Department for International Development
Central Research Department

GDNet

Output to Purpose Review

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Acronyms

AERC	African Economic Research Consortium
BLDS	British Library of Development Studies
BRP	Bridging Policy and Research programme
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CERGE-EI	Centre for Economic Research and Graduate Education-Economics Institution
CIPPEC	Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DGIS	Directorate General for International Cooperation (in the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
EADN	East Asian Development Network
EERC	Economics Education and Research Consortium
EDIRC	Economics Departments, Institutes and Research Centres in the World
ERF	Economic Research Forum
FON	Funding Opportunities Newsletter
FPRI	Foreign Policy Research Institute
FTE	Full Time Equivalents
GDF	Global Development Finance
GDN	Global Development Network
GRP	Global Research Project
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISP	Internet Service Provider
KB	Knowledge Base
KM	Knowledge Management
LAC	Latin American and Caribbean
LACEA	Latin American and Caribbean Economic Association
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MENA	Middle-East and North Africa
NBER	National Bureau of Economic Research
OVI	Objectively Verifiable Indicators
OP	Output
RePEc	Research Papers in Economic
RNP	Regional Network Partner
RRC	Regional Research Competition
SANEI	South Asia Network of Economic Research Institutes
SSRN	Social Sciences Research Network
WDI	World Development Indicators

Executive Summary

S.1. This review was undertaken over a period of months in mid-late 2008, with a delayed write-up. This is the first Annual Review for GDNet. Overall, it is judged that most Outputs are likely to be nearly or completely achieved, and the scoring report awarded an OPR score of '2'.

S.2. GDNet aims to:

- o **Link** institutes and researchers in developing countries into a global network to showcase their work
- o Grant **access to resources** to support their policy research work
- o Help **strengthen communications capacity** in research institutes through training and professional support in knowledge management[1] to inform policy debates.

S.3. It does this through: i) a cluster of on-line information services, particularly a Knowledge Base (KB) of research papers, and profiles of researchers and organisations, all drawn from developing and transition countries, and ii) a programme of capacity building of knowledge management and research communications. GDNet undertakes these two streams of activity in collaboration with eight Regional Network Partners, who manage Regional Windows.

S.4. GDNet's logframe may be précised as having a **Purpose** concerned with improving researchers' effectiveness in influencing policy, and **Outputs** that are mainly concerned with:
1. increased the use of GDNet on-line information (OP1)
2. increasing the volume of the knowledge base (OP2 & 3)
3. building capacity in knowledge management (KM), particularly using the internet for KM (OP4)
4. developing a new software platform for GDNet (OP5)

S.5. The policy orientation of the Purpose is in line with GDN's policy objectives, but there is thus a large leap of objective logic between, at the Purpose level, improving effectiveness at influencing policy, and at the Output level, mainly growing and increasing the use of an on-line knowledge repository.

S.6. In terms of audience, GDNet is targeted at:

- o people in 'international and national policy circles'
- o the 'key target user groups' of 'other researchers, policy makers and civil society'
- o researchers in 'Southern research institutes' (though this is not stated)

S.7. However, GDNet is very much a researcher-focused initiative at present. Its knowledge brokering is primarily between researchers, rather than between researchers and decision makers. Though in sheer volume terms, GDNet appears to be well used. The Knowledge Base receives about 183,000 page requests a month.

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[1] This area is specifically supported by DGIS

S.8. The main users of GDNet are mid-career researchers in economics, mostly based in academic institutes. Economics is the primary discipline of respondents: half of users are economists. The most common respondent organisational affiliation is academic / university (48% of users), increasing to 58% if university-related research institutes are included.

S.9. Access to information on research funding opportunities is the main draw for registering with GDNet. This is followed closely by access to online journals. Access to on-line data, the desire to communicate with peers, access to non-published research and promotion to other researchers are all also important, though notably, a key cost of running GDNet – abstracting unpublished research, is not reflected as being a highly valued reason for registering, especially in Latin America. It is also notable that only a low proportion of users sign-up because they see GDNet as a vehicle for communicating to policy audiences (which is GDNet's Purpose). Nonetheless, users do not find the website and KB easy to navigate.

S.10. GDNet is at a junction point in its development. It has two main options for its next phase:
1) To do more of the same – growing the KB and capacity building – but to do it more effectively and efficiently. This is GDNet as essentially an on-line repository of knowledge, being used in a demand-pull model, and an associated stream of activity supporting researchers and research institutes to make their research more accessible on-line.
2) To revise its Activities and Outputs in support of a Purpose which is clearly focused on policy processes. This is closer to GDN's own current mission, which has become more clearly policy-oriented. This option would shift GDNet away from its 'on-line voice of GDN' epithet to being a key tool in GDN's outreach to policy, and is the one recommended by this review. It also fits better with DFID objectives.

S.11. To consolidate its strengths as a knowledge service, GDNet needs to:
i) Maintain the excellence in its core services, and grow the number of articles in the KB
ii) Continue to increase access to on-line data and journal services and expand the coverage of journals
iii) Provide support / capacity development to both individual researchers and other institutes who want to communicate better to policy actors

S.12. To maintain currency with new ways of working, new styles of accessing information, and preferences of potential new audiences, GDNet needs to:
iv) Position itself for new behaviours in use of ICTs. This does not mean a headlong pursuit of Web 2.0 tools, or use of any particular ICT approach for their own sake, as the review shows that the majority of GDNet's member researchers do not yet have this level of knowledge and communications literacy. However GDNet should work closely with RNPs to offer new services, both push and pull services, in line with regional-specific demand

S.13. To step up to the ambition of its logframe Purpose, and fit with new objectives in GDN, GDNet needs to:

v) Undertake more active marketing of its services – targeting new users in the policy shaping and making arenas, and gain a better understanding of, and then act on, the information preferences of these policy actors

S.14. Therefore, while a real strength of GDNet is its own repository of information in the KB, together with the access it provides to other on-line sources, GDNet should not be seen merely as an on-line store of knowledge. This assigns an overly passive role to GDNet, that will not enable it or GDN to meet their policy-level objectives. Thus, in addition to maintaining the KB, GDNet needs some adjustment in its modus operandi to enable it to better act as a knowledge service with outreach to actors in policy processes.

Twelve recommendations are made, these are detailed overleaf. They cover areas including:

- o Funding a further three year period of GDNet
- o Development of a five year GDNet Medium Term Strategy
- o A thorough logframe revision
- o Development of an outreach function
- o Closer involvement of RNPs in planning and monitoring
- o A need for better plans for research communications and outreach, as well as for better marketing the GDNet knowledge services
- o Greater efficiencies in managing profiles in the knowledge base and in searching it
- o Maintaining a focus on capacity building, and using this to support skills development in outreach
- o Improving M&E

1 Summary of Recommendations

The following is a summary of the recommendations from this review:

2 The Design of GDNet

2.1.   GDNet is in its third phase, having been piloted from 1999 – 2002, and had a substantive second phase between 2002 and 2004, when it moved to Cairo. It is now in its third phase. Fundamental to assessing the performance of GDNet is establishing what GDNet is, and what it has been designed to achieve.

2.2.   GDNet is a core activity of the Global Development Network (GDN), so it is first worth outlining GDN, and GDNet's relationship with it.

2.1 GDN and GDNet

2.3.   GDN was launched in 1999 by the World Bank[2]; it describes itself as: *"committed to promoting and supporting high-quality, policy-oriented research in the social sciences for the purpose of development.[3]"* It also emphasises strengthening and utilising home-grown expertise in order to facilitate policies based on both internal and external advice. To this end, GDN states that it helps researchers from developing and transition countries to:

- **Generate** new knowledge in the social sciences and build research capacity.
- **Share** research output, data, and experiences across regions.
- **Apply** research to policy and inform policymakers.

2.4.   GDN often describes itself as a 'network of networks[4]', and others have described it as a 'formal knowledge network' (Box 1). GDN considers that it is *"a worldwide network of research and policy institutes working to provide a fresh and relevant perspective to the development challenges of our time.[5]"* It goes on to say; *"At GDN, we strongly believe that policy-relevant research, if properly applied, can accelerate the pace of global development. What makes our initiative different is that we aim to generate this research at the local level in developing and transition countries. Thus, it is in the generation of local knowledge that, we believe, lies a much needed alternative perspective on facilitating change"*.

Box 1. Formal Knowledge Networks

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) states that: *"GDN has been described as a 'formal knowledge network'."* (Creech, 2001). They describe 'formal knowledge networks' as consisting of *"groups of expert institutions working together on a common concern, strengthening each other's research and communications capacity, sharing knowledge bases and developing solutions that meet the needs of target decision-makers at the national and international level."*

Heather Creech (2001). *Strategic Intentions: Principles for Sustainable Networks*. IISD, Winnipeg.

2.5.   GDN frames its work around six core activities, which together help build research capacity in developing and transition economies. These core areas are:

- o   Regional Research Competitions (RRCs)
- o   Global Research Projects (GRPs)

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[2] It moved to Delhi in 2005, while GDNet had been established in Cairo in 2004.
[3] *Agreement Establishing the Global Development Network*, March 2004, Article I, Section 1.
[4] See text box
[5] GDN website (www.gdnet.org)

o Global Development Awards and Medals Competition
o Annual Conferences
o Strategic Research Partnerships (which is a new area of activity)
o "GDNet (the electronic voice of GDN)"

2.6.   GDNet is thus seen as one of six of GDN's core activities. It is viewed as both *"the electronic voice of GDN"* and *"a core activity in GDN's capacity building and networking efforts"*. This includes the provision of *"online tools and services to support researchers from developing countries in their work and to help disseminate their research"*.

2.7.   The review finds that the 'electronic voice of GDN' shorthand for GDNet is not helpful, and does not describe well what it does, or what it is aiming to deliver as part of GDN's over-arching strategy. This both ignores that GDNet has its own very specific remit (and is not just the web voice of GDN), and that GDN's 'voice' (i.e. its media and communications activities) are intended to be managed from its Delhi office.

2.8.   In the 21st Century, it can be expected that any international organisation has a significant on-line presence, which will serve a range of functions. A web presence may range from a simple static 'brochure' style website, to a fully dynamic site with a pre-defined architecture, but content that is drawn dynamically from a content database. Displayed content will change dependent on rules set by the administrator, and/or in response to user criteria or requests. Given the ubiquity of 'electronic voice', labelling GDNet as this on-line presence downplays its significance across the range of GDN operations (especially policy outreach and capacity building).

2.9.   GDN has moved towards the latter, dynamic, model of web-presence, and has been revamping its website with greater levels of user interactivity (including some Web 2.0 tools), richer content, and better content management. This new site was launched in early 2009, in time for the annual GDN conference. GDNet has been closely involved with the graphic design and content management architecture for the revamped site, but that still does not equate to being the electronic voice.

2.10.   There is an inherent paradox in GDN's approach to the internet in relation to GDNet, not least this is confused by:

a) GDN's URL being www.gdnet.org (this is historical and is probably worth trying to change[6])

b) GDNet being evident in two different places on the (old) GDN website – i) in its own right as a third tier page (Home → Activities → About GDNet, and Home → About → GDNet[7]), and ii) through the services it provides, spread across the website: Knowledge Base, On-line Services, the Regional Window, and Library in your Letterbox

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[6] www.gdn.org, which is the logical URL for GDNet does not appear to be in use, but *whois* has the domain registered until March 2009 to a small web hosting service in Washington D.C. – Steele Communications. It may be possible to purchase the domain name, and coincide the change with the launch of the new website. It would be worth investigating

[7] http://www.gdnet.org/middle.php?primary_link_id=3&secondary_link_id=12; or http://www.gdnet.org/middle.php?oid=169

c) Much of the '*electronic voice of GDN*' is managed from Delhi, and not within the aegis of GDNet

2.11. GDNet is not GDN's electronic voice – that appears to be a somewhat limited perception of its role within GDN. There is a need to more clearly conceptualise GDNet's territory and remit when GDN talks about GDNet. The shorthand for GDNet might be along the lines of 'GDNet – (digital) communication of policy-relevant research knowledge generated in developing and transition countries'.

2.2 What is GDNet?

2.12. Therefore, what is GDNet, and what does it aim to achieve? The GDNet page on the GDN website states that GDNet is a web-based programme of activities, which aims to:

- o **Link** institutes and researchers in developing countries into a global network to showcase their work
- o Grant **access to resources** to support their policy research work
- o Help **strengthen communications capacity** in research institutes through training and professional support in knowledge management[8] to inform policy debates.

2.13. The GDNet proposal to DGIS[9] for Phase III funding usefully elaborates on this. It states that GDNet's purpose is to "*proactively communicate research knowledge generated in developing and transition countries to stimulate its application to policy*". To achieve this, it has three main objectives:

- o "To enable institutes and researchers in developing countries to **communicate** their knowledge and research more effectively to others by **linking them into a global network** and showcasing their work.
- o To provide social science researchers in developing countries with **access to resources** that enable them to do their research better.
- o To help **build the dissemination capacity** of research institutes by providing training, professional support and other services to upgrade skills in **knowledge management** and provision of new internet-based services".

2.14. GDN supports the generation in developing and transition countries of policy-relevant research, particularly in the fields of economics and social science. Thus, GDNet provides a service which aims to (i) support research generation through access to information and knowledge resources, (ii) communicate and promote the communication of this type of research, and (iii) assist research institutes in better communicating their research.

2.15. In more detail, the activities undertaken by GDNet in these three areas include:

a) support research generation through **access** to information and knowledge resources:

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[8] This area is specifically supported by DGIS
[9] Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS) of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

    i)   provide access to **on-line journals** – researchers who match the eligibility criteria[10], can make use of free access to academic journals and scholarly literature which are normally only available to paying subscribers. Access, which has been negotiated by GDNet, is via two main portals: J-Stor and Project MUSE at Johns Hopkins University. Free hard-copy document delivery is also available through the British Library of Development Studies (BLDS). GDNet has also assembled a comprehensive listing of publicly accessible, non-subscriber journal services, many of which have their own eligibility criteria.

    ii)   provide an on-line **Knowledge Base** (KB) of development research articles produced in developing and transition countries. These are generally articles not published in peer-reviewed journals, and are thus working papers, research reports, conference papers, policy briefs, or similar[11]. The KB has over 15,000 articles, which are available free on-line, less than three years old, and are accompanied by clear conclusion-based summaries written by GDNet

    iii)   provide access to the **GDN library** of a selection of papers produced as part of GDN activities or that have been funded by GDN

    iv)   provide access to **on-line data** – the GDN Data Initiative is working with the World Bank's Development Data Group, to provide access for eligible researchers to two important databases: Global Development Finance (GDF) database and the World Development Indicators (WDI) database.

    v)   provide information on **funding opportunities**, including the fortnightly free GDN Funding Opportunities Newsletter (FON), which is emailed to researchers who have created a researcher profile in the KB. The FON draws from the Community of Science database[12], and covers research grants, scholarships, subsidized conference and workshop attendance and calls for project proposals. Information is also provided on GDN global and regional funding competitions and awards

b)   communicate and promote the **communication** of this type of research:

    i)   As well as acting as a stock of knowledge, the KB helps **link** researchers and research institutes. The KB includes profiles of 7,800 researchers and 3,880 research organisations, with the aim of helping promote the individuals and organisations and their research, and promoting informal networking between them.

    ii)   The eight **Regional Windows**[13], coordinated by GDN Regional Network Partners (RNPs), support linkage of individuals and organisations through both regionally specific web portals, and through events, such as RNP conferences, face to face meetings.

c)   assist research institutes in better communicating their research. This is primarily concerned with **developing capacity** for research communication, and involves activities including:

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[10] Both a national of, and working in, a developing or transition country
[11] See Knowledge Base editorial policy - http://www.gdnet.org/cms.php?id=kb_editorial_policy
[12] www.cos.com
[13] East Asia; Latin America and the Caribbean; Oceania; South Asia; Commonwealth of Independent States; Central and Eastern Europe.; Middle East and North Africa; and Africa

i)   a series of training and skills building **workshops** in Africa to enhance the knowledge management and research dissemination capacity of research institutes and networks. These were held in collaboration with the African Capacity Building Foundation and the World Bank Institute.

ii)   A similar **workshop** was piloted in the South Asia region (New Delhi) in 2007, and in the Latin America region (Buenos Aires) in 2008.

iii)   GDNet has developed **on-line resources for knowledge managers** in Southern institutes, to help them in the dissemination of research knowledge. These tools and services remain in a development stage, but include: tools for realizing dissemination strategies, web-building dissemination toolkits specifically for research organizations facilitating access to information for researchers, and community of practice for knowledge managers

2.16. The drawback of this set of objectives and activities is that they are primarily 'supply-side' – they are concerned with supporting researchers and research institutes to generate and communicate research, without facilitating use by policy users. This is clearer in GDNet's Vision[14], which states that GDNet's purpose is "*to proactively communicate research knowledge generated in developing and transition countries to stimulate its application to policy.*" Within this, two user groups are identified: "*national producers of research may face problems in communicating their findings to national, regional and international audiences due to factors such as lack of access to the internet, lack of resources and capacity to disseminate or closed institutional cultures*", and "*potential end-users of research information may have problems accessing locally generated research due to factors such as atomised availability, lack of time, variable quality and the wider availability of Northern research*". The objectives and activities do less to address the demand-side aspects of the potential end-users.

2.17. Having outlined what GDNet *does*, the critical question to ask here is one of identity – what is GDNet, and hence what role does it play within the wider GDN context?

2.18. While IISD[15] classifies GDN as a formal knowledge network, its description of an Information Network better fits GDNet. These "*primarily provide access to information supplied by network members, occasionally with overlays of interpretative materials which organize content thematically. However, they are fundamentally passive in nature — users must come to the network, physically or electronically, to benefit from the work of the network.*"

2.19. This description is true of the KB – it is essentially a demand-pull service. It might be seen as a knowledge repository, providing access to public goods. Necessarily, the on-line data service is also passive. GDNet works in a supply-push mode for funding news, and is proactive in its capacity development work. Where GDNet does fulfil this categorisation is in not providing interpretative material or thematic organisation of information.

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[14] Section 2 – *GDNet: Vision*, in GDNet Phase 2 Proposal April 2004 – March 2007 (version 8).
[15] Heather Creech (2001). *Strategic Intentions: Principles for Sustainable Development Knowledge Networks*. IISD, Winnipeg

2.20. The other model which is relevant to GDNet is that of an **information intermediary** or a **knowledge intermediary**. These roles concern brokering information and knowledge so that research better reaches those who can use it, either in further research or in practice and policy making. This brokering role implies an active role, as shown in the respective definitions:

o An 'information intermediary' makes information available, or sorts information and makes it more relevant for the intended audience[16].
o A 'knowledge intermediary', is more concerned with how information is interpreted and used to create new knowledge.

2.21. A workshop on the role of information and knowledge intermediaries[17] found that their role is to add value to different parts of the 'information supply chain'. Aspects of the role vary between roles closer to researchers and roles which are closer to decision-makers. Starting with more researcher-oriented roles, this may include:

o levering access to research – persuading owners of research to have it made available
o signposting research and acting as a repository – becoming 'one-stop shops' for documents (especially electronic documents) from a range of sources
o organising research – organisation research outputs thematically
o summarising, synthesising and creating new products – a key activity being to repackage research for different audiences
o raising or advocating for issues or perspectives – there being a difficult balance to achieve better raising issues and acting as an advocate
o facilitating dialogue and exchange – this goes beyond delivering information, to initiation of debate

2.22. It can be seen that GDNet, currently could be described as an information intermediary, but that its activities (which are concentrated around the first two bullets in the list) are closer to the research end of the range. Also, that GDNet is a researcher-focused initiative at present. Its knowledge brokering is primarily between researchers, rather than between researchers and decision makers.

2.3 GDNet operations

2.23. GDNet was established in Cairo in 2004, from an initial base in the World Bank, and then a temporary base in the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) in Brighton, UK. In Cairo, GDNet legally falls under the wing of Economic Research Forum (ERF), since it does not yet have its own independent status.

2.24. GDNet has a staff of six: the Director, four Regional Coordinators and a Coordinator of On-line Services.

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[16] After: Wolfe, R (2006) *Changing Conceptions of Intermediaries in Development Processes: Challenging the Modernist View of Knowledge, Communication and Social Change*. Draft report, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

[17] Catherine Fisher and Yaso Kunaratnam (Eds.) (2007). *Between ourselves: the new generation of information & knowledge intermediaries*. Report from the "Intermediary workshop: summarisers, signposters and synthesisers" held at IDS, Brighton, May 2007. I-K-Mediaries are development actors who provide information, enable knowledge sharing and facilitate communication.

2.25. GDNet works with GDN's Regional Network Partners (RNPs) to produce regionally-focused websites, and to source and collate items for the knowledge base[18]. Most (but not all) GDNet Regional Windows are managed by a Regional Window Coordinator, based in the RNP. The eight RNPs with which GDNet works are:

i) Sub-Saharan Africa: African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)
ii) Middle-East and North Africa (MENA): Economic Research Forum (ERF)
iii) Latin America and the Caribbean: Latin American and Caribbean Economic Association (LACEA).
iv) Central and Eastern Europe (CEE): the Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education-Economics Institution (CERGE-EI)
v) Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS): the Economics Education and Research Consortium (EERC)
vi) East Asia: the East Asian Development Network (EADN)
vii) South Asia: the South Asia Network of Economic Research Institutes (SANEI)
viii) Oceania: Oceania Development Network, hosted at the National University of Samoa

2.26. There are also three developed country members of GDN – Japan, Europe and North America, but these do not coordinate GDNet regional windows.

2.27. GDNet pays each of the RNPs approximately $30,000 per annum each for running the Regional Windows.

2.4 GDNet Logframe

2.28. DFID provides its funding to GDNet against a logical framework (logframe), which outlines the hierarchy of objectives against which it is expected to deliver. The GDNet logframe is presented in full in Annex 1; a summary version is presented in Table 1 (overleaf).

2.29. The logframe may be précised as having a **Purpose** concerned with *improving researchers' effectiveness in influencing policy*, and, by considering the **Output** narratives together with their Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVIs), Outputs (OPs) that are mainly concerned with:

5. increasing the use of GDNet on-line information (OP1)
6. increasing the volume of the knowledge base (OP2 & 3)
7. building capacity in knowledge management (KM), particularly using the internet for KM (OP4)
8. developing a new software platform for GDNet (OP5)

2.30. OP6 is internal and concerned with monitoring progress towards the other five Outputs and the Purpose.

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[18] The RNPs interact with GDN in a number of ways, including the GDNet Regional Windows. Running the Regional Research Competitions (RRCs) is their major activity.

Table 1. GDNet logframe summary

Narrative Summary	Objective Verifiable Indicators
Goal: Informed policy environment, where causes and nature of poverty are properly understood	Increased use of and reference to locally generated research in relevant policy fora
Purpose: To increase the effectiveness of development research (especially that generated by southern research institutes) in influencing policy processes.	**By December 2008**, GDNet referred to as a key source of policy-relevant research produced in developing and transition countries amongst international and national policy circles.
Outputs: 1) High profile and take up (by other researchers, policy makers and civil society) of quality development policy research produced by Southern research institutes.	1.1 Key target user groups aware of GDNet by **December 2008**. 1.2 Increase of **50%** in web traffic by **Mar 2007** (baseline in Jan 04 is approx. **30,000** visits, so increase would be to **45,000 visits by Mar 07**). 1.3 Increase of additional **20%** in web traffic by June 2008, so increase would be approx 82,500 visits by **June 2008**. 1.4 Increase of additional **10%** in web traffic by **December 2008** to reach an average of **90,800** visits over the six months period.
2) Southern researchers using GDNet (core knowledge base, regional windows, researcher services) as a platform to support the generation and dissemination of research, and to build horizontal South-South linkages.	2.1 Increase in proportion of non-OECD researcher profiles on Knowledge Base from **58% to 80% by Mar 2007**. Increase in proportion of non-OECD researcher profiles on Knowledge Base from **79% to 82% by Dec 2008**. 2.2 Increase in proportion of non-OECD researcher profiles with attached document summaries from **5% to 50% by Mar 2008**. Increase in the proportion of non-OECD researcher with attached document summaries to **85% by Dec 2008**. 2.3 Researchers based in developing countries report increased contact by other southern researchers directly as a result of being featured on GDNet.
3) Southern research institutes using GDNet and the internet more broadly as a tool to	3.1 Increase in proportion of non-OECD organization profiles from **65% to 80% by June 2008**. 3.2 Increase in proportion of non-OECD organization profiles *with documents* attached from **7% to 50% by**

Narrative Summary	Objective Verifiable Indicators
disseminate and communicate their research.	**June 2008**.
4) Southern research institutes have skills in research and knowledge management and use of Internet technologies	4.1 Participants in GDNet courses report increase in level of skills by **December 2008**. 4.2 Participants report application of new skills in their work by **December 2008**.
5) Developing a sustainable and scaleable technical platform to support the continued expansion of GDNet and complete its migration to Egypt.	5.1 New technical platform running live at IDS by **February 2006**. 5.2 Systems running full site in Cairo by **June 2006**, with full handover in **Dec 2006**. 5.3 Development and testing of new on-line system functionality and services such as on-line peer review systems amd online project spaces by **September 2007**. 5.4 Development tools and documentation completed by **June 2008**. 5.5 System platform upgrade and new systems redesign by **June 2008**. 5.6 Phased Technical Platform upgrade – systems hardware and licensing upgrade completed by **December 2008**. 5.7 Continuous enhancement of systems functionality, performance and streamlining processes – ongoing **Dec 2008**.
6) Monitoring and Evaluation	6.1 Monthly statistics produced for web traffic, content management, regional management etc. 6.2 In-depth user survey: Report completed by **June 2008**. 6.3 Output to Purpose Review by **June 2008**. 6.4 External evaluation of GDN activities including GDNet scheduled for **end 2007/ early 2008**.

2.31. From this it can be seen there is large leap of objective logic between, at the **Purpose** level, improving effectiveness at influencing policy, and at the **Output** level, mainly growing and increasing the use of an on-line knowledge repository. The disconnect centres on two issues:

      a. the precise Purpose wording – *influencing* policy

      b. the underlying thinking about how the products of research are used in the policy making process. How does supply of research-based information, even policy-relevant research information result in the influence of policy? What research communication activities are necessary and sufficient to achieve policy influence (or even to inform policy processes)?

2.32. The first two of these are topics have been considered within the GDN Bridging Policy and Research (BRP) global research project. It is apparent from recent GDN documents[19] that thinking has become more refined, and GDN itself is now seeing the process it is best suited to as being *informing policy debate*, rather than *impacting policy*, or *influencing policy*. Hence, GDN states that policies informed by a local understanding of development problems and solutions are more likely to have positive outcomes for poor people in developing and transition countries.

2.33. The second point concerns the design of GDNet – as a result of the conceptualisation of the problem, were the appropriate activities commissioned? Given that the Purpose is "*To increase the effectiveness of development research (especially that generated by southern research institutes) in influencing policy processes*", it may be assumed that the problem GDNet is addressing is that southern generated research is not effective in influencing policy processes. None of the Outputs directly address this problem.

2.34. Output 1 should make a major contribution; "*High profile and take up (by other researchers, policy makers and civil society) of quality development policy research produced by Southern research institutes*", but with OVIs mainly based on generic web traffic, the incentives are not strong. The OVI of "*Key target user groups aware of GDNet by December 2008*" has not been assessed by GDNet.

2.35. Outputs 2 and 3, according to their OVIs, are mainly concerned with increasing the volume of the KB. The targets do lead the KB to being more southern relevant, but not more policy oriented.

2.36. Output 4 can be seen to better aligned to the Purpose: "*Southern research institutes have skills in research and knowledge management and use of Internet technologies*". However, 'research and knowledge management' has been taken to be more about knowledge management per se, rather than, as required by the Purpose, communicating development research to influence policy.

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[19] GDN (2008a). Final Report. *Consultation Meeting on Bridging Research and Policy*. Dubai School of Government, Dubai, UAE, May 26-27, 2008. And: (GDN 2008b) *A GDN Action Plan for Supporting Research-Policy Bridging*. Recommendations based on May 2008, Dubai Consultation Meeting. Presentation to GDN Board Meeting, Yale, New Haven, July 2008.

Outputs 5 concerns development of an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) platform for GDNet. The logframe does not steer this to consideration of the role of ICT in effective influencing of policy processes.

2.5 GDNet and the Policy Arena

2.37. GDN states that its goal with respect to policy is "*to strengthen the link between local researchers and local policy-makers*"[20]. This position is based on the view that policy decisions are enhanced by "*the ability of research institutions, governments and civil society to collaborate in examining, discussing and understanding the implications of policy choices that affect them*".

2.38. This brings out two elements of importance:

- The expected level at which policy activity takes place is *local* (i.e national, and possibly regional)
- It is expected that there will be a certain level of *interaction* between actors in policy processes

2.39. GDNet is not established to address these needs. The first point infers a much greater level of activity and support at the level of regional windows than current occurs, the second suggests different modalities with greater level of engagement and interaction. This relates to the overall GDNet model, which as seen above, is primarily a supply-push model. In order to close the gap between Outputs and Purpose, there is a need to work on the demand-side and create a more active knowledge marketplace with a broader set of policy actors. This may entail GDNet being proactive in relation to policy processes, or GDNet changing its audience, and targeting policy intermediaries and shapers more directly.

2.40. In its last funding proposal to DFID, GDNet outlined its approach to linking to what it called 'Policy Shapers'[21]. This was through:

- Engaging researchers, policy shapers, information managers and wider stakeholders to make use of GDNet through the provision of an **attractive portfolio of services** and creation of online communities
- Delivering a program of activities to enhance information and **communications management capacity** within regional research institutes and the wider pool of GDNet information providers to facilitate their policy influence.

2.41. The analysis which is lacking here is a disaggregation of all the different policy actors / policy shapers (such as the media), and whether and how they might be best engaged through the types of services that GDNet provides.

2.42. It is also worth noting that several respondents noted that over the time frame of the current phase of GDNet, GDN has moved to strengthen its focus on policy – with particular consideration of policy influence, some believe at the expense of its previous concentration on capacity building.

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[20] GDN (2008). *Framework for the Next Phase of GDN's Bridging Research and Policy Project* (Draft).
[21] Funding Proposal to DFID: *Request for funding GDNet Phase II (FY 05/06 - FY 06/07)*.

2.43. The difficulty GDNet faces is that as an intermediary, the policy-relevance of its output is limited by the policy-relevance of the research which is the raw material abstracted for the Knowledge Base.

2.44. The field of research – policy interaction - is well studied, not least by Canadian groups[22] and ODI's RAPID programme[23]. Many models of research – policy interaction exist, and lessons from the RAPID programme show that policy processes are very complicated, and that research-based evidence usually plays a very minor role in policy decisions:

> "*policy processes are fantastically complicated. They are very rarely linear and logical. Simply presenting research results to policymakers and expecting them to put them into practice is very unlikely to work. While most policy processes do involve sequential stages from agenda setting through decision-making to implementation and evaluation, sometimes some stages take a very long time, and sometimes several stages occur more or less simultaneously. Many actors are involved: ministers, parliament, civil servants, the private sector, civil society, the media etc., and in the development sector, the donors as well.*" [24]

2.45. Hence, policy processes are complex, multifactorial and non linear. A linear, binary, relationship between production of information and knowledge by researchers and this research output being used to inform, or even influence, policy making is widely discounted. *Instrumental use*[25] of research is much less likely than research contributing to an accumulation of evidence that is part of a policy process – i.e. *conceptual use* of research.

2.46. Nonetheless, Caplan's 'two communities' model[26] of two separate science and policy spheres is useful in considering GDNet's engagement with the policy arena. Clearly, the two communities have a degree of overlap, and are connected by a range of intermediaries (Figure 1), including researchers who are linked into the policy sphere. In general, it is this intermediation function that is one that GDNet aims to play.

2.47. It is however precisely this intermediation, or as outlined above, an information and knowledge intermediary role[27], that GDNet struggles with because of the distance between the Purpose and the Outputs in its logframe. If it is to fulfil

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[22] E.g. The Canadian Health Services Research Foundation http://www.chsrf.ca/home_e.php. And : IDRC: Stephanie Neilson (2001). *IDRC-Supported Research and its Influence on Public Policy Knowledge Utilization and Public Policy Processes: A Literature Review*. Evaluation Unit, IDRC.

[23] http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/Publications/Index.html

[24] John Young (2008). *Strategies for impact and policy relevance*. Glocal Times, Issue 10. http://www.glocaltimes.k3.mah.se/viewarticle.aspx?articleID=144&issueID=16

[25] '*instrumental use or impact*' is the direct impact of research on policy and practice decisions where a specific piece of research is used in making a specific decision or in defining the solution to a specific problem; '*conceptual use or impact'* includes the complex and often indirect ways in which research can have an impact on the knowledge, understanding and attitudes of policy makers and practitioners. Nutley, S., Walter, I. and Davies, H. (2007), *Using Evidence. How Research can Inform Public Services* Policy Press, Bristol.

[26] Caplan N. (1979). The Two Communities Theory and Knowledge Utilization. *American Behavioral Scientist*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 459-470.

[27] Catherine Fisher and Yaso Kunaratnam (Eds.) (2007). *Between ourselves: the new generation of information & knowledge intermediaries*. Report from the "Intermediary workshop: summarisers, signposters and synthesisers" held at IDS, Brighton, May 2007.

the ambition of its Purpose, GDNet needs to move from being essentially a relatively passive knowledge provider to being a more active knowledge broker.

Figure 1. 'Two communities': Research and Policy

Intermediaries (e.g.):
- Info-mediary services
- Journalists & the media
- Policy-connected researchers
- Ministerial & parliamentary researchers
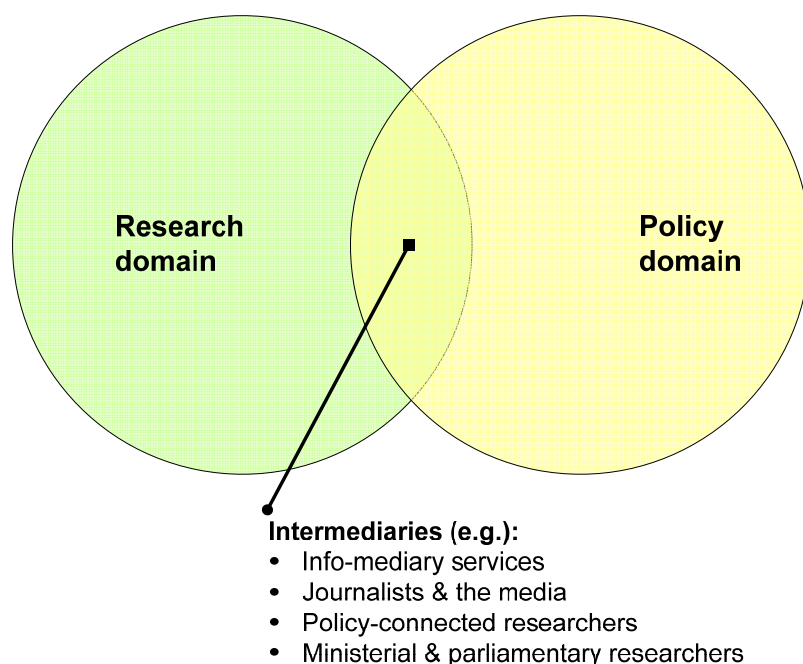
2.48. In order to fulfil its desired intermediation role, GDNet requires a clear vision for how its activities can help, in the words of its Purpose, 'influence policy processes'. However, GDNet cannot be expected to do this alone, and this vision, or theory of change, should be part of a larger GDN vision for policy influencing / informing.

2.49. The difficulty that GDNet faces is that most of its activities are concentrated within the Research Domain: it particularly targets other researchers as users of the services (rather than other intermediaries, let alone policy makers). Other aspects of its work focus on putting researchers in contact with research funding opportunities, and with each other. There is significantly less focus on putting them in contact with policy actors. It is really only the capacity building for knowledge management where it might be said that GDNet is strengthening intermediation functions, but this too has a bias towards researchers and their organisations, rather than other types of intermediary.

2.50. There is an analogy from the field of social capital. Three main types of social capital are recognised: bonding, bridging and linking. Bonding social capital refers to relations amongst relatively homogenous groups; bridging social capital refers to relations with distant friends, associates and colleagues; and linking social capital refers to relations between individuals and groups in different social strata in a hierarchy where power, social status and wealth are accessed by different groups[28]. GDNet is effectively helping to create bridging social capital – strengthening ties between distant researchers, but within what is essentially a large scale peer group of researchers. What, according to its design, GDNet needs to do, is help create

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[28] *Social Capital. A review of the literature*. Social Analysis and Reporting Division, Office for National Statistics. October 2001

linking social capital – between researchers and policy shapers / makers. To do this, it needs an outreach function. This it does not have.

2.51. GDNet made an attempt in 2007 to undertake a pilot study in the MENA region on supporting **policy outreach** at a local level, through relevant policy communications outreach. This was to be undertaken by ERF. The outreach was to potentially involve working with id21 to produce locally relevant *Insights* type products, on a topic of relevance to the region. Although an agreement was signed between GDNet and ERF, the work has not progressed.

2.52. The reasons for this are instructive beyond this pilot. There has been active debate within GDN regarding production of policy briefing material. The critics of such an approach believe that the production of policy materials would require GDN to take a particular stance on the relevant policy matter; i.e. that the organisation would lose its political neutrality – i.e. would become a lobbying organisation. Therefore, the argument given is that the role of research should not be to affect policy, but rather to provide a solid evidence base upon which policy making can draw: informing rather than influencing policy. There are examples of organisations that produce policy material who either do, or do not, take a lobby position. For example, in the UK both ODI and Eldis could be seen to be providers of information to inform policy, without taking a biased position.

2.53. In regard to the GDNet policy pilot, ERF states the problem in Egypt is less about poor contact and flow of information between researchers and policy-makers, but rather that research does not get readily published. For example, more than 50% of faculty in Economics and Social Science at Cairo University are advisers to Ministers or government. They are so connected to policy processes that their research informs policy through ad hoc reports and through presentations. This, combined with peer reviewed papers reportedly being less of a factor for academic promotion in the region, means that incentives to formally publish research are low. For this reason, ERF is keen to use the funds available for the Policy Outreach Pilot to support the establishment of a new ERF peer-reviewed journal[29]. However, the problem of research not getting beyond direct advice to government is also addressed by GDNet's key objective to make available unpublished (i.e. 'grey') literature.

2.54. Regional Network Partners (RNPs) were asked whether GDNet aims to help research influence policy processes. In general, they considered it should:

i)   Not "influence", but GDNet can be a "Policy Knowledge Library" where interested policy makers/officials can more easily access policy studies that have been done in developing countries.

ii)   Inform policy yes – influence is not the business of researchers

iii)   I think GDNet should prepare press releases like NBER so that journalists cover new GDNet research – that's the best way to become more known and be more used

2.55. There is thus support from RNPs for a more policy oriented GDNet, including a more proactive approach to informing policy.

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[29] Middle East Development Journal (MEDJ). http://www.erf.org.eg/cms.php?id=events_details&news_id=28

3 Methods

3.1. A range of methods was employed for this review, and judgements drawn from careful triangulation between the findings from the different methods. These methods included face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews with key informants using a checklist, document review – some 75 relevant documents were provided by GDNet, analysis of data from the survey conducted for the 2007 evaluation of GDN, a questionnaire distributed to RNP representatives, and a new web-based survey, as described below. The review included two visits to GDNet headquarters in Cairo, a one-week visit, working closely with all the GDNet staff, and a second visit to observe and participate in a two-day meeting of RNPs.

3.2. The web survey was conducted using an internet-based survey design and management tool[30]. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish among users and non-users of GDNet products and services in Latin America and Africa. The common difficulty of survey of user-based services is that user lists are, by definition, restricted to users. Thus the survey sample is automatically biased – being only people who have registered for the service; it is also doubly biased as those who take the time to respond to the survey are likely to be those with sufficient investment in the service to be willing to take the time to complete the survey. Surveys of registered users do not therefore canvas the views of what in marketing terms are called 'intenders' – those people who have the appropriate demographic to make use of the goods or services, but have not yet done so.

3.3. This survey was designed to take account of this problem, and include in the survey sample 'intenders', or at least a counterfactual population of suitable researchers who were members of regional, professional, social science networks, but had not registered for GDNet. Hence the survey was administered to the memberships of two RNP organisations – which included both GDNet registered users and intenders or non-users, as well as a research organisation as a 'control'. The two regions covered were Latin America and Africa. Thus the sample was taken from member lists of LACEA (sent to 635 members), and AERC[31] (sent to 576 members), as well as CIPPEC as a 'control' (sent to 68 members) (see Table 2). The sample consisted of:
- o Those who have a registered profile with GDNet
- o Those who use GDNet but do not have a registered profile
- o Those who are unaware of GDNet and it services (this group is the control group against which other results are compared).

Table 2. Web survey sample sizes

Parent membership list	Sample size
LACEA	635
CIPPEC	68
AERC	576

3.4. Response rates were: 53.2% for Latin America (LACEA plus CIPPEC) and 39.4% for Africa (AERC).

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[30] See www.surveymonkey.com
[31] Latin American and Caribbean Economic Association (LACEA); Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento / Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth (CIPPEC); African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)

4   Purpose of GDNet

Objective	Indicator	Data source
To increase the effectiveness of development research (especially that generated by southern research institutes) in influencing policy processes.	By December 2008, GDNet referred to as a key source of policy-relevant research produced in developing and transition countries amongst international and national policy circles.	Survey of sample of target policy and research audiences by June 2008.

4.1.   Section 2.5 above (GDNet and the Policy Arena) makes a detailed analysis of the GDNet Purpose statement, and the issue of influencing or, as is now preferred, informing policy process. GDN itself, like many other organisations and programmes, has moved towards a role in informing policy.

4.2.   Nonetheless, the Purpose as written in the logframe is a difficult one, even informing policy from a research base is not easy. GDNet has compounded the difficulty of the task by setting itself a Purpose level OVI which is hard to both reach and measure - to be referred to as a key source of policy-relevant research in international and national circles is extremely ambitious. And also ambiguous. The OVI does not make it clear what a 'policy circle' is, nor how many countries are expected to refer to GDNet as a source of policy-relevant research – some, all, … ?

4.3.   Judging progress towards this indicator is thus difficult without better quantification and qualification. This is made harder since GDNet has not undertaken the survey indicated in the MOV. Thus GDNet has not formally made any assessment of its progress against this OVI. But, this review finds that, as part of the overall GDN shift towards becoming a higher profile actor in informing policy processes, GDNet is playing an important part.

4.4.   It is not clear that GDNet can achieve its Purpose, as both the narrative and the OVI are flawed, with the latter being neither very modest nor measurable. It is being expected to achieve something that it was not designed to do – as discussed above there is a mismatch being the Outputs and Purpose. Nonetheless, most Outputs are likely to be nearly or completely achieved, and the scoring report awarded an OPR score of '2'. For the next phase, the Purpose needs to be based around 'informing policy', and the Outputs reconfigured to better connect with policy processes.

4.5.   The findings of this review are in line with those of the 2007 GDN evaluation, which found that: "*the evaluation considers GDN's potential objective of "policy impact" both an unrealistic and inappropriate target that the board should clarify is not a target objective. GDN can claim and should claim, however, to be building a base of policy relevant literature and future researcher leaders who can and are informing better policy at national and sub-national levels.*"

5 GDNet Outputs

5.1.   The following sections review progress against the six Output objectives in the GDNet logframe.

5.1 Output 1

Objective	Indicator	Data source
1) High profile and take up (by other researchers, policy makers and civil society) of quality development policy research produced by Southern research institutes.	1.1 Key target user groups aware of GDNet by December 2008. 1.2 Increase of **50%** in web traffic by **Mar 2007** (baseline in Jan 04 is approx. **30,000** visits, so increase would be to **45,000 visits by Mar 07**). **Achievement**: average **68,800** visits for the period **Mar 06- Mar 07**. **Revised Targets for June & Dec 2008** Additional **20%** increase by June 2008 = **82,500** visits**. Additional **10%** increase by **December 2008** = **90,800**	1.1 Survey of target and existing end users by June 2008. 1.2 Web statistics.

5.2.   Output 1 is closest to GDNet's Purpose[32], and is very close to being an indicator of Purpose level achievement, so there is imperfect logic in the logframe. Both the Purpose OVI and Output 1 are concerned with measures of use of policy-relevant research. However, the achievement of Output 1 is indicated by a measure of *profile* (awareness amongst target groups), and a measure of use (web traffic).

5.3.   GDNet has been diligent in keeping webstats, which show that its original target of 45,000 visits by March 2007 was easily exceeded (Table 3):

Table 3. GDNet Webstats from Quarterly Report April – June 2007.

	Jan-07	Feb-07	Mar-07	Apr-07	May-07	Jun-07
Number of requests	317,175	310,877	372,780	376,723	372,205	459,931
Number of visits[33]	80,971	79,445	90,191	76,670	89,662	101,053
Number of visitors	25,621	26,673	29,167	25,227	31,115	29,653

5.4.   Consequently, the target was increased to 82,500 by June 2008, which was met by the end of 2007, and by mid-2008 traffic was routinely in excess of 100,000 visits per month (Table 4).

Table 4. GDNet Webstats from Quarterly Report April – June 2008.

	Jan-08	Feb-08	Mar-08	Apr-08	May-08	Jun-08
Number of requests	551,447	457,640	526,565	492,879	598,703	602,275
Number of visits	104,328	98,991	110,956	103,778	126,477	180,789
Number of visitors	23,581	23,662	26,362	26,156	27,701	24,461

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[32] "To increase the effectiveness of development research (especially that generated by southern research institutes) in influencing policy processes"
[33] A *visit* is calculated as how many IP visits over a period of 20 minutes, if the same IP stays more than 20 minutes it is calculated as a new visit

5.5.   GDNet has thus been successful in increasing traffic to the website. What is less clear is what this means. A key question is to which site / mini-site / landing page(s) do these webstats relate?

5.6.   The definitions in reporting webstats are not entirely clear, but it is assumed that these statistics refer to www.gdnet.org. i.e. total visits and requests to all of GDN's website. The level of traffic is consistent with this, and as will be seen below, with the webstats for specific GDNet components. Therefore, there must be a serious question about the utility of this indicator. Using this measure reinforces the 'GDNet is the electronic voice of GDN' thinking and says something about general visits to GDN. This measure says very little about "*take up (by other researchers, policy makers and civil society) of quality development policy research produced by Southern research institutes*". Although, since GDNet reporting shows that visits to the KB are about half of all visits to the website, it does say something about why people come to the GDN site.

5.7.   Considering therefore more specific measures of use of GDNet services, Figure 2, shows the number of requests to KB landing pages for researchers, organisations and research papers. These data only show page requests for this tier of pages, not the browsing of the substantive 'content' pages below them. These webstats do show the relative use of the different parts of the KB.

Figure 2. Number of month page requests to KB landing pages
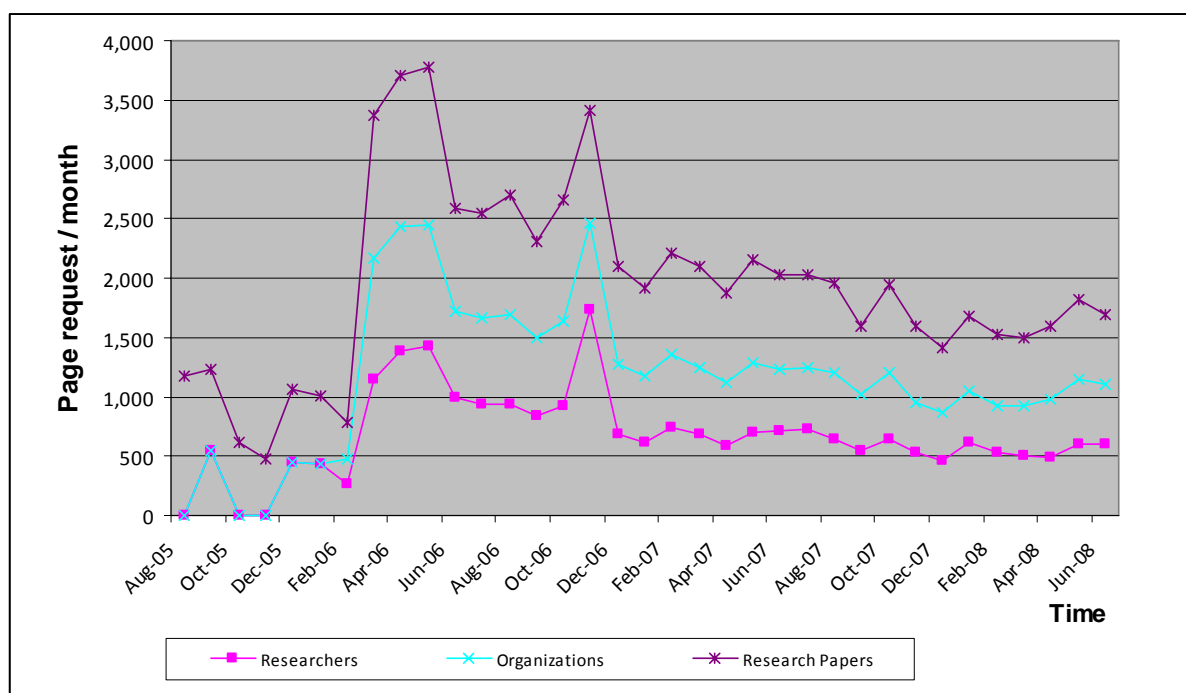
5.8.   Figure 3 shows the total number of page requests to all pages in the KB, the regional windows, and the on-line services. These are a better measure of total use of the GDNet services since all the main pages in lower tiers are captured. Thus, by June 2008 309,902 KB and 184,897 regional window pages requests were served[34] in the month. The figure for page requests from the online services was much lower – 5,832 in June 2008. However the webstats do not capture the use of on-line journals

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[34] The IDS knowledge services had an average of between 1.6 an 5.7 page requests per visit, with a mean of 3.2.

by users going straight to them and using the GDNet login credentials, and so are an under-reported figure, though at present GDNet is not able to determine actual use of the on-line journals, as these figures are only captured by the various journal providers themselves.

Figure 3. Number of total monthly page requests to the KB and Regional Windows
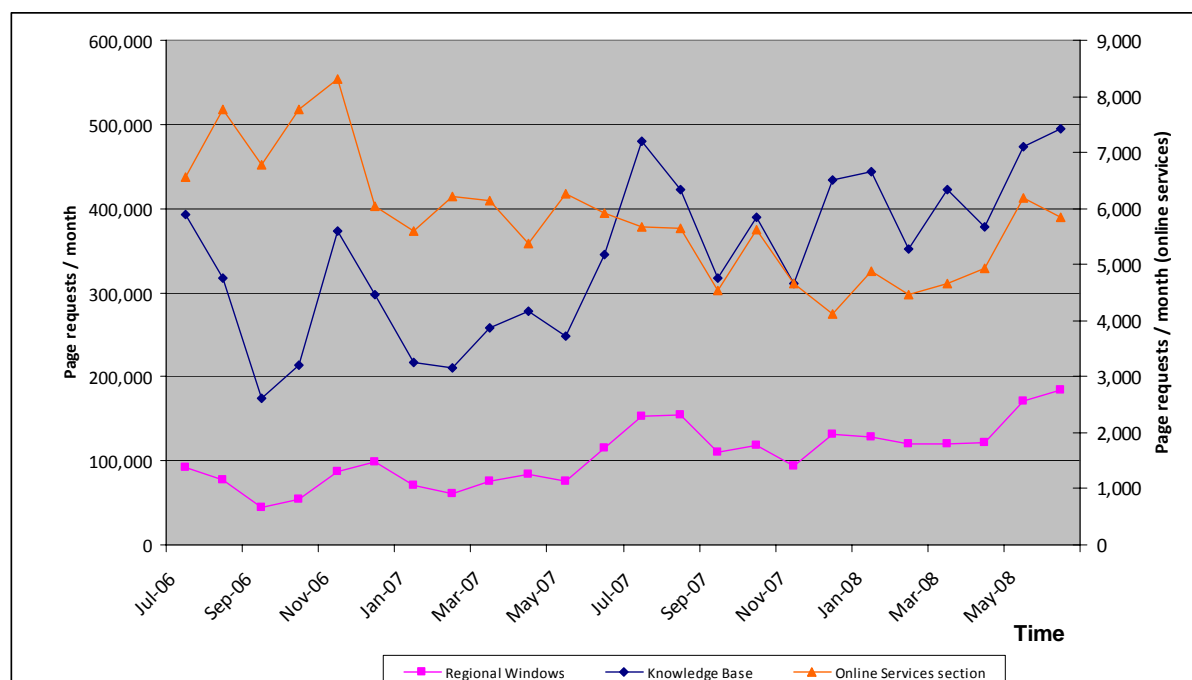
5.9.   It is difficult to judge the absolute performance of the website when the webstats only relate to changes over time. It is helpful to consider comparators. A useful comparison is provided from the webstats of the DFID-funded knowledge services at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) (Table 5). This shows that in 2006/07 the specialist services (eg BRIDGE, Livelihoods Connect) were receiving 12,000 – 18,000 visits per month, and the more general Eldis service an average of about 170,000 visits per month, serving 550,000 page requests.

Table 5. Mean monthly webstats (Mar 2006 – Apr 2007) – IDS Knowledge Services[35]

	BLDS	BRIDGE	Eldis	id21	L'hoods Connect	Siyanda
Unique visitors / year	21,151	223,263	886,237	166,284	153,293	85,126
% repeat visitors in one year	17.2	16.2	20.1	19.5	18.5	16.8
Unique visitors /month (mean)	1,763	18,605	73,853	13,857	12,774	7,094
Visits / month (mean)	1,893	18,605	168,479	28,429	23,549	12,670
Page requests / month (mean)	10,881	30,655	551,144	99,335	52,287	32,425

5.10. These IDS figures are over a year old. However, they show that the GDNet KB is serving a volume of page requests of a similar order of magnitude to that of Eldis.

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[35] MK4D OPR (2007).

5.11. One might reasonably expect that GDNet figures would be lower than Eldis', considering a) that GDNet focuses on economics and social science and Eldis is more broadly based, so should attract a wider audience, and b) that Eldis visitors are predominantly from developed countries with better internet connectivity (Figure 4). Therefore, it may be concluded that in sheer volume terms, GDNet appears to be being well used.

Figure 4. Unique visitors to Eldis by developed or less developed area
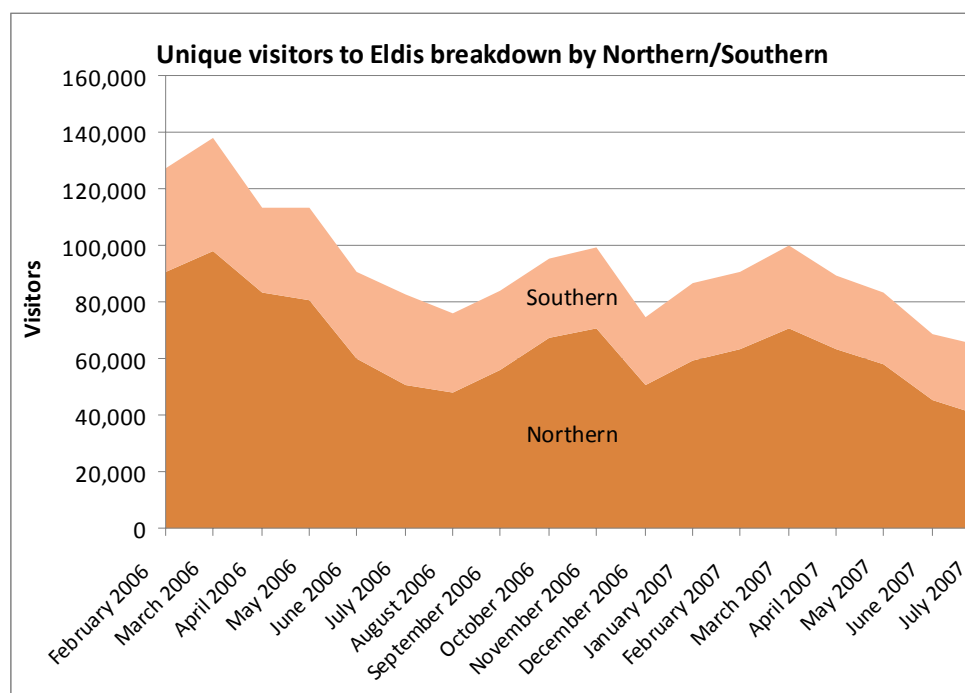
5.12. However it may also be concluded that the traffic indicator used by GDNet is a rather blunt measure of what it intends to achieve. GDNet does not have targets for traffic to the separate GDNet services, and for its next phase, it should set targets for these. These should be ambitious targets, which also draw on current predictions for growth on connectivity in developing and transition regions.

5.13. What these figures do not show however, is who these pages are being served too. Who are GDNet's users?

5.14. GDNet collects data on where its users' internet service providers (ISPs) are located. ISP location is imprecise, and GDNet has not been able to locate 56.6% of users. A further 25.1% are seemingly in the USA, though this is more likely to be where their ISPs are registered, rather than where they themselves are based. The remainder are seemingly thinly spread across 104 other countries or regions (Figure 5).

5.15. GDNet reports using GeoDB for geographical IP address cross-referencing, but it may get more accurate resolution from GeoCountry software, which IDS successfully used to address this problem of finding out where users are actually located. Nonetheless, this does show that GDNet appears to be being used across a wide range of its target countries.

Figure 5. Locations of users' ISPs.

ITALY		INDIA	
EUROPEAN UNION		FRANCE	
UNITED KINGDOM		EGYPT	
CZECH REPUBLIC		CHINA	
CANADA		SPAIN	
GERMANY		JAPAN	
SOUTH AFRICA		SWITZERLAND	
NETHERLANDS		BRAZIL	
AUSTRALIA		NIGERIA	
TAIWAN		PAKISTAN	
BELGIUM		ETHIOPIA	
COTE D-IVOIRE		PHILIPPINES	
RUSSIAN FEDERATION		SWEDEN	
ISRAEL		NORWAY	
NEPAL		MALAYSIA	
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES		KENYA	
REPUBLIC OF KOREA		ARGENTINA	
SINGAPORE		THAILAND	
BANGLADESH		AUSTRIA	
TURKEY		HONG KONG	
UGANDA		CHILE	
FINLAND		INDONESIA	
MEXICO		COLOMBIA	
DENMARK		UKRAINE	
LITHUANIA		POLAND	
NEW ZEALAND		FIJI	
VIET NAM		ARMENIA	
SRI LANKA		PERU	
HUNGARY		ROMANIA	
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN		SLOVENIA	
CROATIA		GREECE	
CAMEROON		BULGARIA	
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA		LUXEMBOURG	
LEBANON		GEORGIA	
JORDAN		KUWAIT	
UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA		PAPUA NEW GUINEA	
PORTUGAL		IRELAND	
SAUDI ARABIA		ZIMBABWE	
BOLIVIA		BENIN	
ASIA PACIFIC		TUNISIA	
SENEGAL		SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC	
AZERBAIJAN		LATVIA	
BAHRAIN		MACEDONIA	
ALBANIA		UZBEKISTAN	
CAMBODIA		GHANA	
MOROCCO		ALGERIA	
KYRGYZSTAN		URUGUAY	
MONGOLIA		TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO	
ESTONIA		TOGO	
GAMBIA		ECUADOR	
SLOVAKIA		NIGER	
NAMIBIA		PANAMA	

5.16. ISP location still does not really answer the question of *who*? The Output states that GDNet should be being used by its *target audience*, who are specified as: 'other researchers, policy makers and civil society'. GDNet does not routinely collect data on the type of user. The logframe intended that GDNet would do a user survey in June 2008 to collect this information. This has not been carried out. GDNet was expecting this current review to undertake a user survey to collect this information, but the sample survey, based on registered members of regional network partner organisations, did not provide this information.

5.17. The type of data and analysis that GDNet should be striving for is as per Figure 6, from SciDev.Net (2007 Annual Report). GDNet should therefore undertake regular user surveys to obtain an accurate profile of the occupation / organisational affiliation of its users. This should be able to track increasing use by policy actors as GDNet moves into the second phase.

Figure 6. User profile of SciDev.Net
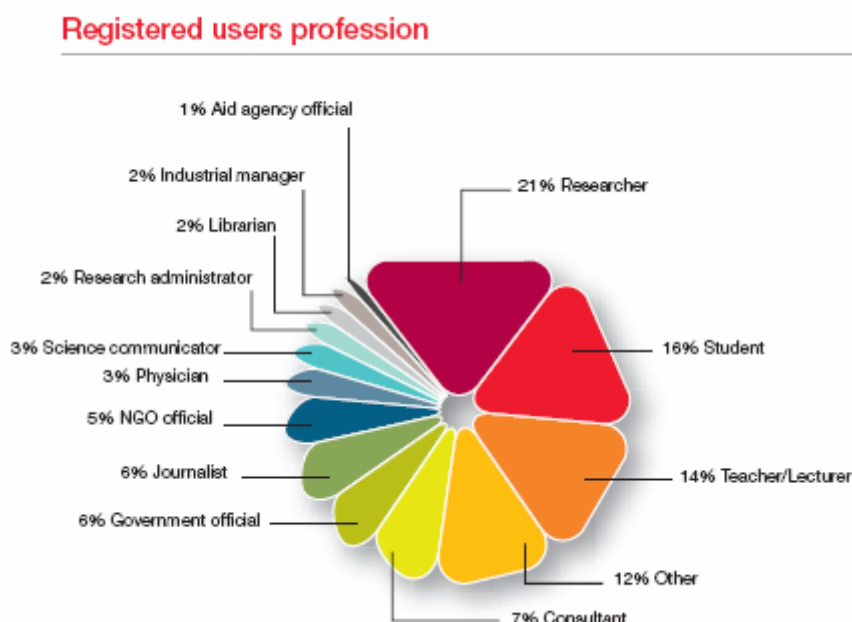
5.2 Output 2

Objective	Indicator	Data source
2) Southern researchers using GDNet (core knowledge base, regional windows, researcher services) as a platform to support the generation and dissemination of research, and to build horizontal South-South linkages.	2.1 Increase in proportion of non-OECD researcher profiles on Knowledge Base from **58% to 80%** by Mar 2007. **Achievement:** increase in the proportion of non-OECD researcher profiles to **79%.** **Revised targets for Dec 2008:** Increase in proportion of non-OECD researcher profiles on KB to **82%.** 2.2 Increase in proportion of non-OECD researcher profiles with attached document summaries from 5% to **50%** by Mar 2008. **Achievement:** increase in the proportion of non-OECD researcher with attached document summaries to **79%.** **Revised target for Dec 2008:** Increase in the proportion of non-OECD researchers with attached document summaries to **85%.** 2.3 Researchers based in developing countries report increased contact by other southern researchers directly as a result of being featured on GDNet.	2.1 GDNet montlhy monitoring stats. 2.2 GDNet montly monitoring stats. 2.3 Survey of researcher profile holders by June 2008.

5.18. This Output concerns target researchers making more use of GDNet to facilitate and communicate their research and promote South-South Networking. The indicators do not all measure these objectives well; OVI 2.1 is a measure of the proportion of registered users from developing and transition countries (i.e. 'Southern-ness'), rather being a measure of how GDNet is used by them to facilitate

and communicate research. GDNet very quickly reached a 78% proportion of users from non-OECD countries, and has made gradual progress towards 80% over 2007 and 2008 (Figure 7). By comparison, between Feb '06 and May '07, Eldis averaged 31.6% of users from the 'South'. Thus, while not a good measure of use, it does at least show that GDNet is successfully targeting a developing and transition country audience.

Figure 7. 'Southern-ness': Proportion of researchers profiles from non-OECD countries
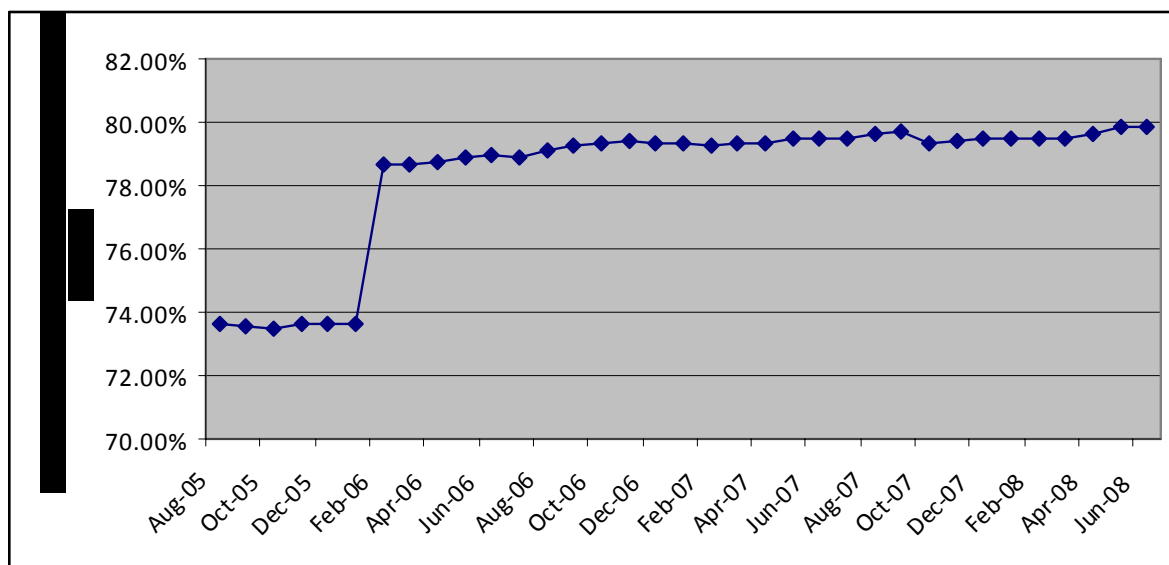
5.19. OVI 2.2 is a better measure of use as it is an indicator of dissemination. GDNet's webstats show that it has successfully hit its target of having 79% of the researchers in the KB with documents associated with them, coming from non-OECD countries (Figure 8). Thus where there are researchers with documents, they are mainly from developing and transition countries.

5.20. However, there are two factors which mediate the level of success related to this indicator:

   i) the proportion of non-OECD researchers with documents is the same as the overall proportion of non-OECD researchers in the KB – i.e. GDNet has not been more successful in getting non-OECD researchers to provide documents than it has with researchers from OECD countries

   ii) the more important figure is the proportion of *all* researchers in the KB who have documents with the profile. This has consistently been between 8 and 11% of the total (Figure 8). Therefore, while the number of researchers with profiles has increased from 4,518 in August 2005 to 7,232 in June 2008, the number with documents has only grown from 381 to 720. This militates against claims about networking and dissemination, and should be an area on which to focus in the next phase.

5.21. OVI 2.3 is a good measure of networking as a result of GDNet, but as above, depends on a survey that GDNet did not undertake. However, evidence from Section 6.1.3 below shows that researchers do not particularly value GDNet as a networking tool.

Figure 8. Proportion of researcher with profiles from non-OECD countries, and proportion with documents in the KB
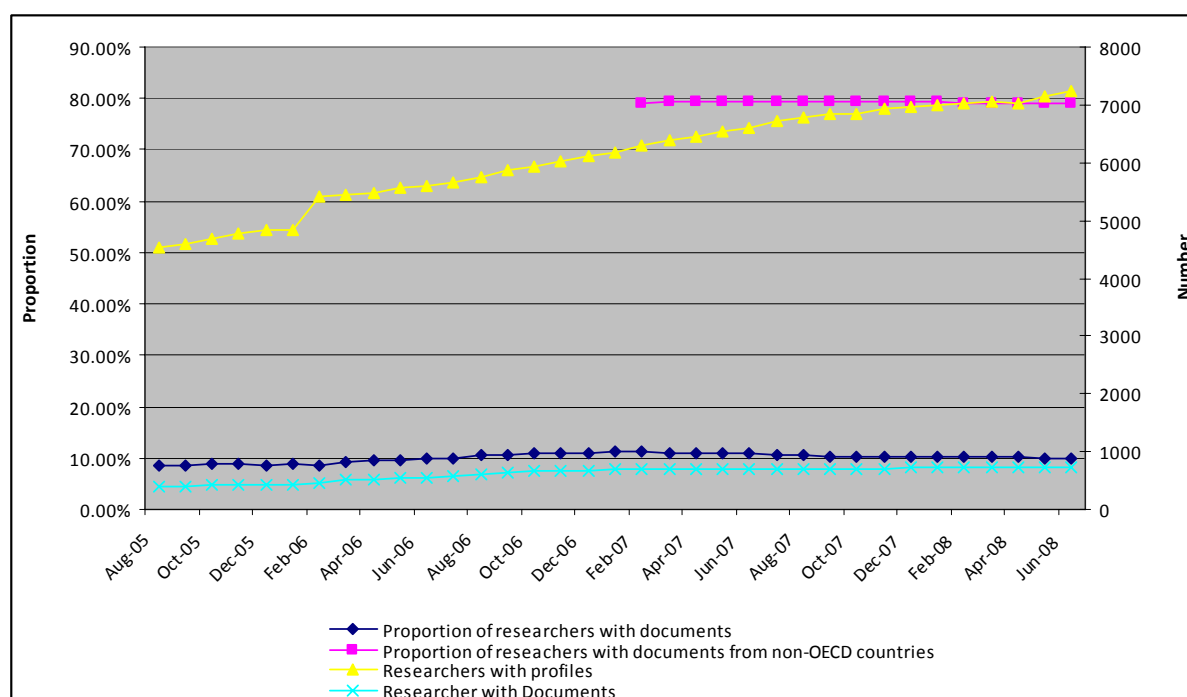
5.3 Output 3

Objective	Indicator	Data source
3) Southern research institutes using GDNet and the internet more broadly as a tool to disseminate and communicate their research.	3.1 Increase in proportion of non-OECD organization profiles from **65% to 80% by June 2008.** **Achievement:** challenging indicator due to the finite number of exisitng non-OECD and OECD organizations. Increase of one percent only achieved to **66%.** **Revised Target for Dec 2008:** increase to **70%** in the proportion of non-OECD organizations post the data updating and cleansing exercise. 3.2 Increase in proportion of non-OECD organization profiles *with documents* attached from **7% to 50%** by June 2008. **Achievement:** increase in proportion of non-OECD organization profiles with documents attached to **54%.** **Revised Target for Dec 2008:** increase in proportion of non-OECD organization profiles with documents attached to **60%.**	3.1 GDNet monthly statistics. 3.2 GDNet monthly statistics

5.22. In this Output also, it is questionable whether the chosen indicators are the most appropriate measures of achieving the objective. The objective is about organisations using GDNet for dissemination and communication of research, whereas OVI 3.1 relates to proportion of 'Southern-ness' in the organisation profiles in the KB. This has also proved a difficult target to hit, with 65% of organisations currently from non-OECD countries (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Proportion of organisations in the KB from non-OECD countries
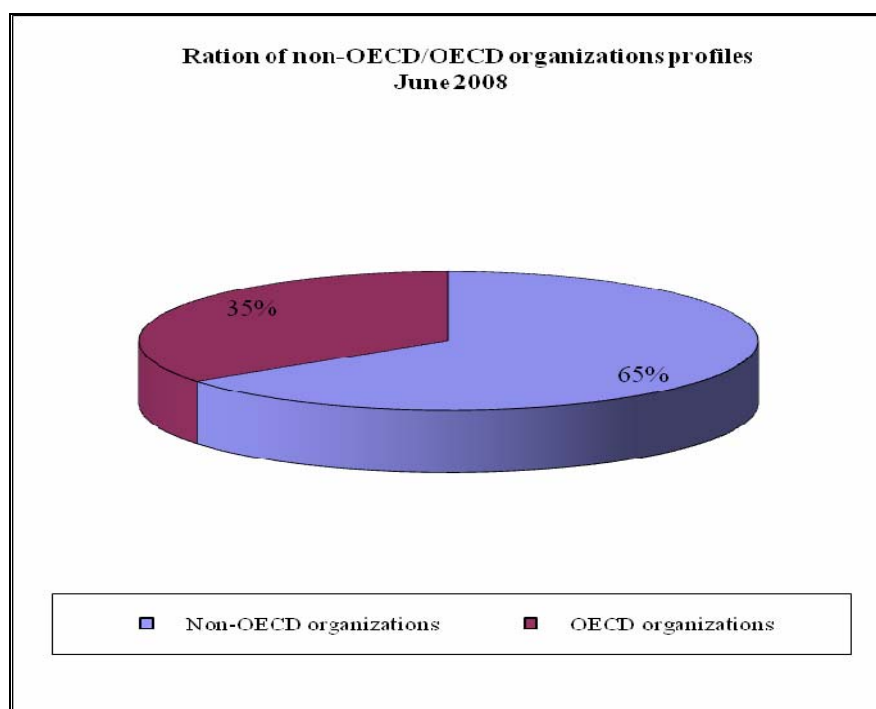
5.23. The difficulty, GDNet believes, is that at least in some regions, it is getting to the limits of the available organisations relevant to GDNet and hence suitable for having a profile. This is supported to some extent by work from the Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI)[36], which shows that while there was 'explosive growth' in establishment of think tanks in the 1990s, this rate of growth has slowed down in the 21st century. But the conclusion of a scoping study which GDNet specifically commissioned FPRI to undertake on the organisations component of the KB, was that the approximately 3,500 organisations in the KB is not a large number. Other directories, such as the list of Economics Departments, Institutes and Research Centers in the World (EDIRC) at REPEC (http://edirc.repec.org/), echo the view that the KB is still relatively small - EDIRC lists 11,091 institutions in 229 countries.

5.24. In this regard, GDNet therefore needs to consider whether:

   i)   it is relevant to its objectives to retain this 'proportion of non-OECD organisations in the KB' an indicator for, and target of, use of GDNet
   ii)   whether it is a sufficiently valuable and effective use of GDNet resources to continue to try to maintain and grow what is essentially a directory of research organisations.

5.25. This begs the question why GDNet does have organisational profiles in the KB? It states that: "*By creating a profile, you are registering your organization with GDN and becoming part of a global policy research community... The Organization Profile provides a simple and cost-free means of supplementing your institution's dissemination activities. Once you have created a profile for your organization, you can submit research papers and documents to the Knowledge Base which will then be linked to the profile. Information on researchers from your institute will also be*

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[36] James G. McGann *(2007). The Global "Go-To Think Tanks"- The Leading Public Policy Research Organizations in the World*. The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program, Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia.

linked to it if they have a GDNet Researcher Profile." Thus the profile is seen as supporting the organisations' use of GDNet and the internet for dissemination.

5.26. As a 'network of networks', there should also be an explicit networking function with the organisations listed in the KB. At present each organisation has a profile, contact information, and a link to its website (where it has one). However, there is no apparent attempt at reciprocation – GDNet is not referenced or linked on a 'links' page in any of the organisations' websites visited for this review. This is an important point, as the volume of links to a site also form part of its search engine ranking[37].

5.27. In relation to the content of the KB, there is guidance on eligibility of organisations on the GDNet website, but the FPRI study found that while the KB aims to include: "a*ll research institutes undertaking policy-relevant social science research*", it does so without a very clear typology of the type of organisation – eg University vs University department. The KB also includes foundations, think tanks, NGOs, consulting firms, community-based organisations, and government departments. Not all organisations were found to fit with the description, making the KB less useful.

5.28. FPRI has offered to assist GDNet in updating and maintaining the organisations KB. While centralising the task runs counter to the spirit of working through RNPs, maintaining and growing the organisations in KB is a demanding task, and it is suggested that GDNet should indeed pursue further discussions with FPRI, which would include examining of cost implications. There is however, a synergy between adding new organisations to the KB and adding new documents – each can lead to the other, and this should not be lost.

5.29. As a measure of organisations in developing and transition countries using GDNet to disseminate and communicate their research, OVI 3.2 is relevant. It shows that of those organisations which have documents in the KB (only about a third of the total), over half of these are from non-OECD countries. The target is for 60% of those organisations with documents to be from non-OECD countries by December 2008. This is reasonable given that 65% of organisations in the KB are from these countries. What is missing here however, is a target to increase the proportion of *total* organisations with documents – the current figure of about 34% is low and not indicative of an active network.

5.30. **Overall**, for **Outputs 1, 2 and 3**, there is a concern that GDNet is being driven by the quantitative targets without necessarily questioning whether they are the best, or even good indicators of the relevant objectives. It is thus recommended that GDNet should, as part of an overarching logframe review for the next phase, thoroughly re-examine its indicators.

5.4 Output 4

Objective	Indicator	Data source

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[37] Google *link:www.gdnet.org* returns only 367 pages linking to GDNet.

4) Southern research institutes have skills in research and knowledge management and use of Internet technologies	4.1 Participants in GDNet courses report increase in level of skills by **December 2008.** 4.2 Participants report application of new skills in their work by **December 2008.**	4.1 **Self-appraisal by workshop participants.** 4.2 **Survey** of workshop participants by **June 2008**.

5.31. This is an important Output, focusing on capacity building. It is the Output closest to GDN's original remit. Without it, GDN stands to become entirely focused on knowledge services, and this would make it much harder for GDNet to achieve its Purpose. Building capacity of partners and research institutes to better manage and communicate research-based knowledge means that there are more and better channels through which research can inform policy processes.

5.32. GDNet has run a series of capacity building workshops designed to enhance the knowledge management and research dissemination capacity of research institutes and networks, by providing training and skills building in knowledge management. As part of the Capacity Building Program in Africa, workshops have been run as follows: in Africa - a pilot in Cairo in February 2005 attended by 52 participants from 25 countries in Africa; in Kampala in June 2006, Johannesburg in December 2006, Ouagadougu in April 2007, and a synthesis in Cairo in June 2007.

5.33. In 2008, the Africa programme had a stronger focus on research dissemination and outreach, and jointly held, with ESRF and WBI, a Forum on Agricultural Innovation in Africa in Dar es Salaam in May, and with ACBF, WBI, ODI and IFPRI a joint workshop on effective use of research communication, titled 'Maximizing the Impact of Agricultural Research in Africa', in Addis Ababa in October.

5.34. Further workshops were held as a pilot in Delhi in December 2007, and a workshop entitled 'Linking Research Communication to Policy Impact through Knowledge Management' with Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento (CIPPEC), in Buenos Aires in February 2008. One of the outputs of this was the creation of a small Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) network of Knowledge Management (KM) experts. As a follow-up to this workshop, GDN and CIPPEC are funding five case studies on policy research institutes or think tanks that have worked, or are currently working jointly with a policymaking agency to produce and/or use research or evidence to inform a social policy.

5.35. Where available, feedback in the workshop reports is very favourable, and they have been useful and constructive events, with good exchanges of ideas. There is a D-Group created for the African capacity building programme: 'GDNet Knowledge Sharing for Development: Africa Regional Program', but it no longer seems to be functioning, and the latest message was posted in March 2005.

5.36. The web survey conducted for this review asked respondents whether they had participated in any of the GDNet capacity building events, and if so, what effect this had had on their ability to communicate research. Seven out of 86 respondents in the LAC region had attended an event, and 7 out of 69 in Africa. Although a very small sample, the majority of respondents felt better able, or much better able, to

communicate research as a result of having attended a GDNet capacity building workshop (Table 6).

Table 6. Effects from participation at GDNet capacity building workshops

	Latin America		Africa	
	n	%	n	%
Much better able to communicate research	1	14.3%	3	42.9%
Better able to communicate research	4	57.1%	3	42.9%
No change	2	28.6%	1	14.3%

5.37. It would have been useful if GDNet had conducted the intended survey of participants to the various workshops. But in the absence of that, the evidence is that individuals in research institutes have had their capacity in knowledge management increased. This may not entirely equate to institutional capacities having increased, and GDNet may wish to consider in the next phase more in-depth capacity building with fewer strategic partners, who might then cascade capacity building wider. The other aspect to note is that the nature of the capacity building programme has shifted in 2008 from knowledge management towards outreach and uptake of research. This is better aligned with the Purpose.

5.38. In addition to the face-to-face, workshop-based capacity building activities, GDNet has been piloting other forms of support. The main one has been a pilot of Online Mentoring and Peer Review Support in the LAC region, working with LACEA and its partners. This involves younger researchers being mentored on production of a research paper, receiving feedback from the mentor on-line.

5.5 Output 5

Objective	Indicator	Data source
5) Developing a sustainable and scaleable technical platform to support the continued expansion of GDNet and complete its migration to Egypt.	5.1 New technical platform running live at IDS by February 2006. **Achievement:** new technical platform platform running live at GDN Cairo Office by mid Februrary 2006. 5.2 Systems running full site in Cairo by June 2006, with full handover in Dec 2006. **Achievement:** systems running full site in Cairo in February 2006. **Revised targets for 2008:** 5.3 Development and testing of new online system functionality and services such as online peer review systems amd online project spaces by **September 2007**. 5.4 Development tools and documentation completed by **June 2008.** **5.5** System platform upgrade and new systems redesign by June 2008. 5.6 Phased Technical Platform upgrade – systems hardware and licensing upgrade completed by December 2008. 5.7 Continuous enhancement of systems functionality, performance and streamling processes – ongoing Dec 2008.	5.1 New system development management reports and communications. 5.2 Migration management reports 5.3/.4/.5/.6/.7 Annual reports, management communications and technical documentation. .

5.39. GDNet has performed well, and if spend has stayed within budget, with extremely good value for money in developing the new platform to support the

expansion of GDNet. The budget for systems development in financial years 2007, 2008, and 2009 was £22,000, £25,000 and £25,000 respectively[38].

5.40. When GDNet moved to Cairo, it was planning to use the new technical platform – called Oryx - being developed for the information services at IDS in the UK. Oryx' development progressed very slowly with changes of contractors and demands of multiple users. GDNet eventually abandoned waiting for Oryx, using local developers to develop its own system, which was in place by February 2006. The software system has been progressively improved and upgraded through to mid-2008, including upgrading of the system hardware. The latter part of 2008 has involved a major revamp to the system, which involved a rewrite of the content management system for GDNet's various on-line services, and an accompanying redesign of the whole GDN website, led by GDNet. This was completed in time for the annual conference in Kuwait in 2009. This Output has thus been entirely achieved.

5.6 Output 6

Objective	Indicator	Data source
6) Monitoring and Evaluation	6.1 Monthly statistics produced for web traffic, content management, regional management etc.	6.1 Monthly monitoring reports.
	6.2 In-depth user survey: Report completed by June 2008.	6.2 User survey report.
	6.3 Output to Purpose Review by June 2008.	6.3 Review report.
	6.4 External evaluation of GDN activities including GDNet scheduled for end 2007/ early 2008.	6.4 External Evaluators Report

5.41. GDNet has included as an Output, 'monitoring and evaluation' (M&E). This is not an Output per se, as there is no deliverable that contributes to the Purpose, although establishment and operation of an M&E system which can monitor traffic of the GDNet services and assess their use in a policy context would be.

5.42. As seen above, GDNet has an effective system of generating webstats, even though these may not always provide very good indicators of Output level achievement. It is a pity that GDNet has not conducted the planned user survey (OVI 6.2), as this would have provided useful feedback to management. A user survey, at least at mid-term, should be a systemic element of M&E in the next phase of GDNet. It is somewhat circular to include this present review as an indicator of M&E, not least as it is not within the control of GDNet.

5.43. DFID has recently revised its logframe format as part of the Using Numbers for Decision Making project. A 'How To Note' is available on the DFID internal Results Network to explain the revised format in more detail. In essence it requires much more explicit detail on the M&E aspects of the logframe (formerly the OVIs and MOVs). All objectives need baselines, targets and milestones. GDNet will need to use this format for its next phase, and this will provide a good opportunity to consider its indicators and their respective change trajectories. It will also be an opportunity to reconsider where routine M&E is justified as an Output.

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[38] This may be compared to the cost of developing the Oryx system for MK4D, with more that four times this amount in external costs.

6 GDNet Performance

6.1 The Use of GDNet – its Relevance

Relevance: The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies.

6.1.   In assessing the relevance of GDNet, it is first necessary to understand who GDNet was designed to serve, and then who is actually using its services, and finally how well it is meeting their requirements.

6.1.1 Who is GDNet designed for?

6.2.   GDNet expounds in a number of places who its services are meant for; for example, in its last submission to DFID[39], two user groups are identified: **national producers of research**, who need support in communicating their findings to national, regional and international audiences, and **potential end-users of research**, who find it difficult to access research information generated in developing and transition economies. The intended audience, or target groups, for GDNet services are explained further in the GDNet logframe, which states - at the Purpose level in the OVI, that:

6.3.   "*By December 2008, GDNet referred to as a key source of policy-relevant research produced in developing and transition countries amongst international and national policy circles*" – this infers that GDNet must have been designed with people in 'international and national policy circles' in mind.

6.4.   Output 1 goes on to add the objective of:

6.5.   "*High profile and take up (by other researchers, policy makers and civil society) of quality development policy research produced by Southern research institutes.*" OVI 1.1 for this Output is: "*Key target user groups aware of GDNet by December 2008*". This leads to the assumption that 'Key target user groups' for GDNet must be 'other researchers, policy makers and civil society'.

6.6.   Further evidence of who are seen as GDNet's users and beneficiaries comes from the Phase 2 submission (see footnote) and the recent submission to DGIS for funding. These state that:

6.7.   "*GDNet is aimed at multiple, often overlapping, user groups and stakeholders who interact with the program in different ways. A user survey was conducted mid 2004 to consult these stakeholders and user groups to assess progress against GDNet's objectives in Phase 1.   The stakeholder analysis is summarized in Table [7] below.*"

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[39] Section 2 – *GDNet: Vision*, in GDNet Phase 2 Proposal April 2004 – March 2007 (version 8).

Table 7. GDNet's intended beneficiaries, stakeholders and user groups

Stakeholder	Interaction With GDNet
Social science/development policy researchers	- **Contributors** to GDNet: personal information; research papers - **Users** of GDNet outputs: website, Knowledge Base, email bulletins
Southern-based social science/development policy researchers	- **Contributors** to GDNet: personal information, research papers - **Users** of GDNet outputs: website, Knowledge Base, email bulletins - Primary intended **beneficiaries** of research services
Information managers in research institutes in org directory	- **Contributors** to GDNet: organization information - **Users** of GDNet outputs: website, Knowledge Base, email bulletins - Primary intended **beneficiaries** of information management capacity building
GDN Regional Network Coordinators	- **Contributors** to GDNet - **Users** of GDNet outputs: website, Knowledge Base, email bulletins - Primary **stakeholders** in GDNet through regionalization strategy
Donors, bilateral and multilateral agencies	- **Users** of GDNet outputs: website, Knowledge Base, email bulletins
Policy shapers at international level	- **Users** of GDNet outputs: website, Knowledge Base, email bulletins
Policy shapers at national level	- **Users** of GDNet outputs: website, Knowledge Base, email bulletins
Wider audiences who use the GDNet site e.g. journalists, NGOs, journal editors , business and private sector, other information intermediaries	- **Users** of GDNet outputs: website, Knowledge Base, email bulletins

6.8.   In this table it is important to note that GDNet distinguishes *Beneficiaries* and *Users*. This table is clearer than the current logframe for DFID funding in showing that Beneficiaries are intended to be researchers and information managers in their institutions, and Users are a wider cross-section, including 'policy shapers'. Nonetheless, the DFID logframe focuses on:

- o   people in 'international and national policy circles'
- o   the 'key target user groups' of 'other researchers, policy makers and civil society**'**
- o   and presumably, researchers in 'Southern research institutes' (though this is not stated)

6.9.   The key question is whether these groups are using GDNet, and indeed, what is GDNet doing in terms of targeting, informing and marketing the services to these groups?

6.1.2 Who is using GDNet?

6.10.   From the web survey conducted for this review, we found that 63.6% of users who responded in Latin America were male, and 83.8% in Africa[40], and respondents had an age distribution as follows (Table 8):

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[40] n = 222 in Africa and 374 for Latin America. n is different for different questions as not all respondents completed all questions in the survey. It is not possible from this result to say whether GDNet is attracting male

Table 8. Users are mid-career professionals

Age bracket	GDNet users		Non-users	
	n	Proportion	n	Proportion
<20	0	0.0%	1	0.3%
20-34	79	28.9%	132	41.4%
35-50	156	57.1%	131	41.1%
50-65	36	13.2%	42	13.2%
65<	2	0.7%	13	4.1%
Total	273		319	

6.11. The majority of users are thus mid-career researchers. However, the proportion of younger researchers is higher in the non-user population, suggesting an opportunity for GDNet to attract more of these early stage researchers – who are likely to be those who need to raise their profiles.

6.12. Economics is the primary discipline of respondents (Table 9): half of users are economists (66% if agricultural and health economists are included), with 16% of users describing themselves as social scientists. Of relevance to GDN and GDNet's aims to inform policy, 12% are researchers in political science and governance disciplines.

Table 9. Economists make up half of the users

Research Discipline	GDNet users		Non-users	
	n	Proportion	n	Proportion
Economics and Finance	137	50.4%	186	58.7%
Social Sciences	44	16.2%	41	12.9%
Political Science and Governance	32	11.8%	31	9.8%
Agricultural Economics	25	9.2%	27	8.5%
Other	19	7.0%	13	4.1%
Health Economics	15	5.5%	19	6.0%
Total	272		317	

6.13. The most common respondent organisational affiliation is academic / university (48% of users), with this increasing to 58% if university-related research institutes are included (Table 10). Linking to possible 'target user' categories, together non-university research institutes (possible think tanks) and government ministries/departments represent 20% of respondents. However civil society (NGOs, the private sector and the media) are poorly represented amongst users (10.4%). Thus, if GDNet is serious about developing a user base outside academia and research organisations, there is a clear opportunity for GDNet to market itself better to other (non-peer) potential users.

Table 10. The majority of users are affiliated with academic organisations

Organisation Type	GDNet users		Non-users	
	n	Proportion	n	Proportion
Academic/University	138	48.3%	175	47.4%
Research Organisation/Institute (not affiliated with University)	39	13.6%	36	9.8%
Research Organisation/Institute (affiliated with University)	27	9.4%	23	6.2%
Non-Governmental Organisation (Local/National)	19	6.6%	40	10.8%

researchers more than female researchers, as it was not possible to prove the null hypothesis that the economics and social sciences researcher population consists equally of men and women.

Government Ministry or Department	18	6.3%	31	8.4%
Other	15	5.2%	5	1.4%
Non-Governmental Organisation (Intl)	11	3.8%	10	2.7%
Donor Agency (Development Bank, UN agency, Bilateral Donor)	8	2.8%	24	6.5%
Independent/Consultant	7	2.4%	15	4.1%
Private sector/Business	4	1.4%	9	2.4%
News & Media	0	0.0%	1	0.3%
Total	**286**		**369**	

6.14. Overall, this profile of the users of GDNet is predominantly, though not exclusively, of researchers, many of whom are economists. It does not fit well with the assumed user base, especially "people in 'international and national policy circles'"

6.1.3 Why are people using GDNet?

6.15. It can be argued that there may be two different strategies to using GDNet:

  i. *Active, contributory using* – wherein users register (and maintain) a personal profile, and they receive newsletters, utilise research abstracted in the KB, and (ideally) contribute their own research (working papers) to the KB

  ii. *Passive, browsing using* – wherein users anonymously browse those GDNet web pages that are publicly available, including the KB of abstracted research

6.16. At present, the active contributory users are almost entirely from the 'producers of research' category. This review's web survey asked why people had registered a user profile with GDNet, and the results are shown in Table 11. The survey did not capture 'browsing' use of the GDNet web pages, though these are shown above in Figures 2 and 3, but as noted in relation to Figure 6, this does not distinguish specific user types.

Table 11. Access to funding information is the top reason for registering with GDNet

	Africa		Latin America	
Main reason for registration[41]	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Access to funding information	42	18.5%	59	23.8%
Access to online journal services	41	18.1%	44	17.7%
Access to data for research	30	13.2%	35	14.1%
Communicate research to other researchers	28	12.3%	34	13.7%
Access to research not published on online	28	12.3%	27	10.9%
Promotion to other researchers	26	11.5%	20	8.1%
Communicate research to policy audiences	19	8.4%	17	6.9%
Requirement of another GDN activity	8	3.5%	9	3.6%
Other	5	2.2%	3	1.2%
Total	**227**		**248**	

6.17. This result shows that access to information on research funding opportunities is the main draw for registering with GDNet. This is followed closely by access to on-line journals. Access to on-line data, the desire to communicate with peers, access to non-published research and promotion to other researchers are all also important, though it is notable that a key cost of running GDNet – abstracting

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[41] Respondents were asked to tick the top three reasons that motivated them to register for GDNet

unpublished research is not reflected as being a highly valued reason for registering, especially in Latin America. It is also notable that only a low proportion of users sign-up because they see GDNet as a vehicle for communicating to policy audiences (which is GDNet's Purpose).

6.18. The 'usefulness' rating that registered users gave to the various GDNet services is shown in Table 12. Table 13 shows how often they used these services. There are some differences between the users in the LAC region and Africa, but some distinct common trends emerge:

o Announcements of GDNet events and opportunities are the most useful service. These are mostly accessed weekly in Africa and monthly in LAC
o The following services are rated as 'extremely or very useful' by more than 50% of respondents:
   o GDN announcements   (Africa & LAC)
   o Access to on-line journals   (Africa & LAC)
   o Funding Opportunities newsletter (Africa & LAC)
   o Research in Focus newsletter   (Africa & LAC)
   o Monthly GDN newsletter   (Africa & LAC)
   o Access to on-line datasets   (Africa & LAC)
   o Knowledge Base – on-line papers (Africa only)
o 'Regional window portals'; 'Knowledge Base - researcher profiles'; and 'Knowledge Base - organisation profiles' are the least valued services in both regions. These were most frequently rated 'moderately or slightly useful'. However, in LAC between a quarter and a third of users do not use these services (or the 'Access to on-line datasets'; and 'Knowledge Base – on-line papers' services) at all
o In LAC, 38.5% of respondents say they never use the regional window portal; this is 32.1% in Africa
o In LAC, 37.7% of respondents say they never use the 'Knowledge Base - organisation profiles'; this proportion is 27.3% in Africa

Table 12. Usefulness of GDNet services

Latin America & Caribbean	Extremely or very useful	Moderately or slightly useful	Not useful	Not used
GDN announcements[42]	70.9%	19.0%	1.3%	8.9%
Access to online journals	64.9%	14.3%	1.3%	19.5%
Funding Opportunities newsletter	63.6%	26.0%	1.3%	9.1%
Research in Focus newsletter	59.0%	21.8%	2.6%	16.7%
Monthly GDN newsletter	54.5%	28.6%	1.3%	15.6%
Access to online datasets	52.0%	16.0%	1.3%	30.7%
Knowledge Base - online papers	45.2%	26.0%	1.4%	27.4%
Regional window portals	34.2%	28.9%	2.6%	34.2%
Knowledge Base - researcher profiles	32.9%	39.7%	2.7%	24.7%
Knowledge Base - organisation profiles	25.4%	38.0%	2.8%	33.8%
Africa				
GDN announcements	83.3%	13.3%	1.7%	1.7%
Research in Focus newsletter	81.4%	15.3%	0.0%	3.4%

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[42] For competitions, conferences, scholarships and jobs

Knowledge Base - online papers	77.2%	15.8%	1.8%	5.3%
Access to online journals	74.1%	17.2%	1.7%	6.9%
Monthly GDN newsletter	71.2%	25.4%	0.0%	3.4%
Funding Opportunities newsletter	70.5%	23.0%	1.6%	4.9%
Access to online datasets	68.6%	25.5%	0.0%	5.9%
Knowledge Base - researcher profiles	49.2%	44.3%	1.6%	4.9%
Knowledge Base - organisation profiles	43.6%	45.5%	1.8%	9.1%
Regional window portals	38.8%	44.9%	10.2%	6.1%

Table 13. Frequency of Use of GDNet services

Latin America & Caribbean	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	< 1/mth	Never
Access to online datasets	3.8%	13.9%	22.8%	26.6%	32.9%
Access to online journals	3.8%	18.8%	30.0%	25.0%	22.5%
GDN announcements	2.5%	21.3%	46.3%	21.3%	8.8%
Knowledge Base - organisation profiles	1.3%	9.1%	14.3%	37.7%	37.7%
Knowledge Base - online papers	1.3%	12.8%	25.6%	37.2%	23.1%
Regional window portals	1.3%	10.3%	24.4%	25.6%	38.5%
Funding Opportunities newsletter	1.2%	22.9%	48.2%	18.1%	9.6%
Knowledge Base - researcher profiles	0.0%	10.4%	14.3%	46.8%	28.6%
Africa					
GDN announcements	13.3%	33.3%	26.7%	11.7%	15.0%
Access to online journals	13.3%	23.3%	28.3%	11.7%	23.3%
Knowledge Base - online papers	12.3%	29.8%	28.1%	12.3%	17.5%
Access to online datasets	8.6%	24.1%	12.1%	29.3%	25.9%
Funding Opportunities newsletter	5.2%	41.4%	20.7%	20.7%	12.1%
Knowledge Base - researcher profiles	3.6%	25.5%	25.5%	23.6%	21.8%
Knowledge Base - organisation profiles	3.6%	20.0%	23.6%	25.5%	27.3%
Regional window portals	0.0%	26.4%	13.2%	28.3%	32.1%

6.19. These figures reveal some large imbalances between areas which GDNet considers are important, and in which it invests large amounts of its resources, and those areas which users value most. Notably, users place low value on two of the three components of the Knowledge Base: the organisational profiles, and the researcher profiles. These are time consuming to maintain, but the evidence is that the returns to effort are low. Surprisingly, users place comparatively low value, and make rather infrequent use of the regional windows, which are a core part of the way GDNet operates.

6.20. These findings are generally supported in the survey of users conducted for the 2007 GDN evaluation (Figure 10), which shows that the Regional Windows were the lowest rated service. The KB rates better in this survey than in the survey conducted for this GDNet review, but it did not disaggregate the components of the KB.

6.21. Specific to registering a profile with GDNet, the 2007 GDN evaluation asked respondents about the value of having this profile on the service. This found that the lowest value was given to disseminating research to policy audiences, and the highest to knowledge of research areas (Figure 11). However these findings are difficult to explain as the Research Profile is not designed to be the main way in

which GDNet either improves knowledge of research areas or disseminates to audiences.

Figure 10. 2007 Survey, Q.19. 'Please rate the value of the following GDNet services to you'
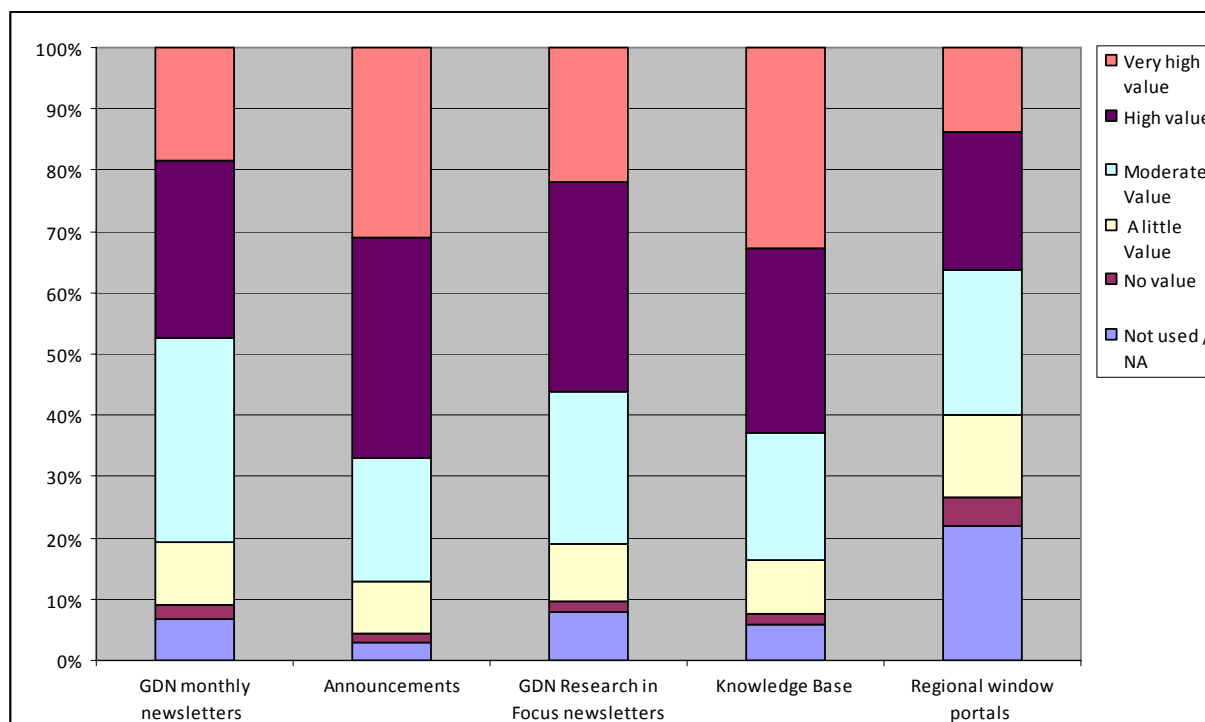
Data from 2007 GDN evaluation (Shapiro et al, 2007)

Figure 11.2007 Survey, Q.21. 'Please rate the value of registering your profile for you'
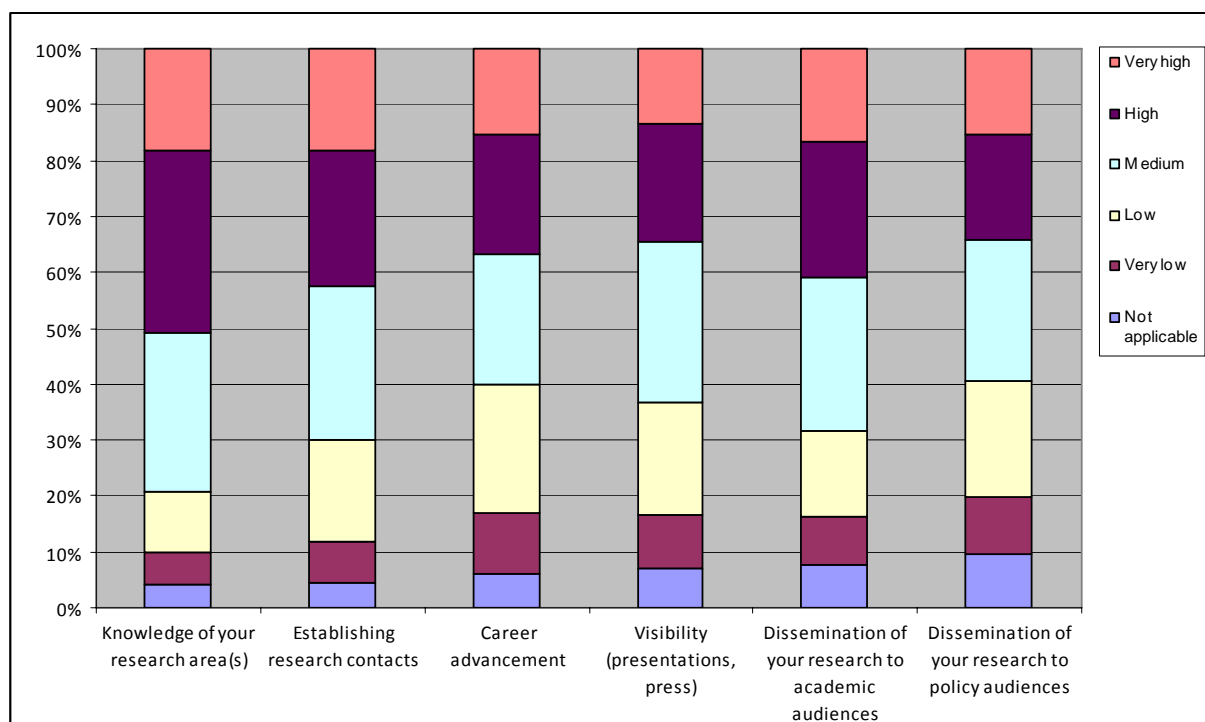
Data from 2007 GDN evaluation (Shapiro et al, 2007)

6.22. The Research Profile is meant to be a means to improve networking and these findings show that over 40% of users have found it highly or very highly valuable for

this purpose. This runs counter to anecdotal evidence that at least within the smaller national/regional research communities, researchers tend to know each other well through face-to-face contact, for example at frequent workshops. There is however, a danger that these established networks are not as inclusive of junior researchers, for whom GDNet profiles could be advantageous, especially where linked to papers. Figure 13 (overleaf), also shows that users consider that 'creating a network amongst researchers' is the third most important activity GDNet could undertake to stimulate greater use of the service. GDNet should thus consider how the Researcher Profiles could be adapted to offer more of a networking opportunity.

6.23. Overall, our survey found that 64.4% of respondents Agreed or Strongly Agreed with the statement that 'GDNet is extremely relevant to my work' (Figure 12). This points to a valuable and valued service, but one which still has plenty of scope for improvement to offer high levels of utility to most users.

Figure 12. How well does GDNet meet research needs?
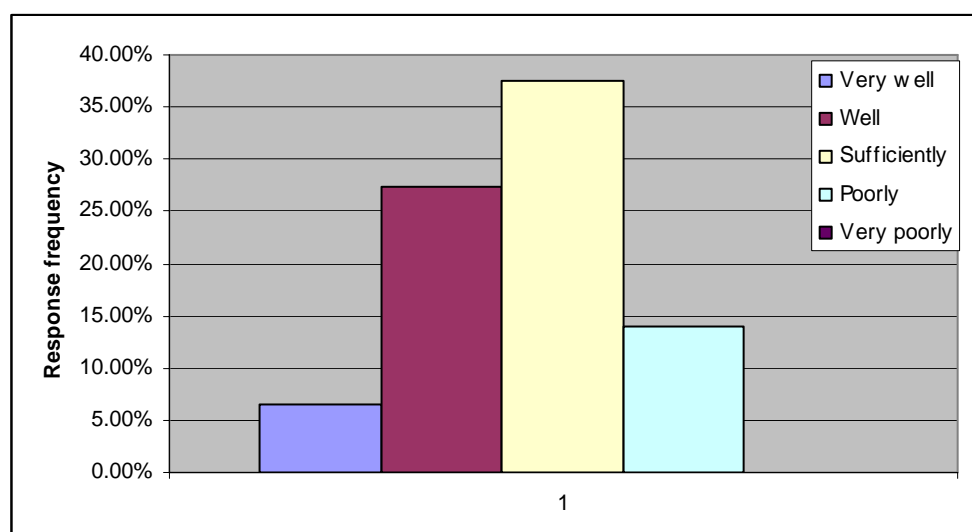
6.24. One area which was not directly investigated in the survey was the area of language of delivery of GDNet's services. Although researchers in the LAC region were surveyed, the survey was in Spanish, and questions on language were not addressed. GDNet has been investigating a French version for Francophone Africa, and an Arabic version for the MENA region. Anecdotal evidence from interviews is that there is a strong demand for this, and it will increase use. However, translation costs stand to be high, and GDNet may wish to prioritise which components it translates first, such as the currently most read KB articles.

6.1.4 Why are people *not* using GDNet?

6.25. Our survey was designed to engage respondents from a 'counterfactual' population, i.e. people who otherwise fitted the profile of registered GDNet users, but were not actually registered. We targeted members of the two Africa and LAC regional economics research associations which are GDNet's regional partners, but who as individuals are not registered with GDNet. Table 14 shows the reasons they gave for not registering with GDNet.

Table 14. Most non-users not aware of what GDNet does

Reason for *not* registering with GDNet	n	%
Not really aware of what GDNet does	151	47.5%
Never heard of GDNet	62	19.5%
Other	57	17.9%
GDNet services are obtained from another source	22	6.9%
Too complicated to register a profile	21	6.6%
GDNet does not offer needed services	5	1.6%
Total	318	

6.26. Nearly half of non-users say they have not registered because they don't really know what GDNet does. Another 20% have not heard of GDNet. This is from members of professional research economics associations. This points to under marketing. Of the 18% of 'other' reasons, are those such as:

- o I don't know that it was possible; I don't know if I can be registered as independent researcher
- o I don't remember exactly if I am registered or not; Can't really remember if I'm registered
- o Haven't known how to register; I don't know how to register
- o I have tried to do it some times, but I have problems with the site/ internet connection
- o Never needed it

6.27. These 'other' reasons point to under marketing also, as well as problems making sure researchers have good access to information on the mechanics of registration.

6.1.5 The accessibility and usability of GDNet

6.28. The web survey identified that greater usability was the fourth most important improvement that GDNet could undertake to stimulate more use by researchers, mentioned by 12.4% of respondents (Figure 13).

Figure 13. What would stimulate more use of GDNet?
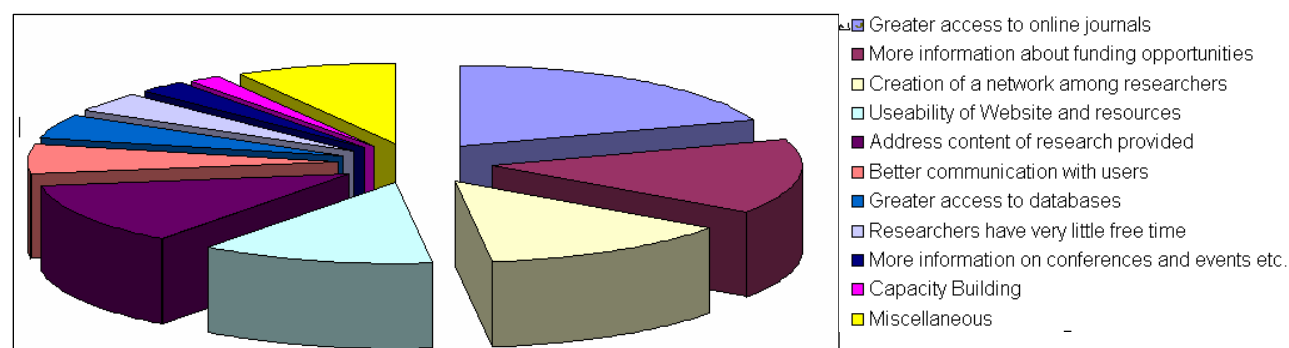
6.29. Free-hand comments made by researchers on what would stimulate them to use GDNet more included:

- o An efficient search engine for GDNet web services
- o An easier website map layout and friendlier search engine

- o Easier ways of finding the information
- o More contents. A better organization of the information
- o Better organization of info
- o Precise word results from custom searches
- o Putting my papers online is a little easier
- o More friendly access to information
- o GDNet resources could be divided by subjects

6.30. This links closely to comments in response to asking what improvements researchers would suggest to GDNet. A range of improvements were suggested, but most fell into four areas (Table 15):

Table 15. Most common areas suggested for improvement of GDNet

Suggested improvement	% of respondents
Improve the usability of website and resources	27.1
Give more/better access to online journals	15.3
Better communication with users	14.1
More information about funding opportunities	12.9

6.31. Specific comments included:

- o Search could be made much easier; Searchable paper database by subject; Use categories, tags, countries or subjects to improve search of knowledge
- o Better organization of the web page; List of works by subjects
- o There should be some info on how the website works in order to be able to take full advantage of the services and the KB
- o Use less links to get to the desired one; Easier access
- o Reducing the "weight" for the home page
- o Direct access to online services
- o Choosing your own password
- o More links to other material

6.32. The 2004 evaluation of GDNet, at the end of its first phase, had similar findings: "*Some survey respondents and interviewees commented that in terms of 'usability', thematically organized information sources that are pertinent to their own interests and containing the required levels of credible, reliable, up to date information are the preferred option. There was also indications that users look for a good deal of the sifting and selecting of materials to be already done for them when they visit a site, as they do not have time to be searching a database in a speculative way.*"

6.33. Some of these comments on the usability of GDNet's website have been partially addressed with the website revamp, which has occurred since this review completed its field work. However, the search function is still not very user friendly, offering either a crude keyword search or a more complicated search of specific fields in the KB, using Boolean logic. The keyword search does not have the intuitive aspects of a Google-type search, and the information presented in returned hits is less informative than, for example would be found through implementing a Google custom search function in the KB.

6.34. The data in the KB are also still presented in a 'raw' fashion, i.e. they have not been filtered, clustered or packaged around themes. This requires every use of the KB to undertake a search, and given the limitation of the search engine in the KB, this is a deterrent to use by researchers, let alone policy actors.

6.1.6 How researchers use the internet and access research information

6.35. It is important in supporting an on-line service to have a good appreciation of users' behaviour in the way they utilise the internet and the ways they access research information. GDNet did not appear to have this type of information easily, to support the intervention logic of what it is doing.

6.36. The survey conducted for this review asked a number of questions in this area. First – do researchers put their papers on the internet? This question was asked to both GDNet members and non-members (Table 16). Respondents were also asked who they expected to read the papers they put on-line (Table 17).

Table 16. Do you put your research papers online?

	All	Member	Non-members
Latin America & Caribbean			
Yes	70.4%	66.3%	75.9%
No	29.6%	33.7%	24.1%
n	334	172	133
Africa			
Yes	52.7%	62.3%	48.0%
No	47.3%	37.7%	52.0%
n	188	61	127

6.37. In both Africa and LAC, more researchers put their work on-line than not, though the 'uploaders' are a much greater majority in LAC. It is noteworthy that uploading is less common amongst GDNet members than other researchers in LAC, whilst the opposite is true in Africa.

Table 17. GDNet users' expected audience for their online papers

Expected audience	LAC	AFR
Other researchers globally	66.4%	69.0%
Other researchers nationally	16.4%	0.0%
Policy-makers	9.4%	14.3%
Students	4.7%	4.8%
Journalist	2.3%	2.4%
Other	0.8%	9.5%
n	128	42

6.38. In both regions, researchers upload their papers in the expectation that they will mainly reach other researchers globally. In Africa, for a reason that is not clear, it is not expected that the research will reach other researchers in the same country. Only between 9% and 14% of GDNet users expect that policy-makers will access their research through on-line channels. This is an important finding given the policy focus of GDNet's Purpose statement.

6.39. Having shown that this is, as GDNet implicitly assumes, a reasonable use of the internet by target researchers, it is worth exploring how far this extends into 'new' uses of the internet, including Web 2.0 tools. Table 18 shows which internet tools GDNet users are using.

Table 18. Which internet tools are GDNet registered users familiar with?

Internet tools used	Use	Don't Use	Don't know about/ don't have
LAC (n=165)			
Own page on affiliated organisation's site	66.3%	13.5%	20.0%
Putting articles online	62.4%	23.0%	14.5%
Own website	53.1%	23.5%	23.0%
Social networking (facebook, myspace)	45.3%	39.0%	15.2%
Blogging	29.0%	43.2%	27.3%
Wikis	27.8%	32.9%	37.6%
RSS feeds / News feeds	24.7%	29.7%	43.6%
Social bookmarking (digg, del.ici.ous)	14.1%	28.8%	53.9%
Africa (n=52)			
Own page on affiliated organisation's site	36.7%	34.7%	28.0%
Own website	30.8%	26.9%	44.0%
Putting articles online	24.0%	44.0%	32.0%
RSS feeds / News feeds	14.0%	20.9%	56.0%
Social bookmarking (digg, del.ici.ous)	11.9%	21.4%	56.0%
Wikis	9.5%	23.8%	56.0%
Blogging	6.8%	25.0%	60.0%
Social networking (facebook, myspace)	4.7%	41.9%	46.0%

6.40. LAC users appear more advanced in their use and familiarity with a range of internet tools than their African counterparts, with over 50% of LAC respondents having their own website and 45% being involved in social networking. Between 25 and 39% use blogs, wikis and RSS feeds, though higher proportions do not know about these tools. In Africa, there is much lower use of all aspects of the internet, and this maybe related to poorer connectivity. Nonetheless, over half of respondents do not know about any Web 2.0 tools. This has implications for moves in this direction on the new GDN website, and the related need to educate users in their use.

6.41. In relation to using the internet for sourcing research information, the survey asked respondents which websites (listing up to five), other than GDNet, they use for research and/or researchers (Table 19), and what they liked about these websites (Table 20). A related question was asked in the 2007 GDN survey (Figure 14).

Table 19. Proportion of respondents listing different websites as sources for research information

Website	Listing order				
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Latin America & Caribbean					
SSRN	28.1%	17.8%	12.9%	-	-
EconLit	19.9%	17.3%	6.9%	21.2%	20.8%

RePEc	16.3%	29.2%	18.1%	15.4%	-
JSTOR	10.4%	14.6%	15.5%	-	29.2%
Google/Google Scholar	10.0%	3.8%	10.3%	11.5%	29.2%
NBER	9.0%	4.9%	10.3%	19.2%	-
World Bank	3.6%	4.9%	10.3%	21.2%	20.8%
African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)	2.7%	4.3%	-	-	-
ScienceDirect	-	3.2%	-	11.5%	-
IADB	-	-	4.3%	-	-
IMF	-	-	5.2%	-	-
EBSCO	-	-	6.0%	-	-
n	*221*	*179*	*98*	*46*	*24*
Africa					
SSRN	22.6%	13.2%	10.7%	11.1%	9.5%
African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)	17.5%	--	8.3%	--	14.3%
JSTOR	8.8%	9.6%	9.5%	14.8%	4.8%
Google	7.3%	5.3%	6.0%	22.2%	19.0%
RePEc	5.8%	15.8%	13.1%	25.9%	28.6%
Poverty and Economic Policy Research Network (PEP)	3.6%	1.8%	4.8%	18.5%	14.3%
World Bank	2.9%	2.6%	10.7%	25.9%	19.0%
WIDER	2.2%	--	1.2%	--	--
Science Direct	2.2%	4.4%	3.6%	11.1%	4.8%
NBER	1.5%	2.6%	2.4%	22.2%	4.8%
CODESRIA	1.5%	0.9%	1.2%	7.4%	9.5%
IMF	0.7%	5.3%	7.1%	14.8%	9.5%
Elsevier	0.7%	0.9%	4.8%	--	--
IDEAs	0.7%	0.9%	2.4%	11.1%	--
Eldis	--	--	--	--	--
ISSER	--	--	--	--	9.5%
EconLit	--	--	9.5%	22.2%	28.6%
IFPRI	--	--	2.4%	--	4.8%
AGORA	--	2.6%	1.2%	7.4%	4.8%
African Association of Agricultural Economists (AAAE)	--	1.8%	1.2%	--	--
n	*107*	*92*	*72*	*29*	*19*

6.42. Our survey found that the services most used by researchers included: Social Sciences Research Network (SSRN), Research Papers in Economics (RePEc), JSTOR on-line journals, the World Bank, Google, National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and EconLit - the American Economic Association's electronic bibliography of economic literature. The reasons that researchers liked these sites included: ease of use, material with high degree of relevance to their work, the scientific quality of papers, and the timeliness of the research.

Table 20. Reasons for using other websites

	LAC		AFR	
	n	%	n	%
Usability	91	33.1	39	24.1
Relevance of Content	38	13.8	28	17.3
Breadth of coverage	31	11.3	-	-
Accuracy/Quality of content	31	11.3	15	9.3

Timely and regularly updated information	25	9.1	22	13.6
Accessibility	-	-	11	6.8
Free Access	12	4.4	7	4.3
Full Text Available	10	3.6	-	-
Visibility	8	2.9	-	-
Networking/event information etc.	6	2.2	7	4.3
Interaction with Users	-	-	6	3.7
Familiarity	6	2.2	3	1.9
Communication (News feeds etc.)	4	1.5	-	-
Publishing opportunities	2	0.7	-	-
Language	1	0.4	-	-
Miscellaneous	10	3.6	24	14.81
Total	*275*		*162*	

6.43. With the exception of slightly lower ratings for RePEc, which many respondents had not used, similar findings emerged from the 2007 evaluation, with users finding search engines, the World Bank and on-line access through their institutions to be valuable ways of finding research information. Our survey found that organisational subscriptions are the most common way in which users access on-line journals. It is not clear how much this overlaps with on-line provision through GDNet.

Figure 14. 2007 Survey, Q.17. How valuable are the following for you to find development-related research produced by researchers in developing or transition countries?
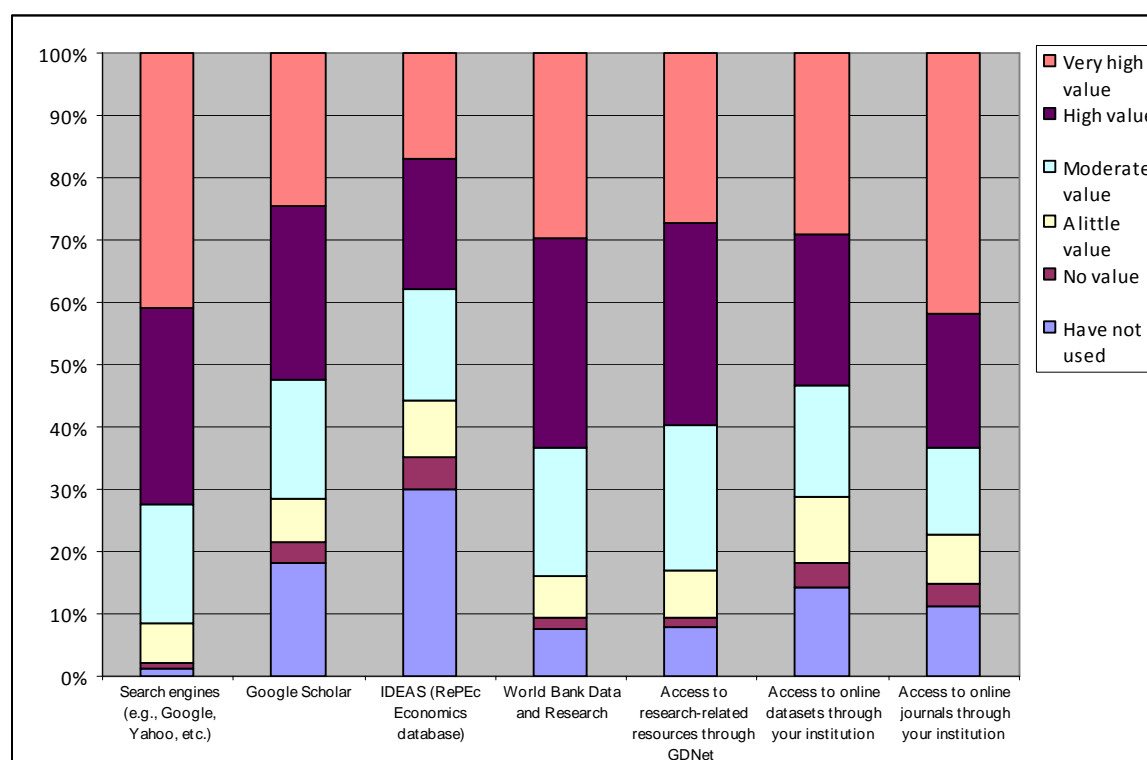
Data from 2007 GDN evaluation (Shapiro et al, 2007)

6.2 The Effectiveness and Efficiency of GDNet

Effectiveness
The extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.

> *Efficiency*
> A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results.

6.44. The question of effectiveness, in terms of how well, or otherwise, GDNet has achieved its objectives has largely been addressed in Sections 4 and 5, on Purpose and Outputs. Here, operational issues which affect achievement are addressed. There are two main aspects to this:

> i) as a network organisation, how effective has the network working with partners been in supporting the achievement of GDNet objectives?
> ii) how cost effective (i.e. efficient) has GDNet been in converting its human and financial resources into results?

6.2.1 Effectiveness – working with RNPs

6.45. The 2007 GDN evaluation found that GDN is less a network of networks and more a grantor/grantee relationship. Thus, its view was that to maintain a good partnership, GDN requires more frequent and interactive contact with the RNPs. This review has similar findings – the relationship between GDNet and RNPs is varied across the different RNPs, with differences due to proximity, levels of activity in the RNPs' other workstreams, how long Regional Window Coordinators (RWCs) have been in post, and the extent to which RNPs prioritise GDNet business.

6.46. Overall however, it was observed that for GDNet, the prime relationship is between it and the RWCs, rather than with senior management in RNPs. Though GDNet *is* in good contact with these people, there tends to be a stronger GDN – RNP management relationship, and the RNP Heads meetings, which GDNet hosted during the review, was seen as a positive contribution to this. However the GDNet relationship is more functional, and even contractual, around the tasks the RWCs perform, as specified in the sub-contract to RNPs. There is clearly an asymmetry in the relationship, whereby GDNet contracts RWCs to undertake tasks that fulfil GDNet's quantitative targets, such as number of items added to the KB.

6.47. As the term states, the RNP are partners, and as explained, the finding is that the relationship is more contractual. However, what measures would indicate a stronger partnership? Partnership is a general term widely used to describe a range of inter-organisational relationships and collaborations. Normally, it means relationships that involve activities beyond those which contracts or authority alone would warrant, aimed at achieving shared goals, based upon close working relationships.

6.48. Research thus shows that four sets of concepts appear to be key to effective partnership working:
- o <u>Trust</u> – which embodies mutual reliance, dependence and the acceptance of risk
- o Having <u>shared values</u> – which embodies joint commitment to common goals
- o Clear and understandable <u>communication</u> is often a prerequisite for development of trust and to reinforce actions in support of common goals
- o <u>Network attributes</u> refer to the degree of centralisation or openness of the partnership, its stability in terms of its resources, agenda and the people

involved, and the ability of the partnership to facilitate the acquisition and transfer of resources and add to the capacity of partner organisations.

6.49. Similarly, if the partnership occurs within a network setting, what attributes would indicate that the network is strong and functioning well? Research by IISD refers to a "network advantage" over other types of collaboration. In the context of knowledge networks, this relates to:

- o emphasising <u>joint value creation</u> by all the members within the network (moving beyond the sharing of information to the aggregation and creation of new knowledge)
- o <u>strengthening capacity</u> for research and communications in all members in the network
- o <u>identifying and implementing strategies</u> to engage decision makers more directly, linking to appropriate processes, moving the network's knowledge into policy and practice. Partner organizations bring with them their own contacts and spheres of influence, thereby extending the reach and influence of all partners to a wider range of decision makers.

6.50. Thus, the other facet of a strong network is having a Network Strategic Plan, which should start with a clear, and mutually agreed statement articulating the change in the world that the network seeks to influence or affect.

6.51. On these two sets of measures, GDNet fares reasonably well; it shares values with the RNPs, communicates well with them, and it is involved with building their capacity. However, the relationships with RNPs could be strengthened to have a better 'network advantage' – this would overcome the 'service function' approach to RNPs, and the resultant contractor – contractee mentality, and take better advantage of RNP strengths to help build a genuine network. GDNet needs to involve the RNPs in developing its Strategic Plan, which could then be a genuine Network Strategic Plan, with RNPs having a greater say in planning GDNet's operations in their regions (i.e. increasing the 'network attributes' of GDNet). Likewise, with policy mainly being made locally, the Network Strategic Plan should include region-specific objectives for better engagement of decision-makers / policy actors.

6.2.2 The Cost Effectiveness of GDNet

6.52. The three year budget for GDNet for the period under review is as follows (Table 21):

Table 21. GDNet Three Year Budget

Cost area	FY07 Budget	FY08 Budget	FY09 Budget	Total (£)	% of total
Capacity building	312,626	775,000	775,000	1,862,626	36.3%
Programme management	459,392	491,549	525,958	1,476,899	28.8%
Regional Window coordination	180,000	240,000	270,000	690,000	13.4%
Direct website & KB costs	221,000	188,940	185,086	595,026	11.6%
Online mentoring & policy pilot	71,000	76,000	76,000	223,000	4.3%
GDN Conference outreach	50,000	50,000	50,000	150,000	2.9%
Contingency, banking, evaluation	35,000	35,000	35,000	105,000	2.0%
Network coordination	10,000	20,000	-	30,000	0.6%

Total	1,339,018.00	1,876,489.44	1,917,043.70	5,132,551	

6.53. Taking the KB as the simplest area of GDNet activity in which to assess efficiency, and using figures from the 2007 Q2 and Q4 reports and the 2008 Q2 report shows that in these periods, the following additions were made to the KB (Table 22):

Table 22. Items added to the KB

	2007	Jan-Jun 2008
Documents	2,555	127
Organisation Profiles	255	31
Research Profiles	913	83
Total	3,723	241

6.54. Taking the 2007 and 2008 budgets as representative, it can be estimated that the cost of running the KB is as follows (Table 23):

Table 23. Budgeted cost of running the KB (£ p.a.)

		2007 (£)	Jan-Jun 2008 (£)
a.	Direct website & KB costs	221,000	94,470
b.	Regional Window coordination	180,000	120,000
c.	25% of programme management	114,848	61,444

6.55. Combining these two tables (costs divided by number of items added) gives a range of costs for adding a single item to the KB (Table 24):

Table 24. Estimated cost of adding an item to the KB (£ / item)

		2007 (£/item)	Jan-Jun 2008 (£/item)	Average (£/item)
i.	Direct website & KB costs only (a)	59	392	226
ii.	Direct costs (a) + RW costs (b)	108	890	499
iii.	Direct + RW costs + 25% of mgt (a+b+c)	139	1,145	642

6.56. Addition of new items to the KB slowed in 2008 due to validation and database cleaning exercises. This makes the cost per item added much higher. Staff time on cleaning the database is nonetheless still a cost to managing the KB.

6.57. Thus, if only direct website and KB costs are considered, one item (document or profile) is estimated to cost between £59 and £392 to add to the KB, with an average cost of £226 per item added. If the Regional Window coordination costs are included on the basis that the majority of RW costs are related to adding items to the KB, then this increases to an average of £449 per item added. Table 21 shows that the website and KB plus the RW costs represent 25% of the GDNet budget. Thus, if 25% of management costs are also included in the cost of running the KB, then the average cost per item added rises to an estimated £649, with a very large range between 2007 and 2008.

6.58. This seems like a large figure, but it needs to benchmarked. Benchmarks are not readily available, and might be a topic that GDNet could raise at an

Infomediaries group meeting. One example of a benchmark is that "the new British Library Research Service being charged at UK£84 per hour, plus online search costs and document retrieval and copying costs if used." [43] Hourly costs at GDNet should be substantially lower than this, but how many hours are required to research, write, check, edit and upload a KB item?

6.59. The 2007 GDN evaluation examined costs of adding different types of item to the KB, and found that: "*The cost effectiveness analysis suggests an average of about $400 for each researcher profile added, $34 for each working paper added, and $118 for each organizational profile added*". These figures are of the same order of magnitude as those above.

6.60. The evaluation further stated that is was: *"aware that adding and maintaining researcher profiles over time is a surprisingly time intensive activity given the lower Internet savvy of new Southern researchers relative to their average Northern colleagues with longer experience. Although the evaluation has not analyzed that figure closely, it appears that the costs are quite reasonable given these large time costs. GDN clearly should brainstorm about ways to reduce these costs, although it offers no suggestions and does not expect it to be able to reduce them greatly.*" A useful finding from this work is the relatively more costly nature of producing a researcher profile, which this review found to be one of the least valued parts of the KB.

6.61. However, the above are *cost* analyses[44]. It needs to be taken with a benefit analysis, but: "Valuing a Library and Information Service is a tricky, complex and difficult process. There is no panacea or easy option"[45]. Ultimately, assessing the value of the uses (i.e. the impacts) of knowledge is particularly difficult due to the complex attribution chain to the use of knowledge (Figure 15).

6.62. It is thus simpler to assess the cost per use. GDNet quarterly reports show the following level of requests to the different parts of the KB[46] (Table 25). Taking the budgeted costs of running the KB from Table 24 above, it can be seen that each request to the KB was estimated to cost between £0.05 and £0.19 (Table 26).

Table 25. Requests to the KB

	Number of requests	
	2007	Jan-Jun 2008
Researchers	6,870	3,342
Organizations	5,794	2,776
Research Papers	8,115	3,696
Knowledge Base Totals*	46,196	24,488
Knowledge Base (all pages)‡	2,667,882	1,720,411

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[43] Sylvia James (2004). *Valuing Information Services*. Proceedings of 12th Nordic Conference on Information and Documentation - Knowledge and Change. pp 130 – 135. Aalborg, Denmark; September 1-3, 2004. http://www2.db.dk/NIOD/james.pdf

[44] Guidelines on developing a more detailed Cost Benefit Analysis are given in: Michel J. Menou (Ed.) (1993). *Measuring the Impact of Information on Development*. IDRC. Appendix 2. *Applying CBA to an Information Project*: http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-43147-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

[45] James (2004)

[46] Other requests were to the KB landing page and 'create a profile', so the rows do not add up.

* *Knowledge Base Totals* reflects the total number of hits (requests) for main pages of the KB. These pages are: Knowledge Base, Researchers, Create a Profile, Organizations, Research Papers.
‡ *Knowledge Base (all pages)* shows the sum of hits (requests) for <u>all</u> the pages in the KB, i.e. all the hits of all the pages of each section within the KB (Researchers -Organizations- Research Papers- GDN Library- Special Features).

Figure 15. Example of indicators of benefits from an Information Service

- a clearinghouse on information on HIV/AIDS (Menou, 1993)

Short-term indicators[a]

- Increased awareness (information literacy) by users and beneficiaries of the existence of, applications for, and methods for using the new information resource (33% awareness level achieved for target user populations by the end of 1st year)
- Operation of a single, central authoritative resource to replace a multiplicity of fragmented, dispersed, and ineffective resources
- Increased availability of the information to more users and clienteles
- Broader, faster and more effective access to the information resource
- Improved retrieval and delivery of documents
- Improved search capability
- Improved retrievability of data, documents, and literature
- Greater usefulness of the output from the information resource because of formatting and packaging features
- Decreased incidence of AIDS from X% to Y% (modest decrease)

Mid-term indicators[b]

- Faster and more effective application of knowledge to AIDS research
- Faster and more effective application of knowledge in AIDS public awareness programs
- Faster and more effective application of knowledge in AIDS education and training programs, both formal and informal
- Reduced time spent in searching for information from X to Y hours per day
- Reduced period between retrieval and application of information from X to Y hours per day
- Greater sharing of information among public health institutions and professionals
- Greater reuse of information assets
- Fewer instances of lost or missing information
- Awareness level of 66% achieved regarding existence of, applications for, and methods for using the new information resource in target user population
- More effective public policy decision-making

Long-term indicators[c]

- Reduced incidence of AIDS from A% to B% in the primary target population as a whole
- Reduced incidence of AIDS from C% to D% in the target population at high risk
- Reduced incidence of AIDS from E% to F% in the secondary high-risk target population
- Awareness level of 95% achieved on existence of, applications for, and methods for using the new information resource in target user population
- Very effective public policy decision-making

Table 26. Cost per use of the KB

	Cost (a) / request (£)		Cost (a+b) / request (£)		Cost (a+b+c) / request (£)	
	2007	Jan-Jun 2008	2007	Jan-Jun 2008	2007	Jan-Jun 2008
Knowledge Base (all pages)	0.08	0.05	0.15	0.12	0.19	0.16

6.63. Again, there is the problem of benchmarking this amount. One comparator is the cost of document supply from the British Library of Development Services (BLDS) at IDS, which charges GDNet £4.50 for supply of an electronic copy of a research document of up to 20 pages[47]. On this basis, the underlying cost of a request to the KB seems reasonable.

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[47] Another comparator is the British Library Document Supply Services. The charge for its *reprints/ePrints* service is made up of three parts: a publisher specified copyright fee, a service charge, and VAT if applicable. Copyright fees differ from journal to journal, but an overall minimum order charge is £100.

6.64. However there are two aspects to the unit cost of a request, both of which could reduce this figure markedly: i) the level of effort in managing the KB, especially producing documents and inputting profiles, and ii) the level of KB use.

6.65. From observation and interviews, the level of resource use in processing of KB items, especially personal profiles, is high. All KB items have careful quality assurance processes – abstracts for documents are produced by RWCs, checked at GDNet in Cairo, sent back for further work, and final uploaded. Assisting researchers through the process of uploading a personal profile is an iterative process because of the way data protection guidance is applied; the data need to be provided by the individuals, but GDNet has to make sure that the profile meets a certain standard. It is difficult a very time consuming process to keep the profiles up to date. Identifying and profiling research organisations is also time consuming.

6.66. The level of use of the KB as a whole is about 183,000 requests per month. But since the marginal cost of additional requests is negligible, cost effectiveness / value for money of GDNet could be improved by both: i) reducing costs of processing KB items, and ii) increasing the levels of use. GDNet needs to pursue both strategies.

6.67. In relation to the overall cost efficiency of GDNet, Table 21 shows that the budgeted programme management costs as a proportion of the budget range from 26.2% to 34.3% across the three years, with an average of 28.8%. This appears rather high as a proportion, and in relation to comparative figures GDN has produced for overall management[48] (Table27).

Table 27.Cost Effectiveness Comparison of GDN with Other International Organisations

	GDN	Overseas Development Institute	Centre for Economic Policy Research	The International Development Research Centre	The Brookings Institution	Center for Global Development
Administrative and supporting services[49]	4.28%	45.16%	4.45%	18.45%	10.04%	5.37%
Total Revenue (in millions)	$9.26	$23.72	$5.15	$170.00	$70.95	$11.56
Year	*2007*	*2007*	*2003[50]*	*2007*	*2006*	*2004[44]*

6.68. It would be useful for GDNet to re-examine how costs are attributed in its budget, and be clearer that core costs and overheads are in programme management, and all other costs are allocated to the relevant programme areas. In the case of staff costs, this might be in the basis of fractions of Full Time Equivalents (FTEs), i.e. a proportion to programme management and a proportion to the KB or website.

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[48] GDN (2008). *Strategic Review - Issues Note for Board Discussion*. New Delhi.
[49] Administrative and Support services include general oversight, business management, general record keeping, budgeting, finance and other management and related activities. We are comparing the Administrative and Support services cost after allocating the direct staff and secretariat cost to project activities. However in case of ODI figures are available before allocation.
[50] The most recent available information.

7 Lessons Learnt & Recommendations

7.1. GDNet is providing a well-used and valued service. However, it is not used and valued for the reasons that it thinks it is, or necessarily for which it is primarily designed. It needs to focus on those services which are most valued, and those which could be marketed better in pursuit of the logframe Purpose, which is concerned with informing policy.

7.2. GDNet is at a junction point in its development. It has two main options for its next phase:

3) To do more of the same – growing the KB and capacity building – but to do it more effectively and efficiently
4) To revise its Activities and Outputs in support of a Purpose which is clearly focused on policy processes.

7.3. Option 1 has GDNet as essentially an on-line repository of knowledge, being used in a demand-pull model, and an associated stream of activity supporting researchers and research institutes to make their research more accessible on-line.

7.4. Option 2 is closer to GDN's own current mission, which has become more clearly policy-oriented. In this option, GDNet would move away from its 'on-line voice of GDN' epithet to being a key tool in GDN's outreach to policy. The review supports this option as likely to best support achievement of GDN's aims and to best fit with DFID objectives as mapped out in its Working Paper on Research Communication[51] (Box 2):

> **Box 2. Future DFID Research Directions**
>
> <u>Theme Four: Facilitation of research up take/enabling environment</u>
> *Outcome: Enabling environment improved for better research up take*
>
> o Explore innovative ways of communicating research, both within research programmes (e.g. through participatory video) and by intermediaries.
> o Continue support for services that close the gap between the practical needs of users with the practical relevance of the providers.
> o Bridge the gap between users' knowledge needs for practical, contextualised information and suppliers' information delivery.
> o Identify and support mechanisms for better access to global public goods research by southern research generators and users.
> o Explore mechanisms to raise the profile and use of southern-generated research (for example working with national governments and regional research networks) to recognise and incorporate local research communities and their work into national strategies.

7.5. To consolidate its current strengths and help it position itself within a more policy-oriented context, GDNet needs to act in five areas, listed below:

i) Maintain the excellence in its core services, and grow the number of articles in the KB

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[51] DFID (2008). *DFID Research Strategy 2008-2013*. Working Paper Series: *Research Communication*

ii)   Continue to increase access to on-line data and journal services and expand the coverage of journals

iii)   Provide support / capacity development to both individual researchers and other institutes who want to communicate better to policy actors

7.6.   To maintain currency with new ways of working, new styles of accessing information, and preferences of potential new audiences, GDNet needs to:

iv)   Position itself for new behaviours in use of ICTs. This does not mean a headlong pursuit of Web 2.0 tools, or use of any particular ICT approach for their own sake, as the review shows that the majority of GDNet's member researchers do not yet have this level of knowledge and communications literacy. However GDNet should work closely with RNPs to offer new services, both push and pull services, in line with regional-specific demand

7.7.   To step up to the ambition of its logframe Purpose, and fit with new objectives in GDN, GDNet needs to:

v)   Undertake more active marketing of its services – targeting new users in the policy shaping and making arenas, and gain a better understanding of, and then act on, the information preferences of these policy actors

7.8.   Therefore, while a real strength of GDNet is its own repository of information in the KB, together with the access it provides to other on-line sources, GDNet should not be seen merely as an on-line store of knowledge. This assigns an overly passive role to GDNet, that will not enable it or GDN to meet their policy-level objectives. Thus, in addition to maintaining the KB, GDNet needs some adjustment in its modus operandi to enable it to better act as a knowledge service with outreach to actors in policy processes.

7.1 Recommendations

7.9.   To support the above actions, the following recommendations are made, drawing on lessons emerging from the programme.

7.1.1 *DFID should continue to fund GDNet*

7.10. The first recommendation is that DFID should fund a further phase of GDNet. It is providing a service which is well used, useful and valued in developing and transition countries. It stands to increase its utility in policy processes in a further phase, if its approach is redirected towards a greater policy focus, with greater outreach.

7.11. GDNet could continue in a 'business as usual' mode, and still provide useful public goods for researchers in developing and transition countries. However, this is a less good fit with DFID's objectives than it would be if it had a better policy orientation. Thus, as seen in the next recommendation, GDNet needs to clarify its own vision for its future, and it needs time and resources to do this.

7.12. However, there should be a clearer relationship between DFID and GDNet in regard to what DFID is funding. At present, DFID is essentially providing a block grant to GDNet. With the exception of the capacity development work specifically funded under the DGIS grant, DFID is funding everything GDNet does. This includes activities which are more part of GDN's communications than GDNet's knowledge services. DFID should continue to provide core funding to GDNet, but within the proposed GDNet Strategy, DFID should identify particular objectives which it wishes to support. In particular it is suggested that DFID should not continue to fund the development and maintenance of GDN's website. Although GDNet has the demonstrated skills, expertise and hardware resources to run GDN's website, this should be under the corporate budget, with separate funds earmarked for the KB and on-line journal aspects.

<u>Recommendation 1</u>: **DFID should fund GDNet for a further three years, with an increased policy focus. The DFID funding should not necessarily fund everything GDNet does.**

7.1.2 The big picture – a GDNet Strategy

7.13. GDNet suffers from not having a **Strategic Plan**. Its aims are currently most clearly spelt out in its proposal to DGIS. The DFID GDNet logframe is also a statement of objectives. However, GDNet needs a plan that stands alone, and to which donor funding contributes, i.e. an umbrella which is broader than the DFID and DGIS funded activities. This plan would link to over-arching GDN objectives and make clear GDNet's theory of change / intervention logic. Producing such a document should be a precursor to a further funding round, and should consider what Outcomes GDNet desires, i.e. objectives that lie between the Outputs and the Goal (impact) in its logframe. It should cover both GDNet's knowledge services and outreach functions, and its capacity building workstream.

7.14. One of the lessons from the review is that GDNet's position within, and relationship to, the rest of GDN is not entirely clear. Good efforts are made, especially using ICTs, to overcome the constraints of split geography, but this has not led to greater clarity on respective roles and responsibility. For example, this is evident in two places – i) the relationship between GDNet and GDN's communications team (eg GDNet as "*GDN's electronic voice*" and being its webmaster, which should not over-shadow the core tasks of communicating research), and ii) GDNet's role in a now more policy-oriented GDN, which risks seeing GDNet as a electronic policy library rather than a tool in policy outreach.

7.15. GDN states that its goal with respect to policy is "*to strengthen the link between local researchers and local policy-makers*"[52], and GDNet's strategy needs to map out how it plays a key role in achieving that objective.

7.16. Neither GDN nor GDNet work in isolation; they work closely with RNPs. Any strategy should be a strategy developed jointly, with close participation of RNPs, so that GDNet's objectives are well-aligned with those of the RNPs – so that there are shared network goals.

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[52] GDN (2008). *Framework for the Next Phase of GDN's Bridging Research and Policy Project* (Draft).

<u>Recommendation 2</u>: GDNet, working with other parts of GDN, and with the RNPs, should develop a five year GDNet Medium-Term Strategy. This should be produced before the next three-year tranche of DFID funding is agreed, and the logframe for DFID funding should sit under / within the Strategy's objective tree.

7.1.3 The Logframe

7.17. The Logframe requires revision. It needs to better reflect what GDNet does, and aims to do, and this is not *influencing* policy. In essence, as currently written, it is missing a level – between the Purpose and the Outputs. The Purpose is concerned with *improving researchers' effectiveness in influencing policy*, and the Outputs are concerned with increasing the volume and (undifferentiated) use of on-line information, plus building capacity to manage on-line information. Therefore, the GDNet Purpose is not achievable without Outreach, i.e. the Purpose is considered to be at about the right level (even though not quite the right wording) and is consistent with GDN and DFID objectives, but the Outputs are not the right mix to cumulatively achieve the Purpose.

7.18. It is suggested that the Purpose in the DGIS proposal is a useful place to start to think about Purpose statements. This could be slightly re-worded to become: "*proactively communicate research knowledge generated in developing and transition countries to stimulate its application to policy*". However, logframe logic states that the Purpose describes a transformation - a change in behaviour by identified groups of people or organisations as a response to the goods and services delivered in the Outputs. It is thus suggested that the response is by policy actors, and the transformation is seen in use of research-based evidence in policy processes. This would require Outputs, as at present, to do with a knowledge base, access to knowledge and capacities, but it would also require an Outputs relating to GDNet's outreach function. It also requires an Output related to new audiences and marketing to them, with appropriate OVIs. Hence a possible revised logframe might look like this (Table 28):

Table 28. Outline of a Possible Revised GDNet Logframe

Current Logframe	Suggested revisions
Goal: Informed policy environment, where causes and nature of poverty are properly understood	**Goal:** Informed policy environment, where causes and nature of poverty are properly understood
Purpose: To increase the effectiveness of development research (especially that generated by southern research institutes) in influencing policy processes.	**Purpose:** Policy processes in developing and transition countries increasingly informed by evidence generated through research, especially research carried out by southern research institutes
Outputs: 1) High profile and take up (by other researchers, policy makers and civil society) of quality development policy research produced by Southern research institutes.	**Outputs:** 1) A current, policy-relevant, and easily accessible repository of research knowledge on social sciences and economics is cost effectively maintained by GDNet and its partners
2) Southern researchers using GDNet (core knowledge base, regional windows, researcher services) as a platform to support	2) Knowledge services developed for, and well-used by, policy-level actors in the South

the generation and dissemination of research, and to build horizontal South-South linkages.	[indicators of development of services include packaging, brokering / intermediary services; indicators of use need to be disaggregated by user category, and use well defined. Activities would need to include a strong set of marketing activities to promote GDNet to new policy audiences]
3) Southern research institutes using GDNet and the internet more broadly as a tool to disseminate and communicate their research.	3) The efficiency and effectiveness of Southern researchers in carrying out policy-relevant research is increased by use of GDNet services. [indicators around use of GDNet for sourcing funding, finding collaborators, use of on-line journals, linking to policy-processes]
4) Southern research institutes have skills in research and knowledge management and use of Internet technologies	4) Southern researchers and research institutes better able to broker / communicate their research-based information / knowledge into policy processes [indicators around packaging information, improving access to information, targeting audiences; activities around training and workshops, and communities of practice]
5) Developing a sustainable and scaleable technical platform to support the continued expansion of GDNet and complete its migration to Egypt.	5) GDNet is an effective knowledge network / knowledge partnership [indicators based on network/partnership criteria, and activities around planning and implementing with a greater degree of mutuality]
6) Monitoring and Evaluation	-

7.19. In revising the logframe, GDNet need to thoroughly re-examine its indicators as many of the numeric webstats-based indicators are not relevant. It will also have to produce its logframe in the revised DFID format, and this is helpful in considering indicators and their respective change trajectories.

Recommendation 3: **GDNet should thoroughly revise its logframe for the next phase, ensuring that Outputs will cumulatively lead to achievement of the policy-oriented Purpose.**

7.1.4 Outreach - from Knowledge Bank to Knowledge Broker

7.20. A lesson from the review is that GDNet is more or less a passive supplier of policy relevant knowledge and mostly to researcher audiences - only between 9% and 14% of GDNet users expect that policy-makers will access their research through on-line channels. GDNet struggles because of the distance between the Purpose and the Outputs in its logframe. To fulfil the ambition of its Purpose, GDNet needs to move from being essentially a relatively passive knowledge provider (knowledge bank) to being a more active knowledge packager and knowledge broker. The lesson is thus also that GDNet needs to develop for itself a clearer information and knowledge intermediary role – better *linking* researchers and policy shapers / makers. This requires an outreach function.

7.21. This has two implications:

    (i)   that resources are committed to new outreach activities
    (ii)   that GDNet starts to package and filter the knowledge base

7.22. And it is recommended that GDNet and the RNPs now start to allocate financial resources to, and develop skill sets in, outreach / knowledge packing / brokering functions.

7.23. However, DFID and GDNet/GDN need to take a fundamental decision. There has previously been a reticence in GDN to move into activities such as production of policy briefs, as these have been seen as 'taking a position' and lobbying. This review does not agree with that position, and indeed it can be seen that over the last year or more, GDN has changed its own stance on this. Briefs and information packs can be written neutrally, giving the range of arguments on a point, so that debate and decision making can be better informed. IDS' id21 *insights* are examples of this.

Recommendation 4: GDNet should develop a strong outreach function as part of its portfolio of activities. This would involve packaging knowledge for specific audiences and on specific topics, and more proactively targeting audiences. GDNet and its regional partners should invest in this area both financially and in terms of human resources.

7.24. Developing an outreach function, should include, inter alia:

o At a simple level, GDNet establishing 'supply-push' services as all current use of the KB is demand-pull. Push services, such as email alerts of new documents, would be 'opt-in' (free) subscription services, and could be themed (new KB records related to 'food', 'commodity trading', etc). They could and should be tailored to specific audiences.
o GDNet starting to filter, theme and package the KB documents.
o GDNet commissioning an Information Markets analysis of its market place, reviewing both the supply side, and the demand. The aim would be to give GDNet a better understanding of the information environment in which it is working, which would help it to elaborate a theory of change. It should also be used to identify means by which to stimulate demand for its services
o GDNet should consider linking to other internet-based services that can syndicate its information - especially the KB. This will target different audiences, and drive more traffic to the site. This might include:
  o re-linking with Eldis, as an additional gateway on to its KB, and to make use of Eldis' outreach. DFID would however need to consider how this fits with Eldis' remit as Eldis has been tasked with directly increasing its 'Southern' content
  o creating links with RePEc (see Box 3), as the default place where the majority of research economists source (and locate) working papers would give GDNet a wider audience and more credibility, and RePEc a significant source of 'southern' papers.
  o These two points support the 2007 evaluation's recommendation that GDNet should consider ways to make more of GDNet as a portal for Southern researchers to leading working paper and database collections worldwide.

Box 3. RePEc

RePEc: Research Papers in Economics (http://repec.org) is a volunteer-driven initiative to create a public-access database that promotes scholarly communication in economics and related disciplines. The database contains information on more than 630,000 items of interest, over 520,000 of which are available online:

- 17,600 individual professionals (their contact information and associated publications)
- 10,800 institutions (economics departments, research institutes, and governmental organizations)
- bibliographic information on 254,000 working papers published by institutions and individuals
- bibliographic citations for 370,000 articles from the leading journals in the discipline
- bibliographic citations for 4,200 books and chapters
- 1,600 software descriptions and programs

RePEc's capabilities are unique in this regard: the RePEc database links information on the published and unpublished works of thousands of economists. RePEc promotes scholarly communication by providing a database that welcomes all providers of unpublished materials (working papers, discussion papers, research reports, conference papers) and publishers of journals (including scholarly societies, commercial and non-commercial publishers) to place their bibliographic information in the public domain. Individual economists are invited to identify the documents they have authored in the database. RePEc is volunteer-driven, and all RePEc information is freely available from web-based RePEc services such as: IDEAS (http://ideas.repec.org), EconPapers (http://econpapers.repec.org), Socionet Personal Zone (http://spz.socionet.ru/index-en.shtml), Inomics (http://www.inomics.com/cgi/show).

Current RePEc data are used in the NEP (New Economics Papers, http://nep.repec.org) service that provides subject-specific current awareness email lists.

7.1.5 Regional Partners / Regional Windows

7.25. GDNet is a 'network of networks' at two levels: i) a network of RNPs who partner GDNet to deliver its services, and ii) a network of organisations with profiles on the KB. The level of 'network-ness' could be better in both cases.

7.26. In regard to RNPs, GDNet shares values, communicates well, and helps with building their capacity. But the relationship is still mainly contractual. Greater levels of joint planning and work beyond the KB and capacity building would be mutually beneficial, for example deciding with partners how to proportion effort and resources between the various GDNet activities in each region. This is a necessary step as the review found that the Regional Windows are surprisingly under-used and under-valued, and have not yet succeeded in developing their own GDNet identity with users in their regions.

<u>Recommendation 5</u>: GDNet should involve RNPs in developing the GDNet Medium Term Strategy, which should include region-specific plans and objectives for better engaging decision-makers / policy actors. RNPs should be more involved in GDNet M&E, with joint monitoring of partnership working in the implementation of the strategy.

7.27. With regard to partners who are organisations in the KB, since most of the policy processes that GDNet aims to inform will be taking place locally, these

partners will be closer to policy actors than GDNet itself. GDNet will need to ensure capacity building activities recognise this dynamic and the skills sets required.

7.1.6 Improve Usability

7.28. A lesson from the review is that a high level of attention needs to be paid to user interfaces in on-line knowledge systems. The GDNet system, until the recent revamp, has not provided an easy to navigate resource. The website had too many levels, and the search function in the KB was rather basic. This put users off.

7.29. Researchers, like policy-makes and many others, are time poor. While the internet has revolutionised access to information, it has also created an information overload - in terms of generation of new information, and multiplicity of channels through which information may be pushed or pulled. GDNet needs to develop a strategy by which it provides a distinctive value addition that users recognise, and so prioritise GDNet as a preferred source, resulting in GDNet rising above the mass of information services.

7.30. Why do people use a particular information source or service? They find it is:
- Relevant - a high 'signal-to-noise ratio'
- Trustworthy – unbiased and quality assured
- Easy to access

7.31. On these criteria, GDNet scores well on trustworthiness, the information it provides is seen by users as balanced and thoroughly checked. Users also perceive the material to be mostly relevant to their needs. However they do not find it easy to access. While a strength of GDNet are its summaries / abstracts of full research papers, which *do* make access to research information quicker and easier, until the launch of the revamped website in 2009, the navigation and searching of the GDNet website and KB were not good. This is where GDNet had correctly needed to focus. Nonetheless there are still improvements that could be made to the KB search engine.

7.32. The presentation and usability of the KB should be significantly improved to make best use of the resources which now exist. Key improvements would include:
- Much better searching, such as use of embedded Google
- As noted above, packaging the knowledge base better. Usability would be dramatically improved by high-level theming of the Knowledge Base according to a number of common topics. Examples of this are Eldis' Resource Guides and Dossiers[53], and CAPRi's 'canned searches'[54]. This packing and filtering are key functions of knowledge intermediaries, and make the knowledge much more usable. Outputs could include – ready made clusters / packs of pre-selected 'top 20' articles in a number of key / topical fields.
- Theming could also be pro-active in relation to 'hot topics' and current events. Thus GDNet could usefully mine the KB to produce a dossier on topics such as the food crisis and food prices. It could also identify key events, such as World Food Day, International Women's Day, World Refugee Day, G8 /G20

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[53] http://www.eldis.org/
[54] http://ifpri.catalog.cgiar.org/pubs_menu.asp

conferences, Arab League conferences, WTO meetings, etc, etc[55], and produce theme packs in advance of these days, and launch them to the press as events in their own right, and as media sources. These might then be a good way to stimulate use of the KB by new audiences. This requires GDN or GDNet to compile a meta-calendar of significant events for which it wishes to prepare relevant policy materials.
   o Topic-filtered email updates (and eventually RSS feeds)

7.33. To get the value out of the investment in the KB, GDNet should implement a more user-friendly search function, which might make use of Google Custom Search. It also needs to undertake some more upstream 'info-mediary' functions, particularly some thematic clustering of material in the KB, so that users can quickly get to some pre-selected sets of articles and other resources related to important / current topics. It is fully recognised that GDNet has diverged from Eldis, and is serving a slightly different function, but GDNet could usefully discuss with Eldis their experience of and approaches to searching and filtering / clustering KB resources.

Recommendation 6: GDNet should continue to improve the usability of the Knowledge Base, through an improved search engine, and as in Recommendation 4, thematic clustering of material in the Knowledge Base.

7.1.7 Audiences, Meeting Users' Needs, Marketing

7.34. A lesson from the review is that GDNet has not been good at identifying or targeting its audiences, and has not particularly chosen communication channels to best hit specific audiences. The logframe describes the audience quite loosely:

   o people in 'international and national policy circles'
   o the 'key target user groups' of 'other researchers, policy makers and civil society'
   o and presumably, researchers in 'Southern research institutes' (though this is not stated)

7.35. Having identified a policy objective in its Purpose and a broad policy audience, GDNet did not then progress to developing a communications strategy and supporting Outputs and Activities to target, inform or market to these.

7.36. A **research communications and outreach strategy** needs to be an explicit part of the GDNet Medium Term Strategy, which explains who GDNet's audience is, how they access and use research-based knowledge, and how different communications channels will be used to best reach them.

7.37. The level of use of the KB is about 183,000 requests per month, but the marginal cost of additional requests is negligible, so GDNet should actively increase the volume of use as well as the diversity of users. This requires a GDNet **marketing strategy**, both for GDNet itself and for its RNPs. This should consider marketing to both expand the researcher audience[56], as well as new, non-research audiences.

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[55] http://www.unac.org/en/news_events/un_days/international_days.asp
[56] The web survey found that nearly half of non-users say they have not registered because they don't really know what GDNet does. Another 20% have not heard of GDNet. This is from members of professional research economics associations, and points to under marketing.

Since much of the contact with both these parts of the audience will be through Regional Windows, it is important to involve RNPs in developing this strategy, for it to have region-specific elements, and for RNPs' marketing capacities to be developed.

7.38. Recommendation 6 above is about broadly increasing usability for users in general. GDNet needs to develop relationships with those higher up the policy 'food-chain', particularly opinion formers, think tanks, and higher level knowledge intermediaries, such as journalists and the media, particularly those at the national level. Having not targeted these target audiences to date, GDNet should undertake an exercise on **audience segmentation** and on information needs and formats for audience segments (see Box 4).

Box 4. Web 2.0

There has been discussion of, and under the website revamp a move into, use of Web 2.0 tools. Web 2.0 tools tend to favour:
- o always-on-line culture
- o a younger demographic, though Web 2.0 is climbing the demographic
- o and to some extent, a relaxed leisure time

This combines with the survey's finding that over half of respondents do not know about or use any Web 2.0 tools. Thus, use of Web 2.0 tools needs to overcome six challenges[57]:
- o how to involve the right people
- o whether potential users have sufficient connectivity
- o infrastructure and language issues
- o whether people will actually participate (time, culture and demography)
- o structuring and organising content
- o assessing the benefits

Web 2.0 clearly is not a panacea for GDNet. Critical tasks for GDNet in use of Web 2.0 are to identify which audiences and which types of information these media best fit, and the related need to educate users in their use.

7.39. However, for the higher-end users in policy processes, producing good output, such as abstracts and theme packs is not sufficient. There is usually a need to cultivate relationships, to encourage use. GDNet has not done this previously, and will find it difficult to do from Cairo – this is a task for RNPs. The capacity building programme will need to cover these aspects of communications.

<u>Recommendation 7</u>: **The GDNet Medium Term Strategy must include explicit strategies for research communications and outreach, as well as for better marketing the services to existing and new audiences, with clear audience segregation and targeting. These strategies should be developed with, and relate to, both GDNet itself and the RNPs.**

7.1.8 *Improving efficiency - Reducing effort on KB profiles*

7.40. The survey results and analysis of costs shows some large imbalances between areas which GDNet considers are important, and in which it invests large amounts of its resources, and those areas which users value most. A lesson from the review is

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[57] Chris Addison, Euforic. Web 2.0 conference for the development sector. Rome, Italy, 24-26 October 2007

that researcher profiles and organisational profiles are not highly used or valued, yet they are a major drain on staff resources in GDNet. Evidence is that returns to GDNet effort are comparatively low.

Researcher profiles

7.41. GDNet needs to reconsider its approach to managing this part of the KB, to seek more efficient systems. A key challenge that GDNet faces at present for KB profiles to function successfully, is that a directory of researchers' details, including contact details and areas of expertise, experience and current interests must be constantly kept up to date. It is suggested that that GDNet no longer aims to maintain the database of researchers, which is a complicated and iterative task, heavily dependent on the individual researchers to react, due to data protection requirements[58]. This would entail the researcher profile database being transformed so that researchers entirely self-manage their profiles. This becomes their own space.

7.42. This is an area where various web tools have good potential – in LAC 66.3% of users have web pages on their organisation's site and 53.1% have their own website; in Africa, these figures are 36.7% and 30.8% respectively. There does not necessarily need to be a uniform format to researcher profiles, although GDNet could provide one for those who wanted it. It could also create a keyworded index of researcher's websites, which would be a much simpler task to maintain than a database of profiles. Creating links to researcher's web pages would provide a richness that is difficult to obtain in a flat KB of profiles. Researchers are more likely to keep their own web pages up to date than they are a profile on GDNet's KB, given that they own their webpage, but feel that the profile belongs to GDNet.

7.43. It's be possible to go further and use some Web 2.0 tools here, establishing the profiles as a social network, which is indeed how it was intended to work in the first place. This review's web survey found that users felt the third most important activity GDNet could undertake to stimulate greater use of the service is by 'creating a network amongst researchers'. It is thus worth putting some effort into stimulating greater networking. It should be noted however that social networking is not yet very widely used everywhere – 45.3% of users in LAC and 11.9% in Africa.

7.44. There would still be a requirement for some form of user validation in order to qualify for free on-line journals and datasets. This could be a much more streamlined exercise than it currently is, not linked to the researcher profile process. GDNet should explore options around self-validation, or simple email response validation (e.g. Microsoft provides hugely discounted software to bona fide higher education students, but they need to have a valid *.ac.uk* or *.edu* email address to validate that they are eligible to receive it). It should also be noted that only a small proportion of researchers with profiles have documents on the KB, and any work on profiles should also be designed to stimulate an increase in researchers putting forward papers to the KB.

Recommendation 8: GDNet should change the way it manages researcher profiles, seeking to employ a system whereby researchers manage their own

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[58] GDNet operates under UK DPA rules, dating back to when it was hosted at IDS.

profiles, and which promotes using the profiles for professional social networking.

Organisation profiles

7.45. Regional Window Co-ordinators in many regions are saying that they are getting to the limits of the number of organisations that are available to add as profiles to the KB. This cataloguing effort is therefore yielding diminishing returns. It also seems slightly anachronistic, given the power of search engines, to create a catalogue of organisations. One of the very early activities Eldis engaged in when it was still part of BLDS, was a catalogue of all the websites in the world dealing with development. It was at a fairly slim volume. Use of the internet has changed dramatically, and the way in which 'listings' are approached has changed. While many websites continue to have a 'useful links' page, this tends to be a small set of favourites, not an encyclopaedic listing. Search engines can now effectively build listings on the fly.

7.46. This is good for finding popular sites (for example against a Google search for the term 'development economics institute', the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) is the second ranked website). The weakness is in finding less prominent organisations.

7.47. The other weakness of the organisations profiles is that it is a flat record of an organisation, plus a one-way link from GDNet's website to an organisation's site. This is not a dynamic reciprocating link, and Google shows that there are in fact rather few links from development organisations to GDNet. Thus, GDNet should encourage organisations to create links from their sites back to GDNet. GDNet feels it is of value to continue to try to maintain and grow what is essentially a directory of research organisations, but this does need to be done more efficiently. Hence:

Recommendation 9: GDNet should make an in-depth assessment of the utility of linking this part of the KB more explicitly, and with reciprocation, to other, larger, directories, such as EDIRC. GDNet should progress the discussions with FPRI on out-sourcing the organisations KB, with a view to releasing staff/RWC resources to areas with greater returns.

7.1.9 Other recommendations

Capacity Building

7.48. The next phase of GDNet needs to make an **important shift of emphasis** and approach: *from* knowledge management and research communications *to* communication of research to policy audiences. This has significant implications in the skill sets which will be required to do the work in GDNet and the RNPs, and on the type of capacities GDNet should be seeking to develop in research institutes and info-mediaries in the regions.

7.49. A capacity building Output and an associated stream of activities will therefore be an important component of GDNet's next phase. This needs to link to, and build on the lessons from, GDN's Bridging Research and Policy (BRP) global programme. Other programmes, such as ODI's RAPID programme and IDS' Knowledge Services, as well as the African Capacity Building Foundation, will also be useful partners in re-aligning the capacity building work.

<u>Recommendation 10</u>: GDNet should ensure that it continues to place sufficient emphasis on its capacity building component, which needs to be re-aligned to support the shift *from* knowledge management and research communications *to* communication of research to policy audiences.

On-line Journals

7.50. On-line journals are an important draw-card for users coming to GDNet. They are the second most important reason, after access to funding information. For example, access to JStor was used as an incentive for researchers to update their profiles on the KB, and about 6,000 profiles were consequently updated. However, where access to on-line journals was less important to some users, it was because they had access through their organisations or another service. DFID also funds multiple journal access across different programmes (MK4D, GDNet, INASP, etc).

<u>Recommendation 11</u>: <u>GDNet</u> should continue to prioritise, and allocate sufficient funding to, provision of on-line journals, but should consider how this might be streamlined or focused on those who do not have access through other channels. <u>DFID</u> should make a study of the multiple portals to on-line journals which it funds, to ensure that it is avoiding duplication / double payment and it is obtaining sufficient value for money for the scale of its bulk purchases across the programmes.

M&E and Reporting

7.51. The indicators in GDNet's logframe are mostly quantitative and strongly based on webstats. These numbers are not good indicators of the related objectives, for example the blunt measure of web traffic does not relate well to the policy level objectives and target audiences in the objectives. This needs to be re-examined in the new logframe, and GDNet needs an M&E system that can disaggregate results by categories of target user and type of use, particularly at the Purpose level in how these relate to policy actors and processes. The webstats focus of the M&E should be complemented by other M&E approaches, such as the user survey, which it did not undertake in the current phase. At a minimum, a mid-term user survey is needed. Having developed its M&E system, GDNet should also negotiate with DFID the level of detail it requires in its routine reporting. At present, the level of reporting is useful for internal management of GDNet, but contains too much fine-grained detail for DFID, who is more concerned with changes at the higher end of the results chain.

<u>Recommendation 12</u>: With the new logframe, GDNet should redesign its M&E to better measure progress against its objectives, and be less reliant on webstats. Its reporting should focus on higher level achievements.

Annex 1. GDNet logframe

This version April 2007

Narrative Summary	Objective Verifiable Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
Goal: Informed policy environment, where causes and nature of poverty are properly understood	Increased use of and reference to locally generated research in relevant policy fora	Policies produced, public statements by policy makers, assessment of researchers, civil society and policy makers	That an informed policy environment leads to the formation and implementation of policies which decrease poverty
Purpose: To increase the effectiveness of development research (especially that generated by southern research institutes) in influencing policy processes.	By December 2008, GDNet referred to as a key source of policy-relevant research produced in developing and transition countries amongst international and national policy circles.	Survey of sample of target policy and research audiences by June 2008.	That policy is based on or influenced by research evidence
Outputs: 1) High profile and take up (by other researchers, policy makers and civil society) of quality development policy research produced by Southern research institutes.	1.1 Key target user groups aware of GDNet by December 2008. 1.2 Increase of **50%** in web traffic by **Mar 2007** (baseline in Jan 04 is approx. **30,000** visits, so increase would be to **45,000 visits by Mar 07**). **Achievement**: average **68,800** visits for the period **Mar 06- Mar 07**. **Targets for June & Dec 2008** 1.3 Increase of additional **20%** in web traffic by June 2008, so increase would be approx **82,500** visits by **June 2008.** 1.4 Increase of additional **10%** in web traffic by **December 2008** to reach an	1.1 Survey of target and existing end users by June 2008. 1.2 Web statistics.	That policy shapers and others are looking to use in their work quality research produced by local, Southern research instirues. That researchers, policy makers and civil society have access to and use the internet to obtain information

Narrative Summary	Objective Verifiable Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
	average of **90,800** visits over the six months period.		
2) Southern researchers using GDNet (core knowledge base, regional windows, researcher services) as a platform to support the generation and dissemination of research, and to build horizontal South-South linkages.	2.1 Increase in proportion of non-OECD researcher profiles on Knowledge Base from **58% to 80%** by Mar 2007. **Achievement:** increase in the proportion of non-OECD researcher profiles to **79%.** **Targets for June & Dec 2008** Increase in proportion of non-OECD researcher profiles on Knowledge Base from **79% to 82% by Dec 2008.** 2.2 Increase in proportion of non-OECD researcher profiles with attached document summaries from 5% to **50%** by Mar 2008. **Achievement:** increase in the proportion of non-OECD researcher with attached document summaries to to **79%**. **Targets for June & Dec 2008** Increase in the proportion of non-OECD researcher with attached document summaries to **85% by Dec 2008**. 2.3 Researchers based in developing countries report increased contact by other southern researchers directly as a result of being featured on GDNet.	2.1 GDNet montlhy monitoring stats. 2.2 GDNet montly monitoring stats. 2.3 Survey of researcher profile holders by June 2008.	That linkages and collaboration between researchers around the world improve research quality, quantity and the policy environment. That local internet or email connectivity is sufficient to make use of GDNet's platform and services. The data updating and cleansing exercise will result in eliminating old records thus reducing the overall number of researchers profiles and possibly influencing the proportion of non-OECD researchers profiles.

Narrative Summary	Objective Verifiable Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
3) Southern research institutes using GDNet and the internet more broadly as a tool to disseminate and communicate their research.	3.1 Increase in proportion of non-OECD organization profiles from **65% to 80% by June 2008.** **Achievement:** challenging indicator due to the finite number of exisitng non-OECD and OECD organizations. Increase of one percent only achieved to **66%.** **Targets for June & Dec 2008:** increase to **70%** in the proportion of non-OECD organizations post the data updating and cleansing exercise by Dec 2008. 3.2 Increase in proportion of non-OECD organization profiles *with documents* attached from **7% to 50%** by June 2008. **Achievement:** increase in proportion of non-OECD organization profiles with documents attached to **54%.** **Targets for June & Dec 2008:** increase in proportion of non-OECD organization profiles with documents attached to **60%.**	3.1 GDNet monthly statistics. 3.2 GDNet monthly statistics	That local internet or email connectivity is sufficient to make use of GDNet's platform and services. That increasing number of development related organizations are identified by the help of regional coordinators. The data updating and mapping exercise will result in identifying new content.
4) Southern research institutes have skills in research and knowledge management and use of Internet technologies	4.1 Participants in GDNet courses report increase in level of skills by **December 2008.** 4.2 Participants report application of new skills in their work by **December 2008.**	4.1 **Self-appraisal by workshop participants.** 4.2 **Survey** of workshop participants by **June 2008**.	That research institutes do not lose key trained personnel.

Narrative Summary	Objective Verifiable Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
5) Developing a sustainable and scaleable technical platform to support the continued expansion of GDNet and complete its migration to Egypt.	5.1 New technical platform running live at IDS by February 2006. **Achievement:** new technical platform platform running live at GDN Cairo Office by mid Februrary 2006. 5.2 Systems running full site in Cairo by June 2006, with full handover in Dec 2006. **Achievement:** systems running full site in Cairo in February 2006. **Targets for June & Dec 2008:** 5.3 Development and testing of new online system functionality and services such as online peer review systems amd online project spaces by **September 2007**. 5.4 Development tools and documentation completed by **June 2008.** 5.5 System platform upgrade and new systems redesign by **June 2008**. 5.6 Phased Technical Platform upgrade – systems hardware and licensing	5.1 New system development management reports and communications. 5.2 Migration management reports 5.3.1 Annual reports, management communications and technical documentation. 5.4.1 Annual reports, management communications and technical documentation. 5.5.1 Annual reports, management communications and technical documentation.	That a suitable contractor or partner is found to host the system in Egypt.

Narrative Summary	Objective Verifiable Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
	upgrade completed by **December 2008.** 5.7 Continuous enhancement of systems functionality, performance and streamlining processes – ongoing **Dec 2008.**	5.6.1 Annual reports, management communications and technical documentation. 5.7.1 Annual reports, management communications and technical documentation.	
6) Monitoring and Evaluation	6.1 Monthly statistics produced for web traffic, content management, regional management etc. 6.2 In-depth user survey: Report completed by June 2008. 6.3 Output to Purpose Review by June 2008. 6.4 External evaluation of GDN activities including GDNet scheduled for end 2007/ early 2008.	6.1 Monthly monitoring reports. 6.2 User survey report. 6.3 Review report. 6.4 External Evaluators Report	Funding, human resources, capacity and time permit regular detailed, in-depth data gathering.

Annex 2. Terms of Reference

Output to Purpose Review – Global Development Network's Electronic Network (GDNet)

Background

DFID has supported GDNet (The Global Development Network's Electronic Service) since its early pilot phase in 2002. The current phase of funding (July 2005 – December 2008) amounts to £1.2 million.

GDNet's purpose is to proactively communicate research knowledge generated in developing and transition countries to stimulate its application to policy. It fulfils this purpose through three key objectives:

1. to enable institutes and researchers in developing countries to communicate their knowledge and research more effectively to others by linking them into a global network and showcasing their work;

2. to provide social science researchers in developing countries with access to resources that enable them to do their research better;

3. to help the dissemination capacity of research institutes by providing training and professional support to upgrade skills in knowledge management and provision of new internet-based services.

GDNet is one of a number of information and knowledge services that DFID supports as a means for enhancing access to research information and results. DFID also strongly supports programmes that aim to build capacity of southern researchers to better communicate their research and also, to provide them with opportunities for show casing their research.

Objectives of the Evaluation

To provide an objective assessment of the results and likely impact of the programme. The evaluation must address the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of the programme in relation to its objectives. The evaluation must identify lessons on both the outcomes and process of the project, which might inform DFID's future strategy for supporting the same or similar services.

The main objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Assess how GDNet meets users' demands for the service and where is the demand and growth for such a service (to examine/ investigate region-specific requirements and researchers communications requirements/ challenges); this assessment should also look at the flexibility and responsiveness of the service to users' demands;

- Assess how GDNet has contributed towards capacity development of Southern partners; investigate modalities to improve cooperation/ partnership with regional network partners;

- Assess the cost-effectiveness of GDNet as a demand-driven information service (look at partners and links to complementary services, etc.);

- Assess how the GDNet interface/ integration with GDN activities contributed to the GDNet development/ outreach;

- Assess the quality, relevance and range of information provided by the GDNet, especially how it complements other communication and information services; investigate potential areas of cooperation;

- Assess the accessibility and usability of the information to different user groups in different countries and regions of the world;

- Assess the contribution the service has had to global (international, national, local) knowledge and information networks;

- Provide DFID with clear recommendations and options to inform the decision on any future funding. These must be based on clear evidence and reasoning. If support should be continued, suggest the most appropriate location in DFID for hosting the service;

- Provide recommendations on how GDNet might be improved; areas of potential growth both regionally and internationally;

- Identify lessons learnt in providing a network in this way; especially consider how the network has changed according to changes in the way information is used and accessed (e.g. access to ICTs, language, skills to 're-package' information, etc.).

Main Questions

The evaluation should seek to answer the following main questions:

1. What is the impact of GDNet on supporting quality research generation; promoting Southern research communications; knowledge sharing and capacity development?

2. What is the relevance and effectiveness of this service? Review of Purpose: To what degree is the GDNet logframe purpose relevant to the overall GDNet/GDN goal (of reducing global poverty as a result of promoting development research especially that generated by Southern research institutes)?

3. How cost-effective and sustainable is this service in relation to demand and benefits?

Deliverables

The Evaluation Team will produce a report that responds to the overall objectives in section 2 and the questions in section 3.

A draft report should be submitted no later than end June 2008 to:

Liz Harmer, Communications Team, Central Research Department, DFID. L-Harmer@dfid.gov.uk

A final report must be submitted within 2 weeks of receiving feedback from DFID. <u>The evaluation must be completed by end July 2008.</u>

Reports should be submitted in electronic format and be compatible with Microsoft Word 2003.

The report should be no longer than 20 pages with additional annexes. There must be an executive summary to the report (see Annex 1 for a suggested format for the report).

The consultants may consider sharing the draft report with the GDN Regional Network Partner Heads during the meeting in Cairo 2-3 July 2008 and the GDN Board meeting in Yale 10-11 July for feedback. The consultants may be required to give a verbal presentation to DFID staff on the main findings and recommendations.

Method

- The Evaluation Team/consultant will work closely with GDNet and the CRD Communications Team.
- The team will receive a briefing from CRD with regard to the TORs for this evaluation.
- The method and process for the evaluation should be discussed with GDNet and then agreed by CRD.
- The consultants will undertake meetings and field visits as required to deliver against the TOR. The field visits should be discussed with GDNet and agreed by CRD. It is suggested to organize meetings with the Regional Network Partners in Egypt, Prague and Colombia.
- The Evaluation Team should use GDNet's own documented arguments and evidence of its achievements as its primary sources. These will include evaluation documents and reports from GDNet's own monitoring system and reports on feedback they have received about any of their services. GDNet will provide the relevant background documents. GDNet will nominate a person to work with the evaluation team to provide them with a briefing, access to documents and other information as requested by the Evaluation Team.

Timing and estimated person days

The evaluation should start in April 2008, though this is flexible providing it can be completed by the end of July 2008. It is estimated that the evaluation will require around 20-25 person days. This will include visits to partners in Egypt and either Czech Republic or Colombia.

Additional Information

See http://www.gdnet.org/middle.php?primary_link_id=3&secondary_link_id=12 and http://www.research4development.info/projectsAndProgrammes.asp?ProjectID=3945

Annex 3. List of People Met

Sherine Ghoneim	GDNet Director
Jermeen El Baroudy	GDNet Regional Coordinator
Shahira Emara	GDNet Online Services Coordinator
Nadia Fawzy	Program Coordinator
Nadine Hashem	GDNet Regional Coordinator, LAC
Laila Kandil	GDNet Regional Coordinator
Haitham El Khouly	GDNet Regional Program Manager
Ingy El Abd	GDNet Regional Coordinator
Karim Sobh	GDNet IT and software support
Gobind Nankani	GDN President
George Mavrotas	GDN Chief Economist
Ramona Angelescu	GDN Senior Political Scientist
Olu Ajakaiye	Director of Research, African Economic Research Consortium (Africa)
Rashid Amjad	Vice Chancellor, Pakistan Institute for Development Economics (South Asia)
Tom Coupe	President, Kyiv School of Economics (CIS)
Randy Filer	Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education and Economics Institute (CEE)
Ahmed Galal	Director, Economic Research Forum (MENA)
Wood Salale	Dean, Faculty of Business and Entrepreneurship, The National University of Samoa (Oceania)
Chalongphob Sussangkarn	President, Thailand Development Research Institute (East Asia)
	Japan
Nabeela Arshad	Pakistan Institute of Development Economics; RWC South Asia region
Ingy Magdi	RWC MENA region, ERF
Michael Jetton	RWC CEE region [by phone]
Lyn Squire	GDN Ex-President (1999-2007) [by phone]
Geoff Barnard	IDS [by phone]
Alan Winters	IDS, and Ex-Board Member, GDN [by phone]
John Young	Director RAPID Programme, ODI [by phone]
Hannah Handousa	...
Dr Ragui Assaad	Fellow, Economic Research Forum; and Regional Director for West Asia and North Africa, The Population Council