

Evaluation title: A review of IDRC's support to two inter-institutional NRM research consortia in LAC

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Simon E. Carter & Ed Weber

Summary

IDRC support to the Consortium for Sustainable Development in the Andes (CONDESAN) and the Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Ucayali region of Peru (CODESU) is reviewed to synthesize experiences in supporting these two regional research consortia and to generate lessons for the ENRM programming area. The review covers projects funded between 1992 and 2001. The reasons for IDRC support to the consortia idea are explained in relation to the evolution in LAC from sector and disciplinary foci of research towards a more integrated and inter-disciplinary paradigm for NRM. The initial visions for each consortium and how activities developed are outlined. Analysis of the focuses on how evolution of the consortia related to and diverged from original objectives, and on the changing relationship with IDRC. The main lessons drawn from the review relate to the strengths and weaknesses of inter-institutional consortia as a means for operationalising NRM, and to continuity of support from IDRC. The review concludes that regional research consortia can make significant contributions to development processes, but only if they fill a clearly defined need, if strong leadership and a shared vision are present, and if the Center is prepared to make long-run and concerted investments.

Introduction: the reasons for support to CONDESAN and CODESU

- IDRC and other donors had made major investments in agricultural research in the Andean region, and to a lesser extent in the western Amazon, during the 1970s and 1980s. These investments contributed to significant changes in the way research was conducted, particularly adoption of the systems approach and a focus on smallholders in marginal social and environmental contexts, and to modest changes in production systems (Weber and Mujica, 1999).
- New research paradigms in the late 1980s and early 1990s, emerging in part from efforts supported by IDRC and other donors, emphasized sustainability, participatory approaches, and new institutional relationships in rural development. One important response to these new paradigms was the idea of an Eco-regional Consortium of institutions that would articulate research for development in a region distinguished by its ecological uniqueness.
- During the early 1990's, IDRC had also to rationalize its programs of research in Agriculture and Food Sciences and in Social Sciences, in the face of dramatic funding cuts. Previous levels of project funding were no longer sustainable, yet the Centre had somehow to try to ensure some continuity to the processes of research and capacity development in which it had previously invested so much.
- This paper reviews IDRC's experience in funding two eco-regional consortia; CONDESAN, the Consortium for Sustainable Development in the Andean Eco-region, which was established in 1992/3 and is international in scope; and CODESU, the Consortium for the Sustainable Development of the Ucayali region in eastern Peru, established in 1995.

- The review is important to IDRC because the consortium idea was seen as a potential mechanism by which to help agricultural research institutions broaden their agenda and take a more holistic approach to rural development. These consortia have been viewed, especially within the CGIAR, as a way to operationalise research for natural resource management and to institutionalize participatory research. The idea of eco-regional consortia as inter-institutional initiatives had an important influence on thinking in IDRC during the development of the Centre's natural resource management program initiatives. IDRC's People, Land and Water Program Initiative supports a similar consortium for the East African Highlands. The Minga Program Initiative invested significantly in both CONDESAN and CODESU during its first phase (1997-2000), and continued to manage projects funded by its predecessor, ALT, that were undertaken by or closely linked to either consortium.
- The objectives of this review are to summarize the lessons over this period (from an IDRC-Minga perspective), and to assess the extent to which both consortia have met initial expectations or contributed in other ways towards the broader programming goals of IDRC.

Terms of Reference and Methodology

The issue which the present evaluation was undertaken to address, as per Minga's Evaluation plan 2000, is to systematize lessons from our support to research consortia, to assess whether these partnerships add anything to the traditional idea of a network, and to assess whether it is worth Minga focussing on the creation and support of these in LAC. Specific questions raised when the plan was developed were as follows:

- i) What were IDRC's (the ALT program's) expectations in establishing these consortia and were these realistic?
- ii) What have these consortia accomplished in line with initial expectations, and what have they failed to accomplish?
- iii) What unplanned achievements have been accomplished, and in what other ways have they diverged from initial expectations?
- iv) How does the type of support required to build multi-institutional consortia/partnerships change over time?
- v) What is the extent and quality of horizontal communication between partners? Has it increased over time? If so, with what benefits?
- vi) Are multi-stakeholder approaches and concepts (stakeholder analysis, gender analysis, conflict management) being incorporated into the work of the consortia, and if so, How and with what results?
- vii) What is an appropriate time-frame for a consortium, and what are the conditions for it to have succeeded? Under what circumstances should it disband?

The evaluation is based on a desk study of information in Centre files and on analysis by the authors, drawing on their own involvement as Program Officer responsible for most of the centre's projects in each consortium since 1998 (Carter), and Program officer in 1992-3 then consultant to IDRC since 1997 (Weber). No primary data were collected for the

study, although some additional supporting material were provided by colleagues in response to earlier drafts.

The process of investment in CONDESAN and CODESU

CONDESAN

- At a multi-institutional workshop hosted by the International Potato Centre (CIP) in 1992(CIP, 1993), a strategy was agreed on to design and implement a collaborative program for the Andean eco-region. CONDESAN was formally established in 1993.
- The strategy developed included a benchmark site methodology intended to encompass existing research partners in IDRC and SDC-funded projects and to permit the extrapolation of research results over wider areas; the establishment of a coordination unit; and an initial focus on:
 - soil and water resources and agro-ecological characterization
 - productive natural resources and their interactions
 - policy and socio-economy, and
 - training and management systems for the consortium.
- IDRC contributed, along with other donors, to the funding of this coordination unit from 1992 to 2001. A part of this funding was dedicated to the establishment of a communications program, Infoandina. Additionally, the center funded a number of ad-hoc training and institution-building events, such as methodology development workshops, electronic conferences and visits.
- During this period IDRC also funded specific research projects at benchmark sites in Ecuador (Carchi) and Peru (Puno). Two phases of the MANRECUR project were funded between 1996 and 2001. A bi-national project operated between 1997-1999 around Lake Titicaca, and linked researchers in Peru and Bolivia. The center funded two policy-oriented projects led by CONDESAN that were regional in scope between 1992 and 2001 (Policy intervention in the High Andes (50215 / 96-8763) and Policies for Sustainable Rural Development 1994 (001367)). These projects led to the development of a further operational arm of CONDESAN, the Fondo CONDESAN.
- Responding to the lack of progress in relation to agroindustry, and reflecting Centre priorities and interests in this field, a project was developed in 1998 to support methodology development for post-harvest processing and marketing at one site in each of Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia (Rural Sustainable Agroindustries (50356 / 98-8751))

CODESU

- After a number of years of research support in Ucayali during the 1980's, lack of institutional collaboration was identified as a key bottleneck to more effective research-development linkages in the Ucayali region. A workshop was held in Pucallpa in 1994 to establish CODESU. IDRC support was provided for establishment of the consortium through a project that provided core support to a coordination unit for CODESU from 1995-99, and some support for research activities. There was a felt need for greater participation in CODESU's modus operandi and the research activities of its members. CIAT took on the lead role in developing a participatory research project (Poverty and the Environment in the Amazon 1998 (003703) funded by IDRC from 1998-2001.

Financial investments

Table 1 indicates the level of funding provided to CONDESAN and CODESU from their respective inceptions in 1992 and 1995 until 2001. The table differentiates between support to core budgets, that is, funds for coordination of each consortium, and research budgets. Parallel funding from other donors is indicated for CONDESAN, but we have excluded from the table a US\$2m project recently funded by GTZ for watershed analysis. No figures are available for parallel funding for CODESU, and we have excluded \$1.3m US in funds for drug substitution projects received from USAID (see below), since these were not related to the development of the consortium per se.

Vision and evolution of the consortia

In this section we explain the original vision of each consortium, followed by an explanation of how each one actually evolved, and of how the evolving IDRC vision differed from the evolving consortia visions.

CONDESAN: vision

- The project was expected to address “...policy and technological interventions to promote sustainable use of natural resources in the Andean eco-region, within a highly participatory approach” (project appraisal).
- Technical NRM research, done in a participatory way at the benchmark sites, was expected to have wider relevance because these benchmark sites were selected on the assumption that they were representative of broader ecologies and socio-economic contexts.
- Expected outputs of CONDESAN phase II illustrate the vision:
 - promoting local communities and decision-makers’ participation in problem identification, search for solutions and validation of promising alternatives;
 - promoting dialogue between researchers and decision-makers interested in sustainable development in the Andean region;
 - ex-ante identification of potential impact from past research experiences, under different policy and price scenarios (including building on and maximizing pay-offs to the substantial earlier IDRC investments);
 - creating awareness of needs and opportunities for development in the ecoregion;
 - institutional linkages that emphasize decentralization, stronger national institutions, mechanisms for community participation and efficient partner communication;
 - policies to bridge the gap between Andean community needs and higher levels of policy and decision-making.
- IDRC documentation anticipates a great degree of interaction among the various research teams and themes based on subject matter specialties.
- Close collaboration with projects funded by other donors such as GTZ and DGIS, and with national institutions, was to provide technologies and alternative land use systems aimed at protecting biodiversity and improving the sustainability of agricultural productivity in watershed systems.

CONDESAN: Evolution

- The policy projects evolved into the “Fondo CONDESAN”, an eclectic approach to linking research with development. It encourages public-private partnerships in investment in

equitable and sustainable rural development, supported by training in participatory watershed analysis and planning.

- The biodiversity component, with considerable and continuous support from SDC, has taken its own path; this is a CIP contribution to CONDESAN. IDRC priorities in the GEM program (and subsequently SUB) did not fit with CONDESAN's focus. CONDESAN has rarely attempted to attract SUB funding, bar one or two minor activities such as successfully requesting support for the Tenth Andean Crops Conference in 2001 (100950). Links to other CONDESAN activities seem tentative.
- IDRC's vision changed gradually in the 1990's, as programming became more interdisciplinary. With the establishment of the Minga PI and changes in key personnel, IDRC took a more critical stance towards technical and economic work and to the functioning of the consortium. Minga's objectives are to support research on multi-stakeholder approaches to NRM, and to institutionalize these within organizations such as CONDESAN. The articulation between IDRC and CONDESAN changed, with more support for a strategic projects in line with the PI's objectives (Resource Management Ecuador -MANRECUR II - 50355) and for stronger horizontal links between members.
- With some pressure from IDRC, including the sponsoring of an electronic consultation with members in 2000 (CONDESAN E-conference - 100529), both the board and coordination unit have taken concrete measures to increase participation by members (representation on the board; increasing links and visits between sites; revamping the technical committee); IDRC's Minga PI has supported these efforts, participating in board meetings as an active observer, and supporting exchange visits between benchmark site teams (Training and Exchange Project 50402).
- Gradually the focus of the CONDESAN coordination moved away from developing and managing a centrally run and controlled program to one based on project design and fund-raising leadership. For example, the Trimestral Report, 16 March to 15 July, 2000 suggested a move towards more collaborative work, by assisting partners in the development of proposals and R&D initiatives in their own context and from their own perspective. Appointment of a new coordinator in 2002 with a background in research and development work, and the opening up of the Board of Trustees to credible scientists representing member institutions, are further signs of this trend.

CODESU - vision

- Jose Toledo, a soil scientist with whom IDRC had a long association in the region, was a key figure in the design of CODESU (Consortium for the Sustainable Development of Ucayali - 50129 / 95-8753). Toledo's vision of an agenda for the consortium (Toledo, 1994) though still very much productivity-oriented, was markedly broader in scope than anything that had been attempted before in Pucallpa. It integrated livestock and pasture systems, forestry, agro-industry and land-use planning.
- The project proposal identified the following as foundations for local sustainable development:
 - Policies and a legal framework that will promote development and protection of natural resources,
 - Implementation of a regional land-use plan
 - Institutional strengthening for scientific and technical development
 - Consolidation of a group of well-trained and experienced professionals to analyze, orient and co-ordinate institutional activities in the region.

- The consortium was founded upon a relatively strong local research capacity, in institutions such as the Universidad Nacional de la Amazonia (UNA), the Instituto de Investigaciones de la Amazonia Peruana (IIAP), the Instituto Veterinario de Investigaciones Tropicales y de Altura (IVITA) and the Instituto Nacional de Investigación Agropecuaria (INIA), and upon strong links with international agricultural research centres CIAT and ICRAF. Some prominent board members were from Universidad Nacional Agraria La Molina (UNALM) and other nationally-renowned institutions based in Lima.
- CODESU was expected by IDRC to provide the coordination and synergy required to promote more effective research, to facilitate the realization of this vision, and to “provide lessons on the feasibility of the use of R&D institutions to manage complex problems of sustainable development based on rainforest resources”(Project appraisal). The project appraisal also emphasized that CODESU was intended as a convener working through local institutions, and should not become a competitor of local institutions for scarce funding.
- CODESU’s vision and objectives were more clearly related to a specific geographical area than CONDESAN’s. In terms of geographical extent, CODESU’s focus area was of the same order of magnitude as a CONDESAN benchmark site. Potentially, CODESU was well placed to identify local development bottlenecks as well as policy issues that needed to be addressed in Ucayali and nationally.
- IDRC’s Senior management and the LACRO ALT PO were very critical of the project (even after considerable revision) as being inappropriate to the reality of Pucallpa. Pierre Beemans pointed to a fundamental weakness in the narrowness of scope stemming from its origin in applied agricultural research. The project was funded anyway, possibly because so much time had gone into its development, possibly because there were few alternatives, possibly because of the determination of the then leader of ALT (Centre file 95-8753).

CODESU: Evolution

- The director of CODESU, Jose Toledo, passed away in 1996, which markedly affected the project. His vision and leadership were not easily replaced. The new Director, Alfredo Riesco, made building CODESU into a solid, formal organization his main priority for the first few years of his tenure.
- During the period 1998-2000 IDRC support was focusing on trying to strengthen participatory research capacity in the consortium. In 1998 the DEPAM project (Poverty and Environment, 97-8756) was funded to establish a small grants fund to finance participatory research that would be developed through partnerships between two or more institutions active in Pucallpa. Fourteen grants were funded in all, as well as a full-time coordinator and a post-doctoral researcher. The latter was recruited by CIAT, but was not put into place until almost one year after the project had begun (December 1998).
- In 1998 two board members, José Dancé and Yolanda Ramírez, conducted a survey and facilitated a dialogue with 32 representatives of member institutions of CODESU, to try to develop a vision of what the consortium should be and do. Areas for action that they identified related largely to strengthening the operational capacity of member institutions, and to the need for the coordination unit to facilitate member institutions’ access to resources, training and to enhance collaboration between them. Missing from their report was any review of the necessary leadership and vision of the role CODESU might play in the region.

- CODESU management was trying to raise the funds to keep the coordination unit afloat. The director's vision – to create a viable development institution, by tapping into drugs control and other bi-national funding, was different to that of IDRC. In 1999 CODESU won a competition to provide US \$1m worth of support services to an Alternative Development Project (USAID drugs control funds managed by Winrock International). IDRC support for the coordinating unit ended in 1999.
- IDRC Funding was provided in 2000 to a postgraduate student, Ernesto Ruez, for his PhD on the political ecology of the Ucayali region. This work built on some of the research Ruez and his colleague Tamsyn Murray conducted on ecosystem approaches to human health with CIAT, 1995-8. His thesis is due for completion in 2002 (Training and Exchange 50402).
- One activity established through the DEPAM project, called by participants “The Learning Project”, continued after IDRC funding ended in December 2000, as an informal association of young researchers belonging to various member institutions in CODESU. IDRC has since funded a modest training activity for this group in 2001 to strengthen skills in gender analysis (Training and Exchange 50402). Results of this activity show promising signs of reflection and learning, including increased awareness of gender roles and capacity for gender analysis.
- In 2001 the consortium, in partnership with ICRAF, won a further contract to provide \$US 1.3 million of services in Aguaytia. This is one of four areas where USAID's coca substitution program operates. CODESU has moved away somewhat from the original idea of a consortium to become an apparently viable development NGO.
- At some point Minga had to decide whether continuing to fund CODESU would further its own objectives. Given CODESU's success in attracting USAID funding it was relatively painless to “let go”.

Analysis

In this section we analyze strengths and weaknesses in the development of each consortium in relation to the overall objective of IDRC. This objective can be summarized as catalyzing the necessary evolution in the consortia in order that they develop technical and policy interventions for sustainable development, and to mainstream participatory approaches in research for ENRM.

CONDESAN

In relation to sustainable development:

- Individual research projects have undoubtedly made significant contributions to local development and important methodological advances (e.g. green-houses and livestock management in the Bi-national Resource Management project 96-8761; building social and human capital around improved agro-processing and marketing (Rural Sustainable Agroindustries (50356 / 98-8751); co-management and conflict management around water resources, gender analysis and participatory research in agriculture in the MANRECUR II project 98-8754; see Crespo and Faminow, 2002).
- The benchmark site concept was underlain by the assumptions that environmental similarity was the main pre-requisite for transferability of new approaches to NRM, and that sustainable, equitable and more productive NRM techniques could be developed by existing networks and disciplinary configurations. (NRM was the way for IDRC and the

CGIAR to address sustainability issues post Rio). The logic of these assumptions is clearly questionable. With hindsight, the potential of the benchmark sites for learning through comparative analysis are likely CONDESAN's greatest asset. Over-time, and with support from IDRC for cross-site visits and the Fondo CONDESAN, some important learning is taking place around water management issues, on scaling for policy dialogue, and on pro-poor enterprise development. To the extent that the Coordination unit can synthesize lessons and summarize learning across sites, the consortium will have important messages to share.

Institution building:

- CONDESAN phase I project documentation (92- 8753) seems to assume an ideal positioning and organization for the Consortium to mobilize research for sustainable development. As in the CODESU documentation, it does not seriously question the assumptions behind the vision statements, how the new initiatives will be operationalized nor how they will be monitored and adjusted in a "learning by doing" approach.
- The consortium adopted something of an ad-hoc approach to its own development that was subject to change in accordance with the differences in style and emphasis of its coordinators. Jose Luis Rueda's dynamic and forceful style provided initial drive, but led to tensions with some of the members. His successor, Joshua Posner had a strong applied science background and played an admirable role as mentor to researchers at the benchmark sites. He dedicated a significant amount of his time to developing research proposals with these partners and across benchmark sites.
- IDRC strongly insisted on grantees seeking co-funding and researchers being "entrepreneurial" in tune with the strong private business sector acculturation push of the mid-1990s. Funding of activities was optimistically expected from all stakeholders complemented by international multi-donor support, Agenda 21 related sources and longer term financing. To some extent this diverted efforts from the research and alliance building objectives toward project writing and promotion that would attract funding from other donors. It also had the effect of keeping things more focused on CIP and its needs than was originally intended by IDRC.

Influencing policy-making:

- Support to Ruben Dario Estrada via the project Policy Intervention in the High Andes (96- 8763) led to a number of projects targeted at the rural poor in Cauca and Caldas departments in Colombia and in Cajamarca, Peru. The project demonstrated that entrepreneurs from these rural areas are willing to fund pro-poor employment and income generating schemes, and developed ways to manage and monitor such schemes. The approach has been linked to models that estimate social and environmental externalities to changes in land use. It has generated significant interest and funding from the Indigenous-led government of Cauca in Colombia for replication in that department. On the basis of the project's results, GTZ has recently approved a large support project for watershed externality analysis for many of its large projects in the Andes. Long term support for methodology development and testing, and flexibility to provide modest venture capital funds to establish the Fondo, were key contributions by IDRC.

Participatory research:

- No systematic approach to promoting or strengthening participatory research nor interdisciplinary research has been promoted by the coordination unit, although some ad-hoc events and training activities have increased members' exposure to and knowledge of these

approaches. The potential contribution from social scientists to CONDESAN was not a high priority under either the first or second coordinator, which limited ~~limited~~ dialogue around the issues on which Minga was trying to support research. CIP's social science department could have played a crucial role in strengthening CONDESAN, but the change in emphasis towards economics during the 1990's meant that there was little interaction with CONDESAN. As a result, the strength of participatory research and inter-disciplinary work has varied amongst the benchmark sites. Strongest by far has been Carchi, where capacity developed independently of any actions of the CONDESAN coordination unit.

- Support to the successful CGIAB-led electronic conference contributed to that institution gaining respect nationally and a strategic place in the national consortium for integrated water management. This alone justifies having made some funds available to the consortium that were not strictly in line with Minga's objectives.

CODESU

In relation to sustainable development:

- CODESU has helped to raise awareness of issues of sustainable development via productive projects, regular events and meetings, local publications and active contribution to discussion about development in Pucallpa. It has drawn attention to the need for better forest management, biodiversity use and conservation, and valuing cultural diversity. It has supported the development of agroindustry based on local agricultural and forest products that can be sustainably managed. However, during the first five years of its life, the period of IDRC core support, advancing research agendas in support of these had to be subordinated to ensuring the sustainability of the institution.
- CODESU represents the successful establishment of an Ucayali-based capacity to implement development projects in the Peruvian Amazon Basin. By establishing itself as a serious and reliable technically focused NGO, CODESU positioned itself well in order to gain significant support from the USAID funded coca eradication programs.
- As a result of collaboration with CIAT, one Consortium staffer developed the institutional capacity for market-based agroindustry research (see final report, 98-87...). Although CODESU did not continue with this work once IDRC support had ended, a company named CRECET was founded by the project staff member to provide business services to farmers' groups.
- To date CODESU has not provided strong independent leadership or vision, in charting paths for sustainable development in the Ucayali region. Whilst the project proposal recognised that the processes driving colonisation in the Ucayali region led to the settlement of the soils least suited to agriculture, there was no attempt to articulate a strategy to influence the process of colonisation itself. Most local researchers involved in CODESU shared the on-station research paradigm promoted by the Department of Soil Science of North Carolina State University through its work at Yurimaguas. They tried to use their technical skills to make agriculture and livestock raising work on the poor acid soils where colonists tended to settle, as they were trained to do.

Institution-building:

- There was no attempt to identify the causes or consequences of the poor institutional cooperation identified as a major reason for the establishment of a consortium. The methodology section of the proposal did not explore how the consortium would enhance

institutional cooperation, and not until Dance and Ramirez' study in 1998 was there a serious attempt to address this issue. It is questionable whether CODESU can be viewed as an inter-institutional consortium today.

- An external review by Alejandro Imbach in 1996 noted that the objectives of the consortium of increasing communication and cooperation made little sense in a context such as Pucallpa, where everyone knew each other, and that instead it would have to deal with interpersonal problems, rivalries and jealousies, and inter-institutional politics. In effect this is what happened. CODESU was likely, from the outset, to take a path of least resistance and conform to set patterns and relationships, if only because it would have to eschew the difficult task of reconciling political and inter-personal conflicts in order to achieve certain minimal technical objectives demanded by its donors. As an example, the competitive process for the small grants component of the DEPAM project was managed and the proposals reviewed by members of CODESU, resulting in a lack of transparency and the funding of projects, which were merely a continuation of the existing on farm-work (External review, May 2000).
- The attempt through DEPAM to develop a stronger role for CIAT in re-directing CODESU (based on its expertise in participatory research), was undoubtedly well-meaning, but badly managed. For example, having a seconded member of CIAT as lead PO in the project development phase gave the impression that IDRC fully backed CIAT and the actions of its staff, which at times created mistrust and tensions with CODESU.

Influencing policy-making:

- CODESU does not seem to have attempted seriously to address key policy issues in Ucayali, apart from commenting on policy changes made in Lima from time to time in its quarterly newsletter and organizing occasional seminars in Pucallpa.
- There was no attempt made to define a theoretical framework that could situate the work of the consortium's members within a broader understanding of the processes driving change in the region.

Participatory research

- The vision of "Ucayali 2005" (ref) given prominence in the establishment of the consortium was not a people-centred vision. Local inhabitants at best seemed to be seen as passive recipients of development.
- Probably the major point of difference between IDRC and the Coordination & Board of CODESU was the priority given to participatory approaches. The DEPAM project was designed with heavy input from IDRC, to enhance stakeholder participation and to get agreement from key partners to go beyond merely creating a combination of existing activities, with each group emphasizing its own particular interest and expertise. The project was a compromise for CODESU coordination, a way to get continued support and to at least appear to be promoting participatory research, in which many member institutions were interested. However, the coordination had other priorities at the time. CODESU has since gone about implementing coca-substitution projects in a participatory fashion.
- No leadership either locally or from Lima was interested or capable of leading the multi-stakeholder vision IDRC was trying to promote. Local institutions were not properly prepared to undertake participatory research, some of their directors were not even

supportive of the idea once they understood well enough the power shifts that the new paradigm entailed. The Consortium's formal research partners in Pucallpa, especially ICRAF, INIA, and CIAT (despite the latter's expertise in participatory research) were not very enthusiastic and continued to implement top-down research in parallel with their participation in CODESU. In fact, it would not have been in the interests of ICRAF, INIA and CIAT for CODESU to evolve into a serious competitor for research funds.

- The project's implementation suffered as a result. A lack of timely support from CIAT, whose scientists were over committed with other projects, meant that no training in participatory research was offered before the call for proposals for the small grants was made. Another factor influencing project implementation was the inability of Minga to monitor DEPAM with sufficient frequency. A more appropriate monitoring plan would have required much heavier involvement at the beginning, so that the call for proposals was not put out before any training in participatory research had been done.

Lessons

In this final section we attempt to draw out some generalizable lessons, using examples from each consortium. We must keep in mind that each consortium is a complex organization and we are limited because we have 2 data points and a lot of underlying dynamics.

Inter-institutional consortia as a means of operationalising NRM

1. If our focus & intention is to reach specific social groups with a different type of research for development strategy, we should look for leadership amongst organizations with appropriate experience and intent.

- It is vital for the relevance of consortia that alliances be forged with institutions that are grassroots and development oriented, in order that the research agenda of a consortium be focused on a coherent analysis and priorities for action that have some chance of benefiting the poor and marginalized.
- In order for regionally-based consortia to play a leadership role they should as a priority contribute to defining policy agendas, via constructive criticism/dialogue with government (rather than deference). This role has proved very difficult for CODESU, given that half of its members are government institutions.
- In CONDESAN, with a much wider range of member institutions to provide leadership in novel areas, there is more scope for this. There are some promising signs that MANRECUR in Ecuador and more recently CGIAB in Bolivia are beginning to take on such a role in relation to governance of water resources at multiple scales.

2. IDRC support to consortia such as CONDESAN and CODESU began to help agricultural research institutions with which the centre had a long history of partnership broaden their agenda and take a more holistic approach to rural development. However:

- During the early and mid 1990's, IDRC was not directed and integrated enough in its own programming to provide the background concepts and testing needed to quickly influence the more mainstream Agricultural & NRM research agenda¹ (though slowly things have changed);
- There was no attempt made to define a theoretical framework that could situate the work of either consortium within a broader understanding of the processes driving change in the regions where they

¹ This is a critique that has been made by Mario Tapia and several others who received IDRC PISCA project era support and have seen IDRC move away from supporting technical productivity enhancement research.

are active. Such a framework has evolved in Carchi, Ecuador, via direct support for eco-regional analysis as part of the MANRECUR project (98-8756). Such a framework could still evolve in Ucayali from the work of graduate students Ernesto Ruez and Tamsyn Murray, and there may then be a role for IDRC in promoting this with willing partners. IDRC has an opportunity and a responsibility to keep supporting the development of such perspectives.

- IDRC has tended to work with and support individuals with different ideas and agendas at the edges of the established paradigms². This usually leaves such individuals on the periphery of their base organizations. This approach may have had an influence on the coordination of CONDESAN, perhaps even the choice of a new coordinator for the consortium (someone from a development background, as opposed to pure research).
 - Disciplinary biases within IDRC and long-standing professional relationships with CGIAR staff overrode real concerns from Centre social scientists in senior management about the vision and focus of CODESU at its inception. Inter-disciplinary critical review of projects, and a pipeline buffering mechanism that does not penalize PI's for delaying or canceling development of projects that are inadequate, are vital for program quality, relevance and ultimately impact.
 - "Loss of neutrality" can arise through close association between the centre and partner/recipient institutions during secondments. Seconded staff should not be involved in any project development work that involves their permanent employer/home institution.
3. The objectives of both consortia were overambitious given the funding situation in LAC as a whole, as well as funding crises of the mid-1990s in IDRC.
- CODESU was organized just about the time that the "Alternatives to Slash and Burn" project initiated and began funneling significant research funds to INIA, ICRAF and CIAT in Pucallpa. Shortly afterward USAID commenced significant funding of "alternative development" (coca-substitution) programming in the region. It is hardly surprising that this diverted a lot of the energy away from an IDRC agenda. The main outcome was that CODESU addressed the agenda of the largest development program in the region, USAID's drug substitution program, rather than the more difficult issues of how to develop environmentally sound and sustainable livelihoods for other more marginal groups, not just coca-producers, in the region.
 - The objectives of IDRC's CONDESAN III project were also probably too ambitious (especially "To improve community based decision-making in the area of NRM"); the coordination was not ready to conduct or promote research on these issues. However, by fully supporting the Resource Management II project in Ecuador (98-8754) as well, we have helped to indicate practicable ways forward, and slowly these ideas have taken stronger root amongst other members of CONDESAN.
4. Novel ideas cannot necessarily be put into practice by long-standing partners; turnover of partners is important.

The need for greater continuity

1. There seems to have been an overall weakening of research for development institutions in LAC, as the NGO boom of the 1980s and early 1990s eclipsed and as public and donor funding declined drastically for research. The insistence of IDRC management in the mid-1990's, responding to Canadian Government and public pressure, for visible "impact" over short periods of time, hence was somewhat at odds with the institutional environment in places like Pucallpa. How do we decide who to work with in a given context, and how long to stick with them trying to "make it work"? Building on the experiences with the two consortia reviewed here, some strategies are:
 - Selecting "savvier" researchers who understand the policy context, international agendas and pressures, and who empathize with the agendas of progressive NGOs and social movements and are willing to go out of their way to work with such organisations.

² Weber & Mujica (2000) found it was individuals within institutions who were the leaders in trying and implementing new ideas and usually in spite of their institutional power structure and base.

- Supporting young researchers with inter-disciplinary training and little of the old paradigmatic baggage of the Green Revolution.
 - Only committing to long-term institution-building initiatives if other donors or government programs are willing to provide the substantial sums required to support the non-research costs
2. As in many IDRC projects, long-term objectives are encapsulated in short term projects for funding and administrative purposes but with unrealistic expectations for results. In relation to the Centre's involvement in the process of support to both consortia, the lack of a good process to build "corporate memory" on the basis of longer term analysis and observations is apparent.
 3. Strong interpersonal relations between CONDESAN scientists and IDRC staff had developed over the years of support to farming systems research and via the CIDA funded projects in Peru and Bolivia. These relationships influenced IDRC's funding priorities. The desire for continuity in promising research at a time of reduced funding in the mid 1990's on the part of the program officers involved is understandable, but it was difficult to reconcile some of these projects, particularly those funded in 1996-7 (Bi-national resource management, 96-8761; Livestock in Ecoregional Research, 050245) with the new Minga prospectus approved for 1997-8.
 4. There is need for greater continuity of IDRC staff involvement at critical periods for specific initiatives. This could have made a big difference to the outcome of the DEPAM project with CODESU, for example. Once it got going, all the IDRC personnel involved in its development changed. More senior staff involvement might have been able to secure more timely CIAT support and buy-in to the project and to CODESU from the directors of its member institutions.

Conclusion

Detailed case studies of the two consortia that IDRC has supported in the Andes (CONDESAN) and the Amazon Basin (CODESU) demonstrate both strengths and weaknesses. Regional research consortia can make significant contributions to development processes, but only if they fill a clearly defined need, if strong leadership and a shared vision are present, and if the Centre is prepared to make long-run and concerted investments.

A long-term learning process, with appropriate monitoring and evaluation functions, then becomes vital both to the Centre and its research partners. The Centre as a whole would benefit from a framework or mechanism to look at research capacity strengthening, both at the organizational level and the consortium-network level. If all we have is personal contacts and linkages, then that is what we will get; if we want to move more toward knowledge systems development and the building of organizational and institutional capacities, then we need a way to consider and design projects which can respond to the criteria and needs for both institutional and organizational strengthening.

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Table 1: IDRC investments in research consortia

File #	Title	Core budget	Research budget	TOTAL IDRC	Parallel funding
CONDESAN					
100529	CONDESAN E-conference	25,415.00	-	25,415.00	-
92-8753	Sustainable Andean Development I	235,980.00	264,020.00	500,000.00	-
92-8762	Sustainable highland agriculture	94,000.00	222,400.00	316,400.00	-
93-8756	Policies for sustainable rural development	-	300,000.00	300,000.00	-
94-0014	Sustainable Andean Development Consortium II	583,000.00	417,000.00	1,000,000.00	950,000.00
96-0021	Infoandina	42,500.00	14,000.00	56,500.00	-
96-8751	Resource Management Ecuador	-	247,180.00	247,180.00	2,130,000.00
96-8761	Binational Resource Management	-	364,420.00	364,420.00	42,600.00
96-8763	Policy intervention in the High Andes	-	257,500.00	257,500.00	30,000.00
97-8754	Sustainable Andean Development Consortium III	168,150.00	373,040.00	541,190.00	4,236,000.00
98-8751	Rural sustainable agroindustries	-	374,990.00	374,990.00	10,000.00
98-8754	Resource Management Ecuador II	-	458,862.00	458,862.00	257,725.00
98-8759	Training & Exchange Program for Minga Benchmark Areas	-	48,139.00	48,139.00	-
	TOTAL CONDESAN	1,149,045.00	3,341,551.00	4,490,596.00	7,656,325.00
CODESU					

98-8759	Training & Exchange Program for Minga Benhamrk Areas	-	48,730.00	48,730.00	-
95-8753	Consortium for the Sustainable Development of Ucayali	257,232.00	177,458.00	434,690.00	-
97-8756	Poverty and the environment (Amazon)	160,980.00	295,730.00	456,710.00	-
95-0021	Amazonian Products (Peru)	-	102,740.00	102,740.00	-
	TOTAL CODESU	418,212.00	624,658.00	1,042,870.00	-
	 TOTAL	 1,567,257.00	 3,966,209.00	 5,533,466.00	 7,656,325.00