Leading the British Government's fight against world poverty

Improving the impact of development research through better research communications and uptake

Background paper for the AusAID, DFID and UKCDS funded workshop: London, November 29th and 30th 2010

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Louise Shaxson of Delta Partnership has been contracted as the lead facilitator for this workshop.
The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of DFID, AusAID or UKCDS

Contents

1. Introduction

This is a background paper for the workshop on *Improving the impact of development research through better research communication and uptake*, being held in London on November 29 and 30, 2010. The paper draws upon and synthesises a number of documents on this topic produced for DFID, as well as other documentation and events of recent interest[1].

In 2005/06, the twenty largest funders of development research invested an estimated US$1988 million in research, with the aim of improving the health, well-being and livelihoods of the world's poorest people[2]. But research rarely transforms lives automatically – it needs to be planned, implemented, communicated, adapted and made accessible for different contexts to ensure that it is relevant to people's needs; whether they are policy makers, practitioners, private sector actors or community members. No matter how good the tools are that we use, it is not simply a matter of communicating research after it has been done. The single most important lesson from the work on research use and uptake over the last decade is that improving research impact means engaging users at the outset of any work.

The communication and uptake of research is a messy business for which there is no clear formula, though it is clear is that routes to impact need to be improved. Without a greater focus on getting research into use, that potential for improving lives through research and innovation will not be fully realised. Research funders have a role to play in encouraging maximum impact from the research they fund, including its influence on their own policies and programming: this is particularly important as funding gets tighter. The workshop will be bringing together funders of development research, researchers and practitioners to:

- develop a common understanding of the landscape of funding and activities in research communication and uptake
- identify opportunities for greater coordination and collaboration
- share innovative thinking on effective ways to get research into use
- investigate options for a more systematic opportunity to share information and coordinate activities

However, one of the challenges of organising an international workshop on research communication and uptake is that it is a comparatively new field. This means that different people use different languages when talking about similar concerns, and that there is no settled model around which discussions can be focused. The purpose of this background paper, then, is to briefly outline some of the different languages and models that are used, to draw from some recent case studies and reports on research communication and uptake, and to identify the main questions that need to be answered so that everyone begins to share a common understanding of how to make progress. The paper is designed to be generally relevant to all who have an interest in improving the impact of development research on policy and practice: policymakers, parliamentarians, civil society organisations, the private sector, think tanks, researchers, research communicators and other intermediaries.

[1] These are outlined in the references at the back of this paper which are available for download from the DFID website http://www.dfid.gov.uk/R4D/index.asp.

[2] An approximate figure, reported in Jones, N. & J. Young (2007). Setting the Scene: Situating DFID's Research Funding Policy and Practice in an International Comparative Perspective. ODI report to DFID. Download at: http://www.dfid.gov.uk/R4D/pdf/outputs/consultation/Setting_the_Scene.pdf

This list of actors shows the potential complexity of discussions around research communication and uptake; the difficult task for this paper is to try to simplify them without losing too much useful detail. The paper – which is a working document rather than an academic article – begins with a brief review of the different terms that are in use, before drawing from the developed and developing world literature to outline various models that have been proposed to improve the impact of research on policymaking.

Having briefly reviewed the various models, the paper identifies a series of questions the workshop will address. The list of questions is not intended to be exhaustive, but instead illustrates some of the complex issues facing all actors seeking to improve the impact of research. They have emerged from the process of developing this paper, as well as from discussions about the purpose of the workshop and how its outputs will continue to inform debate on research communication and uptake.

The final section reviews some even more recent discussions on the roles and functions of knowledge intermediaries; a group of people and organisations which are increasingly seen as important contributors to improving the impact of research.

2. Language and terminology

Although there is no settled language around research communication and uptake, it is useful to describe a few key terms used in the rest of the paper – though they should be seen as suggestions, not final definitions, and are presented in no particular order.

Research dissemination

Processes which ensure the widest reach of the research to potentially relevant audiences. Dissemination usually occurs once research results are obtained, such as through conferences, academic publications, online publications and other channels. The dissemination audience is the broad group of people to whom this process is directed.

Research communication

The ability to interpret or translate complex research findings into a language, format and context that people who are not experts in that particular issue can understand. It goes beyond the dissemination of research results and involves a network of participants and beneficiaries who also require opportunities to articulate their own needs. Research communication is driven by demand rather than from the top down (see Carter & Paulus, 2010).

Target audience

The target audience for research communication (as opposed to the dissemination audience) is the person or group of people whose specific needs are being addressed. Targeting is the process of involving specific potential users of research throughout the research process (particularly in its initial scoping and planning) in an effort to promote its relevance, usefulness and therefore uptake and use.

Research uptake

Adolph *et al* (2010) define this as '...the process of becoming aware of and accessing research outputs, and the institutions, policies, systems and mechanisms supporting this process'; and note that there are commonalities and differences between research communication and research uptake, as in the table below.

Issue	Communication strategy (as described in DFID guidelines)	Uptake strategy (as defined by review team)
Duration	Starts with inception, continues until project ends	Starts with research prioritisation, continues (through partnerships with relevant stakeholders) until (long) after the project ended
Underlying paradigm	Communications approach	User engagement approach
Underlying assumption	Research findings are potentially useful to intermediate and end users	Unless users are involved in defining the research agenda, there is a risk that research is not relevant, in which case even the best communication strategy will not be able to trigger wide scale use
Main research uptake mechanisms used	Strong focus on targeted dissemination mechanisms (but also collaboration with users)	Main mechanism is collaboration with users at different levels (including governance of research programmes, and M&E)
Key actors	Researchers and communication experts, who package research findings in ways appropriate to different users	Uptake pathway actors: Private sector, government agencies, NGOs who are partners in the research process
Main challenge	Finding the most appropriate communication method for each target group	Strengthening demand for research and building capacity of users
 Communication strategies and uptake strategies are closely linked and combined for maximum effect		

Table 1: Differences and commonalities between 'research communication' and 'research uptake' strategies. Adapted from Adolph *et al* 2010, p 62.

Research use

The application of research to the process of shaping or changing an idea, policy, practice or program. This goes further than the uptake of research which can be largely influenced by research communication, engagement and uptake strategies: using research is also influenced by structures, processes and power in the research using organisation and environment. This has implications for evaluating research use versus research uptake in development research communication programs.

Knowledge intermediaries

Knowledge intermediaries[3] work to facilitate the exchange of knowledge between producers and users. They serve two purposes: first, to improve the utility of knowledge such that it actively informs decision-making and has a noticeable effect on the quality of decisions, policies and processes. Second, they aim to improve the receptivity of decision-makers to new knowledge. A knowledge intermediary may be an individual, a team or an organization operating in this way.

[3] The term 'knowledge brokers' is more frequently used in the developed country literature. See Shaxson & Gwyn (2010)

Other terms

Another set of useful terms was developed by Proctor *et al* (2009) who mapped clusters of research communication activity according to whether the focus was on improving supply or demand for information; and whether the search itself was active or passive. They distinguished between:

- The **knowledge attic**: an archive where material is collected and stored
- The **knowledge pump**: a system which selectively attempts to deliver information to those believed to need it
- The **knowledge publisher**: a system which actively tailors information to user needs, but does not allow specific requests
- The **knowledge dialogue** or wheel: a system which enables users to request information and responds with the required supply

3. Models and channels for research communication and uptake

There are many reasons for wanting to develop models of research communication and uptake:

- To take strategic decisions about where and how much to invest in research communication and uptake and to what purpose
- To differentiate the various barriers to research uptake and clarify how to address them
- To make good use of enabling factors to improve research uptake
- To understand which mechanisms for promoting research communication and uptake are most effective in different settings, and to develop clear strategies to enhance their impact

Adolph *et al* (2009 and 2010) noted that while there are various models and mechanisms for improving research communication and uptake, they are not always sequenced and combined to form a coherent strategy. The danger of this compartmentalised approach is that while it is possible to identify which individual mechanisms to improve uptake are most effective, it is more difficult to determine which *strategies* for improving uptake work best in which situations. The next section attempts to synthesise some of the discussions and proposes a simple set of models which may address the need to take this more strategic approach.

3.1. Models for research communication and uptake

Part of the problem may arise from the fact that there are a large number of different models of knowledge transfer or research communication: the fact that the two terms are used synonymously in the literature adds to the confusion. Indeed, some recent reviews have identified over 60 different models of knowledge transfer (Ward *et al,* p157) in the developed world health and social services sectors alone – which makes it difficult for researchers and managers to choose which model to use. However a recent review (Best & Holmes, 2010) develops a simple classification of models for 'knowledge to action' which encompasses all aspects of knowledge transfer activities and may provide

a useful basis for discussions about developing research communication strategies. They differentiate between three groups of model: linear, relationship and systems models – and set out the different situations in which each is most appropriate.

Linear models

Linear models suggest a one-way flow of knowledge 'products', from producer to user, those products then being incorporated into practice through effective communication techniques – resembling Proctor *et al*'s 'knowledge pump' or 'knowledge publisher'. The process of moving from producing to using knowledge can be represented by a series of 'relatively discrete, predictable and manageable steps' (Best & Holmes, p147). Linear models will therefore work best either where the knowledge can be very closely targeted to a particular and clearly-identified need; or where the knowledge is widely generalisable across contexts (such as the results of clinical trials). They also work best where strong institutional structures and incentives are in place, the issues are relatively simple, and there are low risks and costs associated with the transfer of knowledge from one group to the other.

Linear models are weaker where there are different types of evidence are in play; where the evidence is likely to be contested by groups with different views, or where there are clear differences in how it might be applied outside the system in which it was developed (eg knowledge about how agricultural markets work in rural areas may not work so well in peri-urban environments).

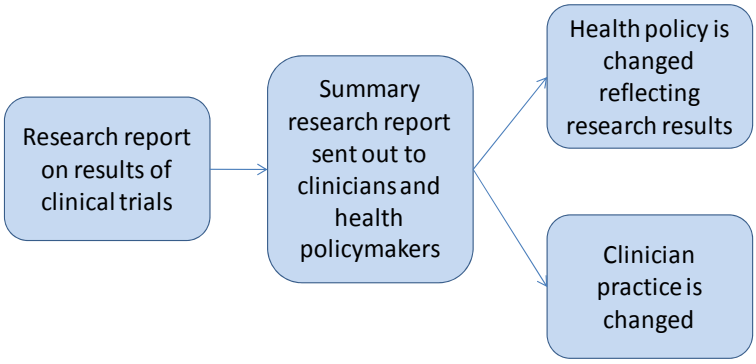

Fig 1: A simple linear model of research communication and uptake

A simple linear model is given above: the results of clinical trials can provide powerful evidence for a change in clinical practice: if the health impacts of the suggested changes are rapidly seen, there are strong institutional incentives for both clinical practice, and health policy, to change.

Relationship models

Relationship models incorporate the principles of linear models (such as effective communication techniques, knowledge as a 'product'), but focus on the interactions between the people having and needing the knowledge. With relationship models there is a clear commitment to close collaboration:

linkage, exchange and shared learning are core processes. Relationship models work best where there is a good consensus that different types of knowledge need to be incorporated (such as local or contextual knowledge), where the complexity of the problem requires system change – and where this need for change is accepted by opinion leaders and decision makers.

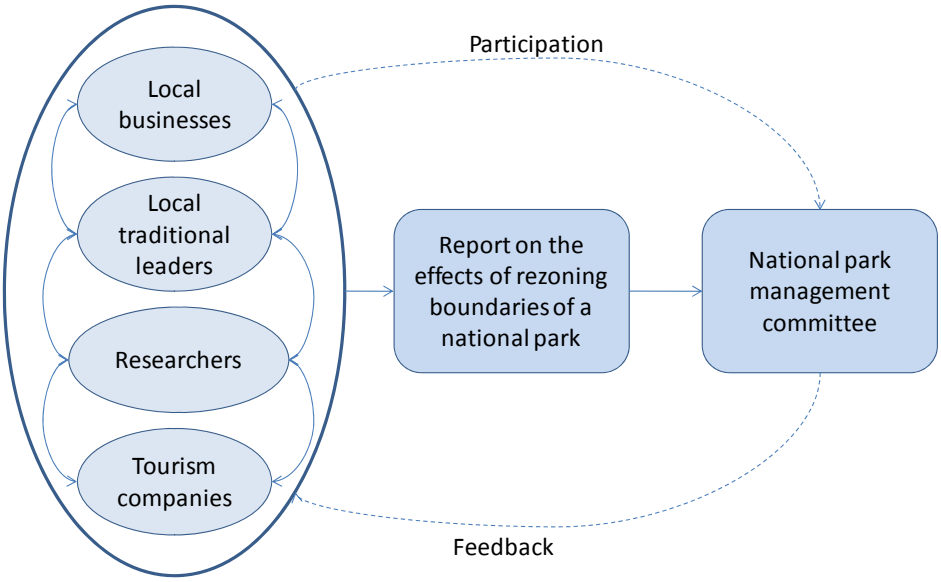

Fig 2: A stylised relationship model. Representatives from the local partnership participate in the national park management committee to ensure the results of collaborative research are taken forwards

Relationship models will work less well where it is too costly to fully engage with all the users of the knowledge – though new technologies may mean that it is possible to develop good feedback from users which proxy that close engagement (such as the Mediae Trust's mobile phone response system for viewers of its programme Makutano Junction[4]). And while they may work less well in situations where power dynamics mean that it is hard to fight a prevailing view, these are probably the situations where most work needs to be done on improving relationships to ensure that opinion leaders and decision makers do accept the need for systemic change. Another challenge is managing staff turnover, particularly in government, where the regular movement of people between posts can have serious effects on the stability of relationships.

Systems models

The two models described above represent fairly simple systems with clear boundaries. But this is often not the case: there may be a large number of different actors who are involved to different degrees in the process of research planning, communication, uptake and use. These are more complex systems and it can be difficult to work out the key institutions, processes, entry points and

[4] See Carter & Paulus, 2010.

windows of opportunity for effecting change. Mapping out the actors in a system may give rise to a complex social network, as in the purely hypothetical example below:

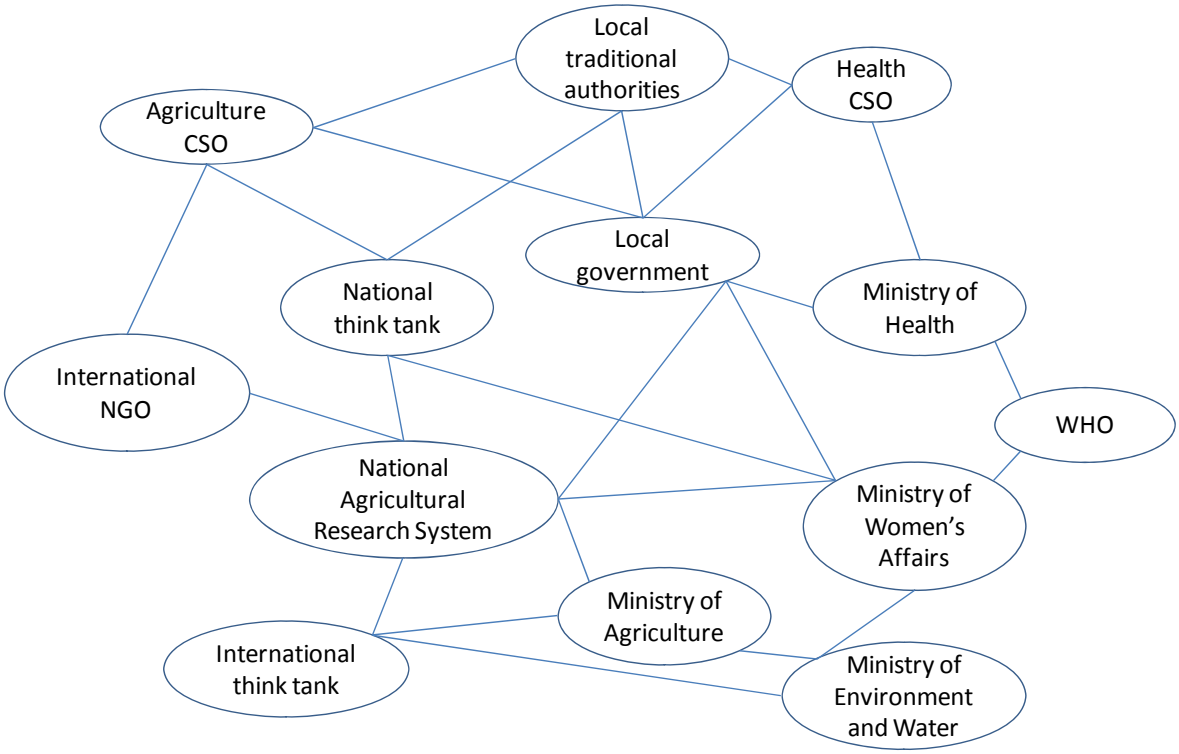

Fig 3: A hypothetical systems model, dealing with (for example) improving health services to women affected by waterborne diseases from irrigation systems

Developing research communication and uptake activities using a systems model would resemble Proctor *et al's* knowledge dialogue, and would be appropriate where the emphasis is on co-learning and co-production of new knowledge; and where all key stakeholders are active collaborators and are willing to invest considerable time and energy in the process. However the power dynamics in systems models are inherently more complex than in linear or relationship models; particularly if the goals of that particular policy attempt to benefit disadvantaged groups. Figure 3 was developed to make this point: say, for example, that the nature of women's work in irrigated systems exposes them to a greater incidence of waterborne diseases. A project to address this would come up against complex issues of power and control as it may become obvious that not only does the irrigation system need to change; the role of women within that system needs to change too. A network of different actors, each of them with different goals and mandates, will need to be involved.

Figure 3 described the system for a particular issue, but this may be further complicated by some overarching characteristics which affect how whole sectors interact with each other and with other national and international partners:

Characteristic	Implications for actors within a complex sector / system
Sector boundaries	A complex system with fuzzy boundaries makes it difficult to know which the key actors are and what roles they play. For example, agriculture and rural development could include economic development and growth, social protection, safety nets infrastructure, nutrition, and food security. In contrast, the boundaries of the health sector are fairly well defined, meaning it is easier to understand who needs to be involved and why.
Number of line ministries typically involved in the sector	Reflects how clear the sector boundaries are: fuzzy boundaries are likely to give rise to weakly coherent ministries with overlapping mandates and highly complex systems. Clear sectoral boundaries tend to lead to more clearly defined mandates and a better understanding of which ministry ought to lead on a particular issue
Sectoral planning at international, regional, national and local levels	Fuzzy boundaries may lead to weak articulation of national sectoral development and investment plans, and a weak consensus on the priority issues. A more simple system does not necessarily mean that the issues are less complex, but that it is easier to articulate national and local priorities.
Role of UN Agencies	Multiple international agencies may be involved, meaning that the international system is complex, never mind the national one. This means that external influences on a sector have their own underlying complexity and dynamics. If there is only a single international body working in the sector (the WHO in the Health sector, for example) it is more likely to be able to give strong leadership, clear direction, and to play a clear co-ordinating role.
Role of private sector at national level	There will be many possible roles for the private sector: if sectoral boundaries are ill-defined there is not likely to be a public sector umbrella organisation with clear responsibility for co-ordinating and regulating private sector activity.
Engagement with private sector at the global level	In a complex sectoral system such as agriculture and rural development, the international political economy makes it difficult to hold structured discussions with the international private sector because neither they, nor the public sector, are well organised. In the health sector, by contrast, both the pharmaceutical and drugs industries, and the public sector, are well co-ordinated and able to bring this co-ordination to sustain and structure dialogues on key issues.
Perceived role of the state	In a complex sectoral system the role of the state may become less clear than in a simpler sector and its strength may decline as a result.
Existence of national research systems	If the system is complex, international research programmes may find it difficult to engage with partners who are closely linked to national service delivery organisations and therefore it will be similarly difficult to have a real impact
MDGs as a driver, and lead sectoral agencies charged with delivering against MDGs	A complex sectoral system will have multiple ministries and organisations delivering against the different MDGs, which may make it difficult to attribute impact. Having said that, MDGs are a very strong driver, and in their efforts to meet MDG targets it would be possible for a simple system to de-emphasise issues that are not emphasised by MDGs.

Table 2: the effects that complex systems may have on sectoral characteristics (adapted from the detailed comparison of Agriculture and Human Development sectors, in Adolph *et al* 2010)

Summary: linear, relationship and systems models

The above section summarised the linear, relationship and systems models and suggested ways in which they could be represented such that it is possible to analyse the implications for research communication and uptake. But the three models are not independent of each other: elements of

each model may need to be used at different times throughout the life of a research project. For example, as a researcher it will be important to understand when windows of opportunity are likely to arise, so that it is possible to 'push' the outputs of research at the right person when they are most receptive (utilising the linear model). However, researchers will also need to understand the institutional process or structure of the group which needs influencing in order to decide what that window might be – such as a quarterly meeting of Provincial Ministers of Health, Environment and Women's Affairs (drawing on the systems model). But this alone may not be enough – it will also be important to understand the relationships within that group to develop a champion or voice within who can advocate for the importance of the research and carry recommendations forward (the relationships model would advocate building a good relationship with a Minister in that group). Adolph *et al* (p65) note that in order to make sense of this complexity, 'the degree to which a programme purpose or strategic objective includes developmental impact would usually inform the types of partners required and relationships with these partners'.

3.2. Channels for linking research to policy

Whichever model is most appropriate to a situation; there are many different channels that can be used to communicate research and improve its uptake by end users. Adolph *et al* (2010) drew from the international literature to outline seven different categories which they then used to examine two research portfolios funded by DFID: Agriculture, and Human Development (health and education). While it was not possible to produce detailed maps of the activities possible; it was clear that both portfolios used a wide range of mechanisms, mostly in combination or in sequence, to target different user groups throughout the research process. For both portfolios, the review estimated that more than 30% of the overall budget was spent on research uptake, though the way it was allocated varied between them. Basic research programmes focused on using publications to make research accessible, using only a relatively modest proportion of funding (e.g. 5%). The more development-oriented programmes invested up to 75% of their budget in some areas, engaging with users at all stages of the programme and using a wide range of dissemination methods.

Channels for linking research to policy	Sub-categories
Dissemination of research findings (message)	• Publications, oral presentations, alternative presentations • Mass media presentations • Research product dissemination • Dedicated research programme/organisation website • Working with knowledge intermediaries • Research-based guidance
Capacity development (learning)	• Educational materials, staff development and training • Interactive training and outreach, providing expert support • Organisational/institutional strengthening
Influence (social influence)	• Endorsement, lobbying and general advocacy
Collaboration between researchers and users (communication)	• User involvement in governance and research planning • User involvement in implementation • Collaboration with business/industry • Research-in-practice

Channels for linking research to policy	Sub-categories
	• Networks and information exchange
Incentives and reinforcement (motivation through reward)	• Research incentives • Reinforcement/feedback
Enabling environment (facilitation)	• Organisational structures, systems and processes • Communication strategies • Legal and policy arrangements • Investing in communication/uptake infrastructure • Funding for research
Research on research uptake and use	• Barriers to research uptake • Monitoring and evaluation, and impact studies • Models for better uptake

Table 3: Categories of uptake mechanisms, with example subcategories (Adapted from Adolph *et al* 2010).

3.3. Summary – models and channels for research communications and uptake

This section synthesises recent work that may be useful in helping to develop coherent strategies for investing in research communication and uptake activities. Current discussions are already very complex, and it may be instructive to step back a little and consider whether it is possible to develop a simple framework on which to hang strategic discussions about delivering impact and value.

The models may help address one of the key concerns emerging from Adolph *et* al (2010) – that it is difficult to take a strategic approach to demonstrating impact because there are few examples of clear strategies being developed for research communications and uptake. Those taking decisions about the need to invest in research communications and uptake will need clear signals about how to determine value for money. While individual projects may analyse and work with their own individual model, at a portfolio or organisational level it is unclear which strategies work best in which situations. Instead of trying to define the perfect model for research communication and uptake, it may be more effective to delineate between the three broad groups of models; assessing the overall effectiveness of each group by identifying aggregate (group-level) indicators of impact and allowing projects and programmes to disaggregate these according to their particular circumstances. Clearly more work needs to be done on this, and one of the questions in the world cafe will look in detail at whether and how this might be taken forwards.

4. Key questions on research communications and uptake for discussion during world cafe

Although it is a relatively new field of enquiry, the intense need to demonstrate value for money in research has led to specific questions being asked about research communications and uptake. Some of these relate to how to build an enabling environment, some relate to the need to involve many different actors in the uptake pathways, some to how best to use different technologies to communicate between the different actors, and some to the most cost-effective ways to measure the impacts of research communications and uptake projects and programmes.

The specific questions set out below have emerged from discussions to prepare for the workshop, from the four main source reports and from the wider literature review done in preparation for this background paper. They are not intended to be exhaustive, but give a good flavour of some of the current topics concerning researchers, research programme managers, research communication programmes, and donors.

The majority of these questions will be addressed during the world cafe session in the afternoon of the first day. Because there are no easy answers to any of them, each table at the cafe will produce a 'conversation map' which will describe the flow of the conversation, make links between the sub-questions and highlight the main issues arising. The conversation maps will be a key part of the workshop report.

4.1 Building an enabling environment for research uptake and use

While the simple, linear model of knowledge-to-action can work well where there are strong institutional structures and sufficient resources, this is not always the case. Research communications and uptake can be hampered by a weak enabling environment, which could affect both the supply of research results to end users, or their ability to clearly express what it is that they need. Organisational structures, legal and regulatory frameworks, sectoral characteristics, the influence of donor organisations – all could affect the impact of research communications and uptake activities.

Question 1: How do we strengthen user demand for evidence from research? Different users, different pathways?

There is an increasing awareness in the literature that models of research communication and uptake have focused on improving the supply; and a corresponding emphasis on the need to improve the demand from end users(from 'push' to 'pull' models).

- How do we find out what the demand for research evidence is from users? Do different groups express their demand in different ways and what are the barriers to determining their demand?
    - Policymakers
    - Practitioners
    - Civil society
    - The private sector
- Are there any novel ways to create demand for research evidence? What role might incentives, structures, penalties and funding play in creating demand (such as earmarked funding to purchase research to directly inform decision-making)?
- How do we know when we have strengthened user demand for evidence? What metrics could we use to demonstrate this?

Question 2: How do we effectively incorporate different types of knowledge into research communication and uptake activities?

While research is perceived as occupying a particular space in evidence for policy and practice, it is clearly not the only voice and in some instances may be the 'junior partner'. As we seek to

demonstrate the impact of research on policy and practice, we need to be able to clarify what other forms of knowledge may modify its impact and in what ways this may happen.

- What are the different types of local knowledge and how should research communications and uptake activities take them into account? Knowledge of the local context, folk knowledge, indigenous technical knowledge... are there others?
- How should research communications and uptake activities mesh local knowledge (as above) with other types of knowledge such as tacit knowledge, political views, values and different world views?
- What is the role of research communicators in transmitting or brokering these different types of knowledge – are there any situations where they might do more harm than good?

4.2 Improving engagement with all actors: broadening our reach beyond the policy audience

While there has been a focus in recent years on improving the impact on policy, there are other actors who also make major contributions to the impact of development research. The private and third sectors play different roles for different types of issue, and have their own ways of interacting with policymakers. Both are potential conduits for research, not simply audiences; and the way that publicly-funded researchers and research communicators interact with them can affect the ultimate impact of a piece of research.

Question 3: Improving engagement with the private sector on research uptake and use

Adolph et al (2010, pp 54-59) – *see Annex A* – a *notes that there are differences between agriculture and human development in terms of the structure of the private sector and how it interacts with national and global policymaking. The questions below set out to explore the implications of this, and any effects this may have on how research communicators work.*

- Is there a general need to improve interactions with the private sector? What ways in which the private sector works need to be understood and accounted for in shaping research and communication activities?
- How does research and research communication deal with potentially conflicting objectives in independent and private sector research and communication?
- Much independently-funded research has a pro-poor emphasis: how can this effectively be maintained by research communicators when dealing with the private sector?

Question 4: Improving engagement with civil society on research uptake and use

Civil society organisations play an important part as knowledge intermediaries, are conduits for research in their own right, and are an increasingly important part of the 'audience' for publicly-funded research outputs. But their different constituencies and mandates mean that researchers and research communicators need to carefully consider whether they demand specific uptake pathways, or whether they can be viewed as one of many actors in more general uptake strategies.

- CSOs can be conduits for research, not just another audience. What are CSO's particular needs in terms of how research is communicated?
- What can help to bring CSOs and researchers closer together? Where has this worked and what lessons can we learn?

- How might we measure the impact of research on CSO activities?

Question 5: Improving availability and access of research results to the end users

As well as 'pushing' research results to end users and working to improve the strength of the 'pull' from end users to researchers, it is also important that end users are enabled to search for evidence themselves. There are various ways in which this could be done: by building relationships between the producers and users of research evidence, and by using technology to make that evidence readily accessible.

- What are the most effective ways of ensuring that end users know of the availability of evidence? How can we be sure they are up to date with the best sources of evidence?
- What role do different communication channels play (ie online, paper copies)? How can information be packaged or organised in a way that ensures decision-makers need can easily extract the information most relevant to them?
- Is one limiting factor that there are no international protocols about open access for publicly available research? What is the effect of this? If there is a need for them, what might these protocols cover?

4.3 The role of technology in improving research communication and uptake

Technology and the media play a key role in improving the communication and uptake of research: paper is not being abandoned, but other technologies are increasingly playing their part as both transmission mechanisms (email, radio, television, SMS services) and as means of engaging different groups of people. But while there has been an explosion in the use of different technologies, it may be equally important to understand what barriers stand in the way of using them cost-effectively.

Question 6: The role of the ICTs and the media in research communication and uptake

The capacity of the media (radio, tv, newspapers, the internet, social media) to influence research communication and uptake is considerable, and it contributes to the public debate around how research and other forms of evidence influence policy outcomes. Carter & Paulus (2010) note that the media is an important factor 'shaping the character of governance... (it)...can constitute the most powerful accountability mechanisms of all democratic institutions.' But the relationship between researchers and the media is not always an easy one, with researchers frustrated by journalists' searches for good news stories, and journalists frustrated by the ifs, buts and caveats which characterise many research reports.

- What needs to be done to improve relationships between researchers and the media, particularly journalists? Is it part of a general need for researchers to be better communicators, or does the media have a particular need for improved engagement from researchers? Does this differ across countries and regions?
- How important is it to ensure that editors and managers in the media are research-literate? How can that be achieved? How can we improve the mutual responsibility of researchers, editors and managers to report research accurately and in an interesting way to enhance uptake?
- How can new technologies and media outlets such as social networks be useful and what are the factors limited their use (eg is internet connectivity or speed a key problem in access some countries or groups?

4.4 Resourcing cost-effective research communication and uptake

Improving the effectiveness of research communication and uptake means ensuring that sufficient resources are directed at the most effective strategies and mechanisms, not just at the research itself. Adolph et al (2010) note that there are different options for resourcing research communication and uptake: a) as an integrated component of individual research programmes, b) as a co-ordinated effort of several programmes together, and c) as part of the wider development mandate of DFID which includes good governance and capacity building. There also remains a question about whether specific funding for these activities affects the long-term sustainability of these services.

Question 7: Issues and challenges in resourcing successful research communications projects

While projects funded under research programme budgets can fund their own research communication activities, there are still opportunities to fund separate research communication projects whose purpose is to improve communication activities across a range of types of research.

- Does specific investment in research communication and uptake projects make a difference? What incentives, rewards or requirements can support successful research communication and when are they most appropriate?
- What are the costs or resources required for successful communication and engagement activities that are often ignored?
- What types of funding channels or mechanisms can be used to stimulate more effective research communication and uptake? Are there possibilities for recovering the costs of these from end users or must they always be subsidised? If so, what are the implications for long-term sustainability of these services?

Question 8: Assessing the impact of research communication

How we define effectiveness has an important bearing on our ability to demonstrate value for money. Adolph et al (2009 & 2010) note that while some individual research communication and uptake projects have done a considerable amount of work to develop parameters for measuring effectiveness of different channels, this has not been done at a strategic level. Nor have there been any comparisons between the effectiveness of different strategies. It is unclear, however, whether research communications and uptake activities are context-specific, or whether it is possible to develop more generic indicators of impact which could be used in all different contexts and would help clarify messages about the value of research communications.

- Could the seven categories of uptake channel set out in Table 3 be helpful in terms of developing broad categories for assessing impact of different approaches to research communication and uptake? Could this lead to better opportunities to replicate and scale up good practice, or is it always context-specific?
- How can we assess impact effectively whilst recognising that the time-frame for real impact may be a very long one, and that research communication activities are one of only many influences on the uptake and use of research? For example, even if it was not possible to demonstrate impact in the short-term, are there any predictors of research use which could be incorporated into monitoring and evaluation activities?

- There are two aspects to improving the way we demonstrate impact: collecting better information, and persuading funding bodies to change the way they demand evidence of impact. For research communications and uptake, where does the balance lie?

5. The roles and functions of knowledge intermediaries

This section summarises some of the ongoing international conversations about the roles and functions of knowledge intermediaries. There has been an increased interest in the role of knowledge intermediaries over the past decade, in both northern and southern countries; evidenced both in the academic literature and in the various communities of practice that are emerging. This section draws from two main sources to analyse where we are in our understanding of the roles of knowledge intermediaries (knowledge brokers); how we can differentiate between the different types of role, know when each is most appropriate and appraise their potential impact so as to determine value for money. The two sources are the reports of the I-K-Mediary network workshops hosted by the Institute of Development Studies[5], and the 'Developing a Toolkit' session at the recent Canadian Knowledge Translation and Brokering workshop held in Montreal[6]. Clearly there are other sources in the literature, as well as a recent lively discussion on www.knowledgebrokersforum.org but these two sources were chosen as having done a good deal to summarise current discussions around the roles and functions of knowledge intermediaries.

Current discussions about the work and impact of knowledge intermediaries resemble the early discussions about research communication and uptake; concerned with the need to clarify roles, understand the different types of impact, and create a demand for intermediary services. Addressing these concerns will help intermediaries develop specific programmes of knowledge translation and brokering within organisations and change organisational culture towards one which recognises the value of knowledge intermediaries and the various tools they use.

Very broadly, however, the discussions in developed and developing countries appear to have slightly different emphases. The Canadian workshop had seems to have had a stronger focus on developing a framework that could be put in front of senior managers to encourage them to think strategically about investing in knowledge intermediaries, possibly as part of a wider organisational change programme. The I-K-Mediary workshop focused less on this, but had a slightly stronger emphasis on how knowledge intermediaries work to ensure that the voices of the poor and marginalised are heard and the tools which could support this; and enabling outside groups to hold decision-makers to account. The workshop sessions will attempt to bring these two sets of discussions together to see if it is possible to develop a generic yet rigorous framework for assessing, implementing and monitoring the work of knowledge intermediaries.

[5] See Kunaratanam & Fisher (2009)

[6] For the southern perspective see http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/ikmediary-group, www.knowledgebrokersforum.org and http://powerofinbetween.wordpress.com/. See http://researchimpact.othree.ca/ktkb2010 for the outputs of the Montreal workshop.

5.1 Understanding the roles and functions of knowledge intermediaries

Participants at the I-K-Mediary workshop analysed the contribution that intermediaries can make and identified seven areas:

- **Enabling and maintaining access to information**: advocating for open access to information and for material to be digitised, capturing tacit knowledge, organising and tagging information; and storing and providing access through various methods such as databases, portals, document delivery services.
- **Making information more edible for audiences:** helping communicate messages in simple language including popular languages; and providing introductions to key issues through issue guides and short briefings
- **Creating demand for information / generating cultures of information use:** changing the culture of public sector professionals to make better use of online information, empowering them to use that information, creating demand from the media and encouraging development partners to maintain their commitment to a particular issue
- **Supporting marginalised voices to be heard**: not relying on text to capture voices on an issue, actively creating fora in which different groups can be brought together (including policy, technical experts, NGO and civil society groups); and actively seeking out and collecting material from non-mainstream sources
- **Creating alternative framings of issues:** presenting multiple perspectives on an issue, spotting gaps in information and advocating for others to act to fill them; using this to help set and refine research agendas, for example.
- **Connecting spheres of action:** convening different groups such as between different disciplines or between central, local government and communities
- **Enabling accountability**: improving the formal process of consultation between government and other stakeholders; making government documents available for people to comment and convening particular spaces for people to share their views.

[This list is drawn from Kunaratanam & Fisher 2009)]

In some contrast to this list of contributions of knowledge intermediaries, the Montreal workshop sought to develop a framework which would enable managers to better understand how to invest strategically in knowledge intermediaries and the types of tools most appropriate to the different functions they perform. The functions were identified as:

- **Informing:** disseminating content, targeting decision makers with information, making information easily accessible and digestible. Examples include factsheets, research synopses, web portals, databases, end-of-project seminars
- **Linking:** linking expertise to need for a particular policy area, helping policymakers address a specific policy issue by seeking out the necessary experts. Examples include project or programme advisory committees, focus groups, LinkedIn
- **Matchmaking:** matching expertise to need across issues and disciplines, helping policymakers think more broadly about a topic, finding experts with relevant knowledge from another discipline, helping them take a strategic overview to address the fullness of the issue. Examples include Departmental expert advisory committees, general conferences, university internships in government, mapping the evidence base for an issue

- **Focused collaboration:** beginning to construct formal relationships to focus on a particular issue, contracting people or organisations to provide knowledge on an as-needed basis. Examples include contracted research programmes, electronic knowledge networks, working groups, wikis
- **Strategic collaboration:** lengthening and deepening the collaborative process, strengthening relationships and moving to a situation where all sides jointly negotiate the questions to be asked Examples include joint agreements where the emphasis is on equality in the relationships between actors such as MOUs, joint agreements, communities of practice
- **Building sustainable institutions:** deepening the collaborative relationship to the extent that all parties jointly frame the issue; broadening institutional capacity of institutions to respond to several issues simultaneously. The focus is on co-production of knowledge and joint learning from doing; the arrangements are self-sustaining in terms of both funding and function, with all sides contributing resources. Examples include co-management arrangements, local enterprise partnerships, self-sustaining consortia.

[This list quotes directly from Shaxson & Gwyn 2010)

The main difference between the two sets of conclusions seems to be the extent to which intermediaries are seen as playing an active part in capacity building. While the Montreal outputs see the development of self-sustaining consortia (for example) as an important part of the knowledge broker's skill set, the southern approach appears to focus less on the building of sustainable institutions and more on the roles of intermediaries in '...making specific contributions to greater access and use of research-based information in decision-making processes.' (Kunaratanam & Fisher, 2009). This does highlight the question of whether we are looking more at a] the roles of intermediaries in improving the supply of research information, b] working from the outside to stimulate the demand for research within policy and practice, or c] working within policymaking organisations to make them more receptive to (and demanding of) research-based information. It may be that the Canadian workshop focused more on (c), while the I-K-Mediary workshops focused more on (a) and (b).

5.2 Questions on the roles of knowledge intermediaries

With budget restrictions firmly in place in the public sectors in many countries, it is important that the community of knowledge intermediaries begins some serious work to identify the key roles and functions intermediaries perform, the value they add and the rationales for investing in them as individuals, organisations or programmes of work. This is not a defensive exercise: as with any new area of work it will take time to convert the sceptical, to convince those with little experience that investing in knowledge intermediaries can be a cost-effective way of improving policy and practice. And a good way of advocating for changed practices is having a clear framework for demonstrating impacts, on which can be built a robust investment strategy. Rather than considering the issue from the point of view of knowledge intermediaries (which could be termed '*what do we do and how could we do it better*?'), it is important to be able to stand back and consider the needs of those making large-scale investment decisions, of which knowledge intermediaries are just a part ('*what do I need to get done in the round, and how could investing in knowledge intermediaries make it more cost-effective*?')

So the questions for this workshop (which will be addressed in session on the second day) will come at this from the point of view of people in organisations who take decisions about what to fund to improve the impact of research on policy. These may be international donors who invest in a range of research and policy activities, senior managers in government departments who are concerned to use research more effectively to deliver policy, NGOs or CSOs who seek to define their roles more clearly, think tanks who operate at the boundaries of all these different organisations, or even individuals who are carving out their own space as a knowledge intermediary within any one of these organisations. It is not to say that there is no more need for debates on how knowledge intermediaries function; but there is a real need to begin substantive discussions that help clarify, and persuade the sceptics of, the value of knowledge intermediaries.

The two frameworks presented in this section are complementary – one is about how knowledge intermediaries make specific contributions to greater access and use of research-based information in decision-making processes; the other is about the full range of functions that a knowledge intermediary could perform, whether they sit inside or outside the policymaking process. Setting them against each other, as in the matrix overleaf, will allow us to begin to develop indicators of impact which relate both to the function that intermediaries perform (informing, linking...) and the contributions they make to better decision-making (enabling access to information, making information more edible...)

The group work on the second day will use a process of challenge and reflection to fill in the cells, developing a minimum set of indicators for each of the columns, then seeing how far it is possible to eliminate duplication by looking across the rows and develop a minimum set of indicators which address the concerns of both workshops. It is hoped that by doing this, participants will make a substantive contributions to ongoing attempts to understand and demonstrate the value and impact of knowledge intermediaries.

Assessing the impact of knowledge intermediaries

For each cell: how can we demonstrate the impact of knowledge intermediaries?		Making specific contributions to greater access and use of research-based information in decision-making processes (I-K-Mediary)						
		Enabling & maintaining access to information	Making information more edible for audiences	Creating demand for information/generating cultures of information use	Supporting marginalised voices to be heard	Creating alternative framings of issues	Connecting spheres of action	Enabling accountability
Framework for investing in knowledge brokering (Montreal)	Informing: disseminating content							
	Linking: linking expertise to need for an issue							
	Matchmaking: matching expertise to need across disciplines							
	Focused collaboration: constructing formal relationships							
	Strategic collaboration: lengthening & deepening the collaborative process							
	Building sustainable institutions: co-production of knowledge & joint learning							

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