

# Newsletter

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**IDRC Regional Office for South Asia and China (SARO)**



Dear Reader,

Advances in, and the rapid, mass adoption of technology, and innovations are allowing people to use information systems and networks in new and interesting ways. This is having impact in many domains, sectors, and industries.

Information systems and networks are transforming and enabling sharing at an unprecedented speed and scale. Sharing in digitally networked societies is founded on an ethos and mode of production and consumption very aptly expressed by [Richard M Stallman](#) with respect to free software, the sharing of code, and the freedoms to do so – and they are the freedom to:

- run the program, for any purpose (freedom 0);
- study how the program works, and change it so it does your computing as you wish (freedom 1) [access to the source code is a precondition for this.];
- redistribute copies so you can help your neighbour (freedom 2); and,
- distribute copies of your modified versions to others (freedom 3) [by doing this you can give the whole community a chance to benefit from your changes].

Exercising these freedoms, contributors shared in the collaboration of free and open software projects that, in a recursive manner, resulted in tools for greater collaboration, and networked-enabled sharing. This, and the adherence to open standards ([TCP/IP](#), [HTML](#), and [SMTP](#) come to mind), resulted in an expansion of the Internet architecture in many directions, and resulted in innovations from the edges that could be and were shared globally ([ICQ](#), [Linux](#), and [Skype](#), are examples). The Internet works, is possible, and is valuable because it is open at its core to enable sharing – it is a meta-network for sharing, for building on top of.

Networked sharing is paramount to economies. Google and Facebook are heavyweights in the “for-free” business of creating value out of sharing: there is little we need to say about how integral these two giants are to the global, networked economy. Networked sharing, enabled by private and public provision alike, is contentious because it is not so clear at

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multiple levels and jurisdictions that what is shared, in terms of personal data, is property; and, it is unclear as to who has what rights over that ‘property’, and whether they should be identified in the sharing of that “property.” It is no surprise that the [Internet Governance Forum](#) – a place for private, public and civil society stakeholders to deliberate – is focused on protecting consumer and privacy rights. In India, most recently, the contentious has been over the sharing of potentially “offensive” material and whether the state and intermediaries (such as Facebook and Google) are within their rights to pre-screen and select what the networked individual consumer and citizen is able to share

Sharing is also contentious in another way. The focus on legislation and trans-national agreements – such as SOPA, ACTA, C-32 in Canada, copyright reform in India and Brazil – is evidence of the tension between the culture of sharing enabled and embedded in networked societies and existing market practices and legal standards. It is not the creative industries alone that are grappling with the incredible opportunities and challenges that networked sharing represents. In the education sector, access to knowledge can greatly be improved, and enhanced. However, publishers and holdings of educational resources maintain business models that do not take account or take advantage of new capacities and existing trends in access and for sharing.

Understanding how new models of sharing can be leveraged for better development outcomes and processes is what IDRC’s [Information and Networks program](#) is interested in. We have our hunches: generally, that sharing more, to more people, for more people, more openly, could yield interesting, if not, positive outcomes. Crowd-sourcing, for example, this notion that in certain cases, many people’s attention to an effort could result in quality collaboration, participation, and access, has been proven. Wikipedia – [questions about hegemony and actual power hierarchies acknowledged](#) – is an example of a global, crowd-sourced model in the spirit of free and open. And whether sharing has become more democratic and equitable is also of great import to the program. Stallman would no doubt remind us, “free as in freedom, not as in free beer,” real-world limitations still apply, degrees of access and sharing are functions of economics.

For more detail on how we see information systems and networks changing the way the world is able to share and the issues that have emerged through this and other transformations, please see the [Information and Network program](#) prospectus (2011-16).

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## Partner's Voice: Anshu Bharadwaj

Policy-making for the world's largest democracy poses a challenge for all involved, be it the government, society, industry, or academia. How should we plan our cities and towns to avoid the congestion and problems that we face today? How can the State and the citizens be adequately prepared to handle natural and man-made disasters? How can we provide alternate mechanisms for energy production and power distribution whilst ensuring long-term ecological sustainability?

These are some of the questions we at the Centre for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP) grapple with. We work to develop technology policy options for equitable growth, with a focus on sustainable energy options and next generation infrastructure. We are in the process of developing expertise in these domains and hope to contribute to the national-level policy-making process and also enrich the public debate on these subjects.



For a relatively new organization such as CSTEP, IDRC's Think Tank Initiative (TTI) is of immense help in our efforts to develop into a high quality institution of national and international excellence. Most policy-making problems are complex and require an interdisciplinary research methodology. IDRC's support has enabled us to form an interdisciplinary, high caliber team with diverse backgrounds in physical and social sciences and with work experience in academia, industry, and government.



One of TTI's major contributions was to enable CSTEP to interact with a large number of other think tanks in India and abroad. This opportunity to learn from the experience of other institutions is unparalleled and invaluable. We have also benefitted by the keen involvement of the IDRC senior staff, who continues to advise us on issues ranging from research quality standards, organizational improvement, and outreach. They have set the bar high for us!

CSTEP's research methodology relies on powerful analytical and computational modeling tools to articulate, design, and evaluate policy options in subjects of interest to our society. TTI enabled us develop a computational infrastructure, which is the first of its kind in India. It combines powerful computational and graphical processors, which are essential for visualization and can be applied to a variety of policy problems. CSTEP's strength in this area has been publicly acknowledged by high ranking officials in the Planning Commission and several ministries. CSTEP is now honoured to contribute to policy-making process in key subjects such as industrial energy efficiency, low carbon growth options, smart grids, emergency and disaster management, and state climate mitigation and adaptation plans. TTI has also enabled us to seed projects of far reaching importance for which it is often difficult to attract funding in the near term.

The recent Think Tank Initiative is a great opportunity to enrich the policy-making process in South Asian countries. To fully realize its objectives, the institutions should regularly interact, learn from each other, and grow. CSTEP is keen on taking this process forward.

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## In Focus: Developments

**Kevin Tiessen, Senior Program Officer, Agriculture and Food Security program** and working primarily on the Canadian International Food Security Research Fund (CIFSRF), met with



SARO staff and travelled with Sara Ahmed, Senior Program Specialist, to the mid-term review workshop for the CIFSRF “Enhancing food security of rural families through production, processing and value addition of regional staple food grains in India” project. Tiessen also visited researchers involved in two CIFSRF projects in South Asia: “Alleviating Poverty and Malnutrition in Agro Biodiversity Hotspots of India” and “Revalorising Small Millets in Rainfed Regions of South Asia.”. For more information, please visit: [www.idrc.ca/cifsrff](http://www.idrc.ca/cifsrff).

**IDRC’s Special Initiatives Division Director Ann Weston and Fellowships and Awards Senior Program Officer Rita Bowry** visited SARO in mid-



November to explore opportunities to expand the International Fellowships

Program (IFP) in South Asia. The IFP was launched in sub-Saharan Africa in 2007 to support doctoral and master’s studies or field research grants. Funding has also been earmarked for training workshops for fellowship recipients, supervisor support, and other activities. Managed by regional institutions and universities, the program has funded 10 International Fellowships projects in sub-Saharan Africa and supported 194 PhD and master’s students from 24 sub-Saharan countries.

**The Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS)** first Annual National Conference on the theme of “**Post-conflict Sri Lanka: Towards Shared Growth**” coincided with the release of the Institute’s flagship publication *Sri Lanka:*



*State of the Economy* on October 19, 2011. The conference aimed to share and disseminate findings and provide a forum for constructive debate. The Annual National Conference was initiated with Think Tank Initiative funding. It is expected to become a regular feature of the Institute’s outreach and dissemination strategies in the future.

**Think Tank Initiative’s Policy Community Survey (PCS):** As part of IDRC’s Think Tank Initiative, GlobeScan was engaged to conduct a perception survey of senior policy stakeholders – representatives of elected and non-elected



government, media, NGOs, research and academia, the private sector, and international organizations in three specific regions. The survey was administered in Africa in 2009-2010 and in South Asia and Latin America in 2010-2011.

PCS was designed to develop an understanding of the policy community in specific countries, and also to discern the strengths and weaknesses of particular think tanks, as perceived by this small senior subset of the policy community.

Instrumentally, the survey sheds light on what activities are associated with the success of think tanks in order to help prioritize support strategies. Finally, it creates a benchmark against which findings from an equivalent survey at the end of Phase I of the Think Tank Initiative can be used to indicate broad changes in the policy community and perceptions of think tanks in selected countries, at least some part of which may be ascribed to the program itself.

The global report of the Think Tank Initiative's Policy Community Survey (PCS) is now available [online](#)

**Think Tank Initiative's Annual Report 2010-2011** reflects on its third year of programming and showcases the institutions it supports. Learn about the valuable research these think tanks lead, the contexts under which they operate, their achievements, as well as the challenges they face. The report is available in three languages; please follow the [link](#) to read the report.

**SARO Lecture by Brad Cousins:** As part of the Evaluation Unit and SARO's Seminar Series, Brad Cousins spoke on Participatory Evaluation: Theory, Research and Practice on November 23,

2011. Cousins is a Professor, Evaluation



at the Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa.

He described the development of a conceptual framework for participatory evaluation that differentiates practical and transformative approaches.

Many lines of participatory evaluation have emerged from South Asia and much of this work is familiar to development researchers, evaluators, and practitioners. However this work is shifting and moving in new directions. This framework considers the goals and interests of participatory evaluation and essential dimensions of practice.

Cousins' lecture was followed by a rich discussion around evaluation research and practice by the broad mix of participants. Some topics explored were: rigour, trends, and pushes in evaluation (including for frameworks that don't fit), connections between theory and practice, field building, and taxonomies.

**IDRC grantee receives Malcolm Adiseshiah Award:**



Political scientist by training and philosopher by inclination, Rajeev Bhargava, Director, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, has a unique place in the world of social sciences. Educated

in Delhi and Oxford, he has achieved distinction through his scholarly inquiries

into several aspects of political theory and philosophy.

Particularly significant are his incisive treatment of methodological individualism and his path breaking analysis of secularism. He broke fresh ground by situating the secular discourse outside conventional Western conceptions and constructed an original paradigm.

In addition to his pioneering work on secularism, Bhargava has addressed other important concerns such as minority rights, multiculturalism, federalism, and the political philosophy of the Indian Constitution. A teacher who has inspired generations of students, Bhargava has jointly edited a textbook on political theory.

In recognition of his pioneering work, **the Malcolm Adiseshiah award** for distinguished contributions to development studies was presented to Rajeev Bhargava on November 21, 2011 in Chennai, India.

**Operationalizing Happiness in Bhutan: Governance, Complexity and the Implementation of a Multidimensional Approach to Development:** IDRC recently funded PhD field research in



Bhutan by Kent Schroeder from the University of Guelph. The research focuses on how governance processes and structures in Bhutan shape the implementation of the country's unique,

multidimensional approach to development, known as Gross National Happiness (GNH).

Past research illustrates that there is a growing consensus on the need to understand development as a multidimensional phenomenon that integrates economic, social, political and ecological concerns. Despite this consensus, there is little understanding of how to best operationalize such an approach in practice on a national scale. In light of this gap, this research project examines how Bhutan's unique GNH strategy is operationalized. In particular, it focuses on the functioning of the governance structures and processes that support the implementation of GNH policies. The research assesses the strengths and weaknesses of Bhutan's approach and further explores whether the Bhutanese governance framework provides insights for successfully implementing multidimensional development strategies elsewhere.

**IDRC Vice-President for Corporate Strategy and Regional Management, Lauchlan Munro, and Regional Director Stephen McGurk** held



discussions with members of the Canadian High Commission's (CHC) Advocacy Group and the Trade Commissioner's Service on how IDRC support to Indian and Canadian joint research improved agricultural productivity and reduced costs of medical kits. In particular, they

discussed improvements in millet dehulling and tuberculosis detectors that have become so inexpensive as to become ubiquitous. Commercialization of these technologies would benefit from CHC coordination and assistance to bring together researchers involved, and by obtaining venture capital to do so. They also discussed how CHC might better use IDRC-supported research in Canadian universities, perhaps through targeted workshops with other Canadian and Indian universities and research councils. This research ultimately contributes to joint Canadian and Indian government-funded applied research programs.

### IDRC Research Programs

**Launch of a Research Initiative on Livelihood Security and Climate Uncertainty in Lake Chilika, India:** A three-year research initiative on Strengthening Livelihood Security and Adapting to Climate Uncertainty in the Chilika Lagoon, Orissa (eastern India), was launched at the Wetland Research and Training Center (WISA) of the Chilika Development Authority (CDA). This new project is one of five winning proposals under the research call on Adapting to



Climate Change in Vulnerable Coastal Communities, held by IDRC's Climate Change and Water (CCW) team in 2010-2011.

The workshop was attended by experts from the National Wetlands Regulatory Authority, a civil society network called NetCoast, IDRC staff Stephen McGurk, Sara Ahmed and Valthsala, and several media representatives, as well as scientists and WISA and CDA staff.

In addition to discussing project objectives, methodologies, and expected outcomes in relation to the larger CCW portfolio in South Asia, the participants spent a day on the lagoon to understand the socio-ecological and hydrological dynamics, livelihood conflicts, and potential threats to flora, fauna, and aquatic life in the region's largest brackish water lake, which was declared a wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention in 1981.

The project seeks to identify management response options and strategies for reducing risks and increasing community preparedness for changes in wetland ecosystem services due to climate change. For more information, please contact Sara Ahmed @ [sahmed@idrc.org.in](mailto:sahmed@idrc.org.in).

**Workshop on Competition Issues in Public Procurement:** The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) organized a workshop on Competition Issues in Public



Procurement on October 5, 2011 in New Delhi to disseminate the findings of a study supported by IDRC. The workshop was attended by officials of several government departments, the Competition



Commission of India (CCI), lawyers, academics, and representative of NGOs. The report emphasized the need for a single law to replace the multiple and fragmented guidelines of various agencies. It also suggested that that law should be sufficiently flexible for the officials to strategically deal with anti-competitive practices. For details, contact Nitya Nanda @ [nitya@teri.res.in](mailto:nitya@teri.res.in)

**IDRC's Sara Ahmed, Samar Verma, and Stephen McGurk** participated in the Shared Learning Dialogue on Systems, Vulnerabilities, Resilience Building and Adaptation held in Kathmandu on



November 2, 2011. The dialogue highlighted results of several projects in the region where the Institute of Social and Environmental Transition (ISET) and its partners are engaged. These projects include one with ISET-Nepal on *Understanding the cross-scale implications of forest and water management for adaptation-mitigation and food security in the Nepal Himalaya*, and another one with ISET-Pakistan on *Building capacity to adapt to climate change in the Indus Basin*. The visit was also an opportunity for reviewing ISET-Nepal's progress under the Think Tank program in South Asia.

**Toward a new role for universities in South Asia?** IDRC's Innovation for Inclusive Development (IID) program explores ways of improving the livelihood

security of excluded, marginalized people working in informal setting in developing countries. The program focuses on intermediaries such as universities, civil society organizations, and research funding councils that could potentially bridge informal and formal sectors.

In Southeast Asia and Africa, IID supports research networks to understand the transformative role of universities, important players in achieving social equity and social justice.

Traditionally, universities have been the spawning ground for research ideas leading to technology development and R&D. Can they orient their research to solve local problems of poverty, informality, water, health, and sanitation? Will research funding councils be interested in supporting these goals, which may not necessarily connect to commercial outcomes? What changes would be needed in the ways research ideas are identified, developed, evaluated, and funded? These are some of the questions the IID program is encouraging as part of regional research networks on Universities as Intermediaries for Inclusive Development in Asia, Latin America, and Africa.

In South Asia, there are challenges and opportunities in undertaking such an exploration. The challenge: universities vary greatly in size, capacity, performance, autonomy, and ability to contribute to social, political, and economic outcomes. They must compete with research institutions and technical schools and face various constraints, including funding, political interference, and bureaucracy. In the Hindu Kush Himalayan region, most universities have weak research and teaching infrastructure. A lot has been researched, written, and discussed about university



reforms in South Asia, but there is no clear way forward.

Two workshops in South Asia will stimulate a dialogue on the social role that universities play and could potentially play. **The first dialogue will take place in Kathmandu Nepal, January 20-21, 2012.** Representatives from this group will join **the second workshop in Colombo, Sri Lanka, February 2-3, 2012.** The two dialogues are likely to point to key research questions and potential champions for a research network in South Asia.

IDRC, in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, a Think Tank Initiative grantee, organised a meeting in New Delhi, India, on December 12-13, 2011 on **“Inclusive Growth: From Policy to Reality.”** A group of



international experts and high profile Indian researchers and practitioners shared their experiences in policies that promote growth and address the toxic inequalities of opportunities. A series of country-focused and thematic papers on political and policy factors that promote inclusiveness of growth were presented. IDRC will now connect these global and national debates and help to inform the monitoring of the Supporting Inclusive Growth programs. A high level Panel Discussion was also organized on the Indian experiences of planning,

achievement, and challenges of inclusive growth.

A two-day research dialogue on, **Emerging Economy Perspectives and Priorities in the New Multi-polar World**, was organized on November 14-15, 2011 in Beijing, jointly by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), the School of Public Policy and Management,



Tsinghua University, and the Brookings-Tsinghua Centre for Public Policy. This was the second in research dialogue. The first, **Emerging Economies in the New World Order: Promises, Pitfalls and Priorities**, was held on April 12-13, 2010 in New Delhi.

Eminent scholars from 13 countries (Brazil, Chile, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, Thailand, and Turkey) presented their research. Discussions were led by high-level policymakers and academics from the host countries.

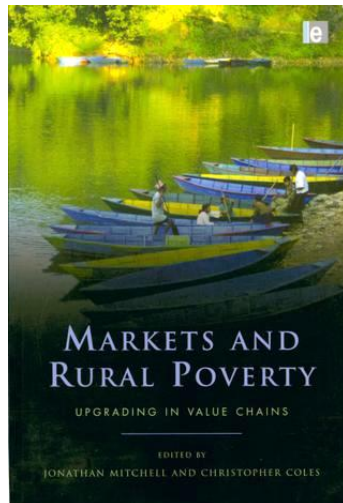
An interim **Review-cum-Brainstorming Workshop** was held in New Delhi on March 21, 2011 to identify issues for deliberation and point the way forward. This series of emerging economies research dialogue was initiated by ICRIER in October 2009 with IDRC funding. It focuses on: agriculture, food security, and livelihoods; technology and innovation;

energy, environment, and climate change; and health.

### IDRC Book Review

India's leading national daily, *The Hindu*, reviewed *Markets and Rural Poverty: Upgrading in Value Chains*.

This book addresses one of the most



intractable problems in development – what can poor people in rural areas do to improve their lives? Most of the one billion people living in rich countries and about three-quarters of the

5.6 billion people living in developing countries have left poverty behind and are enjoying improving livelihoods.

There are, however, about one billion people in rural areas who have not benefited from globalization and are being left behind – often in extreme income poverty. Many more face deprivation even

if their income is above the poverty line (Alkire and Santos, 2010). Their livelihoods are stagnant and the prospects are not encouraging.

D. Murali of *The Hindu* writes: “The book avers that poor people in rural areas can, under certain circumstances, significantly increase their returns from agricultural activities by upgrading themselves in value chains. Urging that there is no reason why poor rural households should have to choose between social protection and enterprise development, the authors observe that both are necessary to reduce poverty. Government can do more than simply trying to avoid harming rural areas; it can take many important positive steps to improve the prospects of the rural poor, the book states. The provision of economic infrastructure to make it easier for rural producers to get products to urban markets is critical. In addition, providing effective agricultural extension services which include market as well as technical support, would impact on large numbers of the rural poor.” Click [here](#) to read the review.

Edited by Jonathan Mitchell and Christopher Coles. Co-published by IDRC and Earthscan, the book is available at [www.idrc.ca](http://www.idrc.ca)

### Inner Voice: Michael Clarke and his team: Rosalie Vezina, Natacha Lecours and Anna Seifried



IDRC's Global Health Policy program area is composed of three programs: the Global Health Research Initiative (GHRI); Governance for Equity in Health Systems (GEHS); and Non-Communicable Disease Prevention (NCDP).

**Global Health Research Initiative:** Launched in 2001, GHRI is a partnership of five Canadian federal government agencies and departments:

- Canadian Institutes of Health Research
- Canadian International Development Agency

- Health Canada
- IDRC
- Public Health Agency of Canada

GHRI brings people together from different countries, sectors, and areas of expertise to tackle the complex problems that affect health around the world. Its goal is to support researchers and decision-makers in their efforts to develop effective policies, programs, and strategies to improve health and strengthen health systems. Among notable recent results in the South Asia region, in Sri Lanka, GHRI support led to the first mobile phone, farm-based disease outbreak monitoring system. The Government of Sri Lanka, working with researchers from the University of Calgary, has implemented this system, which is enabling rapid response to disease outbreaks among farm animals. With foot and mouth disease being endemic in Sri Lanka, significant health and economic benefits will result.

Other ongoing projects in the region include:

- a project in northeastern India on the access, affordability, and cost-effectiveness of HIV prevention services targeting female sex workers and intravenous drug users
- a multi-country grant involving Sri Lanka, Nepal, Guatemala, and Peru to develop evidence-based policies and interventions to address the mental health burden of civilian populations exposed to protracted and endemic political violence and episodic natural disasters.

For more information, please visit [www.ghri.ca](http://www.ghri.ca)

**Governance for Equity in Health Systems** has pioneered the field of strengthening health systems since 2000, recognizing the importance of governance and equity issues. The projects supported have built capacity and deepened the understanding of the drivers of health inequities – the systematic, avoidable, and unfair disparities in people’s health.

In South Asia and China, GEHS has supported various projects addressing the challenges of power relations and decision-making to ensure that resources are allocated to reach the most vulnerable. For example:

- EQUITAP has explored health financing and health systems performance to inform ways toward universal health coverage in the region.
- The PAN Asian Collaboration for evidence-based eHealth Adoption and Application (PANACeA) research network in Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal is generating evidence on how the use of ICTs can support health promotion practices and delivery of services among marginalized populations.

Several projects in India are informing the strengthening of equitable health systems:

- The Administrative Staff College of India is evaluating the Rajiv Aarogyasri Health Insurance Scheme to assess its results in improving access for the poor.
- In Maharashtra, researchers are exploring possible models of universal healthcare with special attention to the role of regulation.
- Research in India is also developing innovative methods to incorporate gender analysis into existing field research on women’s health, as well as national and global policy research.

In Afghanistan, a project is exploring how telehealth can strengthen health care in rural areas, looking specifically at tele-consultation and continuing professional development.

Finally, two projects in China are contributing to evidence-based decision-making:



- One project led by the China National Health Research Development Centre is building capacity at national and local levels to evaluate "Healthy China 2020", a set of reforms that strives to extend universal coverage of basic health care to all Chinese by 2020.
- Another project led by Peking University is developing innovative methodology and providing evidence on requirements for health human resources in rural China.

To learn more about GEHS, please visit [www.idrc.ca/gehs](http://www.idrc.ca/gehs)

#### **Non-Communicable Disease Prevention (NCDP)**

IDRC's NCDP was launched in 2011 to provide a response to the major development challenges associated with the rapid rise in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in low- and middle-income countries. These diseases, especially cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, and chronic obstructive respiratory diseases, are among the leading causes of premature death and morbidity in low- and middle-income countries. They share four common risk factors: tobacco use, unhealthy diet, alcohol misuse, and physical inactivity.

NCDP will increase financial support to tobacco control research, expand the work of the **Research for International Tobacco Control** program (RITC), and continue to explore tobacco as a development issue. Examples of RITC-funded projects in South Asia include tobacco products' labeling in India, links between tuberculosis and tobacco use in Pakistan, growing food crops to replace tobacco farming in Bangladesh, and evaluating tobacco control policies, also in Bangladesh. Projects currently under development in the region look into alternatives to *bidi* production in India, labeling of smokeless tobacco in India and Bangladesh, fiscal policies for tobacco control in China, and assessing NCD prevention policies in Pakistan.

In this new phase of programming, NCDP will fund research that informs healthy public policies and population-wide programs that are low cost but can reduce the NCD burden and improve overall population health.

To learn more about NCDP, please visit: [www.idrc.ca/ncdp](http://www.idrc.ca/ncdp)

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#### **Feedback**

IDRC welcomes responses to this newsletter.  
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