

# IDRC in South Africa

Since achieving majority rule in 1994, South Africa has made great progress in overcoming apartheid's institutionalized discrimination, yet challenges remain. Many citizens still cannot access clean water or proper health care and assets like land remain unevenly distributed.

Global opposition to apartheid turned South Africa into a pariah state. As the anti-apartheid movement grew, however, governments around the world started exploring avenues for channelling aid to the country's poor majority. In the late 1980s, IDRC began its involvement with anti-apartheid groups. The result was a program of support expressly designed to prepare South Africans for a non-racial democracy. When the first freely-elected majority government took office in 1994, more than half of the new cabinet had participated in IDRC-supported policy-oriented research.

Initially, IDRC's post-apartheid support focused on health, urban issues, and economic and industrial policy. Subsequent activity also addressed such issues as environmental preservation, new technologies, and private sector development.

## AIDS and tuberculosis

In response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, IDRC-supported researchers developed a program, called PALSA Plus, to train primary care nurses to diagnose both AIDS and tuberculosis. The project, which began in the early 2000s, also used hand-held computers to create a powerful data collection system for HIV and AIDS clinical research and evaluation. These efforts led to more integrated AIDS care in clinics and a dramatic improvement in the diagnosis of TB.



IDRC: PETER BENNETT

IDRC support for research in South Africa has led to policy changes that increased people's access to health care.

The successful trials have paved the way for similar initiatives in other countries in the region.

## Land reform

Because reducing rural poverty and improving agriculture have long been priorities for IDRC in South Africa, it has developed relationships with academic institutions that address land reform issues. For instance, the Programme for Land and Agrarian Studies at the University of the Western Cape focused on land tenure and women's access to land. The Programme's groundbreaking research on land reform provided decision-makers with an analysis of policy options for holding and managing land in independent South Africa.

**Total IDRC support**  
**285 activities**  
 worth CA\$88 million  
 since 1989

### IDRC support is helping:

- Youth workers offer better services
- Human rights advocates improve their research skills
- Patients access health care
- Women take advantage of new technologies
- Cape Town residents respond to flooding



Research focuses on the impact of technology on women's lives.

### Some current activities

Here is a sample of the research that IDRC supports in South Africa:

#### ■ Support for youth

**Funding:** \$333,500  
**Duration:** 2007–2014  
**Grantee:** North West University, South Africa

*Youth in South Africa face many hurdles, including HIV/AIDS, poverty, and unemployment. Researchers and youth workers in South Africa, Colombia, Canada, and China formed an alliance to identify the services at-risk youth need. They are examining how youth use formal social services and informal networks like family and friends to overcome challenges. IDRC collaborates on this project with Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.*

#### ■ Dealing with injustice

**Funding:** \$531,200  
**Duration:** 2008–2011  
**Grantee:** Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, South Africa

*Several sub-Saharan countries have experienced transitions from war and authoritarian rule and have sought ways, such as South Africa's Truth and Justice Commission has done, to deal with injustices from the past. A network of African human rights advocates are developing the skills they need to conduct*



The boundaries and names shown on the map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by IDRC.

*high-quality research on transitional justice. Research training includes working on ongoing human rights advocacy activities in the region.*

#### ■ Equity in health care

**Funding:** \$1,132,800  
**Donor:** Global Health Research Initiative (IDRC, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Canadian International Development Agency, Health Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada)  
**Duration:** 2007–2011  
**Grantees:** University of Cape Town and University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa and McMaster University, Canada

*Despite post-apartheid reforms, South Africans still face unequal access to health care. To help authorities improve access, researchers are investigating the availability, affordability, and acceptability of health services. They are focusing on maternal care, tuberculosis treatment, and anti-retroviral therapy for HIV throughout South Africa and are carrying out in-depth studies in four rural and urban districts.*

#### ■ Women and technology

**Funding:** \$2,608,760  
**Duration:** 2008–2011  
**Grantee:** Research for the Future and The GRACE Project, South Africa

*New digital technologies such as cellphones and the Internet hold the potential to improve women's lives. Researchers in Africa*

*and the Middle East are exploring how women take advantage of these technologies, as well as the obstacles they face in using them.*

#### ■ Flooding and sea-level rise

**Funding:** \$564,400  
**Duration:** 2008–2013  
**Grantee:** University of Cape Town, South Africa

*Scientists predict that climate change will bring more frequent and intense flooding to the coastal city of Cape Town. Most vulnerable are the city's poor, since many live in low-lying areas. Researchers, community representatives, local businesses, and government are collaborating to improve the city's preparation for and response to flooding. They are also developing an early warning system to alert at-risk communities to extreme changes in sea-level.*

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**For more information** visit the Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa website: [www.idrc.ca/esaro](http://www.idrc.ca/esaro)  
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### About Canada's International Development Research Centre

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.

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