

**Research and Analysis Division, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA):
Comments on the DfID Research Strategy 2008-2013**

Overall

The new strategy is well thought out and builds considerably on DfID's own experience in supporting research and development. What is new, is DFID's bold move to invest up to £1 billion over the next five years.

The strategy is very much in line with present development thinking and practice. There is no doubt that up-to-date research that informs policy and practice is critical to the constantly evolving field of international development.

The development of the strategy involved wide consultations with development partners and stakeholders in the South and it appears that many of the critical issues raised by the stakeholders during these consultations, in some way, have also been accommodated in the strategy.

The strategy, besides identifying "issues", would do well to tackle the root causes of under-development, incorporating corporate social accountability in a globalized world, and keep in mind that the process of change requires holding the institutional and policy agenda open to "another development."

Research coverage

In broad terms, "growth" is the basic premise of the new strategy; in other words, it is primarily focused on economic growth through innovation and improvements in technology. Growth does play a critical role in poverty reduction, however, it can only be truly effective through equity and equitable distribution, areas not substantially addressed in the strategy.

Furthermore, research on poverty reduction cannot be successful without understanding and tackling the root causes of poverty, including not only the economic ones, but also the socio-cultural dimensions, which also need to be understood and addressed. The social science elements of the research coverage seem to be weaker in the new strategy. Increased funding by DfID is promising, but the research funding needs to be long term and go beyond the MDGs, and beyond the rhetoric of capacity building in developing countries.

There is need for caution when addressing issues concerning "Climate Change" in the context of developing countries, notwithstanding the fact that the issue is important, especially in connection with developed countries. Evidence shows that damage to the environment is mostly caused by refrigerators, air-conditioners, industrial waste and application (vast majority to be found in the developed world); although, carbon dioxide, mostly caused due to deforestation is also partly responsible.

With respect to "Governance in Challenging Environments", DfID is to be applauded for noting the direct link between "power, politics and poverty," and could enhance its research by incorporating the reasons for rich/poor imbalances in the world.

This research strategy addresses urbanization in the context of internal migration. Currently, the rapid urbanization in developing countries, also known as rapid "slumalization," has created new social and human security challenges, the likes of which the world has never before experienced. Therefore, the issue of urban poverty and the process of slumalization should be addressed through innovative research initiatives.

Although much needs to be done with regards to world health issues, and DFID has rightly identified them, it is perhaps time it also tackles the issue of "pharmaceutical monopoly", which keeps the prices of drugs high and out of reach of the world's poor.

In the immediate term, DFID may want to focus on sustainable agriculture and health research, as both are timely and appropriate. The food security for the poor has reached to its critical stage and it is going to be more acute in the near future. Sustainable agriculture research promises to invest in technology and innovation, but it also needs to revisit the effects of modern farming techniques and its impact on the poor. Specifically, new research could focus on organic farming to address the issue of environment and crop sustainability, the practices of indigenous knowledge and technology, as well as the ways to benefit the poor. Health research should go beyond innovation and technology development, to target provision of public goods – whether it is a vaccine or basic health services – to the poor.

Clarifications/Questions

In the Executive Summary, "Research for understanding" - the "research" is for whose understanding/benefit?

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