



IDRC Alumni Bulletin-September 2011

Dear Alumni,

Your Executive is pleased to share the last 'stuff' from the least 'stuffy' people we know.

It's your 'stuff' so keep it coming.

In this issue:

- **The 2011 October Alumni Get-together**
- **Membership**
- **Alumni Research Award for 2011**
- **Alumni News**
- **Where are they now?**
 - **Don deSavigny**
- **The United Way through IDRC**

Many thanks to Michèle Wilson for translation.(Ed)

The 2011 October Alumni Get-together

Eight weeks and counting! The 2011 October get-together

The Alumni Seminar and Members' Reception is **Friday October 28 at IDRC HQ**. The invitation to Alumni Members will be sent out towards the end of September. Do remember to RSVP.

Members and non-members are welcome to attend.

Alumni Seminar

This year WARO is the RO being honoured. Nasir Faruqi, Director of the Science and Innovation programme, has accepted our invitation to speak about the work supported in Africa

Membership

"We're always anxious to identify potential members. If you remain in touch with former colleagues who you think might like to join the Alumni, please send their contact information to Rob Robertson, our Director of Recruitment, at:

robertsonre@hotmail.com" or Donna Bickford, Membership Secretary, at: d.bickford@hotmail.com

Alumni Research Award 2011-WARO

Details have been finalized with Katheryn Touré, RD WARO, and her staff for this year's Alumni Research Award to support younger researchers in the *Approche Ecosystème et santé humaine à travers le maraîchage à Cotonou*.

The market garden site has been worked for some 40 years. It is situated under the approach to the airport in the Centre of Cotonou where the land and the vegetables are polluted with exhaust from planes taking off and landing. The project will improve the health of the women and men of Cotonou connected with market gardening. Specifically the project will assess the degree of contamination of the soil, water and produce by pesticides and heavy metals, among other environmental pollutants. The Alumni will contribute \$2,000 and it will be matched with an equivalent amount from the WARO RAF.

Alumni New:

Where Are They Now?

Don deSavigny



Don deSavigny says the memory he treasures most about IDRC is the team spirit and commitment and passion for what the Centre does. That is no surprise, coming from a person who has embodied commitment and passion in his own work.

Fresh from a four year stint as Director of the Ifakara Health Centre in Central Tanzania, Don came to IDRC in 1987 to work in the early days of Ecohealth, eventually becoming its Principal Health Specialist. Among the accomplishments of that period he lists introducing the Geographic Health Information System for health and health research, setting up the Mapping Malaria Risk in Africa network, and proving the credibility of insecticide treated nets for malaria that have saved millions of lives.

Perhaps Don is best known as the research leader of one of the Centre's most successful projects, the Tanzania Essential Health Intervention Program. Based in East Africa from 1996 to 2003, he and his colleagues achieved exceptional results in reducing illness and mortality in the ground-breaking TEHIP project. He says a great deal of the credit goes to former Health Sciences Director Maureen Law who marshalled the outside financial and technical support that was needed. Don says the main lessons learned from TEHIP were the importance of decentralized planning and resource allocation which implies true ownership of the decisions at the local level, seeing global and local health evidence in real time, and connected, systems-wide interventions. He fondly remembers the Tanzanian Minister of Health, tears in her eyes at the end of TEHIP, saying it was the best project that her ministry ever did. Don laments the fact that since that time the world has moved toward the search for single disease solutions rather than a systems-wide approach.

With the end of TEHIP Don undertook a year's sabbatical at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the Swiss Tropical Institute to write the story of TEHIP called "Fixing Health Systems" and to work with Tanzanian PhD students. To this day he remains at STI leading the Health Systems Unit and extending TEHIP knowledge and tools to other African countries. He says one of the biggest challenges in international health is steering the unprecedented resources available for global health in the right direction. He feels that too often the targeted and narrow approaches that are in vogue fragment and weaken already fragile systems and frustrate long-term development for short term specific goals. Don is enthusiastic about the programming in IDRC's Governance Equity and Health Systems, believing the Centre is well-positioned to exploit new advances in ICT and systems thinking. Almost a quarter century after first arriving at IDRC, it's clear that Don's commitment and passion for the work remains undiminished.

Donate the United Way

IDRC Alumni members are invited again this year to contribute to the Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign (GCWCC) — formerly known as the United Way — through the IDRC employees' campaign.

You probably remember IDRC's strong participation in the annual drive for charitable organizations grouped under the United Way banner. The GCWCC campaign raises funds on behalf of two umbrella organisations: the United Way/Centraide and Healthpartners/Partenairesanté, which in turn provide funding to thousands of charities across Canada. The campaign also allows you to fund Canadian charities of your choice.

The 2011 campaign, *Impacting Communities, Changing Lives* will be launched on September 15th and will run until October 26th.

Alumni contributions are always highly appreciated. This year, if you are planning to contribute to the GCWCC, you can make your gift in such a way that it can be included as part of the IDRC campaign.

If you are receiving Canada Pension (CPP), you should by now have received an invitation to give to the campaign. Instead of returning it directly to the United Way office, you can send it to: Nathalie Houle, IDRC, PO Box 8500, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 3H9.

If you are not yet receiving your pension, and want to make a donation, you can contact Nathalie Houle (613-696-2449), or email nhoule@idrc.ca who will send you a Gift Form, which you can return with your donation. IDRC will forward all donations and forms to GCWCC and will add your donation to the total raised from current IDRC employees, helping the Centre to achieve its campaign objective.