THIS WORKING PAPER ON RESEARCH COMMUNICATION IS ONE OF A SERIES OF 10 PAPERS PUBLISHED ALONGSIDE DFID'S RESEARCH STRATEGY 2008-2013. IT PRESENTS THE CASE FOR DFID-FUNDED RESEARCH ON RESEARCH COMMUNICATION – DRAWING ON THE RESPONSES GIVEN DURING A GLOBAL CONSULTATION THAT DFID CONVENED IN 2007 ABOUT ITS FUTURE RESEARCH.

The purpose of the Working Papers is two fold: to record the key issues raised during the consultation; and to spell out DFID's decisions on new directions, as informed by the consultation. As such, they constitute an important part of the feedback process, and provide an opportunity to clearly articulate DFID's strategic response to the consultations and to other global drivers of research. They also provide guidance to those implementing DFID's research strategy in the future.

Each Working Paper reviews the current state of DFID's research on a given theme, highlights the key questions asked during the consultation process, and documents the main feedback received. The Papers then tease out the implications of the consultation findings on DFID's work, and end by spelling out DFID's future directions on each priority theme. Where possible, each Paper makes clear how DFID has drawn upon the consultation responses to shape its plans.

Other titles in the series are: Economic Growth, including Infrastructure; Climate Change; Better Health: Education; Political and Social Science Research; Stimulating Demand for Research; Sustainable Agriculture; Capacity Building; and Mainstreaming Gender in Research. Note that issues which are not directly addressed under this paper may appear in others (for example the impact of agriculture on climate change is largely addressed in the paper on Agriculture).

More information on DFID funded research can be found on the website www.Research4Development.info. This also offers the facility to sign up for e-mail alerts covering different sectors.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

1. DFID is one of the few donors that explicitly earmarks part of its research budget to communication. Centrally-funded research programmes are required to assign a minimum 10% of the budget to research communication and they must also implement a quality-assured communication strategy. Many research programmes have done an admirable job of designing and beginning to implement a Communication Strategy – with the ultimate aim of improving access to and use of their research. Better, more systematic use of research leads to better development outcomes. Within Research Programme Consortiums (RPCs) there is an increasing skills base being built in research communication and some are becoming leaders in this area.

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2. DFID is seen as a leader in facilitating and encouraging communication of research, has developed a comparative advantage in this area, and has been working with other donors to influence the way research is funded and implemented. In this respect, research communication is rising up the agenda of both donors and the global research community (Barnard et al 2006). A survey of funders, among them SIDA, IDRC, DANIDA, ESRC, NORAD and SDC, illustrate the range of tools deployed. These include requiring researchers to produce communication plans and providing guidance and expertise to assist them; requiring minimum spend on research communication; holding central budgets for communication; and funding non-project communication work. DFID has provided leadership in this area but more collaboration is needed, with donors taking a coordinated approach to the global research agenda.

3. DFID's support for research intermediaries has enhanced its role as a promoter of research globally. The current programme of work supports innovative ideas and thinking about how to encourage research uptake and use. The programmes range from support to information services that re-package and synthesise research to helping building the capacity of southern-based journalists and science writers. For instance, DFID is supporting innovative work on the use of mobile technology to improve access to research by end-users.

    DFID provides around £7 million per year to these programmes, which cover three main areas:

    (i)   Identifying and developing ways to enhance people's access to research products (e.g. the DFID research portal www.research4development.info);

    (ii) Contributing towards strengthening the context that enables people to use research products; and

    (iii) Contributing to the international debate and knowledge on communication of research.

A group of researchers and others involved in getting research into use have established an informal network that meets every quarter. The main focus of the group is to share lessons and experiences in good monitoring and evaluation of research communication and communication programmes.

WHAT THE CONSULTATION ASKED

The consultation document asked a series of questions around how DFID could improve the way it meets its research objectives. These were intended to draw out specific ideas and practical suggestions about how research is commissioned, undertaken, and communicated so that it is actually used in policies and development practice.

Specifically, we asked how DFID could improve on the way research responds to user demand; and how we could make sure that people in developing countries can access and use research. Other questions explored how to help developing countries increase their research capacity; how DFID should position its research in future; and how specifically we should work with other funders. The answers to these questions shed light on how DFID should communicate its commissioned research and work with others to encourage better access and uptake to existing and new research knowledge.

WHAT WE HEARD

"DFID is to be congratulated in having research communications team embedded in its Central Research Team. We urge this emphasis to continue and to increase – other funders are trying to learn from DFID's example."

Overall we heard that DFID is regarded as a thought and action leader in the area of getting research taken up and into use, both amongst the research community and research funders. The intellectual leadership is welcomed and this is recognised by an increased awareness and change in policy across the donor community and other funders.

There is a drive for DFID to continue to advocate this approach across the broader donor and research community. But there is also need to develop and refine evaluation tools so that we can get a clearer picture of the impact of spending more resources on communicating research, and the most effective way of doing this.

There was an impression that DFID is on the right track with its thinking on research communication – recognising that "effective research communication is a vital element in ensuring that research makes a difference; without it, a lot of research effort is wasted". It was agreed that there is no 'magic bullet' for ensuring research is both useful and used in both policy and practice, but a range of approaches need to be pursued concurrently. These include providing incentives and support for researchers to communicate more effectively; making global public goods research information more widely available – not just DFID's research and not just new knowledge but the broader body of development knowledge already in existence; and strengthening the 'enabling environment' in which research gets taken up into use. DFID should continue to support the broad range of approaches, in a way that complements the small number of other funders who work in this area. It should use its reputation and institutional leverage as a leader in this field, to advocate a more strategic approach to research communication in other donor organisations.

What developing countries often need most are "mundane" solutions, getting into use what research exists. For example, two-thirds of the burden of disease in developing countries could be alleviated by implementing existing interventions or making them available more cheaply.

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The majority of respondents stated that research is more likely to be used if it takes local circumstances into account; if it gets the interest, support and contribution of important decision-makers at an early stage; and if big efforts are made to communicate the results in a user-friendly way. This has implications for the way that research is carried out, and for DFID the kind of research that is funded. Research is most likely to be appropriate when it has been developed by researchers in the host country and the issues addressed considered high priority for that country.

DFID will need to reflect further on how to manage the bigger research budget in such a way that people producing research paid for by DFID are able to communicate the research effectively – both to DFID and other users.

Many respondents urged DFID to do more to learn across the broad portfolio of its research, and to do more to share this learning beyond the academic community. There was a large call for DFID to undertake more syntheses and more tailoring to reach different audiences. Some suggested that this 'harvesting' could include not only DFID's own commissioned research, but other development research in order to present a more comprehensive case.

There was some criticism that DFID's research doesn't adequately inform the organisation's own policymaking processes, and is not used internally as much as it should.

An analysis of the consultation responses has identified five thematic areas to address on research communication in the new Research Strategy.

THEME ONE: RESEARCH ON COMMUNICATION

The consultation revealed a demand for DFID to investigate a series of 'researchable questions' on communications; the conditions for research uptake; and the role of different communications approaches to getting research into use. This cannot be divorced from efforts and mechanisms to ensure research is responsive to demand.

A number of sub-themes developed under this theme – the media and its role in research uptake and use; partnerships and processes of engagement; information and communication technologies; research uptake and evidence-informed policy.

1. THE MEDIA – ITS ROLE IN RESEARCH UPTAKE AND USE

The media plays an important role in communicating research and changing attitudes and behaviour, influencing public narratives, holding governments to account and giving voice to the poor. This is especially true with the convergence of media (e.g. the use of SMS feeds to broadcast platforms etc) and the growth in people's access to television sets as more people migrate to live in urban areas and the price of technology comes down. The media can act as a lever for change, and is an essential part of the 'enabling environment' for research uptake. It is also an important means of reaching large numbers of people. Today, the media is increasingly interactive, creating important spaces for dialogue, debate and the exchange of ideas. This has major implications for the way research is shaped and used.

What is equally clear is that we do not understand well enough the role of the mass media in particular in informing different policy environments; how to best engage with it; what opportunities exist for exploiting rapid diversification of the media especially in Africa; and its potential role in effective research communication. The increasing commercialisation of global media is influencing how content is generated, and this presents both opportunities and risks for communicating research. We need to understand better these trends, and the nature of partnerships that are possible between research communities, intermediaries and the media.

Current work demonstrates the value of helping southern journalists to engage with research and report development. Other initiatives within DFID offer the potential to learn more about how to support the media to bring about better governance. We need to create tools to analyse and learn from these interventions, and then scale up in the most effective way possible.

2. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

Information and communications technologies are evolving more rapidly than any other single technology on the planet. Mobile phones are the main form of digital progress helping the poor and bridging the connectivity divide. In 1990 there were roughly 530 million telephones in the world, of which only two percent were mobiles. Today there are just over three billion phones, two-thirds of these mobiles. In 2001, Uganda became the first African country to have more mobile phones than fixed lines. A recent study by the London Business School shows that in developing countries an increase of 10 mobile phones per 100 people boosts the economy's growth rate by 0.6 percentage points. Africa has seen the greatest take-up: subscriptions have quadrupled since 2001, and in 2007 they hit 200 million – an average of more than 20 mobile phones for every 100 people. Fortune Magazine predicts that the number of personal computers worldwide will increase from 775 million in 2007 to 2.25 billion in 2015.

DFID's White Paper committed the organisation to using the full breadth of information and communications technologies, including different media, to realise development ambitions.

We need to keep ahead of technologies that affect access to, and use of research by different users and to exploit opportunities that they present. Specific areas for research include the use of ICTs by different communities (e.g. transient communities such as pastoralists and migrants, youth etc.), and the relative merits of specific or converged technologies for reaching different kinds of research users (e.g. radio and mobile phones versus television or the internet) We need to be better informed by – and draw attention to – the evidence that exists on interventions in this sector.

Many respondents urged DFID to explore the use of new ICT tools, such as Web 2.0 or video clip technology, for holding policymakers to account and to forge 'horizontal' connections within and between networks. Country consultations repeatedly stressed the necessity for improved communications infrastructure (hardware and software, skills, networking etc.) to build and strengthen an 'enabling environment' for research uptake. The investment needed for this is beyond the DFID research budget, but we will explore options to engage with others on this issue.

There was a call for DFID to engage the private sector in positive partnerships, for example by providing seed money for the research communication community to link-up with Google and Wikipedia, developing platforms for user-generated content, highlighting innovations and knowledge gaps, promoting transparency, and sharing information in a way that is not necessarily literacy dependent. There was a call to understand better the different political and regulatory environments in which ICTs can bring benefits to the poor, and under what circumstances they can be drivers, for instance, of economic growth.'

3. RESEARCH ON POLICY PROCESSES

There were wide ranging responses from the consultation on the need for research into both policy and political processes, specifically to understand how research evidence engages with and informs the different stages of policy processes, and how this varies across different settings[1].

A cluster of questions arose around understanding how evidence informs policy in different aid environments, particularly as more bilateral aid is spent in broader programmes, direct budget support, and through multilateral agencies. There was demand for more explanation of the relationship between different engagement strategies and communication approaches on the one hand, and research outcomes and development impact on the other: how are policies communicated to people? How are they interpreted? And how and to what extent are the policies finally put into practice?

> Research into policy processes is critical in understanding why good policies have not been implemented. Research into political processes is necessary to understand how development projects are implemented, with what results.

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[1] This area of work comes under DFID's research portfolio that explores social, political and environmental research

We still do not know enough about how uptake patterns vary across different research sectors, for example. how evidence-based health interventions get taken up into policy and practice compared to evidence-based education interventions and what is the role of the 'enabling environment' in each case. We also don't know why for instance water sector reforms play out differently across different political and policy landscapes. In order to improve research uptake across contexts, we need better understanding of these variables, analysis of patterns, and subsequent improvement of the research-policy interface. We need to look 'beyond aid' to understand how national policies, as well as regional and global instruments of governance, can be informed by research. Connected to this theme was a call for DFID to review the uptake of its own funded research.

> There has been too little emphasis on understanding the unintended consequences of policy implementation and this is something that needs emphasis [in the new strategy].

There were specific questions around understanding how health research can shape better policies and services. Specifically, the need for better understanding of the social and cultural norms and values in shaping health decisions; the social, political and governance factors that inhibit research uptake and identify ways of overcoming these factors; and why people do not use reproductive health services, even though many of them are free. The need for research on tools and models for evidenced-based planning in health.

There was demand for investigation of a specific set of questions around the enabling environment for research across geography and social and political contexts. Effective communication is essential but itself not sufficient for getting research into use, especially where there are political pressures to ignore evidence in policy-making processes. DFID should focus more on understanding enabling environments and obstacles to uptake, such as research uptake strategies in fragile states where policy processes do not exist or function or are not mapped, and support better understanding of how to promote research uptake in these hostile environments.

There was call for better understanding of how different audiences engage with research across a range of different contexts, including where policy making is not and never will be evidence based. What are the factors that inhibit uptake and what are the implications for research communication?

THEME TWO: SUPPORTING RESEARCHERS TO COMMUNICATE

There was overwhelming support for DFID's current efforts to support researchers to communicate more effectively in their work. This was balanced with broad recognition that on its own, better research communication will not guarantee research uptake. Support is needed in three areas: first, to improve the incentives for researchers to communicate; second to build skills at personal and institutional levels to more effectively communicate; and third to strengthen the capacity and demand for evidence in policy and practice. Without demand for research, there will be little absorption of its lessons and instructions, however well communicated.

(a) Improve the incentives for researchers to communicate

Current incentive structures operating in research institutions act against effective communication of research to diverse audiences throughout the research cycle. This is true in both the North and South. There are few rewards to be had for forging partnerships with users of research, or communicating using media that are appropriate to users' needs and preferences. There was a call from the academic community in particular for DFID to be mindful of this fact and to work with appropriate bodies to make more appropriate the current incentive systems.

"Research in academia doesn't particularly reward development impact; careers are built largely on publications and grants, the latter being highly dependent upon the former. Also, much development requires multidisciplinary research, which is often not very publishable, making academic researchers shy away from it. This situation has been exacerbated by the RAE system in UK higher education. I think a separate Research Council for Development in the UK is now necessary, where multidisciplinarity is encouraged and where impacts of research on development are seen as an important benchmark. If implemented properly the quality of science will not suffer".

There was strong feeling amongst both research and non-research communities consulted in southern countries that communication of research is a 'moral imperative', not an option. Many felt that researchers should be made more accountable for their findings.

(b) Build skills to communicate more effectively

The consultation called for continued support to building the capacity of researchers and other stakeholders to communicate appropriately and effectively. DFID was urged to provide incentives to the research community to ensure that research communication is taken seriously within the research cycle. It was recognised that there is no one model of 'good communication practice', so DFID needs to be flexible in the way that it funds research communication.

DFID has been open-minded in supporting innovative thinking around research communication and this needs to be further encouraged. Having a funder that actively supports this kind of experimentation makes a big difference. Without this support, research teams are likely to default back to traditional and more 'safe' communication options which are unlikely to have the same impact.

There was demand for more communications training and resources to help researchers become better at communicating. This is an essential – but often overlooked – part of broader research capacity building (these issues are dealt with in Capacity Building Working Paper). Skills need to be developed to better analyse policy environments so that research is more useful, and more likely to be used. These ranged from specific skills building (e.g. writing for diverse audiences) to more strategic training to better understand the broader picture of how research gets taken up into use. There was a call for DFID to advocate for the more strategic integration of communication into research funded by other donors, and private funders, and to learn lessons about 'best practice' from those that do it well.

There was an urge to encourage current RPCs to spend more than the minimum 10% of the budget on communication, and for DFID to do more monitoring of communication plans – to see what is actually being implemented – otherwise there is the danger of this becoming another tick-box exercise.

> There must be sufficient funding to address communications in an effective manner: to reach policy makers and users. Emphasis should not be placed on ineffective communication mechanisms such as 'glossy' publications, which do not reach the target audience and waste resources.

There is recognition that researchers are not expected to be expert communicators, but that they should be encouraged to work with communication specialists. Specialists come from a broad range of sectors including the private sector, media and universities with specialist communications departments, and each is equipped to reach specific audiences. Information intermediaries such as NGOs and networks also provide useful bridges to target audiences. There was call for a collection of donors to concentrate their efforts on building communication capacity at universities, and supporting peer to peer working by north and south research collaboration.

> We must work with specific institutions with commitment to research communication, to build capacity and learn about different models of effective engagement and uptake.

(c) Strengthen the capacity and demand for evidence

The consultation process raised concerns about the capacity of policy audiences and other audiences to access, absorb and make sense of research. The culture of evidence-based policy and practice is still very patchy, and 'information literacy' skills need strengthening in many contexts. There is limited accountability of research institutions to the users of its research in part because users do not make demands (e.g. for new knowledge, or solutions to development dilemmas) of these institutions. It was felt that DFID has gone some way to developing the capacity of researchers to communicate research: it should now extend this to strengthening demand for research and capability to make use of evidence in decision-making at all levels. Funding could be provided directly to overseas institutions, which would support the capacity building agenda and efforts for effective public engagement with communities and other national stakeholders.

There was a connected thread of discussion which questioned how and how far research should respond to different kinds of user demand – ranging from the ordinary farmer to the Minister for Health. It was recognised that for research to be useful it needs to respond to both latent and explicit demand. But identifying and responding to the different demands of multiple users is difficult. We need to better understand knowledge systems at the national level, and help to strengthen them so that research is both in demand and accessible.

A number of respondents emphasised the value of partnerships within research programmes and involving end users in the design of research. Practical suggestions included forging better links between research and local development projects to ground-truth the research questions at the same time as recognising the role of evidence in improving the way that they work. They argued that such approaches would improve the chances of uptake and use. This is more practical for some kinds of research, for example adaptive research as opposed to horizon scanning research. There was a call for DFID to make it a requirement that all research should engage users systematically throughout the research cycle.

Others pointed out that many users are not in positions of power to be able to assert themselves: "We have not developed the culture to push forward and seek for information or research findings. We need to change that culture and knock at the door of researchers and find out what technologies and information are available". At the opposite end of the spectrum, policymakers are often not interested in using research that doesn't fit with their pre-conceived policy and political ways of thinking and acting. There was a call for better investigation of approaches that successfully engage with and meet users' needs for research, whilst also being useful as global public goods to users that do not articulate explicit demand. A number of the consultations called for donors to work with governments to build capacity and political will to use research findings in policy.

> DFID needs to use (and require to be used in its funded research) research methodologies that help ensure user responsiveness such as gender and poverty responsiveness analytical tools in the design, implementation and reporting of research.

> An effective communication strategy would need to be underpinned by local knowledge (how communication is effective regionally) and having had a systematic review of communication knowledge.

THEME THREE: COMMUNICATION OF RESEARCH

Comments were clustered around three main areas: first, the need to help make more accessible current research knowledge, especially that generated in the South; second, the need to make sense of the enormous volume of research information by further analysing and tailoring it to be useful to different audiences; and third, the need to advocate for greater harmony within the research donor community to bring about more effective global access to research information.

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(a) Making existing information more accessible

Many of the answers to major development challenges are already known, but the information is inaccessible, unusable, or unavailable. Above and beyond helping individual researchers to communicate, there is an urgent call for DFID to raise the profile of, and make better sense of, existing research information to different users.

> "There is a great danger that in our enthusiasm to generate new knowledge, we sideline what is already known. There needs to be balance between making existing knowledge more accessible and applicable (to users), and commissioning new research".

Many of the country consultations in particular stated that communicating existing knowledge is as important as commissioning new research, and called for DFID to help in making this information more accessible and more appropriate for different audiences. This is particularly relevant where uptake in national policy (e.g. in China) has the potential to produce global consequences. There was a call to recognise the importance of political factors when putting together global research partnerships, and influencing hostile policy environments.

Southern researchers need better access to global 'conveyor belts of knowledge' that communicate global public goods research swiftly and authoritatively to those in positions of power (who sit in both the North and South). For those in the South, this includes access to research that has been generated in their own countries, but not made visible or easily accessible. Facilitation of global research, especially exposure to southern research can be achieved through practical programmes of support such as advocating around open access to peer-reviewed research; funding southern research information networks; structuring more southern access to global debates, and so on. This is particularly important if we want national research communities to have the authority, credibility and influence over policy processes in their own countries.

DFID is in a position to facilitate new approaches and more creative thinking on ways of getting research into development debate. We need to encourage a 'move beyond traditional models where northern partners have tended to call all the shots'. DFID should support and find ways of ensuring that southern researchers are heard, that their research is available side-by-side northern researchers' work, so that the profile of southern researchers and their credibility with local and global audiences is raised. In this way might we better inform development policy and practice.

There was specific call for mechanisms that will communicate the emerging science of climate change as it becomes known, for example weather patterns and predictions, as well as measures that will help to share the adaptation and mitigation strategies being developed and used by vulnerable groups to cope with rapid change. This call, for a new set of communication processes that are innovative and user-driven, involves a wide set of actors (similar to those considered under Innovation Systems modelling in agricultural research). In health specifically, there was a call for DFID to play a role in facilitating better access to healthcare data, including by strengthening basic national statistics on which healthcare professionals rely for good decisions.

"If DFID wants it research to deliver change, then it needs a clearer sense of how and why change happens, how more change can be pro-poor, what limited contribution research can make to such processes, and what other factors can help construct a more progressive way forward.
Change has to be based on an endogenous process, hence the huge importance of local research, and of other actors playing a key role in designing what makes sense to them. Listen to voices of supposed beneficiaries."

(b) Analysing and synthesising research to provide tailored information services

Global Public Goods are neither global nor public until someone takes action to make them available and accessible globally, and tailors the information so that it is of public use to different kinds of audience. There are dangers in the second part of this process, including making assumptions about who is 'the user' and what kind of information is useful – and not useful – to them.

A range of organisations and individuals called for DFID to 'pull threads' across different research themes, in the first instance of its own commissioned research and more broadly of other research. Meta-analysis would provide a more tailored service to feed into DFID's own policymaking machinery, as well as others who do not know about the range of research information sources. This could be done by supporting knowledge intermediaries in those countries. Better efforts need to be made by DFID to communicate its own research and to open the door for researchers' results to be heard.

We need to advocate for the communication of more contextualised research that is specific for audiences and contexts, whether at community level, regional level, or for policymakers and donors. This will require engagement with others who are better placed to speak for, understand and anticipate the information needs of different kinds of audiences.

(c) More harmonised and effective communication of research

Many respondents – both at global and country levels – called for DFID to use its intellectual muscle and reputation in this field to pioneer a more harmonised development research agenda and a greater focus on getting research into use. DFID should make capacity building a central tenet of the new strategy, not only of research, but of the art and science of getting research into use.

A number of submissions emphasised the importance of continued support for open access to publically-funded research, and more concerted attention on the development of national and institutional policies for open access publishing.

DFID's work on harmonising international information standards and norms was recognised as important, and encouraged to continue.

THEME FOUR: FACILITATION OF RESEARCH UPTAKE/ ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Many of the answers to major development challenges are already known, but the information is inaccessible, unusable, or unavailable.

Users of research will not engage with the results if they do not see its relevance to their own lives and work. They will not want to engage with research that seeks to create new knowledge without acknowledging and building on what already exists. Without functioning mechanisms in place to bring research information into public spaces so that ordinary people can see its relevance – and indeed are part of the process of shaping it – there is a danger that research will not meet its full potential as an agent for change. Users of research need to be actively engaged in the discussion of results and research processes, bringing their knowledge and experiences into the picture so that the knowledge is tempered, deliberated, and crafted to be of social use to ordinary people: only then will they feel willing to and enabled to put the information to good use.

DFID must do more to get research into use. The development community suffers from collective amnesia. DFID must ensure that the evidence-base gets used and that research doesn't continuously reinvent the wheel. What developing countries often need most are "mundane" solutions, getting into use what research exists. DFID needs to support the 'enabling environment' in which existing research can be newly harvested and put to work – for example by building coalitions at national level to use the knowledge base better, supported by international learning networks.

INFORMATION ONLY ONE FACTOR NEEDED TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE

Even when the right information is available in the right form, at the right time, an additional set of factors is often need to turn the information into productive gain. These may include appropriate support services for those wanting to act on knowledge about TB HIV/AIDS prevention; manpower to use the knowledge to make small businesses more efficient; lines of credit for small farmers to diversify etc.

It is recognised that DFID has, for many years, supported a range of information services that enhance access to research information. There is now a need to scale-out and support this growing sector and develop a long-term 'knowledge infrastructure' that is linked to the broader innovation environment in which knowledge can be put to work. The broader range of services should seek to build on existing initiatives – learning from what we know works well in different circumstances. These services should be cross-referring, acting as brokers to other information services which seek to build and shape a better enabling environment for uptake.

Intermediary organisations that help to re-package, tailor and communicate research information appropriately to a diversity of audiences are crucial. We need to better understand and support their role in getting research into use, and explore the potential for new information and communication technologies to facilitate both the better supply of, and strengthen the demand for research information. This includes understanding how global public goods inform DFID's own policies. Knowledge intermediaries also have an important role to play in stimulating debate and especially at getting development research into national, regional and global debates.

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"The best established services now have good credibility and a substantial user base, and are starting to assemble convincing evidence of how providing easier access to research findings can change the information environment and lead to development impact on the ground."

"Effective communication of research is essential but is in itself not sufficient in getting research into use in the future. DFID should focus more on understanding both enabling environments and obstacles to uptake in developing world settings."

Networks have great potential to both generate research and enable effective uptake at various levels. Responses varied from those who suggested coalitions at a national level, international learning networks, listening posts to networks and partnerships amongst knowledge intermediaries. We need to understand better how to build coalitions at the national level and link these to international learning networks which can support partnerships between different service providers/users (scientists, communications specialists, NGOs etc.) and those that bridge the gap between researchers and users.

There were a wide range of practical suggestions about how to investigate and strengthen the 'enabling environment' for uptake. These range from boosting the capacity of the media to convey science and technology to policymakers in an accurate, authoritative and succinct manner, to funding educational pilots in the South that engender understanding of demand and processes to get research into use.

DFID should build on our existing portfolio of work to facilitate access to specialist intermediary services for getting research into use. It should recognise that the enabling environment will vary across countries, and that it may be useful to look at similar aid environments as a way of better understanding patterns, rather than at clusters of countries within a region, or within specific research sectors.

THEME FIVE: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Two broad threads emerged under the consultation: the need for better monitoring and evaluation of research and specifically research communication, and the need to learn lessons more systematically across DFID's portfolio of research. There was a call for us to 'get better' at looking at the performance and results of DFID-funded research that is generated and put to use by multilateral organisations, especially the United Nations bodies and the FAO. This demand was partly in response to the relative lack of information we have about outcomes of money spent through these bodies, and partly because there will be more significant funds spent through multilaterals in the future and we should make sure that international systems work effectively.

There was a call for DFID to monitor and evaluate its research more strategically so that development outcomes – and the contribution of research to those outcomes – can be made more visible. A number of responses called for better and more rigorous processes, to make DFID more accountable for the research it funds. The pressure on researchers to demonstrate the positive developmental outcomes of their research in less than five years (the average project timeframe) was highlighted. Suggestions included DFID commissioning impact studies on project clusters to identify any 'research legacy' or impact footprints.

A subsidiary but distinct thread was the need for more robust processes to track and assess the contribution of research communication to outcomes. This is a new science that has a cluster of promising approaches within it that have not been tested. There was some feeling that evidence is needed of results and contribution to better research uptake and use. We recognise a need to develop better mechanisms, tools and processes for measuring the impact of research communication.

> "DFID needs to support investigation into the science of how you track and evaluate research communication. They need to trial tools and improve and mainstream the most effective and practical ones. Systems must not simply be 'botched adaptations of conventional research monitoring and evaluation."

The second call was for DFID to get better at learning lessons across its broad portfolio of research, and to share this learning with a broader community.

We heard that DFID is in a powerful position to learn across its portfolio of research; to produce syntheses and summaries of collections of research; to inform both its own bilateral policies and those of others; and to pioneer innovative models of research that fill the gaps which are identified.

DFID is uniquely placed, as both policymaker and commissioner of research, to gain insight into many aspects of the research-into-use continuum. But it needs to dedicate more time and resources to the systematised and intentional learning of such lessons. They will not jump out of individual pieces of research work. Neither will feedback from policy-making practices that the rest of DFID is involved with on a daily basis. The Central Research Department is well positioned to cast an assessment 'net' over the research portfolio in the future, and to examine the results through a range of different lenses – approaches to research, management, innovation environment for uptake, efficacy etc. – and to share these with a wider community. But first it must be committed to learning and second, be prepared to allocate resources to the knowledge management processes that need to be embedded in its working culture.

IMPLICATIONS

DFID is viewed amongst other donors and funders of development research as leading the way in putting research communication on the agenda.

> It has been estimated conservatively that for every £ invested in research, between £5 and £10 are needed to achieve widespread adoption of the technologies produced by that research. This requires joined-up thinking, where research becomes part of DFID's mainstream development programmes in both its country and central programmes.

DFID has learnt from its experience of this area over many years and most notably within its agriculture research programmes. Results are beginning to show. Other donors (for example, AusAid, SDC, JICA) are starting to highlight in their research strategies the importance of good communication planning. There is an emerging group of like-minded donors looking for ways to be more joined-up in their funding and thinking in this area. The time is right to scale-up and ensure that there is good practice in planning and implementing communication across DFID's research portfolio.

The consultation highlighted important issues around research communication and uptake that have implications for the way that DFID works and the way that DFID funds research. However, we cannot address all these implications. As demanded strongly by the consultation, we have prioritised those that are most important. We will build on commitments made in the Research Funding Framework 2005-2007, and on our experiences of supporting more effective research communication during that time.

1. RESEARCH ON COMMUNICATION

Delivering the quantity and quality of work suggested through the consultation will require us not only to scale up our efforts on research communication, but to treat communication itself as a focus for our research. The purpose of the research would be to gain insight into potential, limitations and obstacles to both generating and putting into use all kinds of socially-relevant knowledge. For example this could include researching obstacles to uptake in different environments, ICTs and other communication processes.

Research could be carried out in one of three ways. First, as stand-alone programmes; second, integrated within thematic research programmes; or third set up as 'learning laboratories' within ongoing DFID programmes and projects. The results of these investigations would then be used to improve the effectiveness of research communication, both in DFID's own funded work and more broadly. The results could also inform the way that communications is deployed within broader development programmes to achieve better, more inclusive results.

There is a particular call for more research to better understand how and why research is taken up and used. New areas include the role of the media in the process (for instance in promoting accountable societies). This research must be viewed in light of DFID's other programmes – such as the new Governance and Transparency Fund and other likely governance research programmes. Some of DFID's existing and new programmes provide a good research opportunity for exploring and testing the role of the media and communication processes in bringing about better environments for development.

We need to better integrate communication as a researchable area within DFID's existing and new research programmes. For example, research on countries in crisis requires an understanding of human rights and ways that civil society can challenge a government's actions. New media (including citizen journalism, social networking platforms and Web 2.0 technologies more broadly) and traditional media such as newspapers and community radio all play a role in providing civil society with a voice. There is more research needed to understand the role of these media in such challenging environments.

2. SUPPORTING RESEARCHERS TO COMMUNICATE

DFID has led the agenda on research communication and it should continue to do so. We will provide incentives for researchers to communicate, through for example providing resources for innovative thinking on research communication.

DFID is looked upon as a leader and we should continue to maintain this profile in the near future. In the longer-term DFID should continue to support, but not necessarily lead this agenda. It should be a combined effort with equal buy-in from other research funders. We will continue to build our own capacity to be 'an intelligent consumer' of research evidence, and work with others to build demand.

Communication should be an integral part of the research cycle and not an add-on. Our previous Funding Framework put in place a policy that all bilaterally funded research programmes should allocate a minimum 10% of the budget to 'communication'. What we now need is a policy that facilitates integration of research communication across all DFID-funded research programmes.

Development research as a discipline needs more recognition. We need to do more to raise the profile of development research and get it used – in policy and practice – at country level, national, regional, international and including within DFID.

3. COMMUNICATION OF RESEARCH

DFID needs to do more to synthesise the best of its own research. This might be through supporting South-South dialogue through the development of communities of practice; through supporting networks to learn across disciplines; and by linking researchers to knowledge brokers, intermediary organisations and policy makers and implementers.

We recognise that the unexpected sometime occurs with research and consequently there may be a need for an 'add-on' communication activity. This might be due to unexpected results, or changing priorities, or rapidly changing environment were new technologies suddenly take off. To be more responsive we should consider a responsive fund to support innovative initiatives that explore and get research into use. We will begin to reward good and innovative practice in research communication. This could be at any level, but it must show evidence of the research being communicated well and as a result actually being used.

There is high demand for DFID to do more to learn across the broad portfolio of its research, to do more to share this learning, and to do more syntheses and more tailoring to reach different audiences. This includes bespoke information to be appropriate for DFID's own policymaking functions. The scale of any new activities beyond existing commitments through www.research4development.info is dependant on the availability of resources.

4. SUPPORT TO THE ENVIRONMENT FOR RESEARCH UPTAKE AND USE

The consultation has confirmed that this continues to be an important area of research – to do research and to get research into use. We need to think about expanding our support to services and systems that provide the conditions that enable research to be taken-up and used. This will range from more research work on understanding the role of new and emerging ICTs, through to better understanding the role of the media (especially in fragile states), through to creating networks and coalitions and better processes for communicating with and between stakeholders.

DFID needs to re-consider its current programme of work with knowledge brokers and intermediary organisations and other programmes that support the enabling environment. More investment should go to this area, especially in building skills of Southern researchers to promote their research and have access to international platforms; of knowledge brokers to work with researchers; and intermediary organisations who often bridge the gap between research generators and research users.

We should support research users to interpret and contextualise the research for their specific needs and location, taking into account the role and use of local and indigenous knowledge. We must recognise the needs of different audiences (e.g. women, youth, less-able, elderly) in accessing research and also the need for information in languages other than English.

There is a demand for research to be more context-specific. DFID has a role in this. As a funder of global public goods research DFID should be investigating and supporting ways put global public good research to use at local levels. This includes making better links to DFID offices, and being mindful of donor processes in-country such as the Paris Declaration which aims for more donor harmonisation. This will require more support to southern-based institutions to interpret and re-package global and regional research outputs. Any support should seek to complement and build on existing nascent capacity and institutions, and not establish separate 'stand-alone' facilities that might not be sustainable. It will require efforts to build capacity as knowledge brokers. It requires support to building a network of good science writers and journalists, to addressing open access to peer reviewed journals, to research on ICTs to deliver better services to communities. Overall it requires support by DFID to showcase southern research.

5. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING AND EVALUATION

We need a stronger focus on monitoring and evaluation, and especially learning within and across our research programmes to better identify contribution of research to positive development outcomes. We will explore the usefulness and effectiveness of evaluating clusters of research projects and programmes after they have been completed, in order to identify significant results.

We need to develop a robust system for monitoring and evaluation and ensure this learning is fed-back and used in management and policy decisions. Alongside this, we will have in place a more effective Knowledge Management Strategy. This is needed to ensure regular reflection and learning from both successes and failures in research programmes. With in this there is a need for a DFID research communication strategy. This is necessary to map and manage our stakeholders, to influence and promote the role of development research and to engage better with DFID, across Whitehall, the UK development community and the general public.

Alongside placing more emphasis on M+E of research in general, we will develop the science of evaluating research communication and its contribution to both achieving research objectives. There is a call for more evidence of the effects of increased spending on communication.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Overall, during the five years of the new Research Strategy, we will develop a Communication Programme as a standalone set of activities, as well as integrated into other research programmes. By 2010 at least 30% of the research budget across all DFID-funded research programmes will be allocated to getting research communicated and into use. Instead of a separate amount being set aside for independent stand-alone research communication and knowledge management, this will be an integral part of ongoing and new research programmes, and will be fully integrated within these programmes.

THEME ONE: RESEARCH ON COMMUNICATIONS

OUTCOME: IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPACTS OF GOOD RESEARCH COMMUNICATION
PRACTICE ON UPTAKE OF RESEARCH

- Establish a set of collaborative research programmes that explore the 'unknowns' around the role of communication in getting research into use – for example the media, horizon scanning new ICT technologies; research-policy links; uptake in similar aid environments; research communications models that best serve the interests of the poor etc. At least 50% should be southern-led.

- Better understanding about how research uptake happens under different political, social and economic settings through ongoing and new research programmes.

- Map and understanding the role of information and knowledge intermediaries and partners within innovation systems.

THEME TWO: SUPPORTING RESEARCHERS TO COMMUNICATE

OUTCOME: QUALITY ASSURED SYSTEM FOR SUPPORTING RESEARCHERS TO BETTER
COMMUNICATE RESEARCH

- Provide continued support to mainstreaming communication in bilateral research programmes, through a more diverse and dedicated range of interventions and support (e.g. mentoring support, skills building).

- Create a facility for South-South dialogue around better research communication through the development of communities of practice. Structured as a network, this initiative would focus on learning across disciplines and linking researchers to knowledge intermediaries and policy processes. Outcomes include knowledge on research into use models and build capacity among DFID funded research community.

- Set up a responsive fund for innovative initiatives on getting research into use.

- Launch Global DFID Award for Research Uptake to reward innovative approaches and incentivise effective communication.

- Work with others (such as UK Collaborative on Development Sciences on Research Assessment Exercise, NEPAD etc) to improve systems so that they support researchers to communicate.

THEME THREE: COMMUNICATION OF RESEARCH

OUTCOME: DFID IS RECOGNISED AS A GOOD COMMUNICATOR OF RESEARCH

- Develop a programme to raise the profile and intelligent debate around the importance of research communication.

- Work with international research funders to promote good practice in research communication, and better co-ordination of funding.

- Support initiatives with multilaterals to achieve more effective research communication.

- Catalyse a debate around more effective communication of quality-assured southern research, and mechanisms for engagement with national policymakers and more broad global communication channels.

- Stimulate better informed demand for research and evidence within DFID and global policy communities.

- Ensure that DFID is recognised as leading and contributing to important debates about research, through effective communication of syntheses and summaries and bespoke clusters of research programmes around topics of policy relevance and currency.

THEME FOUR: FACILITATION OF RESEARCH UPTAKE/ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

OUTCOME: ENABLING ENVIRONMENT IMPROVED FOR BETTER RESEARCH UPTAKE

- Explore innovative ways of communicating research, both within research programmes (e.g. through participatory video) and by intermediaries.

- Continue support for services that close the gap between the practical needs of users with the practical relevance of the providers.

- Bridge the gap between users' knowledge needs for practical, contextualised information and suppliers' information delivery.

- Identify and support mechanisms for better access to global public goods research by southern research generators and users.

- 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.

- Supporting global initiatives and systems that establish and maintain quality-assured science.

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THEME FIVE: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT/ LESSONS LEARNED

OUTCOME: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY DESIGNED AND IMPLEMENTED FOR DFID
SUPPORT RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

- Commission an agency or consortium to develop and trial robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to show impact of research communications and uptake and mainstream adoption across funders of development research.

- Undertake a scoping study to assess impact of research communication activities within DFID's research portfolio to date as basis for scaling up.

- Develop a comprehensive Knowledge Management strategy to identify and promote learning and innovative approaches to research emerging from DFID-funded research. The strategy should also identify mechanisms for using ongoing DFID research programmes as 'living laboratories' for assessment and learning.

- Develop systematic mechanisms and processes for feeding research into DFID policy, and vice versa.

- Work with others in a collective approach to lesson-learning and development of new tools to make research more effectively inform policy and practice.

REFERENCES

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The Department for International Development (DFID) will spend up to £1 billion on research between 2008-2013. DFID's Research Strategy describes how the money will be used for maximum impact on reducing poverty in developing countries.

This paper is one of ten Working Papers which were produced to accompany the Strategy. Their purpose was twofold: first to record the key issues raised during a global consultation that DFID convened in 2007 about its future research; and second to spell out DFID's decisions on new directions, as informed by the consultation.

Each Working Paper reviews the current state of DFID's research on a given theme, highlights the key questions asked during the consultation process, and documents the main feedback received. The Papers then tease out the implications of the consultation findings on DFID's work, and end by spelling out DFID's future directions on each priority theme. Where possible, each Paper makes clear how DFID has drawn upon the consultation responses to shape its plans.

The full series of Working Papers are: **Economic** Growth, including Infrastructure; Health; Sustainable Agriculture; Climate Change; Education; Political and Social Science Research; Stimulating Demand for Research; Research Communication; Capacity Building; and Mainstreaming Gender in Research.

More information on DFID funded research can be found on the website www.research4development.info This also offers the facility to sign up for e-mail alerts covering different sectors.

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