tel.: 876-968-0323)

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