

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE IDRC-CELADE RELATIONSHIP IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF
THE LATIN AMERICAN POPULATION DOCUMENTATION SYSTEM (DOCPAL)

In 1973, the then existing Fertility Sector of CELADE, responding to requests for fertility bibliographies by country representatives in one of the commissions of the Latin American Social Science Council, considered the creation of a computerized system for storing and retrieving Latin American documentation on fertility, and eventually all population materials. Walter Mertens, then an Associate Director of the IDRC Population and Health Division, was asked for his personal comments on an internal memorandum, and he, in turn, requested the Information Science Division of IDRC for their technical comments. They sent CELADE various suggestions and indicated that IDRC would be interested in receiving a proposal.

Since IDRC doubted that CELADE had the capabilities for a computerized system, and CELADE refused to consider first developing a manual system, a Project Action Proposal (PAP) was offered by IDRC to provide a consultant to determine the feasibility and form of the proposed system. CELADE wrote the PAP in July 1974 setting out the terms of reference, and in December 1974, Helen Kolbe, then Deputy Director of the George Washington University computerized system POPINFORM, visited CELADE and submitted a report recommending from the start that the system include all Latin American population documentation rather than only fertility, that it be computerized and on-line, and that it be funded by IDRC for two years at a level far higher than previously envisioned by CELADE or IDRC.

The report was accepted by both IDRC and CELADE except with respect to the computer software recommended. IDRC insisted (correctly in hindsight) on the ISIS system that they were using, and after an IDRC financed visit of a CELADE staff member to see applications of ISIS, CELADE agreed to this condition.

At the request of IDRC, CELADE prepared a proposal in July 1975 taking the Kolbe report as its basis. The system, called the Latin American Population Documentation System (DOCPAL), was funded in November, 1975. These funds, Can\$ 448,000 in total including a supplementary grant, cover the period from March 1976 through February 1979. This First Phase is known as the DOCPAL Foundation Building Phase since CELADE had no previous experience with documentation systems and therefore had to develop its own skills and internal system and had to have something to offer before providing documentation services and technical assistance to the countries.

A proposal for the Second Phase, known as DOCPAL Country Population Documentation Development, was submitted to IDRC in January 1978 and approved by the IDRC Board of Governors in November 1978. It will provide Can\$ 303,500 for the period March 1979 through June 1980. During this period CELADE will be covering a little less than half the estimated total cost of DOCPAL.

After June 1980, it has been agreed with IDRC that the maintenance of the basic regional-level DOCPAL services and system in Santiago will be financed by CELADE with funds from United Nations sources.

OTHER DOCPAL-RELATED ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY IDRC

In February 1978, with funds from IDRC, the Head of DOCPAL and an IDRC Program Officer went to the United Nations Regional Institute of Population (RIPS) in Ghana to develop a proposal for the Population Information and Documentation System of Africa (PIDSA) for submission to IDRC. This system, which will be compatible with DOCPAL for eventual exchange of information, was recently funded by IDRC.

In July 1978 IDRC financed a meeting in Santiago with representatives of Population Index, PIDSA and DOCPAL, to discuss aspects of compatibility that will eventually permit the interchange of data tapes among the systems.