



IDRC · CRDI

International Development Research Centre
Centre de recherches pour le développement international

STRATEGY 2030

A more sustainable and inclusive world



Canada



Established in 1970, Canada's International
Development Research Centre (IDRC)
is a Crown corporation supporting research
and innovation within and alongside
developing regions to drive global change.

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COVER: Children in fragile, conflict-afflicted countries are more than twice as likely to be out of school. IDRC tests and scales innovations to improve access to and quality of education in the developing world, particularly for girls and marginalized groups.

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FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIRPERSON



When the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) was established 50 years ago by the Parliament of Canada it was a bold experiment and radical investment in the idea that science and innovation were key to prosperity and sustainable development in the developing world. Canada's foresight and investments have paid measurable development dividends and contributed to Canada's reputation as a strong and constructive global partner.

Now, 50 years later, the need for knowledge, innovation, and solutions in developing countries has never been greater. The COVID-19 pandemic, when layered on top of the growing effects of climate change and persistent realities of inequality and exclusion, has stymied, and in some cases reversed, development progress. The poorest and most vulnerable around the world are now at even greater risk of being left behind.

In launching Strategy 2030 at this critical time, IDRC identified where it could make the most consequential Canadian contribution to addressing key challenges such as climate resilience, new pathways for sustainable inclusive growth, gender equality, and democratic governance. IDRC will be guided by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and focus on where accelerated progress and breakthroughs are most needed in order to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

In the decade ahead, IDRC will build on its years of experience helping to advance science and innovation in developing countries and achieve impact at scale. It will continue to expand its reach and amplify its results by building partnerships and alliances across sectors, disciplines, and borders. And it will work with local partners who are best able to identify solutions to the problems that matter most to them.

Most importantly, IDRC's mission on behalf of Canadians will continue to be defined and inspired by Canada's most fundamental interests and values — in peace and security, prosperity, human dignity and rights, and a sustainable planet.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'M. Biggs' in a cursive style.

Margaret Biggs
Chairperson

FOREWORD FROM THE PRESIDENT



I am proud of the vision for a more sustainable and inclusive world that IDRC has in sight for Strategy 2030. Importantly, it reflects what we heard from the diverse set of experts and innovators that we consulted all over the world. Our efforts over the next 10 years will focus on getting research into the hands of people positioned to use it for the greatest good.

Looking to 2030, IDRC will build on its extensive networks and strong presence around the world as a convenor and leader in the field of research for development. We will invest in high-quality research that enables organizations to address local and global development challenges. We will share knowledge and synthesize results in ways that increase the impact of IDRC-supported research. And we will continue to mobilize alliances that expand the reach of the research we fund, but with a greater emphasis on working with the private sector.

This strategy represents a significant shift, and IDRC must walk the talk. On the key challenges of climate change and inequality, IDRC will be part of the solution at home while we move the needle on significant challenges around the world. We will do this by redoubling our efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, and by improving our business practices to further green the Centre's operations.

IDRC will continue to champion research and innovation in developing countries to address the challenges that matter most to people and governments. Today, in the face of new global challenges such as COVID-19, we understand better than ever the positive changes that science can bring. A desire for change, and a more sustainable and inclusive world for everyone, drives IDRC now and into the future. With the strategy's renewed focus and ambition, I am confident Canada, with IDRC, can increase its global leadership role in research for development.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Jean Lebel". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "J".

Jean Lebel, PhD
President

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) was created in 1970 with a mandate to champion and facilitate research on the challenges facing the world's developing regions. Our work is focused on enabling and applying scientific, technical, and other forms of knowledge for the advancement of developing countries.

Since its creation, IDRC has identified and responded to critical development challenges, working to help researchers in developing regions find solutions to the most pressing problems facing their communities and countries. From our five international offices in developing regions and our head office in Ottawa, IDRC's work has helped bridge the digital divide, implement Canada's Earth Summit agenda, address the world's food crises, ensure democratic transitions in emerging economies, and stop a devastating Ebola epidemic.

IDRC's new 10-year strategy leverages the Centre's decades of experience and identifies where it can make the greatest contribution to advancing the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Two major drivers — climate change and inequality — create significant barriers to progress against the SDGs. As part of Strategy 2030, IDRC will use its experience and networks to drive global scientific collaboration and action aimed at overcoming these barriers.

IDRC has learned from long experience that scaling impact is critical to success. We know that building local capacity results in the strongest possible impacts in the developing world. We also know that high-quality development research must be inclusive and equitable — it must consider the varied experiences of women, men, and people of different identities.

Strategy 2030 affirms IDRC's vision for a **more sustainable and inclusive world**, and it commits the Centre to the following mission: **IDRC will be a leader in research for development, investing in high-quality research and innovation, sharing knowledge, and mobilizing alliances for more sustainable, prosperous, and inclusive societies.**

We will:

- 1. Invest in high-quality research and innovation in developing countries**, enabling research organizations and their stakeholders to address both their own and global development challenges.
- 2. Share knowledge for greater uptake and use**, increasing the reach and impact of IDRC-supported research in driving solutions, and influencing national, regional, and global development agendas, including by synthesizing and communicating results.
- 3. Mobilize alliances for impact**, growing international funding partnerships to expand available resources for research for development, and developing enhanced relationships with the private sector to expand the reach of research.

To determine where IDRC can have the greatest impact, we looked at persistent global development gaps alongside the Centre's past successes, contributions, and partnerships. We identified the following five programs that, with a strong gender and inclusion lens, will shape IDRC's work over the next decade.

PROGRAM	DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES	SDGs TARGETED
Climate-Resilient Food Systems	Communities living in climate change hot spots are more resilient and have healthy diets because of improved access to more sustainable and inclusive food systems.	    
Global Health	Through better-prepared health systems, vulnerable populations in countries at greatest risk are better protected from local epidemics and pandemic threats. Women and adolescent girls, including refugees and displaced populations, have improved sexual, reproductive, and maternal health.	 
Education and Science	Children and youth from vulnerable populations are in school and benefit from high-quality education. Women emerge as leaders in strong science systems that produce knowledge and innovation to improve people's lives.	  
Democratic and Inclusive Governance	Vulnerable people and communities benefit from more inclusive, accountable, and transparent governance. They are better able to shape the policies and practices that affect their lives by exercising their democratic rights and freedoms, including in contexts of democratic transition and displacement.	  
Sustainable Inclusive Economies	People in developing countries benefit from more sustainable, equitable, and inclusive economies with expanded, lasting, and high-quality economic opportunities for women and youth.	    

Implementing our strategy

To create significant impact, IDRC will align its operations to Strategy 2030. We will cultivate a learning culture that focuses on results. This means nurturing committed and engaged teams that are focused not only on learning, but also on using evidence to test and challenge assumptions. We will become more environmentally sustainable by reducing our overall footprint. And we will ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion in our operations and workforce.

IDRC will also evolve its internal skills, expertise, and systems toward implementing Strategy 2030. In this way, we will ensure our future financial sustainability and strengthen our reputation as an inclusive and innovative employer that attracts the best and brightest talent from around the world.

Creating impact

The next 10 years will be critical to achieving the SDGs, while addressing climate change and inequality. Through Strategy 2030, research and innovation will better inform decisions and approaches to key development challenges, and the enhanced focus on knowledge sharing will significantly increase the reach and impact of work by IDRC and its grantees. Canada, through IDRC, will contribute to building a more sustainable and inclusive world by delivering and amplifying solutions that are evidence-based, innovative, and transformative.



Islanders of the Sunderbans in the Bay of Bengal are one of many populations worldwide at risk of losing their homes and livelihoods to rising sea levels. Increasingly severe climate change impacts are threatening to undo hard-won development gains and undermine global progress.

IDRC IN CANADA AND THE WORLD

In 1970, the Parliament of Canada created the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) to champion and facilitate research on the challenges facing the world's developing regions. Fifty years later, the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis have demonstrated to Canadians just how deeply global issues can affect our most vital interests. In such an interconnected world, Canadians see the importance of investing in the economic, environmental, and social advancement of developing regions and the importance of ensuring that no one is left behind.

The architects of IDRC's mandate recognized that science, knowledge, and innovation are fundamentally important to reducing poverty and building stronger economies and societies. They also recognized that the skills and expertise for research and innovation must exist within developing countries for solutions to be sustainable.

For these reasons, IDRC works directly with researchers in developing regions through its head office in Ottawa, as well as in five international offices in Amman, Jordan; Dakar, Senegal; Montevideo, Uruguay; Nairobi, Kenya; and New Delhi, India.

Over 50 years, IDRC has responded to critical global priorities by carefully focusing its investments. The following are some examples¹ of where we have made a significant difference:

- led Canada's work with developing countries to implement the agenda from the world's first Earth Summit
- worked with Canadian, international, and African partners to fund and run trials of an Ebola vaccine that helped stop a devastating epidemic in West Africa
- helped bridge the "digital divide" in areas such as health care and education
- worked closely with the Government of Canada and other international partners to address the world's food crises
- worked with local actors to help developing countries experiencing democratic transitions evolve into successful emerging economies

A time of urgency and uncertainty

In 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This ambitious agenda signalled the critical importance of eradicating extreme poverty and increasing sustainability while leaving no one behind. Since then, the COVID-19 pandemic, the resurgence of global movements for greater inclusion and voice for marginalized people, and scientific consensus on the severity of climate change have underlined the urgency for action.

In the face of social, environmental, and economic uncertainty, two drivers in particular create significant barriers to progress against the SDGs: **climate change** and **inequality**.

A GLOBAL CLIMATE CRISIS

Increasingly severe climate change impacts are threatening to undo hard-won development gains and undermine progress on all the SDGs.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warns that the world has until 2030 to halve emissions if we are to avoid the most devastating impacts of climate change on food supply, national security, global health, extreme weather, and more.

Climate change hot spots — places where strong effects of climate change coincide with large vulnerable populations — have the greatest need for innovative solutions. Much of Africa, low-lying coastal areas in Asia, parts of the Middle East and Latin America, and small-island developing countries have limited capacity to adapt. These areas also have widespread poverty and food insecurity, even though they continue to contribute the least to climate change.

Global financial instruments have mobilized new funds for climate action but have so far proven insufficient. Additional evidence-based solutions and innovation, together with engagement of all actors — private sector, public sector, and civil society — will reduce avoidable risks for the vulnerable, ensure adaptation to the unavoidable impacts, and spur green economic development to prevent negative climate impacts in the future.

A RESURGENCE OF CALLS TO REDUCE INEQUALITIES

Inequalities prevent many people from accessing services and opportunities, engaging in civic affairs, and moving out of poverty. Whether based on gender, race, sexuality, economic status, or other issues, inequalities pose significant constraints to achieving the SDGs.

Women face higher obstacles to equal participation in the labour force, earning less than men when they do participate, and spending more time on unpaid domestic and care work. Women's access to basic health services, sexual and reproductive health and rights, quality education, and other essential public services is frequently constrained, especially in the case of women from marginalized groups. The potential for women to contribute to science and society — for example, accountable governance or climate change solutions — is also under-leveraged.

Inequalities are especially prevalent in contexts of fragility, such as in developing regions where populations are displaced. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated the impacts of inequalities for women, girls, and marginalized populations.

The world urgently needs more evidence about how best to deliver differentiated strategies so we can reach and empower the most vulnerable. We also need more evidence on the impacts we can expect from such approaches. We need to break down the barriers that prevent access to vital information if we are to redress long-standing power imbalances. Addressing equality-related gaps will require increased efforts by both the public and private sectors, as well as engagement with civil society organizations.

Building on experience and learning

Between 2015 and 2020, IDRC set its agenda to invest in knowledge and innovation for large-scale positive change, build leaders for today and tomorrow, and be the partner of choice for greater impact.

Our strategic focus on scaling impact taught us a great deal about how science generates meaningful change for people and the planet. We now know that scaling is critical to success but difficult to do effectively. In response, we have developed practical scaling tools, and worked with other funders on significant partnerships and programs that integrate specific strategies to scale positive results. Critical to success are long-term partnerships that mobilize financial and technical know-how and that incorporate effective joint governance and accountability.

IDRC's focus on building leaders — both individuals and institutions — grew out of our steadfast commitment to capacity building. We have learned through experience that researchers are most productive when they work within strong scientific institutions and systems, and when IDRC helps them deepen their relationships with research users. By strengthening institutions, we ensure the research we fund and the knowledge that results has the strongest possible impact and translates into positive change in the places that need it the most.

We also know that high-quality development research must be inclusive and consider gender and other forms of inequalities. The experiences of women, men, and people of different identities are inherently varied. Research that does not take this into account may unintentionally deliver findings and solutions that perpetuate discrimination and exclusion. We need to shift our attention to identifying gender-responsive, equitable, and inclusive solutions that factor in how groups are left behind — and suggest ways to overcome these barriers.

Achieving gender equity is a long-standing core focus of IDRC. Looking toward 2030, the research we fund will put even greater focus on how gender interacts with additional dimensions of inequality, such as race, age, sexuality, and socio-economic position.

Experience over the past five years has also prompted IDRC to choose a 10-year horizon for Strategy 2030. Ten years gives the Centre the time it needs to align its efforts with the critical knowledge gaps that need to be filled so that progress can accelerate on our strategy. Ten years also allows the Centre to maintain a longer-term view and engage in foresight to address the new research questions and dynamics that emerge.

OUR VISION AND MISSION

IDRC's mandate to support science and innovation in developing countries is more important than ever before, and the potential to unlock and scale solutions that are locally tailored is significant. Looking to 2030, IDRC will focus on known gaps and needed transformations to accelerate progress toward the SDGs. We will invest in areas that our analysis shows have the potential to drive the most positive change. We will ensure the research we fund spurs ideas and innovation that have the greatest potential to bring about sustainable and inclusive futures for people who live in the developing world.

Our vision is for a **more sustainable and inclusive world**.

Our mission is to be a **leader in research for development, investing in high-quality research and innovation, sharing knowledge, and mobilizing alliances for more sustainable, prosperous, and inclusive societies**.

OUR CORE OBJECTIVES

To achieve our vision and mission, IDRC will pursue work through three core objectives. These objectives outline the major ways in which the Centre will contribute to development outcomes.

1. Invest in high-quality research and innovation in developing countries

A strong capacity for evidence-based research and innovation enables developing countries to address their own development challenges and contribute to broader global solutions. IDRC will continue to invest resources in high-quality research and innovation in the developing regions of the world, which will strengthen countries' capacities to create, test, and scale solutions. This high-quality research will reflect scientific rigour, legitimacy, relevance, and originality. It will integrate gender and inclusion, and be oriented toward use and uptake. We will also connect expertise in developing regions with research and science globally so that collaborative teams can accelerate change and respond to common challenges.

With strengthened capabilities and increased funding to conduct research and innovation, and greater use and uptake of research, developing countries will be better equipped to address national and global

challenges. Robust research results will reflect and address the needs and views of vulnerable and marginalized populations, leading to legitimate and sustainable recommendations and action.

2. Share knowledge for greater uptake and use

If high-quality research and innovation are to have an impact on development, the resulting knowledge must be clear and visible, and accessible and relevant for users. Strategy 2030 recognizes there is more the Centre can do in support of the SDGs to share knowledge and encourage uptake by specific, segmented audiences and stakeholders. In collaboration with research partners in developing regions, we will synthesize and share results and learnings from across our research investments to influence local, regional, and global agendas. We will share knowledge that is ripe for influence, exploratory research that responds to emerging challenges, and what we know from our research and practice that has the potential to impact research for development.

By doing these things, IDRC will ensure that the research we fund is more easily accessible, visible, and useful to targeted stakeholders — and that it enhances the ability of developing countries to tackle their most pressing priorities and contribute solutions to global challenges.

3. Mobilize alliances for impact

As underlined in the UN's Agenda 2030 and SDG 17: Partnerships to Achieve the Goals, all sectors of society must contribute to overcoming development challenges if we are to realize more sustainable, prosperous, and inclusive societies. Beyond mobilizing developing country knowledge, IDRC will extend the reach and impact of our work by building on our business model of convening and collaborating with complementary partners.

To increase our impact, we will deepen and expand our collaboration with our strongest funding partners and pursue new partnerships — including with emerging funders in developing regions — thus growing the resources available for research. To increase the value of our investments in research for development, we will incorporate joint value-adding activities such as knowledge synthesis, translation, and foresight.

Effective private sector engagement will also take centre stage to move research into use and scale solutions. We will build a robust evidence base of opportunities for private sector actors so they can contribute meaningfully to global development, promote a policy and regulatory environment that encourages private sector actors to take positive action, and increase resources among private sector actors so they can invest in scaling up new solutions for development.

OUR PROGRAMMING

Our programming choices for Strategy 2030 will contribute to development outcomes anchored within SDGs. We will seek to achieve five programs and corresponding development outcomes.

Climate-Resilient Food Systems: Communities living in climate change hot spots are more resilient and have healthy diets because of improved access to more sustainable and inclusive food systems.

Global Health: Through better-prepared health systems, vulnerable populations in countries at greatest risk are better protected from local epidemics and pandemic threats. Women and adolescent girls, including refugees and displaced populations, have improved sexual, reproductive, and maternal health.

Education and Science: Children and youth from vulnerable populations are in school and benefit from high-quality education. Women emerge as leaders in strong science systems that produce knowledge and innovation to improve people's lives.

Democratic and Inclusive Governance: Vulnerable people and communities benefit from more inclusive, accountable, and transparent governance. They are better able to shape the policies and practices that affect their lives by exercising their democratic rights and freedoms, including in contexts of democratic transition and displacement.

Sustainable Inclusive Economies: People in developing countries benefit from more sustainable, equitable, and inclusive economies with expanded, lasting, and high-quality economic opportunities for women and youth.

We made these programming choices based on our assessment of the available data and evidence on global and regional development priorities at this critical time. Progress toward the SDGs has slowed, the impacts of climate change are being increasingly felt in developing regions, and a global pandemic has exposed and worsened inequalities — including gender inequalities — and eroded development gains made in the last decade.

In some of our programs, such as Global Health, Climate-Resilient Food Systems, and Education and Science, we built on a large body of IDRC work, as well as the strong niche and momentum we have created through funding partnerships. In other programs, such as Sustainable Inclusive Economies, and Democratic and Inclusive Governance, we are breaking ground on issues where innovation is urgently needed globally but where evidence and solutions have been scarce or difficult to scale.

Our five new programs will generate knowledge, evidence, and solutions that combat poverty in all its forms, particularly with groups that are the most left behind. They will do this by addressing lagging SDGs in a systemic manner and by opening innovative, sustainable, and inclusive development trajectories for developing countries. In this way, all IDRC research programs will help advance SDG 1: No Poverty.

Our programs will support research that also contributes to SDG 5: Gender Equality. By integrating an intersectional approach to inequality, we will ensure the research we fund addresses problems and generates solutions that include women, girls, and other marginalized groups. IDRC will build on this approach to strengthen how research responds to and meets the needs of additional marginalized groups.

Our programming and funding will focus where needs are greatest around the world. Therefore, we will continue to program substantially in Sub-Saharan Africa. In other regions, we will adapt our focus based on our understanding of gaps, needs, and trends; learnings from our programs; and regional capacities to undertake research and scale impact through alliances and partnerships across academic, civil society, and the private and public sectors.



Research that looks at animal and human health, and their environment, is needed to improve livestock productivity and reduce pandemic threats. Lab assistant Ruth Onywera cultivates the pathogens of a contagious caprine disease, a major cause of economic losses to goat producers in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

CLIMATE-RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS

Our desired development outcome

Communities living in climate change hot spots are more resilient and have healthy diets because of improved access to more sustainable and inclusive food systems.

Contribution to SDGs



The need

Globally, 820 million people go hungry today while 2 billion more are missing key micronutrients, or suffering from obesity and other diet-related chronic diseases.² Rates of hunger and obesity are simultaneously rising among people living in poverty in several developing countries. The problems have been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, creating even greater obstacles to achieving zero hunger (SDG 2) and good health and well-being (SDG 3). Addressing hunger, food security, and nutrition — and acting on climate change — are key to eliminating poverty (SDG 1) globally.

Contemporary food systems contribute to the concurrent problems of hunger, ill health linked to diet, food insecurity, threats from new diseases, and antimicrobial resistance. They need to be overhauled to better contribute to human health and nutrition. Food systems must also be transformed to address climate change because they account for 21 to 37% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions.³ Food systems include all actors involved in the production of food — from farmers, processors, and distributors through to consumers — as well as the actors' social, economic, and ecological circumstances. The impacts of unhealthy and unsustainable food systems are borne disproportionately by poor households in developing countries — in particular, the women and girls in those households. The effects this has on women's and girls' health, economic opportunities, and resilience holds back progress on SDG 5: Gender Equality.

Globally, accelerated action on climate change is needed to avoid catastrophic impacts and to adhere to the Paris Agreement limit of 2°C in global warming. Although developing countries contribute only a small

portion to greenhouse gas emissions today, they experience consequences disproportionately. Even lower-income countries have opportunities to improve their food security, diets, and resilience to climate change by reducing waste, improving soil fertility and carbon sequestration, and improving food production while they reduce their dependency on fossil-fuel intensive inputs. Climate change is also altering which crops thrive where and affecting the nutritional content of some food crops. Therefore, research led in developing regions can produce innovative solutions to support resilient and responsible food consumption and production (SDG 12).

Opportunities exist to transform food systems so they become more sustainable and inclusive, and so they support healthy diets and improve community resilience. One opportunity is to focus on livestock. Another is to scale innovation among small-holder crop farming and along value chains — particularly as they pertain to highly nutritious food crops such as pulses, fruits and vegetables, and traditional grains, which are grown largely by women and are a key source of income and resilience for them.

Livestock is the most significant non-land asset for rural households. It is a key source of dietary protein and a crucial aspect of women farmers' work, livelihood, and resilience to economic shocks. Yet livestock losses are high due to low productivity and disease, which results in significant waste. Furthermore, unsustainable interactions between people, livestock, and the environment can introduce health risks into food systems, such as antimicrobial resistance or new diseases. Research (known as One Health) that addresses human and animal health, as well as the environmental, societal, and economic drivers of health, is needed to improve livestock productivity and sustainability, and reduce zoonotic and pandemic threats.

Small-holder farmers and small- and medium-sized agri-food businesses need equitable access to innovations and technologies, finance, and other inputs, as well as strong value chains, to improve sustainability and resilience. These businesses also need a supportive policy environment where the civil society, public, and private sectors work together to promote equity and inclusion, and scale innovation. Together, these efforts can help reverse negative SDG trends, improve food systems, and foster better community resilience and healthy diets, while also contributing to a more inclusive and sustainable world.

Our contribution

IDRC will invest in knowledge, innovation, and solutions for equitable, sustainable, and diverse food systems. The overarching goal is to build the resilience of communities most vulnerable to climate change and to the emerging health threats that arise from food systems.

We will focus our research in Sub-Saharan African, Asian, and Latin American climate-impact hot spots where climate impacts are greatest for vulnerable populations. For example, our work in livestock vaccines focuses on neglected diseases that affect small holders in the semi-arid zones and wet tropics of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Our food system transformation efforts focus on Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean, where agriculture and food policies can be amended and leveraged together to bring about changes in diet and create nutritional improvements and more sustainable food systems.

Through our programming, we will:

- Support research and innovation to build community resilience to climate change through improved food systems. These innovations will promote equitable access to nutritious and healthy diets, and improve value chains for nutritious crops and livestock in climate-impact hot spots.
- Improve the sustainability and productivity of food systems by investing in research on animal health technologies such as vaccines and alternatives to antimicrobials, and deploy these technologies at scale in partnership with private and public sector partners. Complementary One Health research will reduce the threat of animal and human disease arising and spreading in food systems.
- Make food systems more inclusive through multi-stakeholder research that addresses social and gender inequalities and improves resilience, sustainability, and nutrition.
- Engage the private and public sectors to equitably scale innovations that improve climate resilience and environmental sustainability. These innovations will increase the resilience of vulnerable consumers and farmers in climate hot spots and help developing nations adapt to climate change, while also contributing to sustainable food systems.

GLOBAL HEALTH

Our desired development outcome

Through better-prepared health systems, vulnerable populations in countries at greatest risk are better protected from local epidemics and pandemic threats. Women and adolescent girls, including refugees and displaced populations, have improved sexual, reproductive, and maternal health.

Contribution to SDGs



The need

The COVID-19 global pandemic is of a scope and impact not experienced in a century. It has strained health systems and reshaped public health priorities and the economic positions of nations. Its impacts may have undone years of progress toward SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being and SDG 5: Gender Equality.

The pandemic arose at a time when our gains in health indicators were already at risk due to the compounding stressors of accelerating climate change, mass displacement, and, for vulnerable women and girls, worsening health inequalities. Health systems in developing regions were already struggling to deliver, and their recovery from the impacts of the pandemic will be slow and challenging.

Public health systems in developing regions struggle to be prepared for and respond to epidemics, and to meet the needs of vulnerable women and girls. This is due to a lack of enabling policies, resources, and talent, as well as persistent structural and systemic inequalities. Public health systems often lack the capacity to prepare, detect, and manage the surges associated with emergent epidemic diseases like COVID-19 while also maintaining basic health services such as for maternal, child, and reproductive health. Research, data, and evidence are essential to bring about innovations for more responsive, resilient, equitable, and inclusive health systems that deliver improved health outcomes for vulnerable populations and that reduce epidemic threats.



IDRC supports research to bolster the supply and demand of pulses, fruits, and vegetables so communities living in the developing world access healthy, sustainable diets, generating income opportunities for women smallholder farmers.

A strong need exists to strengthen the integration of health research and public health systems to enhance epidemic response. Locally led research, combining the strengths of One Health and other health systems approaches, strengthens the understanding of new epidemic threats and better control known ones in developing regions.

The longer-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are unknown, and what little is known is primarily based on research led from high-income countries. More local and national knowledge is needed on these key issues in most developing countries.

In lower-income countries, the health of women and girls, including their sexual, reproductive, and maternal health, is lagging relative to other health indicators. Average maternal deaths are well off pace to meet the target in SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being.⁴ Much has been achieved since the Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Muskoka Initiative was launched following the 36th G8 summit hosted by Canada in 2010. This includes progress on facility-based maternal delivery in low- and middle-income countries and associated reductions in maternal and neonatal mortality.

But other aspects of women's health throughout their lives continue to lag behind — in particular, access to contraception, safe abortion and post-abortion care, sexual and maternal health education, and therapeutics from teen years to menopause and beyond.⁵ Child marriage and teen pregnancy remain high in many developing countries. About 12 million adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 give birth every year — most in low- and middle-income countries, which holds back progress on SDG 5: Gender Equality.⁶

Poverty, inequalities, lack of education, and inadequate access to health services perpetuate health disparities in developing regions. Many efforts to address these disparities focus on improving access and education. But solutions that transform the underlying structural inequalities and discriminatory norms are harder to achieve. Given that progress toward the SDG targets for maternal mortality, early child marriage, and reproductive health is lagging while COVID-19 takes centre stage, there is an urgent need to scale further innovation and solutions.

To strengthen health systems so they can respond to such priorities, we must generate new evidence for how to effectively implement strategies and rigorously evaluate governance, financial, and delivery

arrangements within those health systems.⁷ There is a need to strengthen the participation and voices of women, adolescent girls, and vulnerable groups in research and policy-making so policies will better meet their needs. Africa, with the biggest disease burden, has substantial gaps in health research infrastructure and talent.⁸ This presents an opportunity to foster and strengthen an emerging health research community focused on women and adolescents.

Our contribution

IDRC will focus on generating the data, research, and innovation needed to strengthen health systems toward more equitable epidemic preparedness and response, better maternal and child health, and improved sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls.

Not only are these issues central to the achievement of SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being and SDG 5: Gender Equality, but they also underpin the success of other SDGs. We must also tackle gender and other inequalities (SDGs 5 and 10) and the impacts of climate change (SDG 13) to strengthen health systems so they can meet the health needs of vulnerable women and girls and reduce epidemic threats.

IDRC's networks for strengthening health systems and community responses to epidemics are strongest in Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and parts of Latin America and the Caribbean — regions at risk for new disease emergence. Our work on sexual, reproductive, maternal, and child health is most strongly anchored in Sub-Saharan Africa. We will continue to work on improving sexual and reproductive services among displaced populations in the Middle-East, North Africa, and Latin America, where forced displacement has risen sharply.

Through our programming, we will:

- Build on past efforts to strengthen regional research and research-to-policy networks on emerging diseases in regions facing high risk. This will improve the evidence base and decision-making in national and regional health systems for epidemic preparedness and response.
- Strengthen gender and inclusion considerations in epidemic preparedness and response so that women and marginalized groups are not left behind.

- Build on our track record of implementation research in maternal and child health, scaling health service innovations, and expanding this work to improve the full range of women's sexual and reproductive health, including among displaced and refugee groups.
- Support ministries of health and other stakeholders so they can access data, innovation, research, and evidence to develop and integrate a gender-transformative approach in maternal, child, and sexual and reproductive health services.
- Create local, national, and regional databases that promote progressive norms and non-discriminatory practices in health. Such data will improve epidemic preparedness and response, protect the most vulnerable, and ensure they have access to essential health services.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Our desired development outcome

Children and youth from vulnerable populations are in school and benefit from high-quality education. Women emerge as leaders in strong science systems that produce knowledge and innovation to improve people's lives.

Contribution to SDGs



The need

Strong education and science, technology, and innovation systems are foundational to sustainable and inclusive development and achieving the SDGs.⁹ Even in countries with high-quality primary and secondary education, we find that stronger, more equitable tertiary education, cutting-edge skills development, and science and innovation are missing as drivers of the economic and societal transformations needed to address local and global challenges.^{10, 11}

As captured in SDG 4: Quality Education, education is a human right and a key driver in reducing poverty and achieving gender equality. Unfortunately, insufficient

progress is being made, with low proficiency rates in reading and mathematics, particularly for girls. This signals a global learning crisis and holds back progress on SDG 5: Gender Equality.¹²

Some of the most urgent education needs for both girls and boys exist in fragile and conflict-affected areas and among forcibly displaced populations. Gender equality in education benefits every child and has transformative effects in societies and economies. In countries where most girls complete secondary education, women earn higher incomes, economies grow, child marriage declines, and maternal and child survival and health improve.

According to UNICEF, prior to COVID-19, 66% of countries had achieved gender parity in primary education, and only 25% at the upper secondary level.¹³ Even among children who are in school, there is a serious learning crisis: more than half of children in low- and middle-income countries are not achieving basic proficiency in reading and math.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this education crisis. UNICEF concluded that more than half the world's children — over 1 billion — are at risk of falling behind due to pandemic-related school closures. While digital online tools are being used by governments to deliver education remotely, these cannot reach more than a quarter of school children worldwide due to their lack of internet access.¹⁴

Many developing countries have established national science councils and introduced science and innovation policies. Yet the developing world's public investments in scientific research and innovation remain significantly below the global average.¹⁵ Private sector investment in research and development remains very low in lower-income countries. Scientists working in these countries face entrenched barriers to accessing the quality training, research, funding, and infrastructure available to their peers elsewhere. All countries need their own national innovation capacity to contribute solutions locally and globally, and to achieve key components of SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, which are to build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.

While the proportion of women in tertiary education is growing, women lag behind in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.¹⁶ The leaky

pipeline for women in STEM reflects structural barriers arising from discriminatory norms, institutions, and practices.^{17,18} A lack of female scientists in leadership positions deprives countries of a significant body of ideas that, if tapped, could contribute to great advances in innovation and to more gender-inclusive science and policies. More inclusive science would inspire future generations and help remove the gender inequalities that pose barriers to achieving SDG 5: Gender Equality.

Our contribution

IDRC will invest in knowledge, innovation, and solutions to enhance the quality of education and increase access in developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. We will champion gender equality by helping to create environments that enable girls and women to learn at all education levels and be leaders and innovators. Throughout, a systems approach will guide our work to build skills so that educational and other programs produce highly qualified teachers, professors, researchers, and leaders.

Building on our investments in open science, open data, and artificial intelligence, we will support researchers and research organizations by investing in national science granting councils and innovation agencies.

Through our programming, we will:

- Test and scale innovations to improve access to and quality of education, particularly for girls and marginalized groups, beginning with kindergarten to grade 10.
- Build on our collaboration with the Global Partnership for Education to address the priorities of policy-makers in developing countries, and create lasting impact at scale in national public education systems.
- Strengthen the capacity of science and innovation systems and actors in funding, managing, and utilizing research for development tailored to national and regional priorities, beginning with science-granting councils.
- Support research on ways to enable and scale innovation, and engage private sector actors to mobilize research, build skills, and innovate for the public good.

DEMOCRATIC AND INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE

Our desired development outcome

Vulnerable people and communities benefit from more inclusive, accountable, and transparent governance. They are better able to shape the policies and practices that affect their lives by exercising their democratic rights and freedoms, including in contexts of democratic transition and displacement.

Contribution to SDGs



The need

Good governance — the rule of law, access to justice, effective and accountable institutions, and participatory and representative decision-making — is the linchpin for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions is not only a goal in and of itself; it is also foundational to the achievement of economic, social, environmental, and peace and security objectives.

Good governance is inclusive and democratic.

Governance is inclusive when it effectively serves and engages all people, and when institutions, policies, processes, and services are accessible and accountable. It is democratic when it has free and fair elections, promotes popular control over and participation in decision-making, and promotes equality and basic freedoms. Achievement of SDG 5: Gender Equality and SDG 10: Reduced Inequality depends upon just, accountable, and inclusive governance institutions, and simultaneously is a precondition for achievement of SDG 16.

However, after years of improvements in democratic governance worldwide, recent years have seen a reversal of some hard-fought gains. Many countries and communities have been challenged by the erosion of the rule of law and human rights, and by the closing of civic spaces where people can express their dissatisfaction and demand redress. New technologies and digital data are creating new opportunities for civic engagement and offer powerful new tools for governments to be open and transparent, but they can also pose threats to democracy and inclusion. Misinformation can proliferate online and states can intrude in digital civic spaces, often consciously distorting information.

Regulatory frameworks have not kept up with digital technologies globally. Data and evidence are needed to support sound, just policies that leverage technologies to build resilient democracies and prevent the negative and destabilizing aspects of such technologies.

New approaches are needed. On one hand, there is a need for data, evidence, and policy innovations to help governments be more accountable and transparent in their decision-making and to deliver services in an effective and non-discriminatory manner. On the other hand, there is a need for evidence-based social innovations that equip citizens with the ability to hold governments to account, mobilize civic action, and enhance citizens' agency and voice. Policies, tools, and technologies (including digital ones) are needed that foster safe and inclusive civic spaces so people can seek accountability and resolve differences in a peaceful and democratic manner.

Our contribution

Democratisation, civic action, and institution building are inherently national and local processes that can be supported, but not imported, from abroad. The approach IDRC uses in all of its work — to directly support and enable research by developing-country researchers — has allowed the Centre to work effectively on governance and democracy support for many years.

To help advance more democratic and inclusive governance, IDRC will support data, research evidence, and policy innovations that enable greater inclusion, accountability, and transparency by institutions, states, and non-state actors. IDRC research will also support innovations that empower communities — notably women and marginalized groups — to access their rights, and engage with state and other actors to hold them to account.

Our investments in knowledge, innovation, and solutions will target governance in countries that are at a critical democratic juncture — including countries that have committed to improving democratically but where progress is fragile — and in contexts struggling to maintain gains in democratic and inclusive governance. With a focused approach, sometimes in a single country, we will work in contexts where we can reasonably assume that the data and evidence will be used for better governance decision-making, and where there is room to build civic space for people to engage in democratic processes or call for accountability. This will include the digital space.

Our support for global research will strengthen data and digital technology systems for democratic and inclusive governance, including open data and open government approaches. This will contribute to greater inclusion and equality in the digital sphere and in the delivery of government services for women and marginalized groups across developing regions. In specific contexts in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia we will support research that improves governance not only for people forced to migrate, but also for the migrants' host communities. In so doing, the program will strengthen how governments use data, evidence, and research to support inclusive decision-making — a key pre-condition for achieving inclusive and democratic governance.

Through our programming, we will:

- Strengthen knowledge systems and communities of researchers, and innovations that promote inclusive and democratic governance.
- Create enhanced data systems that provide essential information for key development challenges, that include all vulnerable groups, and that are open and promote democratic processes.
- Support digital innovations and data governance that improve the transparency and accountability of state and private actors. These innovations will also address online harm, discrimination, and threats to inclusive digital civic spaces.
- Establish a network of engaged practitioners who are using the data, and work with them to make sure our research priorities improve access to justice and civic engagement.

SUSTAINABLE INCLUSIVE ECONOMIES

Our desired development outcome

People in developing countries benefit from more sustainable, equitable, and inclusive economies with expanded, lasting, and high-quality economic opportunities for women and youth.

Contribution to SDGs





IDRC fosters safe and inclusive civic spaces so people, particularly women and marginalized groups, can exercise their rights and resolve differences in a peaceful and democratic manner.

The need

The concept of sustainable development — development that is socially and economically inclusive and environmentally sustainable — has been with us for decades, but solutions have been elusive. Many advanced and developing countries have achieved impressive economic growth in recent decades, but the benefits have frequently not been broadly shared. Many citizens are being left behind, and growth itself is increasingly constrained by environmental, demographic, and socioeconomic factors. Growth continues to come at the expense of the environment, with rising greenhouse gas emissions, air and water pollution, and declining biodiversity. Current economic growth patterns are driving a global climate crisis.

The SDGs are premised on development pathways that are inclusive and sustainable. They call for innovation and transformation in development models so we can deliver inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (SDGs 8 and 9). Such progress is essential to better address poverty (SDG 1), gender (SDG 5), and other inequalities (SDG 10), and accelerate action on climate change (SDG 13).

Although strong economic growth in some countries has caused income inequality to decline globally, disparities among and within countries remain large. In some countries, income inequalities have grown in association with disparities in housing, work, energy, connectivity, health care, and education, among other things.¹⁹ Women are denied opportunities due to discrimination in labour markets, deep-rooted social norms, and unequal responsibilities for unpaid care. Young workers are disadvantaged in accessing decent jobs and earnings. Technological change has created new economic opportunities, but also new barriers, such as those created by automation.

Economic growth driven by the abundant use of fossil fuels has led to a global climate crisis. This could have significant negative impacts on economies — for example, the equivalent of a 2 to 4% annual loss in GDP in Africa by 2040.²⁰ While the poorest countries contribute least to climate change, they suffer large social and economic costs, and poor people in these countries are particularly impacted.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated the many impacts that inequality has on women, young people, and other marginalized groups. The World Bank estimates that more than 100 million people are likely to be pushed into poverty due to the pandemic.²¹

Evidence and innovations are critical ingredients to a sustainable way forward. Research must focus on the root causes of persistent inequalities, on promoting gender equality, and on building more sustainable growth patterns. Research of this kind requires innovative approaches to economic analysis, policy instruments, and financial and private sector models that address both inequality and climate change. An opportunity exists to explore job creation for women and youth in new sectors of the green economy that contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. But such an exploration requires evidence on how technological change affects employment opportunities in lower-income countries.²² Close attention must be paid to the large informal economy, where strongly gendered patterns of paid and unpaid work are common, and to contexts where youth unemployment and under-employment are high.

Our contribution

This program will help strengthen developing countries' capacity to integrate environmental sustainability and social inclusion into economic decision-making. It will also test and scale innovations that promote the ability of women and youth to move into emerging green job opportunities in decarbonizing economies. The long-term transition to a low carbon economy is a key strategy for sustainable development. IDRC will build the evidence base that supports a private sector "triple win" agenda to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, foster economic growth, and promote gender equality and inclusion.

Through our programming, we will:

- Strengthen the capacity of key policy actors in developing countries to integrate environmental sustainability, climate action, gender equality, and inclusion into economic decision-making. Researchers from developing regions will guide this shift, building on commitments to the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.
- Test and scale policy, program, and private sector innovations to promote decent jobs for marginalized women and youth in sectors aligned with a transition to a low carbon economy. These innovations will promote a "triple win".
- Further test and scale practical solutions in the public and private sectors to advance women's economic opportunities. We will focus on helping them recover from the pandemic-induced economic recession, and on addressing deep-rooted gender barriers such as social norms and the unequal burden for unpaid work.

OUR ORGANIZATION

To be a high-performing organization and deliver on our ambitious Strategy 2030, we will align our business operations with our vision, while enhancing our internal skills, expertise, and systems. We will strengthen IDRC's reputation as an inclusive and innovative employer by attracting top talent and continuing to ensure the organization's financial sustainability.

A sustainable and inclusive organization

IDRC will make sustainable choices, including reducing our environmental footprint. We will also build on our commitment to promote equity in our workplace, redoubling our efforts to achieve a working environment that is diverse and inclusive.

A focus on people and talent

More than anything, IDRC's success relies on employing a workforce that is committed, innovative, and engaged. As we look to the future, we will continue to nurture a healthy and effective workplace that fosters employee health and well-being — and one that provides employees with opportunities to build the expertise, skills, and capacities they need to excel.

Recognizing the new areas of work we will undertake, we will build new capacities and expertise in areas such as knowledge translation, partnerships, and engaging with the private sector. More than that, we will nurture a committed and engaged workforce that is focused not only on learning, but also on using evidence to test and challenge assumptions. Our commitment to excellence and continual improvement will ensure we have the skills and experience to deliver on Strategy 2030.

Taking advantage of the unique positioning of our regional offices, we will maximize the use of our networks in developing countries to build capacity and achieve greater impact.

An organization that is fit for purpose

To strengthen our performance and improve our efficiency, we will innovate our ways of working, and will look to further automate business processes and leverage systems, data, and technologies, while proactively managing risk.

Simultaneously, we will modernize and reduce the administrative burden for employees and grantees by leveraging technologies. This will require innovation to

ensure excellence in our grant administration and financial systems, as well as excellence in our operations.

We will hold ourselves accountable through a monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework. Relying on robust data and information, we will monitor and evaluate our performance in a way that demonstrates the results we achieve and that also demonstrates where we need to improve. As a learning organization, we will continuously strengthen the Centre's performance to maximize the results and impact of our work.

OUR IMPACT

The coming years will be critical for achieving the SDGs while addressing climate change and inequality. To this end, research and innovation will play a central role in building more sustainable, prosperous, and inclusive societies.

IDRC was created with the conviction that research and knowledge could transform lives. Over the next 10 years, by engaging with policy-makers, IDRC will help ensure that research informs and shapes national and regional policies. We will scale up and increase the impact of proven technological and social innovations. We will support strong scientific capacities and robust systems for science and innovation by working directly with grantees in developing countries who will drive the research and solutions that best respond to their communities' demonstrated needs.

Through Strategy 2030, we will expand our reach so that the knowledge and innovation we generate goes much further. This strategy's enhanced focus on knowledge sharing will enable the Centre and our grantees to use research findings more easily and widely. By applying research and increasing the influence it has in forums and policies, and with partners, we can greatly multiply its impact.

The results of our work will support individuals and communities to be more resilient to climate change and emerging diseases, and to access nutritious and healthy diets, quality education, accountable governance, and sustainable and inclusive economic opportunities.

As we look to 2030, the urgency and importance has never been greater to ensure developing countries have the means to move solutions into action. Through IDRC, Canada will make a significant impact by delivering and amplifying evidence-based, innovative solutions to major global development challenges. ■

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