

5. DFID RESEARCH ON COMMUNICATION AND GETTING RESEARCH INTO USE

"Access to the research of others will not bear fruit if the capacity to use that knowledge effectively, in particular to innovate is absent." M. Surr et al¹, 2002

1. Research on its own cannot bring about change. Research must be communicated in an appropriate form if new knowledge is to bring about improvements in the lives of the world's poorest people. The research must also be useful and accessible to people, who may require additional skills and capacity to enable this.
2. Experience tells us that unless communication of research is planned for throughout a research programme, including once it's completed, then research uptake and impact may be limited. A top-down, linear approach to communication, where a homogenous group of end users receive information, is unlikely to lead to change. Communication of research should be an iterative, interactive and multi-directional process that involves a wide range of stakeholders from planning, through to design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. The shortcomings of the linear model are widely recognised, and the question that is asked instead concerns research uptake pathways: 'Why are some of the ideas that circulate in the research/policy networks picked up and acted on, while others are ignored and disappear?' Or, to phrase it from the perspective of those engaged in research: 'How can we market our ideas so that they are noticed? What do we have to do to influence policy in a pro-poor and evidence-based direction?'²
3. Evidence that forging links between researchers and the policy and decision-makers they seek to inform is beginning to emerge. Canadian Health Services Research Foundation supported 400 knowledge brokers over ten years, in order to promote research-based evidence in decision-making. A recent review of the initiative showed its research to be 'four times more likely to be subject to active dissemination and implementation'. Encouraging policymakers to be 'more intelligent consumers of research' can also work: the Foundations' capacity building training showed an increase from 21% to 50% of health systems managers actively seeking out and using research information in their daily jobs.
4. DFID's current RFF highlights the importance of getting research into use. Background studies³ that support the current RFF provided evidence that good communication of research does enhance the uptake and use of research outputs, and recommended that more attention be paid to the

¹ Research for Poverty Reduction, Surr et Al 2002

² Tools for Policy Processes: A Handbook for Researchers, Daniel Start and Ingie Hovland, Overseas Development Institute 2005

³ The DFID Research Communications Review (conducted in 2003 (<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/research/Comms Strategy Final.pdf>); Surr Report 2002.

environment in which research gets taken up and used in a way that benefits poor people. The RFF recognises that ‘to achieve impact, research needs to both make the relevant information accessible and promote an enabling environment in which it can be adopted’.

5. The RFF lays the foundations for DFID’s support to communication, uptake and use of research. The RFF specifies that a minimum 10% of the budget for all DFID commissioned research must be spent on research communication activities. For 2006/07, this amounts to around £2 million⁴. It’s recognised by a broad range of our stakeholders that this policy has given communication specialists great leverage – ‘most researchers what to communicate their work and CRD has begun to develop operational means to support that’⁵.
6. A further £7 million per annum is spent directly on communication research and service delivery programmes to get research into use. These programmes include: research on new ways of delivering knowledge and information (e.g. through television and radio dramas; internet based services; linking the media to researchers); research on information standards and records; and, information services for a broad range of stakeholders such as on-line journals, technical enquiry services, policy papers.

Impact of DFID’s Research Communication Work

7. DFID has supported work in the area of research communication since the early 90s, mainly in the natural resources field. A number of important studies were conducted that examined promotion and uptake of natural resources research. Evidence from these studies (including the evaluation of the RNRRS), indicates that good communication of research does have an impact on the uptake and use of research. This evidence has led DFID to be a major influencer in the field of research communication⁶, along with Canada’s International Development Research Centre. There is now a growing body of evidence and support that planning for good communication (including influencing, scaling-up and out, promotion) is a prerequisite in any research programme.
8. The importance of research communication is rising up the agenda of both donors and the global research community⁷. A survey of funders, including

⁴ This is calculated as 10% of the budget for RPC/DRC. It is an approximate figure as many RPC/DRC spend more than the minimum 10% on communication. It does not include the multilateral programmes or Research into Use. The latter has allocated approximately £4 million to research communication activities (around 11% of the budget) for the duration of the programme.

⁵ Improving uptake of DFID Research: A Review of Options. Chetly and Perkins. April 2007.

⁶ Setting the Scene: Situating DFID’s Research Funding Policy and Practice in an International Comparative Perspective. A scoping study commissioned by DFID Central Research Department. ODI. April 2007.

⁷ Maximising the impact of development research, workshop report at IDS October 2006, Geoff Barnard, Liz Carlile, Deepayan Basu Ray www.ac.uk/research-comms

SIDA, IDRC, DANIDA, ESRC, NORAD and SDC illustrate the range of tools deployed including 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 communications work. Overall it appears that DFID is demonstrating real leadership in its efforts to encourage communication and uptake of research, to enhance the impact of research (Chetly and Perkins, 2007).

Communication within Research Programme Consortia

New engagement: communicating research - transforming researchers

Creating space for peer-to-peer learning between researchers has resulted in changes in how some Citizenship DRC researchers' work – both in terms of communicating research and in how researchers themselves are transformed as part of the research process. For example, during a workshop where researchers were asked to share different approaches to communicating research, Carlos Cortez from Mexico showed a video of the research with Zapatisa communities in Chiapas, Mexico. This inspired Simeen Mahmud, a statistician who used mainly traditional research methods to make a video about garment workers' rights in Bangladesh as a way of communicating research. This video was important because it helped create awareness about the range of different stakeholders involved in the garment sector, some of whom have in the past have been ignored. The stakeholders have different demands and needs and levels of influence and power. It is essential to consider these different views and positions to gain a real understanding of the situation.

Forging new partnerships for better uptake chances

Traditional academic partnerships are no longer the 'norm' for DFID-funded Research Programme Consortia (RPC) as researchers recognise that working with communications organisations, networks, knowledge brokers and communications-savvy researchers early on increases the likelihood of take-up by other stakeholder groups later on. The RPC on CRISIS States has a Uganda partner who regularly writes a newspaper column in which he raises issues framed by his research knowledge. Chronic Poverty Research Centre has partnered with Development Initiatives, a development communications and advocacy consultancy that succeeded in getting Gordon Brown to launch their first Chronic Poverty report in 2004. Another RPC is partnered with the Stanhope School for Communications, which helps them to frame research knowledge and package it appropriately throughout the research cycle.

Impact: from intermediaries delivering and repackaging research

Programme	Detail	Impact
Makutano Junction (Mediae Trust)	TV soap drama. Storylines are based on DFID supported research outputs	A recent storyline followed a young mother whose baby had contracted malaria. It emphasised the importance of using insecticide treated nets and seeking expert medical attention at an early stage. Audience data collected after the programme indicated that 43% of respondents heard about the importance of bed nets and more than 70% who watch the programme use bed nets ⁸ .
Research Communication Programme (RELAY) (PANOS)	Developing a new way of linking the media with academic research communities.	Relationships are being built between journalists and researchers. Results are being seen through increased and better reporting about important research findings. At a recent workshop a Zambian researcher said, 'This is the first initiative that has recognised the need to develop close co-operation between researchers and journalists. It brought out the needs of both researchers and journalists and provided a forum for them to explore avenues for collaboration.'
Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERI) (INASP)	Provides Developing Countries with access to the latest research information, through discounted rates to journals, capacity support and skills development	Access to high quality information inspires timely, new and high quality research. Beneficiaries are broad including universities, non-profit organisations and the private sector. Currently 42 publishers provide discount rates of up to 96% to developing country partners.

⁸ This is data collected two months after the programme was broadcast. It is too early to evaluate whether or not people's behaviour has changed.

Programme	Detail	Impact
Research 4 Development	A web-based information portal on research, containing case studies, success stories and programme information about all DFID supported research	Since its launch in March 2006 visits have increased from approximately 4,500 to 13,600. Gradual increase in the duration of a visit from 8 minutes to 26 minutes.

Future priorities

DFID continues to learn about how research gets taken-up and used; especially by the poor. We need to learn more about how different research communication models enhance and impact on this process.

Future priorities could be to:

- Continue research into innovative ways to communicate research; understanding what capacity is needed to create and enabling environment for research, so improving peoples access to and use of research.
- Look at ways of working across disciplines and learning from different communication models used in different disciplines. So that research communication becomes an integral process in research, rather than a discipline in its own right.
- Improve monitoring and evaluation. Does good M&E feed into better research design and in what ways? And how can researchers learn more from those who experience or use the research?
- Increase our work with intermediaries (those people/organisations who 're-package' research outputs) to understand and explore better ways of working, especially building partnerships and coalitions.
- Continue to support national systems to improve the way that research is communicated; also finding ways of stimulating the demand for research.
- Work with International research funders to harmonise good practice in research communication and better coordination of funding for research communication activities.

Work with organisations that set international standards and norms in scientific information management processes and to build capacity of their member states to collect, analyse and disseminate the material.