ANNEX

An External Review of SciDev.Net:

the company and its website

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by

Andrew Barnett
The Policy Practice Limited
Brighton, UK

(andrew.barnett@thepolicypractice.com)

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Contents

Annex 1. Terms of Reference

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SCIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT NETWORK (SCIDEV.NET) AND THE POLICY PRACTICE CARRYING OUT AN INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF SCIDEV.NET AND ITS WEBSITE

INTRODUCTION

This specification confirms the terms under which the Consultant has agreed to carry out an independent evaluation of the Science and Development Network (SciDev.Net) and the operation of its website (www.scidev.net).

1. Scope of evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is as follows:

- To assess how far the organisation has achieved the broad objectives identified in its original business plan and in its Strategic Plan for 2004-2008;
- To evaluate whether the grants awarded to SciDev.Net since 2001 been used effectively and for the purposes for which they were awarded
- To identify SciDev.Net's opportunities for future growth and for increasing its contribution to development goals;
- To indicate actions that may be required to increase the prospects for SciDev.Net’s financial sustainability?

A more detailed breakdown of the topics and questions to be addressed by the evaluation, dividing these into core, secondary and additional issues, is attached as Part 1 to the Appendix.

2. Delivery format

All reports and other material will be delivered to SciDev.Net as electronic files sent as e-mail attachments.

3. Delivery timetable

The Consultant will provide material to SciDev.Net according to the timetable detailed in Part 2 of this Appendix below.

4. Intellectual property

The copyright of all the material produced or commissioned by the Consultant under this contract will be the property of SciDev.Net as set out in the body of this contract.

Payments

Payments will be based on a schedule detailed below in Part 3 of this Appendix.

Appendix: Part 1

Detailed topics/questions (ranked by priority area)

	Topic	Key questions
Core issues		
	Content	• Is the website content seen as authoritative and useful? • Which parts of the content are seen as stronger/weaker? • How can content be made more relevant to development goals? • Would a similar service focusing on health research be valuable?
	Reach/ Users	• Who uses SciDev.Net? • How do they use it? • How can the value be increased? • Has SciDev.Net reached its target users – and if not, why not?
	Dossiers	• Who uses the dossiers? • Which are most used and valued? • Is their content seen as relevant and of high quality? • What improvements could be made to dossier format? • How can the range of users be increased?
	Outcomes/ impacts	• What impact has SciDev.Net has on: • Knowledge and awareness of users; • Public policy, including S&T decision-making in developing countries; • Science journalism in developing countries; • Donor agency agendas and development goals.
	Secondary issues	
	Regional gateways	• Who uses the regional gateways? • Is their content relevant to regional interests?

	Topic	Key questions
		• How can effectiveness of regional co-ordinators be increased? • How can the role of regional advisers be improved?
	Capacity building	• How effective are our science communication training workshops? • Is there a role for SciDev.net in organizing workshop for aid agencies about role of science in developing strategies?
	Governance	• How effective is the current governance structure?[1] • Could the various parts of the organization be better linked, and if so, how?
	Sustainability	• How can the organisation best ensure its sustainability? • How sustainable is the current financing model, including free access? • What other forms of financing might be appropriate?
	Additional issues	
	Organizational assessment	• How effective is the staff and secretariat? • How well are the networks managed? • How could the organizational structure be improved?
	Networking	• Are there regional/country networks that are stimulated by SciDev.Net?
	Long term development	• How can SciDev.Net adapt to changing technology? • How can it adapt to changes in the environment and competition? • How will the needs of its users change? • How will the donor environment change?
	Competitive environment	• Who are the potential strategic partners for SciDev.Net? • What is the competition?

[1] Board, Regional Advisory Committees, Dossier Expert Panels; Executive Director; Regional Coordinators

Annex 2. Achievements relative to the objectives listed in the Strategic Plan for 2004-2008

Plan Para	Proposed Output	Quantitative target If any	Target Date if any	Achievement to date	Comments
1.1 6.2	Provision of reliable and authoritative information on (1)issues related to science and (2) science-based technology that impact on economic and social development (3) role of science and technology in meeting the needs of developing countries	None specified	None specified	Anecdotal and survey evidence suggests that the website currently meets these objectives, both in terms of a description of its contents, and in the positive response from users on these issues	The results of the evaluation will provide a more robust indication of the extent to which these objectives have been met.
3.6	to develop further the content of the website, including the creation of a section of the website devoted to the communication of science, to set up a regional network in South Asia (early 2004), to repeat the Kampala workshop in India, and to organise a public meeting on science and technology communication in Nairobi, Kenya.		Before march 2004	The section devoted to the communication of science was launched as planned in February 2004 The regional network in South East Asia was launched in November 2004 The Kampala workshop (on HIV/AIDS reporting) was repeated in India as planned in November 2003 The meeting on planned for Nairobi was postponed	Plans for the planned Nairobi workshop were postponed on the departure of the managing editor in August 2005
5.2	to address the delay in meeting some of the initial goals the number of dossiers produced has been significantly lower than anticipated. increasing the number of staff who will be concerned with developing our dossiers	The trustees have agreed to a target of between two and four new dossiers every year. No target has been set for staff	None set	We launched two dossiers in 2005 (R&D and Biodiversity) and plan to launch three in 2006 (Bird flu, desert science and technology transfer). A new dossier co-ordinator was	The scope and number of future dossiers is currently under review

				appointed in June 2006	
5.3 16.1 17.1	**Increase significantly the number of users of the web site particularly in Middle East and North Africa.** **Appoint marketing manager**	**Dec 2003: 8,000** **Dec 2004: 11,000** **Dec 2005: 14,000** **Dec 2006: 17,000** **Dec 2007: 20,000** **Dec 2008: 23,000** **2/3 from ldc** **visits: linear to 30,000 per week by 2008.**		**Actual registrants:** **Dec 2003: 8,318** **Dec 2004: 13,818** **Dec 2005: 20,729** **Dec 2006: 28,000 (Target)** **All these figures are considerably higher than those included in the Strategic Plan.** **The number of registrants in developing countries has risen from about 50% of the total number of registrants in 2003 to 61% in 2006.** **We are currently receiving an average of about 20,000 visitors a week to the website. The highest numbers recorded was 24,731 in the second week of March 2006.**	**Initial targets set in absolute numbers at 3,000 per year. Now increased to 7,500 additional registrants per year.** **Initial predictions were based on linear growth. In fact rate of growth has been increasing steadily**
5.4	**Increase voice of developing world in key debates, by increasing engagement with scientists policy experts others in ldc**	**No fixed targets**		**Various measures have been taken to achieve this objective. For example, most opinion articles are commissioned from scientists, policy makers and others in the developing world.** **However no measurements have been made of the proportion of developing country authors on the website**	
6.3	**Increase number and scope of Regional networks** **National chapters** **Occasional workshops**	**(1) Following the launch of the Latin American regional network in 2003, the strategic Plan suggests launching of network in South Asia in 2004, followed by regional**		**The South Asian regional network (based in India) was launched in 2004 as planned.** **It was decided to split the 'East and South-East Asia' regional network into two, one being the China regional network, and the other covering South-East Asia.**	**The regional network covering the Middle East and North Africa has been delayed primarily because of a current lack of accommodating Arabic language characters on the website, as well as a lack of resources.**

		networks in 'east and South East Asia (based in China) and the Middle East and North Africa. **2. Although the Strategic Plan mentions the possibility of creating national chapters, it does not commit SciDev.Net to doing so** **3. No targets were given for occasional workshops**		**The China Network was launched as planned in June 2005.** **Plans to launch the Middle East regional network were deferred from 2005.** **The trustees have decided not to take any action for the time being on creating national chapters.** **Details of the number of workshops is provided separately**	**This website capacity is currently being rectified, and provided that funding can be found, the Middle East and North Africa regional network will be launched to coincide with the 2007 Annual General Meeting, which takes place in Cairo in May 2007.**
6.4 6.5 6.6 10.2	**Additional functionality of the web site including "electronic resource areas"** **(1)"science and technology communication"** **(2)senior policy makers, diplomats and "science negotiators" in developing countries** **(2a) joint project developed (para 10.4)** **(3) data base on funding opportunities** **(4) how to apply for grants** **(5) fellowships etc**		**No specific target dates**	**The first 'electronic research area', which became known as the e-guide, was launched in February 2004.** **Plans for a website to inform politicians and government decision-makers in Africa are currently being discussed with the UK Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology**	**Although a permanent facility on the website for informing senior policy makers has not yet been introduced, several "microsites" addressing these issues have been launched around specific events. These included a meeting on science policy in Africa in London in February 2005, and a subsequent meeting Dakar, Senegal, of African ministers of science and technology.** **A similar microsite is being prepared to cover the African Union summit meeting due to be held in January 2007 with the topic "science, technology and innovation".**
6.7	**Increase in marketing strategies in developing countries**	**No target dates have been set**		**New marketing strategies have been developed, and regional marketing**	**Marketing strategy is still under development. However**

				consultants have been employed on a temporary basis in Latin America (Paula Leighton), South Asia (Sridevi Sunderarajan) and Sub-Saharan Africa (Liz Nganga)	in 2006 for the first time, all regional co-ordinators have been given clear marketing objectives in terms of increased registrants on
6.8	Continuously evaluate impact on "this audience"	No specific targets set	No specific targets set	Electronic surveys of SciDev.Net registered users were carried out in May 2004 and May 2006. An independent evaluation was carried out in June – August 2006 involving a series of focus groups in different parts of the developing world, and telephone interviews with a range of key stakeholders and others	
7.1	Increase steadily number of news items on the site	Currently 40-45 month No specific goals were set in the Strategic Plan.	The target for the end of 2004 was 13-14 articles per week, The target in the 2005 Workplan was 20 new items a week.	The 2004 was exceeded when we reached 15-16 news articles a week at the end of the year. By the end of 2005 we were publishing about the same number as in 2004, but the proportion contributed by our own correspondents had increased significantly.	Although the 2004 target was reached easily, the 2005 target was considered to be excessive in the context of our available resources
7.4	Establish partnerships with local media	No specific targets	No specific targets		
7.6 7.8	Consider charging for reproduction of material by developed countries. Will Explore o news as source of income fellowships for science journalists o free access to material from additional sources			This issue has been explored as promised, although no action has been taken. The first science journalism fellowships are being introduced with the support of IDRC next year. Discussions have been held about obtaining free use of material from various biomedical journals.	
8.5	New dossiers	Two by Dec 2003 2-4 new dossiers pa.	Dec 2003: 8 Dec 2004: 10 Dec 2005: 12	We currently have 12 dossiers functioning on the website, and will	

			Dec 2006: 14 Dec 2007: 16 Dec 2008: 18.	add one more by the end of 2006	
8.6	New Quick guides	Three by Dec 2003 Three each year.		We currently have four quick guides on the website, which will become 'topic guides' at the end of 2006	Lack of quick guides has been compensated for by "news focuses"
8.8	Increase proportion of ldc experts on panels	No specific targets	No specific targets		Our current goal is that 50% of the members of each advisory panel should be from the developing world.
9.1	Expansion of Regional gateways	No number given		The Latin America gateway was expanded with the introduction of Spanish and Portuguese versions in May 2003 The East and South-East Asia gateway has been split into two, and the one of these – known as the China gateway – was launched with a Chinese language version in June 2005,	The opening of the Middle East and North Africa gateway is dependent on the ability to handle Arabic characters. This will be introduced on the website in December 2006.
9.7	Editorial responsibilities “may” be devolved.	No specific targets	No specific targets		
9.8	(1) local funding explored	No specific targets	No specific targets	Local funding has been raised for events in Latin America (particularly Venezuela and Colombia) and China.	So far, the amount of local funding raised has been relatively small, and focussed on 'add on' activities, such as workshops and the e-guide to science communication
11	Web lay out and design to be gradually improved	“no major redesign planned”	No specific targets	Various measures were taken to improve the performance of the website in 2005, following the transfer to a new website developer.	The content management system is currently being rebuild, and the opportunity is being used to improve the presentation and navigation of a number of individual pages
12	Regional networks developed	Uganda Brazil India China Mid east French Africa	Jan 2004 Later	Regional networks have been launches as follows: Sub-Saharan Africa (2002) Latin America and the Caribbean (2003) South Asia (2004)	The regional networks are building steadily in terms of numbers of regional users. However the size of networks of formal entities remain

		Regional advisory panels in place **Increased autonomy with mechanisms in place**	**"in long run"**	**China (2005)** **Tow more are currently envisaged:** **The Middle East and North Africa (2007?)** **South East Asia (??)** **The creation of each regional network has been accompanied by the creation of a regional advisory panel.**	**relatively low.** **Also the regional advisory panels have remained relatively inactive.** **A meeting to address issues of regional governance will take place in London in November 2006.**
13	**National chapters**	**No target set**		**No national chapters have been created**	**The trustees have decided at successive annual general meetings not to make the creation of national chapters a high priority for the organisations**
14	**Partnerships**	**No target**		**Still under discussion**	
15	**Capacity Building** **training** **Reports of meeting on the web**	**No more than 10% of budget in year one**		**A series of training workshops have been carried out. In particular, three workshops have been organised from the main office on reporting HIV/AIDS, one on general science reporting, and one on reporting on malaria research.** **In addition, the Latin American regional network has acted as a co-sponsor of various regional workshops for science communicators**	**The anticipated expenditure on workshops for 2006 is £35,000, which is about 5% of the total planned expenditure.**
16	**Marketing** **exchange advertising considered** **increase in news feeds** **Media on other media (radio)** **Promotional material** **E-mail drives** **Paid advertising in other media** **Purchase of circulation lists** **Monitoring impact of marketing**			**New marketing strategies have been developed. Marketing strategy is still under development (see 6.7 above).**	
18	**Monitor** **impact**	**No specific targets**	**No specific targets**	**Electronic surveys of all users were carried out in 2004 and 2006.**	

18.3	**demand**			**A major independent evaluation was carried out in the summer of 2006.** **No assessment of demand has been made outside these projects**	
19	**Governance** **revised governance structure** **risk management strategies in place**	**No specific targets**	**No specific targets**	**The governance arrangements have been kept under close review, and a major meeting to address governance issues is planned for November 2006.** **A risk management summary has been created as is reviewed regularly by the trustees**	
20	**Staff**	**From 6 to 10**		**SciDev.Net currently has 10 full-time staff as outlined in the Strategic Plan.**	
21	**Financial**	**From £825K to £1.12m in 2008**		**SciDev.Net's expenditure was as follows:** **2004: £622,156** **2005: £734,622** **2006: £900,000 (est)** **2007: £1 million (est)**	
22 24	**Fund raising** **(1)Ethical fund raising guidelines in place** **(2) sponsorship of sections** **(3) paid announcements** **(4) subscriptions considered from developed world** **(5) increased sponsorship of events** **(6) take professional fund raising advice**	**Additional funding sources secured**		**Brief ethical guidelines have been agreed by the trustees** **External sponsorship has been obtained for one dossier** **So far no policy has been reached on paid announcements** **No action has been taken on paid subscriptions** **External sponsorship has been raised for some events** **Professional advice has been taken on fund-raising**	
23	**Reserves**	**3 months operating costs covered by unrestricted funds**		**Our financial position is constantly monitored to ensure that it meets the requirements of our reserves policy.**	

Annex 3. Principal People Interviewed

Key Informant Interviews

Staff at SciDev.Net:
David Dickson, Director
Mike Shanahan, News Editor
Ken Blake, Web Production editor
Jemimia Tonks, Marketing manager
Karen Levin, Operations Manager
Sian Lewis (new commissioning editor)

Dossier coordinators:
Eva Dantas (on the phone from Germany)
Ehsan Masood
Dominic Glover
Julie Clayton
Graham Dutfield
Johanna Wolf

Board members:
Geoff Oldham
Professor M H A Hassan, TWAS
Dr Anne Whyte, Mestor Associates
Professor Luc Soete
Nalaka Gunawardene, TVE Asia Pacific
Angela Cropper, The Cropper Foundation.
Fred Binka, University of Ghana

External Key Informants:
Erik Arnold (advisory panel), Technopolis, Brighton
Geoff Barnard, Communications Director, IDS
Jo Chatterway, Open University
Kirsty Cockburn, Communications Director, ODI
Alex Duncan (advisory panel), The Policy Practice, Oxford
Richard Isnor, IDRC
Calestous Juma, Harvard
John Mugabe, NEPAD
Carol Priestly (advisory panel), former head of INASP
Prof. Judi W. Wakhungu, ACTS, Kenya
Dylan Winder, DFID
Jean Woo, IDRC
John Young, RAID Programme Director ODI

Emails were exchanged with: SIDA and Rockefeller Foundation

Annex 4. Main Supporting Documents

Arnold, Erik and Martin Bell, Some new ideas about research for development, in Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Partnership at the Leading Edge: A Danish Vision for Knowledge, Research and Development*, April 2001. Download from http://www.um.dk/NR/rdonlyres/7CD8C2BC-9E5B-4920-929C-D7AA978FEEB7/0/CMI_New_Ideas_R_for_D.pdf.

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Barnett, Andrew, *From 'research' to poverty reducing 'innovation'*, **a policy brief from SRA Ltd,** January 2004. Downloaded from: http://www.cphp.uk.com/uploads/disseminations/NSIPolicyBriefbrochure23feb04.pdf .

Barnett, Andrew, *Guidelines for running a focus Group*, 15th June 2006.

Barnett, Andrew, *Annotated Checklist of questions to be discussed by Focus Groups – Notes for Focus Group Leaders*, 15th June 2006.

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The Communications Initiative (http://www.comminit.com)

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Economist: *Science and Technology Supplement* (on-line version down loaded 11 may 2006).

EurekAlert!, web services of the American Academy of Sciences

Eldis *User Survey, Key Findings of a Survey*, Conducted in August-September 2002. ODI, January 2003.

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Google Analytics – data concerning use of SciDev.Net

IDS Policy Briefing, July 2006 *Aids: Questions for Development, produced in association with the HIV Alliance and UNAIDS*

ID21: *Governing Biotechnology: regulations of business or regulation for business (*web version down loaded 13/07/2006.

International Herald Tribune on-line supplement on "*technology*" May 17th 2005.

International Association of Science and technology for Development, http://www.iasted.org

The IDL Group, *Mid-Term Review of Multimedia Support to Broadcasting outputs from DFID's agricultural related Central Research Programme*, May 2006.

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New Scientist, On-line Advertising

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Oneworld.net (http://www.oneworld.net.)

Geoff Oldham: *Notes for Chairman's Report to SciDev.Net trustees* 2006

Research Research Lite (http://lite.researchresearch.com)

Research Africa, edited by Linda Nordling, http://www.research-africa.net

SciDev.Net *Five-year Strategic Plan (2004–-2008)* September October 2003.

SciDev.Net: *Guidelines for SciDev.net Policy Briefs*

SciDev.Net: *what is a dossier?*

SciDev.Net *User Survey, Analysed Results*, Jeremy Thomson, August 2004.

SciDev.Net *Annual Reviews* 2004, 2005

SciDev.Net *Dossiers and Quick guides*,

SciDev.Net *Annual accounts*, year ending December 2005

SciDev.Net: *Information for Freelance News Writers for SciDev.Net*

SciDev.Net *Marketing Strategy*, 2006.

SciDev.Net: *Website technical Evaluation,* 21 March 2006

SciDev.Net *Dossier Co-ordinators meeting* 19th April 2006

Science In Africa, On-line Science Magazine, South Africa (http://www.scienceinafrica.co.za)

Science Media Centre (http://www.sciencemediacentre.org) *Genetics in a nutshell; Nanotechnology in a Nutshell.*

Grové Steyn, Tamar Kahn, and Alister Scott *SciDev.Net Dossier Consultation*, Final Report, 5 May 2003.

Wikipedia, on the concept of 'communities of practice'.

Annex 5. Report of On-line Survey

By Gareth Williams, The Policy Practice

Introduction

An online questionnaire posted on the SciDev.Net website was undertaken in April/May 2006. There were 41 questions including a mix of structured and open-ended responses. The questionnaire generated 2,213 responses. This report presents the main findings for each question and provides brief commentary.

For the structured questions the tables report the percentage of the total of respondents (2,213) who selected a particular response. For many questions there were a large number of respondents who provided no answer. These are recorded as no response in the tables. The rate of non-response tended to be higher for open-ended questions and for questions at the end of the survey.

For open ended questions the most frequently expressed opinions were identified by visually scanning the responses and/or employing automated keyword counting. In general responses to open-ended questions are reported in rough order of importance (most frequent responses first).

Profile of respondents (Questions 1 to 4)

Question 1 - Profession

	Number of respondents	% of total respondents	% of total registrants
Aid agency official	38	1.7%	1.3%
Consultant	123	5.6%	6.9%
Government official (non-aid agency)	140	6.3%	5.4%
Graduate student	91	4.1%	6.1%
Industrial manager	19	0.9%	1.7%
Journalist	140	6.3%	6.3%
Librarian	48	2.2%	2.2%
NGO official	117	5.3%	4.8%
Physician	61	2.8%	3.4%
Research administrator	54	2.4%	2.6%
Researcher (policy)	110	5.0%	3.8%
Researcher (science)	426	19.2%	18.3%
School student	12	0.5%	1.3%
School teacher	30	1.4%	1.4%
University student	88	4.0%	6.8%
University teacher	331	15.0%	11.3%
Science communicator	111	5.0%	2.5%
Other (please specify)	231	10.4%	12.4%
No response	43	1.9%	1.4%
Total	2,213	100.0%	100.0%

NB The final column reports the percentage of all registered users of SciDev.Net (22,201 in May 2006). The comparison of the final two columns shows that the sample of questionnaire respondents was broadly representative of the wider user base. Aid agency officials, policy researchers, university teachers and science communicators are somewhat overrepresented in the questionnaire sample, whereas students and industrial managers are somewhat underrepresented.

Question 2 - Country of residence

	Number	% of total respondents	% of total registrants
Developing country	1345	60.8%	**62.7%**
Developed country	825	37.3%	**35.7%**
Not specified	**43**	**1.9%**	**1.7%**

Developing countries defined as low and middle income countries according to World Bank classification.

Comparison of the questionnaire sample with the total pool of registered users again indicates that the sample was broadly representative.

Question 3 – Age group

	Number	% of total respondents
under 25	113	5.1%
26-35	500	22.6%
36-50	765	34.6%
51-65	548	24.8%
65+	162	7.3%
No answer	125	5.6%
Total	2213	100%

Question 4 – Main geographical area of interest

Region	Number	% of respondents
China	647	29.2%
Latin America and the Caribbean	951	43.0%
Middle East and North Africa	643	29.1%
South Asia	800	36.2%
South-East Asia	848	38.3%
Sub-Saharan Africa	1126	50.9%
No response	43	1.9%

Respondents could tick multiple responses

Question 5 – Are you a registered user of SciDev.Net?

	Number	% of respondents
Registered	1920	86.8%
Not registered	250	11.3%
No response	43	1.9%

There are two (not mutually exclusive interpretations of this result): (i) the majority of website visitors are probably registered users, (ii) registered users were more willing to fill in the questionnaire.

Question 6 - How did you hear about SciDev.Net?

	Number	% of respondents
Friend/ colleague	713	32.2%
Web search	563	25.4%
Receipt of promotional material	144	6.5%
Followed link from another site	312	14.1%
From report/article elsewhere	120	5.4%
From an electronic newsletter	147	6.6%
Leaflet at a conference	17	0.8%
Presentation at a conference	34	1.5%
Other:	120	5.4%
No answer	43	1.9%
Total	2213	100.0%

It is notable that the most common means of finding out about the website was through a referral from a friend or colleague or from the results of a web search. Marketing activities undertaken by SciDev.Net (receipt of promotional material, leaflet or presentation at a conference) appear to have played a more minor role in attracting users to the site.

Question 6 - *Disaggregated by profession*

	Friend/ colleague	Web search	Received promotion-al material	Followed link from another site	From report/ article elsewhere	From an electronic newsletter	Leaflet at conference	Presentation at conference	Other (please specify)	No answer
All	32.2%	25.4%	6.5%	14.1%	5.4%	6.6%	0.8%	1.5%	5.4%	1.9%
No response	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Aid agency official	**47.4%**	*10.5%*	5.3%	*2.6%*	5.3%	**10.5%**	0.0%	**2.6%**	**15.8%**	0.0%
Consultant	36.6%	26.8%	7.3%	17.1%	*0.8%*	6.5%	0.0%	0.8%	4.1%	0.0%
Government official (non-aid agency)	**37.1%**	27.1%	5.7%	11.4%	3.6%	4.3%	1.4%	1.4%	7.9%	0.0%
Graduate student	**40.7%**	**34.1%**	*3.3%*	*8.8%*	4.4%	5.5%	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%
Industrial manager	*15.8%*	**31.6%**	5.3%	**21.1%**	**26.3%**	*0.0%*	*0.0%*	*0.0%*	*0.0%*	0.0%
Journalist	**39.3%**	*19.3%*	7.9%	12.9%	6.4%	*2.1%*	0.7%	**5.7%**	5.7%	0.0%
Librarian	35.4%	22.9%	6.3%	16.7%	**10.4%**	4.2%	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%	0.0%
NGO official	**40.2%**	21.4%	5.1%	12.0%	6.0%	**11.1%**	0.9%	0.0%	3.4%	0.0%
Physician	31.1%	**34.4%**	*1.6%*	**19.7%**	4.9%	*0.0%*	1.6%	1.6%	4.9%	0.0%
Research administrator	33.3%	18.5%	**20.4%**	9.3%	*1.9%*	**13.0%**	1.9%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%
Researcher (policy)	32.7%	20.9%	3.6%	18.2%	7.3%	9.1%	0.9%	1.8%	5.5%	0.0%
Researcher (science)	32.4%	29.1%	7.3%	16.0%	5.6%	4.5%	0.7%	0.9%	3.5%	0.0%
School student	33.3%	**33.3%**	*0.0%*	*8.3%*	8.3%	*0.0%*	0.0%	0.0%	**16.7%**	0.0%
School teacher	36.7%	**43.3%**	*0.0%*	*6.7%*	3.3%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
University student	27.3%	**33.0%**	*0.0%*	15.9%	3.4%	4.5%	**3.4%**	0.0%	**12.5%**	0.0%
University teacher	29.3%	28.1%	9.7%	11.8%	6.0%	**10.6%**	0.3%	0.9%	3.3%	0.0%
Science communicator	**38.7%**	*17.1%*	6.3%	10.8%	5.4%	9.0%	0.9%	**6.3%**	5.4%	0.0%
Other	*21.2%*	22.5%	6.5%	**21.2%**	6.5%	7.8%	0.9%	2.2%	11.3%	0.0%

Note: For this and all subsequent disaggregated tables the figures indicate the percentage of each type of respondent who ticked a particular box. For example, 47.4% of aid agency officials were referred by a friend or colleague to the website. This is higher than the average for all respondents (32.2%). Unusually high figures are entered in bold. Unusually low figures are entered in italics.

Some interesting patterns emerge from this table:

- Aid agency officials, government officials, NGO officials, graduate students and science communicators are more commonly referred to the website by friends or colleagues than other types of user.
- Students, physicians and industrial managers tend to find SciDev.Net more commonly through a web search than is typical of other types of user.
- Research administrators most commonly report that they were referred to the website through promotional material in comparison to other types of user.
- Electronic newsletters are a more common route to the website for Aid Agency Officials, NGO officials, research administrators and university teachers than for other types of user.
- Aid agency officials and science communicators more frequently hear about SciDev.Net from presentations at conferences than for other types of user.

Disaggregated by country

	Friend/ colleague	Web search	Received promotion-al material	Followed link from another site	From report/article elsewhere	From an electronic newsletter	Leaflet at conference	Presentation at conference	Other (please specify)	No answer
All	32.2%	25.4%	6.5%	14.1%	5.4%	6.6%	0.8%	1.5%	5.4%	1.9%
Developing country	32.4%	28.7%	6.9%	12.3%	5.4%	6.9%	1.0%	1.7%	4.8%	0.0%
Developed country	33.6%	21.5%	6.2%	17.8%	5.8%	6.5%	0.5%	1.3%	6.8%	0.0%
No response	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

There do not appear to be major differences between developing and developed country users in terms of how they found about SciDev.Net

Disaggregated by area of geographical interest

	Friend/ colleague	Web search	Received promotion-al material	Followed link from another site	From report/article elsewhere	From an electronic newsletter	Leaflet at conference	Presentation at conference	Other (please specify)	No answer
All	32.2%	25.4%	6.5%	14.1%	5.4%	6.6%	0.8%	1.5%	5.4%	1.9%
China	30.6%	22.6%	6.8%	16.5%	6.0%	7.7%	0.5%	1.9%	7.4%	0.0%
Latin America and the Caribbean	32.9%	23.2%	6.7%	14.9%	5.4%	7.8%	0.6%	1.5%	6.9%	0.0%
Middle East and North Africa	28.8%	25.0%	6.1%	17.0%	6.1%	7.9%	0.5%	1.7%	7.0%	0.0%
South Asia	28.5%	27.4%	8.4%	14.4%	4.9%	7.4%	0.4%	2.0%	6.8%	0.0%
South-East Asia	30.3%	25.5%	6.6%	14.9%	5.5%	7.8%	0.7%	1.7%	7.1%	0.0%
Sub-Saharan Africa	36.4%	22.6%	5.5%	14.5%	5.5%	6.1%	0.8%	1.7%	6.9%	0.0%

There do not appear to be major differences between users with different geographical interests in terms of how they found out about SciDev.Net

Question 7 – How long have you been using SciDev.Net?

	Number	% of respondents
Less than 2 months	203	9.2%
2 to 6 months	316	14.3%
6 to 12 months	406	18.3%
1 to 2 years	678	30.6%
More than 2 years	567	25.6%
No response	43	1.9%

Question 8 – How would you rate the SciDev.Net website?

	Number	% of respondents
Excellent	869	39.3%
Good	857	38.7%
Of mixed quality	138	6.2%
Poor	3	0.1%
No response	346	15.6%

Ratings by profession

	Excellent	Good	Of mixed quality	Poor	No response	% rating excellent or good
All	**39.3%**	**38.7%**	**6.2%**	**0.1%**	**15.6%**	**78.0%**
No response	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	97.7%	2.3%
Aid agency official	39.5%	31.6%	5.3%	2.6%	21.1%	71.1%
Consultant	43.1%	42.3%	4.9%	0.0%	9.8%	85.4%
Government official (non-aid agency)	42.9%	40.0%	4.3%	0.7%	12.1%	82.9%
Graduate student	33.0%	52.7%	4.4%	0.0%	9.9%	85.7%
Industrial manager	15.8%	57.9%	10.5%	0.0%	15.8%	73.7%
Journalist	33.6%	40.7%	7.9%	0.0%	17.9%	74.3%
Librarian	35.4%	37.5%	10.4%	0.0%	16.7%	72.9%
NGO official	41.0%	46.2%	4.3%	0.0%	8.5%	87.2%
Physician	37.7%	45.9%	4.9%	0.0%	11.5%	83.6%
Research administrator	50.0%	27.8%	5.6%	0.0%	16.7%	77.8%
Researcher (policy)	49.1%	39.1%	6.4%	0.0%	5.5%	88.2%
Researcher (science)	38.3%	41.3%	6.6%	0.2%	13.6%	79.6%
School student	33.3%	16.7%	25.0%	0.0%	25.0%	50.0%
School teacher	43.3%	36.7%	6.7%	0.0%	13.3%	80.0%
University student	33.0%	34.1%	6.8%	0.0%	26.1%	67.0%
University teacher	42.6%	35.0%	5.1%	0.0%	17.2%	77.6%
Science communicator	36.0%	37.8%	6.3%	0.0%	19.8%	73.9%
Other (please specify)	43.7%	37.2%	9.1%	0.0%	10.0%	81.0%

Five groups ranking SciDev.Net most positively (excellent + good ratings)

- Researcher (policy)
- NGO official
- Graduate student
- Consultant
- Physician

Five groups ranking SciDev.Net least positively (excellent + good ratings)

- School student
- University student
- Aid agency official
- Librarian
- Industrial manager

Ratings by country

	Excellent	Good	Of mixed quality	Poor	No response	% rating excellent or good
All	**39.3%**	**38.7%**	**6.2%**	**0.1%**	**15.6%**	**78.0%**
Developing country	40.4%	39.6%	6.1%	0.2%	13.8%	79.9%
Developed country	39.4%	39.4%	6.8%	0.0%	14.4%	78.8%
No response	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	97.7%	2.3%

There are no significant differences between developing and developed country users in terms of their ratings of the website.

Rating by age group

	Excellent	Good	Of mixed quality	Poor	No response	% rating excellent or good
All	**39.3%**	**38.7%**	**6.2%**	**0.1%**	**15.6%**	**78.0%**
under 25	34.5%	38.9%	7.1%	0.9%	18.6%	73.5%
26-35	34.4%	41.8%	7.0%	0.2%	16.6%	76.2%
36-50	38.4%	41.7%	6.5%	0.0%	13.3%	80.1%
51-65	46.5%	35.4%	5.8%	0.2%	12.0%	81.9%
65+	45.7%	34.0%	5.6%	0.0%	14.8%	79.6%
No answer	28.0%	28.8%	3.2%	0.0%	40.0%	56.8%

There is an interesting result here that ratings tend to increase with age until 65.

Ratings by length of use

	Excellent	Good	Of mixed quality	Poor	No response	% rating excellent or good
All	**39.3%**	**38.7%**	**6.2%**	**0.1%**	**15.6%**	**78.0%**
Less than 2 months	21.7%	44.3%	6.9%	0.5%	26.6%	66.0%
2 to 6 months	30.7%	44.6%	7.3%	0.0%	17.4%	75.3%
6 to 12 months	37.7%	41.1%	6.9%	0.2%	14.0%	78.8%
1 to 2 years	44.5%	38.3%	6.2%	0.0%	10.9%	82.9%
More than 2 years	48.0%	35.1%	5.5%	0.2%	11.3%	83.1%
No answer	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	97.7%	2.3%

It is notable that longer term users tend to give more positive ratings. Satisfaction with the website probably increases with familiarity.

Ratings by area of geographical interest

	Excellent	Good	Of mixed quality	Poor	No response	% rating excellent or good
All	**39.3%**	**38.7%**	**6.2%**	**0.1%**	**15.6%**	**78.0%**
China	40.2%	36.8%	8.0%	0.2%	14.8%	77.0%
Latin America and the Caribbean	41.5%	37.9%	7.5%	0.2%	12.9%	79.4%
Middle East and North	40.7%	36.7%	8.6%	0.0%	14.0%	77.4%
South Asia	42.5%	36.8%	7.0%	0.1%	13.6%	79.3%
South-East Asia	40.6%	37.7%	6.8%	0.1%	14.7%	78.3%
Sub-Saharan Africa	42.1%	37.8%	6.7%	0.1%	13.3%	79.9%

There do not appear to be any significant differences in the ratings of users with different geographical interests.

Question 9 – Main strengths of the website

This open ended question was answered by 83% of respondents.

The most commonly mentioned strengths of the website relate to its news function. In rough order of importance (descending) the following points were mentioned:

- The breadth and comprehensiveness of the website, as well as the diversity of content.
- The ability to get a quick overview of current science and development issues.

- The timeliness, topicality and relevance of articles, which often engage with frontier issues.
- The quality of journalism. Reports were generally seen as being objective, balanced and accurate, and the writing style was often praised for being clear, concise, and punchy using plain English and explaining science in simple terms
- The user-friendliness and easy navigation of the website.
- The global coverage of stories covering all developing countries
- The use of materials from scientific journals (*Science* and *Nature*) and links to other sources.
- The usefulness of weekly emails and RSS feeds.

While news was the main emphasis of these comments, a few respondents identified non-news features as strengths of the website, including announcements, dossiers and opinions.

Question 10 – Main weaknesses of the website

This open ended question was answered by 79% of respondents. Of those who responded nearly 40% stated that there were no problems with the website. Thus only half of the questionnaire respondents mentioned any weaknesses of the website.

Most of the comments related to website design, functionality and presentation issues. There were relatively few comments on the contents of the website, but some of the more frequently mentioned points included:

- Many users commented that news articles are too brief.
- Some respondents suggested that number of stories presented creates a sense of information overload.
- Many users were critical of an excessive focus on a few single issues, such as bird flu.
- A few respondents mentioned that they thought that the content of the website was biased towards developed countries.
- Several respondents commented on the balance of articles between Asia, Africa and Latin America. Responses were somewhat contradictory in this respect.
- Most of the material is only available in English language.

In relationship to website design and functionality the main criticisms were:

- Cluttered page layout contributing to a sense of information overload. Some pages are overly long.
- Small font size leading to a cramped appearance
- Difficult navigation
- Broken links
- Slow downloads
- Unappealing graphic design – rather old fashioned look, not enough graphics, lack of colour.
- Lack of interactivity. Absence of comments facilities, discussion groups, electronic fora etc.
- Weak search facility
- Archived articles hard to find
- Limited material to download as pdf files
- Absence of video content

Question 11 – Which sections do you consult regularly?

	Number	% of respondents
News	1538	69.5%
Features	964	43.6%
Opinions	642	29.0%
Editorials	660	29.8%
Dossiers and quick guides	618	27.9%
Regional gateways	292	13.2%
E-guide to science communication	424	19.2%
Notices of jobs, events, etc.	624	28.2%
Book reviews	293	13.2%
Letters to the editor	166	7.5%
Links	394	17.8%
I do not consult any of these sections regularly	81	3.7%
No response	346	15.6%

Multiple selections allowed

The importance of SciDev.Net as a news service is highlighted by these results. Features and editorials are also commonly read. It is notable that only 28% of users regularly consult dossiers and quick guides. Regional gateways are also not commonly used. A significant number of respondents make regular use of notices of jobs, grants and events.

Question 11 - *Disaggregated by profession*

	News	Features	Opinions	Editorials	dossiers and quick guides	Regional gateways	E-guide to S&C	Notices	Book reviews	Letters to the editor	Links	I do not consult any of these sections regularly	No response
All	69.5%	43.6%	29.0%	29.8%	27.9%	13.2%	19.2%	28.2%	13.2%	7.5%	17.8%	3.7%	15.6%
No response	2.3%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	97.7%
Aid agency official	63.2%	42.1%	23.7%	*15.8%*	31.6%	13.2%	*13.2%*	*7.9%*	10.5%	5.3%	13.2%	2.6%	21.1%
Consultant	**80.5%**	39.8%	26.0%	29.3%	25.2%	**20.3%**	16.3%	26.8%	16.3%	6.5%	18.7%	4.1%	9.8%
Government official (non-aid agency)	69.3%	42.1%	30.0%	32.1%	29.3%	16.4%	20.7%	27.9%	10.7%	5.7%	*12.9%*	7.1%	12.1%
Graduate student	63.7%	36.3%	36.3%	30.8%	*22.0%*	12.1%	18.7%	**44.0%**	14.3%	**14.3%**	**24.2%**	4.4%	9.9%
Industrial manager	73.7%	*21.1%*	26.3%	*5.3%*	31.6%	10.5%	21.1%	21.1%	**26.3%**	5.3%	10.5%	**10.5%**	15.8%
Journalist	77.1%	**57.1%**	22.1%	28.6%	25.7%	13.6%	17.9%	25.7%	10.0%	7.1%	11.4%	2.1%	17.9%
Librarian	*58.3%*	41.7%	27.1%	25.0%	29.2%	16.7%	**25.0%**	22.9%	**20.8%**	4.2%	20.8%	6.3%	16.7%
NGO official	71.8%	46.2%	31.6%	29.9%	29.9%	11.1%	23.1%	27.4%	18.8%	6.0%	17.1%	4.3%	9.4%
Physician	*60.7%*	*27.9%*	24.6%	37.7%	26.2%	3.3%	24.6%	34.4%	11.5%	6.6%	**29.5%**	**9.8%**	11.5%
Research administrator	75.9%	**63.0%**	37.0%	**42.6%**	24.1%	13.0%	18.5%	25.9%	9.3%	**11.1%**	13.0%	1.9%	16.7%
Researcher (policy)	**79.1%**	50.9%	36.4%	**39.1%**	**40.0%**	21.8%	*12.7%*	32.7%	**20.0%**	5.5%	16.4%	2.7%	5.5%
Researcher (science)	71.4%	44.4%	32.9%	30.0%	27.7%	13.4%	17.4%	**35.7%**	12.0%	10.6%	22.1%	2.3%	13.6%
School student	66.7%	*33.3%*	25.0%	**50.0%**	0.0%	8.3%	16.7%	25.0%	**25.0%**	0.0%	**25.0%**	0.0%	25.0%
School teacher	73.3%	**53.3%**	23.3%	*16.7%*	*16.7%*	*6.7%*	10.0%	20.0%	*3.3%*	10.0%	**30.0%**	0.0%	13.3%
University student	*52.3%*	*31.8%*	25.0%	*14.8%*	28.4%	12.5%	*9.1%*	28.4%	13.6%	4.5%	8.0%	3.4%	26.1%
University teacher	66.8%	39.9%	28.1%	29.9%	28.1%	10.6%	20.2%	27.5%	17.5%	7.6%	19.3%	3.3%	17.2%
Science communicator	72.1%	45.0%	29.7%	29.7%	26.1%	12.6%	**36.0%**	24.3%	*2.7%*	7.2%	13.5%	0.9%	18.9%
Other (please specify)	77.5%	52.8%	29.0%	36.4%	34.6%	13.9%	22.5%	21.6%	12.1%	6.1%	18.2%	5.6%	10.0%

Some notable findings from this table include:

- Consultants and policy researchers tend to be more interested in new stories than other types of users.
- Journalists, research administrators and school teachers tend to be more interested in new stories than other types of users.
- Policy researchers appear to be particularly interested in dossiers and quick guides in comparison to other groups
- The E-guide to science and communication is particularly read by science communicators and librarians, but not, as might be expected, by journalists.
- Notices are particularly commonly consulted by graduate students and science researchers

Disaggregated by country

	News	Features	Opinions	Editorials	dossiers and quick guides	Regional gateways	E-guide to S&C	Notices	Book reviews	Letters to the editor	Links	I do not consult any of these sections regularly	No response
All	69.5%	43.6%	29.0%	29.8%	27.9%	13.2%	19.2%	28.2%	13.2%	7.5%	17.8%	3.7%	15.6%
Developing country	70.0%	43.2%	29.7%	30.3%	29.4%	14.6%	**23.4%**	**35.7%**	16.2%	8.6%	21.1%	3.0%	13.8%
Developed country	72.2%	46.3%	29.5%	30.5%	27.0%	11.4%	*13.2%*	*17.3%*	9.1%	6.1%	13.2%	5.0%	14.4%
No response	2.3%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	0.0%	97.7%

There are few significant differences between developed and developing country users in terms of the different sections of the website that they consult. Developing country users appear to be more interested in notices and the E-guide to science and communication than developed country users.

Disaggregated by area of geographical interest

	News	Features	Opinions	Editorials	dossiers and quick guides	Regional gateways	E-guide to S&C	Notices	Book reviews	Letters to the editor	Links	I do not consult any of these sections regularly	No response
All	69.5%	43.6%	29.0%	29.8%	27.9%	13.2%	19.2%	28.2%	13.2%	7.5%	17.8%	3.7%	15.6%
China	74.5%	50.4%	33.4%	36.0%	27.5%	14.4%	17.0%	20.6%	13.8%	9.7%	15.5%	4.9%	14.8%
Latin America and the Caribbean	74.9%	45.1%	29.9%	33.5%	29.5%	14.5%	16.5%	26.2%	14.1%	7.8%	17.6%	4.7%	12.9%
Middle East and North Africa	75.9%	47.4%	33.9%	36.5%	31.6%	14.2%	21.3%	28.3%	15.4%	8.9%	20.1%	4.0%	13.8%
South Asia	73.6%	51.5%	34.4%	34.8%	31.3%	13.9%	19.9%	26.9%	13.9%	9.3%	17.3%	3.6%	13.8%
South-East Asia	72.8%	50.5%	33.3%	34.8%	32.4%	12.5%	19.2%	25.4%	13.7%	9.0%	17.8%	4.0%	14.9%
Sub-Saharan Africa	71.9%	48.0%	30.8%	30.2%	28.8%	12.0%	18.6%	33.8%	12.9%	7.7%	19.5%	4.0%	13.2%

Question 12 – What additional topics should we cover in the news section?

It is notable that fewer than half of the respondents (47%) answered this open-ended question, which may indicate a high level of satisfaction with the breadth of news content. However, a number of topics were consistently identified by respondents as requiring additional news coverage:

- Energy, in particular small scale energy and renewable energy
- Plant sciences
- Science policy
- Climate change
- Earth sciences
- Nanotechnology
- Stories covering applications of technology

Question 13 – What do you think of the relative focus on international/regional and country-specific news on the website?

	Number	% of respondents
The website should focus more on international and regional news	301	13.6%
The website should give more space to country-specific news	259	11.7%
The balance is about right	1033	46.7%
No opinion/ no response	619	28.0%

A clear majority stated that the regional balance of news was about right or had no strong opinion on this issue.

Question 14 – What additional types of content should we add to the dossiers?

Only a third of respondents answered this open ended question. The most frequent proposals that were put forward for additional content to the dossiers included:

- More links to external sources and documents, and more comprehensive bibliographies
- More country level information and case studies
- More examples on the application of technology
- More interactive features including discussion groups
- Directories of researchers and media contacts
- Briefings on the key arguments of academic debates
- More downloadable content including research papers
- Greater use of images and movies
- More information on donor and government policies
- Foreign language versions
- Interviews with important scientists
- Calendars of key events

There were also numerous suggestions for additional subjects that could be covered by new dossiers, including:

- Science policy
- The commercialisation of science
- Renewable energy
- Water and sanitation
- Information Technology
- Conventional and modern plant breeding
- Public Private Partnerships in research
- Biosafety

Question 15 - Do you use the 'What's New' section regularly?

	Number	% of respondents
Yes	936	42.4%
No	530	24.0%
Never noticed it	400	18.1%
No response	345	15.6%

Question 16 – Which notices, if any, do you consult regularly?

	Number	% of respondents
Announcements	917	41.4%
Events	1029	46.5%
Jobs	530	23.9%
Grants	758	34.3%
None	394	17.8%
No response	346	15.6%

Multiple selections allowed

Disaggregated by profession

	Announcements	Events	Jobs	Grants	None	No response
All	41.4%	46.5%	23.9%	34.3%	17.8%	15.6%
No response	0.0%	2.3%	2.3%	2.3%	0.0%	97.7%
Aid agency official	*31.6%*	*28.9%*	*13.2%*	*5.3%*	**34.2%**	21.1%
Consultant	**46.3%**	41.5%	26.0%	*26.0%*	19.5%	9.8%
Government official (non-aid agency)	40.7%	43.6%	21.4%	*24.3%*	**25.7%**	12.1%
Graduate student	39.6%	**53.8%**	**50.5%**	**53.8%**	15.4%	9.9%
Industrial manager	**47.4%**	42.1%	*15.8%*	*21.1%*	15.8%	15.8%
Journalist	*35.0%*	47.1%	21.4%	*23.6%*	20.7%	17.9%
Librarian	*22.9%*	47.9%	*12.5%*	*20.8%*	**25.0%**	16.7%
NGO official	44.4%	48.7%	20.5%	35.0%	**27.4%**	9.4%
Physician	37.7%	**57.4%**	**29.5%**	**39.3%**	13.1%	11.5%
Research administrator	**48.1%**	38.9%	*14.8%*	**44.4%**	16.7%	16.7%
Researcher (policy)	42.7%	**54.5%**	26.4%	37.3%	20.9%	5.5%
Researcher (science)	46.2%	**53.1%**	**28.4%**	**47.7%**	*10.6%*	13.6%
School student	41.7%	50.0%	*0.0%*	*16.7%*	8.3%	25.0%
School teacher	**50.0%**	*36.7%*	*6.7%*	*13.3%*	16.7%	13.3%
University student	*34.1%*	46.6%	23.9%	*22.7%*	14.8%	26.1%
University teacher	**48.9%**	47.1%	23.0%	**45.0%**	*11.5%*	17.2%
Science communicator	*34.2%*	43.2%	27.9%	*18.9%*	21.6%	18.9%
Other (please specify)	39.4%	42.4%	20.3%	27.7%	28.1%	10.0%

There are some marked differences between professions, most of which are not surprising given different funding and career stage needs.

Disaggregated by country

	Announcements	Events	Jobs	Grants	None	No response
All	41.4%	46.5%	23.9%	34.3%	17.8%	15.6%
Developing country	**48.4%**	**55.5%**	**28.3%**	**45.7%**	*9.8%*	13.7%
Developed country	*32.2%*	*34.1%*	*18.1%*	*17.3%*	**31.8%**	14.5%
No response	0.0%	2.3%	2.3%	2.3%	0.0%	97.7%

Developing country users appear to be more interested in all types of announcements than developed country users.

Disaggregated by area of geographical interest

	Announcements	Events	Jobs	Grants	None	No response
All	41.4%	46.5%	23.9%	34.3%	17.8%	15.6%
China	37.9%	42.2%	18.5%	24.3%	26.9%	14.7%
Latin America and the Caribbean	38.7%	46.3%	21.3%	29.1%	22.7%	12.9%
Middle East and North Africa	41.7%	47.1%	26.1%	31.4%	22.9%	13.7%
South Asia	41.9%	45.3%	22.8%	29.5%	22.1%	13.8%
South-East Asia	40.6%	44.5%	21.6%	31.1%	22.3%	14.9%
Sub-Saharan Africa	43.4%	47.8%	27.7%	36.3%	20.8%	13.1%

Question 17 – Should our notices be divided by region?

	Number	% of respondents
Yes	865	39.1%
No	495	22.4%
No opinion	468	21.2%
No response	384	17.4%

Question 18 – In what ways do you find the SciDev.Net website useful?

	Number	% of respondents
It keeps me up-to-date with relevant news	1519	68.6%
It provides valuable comment and insight	874	39.5%
It brings my attention to important issues	1210	54.7%
It provides valuable background information on key issues	1042	47.1%
It is a good source of relevant reports and contacts	910	41.1%
It helps me inform the decision-making of others	362	16.4%
Other (please specify)	103	4.7%
No response	457	20.7%

Multiple selections allowed

This table again highlights the importance of SciDev.Net as a news service and source of background information. Only a small percentage of users (16.4%) stated that it helped to inform the decision making of others.

Question 19 – What was the most useful or interesting news item that you read on SciDev.Net over the past year?

The response rate to this question was rather low (48%) and few respondents were able to identify a single news item that had been most useful or interesting to them. Most of the responses referred to broad topics. The most commonly mentioned included bird flu, climate change, malaria, biotechnology, tsunami reports, drug development and nanotechnology.

Question 20 – Are you actively involved in developing policy in topics covered by the SciDev.Net website, in engaging in policy-related discussions about these topics or in researching policy-related issues?

	Number	% of respondents
Yes	602	27.2%
No	1022	46.2%
No response	589	26.6%

A clear finding from the respondents to this question is that only a minority of users (27.2%) are involved developing policy on topics covered by SciDev.Net. The following table shows the professions of respondents who fit into this category.

Question 20 - *Respondents who answered yes disaggregated by profession*

	Number	respondents answering yes to q 20 as % of each professional group
All	602	27.2%
No response	0	0.0%
Aid agency official	15	**39.5%**
Consultant	53	**43.1%**
Government official (non-aid agency)	53	**37.9%**
Graduate student	13	*14.3%*
Industrial manager	4	21.1%
Journalist	12	*8.6%*
Librarian	10	*20.8%*
NGO official	46	**39.3%**
Physician	13	21.3%
Research administrator	26	**48.1%**
Researcher (policy)	67	**60.9%**
Researcher (science)	87	*20.4%*
School student	4	33.3%
School teacher	3	*10.0%*
University student	14	*15.9%*
University teacher	87	26.3%
Science communicator	25	*22.5%*
Other (please specify)	70	30.3%

The table indicates that the professions most commonly claiming to be involved in policymaking include aid agency officials, consultants, government officials, NGO officials, research administrators and policy researchers.

Respondents who answered yes disaggregated by country

	Number	respondents answering yes to q 20 as % of each group
All	602	27.2%
Developing countries	325	24.2%
Developed countries	277	33.6%
No answer	0	0

This table indicates that developed country users appear to have slightly more influence on policy making

Respondents who answered yes disaggregated by region of interest

	Number	respondents answering yes to q 20 as % of each group
All	602	27.2%
China	207	32.0%
Latin America and the Caribbean	296	31.1%
Middle East and North Africa	195	30.3%
South Asia	245	30.6%
South-East Asia	256	30.2%
Sub-Saharan Africa	342	30.4%

There is little difference between regions of geographical interest

Question 21 – How has our material been of value to you in policy making?

A quarter of respondents answered this open-ended question, which corresponds to percentage of respondents who stated that they are actively involved in developing policy in question 20. The responses to question 21 provide further insight into the level and type of policy influence exercised by users of SciDev.Net. The majority of respondents who answered question 21 were only loosely connected to policy making, and included for example science communicators NGO lobbyists and researchers who judged their outputs to be relevant to the policy debate. About 20% of the respondents to question 21 (equivalent to about 5% of the user base of SciDev.Net) held positions where they are able to influence policy directly. Amongst this small group the main policy roles that were evident from the questionnaire responses included science funding, setting research priorities for research institutes, and contributing to the policy making within governments, donor and international organisations on science topics.

Responses to question 21 suggest that SciDev.Net influences policy mainly by providing background information and general knowledge of science and development rather than specialist material on specific policy issues. Some of the uses of SciDev.Net in informing policy makers noted by respondents include (in rough order of importance):

- Providing background information on topics and keeping policymakers up to date with new ideas
- Providing a source of opinion and comment on science debates
- A source of information for the writing of briefing papers and lobbying materials

- A source of information for inclusion in newsletters and online documentation for broader dissemination amongst policy makers.
- Providing examples of policy measures in individual countries, which may be applicable elsewhere
- Providing information relevant to the setting of research priorities
- Informing policy makers on cross-cutting topics (e.g. climate change, bioethics etc.) that are relevant, but may not be central, to their primary responsibility
- Providing practical examples on the application of technology and evidence about what works. Several users suggested that SciDev.Net could provide more such examples.

Question 22 – Another example of how SciDev.Net has assisted you?

Around 40% of respondents answered this open-ended question. The services provided by SciDev.Net that were most frequently cited include:

- Background information on a wide range of science and development topics
- A teaching resource
- A source of information that is useful for writing research proposals and articles
- Job announcements
- Grant announcements
- Conference announcements
- Keeping colleagues informed about science news
- Links to other publications
- Guidance on good practice in science journalism
- Newsfeeds and syndication
- Book reviews as a source of information for library purchases

Question 23 - What impact has the material you have read on SciDev.Net had on your ideas and/or activities?

	Number	% of respondents
It has increased my awareness of the importance of science and technology	861	38.9%
It has helped me to increase the awareness of others of the importance of science and technology	695	31.4%
It has helped me to make up my mind on critical issues	640	28.9%
It has had a direct impact on personal decisions that I have made	223	10.1%
It has had a direct impact on professional decisions that I have made	409	18.5%
It has allowed me to expand my professional knowledge and skills	1151	52.0%
It has allowed me to contact others who share my personal or professional interests	424	19.2%
It has helped me to engage in activities that I was previously unaware of	381	17.2%
None	51	2.3%
Other (please specify)	77	3.5%
No response	458	20.7%

Multiple selections allowed

Question 23 - *Disaggregated by Profession*

	It has increased my awareness of the importance of science and technology	It has helped me to increase the awareness of others of the importance of science and technology	It has helped me to make up my mind on critical issues	It has had a direct impact on personal decisions that I have made	It has had a direct impact on professional decisions that I have made	It has allowed me to expand my professional knowledge and skills	It has allowed me to contact others who share my personal or professional interests	It has helped me to engage in activities that I was previously unaware of	None	Other (please specify)	No response
All	38.9%	31.4%	28.9%	10.1%	18.5%	52.0%	19.2%	17.2%	2.3%	3.5%	20.7%
No response	2.3%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	97.7%
Aid agency official	34.2%	31.6%	34.2%	7.9%	34.2%	44.7%	21.1%	13.2%	0.0%	0.0%	28.9%
Consultant	33.3%	30.9%	28.5%	9.8%	19.5%	58.5%	20.3%	8.9%	4.9%	4.1%	12.2%
Government official (non-aid agency)	45.0%	38.6%	32.1%	9.3%	25.0%	51.4%	15.0%	14.3%	1.4%	3.6%	20.0%
Graduate student	45.1%	28.6%	31.9%	14.3%	12.1%	50.5%	16.5%	26.4%	6.6%	2.2%	15.4%
Industrial manager	47.4%	26.3%	26.3%	15.8%	15.8%	42.1%	10.5%	15.8%	0.0%	0.0%	15.8%
Journalist	39.3%	35.7%	25.7%	7.1%	20.0%	52.1%	17.9%	20.0%	2.1%	5.0%	22.1%
Librarian	50.0%	43.8%	25.0%	6.3%	12.5%	39.6%	20.8%	16.7%	6.3%	2.1%	18.8%
NGO official	37.6%	30.8%	30.8%	10.3%	21.4%	53.8%	20.5%	17.9%	1.7%	5.1%	19.7%
Physician	34.4%	27.9%	21.3%	13.1%	19.7%	50.8%	6.6%	19.7%	1.6%	1.6%	14.8%
Research administrator	29.6%	38.9%	24.1%	7.4%	25.9%	57.4%	24.1%	27.8%	1.9%	1.9%	20.4%
Researcher (policy)	30.9%	23.6%	35.5%	6.4%	13.6%	68.2%	16.4%	23.6%	1.8%	8.2%	7.3%
Researcher (science)	42.5%	27.2%	31.2%	10.8%	18.1%	53.5%	20.2%	20.0%	1.9%	1.9%	19.5%
School student	41.7%	16.7%	8.3%	16.7%	8.3%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	41.7%
School teacher	30.0%	40.0%	20.0%	10.0%	10.0%	60.0%	23.3%	10.0%	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%
University student	46.6%	27.3%	31.8%	14.8%	14.8%	44.3%	20.5%	17.0%	1.1%	0.0%	29.5%
University teacher	38.7%	34.4%	27.8%	10.3%	20.8%	52.6%	24.8%	16.6%	2.7%	3.6%	23.0%
Science communicator	31.5%	35.1%	23.4%	8.1%	16.2%	52.3%	16.2%	12.6%	0.9%	2.7%	25.2%
Other (please specify)	43.3%	35.1%	33.8%	12.1%	18.2%	53.2%	20.3%	15.6%	2.6%	6.9%	13.4%

Disaggregated by country

	It has increased my awareness of the importance of science and technology	It has helped me to increase the awareness of others of the importance of science and technology	It has helped me to make up my mind on critical issues	It has had a direct impact on personal decisions that I have made	It has had a direct impact on professional decisions that I have made	It has allowed me to expand my professional knowledge and skills	It has allowed me to contact others who share my personal or professional interests	It has helped me to engage in activities that I was previously unaware of	None	Other (please specify)	No response
All	38.9%	31.4%	28.9%	10.1%	18.5%	52.0%	19.2%	17.2%	2.3%	3.5%	20.7%
Developing country	**45.9%**	34.1%	**32.6%**	**12.9%**	21.9%	53.5%	**22.9%**	**22.1%**	1.6%	2.0%	19.9%
Developed country	*29.5%*	28.6%	*24.4%*	*6.1%*	*13.9%*	52.2%	*13.9%*	*10.2%*	3.5%	6.1%	18.1%
No response	2.3%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	2.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	97.7%

It is notable that developing country users report that SciDev.Net has had a greater impact on their work than developed country users

Disaggregated by area of geographical interest

	It has increased my awareness of the importance of science and technology	It has helped me to increase the awareness of others of the importance of science and technology	It has helped me to make up my mind on critical issues	It has had a direct impact on personal decisions that I have made	It has had a direct impact on professional decisions that I have made	It has allowed me to expand my professional knowledge and skills	It has allowed me to contact others who share my personal or professional interests	It has helped me to engage in activities that I was previously unaware of	None	Other (please specify)	No response
All	38.9%	31.4%	28.9%	10.1%	18.5%	52.0%	19.2%	17.2%	2.3%	3.5%	20.7%
China	40.2%	35.9%	29.4%	11.3%	20.2%	53.6%	19.8%	17.0%	2.2%	3.9%	18.5%
Latin America and the Caribbean	34.8%	32.5%	28.9%	7.5%	16.3%	53.7%	15.8%	13.7%	2.4%	4.3%	17.4%
Middle East and North Africa	41.4%	36.4%	29.7%	11.2%	20.1%	56.1%	18.5%	18.4%	2.2%	4.5%	18.0%
South Asia	42.1%	36.1%	32.1%	10.1%	19.9%	56.3%	20.3%	17.8%	1.4%	4.3%	18.3%
South-East Asia	40.8%	34.0%	30.7%	11.0%	20.3%	57.2%	19.9%	17.6%	2.2%	3.2%	18.6%
Sub-Saharan Africa	40.8%	33.6%	30.6%	12.3%	21.5%	55.7%	20.3%	19.2%	2.1%	4.7%	18.5%

Question 24 – What use have you made of information in the dossiers?

	Number	% of respondents
I have used dossier material in my research	570	25.8%
I have used dossiers to help write an article or report	612	27.7%
I have used dossiers for teaching	395	17.8%
I have used dossiers for a student project	174	7.9%
I have used information as input into a policy decision	291	13.1%
I have not used information from dossiers	487	22.0%
Other (please specify)	118	5.3%
No response	458	20.7%

Multiple selections allowed

There is some inconsistency between the responses to question 24 and responses to question 11 which suggested that only 28% of respondents regularly use the dossiers. The responses to question 24 may often be indicative of occasional rather than regular use.

Question 25 – If you have used information from the dossiers, which of the following elements have you used?

	Number	% of respondents
Policy briefs	555	25.1%
Opinion articles	674	30.5%
Key documents	667	30.1%
Glossary	140	6.3%
Links	383	17.3%
Spotlights	165	7.5%
No response	1038	46.9%

Multiple selections allowed

The low response rate to this question suggests that many users may not be aware or fully understand the nature of the different elements of the dossiers.

Question 26 – Other specific online sources

More than half of the respondents (1103) answered this question. The responses were very diverse and exhibited a long-tail distribution. In other words there were relatively few online sources that were mentioned by a large number of users, and a large number of specialist sites that were each mentioned by only a few users. The most common responses were identified using keyword analysis and are reported in the table below. This indicates that the most frequent alternative sources of science news that SciDev.Net users refer to are the BBC, *Science*, *Nature*, *The New Scientist*, *The New York Times* and *Scientific American.*

Source	Number of responses
BBC	253
Science	125
Nature	119
New Scientist	48
Google	46
New York Times	41
CNN	27
Scientific American	26
WHO	22
FAO	20
The Economist	19
Development Gateway	16
Yahoo	15
Pubmed	13
Washington Post	13
Eurekalert	12
AAAS	12
Medscape	11
Science Direct	11
ELDIS	10
World Bank	10
Google Scholar	9
The Guardian	9
The Scientist	9
CGIAR	8
NASA	8
IFPRI	7
IUCN	7
The Lancet	7
Reuters	6
Science news	6
Research Research	3

Question 27 – What do these other sources offer that is currently not available through SciDev.Net?

This open ended question was answered by just over 60% of respondents. A large number of respondents stated that SciDev.Net is complementary to other sources of science news that have a different focus or serve different audiences. There was little sense that SciDev.Net is duplicating the work of other sources, or that SciDev.Net compares unfavourably with other sources. Respondents noted many reasons why they would consult other websites in addition to SciDev.Net. The most common include:

- Many respondents also require more detailed information on their areas of scientific specialism, and would typically look to other sources to provide this

- Many respondents are looking for material that is specific to a particular country or region, and also consult other websites for this.
- In contrast to those looking for more specialist information, a number of respondents were looking for scientific news with a broader focus or news that is explained in more simple terms than SciDev.Net.
- Many respondents suggested that other sources contained more comprehensive information on job vacancies.
- Many respondents indicated that they consulted other sources to gain access to published papers in downloadable form.
- A number of respondents suggested that other sources had a livelier format and contained more interactive features, such as discussion groups and blogs.
- A few respondents suggested that other news sites were quicker to report breaking news.
- A small number of respondents reported that they consulted other sites to get information in languages other than English.

Question 28 - Would you like to see more or fewer images on the website?

	Number	% of respondents
More images	522	23.6%
Balance is about right	689	31.1%
Fewer images	119	5.4%
No opinion	231	10.4%
No response	651	29.4%

Question 29 - Do you feel that the balance of coverage leans too heavily on the life sciences, on the physical sciences and technology, or is about right?

	Number	% of respondents
Too much life sciences	252	11.4%
Too much physical science and technology	94	4.2%
The balance is about right	994	44.9%
No opinion	221	10.0%
No response	651	29.4%

Question 30 - If you are registered with SciDev.Net, you will occasionally receive material from us about new items relevant to your topic or topics of interest. Do you feel

	Number	% of respondents
That you would like to receive more of this information from us	407	18.4%
That the amount of information you receive is about right	896	40.5%
That you receive too much information from us	49	2.2%
No opinion	92	4.2%
No response	668	30.2%

Question 31 - Would you like to receive a monthly email alert listing new material relevant to your geographical region(s) of interest, in addition to the standard weekly email alert?

	Number	% of respondents
Yes	1136	51.3%
No	359	16.2%
No opinion	85	3.8%
No response	632	28.6%

Question 32 - Would you like to receive occasional emails containing information about products or services relevant to the goals and interests of SciDev.Net that are provided by third parties?

	Number	% of respondents
Yes	652	29.5%
No	739	33.4%
No opinion	173	7.8%
No response	648	29.3%

Question 33 - Do you think our editorial independence would be significantly affected if we introduced paid advertising to help cover our operating costs, provided that a clear distinction is made between editorial and advertising content?

	Number	% of respondents
Yes	591	26.7%
No	698	31.5%
No opinion	268	12.1%
No response	655	29.6%

Question 34 - Would you like to see SciDev.Net make greater use of blogs (web-based diaries)?

	Number	% of respondents
Yes	526	23.8%
No	450	20.3%
No opinion	576	26.0%
No response	660	29.8%

Question 35 - What additional features would you like to see on the website that would make it easier for users to express their views?

This open ended question was only answered by 23% of respondents. Of the respondents who answered the question around 30% stated that there was no need for additional features to allow greater user participation. While this may suggest that demand for more interactive features on the website is limited, it should also be noted that response rates for questions appearing at the end of the questionnaire, in particular the open-ended questions, tended to be low.

The most common suggestions for more interactive features were (in rough order of importance):

- Discussion groups on selected topics
- Reader comments should be posted below each article
- Message board, Guest book, visitors pages and chat rooms
- More frequent letters to the editor
- Blogs, written in particular by developing country scientists (while many users were enthusiastic about the blogs others questioned their value)
- Ability to submit own articles and publications to SciDev.Net
- Polls and surveys
- Podcasts

Question 36 - Would you make use of a short online training course on science journalism?

	Number	% of respondents
Yes	979	44.2%
No	570	25.7%
No response	663	30.0%

Question 37 - Would you make use of a short online training course on how to interact with science journalists and other science communicators?

	Number	% of respondents
Yes	1027	46.4%
No	503	22.7%
No response	682	30.8%

Question 38 - Would you be interested in attending events organised by SciDev.Net on contentious issues at the interface between science, technology and public policy?

	Number	% of respondents
Yes	1188	53.7%
No	218	9.9%
No opinion	193	8.7%
No response	613	27.7%

Question 39 - Would you like to be put in contact with others in your country or region that share an interest in science and technology communication?

	Number	% of respondents
Yes	1135	51.3%
No	441	19.9%
No response	636	28.7%

Question 40 - If you are a scientist or a policy researcher, would you be prepared to talk to your country or region about a news event or a related issue?

	Number	% of respondents
Yes	965	43.6%
No	356	16.1%
No response	891	40.3%

Question 41 – Additional comments

Around a quarter of respondents provided additional comments. Nearly all of these were positive statements praising the work of SciDev.Net in general terms.

Annex 6. Report of Telephone Interviews

Gareth Williams, The Policy Practice

1. Purpose

Thirty telephone interviews each lasting about 20 minutes were held with users of SciDev.Net. The purpose was to complement the online questionnaire through more open-ended and in-depth discussion of selected issues that were of particular interest to the evaluation. The interviews were loosely structured around the following questions:

- How interviewees use the website, and what impact it has had on their work.
- How users perceive the quality of the website and its journalism.
- What users consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the website in terms of its content and functionality. The dossiers were a particular focus of discussion.
- How users suggest that the website should be developed in future.
- What comments users have on the outreach and marketing of the website

This report summarises the principal findings of the interviews, and is organised according to the above list of questions. It must be emphasised at the outset that the statements report the opinions of individual users, and may not necessarily reflect the conclusions of the evaluation.

2. Sample

The sample was devised so as to ensure good coverage of users from developing countries (and Sub-Saharan Africa in particular). The regional breakdown of the sample was as follows:

- Developed countries (10)
- Developing countries (20), of which:
    - Sub-Saharan Africa (11)
    - Latin America and Caribbean (5)
    - Asia (4)

A particular focus of the interviews was to assess the impact of SciDev.Net on policy making. The sample was designed to include a high proportion of users, who are actively engaged in policy making and policy research. More than half of the sample (18 interviewees) had a strong connection to policy and were drawn from government and international organisations, research institutes, think tanks, universities and NGOs, government departments and international organisations. The remainder of the interviews were conducted with postgraduate students, university lecturers, scientific researchers, journalists, science communicators and research administrators. Three interviews were conducted in French (West Africa).

The sample was broadly representative of the SciDev.Net user base as reflected in the database of registered users. However, certain categories were

somewhat overrepresented, including developing country users and users with policy influence because the evaluators were particularly interested in the use of the website in developing countries and its influence on policy.
Potential interviewees were chosen at random from the list of registered users, and were sent an invitation to participate by email. The response rate was about 10%. From those who responded, interviewees were selected through purposive sampling so as to achieve the desired balance between different categories of users.

3. Use and impact of the website

The telephone interviews confirmed the results of the online questionnaire that users are primarily interested in SciDev.Net as a source of news and comment. Many users return to the site regularly, typically once a week. Almost all users reported that their primary route to the website is through links in the weekly email, and they rarely visited SciDev.Net without the email prompt.

The weekly email appears to have a strong influence on which sections of the website are regularly consulted by users. Articles that are highlighted in the weekly email (mainly news stories, editorials and opinion pieces) receive most visits. As discussed in section 6, the majority of users do not regularly consult the dossiers. Some users suggested that this was because of the limited prominence of dossiers in the weekly email.

An important finding of the interviews is that the use and impact of SciDev.Net extends much beyond the registered user base. Numerous interviewees reported that they forward the weekly email or particular stories widely amongst colleagues.[2] Many organisations reported that their organisations draw on materials from the SciDev.Net website in their own media and publications. Interviewees were requested to comment on their use of other online and printed sources of information on science and development. All responded that they were not aware of another website or journal that covers the same breadth of science news as SciDev.Net and was focused on developing countries. However, most users also consult a large number of other websites and journals that cover narrower and more specialist topics.

The interviews revealed that the website is used in a number of ways for different purposes, and that its impacts vary accordingly. In rough order of importance these can be grouped as follows:

Providing background knowledge on science and development

The majority of interviewees explained that their primary reason for consulting the website was to keep in touch with a broad range of science and development issues mainly for background knowledge or general interest. It is notable that many users reported that the website only partially met their needs as a source of information on their primary research or policy interest, and for this purpose they would typically make greater use of more specialist websites and journals.

[2] In the World Bank for example the weekly email is circulated to around 500 staff members including around 100 at senior level.

SciDev.Net appears to be most valued by users as a means to brief themselves on topics about which they are less knowledgeable, but need to gain a rapid understanding. Users would typically consult SciDev.Net if embarking a new research subject or to find out about a topic that was connected to their primary interest, including cross-cutting issues such as HIV/AIDS or climate change.[3] Many users stated that they use the website to get a quick sense of the debate surrounding particular topics. Editorials are seen as being particularly useful in this regard.

A convenient means to access latest sources on science and development

Many interviewees praised the convenience of the website as a means to keep up to date with science and development news. Several stated that most of the information posted on SciDev.Net was available elsewhere, but SciDev.Net brought it all together and provided a useful time saving tool. This was particularly valued as an aid to preparing conference and workshop presentations. The links to more detailed original sources are highly valued by users, in particular where SciDev.Net provides access to scientific journal articles free of charge.

Announcements of jobs, grants and events

In addition to providing a news service, many users, particularly those from developing countries, stated that the website provides an important source of information on grants, jobs and events. One interviewee is currently undertaking a fellowship that was advertised on the website. Others mentioned that colleagues in their institute had applied for grants or attended conferences as a result of notices posted on SciDev.Net. A few respondents stated that their organisations actively use SciDev.Net as a means to advertise events, jobs and research outputs.

A research tool

Several respondents reported that they use SciDev.Net as a means to assess what organisations and countries are already doing in particular fields of scientific research. Many developing country users reported that they find the website helpful as a tool to follow scientific developments in other developing countries, and to consider possible applications in their own country

A teaching resource

Several university lecturers reported that they use material on the website as a teaching resource. There is also a large student user base, particularly amongst postgraduate students.

Raising awareness of science and development through other media

Several users commented that SciDev.Net serves an important awareness raising and educational purpose. Its messages reach a wide audience where other media

[3] For example a trade policy researcher reported that the site was useful as a quick source of information on scientific topics that are relevant to trade, including IPRs and GMOs . Another user mentioned that she used the website to get up to speed on new topics, for example the drafting of a research proposal on biological control of malaria carrying mosquitoes.

actively use content from the website. The telephone interviews revealed several examples of this, including a radio station in Burundi that broadcasts information about HIV/AIDS drawn from SciDev.Net, a webmaster in South Africa who uses SciDev.Net RSS feeds to add content to several science websites, a science magazine in India whose journalists consult SciDev.Net daily as a source of material, and a science organisation in North America that uses SciDev.Net material for a newsletter of science and human rights.

Informing policy making

It is difficult to demonstrate the influence of SciDev.Net on policy making because links between knowledge and policy are complex, multiple and difficult to trace. The telephone interviews revealed a limited number of examples where users reported that information gained from SciDev.Net had been directly applied to policy making. These include the design of an African Science and Innovation Facility,[4] the formulation of Kenya's recent environment policy and the drafting of a climate change strategy for a nature conservation body in southern Africa. However, these cases are relatively few in number, and it is difficult to demonstrate a clear impact of SciDev.Net in shaping policy. However, the interviews suggested that many people with important policy responsibilities are exposed to SciDev.Net either as registered users or recipients of forwarded information. Several interviewees suggested that the website provided background information that was an essential basis for effective policy making. One stated that the website provide a minimum platform of knowledge that policy makers needed to be aware of. This is particularly important in the case of topics covered by SciDev.Net that cut across many areas of policy making in science and beyond (e.g. climate change, HIV/AIDS).

Health information

Some of the reported uses of the website were rather unexpected. For example, many individuals, companies and organisations commented that they used the website as a source of information on health risks.[5]

4. User opinions on the quality of journalism and the website

All of the interviewees held a positive view of the quality of the journalism and the website. The survey revealed a broad consensus that SciDev.Net provides a source of reliable, balanced, interesting, accessible and current news with a sharp focus on science in developing countries. Several users stated that they perceived SciDev.Net as a credible source of information that could be trusted and had no particular agenda of its own. No instances of major inaccuracies in reporting were mentioned during the interviews. One interviewee commented that in some cases SciDev.Net needed to make it clearer who the authors of stories were.

[4] Consultants working on the design of this facility are reportedly heavy users of SciDev.Net. SciDev.Net has also invited comments on the design on the proposal (See news item posted on 14 August 2006)

[5] A mining company in India reported that information on malaria and bird flu obtained from SciDev.Net had been passed on as general health advice to their workforce. A student in West Africa reported that he had used information from SciDev.Net to inform himself and his friends about HIV/AIDS.

Some interviewees were asked to comment on the quality of SciDev.Net in relation to other sources of information on science and development that they regularly use. The feedback was positive, and nearly all users considered that the service provided by SciDev.Net was at least as good as or better than other sources of science news.

The interviewees held varying opinions on whether the news items covered by SciDev.Net provided sufficient length and depth. Many users found the length of articles to be about right, a significant number suggested that material is rather brief, introductory and short on substance. One interviewee suggested that readers with specialist knowledge of a particular subject would not learn much from the website. Another described SciDev.Net as a news clipping service rather than a source of original or investigative journalism. A few users stated that they believed that SciDev.Net relies too heavily on other sources, but others commented that they had noticed that stories are increasingly written by SciDev.Net's own network of journalists.

Several interviewees commented that they particularly valued the editorials and opinion pieces which provide more in depth discussion and debate, and are an essential complement to the brief and factual news pieces.

The large majority of users commented favourably on the design, usability and functionality of the website, which was generally considered to be simple to navigate, fast to download, and attractive in appearance. However, several interviewees commented that the website was rather traditional in appearance and pages were somewhat overloaded in textual content and lacking in graphics. Several users commented that the search function is not very effective and precise, and is not prominently displayed on the homepage. Many complained that it was particularly difficult to find archived articles.

5. User opinions on the content and coverage of SciDev.Net

The telephone interviews indicated that users are generally satisfied with the content and coverage of SciDev.Net. While many users requested more material on their own particular subject specialism and country or regional interest, it is difficult to cater for all needs, and most found that the balance of coverage is generally appropriate for the purpose and audience served by SciDev.Net. However, interviewees did point to a number of areas of imbalance and weakness in the coverage of SciDev.Net. The observations below summarise the points that were raised most consistently:

- Several interviewees commented that SciDev.Net tends to focus on hot topics of the moment to the detriment of other subjects. For example, one user commented that the coverage of GMOs in relation to advances in conventional plant breeding was excessive given the relative importance of the two techniques in food production. Numerous interviewees suggested that there had been overkill in the coverage of avian flu.

- Several interviewees claimed that certain topics are not given sufficient attention. The most commonly mentioned was energy, in particular small-scale and renewable energy. Others included earth sciences (e.g. natural disasters), plant diseases, food and nutrition and food science.
- A number of users suggested that SciDev.Net tended to focus too much on hard science without giving enough attention to the application of technology in developing countries. Several called for the website to provide more news stories describing practical examples of the use and adoption of science and technology, including community level applications. Similarly others suggested that SciDev.Net could give greater coverage to applied research and technology transfer.
- A number of users commented that SciDev.Net provided insufficient coverage of science policy issues, in particular country-by-country reports on science policy and analysis of best practice.
- Some users commented that there was relatively little discussion on the website of the general contribution of science to development and the role of innovation systems in economic growth. This was viewed as essential to making a persuasive argument about the links between science and development.
- Several users remarked that the website did not cover social science issues. While accepting that this might be beyond the remit and resources of SciDev.Net, it was argued that it was essential to discuss the socio-economic barriers to the uptake of science and technology in developing countries.
- Numerous interviewees commented that there were many research institutes in their countries whose programmes and outputs were not reported by SciDev.Net. In focusing on internationally newsworthy stories, it was suggested that SciDev.Net might be missing an opportunity to report on less well known, but valuable pieces of research being undertaken in developing countries.
- While the announcements of grants, jobs and events were appreciated by many users, there was a widespread view that this service was somewhat limited and some important events were missed. Many users reported that they trawled numerous websites for information on grants, jobs and events, and that no website provided a comprehensive source.
- The majority of interviewees praised the website for its coverage of developing countries. However, a number of respondents commented that developed country writers and viewpoints appeared to be better represented in the editorials and opinion pieces.
- The three interviews conducted with French speaking users indicated that language barriers are a significant obstacle to the use of the site in francophone countries. There was a call for more content to be made available in French. In addition, users stated that news coverage of countries in Francophone Africa was far more limited than in Anglophone African countries.[6]

[6] It is likely that other non-English speaking audiences would make similar comments to the sample of Francophone users. However, the limited sample and languages available to the interviewer makes this difficult to judge.

6. User opinions of the dossiers

Interviewees were questioned about their use and opinions of the dossiers published on SciDev.Net. The main finding was that the majority SciDev.Net users make little use of the dossiers. Around half of the interviewees stated that they had never consulted the dossiers, and only about a quarter reported that they regularly used the dossiers. One of the reasons for the limited use of the dossiers may be that the majority of users access the website through the weekly email that tends to highlight news items, editorials and announcements. Presentational issues may also be important. Some interviewees commented that the dossiers were not given sufficient prominence on the home page, and suggested that the term “dossier” might not be the right label to attract users (a term like “hot topics” or “in depth” might work better).

The interviewees who did make regular use of the dossiers held rather mixed views on their quality. Several users stated that the dossiers were one of the main strengths of the website and were generally well produced. Many interviewees found the dossiers to provide a useful synthesis and convenient source of information on new topics. However, it was generally considered that the dossiers were rather introductory, and while this served an important purpose and would be of use to a general audience, specialists would not learn much. Some respondents stated that they found the dossiers most useful to inform themselves about issues on the edge of their professional responsibilities. A few interviewees stated that the dossiers added little value to the website, and that in many cases they provided only a brief overview linked to content that appears elsewhere on the website. It was also suggested that there was a lack of consistency in the format and level of detail of different dossiers. However, several interviewees stated that they had noticed improvements in the quality, coverage and consistency of the dossiers over the past few years.

A few suggestions were put forward on possible improvements to dossiers. One stated that it was difficult to know when material in dossiers had been updated and users who had registered an interest in each dossier should be sent email alerts when new material is added. Another interviewee suggested that dossiers could be enhanced by adding country case studies and practical examples of the use of science and technology in developing countries. A proposal was put forward that dossiers could be replaced by six monthly news roundups on the latest developments for certain topics.

7. Suggestions for the future development of SciDev.Net

The interviews generated numerous suggestions on the future development of SciDev.Net. Reflecting the diversity of users and their varying needs, these suggestions covered a wide range of ideas. There was little sense of a common view amongst users on how the website should be developed in future. The main points put forward in relation to the content and functionality of the website are summarised below:

7.1. Content

Many of the suggestions for the further development of SciDev.Net relate to subjects referred to in section 5 that interviewees identified as gaps and imbalances in the content of the website. There were several demands for additional coverage of energy issues (in particular small scale energy and renewable energy), food and nutrition, the practical applications of technology in developing countries and science policy issues.

Several users suggested that SciDev.Net could provide more comprehensive coverage of research policies, programmes and outputs from individual developing countries or regions. There was a suggestion that this could be provided as a regional roundup produced for each region on a six monthly basis.

A few users suggested that the focus of SciDev's future development should be to extend the content of dossiers and to add new dossiers. However, other users questioned the value added of dossiers in their present form. One interviewee suggested that a more useful approach would be to draft updates on research progress, news and events for particular subjects on a regular (possibly six monthly) basis.

Several interviewees suggested that SciDev.Net should focus its resources on investing in strengthening its journalistic capacity in developing countries. One commented that the SciDev.Net should broaden its sources, carry out more original journalism and rely less on material reproduced from other science journals. Another suggested that SciDev.Net should provide more lengthy, in-depth and investigative stories.

Reflecting the popularity of the announcements section of the website, several interviewees suggested that SciDev.Net should extend its coverage of jobs, grants and events. It was noted that there was a strong demand for such information amongst the science community in developing countries. One interviewee suggested that SciDev.Net should upgrade and extend its information on grants by providing a grant finder monthly service.

Many users appreciated the access provided by SciDev.Net to other websites and journals, in particular the free access provided to many scientific papers. Several interviewees proposed that SciDev.Net should strengthen its knowledge management function and its role as a portal to other information providers on science and development. It was suggested that SciDev.Net should attempt to negotiate greater access to free journal articles for developing country users, or could attempt to purchase wholesale access to online journals on behalf of its users. One interviewee suggested that there was an important and unmet demand for an authoritative source of statistics on science and development that could be provided by SciDev.Net.

Another frequent suggestion was for SciDev.Net to develop its role as an education tool. Some interviewees proposed that SciDev.Net could develop a student section, or provide simplified science news for schoolchildren in developing countries. Many considered SciDev.Net could play a greater role in

popularising science in the developing world and encouraging more students to enter a scientific career.

As noted in section 5 the interviews with French speaking users suggest that there is significant demand for more non-English language content.

7.2. Functionality

In discussing the functionality of the website many users commented on the limited interactivity of the website. It was noted that SciDev.Net operates much like an online newspaper rather than an interactive website that invites user input. Many users stated that this format is well suited to their needs. However, about half of the participants in the telephone interviews considered that SciDev.Net should do more to use the technology of the internet to provide more interactive features. Some of the suggestions put forward included:

- Online discussion groups, electronic conference or e-fora organised around particular topics.
- Blog spots for science journalists
- Feedback on SciDev.Net articles. Several users pointed out that while the website allows users to comment on articles, few of these comments appear on the website. One interviewee also questioned why there are so few published letters to the editor.
- An online directory of individuals and organisations interested in particular research topics that would facilitate research collaboration. One interviewee suggested that this might take the form of a market place for research ideas putting researchers in touch with other.
- More opportunities for users to submit their articles and announcements. Several interviewees stated that they would be interested in posting news stories on SciDev.Net to publicise their research outputs.

It was notable, however, that a sizeable minority of interviewees expressed a sceptical view of the usefulness of interactive features. Many stated that they would not have the time to participate in discussion groups. It was also noted that it is often difficult to achieve balanced and high quality participation in discussion groups.

In addition to comments about greater interactivity, there were many other suggestions on how the functionality of the website could be improved. These included:

- RSS feeds, while generally working well, should be subdivided by topic as well as by region
- Search and archive functions need to be improved and made more prominent
- CD Rom versions could be distributed in countries with poor internet connectivity
- Email alerts should be issued to interested users when dossier are updated or extended
- Regional gateways could be further subdivided. For example, several users in Southern Africa stated that it would be useful to highlight Southern Africa related news rather than to have to browse through all of the content relating to Sub-Saharan Africa.

8. Outreach and marketing

There was a widespread view amongst interviewees that SciDev.Net could more actively market itself and increase its user base. Some users commented that the website is not widely advertised or linked to other sites. Many reported that few of their colleagues used the website.

A few interviewees were able to the comment on the potential audience of the website. One stated that there were around 250,000 scientific researchers in Latin America, of which around 20% are interested in policy. On the basis of the number of registered users of SciDev.Net in Latin America, this may represent about 10% of the potential audience in Latin America.

Various suggestions were put forward on how SciDev.Net might increase its readership:

- New or enhanced services would attract more users to the site. For example, more comprehensive coverage of events, jobs and grants would bring in users who would then be more likely to views news content and dossiers.
- Linking to mailing lists held by other organisations. The telephone interviews revealed that the SciDev.Net weekly email is already widely circulated beyond the registered users. Several interviewees commented that their organisations also operated large mailing lists that could be used to advertise SciDev.Net.[7]
- Commissioning more articles by high profile scientists would attract new users to visit the site.
- Targeting potential user groups that may have been missed. It was pointed out that the website could be more actively marketed amongst key government policy makers. One interviewee noted that SciDev.Net appeals mainly to a scientific audience and is not well known on the economics side of the development profession. Industrial associations were also mentioned as an audience that could be further developed.
- Maintaining free access. Many interviewees commented that maintaining free access was key to the future growth of the website (one user suggested that certain specialised reports could be sold for a fee). Several argued that placing advertising on the website would be off-putting to many users.

[7] These suggestions were put forward by a large UK student campaigning body and the webmaster for several NEPAD mailing lists on science and development.

Annex 7. Report of Indian Focus Group

Report On the Focus Groups Held On 22ND July 2006 At Punjab Bhavan, New Delhi India

By Amitabha Pande

August 27th 2006

Executive Summary

(a). **What the participants like and do not like about the services offered by SciDev.**

What the participants like:

- The accent on the socio-economic dimensions of Science & Technology applications.
- Breadth of coverage, esp. on issues of greater relevance to developing economies.
- Functions as a single window on a wide range of issues.
- Useful, first level of information and competent presentation.
- Pleasant, relatively clutter free design and user friendly format.
- Content well written, easy to understand and jargon free.
- Balanced, geographical spread of information content.
- the dossiers were the most useful, in comparison with other elements such as News, however, the dossiers were not useful to policy makers in their present form, as they were not given sufficient depth.

What the participants do not like:

- Grossly inadequate publicity. Most potential users unaware of the existence of the site.
- Diffused focus on account of insufficient understanding of the **differentiated** requirements of users/potential users.
- Inadequacies in the depth of information content and its low levels of 'spatial resolution' - the need is for more detail at a country and sub-country level.
- Usefulness for policy makers/analysts and subject matter specialists limited.
- No indication of validation/quality control processes followed and how and why the content should be treated as authoritative and reliable.

(b). **What impact the participants believe the web site has had on those that use it.**

- Enabled users to make up for information gaps on subjects outside their own fields of specialization.
- Has enabled those with a science education to gain better appreciation of socio-economic and political dimensions of science and those with non-science education to get a

bird's eye view of relevant and topical scientific and technological issues.

(c) **<u>The ways in which the services of SciDev might be improved in future:</u>**

- Greater attention to deepening of content in selected subjects instead of widening the range.
- Providing easy access through links to original sources/research material and cited authorities.
- Provide a forum for debates on key topical issues with presentation of multiple and contrary points of views. E.g. impact of aerosols versus carbon emissions on climate change.
- Provide Blog (s) for making the site more interactive, participative and for encouraging open ended debates.
- Add suitable links within the existing ones (e.g. country links in the regional gateways) especially to institutional structures and relevant organizations within the countries, the existing policies followed by them and analyses of such policies (including case studies)
- Provide links to technology data bases and relevant materials on technology options and choices especially technologies for livelihoods and micro-enterprises.
- Develop "brand equity" for the content esp. the dossiers by indicating who the authors/contributors are and what their standing in the field is.
- Step-up publicity and promotion.

(d). **<u>any other key or unexpected findings:</u>**

- A strong case was argued by many participants for strengthening the role of the Regional Coordinator, especially in commissioning content production at the regional/country level and for facilitating greater uploading of information from the developing countries. It was also suggested that the Regional Co-coordinator or a Regional Advisory Group could also play a bigger role in the choice of thematic/subject area priorities of specific relevance to the region.

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1. Background:

1.1 The Policy Practice had requested Amitabha Pande, a senior officer of the Government of India, who had formerly been at key policy making levels in the Ministry of Science & Technology to coordinate a Focus Group discussion in India as a part of the evaluation exercise. Prior consultations and informal discussions were held with the Regional Coordinator of SciDev – Ms T.V. Padma – to decide on the final list of the invitees. The intent was to secure greater participation of potential users at various levels of policy making/policy analysis than of existing users from other categories. A list of forty invitees was drawn up and a detailed letter of invitation sent, explaining the purpose of the meetings, along with a brief on SciDev. A short questionnaire was also sent in advance to enable participants to prepare themselves. Some key officials at the senior most decision making levels were personally contacted to ensure their participation.

1.2 The meeting was held in Punjab Bhawan, New Delhi on 22nd July. It lasted six hours. Seventeen participants attended, in addition to the focus Group Moderator and the SciDev Regional Coordinator. As a fair amount of preparation had preceded the meeting the preliminaries were kept to the barest minimum to gain more time for meaningful discussion. The discussions went beyond the set of questions posed by the organizers to reflect on some of philosophical issues implicit in the 'mission' objectives of SciDev.

1.3 As the number of potential users was larger than regular users among the participants, it was decided to continue discussions in a plenary format. The discussions were lively and animated with equal degree of participation of all the participants.

2. Characteristics of the Participants

2.1 There were seventeen (17) participants out of the forty (40) invited. There were ten (10) potential users and seven (7) users. The following is the category-wise composition of the participants:

		Users	Non-Users
(1)	Aid Agency Official	1	0
(2)	Consultant	0	2
(3)	Government officials	0	6
(4)	Journalists	3	0
(5)	Researcher / University Teacher	1	0
(6)	Science Communicator	1	1
(7)	NGO Official	1	1
	Total	**7**	**10**

2.2. All Government participants were at senior policy making levels including one who ranked second only to the Secretary, Science & Technology. One of the participants had recently retired as one of the highest ranking Science & Technology administrators in India with a record of having pioneered some of the most significant technology interventions for socio-economic development.

2.3 Annex-I provides the list of the participants, their occupations and their mailing addresses.

3. Overall Impressions of SciDev

3.1 The Group felt that apart from a discussion on the website itself, it may be useful to reflect on some of the philosophical and ideological assumptions implicit in the stated objectives of SciDev, to enable the participants to develop a better critique. The following issues were explored in discussion:-

- The notion of what constitutes “science” and the risk of perpetuating a positivist, exclusivist and western approach to science.

- The notions of ‘development’ ‘developing countries’ and ‘developed countries’ and the dangers of scientific and technological determinism in supporting western style, wasteful, energy intensive and consumerist patterns of development.

- The assumption that superior levels of scientific knowledge production takes place primarily in the developed world which needs to be communicated to and disseminated in the developing world for consumption by passive users there. S&T capacity development can thus be confused with ready acceptance and consumption and digesting of knowledge produced outside of the user and his environment.

3.2 It was felt that initiatives such as SciDev, emanating from the developed world, could easily fall into any of the above traps unless conscious efforts were made to:

- Widen the definition of ‘science’ (the dossier on Traditional Knowledge systems for example, was an effort in the right direction) by giving an equal emphasis to social and human sciences.

- Collect inputs from people’s movements especially social movements related to issues in science, environment, habitat, natural resources, water, natural calamities, etc. and make these inputs a part of the knowledge base available to users.

- Decentralize content production such that groups in the developing countries became partners in ‘uploading’ of content as much as in ‘downloading’. Such content would, of course, be

subject to rigorous validation and quality control processes. Quality Control over decentralized content production could be achieved regionally. An independent panel of external referees would be easily available and The Regional Coordinator could arrange for such peer review locally.

- Make the SciDev network an active forum for dialogue and debate especially through Blogs and other interactive means.

3.3 Many of the overall impressions have also been captured in the executive summary and are not being repeated. However, the following unanimous observations / reactions deserve to be highlighted:

- Awareness regarding the site, particularly among policy makers is non-existent.

- While the website offers useful first level of information, being primarily a journalistic output, its usefulness for policy analysis or policy formulation is very limited.

- Although the quality of the content is good and the presentation user-friendly, the insufficient depth and the low spatial resolution of information limits its usefulness for potential users among policy analysts. Information should be as detailed as is technologically possible and should go down to as micro a level as required - country, province, district, sub-district, village cluster, village.[8]

- The website is particularly weak on information relating to technology.

[8] For instance, for a policy analyst in South Asia there is no point talking about the impact of Climate Change at a global level unless one can provide information/knowledge about impacts at regional or sub regional levels.

- For science journalists the SciDev website often serves as competition rather than as a resource because it provides fully developed stories and features rather than ideas and leads.

- The processes by which the website organizers and managers validated the information content and exercised quality control were not apparent and hence the user could never be certain whether the site was picking up the best of peer reviewed scientific content.

3.4 The reactions highlighted in the preceding paragraph were common to both users and potential users. Some of the users, especially, the journalists reported that their visits to the site were not very frequent as the topicality and the relevance of scientific developments for their specific readership/audience was so episodic and context driven that a general purpose site such as SciDev could not be expected to adequately service their requirements.

3.5 The potential users especially policy analysts felt that the site would be useful to cover information gaps primarily in areas outside their own respective spheres of specialization and much less so in their own spheres. Both users and potential users felt that a substantial deepening of content was called for. They also felt that the website could take on a knowledge management role by guiding and leading people to knowledge bases on the web.

4. The most useful parts of the SciDev. Website and its impact

4.1 Both policy analysts and science journalists agreed that ‘dossiers’ were the most useful parts especially for getting competent and well written background information on subjects outside their own spheres of specialization. But the usefulness of dossiers for policy analysts in their own areas of focus could be realized **only** if the reports were substantially more exhaustive and in-depth and if links and sub-links could lead to web libraries, digitized research

reports / documents and all allied knowledge resources available on the web through the SciDev window. The dossiers could then serve as centralized 'meta-data' through which users could access all the peer reviewed web based research material on the subject.

4.2 Both types of users also appreciated the 'opinion' articles and suggested that the SciDev site could serve as a platform for informed debate on specific topical themes presenting multiple, differing and opposite points of view. The theme (s) could change fortnightly and the debates archived. This could prove to be extremely useful.

5. The least useful parts of the Scidev website and why

5.1 No specific views were expressed on the least useful parts. As the site was felt to be generally useful in an 'all-round' sort of way, comparisons between the most useful and the least useful parts were not really possible. For science journalists, news-based features and stories were the least useful as SciDev in this role could be viewed as competition rather than as a source for developing new stories.

5.2 A view was expressed that presently the Regional Gateways did not appear to add much value as they only provided a region wise selection of the available content on the site rather than access to more detailed and region specific content.

6. Improvements that could be made to SciDev

6.1 Most of the suggestions have been covered in the Executive Summary. The following require reiteration in view of the complete unanimity of views among the participants:

- A substantial deepening of the content on chosen topics (especially the dossiers) both in terms more data especially updated statistical data and links to peer reviewed research output on the web.

- Addition of links and sub-links especially links to countries, their policies, their institutions and organizations and analyses of their policies.

- Augmentation of content on technology, technology choices and links to technology data bases, technology scans.

- Addition of blogs and discussion groups to make the site much more interactive and lively.

- Increase opportunities of more uploading of content from regions by giving the Regional Coordinators / Regional Advisory Groups a greater role in commissioning content production.

- Establishing brand equity for the content by making transparent the validation, peer-reviewing, quality control processes and by providing details of authors / contributors and their standing in the field.

- A concerted effort to publicize and market the site through advertisements in widely circulated science magazines and supplements and web-sponsorship of major scientific conferences workshops, etc.

7. The value of the ‘dossiers’ and how they could bed improved

7.1 As already brought out, the dossiers were treated as the most useful element of the SciDev web-site by all user/potential user segments. The following suggestions were made to improve the ‘dossier’ section and increase its usefulness:

- Dossiers needed to be added on several other topics, e.g. – natural calamities and extreme events, public health, renewable energy etc.
- Dossiers needed to be self-contained, exhaustive and more intensive.

- Research documents forming a part of the dossiers needed to be associated with the names of their editors / authors to develop a 'brand identity'.[9]
- Bibliographic links needed to be improved.
- Better links to be provided to peer reviewed journals.

7.2 The policy briefs produced by institutions like the IPCC, International Institute of Sustainable Development, the U.N. Organizations and the World Bank should be the models. The existing policy briefs are not exhaustive enough for use by policy makers.

7.3 The dossiers could profitably address filling the knowledge gaps –

- Among scientists and Science & Technology administrators of the socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-political dimensions of scientific issues and concerns
- Among generalist administrators and senior policy making levels in socio-economic and infrastructure development sectors of scientific dimensions of sector concerns and issues.

8. Other services provided by SciDev

8.1 As awareness about the existence of the SciDev Website itself was extremely limited, the question of knowing about other services provided did not arise.

[9] Articles/Reports/Documents etc are presently anonymous and as Scidev itself is unknown there is no value associated with the name. An article appearing in Science or Nature ,for example, has a strong brand equity carrying a guarantee of conformity to the highest standards of scientific writing. While it will take a long time to achieve such brand equity, it should be possible that if the SciDev authors have a standing in the field then carrying a Byline will spell a measure of quality. This would eventually help SciDev build a strong 'Brand Equity'.

9. SciDev as a Network

9.1 The presence of SciDev as a network and as a stimulator, catalyst of interaction, collaboration and sharing has yet to be felt even among the registered users. In fact, the Focus Group meeting was found to be the first useful interaction among the fraternity of those concerned with science and development related matters: Presently Scidev is largely a one way communication exercise with some undercurrents of “us” (the developing world) and “them” (the developed world). Unless a much bigger role is envisaged for knowledge production and interaction in the regions and the regional Co-coordinator empowered to establish ‘communities of practice’ the possibilities of SciDev emerging as an active and lively network are probably limited.

9.2 The creation of Blog (s) and Discussion groups around specific subjects within the website will certainly stimulate networking and the participants look forward to such a development.

Participants at the Indian Focus Group Discussion

New Delhi the 22nd July, 2006

Name	Occupation	User/Non-User	E-Mail
Ms. Sangeeta Baksi	Government Official	Non-User	sangeetab@tifac.org.in
Dr. S.M. Kulshrestha	Consultant	Non-User	Drsmk2002@yahoo.com
Mr. Mallikarjun	NGO Official	Non-User	
Mr. Shambhu Singh	Government Official	Non-User	shambhuin@gmail.com
Ratnabali Mitra	Science Communicator	User	Ratna_@rediffmail.com
Mr. G. Srinivasan	Government Official	Non-User	Srinidst@nic.in
Mr. Dhruv Raina	Researcher / University Teacher	User	D_raina@yahoo.com
Mr. Indraneel Ghose	Aid Agency Official	User	Indraneel.ghose@ec.europa.eu
Ms. Roshni Sengupta	NGO official	User	roshnis@teri.res.in
Ms. Kinkini Dasgupta Misra	Science communicator	Non-User	udgm@vigyanprasar.gov.in
V. Rao Anjagavi	Government Official	Non-User	Venktesh@nic.in
Dr. Akhilesh Gupta	Government Official	Non-User	Gakhilesh2002@yahoo.co.in
G.S. Mudur	Journalist	User	Not available
Nitin Sethi	Journalist	User	nitin@cscindia.org
P. Saroop	Government official	Non-User	psaroop@dbt.nic.in
Y.S. Rajan	Consultant	Non-User	y.s.rajan@ciionline.org
R. Ramachandran	Journalist	User	bazzi@vsnl.com

Annex 8. Report of South African Focus Group

REPORT ON THE WORKSHOPS HELD IN SOUTH AFRICA ON 4TH JULY 2006 AT THE DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

AND INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED TELEPHONICALLY FROM 8TH JULY – 23RD AUGUST 2006

MODERATOR: PROF. D. (GANSEN) PILLAY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Based on the focus groups sampled, the penetration and uptake of SciDev as an information source by South Africans does not appear to be significant. This may be attributed to the following primary reasons:

(i) SciDev is relatively unknown to many of the target audience. This may be attributed to the low visibility of SciDev and a marketing and communications strategy that can be best described as "passive".

(ii) Those who use SciDev, use it minimally since their focus for information is more acutely defined by their vocations. For example, a medical scientist will use PubMed more frequently than SciDev.

Despite the aforementioned, those who have been newly introduced to SciDev as well as current users are, in general, impressed by the appearance and structure of the site and by the latitude and depth of topics covered and information provided. The impact of the site on current users has been minimal. It appeared that many of them looked at the alerts superficially and did not spend enough time to navigate through the various elements of the site. Based on the responses of new users, the impact on this group may be positive in the future.

It was surprising that many of the new users contacted were unaware of the existence of SciDev – despite their access to the internet and their frequent use of similar sites.

In summary, the potential impact of SciDev on South Africans can become significant. However, this would only be achieved through a creative, pro-active, and aggressive communications and marketing strategy that delivers SciDev to the user. This focus group workshop attests to this when one counts

the number of new users that have registered to SciDev after minimal intervention. Increasing the visibility and use of SciDev is very easy and simple. One simply has to follow the following three steps:

(i) Host interactive discussions/workshops with all stakeholder groups – academia, industry, government, NGOs, students, etc. within developing countries;
(ii) Register the participants at the workshop; and
(iii) Add the SciDev link to the existing websites of stakeholder institutions/organisations.

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

The database of current SciDev users in South Africa was supplied by The Policy Practice in the UK. Since the workshop was held regionally, only current users and potential users from the KwaZulu Natal region of South Africa were invited.

A total of 39 current users of SciDev were contacted by e-mail regarding the hosting of the workshop. Eight of these e-mail addresses were invalid. Eleven (11) persons responded. Most of the responses were as a result of personal telephone calls to these users. Of these four were available to attend the workshop. The list summarizing this is attached as "Current Users of SciDev" (Annexure 1).

A total of 38 potential users of SciDev were contacted by e-mail regarding the hosting of the workshop. One of the e-mail addresses was invalid. Thirty one (31) persons responded after numerous telephone calls. Of these 16 were available to attend the workshop. The list summarizing this is attached as "Potential Users of SciDev" (Annexure 2).

A focus group workshop was held on 4th July 2006 from 08h30 to 14h30 at the Durban University of Technology, Durban, South Africa. Participants followed a programme which included an introduction and demonstration of the site, interactive open discussions and sub-group discussions (Annexure 3). Twenty participants (Annexure 4) comprising six researchers (from academia and research councils), four research administrators (associated with policy formulation), two government officials, two policy researchers, two journalists, one from industry, one university undergraduate student and one science school teacher participated. In addition, 13 persons comprising 3 current users (2 journalists and 1 researcher) and 10 potential users (comprising 2 researchers, 1 research administrator, 2 journalists, 3 policy researchers and 1 each from industry and government) were contacted telephonically. All participants who attended the workshop were requested to complete a questionnaire (Annexure 5). The same questionnaire was sent to the remaining current and potential users who were not available for the workshop. They were requested to fill in the questionnaire and to submit it electronically. The exercise was also followed up telephonically to ensure responses.

SECTION 2: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Details of the participants who attended the workshop are attached (Annexure 4). Details of the participants who were contacted telephonically and submitted their questionnaires electronically are contained in Annexures 1 and 2 (persons indicated as “Not Available” to attend).

SECTION 3: OVERALL IMPRESSIONS OF SCIDEV

In general, current users were satisfied with the website. Potential users were impressed by the range of features and the depth of coverage. One of the users indicated that the website “ranks among the top website in terms of design and appearance”. Both users and potential users felt that since SciDev was targeting developing countries, an effort should be made to present the site in regional or indigenous languages (e.g., IsiZulu/Xhosa in South Africa). This would contribute to greater access to the site by populations from developing countries whose first language may not be English. Two potential users felt that the elements and sub-set of elements could be presented in alphabetical order. Regional gateways and links were acknowledged as excellent and provided a window to issues affecting other developing countries.

Those participants who were not natural or physical scientists were of the strong view that the site should cater for social sciences with a strong emphasis on multidisciplinary research topics and the integration of the social sciences in terms of human and economic development.

Both current users and potential users were very aware of other websites that covered similar criteria. However, their user-friendliness and attractiveness varied. Media users identified other sites that linked social change to development, e.g., witness.org. “Science in Africa” was found to be similar but lacked the depth of information which SciDev provided. According to one user, “SciDev has the potential to be the best and most comprehensive website if it were better known”. Some respondents were of the view that other sites had more directed, relevant, and comprehensive links. Many indicated that ScienceDirect is an excellent website for similar information and covers a wide range of topical issues. CabDirect was found to contain more depth of information but is not available free of charge. Many felt that the free access to journals should be provided to every publication of the journal and not selected articles only, e.g., *Nature*. In addition, free access should be provided to more international journals.

It was the consensual view of all participants that SciDev is not being communicated and marketed aggressively and that this should be addressed. Target populations are being denied access to an important resource through lack of knowledge of the existence of the SciDev website.

SECTION 4: MOST USEFUL PARTS OF THE SCIDEV WEBSITE AND ITS IMPACT

Most respondents were aware of all the elements contained on the SciDev website. Elements which were most useful varied among the respondents. However, there was consensus that the “News” and “Features” sections were important. “Dossiers” and “Links” were singled out as the most useful parts of the site by most respondents, especially government and policy researchers. The dossier provided an avenue to obtain in-depth, current information on a topic easily and readily.

In addition, the following was noted by respondents as being useful:

- “Announcements” assisted with planning for conferences, and attending of meetings and workshops;
- There was free access to scientific journals and selected articles. The high cost of subscription is often an impediment in accessing information for researchers and academics;
- “Regional gateways” provided a window into science in other developing countries;
- “Editorials” were helpful to researchers and academics in broadening their thinking and views.
- The “E-guide” to science communication was exciting;

Some respondents were of the view that the integration of the social sciences into the content could enhance the website. Sections on the cultural dimension of science/social change, issues of a social dimension affecting development, and research linked to economic development should be included. The terms “science” and “development” needed to be more clearly defined. The website should also include more “lower-level” science for users with non-specialized knowledge in science. Sections on basic scientific information should be considered to improve the teaching of science at schools.

Human health challenges, including AIDS, malaria, TB, access to clean water, sanitation, etc. facing developing countries should be vigorously debated with a focus on poverty eradication and a better life for all. On-line workshops with specific themes should be considered.

Current users indicated that SciDev provided them with an additional resource to information which impacted positively on their vocations in terms of making informed decisions, especially regarding policy. Respondents also felt that SciDev can have an impact on poverty reduction and sustainable development through **providing information on** agricultural sustainability, disease prevention, science for entrepreneurial development, health issues, setting up of small scale industries, indigenous medicine, and renewable energy.

SECTION 5: LEAST USEFUL PARTS OF THE SCIDEV WEBSITE

In general, most respondents found the website useful. Consensus was that any information that was pre-screened and then placed into the public domain must be credible. Some respondents found the "Extended Dossiers" to be less useful for their purposes while others disagreed. One respondent found the "Book Reviews" to be subjective and therefore, not useful. Two potential users indicated that the "Letters to the Editor" were not useful.

SECTION 6: IMPROVEMENTS THAT COULD BE MADE TO SCIDEV

Suggestions to improvements that could be made to SciDev were largely dictated by the vocation of the respondent. These included:

- Links to specialist research groups within universities;
- Information for secondary school students considering a career in science;
- More information on funding opportunities (links) for researchers; and
- Additional dossiers on "Research Management", "Research capacity Building", "Innovation and Entrepreneurship", "IP and Technology Transfer";

Respondents found the contents of the site appropriate for their purposes. Articles on scientific journalism have prompted thoughts on re-curriculation and additions to the academic teaching content. Other sources that respondents used included the printed media, books, on-line journals, CabDirect, PubMed, conference-alerts.com, etc.

Respondents were of the view that SciDev should be circumspect with regard to the links it provides. A problem with the internet is that many sites provide unreliable information. According to users, one of the strengths of SciDev is that the information is reliable and it would be a pity to compromise this through attempting greater coverage. Respondents also felt that similar services focusing exclusively on other areas, e.g., health was not necessary and could easily be incorporated into a dossier. Integration of information could benefit users.

SECTION 7: VALUE OF THE DOSSIERS AND HOW THEY CAN BE IMPROVED

The dossiers were found to be very useful to all current users. Potential users indicated that they regarded the dossiers as being an important facet of the SciDev website. All respondents had a very good idea of the intent and content of "dossiers".

Policy researchers and persons from government affirmed the usefulness of dossiers but indicated that they had not relied solely on the SciDev site since

additional information which was purpose-specific was made available to them to assist in policy analysis.

New users indicated that all elements of the dossier were potentially useful since they considered the contents of the dossier to be well researched, relevant and of excellent quality. A few respondents indicated that dossiers could in some instances be region specific. Most participants were of the view that the dossier in its current format should be retained. Additional dossiers should be introduced which take into account regional and national priorities and imperatives.

Some were aware of other "policy briefs" especially within government circles. Policy briefs from the World Health Organization, United Nations, UNAIDS, etc. were indicated.

SECTION 8: OTHER SERVICES PROVIDED BY SCIDEV

Many of the users were aware of the other services offered by SciDev. Potential users, who gleaned this information, prior to attending the workshop, indicated that the additional services provided by SciDev are helpful and its use should be maximized. Both groups were of the view that announcements of regional and international meetings, workshops, conferences, training programmes, advertising, etc. were useful additions to the site. One respondent felt that use of "flashes" on the site should be used to highlight latest announcements, funding opportunities, etc.

One respondent (current user) also challenged SciDev to investigate "How did PubMed become the "gold standard" for research references in science?". He/she felt that users of the site could benefit from this exercise.

Many felt that the impact of SciDev was low. This could be mainly attributed to the "limited readership/audience of SciDev". Respondents concurred that training workshops through knowledge and technology transfer was central to address advancements in developing countries. Examples included, training on research methodology, science journalism and basic interventions in demystifying science.

SECTION 9: SCIDEV AS A NETWORK

Many respondents were of the view that the interaction with SciDev was "one-way". However, they acknowledged that they had to take responsibility for this since they were unaware that "two-way communication" was possible. One way of circumventing this misconception in the future is to engage in workshops which outline the attributes of the site.

The majority of respondents who were current users concurred that communications with persons having similar interests was not pursued. They

were of the view that an expert database containing names of persons with an indication of their specialist fields could be useful.

Many respondents (current and potential users) were well connected, electronically, with other user groups within their professions, e.g., Crop Biotech, IAIA (International Association for Impact Assessment), AfricaBio, IWSA (Institute for Waste Management in South Africa), etc.

Research policy makers and policy makers from government indicated that the site was used to a limited extent to solicit information which could assist in policy formulation. These persons were accessing sites better known to their portfolios, e.g., sites on health issues, corporate governance, etc.

From the user group, there was limited use made of the "Regional Gateways". However, potential users indicated that they considered this as an important window to learning about developments in other countries.

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Participants at the SciDev Focus Group Workshop
4th July 2006

First Name	Last Name	E-mail	Profession/Organisation
Bala	Pillay	pillayb1@ukzn.ac.za	Researcher
Ademola	Olaniran	olanirana@ukzn.ac.za	Researcher
Nisha	Singh	singhni@ukzn.ac.za	Researcher
Faizal	Bux	FaizalB@dit.ac.za	Researcher
Nelson	Moodley	moodleyy@ukzn.ac.za	Research Administrator
Prem	Mohun	mohunp@ukzn.ac.za	Research Administrator
Vaneshree	Govender	Vanesh@dit.ac.za	Research Administrator
Zelda	Roberts	robertsz@kznded.gov.za	Government
Vijay	Reddy	vreddy@hsrc.ac.za	Policy Researcher
Bengy	Govender	bengyza@yahoo.com	Science School Teacher
Ismail	Banoo	ibanoo@csir.co.za	Policy Researcher
Robin	Sewlal	robin@dit.ac.za	Journalist
Dirk	Coertze	dirk@julian.mantec.ac.za	Research Administrator
Poovie	Govender	poovie.govender@sugar.org.za	Industry
Mikhail	Peppas	mikhailp@dit.ac.za	Journalist
Rishanth	Pillay	altered_equilibrium@hotmail.com	University Student

Monique	Frederic	frederic@ukzn.ac.za	Government
Jacqui	Hadingham	hadinghamj@ukzn.ac.za	Researcher
Graeme	Leslie	leslieg@sugar.org.za	Researcher
Nkululeko	Mkhize	mkhizenkululeko@durban.gov.za	Government

Programme of the SciDev Focus Group Workshop

Durban University of Technology
4th July 2006

08h30 – 09h00: Registration of participants.
Tea, coffee and biscuits.

09h00 – 09h15: Welcome – Prof. D. Pillay (Moderator).
Outline of meeting objectives and agenda for the day.

09h15 – 09h30: Introduction of participants.

09h30 – 10h00: Presentation: ***"The SciDev website: background and current status"***.

Demonstration: ***"The SciDev website"***

10h00 – 10h30: Preliminary discussion to establish an understanding of the role and objectives of SciDev.

Interactive question and answer session.

10h30 – 10h45: Tea, coffee and hot snacks.

10h45 – 12h45: Participants will be divided into two sub-groups.
Each sub-group will explore a range of questions contained in their participant pack and will provide consolidated feedback for each sub-group at the end of the session.

12h45 – 13h15: Buffet lunch.

13h15 – 14h15: Interactive open discussion, collation of responses and consolidation of issues raised.

14h30: Closure and tea.

Annex 9. Report of Ugandan Focus Groups

Report On the Focus Groups Held On 12th July 2006 At Hotel Equatorial, and On 09th August At The Athina Club In Kampala Uganda

By Paul Nyende, Agnes Nayiga and Jackie Naggayi

NKOOLA INSTITUTIONAL ASSOCIATES LTD

Executive summary

Two half-day workshops to evaluate the Science Development Network (SciDev) service were held on 13th of July 2006 at the Equatorial Hotel and on 9th August at the Athina Club in Kampala, Uganda. Twenty- two (22) participants (12 registered users and 10 potential users) attended the workshops. Their evaluation of the SciDev services is presented in the following report.

The participants appreciated/ liked the following about SciDev services:

- The SciDev website is well structured, logical and provides a wide range of good in-depth information.
- Information provided is authoritative, original and up to date
- The dossier section provides an in depth analysis of information
- The search facility is helpful although its utility is determined by the explicitness of the query
- The site provides science journalists and communicators with 'rare to get' news and information
-

The participants did not like the following:

- SciDev focuses more on the latest news and discoveries and gives little information on older science and technology.
- The site provides little information for socio-scientists who are also key actors in development.
- The website is cluttered, right from the home page, making it difficult for a new user to find required information
- The information contained is often too academic for frontline development workers
- The search facility is not easy to find in its current placement.
- There are no clear guidelines for contributing articles to the website, hence users feel left out, and only at the receiving end
- The rigorous peer review process of papers and articles for posting on the site does not favour local contributions
- The information provided is too general and not applicable to local contexts

Users reported that the SciDev service has helped them to improve their knowledge and awareness of latest issues in science and development; obtain information quickly; prepare teaching aids, student notes and reference material; and is inspirational for scientific writing.

The content of SciDev.Net can be improved by adding information on Socio-economic research and development; health related issues like malaria with a more African perspective/focus so

that it is sufficiently relevant to African readers; ICT and development; International trade and generally more regional and national specific information.

The SciDev website can be further improved by:

- De cluttering the site
- Making the site more applicable to local contexts by including local content
- Advertising the website more widely by linking to websites such as www.naads.org, www.naro.org, www.fao.org, www.I-network.org which are commonly used by potential users; making brochures; news paper, radio and television adverts.
- Book marking and standard archiving so that users can access older articles
- Increasing interaction between regional and national SciDev users by introducing and facilitating networks, country chapters, chart forums and public discussion forums
- Placing the search facility to the top right hand side on of the home page
- Capacity building on the use of the website for potential users

The other issue that emerged during the discussions was most Users are unaware of SciDev's procedures for sourcing information/ people contributing information. Therefore their ability to contribute to SciDev is limited. Furthermore interaction and networking between local Users of SciDev is poor. As a solution the participants of the second workshop proposed the formation of a SciDev Uganda Chapter for which they proceeded to set up an interim committee.

1 Background

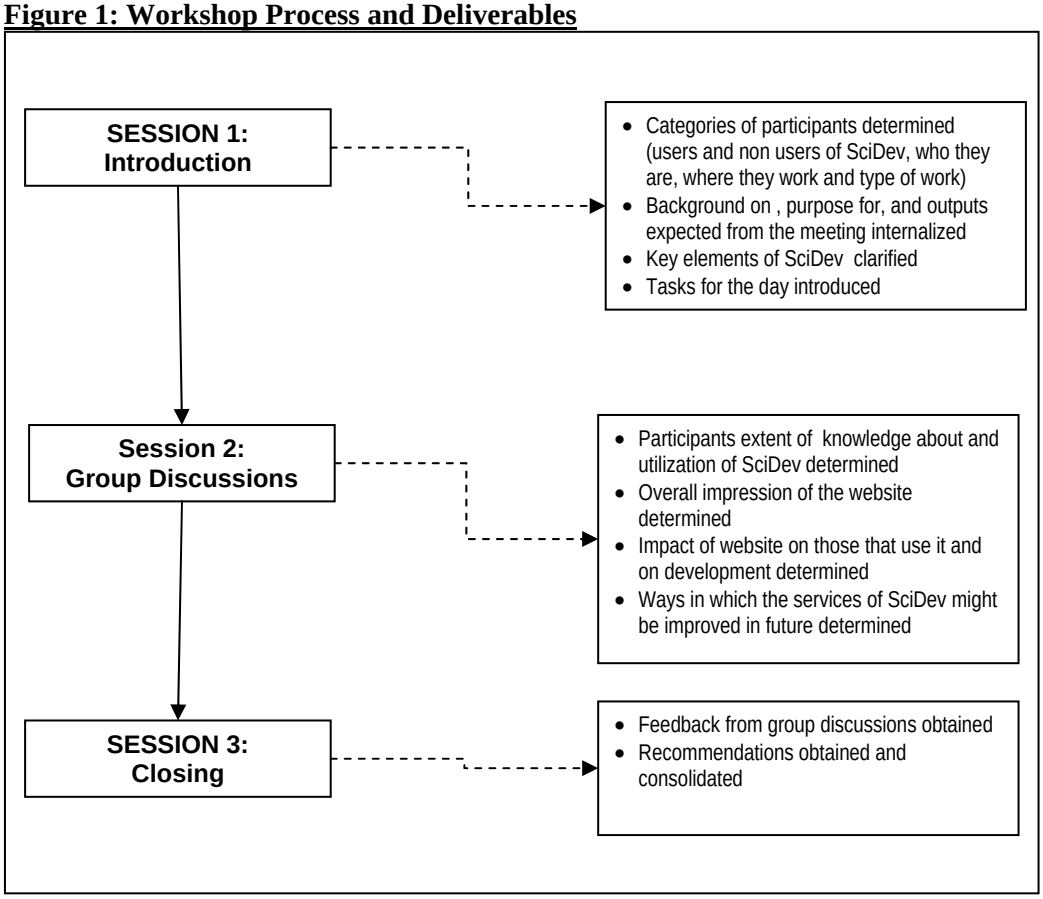
Two half-day workshops to evaluate the Science Development Network (SciDev) service were held on 13th of July 2006 at the Equatorial Hotel and on 9th August at the Athina Club in Kampala, Uganda. The first workshop was attended by twelve (12) participants and the second workshop by ten (10) participants. Both workshops were facilitated by two consultants from Nkoola Institutional Development Associates Ltd (NIDA).

The users of SciDev were selected from a list of registered users provided to NIDA by the client (Policy Practice). For the first workshop, a sample of fifteen individuals was selected randomly from the list as follows: three scientists, three science journalists, five government officials, one Aid agency, one NGO and others e.g. University lecturers and consultants and invited. A similar sample of potential users was identified and invited to the evaluation workshop. Using the same sampling frame for users, purposive sampling approach was used to select participants that were invited to the second workshop. Researchers and government officials were specifically targeted because their representation in the first workshop was poor. Two science journalists who are active users of SciDev were also selected purposively from the provided list of users. A similar category of potential users was also identified and invited to the second workshop.

1.1 Organisation of the Discussions

The discussions were organized in three sessions illustrated in figure 1.

Figure 1: Workshop Process and Deliverables



2 Characteristics of the Participants

The twelve (12) participants in the first workshop included six users and six potential users of the SciDev.net. Among the users, were two science journalists/ communicators; two working for NGOs (a medical scientist and one non scientist); and two government officials (a lecturer at Makerere University and Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) official). The potential users included two persons from NGOs, three communicators/ journalists and one person from a development agency. Among them one participant though not a registered User of the SciDev website, had used it a couple of times. He found the site through a Google search. All the other potential users had not visited the site prior to receiving invitations to the workshop.

The ten (10) participants who attended the second workshop included six users and four potential users of the SciDev.net. The users included one medical researcher who also runs a science media company; two science journalists/ communicators; two working for NGOs; one government official and one researcher. The potential users included two researchers from the National Agricultural Research organization (NARO) and add persons working with NGOs. All the potential users had not visited the site prior to receiving an invitation to the workshop. The detailed participant lists are attached as annex 1.

3 Overall Impressions of SciDev

There was a difference in the perceptions of users and potential users of the SciDev website. The Users based their evaluation on the site content while the potential users tended to base their on the "look and feel' of the website.

3.1 Users' Impressions on the website

The Users' impression of the website was that it:

- Is well structured and logical
- Is authoritative, rich in information
- Gives users access to a wide range of information
- Original in the information provided
- Provides in depth analysis in the information in the dossier section
- The search facility is helpful, but that its utility is usually determined by the explicitness of the query. The presence of the advanced search button helps to improve specificity of queries.
- The site enables science journalists and communicators to access 'rare to get' news and information for their reporting purposes.

The also had the following concerns:

- The site is crowded/ cluttered and information contained is often too academic for those that are not scientists/ researchers and academics.
- Too much emphasis is placed on latest news and discoveries and too little on older science and technology, which would be more relevant to practitioners in Africa.
- There is little content and information for socio-scientists who are key actors in development. Too few socio-scientists are aware of SciDev.
- There are no clear guidelines for contributing articles to the website, hence users feel left out, and are only at the receiving end
- The rigorous peer review process of papers and articles for posting on the site does not favour local contributions

3.2 Potential Users' Impressions on the website

The views of the potential users were that:

- The site is well structured and logical.
- Provides a wide range of good in-depth information
- The information is more suited to academics than development practitioners and is not adequately specific to local contexts.
- The website seems cluttered, right from the home page, which makes it difficult for a new user to find required information.
- Site is plain and not eye catching/ attractive enough (this was the view of only a few people). However there was no consensus on this as some felt site appearance was favourable for prolonged reading.
- The search facility was not easy to find in its current placement.

4 The most useful parts of the SciDev web site and its impact

Views on the most useful parts of the SciDev varied. The usefulness of the different elements to a user depends on the information that one requires and type of work they do. Both workshops were not able to adequately capture the views of the policy makers. This was partly because the people present found it difficult to reach a consensus, and partly because the participants did not feel able to reflect the views of high-level policy makers. However, the Science journalists and communicators listed the following elements of the website as particularly useful to them:

- Searches – This provides a quick means of obtaining the required information in a relatively short time
- News and dossiers – From which communicators and journalists draw 'rare news' to report.
- Quick guides – because they provide a relatively synthesized information
- Journal articles –To which users can contribute articles so that their names also go on record for publishing
- Alerts – because these would keep the users vigilant and watchful of news and events.

4.1 Impacts of the website

Users reported that SciDev.net has contributed to their work by improving their knowledge and awareness of issues relating to science and technology; improving access to information; and reducing time spent searching for information. A University lecturer reported using the SciDev website searches and quick guides to prepare notes and teaching aids; research topics and as reference for students. The Science journalists and researchers/ scientists reported that the journal articles, that is, including the articles and "opinion pieces" in the dossiers are an inspiration for scientific writing.

5 The least useful parts of the SciDev web site and why

There was no consensus on the least useful parts of the SciDev website. However, it was recommended that a questionnaire be circulated via e-mail for participants to give their independent views.

6 Improvements that could be made to SciDev

The following is the information that participants would like SciDev to contain that is not currently on the website.

- Socio-economic research and development. e.g. on HIV/AIDS, nutrition, etc
- Natural resource management
- Health related issues like malaria especially with a more African perspective/focus so that it is sufficiently relevant to African readers.
- ICT and development
- A dossier for Social Scientists on science, technology and development.
- International trade in relation to science and technology.

- More regional and national specific information. Such information will be very useful to more frontline development workers.

The participants (both users and potential users) suggested the following improvements to the SciDev website.

- De cluttering the site by making more use of drop down menus to reduce on the details displayed at any one time
- Putting animations (moving pictures) e.g. every after 10 seconds (some felt that animations were not appropriate for a website such as SciDev.)
- Putting some colour themes in the background
- Providing language selection for the whole site and not only a few elements of it such as French and Spanish sections to be entirely in these languages. (This issue was raised because some participants observed that some articles are in languages they cant understand yet they could be of importance to them. So if these articles are entirely translated, they can then be understood and be used instead of translating sections of the articles).languages.
- Book marking and standard archiving so that users can access older articles
- Advertising the website more widely, by encouraging commonly used websites to provide links to SciDev, commercial adverts, media adverts and putting notices in target organisations such as universities, research stations and development programmes.
- Website information should also target policy makers directly e.g. parliament, Uganda National Council of Science, etc.
- Increase interaction between regional and national SciDev users by introducing and facilitating networks, country chapters, chart forums and public discussion forums
- Placing the search facility to the top right hand side on of the home page.
- Fitting all pages' content on one page to avoid people having to scroll up and down in order to view the whole content on a page.

Participants cited the following websites as examples that SciDev can use to improve:

- www.worldbank.org
- www.fao.org
- International Engineering Consortium – USAID website
- American Association for advancement of scientific development (www.aaas.org)

7 The value of the "dossiers" and how they could be improved

Most participants understood what a dossier is and the users were aware of the different elements of SciDev's dossiers. The science journalists and communicators used the dossiers as sources of "rare news". They often scanned through the elements of the dossiers on potentially interesting information to get information that can not be easily obtained from other sources. The views of policy makers were captured through government officials present. One such participant in the first workshop advised that his experience with working with policy analysts is that they occasionally used dossiers indirectly through asking junior officers to research information on their behalf. The information is often used for preparing briefs or reports. The conclusion of the discussion was that including more region and country specific information and policy issues would greatly improve the use of dossiers.

8 Other services that could be provided by SciDev

More users were aware of other services offered by SciDev in the second workshop than in the first. In particular, they mentioned that they were aware of information on grants and capacity building events. One person participated in HIV/AIDS reporting workshop that was held in April 2003. The participants' recommendation was to publicise these other services more, to design trainings to cover national and regional issues so as to be more relevant to local needs. Other trainings proposed include scientific writing and use of ICTs.

9 SciDev as a Network

The Participants (Users) felt that they were part of the SciDev network because of the regular e-mail updates and news alerts and SciDev's effort to involve them in evaluating their services through the focus group discussions

But the communication and interaction between local SciDev users is weak and can be improved by the creating a regional platform/ a local Users' SciDev.Net Uganda Chapter. The committee, which they proceeded to constitute during the second workshop, should include the following responsibilities:

- Promotion/publicity and reporting;
- Research / Science communication;
- Fundraising;
- Capacity building in science communication; and
- Executive Member.

They emphasised that this was their own initiative that did not need external funding from SciDev. Participants in the second workshop reported that they are members of professional groups, which are connected by newsletters or electronic communication such as the Community Content Creation (C3) Net, Gender and Diversity, Crop Bio-technology, Aids Alliance and Ugabytes.

Table 1: List of Participants for the 13th July Focus Group Discussion

No	Name	Occupation	Place of Work	User/ Potential User	E-mail Address
1	Nicholas Ddumba Katumba	Solution Engineering Executive	Uganda Telecom	Potential User	Nicolas.Dumba@utl.co.ug
2	Amelu Ejalu		I-Network Coordinator/ICT Mgt Consultant	Potential User	aejalu@sacrod.com
3	Ken Wasswa	Asst.Coodinator	Rural Dev. Initiative	Potential User	Kenwasswa@mail.com
4	James Okoth	National Project Coordinator FFS Programme	FAO	Potential User	James.Okoth@fao.org
5	Denis Okwar	Compliance Officer	ACDI/VOCA	Potential User	dokwar-pl480@acdivocaug.org
6	Felix Bnan Oketcho	Business Reporter	Daily Monitor	Potential User	foketcho@yahoo.com
7	Davis Weddi	Internet Editor	The New Vision	User	dweddi@newvision.co.ug
8	Chris Odubi	IT Assistant	Uganda Business Information Network/FECH-Uganda (Nebbi District)	User	Chris-Odubi@yahoo.co.uk
9	Joshua Abens Kayiwa	Data Manager	Joint Clinical Research Centre	User	Jkayiwa@jesc.co.ug
10	Fredrick Kintu	Programme Manager	Information Society Foundation (ISF)	User	fkintu@isf.or.ug
11	Kwizera Musaba H.	Lecturer	Makerere University	User	kwisaba@agric.mak.ac.ug
12	Rukara Julius	Agricultural Inspector	Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Animal Industry	User	

Annex 10. Report of Ecuadorian Focus Groups

Reports of Meetings held at Quito and Guayaquil, Ecuador

by

María del Carmen Cevallos

Date: August 18, 2006

Abstract

All participants in Quito and Guayaquil think that Scidev.Net portal is useful for their work, because it offers access to high quality specialized scientific magazines, such as Nature and Science. A few participants in Quito believe that aspect of the web site should be improved to make it more attractive; in particular it currently contains too much information. In the Spanish section that is in English, they think it should all be in Spanish, as many people do not read English. However, in Guayaquil all participants stated they like its aspect; most of them found its aspect was agreeable, informative, clear, fresh, attractive and interesting in the first page on entering. Most participants of both groups did not know about many of the other services offered by SciDev. They would like training workshops be promoted on a permanent basis and would like them extended to scientists, for example “How to communicate with journalists”.

Most of participants stated that news and “dossiers” to be the most interesting pursuant to the specific work they perform. For journalists, for instance, the news is the most important element of the site, because “news let them know scientific advances in Latin America”; while for analysts and investigators, “dossiers” are said to be the most useful, because of the depth of the analysis. However, most of participants many of the portal’s services are under-used, because all profitable aspects are not known. They believe that a promotional strategy is required to encourage a better use of the information. Real impact of the portal on people’s life was not known.

Half of researchers participating think that the portal should include sections that allow users to participate through discussions, forums, and opinions and to enable them to get in touch with specialists for a direct contact. They feel that at opening a site and finding an interesting subject they would like to have a way to communicate inline with the authors, for example, and participating in virtual forums and express their ideas. Most of both groups stressed in the need of self-identifying and publishing a great deal of information that exists about their own country. They appreciate the information about other countries, but they also want the scientific information that originates in Ecuador.

One interesting contribution of most participants to improving the impact of SciDev, was the suggestion to create Editorial Committees in each country. They believe it will help evaluate information to be published. They also suggest opening a contacts directory for scientists, researchers, analysts related to C&T to generate information. Universities and research centers have shown their interest would provide support for this function. In addition all participants in

Quito and Guayaquil also suggested “implementing a marketing strategy in order to widely promote the portal and its services”. In addition, they suggest implementing audience segments so that a large number of subscribers register and use the information as a source for their work. For journalists, the portal becomes “a source of information”, and for researchers and analysts “it allows them knowing a topic more deeply on other countries advancements”.

1. Background

Both in Quito and Guayaquil, the idea was to organize focal groups including both users (from a list provided by The Policy Practice) and non-users selected by the following categories: investigators, scientists, journalists and policy analysts. It was decided to invite half users and non users in each category. The invitations were sent out two weeks before the meetings so that participants reserved their time for the meeting. In Quito, the focal group took place on July 14 2006, in the Río Amazonas Hotel between 10 am and 15H00 pm. During the meeting, the portal was connected to the Internet so that it could be reviewed during discussions. In Guayaquil, the focal group took place on July 18 2006, in the Continental Hotel, and followed the same schedule. The portal was recorded on a CD that could also be viewed.

In the case of users and nonusers who were not able to attend, despite having confirmed their participation, a questionnaire was sent to them via email. In addition separate personal interviews were conducted with entrepreneurs and policy analysts.

The leader of the focal group introduced herself and explained the purpose of the meeting, and requested each participant to introduce themselves. After presentation of the portal, a questionnaire was administered and participants’ opinions sought. The rapporteur noted the most relevant ideas and an audio recording was made for information support. At the end of each meeting, a lunch was offered to participants.

2. Participant Characteristics

	Meeting participants		Personal interviews	
	Users	Non users	Users	Non users
Journalists	1	5		3
Researchers	5	3	2	
Science administrators		4		
Entrepreneurs		1	1	2
NGOs		1		
Policy analysts				2

All participants were very keen to participate in the meeting. Each focal group included journalists from press, tv, radio mass media, as well as news agencies, magazines and investigators of different areas as well as entrepreneurs, science administration officials, policy analysts and technicians working in diverse NGOs. Experience of running focus groups in Ecuador suggested that time is an important limitation for busy participants. So it was decided to hold one single meeting in each city. Those that were not able to attend the meeting were interviewed in their job sites and others received the questionnaire via e-mail.

All participants are linked to science and technology areas from different viewpoints; hence their opinion is representative of their relevant segments. Participants showed a great willingness to provide their opinions on the portal.

Most of the participants involved in research belong to universities where they perform their activities, some of them as directors of research centers or directors of research projects and also as members of the teaching staff. The participants who were journalists provide scientific journalism in magazines, news agencies, and print media, and they write on the work of NGOs, the environment and research on communication. The analysts undertake consultant activities, both in the university sector and private enterprises.

Participants that are SciDev users obviously knew the site well; however, the site seemed to be under used due to the great amount of information that can be obtained from other sources. In fact, even the potential users knew of SciDev and when they received the invitation, they checked the website in order to prepare themselves for the discussions in the meeting. Most of them remarked on the lack of publicity about the SciDev site as the likely main reason for more people not using the site. This is why they suggest sending information about the site to different users in groups, that is to say, researchers, university professors, analysts, leaders, etc.

3. Overall Opinions on the SciDev.net site

In both cities, most of SciDev users stated the portal has a great amount of scientific “communication”. In Quito, most of readers stated the portal had “too many elements”, in Spanish and English which hinders surfing. Some journalists suggest a more effective division into different topics to make access to information easier. One nonuser journalist suggested that www.webyawards.com provided useful guidelines for better website design, because website design was a good element to render it attractive, considering contests winner websites are placed there.

Several participants stated that when they visited the site, they were not able to see graphics and photographs and that several times access took too much time. Most of journalists in both meetings emphasized that “the Spanish website should be entirely in Spanish because it is difficult to surf when there are several parts in English”, thus most of them do not speak English. In the Guayaquil meeting, all participants stated that the website design was acceptable. “The design is attractive, informative, clear, fresh and interesting on entering the website”. They found no trouble when accessing the site; all stated that during work hours becomes difficult because “it is possible there are many users that are accessing the page at the same time”. They also think internet connection is limited in their work sites, so access becomes difficult.

Prospective users in Guayaquil, especially researchers, would like more scientific documents to be included. It was explained by the focus group leader that the website is exclusively devoted to scientific communication, and for this reason referred materials are not on the site. The researchers also felt that a facility should be added to the site to enable more sharing to take place for scientific projects and network connection users of virtual libraries to share the papers they are working with. Most of them think that the site’s main page “should show mission and vision of SciDev”, because it would be a way of learning the portal policy.

Users visiting the website state they would like to use the SciDev website to share events such as “IFS invitations that are highly appreciated by researchers but are not well publicized. From a users’ viewpoint, they think that the information on the web site is interesting, but at the same time, they feel it does not adequately reflect Latin American information. For example, they think research on Ecuador or in other Latin American countries is more important to them than work in Europe. However, they stressed the need for SciDev managers to improve the balance of the material on the site to better reflect the reality of the Latin American experience in a better way, and thereby to increase the flow of information from a more diverse range of countries.

4. The most useful parts of SciDev and its impact

Scientific journalists consider that SciDev are useful, because it informs them about events in Latin America and other continents and are a useful source of information for their media.

Policy analysts appreciate dossiers because they treat specific subjects in depth. They would like more information on science policies, technology and innovation in order to make decisions in particular countries. They have also stated that knowing what happens in other countries on a given topic would be very useful for Ecuador especially to make decisions and know how policies are managed in other countries. Evidently, the usefulness varies according to different activities in each group. However, all of the focus groups found it difficult to provide evidence regarding the impact. They felt that the existence of a portal as an information source "does not necessarily assure impact". Impacts may well occur but will depend on which people visit the site and how they use the information it contains.

5. SciDev's least useful parts and the reasons for this

Most scientific journalists agreed that dossiers are interesting and provide high quality information, even though they do not use it for their work. However they believe that, more information organization is necessary for the website becomes friendlier. "Information should take as something practical, where knowledge can be applied", that is information non included in the portal should be included.

Policy analysts also confirmed from their viewpoint the site does not contain less useful sections. However, while they are aware that the information comes from several countries, they would like a relevant space devoted to information from Ecuador. In general, both groups of participants believe there are no less useful sections in the website.

6. How SciDev can be improved

Journalists agreed that the contents should be organized under a number of different subjects, such as medicine, natural sciences, volcanology, etc. In the same way, some of them stated that the depth of the analysis should be determined in relation to the specific audience being addressed. Considering this website is open to the public, several sections can be deep and others less deep.

Some journalists believe that audio and video devices should be incorporated into the site, they are important to attract users, and particularly journalists, as such media will allow them to understand the issues better and they can use it directly as additional information sources. Several journalists cited the Radio Nacional de España website which contains this type of output.

They believe that more links should be included. They request that information should be included that allow them “to see how such knowledge is applied in practice”. Information of this type can become a point of reference as a way to when used by the media.

Most policy analysts consider that links should be included to provide bibliographic references on each themes being reviewed, or in those items that they want to download from the website, especially dossiers. They also think “there is a need for space on the web site that enables them to contribute their own comments about the subject”. They would also like to be able to download scientific documents in PDF format regarding different and interesting subjects to download and “in order to get quick and efficient access to interesting information”.

Most of participants, either users and nonusers stated the need to include technology information. They stated having reviewed the portal and “said information was not found and it is very important” in order to apply knowledge so that the general public can better understand the science role in life.

7. The value of “dossier” and how to improve them

For journalists, the dossiers are highly valued because of the depth of their treatment and particularly because of diversity of viewpoints on the same subject. They regard dossiers as a highly reliable source of information that can be used to publish in their own media in relation to local circumstances. Some journalists believe that subjects and concrete examples that are relevant to Latin America, such as health, volcanology, and weather change among others, in order to encourage interest by the public in Ecuador.

In the specific case of Ecuador, they believe the volcanoes, for example would be a particularly useful topic of a dossier. They explained that an eruption of the Tungurahua volcano is currently occurring, which is causing several negative consequences in villages near the volcano, which has important social and economic impacts. Another example being cited is the “Child Phenomenon”; “the melting of glaciers” due to climate change that are directly affecting the local population because water sources have decreased, floods, call for a wider coverage and diversification of subjects pursuant to specific conditions and needs that sometimes are common”.

In order to improve the dossiers they believe that “they should have a more educative focus with information about avoiding and relieving the social, health and environmental impacts caused by natural phenomena. Of course, they all agreed that health is a subject close to people that is why priority should be given to this topic. They think that in spite no immediate consequences have occurred in Latin America, such as the “bird flue”, information should be available to take action. All participants think dossiers should not be replaced by health information solely because they found that “it is important to

communicate them to the general population and to provide decision makers in the country with precise and reliable information".

8. Other services provided by SciDev

Most participants did not know about the workshops, lectures and support material provided by SciDev. They believe that it is very important to provide a permanent training service for journalists on how to treat scientific information.
Researchers and analysts stated "relationship between journalists and scientists should be treated as a training service. Most of researchers state journalists should be trained through updating events that are not only theoretical but also practical. For example it is believed that researchers and scientists should be present in workshops in order to know each sector view, concerns and worries. All of them stated that "if known how to manage the relationship journalist-scientist, the journalists' work will be more professional and errors and misunderstandings will be avoided when sharing scientific information", that have bothered scientists in several times.

All researchers have expressed the interest to have access to training events in order to improve their communication with the public. For that purpose, they are ready to be trained on ways to communicate science and to their acceptance by the public. Using technical language is seen as a barrier "we are willing to be trained in that theme" –they added.

9. What other services can be offered by SciDev?

Most of researchers stated that several options, such as forums and discussion groups, should be incorporated into the site in order to facilitate the exchange of information with people in different countries on common subjects. In addition, they have suggested that in order to generate more local information, an office should be opened in each country to collect information. This might be achieved through a mapping exercise to generate lists of specialist contacts so that a wide range of useful and first hand information can be obtained.

They would also like to have information on "how to get in touch with specialists in each subject" in order to create communication processes, consultation and information interchange.

Half of the participants stated that "the SciDev main website should be maintained as a cover in case sites are created for each country", another suggestion frequently proposed, should allow maintaining an image of unity in the portal. Journalists and researchers stressed the need to seek information in each country and their opinion would be validated on the creation of Editorial Committees to generate information, evaluate it and place in the portal.

10. SciDev as a Network

Most of participants felt that in order for scidev.net to become more effective and to achieve more beneficial impacts of scientific information in their relevant jobs, a validation Editorial Committee should be appointed in each country to select what should be published. Such a committee would ensure reliability and, additionally, would broaden sharing of scientific information" Researchers criticize a lot when setting their opinion, they feel that "all scientific information should pass a revision, evaluation and validation processes to avoid errors.

Most of people participating in the focal group were very interested in cooperating on this task. They stated that, "we are interested in generating more local scientific information and welcome important, useful contributions from other countries". They feel that Ecuador should also contribute as well as other countries from Latin America, "we know differences between Latin American counties, so it becomes necessary that Editorial Committees are in place to evaluate information". Most of them feel that "there are countries that are relevant in the Latin American context, such as Brazil whose information is more abundant. They explain that "Brazil is a very big country almost equivalent to all Latin America area, and that its scientific-technologic development is quite different in comparison with ours".

Most participants think that working in a network is very important, mainly for scientific divulgation purposes. They add "there works and results from relevant researches that are known for lack of spreading". Researchers also stated that "it is partially their error for not generating information, because several times they do not know how to do it; they do not know to approach mass media" and they think that SciDev "is a chance to link and be communicated". Most of journalists stated that "network task is a current essential need for communication, share information and cause better impact regarding coverage and usefulness of information addressed to different publics".

All participants think that "important information for each of us should be taken into account, which is not necessarily important for all, the same occurs in countries". They stated that "a network can play an important role for the work of scientific journalists at it becomes a proprietary source of information for its work", "because it would allow sharing information among journalists, journalists and researchers". Most of them stated that to reach this purpose, the page should be capable to impact the user, "so it becomes the main searcher, in a need, for example Google

Most of participants feel that SciDev is very popular in Ecuador; they stated "that more promotion and publicity should be implemented on the site per 10-subscriber groups so it is more friendly and personalized and get the attention of potential users. They explain that "when the information is received to be sent to a great number of persons, the impact is different from if it is to be sent to a small group of persons or to an individual". Sending to a small group becomes

closer, people feel involved. They believe e-mails should be sent with attractive ads reading “register it is free”, for example, and mention benefits and fortresses offered by SciDev portal. Some participants suggest SciDev portal should be linked to yahoo and Google sites and contain “free sharing information”

List of Participants

Name	Occupation	Workplace	E-mail	Address
	QUITO			
Carmen del Rocío Echeverría Ruiz	Coordinator of the Ecuadorian, Science, Technology and Innovation Observatory. Implementation of the Observatory. Conduction of research surveys to generate indicators allowing making decisions at governmental level.	FUNDACYT	cechever@fundacyt.org.ec	Avdas. Patria 850 y 10 de Agosto. Quito. Tel: 2550553 2506540
Ramiro López	Physician, investigator; government official; Leader of the Science and Technology Investigation Process.	Ministry of Public Health	ramirolopezp@gmail.com	Buenos Aires 340 y Juan Larrea Tel. 2543598
Edmundo Estévez	Genetic physician; researcher; surveys and researches in genetics. Scientific releases on bioethics; Director of a Biomedicine Center of the University; University professor.	Faculty of Medicine. Central University of Ecuador	eestevez@cbm.uce.edu.ec	Sodiro N14-121 e Iquique Tel: 3228455
Ericsson López	Scientific research in Astronomy	Astronomic Observatory in Quito, EPN	ericsonl02@yahoo.com	Interior del Parque la Alameda, Avenida Gran Colombia s/n P. O. Box 17 01 165
Luis Lascano Lascano	Professor in Physics; researcher on materials for Physics.	Physics Department – EPN	llascano@server.epn.edu.ec;	Ladrón de Guevara E11-253. Quito
Darwin Leonardo Hernández Jaramillo	Coordinator on Natural Surrounding Management; coordination of conservation projects; training on environmental education; follow up and evaluation of projects.	OIKOS Corporation	dhernandez@oikos.org.ec	Luxemburgo N34-80 y Holanda. Quito.Tel: 2461595 / 2461596
Ivette	Journalist; Communication	Fundación Natura. Area	ipullas@fnatura.org.ec	Elia Liut N45-10 y El Telégrafo.

Susana Pullas Lucero	Coordinator for the Chemical Products and Special Wastes of the Fundación Natura Project; induction of technicians for the preparation of texts for technical and didactic material in order to disseminate information on environmental subjects for environmental quality as well as promoting the project image in the national and local environment where the project works.	on Environmental Quality, Project on Chemical Products and Special Wastes		Sector El Bosque PBX: 2272863 ext. 213 - Quito
María Isabel Cevallos Simancas	Journalist; Director of the CyT Agencies Project. Editorial planning with freelance journalist to prepare articles; analysis of the country's situation; contact with scientists and researchers; link with communication media; negotiation of covenants for the diffusion of information.	FUNDACYT	micevallos@fundacyt.org.ec	Av. Patria 850 y 10 de Agosto, Edif. Banco de Préstamos, piso 8.
Leissa Sánchez	Scientific journalist; reporter for Gestión magazine, circulating in the national territory; covers several sources; freelance journalist of FUNDACYT CyT News Agency.	MULTIPLICA	leisa.sanchez@multiplica.com.ec	
Héctor Chávez	Architect; private enterprise; preparation of technologic innovation projects in the housing sector through the use of appropriate technologies; specialist in intellectual property.		icaecua@interactive.net.ec	
Rosa Solórzano de Cervantes	Journalist; Press adviser of the Vice-president of the Republic. Adviser in divulgation and popularization policies in science; relationship with other communication media.	Vice-presidency of the Republic	rosa.solorzano@vicepresidencia.gov.ec	
MelissaArévalo	Biologist. Researcher on human genetics; several studies completed	Human Immuno-genetics Laboratory. Pontificia	nmarevalo1@yahoo.com	

	and others in process.	Universidad Católica del Ecuador		
Freddy Fuenmayor	Scientific journalist. Works for recovery of species in captivity; Director of a radio program on the environment.	Planeta Verdeazul	planetaverdeazul@yahoo.es	
Fabián Jaramillo	Engineer; researcher specialized in Info-pedagogy. Trainer in the use of new information technologies to elementary school and high school students.	Ciudad	infopedagogos@yahoo.com	
José Balarezo	Engineer; science administrator; evaluation of scientific research projects, follow up, monitoring.	FUNDACYT	javalrez@fundacyt.org.ec	San Salvador 290 y Pradera. Tel: 2504313
	GUAYAQUIL			
Telmo Fernández	Researcher physician; specialist in research of tropical diseases; active member of the Investigation Forum on Health in Ecuador (FORNISA); General Coordinator of the forum. University professor.	Universidad de Guayaquil	telmo1312@hotmail.com	Urdaneta 1401 y García Moreno Tel: 2291840
Paul Carrión	Researcher geologist engineer; Director of the Science and Technology Research center (CICYT). Negotiation of research projects manager, CyT fairs, release of scientific books and articles.	ESPOL	pcarrion@goliat.espol.edu.ec	Campus “Gustavo Galindo Velasco”. Prosperita. Km. 30.5, vía Perimetral. Tel: 2269269
Juan Carlos Ruiz	Physician; researcher specialized in cancer.	SOLCA. Ecuadorian Society to Fight Cancer.	jcruizc@hotmail.com	Av. Pedro Menéndez Gilbert, diagonal al hospital Lorenzo Ponce. Tel: 2288088
Liena Shinkarenko	Health researcher; university professor.	SOLCA. Ecuadorian Society to Fight Cancer.	liena02@hotmail.com	Av. Pedro Menéndez Gilbert, diagonal al hospital Lorenzo Ponce. Tel: 2288088
Glenda	Scientific journalist; reporter;	Red Tele Sistema Canal	gbastidas@rts.com.ec	Juan Tanca Marengo, Kim. 4.5

Bastidas	producer of Science and Technology segment for the main tv news program; national covering channel; emission of a journalist report per week (Wednesday) on results of scientific research and technologic innovation projects.	Nacional.		
Pedro López	Scientific journalist. Covering and reporting of the Technology site published on Sundays in El Universo Journal (journal with the highest circulation in the country).	Diario El Universo	domingo@eluniverso.com	Av. Domingo Comin y Ernesto Albán.
Sergio Flores	Engineer; Ex-Rector of the Politecnic School of the Litoral (ESPOL); private entrepreneur; specialist in CyT policies; researcher and university professor.	ECUTEL ESPOL	sflores@goliat.espol.edu.ec	Campus “Gustavo Galindo Velasco”. Prosperita. Km. 30.5, vía Perimetral. Tel: 2269269
Viviana Suntaxi	Engineer; Assistant of the “Ajá” Scientific Divulgation Park; preparation of education and divulgation materials on science.	ESPOL	vsuntaxi@goliat.espol.edu.ec	Campus “Gustavo Galindo Velasco”. Prosperita. Km. 30.5, vía Perimetral. Tel: 2269269
Raúl Castillo	Engineer; PhD in agriculture; researcher specialized in sugar cane.	CINCAE – Research Center on Sugar Cane of Ecuador	raulcast@ecua.net.ec	Elizalde 114 y Malecón. Tel: 042-729 163 / 4/5 - 099-948372
Azucena Acosta Correa	Responsible of Solca Website; Administrative Assistance of Systems Department.	Solca (Ecuadorian Society to Fight Cancer)	aacosta@solca.med.ec	Avenida Pedro Menéndez Gilbert P. O. Box 3623 09821340
María del Pilar Cornejo R. de Grunauer	Professor, researcher. Area: interaction-ocean- atmosphere, climate and applications, systems of environmental management in agriculture and water culture.	Faculty of Maritime Engineering and Marine Sciences-ESPOL	pcornejo@espol.edu.ec	Campus Gustavo Galindo. Km 30.5 via perimetral, Guayaquil-Ecuador. Cel: 094427823
David Sabando	Engineer; science manager; management of CyT projects; follow up; relation with system stake holder for the coastal region.	FUNDACYT	dsabando@fundacyt.org.ec	Malecón 100 y Loja. Campus Las Peñas.

Jorge Tola	Engineer; science manager; management of research projects; raising if funds for research. Lobby politician. Founder member of Fundacyt.	FUNDACYT President controlling private sector	tolaj@gye.satnet.net	Av. El Ejército 303 entre Alejo Lascano y Padre Solano, Planta Baja
Lucy Peralta	Journalist; National director of news in a local tv channel; programming of 3 news programs in a daily base; journalistic plan. Analysis of the national reality, including science and technology. Weekly program for two consecutive years.	Red Tele Sistema. Canal de Televisión	rperalta@rts.com.ec	Juan Tanca Marengo, Kim. 4.5

Annex 11. Report of Chinese Focus Group

Report on the Focus Group held on 1 September 2006 at the Chinese Hall of Science and Technology by Hepeng Jia, regional coordinator for SciDev.Net.

Executive summary:

What participants like and do not like about the services offered by SciDev,

What participants like

- A window linking China and the world, especially other developing nations
- Wide coverage
- Specific role to inform various participants about science communications
- Unique and up-to-date information
- Information rich website
- The web frame and structure are attractive and easy to use
- The website pictures are very interesting and relevant.
- Science communication training offered by SciDev.Net is highly valuable
- Language easy to understand

What participants do not like

- Chinese information is insufficient
- Information about China is insufficient, and lacks China-specific topics such as TCM
- There are no specific communications products (meaning contents) designed to meet the specific needs of subgroups of the target audience (scientists, policymakers/researchers, journalists)
- The contents of the site is not sufficiently academic and may not attract scientists
- News content insufficient, especially for a website
- Website and its valuable information are not widely publicized so that non-users do not know this information.
- Insufficient interaction between readers and editors
- Lacking corporate information
- Website speed is slower than many domestic websites
- The Chinese email alerts are often illegible and contain a jumble of code.

What impact do the participants believe the web site has had on those that use it

- Useful to enable readers to obtain specific information, especially about other developing countries
- The website and SciDev.Net's activities are an important tool to

communicate science
- SciDev.Net dossiers, especially policy briefs, are important sources of development-related science policies

Suggestions on the ways in which the services of SciDev might be improved in future.

- It was recommended to increase the Chinese contents, especially content that is intended for policymakers and journalists who cannot easily read in English
- Increase the availability of the website by including more mutual links to local organisations and commercial websites.
- Increase website publicity through the production and distribution of brochures to institutions such as universities, international and national research programmes, NGOs, and research companies and at various meetings
- Make the contents more diversified, covering not only topics, but also scientific disciplines. Such classifications can be run in parallel and the contents in the different items can be repeated.
- Link valuable contents, such as policy briefs in dossiers, directly to other websites or make them easier to find by search engines such as google and baidu.com.
- Increase SciDev.Net cooperation and partnerships with local organisations, especially government organisations.
- Create items to help scientific writers to report about specific hot topics, such as the latest scientific discoveries or controversial issues

Any other key or unexpected findings

- The source of information such as articles to put on the website as this was not clear to the participants. For people trying to quote SciDev.Net contents, lack of source references make them seem less reliable, at least at first sight.
- Topics, headlines and expected target users are appreciated by the focus group participants, including editors of very popular commercial websites. Originally, it had been thought that SciDev.Net titles (at least when they are in Chinese) are less appealing, but our users think the current forms are okay and we need only to expand contents.
- Dossiers are being used by science policy analysts but they have not been used as major references when the latter try to write policy-related papers and/or reports

Focus group facilitator's impression:

The role of SciDev.Net, both its website and its activities, are highly appreciated by focus group participants who think such activities have been previously lacking in China. However, the use of SciDev.Net, even among long-time users, is relatively limited, perhaps because the contents of the website's content is yet sufficiently relevant to each specific group of readers'/users' needs.

Section 1: Background

Hepeng Jia on behalf of The Policy Practice which is implementing the SciDev.Net evaluation conducted a one day workshop geared towards evaluating the services of SciDev.Net with view of determining the opinions of users and potential users of the SciDev web site. The specific objectives of the workshop were:

a. Determining what users like and do not like about the services offered by SciDev,
b. Finding out what impact the web site has had on those that use it, and
c. Discussing ways in which the services of the SciDev might be improved in future how the services of SciDev might be improved in future.

The workshop was held at the Chinese Hall of Science and Technology in Beijing on 1 September 2006 and lasted for 5.5 hours. The twenty-two participants for the workshop were selected randomly from two categories of users and potential users of the SciDev.Net. A list of 180 users was provided by the Policy Practice, who can be clearly identified to be in Beijing. The selection of 10 participants was mainly based on this list but also on the full name lists of SciDev.Net users provided by Jemima Tonks.

A sample of 11 non/potential users is obtained randomly. It was intended that should have been 10 people in each subgroup. In the selection process, however, in order to abide by the participant categories suggested by Policy Practice (two scientists, two science journalists or communicators, three government officials or S&T policy advisors and three “others” including aid agencies, NGO, business, students for each subgroup), 20 candidates were contacted by emails or telephones for each subgroup (user/non-users) so that there would be right proportion of participants. However, as the result of more-than-expected response, the non/potential subgroup has one additional participant. However, if we include the SciDev.Net translator – a registered user based outside Beijing – who tried to answer the focus group questions by emails, and then the number of participants in the two subgroups is the same.

In the organization process, foreigners (in China) have not been considered because of the language barrier.

The workshop was organized into three sessions:
Session 1 was for introductions and to enable participants to get to know each as users and non-users of SciDev, who they are, where they work and type of work they do. Annex 1 provides details about the participants’ categories in a plenary session. Thereafter, the background, purpose, and outputs expected from the meeting were introduced to the participants and discussed, key elements of SciDev clarified and the tasks for the day explained to the participants. The participants thereafter split into two categories of users and potential users and discussed the rest of the issues in their respective categories.

Section 2: Characteristics of the Participants

The 22 participants included universities professors both in science and policy researchers at the CAS (Chinese Academy of Sciences), government officials (one for each subgroup respectively), policy researchers at institutes, corporate scientists, website and newspaper editors, and graduate students in science and science communication.

As a whole, the participants are top ranked in their categories. They have included very famous scientists in China, leading policy researchers and major science communication researchers in China. The gathering of the top ranked people indicates the high value they placed on SciDev.Net in China.

Another common feature of the participants was that they are supportive of science communication, which has not been shared, at least in practice, by all scientists, science officials, and policy researchers. In China, scientists have no obligation to communicate science to people outside their circle. Therefore, many scientists who are not enthusiastic about science communication would not participate in the focus group held by SciDev.Net, because the website/organisation is primarily aimed at communicating to a wider (more popular) audience

One question sheet was sent to the major official in charge of science popularisation but no response has yet been received. Another question sheet was sent to a translator of SciDev.Net, based in Jinan, Shandong Province, who is a registered user. His answers have been merged into this survey report.

Annex 1 provides a list of the participants and highlights who they are, where they work and type of work they do, and how much they know about the web site..

Section 3: Overall Impressions of SciDev

As regards to the overall impression of SciDev.Net, both the users and non-users regard this as an important window linking China to the rest of the world, and especially to other developing nations. None of the participants, either users or non-users, know of any other website containing similar information, especially in Chinese.

They also think the website covered a wide range of issues in science and science-related fields and its information is rich, as compared with journals and other non-media website. But when compared with other media, both non-journalists and journalists think that SciDev.Net’s contents are much less extensive.

Both SciDev.Net users and non users recognize the important roles of SciDev.Net in informing and equipping various participants of science communications with skills and up-to-date information, especially the information in hot international science topics related to development. However,

they tended to stress this role at the cost of overlooking other roles that SciDev.Net seeks to perform, such as briefing policymakers. They only became aware of this other role of SciDev.Net after it was drawn to their attention by the focus group moderators.

All of the participants, including media and non-media, think SciDev.Net has very up-to-date information. But they – both users and non-users -- are not clearly aware about the key focus of SciDev.Net, namely relating science to development. As a result, many criticised SciDev.Net for not reporting China's advances in basic sciences and other areas, such as space sciences.

It is also suggested that SciDev.Net should open a special theme (or section) on TCM (traditional Chinese medicine). Although SciDev.Net has already had a dossier on indigenous knowledge, it does not adequately cover the TCM. China has given TCM high official recognition and huge formal research resources, much more than any other country. As a result, TCM in China has the combined features of both traditional herbal medicine and the official, scientifically recognized drugs.

Most participants, including the professional website editor, thought that the web frame and structure look good and are easy to use. None of them think that the contents are too congested, as suggested elsewhere.

All participants, including those having participated in SciDev.Net's science communication training workshops and those who only recently learned of these activities at the focus group, were highly appreciative of this service and work. None of them were aware of similar activities in China before.

Participants in the plenary meeting thought that SciDev.Net's information on (and from) China was insufficient, the classification of contents should be more diversified, not only covering current topics like climate change, agricultural biotech and so on, but also covering scientific disciplines such space science, earth science, life science and physics science). They also thought that the interaction between website editors and users/readers should be improved.

The sub-group of non-users had more negative comments (perhaps because the coordinator, me, was not chairing this subgroup). Generally, they made several key points:

1. It could be very difficult for SciDev.Net, as a website-based media, to combine the interests and needs of different groups of target users, such as journalists, scientists, and policy researchers.
2. The contents of SciDev.Net are aimed at a middle level between academics and the public. They felt that scientists would not read it because it is insufficiently professional, and the average public would not read it because it would be too scientific for them.
3. Few topics in advanced sciences in developing countries, such as China's lunar exploration project, have been covered by SciDev.Net. This means that it does not adequately report the full range of scientific developments in developing countries.

4. If SciDev.Net is to serve developing countries, then local languages should be used rather than English. The contents should be reported first in local languages and then only selective ones should be translated into English.

Several recommendations have been made both in the plenary meeting and the subgroup meeting, which have been listed in the executive summary of this report.

Section 4: The most useful parts of the SciDev web site and its impact

It is very difficult to effectively evaluate this aspect of SciDev as the site was not familiar to the non-users and users did not use the site frequently. However, both agree that SciDev.Net news and other news-related contents, such as features and opinions, open up a new angle for them to observe the world of science. Some participants felt that opinion articles offered them fresh thinking, but they do not often read them.

Following the introduction from the moderator, all participants, including media and non-media, and users and non-users, felt that the E-guide for science communication and dossiers are very important.

Because most of the participants who use SciDev.Net read it in Chinese, they were not aware of the search function which cannot be used in Chinese.

In addition to the focus group participants, the SciDev.Net translator reflected that he only read the news/feature sections of the website.

A list of useful part of SciDev.Net is thus described below:

- News and features – because as journalists, their work is to report news and SciDev.Net provides a quick source of ‘rare news’ that other channels seldom offer.
- Opinions – in most cases they were not read by users, but those that do still think this part very inspiring.
- Dossiers were highly valued by all participants. But only policy researchers used this section regularly. Journalists reflected that they would like to use them, but often find no time to read them. Scientists said they only read dossiers in areas outside their major area of specialism.
- E-guide – there were highly valued by all participants, but only the journalists have been using it.

Among the users, the policy researchers have used the dossiers more frequently than others. But they feel that the contents of the dossiers are not directly relevant to China. SciDev.Net dossiers lack the descriptions of the policies of individual countries to cope with issues related to the dossiers. Users feel that the dossiers are too international, lacking policies in individual

countries. They suggested that the dossiers should contain more basic facts on the policies of individual countries on selected issues related to development. A policy researcher, who is the long-time user of SciDev.Net, would like to read more comment from foreigners on China's concrete science policies, especially the bold policies to encourage innovation that have recently been released.

Section 5: The least useful parts of the SciDev web site and why

It is difficult to encourage people to say which parts of the website they found least useful. But results were obtained by asking whether participants use certain specific parts of the site, and whether potential users plan to use them.

As a result of this approach it was found that quick guides were the least valuable section. The reason is that professional scientists from universities and CAS have their own professional academic websites or information channel. Given the fact that all research-related participants come from major universities and CAS where the libraries have established comprehensive databases (in this aspect, China is quite different to typical developing countries), it is reasonable to expect such low use of the quick guide. However it may be that grassroots researchers will find this part very helpful, but the focus group has did not contain such people.

Perhaps for similar reasons, natural science participants said they do not use nor will use the full-text Science or Nature papers available through SciDev.Net. They are able to obtain full access to all the papers in these two journals easily when they want to read them. Another reason for this might be that the four natural science-related participants (two life scientists on cancer drug development, one space scientist and one seismologist) do not work on issues covered by SciDev.Net.

The least used parts of SciDev.Net also includes the service information section (events, jobs, and grants), partly because we do not offer Chinese in this section, partly because they are far removed from the needs of Chinese participants (for example, jobs through SciDev.Net are mainly international aid organisations or NGOs, which are not attractive to Chinese participants).

Our translator also point out that book reviews are also little used.

Section 6: Improvements that could be made to SciDev *(one page)*

Both users and non users recommended increasing the Chinese language content of the site, especially the content intended for policymakers and journalists who cannot easily read in English. The participants remarked that among the three key reader groups, only scientists can read easily in English.

Participants suggested classifying the contents of the site both in terms of topics and also in terms of scientific disciplines. For example, news on the website can

be classified as both indigenous knowledge, and another system of classification, such as, chemistry.

Participants, especially non-users, particularly want the website to report the newest high-tech development of developing countries. Non-users also think that the site has given more prominence to the negative reports about developing countries than more positive ones. It is also suggested that a mechanism be designed to ensure the website truly reflects the views and needs of developing countries about concrete issues, instead of merely reflecting the views and needs that the London editors believe will be of interest to developing countries.

Participants welcomed the idea of covering more health related issues. But they would like more reporting of medical practice instead of merely medical research, because there is a big gap between the two in the developing countries.

Participants understand the limits of what SciDev.Net can do with its limited resources. They suggested that more partnerships with local organisations might help remove these constraints. In particular they mentioned getting partners to post their information directly on SciDev.Net and joint efforts to undertake and pay for translations. They argued that the Regional coordinator of SciDev.Net should not work mainly as a reporter/editor, but rather he or she should be coordinating others' work and seeking to develop more partnerships.

Several suggestions on the promotion of the web site were proposed. These included increasing the availability of the website elsewhere by making more links to local organisations and commercial websites, increasing website publicity through production and distribution of brochures with institutions such as universities, and making valuable contents, such as policy briefs in dossiers, more frequently linked to other websites or make more accessible to search engines such as google.com and baidu.com.

All journalists, both users and non-users, agreed (some suggest and others agree) that SciDev.Net should work more as a tool to help science journalism. Its E-guide should not only be a collection of articles, but provide real-time guides to the reporting of specific hot topics, such as the newest scientific discovery or controversial issues, or the visit of important guys like Stephen Hawking. Such assistance could include the background of the news-making scientific events, and the names of authoritative scientists or institutes to contact. Assistance or mentoring would also be welcomed from experienced senior reporters who can be invited to comment on whether a certain article has been well or poorly done, and if so, how it might be improved.

Participants cited the following websites as examples that SciDev can use to improve the services it provides:

> Peking Univ professor Wu Guosheng's science communication center: http://www.csc.pku.edu.cn/
> China Red ribbon:

http://www.chain.net.cn/aidsenglish/index.htm

Section 7: The value of the "dossiers" and how they could be improved

Most suggestions on dossiers have been mentioned previously. In this section, the report will summarise some of the issues while adding more concrete points.

Policy researchers and government officials think dossiers, especially policy briefs, are important sources for understanding development-related science policies. In China, each major government department has at least one affiliated research body. Therefore, dossiers could THEORETICALLY be important references for policy researchers and through them, policymakers. But currently their existence is not sufficiently known to these institutions, and as they are not in Chinese they cannot be read.

Meanwhile, science communication researchers in China think that the dossiers, especially the policy briefs, can be very valuable as they offer comprehensive view about certain issues, instead of the one-sided and one-way information flow that is so common in the practice of China's science communication.

However, it was only policy researchers that used the dossiers. None of the other participants said they use dossiers [at all or often], suggesting that that the content, structure and relevance might need to be adjusted to increase their attractiveness to these audiences.

Suggestions (some have been mentioned above) for improving the dossiers were made, including:

1. Make the classification of contents more sophisticated, both in terms of topics, but also in terms of scientific disciplines. The material can be classified in a number of different ways in parallel and can be repeated in different parts of the site.

2. Make of the policy briefs in the dossiers can be linked directly to other websites or made more accessible to Internet search engines such as google and baidu.com..

3. Participants wanted the policy briefs to contain more in-depth analyses rather than stressing more up-to-dated but less incisive contents. To overcome the problem of policy briefs becoming out-date, they suggested that they should be supplemented by more recent news at the end of the policy briefs.

4. More local language (Chinese) policy briefs should be posted and they should be more locally relevant. More relevant topics might include some describing China's TCM. Participants suggested some of them

might not need to be in English at all but to contain only an English summary. SciDev.Net does not need to commission all policy briefs itself, but could post directly penetrating and informative journal review articles produced by others as policy briefs.

5. More local partnership can be used to develop locally relevant dossiers. For example, a Chinese dossier on TCM could include translations of the existing policy briefs on indigenous knowledge, and additional analysis on the relevance of these briefs to China's situation, Chinese policy briefs on certain topics of TCM and English summaries, and the comments by Westerners on TCM approaches.

Section 8: Other services provided by SciDev

All participants, including those having attended SciDev.Net's science journalism/communication training workshops and those who just learned of these activities at the focus group, were highly appreciative of this service and work. None of them have ever heard of similar activities in China before. The participating journalists hope that SciDev.Net can offer more of these services and spread the results from the workshop among non-workshop participants. The participants showed great interest when the learned that Hepeng Jia is editing a book resulting from SciDev.Net-UNESCO Beijing workshop.

The moderator indicated that SciDev.Net science communication workshops are intended not only for science journalists but also scientists. This immediately aroused the interests of the CAS PR official, who would like to cooperate with SciDev.Net to train its institute PR officers (CAS has more than 80 institutes).

Compared with some negative evaluation on the SciDev.Net website, it was striking that no one has any negative comments on the science communication workshops initialized by SciDev.Net in China.

However, most participants say they have not known in time about the previous science communication workshops by SciDev.Net and its future plans.

Section 9: SciDev as a Network

Neither users nor non-users felt that they were part of a network initiated by SciDev.Net. Participants from an environmental NGO considered that networking activities were rare in China's science community, because of people's self consciousness. It was suggested it would be very difficult for a foreign organisation such as SciDev.Net to promote any networking activities in

China's science and science communication societies. But participants did express their willingness to increase their cooperation and partnership with SciDev.Net.

List of participants

No.	Name	Occupation/ Place of Work/Type	Contact information
Non-user/potential users below			
1	Luchuan Ren	State Seismology Administration/scientist	renluchuan@sina.com
2	Weixin Jiao	Geographical professor, Peking Univ./scientist	jiao@pku.edu.cn
3	Yongqing Lei	Science editor, Sina.com.cn/journalist	yongqing@staff.sina.com.cn
4	Daqing Li	Senior reporter, S&T Daily/journalist	lidq@stdaily.com qlida@263.sina.com
5	Xiaomin Zhu	Inst. Of Science policy, CAS/policy researcher	zhuxm27@hotmail.com zhuxm@mail.casipm.ac.cn
6	Jinsong Jiang	Inst. Of Sci & Society, Tsinghua Univ./policy researcher	jsjiang@mail.tsinghua.edu.cn
7	Ping Liu	State Council, HIV Prevention Consulting Committee/govt official	liuping@chinaaids.cn
8	Xiangyin Chen	retired research fellow, Chinese Aca. Of Med. Sci/Others	67618264/13681230231
9	Huilian Zhang	Project manager, Inst. of Environment And Development/ Others: NGO	zhanghl@ied.org.cn
10	Gong Cheng	PhD student, Peking Univ. / Others: student	victorchenggong@gmail.com
11	Bo Xu	Graduate student on climate change, CASS / Others: student	8610-85195711 13810712899
Registered user below			
1	Zailin Yu	Prof. Peking Univ, School of Life Science/scientist	zyu88@yahoo.com
2	Pei Han	Tech. Marketing Dept. Sino TCM Co Ltd/scientist	ph_ohi@yahoo.com
3	Shuo Shi	PR section deputy chief, CAS/government official	shishuo@cashq.ac.cn shishuo@263.net zhong-qi@vip.sina.com
	Qi Zhong		zhongqi@cast.org.cn
4		China Research Inst. Of Sci. Popularisation/policy researcher	kepusuo@263.net
5	Junying Huang	Inst. Of S&T Information of China/policy researcher	huangjy@istic.ac.cn
6	Xiuhua Xu	editor, S&T section, People's Online/journalist	xuflower001@yahoo.com.cn
7	Guangjing Zhu	Editorial chief, Mass S&T Daily/journalist	zhuguangqing@163.net
8	Yue Mei	Greenpeace China/Others: NGO	zhou.meiyue@cn.greenpeace.org
9	Pei Wei	Graduate student, CAS Graduate University/Others: student	woshiwpei@163.com

No.	Name	Occupation/ Place of Work/Type	Contact information
10	Xingying Zhao	Graduate student, China Mining University/Others: student	xy_zhao163@163.com