

# IDRC in Burkina Faso

**I**DRC has supported Burkina Faso's scientific and research community since the early 1970s. One of the world's poorest countries — it ranks 175 out of 177 in the United Nations Development Programme's 2006 Human Development Index —

Burkina Faso has been an important hub of IDRC-supported research. It is one of the very few West and Central African countries to have a functional national research coordinating body: the Centre national de la recherche scientifique et technique (CNRST). IDRC has supported the CNRST's research and its biennial National Forum on Scientific Research and Technological Innovations (FSRTI), a unique platform for dialogue between researchers and decision-makers.

During the 7<sup>th</sup> FSRTI in 2006, Burkina Faso presented IDRC with its highest honour, the *Chevalier de l'Ordre National*, in recognition for its support in strengthening research capacities in the country. This support has led to advances in such areas as agricultural technology and the processing of agricultural products. More recently, it has fostered community involvement in poverty monitoring, natural resource management, and environmental health — initiatives that are improving people's lives.

IDRC support has also led to increased access to public legal information. Over the last few years, Burkina Faso has been engaged in the modernization of state structures to improve the delivery of public services. In a pragmatic step forward, the national law society and the government collaborated in 2004 with the Université de Montréal to launch JuriBurkina, an online legal repository. The service provides law practitioners and citizens access to public legal information and has become a model in the dissemination of jurisprudence. IDRC is now supporting the creation of a network in which JuriBurkina will share its experience with judicial information centres in other countries.

IDRC support for poverty monitoring began in several countries at the end of the 1990s, with a unique community approach. In Burkina Faso, a consortium of institutions set up community-based monitoring systems that are now providing a much clearer picture of poverty. The research team is currently exploring better ways to feed the results of ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities into the government's poverty reduction strategies and policies, to make them more effective.

Community involvement in natural resource management is another approach IDRC has

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supported in several countries. Burkinabé researchers are pursuing this approach to improve the livelihoods of the country's large rural population and manage competition for resources such as water. A long-standing partner, the Université de Ouagadougou's Centre d'études, de documentation et de recherche économique et sociale (CEDRES) has perfected tools and techniques to help communities work through conflicting interests and create water management committees. Now in a third phase of IDRC support, researchers are consolidating these methods and their links to regional and national policy development and planning.

Community involvement is also a basic tenet in the ecosystem approach to human health, which IDRC and partners in Benin, Cameroon, and Burkina Faso have pioneered in the region. For example, researchers with the Institut international de l'ingénierie de l'eau et de l'environnement in Ouagadougou have involved people living close to small dams in northern Yitenga in participatory research to identify and address the causes of gastrointestinal diseases. Among the strategies now being implemented in a second phase of IDRC support is a community plan for managing human and animal wastes in the confined waters.

IDRC's history of support for the Burkinabé research community began with agriculture, which still provides a livelihood for 84 percent of the country's working population. Research aimed at improving staple crop varieties — cowpeas, for example — was complemented by other work to target crop pests, such as *Striga*, a pernicious weed stunting sorghum, maize, and millet growth.

Support in the 1980s and 1990s developed better ways to process plant-based products, generating income as a result, and providing jobs in rural areas. With input from local women's groups, researchers from the Institut de recherche en

sciences appliquées et technologies (IRSAT) developed dehullers, crushers, roasters, and manual presses to improve the production of non-edible oils from trees, particularly shea butter and neem oil, to supply growing national and international markets.

IDRC's relationship with Burkina Faso was enhanced through the participation of several Burkinabé members in its Council of Regional Advisors for West and Central Africa, created in 2001 to help guide the Centre's programming in the region. Asseta Diallo, a development consultant and the first woman to earn a PhD in economics at the Université de Ouagadougou, joined the council in November 2005. Previous members were Joachin Tankoano, the current Burkinabé Minister of Telecommunications and Information and Communication Technologies and Alice Tiendrébéogo, the Chief Executive Officer of the Forum for African Women Educationalists and former Minister of Primary Education.

IDRC has supported 95 projects in Burkina Faso, some of which are regional in scope. They represent a total allocation of just over CA\$18 million. Seven active projects represent an investment of just over CA\$6 million.

### RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

#### Promoting the rule of law

In Burkina Faso, searching for legal documents — court rulings, case law, legislation, and the like — often required dogged perseverance. Many began to see access to public legal information as a condition for strengthening democratization, the rule of law, and economic development.

In 2004, the country's national law society joined forces with the government and researchers from the Université de Montréal's justice system technologies laboratory, LexUM, to develop a low-cost, online, legal database, known as JuriBurkina. Users can access it freely through a

website incorporating a search engine, and on regularly issued CD-ROMs. The legal society, La Maison de l'Avocat, offers a free access point in Ouagadougou for those without access to computers.

The repository is now operated and maintained by a local team of legal experts and information technology engineers. Through this second project, IDRC is supporting LexUM's effort to establish the African Judicial Information Network (AJIN) and promote the creation of more online national legal information systems in Africa, starting with Niger and Senegal. Support to JuriBurkina will continue and extend to Madagascar's LEGIS Centre, for the two centres to develop dissemination strategies for the documentation they manage.

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## Monitoring Poverty

Traditional systems of poverty monitoring typically rely on data from large, costly, and occasional censuses, which do not focus on the conditions of vulnerable groups.

Since 1996, IDRC has supported the design and piloting of community-based poverty monitoring systems (CBMS) in Asia and West Africa. These systems rely on a few relatively simple poverty indicators, like the quality of housing, which can be sampled frequently. Moreover, the communities themselves are involved in developing the indicators, as well as in collecting and analyzing the data. Over time, this information provides a detailed poverty picture and shows whether poverty reduction programs are having the desired effect.

Burkina Faso was among the first African countries to develop CBMS. Coordinated by the Burkinabé office of the Montréal-based Centre d'étude et de coopération internationale, a consortium of institutions began by building local capacity in such areas as sampling techniques and the choice of indicators. During the project's second phase, the research team sampled 39 villages and seven sectors in the department of Yako, northwest of Ouagadougou. The poverty profile that emerges shows, for example, that the poorest households are those headed by single fathers in the rural central and north central regions. During a third phase, researchers are perfecting the monitoring system to ensure that communities can use it and that it serves local and national long-term needs for poverty monitoring.

(Project # 102935; Poverty monitoring system in Burkina Faso—Phase III; Duration: 2005–2008; IDRC allocation: CA\$348 340; IDRC contact: Elias Ayuk; Research partners: Adama Ouedraogo, Centre d'étude et de coopération internationale (CECI–Burkina), 01 BP 3440 Ouagadougou 01, Burkina Faso; Tel.: 226-50-36-2992; Email: adama@ceci.ca)

## Involving Communities in Water Management

Water is a source of conflict throughout a dry country like Burkina Faso. IDRC-supported research, piloted in the Nakanbé Basin in 1999 by the Centre d'études, de documentation et de recherche économique et sociale (CEDRES), identified four causes of community strife: insufficient water supplies, poor management of existing water sources, lack of basic communication among water users, and the non-appropriation of existing water projects by the local population. This translated into physical confrontations at wellheads, broken equipment, abandoned wells, and contaminated water.

With IDRC support, CEDRES researchers employed participatory development communication techniques to explore different viewpoints,

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bridge divides, and reach consensus on proposed solutions in 19 pilot sites. Follow-up activities included the repair of broken pumps and wells, creating water holes for livestock to relieve congestion at handpumps and reduce contamination, and reconstituting or establishing committees to manage water stations. Some communities also introduced fees to fund the repair of old pumps and the digging of new wells.

A second phase of IDRC support transferred the successful approach to 300 more villages. The project benefited greatly from the logistical and technical support of Burkina Faso's Ministry of the Environment and Water. The ministry also drew on the research to formulate its integrated plan for managing water resources.

In this third phase of funding, researchers are looking to help communities develop a permanent strategy for managing local water resources that includes input into regional and national resource management plans.

(Project # 103230; Community Participation in Political Dialogue on the Issue of Water Management in Burkina Faso; Duration: 2005–2008; IDRC allocation: CA\$447 250; IDRC contact: Guy Bessette; Research partners: Karidia Sano, CEDRES, Université de Ouagadougou, BP 7021 or 7164 Ouaga 03, Zogona, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; Tel.: 226-50-33-1636; Email: ksanon@bf.refer.org)

### Improving rural livelihoods

Poverty has a rural face in Burkina Faso: eight out of 10 Burkinabé live in villages where agriculture is the main source of livelihood. To combat poverty, the Government of Burkina Faso is modernizing and diversifying agricultural production. A key strategy is the promotion of the fruit and vegetable sector and the development of small, rural-based food processing businesses.

A number of research projects examining non-timber forest products have shown that wild fruits are an important source of food and income for landless villagers. Supported by IDRC, researchers from the Centre national de la recherche scientifique et technologique (CNRST) are working to reduce poverty and improve the food security of subsistence farmers by preserving and developing wild fruit orchards. Researchers are exploring the prospects for adding value to harvested fruit and are developing a conservation strategy to protect this natural resource.

(Project # 101171; Indigenous Fruit Trees (Burkina Faso); Duration: 2002–2007; IDRC allocation: CA\$297 900; IDRC contact: Innocent Butaré; Research partners: Niéyidouba Lamien, CNRST, BP 7047, Ouagadougou 03, Burkina Faso; Tel.: 226-50-3246/48; Email: dg@cnrst.bf)

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