

IDRC

A Canadian link to business in Eastern and Southern Africa.

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) was created by the Parliament of Canada to help developing countries find solutions to their social, economic, and environmental problems through research and information programs. Since its creation in 1970, IDRC has managed more than \$1.5 billion in support of some 5,000 projects in over 100 countries. The Centre's funding comes from an annual Parliamentary grant, co-funding of projects with other international development donors, and managing research projects or providing services for other organizations. IDRC is also promoting the commercialisation of technologies in order to bring the results of IDRC-supported technical research to the market.

IDRC is pursuing new partnerships with the private sector. For Canadian businesses interested in opportunities in Eastern and Southern Africa, IDRC's network of contacts and its experience in working in the region can help pave the way.

Key Sectors of Activity

IDRC offers a comprehensive menu of scientific, managerial, and information services in six core areas: Environmental Management and Water, Protection of Biodiversity, Food Systems, Economic Management, Small Enterprise Development, and Information and Communication Technologies.

To all the projects it undertakes, IDRC applies the expertise of its full-time staff – a multilingual team of more than 60 respected scientists and managers with broad experience in applied physical, social, life, and information sciences. Where necessary, additional qualified personnel are recruited from among the Centre's network of partner organizations. IDRC's "field presence" in regional offices in Nairobi and Johannesburg ensures strong local support for its projects.

Research networks and personal contacts have always been key components of IDRC's work overseas. Over the years, IDRC has set up dozens of research networks and centres in the social and natural sciences – the International Centre for Agro-Forestry Research in Nairobi, Kenya, for example. The Centre also administers a number of Secretariats with headquarters in Africa. Through its research support program, IDRC has established strong working relationships with many of the region's researchers, policy experts, and private industries.

IDRC offers a range of services including:

- planning/management of large international research projects
- project set-up, direction, monitoring and evaluation

- coordination of human resources
- technical assistance in areas of sectoral competence
- tracking issues in developing countries and emerging economies
- identification/referral of local experts/decision-makers
- development, coordination, and management of international information networks

Examples of IDRC's Partnership Approach

ACACIA, a five to twenty-five year effort to empower sub-Saharan communities with the ability to appropriate and adopt information and communication technologies (ICTs) to meet their own social and economic development, is an example of IDRC's approach. Acacia will finance activities in partnership with African communities, international donors and foundations and the Canadian and international private sector. Many organizations already support projects related to ICT policies, infrastructure, technology innovations, and applications in Africa. What makes Acacia different is its integrated approach to these four areas, its community focus, and a key learning component. The Canadian private sector will play a significant role in Acacia. With acknowledged leadership in sectors such as information technology, telecommunications, resource management, finance, education and health care, Canadian companies recognize the long-term business benefits of developing entrepreneurial partnerships in Africa.

FOODLINKS is a market-oriented initiative within IDRC aimed at helping complete the food chain from producer to consumer in developing countries and in Canada. Canadian firms can gain access to new sources of supply offering unique and exciting food products. As well, Foodlinks can assist Canadian food processing and technology firms access rapidly growing markets in Africa and elsewhere.

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