

What is **Research Into Use?**

An overview of the RIU Programme: **Putting research results into practice**



Research Into Use (RIU) is a major five-year initiative, funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). We've been created to tackle one of the biggest (and oldest) problems of development: How do you ensure that new options to improve poor communities' livelihoods actually get picked up and used by the largest possible number of people?

The RIU programme does exactly what its name says: it puts research into use. Decades of investment in agricultural and natural resources research in the developing world has produced hundreds of tried and tested new technologies, practices and processes that could lift many out of poverty. RIU is working to make sure that these innovations are both taken up far more widely and used successfully in Africa and Asia.



What are RIU's goals?

RIU is working to achieve two main objectives:

1. to maximize the poverty-reducing impact of research on natural resources funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and others, and
2. to increase understanding of how the promotion and widespread use of research outputs can contribute to reducing poverty and boosting economic growth.

To help us achieve our objectives, our work has been split into three distinct thrusts (or what we call 'Outputs') each made up of two or three 'Components' dealing with different aspects of our work and headed by a different leader (see below for an overview of our 'Outputs' and 'Components').

RIU programme outputs and components

Research-into-use Putting research results into practice	Budget/ Effort
Output 1 Use of past research results increased by using research outputs to greatly benefit the poor	
Component 1.1 Improved access to research outputs by enhancing access to research findings and bridging information gaps	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ □
Component 1.2 Enhanced demand for research outputs by strengthening capacity to demand research findings	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
Component 1.3 Enterprises using research by kick-starting enterprises	■ □ □ □ □
Output 2 Research-into-use evidence generated by gathering concrete evidence of what works and why	
Component 2.1 Monitoring and evaluation support and synthesis by constantly checking we're on the right track	■ □ □ □ □
Component 2.2 Impact evaluation by assembling robust evidence on how, where and why poor people benefit	■ ■ ■ ■ ■ □
Output 3 Research-into-use principles and lessons generated and shared by embedding innovations for the poor in development agendas	
Component 3.1 Influencing the agenda by sharing lessons relevant to policy	■ □ □ □ □
Component 3.2 Communications with professionals and practitioners by building a global brand for innovation for the poor	■ □ □ □ □

RIU's programme

People can't use research results if they don't know they exist. There is widespread agreement that this lies at the heart of the problem RIU is tackling. But there are two sides to this difficulty.

On the one hand, there's what we call the 'push' side of putting research into practice. This describes the fact that those who produce research information need to make it user-friendly for intermediaries like NGOs, extension workers, private sector traders and credit providers so that they can promote and explain new options to end users such as poor farmers.

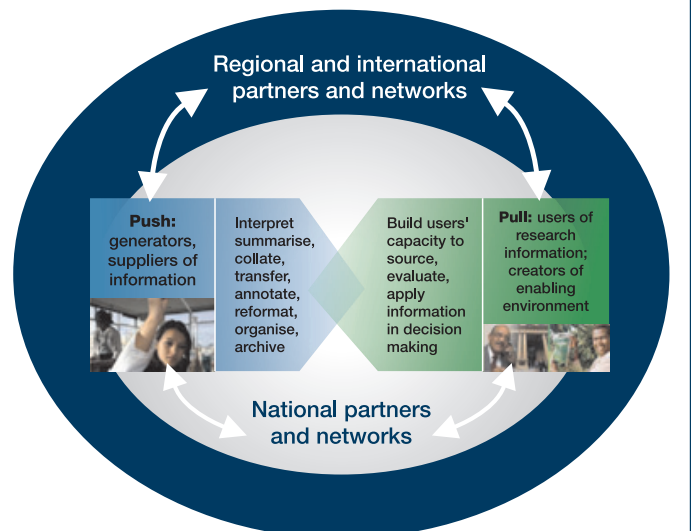
On the other hand there's the need to create the demand for information—what we call the 'pull' side of the knowledge flow. We want poor farmers, and anyone else who could benefit from new options, to realise that they can ask for relevant solutions if they face particular problems. This means working with them to help them learn how to ask and who to approach.

'Push' and 'pull' don't only work at the grass roots level, to outscale new options and spread them more widely. They also apply with decision makers at all levels, helping them do their bit to create environments that encourage and make broader use of those options—what we call 'upscaling' (Box 1).

The components of the RIU programme work to address complementary aspects of the work to create such 'push' and 'pull' to outscale and upscale research into use.

Box 1 Outscaling and upscaling research into use

By strategically aligning RIU with existing processes—national, regional and global—our work to 'push' research information out from those who produce it, and to create demand or 'pull' by those who can put it to productive use, will be far more effective.



Output 1 Use of past research results increased (Doing)

Why don't policy makers, the business community and the poor consider doing things in new ways? Quite often it's because information about new developments isn't available to them. To address this problem, the components of Output 1 are stimulating the spread of information about research findings in three ways.

Component 1.1 Improved access to research outputs

This component is using an Innovation Challenge Fund approach to identify innovative ideas for building bridges between the information 'haves' and 'have nots'—to put the right kinds of information into the hands of the poor, policy makers and those who relay information. We put out the first call for 'best delivery proposals' in August 2007 for the six Asian countries we're targeting—and we plan on funding around 15 three year projects by April/May 2008. The second call, in April 2008, will, target sub-Saharan Africa.

Component 1.2 Enhanced demand for research outputs

New products and new services emerge when new or old knowledge and technologies are used in ways they have never been used before. Village internet information kiosks offer one successfully piloted example, marrying existing information with new technologies. Another is the innovative use of mobile phone technology, which is also an exciting development opportunity that could give villagers access to information and services they've never had before.

Innovations such as these emerge when researchers, farmers, entrepreneurs, service providers, policy makers, consumers and 'infomediaries' (those who help the flow of information and services) work together to improve the effectiveness/quality of a common service and, in so doing, pursue not only their individual objectives but also achieve a common goal, such as poverty alleviation. The impacts of such innovations are far reaching and sustainable.

Component 1.2 aims to create these alliances. To begin with this will mean providing them with start-up resources. In the long term, however, they will be encouraged to become self-sufficient, relying on their own resources and their ability to mobilize other development resources to achieve their goals.

Component 1.3 Enterprises using research outputs

Development research has produced some exciting commercial prospects. But, few entrepreneurs have tried to make use of them because rules, regulations and policies were against them. This component is addressing this problem since it's unlikely that the poor will ever benefit from new technologies on any meaningful scale without the private sector.

To do this we're taking new and opportunistic approaches to kick-start enterprises that use research findings. Examples of such

include licensing deals, setting up marketing and distribution channels and even launching new companies.

Output 2 Evidence gathered (Learning)

What works and why in turning research results into

action? This Output pulls together the answers to these questions in order to show that the poor really are benefiting from using new development options. Two components, one working inside RIU and the other outside, scrutinise what the programme is doing and what difference it is making. Simply putting together and analysing this information is only part of their work, however, as they also share what they learn.

Component 2.1 Monitoring and evaluation support and synthesis

This component works across the programme to support performance and learning activities, constantly checking that RIU activities are on track. We help every single part of the programme to take stock regularly, review what has happened and revise its plans accordingly. The guidance and skills we provide focus particularly on establishing baselines, participatory monitoring and evaluation, and formative evaluation. We share the lessons we learn widely across the programme.

Component 2.2 Impact evaluation

To be in a position to facilitate and implement conditions in the renewable resources sector that will help the poor, we need robust evidence of the impact of pro-poor innovation. This means understanding the circumstances in which different groups of poor people improve their livelihoods using research information effectively together with other resources. So, this component is using appropriate assessment tools to undertake a careful comparative impact analysis of pro-poor innovation in the renewable resources sector.

Output 3 Lessons on policies and practices generated and shared (Sharing)

When governments and development agencies start providing funds to implement new ways of doing things, it will show that they're convinced that research findings are actually being used by the poor and making their lives better. Another sign that this approach is working will be more widespread use of innovations and associated systems thinking to improve the lives of the poor. The two components of Output 3 work to bring about these changes, in order to move research findings from the periphery into mainstream development agendas.

Component 3.1 Influencing the agenda

Although hard evidence can sometimes be convincing, the softer skills of building relationships and trust are just as important in influencing the movers and shakers who sway opinion and actually make things happen. This component finds out what's on agendas

COMPONENT OVERVIEW

—national, regional and global—and helps RIU recognize complex spheres of influence and take advantage of windows of opportunity. We identify strategic partners, key events, champions, and those with like minds, and build on the work of external partners and our other components to create the synergies and harmonised effort that facilitate innovation.

Component 3.2 Communications with professionals and practitioners

Groups that we call 'infomediaries' facilitate the transfer of new information from researchers to users (poor farmers and others in the supply chain) and help to make researchers and policy makers aware of the information needs of farmers and others in the demand chain. For governments, communities or individuals to take up new research they need to trust both the information and the bearer. Plus, what's proposed must be within their economic and physical means and the information provided needs to be presented in a way that's easy for them to interpret.

This component works with in-country partners to find the best ways of communicating new research information—about practices, technologies and policies. We do this in two ways. First, we listen to demands for research information and respond by providing it in a form that those demanding it can understand and use—through information markets. Second, we understand and promote the incentives which improve the likelihood that innovations will be adopted and so benefit poor communities with minimal assets.

Where is the RIU programme working?

RIU focuses on sub-Saharan Africa (East Africa, Southern Africa and West Africa) and Asia—those regions of the developing world where poverty levels are highest. We're working in six Asian countries (Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Cambodia, Pakistan and Vietnam) and eight African countries (Rwanda, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Tanzania, Mozambique, Mali and Zambia).

Our regional hubs (decentralized management nodes) and regional reference groups (comprising representatives of research users) in South Asia and West, East and southern Africa make sure that those on the ground are involved, informed and actually responsible for most of our activities.

Who we are

The team that manages RIU is drawn from NR International in the UK, Nkoola Institutional Development Associates (NIDA) in Uganda and Michael Flint (and the Performance Assessment Resource Centre), also in the UK.

Our Programme Advisory Board (PAB), chaired by Professor Richard Mkandawire, Agriculture Advisor to the New Partnership for Africa's

Development (NEPAD), oversees the programme. Other members are experts from sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the UK.

How you can get involved

We are keen to build our list of potential partners in the regions where we will operate. To strengthen the research-into-use effort, we aim to work with the widest possible range of relevant institutions and individuals. So why not get in touch with us to explore the opportunities for working together? We look forward to hearing from you.

For more information

For more information on a specific aspect of RIU, please contact one of the key team members given below.

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