

PUBLIC CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ON DFID'S RESEARCH STRATEGY 2008–2013

1. Introduction

Background

1.1 The Department for International Development (DFID) is seeking views to help it develop a new research strategy. The new strategy will start in April 2008 and replace the Research Funding Framework 2005–2007.

1.2 The Government's 2006 White Paper [Making Governance Work for the Poor](#) emphasises the importance of new technologies and knowledge and evidenced-based policies for development; it sets out that these are fundamental to growth and poverty reduction. DFID's budget for research will double from £110 million in 2005/06 to £220 million in 2010. This means that around £650 million will be available to fund new research programmes in the forthcoming strategy period, which will be five years (2008–2013). The new strategy is an opportunity for DFID to refocus on the most pressing research challenges, work in innovative ways and make new research partnerships.

1.3 Our consultation on the new strategy will happen in three main ways:

- 1 From June 2007 we will hold face-to-face discussions in seven DFID partner countries. [Details of these country consultations are available](#) if you are interested.
- 2 We will be organising joint discussions with key research stakeholders in the UK. [Further information on the timetable is available](#)
- 3 We are using this electronic questionnaire to get a wide range of views from people interested in development research in the UK, developing countries and internationally

Issues for the new research strategy

1.4 Urbanisation, globalisation and climate change are just some of the issues which present new challenges for development and development research. This consultation asks how the new research strategy can help countries deal with emerging issues - be they new diseases, trading opportunities, migration, changes in world economic power etc. This consultation also asks how the new strategy can build on the strengths of the current research programme. In particular, how DFID can:

- build on our four priority research themes and address the links between them effectively: these are
 - sustainable agriculture, especially in Africa, moving towards a broader agenda of economic opportunity and growth;

- “killer diseases” and healthcare, moving towards building capabilities of individuals and families for a better life;
 - states that work for poor people, where our good governance and social research will include more emphasis on policy design areas;
 - the impact of climate change on poverty, moving towards research that helps partner countries understand, influence and adapt to changes and future “shocks” more broadly.
- improve the way we identify demand for research from end-users in developing countries;
 - promote more cutting-edge science that will benefit poor people;
 - work more effectively to help developing countries to carry out, access and use research themselves; and
 - make it more likely that research will be used.

1.5 The context for funding international development research has changed since the Research Funding Framework was produced in 2004. Research is part of a rising UK aid budget and DFID is set to become one of the world’s leading funding agencies for development research. The new strategy needs to make choices about how and where DFID research can have the greatest impact in future, given the contributions of other funders.

How to give your views

1.6 The questions that we would like you to answer are set out in sections 3, 4 and 5. We put them together following a very useful [workshop that we held with a number of research stakeholders in London in March 2007](#)

- **Section 2** gives some background information about DFID research.
- **Section 3** asks how we should build on our research themes in future.
- **Section 4** asks how we can better meet our research objectives.
- **Section 5** asks how we should position our research in the future and how we should work with other research funding agencies internationally.

1.7 There are 13 main questions. Please fill in the response boxes that you feel are relevant to your area of work. If you would like to comment on the points raised at DFID’s meeting with key stakeholders [] space is provided for this in **section 5** of this questionnaire.

1.8 Please note that we are not able to respond to specific research funding proposals in this consultation.

1.9 Please submit your comments using the [on-line form](#) by 23 September 2007 at the latest. Once we have read your reply we may ask you to provide further details. If you don't want to be contacted again please indicate this on the first page on the on-line form

2. About DFID research

2.1 DFID research aims to help reduce poverty in poor countries by developing new technologies and policy-related knowledge and helping to get these used.

2.2 We work in partnership with other international development research funding agencies. This includes government agencies such as Canada's International Development Research Centre and private foundations such as Wellcome Trust and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. This increases the resources we can use in development research and makes sure that research covers a broad range of important topics. We also work closely with the UK research councils, which help us to target UK scientific expertise on development problems.

2.3 The [Research Funding Framework 2005–2007](#) describes the four priorities for research that account for the core of our current investment, –

- sustainable agriculture, especially in Africa;
- “killer diseases” and healthcare;
- states that don't work for poor people, which covers both governance and social research;
- the impact of climate change on poverty, including environmental change more broadly;

2.4 We also fund targeted research in areas where there are particular information gaps that need to be filled – on topics ranging from education to pro-poor growth to the effectiveness of aid. Where it makes sense, we also carry out research in partnership with other research funding agencies (for instance, we work closely with the World Bank on researching low-cost transport options for poor communities). We also fund a range of research dissemination services, which are available free to poor countries. [Details of the research programmes we fund are available.](#)

2.4 DFID's Research Funding Framework began in 2005, with the majority of programmes commissioned during the last eighteen months. In the new strategy we will strike a balance between building on the progress achieved in the current Research Funding Framework, ensuring that major new development challenges receive attention and finding better ways of responding to developing country research needs. In addition, DFID's growing

budget for research presents important choices about our future role and ways of working as an international funder.

3 Building on our research themes

3.1 We have reviewed our current research themes and believe they are broadly right for the future, not least because DFID has a track record of doing research in these areas. In each theme our overriding priority is to identify better ways to lead to growth and poverty reduction. In the new strategy we want to build on the current themes in four main ways:

- firstly, by meeting the commitment in the 2006 White Paper to fund more research that helps partner countries to grow their economies, including by boosting agricultural productivity but also more widely. We will also increase funding for innovative technologies for cleaner water and sanitation and help to develop a new generation of drugs and vaccines against the major “killer” diseases;
- secondly, by putting more emphasis on research that helps partner countries be aware of global trends that are likely to shape their development – ranging from the impact of new powerful economies on the poorest countries in Africa, to new disease threats or trading opportunities.
- thirdly, by paying more attention to research that fills knowledge gaps that cut across our themes – eg how climate change will affect the economic and political decisions facing partner governments in future; or how better education opportunities can lead to higher household incomes and better nourished mothers and children.
- fourthly, by doing work across our themes that helps donors understand better the impact they have. For instance, how can aid donors best target their funds so that corruption is avoided?

3.2 Our plans for developing research in each of the four priority topics are set out in brief below. **For each theme, please let us know what you think are the key issues, the trends that are most likely to affect this topic in the future, as well as any key questions for aid effectiveness. If you have reasons why DFID research has something particular to offer in this area, please let us know this too.**

QUESTION 1

How can DFID build on its work on sustainable agriculture and develop its work on economic opportunities and growth? (Please give your response at Box 1 below)

3.3 Agriculture and natural resources have traditionally been priorities for DFID research. Our work on this is guided by DFID’s [Strategy on Research](#)

[into Sustainable Agriculture](#). We provide support to the Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research and are building up investment in regional agricultural research programmes, led by three organisations in Africa and one in South Asia. We also support a substantial programme to define the factors that encourage or stand in the way of policy-makers and communities making the most of new knowledge and agricultural technologies. [Some background on DFID research on this topic is available](#).

3.4 In future, we see a need to broaden this theme to meet our White Paper commitment to promote research related to the growth agendas of African countries, particularly how to achieve growth in equitable, socially responsible and sustainable ways. Themes that could potentially be emphasised in the new strategy include:

- How can African economies best diversify to achieve the 7% annual growth needed to attain the Millennium Development Goals?
- What technological innovations can best raise agricultural productivity and what policy reforms and infrastructure can make agriculture more competitive?
- The impact of climate change on sustainable economic growth in Africa
- How can governments promote the right kinds of education and technical skills for the world of work?
- Population dynamics and growth in Africa - what impact does migration and increasing urbanisation have on sustainable growth?
- What policies are needed for pro-poor growth in fragile states?
- How to ensure labour markets provide opportunities for all, including women.
- How can developing countries harness new technologies and investment to accelerate growth?

What do you think are the key issues in these areas? What trends are most likely to affect this area in the future? What are the key aid effectiveness questions on this topic?

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| RESPONSE BOX 1 |
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QUESTION 2

How can DFID improve research on “killer diseases” and healthcare and develop its work on building the capabilities of individuals and families for a better life? (Please give your response at Box 2 below)

3.5 Our health research helps to ensure that new treatments, vaccines and technologies are developed for diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV and AIDS, where the private sector has not traditionally invested. We also

support research that helps partner countries test and deliver healthcare in cost-effective ways. [Some background information on DFID research on this topic is available.](#)

3.6 In many areas of health in developing countries we have substantial evidence about what works and what different health care packages cost. The main challenge is to make sure health systems can deliver existing health interventions and learn to adapt better models. However, we are also aware that the global pattern of disease is moving towards non-communicable diseases, and that climate change will result in other changes in the disease burden. Our partner countries will need research evidence about what treatments are suitable in their own settings to meet these challenges, and how to deliver these services in cost-effective ways.

3.7 We also feel there remains a significant need – and funding gap – for vaccines, microbicides, drugs and diagnostics for a wide range of neglected tropical diseases. There is also a need to develop good systems that make sure these new technologies can reach the people who need them.

3.8 We see a need for non-medical research that could hold the key to overcoming difficult health challenges facing many of our partner countries. Important topics could include:

- children’s education and HIV and AIDS
- how women’s incomes affect the survival and nutrition of their children
- the politics of making childbirth safer

3.9 Finally, we see potential for inter-disciplinary research that will bring DFID’s health and education research together to make a bigger contribution to human development in our partner countries. We also see potential to widen the scope of our education research to cover such priorities as post-primary education and the links between education and the world of work.

What do you think are the key issues in this area? What trends are most likely to affect this area in the future? What are the key aid effectiveness questions DFID should consider on this topic?

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| RESPONSE BOX 2 |
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QUESTION 3

How can DFID improve research into good governance, including social and policy design areas? (Please give your response in Box 3 below)

3.10 Our governance and social research answers questions about how states can better meet the needs of poor people and uphold their rights – for

instance, to services, equality, political representation and a chance to participate actively in society. We also fund research into social themes that are common global concerns, such as migration, urbanisation, and gender. [More information about past and present DFID research in this area is available.](#)

3.11 In future, we see a need to pay more attention to work in three main areas:

- **Research into fragile and post-conflict states, where there is only patchy evidence about how development works.** We feel that more research is needed on achieving effective and long-term improvements in the capability, responsiveness and accountability of governments and states in fragile and post-conflict environments. Research themes that could potentially be emphasised in the new strategy include: i) post-conflict justice and state building, including security sector reforms; helping governments to promote legal economic activity; restore a tax base and create an investment climate; ii) promoting accountable state and non-state service providers.
- **Researching governance and social challenges that stand out as common concerns across DFID partner countries.** Relevant topics could include managing decentralisation, migration, service delivery, policy responses to demographic trends and gender and politics. New cross-national themes could include international threats to good governance such as illegal trade, criminal networks and terrorism.
- **More emphasis on policy design research** that helps partner countries discover and implement what policy solutions work best for their particular circumstances.

What do you think are the key issues in these areas? What trends are most likely to affect this area in the future? In addition, what are the crucial aid effectiveness questions DFID research should consider?

RESPONSE BOX 3

QUESTION 4

How can DFID improve research into the impact of climate change on poverty and environmental change more broadly? (Please give your response at Box 4)

3.12 Our programme of environmental change research is expanding rapidly to help developing countries address the challenges of adapting to climate

change. We also fund research into water and sanitation, energy and ways of managing environmental assets for the long term.

3.13 We know that the poorest people around the world will be the first to be affected by rapid rates of environmental change. They will also be the worst affected. But we still need to know more about how climate change will affect economic growth and livelihoods in DFID's partner countries and help these countries understand the options for reducing the risks they face. [Some background about DFID research on this topic is available.](#)

3.14 Supporting research capability across Africa, Asia and Latin America to adapt to climate change will remain our top priority. Related to this, we will also work to build partner countries' research capability to manage environmental assets in ways that safeguard the livelihoods of poor people in the long term. We feel that water resources are particularly threatened by climate change and that DFID research should address this. The 2006 White Paper also highlights the need to develop innovative technologies for cleaner water and sanitation. Other topics that require research attention include:

- low carbon development, including producing biofuels, as well as new forms of eco-friendly infrastructure, transport and power generation
- future international systems for carbon trading and how partner countries can design national policies to benefit from these new rules
- the governance and political implications of increasing pressure on natural resources such as land, food and water

What do you think are the key issues in this area? What trends are most likely to affect this area in the future? In addition, what are the crucial aid effectiveness questions DFID should consider?

RESPONSE BOX 4

QUESTION 5

In addition to climate change, what are the emerging global trends that DFID research needs to address? (Please provide your response at Box 5 below)

3.15 We plan to work with our research partners, both in the north and the south, to identify in future trends that are likely to affect development in partner countries. However, the role of the new powerful economies such as Brazil, India, China and South Africa is likely to change the context for international development radically over the coming decade, cutting across all of our research themes.

3.16 We would welcome comments on the key issues DFID partner countries face in relation to poverty reduction and the growing influence of new powerful economies. Let us know, too, how you think DFID could support

research partnerships with countries that have powerful science and technology capacity for poverty reduction. What types of technology development being undertaken by these rapidly advancing economies could help lower income countries most? In addition, DFID partner countries may wish to learn about these countries' development experiences. How should DFID best facilitate this?

RESPONSE BOX 5

4. Improving the way we meet our research objectives

4.1 We think we can boost the impact of DFID research funding in three main ways.

- by strengthening the way we identify demand for research in developing countries
- by consolidating our work to help partner countries build capacity to do, access and use research
- by paying more attention to strategies that will get the results of research used.

4.2 We also want to ensure that we continue to fund cutting-edge science that will benefit poor people. Some specific questions about each of these issues are set out below.

QUESTION 6

**How can DFID improve the way research responds to user demand?
(Please provide your response at Box 6 below)**

4.3 We want to give end-users of research (for example developing country policy-makers and farmers) a bigger say in developing DFID's research agenda. By doing so we hope that research will be even more relevant and likely to be used. If you would like to know more about the background to DFID's work on this topic, please read the report of the meeting DFID held with [key stakeholders to help prepare this questionnaire](#).

4.4 The main way we intend to do this is through our national consultation exercises in seven partner countries [link] and analysing the responses from stakeholders in developing countries to this questionnaire. In the longer term, we hope to decentralise some of our research management and have permanent local research offices in some regions.

Please let us know what you think the key issues are in terms of locating demand for research. In particular, tell us what techniques work well for research demand appraisal. Also let us know any lessons you have learned in using these techniques.

RESPONSE BOX 6

QUESTION 7

How can DFID best support cutting-edge science that benefits poor people? (Please provide your response at Box 7 below)

4.5 Of course, demand from users is not a prerequisite of good research: many of the world's most significant research breakthroughs have been supply-driven.

4.6 For economies of scale, we think it makes sense for cutting-edge scientific research (for example developing new vaccines) to develop where the infrastructure, expertise and funding is most readily available. This often means Northern settings, but India, Brazil and China also have powerful technological resources for developing drugs. We welcome views on what key scientific advances are likely to be most useful to partner countries in future and how DFID should work to support and help deliver these.

RESPONSE BOX 7

QUESTION 8

How can DFID be more systematic in helping developing countries to increase their research capacity? (Please provide your response at Box 8 below)

4.7 This area of work involves helping not only individuals and research institutions but also the broader 'uptake environment' in partner countries.

In the long term, we want research institutions in the south to be able to:

- articulate research agendas at national and global levels;
- conduct world class research;

- work in the right ways with a range of knowledge ‘intermediaries’ (the media, think tanks etc) to put research into use; and
- be financially self-sustaining.

4.8 The ability of southern institutions to help each other build and strengthen their research base is also important. We want to support this too.

4.9 This is a broad agenda and no single donor, including DFID would have the resources to help with all of it. We therefore plan to contribute in the first instance by building on ongoing initiatives. We are particularly interested in getting views on what DFID already does well in this area, what we can learn from others, and who our key partners in this agenda should be. Please share any lessons you have about capacity-building programmes in research, especially from evaluations. Let us know what you think should be priorities for DFID’s research capacity building strategy in future. If you would like to know more about the background to DFID’s work on this topic, please refer to the [note of the meeting DFID held with key stakeholders](#) .

RESPONSE BOX 8

QUESTION 9

Communicating research: How can we make sure people in developing countries can access and use research? (Please provide your response at box 9 below)

4.10 The ultimate test of research value is if it gets used. In many cases what developing countries need is not new thinking but strategies and lessons to implement what knowledge already exists. We see ‘research-into-use’ initiatives as vital within research programmes and as stand-alone programmes to find out what works and what doesn’t; "research-into-use" is also itself a topic that needs more research.

4.11 One priority for the future is to better understand what helps to get research in partner countries widely know about and used. This includes regulatory environments, links between the media, civil society, think-tanks and the private sector or indeed communications infrastructure.

4.12 We also want to continue to provide incentives for the researchers and institutes we fund to communicate their findings to different audiences. We would like to work more closely with other international funders to increase the impact all research communication funding makes.

4.13 We think that there are not enough international funds to help those who repackage research knowledge through the media and online publishing. We want to continue to provide support for this, as well as working with

international organisations that facilitate information sharing and learning between countries and regions, including setting standards for this (for example on intellectual property).

4.14 We would welcome views on how to develop DFID's role in research communication and getting research into use in future. In particular, how big should our role be in better understanding the 'enabling environments' for uptake of research? Where are the right entry points for DFID? We would also welcome views on whether DFID should invest more in communicating not only its own research but the best of other people's. [Read some background about DFID research on this topic.](#)

RESPONSE BOX 9

5. Strategic choices

QUESTION 10

How should DFID position its research in the future? (Please provide your response at Box 10 below)

5.1 DFID supports different types of research – from basic science that helps to discover treatments for tropical diseases to policy knowledge for developing country decision-makers. We also work on getting poor communities to take on new technologies, and help make research more widely available in partner countries (for example through the media). Do you have views about what DFID does well or less well in particular research areas and what we should emphasise in future? Are there some absolutely fundamental themes for the future which are seriously under-researched at the moment?

RESPONSE BOX 10

QUESTION 11

How far should we take a more regional approach to some research questions? (Please provide your response at Box 11 below)

5.2 At present in several areas DFID seeks to get global research results drawing on research in different countries. As part of this, we promote cross-national and cross-cultural research – for instance on gender and young people - that helps comparisons to be made and lessons learned internationally. Is this the way forward or should we aim to achieve more

regionally relevant research results in certain areas of research? If so which areas?

RESPONSE BOX 11

QUESTION 12

How should DFID work with other funders of international development research? (Please provide your response at Box 12 below)

5.3 It is important to coordinate the work of international research funders, so that their work is complementary and has a bigger research impact. We want to work in partnership with other international funders – both governments and private foundations – to help use the experience and expertise of different funding agencies to best effect and promote a diverse research agenda. We also want to identify research challenges that are too complex and/or too expensive for a single agency to tackle alone. We are interested in views on how we collaborate better with other international research funders and the areas for doing this. We would also like to hear from you about research challenges that you think demand a co-ordinated, multi-agency response.

RESPONSE BOX 12

QUESTION 13

Finally, would you like to comment on any of the points raised at the workshop [DFID held with research stakeholders](#) to help prepare this questionnaire? Any last comments on the process for developing this strategy?

RESPONSE BOX 13

6. How the results of this consultation will be used

6.1 Thank you for taking the time to read this paper. Please fill in the sections relevant to you [on the on-line form](#). Once we have assessed your reply we may ask you to provide further details, unless you indicate on the first page on the on-line form that you don't wish to be contacted

6.2 We aim to have the new strategy ready by February 2008.

ANNEX A :

DFID will appoint a third party organisation to hold in-country consultations in:

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| Nigeria, | India |
| Ethiopia | Bangladesh |
| Uganda | |

On the basis of these scoping discussions, we will hold in-country follow up consultations in South Africa and China to help determine the role of BRICS countries within the strategy.

The types of question to be asked will be:

1. How best to achieve demand-led research in [health].. research area
 - who are the authentic representatives of the research users and how easy is it to elicit demands from them?
 - What are the current ways that demand is appraised and are they effective?
2. How best to develop capacity to do, to access and to use research from research area? [IDRC methodology for use in this case.]
 - who currently does, accesses and uses research in this area?
 - how effective is the research done, accessed and/ or used?
 - is people's capacity a limiting factor to better doing, accessing and/ or using?
 - if so what could be done to improve capacity?
3. How best can outputs from the research area be utilised?
 - how is research currently made available, is it effective and where does the research come from?
 - who needs to access research in this area, do they have access and do they how best to use the research?
4. New powerful economies
 - What effects do you think new powerful economies such as China or India currently have in the different domains of the main research areas?
 - What type and scale of effects will arise in the future
 - Do you see a role for partnership with these countries' researchers in X area?