

Développement international Desjardins

50 YEARS
OF INCLUSIVE
FINANCE

1970-2020

Pierre-Olivier Maheux



Coordination: Mylène Bruneau
Editor: Marie-Ève Larue
English translation: Perry Bisaro and Jenn Cook
Graphic design: Pro-Actif
Photos: All photographs in this book have been taken from the DID
and Desjardins archives. Digitization by Jean-Philippe Bélanger.

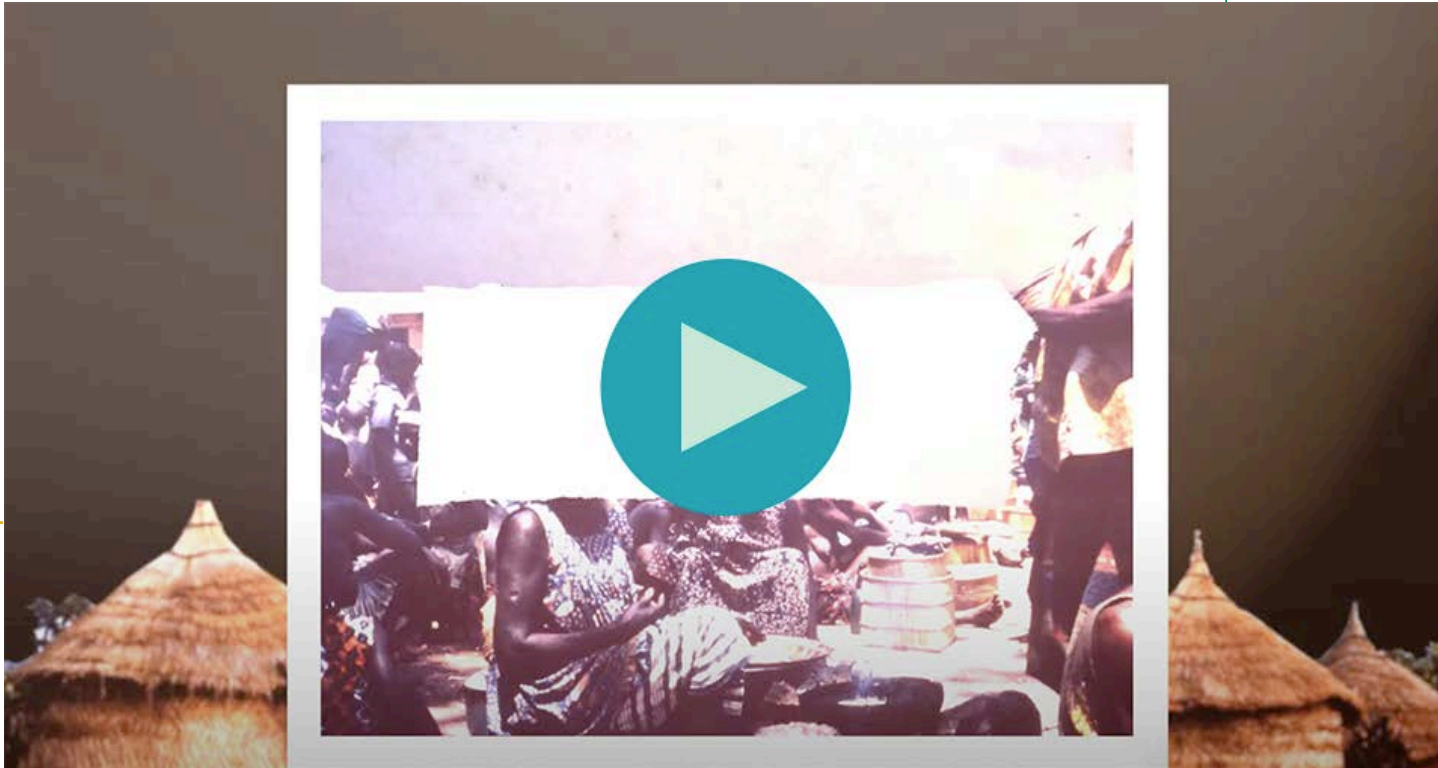
Les Éditions Dorimène
ISBN: 978-29818788-9-2
Legal deposit – Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec (2020)
Legal deposit – Library and Archives Canada (2020)

Les Éditions Dorimène
Fédération des caisses Desjardins
100 des Commandeurs
Lévis QC G6V 7N5
Canada

Telephone: 418 835-2090, ext. 5562507 or
1 866 835-8444, ext. 5562507
Email: shad@desjardins.com
desjardins.com

© Développement international Desjardins

WATCH THE VIDEO "50 YEARS OF INCLUSIVE FINANCE"



[View in your browser](#)





TABLE OF CONTENTS



Leading the pack in inclusive finance since 1970

Desjardins is part of Quebec's cultural fabric and a recognizable entity across most of Canada. But it remains a little-known fact that the cooperative group has also built up an international reputation in 60 developing and emerging economies.

That reputation is due in large part to the work of Développement international Desjardins (DID) and to the people behind it, who have made the organization the leader in development aid that it is today.

There are currently 1.7 billion adults in the world without access to official financial services. Setting the scale aside, that lack of access mirrors the situation in Quebec at the turn of the 20th century, before the caisses opened up new socio-economic opportunities for Quebecers. The progress and the positive social impacts from the cooperative model that followed are exactly what Desjardins wanted to share when it created DID.

Développement international Desjardins was launched in 1970 with the mission of exporting the know-how and experience Desjardins had acquired over 70 years to developing and emerging economies. As the organization carried out projects and developed partnerships around the globe, it also shared Desjardins's expertise and built a track record that made it a leader in economic development aid. DID's ability to adapt to project-specific needs and a history of proven performance has made the organization an important ally for its partners around the world.

Historically, DID has worked to create inclusive finance institutions in marginalized areas and to build up institutional knowledge and services around the world. The scope and the complexity of these projects is greater than ever. Increasingly, DID works with all the stakeholders in a given region or country to develop a comprehensive infrastructure for inclusive finance.

What we've learned from DID projects over the years is that access to financial services can be a powerful catalyst for change and can contribute to a whole range of development goals, like gender equality, entrepreneurship and economic growth, food security, adapting to climate change and more.

Now more than ever, DID is asked to take on complex mandates in a changing world. Health, safety and climate crises seem to come one after the next. And yet, the financial resources that the public and private sectors commit to development aid are repeatedly questioned and criticized, despite an obvious and persistent need. These types of challenges require DID's full capabilities and expertise, but what they require most of all is an ability to adapt.

The team at DID has shown an incredible ability to do just that—and do it in the face of ambiguity. The organization is fortunate that it can always count on support from Desjardins, which is in a constant state of evolution all its own.

I'm extremely proud to be at the helm of an organization like DID. I'm motivated by our mission to promote financial literacy and inclusiveness, by our values of cooperation and solidarity, by our team of dedicated professionals, by the strong friendships and partnerships we've forged over the years, and by the tangible long-term impact that we've been able to make.

I think you'll find our story interesting. And I hope that by learning more about what we do and how we got here, you'll get a sense of the passion that drives us to help others.

Gerardo Almaguer



Gerardo Almaguer, President and Chief Executive Officer





The Desjardins Campus in Lévis, Quebec, is home to Desjardins headquarters.

Under the radar

Cité Desjardins de la coopération sits atop the hills of Lévis, a city of 150,000 on the south shore of the Saint Lawrence river in Quebec, Canada. The Desjardins Campus, as it's known in English, is the headquarters of Desjardins, the sixth largest cooperative financial group in the world. For most of the residents of Lévis, the buildings form part of the local geography. They probably don't notice how often the flags in the square at the base of the main building are changed. Most days, the Desjardins banner, with its green hexagon on a white background, can be seen flying alongside the flags of Canada, Quebec and Lévis. But for a few days every year, passersby can see the yellow star on green and red of Burkina Faso; or the red and blue of Haiti; the lion of Sri Lanka or the tricolour of Lithuania or Colombia, to name a few. They are small but important changes, a nod to protocol when a foreign delegation is visiting the campus, often to learn more about Desjardins's cooperative model. The organization's international reputation has largely flown under the radar in Canada, much like Développement international Desjardins (DID), Desjardins's international development arm.

In 2020, DID celebrated 50 years of executing its mission to empower disadvantaged populations by providing access to diversified and secure financial services, including savings and credit; and of exporting Desjardins's expertise and experience to the emerging and developing countries where it operates.¹ There are few Canadian development organizations with a record as long as DID's. It's one that stretches over five decades and across almost every continent, made even more remarkable because it has held up in the face of fundamental changes around the globe, in international aid, with partners near and far, and inside Desjardins itself. The Lévis-based cooperative has developed and refined its know-how over the years to be just as relevant today as it ever was. It's that constant process of adaptation that will be covered in the five chapters of this book.

But before we can understand that evolution, we need to examine the international relationships that Desjardins founder Alphonse Desjardins developed even before the first *caisse populaire* opened its doors in 1900—and the relationships the organization built and maintained right up until the creation of DID in 1970.

In Chapter 1 I show that over those seven decades, Desjardins's international involvement ebbed and flowed. Sometimes the organization withdrew from the international scene, while at others it worked hard to create new international ties or played

an important role in Canada's early efforts in development aid. By the time Desjardins launched its international aid organization under the name CIDR-Canada, it already had some experience working overseas. But as I show in Chapter 2, the early years of the new entity weren't easy. Everything had to be built from the ground up, building institutional knowledge as it evolved and navigating a relationship with Desjardins that wasn't clearly defined on day one.



The DID offices in the Desjardins Building in Old Lévis, Quebec.

By the 1980s, which I cover in Chapter 3, the institution had matured and was more stable, in part because of the support of the cooperative financial group behind it. As it did early on, DID continued to execute projects that focused on savings, credit and rural development. The 1990s focused on microfinance, an increasingly popular field at the time. This period of growth, during which DID added investment to the technical assistance it was already providing, is covered in

Chapter 4. The fifth and final chapter of the book describes the evolution of DID over the last 20 years, as it adapted to new trends in development aid, providing technical assistance and investment services and building and staffing financial centres for entrepreneurs around the world. For over half a century, DID has been Desjardins's gateway to international development, acting locally and internationally

CHAPTER

1

DESJARDINS AND ITS FOUNDER, AROUND THE WORLD (1900–1970)



It's tempting to think of our current era as one shaped primarily by globalization, and those before it as periods in which communities and countries existed unconnected and independent from one another. But by the turn of the 20th century, the world was starting to become a smaller place. In 1908, Alphonse Desjardins commented that steamboats were already bringing continents closer together, and he understood that railways were transporting millions of people at speeds previous generations could never have imagined.¹ Two years later, he thought the increasing ease and speed of communication was turning the national market international,² a sentiment that also applied to the free movement of ideas. So Desjardins used those ideas to develop his model for the *caisse populaire*, soliciting advice from experts around the world. It wouldn't be long before he himself was being asked to use his expertise to help others.

We can view Alphonse Desjardins's *caisse populaire* project as an incarnation of his international relationships. But the man passed on in 1920, and the relationships he built died with him. It took several decades for Desjardins—the organization—to reassert itself in international networks and promote cooperative savings and credit around the world. By

the end of World War II, it was back, stronger and with a better structure. It began receiving an increasing number of requests for support from overseas and took its first steps toward a lasting international presence. This period paved the way for the creation of *Développement international* Desjardins in 1970.



Alphonse and Dorimène Desjardins with their daughter, Albertine, on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. Circa 1915.

Inspiration, around the world

On May 12, 1898, Alphonse Desjardins wrote to Henry W. Wolff, the author of *People's Banks* and the president of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), which had been founded just three years earlier. Desjardins was beginning a real investigation into cooperation, worldwide. His research put him in touch with dozens of representatives from the cooperative movement in Europe.³ From his first correspondence with Wolff, Desjardins declared his intention to create a cooperative banking institution in Canada.

On December 6, 1900, he accomplished that when he founded Caisse populaire de Lévis with the help of his wife, Dorimène Desjardins. There were approximately 100 members of that first savings and credit cooperative in North America, an institution that would seed the Desjardins of today. What Alphonse had done was create something new and original by taking features from the institutions and the systems he had learned about in the previous year and a half. There were elements of the caisses d'épargne—savings banks in France—and of Raiffeisen's credit union and Schulze's and Luzzatti's peoples' banks, in Germany and Italy, respectively. But he didn't only use what he had learned from other institutions abroad. He also applied the extensive practical experience he had from working with community groups in Lévis.

Encouraged by Wolff, Desjardins had founded the first *caisse* at a time when there was no existing legislation regulating cooperatives in Canada. He set to work learning all he could and building a strong case for cooperative financial institutions in the country. In 1902 he asked 15 cooperative leaders in Europe to fill out a questionnaire on existing laws in their own countries, even receiving the support of the ICA by way of a resolution from the organization's executive committee.⁴ Five years later, as he testified before a committee in the House of Commons in Ottawa, Desjardins had a wealth of information and support from across Europe, praising a report produced by the government of the Indies that he described as one of the best and most complete works on the topic,⁵ and citing another work produced by the United States Department of Agriculture. What Desjardins did was give Parliament an around-the-world tour of cooperatives, proving the extent to which cooperative organizations were already operating around the globe. His impressive list of contacts and knowledge only served to strengthen his argument.

Over the next few years, Desjardins built an international reputation as an expert on cooperative savings and credit. In 1905, he responded to a request from Jamaica to provide a copy of the *caisse* bylaws. He was also asked to provide some suggestions for a financial cooperative in India. And he was solicited to write an article for an economic review in Argentina. In 1913, he was named a Commander of the Order of St. Gregory the Great by Pope Pius X. Throughout, he continued crisscrossing Quebec, founding and promoting new *caisses populaires*. In 1908 alone he travelled over 8,000 km. But despite all his travel in Canada and his contacts around the globe, Desjardins only ever left the country to visit the United States.

Desjardins's first of five trips to the US turned out to be very influential. On November 24, 1908, he founded the first savings and credit cooperative in the country, Caisse populaire de Sainte-Marie de Manchester, in New Hampshire (today St. Mary's Bank). In the years that followed, US journalists, academics, public servants and philanthropists would write to Desjardins or visit him in Lévis or Ottawa to ask how the caisse structure worked. Desjardins had contacts in 22 different US states.⁶ In some, like Massachusetts and New York, he advised the government and helped draft bills allowing for the creation of credit unions. He was also invited to a conference for state governors on agricultural credit hosted by US President William Howard Taft, but unfortunately was unable to attend.

But Desjardins's life's work was in Canada, where he founded 136 caisses populaires in Quebec and another 18 in Ontario. Alphonse Desjardins died on October 31, 1920, before he could complete the project he'd been working on for years—to unite the caisses under a single federation.

Stepping onto the world stage

It took several years after Desjardins's passing to put the finishing touches on his project to unify the caisses. Between 1920 and 1944, 10 caisse regional unions were created. They in turn began meeting as the Fédération de Québec des unions régionales des caisses populaires Desjardins in 1932. The unions and the federation were essentially secondary and tertiary organizations that worked primarily to found, inspect and promote their member caisses.

While the federation focused on creating a framework inside Canada, conditions weren't exactly favourable to export the caisse structure abroad.⁷ The 1930s were marked by the Great Depression, which was followed closely by World War II (1939–1945), which essentially shuttered constructive international dialogue for the federation for 30 years. But by the 1950s the organization had matured, and relationships were reforged, pursued this time by an established organization rather than one—albeit driven—man.

Desjardins had grown significantly by the time the 1950s arrived. There were 1,000 caisses in Quebec with a total of 600,000 members and \$225 million in assets, in addition to two insurance companies. An international congress of savings and credit cooperatives was held in Lévis in 1950, highlighting the 50th anniversary of the inaugural caisse populaire. Delegates from Europe, the United States, Haiti and every Canadian province attended. The federation began building relationships with associations like the International Thrift Institute and the Confédération internationale du crédit populaire.



In 1950, Desjardins organized an international congress of savings and credit cooperatives to highlight the 50th anniversary of the inaugural caisse populaire. Shown here is Belgian delegate André De Guchteneere speaking during the opening session. On the left, Cyrille Vaillancourt, federation general manager; on the right, Msgr. Moses Coady from St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia; and Laurent Létourneau, federation president.

A second international congress was held in 1957 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the federation. The same year it became a member of the Conseil de la coopération du Québec, which also signalled its introduction into the circles of important national and international cooperative organizations,⁸ including the International Co-operative Alliance. The postwar period was a fertile time for this type of dialogue, and Desjardins's entrance onto the world stage was well-timed.

Two world wars and the failure of the League of Nations had a huge impact on the international community. A broad desire to establish lasting peace by working better together was channelled into the creation of the United Nations. Even before it was officially founded in 1945, several meetings had already been held under the name, including a United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture in Hot Springs, Virginia, USA, two years earlier.

The Canadian delegation at that conference included the usual cast of politicians and public servants, but it also included Cyrille Vaillancourt, the general manager of the federation. When he returned from Hot Springs, he informed caisse delegates that the cooperative structure was discussed as a possible solution at the conference and would have a place in the postwar world.⁹ The conference laid the groundwork for the Food and Agricultural Organization, which was officially created in Quebec City in October 1945 and was counted among the most important global institutions of the postwar period. One year earlier, the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference, since coined the Bretton Woods Conference, launched the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which was succeeded by the World Trade Organization in 1995. Gradually, this new group of international institutions incorporated development policies targeting the world's most impoverished nations.



The head of the federation's inspection department, Rosario Tremblay (far right), was a member of the 1953 Canadian delegation for the Colombo Plan with (right to left) J. Eddie O'Meara, Abbot J. J. McKinnon and Howard L. Trueman.

Public development aid

In 1950, a group of seven Commonwealth nations, quickly joined by the United States, created the Colombo Plan to promote cooperative economic development in South and Southeast Asia. It was one of the first instances in which Canada contributed significantly to international foreign development aid.¹⁰ In the winter of 1953, a Canadian delegation went on a fact-finding mission to Pakistan, India and Ceylon (modern day Sri Lanka) to learn more about how foreign aid could help. Included in the four-member delegation was Rosario Tremblay, the head of the federation's inspection department. His mandate was to find out just how the structure of Canadian savings and credit cooperatives could be implemented in the countries they visited.¹¹

The Colombo Plan, and development aid in general, can be viewed through the prism of the Cold War and the wave of European colonies declaring their independence. The battle between communist and capitalist blocs created the Third World, an expression designating countries that identified with neither. The United States saw international aid as a buttress against the encroaching threat of Communism in Third World countries, and as a mechanism for integrating those countries into the market economy. Canada did these things cautiously and timidly,¹² and they lined up squarely with US goals.

The United Nations declared the 1960s the Decade of Development. Mechanisms for delivering Canadian aid were improving and the federal government launched the External Aid Office in 1960. By the middle of the decade, the office's budget had increased significantly, and it was renamed the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in 1968. Canada was beginning to view aid as a means of asserting itself on the international stage. Similar efforts were underway in Quebec. Provincial cabinet minister Paul Gérin-Lajoie, who would later lead CIDA, defined a doctrine that bears his name, advocating that Quebec should conduct its own international relations in areas under its jurisdiction, as defined under the rules of confederation. The result was Canadian development aid that could now look outside the bounds of the Commonwealth and move into French-speaking Africa.¹³

But providing international assistance wasn't a new idea in Canada at the time. Since the second half of the 19th century, French-Canadian Catholic missionaries had been travelling to different corners of the globe. And after World War II, the papacy had encouraged its flock to assist those in need on several occasions. Despite the decreasing ranks of the Church throughout the 1960s, the number of Quebec missionaries rose significantly in every region of the globe.¹⁴ A congregation of Quebec Dominicans played an important role founding the National University of Rwanda in 1963, the first rector of which was none other than father Georges-Henri Lévesque, a prominent figure in Quebec.

In 1968, Pope Paul VI wrote the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, a section of which was titled, "Development, the New Name for Peace."¹⁵ Like *Rerum Novarum* in Alphonse Desjardins's time and *Quadragesimo Anno* in the 1930s, this new text from the Vatican resonated with people in the caisses. Several articles addressing the encyclical appeared in the federation's magazine, *Revue Desjardins*. The Haitian-Canadian editor-in-chief, Édouard-A. Tardieu, wondered if it wasn't time to think about planting more seeds now that the tree had produced a number of successful offshoots.¹⁶



Édouard-A. Tardieu, a pioneer of savings and credit cooperatives in Haiti, was editor-in-chief of *Revue Desjardins* in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He's shown here in 1967 (far left) with Msgr. Emmanuel Kebreau, priest at the Sainte-Anne de Port-au-Prince parish in Haiti, and Rosario Tremblay.



Beginning in the 1950s, Quebec missionaries began helping launch financial cooperatives in other countries, including approximately 50 in Haiti with the participation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. This photo was taken during a caisse meeting at Camp-Perrin.

The caisses gain popularity

In the 1950s, Quebec missionaries had started creating financial cooperatives in different countries around the world. In Haiti, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate launched approximately 50. In Japan, a Jesuit and a priest from the Quebec Foreign Mission Society got 15 more off the ground. And a friar from the Congregation of Holy Cross created savings cooperatives at schools in Pakistan.¹⁷

These independent, isolated actions were on Desjardins's radar, and the organization was sympathetic. But they didn't trigger any official technical or financial support. Throughout the 1960s, the federation was ambivalent about its role on the international stage. On one hand, it donated several thousand dollars to create caisses in rural Brazil, and caisse regional unions did the same for a project in Basutoland (modern day Lesotho).¹⁸ On the other hand, Desjardins declined an invitation to attend the 1968 Nairobi Conference in Kenya, which ultimately led to the creation of the African Confederation of Cooperative Savings and Credit Associations.¹⁹

In Lévis, visitors from around the globe who were curious about how caisses populaires operated occasionally turned up. In fact, Mexican visitors had already visited a caisse and the offices of the federation by October 1945.²⁰ Grant recipients from India, Burma, Pakistan, Cambodia and other countries visited between 1956 and 1961. For some, a good part of their trip to Canada was spent at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. The institution had founded the Coady International Institute in 1959 to train Canadian and foreign students in development that focused on the cooperative model and on adult education. It served as the inspiration for the Desjardins Cooperative Institute (DCI), which provided a framework to welcome visitors and was the catalyst for Desjardins Group to begin concerted international activities.²¹



From the Desjardins Cooperative Institute to the Tremblay-Barbin report

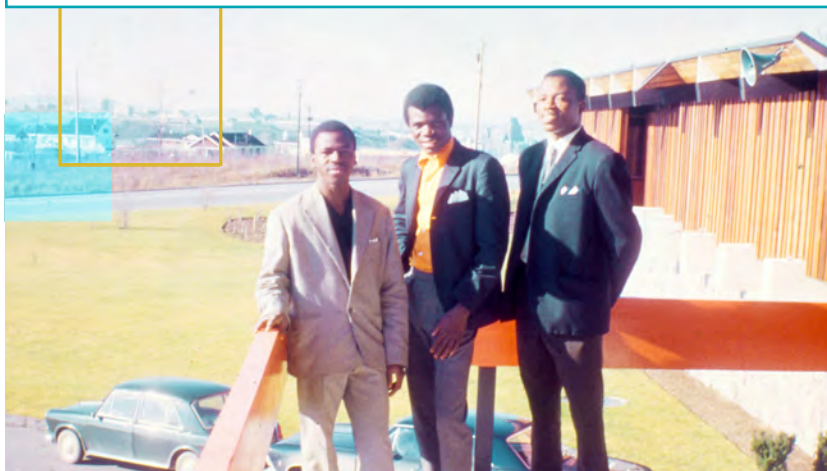
On December 4, 1963, the DCI was inaugurated as a training centre on the Desjardins Campus in Lévis. The institute's target audience went well beyond Desjardins Group employees and officers. The general manager, Gérard Barbin, wanted to bring as many organizations as possible to Lévis for training.²² The preamble in the founding DCI bylaws clearly stated his international goals, highlighting a concern for economic and social problems present in developing countries and convinced that true cooperative education could help solve those problems. The bylaws made clear that Desjardins Group officers were focused on making the DCI a socio-economic training centre that would benefit interns from developing countries.²³



Paul Gérin-Lajoie, Quebec minister for youth and future president of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), attends the inauguration of the Desjardins Cooperative Institute (DCI) on December 4, 1963.



Between July and November 1966, the DCI gave its flagship training course in cooperation to 19 External Aid Office scholarship-winners from 10 French-speaking countries in Asia and Africa. Here Michel Doray and Yvan Forest from the DCI (standing, 2nd and 3rd from the left) pose for a photo with trainees.



In 1964, its first year of operation, the DCI partnered with the External Aid Office to welcome approximately 20 interns from the Antilles and five from Cambodia. The next year, 24 union representatives from French-speaking Africa spent 12 days at the institute. Several preparatory sessions were scheduled for volunteers in the Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO) in Quebec, and others in Africa. Between July and November 1966, the DCI gave its flagship training course in cooperation to 19 External Aid Office scholarship winners from 10 French-speaking countries in Asia and Africa.



During a mission to Africa, Rosario Tremblay and Gérard Barbin (far left and far right, respectively) met Msgr. Jean Zoa (2nd from left), Archbishop of Yaoundé, Cameroon, and Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger (3rd from left), who stepped down from his role as Archbishop of Montreal two years earlier to become a missionary.

The training set off a serious evaluation of the possibility of creating a permanent mechanism for collaboration between the DCI and African organizations.²⁴ Michel Doray was put in charge of the project. Doray headed up international activities for the DCI and would later be president and CEO of DID in the 1980s. The initiative established contacts in Europe and Africa and led to another trip in April 1970. This time, Gérard Barbin, the DCI general manager, and Rosario Tremblay, now in charge of public relations for the federation, travelled to Cameroon and Upper Volta (modern day Burkina Faso).

In Cameroon, the two met Msgr. Jean Zoa, the Archbishop of Yaoundé, who had visited Quebec and wanted to create caisses populaires in his own country.²⁵ They also ran into a familiar face: Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger, who had stepped down from his role as Archbishop of Montreal two years earlier to go on a mission. In Upper Volta, they met with several members from the Compagnie internationale de développement rural (CIDR-France), a French aid organization already active in the region. Its president and general manager, Count Bertrand de La Rocque, had already been soliciting Desjardins Group for technical support for some time.²⁶ Two CIDR-France employees, including the chef de mission in Ouagadougou, Paul Préault, had actually attended the DCI training the previous summer, which may have indicated the organization's desire to form closer ties.²⁷

The Tremblay-Barbin report was submitted to the federation in May 1970. It recommended that the federation immediately prepare an integrated action plan for assistance to developing countries that would maximize the impact of Desjardins's activities and provide effective monitoring.²⁸ The two authors suggested that four specialists from the caisses populaires travel to Africa—two to Cameroon to support the teams working in the community from Msgr. Zoa's diocese, and two to Upper Volta to collaborate with CIDR-France. Federation directors quickly accepted the recommendations and an important announcement was made to all the caisses and regional unions in the fall of 1970: Desjardins Group would help found and launch financial cooperatives in the

developing countries shortly. A committee was created and discussions began with CIDA and CUSO.

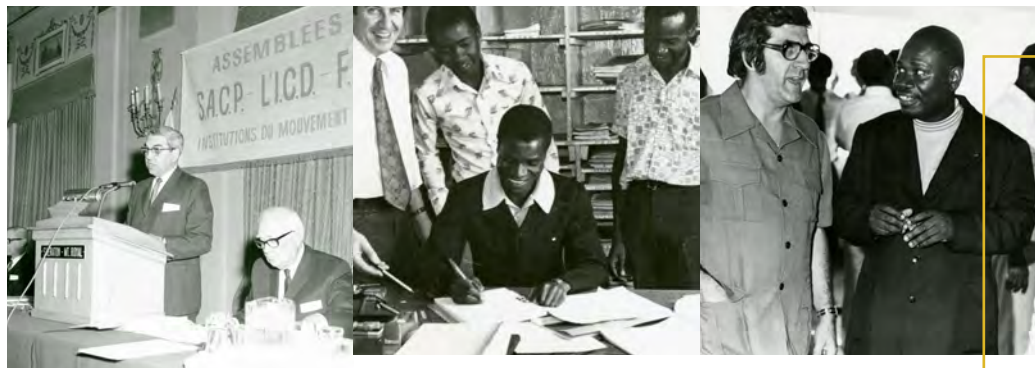
Initially, the plan was for projects in Africa to be coordinated through CIDR-France, but Desjardins quickly realized that foreign organizations weren't eligible for CIDA funding. Generally speaking, countries only fund their own aid organizations. So a new recommendation was submitted in February 1971 to the federation's board of directors, to coordinate the projects through CIDR-Canada, which had only been created a few months before.



CHAPTER

2

COMPAGNIE INTERNATIONALE DE DÉVELOPPEMENT RÉGIONAL (1970–1978)



The early years of the Compagnie internationale de développement régional limitée (CIDR-Canada) are often associated only with savings and credit cooperative projects in Africa. But activities were much broader than that. And it bears mentioning that simply establishing the organization took a lot of work and was very complex. The 1970s were a period of development for the organization, as neither ties to Desjardins Group nor its mandate were clearly defined. In fact, the decade was somewhat precarious.

Founding CIDR-Canada

On November 16, 1970, a team of Montreal lawyers received the letters patent to create the Compagnie internationale de développement régional, or CIDR-Canada. The name of the company was slightly different than that of its French counterpart, focusing on “regional” rather than “rural” development. It was the entity that would eventually become Développement international Desjardins. Two days after its creation the lawyers acting as temporary administrators handed control over to the people behind the idea.

We can point to Raymond Audet as the central figure in the founding of CIDR-Canada. He would serve as the first chair of the board, president and CEO following a role as the head of the federation’s inspection department in the second half of the 1960s. In fact, he and Simon L’Heureux had just finished launching the integrated system (Système intégré des caisses) that revolutionized caisse operations. He was looking for a new challenge and had always been interested in exploring developing countries.¹



Raymond Audet is recognized as a primary founder of CIDR-Canada. He's shown here at the 1969 Desjardins annual general meetings.

In 1975, Desjardins president Alfred Rouleau noted that it wasn't Desjardins Group that had created CIDR-Canada, but the contribution of many, some of whom happened to be with Desjardins. He said CIDR-Canada was launched with the hope that it would become a tool for Desjardins and would eventually be part of the organization.² His is a difficult opinion to counter. He and other important players were among the founding board members. Rouleau himself was the head of two Desjardins life insurance companies. Paul-Émile Charron had just succeeded Cyrille Vaillancourt as general manager of the federation. Both men were prospective candidates for the role of Desjardins president, which would be created a few months later. Gérard Barbin, the general manager of the DCI and co-author of the report submitted in May 1970, also

sat on the board, as did Louis A. Desrochers, an Alberta lawyer and director of the Desjardins Life Assurance Company. An interesting fact, one of the employees on the board of directors was Marthe L'Espérance, a secretary working for Desjardins and the right-hand of Raymond Audet at CIDR-Canada.

After the company was launched, it had a closer relationship to France than it did to Desjardins, despite six of the ten directors having direct ties to Desjardins. CIDR-France founder, Count Bertrand de La Rocque, also sat on the board. According to Raymond Audet, he was the person who had started the process for the letters of patent. He must have moved quickly and without consulting local players, which would explain why the project wasn't handled by the legal firm Desjardins regularly dealt with.³

The headquarters of Groupe CIDR were in Autrêches, France, approximately 100 km north of Paris on a large estate known as L'Hermitage. De La Rocque had founded a centre for people with leprosy and disabilities in the late 1950s after having lived in Africa for several years. He created CIDR-France to honour the wishes of the sick people he had met. They told him they wanted to see progress in underdeveloped countries.⁴ The company's agricultural projects in Africa gave farmers a modest income and created the need for basic financial services, like savings and credit. This is why de La Rocque went to Desjardins for technical help. According to Rosario Tremblay, de La Rocque had met Alfred Rouleau decades before and that influenced his decision to turn to Desjardins.⁵

CIDR-Canada was established as a limited liability company, like the other entities in the French group it was affiliated with. The company didn't want to be perceived as giving charity, but rather offering professional technical services.⁶ The money generated by the organization was reinvested into its projects, so it wasn't set up to enrich shareholders. In



terms of equity, Groupe CIDR's initial commitment to invest \$100,000 didn't happen as quickly as planned. At the time, Raymond Audet was promoting an equity share for Desjardins so it could gain control of the company.⁷ At its start, CIDR-Canada was connected to Groupe CIDR, which shared ownership with Desjardins.



CIDR-Canada's first offices were located at 55 Avenue Bégin, in Lévis, Quebec.

Launch and early projects

The letters of patent issued in November 1970 marked the legal creation of CIDR-Canada. But then the hard work began. Over the next several months, offices were set up at 55 Avenue Bégin in Lévis, in a building owned by the Union régionale des caisses populaires Desjardins de Québec. The organization had two main priorities: establishing cooperatives in developing countries (primarily savings and credit cooperatives) and coordinating aid following natural disasters.⁸ The second of these was overseen by Michael Trew, a former consultant for the Food and Agricultural Organization living in British Columbia, Canada, but the priority was eventually dropped after several years of very little activity.⁹



Michel Lagacé moved to Bougouriba, a region in Southwest Upper Volta, to help launch caisses populaires. He's shown here (seated, third from left) during the meeting that founded Caisse populaire de Koper.

The official launch of CIDR-Canada activities took place on November 17, 1971. Newlyweds Michel and Andrée Lagacé were introduced in the leadup to their honeymoon and eventual relocation to Upper Volta. Michel was setting up a project to establish caisses populaires for CIDR-Canada and Andrée would be working as a nurse. In the words of a journalist who covered the launch at the time, they were young, good-looking, and full of hope—how could they fail?¹⁰ Michel had gotten a job with the federation's inspection department one year earlier with the express purpose of eventually working for CIDR-Canada. He was the first expert sent by the organization to head up a savings and credit project. Following six weeks of training in Autrêches, the couple travelled to Bougouriba, a region in Upper Volta where they would live for the next two years. Another CIDR-Canada employee, Michel Blais was already in the region of Koupéla, working as an agronomist in a rural development project for CIDR-France.

The Tremblay-Barbin report had recommended that Desjardins Group help establish caisses populaires not only in Upper Volta, but also in Cameroon. That project began in 1972 under the leadership of Jean-Louis Rouleau, who had also come out of the federation's inspection department.¹¹ Three years later, CIDR-Canada would take over another savings and credit cooperative project in Zaire (modern day Democratic Republic of Congo) that had been launched in 1970 by Canadian credit unions. The credit unions had hired Desjardins employee Paul Beaulieu to work in the French-speaking country.

In addition to its international activities, CIDR-Canada also conducted cooperative awareness activities in Indigenous communities, primarily in northern Quebec, led by Serge Bédikian.¹² This was no surprise, as chair of the board, president and CEO Raymond Audet had actually founded

the Caisse populaire de Puvirnituq and was involved with the Fédération des coopératives du Nouveau-Québec, which had been running a centre for Inuit art since the mid-1960s out of the same building where CIDR-Canada had set up its headquarters.

Bordering on bankruptcy

Projects were being created and launched, but it quickly became clear that company finances were in bad shape. The campaign recruiting CIDR-Canada shareholders hadn't been very successful within Desjardins, reaching only half of the \$100,000 goal by the fall of 1972. According to Raymond Audet, the organization was able to start up operations despite the weak response,¹³ but those operations were largely financed by a long-term loan of \$100,000 from the Union régionale des caisses populaires Desjardins de Québec. Capitalization, however, wasn't the organization's only cause for concern. After a year of constant negotiations¹⁴ the organization had realized that its structure of a limited liability company was affecting its ability to obtain financing from CIDA's non-governmental organizations (NGOs). A foundation was set up in the hopes of creating a workaround, but the process was a long one. CIDR-Canada found itself with no working capital and over \$150,000 in debt.¹⁵

Nevertheless, a federation report in 1973 still recommended that CIDR-Canada continue to execute Desjardins projects and try to reach the original capitalization goal.¹⁶ But by the end of that September, Desjardins president Alfred Rouleau informed Raymond Audet that no new financing would be awarded, and no new projects would be approved. Activities would need to be reduced to an absolute minimum and any projects currently underway would be transferred to the DCI. CIDR-Canada had two options: liquidate or give over total control to Groupe CIDR.¹⁷

The organization chose the latter. Over a two-day CIDR-Canada board of directors meeting held November 27 and December 1, 1973, a resolution was passed transferring all Desjardins Group shares to an individual to be named by de La Rocque. That person was Yvon L'Heureux, an entrepreneur from Belœil and a founding CIDR-Canada board member. L'Heureux had been a Liberal member of Parliament in the House of Commons in the early 1970s and a common acquaintance had introduced him to de La Rocque, who would convince him to get involved in development initiatives in developing countries.¹⁸ Guy Bédard, who also seemed to have personal ties to the French count,¹⁹ was elected to the board of directors on the spot. Following a proposal by de La Rocque, Bédard was named interim president and CEO and Raymond Audet, who retained the title of chair, was temporarily assigned to the project in Cameroon.

Since the early 1970s, different voices had commented on Desjardins's seeming ambivalence toward its involvement in the developing world. One of those had been Rosario Tremblay inside the federation, and Yvon Daneau while he was general manager of the Conseil de la coopération du Québec.²⁰ Daneau represented his organization on the CIDR-Canada board of



In 1974, Guy Bédard (left) and Yvon L'Heureux (right) became president and CEO and board chair, respectively, of CIDR-Canada. They're shown here with M. B. Mukong (centre), president of the African Confederation of Cooperative Savings and Credit Associations, in Nairobi, March 1976.

directors and spoke about Desjardins's reluctance in the field. The ambivalence about the future of CIDR-Canada, Daneau said, was a perfect example. But the board meeting seemed to put an end to any hesitation that Desjardins may have had on the subject. Desjardins was withdrawing from the company. Although a complete reversal would follow in the spring.

Renewed enthusiasm

At the next CIDR-Canada board meeting, in June 1974, the resolution concerning the transfer of shares was revised. The shares held by Desjardins's regional unions and entities would be transferred to the federation, while a small number were to be sold to Yvon L'Heureux and to Opération Haute-Volta, which would become a new shareholder. Desjardins had reviewed its position and decided to maintain a relationship with CIDR-Canada. It's hard to know why the change happened. Documents available seem to indicate that de La Rocque didn't meet all the conditions of the deal, leading to its cancellation.²¹ The ambiguity about the relationship between CIDR-Canada and Desjardins remained, but now Rosario Tremblay sat on the board of directors and had a mandate to create ties with the federation.²²

Next, the public face of CIDR-Canada changed completely. The employees who helped launch the organization, Raymond Audet, Marthe L'Espérance and Serge Bédikian, stepped down, and interim president and CEO Guy Bédard was made permanent. Yvon L'Heureux accepted the role of chair of the board at Alfred Rouleau's request,²³ and Pierre-F. Côté, the clerk for Quebec

City, who would later go on to become the first chief electoral officer for the province of Quebec, in 1978, was recruited to become secretary. The financial situation was far from rosy, but CIDR-Canada had so far avoided bankruptcy and liquidation.

The organization's main creditor, Union régionale des caisses populaires Desjardins de Québec, was very understanding. Jacques Bertrand, the director of finance, became CIDR-Canada treasurer and vice-chair of the board, which also included one of the creditor's comptrollers, who would oversee the financial recovery. In 1975, the company moved into profitability, though getting there had taken a general manager willing to try almost anything to achieve it, according to a consultant's report.²⁴ Guy Bédard had been active in international aid since the mid-1960s and founded Opération Haute-Volta and Rallyes Tiers-Monde. He brought extensive experience in the field and a broad network of contacts with him. He adopted two new pillars for the organization: participation in bilateral or multilateral financing projects, and consulting through an office conducting studies and analyses.

Thanks to ties with NGO Opération Haute-Volta, CIDR-Canada obtained its first large contract for a project with the Office de développement régional du Centre-Est de Koupéla, in Upper Volta. The \$2 million price tag was financed by CIDA over five years and the project's integrated approach led to the creation of a farming equipment cooperative and a savings club. The contract did nothing less than save CIDR-Canada.²⁵ The company was then quickly selected to team up with an engineering firm for a development project in the marshland valley of Mutara, Rwanda. The \$6 million contract was the first that would be awarded to CIDR-Canada from the bilateral financing section of CIDA, which developed

projects based on agreements the Government of Canada had with other nations. Bilateral financing projects generally had bigger budgets. The company also set up a consulting office that provided services to CIDA. Beginning in 1974, it authored a series of studies on the potential for cooperatives, rural development, marketing agricultural products, water management, and fishing in Africa and Latin America. New experts were also sent to the caisses populaires in Upper Volta, Zaire and Cameroon. In 1976, they were all brought under the same umbrella, in partnership with the African Confederation of Cooperative Savings and Credit Associations.²⁶



Paul Beaulieu (standing left) went to Zaire in 1970 for a savings and credit cooperative project launched by Canadian credit unions. In 1975 he took over savings and credit projects for CIDR-Canada.

The CIDR-Canada team remained small, but it had built up solid experience. When Paul Beaulieu returned from Zaire in 1975, he took on the lead role for savings and credit projects. Two years later, Michel Lagacé returned to the company as the chief administrative and financial officer. The organization now had rural development consultants with high-level training and hands-on experience in the field. People like Paul T. Perreault, Jean-Claude Mailhot and Paul Préault, who had come over to CIDR-Canada after several years with its French counterpart. There were indicators that Groupe CIDR was losing steam in the second half of the 1970s.²⁷ Bertrand de La Rocque's secretary, Monique Breteau, had also made the jump to the Canadian company and remained there until her retirement in the early 1990s.

*"I was attracted to the deeply human aspect of the organization.
From my first days with the organization in 1971, I felt that there
was a great respect for individuals as well as a willingness to listen.
These are two essential traits for working in development."*

– Monique Breteau, assistant to the DID President and CEO (2005)

At a shareholders meeting in the spring of 1976, Guy Bédard told attendees that the company had finished taking its halting early steps and the uncertainty that marked its beginning had passed.

In short, CIDR-Canada was here to stay.²⁸ They were finally able to see past the short term and plan for the future, although questions about the company's relationship with Desjardins remained.

Relaunch and integration with Desjardins

In 1975, Desjardins organized an international congress in Montreal to highlight the 75th anniversary of the founding of the first *caisse populaire* by Alphonse Desjardins. Desjardins president Alfred Rouleau used his closing remarks to praise the cooperative formula as a way for developing countries to take their futures into their own hands.²⁹ He suggested that CIDA create a section dedicated solely to cooperative projects, something that would actually happen five years later when the organization created the Institutional Cooperation and Development Services Program (ICDS). He also spoke about Desjardins's activity in Africa and presented the projects in Upper Volta and Cameroon.

Within CIDR-Canada, there was a desire for Desjardins to be more involved. Beginning in 1977, managers and technical professionals at the organization began an in-depth analysis to relaunch the company on a bigger scale and under a new organizational structure.³⁰ The decision was taken to transition toward something that more closely resembled a consulting firm with "senior associates," shareholders who would actively manage the company. The organization would be rebranded under a new name and headquarters would be moved to Montreal to facilitate travel abroad and to Ottawa. The relaunch also depended on a substantial increase in capital from the Quebec cooperative movement writ large. By holding a majority stake in the company, the cooperative community would then be able to benefit from the spinoffs of successful projects.³¹

In December 1977, the relaunch was presented to an enthusiastic CIDR-Canada executive committee that also had suggestions.³² A handful of initiatives were accepted or selected for further analysis over the next several months, but the plan was never finalized. First off, the proposed compensation and management models didn't fit well with Desjardins.³³ Second, the document was focused on rural development, with savings and credit somewhat sidelined—for Desjardins, developing cooperatives and financial cooperatives in particular needed to be a top priority, or at least among them.³⁴ The question of how much would go to rural development and to savings and credit would be a fundamental issue in the evolution of DID, which will be addressed in the next chapter.

But more than anything, the proposed relaunch was being developed while major changes were already underway.³⁵ There had always been too much ambiguity in the company

and the federation needed to have a clear position in relation to CIDR. During a meeting with the CIDR-Canada executive committee in December 1977, federation general manager René Croteau described the company as a child in search of its mother.³⁶ It was a position that had been expressed before, but now the time was right for action. The next spring, Desjardins committed \$250,000, taking an 80% stake in the company and the majority of seats on the board of directors.³⁷ CIDR-Canada had essentially been folded into Desjardins. In the years that followed, other players in the cooperative movement would follow suit. The Coopérative fédérée du Québec and the Conseil de la coopération du Québec took a share in the company, after having been shareholders for a brief time earlier in the decade, as did the fishing and cooperative retail industries, through the Pêcheurs unis du Québec and the Fédération des magasins Coop.

The new relationship with Desjardins Group brought with it several changes and ultimately marked the end of an era at CIDR-Canada. A decade into its existence, it was a good time to stop and take stock of the organization's accomplishments. The company completed projects in savings and credit, rural development, and studies and analyses. The first wave of activity was concentrated in Upper Volta, Cameroon and Zaire, to varying degrees of success. In 1979, 84 caisses totalling approximately 40,000 members were operating in the three countries. Savings totalled the equivalent of almost CAN\$3 million, and loans CAN\$1.3 million. Three caisses regional unions were also established. In addition to the rural development projects in Upper Volta and Rwanda, an important project, COMAGRI, was launched in Zaire to help market agricultural products within the country. Other smaller projects also got off the ground in Peru, Brazil, Lesotho and Mauritania. A total of 30 studies and analyses were completed, only two of which focused on new financial cooperatives. The analyses conducted by CIDR-Canada helped the company move their activities into other African, South American and Caribbean countries, including Niger, Benin, Tanzania, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Togo, Chad, Colombia, Peru and Haiti.³⁸



Inauguration of Caisse de Diébougou.

"If the network had not benefited from DID financial and technical assistance, it would not have been able to achieve what it has today. What is important to emphasize is that DID is a partner that understands, participates and listens to the concerns and issues important to local partners. A participatory approach is used in which the local partner is always at the forefront. In the field of savings and credit, DID has a global reputation for its specialized expertise that delivers substantive results. What we found the most edifying in this relationship was the complementary nature of the two cultures. As one culture from the South and one from the North, we achieved a synthesis that enabled the RCPB to reach very splendid goals."

– Daouda Sawadogo, General Manager, Réseau des caisses populaires du Burkina (RCPB) (2010)

CIDR-Canada's first decade was far from a smooth ride. The company's mere survival had been an open question on several occasions. Without the perseverance and the sacrifices³⁹ made by the founders and the early believers, and the financial flexibility of the Union régionale des caisses populaires Desjardins de Québec, its history would have been fleeting. But as with several Desjardins entities, CIDR-Canada's modest beginnings didn't stop the company from achieving its founding goals.

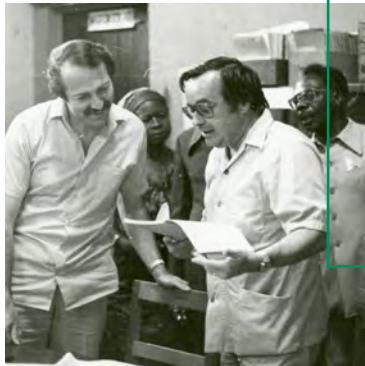


The launch of DID is an opportunity to introduce Michel and Andrée Lagacé, who are about to leave for Upper Volta



CHAPTER

3



FROM TELLER'S WINDOW TO FARMER'S FIELD (1979–1989)



CIDR-Canada spent its first decade getting operations off the ground and establishing stability. Things were going well enough that by the early 1980s there was much less doubt about the future of the organization. But the company hadn't completed its evolution, as it underwent a name change and became the Société de développement international Desjardins. Initially, the rebranded company continued executing projects in savings and credit and in rural development. But by the end of this 10-year stretch, they had evolved into something that more closely resembles the organization we see today.

A new link in the Desjardins chain

Federation directors saw CIDR-Canada becoming a new link in the Desjardins chain—and everything that meant in terms of institutional responsibility and brand image.¹ The new status of the organization resulted in some changes that boosted Desjardins's involvement. Yvon L'Heureux stepped down as chair of the board and handed the role over to Desjardins president Alfred Rouleau, although L'Heureux did remain on the board for a short while. A year later, Guy Bédard took a sabbatical from his administrative duties as president and CEO of CIDR-Canada so he could spend a year focusing on research and analysis,² eventually landing a job at the Université coopérative internationale. In April 1979, Yvon Daneau replaced Bédard and took over as president and CEO. As

one of the main organizers of the international congress held in Montreal in 1975 and briefly a member of the CIDR-Canada board of directors, he was the only senior manager at Desjardins with international experience.³ But his term was short-lived. He was named secretary general of the federation one year later, although he would continue to sit on the CIDR-Canada board until his retirement in 1989. That meant the position was taken up by Michel Doray, who would hold it for the next 10 years. He had been involved early with the DCI in the 1960s and had played an important role in its international activities.⁴

In addition to changes in management at the top of the organization, CIDR-Canada's integration into Desjardins brought with it other changes that began in earnest in the fall of 1979.⁵ The head office was moved to the Desjardins Campus, where most of Desjardins's offices were located. The move perfectly encapsulated the new order, much like the name change that came with it, to Société de

développement international Desjardins (SDID), which would eventually be shortened to Développement international Desjardins (DID) in 1994. The organization's logo was also redesigned to sit inside the Desjardins Group hexagon, providing a visual reminder about the new relationship.



SDID moved to the Desjardins Campus in Lévis, Quebec, where Desjardins Group kept most of its offices.



In the fall of 1981, the rebranded organization defined its first mission statement, two years before Desjardins had even identified its own. It provided a framework for SDID activities for the decade to come:

Contribute to the creation, promotion and empowerment of businesses and relevant community organizations in developing countries by providing research services, mentorship and consultation in rural and cooperative development to aboriginal communities and organizations committed to self-governance and development that will meet basic needs [...] and increase individual and family incomes.⁶

The statement highlighted the activities that the organization had engaged in since its beginnings: rural development and cooperative development. Missing though was an explicit mention of savings and credit.

In January 1984, a group of external analysts published a report recommending SDID become a non-profit so the organization's legal status would more closely reflect its stated goals and how it conducted its operations.⁷ The next year, the company originally created in 1970 was dissolved and a non-profit created in its place. But the move resulted in changes among institutional members. Between 1985 and 1989, most of the institutional members were exclusively from Desjardins: the confederation (previously known as the federation), the caisse regional federations (previously known as the regional unions), insurance companies and Desjardins Trust. The board of directors was made up of a few senior managers, but was mostly officers elected to a board at their caisse and to the board of the regional federation. As an example, for four years the chair of the board was Henri-Paul Trudel, president of the Fédération des caisses populaires Desjardins du Centre-du-Québec. A 1987 report suggested admitting external organizations as well to diversify the pool of board members.⁸ Two years later, SDID recruited Université Laval and the Coopérative fédérée, which had been a member several years earlier.



SDID employees with Desjardins president Raymond Blais (seated, centre).

All these moves improved the structure and no doubt had an impact on SDID's growth during this time. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of employees grew from 25 to 80, business volume from less than \$2 million to \$12 million, and net profit from \$21,000 to \$197,000.⁹ The organization also benefited from another key element, more generous—and more consistent—funding.

A boost in funding

In the early 1980s, there was a lot of interest in international development. A famine in Ethiopia in the fall of 1984 was widely covered in the media and prompted a widespread fundraising effort among the general public.¹⁰ It was the era of *We Are the World* and the *Live Aid* concerts. One observer at the time referred to it as an explosion of international solidarity, with multiple projects taking place, including some carried out by small, suburban or more or less rural NGOs.¹¹ The government of Canada increased its budget for development aid from \$1.3 billion in 1980–1981 to more than \$2.5 billion for 1986–1987, which was also reflected in an increase in aid money relative to GDP.¹²

Most of the money for SDID activities came from its primary financial backer, CIDA. Since its founding, SDID had been piecing funding together one project at a time and covering overhead at the head office.¹³ The model made it very difficult to wait out longer funding droughts in anticipation of the next contract, while preparing new projects and maintaining regular operations. In 1984, Michel Doray was able to close SDID's first



In 1984, SDID obtained its first multi-year financing agreement with CIDA. Seated are Monique Vézina (left), federal Minister of External Relations, and Desjardins president Raymond Blais (right). Standing are SDID president and CEO Michel Doray, and SDID board chair Yvon Daneau.

multi-year financing agreement with CIDA. Monique Vézina, the federal Minister of External Relations, was already quite familiar with Desjardins. Prior to her career in politics, she had been a board member at a caisse populaire. She was the first woman to head up a regional federation and to sit on the confederation's board of directors.

There were two different aspects to the agreement: program funding and institutional financing. The first covered all the direct costs related to the projects being financed annually by CIDA. The money would flow through the ICDS program that CIDA had set up almost three years before in response to repeated demands from Canadian cooperatives to have more representation within the agency. Michel Doray spoke on behalf of Desjardins and played an important role in the program's creation.¹⁴ The second part of the agreement would finance overhead, institutional support, research and development, and training over a three-year period.¹⁵ One quarter of the budget was provided in cash by Desjardins.

Any remaining funding needs that did not fall under those two categories would also be provided by CIDA, and through a \$60,000 contribution in kind from the Confédération des caisses populaires et d'économie Desjardins. It resulted in a policy that

supported human resources and the implementation of an awareness campaign across the Desjardins network.¹⁶ When the agreement was renewed in 1987, Desjardins's annual contribution was increased to \$350,000, an amount that would be maintained until the early 2000s and represent a decreasing portion of the organization's revenue, shrinking from 4% to 1.5%.¹⁷ There was also the possibility for SDID to receive funds because of CIDA's "country focus," through the agency's bilateral section for projects with strictly defined parameters. For example, in 1987, the agreement specified financing of \$16 million over three years, while SDID also had another \$11 million committed from CIDA's bilateral section.¹⁸ This financing was usually slated for rural development projects, while any savings and credit projects would generally come from the program funding envelope.

The specifics of the agreement would change as it was renewed every three or five years. But the financing formula would have an important long-term impact on the evolution of SDID and how it operated. According to Michel Lagacé, by guaranteeing institutional financing the system played an important role in providing the financial stability DID needed to develop new projects, as a driver or to open up new sectors or

regions. It also enabled DID to develop new methodologies and technologies, to document them and to promote the organization within Desjardins.¹⁹ Anne Gaboury, who would later go on to lead the organization, said the financing agreement provided the flexibility to innovate, without which the organization would not be what it is today.²⁰

"CIDA and DID have worked together to fight global poverty through sustainable economic development. Your management of hundreds of community finance projects has greatly assisted living in some of the more impoverished regions of the world."

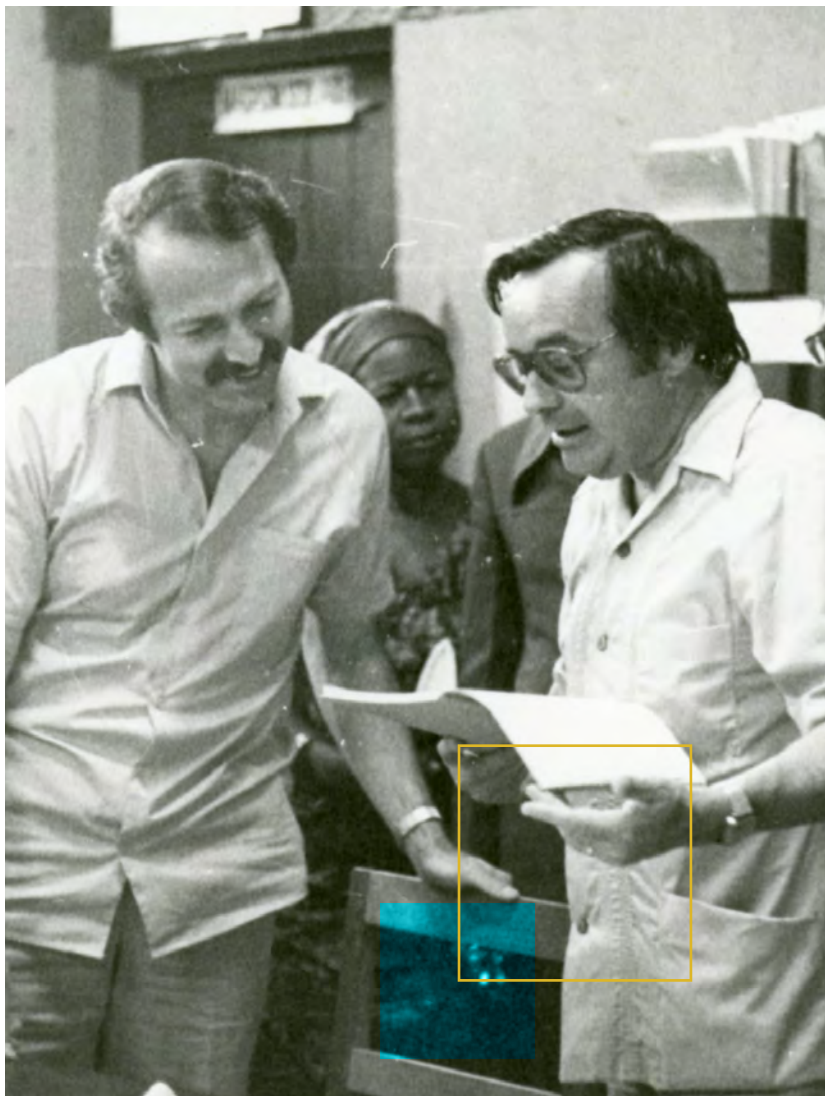
– Beverley J. Oda, Minister for International Cooperation (2010)

An overview of SDID activities

We can see three trends when looking at SDID activities in the 1980s. Broader geographical reach, a new level of participation in the field, and a balance between savings and credit projects and rural development projects. The partnership formed with the Confederación Latinoamericana de Cooperativas de Ahorro y Crédito (COLAC) perfectly encapsulates all three.

When COLAC began working in earnest with SDID in 1980, it was a group of 17 South American national federations representing 2,200 savings and credit cooperatives with a total of 2 million members and \$480 million in savings. Initially, SDID helped set up FECOLAC, an educational foundation with a mission to promote skills development opportunities for people by providing training, advisory services, coordination, research and documentation.²¹ SDID used more robust funding from CIDA and Quebec's Department of Intergovernmental Affairs to support the foundation and create a technical program. The goal was to help the national federations deepen their relationships with cooperatives, develop information tools and encourage members to trust in the cooperative system again.²² In 1986 alone, SDID worked directly with the federations from Honduras, Nicaragua and Colombia, as well as consulting the federations of El Salvador, Ecuador and Bolivia.²³

But to really have a sense of how this collaboration fits into the evolution of SDID, we need to compare the 1980s to the previous decade. In the 1970s, CIDR-Canada focused its activities primarily in Africa. In South America, they had conducted no more than a handful of studies and two small development projects.²⁴ The partnership with COLAC was the first real breakthrough into the region and signalled the beginning of a broader geographical reach for the organization. As for involvement in the field, savings and credit projects in Africa had all been managed locally and involved starting basic financial institutions—the savings and credit cooperatives. This time SDID was supporting secondary and tertiary organizations that already existed: national federations and a continental confederation. This new collaboration was an important shift in the way SDID worked, providing support and advice in addition to creating local institutions. An employee at the time described it as moving from executing to advising.²⁵ The partnership also meant that for the time being, there were more savings and credit projects than rural development projects, which had always been at the heart of the organization's activities and its primary source of profitability from day one.



Michel Doray, SDID president and CEO, and Yvon Daneau, SDID board chair, in Zaire.

As chair of the board, president and CEO, Yvon Daneau still didn't see SDID's future as guaranteed, despite the affiliation with Desjardins. He believed the organization needed to stay relevant at all times, especially when it came to projects in savings and credit.²⁶ This is when concrete steps to raise awareness about SDID within Desjardins began,²⁷ with a first information session held during the Desjardins annual general meetings (AGMs) in March 1980. The sessions became increasingly popular and were a good opportunity for SDID to introduce its partners. The organization was also introduced at individual caisse AGMs. It was early days for intra-organizational communication and awareness, but the approach would pay dividends in the decade that followed. In fact, public awareness was an activity expressly laid out in the financing agreement with CIDA, and Desjardins was a deep pool of expertise and partners for SDID to draw from.

The increase in savings and credit activities also led to partnerships with Desjardins Group entities. The first of these was a collaboration in 1983 between the Fédération des caisses populaires Desjardins du Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean and the Union régionale des caisses populaires de la Bougouriba, in Burkina Faso. The program was renewed several times and the two entities remained in touch for 15 years. SDID experts did the work in the field, but the federation supported the program by providing resources, welcoming interns from Burkina Faso and fundraising among employees and officers.²⁸ The same year the program was launched, a group of caisses in Southwest Montreal were also developing an integrated community and cooperative development program in Colombia. The work culminated in the launch of the La Cocha project in 1985, which encouraged local socio-economic development by creating a multiservice cooperative for farmers.²⁹ The program ran for three years and then moved into a second phase which received financial support from the caisses that had launched it.

Some caisses took steps on their own to contribute to cooperative development. In 1985 and 1986, Caisse populaire Saint-Paul-de-la-Croix de Montréal donated a total of \$30,000 to the Union des coopératives centrales d'épargne et de crédit du Zaïre for the construction of two new caisse locations and the renovation of two others buildings.³⁰ SDID was now receiving requests to participate in initiatives that were already underway, as it did beginning in 1986 with Caisse populaire de Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pocatière and



A group of caisses populaires in Southwest Montreal helped launch the La Cocha project in Colombia in 1985.

Caisse populaire de Saint-Sacrement de Québec, which had both launched cooperative development projects in Haiti. And no small number of caisses were also making modest financial contributions to different initiatives, including internships. These are just a few examples that illustrate the growing interest in international development within Desjardins at the time.

There was also a push by SDID to develop relationships with organizations that had similar missions. In 1983, it reached out to two organizations. With the first, the Centre international du Crédit Mutuel, they discussed a potential collaboration in Ivory Coast. And with the second, the World Council of Credit Unions, based in Madison, Wisconsin, USA, they executed a mission to Togo that led to a seminar the next year, in collaboration with the FAO, the African Confederation of Cooperative Savings and Credit Associations and the Comité de liaison international de la coopération d'épargne et de crédit.

By the end of the decade, SDID was helping the International Co-operative Alliance establish two regional offices, one for West Africa, based in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and the other for the Caribbean and Central America, based in San José, Costa Rica.³¹ The early groundwork was also being laid for joint activities with other Canadian organizations, primarily those established by cooperatives and engaged in international development activities. SDID collaborated with the Canadian Co-operative Association and SOCODEVI to organize a 1987 conference on the Canadian cooperative sector and international development.

But rural development, SDID's other focus, slowed down in the middle of the decade. In 1979, revenues were generally split between the two sectors of activity. But by 1983, income from rural development had decreased by approximately half.³² Projects that had been carried over ended and nothing new was planned. These types of projects were also receiving funding from CIDA's bilateral section, which had a unique financing structure. The projects took more time to develop and the funding more time to secure, but they were more profitable when they finally did get off the ground. As one employee explained, SDID needed to clarify its stance on rural development, as only two people in the organization were assigned to rural development work, while the rest of the staff worked on projects related to savings and credit cooperatives.³³



But that trend was reversed in the second half of the 1980s, which was a boon for rural development projects, thanks in part to country focus.³⁴ In 1986 alone, SDID launched new programs to promote the socio-economic outcomes of women in Niger, for hydroponic cooperative associations in Rwanda, and for the creation of agricultural, artisanal and industrial cooperatives in Honduras.³⁵ More than half of SDID's technical advisors in Africa were in Zaire,³⁶ where support for savings and credit cooperatives continued, but a number of rural development projects were also launched in Nord-Kivu. That included working with livestock farmers' associations (Association coopérative des groupements d'éleveurs and Association coopérative des éleveurs de l'Ituri), building a slaughterhouse in Goma, setting up a rural community radio station, and more. If savings and credit were prioritized at the beginning of the decade, rural development took off soon after.

A slow shift toward savings and credit

For Desjardins, it was clear that SDID needed to focus more on savings and credit cooperatives. When SDID board members examined their strategic goals in December 1986, they wanted to know if the organization intended to continue doing more in savings and credit, or shift to specializations that could be applied to other projects. They also wondered about the impact savings and credit could have in the countries where SDID operated.³⁷

Following the division of activities between Africa and South America, SDID reviewed its structure in 1987 and created two departments: savings, credit and financial institutions, and rural development. One of the primary objectives of the review was to consolidate savings and credit projects,³⁸ the responsibility of which was given to Ghislain Paradis, who had previously been the head of human resources at the confederation and had held various training roles at Desjardins Group. He had previously taken on a short action research mandate with SDID at the beginning of the decade. While the collaboration with COLAC had boosted the profile of savings and credit in the 1980s, the projects in Africa weren't going off quite as smoothly.



Several caisses took steps on their own, including Caisse populaire Saint-Paul-de-la-Croix de Montréal, which made donations to the Union des coopératives centrales d'épargne et de crédit in Zaire, for the construction and renovation of several buildings.

The situation in Cameroon was particularly concerning. An evaluation conducted in 1984 confirmed and amplified concerns and findings about just how vulnerable the Union des caisses populaires de Yaoundé, and several affiliate caisses, were.³⁹ Despite some serious moves to improve the situation over the next two years, SDID decided to withdraw its support. At the same time in Zaire, a new program primarily targeting technical and financial consolidation for the Union des coopératives centrales and its members was underway. But it too wasn't renewed when it ended five years later. Only the caisses populaires in Burkina Faso continued to receive support through the 1990s. The project was more about maintaining growth⁴⁰ and opening new caisses. According to a study conducted by researchers at the Chaire de coopération Guy-Bernier at the Université du Québec à Montréal, the general idea that had kicked off SDID's first projects—transposing the Desjardins caisse model to Africa—wasn't the success people in the organization had envisioned.⁴¹

SDID found itself in somewhat of an awkward position. The projects it executed that drew directly from Desjardins's expertise were experiencing difficulties, while the rural development side was making gains. Surprisingly, the success wasn't the result of a formal strategic planning exercise within the organization,⁴² but rather due to the relative independence that SDID experts enjoyed, and to their network connections with financial backers, according to Ghislain Paradis. In 1989, Michel Doray moved into the role of senior vice-president of national and international affairs at the confederation and Ghislain Paradis replaced him as president and CEO of SDID. Although Paradis stepped into the role without a specific mandate to reorient the direction of SDID activities, he was aware of concerns about the mixed results in savings and credit and wondered about the value of SDID participation in certain projects, like the fight against AIDS, for example. And he'd repeatedly heard the arguments from multiple Desjardins players about putting more resources into the financial sector.⁴³ He decided to concentrate on the financial side of SDID's mandate.

The tone and the activities of the organization began to shift without undergoing any drastic moves. Internally, the new direction was clearly communicated to employees and the organizational structure was divided into two departments based on project geography. Within each were just as many savings and credit projects as there were rural development projects. The majority of the new management committee were people from the finance side. Organizational changes like this rarely occur without pushback, but most of the employees who had been working in rural development up to that point stayed on and made the transition to savings and credit. Several of them went on to play important roles in the organization, including Yvon Bernier, Yves Boily, Jacques Durocher, Adriana Maturana Nunez and Claude Miville.⁴⁴

It was decided that the rural development projects already underway would not be renewed once they concluded. Nevertheless, several new projects started up over the next few years. They included, for example, establishing cooperatives for electricity distribution in rural Peru between 1992 and 1994, and help creating a dairy processing cooperative in Hungary between 1994 and 1997.⁴⁵

By the middle of the 1990s, the shift was more or less complete. Rural development projects had all but disappeared from the SDID project portfolio, and communications clearly indicated a specialization in

finance. The organization's mission, as spelled out in its annual report, stated that SDID encouraged access to basic financial services for the poorest people in developing and transitioning countries by facilitating the local creation and ownership of businesses based on a participatory model.⁴⁶ The specialization in finance signalled the end of an era at SDID. It was a bold shift, particularly in terms of profitability. The next decade would affirm the decision.



CHAPTER

4

BECOMING A
GLOBAL LEADER
IN MICROFINANCE
(1990–2002)



When the 1990s arrived, major international events and trouble in the global economy triggered changes to Canadian policy in development aid. DID needed to adapt while continuing its shift toward savings and credit. Buoyed by growing interest in microfinance from investors, the organization grew significantly, providing an increasingly diversified range of specialized services and adding investment to its existing program of technical assistance.

Development aid: A new atmosphere

In the 45 years following World War II (1939–1945), international affairs was seen almost exclusively through the binary of capitalism or communism. The Berlin Wall went up in 1961 in the heart of Europe and was one of the most striking symbols of the Cold War. Two years after it came down in November 1989, the world watched as the Soviet Union came apart at the seams. The simmering conflict with the Eastern Bloc had been one of the main motivations behind the West's entry into development aid 40 years earlier. The fall of the wall and the end of the Cold War led to a movement to redefine that assistance by eliminating the requirements for ideological purity and anti-Communist politics.¹

The atmosphere around development aid had already begun to change in the previous decade, largely due to economic factors. Several South American countries fell into recession and experienced a debt crisis in the early 1980s. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank stepped in to provide relief in exchange for structural adjustments. These were essentially conditional loans requiring governments to implement reforms related to fiscal restraint, public spending, free trade, and so on. Structural adjustment policies were hotly debated. On one hand, they were seen as a financial, or neo-liberal, approach to development aid. On the other hand, bilateral financial backers wanted to implement the policies into their own programs.² DID sought to limit the negative social impacts of structural adjustment programs while strengthening the measures in them meant to help turn economies around.³

Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, several donor countries like Canada also had significant levels of debt, leading to decreasing budgets for development aid. In April 1989, the Canadian government's budget for development aid was decreased 13%, or \$360 million.⁴ CIDA and all other Canadian organizations were affected. The projected revenue for DID was decreased from almost \$14 million to under \$11 million. Over the next few years, projects were delayed or scrapped.⁵ CIDA underwent a reorganization and ended up combining special projects with the Institutional Cooperation and Development Services Program to create a Partnerships with Canadians Branch.⁶ Afterwards, DID's public financing would be topped up through CIDA's new program following a private contribution from Desjardins. But the most significant cuts came in 1995. Overall, the Canadian federal budget for development aid was slashed by 34% during the 1990s. The percentage of GDP committed to development aid, which had been 0.5% in 1991, was decreased by half in 10 years.⁷ It would only be in the early 2000s that the trend would begin to reverse course.

When the budget cuts were first announced, governments seemed to be in lockstep with public opinion. There was a sense of development fatigue that followed the broad international awareness and solidarity in the mid-1980s.⁸ In 1991, DID's first female chair of the board, Lauréanne Boutin, specifically mentioned that Canadians had become more



Lauréanne Boutin, DID's first female chair of the board, in Burkina Faso.

reserved in their support for aid to developing countries.⁹ The public was increasingly interested in environmental issues, which had entered the mainstream following a report published by the Brundtland Commission in 1987, and gained traction five years later with the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

As governments tightened their belts, the pool of money for development aid shrunk and competition became fierce. In the second half of the 1990s, CIDA began awarding contracts rather than accepting calls for tender, which meant that non-governmental organizations and institutions needed to make their operations more professional.¹⁰ When CIDA reviewed proposals, its criteria was leaning more toward specialized training and organizational experience.¹¹ Encouraged by CIDA, DID had begun trying to diversify its sources of funding beginning in the late 1980s. Up to that point, the agency had been providing between 95% and 100% of the funding. DID began making headway, and by 1995, 20% of its business volume came from multilateral backers like the World Bank.¹² At the end of the 1990s, relationships with financial backers and service proposals were handled by the department for developing markets, which was led first by Yves Boily and then Serge Gosselin. The proportion of DID revenue from CIDA contracts would decrease significantly over the next decade. At DID, there was a shift toward a business culture, internally and in relationships with its partners. It included an increased focus on results monitoring, cost controls, business development, investment, review, productivity and performance.¹³

In trying to keep up with the public's ever-changing opinions on development aid, DID also tried to consolidate the experience and the know-how it had built up since it was founded. In 1986, Guy Le Boterf and Pierre Lessard published *L'ingénierie des projets de développement*, which explained DID's methodology and the tools it used to operate.¹⁴ A few years later, the book was translated into Spanish and English, as *Designing development projects*. The new structure implemented in 1989 was designed in part to codify the institutional knowledge. It was folded into a new studies and instrumentation department under Pierre Giguère, who had a mandate to define methodologies and develop tools for project management and execution. This led to publications like the *Guide de démarrage d'une coopérative d'épargne et de crédit* in 1993, which encouraged the launch of savings and credit cooperatives and marked another step toward a consistent, coherent model for DID activities.¹⁵ Essentially, DID was ensuring the creation, sustainability and maintenance of its own institutional knowledge and know-how. A new approach to task assignments for individual projects also helped. Experts worked like internal consultants and published opinions or worked on more than one file at a time. Previously, they would have been given very specific assignments and often hired external consultants.¹⁶ Keeping and fostering internal expertise and finding a way to profit from it was a big step forward in the professionalization of the organization.

Thanks largely to a business volume that would double over 10 years to reach \$20 million in 2000, DID was consolidating its financial situation, in addition to its intellectual capital.¹⁷ Reserves had surpassed \$1 million in 1992. Although the legal status of the organization stopped it from being able to stockpile too much money, DID negotiated a certain

level of flexibility with CIDA in order to establish a financial cushion that enabled DID to avoid laying off employees during leaner periods.¹⁸ The organization had learned a lesson from the political turmoil that had led to the shuttering of several projects—a certain amount of unpredictability had to be anticipated.

The uncertainty of global politics

The 1980s ended and the 1990s began with international political upheaval. The end of the Cold War, for example, opened up new possibilities. But a rash of armed conflicts,

primarily in Africa, created hurdles. DID had to account for a multitude of variables caused by global political ripples in its operations.

In Rwanda, DID was involved for several years in a rice-growing project in the Mutara Valley, a border region with Uganda. Yvon Bernier had been in the field since 1986 and watched the country break down. Tensions had always simmered in the region, but the situation was about to explode.¹⁹ As DID noted in its 1990 annual report, October of that year marked the end of peace in the region, and Rwanda descended into civil war.²⁰ Staff were called back to Canada and the project wound down long distance, as the country plunged into the horror of a genocide in April 1994. The year after, the conflict spilled over into neighbouring Zaire, and the climate eventually forced DID to shut down projects there as well. Full-scale war broke out several years later and a change in the regime brought with it a new name for the country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 1992–1993, the loss of projects in Zaire and Rwanda represented one quarter of all DID activities. Nevertheless, it forced CIDA and DID to refocus their attention on West Africa and Madagascar, where activities would start to pick up soon after.²¹



DID secured multiple projects in Madagascar beginning in the early 1990s.

Across the Atlantic, in Haiti, a coup in 1991 was followed immediately by violent repression. The international community implemented a trade embargo on the military regime that took power. DID was forced to shut down its projects and leave the country until 1994, so it began phase two of an ambitious microproject program, Programme d'appui aux microréalizations, which for the first time combined its two main sectors of activity: savings and credit, and agricultural development.²² The organization's rural development projects were heavily concentrated in Zaire and Haiti. Having to shut them down prematurely sped up the shift to savings and credit.²³

At the end of the Cold War, CIDA and other financial backers turned their attention to Central and Eastern Europe. DID's first project in the region began in Poland in 1990. But operations in the region began in earnest in Hungary two years later, providing support to restructure and consolidate the cooperative savings movement. Romania was next and the year after, a project was launched in Russia. In 1994 it was Lithuania, where DID helped a network of savings and credit cooperatives get off the ground, then watched it achieve incredible growth in the years that followed.



Yves Boily (front row, far right), visits Poland. DID's activities in Central and Eastern Europe began with a mission to Poland in 1990.

"In 1996, the first credit unions in Lithuania were launched with computerized systems, following DID's recommendations. Today the Lithuanian credit unions are the second banking institution in terms of points of service and first in terms of presence in rural areas. Furthermore, they are the only financial institutions under Lithuanian ownership in the country. [...] We can offer modern financial products such as payment cards and Internet banking. Lithuanian credit unions have become more and more attractive for their members and are now more competitive in the financial services market."

*– Deividas Burokas, Deputy CEO and Head of IT,
Lithuanian Central Credit Union (2010)*

At the end of the 1980s, Canada wanted to reassert its role in Asia by becoming a founding member of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.²⁴ DID was interested in making inroads in the region, so an evaluation mission was sent to Sri Lanka in 1987. Two years later, in collaboration with Université Laval, a socio-economic study on agricultural credit and SMEs in the Wenzhou region of China was conducted. But the protests at Tiananmen Square cast a long shadow over the political climate in the country and the project was delayed.²⁵ The next year, the first real project in Asia began with DID providing support to a secondary organization, the MASS SPECC Cooperative Development Center in the Philippines.

Following the breakup of the USSR, political change began to move through Asia and countries began opening up to the rest of the world. The US ended its embargo against Vietnam and the two countries re-established diplomatic relations. DID executed its first mission in the country with Caisse centrale Desjardins in 1991, and several seminars were organized soon



Desjardins president Claude Béland and DID president and CEO Ghislain Paradis visit the DID office in Hanoi, Vietnam. June 1996.

after. Anne Gaboury, confederation employee and future president and CEO of DID, took part in her first foreign trip. A support project for the People's Credit Funds got underway in 1994. Vietnamese decision-makers conducted a review of the different models for financial cooperatives in use around the world and decided on Desjardins's.²⁶



In 1994, 63 savings and credit cooperatives were launched across 19 Mexican states, attracting a total membership of 38,000 farmers representing \$21 million in assets.

In the second half of the 1980s, a major international political story in Canada was the signing of a free trade agreement with the US. Early the next decade, the agreement was updated to include Mexico. In 1992, Ghislain Paradis said the agreement would foster a promising relationship between DID and its Mexican partners.²⁷ Over the next several years, projects in Mexico would make up a considerable share of DID's project portfolio.

Geopolitical events around the world had an impact on DID's activities. The organization needed to be able to react quickly to difficult situations and take advantage of opportunities when they presented themselves. This period was marked by a significant influx of funding for microfinance projects.

The rise of microfinance: Different approaches

In the early 1990s, DID made a conscious decision to shift away from rural development and toward savings and credit projects. This was based on the overall sense that financial backers were increasingly interested in providing accessible financial resources as a means of development aid.²⁸ The shift became even more apparent in

the years that followed. The 1997 DID annual report noted that over the previous several years, microfinance had become one of the primary strategies financial backers were interested in using to fight poverty.²⁹ Interest in the field became widespread, but there were different approaches for getting results.

Microcredit had captured a lot of attention in the media and from financial backers. DID took a broader approach that didn't solely rely on loans, but also included savings. This was microfinance. As Ghislain Paradis explained at the time, the idea was to democratize financial resources and to make them accessible to as many people as possible. That would be done using financial products and services that had delivery and control systems, miniaturization, regulation, costs and returns that were all compatible with local resources and accessible to the poorest populations.³⁰ DID wanted to achieve that by promoting a cooperative model and demonstrating how to use existing institutions to play an important role rather than starting from scratch.³¹

The first Microcredit Summit was held in Washington, DC, USA, in 1997 and focused on the poor. Two years earlier, the World Bank had created the Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest, which focused on professionalizing microfinance institutions and improving their profitability. The profile of the two organizations highlighted another debate about who should be benefiting from financial services. Microcredit focused primarily on the poorest of the poor. But DID's position was that because of important capital requirements and the need to reduce operating costs, solid, sustainable and reputable community financial institutions should focus on a clientele made up of not just the poorest of the poor, but also those who are actively improving their lot.³²



The offices of the Nyèsigiso network in Bamako. January 1997.

DID set a goal to professionalize microfinance institutions in the countries where it was operating. But they needed to have several elements in place to make it work: a reliable legal and regulatory framework, a system of supervision and controls, a

set of standards respected by the financial industry, skilled human resources, a move toward a market economy so as not to depend on grants, and product diversification.³³ DID intended to help put all of these in place.

Capacity for multi-level support

The 2002 DID annual report stated that developing basic financial institutions was still the organization's main goal. But it also recognized that its own strength depended on having a diverse set of activities³⁴ that would enable it to consolidate the structures and the systems of the institutions it was supporting. The DID service offer received a significant upgrade during this period to include legal frameworks, monitoring, training and computerization. It also added an innovative element of investment. The increasing ties with Desjardins helped push this diversification.

In 2000, DID chair of the board André Roy said in the organization's annual report that the history of the Desjardins caisses was an incredible source of experience and knowledge to draw on. It provided context to understand what was happening in the institutions DID was supporting and to help

them overcome their own challenges.³⁵ Even though DID wasn't trying to export the Desjardins model wholesale, it was a powerful influence and shaped DID's project paradigm. Unlike other organizations working in the sector, for example, DID didn't set up a string of atomized institutions, but was trying to create cohesive networks, or federations. In some projects, those federations were set up early on. In others, cooperatives that had operated completely independently needed to be brought together.³⁶ Université Laval professor Klaus Fischer thought these integrated structures, which were built on a national scale and created in the face of a certain level of resistance, were perhaps Desjardins Group's greatest accomplishment and the source of its greatest strength.³⁷ Although the approach wasn't unique to DID, it did become somewhat of a calling card for the organization.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Alphonse Desjardins had wanted to see a law passed regulating caisses populaires. Then, like now, it was an essential step to gain the trust of depositors and ensure effective governance. In 1990, DID was undertaking some of that same work in Senegal, with the *Projet d'assistance technique aux opérations bancaires mutualistes au Sénégal (ATOMBS)*. Working within the framework of a structural adjustment program, the local government, the World Bank and CIDA financed a project that would make it easier to create savings and credit mutuals. DID's mandate was to record the existing savings and credit practices in the country and lay the groundwork for a legal and operational framework for the institutions. That led to the organization playing a key role getting legislation passed and putting governance systems in place in other countries, including Costa Rica, Peru, Romania, Lithuania and Vietnam.

The success of ATOMBS was encouraging and led to the launch in 1992 of the *Projet d'appui à la réglementation sur les mutuelles d'épargne et de crédit (PARMEC)* in seven countries in the West African Economic and Monetary Union.³⁸ In one of the first instances in which DID was able to implement something multilaterally and across international boundaries, all seven countries passed the same law regulating their institutions. The approach worked well due to a common currency and agreements between the countries about the free movement of goods and people. But it was nonetheless

a unique achievement for the organization. Although NGOs and financial backers generally focus on projects in one country at a time, in this case DID was able to use the flexibility of its financing model to innovate.³⁹ The regional approach taken in West Africa spurred a joint effort to create the *Centre d'innovations financières* in 1999, which became the *Confédération des institutions financières d'Afrique de l'Ouest* in 2007, representing six networks in five countries.



From left to right, Michel Lagacé, program director; Pierre Émond, vice-president of programs; Fatimaou Diop, head of banking regulation for the Central Bank of West African States; Charles Konan Banny, governor of same; and Ghislain Paradis, president and CEO of DID, attending the Desjardins annual general meetings. March 1996.

"From the initial financial cooperative in Burkina in 1972 through to the CIF (Confédération des institutions financières) in 2010, our partnership with DID has been first and foremost an experience founded on friendship, collaboration and enthusiasm by all those involved from both the North and the South around the powerful concept of empowering communities by mobilizing their very own savings. We expanded that institutional one-country partnership to a regional federation drawing on the experience of various West African savings and credit institutions."

*– Alpha Ouédraogo, General Manager, Confédération
des institutions financières (2010)*

In a paper published in the mid-1990s on DID, researchers commented on the organization's ability to transform participation in the legislative development process for national and regional cooperatives into business opportunities.⁴⁰ The laws that DID helped draft and get passed addressed management oversight and the financial health of the institutions. It was another step into the niche the organization was developing. PARMEC, for example, called for personnel training in the Central Bank of West African States and in each country's department of finance, which were responsible for regulating and monitoring savings and credit cooperatives. After landing a contract in Vietnam to improve monitoring for the country's central bank in 1997, DID reached out to the Desjardins Bureau for Financial Monitoring and Enforcement for assistance. The next year, a financial control body, UNICIM, was set up in the Mexican state of Guanajuato. The project involved three networks with a total of 600,000 members and total assets of US\$600 million and opened the door for DID in a country with a large population and a robust economy.



A number of foreign delegations were welcomed by Desjardins and visited different caisses. Pictured are representatives from the State Bank of Vietnam in 1999.



Desjardins president Claude Béland welcomes Vicente Fox, then governor of the Mexican state of Guanajuato. October 1997.

When the governor of Guanajuato, Vicente Fox, was elected president of Mexico in 2000, he began a broad reform of the country's credit unions. Visiting Quebec City for the Summit of

the Americas the spring after his election, Fox was joined by the Premier of Quebec, the president of Desjardins Group and the president and CEO of DID to announce that his country was awarding DID a large contract for the application of a new law on savings and credit cooperatives. The work would include creating seven monitoring offices across the country. Javier Gavito Mohar, who was selected to implement the reforms, was the general manager of Banco del Ahorro Nacional y Servicios Financieros. Visiting Quebec City to attend Desjardins's annual general meetings in April 2002, he announced a \$3 million contract to provide technical assistance for rural microfinancing and support for rural financial institutions in the state of Chiapas. In 2003, an unprecedented seven proposals were submitted by DID in Mexico, where the organization kept pushing for contracts until 2010, in the face of strong competition.⁴¹

DID saw professionally skilled workers as another important pillar for microfinance. The organization pursued a transnational approach with the Programme d'appui à la mobilisation de l'épargne dans la francophonie, which ran from 1994 to 2003. Developed in collaboration with expertise from online university TÉLUQ and financed by the Quebec Ministry of International Relations, the distance-training program included technical seminars and an information

newsletter for 21 African countries. Shortly after, it was adapted and translated into English for use in Russia, Tanzania and Vietnam, and into Creole for use in Haiti. Program coordinator Jean-Bernard Fournier was pleased that unrelated networks that knew nothing about each other were now exchanging information and resources and finding common solutions.⁴² This was precisely what DID wanted to do by creating partnerships and engaging groups in common cause.



The programme d'appui à la mobilisation de l'épargne dans la francophonie encouraged savings in French-speaking countries and included seminars like this one in Benin. Attending are Jean-Bernard Fournier (far left) and Garnier Parent (far right).

The push for computerization demonstrated an element of the Desjardins model that needed to be adapted for DID's service offer, which ultimately led to the organization developing the expertise it needed internally. It wasn't technology created by Desjardins that was exported and gave DID activities their value, but rather the experience acquired during the implementation.⁴³ The organization decided not to borrow IT solutions from Desjardins. Occasionally it used technology from other international organizations, like Microbanker from the FAO. But it largely developed its own, alone or with partners. One of the earliest software solutions, INDIX, was a dashboard inspired by the software used by Desjardins Group inspectors.⁴⁴ It enabled umbrella organizations to monitor the local units they were responsible for. In partnership with the Costa Rican firm SYSDE, DID also developed transactional software called SAF and its own information management system.⁴⁵ In 2000, the Programme d'appui technique à la finance communautaire (FINACO) was preparing to apply its regional approach and detailed implementation process to a rollout program for IT solutions in West Africa.

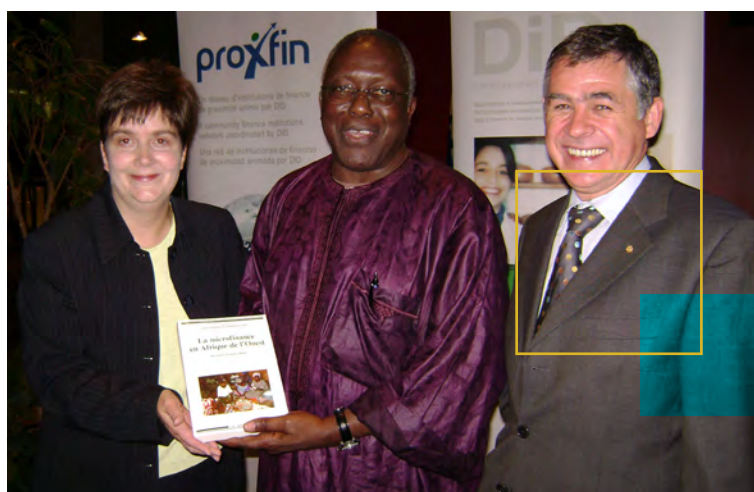
DID had provided technical assistance to its partners since it was launched in 1970. But the addition of investment and financing services in the middle of the 1990s was an important new step forward. In terms of the service offer, it introduced a new business line—and it was innovative, as the organization was among one of the first organizations providing technical assistance to branch out into investment.⁴⁶ The move was an organic one that responded to the needs the organization was seeing in the field. But CIDA needed some convincing before agreeing.⁴⁷ A partnership fund was created in 1996 using revenue from previous years. The first investment was in collaboration with the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec and sent \$1 million to FEDECREDITO in Costa Rica. A pension fund management firm in Uruguay received the second. A third, smaller, investment went to the Latin American Challenge Investment Fund.

These early steps in the new sector provided important learning opportunities that led two years later to the launch of the Fonds d'investissement pour le développement international (FONIDI) and a modest guarantee fund⁴⁸ for partner networks short on liquidity. DID also restructured, and an investment branch was created. There was a lot of work to do, as DID needed to keep an eye on current investments, create a work structure and a decision-making process, and try to find and secure new deals.⁴⁹ Several Desjardins entities helped set up FONIDI, including the pension and group

insurance committee and the Desjardins-Laurentian Financial Corporation, the holding company for Desjardins subsidiaries. DID convinced them to make a financial commitment by stressing that they were providing development aid, not just participating in an investment opportunity. According to Ghislain Paradis, it wasn't about giving charity or making investments that went nowhere. DID wanted to buy into the culture of a market economy. And the medium-term goal was to demonstrate that the goals of community development and profitability weren't incompatible.⁵⁰

"When I met the team in 2000, when the Fonds d'investissement pour le développement international was set up, I was impressed by the clarity of their vision for investment, the relevance of their project and their strong desire to help businesses in the financial sector in emerging and developing economies. The fund is a source of capital and financing for savings and credit institutions in developing countries. It gives them the resources they need to execute important projects perfectly adapted to the needs of the people they serve."

*– Raymond Laurin, Senior Vice-President, Finance and Treasury,
and Chief Financial Officer, Desjardins (2010)*



Author Alpha Ouédraogo, with Anne Gaboury and Yvon Bernier, at a book launch for *La microfinance en Afrique de l'Ouest*. October 2008.

The range of services that DID could provide meant the organization had something to offer its partners at every level, ultimately helping them manage their way through a growth crisis⁵¹ at the end of the decade. Aggregated data from the networks supported by DID between 1995 and 1998 provide a sense of just how fast that growth was: from 362 to 1,288 financial cooperatives; from fewer than 200,000 to almost 1 million members; and savings and credit that grew by 470% and 2,025%, respectively.⁵² The rate of default on the loans it provided dropped from 11.3% in 1995 to 3.8% in 1999, an indicator of the quality of DID support.⁵³ In some countries, the numbers are staggering: in Vietnam the number of financial cooperatives grew from 200 to 900 between spring 1995 and autumn 1997. The exponential growth paved the way for some consolidation, based again on the Desjardins model.

Little known at home, widely known abroad

When Ghislain Paradis landed in Davao, Philippines, for the first time, he was met at the airport by an employee from the local cooperative group. After exchanging pleasantries, the employee asked a peculiar question: where exactly in Lévis, he wanted to know, was Maison Alphonse-Desjardins, the founder's home?⁵⁴ The anecdote illustrates perfectly just how well known Desjardins had become internationally, in comparison to the more modest reputation it had in Canada for its work abroad. It also speaks to the reach of DID, which understood it was the least-known Desjardins subsidiary in Quebec, but the most well known around the world.⁵⁵ An awareness campaign was launched in the 1990s to help people at Desjardins, and the general public, learn more about the aid organization.

A communications department had been created during the restructuring in 1989. One of the goals of that department was now to boost DID's brand awareness.⁵⁶ A magazine, *Par ailleurs*, was created and slipped into *Revue Desjardins* as an insert twice a year, meaning managers and officers across the organization would receive a copy. In 2000, the magazine was renamed *Finance et communautés*. Articles about DID also appeared in *Ma Caisse*, a magazine for Desjardins caisse members. Content

for the general public was largely targeted toward youth. The organization teamed up with the well-known international travel show *Course destination monde*, in which participants created journalistic videos in different genres. DID awarded a prize to the participant who did the best job describing how the associative or cooperative model helped people contribute to economic development in their community.⁵⁷ Press conferences were held for some of DID's projects, alongside Quebec and Canadian Cabinet ministers, which also helped raise DID's profile.



Desjardins president Claude Béland, federal Minister of Foreign Affairs André Ouellet, and DID president and CEO Ghislain Paradis at a press conference announcing the beginning of a project to build a network of savings and credit cooperatives in Russia. December 20, 1993.



DID president and CEO Ghislain Paradis and board chair André Roy attend the Desjardins annual general meetings. André Roy was DID board chair from 1993 to 2001 and vice-chair until 2007.

Every year at Desjardins's annual general meetings, DID was there to host information sessions for caisse delegates and provide some exposure to distinguished guests in attendance, like the governor of the Central Bank of Guinea, or the president of Cooperatives of the Americas for the International Co-operative Alliance. In 2000, a video message from the director of cooperative finance for the Bank of China made a big impression on those attending.⁵⁸ The efforts paid off. In 1990, almost 65% of caisse officers said they didn't know much about DID activities. Fifteen years later, 90% of them said they felt like they knew the organization.⁵⁹ In 1996, Ghislain Paradis took on the role of senior vice-president of national and international affairs at the confederation, in addition to his role as president and CEO of DID. There's no doubt this also helped raise DID's profile within Desjardins.

Communications within Desjardins were also beginning to reflect the growing workforce need. Increasingly, DID was recruiting directly from Desjardins to help execute projects abroad. It was a challenge. Not only did the fieldwork call for specialized knowledge, but also for a very broad skill set, most important of which was the ability to adapt. The

advisors on the ground were determining factors for project success.⁶⁰ Employees at headquarters and in the field each played an important role in helping things run smoothly. Office personnel in Lévis and board members occasionally had the opportunity to travel to a project site to try their hand at fieldwork.

"There's a bit of magic in projects abroad. It's a specific task in a specific location on a precise schedule. You feel like you're participating in something very unique, so you're completely committed. I would definitely say I'm someone who wants to get results. And with DID I felt like I was able to give it my all to achieve our specific objectives. In the field we build and we innovate. But don't mistake it for improvisation. Expectations are very clear, and our activities are well planned out."

– Lise Veilleux, Savings and Credit Management Advisor, DID (2000)

To meet the growing staffing needs, DID also reached out to Desjardins retirees, and not for the first time. In 1986, Michel Doray had suggested they create something similar to the Canadian University Service Overseas for retirees⁶¹ so they could take advantage of their knowledge and skills. The idea was eventually tried out in 1995 with retirees receiving foreign delegations and telling them about Desjardins. A partnership program (Programme d'accompagnement des partenaires) was created in 2002, somewhat formalizing the activities. The next year, eight missions of two volunteers each were undertaken. It was a strategy that the entire microfinance industry was interested in, but once again DID was out in front.⁶² Young people interested in the sector weren't lacking either, as a program for young interns abroad gave students the opportunity to participate in DID missions.

At the beginning of the 1990s, DID was on somewhat shaky ground. The formula for government funding for development aid was evolving and there was no guarantee that the organization's shift toward savings and credit would pay off. But it navigated the period deftly and became a world leader in microfinance.

Nom : Lise Veilleux
Âge : 40 ans
Ancien DID : directrice générale de la Caisse populaire de L'Ange-Gardien
Affectation actuelle : conseillère en gestion des opérations d'épargne et de crédit
Pays : Pérou
Détail : moderniser un groupe de 15 coopératives et préparer son expansion à l'échelle nationale
Responsabilités : création des modes de gestion et implémentation d'un nouveau modèle de caisse
Langue de travail : espagnol

« La chance de travailler avec passion »

Il y a comme une magie dans un mandat à l'étranger. C'est un travail à accomplir dans un endroit particulier et selon un échéancier précis. On a la sensation de vivre quelque chose d'unique, alors on travaille avec une passion vraiment spéciale...

Je peux certainement me définir comme une personne de résultats. Avec DID, j'ai trouvé la possibilité de contribuer à mon maximum à l'atteinte d'objectifs précis. Pour moi, ce mandat au Pérou est l'occasion d'être créative et de m'engager à fond dans mon travail. Au Pérou, au sein d'une jeune organisation en croissance, je sens que je dispose d'une marge de manœuvre plus grande que dans des structures qui ont atteint toute leur maturité. »

« Se centrer sur les résultats dans une nouvelle culture, cela conduit à se redécouvrir soi-même. »

DID reached out directly to Desjardins employees to ask for help with projects overseas. Pictured is Lise Veilleux, former general manager of Caisse populaire de L'Ange-Gardien, before leaving on a mission to Peru.

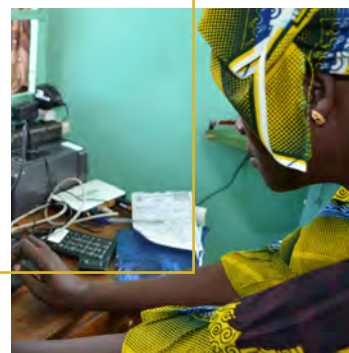
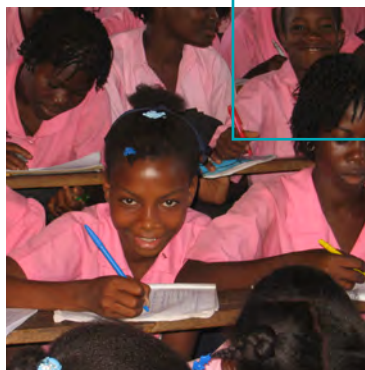
It developed a complete range of services underpinned by its own experience and expertise, while also benefiting from Desjardins's. Nevertheless, when the 2000s came there would be new changes in development aid to deal with.



CHAPTER

5

THE DIVERSITY OF INCLUSIVE FINANCE (2003–2020)



When the year 2000 arrived, DID was a professional organization offering specialized, high-quality services recognized the world over. But there was also new pressure to deliver development aid more efficiently. During this period the organization added another element to the technical assistance it had been providing since the beginning, and to the investment services it had developed in the mid-1990s: creating and operating entrepreneur financial centres. By providing a broader range of services than it ever had, DID was building what we now know as financial inclusion.

Development aid: The push for efficiency

In a 1998 World Bank report, the organization painted a mixed picture for development aid over the last 50 years: resounding successes in some countries and complete failures in others.¹ A certain amount of aid fatigue and questions about the sector at the beginning of the decade led the World Bank to take a step back and reconsider how aid was delivered. Changes were coming. DID recognized that financial backers wanted to work with organizations that were making a real difference.² Impact assessments became popular to justify the time and the money invested in development projects. DID conducted its first in Burkina Faso in 1998 in an effort to determine how much savings and credit services had improved living conditions and incomes. In the same vein, the financial results of its partners were increasingly scrutinized as a corollary to its own performance.³

But you can't reinvent aid in a vacuum, so international cooperation was necessary. The OECD stepped up and hosted a forum in 2003. A second was held in Paris two years later, which led to the adoption of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The thrust of the declaration was to increase ownership for developing countries across the board. They would be expected to define their own needs and policies, which donor countries would align behind and use local systems. The declaration explicitly mentioned a shared responsibility for beneficiaries and donors alike, and encouraged managing for results.⁴ The new paradigm was implemented over the next several years and brought with it a number of changes.

In Canada, the push for efficiency led to a focus on two different elements. The first was Canada's global footprint. Canadian aid had traditionally been spread very widely, so that number of countries receiving aid was now reduced. The second was Canada's sector footprint. Individual sectors, including health, education, governance and the private sector, would now be identified and targeted. The sector-based approach was also encouraged in beneficiary countries to focus the funds allocated to a particular sector (education or health, for example). This approach would ensure development and support for a coherent policy for the entire sector,⁵ a shift from the traditional model supporting specific actors or projects.

Increasingly, beneficiary countries began managing calls for tender for aid contracts. Organizations like DID needed to adapt to the goals and the operational norms for each country. It added an element of complexity to the work, all the more so because countries didn't always have the infrastructure, resources and experience to ensure smooth sailing.⁶ This new reality meant that DID had the most diverse source of funding in its history. In 2005, half of the organization's revenue came from CIDA.⁷

"We reached an agreement with DID: they provide the support because they have the equipment and the experience with savings and credit cooperatives, while we understand our community. That understanding was the cornerstone for our program implementation. Based on that, everyone played their part.

We took responsibility very early on for the program and DID provided technical and financial support. It was up to us to make it work. Everyone was completely committed to the success of the program. And the results show that—we're the largest and the most credible network in the country."

*– Marcelin Kaboré, Assistant General Manager, Réseau
des caisses populaires du Burkina (2009)*

The diversification of financing can also be attributed to the emergence of “untied” aid, which was a trend that appeared early in the 2000s. Since the early days of development aid, money for projects abroad had always been given to organizations from the donor country. That meant CIDA only financed Canadian organizations. When calls for tender were eventually opened up to organizations from any country, the aid was said to be “untied.”

Canada followed major international trends for development. In 2007, following the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade published a report with a title that didn't mince words. *Overcoming 40 Years of Failure: A New Road Map for Sub-Saharan Africa* was an unabashedly critical document. But it did also have some praise, particularly for DID and the Programme d'appui aux mutuelles d'épargne et de crédit au Sénégal (PAMECAS), which the committee was very impressed with.⁸ The authors were less complementary about CIDA and even went so far as to consider dismantling the agency, reflecting the reservations raised over the years by various Canadian players in development. But when the agency was folded into the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in 2013, it still came as a surprise, sparking strong reactions. What had previously been divided among three federal departments a few years before was now united

under a single new one, Global Affairs Canada. The end of CIDA, after 45 years as the beating heart of Canadian development aid, marked the end of an era.

In the immediate aftermath of the consolidation, there were delays in reviewing proposals.⁹ This made people at DID extremely nervous in late 2013. But ultimately, several large-scale projects were approved simultaneously.¹⁰ The biggest permanent adjustment the organization needed to make was dealing with the end of the Partnerships with Canadians Branch. The last agreement DID signed was in April 2011 and included funding of almost \$20 million from CIDA, and more than \$6.5 million from Desjardins over four years.¹¹ DID's funding model combining public and private funds went back to the 1980s. As I showed in Chapter 3, it funded research, innovation and communications, all of which remained at the heart of DID's evolution,¹² but would now need to be adjusted. The organization was able to secure an annual increase in funding from Desjardins.¹³ As the organization had done in response to other major shakeups, it set to adapting not only nationally, but internationally.

Managing crises around the globe

The previous two decades had not been witness to a single geopolitical event as significant as the end of the Cold War. But there had been a multitude of smaller events scattered around the globe. Natural disasters, financial crises, health crises and terrorism were in regular rotation in international headlines beginning in the early 2000s. DID couldn't help but be affected.

The natural disasters in the countries where DID was operating didn't always make headlines in Canada, but the entire world took notice when a tsunami in the Indian Ocean in late December 2004 devastated several countries. Beginning in early January

of the next year, Desjardins announced that it would pull \$1 million from its surplus earnings to support the reconstruction effort. DID was selected to manage the distribution of the money. Desjardins president Alban D'Amours thought the expertise DID and its local partners already had would help make the best use of the funds.¹⁴ The move gave DID some leeway on how to use the money to immediate effect. It reached out to a Sri Lankan network of savings and credit cooperatives, SANASA, to gauge their needs and start planning reconstruction work immediately.¹⁵

"On behalf of the SANASA leaders, we would like to express our gratitude to all of the Desjardins family for the significant contribution you made to post-tsunami reconstruction in Sri Lanka. Your funds, as well as the solidarity of DID's experts, made a difference to the recovery efforts, strengthened our network and gave back hope to thousand of Sri Lankans."

– Dr. P.A. Kiriwandeniya, Leader of the SANASA Movement (2010)

Some of the money was also earmarked for Haiti, which had been ravaged by Hurricane Jeanne a few months before. But the organization would be much more involved in the country following a massive earthquake that struck on January 12, 2010, when DID had a project underway with local partner Fédération Le Levier, and employees in the field. Tensions were high in the hours and the days following the quake, as DID tried to confirm everyone's whereabouts. Reports weren't good. In the caisse network, 200 people were affected, including six employees and two officers who lost their lives. Three caisses were completely destroyed and there were financial losses.¹⁶ A fundraising

effort organized with Desjardins raised over \$1 million. The general manager of Fédération Le Levier, Jocelyn Saint-Jean, was invited to speak at the Desjardins AGMs, where he received a standing ovation from caisse delegates. But it would be the last time that DID participated in the AGMs, following changes to the event the next year. In Haiti, as the sheer scope of the devastation became clear, financial backers like CIDA carved out part of their budgets for aid, contributing to several DID projects in the country over the next few years.



Anne Gaboury was appointed president and CEO of DID in 2002 and remained in the position for the next 17 years.

Two years earlier, in 2008, the global economy had been rocked by the start of a financial crisis that would last several years. Fortunately, it didn't have a large impact on DID activities. In fact, the organization was buoyed by several positive analyses of its approach. A report by the International Labour Organization stated that cooperatives had navigated the recession better than banks.¹⁷ DID president and CEO Anne Gaboury agreed, citing the partner network in Lithuania as an example. The credit unions were the only locally owned institutions in the country and relied on the savings of their members. They continued to provide loans when banks had temporarily stopped. Because the credit unions were organized into a network, they were able to support one another during the hardest of times. Gaboury commented on how the crisis highlighted the strength of the cooperative model and the weaknesses of others, including some institutions in the microcredit sector.¹⁸

In 2015 and 2016, several terrorist attacks in African countries where DID was operating provided a wake-up call inside the organization. Two attacks took place in Tunisia where DID was setting up a financial centre for entrepreneurs. The next year there was an attack at a hotel in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, which was popular with foreigners, including DID employees. Fortunately, DID's people weren't there at the time. The attack mirrored a similar event in Bamako, Mali, the previous fall. Expats had become primary targets for terrorist groups. In other countries, like Haiti, a climate of poverty and a tense political environment led to daily violence in the streets. There had always been an element of risk inherent to the job, but the events of the last few years had put an end to the relatively carefree attitude of some DID advisors heading overseas.¹⁹

A consulting firm was hired to conduct a security analysis and help DID establish a security framework. Security became a priority and protocols were put into place. The organization established new, reliable sources of information on high-risk countries, developed protocols and procedures, created a risk monitoring committee, managed essential travel, reviewed the security of short- and long-term accommodations, monitored local travel, managed certain tasks long-distance, and hired local professionals more frequently. There was a push to make sure employees understood the new paradigm, especially those who had been used to very low security risks when travelling.

These types of operational changes affected every aspect of international development. The community was also shocked when a British organization working in Haiti was implicated in a sex scandal in 2018. In the middle of the #MeToo era, the revelations prompted some major changes in the sector, including at DID and with financial backers, who began developing policies and codes of conduct.

This period was also marked by severe health crises. Health risks had always been present for employees working abroad, especially malaria, but sometimes there were broader outbreaks. In 2006, the organization created an action plan in response to the avian flu. DID needed to be ready—these were real threats. In 2014 and 2015, there was an Ebola outbreak in West Africa, where DID had several projects underway. The outbreak spread to several countries but remained relatively localized compared to the spread of COVID-19 in 2020. The coronavirus outbreak led many countries to close their borders and DID suspended all international travel. Employees at the head office in Lévis shifted to telework. The full social, political and economic repercussions of the pandemic remain impossible to know as this book goes to press. But it will result in new challenges for DID and its partners over the next several years.

From community finance to financial inclusion

In 2005, the United Nations sponsored the International Year of Microcredit. It coincided with DID's 35th anniversary and was an excellent opportunity for the organization to raise its public profile. DID had continued to push the narrative that its approach was much broader than credit alone, but now there was a subtle shift in the language it used as well. It slowly phased out "microfinance," which it had been using since the second half of the 1990s, in favour of "community finance." The next evolution would be toward "financial inclusion," around 2010. The shift represented the organization's desire to communicate its goal. DID wanted to give people access to a range of financial services, including savings and credit, yes, but also specialized financing for entrepreneurs and farmers, various insurance products, pension plans, and more.²⁰

DID wanted to differentiate itself from all the other players and approaches in development aid financial projects. It wanted to be as clear as ever about how it operated and what it offered. According to Anne Gaboury, DID's product was its belief, tools and vision for development.²¹ In an effort to standardize language in the organization and provide consistent messaging outside of it, DID published a list of institutional positions in the fall of 2005. The documents presented the organization's point of view and its methodology in different areas of activity: monitoring, legal framework, housing, investment, agricultural financing, etc. They provided a clear picture of DID's identity in relation to other active organizations in development aid. They also helped identify a thread that ran through all of its operations, which was reflected by the creation of Proxfin.

In May 2005, DID held an international seminar attended by 120 invitees from 22 different countries. As a group, the participants came up with the idea to create an association founded primarily on sharing the model they promoted—the federated network.²² Proxfin, as it was named, was launched in September 2006 as a place for dialogue and reflection to encourage communication between networks sharing the same model and values.²³

Since then, the seminar has been held annually, alternating locations between Canada and the country of a member organization. Proxfin has given members an opportunity to learn from one another, called “South-South Cooperation,” and to experiment in new fields, which has led to new additions to their service offers and to DID’s.



The 2015 Proxfin seminar in Thailand. Anne Gaboury (second from left) with Fortunatas Dirgincius (Lituania), Sylvia Paraguya (Philippines), Pedro Löblein (Paraguay) and Nathan DeAssis (Zambia).

Help, invest, execute

At the end of 2002, Ghislain Paradis stepped down as president and CEO of DID but stayed on for several years working in Mexico. For his successor, the board of directors chose Anne Gaboury, who already had an accomplished career and would be the first woman to lead the organization. She had originally joined Desjardins as a management advisor for the confederation but made the jump to DID in 1995. By 1997 she was managing research and development and leading a multidisciplinary team that had a hand in all of the organization's development projects.

Gaboury stayed the course for the first few years of her tenure. DID was in a good financial situation, the order book was full and there were several projects under development.²⁴ But changes would come when the entire sector shifted following the Paris Declaration in 2005. Soon after, DID developed three strategies to adapt to the increased ownership for beneficiary countries: (1) Develop "sector-specific positioning" by broadening the service offer to all community finance stakeholders; (2) improve ties to local markets; and (3) become an "operator," by setting up and operating entrepreneur financial centres.²⁵



IT solutions have played a central role in the history of DID going back to the 1990s.

DID had specialized in savings and credit since its beginnings. And in the 1990s, when it broadened its service offer to include legal advice, monitoring and technology, the new activities fit within its traditional offering. But it was still just one aspect of financial services. Other projects in other sectors, insurance for instance, slowly came together. And over the years, the organization defined a belief that all people needed access to a diverse set of high-quality financial services.²⁶ This is why the organization developed what they called "specialized solutions," which included technology, school credit, agricultural financing, training, social responsibility, microinsurance, home financing, and more. The organization wanted to give people access to all the services they might need, not only savings and credit. DID's specialized solutions fell under the new strategy of sector-specific positioning.

The sector-based approach was designed to address global problems that could not be solved by a single institution. The drive for efficiency and delivering aid effectively encouraged DID to work with all the players in a particular sector. Take for example the Programme d'appui au secteur de la microfinance in Benin, which was launched in 2010. DID's mandate was to stabilize microfinance by working with several institutions, private and public alike. They included the FECECAM network, which had already been a DID partner for several years, Benin's department of microfinance, and a professional microfinance association. By working across the sector, DID created ties between local entities that didn't have a long history of close working relationships.²⁷

Agricultural credit was another example where the sector-based approach paid off, because the product can't be offered by a single institution. In Haiti, DID launched the Système de financement et

d'assurances agricoles (SYFAAH) in 2011. The first step was to select several financial institutions, then help them create professional agricultural credit teams. The SYFAAH involved several players in the field and in development, because it was a joint operation with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture and La Financière agricole du Québec, which also partnered with a similar agricultural financing program in rural Mali (FARM) which was launched in 2014. The same year, the Proyecto de Apoyo al Sistema Financiero Agropecuario Colombiano (PASAC) got off the ground in Colombia. It provided technical assistance to the agricultural and rural finance sector so institutions could respond better to the needs of farmers, agricultural associations and owners of rural microbusinesses.²⁸ The sector-based approach was an evolution in development aid and an innovation in DID operations.

Microinsurance was another field that required cooperation from multiple stakeholders. And it was something that DID had been very interested in, early on. There were small collaborative attempts between Desjardins Life Insurance in Hungary and even more in China throughout the 1990s. But it wasn't until 2006 and the arrival of a specialist on the development team that DID made a clear commitment and investment in the field.²⁹ It became much more active with the International Cooperative and Mutual Insurance Federation, chairing the development committee and organizing a special workshop on microinsurance in Quebec City in 2007. DID insurance projects were in large part operated in collaboration with networks. In Burkina Faso, a company was created with the *caisse* network to offer loan-life insurance,³⁰ a project that was initially planned to extend into West Africa, but that ran into legal hurdles. In Sri Lanka, DID began working with the insurance company from the SANASA network at the end of the 2000s, which ultimately led to the creation of a harvest insurance product based on precipitation trends. It covered rice farmers in the event of too little or too much

rain, so they could be compensated for weather-related crop losses.³¹

Technological solutions played an important role throughout this period. In 2004, a mobile app (AMIO) was developed for handheld computers so DID could offer financial intermediation to a growing number of clients located far from urban centres.³² In late 2007, the organization made headlines when it signed an important contract with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to increase interconnectivity among financial cooperatives. The Foundation rolled out a fund transfer service to facilitate transactions between rural and urban points of service in the same savings and credit cooperative network, between the *caisse* and the federation, or between the federation and an external party. The project was eventually active in five countries on three continents: Burkina Faso, Togo, Mali, Vietnam and Haiti.



In late 2007, the organization signed an important contract with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to increase interconnectivity among financial cooperatives.

A pilot project in Haiti in 2004 led to the creation of a specialized product called *écolage*, or school credit. Most of the elementary schools in the country are private and school fees are quite high. Students are sometimes forced to wait at the beginning of the school year until their parents can come up with the tuition. It's an unfortunate situation that can result in students dropping out or falling behind. The school credit loans provided to parents were a specialized financing product so they could pay for their children's fees without needing to borrow from predatory lenders. The new and original idea was a first between the financial and education sectors.³³ Beginning in 2015, DID carved out a place for financial education in an increasing number of projects. In Colombia, for example, it was integrated into a partnership with the national federation of coffee producers.

The second strategy DID developed for delivering aid more effectively was improving ties to local markets. DID began by setting up two regional offices in the late 2000s, with Mexico an obvious choice due to the sheer number of projects in the country. Work was slated to begin in the spring of 2009 but was delayed due to fallout from the 2008 financial crisis. Despite best efforts to get the project off the ground, and the undeniable quality of the services provided by the local team,³⁴ the project was shelved the following year. Fortunately, things went differently in Dakar,



A school credit program in Haiti gave parents a way to pay for school fees.

Senegal. There, the idea of a regional office had been around since 2003 following FINACO and the wave of implementation of SAF software.³⁵ But it would still take five years to become a reality. Initially, activities were primarily concentrated on technology before being redirected. In 2015, the DID office in Senegal secured three collaborative projects related to agricultural financing and conducted a study on financial inclusion that was commissioned by the government of Senegal.³⁶

The third strategy, to become an operator, took shape by setting up entrepreneur financial centres (EFCs), which would become an important part of DID's investment activities during this period. But it's important to look back to a few years earlier to understand the difference between the alliance and operator-investor models the organization eventually created. Because Desjardins's traditional *caisse* clientele had always been individual members, corporate financial centres (later called business centres) were created at the end of the 1990s to improve the services the cooperatives could offer businesses. The idea was to pool the collective experience of multiple *caisses* serving the same market and allow them to share the cost of analyzing credit risk, profitability and business growth. DID didn't waste time implementing the model in its partner networks: in Burkina Faso with the RCPB *caisses* in 2003, in Senegal with the PAMECAS network in 2004, and in Mali with the

Nyèsigiso network in 2005. Other EFCs were also set up throughout the 2010s, including in Benin and Haiti. These EFCs operated using the alliance model, which resembled Desjardins's own model—a common pool of expertise created and drawn on by *caisses* in a given network.

DID came up with the operator-investor model out of necessity³⁷ for countries without a partner network and to enable DID to inject funds with other investors. Because these were publicly traded companies and not cooperatives, DID created a shareholder program that encouraged clients and employees to buy in. The first EFC operating this model was Agaseke in Rwanda in 2003. But it remained the only one of its kind for the next six years.



The opening of an operator-investor EFC in Tanzania in 2009. Present are Martin Villemure, who helped open many EFCs (centre), and Marie-Claire Duguay (second from right).

Martin Villemure was an integral part of the initial implementation and became involved in executing the operator-investor model elsewhere. A second EFC was opened in Zambia in 2009. Three more opened their doors in the two years that followed, one each in Panama, Tanzania and Uganda. Another was opened in Tunisia in 2015. After only four years of activity, the contracts from operator-investor EFCs represented

20% of DID's order book. On the ground, the four EFCs operating in 2013 had a total of 28 points of service and almost 25,000 clients, 39% of whom were women. Their combined credit portfolio stood at CAN\$35 million spread among 5,000 entrepreneurs, while savings reached almost CAN\$8 million.³⁸



The inauguration of an EFC in Sfax, Tunisia in 2017.

The ethos behind the EFCs was build, operate, transfer, which reflecting DID's eventual withdrawal. By 2017, only the EFCs in Panama and Tunisia remained within the organization's fold. Each EFC operated in a unique environment and evolved differently. In Zambia, the period following the start up was very promising, but the country's economy crashed in 2015. In Panama, it was the opposite. The EFC had a hard time at the beginning but showed strong growth afterwards. The

operator-investor model had been a risky proposition and DID handled some problems along the way, especially when it came to the expectations of investors that DID itself had recruited. Nonetheless, Anne Gaboury saw the future of development in investment and was convinced that DID's niche of lending to entrepreneurs was an essential part of it.³⁹

DID activities meant the operator-investor EFCs could access a specialized solution—business financing—as well as investment. Investor activities evolved in 2011 with the launch of the Desjardins Fund for Inclusive Finance, a limited partnership with a CAN\$10 million capitalization, 30% of which came from DID and 70% from Desjardins. One year after it was launched, the fund had already made six investments totalling \$6 million, including to the Fundación para el Desarrollo Integral Espoir in Ecuador to support growth and find new investment partners.⁴⁰ The new fund had an institutional investment committee of five high-level experts from different units within Desjardins.

DID's move to deliver technical assistance through a sector-based approach, get closer to local markets by opening a regional office in Senegal, and launch a new type of activity—as an operator—helped it adapt to the shift in public funding for development aid that had been happening the previous 15 years. At the end of 2018, as the organization was on the cusp of identifying the next set of changes that would need new strategic goals and define a new era, Anne Gaboury decided it was time to step down from her role as president and CEO.

For the first time since the late 1970s, the person taking over had come up in Desjardins knowing only DID, and not the traditional

financial institution that had been built and grown in Canada. Gerardo Almaguer was originally from Mexico and had first learned about DID when he was working with one of the organization's partners. His path enabled him to learn about the organization from the outside in.⁴¹ He participated in his first DID project in 1999 and six years later moved to Canada after landing a job as an advisor. After being at the helm of the EFC in Panama and PASAC in Colombia, he became the Senior Director for Agricultural Finance and Food Security in 2016. When he became President and CEO of the organization in January 2019, it coincided with a new generation making its mark on the management committee. Together, they would face the next set of DID's challenges together.

In the late 2010s, the Canadian development aid sector was adjusting to certain changes that DID had already adapted to, including a conscious effort to support gender equity and sustainable development. In 2018, FinDev Canada was launched with a mandate to support the growth and sustainability of businesses in developing markets.⁴² The long history of DID and Canadian development aid continues to evolve, and has perhaps already entered yet another era.

"DID works with financial institutions of all sizes to help them fulfill their own missions and to tackle the challenges they face in their own markets. That includes focusing more on youth and helping them achieve their goals, giving entrepreneurs the support they need to be successful—because successful businesses are key to growing vibrant, dynamic communities, helping build a healthier, more sustainable environment for future generations, and using digital platforms to provide better service to members and clients. I'm proud of the incredible social impact DID has. Of the sheer scope of the work they do making a wide range of secure financial services accessible to underprivileged communities around the world. But most of all, I'm proud of the people who do the work."

– Guy Cormier, President and CEO of Desjardins (2019)

Desjardins and DID: Ever closer

In the early 2000s, Desjardins underwent a major transformation. The organization moved from a three-level organization (local caisses, regional federations, confederation) to a two-level organization (local caisses, federation). In 2008, a major restructuring was designed to improve the integration of all the entities in the organization and create a more cohesive body. Because of its particular role within Desjardins, DID came out of the exercise with a degree of autonomy. Nevertheless, it was folded into the cooperative as a division, with the DID president and CEO reporting to Desjardins's chief operating officer. This new, closer relationship largely defined how the two organizations interacted during this period.

In 2003, DID launched a North–South partnership to encourage Desjardins caisses to help fund a computerization initiative for 300 savings and credit cooperatives in Africa and Haiti. Representatives toured Quebec and Ontario to present the project and promote the organization. Awareness activities were also organized for board members and managers from participating caisses.⁴³ It took just one year to reach the \$1.6 million goal for the partnership program thanks to contributions from 262 caisses in Quebec and Ontario, and from the federation. The first contribution from the computerization project totalled \$300,000 and went to 10 caisses in the Réseau des caisses populaires in Burkina Faso.⁴⁴



DID coordinated Desjardins's solidarity-based financing programs, including the Desjardins Microcredit to Businesses program, at home in Canada. Pictured is Gerardo Almaguer on the occasion of the International Day of Microcredit in 2019.

The relationship between DID and Desjardins became even more pronounced in the 2010s, with solidarity-based finance programs like the Desjardins Mutual Assistance Fund, the Créavenir Youth Entrepreneurship Program and Microcredit to Businesses. The first offers emergency loans and budget counselling services with community partners. The other two support entrepreneurs who aren't able to access traditional financing by providing financing and support to help them get their businesses off the ground.⁴⁵ Around 2010 there was a push inside Desjardins to improve how the products were coordinated. Anne Gaboury believed the solidarity-based finance products mirrored DID's mission for financial inclusion and that DID had the two specific talents needed for the products to be successful: the ability to combine development with finance, and experience in implementation.⁴⁶ She believed that DID's position inside Desjardins made it a natural fit to coordinate these products. The results were positive, and the two organizations renewed their agreement at the end of 2019.⁴⁷

Looking back at the beginnings of DID, it's interesting to see that its focus and its operations were squarely set in Canada. At the beginning of the 1970s, CIDR-Canada was executing projects with Indigenous peoples in the country. In a way, the adoption and promotion of solidarity-based finance programs was a bit of a homecoming for the organization. In a nod to its early years, and amidst an ambitious construction project that was redesigning the Desjardins Campus in Lévis in 2015, DID left the offices it had been using for more than 30 years and moved to the Desjardins Building

at 59 Avenue Bégin, right beside the location of its first headquarters when it operated as CIDR-Canada.

As for Desjardins, it continued to expand its international footprint during this time. During the International Year of Co-operatives in 2012, it was a key organizer for the International Summit of Cooperatives in Quebec City. Two more summits were held in 2014 and 2016, each attracting an average of 3,000 people from 90 countries. DID hosted Proxfin seminars, the members of which were very active in Summit activities. Eight of them were actually invited onto different panels at the summit in 2014. Monique F. Leroux, Desjardins chair of the board, president and CEO from 2008 to 2016, attended the third summit with her successor, Guy Cormier. Leroux had been elected president of the International Co-operative Alliance only a few months before, a first for a former head of Desjardins.

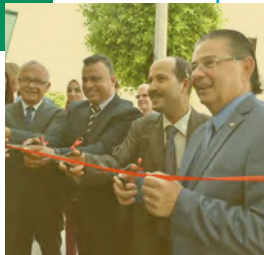
Since the beginning of the 2000s, DID had worked to adapt to international trends in development aid and the resulting changes in Canada. It did so by being flexible and ready to adjust to different crises that impacted the globe. The organization remained committed to promoting financial inclusion and made changes to its service offer that reflected that, most notably by adopting the role of an operator. What's more, the organization had made the most of its closer relationship to Desjardins.



Desjardins president Guy Cormier attending the 2018 Proxfin seminar in Montreal.



CONCLUSION



A field in constant evolution

In an interview in 2019, Anne Gaboury made clear that she thought international development was a profession, whether it was perceived that way or not.¹ For most people, organizations like DID are providing philanthropic or humanitarian aid, and not highly specialized activities requiring various skill sets and executed in a competitive environment. Over the last 50 years, DID has experienced every step of the evolution that development aid has lived through.

When DID was founded in 1970, Desjardins already had a level of experience in international relations, but none in international development. DID's first decade of existence included not only the administrative hurdles inherent to getting a development aid organization off the ground, but also all the work of building and learning a profession, in the field and in the head office. Over the years it built real expertise in savings and credit and rural development. When it was brought into the fold by Desjardins at the end of the 1970s, it cemented its footing, and the relationship largely explains why the organization concentrated on finance projects beginning in the 1990s.

It was an audacious move at the time, but a smart one that demonstrated a real sense of vision. It was also very profitable, as it predicted the interest that financial backers would have

for financial tools in the years to come. DID was able to count on the experience and the expertise of the cooperative financial group behind it and broaden its project scope, beyond the technical assistance of its early years and into investments that helped its partners grow. And those partners grew with DID, as did their needs and their expectations for the aid organization they worked with. Like Desjardins before it, DID and its partners worked to expand the financial products and services they offered beyond savings and credit to include insurance, technology, financing for entrepreneurs and farmers, and more. The organization became an operator and created entrepreneur financial centres in Africa and Central America. The scope of its operations and the role of its advisors had created a complex network of interactions over its 50-year history.

DID is a unique and specialized entity within Desjardins. It promotes and raises awareness about the leading cooperative financial group in Canada around the globe. At the beginning of the 20th century, Alphonse Desjardins drew his inspiration from cooperators abroad. Since 1970, it's been the Desjardins name and the Desjardins logo that have encouraged partners in countries around the world to develop inclusive financial services adapted to the needs of the people in their communities.

Chair of DID's board of directors

1. Raymond Audet, 1970–1974
2. Yvon L'Heureux, 1974–1978
3. Alfred Rouleau, 1978
4. Yvon Daneau, 1978–1984
5. Henri-Paul Trudel, 1985–1988
6. Bertrand Proulx, 1989
7. Lauréanne Boutin, 1990–1991
8. Bernard Robillard, 1992–1993
9. André Roy, 1994–2001
10. Olivier Lavoie, 2002–2005
11. Marcel Lauzon, 2006–2012
12. Michel Roy, 2012–2013
13. Annie P. Bélanger, 2014–2018
14. Louis Babineau, since 2019

DID's president and CEO

1. Raymond Audet, 1970–1974
2. Guy Bédard, 1974–1979
3. Yvon Daneau, 1979–1980
4. Michel Doray, 1980–1989
5. Ghislain Paradis, 1989–2002
6. Anne Gaboury, 2002–2019
7. Gerardo Almaguer, since 2019

Organization names

1. Compagnie internationale de développement régional, 1970–1980
2. Société de Développement international Desjardins, 1980–1994
3. Développement international Desjardins, since 1994



Introduction

- 1 www.desjardins.com/ca/about-us/developpement-international-desjardins/index.jsp

Chapter 1

- 1 Alphonse Desjardins, "Les caisses populaires," *Le Congrès de la Jeunesse à Québec en 1908* (Montreal: 1909), p. 26.
- 2 Alphonse Desjardins, "L'union des forces sur le terrain économique," *La Vérité* [Quebec City], October 1, 1910, p. 82.
- 3 Guy Bélanger, *Alphonse Desjardins, 1854-1920* (Quebec City: Septentrion, 2012), p. 122.
- 4 Bélanger, *Alphonse Desjardins*, p. 282.
- 5 Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. *Reports of the Special Committee of the House of Commons to Whom was Referred Bill No.2, An Act Respecting Industrial and Co-operative Societies*. 10th Parliament, 3rd Session. Ottawa: Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1907, p. 26.
- 6 Yves Roby, *Alphonse Desjardins et les caisses populaires, 1854-1920* (Montreal: Fides, 1964), p. 99.
- 7 Pierre Poulin, *Histoire du Mouvement Desjardins, T. III : De la caisse locale au complexe financier 1945-1971* (Montreal: Québec/Amérique, 1998), p. 76.
- 8 Poulin, *Histoire du Mouvement Desjardins*, T. III, p. 79.
- 9 "Vingtième assemblée générale de l'Union régionale de Québec," *Revue Desjardins* 9, 7 (August-September 1943), p. 125; Henri Desroches, *Le projet coopératif*, (Paris: Éditions Économie et Humanisme, Les Éditions ouvrières, 1976), p. 105.
- 10 Philip A. Tanner, "L'Asie et les îles du Pacifique," *L'aide canadienne au développement*. Edited by François Audet, Marie-Eve Desrosiers and Stéphane Roussel (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2008), p. 298.
- 11 Claude Genest, "Plan de Colombo. Rosario Tremblay et la mission canadienne de 1953," *La Seigneurie de Lauzon* 122 (Summer 2011), p. 12.
- 12 Cranford Pratt, ed. "Humane Internationalism and Canadian Development Assistance Policies," *Canadian International Development Assistance Policies: An Appraisal* (Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), p. 339.
- 13 David R. Morrison, "The Choice of Bilateral Aid Recipients," *Canadian International Development Assistance Policies: An Appraisal*. Edited by Cranford Pratt, p. 124–125.
- 14 Catherine Foisy, "La décennie 1960 des missionnaires québécois : vers de nouvelles dynamiques de circulation des personnes, des idées et des pratiques," *Bulletin d'histoire politique* 23, 1 (2014), p. 25.
- 15 http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum.html
- 16 Édouard-A. Tardieu, "La caisse populaire, le développement et la paix," *Revue Desjardins* 35, 1 (January 1969), p. 10.

Chapter 1 (Continued)

- 17 Henri Langlais, "Une lumière éclairant les ténèbres," *Revue Desjardins* 17, 12 (December 1951), p. 188-189; "Caisses populaires d'épargne et de crédit en Haïti," *Revue Desjardins* 22, 5 (May 1955), p. 90-91; Rosario Tremblay, "Visiteurs du Japon," *Revue Desjardins* 34, 6-7 (October 1968), p. 108; Édouard-A. Tardieu, "Un pionnier québécois dans le mouvement coopératif au Pakistan," *Revue Desjardins* 36, 1 (January 1970), p. 20.
- 18 Meeting of FQURCPD board of directors. Minutes of proceedings (September 3-4, 1962 and May 30, 1966), FCDQ archives.
- 19 Meeting of FQURCPD executive committee. Minutes of proceedings (July 18, 1968), FCDQ archives.
- 20 Rosario Tremblay, "Des visiteurs mexicains," *Revue Desjardins* 11, 8 (1945), p. 148.
- 21 Poulin, *Histoire du Mouvement Desjardins*, T. III, p. 296.
- 22 Martine Côté, *Rapport de recherche sur l'Institut coopératif Desjardins, 1963-1986* (Lévis: DCI, 1987), p. 22.
- 23 Michel Doray, *L'Institut coopératif Desjardins et la coopération avec les pays en voie de développement. Année de recherches, 1968. Rapport-synthèse*, (Lévis, 1968), p. 8. FCDQ archives 8.
- 24 Doray, *L'Institut coopératif Desjardins et la coopération avec les pays en voie de développement*, p. 8. Cited in FCDQ archives.
- 25 Jean-Paul Messina, *Jean Zoa : prêtre, archevêque de Yaoundé, 1922-1998* (Paris: Karthala, 2002), p. 164.
- 26 CIDR annual general meeting. Message from the president (April 30, 1973), p. 2.
- 27 "Des visiteurs d'Afrique," *Revue Desjardins* 35, 10 (December 1969), p. 285.
- 28 Rosario Tremblay and Gérard Bardin, *Voyage en Haute-Volta et au Cameroun* (Lévis), May 1970, p. 4. FCDQ archives.

Chapter 2

- 1 Interview of Raymond Audet by Francis Leblond (December 1995). FCDQ archives.
- 2 Summary of meeting between the federation and the CIDR executive, (March 21, 1975). FCDQ archives, reel 11994.
- 3 Interview of Raymond Audet by Francis Leblond (December 1995). FCDQ archive.
- 4 CIDR-Canada brochure. 9017 : CIDR, historique, 11236-229. FCDQ archives.
- 5 Interview of Michel Lagacé by Claude Genest (June 22, 2009). Additional note by Rosario Tremblay (December 14, 2011). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 6 CIDR-Canada brochure. 9017 : CIDR, historique, 11236-229. FCDQ archives.
- 7 Memorandum from CIDR to the Fédération de Québec des caisses populaires Desjardins (November 14, 1972). 9017 : CIDR, financement, capital-actions, 11236-243. FCDQ archives.
- 8 CIDR-Canada brochure. 9017 : CIDR, historique, 11236-229. FCDQ archives.
- 9 Interview of Michel Lagacé by Claude Genest (June 22, 2009). Additional note by Michel Lagacé (December 13, 2011). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 10 Jacques Barbeau, "La Compagnie internationale de développement veut offrir une formule coopérative aux pays du tiers-monde qui pourraient en profiter," *Le Soleil* [Quebec City], November 22, 1971.
- 11 "Monsieur Jean-Louis Rouleau et sa famille pour deux ans au Cameroun," *Revue Desjardins* 38, 5 (1972), p. 41-42.
- 12 CIDR Annual report. "Projet d'animation et de promotion coopérative dans diverses réserves indiennes du Québec" (September 5, 1973). DID archives.
- 13 Memorandum to the CIDR FQ. 9017 : CIDR, financement, capital-actions, 11236-243 (November 14, 1972), p. 4. FCDQ archives.
- 14 CIDR shareholder's meeting. Message from the president (April 30, 1973), p. 7. FCDQ archives, reel 11236.
- 15 Shareholder's' meeting. Speech by Yvon L'Heureux (June 28, 1978). DID archives, reel 53.
- 16 Report from the Comité d'étude pour les problèmes d'aide au tiers-monde (July 25, 1973). FCDQ archives, reel 11222.
- 17 Letter from Bertrand de La Rocque to Raymond Audet and Guy Bédard (November 6, 1973). FCDQ archives, reel 11236.
- 18 Shareholder's meeting. Speech by Yvon L'Heureux (June 28, 1978). DID archives, reel 53.
- 19 DID, *Appui technique et investissement en finance communautaire. 35 ans de développement international* (Lévis: DID, 2005), p. 7.
- 20 Memorandum from Rosario Tremblay to Alfred Rouleau (August 11, 1972). FCDQ archives, reel 11222; CIDR shareholders' meeting (April 30, 1973). FCDQ archives, reel 11236.
- 21 Telex from Alfred Rouleau to Bertrand de La Rocque (April 5, 1974). FCDQ archives, reel 11236.
- 22 Letter from Alfred Rouleau to Raymond Audet (September 24, 1973). FCDQ archives, reel 11236.

Chapter 2 (Continued)

- 23 Shareholders' meeting. Speech by Yvon L'Heureux (June 28, 1978). DID archives, reel 53.
- 24 Jacques Ouellet, CIDR consultant's report (January 1977). FCDQ archives, reel 11994.
- 25 *Une proposition de relance pour la CIDR Ltée* (October 1977), p. 27. DID archives; Interview of Michel Lagacé by Claude Genest (June 22, 2009). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 26 *Une proposition de relance pour la CIDR Ltée* (October 1977), p. 24. DID archives.
- 27 Michel Blais (April 8, 1977). FCDQ archives, reel 11994; see also *Une proposition de relance pour la CIDR Ltée* (October 1977), p. 46. DID archives.
- 28 CIDR shareholders' meeting. Message from the general manager (May 26, 1976), p. 40. FCDQ archives, reel 11994.
- 29 Fédération de Québec des Caisses populaires Desjardins, *Les institutions coopératives d'épargne et de crédit dans le développement économique et social. Actes de la rencontre internationale de Montréal 5-6-7 octobre 1975* (Lévis: Fédération de Québec des caisses populaires Desjardins, 1976), p. 455.
- 30 *Une proposition de relance pour la CIDR Ltée* (October 1977). DID archives.
- 31 *Une proposition de relance pour la CIDR Ltée* (October 1977), p. 75. DID archives.
- 32 Meeting of CIDR executive committee. Minutes of proceedings (December 10, 1977). DID archives, reel 53.
- 33 Meeting of CIDR executive committee. Minutes of proceedings (June 6, 1978). DID archives, reel 53.
- 34 Interview of Michel Lagacé by Claude Genest (June 22, 2009). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 35 Meeting of CIDR executive committee. Minutes of proceedings (October 2, 1978). DID archives, reel 53.
- 36 Meeting between René Croteau and CIDR executive committee. Minutes of proceedings (December 1, 1977). FCDQ archives, reel 11994. This may have been the origin of the term "illegitimate child" in reference to CIDR-Canada's relationship with Desjardins; Chantal De Corte, *Développement international Desjardins – 1970-2010. Pionniers québécois de la microfinance* (Quebec City: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2010), p. 16.
- 37 Meeting of Fédération de Québec des Caisses populaires Desjardins board of directors. Minutes of proceedings (May 22, 1978). FCDQ archives.
- 38 CIDR annual report (1979). DID archives.
- 39 Shareholders' meeting. Speech by Yvon L'Heureux (June 28, 1978). DID archives, reel 53.

Chapter 3

- 1 Meeting of Fédération de Québec des Caisses populaires Desjardins board of directors. Minutes of proceedings (May 22, 1978). FCDQ archives.
- 2 Letter from Rouleau to management committee and management (March 21, 1979). FCDQ archives, reel 11994.
- 3 Interview of Yvan Daneau by Jean-François Langlais (June 10, 1992). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 4 "Nominations," *Revue Desjardins* 46, 3 (1980), p. 44.
- 5 Meeting of CIDR board of directors. Minutes of proceedings (November 1, 1979). FCDQ archives, reel 11994.
- 6 SDID board of directors. *Orientations de la SDID 1982-1985* (November 26, 1981).
- 7 Robert Nelson, *Élaboration du système de financement des activités : Société de développement international Desjardins*, (Master's thesis on PMO management, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, 1984), Appendix 5.
- 8 Société conseil Maheu-Noiseux, *SDID. Revue organisationnelle de la Société de développement international Desjardins. Rapport final* (February 1987), p. 34. DID archives.
- 9 Mauro Malservisi and Max Tereraho, *Vingt-cinq ans de coopération internationale de Desjardins : un portrait général des interventions de DID* (Montreal: Université du Québec à Montréal, Chaire de coopération Guy Bernier, 1996), p. 11.
- 10 Tim Brodhead and Cranford Pratt, "Paying the Piper: CIDA and Canadian NGOs," in Pratt, *Canadian International Development Assistance Policies*, and Tim Brodhead, Brent Herbert-Copley, and Anne-Marie Lambert, *Bridges of Hope?: Canadian Voluntary Agencies and the Third World* (Ottawa: North-South Institute, 1988), p. 104.
- 11 Pierre Beaudet, *Qui aide qui? Une brève histoire de la solidarité internationale au Québec* (Montréal: Boréal, 2009), p. 110-111.
- 12 David R. Morrison, *Aid and Ebb Tide: A History of CIDA and Canadian Development Assistance* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998), p. 454.
- 13 SDID proposal for new CIDA-SDID agreement, 1987-1990. Accompanying file (March 1987). DID archives, reel 80.
- 14 Interview of Michel Lagacé by Claude Genest (June 22, 2009). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 15 Société conseil Maheu-Noiseux, *SDID. Revue organisationnelle de la Société de développement international Desjardins. Rapport final* (February 1987), p. 119. DID archives.
- 16 SDID annual report (1984), p. 5. DID archives.
- 17 SDID annual report (1987), p. 13; SDID annual report (1999), p. 14. DID archives.
- 18 Speech by SDID general manager Michel Doray, August 27, 1987), DID archives, reel 80, p. 2.
- 19 Interview of Michel Lagacé by Claude Genest (June 22, 2009). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 20 Interview of Anne Gaboury by Pierre-Olivier Maheux (October 28, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 21 SDID annual report (1980), p. 4. DID archives.
- 22 DID annual report (1990), p. 10. DID archives.
- 23 SDID annual report (1986), p. 6-7. DID archives.
- 24 CIDR shareholder's meeting. Message from the general manager (May 26, 1971). FCDQ archives, reel 11994, p. 21.

Chapter 3 (Continued)

- 25 Robert Nelson, *Élaboration du système de financement des activités : Société de développement international Desjardins*, (Master's thesis on PMO management, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, 1984), Appendix 5, p. 2; Mauro Malservisi and Max Tereraho, *Vingt-cinq ans de coopération internationale de Desjardins : un portrait général des interventions de DID* (Montreal: Université du Québec à Montréal, Chaire de coopération Guy Bernier, 1996), p. 8.
- 26 Interview of Michel Lagacé by Claude Genest (June 22, 2009). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 27 Chantal De Corte, *Développement international Desjardins – 1970-2010. Pionniers québécois de la microfinance* (Quebec City: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2010), p. 19-20.
- 28 Pierre Demers, "Bougouriba et Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean : deux fédérations qui coopèrent," *Revue Desjardins* 52, 2 (1986), p. 24.
- 29 Martine Giroux, "Les caisses populaires du secteur Émile-Girardin. Une solidarité sans frontières," *L'entre-gens* 10, 3 (1987), p. 9.
- 30 SDID annual report (1988), p. 20. DID archives.
- 31 SDID annual report (1984), p. 7, p. 9. DID archives.
- 32 Robert Nelson, *Élaboration du système de financement des activités : Société de développement international Desjardins*, (Master's thesis on PMO management, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, 1984), Appendix 3.
- 33 Robert Nelson, *Élaboration du système de financement des activités : Société de développement international Desjardins*, (Master's thesis on PMO management, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, 1984), Appendix 5, p. 6-8.
- 34 Mauro-F. Malservisi, "Desjardins en Afrique : interventions pour un développement durable," *Desjardins, une entreprise et un mouvement?* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1997), p. 237.
- 35 Michel Doray, "Société de développement international Desjardins. Dix-sept ans d'engagement dans les pays en développement," *L'entre-gens* 10, 3 (1987), p. 7.
- 36 SDID annual report (1986), p. 4. DID archives.
- 37 Meeting of SDID board of directors. Minutes of proceedings (December 18, 1986). DID archives, reel 80.
- 38 Meeting of SDID management committee. Minutes of proceedings (April 18, 1989). DID archives, reel 55.
- 39 SDID annual report (1984), p. 3. DID archives.
- 40 SDID annual report (1991), p. 12. DID archives.
- 41 Mauro Malservisi and Max Tereraho, *Vingt-cinq ans de coopération internationale de Desjardins : un portrait général des interventions de DID* (Montreal: Université du Québec à Montréal, Chaire de coopération Guy Bernier, 1996), p. 8.
- 42 Interview of Ghislain Paradis by Pierre-Olivier Maheux (September 19, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 43 Interview of Ghislain Paradis by Pierre-Olivier Maheux (September 19, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 44 Interview of Ghislain Paradis by Pierre-Olivier Maheux (September 19, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 45 DID. *Expérience professionnelle* (March 2019). DID archives.
- 46 DID annual report (1996), p. 2. DID archives.

Chapter 4

- 1 David R. Morrison, *Aid and Ebb Tide: A History of CIDA and Canadian Development Assistance* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998), p. 316.
- 2 Morrison, *Aid and Ebb Tide*, p. 317.
- 3 DID annual report (1989), p. 1. DID archives.
- 4 Morrison, *Aid and Ebb Tide*, p. 301.
- 5 DID annual report (1989), p. 11. DID archives; Desjardins, *Revue financière* (1993), p. 44.
- 6 Morrison, *Aid and Ebb Tide*, p. 326.
- 7 François Audet and Marie-Ève Desrosiers, "Introduction générale. Aide canadienne au développement : état présent et tendances récentes," *L'aide canadienne au développement*. Edited by Audet, Desrosiers and Stéphane Roussel (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2008), p. 27.
- 8 Tim Brodhead and Cranford Pratt, "Paying the Piper: CIDA and Canadian NGOs," in Pratt, *Canadian International Development Assistance Policies*, and Tim Brodhead, Brent Herbert-Copley, and Anne-Marie Lambert, *Bridges of Hope?: Canadian Voluntary Agencies and the Third World* (Ottawa: North-South Institute, 1988), p. 108.
- 9 DID annual report (1991), p. 2. DID archives.
- 10 Ian Smillie, "Le développement international et la société civile," *La société civile et le changement mondial. Rapport canadien sur le développement* (Ottawa: Institut Nord-Sud, 1999), p. 28.
- 11 Interview of Anne Gaboury by Pierre-Olivier Maheux (November 4, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 12 Mauro Malservisi and Max Tereraho, *Vingt-cinq ans de coopération internationale de Desjardins : un portrait général des interventions de DID* (Montreal: Université du Québec à Montréal, Chaire de coopération Guy Bernier, 1996), p. 16.
- 13 DID board of directors, *Bilan 2002 et perspectives 2003* (December 11, 2002), p. 2. DID archives.
- 14 Guy Le Boterf and Pierre Lessard, *Designing development projects. Participative management and institutional development* (Laval: Éditions Agence D'ARC, SDID, 1989), p. XV.
- 15 De Corte, *Développement international Desjardins – 1970-2010*, p. 26.
- 16 Interview of Ghislain Paradis (September 19, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 17 DID annual report (2000), p. 11. DID archives.
- 18 Interview of Ghislain Paradis (September 19, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 19 Interview of Yvon Bernier, (April 25, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 20 DID annual report (1990), p. 25. DID archives.
- 21 Mauro-F. Malservisi, "Desjardins en Afrique : interventions pour un développement durable," *Desjardins, une entreprise et un mouvement?* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1997), p. 237.
- 22 DID annual report (1991), p. 8-9. DID archives.

Chapter 4 (Continued)

- 23 Interview of Michel Lagacé by Claude Genest (June 22, 2009). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 24 Philip A. Tanner, "L'Asie et les îles du Pacifique," *L'aide canadienne au développement*. Edited by François Audet, Marie-Eve Desrosiers and Stéphane Roussel (Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2008), p. 300.
- 25 DID annual report (1989), p. 10. DID archives.
- 26 Interview of Anne Gaboury (October 28, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 27 DID annual report (1992), p. 4. DID archives.
- 28 Interview of Ghislain Paradis (September 19, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 29 DID annual report (1997), p. 3. DID archives.
- 30 "Microfinance contre pauvreté," *Entreprendre* 1998, p. 48. In *Revue de presse DID 1998 (médias canadiens et internationaux)*.
- 31 Claude Turcotte, "Lancer son entreprise... avec 50 \$," *Le Devoir* [Montreal], July 8, 1998. In *Revue de presse DID 1998 (médias canadiens et internationaux)*.
- 32 DID annual report (1998), p. 2. DID archives.
- 33 "Microfinance contre pauvreté," *Entreprendre* 1998, p. 48-49.
- 34 DID annual report (2002), p. 4. DID archives.
- 35 DID annual report (2000), p. 2. DID archives.
- 36 Interview of Anne Gaboury (November 4, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 37 DID annual report (2000), p. 6. DID archives.
- 38 Jean-Bernard Fournier, Pierre Giguère and Camille Moreau, "Élaboration d'un cadre juridique pour l'implantation d'un réseau financier mutualiste au Sénégal," *Revue canadienne d'études du développement* 14, 3 (1993), p. 467.
- 39 Interview of Anne Gaboury (October 28, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 40 Mauro Malservisi and Max Tereraho, *Vingt-cinq ans de coopération internationale de Desjardins : un portrait général des interventions de DID* (Montreal: Université du Québec à Montréal, Chaire de coopération Guy Bernier, 1996), p. 20.
- 41 DID board of directors, *Bilan 2003 et perspectives 2004* (December 10, 2003), p. 2. DID archives.
- 42 "Programme d'appui à la mobilisation de l'épargne dans la francophonie. L'heure du bilan est arrivée," *Par ailleurs* 6, 1 (1999), p. 6.
- 43 Interview of Anne Gaboury (October 28, 2019). *La Société technologique Desjardins sera une tentative de courte durée de vendre la technologie créée par Desjardins ailleurs dans le monde*; Interview of Ghislain Paradis (September 19, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 44 "L'informatique de plus en plus accessible aux partenaires de DID," *Par ailleurs* 6, 2 (1999), p. 4.
- 45 DID board of directors, *Bilan 2001 et perspectives 2002* (December 14, 2001), p. 3. DID archives.

Chapter 4 (Continued)

- 46 Interview of Yvon Bernier (April 25, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 47 Interview of Ghislain Paradis (September 19, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 48 DID board of directors, *Rétrospective 1999 et planification 2000* (December 9, 1999), p. 7. DID archives.
- 49 DID board of directors. *Rétrospective 1998, plan de travail 1999*, (December 10, 1998), p. 7 and p. 20. DID archives.
- 50 Cited in De Corte, *Développement international Desjardins – 1970-2010*, p. 26.
- 51 DID annual report (2000), p. 7. DID archives.
- 52 DID annual report (1998), p. 5. Data from networks in Haiti, Madagascar, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Mali, Senegal, Lithuania, Vietnam. DID archives.
- 53 DID board of directors, *Rétrospective 1999 et planification 2000* (December 9, 1999), p. 3. DID archives.
- 54 Ghislain Paradis, "Desjardins dans le monde : une présence modeste mais significative," *Desjardins, une entreprise et un mouvement?*, p. 221.
- 55 *Info-Gestionnaires* (February 23, 2000). In *Revue de presse DID 2000 (médias canadiens et internationaux)*.
- 56 Meeting of DID management committee. Minutes of proceedings (December 20, 1989), FCDQ archives, reel 55.
- 57 "Toujours plus près des jeunes," *Par ailleurs* 3, 2 (1996), p. 8.
- 58 "Desjardins n'est plus une inconnue en Chine," *Journal de Québec* [Quebec City], March 27, 2000, p. 32. In *Revue de presse DID 2000 (médias canadiens et internationaux)*.
- 59 *Sondage auprès des dirigeants du Mouvement Desjardins* (July 1990), p. 29; De Corte, *Développement international Desjardins – 1970-2010*, p. 78.
- 60 Interview of Ghislain Paradis (September 19, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 61 Réal Laberge, "Desjardins envisage la création d'un SUCO du troisième âge," *Le Soleil* [Quebec City], March 25, 1986. In *Revue de presse DID, années 1980*.
- 62 DID board of directors, *Bilan 2003 et perspectives 2004* (December 10, 2003), p. 8. DID archives.

Chapter 5

- 1 World Bank, *Assessing Aid. What Works, What Doesn't, and Why. A World Bank Policy Report* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 1.
- 2 DID annual report (2001), p. 2. DID archives.
- 3 DID management committee, *Bilan 1999*, p. 2. DID archives.
- 4 OECD, *The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (2005), <https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/34428351.pdf>. OECD website.
- 5 Audet and Desrosiers, "Introduction Générale," *L'aide canadienne au développement*. Edited by Audet, Desrosiers and Stéphane Roussel, p. 13.
- 6 Audet and Desrosiers, "Introduction Générale," *L'aide canadienne au développement*. Edited by Audet, Desrosiers and Stéphane Roussel, p. 21.
- 7 De Corte, *Développement international Desjardins – 1970-2010*, p. 23 (note 19); DID management committee, *Bilan 2013*, p. 8. DID archives.
- 8 Standing Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade, *Overcoming 40 years of failure: A new road map for sub-saharan Africa* (Ottawa, 2007), p. 67.
- 9 DID management committee, *Bilan 2013*, p. 8. DID archives.
- 10 Interview of Anne Gaboury (November 4, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 11 "Développement international Desjardins lance une nouvelle programmation de quatre ans en collaboration avec le Partenariat avec les Canadiens de l'ACDI," press release, April 8, 2011. In *Revue de presse DID 2011*, p. 71.
- 12 DID management committee, *Bilan 2014*, p. 1. DID archives.
- 13 Interview of Anne Gaboury (October 28, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 14 "Desjardins versera 1 M\$ pour l'Asie," press release (January 11, 2005); "Tsunamis en Asie. Desjardins débloque 1 M\$ pour les sinistrés," *LCN* (January 11, 2005). In *Revue de presse DID 2005*, p. 3 and p. 6.
- 15 Interview of Anne Gaboury (November 4, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 16 DID management committee, *Bilan 2010*, p. 3. DID archives.
- 17 Johnston Birchall, *Resilience in a Downturn: The power of financial cooperatives* (Geneva: International Labour Organisation, 2013).
- 18 Louis Tanguay, "Un modèle coopératif 'très robuste'," *Le Soleil* [Quebec City], February 11 2012, p. 43.
- 19 Interview of Anne Gaboury (November 4, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 20 World Bank, *Global financial development report 2014: financial inclusion*, p. 15.
- 21 Interview of Anne Gaboury (November 4, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 22 DID management committee, *Bilan 2005*, p. 3. DID archives.
- 23 DID management committee, *Bilan 2006*, p. 2. DID archives.
- 24 Interview of Anne Gaboury (November 4, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 25 DID management committee, *Bilan 2008*, p. 1. DID archives.

Chapter 5 (Continued)

- 26 DID management committee, *Bilan 2011*, p. 6. DID archives.
- 27 Interview of Anne Gaboury (November 4, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 28 DID. *Expérience professionnelle* (March 2019). DID archives.
- 29 DID management committee, *Bilan 2006*, p. 10. DID archives.
- 30 Interview of Yvon Bernier (April 25, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 31 Laurent Bernard, France Michaud and Philippe Grégoire, "La microassurance dans les pays en développement : définitions, enjeux et perspectives dans le secteur agricole," *Assurances et gestion des risques* 82, 1-2 (2015), p. 201.
- 32 DID management committee, *Bilan 2005*, p. 2. DID archives.
- 33 Andrée Poulin, "Educating Haiti", *Canada's History* (February-March 2012), p. 64. In *Revue de presse DID 2012*.
- 34 DID management committee, *Bilan 2011*, p. 2. DID archives.
- 35 DID management committee, *Bilan 2003*, p. 5. DID archives.
- 36 DID management committee, *Bilan 2015*, p. 3. DID archives.
- 37 DID management committee, *Bilan 2002*, p. 5. DID archives; Interview of Yves Boily by Francis Leblond (September 25, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 38 DID management committee, *Bilan 2013*, p. 5. DID archives.
- 39 Interview of Anne Gaboury (November 4, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 40 Press release, "Nouvel investissement du Fonds Desjardins pour la finance inclusive," (September 18, 2012). In *Revue de presse DID 2012*, p. 174.
- 41 "Gerardo Almaguer," <https://www.did.qc.ca/a-propos-de-nous/experts-did/gerardo-almaguer-20/>. DID website.
- 42 "How FinDev Canada came to be," <https://www.findevcanada.ca/en/who-we-are/our-story>. FinDev Canada website.
- 43 Marie-Élène Laperrière, "Partenariat Nord-Sud. L'intercoopération au service des caisses africaines," *Revue Desjardins* 69, 4 (2003), p. 28.
- 44 DID management committee, *Bilan 2004*, p. 9. DID archives.
- 45 Desjardins, *2005 Social Responsibility Report*, p. 13.
- 46 Interview of Anne Gaboury (November 4, 2019). Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society.
- 47 "Finance solidaire : Desjardins prolonge le mandat de coordination confié à DID," (January 6, 2020) <https://www.did.qc.ca/nouvelles/finance-solidaire-desjardins-prolonge-mandat-coordination-273/>. DID website.

Conclusion

- 1 Interview with Anne Gaboury, Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society, November 4, 2019.



I'd like to thank Développement international Desjardins for entrusting the Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society to document its history. Over the course of my research, I interviewed Yvon Bernier, Yves Boily, Anne Gaboury and Ghislain Paradis, all of whom were extremely generous with their time and patiently answered questions from myself and my colleague, Francis Leblond. A 2009 interview of Michel Lagacé by Claude Genest was also very useful.

A review panel made up of Yvon Bernier, Michèle Bilodeau, Jean-Bernard Fournier, Anne Gaboury, Ghislain Paradis, Mylène Bruneau and France Michaud read my manuscript and provided valuable feedback. I would like to thank them for improving the text with their suggestions and comments.

I would also like to thank Guy Bélanger, Claude Genest and Sabrina Roy for their input on an earlier draft.



For 50 years, Développement international Desjardins (DID) has been sharing Desjardins's experience and expertise in developing and emerging countries. There are few Canadian aid organizations that can boast a track record as long. DID's field experience has reached almost every continent and is even more remarkable because it has been built in the face of fundamental changes around the globe, in international aid, with partners near and far, and within Desjardins itself. The Lévis-based organization has developed and refined its know-how over the years to be just as relevant today as it ever was. This book examines the constant process of adaptation that's made DID the international leader in microfinance that it is today.

Pierre-Olivier Maheux is an historian at the Alphonse Desjardins Historical Society, a division of Desjardins.

