Malaysia was one of the first Southeast Asian countries in which IDRC supported research, in 1971. Over the following two decades, more than 100 IDRC-funded activities contributed to better policies, technologies, and research capacity in sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, education, health, and science and technology. Research results in the late 1980s, for example, shaped the Malaysian government’s national industrial strategy around science and technology.

As Malaysia became an upper middle-income economy and the government made funding for research a priority in the 1990s, IDRC scaled back its support. Recent IDRC funding has bolstered Malaysian efforts to understand how the knowledge economy can benefit the poor and has promoted the use of new technologies for development in Asia and throughout the world.

**Better livelihoods for homeworkers**

One recent Malaysian grantee, the non-governmental organization eHomemakers, documented women’s access to information and communication technologies in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand and the strategies needed to support women’s use of these technologies in the home. The research on women homeworkers and home-based entrepreneurs — selling everything from telemarketing and editorial services to homemade crafts and cakes — has raised the profile of women working at home and their need for recognition, training, and legal protection. The special needs of homeworkers with disabilities were also highlighted.

**Global partnership for knowledge and development**

Since 2001, Malaysia has been home to the Global Knowledge Partnership Secretariat, supported by IDRC and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. This international network of public, private, and not-for-profit organizations promotes the innovative application of knowledge and technology to achieve development goals such as improving education and reducing poverty. The network shares knowledge and builds partnership through training, meetings, excellence awards, and project funding. IDRC’s most recent grant allowed the Partnership to assess its future directions.

**Total IDRC support**

113 activities worth CA$18 million since 1971

**IDRC support is helping:**
- Poor rural residents get an education
- Small-scale entrepreneurs find venture capital
- Farmers safeguard their export markets
- Migrant workers gain better protections
Some current activities

Here is a sample of the research that IDRC supports in Malaysia. In several of these projects, less-developed countries in the region are learning from Malaysia’s experience.

**Greater access to education**

Funding: $1,200,000  
Duration: 2010–2013  
Grantee: Virtual University of Pakistan

At Wawasan Open University, a private, not-for-profit open-learning institution in Penang, Malaysia

Information and communication technologies can increase access to education and thus give poor rural residents a chance to learn a profession or job-related skills. Researchers in 11 Asian countries are identifying the technology, standards, performance indicators, and teaching methods that will improve the quality of distance education and help it reach its potential. Among the project leaders is the Wawasan Open University of Penang, Malaysia.

**Financing innovation**

Funding: $309,900  
Duration: 2010–2012  
Grantee: Thammasat University, Thailand

The global financial crisis has made it difficult for firms to access capital during the early stages of business development. This study aims to help the newly industrializing Asian economies develop policies that will promote the long-term viability and competitiveness of small and medium enterprises. Researchers are comparing innovation financing schemes in Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand, with emphasis on venture capital, tax incentives for research and development, loan and grant programs, and capital market rules and regulations.

**Plant health and safety testing**

Funding: $426,565  
Duration: 2009–2012  
Grantee: CAB International, United Kingdom

Countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are highly dependent on agricultural exports. This trade depends in turn on compliance with strict plant health and safety standards established by the World Trade Organization, among them the ability to diagnose and manage agricultural pests and diseases. This project launches an ASEAN-wide network to provide plant health and safety services. An independent clearinghouse in Malaysia will anonymously test samples in other countries, thereby supporting those countries where this capacity is weak or absent.

**Labour migration within ASEAN**

Funding: $499,100  
Duration: 2009–2011  
Grantee: Philippine Institute for Development Studies

Among ASEAN countries, international labour migration has benefited migrants, their households, and national economies. However, policy and institutional responses to managing these migration flows are varied and often uncoordinated. Governments need evidence-based data to guide policy choices and to ensure that migrant workers are protected. This project mobilizes researchers in Malaysia and other ASEAN countries to study current arrangements for managing labour migration flows, and their development effects. They are looking at both the long-term migration of skilled workers and the high-frequency, short-term cross-border movement of unskilled workers.

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For more information, visit the regional office for Southeast and East Asia website: www.idrc.ca/asro  
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IDRC supports research in developing countries to promote growth and development. IDRC also encourages sharing this knowledge with policymakers, other researchers, and communities around the world. The result is innovative, lasting local solutions that aim to bring choice and change to those who need it most.