SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION POLICIES FOR DEVELOPMENT:
Looking back and thinking forward

The IDRC Science and Technology Policy Instruments (STPI) Project
40 years later

Introduction and background

In January 1973 the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Technology Development Unit of the Organization of American States (OAS) convened a "project identification meeting" in Barbados. The purpose was to design, organize and launch the "Science and Technology Policy Instruments" (STPI) project, which became the first large-scale international policy research network on science and technology for development.

The Barbados project identification meeting followed months of intense discussions and meetings in several developing countries, largely sponsored by IDRC and the OAS, in which several senior policy makers and researchers expressed their concerns about the lack of rigorous and useful information on the effectiveness of public policy instruments to promote the creation of science and technology capabilities in developing countries. Several of the participants in these meetings had attended the 'Study Seminars" organized by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and the Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU) at the University of Sussex, as well as several seminars organized by the OAS, the OECD, UNESCO and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Geoffrey Oldham, Deputy Director of SPRU and Director of IDRC's Science and Technology Policy program, and Maximo Halty, Director of the OAS Technology Development Unit, took the leadership in gathering a group of researchers to flesh out an approach to policy research that would help decision makers in developing countries to adopt the most appropriate mix of interventions to improve science and technology capabilities. The Barbados project identification meeting had participants from six Latin American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela) and from the Republic of Korea, India, Egypt and the Republic of Macedonia, as well as consultants who had developed background material for the project.

The STPI project started in August 1973 and concluded at the end of 1976, and a results dissemination phase extended till the end of 1979. A total of more than 150 researchers participated in the country teams in charge of preparing national reports, 30 consultants were asked to prepare reports on special topics, a Field Coordinator's Office with three staff members was established in Lima for the project, and the dissemination phase was carried out at the IDRC Latin America Regional Office in Bogota. Coordinating such a large international policy research network was a challenge at a time when neither Internet nor fax machines were available, and this

required frequent face to face meetings, extensive travel, use of regular mail and even the intensive use of telex machines.

More than thirty books and reports were produced as part of STPI, and the country teams produced many more working papers, documents and policy briefs. A large number of project coordination and technical meetings were held in various parts of the world, and this helped to build a tight and quite effective policy research network that quickly spread best practices. The impact of the STPI project was significant in most of the participant countries, and its results helped to shape the international debate on science, technology and development during the 1970s and 1980s.

Forty years later: looking back, watching the present and viewing the future
The fortieth anniversary of the STPI project identification meeting provides a unique opportunity to examine the long-term impact of the first large-scale, policy-oriented research initiative in science and technology policy for development; to evaluate the ways in which the knowledge acquired through the project helped to shape policy and decision making; and to assess how it affected the professional and personal development of those who participated in the project. Most of the country coordinators are still professionally active, and although some have moved to other fields, several are working on science and technology policy issues. Members of the STPI network have frequently acknowledged the influence that the STPI project had on their professional careers, on the advice they provided and decisions they made, and on their contributions to the field of science and technology policy for development. Sadly, some of the country coordinators are no longer with us, but a sufficiently large number of STPI network members remain and have expressed interest in taking part in an exercise to look back at the experience of STPI, and also to explore what lessons it may offer for the future.

Taking this into consideration, it is proposed to hold a STPI 40th anniversary event with the participation of as many members of the STPI network as possible, and also with members of the younger generations of science, technology and innovation policy researchers and decision-makers. The objectives of the gathering would be:

1. To reflect on the experience of STPI and the way in which it affected the personal and professional development of the members of the network, and particularly their contributions to policy and decision-making.
2. To examine the impact the STPI results had in shaping national, regional and international agendas for science and technology policy design and implementation, as well as the results of such policies. It is most unusual to have the opportunity, four decades later, to review experience and extract lessons that would be useful for policy makers and researchers at present.
3. To explore the implications of what has been learned in STPI and the subsequent decades for science, technology and innovation policies in the coming years.
4. To provide an opportunity for STPI network members to engage representatives of the new generation of science, technology and innovation policy researchers and decision-makers in debate and discussion, seeking to

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transmit the experience and knowledge acquired in the four decades since the STPI project was launched.

Venue, materials and schedule

The STPI 40-year review meeting will take place in Lima and Paracas, Peru, during August 2-7and will be divided into two segments. The first will last a day and a half and will be devoted to a reunion of STPI network members, who will focus discussion on the first two objectives indicated above. The second part of the meeting will last two days, will be devoted to the third and fourth objectives, and the meetings would take place in Lima with participants from the STPI network, younger science and technology policy researchers, and local authorities. FORO Nacional Internacional, one of the research centers associated with IDRC, will be in charge of the organization of the STPI+40 meeting.

All reports prepared as part of the STPI project are available in the STPI+40 webpage (see: http://kind-cind.org/blogstpi). Geoffrey Oldham, who supervised the STPI project for IDRC, prepared a background paper describing the origin of the project, the reasons why it was supported, the way it was implemented, the results obtained and the impact it had. Dr. Oldham based his paper on personal recollections and reflections, complemented by responses to a questionnaire sent to all STPI network members. The second paper will describe the current issues and concerns with regards to the design and implementation of science, technology and innovation policies, and has been prepared by Juana Kuramoto. In addition, a series of multimedia material (reports, papers, videos, tape recordings and social network activities) will be prepared as part of the STPI 40th and will be widely disseminated.