

IRIACC

International Research Initiative on Adaptation to Climate Change (IRIACC)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is IRIACC?

IRIACC is a \$12.5 million research program aimed at helping vulnerable populations in Canada and in developing countries adapt to climate change.

Why do we need to carry out this research?

Climate change is already happening, and its effects are being felt in many places. While the causes of climate change are well understood, relatively little research has been done on how to respond to it. We need to know what adaptation strategies will best protect people, communities, and economic sectors such as tourism and agriculture that are most vulnerable to these

impacts. This initiative is working to fill that knowledge gap. Researchers are looking for solutions that will help communities cope, both in Canada and in developing countries.

Who coordinates the initiative?

IRIACC is managed by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and funded jointly by IDRC and Canada's three main research granting bodies, known as the Tri-Council: the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

Why are so many organizations involved?

IRIACC is a unique collaboration that draws on these organizations' capacity to work both within Canada and abroad. For the first time under a single program, the Tri-Council's leadership in funding university-based research in Canada is joined with IDRC's expertise in fostering international development. This kind of partnership is well suited to confront the global challenges resulting from climate change.

How are the studies carried out?

Five research teams are each tackling an urgent problem relating to climate

change adaptation. Each team brings together researchers from Canadian universities with counterparts from institutions in developing countries. Additionally, these collaborations engage in various ways a range of other partners, including experts from government, civil society, and the private sector.

What are the timelines?

The four funding agencies launched IRIACC in 2009. Through a peer-review competitive process, five projects were selected for support. Each team has been awarded \$500,000 per year for the period 2011–2015. Research activities began in spring 2011.



The lead researchers of the International Research Initiative on Adaptation to Climate Change are (from left to right): Fernando Santibáñez (Chile), James Ford (Canada), David Sauchyn (Canada), Taha Ouarda (Canada), Daniel Scott (Canada), Murray Simpson (Barbados), Lea Berrang-Ford (Canada), Gordon McBean (Canada), Alejandro Llanos (Peru), Driss Ouazar (Morocco), and Shuaib Lwasa (Uganda). Absent from photo: Anond Snidvongs (Thailand).

What are the funded research projects?

The studies address a range of adaptation issues in Africa, Asia, and the Americas:



- Researchers from Morocco, Niger, and Quebec's Institut national de la recherche scientifique are looking at the relationship between **water resources and health** in West Africa and in Canada. They are studying extreme weather events as well as long-term climate variability – for example, the scarcity or abundance of rain and the uneven distribution of water – and how these relate to health risks such as vector-borne diseases.
- A team from Thailand and the University of Western Ontario is examining **coastal megacities at risk**. Many large, low-lying coastal, river-delta cities, already stressed by population growth and other challenges, are now increasingly vulnerable to the effects of climate change – for instance, rising sea levels. The study focuses on Bangkok, Lagos, Manila, and Vancouver.
- A partnership of scholars from Chile and the University of Regina is seeking to understand and reduce the vulnerability of **agricultural and indigenous communities** in the Americas to climate variability and the frequency and intensity of extreme climate events. The investigators are also engaging decision-makers in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, and Canada.
- Researchers from Peru, Uganda, and McGill University are applying scientific and indigenous knowledge to empower **remote indigenous populations** to adapt to the health-related effects of climate change. These effects include water and food insecurity and vector-borne disease. The researchers have already conducted pilot studies among three communities: Uganda's Pygmy, Peru's Shipibo and Shawi populations, and Canada's Inuit.

- Investigators from Barbados and the University of Waterloo are comparing communities living in **low-lying small-island countries** of the Caribbean – Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica – with coastal communities in Atlantic Canada, and seek to assess their vulnerability to sea-level rise, coastal erosion, and storms. The project examines the underlying political, socio-economic, and environmental conditions that affect the vulnerability and adaptive capacity of these communities.

Why should Canadians care about this initiative?

IRIACC demonstrates Canada’s leading role in supporting science for development. The partnership is a unique Canadian collaboration, a “whole-of-government” approach to protecting vulnerable people and places – both internationally and at home – from the effects of climate change, using rigorous and independent research. At

the same time, Canadians will benefit concretely: by learning about adaptation strategies in other parts of the world, we will strengthen our own technical and scientific base and our ability to innovate.

Where can I find out more about IRIACC?

Visit www.idrc.ca/iriacc, or email iriacc@idrc.ca.

