Setting The Scene: Situating DFID’s Research Funding Policy and Practice in an International Comparative Perspective

A scoping study commissioned by DFID Central Research Department

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Draft v1 - April 24th 2007
Executive Summary

This report aims to situate the Department for International Development (DFID)’s role as a donor of international research in a comparative international perspective in order to inform the development of the Central Research Department’s next 5-year research strategy and 20-year Vision of development for poverty reduction. The study included a desktop/web review of published information and key informant interviews with development researchers and practitioners. The objectives of the study were to i) identify the top 10-15 research donors, ii) identify areas of duplication, and omission, iii) suggest where DFID can add value, iv) identify regional research processes, and vi) new partnerships with which DFID can engage, and vi) identify key northern research organisations of value for developing countries. Outputs include answers to these questions in this report (summarised below), and a series of databases containing detailed information about research donor spending, their programmes (themes, geographical focus, and approaches to capacity development), and regional research networks.

Key findings

Key findings relating to each of the six questions are:

- **Definitions and data constraints:** The absence of comparable published data, a broad diversity of definitions of research, research themes, and research processes, themselves indicative of limited information sharing, cooperation and collaboration between research funders has made this study extremely difficult.

- **Top 10-15 donors:** Based on highly varied and possibly unreliable budget data alone, the top 10 research funders in 2005/06 were The Gates Foundation - $450m, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) - $400m, the World Health Organisation (WHO) - $370m, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) - $282m, the European Union (EU) - $254m, Research Institute for France (IRD) - $220m, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) - $174m. Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) - $114m, the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC) - $110m, and the World Bank – c.$100m (NB: Some of the figures for Multilateral Agencies may include funds from Bilateral Agencies and be double-counted – See Appendix 1 for full details). Key criteria of quality included Clarity of Mandate, Visibility and quality of processes, Supporting Innovation and Stimulating demand. IDRC was the only donor universally highly regarded, though many others scored highly in specific themes.

- **Duplication, and omission:** This was even more difficult, but geographical and thematic overcrowding does not seem to be a major problem, and there was no consensus among informants about thematic omissions. There is good coverage of Sub-Saharan Africa, South and South-East Asia, Latin America and the Middle-East and North Africa (MENA), but relatively little in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, East Asia and Oceania.

- **Where DFID can add value:** DFID research in the Health Sector is held in high regard, as is DFID’s willingness to support research which explores countervailing ideas. The literature and key informant interviews suggest a range of other mechanisms to add value including research on research itself, getting research-based knowledge into use through support to broader innovation systems and evidence-based policy, flexible funding systems and research capacity-building – in the north as well as the south, and with research users as well as suppliers.

- **Regional research processes:** A number of regional networks and research processes were identified including the International Science Programme (ISP), the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) and the Southern African Regional Poverty Network (SARPN).
New partnerships: Potential for enhanced partnerships exist with southern research organisations (through Research Programme Consortia), the multilateral organisations (CGIAR etc), “quality” donors (eg IDRC and the Wellcome Trust) – though it is important to ensure that the objectives of collaborative work are closely aligned - and North-South partnerships. The value of investment in Networks was contentious, while there appears to be scope for more PPPs.

Key northern research organisations: A number of high quality northern research institutes with an interest in development issues or valuable for southern research were identified (eg Nuffield, Rowntree, Leverhulme etc).

Key Recommendations:
The study makes recommendations in six areas:

Improved knowledge and harmonisation of development research programmes: DFID could play an important role in supporting international efforts to improve knowledge of what’s going on and harmonisation of development research programmes. This could include work to encourage the use of common definitions, the development of a database of development research programmes, work on quantitative and qualitative indicators, establishing an institutional home (possibly Development Assistance Committee (DAC) or the International Forum of Research Donors (IFORD), fostering greater information sharing, and promoting “good development research donorship”.

Improved research donor practice: There are a number of opportunities for DFID to put good development research donorship into practice itself. These could include: better communication of it’s own research mandate internally and externally, enhanced investment in research communication, establishment of good research management processes (eg knowledge management and funding mechanisms), mechanisms to support innovative research (eg diversity of funding mechanisms, a balance between thematic and opportunistic research, long and short term funding streams etc), and more work on stimulating demand (through eg support to policy makers and civil society groups).

Improved positioning to add value: In a rapidly changing environment more and on-going work will be needed to identify the key research themes (eg through horizon scanning, meta-analysis, and consultations), and greater emphasis on research on policy implementation, and learning about research itself.

Capacity building: Capacity building for research suppliers and research users emerged as a clear priority from the literature, the donor mapping and informants. Greater financial and human investment is needed in M&E, balancing research and capacity-building, expert training, north-south partnerships and networks.

Partnerships and regional processes: There are a number of opportunities for partnership: with other research donors working on similar themes, with other donors with an emphasis on research into use and capacity building (eg IDRC), with UK Research Funders with an interest in development issues (eg Leverhulme) and/or expertise in policy-relevant research and policy engagement (eg Rowntree, Nuffield), with regional networks (eg AERC), with Public Private Partnerships (eg Climate Change), and with European Donors and their networks (eg the Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education NUFFIC).

Further investigations: Given the absence of comparable published information and definitional inexactitude that has complicated this study, further work would be useful to inform the new strategy. This could include verification of the data in this report, interviews with research managers in the other major research funders, interviews with a wider range of southern research users and suppliers and a meeting of the major donors to discuss the results and explore opportunities for improved information sharing.
Contents

Executive Summary ..................................................................................................................i
Contents..................................................................................................................................iii
Acronyms and Abbreviations ...............................................................................................v

1. Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1
   DFID’s New Research Strategy .......................................................................................... 1
   The Study ............................................................................................................................ 1
   Caveat and qualifications ............................................................................................... 2
   Structure of the report ..................................................................................................... 2

2. Findings .............................................................................................................................. 2
   2.1 The 10-15 major of development research ................................................................. 2
       Definitions .................................................................................................................... 2
       Data constraints ........................................................................................................ 3
       Quantitative indicators ............................................................................................. 3
       Qualitative indicators ............................................................................................... 4
       Bilateral Donors ........................................................................................................ 5
       Private foundations ................................................................................................... 5
       Multilaterals .............................................................................................................. 6
   2.2 Research duplication, overlap and donor crowding ...................................................... 7
       DFID’s thematic priorities in relation to other donors ................................................. 7
       Geographical priorities .............................................................................................. 9
       Areas of donor crowding ............................................................................................ 9
   2.3 Adding Value ............................................................................................................... 9
       Areas of omission ....................................................................................................... 9
       Research into use ...................................................................................................... 10
       Funding mechanisms ............................................................................................... 10
       Capacity building ..................................................................................................... 11
   2.4 Engaging in regional policy processes ....................................................................... 13
   2.5 New partnerships for Increased Impact .................................................................... 13
       Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) ......................................................................... 14
   2.6 Funders of Northern research .................................................................................... 14

3. Conclusions and recommendations .................................................................................. 15
   3.1 Improved knowledge about and harmonisation of development research ............... 15
   3.2 Improved research donor practice............................................................................. 15
   3.3 Improved positioning to add value........................................................................... 16
   3.4 Capacity building ..................................................................................................... 17
   3.5 Partnerships and regional processes ....................................................................... 18
   3.6 Further work ............................................................................................................ 18

Notes.....................................................................................................................................xix
### Acronyms and Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADBI</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AERC</td>
<td>African Economic Research Consortium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFD</td>
<td>Agence Française de Développement - French Development Agency AfDB African Development Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGRA</td>
<td>Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa</td>
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<td>ADBI</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBSRC</td>
<td>Biotechnology and Biological Science Research Council (UK)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMZ</td>
<td>German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDE</td>
<td>Centre for Development and Environment (Switzerland)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CGIAR</td>
<td>Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIDA</td>
<td>Canadian International Development Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIRAD</td>
<td>French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRCBD</td>
<td>Collaborative Research and Capacity Building for Development (USAID)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>DANIDA</td>
<td>Danish International Development Agency</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development (UK)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DMFA</td>
<td>Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNDI</td>
<td>Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENRECA</td>
<td>Enhancement of Research Capacity - Danida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESRC</td>
<td>Economic and Social Research Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIND</td>
<td>Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAIN</td>
<td>Global Alliance to Improve Nutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GALV</td>
<td>Global Alliance for Livestock Vaccines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAVI</td>
<td>Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDN</td>
<td>Global Development Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTZ</td>
<td>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IADB</td>
<td>Inter-American Development Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAVI</td>
<td>International AIDS Vaccine Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICLEN</td>
<td>International Clinical Epidemiology Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDCJ</td>
<td>International Development Centre of Japan</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDE</td>
<td>Institute of Developing Economies (Japan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDRC</td>
<td>International Development Research Centre (Canada)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFORD</td>
<td>International Forum of Research Donors for Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPM</td>
<td>International Partnership for Microbicides</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRD</td>
<td>L'institut de recherchepour le développement - Research Institute for Development (France)</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRRI</td>
<td>International Rice Research Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISP</td>
<td>International Science Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>JBIC</td>
<td>Japan Bank for International Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JICA</td>
<td>Japan International Cooperation Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAS</td>
<td>Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDP</td>
<td>Microbicides Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIM</td>
<td>Multilateral Initiative on Malaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MMV</td>
<td>Medicines for Malaria Venture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRC</td>
<td>Medical Research Council (UK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MVI</td>
<td>Malaria Vaccine Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norad</td>
<td>Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUFFIC</td>
<td>Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUFU</td>
<td>Norwegian Council for Higher Education's Program for Development Research and Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDVI</td>
<td>Pediatric Dengue Vaccine Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP</td>
<td>Public-Private Partnership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rawoo  Netherlands Development Assistance Research Council
SARPN  Southern African Regional Poverty Network
SDC  Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation
Sida  Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TDR  UNICEF/ UNDP/ World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases
UNDP  United Nations Development Programme
UNRISD  United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
USAID  United States Agency for International Development
WB  World Bank
WHO  World Health Organisation
1. Introduction

DFID’s New Research Strategy

DFID’s Central Research Department is developing a new five-year research strategy (2008/9 – 2012/13), informed by a twenty-year vision of the role it hopes global and developing country research will contribute to poverty reduction beyond the Millennium Development Goals. Its thinking is situated within a recognition of the increasingly important role that knowledge and knowledge markets play in international development, including an appreciation of the potentially significant returns to research (e.g. Alston et al., 1998, Surr et al, 2003)

The new strategy will build on DFID’s current research funding framework 2005-2007 (RFF) which is framed around four key researchable priorities: Sustainable Agriculture, Killer Diseases, Climate Change and States that Don’t Work for the Poor, and two cross-cutting issues – getting research into use through improved engagement with research users and links to policy, and building the capacity of developing country users and researchers to do and access research. It will also address directly the priorities set out in DFID’S 2006 White Paper on International Development: Making Governance Work for the Poor and its forthcoming Science and Innovation Strategy.

During the RFF period CRD has aimed to position DFID research increasingly within an international context. Strategic links have been strengthened with other major research funders (both government and foundations), including through joint programming and in line with the OECD Development Assistance Committee harmonisation and alignment principles. In view of a rapidly developing international environment for research funding, this report is designed to build on an international mapping study produced by the RAND Corporation in 2005 and to provide DFID with a more updated information base to inform their decision making, including a wider international consultation process around its research strategy scheduled for the second half of 2007.

The Study

The aim of this study is “to inform decision-making about the optimal positioning of DFID research based on an assessment of DFID’s current and potential comparative advantage vis-à-vis other international research funders”. The specific objectives are to:
1. identify the major funders in international development research (top 10-15)
2. identify areas of duplication, overlap and donor “crowding” in relation to need, and by extension provide an assessment of areas of omission
3. suggest where DFID can “add value” (i.e. sectorally, in relation to research/policy impact, leveraging funds etc.) and therefore develop further a distinct comparative advantage
4. identify any major regional/continental research policies processes with which DFID’s strategy should engage
5. identify new partnerships which could increase the impact of development research or where there would be significant efficiency gains for DFID research management.
6. identify key funders of northern research which have application for developing countries.

The full Terms of Reference are provided Appendix 1.

The study methodology included a printed and web literature review, key informant interviews, and frequent engagement with DFID staff. More methodological details and a list of key informants is provided in Appendix 2.
Caveat and qualifications

It is important to note from the outset, however, that due to severe data limitations and tight time constraints it has not been possible to answer the study’s research questions as comprehensively as we believe this topic merits. Our recommendations include suggestions for further investigations during the course of consultations around the development of the strategy, rather than conclusive and authoritative.

Structure of the report

The bulk of this report, Section two, provides the key findings under each of the six questions above. A summary of our conclusions and recommendations are in Section three. Detailed information about donor spending, research topics, geographical focus, approaches to capacity development, research networks and private-public partnerships are presented in a series of Appendices.

2. Findings

2.1 The 10-15 major of development research

Identifying the top donors of international development research is extremely difficult for two main reasons: a) definitional issues and b) availability of data.

Definitions

First, definitions of ‘research’, ‘development research’ and ‘research donors’ vary considerably (e.g. Farley 2005, Surr, 2003, Arnold and Bell, 2001). Definitions of “research” in our desktop review and key informant interviews ranged from “academic research published in peer-reviewed journals” through to the OECD definition of “any creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications” to the 2003 Surr Report’s emphasis on knowledge creation and management. The latter focuses on “research and research-like activities” embedded within broader “knowledge systems” and may encompass both “research” and “policy analysis”. It should be noted however that DFID’s own definition of research emphasises the long-term process of “generating new technologies and ideas” as opposed to shorter-term analysis. Although the Surr Report distinguishes between “research” and “evaluation” in terms of breadth of audience, with research being intended for a wide external audience and evaluations mainly (although not exclusively) for DFID (p16-17), many of our key informants believed that rigorous research on policy implementation represents a major gap in development research. As such evaluation research of this nature might be usefully conceptualised as a component of “research-like activities”.

“Development research” is also subject to wide-ranging interpretations, and there appears to be no commonly agreed upon definition. It may encompass a wide range of disciplines (development studies, social sciences, health/medical research, agriculture research, science and technology, innovations systems and communications), involve different goals (research about development as well as research for development) and different actors. At its broadest, ‘development research’ could potentially encompass all research carried out by developing country governments or even all research undertaken in developing country contexts. For the purposes of this report, however, the UK Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) Development Studies definition of:

\[
\text{issue-driven research concerning the analysis of global and local processes of cultural, demographic, economic, environmental, political, technological and social change in low and middle income parts of the world, with particular reference to structures and institutions; the changing relationships between developed and developing countries; and the critical interrogation of theories of these processes and relationships, and of development policy (61)}
\]
appeared to provide the closest fit to DFID’s stated objectives in its 2005-7 Research Funding Framework and informed the thinking underpinning this scoping exercise.

Researchers and practitioners positioned in different fields often not surprisingly have very divergent views on “leading development research donors”. Donors of research occupy a continuum, ranging from those whose primary purpose is to fund development research (e.g. IDRC), those who produce research, both in-house and commissioned work (e.g. World Bank and some UN agencies), those who combine development intervention and research (bilaterals and foundations) through to the private sector who may fund research as part of a corporate social responsibility initiative. In this report, we group our discussion according to three sub-categories of research donors: bilaterals, multilaterals and private foundations.

Data constraints
Data on research donors is extremely fragmented, in terms of location, coverage and currency. Although the OCED Development Assistance Committee (DAC) website provides the most comprehensive overview of overseas development assistance funding, there is no comparable data on development research spending. Individual agencies also vary widely in the degree to which they publish detailed information on their research funding policies and processes. Disaggregated data on expenditures across research priorities (both thematic and geographical focus) and different types of funding mechanisms is patchy at best and often unavailable. As we discuss further in the recommendations section, these data problems appear to be emblematic of a broader lack of coordination and limited transparency in the field of development research funding. Although none of our respondents advocated donor harmonisation in development research because of the risks of creating a cumbersome bureaucratic strategy and stifling creativity, there were strong calls to pay more attention to achieving greater complementarity among research donors. This could be achieved through regional (e.g. European donors) or organisational type groupings (e.g. private foundations or bilaterals, perhaps through IFORDiv) and/or on the basis of a specific thematic research field (e.g. health research donors or the Global Development Platform for Rural Development).

Quantitative indicators
Our key informant interviews underscored the importance of selecting leading international donors based on both quantitative and qualitative criteria. Beginning first with our quantitative assessment, comparative statistics were challenging to compile as there was a paucity of data on separate donor research spending, as well as a frequent lack of clarity as to what this expenditure encompasses. For example, is support to research institutes or multilaterals engaged in research calculated as ‘research spending’? Is research which is carried out in the course of programmes and projects incorporated in research expenditure totals? In the case of bilaterals, is research conducted by country offices included in overall totals? Moreover, no international agency provides comparable data on development research funding – neither as a percentage of total development assistance nor disaggregated based on common categories. Thus our overall Top 20 Research Donors (see Table 1 below) should be treated with considerable caution.
Table 1: The Top 20 Research Donors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency (Country)</th>
<th>Annual Spending on Development Research – (USD)</th>
<th>Year of spending figure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gates Foundation (USA)</td>
<td>$450m+</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGIAR (International)</td>
<td>$400m+</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO (International)</td>
<td>$370m</td>
<td>2006/07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID (USA)</td>
<td>$282m</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>$254m</td>
<td>2007/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRD (France)</td>
<td>$220m</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIFD (UK)</td>
<td>$174m</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIDA (Sweden)</td>
<td>$114m</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDRC (Canada)</td>
<td>$110m</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Bank</td>
<td>$&gt;100m</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORAD (Norway)</td>
<td>$98m</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford Foundation (USA)</td>
<td>$75-100m</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDC (Switzerland)</td>
<td>$58m</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>$&gt;35m</td>
<td>2005/06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMFA (Netherlands)</td>
<td>$&gt;35m</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danida (Denmark)</td>
<td>$35m</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockefeller (USA)</td>
<td>$30-40m</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Development Bank Institute (International)</td>
<td>$14m</td>
<td>2006/07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Development Bank (International)</td>
<td>$&lt;5m</td>
<td>2006/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNRISD (International)</td>
<td>$&lt;4m</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
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This exercise does however point to some interesting trends, including a) the high ranking of DFID among bilaterals (even prior to the recent announcement of the doubling in its budget from 116 million GBP in 2006/7 to 220 million GBP by 2010/11, b) the relative insignificance of UN agencies in the development research field (except for the WHO), and c) the relative financial clout of private US (especially the Gates Foundation) and UK foundations. NB: Although the volume of research funding under the management of the CGIAR institutions and the WHO is high, greater clarity is needed on what proportion of this funding is already included in calculations of research expenditure by bilateral donors in order to avoid double counting. More detailed Tables and explanatory notes are provided in Appendix 3 – Donor Spending League.

Qualitative indicators

Turning now to considerations of quality, although resource size (both financial and human) is obviously significant, highly reputed donors were also characterised as those effective in fostering innovation as well as research-based policy dialogue and research uptake within development practice. Our findings identified the following criteria of quality:

- **Clarity about mandate**: having a clear mandate was identified as a prerequisite for ensuring policy impact and value for money from development research. The importance of prioritising and investing in policy-relevant research was reiterated repeatedly. In this regard, a distinction was made between the role of government agency funding of research which some key informants argues stressed should be “research for the purpose of social and policy change” and those of research councils who legitimately focus more on the goal of knowledge expansion.

- **Visibility and quality**: this criterion was defined variously including ‘punching above one’s weight’ on account of organisational strategic coherence, funding research that is published in peer-reviewed journals, maintaining a long-term commitment and a willingness to challenge orthodox views and methodological approaches.
- **Supporting innovation**: this was viewed as critical and included investing in the incubation of new ideas, a willingness to take risks, not being overly constrained by organisational bureaucracy, investing in quality knowledge management to ensure adequate organisational memory in order to be able to identify innovation, and having flexible budgeting and human resource procedures in order to facilitate such creativity. Fostering an entrepreneurial staff ethos to pro-actively identify quality cutting-edge research rather than relying on responses to calls for proposals was another key quality of a high impact donor.

- **Stimulating demand for research evidence**: this included mechanisms to listen and react to demand from more unconventional research users such as the private sector and sub-national government officials, and supporting knowledge brokers and creative knowledge translation mechanisms.

### Bilateral Donors

Mindful of the caveats discussed abovevi (and in Appendix 3), the top ten bilateral funders of development research include in descending order of quantity of expenditure the USA, France, UK, Sweden, Canada, Norway, Switzerland, Japan, Denmark and the Netherlands. Funding volumes range from an estimated 282 million USD by USAID to 34 million USD by the Netherlands.

What was striking from the key informant interviews, however, was the wide range of assessments of quality research donors among bilaterals. The only bilateral to stand out consistently in terms of positive evaluations (including among both northern and southern key informants) was the Canadian International Development Research Center (IDRC), which ranks towards the middle of the bilateral spending league table. This reputation was based predominantly on their role in supporting innovation, capacity building/mentoring and a focus on research-policy linkages, and less on the commissioning of high quality research outputs. Some of the variation in responses to this question can be attributed to different disciplinary backgrounds and interests across the development research continuum. For example, respondents interested in agriculture evaluated France and the US highly, while those concerned with social development issues singled out the Scandinavians and Dutch, whereas DFID was highly praised in the health field. Those interested in research communications assigned high ranks to IDRC and DFID; the German government was commended for fostering close long-term relations between researchers and policy-makers and USAID, the French and IDRC for research capacity development initiatives (especially at the level of the individual). DFID also earned positive assessments for nuanced thinking and the ability to ask pertinent, policy-relevant questions (especially in health), as well as its emphasis on research utilisation.

### Private foundations

Both the quantity of expenditure and contribution to innovation emerged as important characteristics of private foundations involved in international development research funding. In terms of funding volume, Gates, the Medical Research Council, the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations were the most significant development research funders, with the Gates Foundation (450 million USD) being the single largest funder in the international development research field. However, in terms of quality assessments, the Ford, Open Society Institute, Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations were identified (albeit not universally) as important supporters of innovation and incubators of new ideas. This quality was attributed to organisational flexibility and a willingness to take risks (especially Ford and Open Society), high calibre and research-savvy personnel (especially Ford and Rockefeller) and investment in southern institutions over the long-term (especially Ford and Rockefeller).

We have also included major UK and European private foundations which fund quality research in Table 1 as a basis for comparison. Although data is unavailable as to what
percentage of this funding could be considered expenditure on development research, these figures suggest the relative importance of these donors in terms of expenditure if DFID were to considering partnering with funders of northern research. It is also worth noting that the European Foundation Center and the US Foundation Center have useful databases on research funders more generally and could thus serve as useful contact points with which international donor fora could coordinate in order to promote better collection and collation of data on development research spending.

Lastly, private foundations (both national [e.g. Peruvian mining companies] and international foundations working in Latin America such as Fundacion Telefonica) are also emerging as important development donors in Latin America. Although not focusing explicitly on development research, private donors in Peru for example are increasingly commissioning research institutions and universities to carry out evaluations of their community intervention efforts which collectively committed to establishing a 200 million USD corporate social responsibility fund. As we discuss further in the recommendations section, this is an area which may merit further follow-up analysis.

Multilaterals
A range of multi-lateral institutions was also recognised by various key informants as important development research funders. The World Bank was identified almost universally as the heavy weight in the field, even if acknowledging that a lot of the Bank’s research is in-house. The Bank clearly stands out in terms of resources (both quantity and calibre of personnel), visibility and accessibility of information. A number of respondents, however, were critical of the Bank’s perceived arrogance around its in-house research quality (in line with recent evaluations of the Bank’s research), the dominance of a single discipline (economics) and relatively narrow lines of inquiry. Interestingly, several key informants identified a key role for DFID as it emerges as a top bilateral research donor to challenge and question the Bank’s dominant role and particular perspective in the field and to actively support alternative and critical perspectives where appropriate (e.g. Banerjee et al., 2006).

Regional development banks were recognised as having some importance (especially the Inter-American Development Bank) but relatively limited research budgets. The African Development Bank was seen to be struggling due to capacity and resource gaps in this field.

Turning to UN agencies, we encountered an acute lack of data on development research spending. Our key informant interviews also revealed a general consensus that the UN was not a major player in the field but in some thematic areas various agencies deserved a mention. These included UNIDO, UNRISD for innovative social development research, the UNDP, the Innocenti Research Center on Childhood and the Brasilia UNDP Poverty Center.

Lastly, the CGIAR which enjoys extensive funding (400 million+ USD p.a.) was positively evaluated for its role in promoting high quality research on agricultural development. However, the WHO (370 million+ USD p.a.), which is also well funded, was seen less favourably due to excessive bureaucracy and limited attention to sustainable capacity building. The Global Environmental Facility and the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development were also mentioned as emerging players which DFID should monitor. However, specific information on research spending was not available and thus they are not included in the spending league table.
2.2 Research duplication, overlap and donor crowding

Assessing areas of duplication, overlap or donor ‘crowding’ presented even greater methodological challenges than the identification of leading research donors due to the widely divergent ways in which donors select and define thematic research priorities. Comparable disaggregated data on how donor agencies allocate funding across thematic and geographic areas or type of funding mechanism was simply not available. Most key informants felt their knowledge of the field was too patchy to make firm statements. They urged that DFID should be flexible and balance attempts to map the field, to identify southern demand and to capitalise on on-going work. The process of identifying research priorities, especially those that speak to policy problems, was described again and again as a messy, non-linear, dynamic process, and it would be critical to foster multiple lines of inquiry in parallel, and to have the in-house capacity to ensure that DFID is an informed research consumer.

Appendix 4 presents a mapping of research donors’ priority research themes. In the absence of a universal system of classification, we began with DFID’s four key research priorities: health (killer diseases), governance (states that do not work for the poor), environment (climate change) and sustainable agriculture. We then broadly categorised additional topics included in other donor portfolios as economic development, natural resource management, pro-poor policy, human development and other for the sake of convenience. Within each of these loose over-arching categories we grouped topics according to sub-themes according to the way in which they are conceptualised by respective donors (see headings in bold italics). Our analysis is based on this map, and the informant interviews.

DFID’s thematic priorities in relation to other donors

DFID’s current research priorities are killer diseases (46 million GBP per annum), sustainable agricultural development (34 million GBP per annum), climate change (5.5 million GBP but increasing to 9.3 million GBP per annum in 2007/8) and governance (especially in fragile states) (6.7 million per annum). Based on our mapping, the areas of health, agriculture, climate change/environment and governance/democracy constitute major research priorities among a number of top donors (see Table 2 below). These thematic priorities are broad enough and sufficiently important to warrant multiple research initiatives, and it should be noted that the only other research donor to identify climate change as a major research priority is the US.

Several key informants, however, made specific suggestions about additional aspects of these development challenges that could be usefully included:

- **Killer diseases:** it was recommended that the theme should be sufficiently broadly conceptualised so as to include funding for research on a) less high-profile ‘old-fashioned diseases’ such as cholera and water-borne diseases or lifestyle diseases such as the diabetes pandemic, b) health systems (only Denmark identified this as a priority) as well as c) facilitating greater dialogue between the natural and social sciences about health and healthcare.

- **Climate change:** a value-added niche would be to foster a focus on the social and political dimensions of climate change by ensuring that these receive adequate attention within the Global Environmental Facility as part of a broader effort to facilitate dialogue between the natural and social scientists.

- **Making states work for the poor:** here it would be important to ensure that DFID’s governance work is informed by a broad definition of governance and dialogues with the more specific work that other donors are supporting on particular groups of rights and socially excluded population groups, peace and conflict resolution. Given that this thematic priority is an area in which DFID’s current spend is relatively low (5.8%), increasing expenditure in this area in the next research strategy should be carefully considered.
Table 2. Thematic research priority overlap: DFID vis-à-vis other donors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance</th>
<th>Bilaterals</th>
<th>Foundations/ Councils</th>
<th>Multi-laterals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Japan, US, Switzerland, Germany, Canada</td>
<td>Ford, Open Society, Rockefeller, ESRC</td>
<td>World Bank, UNRISD, AfDB, IADB, ADB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td>Japan, Switzerland</td>
<td>Open Society</td>
<td>IADB, AfDB, ADB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Society</td>
<td>US, Switzerland</td>
<td>Ford, Open Society, Rockefeller</td>
<td>UNRISD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>Ford, Open Society</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule of Law</td>
<td>US, Switzerland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy/Elections</td>
<td>Japan, US, Germany</td>
<td>Ford, Open Society</td>
<td>UNRISD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict Management</td>
<td>Japan, US, Germany, Canada, Switzerland</td>
<td>Ford, Open Society</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Japan, US, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany,</td>
<td>Gates, Rockefeller, Wellcome, Leverhulme, BBSRC, MRC</td>
<td>WHO, World Bank, UNDP-IPC, UNRISD, IADB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infectious Diseases</td>
<td>Japan, US, Denmark, Canada, Switzerland, Norway</td>
<td>Gates, Rockefeller, Wellcome, Leverhulme, BBSRC, MRC</td>
<td>WHO, UNRISD, UNDP-IPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal/Newborn Health</td>
<td>Japan, US, Switzerland</td>
<td>Gates</td>
<td>WHO, IADB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reproductive Health</td>
<td>US, Denmark, Switzerland</td>
<td>Gates, Ford</td>
<td>WHO, World Bank, UNDP,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Systems</td>
<td>US, Sweden, Denmark, Canada, Switzerland</td>
<td></td>
<td>WHO, World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Japan, Sweden, Norway Canada, Switzerland, Germany US</td>
<td>Wellcome Trust, Ford, Rockefeller, ESRC</td>
<td>WB, UNDP-IPC, UNRISD, ADB, IADB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate Change</td>
<td>US, Sweden, Germany, Canada,</td>
<td>Wellcome, Rockefeller, ESRC</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Resource Management</td>
<td>Japan, Norway, Canada, Switzerland</td>
<td>Ford, ESRC</td>
<td>World Bank, IADB, ADB, UNRISD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>US, Japan, Denmark, Canada Germany</td>
<td>Gates, Rockefeller, Wellcome, BBSRC</td>
<td>World Bank, ADB, CGIAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biotechnology</td>
<td>US, Germany, Switzerland</td>
<td>Gates, Rockefeller, BBSRC</td>
<td>CGIAR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Management</td>
<td>Germany, Canada, Switzerland</td>
<td>BBSRC</td>
<td>CGIAR, WB, ADB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markets</td>
<td>US, Denmark, Canada, Switzerland</td>
<td>Gates</td>
<td>WB, ADB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>Wellcome</td>
<td>CGIAR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is also worth noting that although other areas, such as rights and social justice (including gender, children/youth, indigenous peoples and the disabled), peace and conflict and the private sector, are all being addressed within the research donor community, in broad terms they are the priorities of smaller bilateral donors (Scandinavia and Germany) and some private foundations (Ford, Rockefeller, OpenSociety Institute, Leverhulme Trust). This indicates that in order to understand the resourcing for research in different thematic areas, it
will be necessary for funders to provide more transparent data on the breakdown of their research budgets.

There were also strong concerns that DFID should pay greater attention to cross-government department linkages in order to promote its own research and learn in-depth about its work relates to the UK’s government’s broader research and policy work. In particular, stronger linkages and dialogue with Foreign Office, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and with the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and associated networks such as the UK Sustainable Development Research Network (http://www.sd-research.org.uk/index.php) were encouraged. ix

Geographical priorities
Turning to country/regional focal areas, the cross-donor mapping suggests that there is a reasonable coverage of Sub-Saharan Africa, South and South-East Asia, Latin America and the MENA regions, as well as countries within these regions (see Appendix 5). Regions that are receiving relatively little attention include Eastern Europe, Central Asia, East Asia and Oceania. However, given the paucity of comparable data on the relative spend per region and country, we cannot provide any in-depth analysis. In light of the concern raised below about the lack of attention to policy implementation evaluations and lesson learning, it does seem important to promote greater transparency on region and country spending if we are to learn about development (poverty reduction and governance) trajectories from a diversity of perspectives.

Areas of donor crowding
From the cross-donor mapping of research areas presented in Appendix 4, evidence of donor crowding is not especially evident. However, key informant interviews suggested the following areas of concern need to be addressed: the dominance of econometrics research, an over-reliance on large quantitative cross-country studies based on secondary research at the expense of grounded context-specific work, and general frameworks linking trade liberalisation and poverty (over country and sector-specific case studies). In terms of methodological approaches, there was also a view that in order to ensure the production of policy-relevant knowledge that there needed to be a better balance between primary knowledge generation and consolidation or meta-analysis and audience-friendly rapid synthesis work. Caution would however be necessary to ensure that DFID did not over-correct in areas that it deemed to be suffering from donor crowding.

2.3 Adding Value
Areas of omission
There are of course a myriad potential research topics and thus the challenge facing DFID is to identify development problems where there is either an insufficient body of knowledge and/or under-developed research methodologies to which their support could usefully contribute. Our key informants, who span the breadth of thematic and cross-cutting issues in which DFID is engaged, identified a number of potential areas of omission including social development and building social capital and inequality – especially ethnic minorities, gender poverty reduction and service delivery for children, youth and the elderly. A full list is provided in Appendix 6. But due to our relatively small and non-representative key informant sample these are inevitably a partial and indicative list and should be treated with caution.

Our key informants were much more concerned about omissions in the way that DFID commissions and supports research including suggestions that DFID country office staff should develop regular mechanisms to interact with local grassroots groups and better understand their knowledge needs, and DFID should provide greater support for multi/trans and/or inter-disciplinary ways of working. x
Irrespective of discipline or institutional position, a lack of rigorous research on what does and does not work in terms of *policy implementation* emerged as an important area of omission. There was a strong call for much greater investment in rigorous *evaluations* and *lesson learning* among northern and southern key informants alike. This included in particular learning from bilateral interventions, NGO pilot projects, the failings of gender mainstreaming as well as evaluation of knowledge brokering strategies and tools. Overall there was a real concern to avoid simply extrapolating from the "vaccine model" or the Gates Foundation’s search for a magic bullet.

*Global trends* and *global public goods* were also identified as an important focal area. First, there was a call for greater attention to horizon scanning and futures work, especially with regard to the future of the Horn of Africa (an area plagued by conflict, post-conflict and failing states as well as extreme poverty and rapidly growing populations) and China’s role in international development. Second, in response to the suggestion to focus on Global Public Goods in DFID’s 2007 Visioning Event Background Document there was support for some attention (but certainly not an exclusive focus) to global public goods. However, this would necessitate the adoption of a relatively broad definition that was informed by Southern perspectives (and not only Northern governance concerns) and should include poverty reduction, addressing inequalities (including gender and ethnic minorities) and the realisation of rights. It would also be essential for research in this area to be grounded in regional realities.

**Research into use**

In addition to DFID’s four specific thematic foci, research communication and research utilisation is (along with capacity building) one of two priority cross-cutting issues within DFID’s current research strategy. The only other international donor to have identified research utilisation and communications as a priority focus is IDRC. Our key informant interviews largely concurred that this is one of DFID’s potential comparative advantages. However, this is the subject of another background study that DFID has commissioned to inform the development of its 2008/9 to 2012/13 research funding framework and thus we did not include it as a specific line of inquiry during the course of this scoping study. Nevertheless, several key informants highlighted the need to undertake more rigorous evaluations of what types of research-policy linkages and research communication and utilisation strategies are effective in different research fields and political and policy contexts, suggesting that this was an important under-researched area to which DFID could usefully contribute. It was also emphasised that a focus on research into use should not be conflated with embedding policy research questions in research design. In this regard, specific attention to building the capacities of southern policymakers to become more effective and informed consumers of knowledge was identified as an area that had received insufficient attention to date and one where DFID could potentially add value.

**Funding mechanisms**

Lastly, a diversity of funding mechanisms was seen as critical to ensure a balance between key organisational priorities and the identification of emerging issues and trends. Overall, DFID’s model of Development Research Centers and Research Programme Consortiums was seen as positive in its focus on longer-term outcome-focused research funding. It was nevertheless noted that no cross-programme evaluations had been undertaken as yet and that this would be important to better understand which DRC and RPC models were working effectively and why. In addition, there was also a call for greater availability of smaller tranches of funding (with low reporting requirements) to foster creative innovative thinking. This was an area that respondents believed had been relatively neglected in recent years.
Capacity building
Capacity building is increasingly recognised as critically important to ensure greater research utilisation among diverse target audiences – policy makers, civil society, southern research institutions, development journalists etc. (e.g. Farley, 2005; Neilson and Lusthaus, 2007). Our cross-donor mapping indicates that all research donors are involved in some form of capacity building, but no comparative data is available on the proportion of funding allocated to capacity development out of their total spend, thus making it difficult to assess the relative significance of these efforts. It is also worth noting that several key informants questioned whether funding for capacity building—although important—should be funded from DFID’s research budget or should instead be funded through other mechanisms, including direct budget support to developing countries. At a minimum this suggests that DFID could pay greater attention to encouraging recipient countries to invest substantially in research and higher education capacity building.

Neilson and Lusthaus (2007) argue that research capacity building efforts should be shaped by the research problem at hand, and that an appropriate balance of individual, institutional and network approaches should be selected accordingly. Key considerations include what sort of solutions are demanded and what types of abilities at which levels and through which possible entry points are required? As can be seen in Appendix 7, donors are supporting a wide range capacity building mechanisms, which can be broadly grouped as institutional/networking and individual approaches.

**Institutional** and **networking** approaches include the following:

- Research partnerships between Northern and Southern research institutions/ universities which have either a regional or thematic focus (esp Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Denmark)
- Support for universities in developing countries (particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and in the case of the German Academic Exchange Service Egypt, China and India)
- Support for national research councils in developing countries—which tend to be relatively weak and under-funded--in order to better promote the value of research and research-informed policy dialogue
- Research partnerships between developing and transition countries in order to learn from recent development paths (Switzerland)
- Funding for developing country institutions to access research and technical services of developing country partners
- Supporting the development of communities of practice among researchers and policy-makers working on a specific development problem or sector (e.g. SEPIA which addresses agrarian reform in Peru)
- Supporting relationships between researchers working on specific country cases and university teachers in order to foster a new generation of more engaged knowledge consumers
- Supporting policymakers to become more aware of and more discerning consumers of research-based evidence
- Integration of capacity building as a cross-cutting central theme in (most) development research projects (IDRC)
- Support of northern institutes to engage in quality development research and development research partnerships
- Funding collaborative regional Masters and PhD programmes (African Economic Research Consortium)
- Long-term (15-20 yrs) perspective on and investment in capacity development (ISP)
Individual approaches to capacity development include:

- Provision of training for development professionals/experts/executives (e.g. Germany, Japan, OSI)
- Third country training of experts whereby there is support for training provided by another developing country expert (Japan)
- North-South university exchanges for researchers (Germany)
- Graduate and post-graduate scholarships (esp Japan, Norway, Germany, Canada, and the European Commission)
- “Sandwich training”, i.e. short (3-10 months) overseas training opportunities in an effort to minimise developing country brain drain and lifestyle upheaval (ISP)
- Training for officials on development policies (Japan)
- Awards for international development journalism (IDRC)
- Sabbatical scholarships for mid-career academics from the natural and social sciences to spend a year in residence researching on a common topic and engaged in sustained trans-disciplinary dialogue (Kennedy School, Harvard University).

As a cross-cutting theme, capacity building for development research and research utilisation is one of DFID’s stated priorities. Our key informants generally also agreed that capacity building was an important area and urged that it should not be viewed as a simple add-on to existing research funding initiatives as this risked generating a conflict of interests between research standards and investment in capacity building. They identified several important areas where DFID could strengthen its efforts and impact. Broadly speaking DFID has taken an institutional approach to capacity development but a number of respondents argued that this was one of the weaknesses of UK development agencies vis-à-vis the French and the US. The latter have historically invested much more in MA and PhD scholarships in order to provide training to local researchers involved in joint research projects whereas the British Council’s scholarship approach was seen as too narrow and insufficiently policy-focused. At the UK end there is similarly a need for individual PhD scholarships to support country-based fieldwork. In short, there needed to be a strong recognition that research is more than a body of codified knowledge and is equally about training skilled people.

On the institutional front, there was a clear message that capacity building will only be effective if it constitutes an explicit and central aim. There was also a perceived need to invest more in capacity development across the development research continuum, including research management skills, research communication and knowledge brokering skills. This would require a careful mapping of the type of capacity building required and the type of organisation (including respective incentive structures) with the comparative advantage to undertake it.

Equally important, there was a recognition that capacity development was also needed in the North. This includes: i) within DFID itself in order to improve the capacity of the organisation to effectively absorb new research findings, ii) within UK universities and research institutes in order to remain at the international cutting-edge and iii) among governmental policymakers so that they are able to clearly articulate and justify the type of policy-relevant evidence they need in order to improve decision-making that impacts international development policy.

Lastly, there were some concerns about whether there is an adequate supply of suitably qualified capacity development trainers to meet demand if DFID were to significantly increase its spend in this area. In particular, there was a need for mentoring of southern non-governmental actors to participate more effectively in dialogue with inter-governmental bodies on technical issues such as taxation, customs, international law. Specific capacity
building organisations of merit included: the African Capacity Building Foundation, the United Nations University, the Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships, the Third World Academy of Sciences, and the Hewlett Foundation’s proposed Southern think tank initiative where it was suggested DFID could play an important interlocutor role.\textsuperscript{xv}

2.4 Engaging in regional policy processes

A number of regional/continental research policy processes and networks were identified during the course of our research, some of which DFID is already engaging with. These are presented by topic and region in Appendix 8. Those that received special mention included the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), the Southern African Regional Poverty Network (SARPN), the International Science Programme (ISP) and the International Clinical Epidemiology Network (ICLEN) due to their strong north-south linkages, clear mandate and focus on long-term capacity development.

There was also a strong view that DFID was not sufficiently informed about the European development research ‘landscape’.\textsuperscript{xvi} In particular, it was felt that DFID needed to engage more actively with the European Community and that it could play a more significant role in the funding and brokering of development research in Europe. In this regard, the new European Research Council as well as NORFACE, a partnership of European national research councils of which ESRC is a member, could be useful initiatives to support as would the Three-Cs.Net (drawn from the Maastricht Treaty principles of coordination, complementarity and coherence) community of practice (http://www.three-cs.net/community_of_practice). In the former case, the UK research councils would likely be the most appropriate channel through which to coordinate such efforts but this would first require the development of closer communication mechanisms between the Councils and DFID in the UK.

Lastly, at the international level, engaging with the World Bank’s Researchers’ Alliance for Development (www.worldbank.org/rad) or the Sustainable Products Task Force (an international multisectoral network focusing on product policy of which DEFRA is a member) were also recommended as potential linkages.

2.5 New partnerships for Increased Impact

In line with broader donor principles of coordination and alignment as well as the sheer breadth and scale of the challenges that international development research must address, DFID has already entered into a range of national and international partnerships to fund research. These include Research Programme Consortia (a partnership between developing country and usually UK-based research institutes), funding regional research systems, joint funding with other donors (including responsive research programmes with UK Research Councils), Product Development Partnerships (with the private sector) and providing core funding to such multilaterals such as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). While evaluation of these partnerships is a separate and important exercise, this study sought to identify potential new partnerships in which DFID could engage in order to increase its impact and/or produce efficiency gains for DFID research management.

First, partnering with quality donors such as IDRC or the Wellcome trust, for example, was seen as a positive development and one that could be reinforced in DFID’s future research strategy. However, there were also cautionary notes that partnerships need to strive to keep bureaucracy to a minimum (in order to foster creativity and diversity) and have a clear mandate. Here for example there were some concerns that the DFID/ESRC joint venture had been less than optimal due to divergent viewpoints about the type of research that the respective partners wanted to promote.
Setting The Scene: DFID’s Research Funding in an International Comparative Perspective

Second, although there was clear support for investing more in Southern institutions and partners, experience across diverse disciplines and geographical regions among northern and southern key informants alike suggested that there was still value in supporting partnerships between Northern and Southern institutions. Not only was this important in order to promote standards of academic excellence and quality control or “technical backstopping”, but also because of the greater leverage international partnerships often enjoy vis-à-vis national governments. International partnerships may provide a safer space for southern researchers to voice critical views that challenge existing orthodoxies, and a combination of northern and southern researchers is likely to open up a wider set of doors with influential policy-makers than either alone. It would however be important to foster an environment in which equitable partnerships are able to flourish, including involvement of southern partners from the outset in project design and avoidance of a ‘big brother’ attitude by northern actors vis-à-vis southern counterparts.

Third, whether or not to support networks solicited mixed views. On the one hand, network theory suggests that multiple seeds need to be sown in order that some will bloom and that diversity and flexibility are of the essence to the diffusion of innovative ideas (e.g. Everett, 2003). On the other, however, there was a concern that network proliferation at the regional and international levels tended to detract from national and sub-national focused work as participation in networks was a time and energy consuming activity. As such, there was a perceived need for greater rationalisation of networks on the part of donors. Decision-making about support for networks needed to be more decisive and informed by rigorous evaluations as well as a recognition that networks may have a natural lifecycle. It is also critical to be mindful that networks promote knowledge produced within a particular socio-cultural context and that consumers of knowledge need to be mindful of the power dynamics or what Stone (2003) terms “ideational power” that underlies particular knowledge discourses. In light of these divided opinions, there appears to be a need to invest in more in-depth case study evaluations of the contexts in which different types of networks are effective.

**Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)**

The most recent research strategies of USAID, the Netherlands, Norad, Danida, SDC and DFID all recognise the importance of greater linkages with the private sector in order to ensure more efficient, timely and relevant research. Moreover, AFD (Agence Française de Développement), IDRC and SDC have all identified private sector involvement in development cooperation as a research priority, while IDRC has set up a Private Sector Development Task Force. A cross-donor mapping of PPPs suggests that public-private linkages are being extensively promoted in the fields of health and agriculture (as can be seen in Appendix 9). Given the importance of climate change within DFID’s strategy, DFID may want to explore a PPP model in this field and also to pay greater attention to research into corporate social responsibility issues.

**2.6 Funders of Northern research**

This was a topic that also solicited mixed views. On the one hand, there was the belief that taking a thematic approach to development and then assessing the way these issues play out in diverse contexts (North, South, East) would obscure the real challenges and complex dynamics of governance and poverty reduction in developing countries. On the other, approaching development issues such as social exclusion, inter-generational poverty transfers, social protection mechanisms or food poverty from a North-South comparative lens could provide a sharper focus on critical variables and lead to richer policy dialogues in both developed and developing country contexts (see Maxwell, 1998).

Turning to specific examples, the Nuffield Foundation, Leverhulme Trust, Rowntree and Wellcome Trust were all identified as important and quality UK donors of northern research,
with potential for collaboration with DFID (see Appendix 10 for a brief summary of their key research foci). xviii

Similarly, the ESRC and other UK research councils were seen as important funders of research with application for developing countries. However, the value of these councils was primarily seen in their adherence to rigorous quality standards and concern with expanding new knowledge frontiers, which may not make them ideal partners for development research initiatives that prioritise policy-relevance. They could though play a role in supporting capacity building initiatives for southern researchers and research institutes.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

The clearest conclusion from this study is that the absolute lack and inconsistency of information about development research programmes and policy makes it extremely difficult to map the field with sufficient accuracy to provide clear recommendations about where DFID could best add value. Nevertheless DFID is recognised as a valued and important player in the field, with a distinct character and voice that should be reinforced and expanded. Our conclusions and recommendations focus on six areas: 1) knowledge about development research; 2) donor practice; 3) positioning; 4) capacity-building and 5) partnerships and 6) immediate additional investigation.

3.1 Improved knowledge about and harmonisation of development research

The clearest conclusion to emerge from this study is the lack of comparable published data about development research, divergent definitions, weak knowledge sharing and lack of coordination among development research donors. DFID could play an important role in fostering support for and leading an initiative within the DAC, IFORD or possibly the IGFA (International Group of Funding Agencies for Global Change Research) to overcome these serious data constraints and develop an international database on research expenditure. Such an initiative should include work on definitions xix, data on total volume of expenditure, as well as disaggregated information on spending by research funding mechanism, research theme, geographical coverage and capacity building efforts. Our findings also suggest that it would be valuable to complement such quantitative data with the development of qualitative indicators, possibly to be assessed by a peer review process along the lines of the OECD’s peer review process of member country’s overall development assistance approaches. In this regard, this scoping study identified four broad dimensions of quality which might provide a useful starting point: clarity of mandate, supporting innovation, visibility and stimulating demand for research.

3.2 Improved research donor practice

The study identified a number of areas where DFID could improve its own practices in these four areas:

- **Clarity of mandate**: DFID’s focus on policy-relevant research aimed at informing and shaping international efforts to reduce poverty over the course of the MDGs and beyond, with particular attention to governance issues, needs to be more clearly and consistently communicated to staff and other stakeholders. Given DFID’s high profile and standing in the international development community, it is important that DFID sees itself as more than an efficient manager of its research budget and takes an entrepreneurial spirit to understanding the role of research in fostering change in development policy and practice. The experience of other leading donors (e.g. the Ford Foundation and IDRC) suggests that particular attention should be paid to recruiting and retaining high calibre personnel with strong research backgrounds who can identify important policy-relevant questions in their field. The health advisors in DFID were identified as being effective in this regard so this could be an area for follow-up lesson learning.
Visibility and quality: DFID already enjoys a relatively strong reputation, particularly in the area of research communication and research utilisation. It seems critical for DFID to continue to invest in its research communication and research uptake efforts. DFID is also valued for its role as a “nuanced thinker”. It could therefore consider positioning itself as a promoter of alternative perspectives and challenger of orthodox views, informed by innovative inter-disciplinary and mixed methodological approaches. Given the dominance of the World Bank in the development field, such a counter-weight role would contribute to ensuring that a multiplicity of views are brought to international, regional and national policy dialogues.

Supporting innovation: It will be critical for DFID to ensure that its research strategy is supported by a human resource and budget strategy that encourages flexibility and diversity. Employing a diversity of funding mechanisms from large long-term grants through to smaller innovation funds to explore new ideas and methodological approaches is also recommended. This could usefully include ensuring a balance between research that is commissioned in line with a set of organisational thematic priorities and opportunities for researchers to propose new lines of inquiry at relatively regular junctures.

Stimulating demand: DFID is one of the few international donors explicitly concerned with stimulating demand for research evidence, but these efforts are yet to be evaluated. There is also a pressing need to establish more regular communication channels between emerging groups of research users such as the private sector, sub-national government officials and southern CSOs through roundtables, workshops and seminars involving researchers and public and private sector representatives. Similarly, it is important that DFID invests in innovative methods to listen to the knowledge demands of social movement actors and grassroots groups.

3.3 Improved positioning to add value
While data and time constraints make it difficult to provide very specific recommendations, it is possible to make some general recommendations about thematic, geographical, and capacity building issues:

Thematic priorities: Due to the data and time constraints described above our findings did not reveal areas of obvious thematic donor crowding, or glaring thematic omission, although a number are identified in Appendix 6. Specific recommendations to explore this further are: a) Horizon scanning work to identify emerging issues of importance to development and poverty reduction policy debates, especially relating to global trends and global public goods, and b) Meta-analyses of research being undertaken by leading development research donors in specific sub-themes that fall outside DFID’s priority themes in order to better evaluate areas in which DFID should lead, partner or omit. Such an exercise should be triangulated with consultations with a range of DFID’s traditional and non-traditional stakeholders in both the South and North. Rigorous research on policy implementation efforts by governmental and non-governmental bodies and systematising lesson learning from both successes and failures were identified by the majority of our key informants as areas where DFID could add value on the international stage.

Geographic priorities: Our mapping of donor geographical prioritisation suggests that there is adequate coverage of the sub-Saharan African, South and South-East Asian and Latin American regions as well as countries within these regions. Better data is however required in order to assess the depth of this coverage. Coverage of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, East Asia and Oceania appears relatively thin by contrast and in need of attention. In this regard, one of the recommendations from this study is that DFID consider whether it should use a different weighting for its research across regions than it uses for its intervention efforts (90% to low-income countries and 10% to middle-income countries). Learning from a plurality of development experiences in terms of
economic and social development and governance/democratisation and the variables that were decisive in diverse contexts is of vital importance for DFID’s policy and programme work. This is also possibly an issue that DFID could lead on in the IFORD and other regional or international fora.

3.4 Capacity building

Capacity building across the development research spectrum (from asking questions and designing research through to research communication and utilisation) is without doubt an important part of the broader innovation system that is necessary to ensure effective research-policy-practice linkages. Our mapping of capacity building initiatives revealed a rich and varied portfolio of individual and institutional approaches among international research donors, but relatively limited evaluation evidence. Given such diversity, a useful follow-up exercise that DFID could undertake in partnership with other donors (potentially with IDRC which has already initiated a programme of research in this field) would be an evaluation of the relative strengths and weaknesses of these approaches. This could in turn inform efforts over the medium-term to develop a coherent capacity building approach within DFID that encompasses a strategic balance of individual, institutional and networking mechanisms. Decision-making should be based on a clear ‘theory of change’ and if possible a corporate definition of capacity building so staff and stakeholders alike are clear about DFID’s goals and underlying assumptions.

More specific recommendations for DFID to consider include the following:

- Investment in greater financial and human resources to develop a monitoring and evaluation system to assess the aggregate impacts of this capacity building approach over time.
- Ensuring compatibility between institutional incentive structures and capacity building in particular areas. For example, developing policy research and knowledge brokering capacities could be more fruitfully developed through support to think tanks and policy research institutes than universities.
- Learning from the experiences of SDS and Japan’s support of third country expert training so as to promote greater South-South and South-East learning and experience sharing.
- Providing more opportunities for capacity-building to be demand-led, for example, through financing southern researchers and research institutes to access Northern or third country expertise and services, should be given greater weighting.
- Learning from the experiences of AERC and ISP in terms of capacity building for individual researchers (including collaborative regional MA and PhD programmes) as strong models that simultaneously build individual capacities as well as training and teaching skills in southern regions. It could be useful to consider applying these multi-pronged integrated capacity building approaches to other thematic areas (especially the social sciences) and other regions (e.g. Central Asia, MENA region, Oceania).

It is further recommended that capacity building be viewed not only as an issue for the South but also for the North. In order to increase DFID’s in-house capacity, the IDRC model suggests that there needs to be adequate staffing to ensure that individual advisors and officers can devote sufficient time and energy to advising research and knowledge brokering partners, and facilitating linkages among governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. Secondments to research institutes and think tanks, or to UK research councils and the large private foundations, for DFID staff would also ensure that they are sufficiently up-to-date on emerging research ideas and methodologies and not only on management dimensions.

Lastly, funding to maintain the capacity and quality of policy-relevant research in the UK at the graduate, post-graduate and post-doctorate levels is also an important consideration.
One possibility would be to pursue this aim in partnership with the UK research councils. However, any decision-making should be informed by a careful assessment of the nature of many global policy goals (multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary and action-oriented) and the extent to which the existing research data base (which is largely but certainly not exclusively single sector, mono-disciplinary and theory-driven) is compatible with these goals.

3.5 Partnerships and regional processes

Given the clear need for more in-depth data collection, mapping and evaluation work as discussed above, it is difficult to make specific recommendations on possible partnerships with other donors. However some possible avenues for DFID to explore include the following:

- Research partnerships with donors based on thematic priorities as mapped out in Appendices 4 and 8. At a minimum when developing a call for proposals it may be useful to check with agencies or particular regional or thematic groupings of donors who have a strong focus in the research area in question what type of work they already have underway.
- In terms of research communication and capacity building, the already close linkages with IDRC could be reinforced and strengthened as DFID and IDRC are unique in their specific focus on these issues.
- Given the strong reputation that UK private foundation donors such as Nuffield, Wellcome and Leverhulme enjoy, it would be advisable for DFID to explore specific thematic areas for mutual exploration where a comparative perspective could add value to policy dialogues in both the North and South. The mandates of these foundations are also primarily concerned with policy impact and social change so there is a clear compatibility with DFID’s own overarching goal of poverty reduction.
- It is recommended that support of regional and thematic research networks be undertaken on the basis of rigorous evaluations and a preparedness to withdraw funding if the network is no longer performing a value-added function. Good practice would however seem to suggest that such arrangements are likely to be more effective when there is a close association between the donor and the network, and the provision of mentoring resources where possible.
- In order to leverage the impact of its sizeable budget, DFID could usefully explore greater involvement in Private Public Partnerships – both in terms of evaluating the efficacy of current experiences in the fields of health and agriculture and also in new fields, including climate change, product policy approaches and development and corporate social responsibility.
- In order to promote better synergies and lesson learning among international development research donors, it is also recommended that the UK invest greater resources to better understand and engage with the European development research community, and work in close partnership with the National Research Councils to achieve this aim.

3.6 Further work

As has already been mentioned, the absence of comparable published information and definitional challenges has complicated this study. Further work will be necessary to fully inform the process of developing the new strategy. This could usefully include:

- Verification of the data gathered during this study with the major research funders
- Interviews with research managers in each of them to explore their current programmes and future plans, clarify definitional and budgetary uncertainties.
- Interviews with a wider range of southern research users and suppliers.
- A meeting of the major donors to discuss the results and explore opportunities for improved information sharing.
Notes

1 Helpful comments on this report were received by Andrew Barnett, Paul Garner, Simon Maxwell, Sheila Page, Andrew Sumner, Louise Shaxson and Diane Stone. All opinions expressed and errors are however the sole responsibility of the authors.


iii Another possibility could be the International Group of Funding Agencies for Global Change but the membership is focused more on natural sciences. http://www.igfagcr.org/

v Although please note that paucity of data on UN agency development research funding made this impossible to verify.

vi We are mindful that donors employ not only different definitions of research when calculating spending volumes, but potentially also different departments (e.g. centrally funded research vs research conducted by country offices vs research as a component of programme or project funding).


viii It is difficult to estimate the total amount of funding the World Bank devotes to research. The recent evaluation of the World Bank put the amount of funding for the research department at 45 million USD per annum which appears relatively low given the international visibility and breadth of World Bank research products, but as we explain in the Appendices, this is due to a narrow, specific definition of research adopted by the World Bank. It also does not include research components of Global Programs and Partnerships which the Bank’s Development Grant Facility finances. See http://web.worldbank.org/wbsite/external/projects/extfinstruments/extrustfundsandgrants/extdgf/0,,contentMDK:20588735~menuPK:64161792~pagePK:64161825~piPK:64161011~theSitePK:458461,00.html for further details.

ix Note this is also in keeping with a recent Capability Review which noted that 'DFID has an important part to play in both the development of international policy and in its delivery through improved cross-Whitehall working . . . other departments will have to do likewise'. It also argues that 'more consistent early engagement by DFID with other government departments . . . is crucial'. (quoted in Maxwell, 2007).

x Augsburg (2005) provides a useful definitional distinction in this regard:

- Transdisciplinarity: Research that integrates the social and natural sciences in a common approach, and includes non-scientific knowledge systems in a participatory and interactive process to improve societal practices. Transdisciplinarity is a principle of scientific research and intradisciplinary practice that describes the application of scientific approaches to problems that transcend the boundaries of conventional academic disciplines.

- Interdisciplinarity: Interdisciplinarity is the act of drawing from two or more academic disciplines and integrating their insights to work together in pursuit of a common goal. "Interdisciplinary Studies", as they are called, use interdisciplinarity to develop a greater understanding of a problem that is too complex or wide-ranging to be dealt with using the knowledge and methodology of just one discipline.

- Multidisciplinarity: Multidisciplinarity is a non-integrative mixture of disciplines in that each discipline retains its methodologies and assumptions without change or development from other disciplines within the multidisciplinary relationship. Multidisciplinarity is distinctly different than interdisciplinarity because of the relationship that the disciplines share. Within a multidisciplinary relationship this cooperation "may be mutual and cumulative but not interactive" (Augsburg 2005: 56) while interdisciplinarity blends the practices and assumptions of each discipline involved.

xi It is also an area in which DFID should consider increasing funding as despite the importance to DFID’s strategy and reputation total expenditure constitutes just 5.8% of its total annual budget (6.7 million GBP out of a total annual budget of 116 million GBP, DFID, 2007). Note, however, that a substantial budget has been allocated to DFID’s Agricultural and Natural Resources Research into Use Programme managed by NRI.
The European Commission through Erasmus Mundus and other ‘mobility schemes’ is seeking a lead in integrating the ‘European research space’ with its neighbourhood and beyond with funding instruments such as ‘Asian windows’ which earmark funding for students from particular countries to carry out higher education degrees in European institutions (see http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/asian.pdf for details).

In this regard it would be useful to disaggregate its total spend as this information is not available in DFID’s Research Strategy Background Paper (March 2007).

UK universities were seen to have a comparative advantage in that the relatively small size and resourcing of the academic community compared to the US had already compelled academics to diversify and to be outward looking in terms of the partnerships they forge and research problems they select.

A more comprehensive list can also be found in Young and Kannemeyer, 2001.

A useful database in this regard is provided by the European Foundation Centre: http://www.efc.be/projects/eu/research/Facts.htm

It is however important to note that time did not permit us to consult with an even number of northern and southern stakeholders, and thus this issue should be revisited over the course of DFID’s research strategy consultation process. Such consultations should strive to ensure a balance between southern countries where donor funding plays a major role in supporting research funding and those in which research is funded primarily though local public and private funding sources.

The Volkswagen Stiftung in Germany was recognised as important in terms of volume of funding but with limited partnership potential given their concern for branding. Party-affiliated foundations such as the SPD-affiliated Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung was believed to invest in national and European social research, as were foundations in other Western European countries such as Italy, France and Spain.

Here the UK Research Assessment Exercise style definitions of academic disciplines might provide a useful model

There seemed to be a broad consensus about this at the March 2007 DFID Visioning Event.

See useful discussion by Lusthaus and Neilson, 2005.

Here the Professional Skills for Government and Head of Profession approaches promoted by the Cabinet Office may provide a useful reference point.