

Research Communication and Uptake – funder activities and options

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*Improving the impact of development research through
better communication and uptake: funders' session*

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London UK

Aim of presentation

Help set the scene for the afternoons' programme

- Draw out key observations from the submissions made by workshop participants
- In the light of this – highlight any key differences, relevant findings and or elaborations from recent and related studies

Sources

Questionnaire (2010)

- Short questionnaire - 10 funders responded
- NOTE: examples given in the presentation seek to illustrate points/examples and are not comprehensive

Learning lessons on research uptake and use: donor review on research communication (2009)

- Document review, telephone interviews against set questionnaire. 17 funders

Other related studies

- Learning lessons on research uptake and use: A review of DFID's research communication programmes (2009)
- Learning lessons on research communication and uptake: Review of DFID human development and agriculture portfolios and their contribution to making research available, accessible and useable (2010)

Except for funder completed questionnaires – all reports referenced are available <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/r4d/>

Contributors to donor review (2009) and questionnaires (2010)

Bilateral / multilateral donors

- AusAID, Australia
- CIDA, Canada
- DANIDA, Denmark
- DFID, UK
- DGIS, The Netherlands
- EC, Belgium
- IDRC, Canada
- IRD, France
- NORAD, Norway
- Sida, Sweden
- USAID, USA
- World Bank, USA

Foundations, etc

- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, USA
- Carnegie Corporation, USA
- Hewlett Foundation, USA
- Rockefeller Foundation, USA
- Winrock International, USA
- Wellcome Trust, UK

Not in donor review

- ESRC, UK
- NERC, UK

In red – Funders who completed questionnaires for November 2010 workshop

RC and U as part of funder mandate

- Wide interest in and general consensus on importance of Research Communication (RC) and Uptake (U)
 - RC and U as explicit part of mandate (8/17 donors) but may not have explicit policy/strategy
 - RC an embedded part of R and D policy/strategy (10/17 donors)
- Recent new strategies in a number of agencies which include research communication, uptake and knowledge management

RC and U as part of funder mandate

BUT with diverse focus e.g.

- **Geographical focus and targeting**
 - From targeting the general public in the North (e.g. for Wellcome Trust the UK, for Carnegie the USA, for EC the European Union member states) to targeting development assistance to low and middle income countries, and/or targeting through a global focus
- **Research – development continuum**
 - From a focus on basic or applied research, to a focus on development impact

RC and U as part of funder mandate

AND with:

- Wide **range of interpretation of and approaches** to RC and U with resulting differences in priorities and practice in terms of resource allocation and programming
- Implications to **Organisational** setup:
 - separate research communication unit located in research or communication departments within funder organisation
 - research communication embedded in research (outsourced)
 - research communication 'outsourced' to intermediaries
 - research communication delegated to grantees / funded projects and programmes
- No/limited estimates of funding levels on RC and U available

Drivers for RC and U

- Increase aid effectiveness through research impact
- Enable evidence to feed into policy and wider economic impact of research e.g. technology exploited commercially
- Demonstrate value for money on research expenditure (including through general public awareness, corporate communication)

Matching the supply and demand sides

- Most RC and U effort is placed on the supply side – why?
 - Often structurally linked to research not to development programmes
 - Support to demand side seen as more difficult to support/engage with
- Role of researchers in RC and U is contested
 - consensus that choice between the role of the researcher depends also on the type of research – ‘blue skies’ vs. applied and adaptive research – with researchers engaged in applied research often being felt to be ‘closer’ to the end user than researchers working on theoretical or basic research

Barriers to increased research uptake and use

- Demand side
 - Not/weakly tailored to specific needs
 - Not /weakly relevant to policy (content and timing at)
- Supply side
 - Weak capacity of researchers to communicate
 - Incentives and structures
 - Poor access to research outputs
 - Concerns raised about the role and capacities of “intermediaries”
- Systemic
 - Systemic issues or relations between supply and demand and the enabling environment
- Others
 - Lack of resources/resource allocations
 - Information overload
 - Weak institutional commitment/ scepticism on linkages and how to?

Strengthen supply side - Incentives and demands placed on research

Funders have different strategies and approaches e.g.

- Clear and articulated RC and U pathways required of research proposals
- Embed Results Based Management approach
- Dedicated competitive funds for RC and U
- Ring fence set fund levels for RC and U within all research programmes
- Dedicated and negotiated funds for RC and U within research programmes
- HQ comms unit plays strategic and supportive role

Facilitate researcher – user linkages

Examples of funder supported activities:

- Link funder and universities
- Support networks - research to policy
- Multistakeholder incubators
- Colloquia, fora, workshops and conferences
- Placement scheme for researchers in government departments
- Align research with development programming, regional and national policy users define priorities
- Embedded within commissioned research programmes

Example - RC and U within research portfolios

- RC and U investment within agriculture and human development DFID funded/co-funded research programmes (e US\$190M/annum - 68 programmes)
- Key observations
 - Some 30% spend on RC and U within portfolios (range 1-75%)
 - Much innovation and “good” practice on RC and U
 - Need to clarify RC and U definitions i.e. a toolkit?
 - Opportunities to strengthen sharing of lessons between programmes and secure value addition
 - Weak links between research programme and RC and U intermediaries
 - Key gaps in building of user demand and cross cutting support including enabling environment
 - One size does not fit all – sector, type of research

Source: Learning lessons on research communication and uptake: Review of DFID human development and agriculture portfolios and their contribution to making research available, accessible and useable (2010)

Making knowledge available

Examples of funder supported activities:

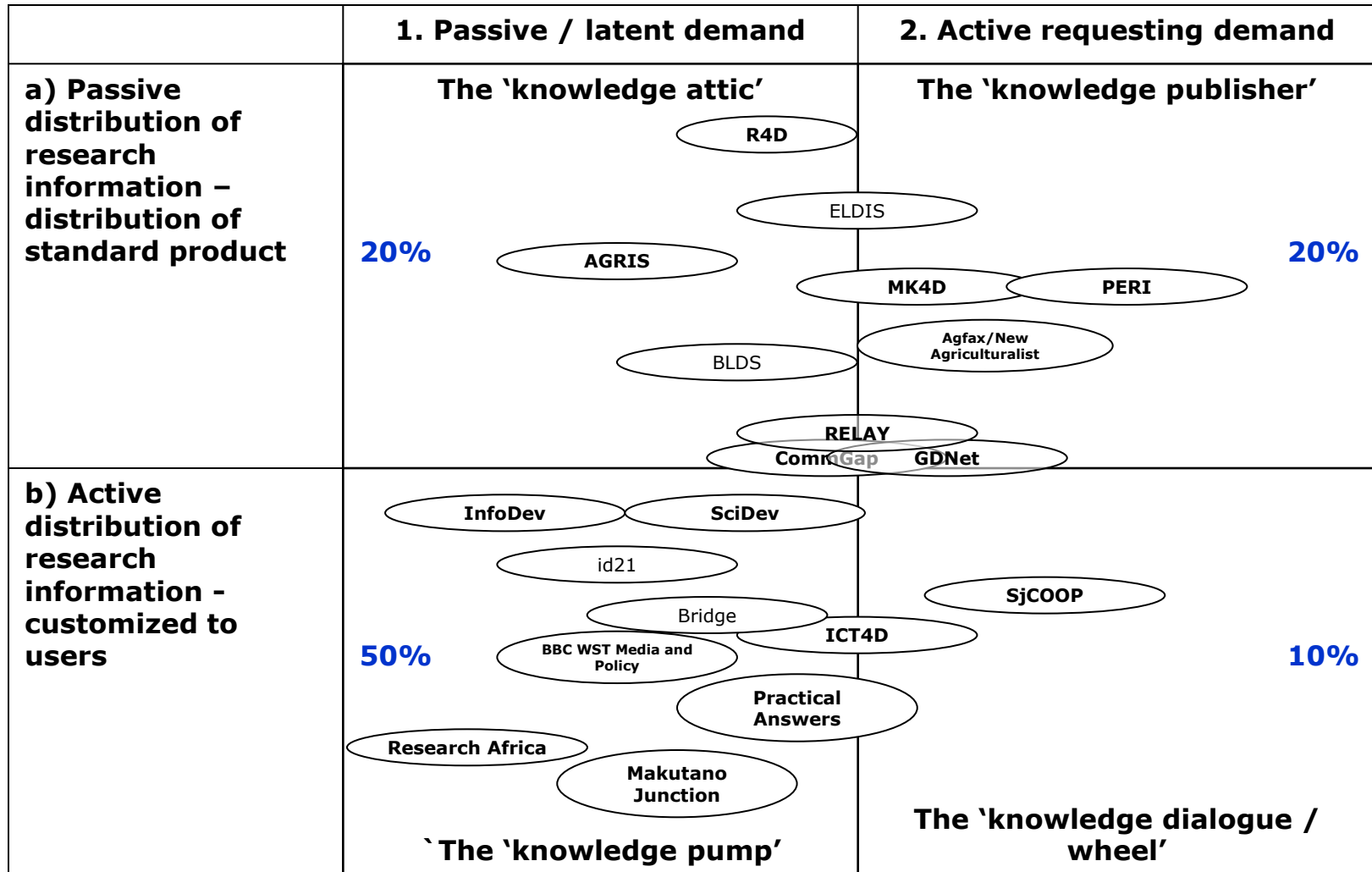
- Own web portals - often internal and external – however weak linkages/network/cross reference between funders
- Specific policy for all research outputs to be posted and or original results/data sets
- Support
 - specific portals /tools e.g. HINARI with WHO
 - archives
 - multilateral programmes and think tanks who have portals
 - research journals
 - systematic reviews

Support RC and U intermediaries

Much diversity in use and types of intermediaries supported:

- Think tanks (mostly south) and CSOs for research to policy linkages either national, regional or international
- Best practice brokers e.g. *Implementing Best Practices Consortium* Initiative through WHO
- Media
- Advocacy groups
- Knowledge brokers and other service providers
 - Synthesis and repackaging
 - Customised information/repackaging
 - Matching user demand with supply

Example - Map of DFID funded/co-funded knowledge brokers and intermediaries (% value)



Model adapted from van Heijst et al. 1998

Source:

Research Comms review (2009)

Build capacity to reach different users in different ways

- Range of models and modalities supported including
 - build south partners for research-policy linkages
 - RC/advocacy staff in research institutions
 - match media grantees with research
 - in-house communication staff work with grantees and at key events
 - RC programmes which offer specific training/capacity building
 - Globelics (Global Network for Economics of Learning, Innovation, and Competence Building Systems)
 - dedicated training for researchers including development research awards and preparation of guidance notes
 - knowledge brokers within agencies
 - systematic reviews
 - technical advisory meetings linking in-house and external partners

Stimulating demand - much innovation

- Funders seen as key users
 - strengthening in-house capacity to use evidence for better intervention
 - evidence /systemic reviews
 - embed knowledge brokers
 - technical advisory meetings
- External users – seen as multiple and varied
 - knowledge networks
 - new models e.g. innovation clusters
 - Partner Driven Cooperation
 - new funding modalities e.g. fund south researchers to respond to policy demand and support projects commissioned by decision makers
 - strengthen “new” user groups e.g. parliamentarians

Monitoring and Evaluation

- No comprehensive system in place in /between agencies to monitor uptake of research by different user groups
- Within institutions multiple tools and approaches used
 - research reporting
 - independent evaluations
 - specific tools and frameworks
 - evidence based policy
 - Expected Return framework
 - Results Based Management
 - tracking of media and websites (multiple agencies)
 - target group involvement and impact measure)
- Little evidence of feed back into RC and U policy and practice
- Need systems which accommodate all research types incl. “blue skies”

Research into RC and U

Research into RC and U currently supported. Examples include:

- ICTs - using ICTs for knowledge management, research into ICTs in Europe
- New media
- Use of evidence in-house
- Strengthening demand for research
- How research is used and the impact of use, and the value and best practice on platforms for exchange of knowledge
- Knowledge and innovation systems
- One-off studies on a particular aspect of research communication

Funders - some pipelines activities

These include:

- Take forward and embed new RC and U /KM strategies
- Build capacity of Africa universities for RC
- Strengthen parliamentary committees for use of evidence
- Strengthen the demand side
- Support new models “university/ public sector/ private sector / CSO”
- Knowledge exchange programmes in key areas
- Use of indicators and data visualisation for wider stakeholder engagement
- External development research portal
- New research agenda on RC and U
 - Understand and strengthen user demand and uptake pathways
 - Understand evidence based policy formulation
 - Develop tools to measure impact of RC and U and share good practice
 - Work with private sector and share experiences on RC and U

Source: Questionnaire (2010)

Possible future opportunities

Call for - **Systematic engagement between development partners** on key issues on RC and U to:

- Reach broad consensus on language of RC and U
- Address the tensions between quick fix i.e. low hanging fruit and longer term research/issues
- Harmonise access to development research
- Understand better how funders with similar investments address particular challenges e.g.
 - how do/can funders to multilateral organisations influence and strengthen RC and U
 - how to adapt RC and U in different development contexts including the “research for development funders”

Possible future opportunities

- **Share lesson learning and link up** (incl. possible joint funding) on
 - what works and what does not in RC and U
 - open access policy
 - results measurement and working with less staff
 - post completion evaluation of RC and U
 - use of social networking tools
 - monitor and evaluate scaling up and institutionalisation of research results
 - embed research in development investment including policy
- **Provide strategic support**
 - peer review of respective work on RC and U
- **Joint funding**
 - systemic reviews
 - join-up funding for Knowledge Exchange