

DFID RESEARCH STRATEGY 2008-2013

## Working Paper Series: Capacity Building



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

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

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

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

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

## SUMMARY

1. The concept of capacity building has received a great deal of attention over the last few years. Some of the work has focused on definitions; other studies have tried to map different interventions; and some have explored different approaches and their achievements (Definitions of capacity building).

## DEFINITIONS OF CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity – “the ability of people, institutions and societies to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve objectives” (UNDP 2002.)

Capacity development is the process whereby individuals, groups, and organisations enhance their abilities to mobilize and use resources in order to achieve their objectives on a sustainable basis. Efforts to strengthen abilities of individuals, groups, and organisations can comprise a combination of (i) human skills development; (ii) changes in organisations and networks; and (iii) changes in governance/institutional context (ADB 2004).

2. Capacity building is a complex notion – it involves individual and organisational learning which builds social capital and trust, develops knowledge, skills and attitudes and when successful creates an organisational culture which enables organisations to set objectives, achieve results, solve problems and create adaptive procedures which enable it to survive in the long term
3. DFID defines research capacity as “the ability of individuals, organisations and systems to undertake and disseminate high quality research effectively and efficiently”. There is, in addition to the three levels in the definition, the ‘institutional’ context in which capacity building takes place. This covers the incentives, the economic, political and regulatory context and the resource base on which the context is built.
4. The field is vast. An ODI study<sup>1</sup> revealed 49 organisations which put ‘strengthening southern research capacity’ in their mission statement or key objectives. Because of the definitional problem (where does ‘capacity building’ end and actual ‘research’ begin?), the expenditure figures by donors on capacity building are imprecise. There is no agreed definition for capacity building, resulting in different emphasis in other funding agencies’ ambitions and approach (Work to date on capacity building).
5. A significant percentage of DFID’s £120 million budget on centrally-commissioned research in 2006-2007 was spent on capacity building. However, an ODI study into spending on capacity development within the context of research places the Netherlands, Sweden and IDRC in the top three bilateral donors. Budgets ranged from DSIG/NUFFIC (the Netherlands) spending US \$140 million in 2005 to IDRC’s funding more than US \$20 million each year. We estimate that DFID spent at least as much as this out of its £120 million. The ODI Report also notes that the biggest spend, by multiple funders, was in health, agriculture and economic research. They add that there was a ‘significantly lower investment in the humanities and non-economic social sciences’.

<sup>1</sup> ‘Building Capacity in Southern Research: A Study to Map Existing Initiatives, ODI, 2001  
[http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Projects/R0008/Docs/Report\\_Final.PDF](http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Projects/R0008/Docs/Report_Final.PDF)

## WORK TO DATE ON CAPACITY BUILDING

An influential group of papers has emerged from research commissioned in 2002 by the OECD which asked ECDPM (European Centre for Development Policy Management) to 'study the capacity of organisations..., mainly in low income countries, its development over time and its relationship to improved performance'. One useful paper is entitled 'The Concept of Capacity', P Morgan, 2006. The 2005 Commission for Africa Report and the G8 summit focussed on the crisis in higher education in Africa, putting the issue firmly on the agenda.

Meanwhile, DFID and other donors have commissioned several research and technical reports on Capacity Development in the last few years. They include 'Building Capacity in Southern Research: A Study to Map Existing Initiatives, ODI, 2001. Capacity was also a major part of ODI's Report entitled 'Setting the Scene: Situating DFID's Research Funding Policy and Practice in an International Comparative Perspective', (June 2007). This was up-dated in Nov 2007 DFID/CRD funded a lesson learning study 'Developing the Capacity of research Systems in Developing Countries: Lessons learnt and Guidelines for Future Initiatives'. NRI, (Sept, 2005 ).

DFID also funded (with other donors) a Capacity Collective workshop. The workshop report, Capacity for a Change; Documents based on outcomes of the Capacity Collective Workshop, (Jan 2008), IDS, Sussex pulled together current views on definitions, range of activities and extent and size of donor involvement. As a prelude to the development of the research Strategy CRD held a 2 day workshop/learning event (Sept 2007) which sought the ideas and experiences of researchers involved in DFID research funded activities. Other UK bodies have looked at UK/ International research funding. The Association of Commonwealth Universities issued a report 'Frameworks for Africa-UK Research Collaboration in the Social Sciences and Humanities: African Universities Perspective' (May 2007).

Similar work has been commissioned in the physical sciences and engineering. The UNCTAD Least Developed Countries Report contains a 60 page background annex on Science and Innovation which summarises science development issues and comments on differing donor approaches to research and capacity building. A World Bank Forum around the topic 'Building Science, Technology and Innovation Capacity for Sustainable Growth and Poverty Reduction' was held in Washington in early 2007.

Other donors have also looked at their programmes or undertaken more strategic evaluations. An Australian report 'Capacity Building Evaluation', (Oct 2006) notes that the development community spends 15 billion US \$ on capacity development but is unsure of the return on the investment. The Dutch have attempted to deal with this question in a Report 'Comparative Study of the Impacts of Donor-initiated programmes on research capacity in the South', p149, DGIS, (2001). The report has little on Africa because they could find no non-donor funded research to act as a 'control'. The World Bank has recently funded a research report on agricultural education in Africa - 'Cultivating Knowledge and Skills to Grow African Agriculture', W Saint (May 2007). The report shows a continuing decline in the quantity and quality of those entering agriculture as students, teachers and researchers. Net losses caused by retirement, migration and HIV/Aids show a rapid decline in numbers such that people in key teaching and research positions are not being replaced because there is no-one to fill the post. This problem is repeated in other sectors; especially in Africa. The US Social Science Research Council commissioned, in 2002, a report 'Social Science Research Capacity in South Asia'. Its sub-title is 'Decline and Crisis' although not as precipitate as the decline in Africa the trend lines are downwards.

## WHERE WE ARE NOW

6. DFID funds a range of programmes that support capacity development. This may be as a core, planned activity within a research programme, or as an indirect programme outcome. DFID currently supports three different types of capacity support in its research programmes:

### CORE SUPPORT TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS, WHERE CAPACITY BUILDING IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF PROGRAMMES. SOME EXAMPLES:

7. DFID provides £20 million per year to the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). Some of the funding is provided to specialist centres, and some is spent on central administration. Since the funding is not generally earmarked, a significant percentage will be used for the training and development of researchers and for ensuring that the institutes are effectively managed.
8. DFID has supported the WHO Special Programmes for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR) and Human Reproduction (HRP) for many years. Current funding for each programme is £5.5 million over 3 years. TDR provides grants to support developing country researchers in their Masters, PhD and post-doctoral studies. It also provides re-entry grants to help reverse the brain drain. It supports institution building in southern research institutions. Grants are awarded directly to institutions and principal researchers in developing countries. Over a 30-year period 4,000 TDR projects in 80 countries have helped over 200 institutions and 1,500 young scholars. HRP supports national research capacity strengthening as well as research that responds to country reproductive health priorities. It also supports training in research methods in reproductive health and administers capacity strengthening grants.

9. DFID contributes £5 million to a five-year, £31 million ICT4D programme of work that is hosted by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The programme aims to ensure that information and communication technologies (ICTs) play a key and integrated role in accelerating progress towards achievement of the MDGs. Support will be split 70:30 between Africa and Asia. Strengthening the capacity of researchers, research institutions and research networks already working on these topics is a key thread of the programme, with 80% of support channelled through southern research networks/institutions with which IDRC already has some relationship, capacity and trust. Approaches include providing support to partners in policy research and communication skills, as well as disseminating research results.

### DIRECTLY MANAGED AND JOINT PROGRAMMES THAT ARE PRIMARILY ABOUT CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

10. The SEACAP (South East Asia Community Access Programme – £7.5 million over 5 years) is building capacity and strengthening institutions to ensure that local infrastructural investments are carefully researched and developed in a way that is sustainable. The programme, based in Hanoi, operates at various levels. It facilitates practical action-oriented research in rural communities, ensures that lessons learned about, for example, low cost technologies to maintain rural roads, are integrated into professional engineering development programmes at universities. The programme also ensures that government officials are involved at all levels so that research findings influence future policy and practice.
11. The SCARDA (Strengthening Capacity for Agricultural Research) programme (£8.7 million) is designed to strengthen the institutional and human capacity of African agricultural research and development systems. It will focus on research management, scientific quality and continuing professional education. It aims to create stronger national agricultural innovation systems that are able to deliver research outputs that meet the needs of poor people in Africa.
12. The Climate Change Adaptation in Africa programme, managed by IDRC, has a budget of £24 million over 5 years. Around 40% of the overall budget (more in the early years) will be for capacity development to help African researchers, policy makers and institutions, including NGOs, and those representing at-risk groups, to address the expected impacts of climate change in Africa. The funds will support action research programmes, training and mentoring initiatives and higher education opportunities for specialists. Participatory Action Research methods will be used to ensure that all concerned stakeholders are involved.
13. DFID supports a number of programmes that aim to strengthen the ‘enabling environment’ for research uptake. Some of these specifically address the needs of southern journalists to improve the way that science is reported. These include the Science and Development Network (Scidev.net) £1.6 million over seven years; Panos RELAY programme £800,000 over three years; and World Federation of Science Journalists £300,000 over three years. The Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information provides support to southern partners to enable them to negotiate for access to academic journals. The Global Development Network Electronic Service (GDNNet) supports capacity

building to information management staff and researchers in developing country research institutes. They have developed a programme of skills-building and knowledge-sharing in information management and to building southern capacity in research communication.

14. In 2008 DFID is launching a £10 million programme in association with IDRC and the Wellcome Trust to develop research capacity in Kenya and Malawi. The focus will be working with the apex institutions (the National Research Council of Malawi, Kenya Medical Research Institute and Kenya Consortium for National Health Research) to rebuild their capacity to facilitate and disseminate health research in their respective countries. The programme will also work to improve the regulation and coordination of the research environment to encourage local scientists to stay within the region.
15. 'Building Capacity for Better Governance and Social Policy Research' (Phase One over 5 years – £8.5 million), a new programme to develop capacity in the political and social sciences, is under development and will start in 2009.

#### RESEARCH PROGRAMME CONSORTIA WHICH INCLUDE CAPACITY BUILDING (TO FACILITATE RESEARCH) IN THEIR OBJECTIVES

16. Most of the CRD's directly-funded research takes place through Research Programme Consortia (RPCs), which together account for 15% of CRD annual spend. The first generation of RPCs (commissioned in the current Research Funding Framework 2005-2007 which built on the Development Research Centres, DRCs) did not have CB as an explicit objective, but capacity strengthening was nonetheless expected to be an important by-product of the research process.
17. Within RPCs, the level of engagement and resources spent on capacity issues vary enormously. It depends on location, need, previous investment, and nature of the research. It also depends on whether the consortia members wish to move beyond the 'basic' capacity building level through which a number of scholarships (for Masters or PhDs) or a series of workshops and training events (on, for example, research methods and academic writing) are provided. Some combination of training, mentoring, and higher education will be a feature of every current RPC – not least because it is a requirement of the tendering process.
18. For those RPCs which provide basic capacity assistance the level of expenditure is relatively modest: below 5%. For the majority, who work with southern colleagues to assist in the building of organisational capacity and who are attempting to build sustainable institutions and an international profile the figure is between 7-12 %. The average for the Health RPCs (which number 14 in 2008) is 7%. Since health research has been relatively well funded over the last decades this amounts to a not unreasonable figure. The percentage allocated to capacity issues is rising in recently-awarded RPC contracts as the importance of long-term and more equal partnerships and the need to avoid extractive relationships is recognised.

19. The figures for RPCs which work mainly in Africa are higher because the capacity problem is more profound. The RPC entitled 'Power, Politics and the State in Africa' has budgeted to spend 25% of its funding (£3.75 million over five years) on capacity building. The 'Disability, Development and Policy in the Southern African Region' RPC (£1.8 million) is developing a southern-led research programme on issues of disability and poverty with Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPOs) in Southern Africa. The programme will focus on building local capacity to direct and undertake research according to the priorities of disabled people and to ensure that the research results are used to influence policy. The programme will facilitate a shift from supply to demand-led research of a kind which is useful to disabled people. Capacity building is an early priority for this programme (60% of the budget) as is the collection of data on disability issues.

## COMMUNICATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

20. DFID believes that communication is central to the capacity building 'mix' and is an instrumental catalyst in getting research taken up and used to create better development. There are three separate aspects to the overall task, which DFID pursues with distinct but inter-related sets of activities.
- The first is helping individuals and institutions to more effectively communicate research. This requires that those generating new knowledge consider from the outset how best to engage with others so that the research will be useful and used. Specific skill sets, mindsets, and institutional environments are required to make this happen. The policy of embedding communication into the work of DFID's RPCs was introduced by the Research Funding Framework 2005-2007. It required that a minimum 10% of the overall budget be spent on helping researchers communicate more effectively, strengthening the enabling environment for uptake and strengthening southern research through better access to information.
  - The second aspect is making easily accessible global public goods so that southern researchers are not disqualified from achieving research excellence because of lack of access to cutting-edge research, or southern policymakers removed from research that could inform their better decision-making. Some of the assistance given in this areas includes providing better access to research information, for example through supporting information services such as ID21, Eldis, Scidev.net and DFID's research portal [www.research4development.info](http://www.research4development.info).
  - The third aspect is supporting and strengthening an 'enabling environment' in which research can be accessed, tailored for effective uptake, and deployed by anyone in positions to shape development processes. Programmes have included innovative communication approaches. This has included trialling multimedia use to communicate research information (for example, using television combined with radio and text messaging). Other work includes strengthening the capacity of the media in developing countries to report on scientific advances and help to ensure that policy makers were engaged in the research/ dissemination/ use continuum. Although not all of these activities can be fully described as capacity building, 'capacity' plays a major part in ensuring that effective communication takes place.

## WHAT THE CONSULTATION ASKED

- How can DFID be more systematic in helping developing countries to increase their research capacity?

## WHAT WE HEARD

20. A key lesson of international development experience is that public policies work best when they are designed and implemented by local actors. Without locally-generated data and analysis, well-intentioned programmes often do not respond to realities on the ground. Although donors now recognise that local ownership is critical to successful development interventions, they often fail to invest in the local institutions that can do the ongoing research and analysis needed by policy makers.
21. One theme that emerged from the consultations is that many of the weaknesses in the current market for policy research are the result of short-sighted funding decisions by donors. For example, most developing country research institutes do not receive the kind of predictable core funding that would allow them to do long-term planning, establish their own research priorities, and invest in creating strong research programmes. International donors give them some support, but usually for one-off projects, which the donor agency often designs and leads. As a result of these constraints most policy research institutes are doing primarily “responsive research” rather than setting a forward-looking research agenda driven by locally-determined needs. Many developing countries have a limited pool of highly educated experts, and it is difficult to retain personnel without strong local institutions that provide policy researchers with real opportunities to build careers. To give staff job security and career opportunities, research institutes need to have stable, long-term sources of support.
22. The time is ripe, according to several submissions, for policy researchers in developing countries to consolidate stable organisations, develop long-term research programmes, and invest in efforts to better link research and policy. However, policy research is pervasively undersupplied by market forces, and there are almost no domestic sources of support for independent policy research institutes in the developing world. International donors are thus a key source of funding for local research, but funding policies have failed to build strong research organisations with forward-looking research agendas.
23. Several submissions emphasised the central importance of demand-led research and programmes to prioritise action to strengthen country ownership of research programmes. One submission states: “In order to address the dominance of externally-led development models it is vital that developing countries are supported to build the capacity to generate and promote their own ideas about development and that every research project should contribute to this objective. The best way to ensure that development research contributes to capacity building efforts is to involve developing country partners in as many aspects of research programmes as possible, through creating more equitable research relationships. There is concern that the current RFF fails to prioritise capacity building highly enough and to provide research programmes with clear guidance on how to put capacity building into practice”. Unless DFID places increasing emphasis on building the capacity of scientists and policy makers in its partner countries, says another submission, local ownership will not happen.

24. Universities and research institutions in many parts of the world but especially in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), have, over the last 20 years, suffered from severe de-capitalisation. The tertiary education sector has been under-funded, partly because of budget constraints under structural adjustment and the emphasis given to primary and secondary education. Internationally mobile academics have used their mobility to obtain posts in the North and those that remain have seen recruitment into their professions decline. Years of under-investment, migration, and the impacts of HIV/AIDS means there is an insufficient number of mid-career professionals to replace them. The current capacity crisis will get worse in the next few years as senior academics retire. The problem of cadre renewal in academic institutions is particularly difficult in those subject areas where international funding is based on the occasional scholarship or consultancy work rather than systematic investment in intellectual capital. From Asia the point has been made that research has been crowded out by teaching and administrative in both public and private universities. In Government Research Centres there has been a lack of contract continuity and a shortage of good local consultants to undertake high quality research.
25. A range of responses (to the question 'What can DFID do to help') came in submissions, e-mails and from international workshops. It was recognised as an issue by every correspondent. Most felt that 'the development of research capacity in developing countries is a legitimate objectives of its [DFID's] own research programme'. This view was echoed by Sir David King, Government Chief Scientist and in the submission from the Royal Society. While emphasizing "the need for developing country scientists to be involved in identifying and tackling problems in their communities" the Royal Society noted: "In order to ensure the development of well-trained and knowledgeable people, including scientists and engineers, universities and higher education institutes in developing countries need to be the focus of greater development efforts. We recommend that DFID take a more holistic view and look at tertiary as well as primary and secondary education. We welcome DFID's efforts to date, but believe that it could do more".
26. Several submissions made an important point about the problems of undertaking effective capacity building in projects "contracted purely by research output". Capacity building should not be of research institutions in isolation, but of partnerships that can innovate and deliver the results of innovation. That is, it is the institutional links between organisations that need building once the common good has been identified. "In agriculture, this would frequently mean networks of research institutes, extension departments, NGOs, private-sector operations and of course farmers themselves. Actors within such partnerships need to be properly trained to make linkages, and systems need to be reformed so that those making linkages are rewarded". This submission adds that with the rapidly diminishing pool of UK expertise in agricultural research for development DFID will soon have no choice but to seek assistance from overseas. However, "research for development is not a popular career choice for the most gifted researchers given the low academic status of much of the applied research that is required".

27. The concept of conducting only 'blue sky' research in The North and more applied research in the South is flawed. Experience has shown that research for development is most effective if end-users are engaged in the process at an early stage (4). This point concerns agriculture but applies in most other sectors which undertake development research. A similar point was made by contributors to the South Africa consultations who suggested that there is a dearth of social scientists interested in working in rural areas and in the agricultural sector. Researchers seldom go to the field, engage too little and hence do not understand rural issues.
28. Others take a more instrumental approach to the development of scientific research in developing countries. They suggest that improved access to scientific literature, good computing facilities and communication links would make a significant difference. Furthermore, the exchange of ideas could be promoted by the establishment of long-term links between institutions in the region and those more developed parts of the world. Funds to help build bridges across bodies of work, synthesise the knowledge and drive new research agendas would be valuable. A good example is a German-funded initiative involving researchers working on ecological issues in communal areas in South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana.
29. One correspondent quotes another success story, from the UNESCO Bilko project, which has distributed software and training materials to more than 600 marine laboratories and educational establishments and in excess of 3,000 individual users in nearly 100 countries. As they confirm, the extractive nature of many relationships can be reduced by "a strong local research base which encourages researchers to stay in their home county, and encourages UK researchers to go on secondments or sabbaticals to new host institutions and write joint-authored papers with local researchers". Effective links between researchers and local NGOs will help to encourage links with the grassroots and will help to ensure that findings are used for the benefit of the local community.
30. A research council, in commenting on the relationship between capacity and 'demand-pull', states that DFID should recognise the importance of the tertiary education system for research capacity development, and also for "development of sectoral research capacity to generate informed user demands (e.g. for health experts in health ministries, or economists in finance ministries, etc). This recognition exists in our country, and it should be extended to developing country contexts".
31. A country-based response notes that there is often little enthusiasm for research or the generation of new knowledge among students of tertiary institutions. This is attributed to the 'growing anti-intellectualism and a growing commodification of the tertiary education sector in which the criteria of numbers and through-put play a major role.' In South Africa graduate students want a university education to help them "to meet their unrealistically high material expectations". In South Africa "research output is entirely dominated by an ageing cohort of white men", with very few black South Africans registering for post-graduate studies – particularly in the natural sciences. The lack of adequate funding for higher research students exacerbates the situation.

32. "In thinking about capacity building", notes the research council, "there is also a need to recognise different elements of capacity that together form a 'capacity system'" made up of:
- institutions and organisations with buildings and core infrastructure (such as ICT and libraries);
  - human capacity, with depth and breadth to ensure both quantity and quality, and a demographic and experience profile to ensure sustainability over the long term;
  - incentive structures to encourage people to stay in-country if they so wish; and
  - data and other research resources to ensure the sustainability of the system and to provide the basis for good research leading to evidence-informed policy and practice.
33. There also needs to be recognition that there are both short and long-term dimensions to the capacity issue.
34. These points are made by several contributors. An international contributor suggests the value of developing networks where capacity is so weak that formal organisational capacity building activities might not be cost-effective. These networks could be linked to larger international communities of practice. Learning groups (regional, international) can be developed around key goals such as the MDGs or governance questions. Even in relatively well-funded sectors (as in South Africa) the importance of adequate long-term funding to enable 'human capital development' was highlighted – not only in universities but also other tertiary institutions.
35. A range of submissions focused on the way research is funded and managed, pointing to a number of strengths in DFID's current RPC research model with respect to capacity development (CD). These are:
- "Experiences of capacity assessments that can be shared with others;
  - Innovative training design and implementation models;
  - Strategies for human resource development that support CD;
  - Efforts to develop a learning approach for CD within the overall programme; and
  - Establishing CD as a core objective within the overall research programme".

37. There are also significant challenges:

- Terminology for capacity development is vague and inconsistent between and even within research programmes. Related concepts are cloudy and ill-defined, or not articulated in programme documentation; none of the research centres have an explicit framework for capacity development;
- Although attempts have been made to develop more planned and strategic CD efforts which are multi-directional (North-South and South-South) and have a strong learning focus, a variety of CD approaches are still used among the research centres, with the majority of them viewing CD as instrumental rather than from a systemic perspective;
- Assessment of capacity needs is limited; baselines for evaluating the success of capacity development strategies have not been set up, and it is unclear as to the extent to which the Centres have contributed directly to increasing capacity since studies on this have not been carried out;
- Time is seen as a limiting factor when it comes to understanding and conceptualising capacity development, with pressure on partners to undertake research activities within specific timelines set out within the broader programme;
- There is considerable overlap of research partners between different consortia. This should facilitate more joint and collaborative CD efforts which bridge across the work of different Centres and Consortia. However, research programmes are founded on what appear to be particular sets of principles and values not necessarily shared by others; this makes coordination difficult.

38. Not surprisingly they believe that a significant re-think of the approach to CD is required. Among the points they make are the following:

- CD must be carried out purposefully. Its purpose is often not stated at all, or there may be differing perceptions on the purpose (implicit, hidden and even negative) amongst different stakeholders.
- CD initiatives need to draw on valuable knowledge associated with different disciplines (for example adult education, psychology, information systems) even in an era where 'interdisciplinary' approaches are seen as beneficial. There is a tendency towards simplification when moving to implementation stages, failing to take into account complexity, non-linearity and the uncertainty of change in human systems.
- CD interventions need to address CD from a systematic perspective, where the relationships between capacity at the individual, organisational and institutional (wider societal) levels are acknowledged. Attempts to evaluate CD also tend to take an instrumental view, looking at outcomes and impacts from a project/programme intervention view.

- Timeframes for support to CD must go beyond the short-term. It is rare to find long-term commitment to CD that allow patterns of support to emerge in a responsive fashion. Insufficient attention is given to the nature and evolution of partnerships within which CD takes place, and in which there is a common strategic vision, shared ownership, and effective and accountable forms of governance. Resource allocation is seen to be bound to strict timelines and limited areas of support, disconnected from other parts of the system. The range of stakeholders is often limited to governmental organisations, failing to take account of the roles of NGOs and civil society organisations, as well as the private sector.
- Mutual capacity gaps need to be recognised. Southern research institutions comment frequently on the perception by external agents that they have a capacity deficit, whereas they often feel their northern partners and/ or donors have their own capacity gaps that prevent them from working cooperatively towards common development goals. This lack of capacity for equitable cooperation can lead to:
  - o Brain-drain from southern institutions;
  - o Challenges for the wider spread (scaling-up and scaling-out) of capacity beyond individuals to organisations, and more widely in society;
  - o Inequitable control over resources that support CD, with northern institutions usually holding the reins;
  - o And the continuation of the paradigm of the North “developing capacity” in the South, rather than making a shift to approaches that emphasise the valued perspective of the outsider.
- Practical progress depends on acknowledgment and understanding the power relationships. Even where values, principles and concepts of CD are expressed, these rarely are seen to translate into practical action. Increasing emphasis is being placed in the literature on the need for CD initiatives to take into account the relationships of power and knowledge in specific contexts which may govern how CD plays out in practice. Although difficult to address, it seems feasible that the impact of CD has been limited by a collective reluctance amongst both northern and southern actors to address systemically the issues of power, equity, social justice, inclusion, distribution of resources and voice which constrain CD in both the North and South.

## IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

### IMPLICATIONS FOR DFID (FROM THE SUBMISSIONS)

39. The issues raised by the submissions need to be addressed at both the strategic/intellectual and at the instrumental/practical levels. Among the principles to inform our thinking are:

- Examining the relative strengths and weaknesses of CD interventions with different forms of partnership, and over different time-frames, in order to identify the variables that bring about significant and positive change in power relations, equity and voice, as well as other benefits.
- Supporting pilot CD initiatives that take a systemic approach in different contexts (regionally, and in settings with different “baselines”), in order to identify more clearly which variables have critical impact on CD effectiveness; these may include exchanges and visit, co-creation and sharing of knowledge, alternative mechanisms for resource management and accountability over donor support and development research.
- Supporting the development of innovative strategies for evaluation of CD and change processes from a systems and learning perspective – paying particular attention to comparative analysis of existing capacity and resulting needs, and processes by which CD interventions are then established through collaboration of different stakeholders.
- Reflecting on DFID’s internal capacity to develop effective long-term partnerships around CD and to address issues of ownership, adaptability and longevity of support to CD initiatives.
- Engaging with international and regional networks that are problematising and addressing CD challenges, and providing support to those institutions equipped to take forward specific elements of the agenda in a coherent fashion

40. Developing capacity at the instrumental level can be pursued in a number of ways. DFID and other donors could commit to: spending an increasing percentage of its research budget through southern research institutions, in particular those adopting a holistic approach to development; supporting South-South exchanges between universities, research institutions and also NGOs; increasing funding for locally relevant research collaboration with research based universities, including offering research fellowships, secondments and twinning arrangements; supporting regional research centres that focus on specific areas of science where there is proven contribution to local needs; supporting grassroots research and innovation (for example by farmers, small entrepreneurs, CBOs) and ways to link this with more formal research. However DFID and other donors need to understand “the extremely demanding reality of academia in Africa” and just how difficult it will be to create ‘southern leadership’ given the economics of the context.

41. Nevertheless we should, in the view of several submissions, undertake the task of building capacity in southern institutions, but ensure we work over a sufficiently long time frame that communities of practice can be built. This will reduce the brain drain, develop relationships, produce research which attracts the attention of policy makers and thereby assist with the goal of high quality, sustainable local research organisations. This view is summarised by a major donor which urges DFID to invest in a more sustained and coherent manner in building research capacity in its partner countries. This includes capacity building in and by partner countries themselves. This approach “should be an explicit and cross-cutting priority in the new strategy; indeed if capacity building efforts are not to be torpedoed, more research is needed on strategies to mitigate the North-South divide”. More time will also be needed to allow successful relationships to develop.
42. DFID should be mindful of the importance of southern leadership: “The initiation and responsibility should be that of the southern institution, not the northern one”. However, this is problematic in severely-compromised institutions. Ironically it can also be a problem in middle-income countries where researchers are unable to earn an adequate living through research and choose, where they are able, a better job in the private sector, as a consultant or internationally.
43. Among the strategic ways forward are getting research from developing and emerging countries widely known and used; developing regulatory environments; and fostering links between media, civil society, think tanks, the private sector, government and other stakeholders. Research capacity is about more than ‘packages’ as the desired ‘output’ and needs to expand to encompass, for example, indigenous knowledge, local institutional experience and capacity, human capacity, organisational capacity and management capacity.
44. It is important to: ensure the strategy encompasses the entire set of actors involved in effective research and its communication; enable and enhance capacities to unlock the existing research potential within developing and emerging countries; consider support for making the wide range of indigenous information, knowledge and research available on the global stage; and recognise complementary activities that nourish publication/ research into use such as networking, formal and informal gatherings, new technological tools such as message boards, blogs, social networking sites and so on .
45. The strategy should recognise the fact that effective research involves both the researchers themselves and a far wider community of actors – including governments, information intermediaries, ICT professionals, field workers, trainers, librarians, funders, publishers, journalists and many other research communicators. “We would suggest the strategy should also address the relationship of indigenous knowledge to internationally recognised/valued knowledge”.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR DFID

46. The importance of building and maintaining sufficient capacity in southern research institutions is recognised. The reality of recent decades is that research capacity – to do and to use research – has been declining, particularly in Africa. DFID is committed to working with others to reverse this trend.
47. During the life cycle of the Research Strategy (2008-2013) we will continue to support capacity building initiatives (i) within existing and new programmes and (ii) as stand-alone new initiatives. We recognise that abilities to do, access and use research are inextricably linked, so we will also give renewed emphasis to supporting stronger environments for research uptake.
48. We will continue to work with other donors on a more coordinated approach to CB initiatives and from analysis to action. We will also seek to engage with relevant national and regional partners. We will continue to fund capacity development in areas in which we are currently active and we will develop a broader portfolio of capacity strengthening initiatives. These will include:
- Working as part of a broader community to develop a capacity development programme in the non-economic social sciences in a number of African countries. This will work alongside a 'Think Tanks' programme which is being developed by IDRC and the Hewlett Foundation. Funding from other parts of DFID for the African Economics Research Consortium will continue.
  - Within health we will continue to fund the WHO TDR and HRP programmes, and will launch, in 2008, a programme jointly with Wellcome to develop health research capacity in Kenya and Malawi.
  - Further funding in the Agriculture sector through CGIAR, the SCARDA programme and other initiatives to help with the development of regional bodies such as ASERECA and CORAF.
  - A network to build the capacity of intermediary organisations to help communicate research, and help build skills of generators to disseminate and users to access and put into use research evidence.
49. Within directly managed research programmes (the 'second generation Research Programme Consortia'), we will ensure that capacity building is given higher priority. This will go beyond training to include organizational and management skills, effective communication and partnerships, and policy influencing, recognising that capacity strengthening at the 'institutional' level is largely the responsibility of the host governments' education and research sectors, which needs the assistance of donors.
50. All directly managed research programmes will be required to have a capacity building component, which can be monitored and evaluated. These capacity building initiatives will contribute to DFID's broader plan and principles for building research capacity.

51. We will be better at articulating our capacity building principles, which include:

- Recognising the value and importance of southern leadership;
- A consideration of both systemic and instrumental approaches to capacity building;
- Adopting a broad definition of capacity building that includes both the generation and communication of new knowledge, and recognises that a variety of stakeholders outside of the academic community need to be involved;
- Recognising that the complexity of the situation does not lend itself to quick or linear solutions; and
- Ensuring that funding for capacity building is sufficient to have a sustainable impact, particularly when encouraging research in fragile and poorly funded research environments.

**IN TERMS OF APPROACH, WE WILL:**

- Continue to work closely in the sciences with the Royal Society, the MRC, Wellcome and others to expand their current arrangements. This includes facilitating South-South interactions;
- Adopt a more strategic approach when planning sectoral capacity building interventions, to ensure that governments, the private sector, sources of indigenous knowledge and others are included in the discussions;
- Advocate for greater attention and resources to be applied to capacity building as part of development aid more broadly and development research in particular, using evidence of our own learning about strategies that work at both systemic and instrumental levels;
- Carefully analyse the capacity issue in our main research areas in terms of geographical region, subject matter and skill set; and
- Ensure that senior southern researchers are fully involved in the analysis of what is required and in the development of action plans.

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

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

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

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

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

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