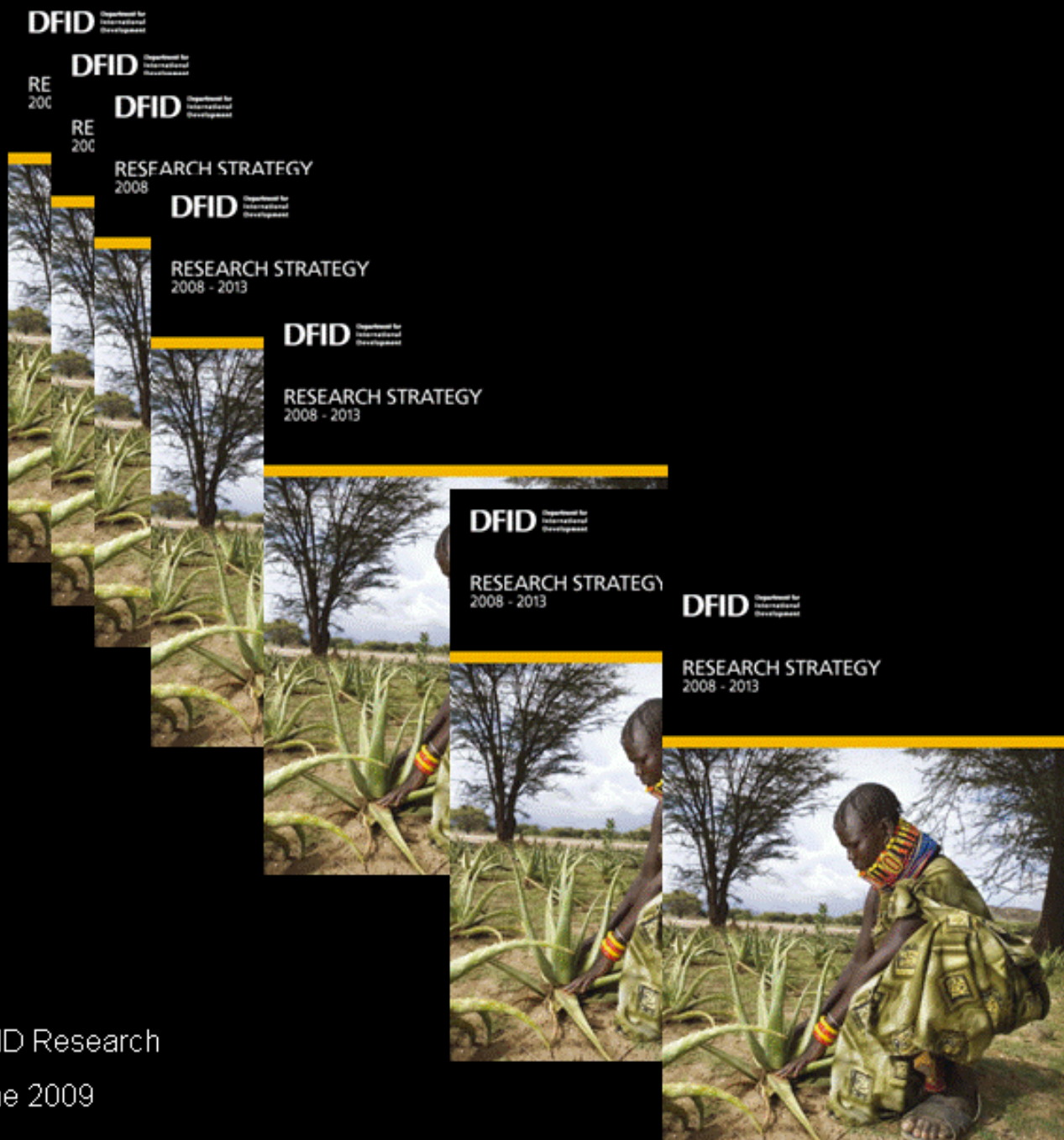


Research Programme Consortia

GUIDANCE NOTE ON CAPACITY BUILDING



Guidance Note on Capacity Building

This note should be read in conjunction with the Research Programme Consortia (RPC) Terms of Reference and other RPC guidance that can be found on the DFID website: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/research/guidance.asp>

Definitions

1. The need to build Research Capacity in our Southern research partnerships features strongly in DFID's Research Strategy (2008-2013 <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/Research-Strategy-08.pdf>). In addition to six focal research areas defined in the Research Strategy there are four strategic results areas, one of which is that **we will seek to strengthen capacity to do and use research**.
2. DFID recognises that the ability to plan, undertake, access and use research is interrelated. The Research Strategy commits DFID to a focus on improving research capability by supporting environments that encourage people to use research. This means improving researchers' skills as well as their access to research information and resources.
3. Capacity Building within the context of DFID Research is defined as *enhancing the abilities of individuals, organisations and systems to undertake and disseminate high quality research efficiently and effectively*. There are 3 levels of Capacity Building :
 - **Individual:** involving the development of researchers and teams via training and scholarships, to design and undertake research, write up and publish research findings, influence policy makers, etc.
 - **Organisational:** developing the capacity of research departments in universities, think tanks and so on, to fund, manage and sustain themselves.
 - **Institutional:** changing the 'rules of the game' and addressing the incentive structures, the political and the regulatory context and the resource base in which research is undertaken and used by policy makers.
4. The goal of capacity building, for DFID, is *to facilitate individual and organisational learning which builds social capital and trust, develops knowledge, skills and attitudes and when successful creates an organisational culture which enables organisations to set objectives, achieve results, solve problems, and create adaptive procedures which enable them to survive in the long run*.

The Current Situation

5. It is accepted that many existing Research Programme Consortia have expended a great deal of time and effort in capacity development and have, for example, delivered short courses in research design, writing for academic purposes and so on. Some have encouraged extensive South-South engagement and ensured that the partnership has been as equal as possible. However, much of the capacity building work has been done at the individual level and some has not gone much beyond the traditional level of scholarships and attendance at conferences. The consultations on the new Research Strategy

noted a measure of short-termism and identified too many relationships based on extraction rather than collaboration.

The Future

6. The new Research Strategy provides an opportunity to change the 'rules of the game' with respect to collaborative international research. Most RPCs will be larger in scope, will have bigger budgets and will require consortia to spend more time and energy building longer-term sustainable research organisations as well as investing in individuals who work in them.
7. This approach carries at least three risks
 - **That capacity building diverts attention away from the primary purpose of delivering high quality research:** There can be tensions between these two objectives and in general the research objectives take priority. However in some contexts, such as fragile states where academic and research capacity has been severely undermined for various reasons it may not be possible or desirable for foreign researchers to operate without local counterparts. In some cases these counterparts will need more support than their equivalents in less damaged environments. This will need to be explained in the partnership arrangements and included in the work plans which accompany the first year Inception Report. The incorporation of a one year inception phase to prepare the ground for the five year RPC research programme will provide more time to develop and initiate a successful capacity building programme.
 - **Academic and research staff from the lead organisation (contract holder) may feel that they do not have the skills or experience to do effective capacity building.** This is often the case but the enhanced budget and priority for capacity building means that 'traditional' research leaders may look to work together with other organisations such as business schools or consultancies specialising in organisational development and change management to deliver the capacity building aspects of the programme. These organisations may be based in the north or the south and would include all the RPC partners in their programmes.
 - **Institutional Rigidities.** Perverse incentives may encourage dysfunctional organisational structures and 'rules of the game'. For example senior academics may not wish to empower their junior colleagues or share consultancy opportunities; younger colleagues might wish to protect their familiarity with new technology or new research methods, and University administrators might make it difficult for favoured faculties to benefit directly from regional and international networks. These concerns and the related one that some researchers might join a consortium primarily to obtain funding for their own pet topic rather than join in with the broad purposes of the programme have been mentioned in the Research Strategy consultations. While these problems can be overstated, they are examples of a range of cultural/attitudinal issues which can only be addressed if the partnerships are open and trust-based and if the RPC leadership is quite explicit about their interest (if necessary) in changing the rules of the game in the interest of better research. The area is a complex one and will need a high degree of expertise and sensitivity. It will be necessary to guard against negative unexpected consequences.

Managing Capacity Building

8. In the new RPCs we will expect the RPC management to be explicit about the steps they will take to assist in the development of sustainable capacity at the **Individual** and **Organisational** levels. These should be summarised as a Log-Frame Output. As with other Outputs, these should be outlined in the initial proposals and filled out in more detail in the Inception Report. The Annual Reports will contain a section on capacity building. The issue of facilitating and reporting on changes at the **Institutional** level is more problematic. We cannot force cultural and attitudinal changes nor expect the rules to change because we wish them to. However, an awareness of these issues and a willingness to discuss them with partners and take joint action where appropriate is something we will look for in our RPC managers and their partners.

Operational Steps

9. All RPCs will submit an Inception Report towards the end of the inception phase which must be approved by DFID prior to the continuation of the RPC programme. In this report RPCs will be expected to outline a **Capacity Building Strategy** for the programme. This will:
 - Spell out how the RPC will undertake individual and organisational training needs in their partners. Needs assessment will include Northern partners.
 - Identify which people and organisations in the RPC will be responsible for which aspects of skills training, management development and organisational change. This is in addition to the development of the more traditional research/methodology skills.
 - State which training methods the RPC will use (i.e. distance, classroom-based, open access) for which part of the overall capacity building plan.
 - Spell out how the RPC will ensure that all partners are fully engaged in the process so that their concerns are dealt with at an early stage. This will be more difficult to achieve with late joining members of the RPC and those working in fragile states and disruptive environments.
 - Explain how they will undertake or up-date a baseline survey against which to measure progress.
10. All RPCs will submit Annual Reports to DFID. Annual Reports will include a capacity building section and RPCs will be required to provide:
 - An update on progress of the Capacity Building Strategy, and reporting against the Capacity Building Plan which derives from the Strategy.
 - An update on progress measured at the Individual and Organisational levels (and as far as possible the Institutional level).
 - Reporting of South: South linkages and networks which assist in the sustainability of the overall objective of Capacity Building

Ten Steps to Good Capacity Building

1. Identify, with partners, what knowledge and skills will be needed to undertake high quality research.
2. Ensure that all partners/team members understand the implications for Capacity Building at the 3 levels - Individual, Organisational and Institutional - and understand that this goes beyond skills training and PhD programmes.
3. Undertake a Training Needs/Gap Analysis and Organisational Assessment of programme partners and key stakeholders to identify capacity building requirements. Use the data to construct a baseline for M&E purposes
4. Develop a Capacity Building 'plan of action' which is realistic in terms of inputs, time frame, methodology and cost. Ensure that it is focussed on research excellence.
5. Undertake Risk and Sensitivity Analysis of the Capacity Building plan to ensure it is robust, flexible and not excessively optimistic
6. Identify providers with the necessary expertise to deliver the Capacity Building programme from within, or if necessary outside, the consortium
7. Get agreement on the Capacity Building plan from partners and donors via the Inception Phase Report. This Report should also include the M&E arrangements for the capacity building activities over the life of the programme. Risks/Methods/Focus will be reviewed annually.
8. Identify networking and South-South opportunities to support capacity building, particularly at the Individual and Organisational levels
9. Initiate the Capacity Building Plan
10. Monitor and report on progress regularly. Look particularly for ways of facilitating change and development at the Institutional ('rules of the game') level, so that good research is produced by sustainable organisations.

Selected Websites and Publications

11. The following is a small selection of publications recommended for further reading on capacity building:

- Many of the ideas leading to the change of approach to CB are summarised in [DFID's Research Strategy on Capacity Building](#), (2008).
- The best of the recent attempts to provide useable definitions of capacity building are provided in a series of Papers from the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM). The ECDPM studied the capacity of organisations, mainly in low income countries, assessing development over time and the relationship to improved performance. The key document in this series is

Capacity, Change and Performance (H. Baser and P. Morgan , ECDPM, April 2008 (pp100+)).

- DFID funded a series of research papers by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) pertaining to capacity building: (i) **Building Capacity in Southern Research: A Study to map existing Initiatives** (ODI, London, 2001); (ii) **Setting the Scene: Situating DFID's Research Funding Policy and Practise in an International Comparative Perspective**, (ODI, London, June 2007).
- Horton, Douglas, 2003. **Evaluating Capacity Development: Experiences from Research and Development Organizations around the World**. IDRC, Canada.

12. The following is a selection of website resources on capacity building including tools and training:

- The **European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM)** helps countries in Europe, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific to build effective partnerships, including strengthening their institutions and capacities to develop policies for development and poverty reduction. It includes a knowledge and innovation section that consider capacity development and hosts news and reports on the issue: <http://www.ecdpm.org/>
- **Capacity.org** is a web-based magazine and portal for practitioners and policy makers who work in or on capacity development in international cooperation in the South. It includes quarterly journal and a sections on tools, methods and practice reports: <http://www.capacity.org>
- The **International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC)** provides advice and training on strengthening management and organisational effectiveness under its Capacity Building area, focussing on strategies for organisational capacity building through practice and research; and working in partnership with local support organisations. It incorporates a strong focus on participatory development: <http://www.intrac.org>

Department for International Development Leading the British government's fight against world poverty.

One in six people in the world today, over 1 billion people, live in poverty on less than one dollar a day. In an increasingly interdependent world, many problems – like conflict, crime, pollution and diseases such as HIV and AIDS – are caused or made worse by poverty. DFID supports long-term programmes to help tackle the underlying causes of poverty. DFID also responds to emergencies, both natural and man-made.

DFID's work forms part of a global promise to:

- halve the number of people living in extreme poverty and hunger
- ensure that all children receive primary education
- promote sexual equality and give women a stronger voice
- reduce child death rates
- improve the health of mothers
- combat HIV and AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- make sure the environment is protected
- build a global partnership for those working in development.

Together, these form the United Nations' eight 'Millennium Development Goals', with a 2015 deadline. Each of these Goals has its own, measurable, targets. DFID works in partnership with governments, civil society, the private sector and others. It also works with multilateral institutions, including the World Bank, United Nations agencies and the European Commission. DFID works directly in over 150 countries worldwide, with a budget of £5.3 billion in 2007/08.

Details of more than 5,000 DFID-funded research programmes and their results, can be found on the research portal <http://www.research4development.info>

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