Understanding Influence: Summary Report for DfID[i]

Draft for discussion with government stakeholders
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INTRODUCTION

Background and objectives

This report summarises the findings of a three-year collaborative research project funded jointly by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and DfID. The full findings are presented in a project book and a number of academic journal articles.[ii]

The research has explored the various features, dimensions and factors pertaining to the use of statebuilding research in UK policy. In order to effectively capture and understand the chief elements of such an emergent, complex and dynamic landscape, we have probed the subject from a number of angles, looking at the evolution of the research-policy nexus over time at both headquarters and country level as well as through detailed case studies of prominent issue areas. Beyond simply establishing whether research has had influence, the main challenge has been to understand better how and why research is being used and to what ends, as well as identifying and explaining continuing shortcomings and weaknesses.

This has been joined by the following specific objectives: to identify factors which facilitate or inhibit the uptake of research outputs and to identify opportunities for increasing the influence of research on UK policy. As such, this study assesses the extent to which relevant UK departments have the capacity to absorb and assimilate research findings while recognising and discriminating between strong and weak research. The study also seeks to draw out more overtly practical and operational implications which can help enhance the use of evidence and research in fragile environments.

Academic and policy contexts

The policy relevance of research is a hot topic at present with academics increasingly having to show influence and 'impact' beyond the ivory tower, while policymakers are under increasing pressure from both taxpayers and corporate managers to justify their policies, practices and interventions with the latest evidence. Furthermore, the problem of strengthening the use of research in statebuilding is not only one of principle, but also of economic sense. The UK government now spend millions every year funding research on governance and statebuilding-oriented topics and yet, to date, no study into the research-policy nexus has addressed this topic. There is increasing pressure to show value for money and demonstrate returns in terms of influence on policy from such large research investments.

There are now scores of excellent books and reports that outline the various challenges faced by those attempting to rebuild states and societies after war. Quantitative, statistically based analyses purport to prove what does or does not work in governance interventions.[iii] Yet, perhaps the major omission in the literature is focused consideration of the issues involved in strengthening the relationship between statebuilding research and policy: this should be a major concern for all actors involved. As Roland Paris has noted, our claims about the relationship between research and policy are based largely on 'personal anecdotes and untested assumptions.'[iv] In order to make progress, governments and funders need to better understand the dynamics and processes of research use in this field.

The concept and reality of comprehensive, multilateral sponsored peacebuilding and statebuilding in fragile, post-conflict countries was essentially a new feature of the international post-Cold War political landscape. The breadth and depth of these operations was unprecedented, while the number and different types of actors involved grew rapidly. The rapid and dramatic pace at which these developments played out confronted policymakers with novel challenges for which there were few ready answers and led to a situation in which practice often ran ahead of knowledge and evidence. In the early 1990s, the literature offered very little in terms of systematic, cross-case analysis or robust theory.[v] Moreover, the intensification of various flows of global social, political and economic forces have challenged accepted wisdom and traditional frameworks of understanding in many areas. Policymakers thus generally responded to events through improvised decisions based significantly on personal experiences, gut-feeling and instinct. In this sense, if generals are often

accused of fighting the last war, statebuilders could be accused of always building the last state.

Serious concerns are expressed throughout the statebuilding literature that there is a significant disconnect between the policy approaches being implemented and existing scholarship on statebuilding. Ghani and Lockhart note that, 'Taken by surprise, we have rushed to address each problem without understanding the whole, using atavistic, haphazard, fragmented, and short term responses that sometimes exacerbate the collection of problems we seek to fix.'[vi] Paul Collier has stated that 'science is only just catching up and policy makers have meanwhile persuaded themselves that what they want to believe is true.'[vii] Furthermore, Sisk and Paris amongst many others have criticised the 'limited foundation of knowledge' which officials have to draw upon in building effective, legitimate government institutions.[viii]

In a similar vein, Egnell and Halden argue that, 'too often the practical problem-solving debates are detached from the theoretical aspects of statebuilding and vice versa, leading to operations without a solid foundation in existing knowledge of the nature of states and state formation, as well as research too far detached from the practical challenges in the field.'[ix] This can have extremely detrimental consequences for practice because, as Berdal notes, without a clear understanding of the issues surrounding the political economies of societies emerging out of war and conflict, the policies of outsiders risk producing 'perverse and unintended consequences.'[x]

Yet there exists anecdotal evidence that scholarly work has helped to shape new agendas and debates in the statebuilding field and has shifted policy thinking in more indirect, but perhaps more significant ways. The body of research and evidence on statebuilding has certainly grown significantly since the early 1990s and there has been a steep learning curve. So, Sisk and Paris note the growth in systematic and theoretical approaches that emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s[xi] and Collier points to how astonishingly fast the research frontier is moving.[xii]

New academic centres, think tanks and research institutes have been established that have produced countless studies, reports and books on various aspects and sub-fields of statebuilding. Some of the most prominent lessons learned have been incorporated into accessible guidance manuals.[xiii] Sector-specific studies have explored and evaluated, in depth, particular aspects of statebuilding, with recommendations for future practice. Scores of analysts both inside and outside government provide extremely detailed understanding of country and regional contexts. Also, researchers now have multiple case studies from which to extrapolate more reliable findings and

have had a chance to step back from, reflect on and analyse the early 1990s missions.

Thus, the precise nature of the relationship remains clouded in uncertainty and is driven largely by often inaccurate assumptions that have little basis in reality or that fail to account for significant developments in scholar-practitioner relations in recent years. This research will thus contribute to understanding the various dimensions of the relationship in greater depth and will hopefully facilitate a more accurate and informed debate amongst key stakeholders. By framing the discussion within theoretical and conceptual insights derived from the research utilisation literature, it probes the subject from a number of important angles, and in the process sheds light on key issues.

Methodology and cases

The research team has employed a four-part methodological approach: (1) quantitative 'rate of return' analysis; (2) in-depth qualitative narrative analysis of the development of UK statebuilding policy at headquarters level; (3) country case-studies analysis of research use in three fragile, conflict-affected countries;[xiv] and (4) backward tracking of UK Security Sector Reform policy in one of the case studies: Sierra Leone. The combination of these four approaches and the use of mixed methods – including quantitative bibliometric, citation and content analysis, questionnaires, documentary analysis and in-depth semi-structured interviews – allowed for a comprehensive, triangulated and longitudinal understanding of the prominent factors and issues impinging on statebuilding research influence and uptake.

While focused on the UK experience, the study has also sought to put this analysis into wider international perspective, as well as recognising the vast body of research on statebuilding that is not funded by DfID. Indeed, the highly internationalised character of the networks involved in statebuilding issues meant that this was the only realistic way the subject could be approached. Of course, DfID-commissioned researchers do not have anything like a monopoly on statebuilding research thus studies that fall outside this category were considered. In particular, the analysis of the case study countries has drawn heavily on the views of a wide array of international actors to give the study greater comparative perspective.

The adapted payback model, initially developed by the Health Economics Research Group at Brunel University, has been employed as a conceptual framework to support and direct the qualitative elements of the research.[xv] The model is comprised of seven stages and two interfaces showing how and

at what stages categories of payback can be assessed (See Fig. 1.1 below). The model is based upon the various theories of utilisation and, as Hanney et al explain, 'although the stages are presented in a linear form, the model recognises that the actual steps involved in utilisation ... are often multidirectional and convoluted.'[xvi] The model has the benefit of including a focus on the identification of research needs, the commissioning and conduct of research, and the use of research findings to influence primary policy, secondary policy and rhetorical/conceptual understandings. Furthermore, it highlights the influence of the actual research process on policy development.
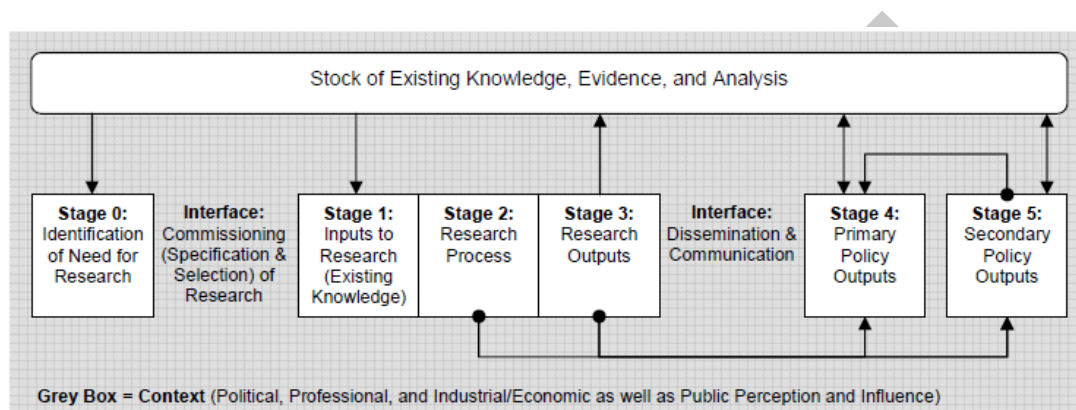

Figure 1. Revised Payback model of the research and policy process

While the methodology has involved an element of quantitative analysis, it is important to note that it has not been the final objective of the analysis to assign accurate scores or precise measurements of research influence. As the literature attests, this is an unrealisable goal in the field of social policy and governance.[xvii] The quantitative element of the methodology is intended to provide a tentative foundation for the in-depth qualitative analysis by attempting to measure, as far as possible, degrees of research influence. The detailed case study narratives then explored these findings further and consider prominent explanations. It is important to emphasise that the overriding priority of the study was not to assign scores to individual studies or bodies of research, but rather to explore the *processes* involved in research utilisation and the factors that either enhance or impede research use.[xviii]

DIMENSIONS OF UPTAKE

It is useful to approach the main issues of research utilisation from four perspectives relating to different aspects of the research to use process. Four main dimensions of research uptake are considered, namely: structural

issues; developments and features of research management and organisational processes in policy; the research itself and its attributes that impinge on its use by policymakers; and lastly the central issue of 'translation' or the problem of turning research into outputs that are usable, relevant and accessible to policymakers. These four dimensions are outlined in the table below, indicating subsidiary issues relevant to each dimension.

Uptake Dimension	Specific Issue
Structural Factors	Country Context and Stability
	Institutional Dynamics
	Politics and Ideology
Policy Factors	Research Management
	Organisation, Incentives and Policy Process
	Subjective Competencies
Research Factors	Format and Presentation
	Dissemination and Communication
	Focus, Content and Quality
Translation Factors	Intermediaries and Brokering
	Formal and Informal Networks
	Research-Policy Interchange

Structural

Certain structural or general underlying factors pertaining to statebuilding research use in fragile states can have a strong underlying impact on research uptake and influence. The specific country context and levels of fragility, institutional dynamics and the relative politicisation of issues surrounding statebuilding and governance are all important issues in this respect. Regarding the latter point, our detailed study of the evolution of political settlements research uptake showed how powerful ideological preferences based on a liberal paradigm of rebuilding post-war societies acted as a barrier to influence. We designate such factors as 'structural' because they are more impervious to conscious reform than the other dimensions – they exert a continuous, underlying influence and generally change only very gradually, if at all. Nevertheless, rapid or sudden alterations or step changes in these variables are possible, be it due to change of government, serious institutional reform processes and so forth. Moreover,

structural factors need not be negative in their affect on research uptake and influence – so, for instance, the politicisation of a particular statebuilding issue may actually serve to catalyse research use as policymakers seek to establish the evidence-base for the policy agenda they are advancing.

CASE STUDY

A key structural variable impinging on the uptake of research in fragile states relates to the specific country context. As demonstrated through our Sierra Leone case study, the presence of conflict and the stability of a country's context can importantly influence the utilisation of research by policymakers operating on the ground. In open conflict situations, the insecurity of the environment does not allow regular access to some regions or provinces, making the task of researching and gathering reliable information extremely difficult, if not impossible. Furthermore, policymakers working in conflict-affected environments are often compelled to take urgent policy decisions at short notice, and lack the required time to read and consult research. The use and uptake of research in policy tends to improve the further a fragile country moves toward stability, as occurred in Sierra Leone during the post-conflict decade. Improving security and stability ensures more access and capacity to gather information for researchers. Likewise, policymakers face less urgent and compelling decisions in later post-conflict years, and might thus have more time to interact with researchers, read, reflect on, and consult different research outputs.

Policy

Our interviews and wider research strongly conveyed **the real sense of purpose in key departments, especially DfID, to improving and enhancing the use of evidence and research in a whole range of ways**: a commitment and drive which should not be underestimated. In many ways, we feel this is a large part of the explanation for the high and improving levels of research use we witnessed. The push to enhance the use of research in policymaking is serious, systematic, sustained and impressive. This was manifested in clear commitments to improving research uptake in various high level policy documents, strategies and so forth; increased funding for research and research activities; new research funding frameworks; innovative roles and positions devoted to improving uptake in government; and organisational restructuring. Especially useful has been DfID's employment of a number of Senior Research Fellows, the practice of policy teams buying out the time of colleagues from Research and Evidence Division (RED), and the role of

steering committees ensuring the relevance of research produced by the large Research Programme Consortia. Also, more recently, evidence papers have been produced by staff from the Evidence into Action Team, retrospectively assessing the quality of research underpinning high-level policy; further, a 'How to Note' on assessing the strength of evidence demonstrates the seriousness which the organisation now places on not only using research, but specifically good quality and reliable research. We strongly feel such practices and innovations should be continued, strengthened and energetically supported by senior management.

It also appears that policymaking doors have opened up to a greater number of outside voices and expertise in the form of expert panels and reference groups. All such developments have contributed to what was described to us, positively, as the atmosphere of 'creative chaos' in relation to the formulation of statebuilding policy, and while occurring incrementally over the last fifteen years or so, since around 2008 they have collectively constituted a 'quiet revolution' in research management. This was not only apparent in DfID but to some extent in both the FCO and MoD also. Personnel in the FCO described a growing appetite and appreciation for in-depth research, partly reflecting changes in the reorganisation of the FCO's Research Analysts to be located with their relevant issue group or geographical desk.

Many of the positive developments outlined above have occurred at headquarters level and **the same progress is not equally evident at the country level**, where arguably policy is likely to make the most difference. High-level policy papers are, as intended, importantly shaping country priorities and in this sense, research is influencing programming in this indirect, secondary manner. Nevertheless, a number of shortcomings or concerns with respect to certain aspects of the research uptake process were apparent at the country level. **The justificatory use of research – whereby research is selectively employed to support an existing or predetermined course of action – is widespread while there is next to no incorporation of new findings into ongoing programmes.** While primarily an issue at country level, this was also apparent at headquarters level with respect to the way Ministerial priorities and agendas – not necessarily informed by the evidence – push certain issue areas to the fore, and officials then strive to find supporting evidence which is 'reverse engineered' to fit the case. The Coalition's recent rhetoric on the 'Golden Thread' of development and associated anti-corruption drive is a good example in this regard.

Moreover, and in many ways a chief cause of justificatory research use, **the direct use and engagement with research in-country is severely limited**

by various practical and organisational constraints. The classic problem of the severe time pressures on officials has only been exacerbated by staffing deficiencies linked to resource constraints, the difficulty of attracting experienced officials to post-conflict countries and the high turnover of staff in country offices (a problem even more pronounced within military structures). This latter problem can serve to undermine the ownership of completed studies which may be lost or forgotten as new staff arrive with their own priorities. Restrictive approaches to risk can lead to a bunker mentality which severely undermines country contextual knowledge, a reliance on highly paid contractors and a disproportionate focus on elite, capital-based opinion. It also limits the extent to which staff can monitor the work of those it contracts to conduct research in the field. In programmatic terms, the practice of favouring a small number of big programmes limits operational flexibility and the space for new research or evidence to shape ongoing programmes.

Serious deficiencies were also apparent in terms of knowledge management and institutional memory in country offices where record keeping is poorly maintained and country-based repositories are not of a high standard or easily searchable. This means it can be difficult to get a handle on what research has already been done leading to duplication or simply missed opportunities to consult and utilise existing evidence. Pre-deployment and induction processes were also judged to be deficient in terms of the incorporation of relevant research - we believe that such occasions are ideal for exposing officials to the latest and relevant research as well as enhancing their country contextual knowledge (either through written outputs or briefings with experts). So, what influence that has been achieved has had to compete against such barriers, constraints and general friction.

More generally, it was also apparent that there were **shortcomings regarding the awareness of research activities, communication and linkages between different parts of DfID and across government**. Most importantly, country offices were not sufficiently feeding into the central research agenda overseen by Research and Evidence Division (RED) and there was little awareness in country offices of the research funded by DfID except in an extremely general sense. While RED is geared towards promoting longer-term research, the extent of its disconnect from operational priorities and concerns was a cause for concern. Research links and communication across and between government departments was also weak, particularly at the country level, so FCO officials had little awareness of the research DfID funds on statebuilding. There is a clear need to improve awareness and communication of research outputs and activities across government departments that work on statebuilding, and there should be clear channels for country offices to feed into the larger, longer-term research agenda. There is also room for enhanced

interaction and knowledge sharing between the research and analytical functions in different departments, such as between Research Analysts and DfID advisers.

A particular concern emerging from the study related to the mechanisms in place to enhance local research capacity. All three fragile case study states suffered from deficiencies in indigenous research capacity to varying degrees. Certain common practices in British approaches to research, such as the overwhelming reliance on Western researchers, can even serve to exacerbate or at least do little to address the problem. While RED has formalised capacity building at headquarters level, such as through the Research Programme Consortia (RPC) model, the situation in country offices is less positive. More needs to be done to draw upon local expertise or build research capacity in its fragile states. While obstacles to achieving this certainly exist – most notably the dearth of credible local institutions or experienced researchers – more should be done from the outset to identify existing resources and build local capacity. Moreover, the benefits, in terms of the increased credibility and legitimacy of the research given its local provenance, can be considerable if handled effectively.

Research

The potential influence of research can be greatly affected by its own particular attributes. This if of course a point well established and consistently made in the wider research utilisation literature. Our research confirmed its general importance in the field of statebuilding, but it might be said that in fragile contexts there is an added premium on ensuring research is usable, accessible and relevant. Part of this challenge lays more with the various intermediaries (see below), but researchers can only help themselves by bearing in mind some of the following points. Often this does not entail 'dumbing down' their findings or sacrificing nuance and complexity. Rather, simple issues and principles of presentation, dissemination and communication will make a considerable difference.

Of course, the subject of statebuilding is affected by an underlying weakness common to all social science: **the contested and uncertain nature of the evidence, which rarely points in one direction.** Arguably this is only exacerbated in relation to research in fragile states, whereby the collection of data is confronted by numerous methodological restrictions and challenges. Yet, this is not a cause for despair because, as our cumulative influence model, outlined below, suggests, **achieving influence is more about the existence of a convincing body of evidence that points in broadly similar directions** rather than achieving the unrealisable singular 'magic bullet' of

definite proof. Moreover, policymakers – many who have academic or research backgrounds – are acutely aware of this issue and understand that perfect proof is an unobtainable chimera in the social sciences. Also, despite the generally high appetite for figures and statistics (which are useful for business cases and policy documents), we encountered considerable scepticism with regard to large-N, cross-country quantitative studies and a preference for detailed case-based or comparative studies combining in-depth qualitative research with relevant statistical data.

Unremarkably, research tends to have a greater chance of achieving influence when findings are written and presented in a concise, clear and accessible manner. Again, this need not entail sacrificing nuance or dumbing down as some researchers fear, but rather entails avoiding dense, technical language and jargon, presenting arguments logically and in straightforward English, and ensuring written work is free of errors and mistakes – regarding the latter, policymakers suggested they might place less trust in pieces containing basic grammatical mistakes and typos.

With respect to reports, the **length should be kept to a realistic minimum**, a concise executive summary is vital, and various presentational techniques can increase the chances it will be read, such as emboldening the first sentence of each paragraph so readers can decide if they need to read specific sections. While seemingly superficial attributes, a glossy colour cover and the inclusion of pictures can also be extremely important facilitators of uptake. Of course, academics do not have much control over the specific design or presentation of outputs such as journal articles, but they might consider producing accompanying briefs which outline the main points or findings of their research.

Especially important is the manner of the dissemination of research – policymakers are much more likely to engage with research when is presented in person rather than simply turning up on their desk or mentioned in an email. Furthermore, where possible, this can be an important part of establishing the trust and respect between researchers and policymakers which can only truly come from personal interaction.

It is apparent that officials have varying appetites for different types of research depending on where they sit in the organisation: policymakers at headquarters level are generally in a better position to engage with academic research, whereas at country level there is a strong preference for immediate, problem-solving and operationally-relevant outputs over generalised or theoretical research. Country level advisers described a requirement for research that tells them 'what to do' rather than pieces that

simply lay out all the problems (which they often know anyway), criticise existing approaches or describe generalised issues and processes. Operationally relevant research has a greater chance of being used if the suggestions are realistic and based on an awareness of the practical restraints officials face, whether of a political, financial or technical nature. A key factor that appears to determine uptake is the extent to which the research resonates with the personal experiences of officials. In this sense, including vignettes, case studies and examples can be an important way of conveying the real world manifestations or implications of more general findings. Also, given that staff are being pushed to better interrogate and appraise the quality and reliability of the research they use, it is important that the methodology underlying findings is presented in a transparent manner, while drawing attention to potential limitations. It was also apparent that officials tended to trust academics and experts who had experience of working on the ground in fragile states.

Translation

The literature on research utilisation has increasingly drawn attention to **the importance of the linkages between research and policy in fostering the enhanced uptake of findings.**[xix] Research use in fragile states policy is no exception in this respect, and the increased pressures and constraints acting upon both policymakers and researchers suggests these considerations take on even greater importance, placing a premium on establishing robust linkages across the research-policy divide.

Formal and informal networks comprising informed policymakers and researchers were seen as critical. Such networks encourage dialogue and facilitate knowledge exchange processes. Policymakers noted how they often relied on their informal networks to identify knowledgeable people who are either acknowledged experts, aware of the latest research or can direct them toward relevant outputs or experts. They pointed to the importance of socialising policy problems and feeding off others' knowledge and experience. Others noted the benefits of developing good relationships with researchers who have practical experience or have a good idea of what policymakers need. In fragile countries, officials describe learning a great deal at informal gatherings and note the importance of being on ground and plugged into policy networks.

Enhancing understanding between the supposed 'two communities' of research and policy is another important factor. Appreciating the various constraints, pressures and concerns faced by those working in the 'other' community can help break down barriers, lead to more mutually beneficial

relationships and enhance the uptake of research. Officials with backgrounds in research, as is often the case with DfID or FCO research analysts, can be an important first step. But more importantly, **opportunities for research-policy cross-over, exchange or secondments can be crucial.** Indeed, our analysis suggests that such opportunities have played an integral role in fostering uptake and subsequently prompting policy change. This has mainly been manifested in the practice of, on the one hand, policymakers being given the chance to conduct research or granted reading weeks and sabbaticals, and on the other, of academics taking up positions in policy (such as Senior Research Fellows) or working closely with policymakers on discrete research projects. Again, such practices appear to be happening primarily at headquarters level but remain insufficient at country level. **Concerted efforts to facilitate opportunities for research-policy interaction and cross-over at the country level should be a priority** in terms of enhancing the evidence basis of British policies and programmes in fragile states. This was seen as an extremely positive feature of the US system.

Another crucial aspect of bridging the divide relates to the issue of what we term 'translation': this essentially refers to the issue of boiling down, synthesizing or condensing often complex research into practically relevant and operationally useful findings, recommendations or conclusions. This problem is particularly relevant in relation to scholarly outputs as there was an often-stated belief that academic researchers fail to package or present their work in a way that is accessible or usable by policymakers. DfID has taken steps to address this issue. Many of the developments in research management and organisation outlined above explicitly target this problem, such as the establishment of dedicated resource centres, the hiring of evidence brokers and the practice of recruiting prominent academics as Senior Research Fellows.

Also, the requirement for the large university based centres it funds to produce **clearly written, relatively short research syntheses** containing prominent policy implications has been important – there was evidence that such syntheses had been consulted and were beginning to influence policy. The improved visibility and accessibility of research on sites such as R4D has also better enabled policymakers to access research outputs relevant to their work, although it was suggested that such sites could be improved through more relevant categories and themes. Apparently a new internal resource site – providing a clear route through the available evidence on a variety of topics – is in the process of being created, and this is to be welcomed.[xx]

Intermediaries inside and outside of government are increasingly utilised as a means of bridging the academic-policy divide. We have

discussed the important role of evidence brokers, senior research fellows and services such as those provided by the Governance, Social Development Research Centre (GSDRC). However, at the country level there were apparent continuing shortcomings in translation and knowledge brokering activities, at least when compared to improvements at the centre. The establishment of regional research hubs has been a positive step in this respect, but there remains a requirement to better incorporate brokering roles into country office practices.

KEY FINDINGS

General

A particularly striking finding of this study is the overall evidence of extensive statebuilding research use and influence in British policy, and this appears to have only increased and improved over time. Our research does not point to any particular 'crisis' or major shortcoming in the general use of research in British statebuilding policymaking. We broadly agree with Paris that the 'much-lamented gap between the work of professors and practitioners may be less pronounced, and considerably more complex, than is often assumed.'[xxi] So, one basic point can be stated with confidence: research is used regularly, widely and at all levels of statebuilding policymaking and programming. This perhaps gives the lie to those who claim policymakers barely engage with or utilise research at all. This finding is all the more impressive given the many structural factors working against research use in fragile states, be it the fast-paced, difficult and dangerous environment in which research and policy operates, the contested conceptual nature of the field or the strong grip of ideological approaches to statebuilding interventions.

We observed extremely varied types and levels of influence depending on a range of factors, such as the country context, political situation, levels of instability, attributes of the research, precise policy issue at hand, and even the character of personnel in position at any given time. This multiplicity of conditions and factors shaping research influence and uptake is perhaps to be expected, and means that no accurate definitive or overall conclusion as to the extent of statebuilding research influence is actually possible or for that matter especially useful. Perhaps most importantly, the uptake of research can be greatly affected by certain attributes specific to the particular output in question, such as its focus, form, quality or presentation – and we consider such variables below.

The types of influence identified in the course of this study has been diverse, essentially capturing the full range of types of influence described in the theoretical literature. At one end of the spectrum, we encountered numerous instances of the direct, instrumental utilisation of research findings in policy or programming. This was mainly the case with commissioned studies in the field for a specific purpose, such as conflict assessments or political economy analyses. There was only marginal evidence of academic research being used in such a manner, and mainly because it is generally not in a form to easily digest and apply in operational settings. Rather, the influence of such research occurred at the other end of the spectrum whereby findings seep into policy discourse through a process of osmosis and 'selective absorption'. This was relevant not only in terms of headquarters policy but also at the country level and primarily with respect to the manner in which the concepts and approaches contained within influential high-level policy papers filter down to and shape country level programming decisions – we term this 'secondary influence'.

Whether influence was direct or indirect, this is not necessarily an accurate measure of its ultimate *significance*. In fact, our findings suggest that, over time, academic research has had a more significant influence in shaping and framing broad policy approaches, and largely through more indirect forms of conceptual 'enlightenment' rather than the instrumental application of findings. On the other hand, research outputs such as short-term, commissioned reports, analyses or assessments do not appear to have been of great significance beyond their immediate (usually country) context, despite being occasionally referred to as illustrative cases in high-level policy papers. While perhaps extremely valuable in informing operational interventions, prompting programme redesign or a rethink of policy priorities, this generally occurred only in a somewhat narrow and time-limited sense.

Research has also been used politically as 'ammunition' in negotiations with partners in order to add weight or persuasiveness to a certain policy stance. Being able to demonstrate the wisdom of a particular intervention or course of action with strong and credible evidence to hand can greatly enhance bargaining positions or help to persuade interlocutors to follow ones desired approach to an issue or simply give one a lead role in the a certain policy. A linked form of use which has perhaps been underrepresented in the wider literature, but was strongly apparent in our interviews at the country level is what we term **'justificatory use' whereby research is essentially cherry-picked to justify or support predetermined or ongoing policies**. This was described as perfectly normal practice but perhaps more worrying was the relatively common practice of recycling successful business cases (and their underlying evidential base), which

suggests a lack of critical engagement with the research underpinning interventions, even if research is nevertheless sought.

A range of subjective factors strongly determine uptake levels in any particular case. This might relate to the specific personnel in key positions at any time, their background, expertise, experience or particular approaches to issues. Some staff have strong research backgrounds and thus feel entirely comfortable interacting with research, whereas others may be far more operational or technical in their orientation. This point applies especially to senior staff, such as country office directors, as they in many ways shape the whole office environment in terms of how proactive and serious it is about using research. Their relative appetite for attitude towards research can be a crucial determinant of the dynamics of use. But this issue extends right up to Director-General and even Ministerial level, and should priorities shift due to changes in key figures, so too can the dynamics of research use.

Research funded by DfID – or more specifically, the research emerging out of the large research centres (as opposed to directly commissioned research, which is a different matter) – was not consciously favoured by officials, and policy papers clearly demonstrate that a wide range of sources have been drawn upon. In fact, our research showed that often policymakers use research or discuss prominent concepts and issues (such as horizontal inequalities) without being aware of its specific provenance or funding source. Certainly, there should be no presumption that just because research is funded by DfID, it will be used.
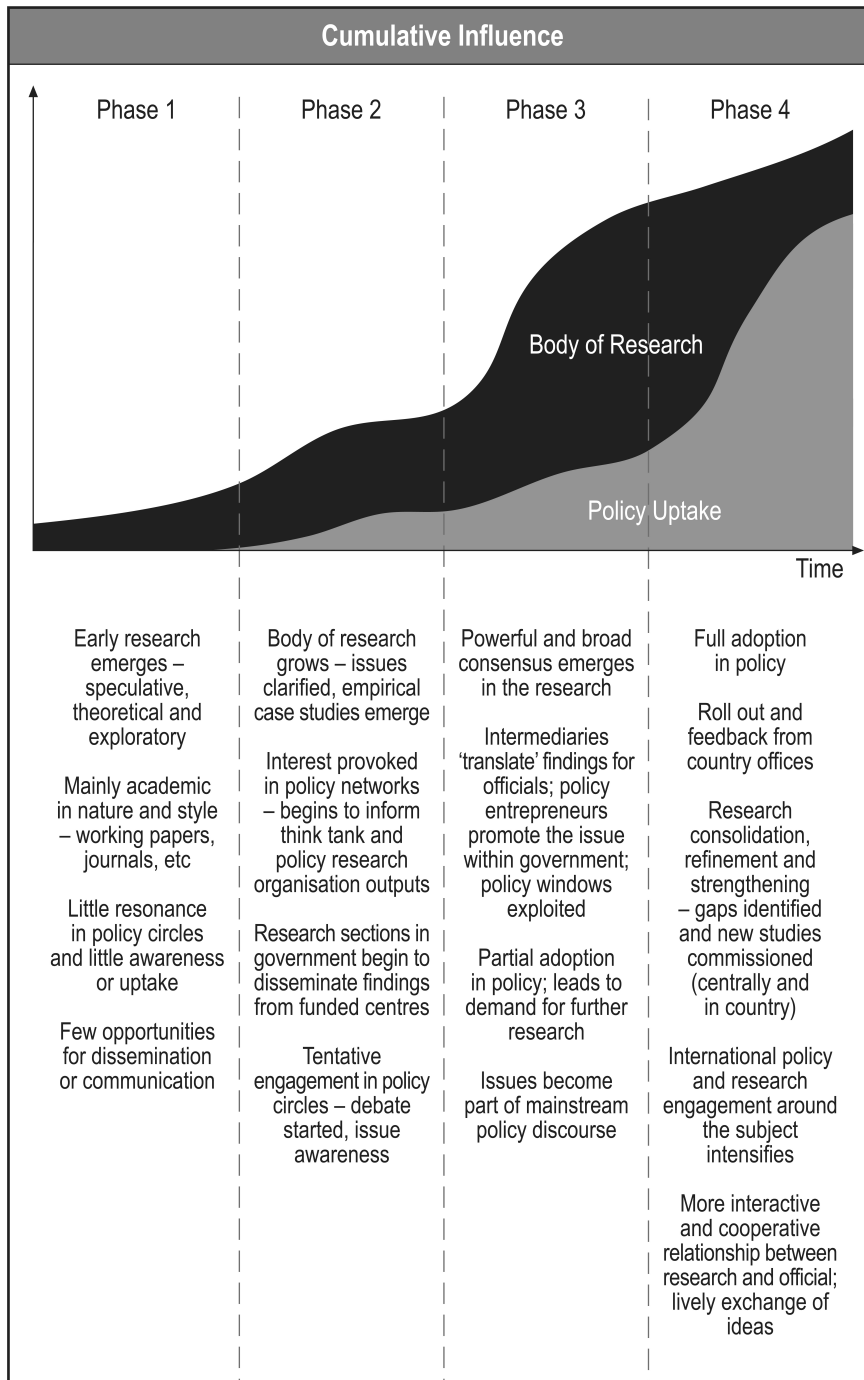
Nevertheless, our findings suggest that DfID funded research has achieved disproportionately higher influence overall. Given that this has not resulted from any conscious selection or 'positive discrimination' by officials, we believe this resulted from the greater exposure of DfID research through internal newsletters and research summaries circulated by RED, the relatively easier access enjoyed by funded researchers and simply the greater volume of outputs produced by the centres given the long-term funding and support provided.

Where research has been utilised, the substantive content of research has been broadly comprehended by officials and policy is, in most cases, closely aligned with scholarly understandings. This was apparent in a general respect, whereby the broad thrust of a particular body of research, or certain of its central arguments, come to be accepted and adopted in British policy over the long term. However, it was apparent in our detailed case study of political settlements that some of the nuance is either abandoned, lost or ignored in statements of policy, some issues prominent in the research do not

feature in policy or some specific conclusions appear to be misunderstood or not quiet consonant with the major research findings. Reviewing the evolution of policy over the last decade or so, we can certainly detect improvements in this regard, manifested in policy that is better aligned with leading research findings and more aware of the possible tensions and trade-offs inherent in certain approaches, as described in the literature. Officials interviewed during this study often displayed an in-depth and sophisticated command of the main issues. What shortcomings that are still apparent are to some extent to be expected: policy papers are generally not written in a manner allowing for a comprehensive discussion of the detail or complexity of underlying issues. Nevertheless, there is certainly room to improve the referencing of papers and to better demonstrate how policy positions have been arrived at and based on what specific evidence.

Cumulative Influence

An overarching finding of the research is the presence of a process which we term 'cumulative influence' whereby influence is achieved over time as the body of evidence and research on a particular subject accumulates, coalesces and strengthens. Below we describe a heavily idealised process of cumulative influence that presumes a positive trajectory of uptake, but we will draw attention to possible negative routes and barriers to influence that might be present at any stage. Although there is no certainty that a positive cumulative process will occur in relation to any particular area of research, it should be borne in mind that in all our case studies such a generally positive dynamic was indeed identified. The following is divided into four idealised phases and their respective prominent characteristics. The following narrative seeks to describe the cumulative influence model presented in the figure below. Again, it is important to note that no diagrammatical representation of the process can accurately capture what is in fact an extremely amorphous, complex and non-linear phenomenon. Nevertheless, it represents a first step in envisioning the broad outlines of the process and its prominent characteristics as we have identified during the course of the research.

	Cumulative Influence		
Phase 1	**Phase 2**	**Phase 3**	**Phase 4**
Early research emerges – speculative, theoretical and exploratory	Body of research grows – issues clarified, empirical case studies emerge	Powerful and broad consensus emerges in the research	Full adoption in policy
Mainly academic in nature and style – working papers, journals, etc	Interest provoked in policy networks – begins to inform think tank and policy research organisation outputs	Intermediaries 'translate' findings for officials; policy entrepreneurs promote the issue within government; policy windows exploited	Roll out and feedback from country offices
Little resonance in policy circles and little awareness or uptake	Research sections in government begin to disseminate findings from funded centres	Partial adoption in policy; leads to demand for further research	Research consolidation, refinement and strengthening – gaps identified and new studies commissioned (centrally and in country)
Few opportunities for dissemination or communication	Tentative engagement in policy circles – debate started, issue awareness	Issues become part of mainstream policy discourse	International policy and research engagement around the subject intensifies
			More interactive and cooperative relationship between research and official; lively exchange of ideas

Phase 1: Emergence. In the early stages of the process, we see the first pieces of research on a subject emerge. This research generally builds on earlier studies or concepts in the existing stock of knowledge, perhaps developed within loosely associated fields. Key terms and ideas may be only loosely defined and the content may be purely conceptual, speculative, exploratory or hypothetical at this stage rather than being based on concrete empirical data. This early research may well be produced by government

funded centres but this will likely be complemented by work done elsewhere – regarding the former, the extent of strategic government direction may vary but it is likely that officials have specified broad areas that it wishes to be at the heart of the research agenda undertaken by the centres. In other situations, the body of research may emerge in a more independent manner and only later be supported explicitly and with government resources. So, the nascent body of research and evidence begins to build, research questions are posed and tentative explanations, often largely based on secondary literature, provided. Most of the outputs tend to be of an academic nature, published in scholarly journals or university working papers. At this stage, it is unlikely that there is much resonance of the research within policy circles, especially where the findings might challenge dominant approaches. At this stage it is perfectly possible that the research leads to dead ends or fails to take hold within academic circles, funding dries up and academics move on to look at different questions.

Phase 2: Tentative engagement. Assuming the early research foundation provokes interest in academic circles and spurs further studies, after some time the emergent body of research is supplemented by the findings from new research, key issues are clarified and researchers begin to explore specific issues in greater detail. A number of empirically informed case studies might confirm initial hypotheses, suggest different areas to focus on or raise new subordinate issues and questions. Overall, the research agenda gathers momentum. As the strength and credibility of the research builds, the issue begins to spread within associated research networks and may be picked up and utilised by other research organisations, such as think tanks and policy research organisations, who work closely with academic institutions. Such organisations may begin to draw on the research in producing their own outputs, some of which may be directly commissioned by government.

Thus, at this stage we can expect the issue to start seeping into policy circles and coming to the attention of certain officials, whether directly (as written products or perhaps disseminated at conferences attended by policymakers) or indirectly through more general discussion and debate within the organisation. We should also not discount the potential movement of researchers into government positions who bring with them their expertise on certain issues. Yet, given the still somewhat limited or partial nature of the body of research, the issue may fail to feature significantly within the policy environment. Potential 'policy windows' might be missed because the central findings do not appear convincing enough at this stage or the research is not being read for any number of reasons, be it the complex and inaccessible nature of the literature or the absence of officials with the time, capacity or inclination to read or engage with the research.

Phase 3: Translation and uptake. Eventually, again assuming a positive trajectory overall, a powerful consensus and robust body of research and evidence is achieved based on numerous studies and supported by empirical findings. An important role at this stage is played by intermediary actors who attempt to boil down and make sense of the now quite substantial existing literature. This form of research translation might be undertaken by think tanks or dedicated knowledge brokers and policy research services such as GSDRC who begin to consider some of the operational implications. These intermediary services may be the result of improvements in research management or organisational changes in the policy environment. Research syntheses may also be produced by the academic centres themselves which seek to summarise their main findings and in a format accessible to policymakers; these might also be circulated by government research managers to relevant officials. If a particular piece of research happens to have been read by senior figures, whether Minister or senior adviser, they may be circulated as 'recommended reading' thus improving the chance they will be read.

As the weight and persuasiveness of the issue is now considerable, so called 'policy entrepreneurs' or well-placed policymakers may engage with the research itself and those who produced it, such as prominent academics. Such people may seek to get the issue firmly onto the policy agenda through a process of internal advocacy. Key to this will be socialising the issue within governmental policy networks, organising debates and seminars, inviting relevant academics and researchers to annual retreats or to speak on video conferences. The issue then reaches a wider audience and may become the subject of debate within formal and informal networks of relevant and interested officials. Understanding begins to develop and the demand for more research increases. The subject may well at this stage have entered into mainstream discourse, featuring in parliamentary committee reports, official speeches and various forms of media including mainstream news or internet blogs.

A key juncture might be a prominent policy window such as the writing of a white paper – or other forms of government strategies and practice papers – and this might mean that the concept is adopted in a tentative fashion. We also saw how certain opportunities, such as Whaites's review of statebuilding, can be a crucial period in which policymakers take stock of the existing evidence on a subject, engage closely with internal and external experts and generate intensive debate around an issue. Academic experts seconded into government positions liaise closely with officials and assist them in refining understandings. This increased engagement in policy circles may spur

officials to seek further information and research leading to the commissioning of new studies or research summaries, evaluations of existing work being done on a certain issue or discussions with international partners on the subject. Interaction with relevant researchers likely becomes deeper and more reciprocal and interactive. Researchers may be invited to give talks, brief officials, comment on policy drafts or serve on expert panels. The issue may essentially enter into policy at this stage, but the likelihood is that it will be accepted in a somewhat marginal fashion and while perhaps recognised as important in broad terms, as manifested in general commitments to work on the area, the detail might not have been worked through or precise operational implications laid out.

Phase 4: Consolidation and refinement. Once the issue has found its way into policy, the concepts and issues penetrate deeper into the organisation and gradually a stronger understanding of the research is attained as officials grapple further with the ideas. The policy is rolled out in country offices and early experiences feed back to headquarters or inform research funding strategies, directly in the context of policy formulation consultation with country representatives or indirectly through commissioned evaluations. More discrete pieces of research conducted and commissioned at country level – such as governance assessments, drivers of change analysis and conflict assessments – which may incorporate understandings of the subject in their design may serve to add specific evidence of relevance and applicability of the issue and further familiarise officials with the ideas and concepts at all levels.

At this stage, a period of research consolidation, refinement and strengthening takes place whereby new centres with an explicit mandate to explore the issue in greater depth are funded or commissioned. Specific areas that require a stronger evidence base may be identified and more research organisations, universities and think tanks begin to work on the issue – often in effect following the new money devoted to the subject following its uptake into policy. Further feedback from networks of relevant specialist, experts and academics is gathered and discussed. Other international actors and partners may engage further with the subject and share their perspectives and experiences, often during their own periods of policy reflection and formulation (such as the World Bank's WDR process). Ultimately, a more cooperative, interactive and reciprocal relationship between research and policy emerges surrounding the subject, facilitated by various intermediaries and characterised by a more lively exchange of ideas within policy networks.

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The speed or extent to which this process takes place appears to be determined by, amongst other things: prominent factors relating to the specific policy context; chance and contingency; the existence or otherwise of various barriers and facilitators; and the effectiveness of available translation functions. Overall, the process can be described as iterative, incremental, non-linear and ad hoc, with alternating periods of accelerating uptake, leveling off or perhaps even decline. Debate, discussion and knowledge exchange is evident throughout but to varying degrees depending on the state of the body of research, the level of its penetration within policy circles, the presence of facilitating intermediaries and the proactivity and skills of researchers in the effective communication and dissemination of findings.

Again, we are not suggesting the process is problem free or inevitably positive – it is perfectly possible for the process to reverse or stall due to a wide range of factors, all previously discussed above. Nevertheless, where a strong, coherent and convincing body of research and evidence emerges on a certain subject, there is a likelihood that, over time, many of the positive factors and dynamics identified above will take hold and the cumulative influence will manifest itself in the increasing engagement with and uptake of the research by policymakers.

This cumulative process is impacted on at all levels and stages by the pervasive effect of chance and contingency. By this we mean that luck and good fortune can be the difference between research being either ignored or read, understood and acted upon. This can relate to the presence of certain individuals with the appropriate background, expertise or outlook to effectively engage with and promote research within official circles, at either headquarters or country level. Whether individual policymakers engage with research can be highly dependent on unique contextual factors or the specific character of individuals, their skills and competencies. Moreover, there is arguably a limit to how far incentive structures and institutional requirements can promote research use. Indeed, attempts to over-formalise or pressure officials to use research may actually undermine the spontaneous and natural operation of important informal networks or lead officials to adopt 'coping mechanisms' such as selectively seeking out research that supports predetermined agendas.

This all suggests that from the researcher's perspective, there is a need for resolve, commitment and perseverance and, from the policy perspective, a requirement for highly strategic, long-term approaches to research funding and management. Individual pieces may not appear to generate significant movement or influence in policy circles, but as such studies are complemented and supplemented by further research, either by

the same researchers or others, findings become part of a broader 'critical mass' of robust, credible and mutually supporting evidence which will in all likelihood eventually penetrate policy circles, shift thinking and catalyse policy change.

Current government funding models appear more or less well-placed to foster and enable such long-term academic commitment to a subject. There is of course also an important role for shorter-term studies which meet operational needs, and the hope would be that such studies are conceptually informed by and draw upon the deeper, longer-term knowledge emerging from academic centres and individual scholars. Furthermore, while the cumulative model might suggest researchers should simply trust in the passage of time, this would be mistaken. Such influence will fail to occur if researchers do not carefully consider intermediate factors impinging on uptake and influence and proactively take steps to promote their research findings and engage directly with policymakers where such opportunities arise.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our research has drawn attention to a number of prominent critical issues that remain to be fully addressed by both researchers and policymakers. In general our research suggests, given the powerful role of chance and contingency, enhancing uptake is arguably more about identifying and targeting certain discrete areas for improvement which build on existing strengths, minimise apparent weaknesses, encourage dynamic cultures of research use and promote understanding between the producers and consumers of research.

A number of these measures have been discussed in the course of this report, such as: designing realistic institutional incentives; developing staff skills and experience in handling and appraising research; improving the research component of inductions and pre-deployment briefings for officials taking up positions in country offices; revamping knowledge management structures, research repositories and institutional memory; enhancing efficient and effective intermediary services; supporting and promoting formal and informal knowledge-policy networks; building local research capacity; providing opportunities for secondments and exchanges across the research and policy worlds; optimising the substance and presentation of research; and strengthening the awareness and communication of existing research activities throughout government.

The following draft recommendations focus on a number of key areas and suggest possible practical steps that will be tabled for discussion with DfID staff in June 2014:

DfID HQ and general

Challenge function and expert panels

DfID should seek to strengthen and expand its use of various forms of challenge functions, such as reference groups and expert panels, especially for significant policy rethinks. The membership of challenge groups should include a culturally diverse range of perspectives, including figures from government, civil society, academia and the business community. In-country officials should also be feeding into this process in a meaningful fashion. Retired advisors may also be involved as important sources of background knowledge and country experience and who can provide a longer-term perspective. Membership could be based on a virtual network of established experts. The transparency of such processes is key in order that outsiders can see that the process has been put in place. The frequency of such events is open for discussion.

Networks

DfID should recognise and place emphasis on the importance of networks, which serve as critical conduits for the sharing and exchange of research. DfID should ensure that it is adequately supporting, encouraging and facilitating both formal and informal networks. Internet systems can help in this respect and DfID might consider the systems used by other agencies and organisations. Also, more can be done to improve the accessibility of intranets across government departments.

However, it is important not over-formalise this or force staff to 'network'. Rather, staff should be provided with the freedom to venture out of their comfort zones, as well as the physical space, time, resources and opportunity to attend conferences, seminars and other relevant events. In country, staff should be encouraged to become part of the local scene and establish informal relationships with journalists, researchers, non-governmental representatives and so on.

Also, important is follow-up work to cement relationships, keep networks 'live' and useful. Short reports outlining who staff have met and their specific expertise or area of research will allow staff to better harvest the benefits of networks. This should not become too formalised but DfID needs to recognise that networking is not just a social activity or a matter of personal interest, but an important corporate organisational means of exploiting potential valuable sources of knowledge, research and evidence.

Intermediaries

Intermediary functions, roles and services are key to promoting uptake and DfID has already made considerable progress in this respect over recent years. However, in our opinion there is room to strengthen, expand and further support existing mechanisms, manifested in the existing Evidence into Action Team, Senior Research Fellows system, Regional Resource Hubs and funding for PEAKS (formerly GSDRC).

Particular emphasis should be placed on ensuring intermediary services are optimised for and relevant to country office requirements. DfID might explore the potential for country or regionally based intermediary functions (or centrally based) to some extent reflecting the FCO Research Analyst set up.

It should be absolutely clear in job descriptions that such translation functions are a recognised and important component of the position and that time will be allocated to such functions. The capacity and skill set of advisers in this respect should be developed throughout their career.

Services such as PEAKS should also be made available to other departments. There seems little sense in fencing off such valuable services when cross-government cooperation and integrated approaches are crucial for effective statebuilding interventions.

Internal DfID research linkages

RED-country office communication could be improved both ways. Having centrally-funded DfID statebuilding research taking place in the country without the advanced knowledge of the country office is damaging, as was illustrated in our case study from Sierra Leone.

Also, the country office needs to be given the opportunity to feed into the bigger research agenda in a better fashion. It would be sensible to ensure that offices in those countries that come under the broader definition of 'state fragility' or requiring 'statebuilding' interventions are allowed the opportunity to contribute regular input.

DfID in-country

Institutional memory and ownership

Serious attention needs to be devoted to improving research management at the country level. Systems to enhance institutional memory are central to this in order to ensure that existing and especially incoming staff can quickly get a handle on what the available studies and research. Record keeping and archiving of studies could be significantly improved, accompanied by clear and easy to use searchable systems in both hard and soft form. Efforts should also be made to better update and keep alive completed studies.

Approaches to risk

In recent months DfID has taken steps to adapt its approaches to risk in fragile states. However, it also needs to think carefully about how its approach to risk is affecting its ability and capacity to utilise research or properly understand the countries in which it works. Ultimately, a clear and transparent risk management strategy that recognises and incorporates research uptake issues is required, and DfID should avoid falling into the trap of self-censorship or avoiding risk unnecessarily and in potentially counterproductive ways. One way of managing risk better would be develop a pool of experts and researchers who have the experience and the ability to work in such environments.

Shelving of research that is sensitive or potentially destabilising, as a way of managing reputational risk should be avoided. At minimum findings should be circulated confidentially on secure networks internally to relevant stakeholders so that the findings are not wasted and the challenge function is activated. Learning from such findings is an important, if not more important, than learning from those that can be made publically available. This of course does raise the issue of how to share such findings across departments.

In term of programmatic risk, where big projects tend to prevent new research feeding in, a more sensitive approach is required. Big projects should have built into them junctures of questioning to allow for reflection and the possibility of feeding in new thinking.

Induction and pre-deployment

DfID should improve (and in some cases introduce) the research components of pre-deployment and induction processes. These represent ideal opportunities to expose staff to the latest research, expert knowledge, country-specific literature and most importantly mechanisms to access and evaluate research. The induction should be very clear about the limitation of resources and what avenues of collaboration can be used to work around such issues. Particularly important is to clarify to those in country the ways in which they can continue to be part of the bigger picture in terms of both developing and seeing through research agendas.

Part of the issue here is to ensure that the nature of the research outputs are in a clear and accessible form – the types of product that may be of most use are concise research summaries and syntheses (as now produced by RPCs) – they need to be attractive and draw people in. The onus here is on the supply side. There is room for DfID to be more specific in it is reporting requirements when it comes to research projects funded by the department, including those jointly funded with ESRC and other research councils.

Access to research outputs can be improved through the introduction of a more systematic indexing process, that allows staff to search both thematically, and country specific. Also it would be good to allow such index to include information on former employees and the potential for seeking their advice following retirement and/or move to new posts.

Mentoring of younger staff by experienced staff (even if they have moved post) is important. The mentoring function can play a number of roles in improving people's practices that go beyond appreciating what has been done in a specific area of research to include all sort of carrier development. Such mentoring can take place online or face-to-face but needs to be done in a structured and transparent way.

Policy-research interchange

DfID should seek to expand the opportunities available to researchers and academics to take up secondments in government, especially at the country level (building on the successful SRF model at headquarters level). Given the contemporary emphasis on 'impact' introduced by Government funded research councils, academic scholars can only benefit from greater access into policy circles. This offers a very good opportunity to open government up to researchers at various levels. This can be useful in a number of respects: researchers can provide a fresh or critical perspective on policies and programmes; they can provide up-to-date reviews of the literature; they know where to find relevant information. Also, their presence can protect against adviser isolation and group think and encourages an analytical and reflexive culture in DfID.

Officials should also be given the opportunity to engage in research activities of various forms, such as sabbaticals, enrolment on Masters Courses or involvement in discrete research projects. They could be embedded in research institutions (while extremely useful, Whaites was still in the DfID environment and hence a bit closed). Ways in which embedded in academic institutions (link to research grants) does not necessarily entail compromising on academic independence – officials can pick up the skills, ethos, etc. Such opportunities will go a long well to encouraging a reflexive culture (not necessarily a research culture) in DfID.

Local research capacity

An important aspect of sustainable development involves ensuring own that developing countries own the knowledge that will help them move forward, and this is particularly relevant to fragile states. DfID has a responsibility, while operating in such countries, to foster the local research capacity and ownership of knowledge. While RED has formalised such capacity building through various initiatives linked to the RPC model, this is not well linked up to in-country offices, nor do country offices do enough to draw off or build local research capacity in its programming.

DfID needs to take proactive steps to map the knowledge resources in the context where they operate and not passively rely simply on those who present themselves to the country office. In this respect, DfID could take steps to hold events which could be attended by local academics, researchers, institutional representatives, and local workers who served with DfID in past.

Ultimately, while driven by corporate incentives and requirements, developing local research capacity will need to be based on individual strategies formulated in country and tailored to the specific context.

The way in which this might be done could take the form of a country-based challenge function whereby native researchers and experts could be brought in to provide a (not necessarily binding) perspective on planned DfID activities. Many other benefits can accrue from such practices, including the strengthening of UK cultural diplomacy and the enhanced perceived legitimacy of research outputs and policies.

Cross-government

The nature of the subject makes cross-governmental integration not a choice but a strategic necessity and often linked to national security objectives. This important dimension should be reflected in the way research management processes work to ensure cross-government coherence and effectiveness.

Awareness and Communication of Research

It is important that DfID does not take it as read that others know what is out there in terms of research processes and findings. Improved awareness and communication of DfID-funded research outputs across government is key. The idea of index mentioned above may help to improve access to knowledge as to what DfID has funded and who (and in what department) is doing what at a given time.

Partnering with other departments in research terms is important in order to avoid blind spots that can easily develop between mandates. It is important to keep track of emerging joint research and to credit it as such. The benefits of such processes should also be made clear insofar as they build credibility.

Advanced awareness of research ideas can be extremely helpful, particularly for in-country officers. Circulating in advance a draft interim research agenda associated with priority policy areas would certainly encourage people to participate in the shaping of the agenda. The interim research agenda should be designed in a way that opens the possibility for officials at all levels across government to feed in. This could be structured around clear understood and recognisable entry points in the design and commissioning process of research and at different stages.

Cross-government research linkages

The report indicates that cross-government research linkages are not sufficiently open. For instance, the PRT in Helmand was not in any way feeding back or shaping the RED agenda (mainly because there were no governance advisors in Helmand).

Furthermore, intranet restrictions between government departments retard the collaborative governance of research (for instance, the PRT does not have

access to the DFID intranet). But ultimately British departments working on statebuilding are part of the same mission and efforts should be made to move beyond bureaucratic stove piping in order to smooth the flow of research collaboration, sharing and communication. There is a general perception of inaccessibility that demotivates staff from seeking information.

It is important to enhance and foster better link-up across government (DFID, FCO, MoD) in terms of research functions and analysis (e.g. between FCO Research Analysts and DfID Advisers). Our research has demonstrated evidence of DFID advisors working with RAs but room still exists for strengthening and building better relationships.

A cross-departmental professional specialism index could aid intergovernmental research collaboration and exchange, composed of short biographies, key words, and topics. It should be searchable by country, geographical area, subject specialism, and previous team/country experiences. It should be internal and kept up to date.

NOTES

[i] This report is part of the overarching project entitled 'The Influence of DfID-Sponsored State Building-Oriented Research on British Policy in Fragile, Post-Conflict Environments' and is jointly funded by the ESRC and DfID (grant reference: RES-167-25-0596). The Principal Investigator is Professor Sultan Barakat.

[ii] Thomas Waldman, Sultan Barakat and Andrea Varisco, *Understanding Influence: The Use of Statebuilding Research in British Policy* (Ashgate, forthcoming, 2014); Thomas Waldman, 'Reconciliation and Research in Afghanistan: An Analytical Narrative', *International Affairs*, forthcoming, September 2014; Thomas Waldman, 'The Use of Statebuilding Research in Fragile Contexts: Evidence from British Policymaking in Afghanistan, Nepal and Sierra Leone', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, March 2014, DOI: 10.1080/17502977.2014.885675; Sultan Barakat and Thomas Waldman, 'Conflict analysis for the twenty-first century', *Conflict, Security and Development*, Vol. 13, No. 3, July 2013, pp. 259-83; Andrea Varisco, 'The influence of research and local knowledge on British-led security sector reform policy in Sierra Leone', *Conflict, Security and Development*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2014, pp. 89-123.

[iii] Merilee S. Grindle, 'Good Enough Governance Revisited', *Development Policy Review*, Vol. 25, Issue 5, September 2007, pp. 533-74.

[iv] Roland Paris, 'Ordering the World: Academic Research and Policymaking on Fragile States', *International Studies Review*, Vol. 13, Issue 1, March 2011, p. 59.

[v] Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, 'Introduction: Understanding the Contradictions of Postwar Statebuilding', in Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk (eds.), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 6.

[vi] Ashraf Ghani and Claire Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 5.

[vii] Paul Collier, 'Private Sector Development and Peacebuilding', *Bonn Speech*, 14 September 2006. Available online at: <http://www.businessenvironment.org/dyn/be/docs/108/Collier_Keynote.pdf>, retrieved 2 October 2011.

[viii] Sisk and Paris, 'Introduction', p. 15.

[ix] Robert Egnell and Peter Haldén, 'Contextualising International State-building', *Conflict, Security & Development,* Vol. 10, Issue 4, 431-41, 2010, p. 432.

[x] Mats Berdal and Achim Wennmann (eds.), *Ending Wars, Consolidating Peace: Economic Perspectives* (Abingdon: Routledge for IISS, 2010), p. 92.

[xi] Sisk and Paris, 'Introduction' p. 7.

[xii] Paul Collier, *Wars, Guns, and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous Places* (London: Bodley Head, 2009), p. 3.

[xiii] OECD DAC, *Supporting Statebuilding in Situations of Conflict and Fragility: Policy Guidance* (Paris: OECD, 2011); United States Institute of Peace and United States Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, 'Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction', United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC, November 2009.

[xiv] For a detailed description of how the countries were selected see Annex II.

[xv] As Wooding et al note, 'The lesson from the application of the payback framework is that it may need to be adapted in various ways in order to meet the particular circumstances of the research funder.' Steven Wooding, Stephen R. Hanney, Martin Buxton and Jonathan Grant, 'The Returns from Arthritis Research', *A Report Prepared by RAND Europe for the Arthritis Research Campaign*, RAND Europe, Cambridge, 2004, p. 12.

[xvi] Hanney et al., 'The Utilisation of Health Research', p. 3.

[xvii] Kunal Sen, 'Literature Review on Rates of Return to Research'. Available online at: <http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/PDF/Outputs/EcoDev/60705-LiteratureReview_on_Rates_of_Return_to_ResearchFINAL.pdf>, retrieved 25 September 2013, pp. 23-25.

[xviii] The quantitative findings and case study narratives are not presented here in detail but rather form the basis of many of the observations, overarching conclusions and recommendations. Please refer to the associated book, Understanding Influence for the full analysis…

[xix] Julius Court and John Young, 'Bridging Research and Policy in International Development: An Analytical and Practical Framework', *ODI Briefing Paper*, Overseas Development Institute, London, September 2004 in particular.

[xx] Interview, senior DfID official, March 2012.

[xxi] Roland Paris, 'Ordering the World: Academic Research and Policy Making on Fragile States', *International Studies Review*, Vol. 13, No. 1, March 2011, pp. 58-71.