

MISSION STATEMENT

The IDRC Alumni provides opportunities for former IDRC employees to maintain personal and professional links, and supports continuing dialogue on development issues.

In this issue:

- ✍ A great leap forward
- ✍ Where are they now
- ✍ Regional Offices revisited
- ✍ Letter from the Prez

The *Alumni Newsletter*
Editor: Bob Stanley
Correspondent: Chris Smart

Contact:
Bob Stanley, 6853 Twin Lakes
Avenue, Greely, ON K4P 1P1
Email: stanleyb@rogers.com

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS:

YOUR IDRC ALUMNI TO DATE

The IDRC Alumni first convened in 2003. It is time to take stock. Your executive wants to hear what you -- the members -- think about the IDRC Alumni to date. That's why we are inviting you to complete a survey questionnaire.

There are two ways to complete and return the questionnaire:

On the Internet, use this link:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm= 2fV_2bckwdnRFXLaHPj_2fSJ2mA_3d_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=2fV_2bckwdnRFXLaHPj_2fSJ2mA_3d_3d)

to go to the version posted on Survey Monkey.

OR

Use the MS Word (RTF) version appended to this Newsletter and return it as an email attachment to Chris Smart at csmart@ca.inter.net or print it and mail a hard copy to Chris at 75 Kenilworth Street, Ottawa, ON. K1Y 3Y6.

If you have problems do not hesitate to get in touch by email at csmart@ca.inter.net, or at (613) 729-9276.

We look forward to reporting your assessment and suggestions in the next issue of this Newsletter.

Chris Smart

We like to hear from our members...

...so drop us a line. Let us know what you're doing, where you've been.

Got a new job?

Moved to another country?

Just back from another country?

Our members like to hear news of their former colleagues — people consistently tell me that they turn to the “Where are they now?” feature first when they receive their newsletter. It's a great way to stay in touch.

So don't be shy. Whether you send me a few paragraphs like John, or a detailed article like Paul, I'll be happy to publish it. And if you can send a picture as well, so much the better. By email or snail mail will be fine... the addresses are at left.

Look forward to hearing from you.



David Malone

“Export embargoes and increased export taxes ... create distortions worldwide and undermine access for the poorest countries and consumers.”

Agriculture needs a great leap forward

The following article by **IDRC President, David Malone**, originally appeared in *The Globe & Mail*.

Many people, particularly in the world's poorest regions, were gripped by food shortages and price spikes in 2007 and 2008. There were many reasons for this: Global grain stocks had been dropping for years; prices of some commodities (such as rice) had been rising; global demographics had increased pressure on both stocks and prices; and economic success in much of the developing world, including China and India, was altering eating habits. The stampede into biofuels to supplement international oil reserves also handicapped food production.

Food - and oil - prices subsided late in 2008. The temptation now is to forget all about earlier developments. But this would be deeply unwise.

Canada is closely associated with agriculture internationally, having contributed over many decades to significant research that supports agricultural productivity growth worldwide. So, looking ahead, what should we be worrying about?

We have all the basic food we need, and we export a good deal, too. Other rich countries will always be able to amass whatever food supplies they need by outbidding poorer countries on international markets. Thus, we need to focus on poor consumers in poor countries.

Alex McCalla of the University of California at Davis scans global agriculture and food production for trends. These are not reassuring. Demand-side factors exerting pressure on stocks and (eventually) prices include: (a) rapid growth and rising incomes in developing countries (China and India together account for 32 per cent of the share of growth in grain consumption from 2005 to 2008); (b) recent enthusiasm for biofuels; and (c) urbanization and globally rising incomes, which increase demand and changes the mix of food people can afford.

Supply-side constraints include: (a) slower agricultural productivity growth and increased competition for land and water; (b) petroleum costs that affect agricultural costs of production; (c) global stocks at their lowest levels since the early 1970s, as global consumption increased much faster than global production; (d) population growth; and (e) fertilizer costs that tripled in 2007 alone.

What's to be done?

Decreased investment in agricultural research and global development over the past two decades can be reversed. Bad policies can be stopped: Export embargoes and increased export taxes reassure in the short term but create distortions worldwide and undermine access for the poorest countries and consumers.

Water management techniques and policies are in their infancy in much of the world, and this needs to change. And the reality of climate change is not yet fully acknowledged in the policies of many countries.

Different approaches to agricultural development hold clues. Take the diverging paths of India and China. India's key economic reforms of the early 1990s centred on liberalization favouring the manufacturing and services sectors. These were tremendously successful, but little was done for agriculture. China, on the other hand, started its key reforms earlier and focused first on agriculture.

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“India was once at the apex of international achievement in agricultural innovation.... But then, as so often after success, attention and focus faded.”

Where are they now?

Continued...

China's approach was counterintuitive, initially bottom-up rather than top-down. In the late 1970s, after Maoist excesses led to an economic dead end, Deng Xiaoping sought to raise agricultural production by encouraging multiple experiments at the local level, "learning by doing." Only after it was clear what worked did Beijing launch a reform process that succeeded dramatically in raising production and reducing rural poverty.

India was once at the apex of international achievement in agricultural innovation. Drawing on a variety of international grain types, pioneers of high-yielding hybrid seeds were able to achieve a "green revolution" in the 1960s and 70s, boosting agricultural productivity and making the country self-sufficient in its main food requirements for the first time in modern history. Scientific innovation was supported by energetic government policy. But then, as so often after success, attention and focus faded.

Is India facing a long-term challenge in agriculture and a serious threat to its food security? Yes, but there is no reason for panic. India remains capable of meeting its main needs. It is the combination of its demographics with the growing success of its economy and environmental stress that demand attention: Increasingly prosperous Indians will be eating more (and probably wasting more, as do middle classes everywhere).

But the country has been prudent on another front: Rural India may be better equipped to absorb shocks than its highly privatized Chinese counterpart because of the range of its anti-poverty programs. China, flush with its market reforms, may not have been sufficiently attentive to the need for such social programs.

Fulfilling developing countries' agricultural potential will require sound government policies, determined implementation and greater attention to more sustainable growth of farm produce. Industrialized countries should intensify efforts to support innovation in nutrition and to achieve greater agricultural productivity at home and abroad. With its fine universities and demonstrated excellence in agricultural research, Canada is exceptionally well placed to do so.

Prior to taking up his appointment as President of IDRC, David Malone was Canada's Ambassador to India.

Sheldon Shaeffer writes:

I retired as Director of UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau in Bangkok on December 31 and will continue to live part-time in Thailand and part-time in Laos where my husband (Sounivanh Phimlavone) and I run a coffee shop on the banks of the Mekong River. Come and visit!

I'll probably keep my hand in things educational in the future. I am sitting on an Advisory Committee for an ActionAid (UK) project on the right to education, and was recently elected President of the Executive Board of the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, founded 25 years ago with strong IDRC support.

- My new email address: s_shaeffer@hotmail.com

- My phone number +66-81-922-0369.

Our tireless correspondent Chris Smart has been reminiscing recently about his visits to IDRC's regional offices over the years. That inspired him to dig into the history of some of those buildings and pen a series of articles on the ROs.



"...you might say that IDRC's office rent is helping to conserve a small piece of Raffles-Singapore."

ASRO? WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN

AMONG MY INTRODUCTIONS TO ASIA was a stay in Singapore in 1968. It was wonderful -- not hard to connect with Raffles, the short stories of Somerset Maugham and Sarawak's White Raja Brook as one took in the mix of Chinese shophouses and staid colonial buildings.

Returning on an IDRC trip in 1984 I had to come to terms with a Manhattan of the tropics with the thoughts of Peter Drucker and Tom Peters making the running. Colonial buildings were dwarfed by skyscrapers and the shophouses leveled by impatient development. IDRC was in the RELC building at the time, a modest enough tower but definitely in keeping with the ethos of the time.

Fast forward to today and a request to friends in ASRO for a picture of the office to dress up the Alumni Website. And to a pleasant surprise which I share with you in the delightful photo of ASRO's current premises. Vivien Chiam took the pictures and when I expressed surprise and delight with them sent the following details.



"The building we're in originated in 1917, but it has been refurbished under the national Conservation Plan. IDRC occupies space across the second storey of a row of eight shophouses strung together. It is indeed quite lovely, our office floors are uncarpeted, old teak wood."

So you might say that IDRC's office rent is helping to conserve a small piece of Raffles-Singapore. Vivien also reports that "Chinatown still retains a lot of nostalgia - the sights and smells of medicinal and provision shops are still prevalent, but many of the refurbished shophouses have now been turned into upmarket office space for designer and consultant firms. It is still the only Chinatown in the world, to my knowledge, which has a mosque, Chinese temple and Hindu temple all on the same street -- a true testimony to Singapore's multiculturalism!" Vivien invites us to read more about ASRO at http://www.travel.com.sg/publish/stbportal/en/home/what_to_see/ethnic_quarters/chinatown.html

Well done IDRC to have found a wonderful mix of past and present to work on the future.

SARO ? PICTURE PERFECT!

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. So here are three thousand words to stir memories...



This is number 11 Jor Bagh, where IDRC had its offices from 1983 to 1994. No word on what it became after IDRC moved out, other than being a private property.

“It’s interesting that all the offices have been within Jor Bagh ... Cost considerations aside, my personal take on that is its proximity to the Indian International Centre.”



This is number 17 Jor Bagh, which SARO occupied from 1994-1999. After IDRC left it was a ‘play school’. Some might say that was a fitting continuity of use! It looks rather neglected now, a victim of the rising cost of residential property in Delhi.

Continued...



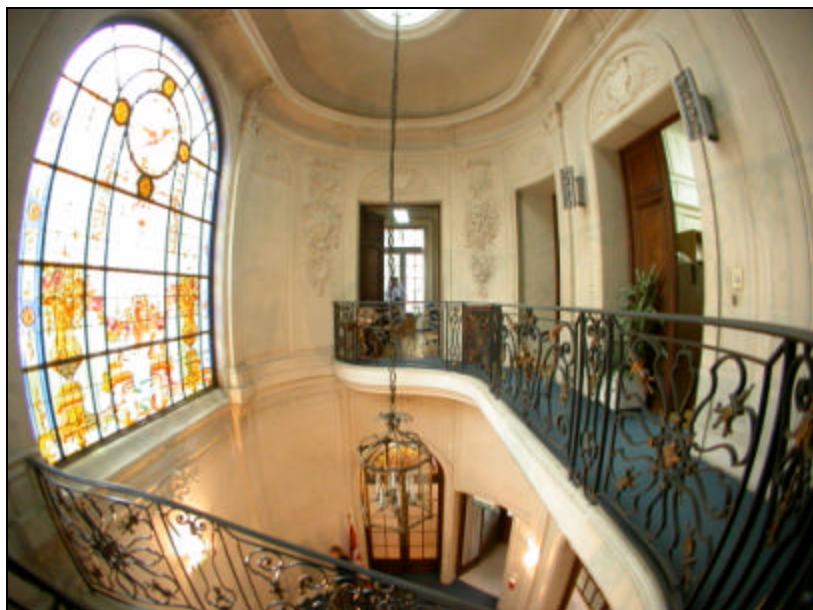
Finally, number 208 Jor Bagh, SARO's home since 1999. Very nice premises!

It's interesting that all the offices have been within Jor Bagh ? an "upmarket" area in South Delhi. Cost considerations aside, my personal take on that is its proximity to the Indian International Centre. A fond memory is a restful night in the hard comfort of the IIC (for US 10!) and its full English breakfast with echoes of the Raj in the choice of marmalades and teas, and a 15- minute stroll through the Lodhi Gardens in the chill of a Delhi December morning to arrive at SARO ready for the day at 'play school'.

LACRO ? FROM BARONE'S HOUSE TO BURONE'S OFFICE

If the pictures of SARO are worth a thousand words, these from LACRO replace whole books. A quick look at IDRC digs in Bogotá and Montevideo will spur memory but pictures of the offices LACRO currently occupies will invoke awe. What a great place to work, I hear you say!

"Pictures of the offices LACRO currently occupies will invoke awe. What a great place to work, I hear you say!"



“From 1946 to 1947 the house was used as a presidential residence.”

The building where LACRO premises are located was built at the beginning of the twentieth century. Construction took four years, between 1919 and 1923. The Barone family -- a wealthy and well-known Argentinean family in the textile trade -- requested the construction of the villa near the sea, where the family spent their summer holidays from December to March every year.



The residence was constructed by architect Arrarte Borda and decorated by a French interior designer. Carrara marble fireplaces, French vitreaux, walls with plenty of ornamental decoration, murano crystal lamps, intricate wood flooring, and a lot of bars built in iron and brass were used, following the typical Louis XVI style.

Years later, the descendants of Ms. Carmen Barone sold the house to Mr. Grompone, a Uruguayan businessmen who was a close friend of former Uruguayan President, Tomas Berreta. From 1946 to 1947 the house was used as a presidential residence. Then in 1953 it was sold to José Pedro Cibils, a plastic surgeon, who used the house as both his residence and as a clinic.

In October 1995 the house was declared a building of Municipal Interest by Montevideo's City Council. IDRC's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean moved to this building in 2001.

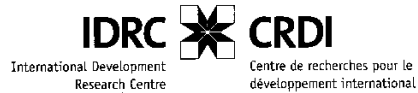
More RO reviews from Chris in your September Newsletter.

Alumni, if your travels for work or pleasure put you within reach of an IDRC Regional Office why not drop in to renew old and make new collegial acquaintances. And then drop us a note on the visit for the Newsletter? Chris Smart

And while we're on the subject of renewing old acquaintances...

...why not drop us a line by email or snail mail to let us know where you are and what you're doing these days. Include a picture if you can. We'll publish your news in the "Where are they now" feature. It's a great way to stay in touch with former colleagues, and staying in touch is what this Newsletter is all about. The address is right there on the front page. BobS

From the mailbag...



DAVID M. MALONE
President / Président

January 9, 2009

Mr. James Pfeifer
Chair
IDRC Alumni Association Executive
c/o 11 Centre Park Drive
Gloucester, ON K1B 3C2

Dear Mr. Pfeifer:

On behalf of the entire Centre, I would like to extend my sincerest thanks for the donation of \$3000 from the IDRC Alumni to build capacity in Environmental Economics in the MENA region. It is a demonstration of the unique and valuable nature of the IDRC Alumni Association to take such an interest in current programming, and to want to contribute financially towards it. We will ensure that the recipient of the grant is made aware of your contribution, and that any communications regarding the grant recognize your part. The relevance of the theme you have chosen will undoubtedly solicit a great deal of interest.

Since my arrival, I have greatly appreciated the close linkages that IDRC enjoys with its Alumni Association, and value the ongoing support that it provides to IDRC's mission and reputation. My colleagues and I look forward to continuing this collegial and collaborative relationship into the future.

Please accept my enthusiastic thanks, once again, for your generosity.

Yours sincerely,

David M. Malone

*We are: a) very impressed; and
b) tremendously grateful.*

HEAD OFFICE / SIÈGE: PO Box / CP 8500, Ottawa, ON, Canada K1G 3H9 (150 Kent Street / 150, rue Kent)
Phone / Tél.: 613-212-3559 Fax / Téléc.: 613-235-6391 Email / Courriel: dmalone@idrc.ca

WWW.IDRC.CA / WWW.CRDI.CA

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