

LESSONS LEARNT IN RESEARCH COMMUNICATION: DFID'S 10% POLICY ON COMMUNICATING RESEARCH - SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES AND NEXT STEPS

REPORT OF A LESSON-LEARNING WORKSHOP, DFID, PALACE STREET
22ND JULY 2008

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“DFID R4D WEBSITE REWRITE PROJECT”

Since the end of the 3rd Annual Communication Conference an Update/Rewrite Project has been undertaken with regard to our R4D Website <http://www.research4development.info/index.asp>. This project includes RPC/DRC, multilateral, direct contract and other programmes, including programmes supported by the Communications team.

Some teams will have already been contacted with a request to supply Case Studies, News Stories and other material. Thanks for the replies already received. This process is ongoing. We are also keen to receive text, written in plain readable English, which illustrates research uptake and the resultant benefits from it.

With the publication of this report why not take a critical look at your own Project Record and ask yourself, “Is it correct? Is it good enough? Does it do justice to my Project?” If not, contact alan-hamilton@dfid.gov.uk . If help is needed, a “Case Study” template is available to guide you through the information we need.

Alan Hamilton 24/11/2008

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ABBREVIATIONS

DFID	Department for International Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
R4D	Research 4 Development
RPC	Research Programme Consortium
RPC	Research Programme Consortium
ODI	Overseas Development Institute

SUMMARY

- 01** This is a report of a research communications lesson sharing workshop organized by DFID's Central Research Department and held in DFID, London, during July 2008. The workshop was attended by representatives from 26 RPCs, 2 presenters and 9 DFID staff.
- 02** The workshop followed on from the ones held in 2006 and 2007. Both workshops had the main objective of providing networking opportunities for RPCs and to share lessons on processes for getting research into policy and practice. The third workshop focused on the 10% budgetary policy for RPC communications.
- 03** General discussions around research communications raised a number of points, two critical ones being:
 - The need for more support in generating communications strategies that take into account the complexity of policymaking.
 - A general need to strengthen relationships, not only between communications and research, but also between communications officers themselves through peer networks, and between the communications officers and their host institutions in the way of greater recognition and opportunities for career development.
- 04** Discussions around John Young's (ODI) presentation about the new 10% strategy were broad but generally the experience of most RPCs resonated with the presentation, that the new strategy had brought more attention and focus to research communications. Even so, many perennial issues persist, such as interacting with researchers and M&E. The group challenged ODI's preliminary findings on some points, suggesting there was much more networking going on than the report acknowledged as well as more changes in behaviour than were noted.
- 05** The presentation on Web 2.0 tools for communications was well received. There was all-round interest in the potential of these new techniques, and several RPCs demonstrated that they are already trying to utilize these applications in various ways. However, more training will be necessary for New Web technologies to become thoroughly integrated in RPC communications.
- 06** Feedback on the workshop was generally positive. RPC officers see these as valuable learning events and especially for networking across different sectors. Such a workshop provides a forum for research partners to share experiences—both positive and negative—and for DFID to hear these.

INTRODUCTION

DFID's Current Research Funding Framework 2008-2013 (<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/Research-Strategy-08.pdf>) emphasizes the joining of research with practice. Within the framework, research communications programmes work to achieve three primary objectives:

- (i) Identifying and developing ways to enhance people's access to research products, for example the DFID research portal www.research4development.info;
- (ii) Contributing towards strengthening the context that enables people to use research products;
- (iii) Contributing to the international debate and knowledge on communication of research.

All Research Program Consortia (RPC) are required to develop a Communications Strategy, and to allocate a minimum of 10% of their overall research budgets to its design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

The first research communication lesson sharing workshop was held in DFID London, on 26 July, 2006. This workshop had the broad aim of sharing lessons and experiences from designing research communication strategies. Specific aims of this first workshop were to:

- Provide an opportunity to give feedback to DFID's Central Research Department (CRD) on the process and expectations in designing and implementing a communication strategy
- Give researchers the opportunity to share experiences across research Programmes
- Identify how and where CRD can provide support to research programmes on communication
- Create a space for networking across research programmes and to meet with other research programme communications/policy officers to see how resources might be shared.

During this first workshop, the main part of the day was given to presentations from a number of research programmes. The presentations provided an opportunity to share lessons learned; as well as to identify constraints and solutions in designing and implementing the strategies. Following the workshop, participants expressed a desire for greater networking opportunities and for more workshops.

Ongoing monitoring of RPC Communication Strategies by DFID staff revealed a general weakness in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems across most of the research programmes, and wide diversity in the approaches taken to building communications capacities across global teams of researchers and communications officers. Therefore a second workshop was planned for the following year to respond to expressed needs, and to build research communication capacity across DFID-funded research.

A second one-day workshop was held on 2nd August 2007 at DFID, London, with the following objectives:

- To learn from best practice M&E techniques practised by RPC s, and broaden understanding of the range of approaches that exist to capture and communicate outcomes and impact
- To share approaches to, and results of, activities to strengthen partner capacities in research communications
- To establish and strengthen communication peer groups across RPC s that will provide medium-term communications support; improve communications strategies and outcomes; and build research communication capacity
- To identify priorities to further support research communication (medium and long-term) that can feed into DFID's current Research Strategy, and suggest practical ways for participants to feed these into consultation.

The workshop revolved around two presentations on the principle themes of monitoring and evaluation and capacity development, with group analysis and reporting following each session. The presentations provided an opportunity to share lessons learned; as well as to identify various difficulties with the multiple M&E processes of different funders, particularly in terms of attribution. Constraints of capacity development were raised both within local institutions' organizational cultures and also with Southern partners, particularly in terms of a digital divide that hampered the flow of information.

Other issues raised included a need for consistent framework to be shared across the RPCs that would create a common sense of purpose and process. Building peer networks between RPCs was seen as one part of the solution, but most also wanted basic templates for strategizing and influencing policymaking. Participants also sought better connections with DFID itself, particularly in terms of country offices where there was thought to be little interest in working with, sharing with or assisting with research communications programmes.

A third workshop was held on the 22nd of July 2008 at DFID, London, with the following objectives:

- To discuss the effectiveness of DFID's policy on research communications (i.e. 10% minimum spending on RPCs) - based on some preliminary findings from a review being conducted by the Overseas Development Institute.
- To explore the potential of Web 2.0 tools to increase visibility of research, and to promote engagement so that results are useful and subsequently used.

The sections below aim to summarise the main issues raised in each discussion, ultimately drawing together the cross-cutting themes of the day. Section 2, the Workshop Programme, covers the main sessions of the day. Section 3 provides a synopsis of the six main areas of discussion and Section 4 specifies the main conclusions of the workshop and names the challenges raised in the workshop, including the kinds of support that are sought from DFID to help the RPCs accomplish their purpose. Records of group discussions are provided in the accompanying annexes.

01 The workshop programme

The workshop agenda is given in Annex 1. The main sessions that made up the workshop programme are summarised below.

Introductory Presentations

Peter Taylor opened the workshop by citing the three aims of the day: to share experience across the RPCs, looking for common challenges and opportunities; to help communications officers move forward in the programmes; and to move forward collectively to support the 'art and science' of communications research. He emphasized that this was the largest meeting yet of communications officers, representing all but two of the RPCs, and thus a great opportunity to network among peers and share ideas and experiences. The workshop was also to be considered a chance to feedback directly to DFID and to be heard about what of additional support was needed, either from peers, researchers, or DFID itself.

Group Work—Successes and Challenges

Following a round of introductions, Peter asked the groups to discuss among themselves what had been the thing they were most excited about over the past year and also what had been most challenging.

Highlights of this feedback included:

Most exciting:

- Policy impacts in Uganda, Malawi and Bangladesh
- Getting buy-in from partners in communication strategy
- Direct engagement with stakeholders
- GMR background paper
- Realising Rights' unsafe abortion workshop and information dissemination programme
- Progress in built capacity in communications

Most challenging:

- Working with busy senior researchers
- Getting researchers to see the relevance of communications
- Time constraints for M&E
- Evaluating impact
- Difficult to research, engage and communicate all at the same time
- Making research communication a discipline so that it has credibility in academia
- Unpacking policy to practice

DFID Welcome

Megan Lloyd-Laney and Abigail Mulhall welcomed the participants on behalf of DFID and explained what they hoped would be accomplished in the workshop and also further into the future for research communications at DFID.

Megan began with a short summary of DFID's Research Strategy and presented some of the implications for future research communications work. DFID has recognized the crucial role that communications plays in getting research into the policymaking arena. Because of this, the percent of research funds set aside for communications will eventually reach 30%. Given that these extra funds would soon be available, Megan stressed that she and Abby needed to know what kind of additional supports were needed to improve communications practices.

There would be particular attention paid to the following issues: how to communicate research; how to engage the media with research and not just headlines; how to generate public conversations about these issues; and finally how better to handle knowledge management? Abigail Mulhall emphasized the newly elevated profile of communications under the new funding framework. There would be many benefits, including new support staff, more research on communication, and the possibility of decentralizing many research functions to the field to bring it closer to users.

Dr. Andrew Steer, the newly appointed Director General of Policy and Research, visited the workshop to introduce himself to the participants and praise them for their efforts. He emphasized the ascending role and importance of research for Ministers and other policymakers, but felt that DFID research had traditionally been unused and unrecognized, in part because DFID's role in funding the research had gone unrecognised.

Given the doubling of funding that DFID expects over the next five years, Dr. Steer argued that DFID's profile needed to be raised in order to justify the increased spend to taxpayers. Even more so for the sake and process of better development, more effort needs to be made in getting research to policymakers in host countries and even to DFID country staff, who often do not know that such information is readily available to better inform their work on the ground.

PRESENTATION ONE: Review of DFID's 10% policy on research communication

Following a tea-break, ODI's John Young presented the preliminary findings of his team's review of the 2005-2007 funding framework that specified a 10% minimum expenditure for research communications. To date, the review team had only looked at existing documents but had not begun other research activities planned around the project. Although the documents produced by the RPCs were of high quality, the reviewers noted that most remained academic and not readily accessible by the general public. The literature review also found little evidence of network building. Nonetheless, there was ample evidence that the research was making an impact, attracting the attention of important multilateral donors like the World Bank and several UN agencies. The best outcome located thus far pertained to the high level of stakeholder consultation at the beginning of many projects—something that has been a change from earlier generations of the RPCs. By analysing this and other changes across the RPCs over time, ODI's research aims to understand what factors enabled these changes. Doing so might help DFID provide better supports systems and tools in the future for all RPCs.

Group Work—Resonances with the ODI report, other challenges and the need for more support

Peter Taylor began the second group activity by asking break-out groups to reflect on ODI's review of RPC activities and to provide feedback to the ODI researchers on what points of the presentation resonated the most with their own experiences and where it diverged with their perceptions of their work. He also urged them to take the discussion further. What communications successes and achievements had been overlooked? What communications challenges had not be addressed? What kinds of additional supports do RPCs need from DFID itself?

Participants then worked for an hour in four groups to consider these questions in light of the ODI presentation and in terms of carrying forward their work on research communications collectively. The groups presented highlights of their findings in the subsequent plenary session. Some of the keys responses regarding the ODI report and the issues of further support from DFID are listed below. The complete transcripts of each group's notes as well as their feedback presentations are included in Annex 5.

Resonances with the ODI report	Differences with the ODI report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of knowledge regarding M&E • Implementing strategies • Structural tension between communications and research • Conceiving of 'policymakers' makers broadly, including grassroots leaders, is good • The 10% strategy has brought greater focus to communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some disciplines do have a culture of communications • More networking is going on than is captured in the report • Successful changes in behaviour need more recognition • There is a need to formally acknowledge the complexity of engaging with policymakers

The following support from DFID was requested:

- Clarity about the use of the DFID logo
- Longer-term funding, larger grants, more money for communications
- Additional help with communications strategies: templates for strategy and actions plans
- Trainings and other workshops in countries/regions—some directed particularly at senior staff people to get them fully on-board. Link these workshops to DFID country offices
- Helping to overcome researcher resistance to communications
- Reevaluating the use of the logframe for research communications
- More donor coherence regarding M&E: simplify and streamline tools

Theses ideas and others are drawn together thematically and elaborated on in the Discussion Points in Section Three.

PRESENTATION TWO: The Potential of Web 2.0 for Research Communication

Peter Taylor introduced the afternoon presentation which was given by Chris Addison of Euforic. The purpose of the session was to help communications officers become more familiar with Web 2.0 technologies and how they could be used to further disseminate research outputs.

Chris began by emphasizing the paradigmatic change in the internet over the past several years, from a net composed largely of static websites to one made of dynamic, interactive sites that could be co-create, co-managed and linked to numerous other points on the web where related content would be stored and shared across sites and networks.

Beginning with more well known tools such as wikis and blogs, Chris described how easy these kinds of tools were to create and use instantly using resources that were free and readily available on the web. Helping participants to better understand how content could move across the web, he went on to explain how RSS feeds could facilitate file sharing through the wise usage of 'keys words' and other forms of 'tagging.' Through coding and existing sites such as Delicious, Chris demonstrated how visitors to a homepage could easily reach bibliographies and lists of favourites that were relevant to their research inquiries.

The idea of having the content of one's website spread across a family of websites had multiple benefits. Obviously, because most of the content was stored remotely, Web 2.0 sites require less storage capacity within the home network, and further, such sites tend to be more accessible to those with lower bandwidth—which is the reality for most Southern partners. Additional resources for dealing low bandwidth were also described.

Martin Parr concluded the presentation with a brief explanation of how D4D was also a part of the Web 2.0 way of working, showing how RPCs could directly post new documents into the D4D database and tag them with key words that would make them immediately accessible to anyone searching the database for those issues or topics.

Group Work — Experiences with Web 2.0 Technologies

Peter polled the group to see how many of the RPCs were already using Web 2.0 tools in some form. About half of the research groups had previously engaged with these technologies in one form or another. Four RPCs had worked seriously with the New Web, enough to be willing to lead small group discussions. Peter proposed that the groups consider the following questions:

- What tools and mechanisms are you already using?
- How can others be encouraged to use these tools?
- How do you share your research with colleagues and partners with slow or no internet access?
- What are the potentials for collaboration?

Common themes from each of the four groups were then presented in the plenary session. Please see Annex 7 for the full list of ideas and useful websites generated in these discussions.

Final Wrap-Up

Following the group exercise, Peter summarized his reflections and key points of the day. He brought together the numerous ideas and challenges that had been repeated at various points and in various forms throughout the workshop. He elaborated on six central areas that required attention over the coming year for improving the quality of research communications and for moving forward the profession research communications itself:

- Experience
- Strategy
- Learning and Monitoring & Evaluation
- Community and Relationships
- Capacity Development
- Support from DFID

These topics are explored at length in the following section under Discussion Points.

Following Peter's summary of the day, the meeting closed with participants completing individual evaluations of the workshop. Results of the evaluations can be found in Annex 9.

02 Discussion points

Throughout the day, from work in groups and discussion in plenary, a wide range of issues were shared by participants. In a complex area such as research communications, many of the issues raised were seen as interlinked and as such did not fall neatly into isolated categories. However, six common, recurrent themes were drawn out in the final session of the day in order to add bring additional clarity to the workshop and to provide guidance for future action. These are summarized below:

Experience: Acknowledging the huge collective of experience and innovation that is already represented in the RPCs, what was seen as still lacking was an effective way of communicating this embodied knowledge across RPCs. Participants expressed a collective need for more sharing of knowledge and more stories for helping them to understand the context and conditions under which certain strategies were successful—and not successful as well. ODI's research on the RPCs being led by John Young appears to be an excellent opportunity for sharing experiences. Through the 'stories of change' work he and his group

are going to undertake, they will find many enablers that have facilitated positive outcomes resulting in changes in behaviour. Certainly they will find disablers as well, which can also be very instructional. There remains a huge amount of lived—untapped—experience within the RPC collective that will take future study and understanding of research communications well beyond the written documents that exist so far.

Strategy: Another oft-repeated challenge was that of trying to expand and build up the strategic aspects of research communications. How does one build up a research communications strategy? There is a need for support in this area across the RPCs. Certainly ODI's 'stories of change' work will provide instances of effective communications strategies within the RPC program; however, there was also general consensus within the workshop group that DFID also needs to be active in helping communications officers better understand the fundamentals of strategic communication. Recognizing that every RPC works in different circumstances and contexts—and that these significantly impact planning—participants still felt templates for strategies and other methodological tools which could be generated within DFID would provide a valuable starting point and common frame of reference for all RPCs.

Learning and Monitoring & Evaluation: These issues reflect some of the largest and most persistent challenges within the field of research communications. These are systematic problems in part generated by the time constraints of limited project- and funding-cycles. How to handle time? Influence and change often take a very long time. How to manage this in a time-constrained environment? Also, how to understand the added-value of research communications? Demonstrating how communications work is making an impact is currently very difficult. Many felt that existing indicators were inadequate, and that there was a dire need to move beyond the log-frame, even though it maybe helpful at some points. What are the tools and indicators that are already out there? How can these be made accessible? There was also an expressed need for greater donor coherence in M&E, so that RPCs are not being asked to look at different indicators for each different funder of a project.

Community and Relationships: As research communications is such a new profession, many structural issues constrain professional development. Often a career ceiling exists. How to validate the careers of communications officers? Researchers can undertake communications work and vice versa, but usually these two careers are quite different—with different professional outcomes. How can this work become more recognized institutionally to expand career opportunities for communications officers? How can appropriate incentives be put in place so that research communication becomes a viable career in the long term? More support networks among communications officers are an important place to start, so that those working within communications can act collectively to define and lobby for the changes that will make the profession more sustainable in the future. In terms of the work itself, research communications as whole must become more recognized and valued by primary researchers. Currently, the relationships between researchers and communications staff are very strained, and this frequently hampers research communications as a whole. Improving these relationships will require support and validation from beyond the research communications field itself, with higher level officials helping to foster the institutional and sector-wide acceptance of communications as a vital part of the development process. Finally, the wide variety of policy actors that exist are generally unrecognized—which makes M&E all that much more complicated. There are far more actors and roles than the current linear policy model recognizes. How to establish a framework that represents that complex reality?

Capacity Development: Many participants felt they were tasked with too many activities to handle all at once, juggling too many balls in the air. They want more guidance on processes and products. Again, donor coherence would help to streamline many redundant and parallel processes. But how can communications officers and their partners manage all of their existing work? For some, these pressures suggested a need to learn other skills; this could be achieved through more training in a variety of areas—particularly further workshops on ICTs. Similarly, many felt that training should be developed to help communications officers better understand the complexities of the policy process, and within this how best to achieve policy influence. Importantly, many participants also suggested the need to train across levels—to reach those outside of research communications itself, especially those at higher levels within the organization—to help them understand better the role of research communications: what it can contribute to the institution and to the overall development process through the uptake of research and the influencing of behaviour.

Support from DFID: When dealing with complexity, a certain amount of flexibility is needed. In the case of RPCs, longer-term institutional support and funding seem to be the kinds of flexibility most desired by those present at the workshop. Closely tied in with issues of flexibility are those of purpose. Are RPCs about proving or improving? This is not so clear at the present time as the limited resources available currently lend themselves toward proving—because they are generally insufficient to facilitate improving, both for research communications itself and for project environments. More directly within the purview of DFID were suggestions that research communications could be engaged more directly with in-country staff and offices. At present there is very little connection between RPCs and in-country programmes. Participants were highly desirous of more engagement with DFID contacts at the country level, of being able to think of DFID country offices as a type of resource base for Southern RPC partners and of connecting country offices to communication-based events. On another issue, that of branding, the participants felt strongly that there needs to be more clarity from DFID on this initiative, about what is expected when documents are prepared and about ownership and collaboration. There are times, the group believed, when branding could be beneficial, but their prevailing opinion was that universal branding requirements may undermine projects and collaborations in certain locations, and even put local partners into vulnerable situations if seen to be working too closely with British organizations. At best, participants felt that issues of branding will need to be reviewed on a case by case basis so that exceptions can be made if the situation warrants.

03 Conclusions

Several key conclusions and shared challenges across the RPCs emerged from the workshop:

Conclusions:

- ODI's research on RPCs is on the right track, resonating with participants' experiences at many points, though some preliminary conclusions should be reviewed in light of differing opinions within the workshop group. Active participation by RPCs in the current 'stories of change' research will improve the quality of this research overall and provide a platform for sharing the most successful strategies developed thus far by the RPC community.
- Communications officers are keen to improve their Web 2.0 skills. Practical, collaborative trainings supported by DFID can facilitate the adoption of these new interactive internet tools.

10 Key Challenges:

- Researcher—Communications relationships
- Relationships between RPCs and DFID country offices
- Monitoring & Evaluation: Timeframe and key indicators
- Developing communications strategies
- Branding issues
- More training for communications officers
- More training for others about research communications
- More research on research communications
- More research on the actors and processes of policy-making
- More support for building peer/professional networks

ANNEX 1: WORKSHOP AGENDA

Time	Session	Presenter/Facilitator
08.30	Arrival and Coffee	
09.00	Welcome, purpose of the workshop and introductions	Peter Taylor
10.00	DFID Research Strategy – opportunities and challenges	Abigail Mulhall,
10.30	Tea	
11.00	Presentation: Effectiveness of DFID's policy (of minimum spend of 10% on communications in RPCs) in making research more appropriate for different audiences; more accessible; and taken up in policy and practice. Preliminary findings from study.	John Young ODI
11.20	Group Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To share experiences of approaches to research communications • To explore successes and challenges • To identify support needed for more effective work 	
12.30	Plenary – what support needed to scale up impact through communications	Peter Taylor
13.00	Lunch	
14.00	Belated welcome to workshop	Joanne Alston, Head of Central Research Department
14.10	Presentation: The potential of Web 2.0 (blogs, discussion forums, iGoogle etc.) to increase visibility of – in particular – southern research and to promote engagement and discussion of research so that it is useful and subsequently used.	Chris Addison Euforic
14.30	Groupwork <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To share experiences of using Web2.0 tools • Successes, limitations and challenges • Recommendations for action 	
15.15	Plenary – issues and resolutions	Peter Taylor
15.45	Wrap-up and Actions	Peter Taylor Abigail Mulhall
16.00	Close	

ANNEX 2: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants – 3rd Communications Workshop July 22nd 2008 – DFID Palace Street

RPC	Director/Comms Officer	Contact
HD3 Research and Capacity Building in Reproductive and Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS in developing countries	Tamsin Kelk	tamsin.kelk@lshtm.ac.uk
HD5 – Achieving MDGs 4 and 5	Rebecca Wolfe	rebecca.wolfe@lshtm.ac.uk
HD7 –Effective Health Care Alliance Programme	Harriet MacLehose	hgmac@liv.ac.uk
HD105 – Consortium for Research on Equitable Health Systems	Nicola Lord Rebecca Wolfe	nicola.lord@lshtm.ac.uk rebecca.wolfe@lshtm.ac.uk
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HD 8 Educational Outcomes and Poverty	Dr. Bolormaa Shagdaar	bs364@cam.ac.uk
HD 9 Implementing Education Quality in Low income countries	Angeline Barrett Rita Chawla-Duggan	angeline.barrett@bris.ac.uk r.c.duggan@bath.ac.uk
HD 10 Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE)	Nicole Blum	a.n.blum@sussex.ac.uk
HD 11 Evidence for action on Treatment and Care HIV	Annabelle South [Admin and Comms Manager]	annabelle.South@lshtm.ac.uk
HD12 Addressing the Balance of Burden in HIV/AIDS (ABBA)	Dr Sally Theobold	sjt@liverpool.ac.uk
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Citizenship, participation and Accountability DRC	Joanna Wheeler	j.wheeler@ids.ac.uk

RPC	Director/Comms Officer	Contact
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Resource People – 3rd Communications Workshop July 22nd 2008 – DFID Palace Street

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ANNEX 3: GROUP WORK - SHARING ACROSS RPCS: COMMON SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGE

Common Successes	Common Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Built capacity in communications• Getting buy in from partners in communication strategy• Producing major reports• Policy impacts in Uganda, Malawi and Bangladesh• Bringing results to Parliamentarians• Direct engagement with stakeholders• Innovations in website design, strategies, research and planning• GMR background paper• Realising Rights unsafe abortion workshop and information dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to look for role models for research engagement for communication with audiences• Working with busy senior researchers• M&E for complex and informal outcomes• Communicating to secondary audiences• Evaluating impact• Working in multiple languages• Difficult to research, engage and communicate all at the same time• Partners want to do 'too much'• Opening dialogue with researchers• Researchers not interested in communications• Getting researchers to take communication seriously & report all their activities• Making research communication a discipline so that it has credibility in academia• The need to expand the area of communications• Lack of support in developing strategies• Determining the audience: who are we doing this for?• Unpacking policy to practice• Getting research communications programs up and running• Creating opportunities for career progression• Creating peer support networks for communications officers

ANNEX 4 PRESENTATION: REVIEW OF COMMUNICATIONS IN RPCS

Review of Communications in DFID-funded Research Programme Consortia (RPCs)

DFID Research Communications Meeting
22nd July 2008

John Young (j.young@odi.org.uk)
ODI, London

DFID RPCs

- DFID currently funds 30 Research Programme Consortia
- Introduced a 10% minimum spend on communications
- Each RPC required to produce a strategy demonstrating how research would be put into use
- DFID provided a series of support mechanisms to enable this



RAPID Review

Key questions

- How effective is this policy?
- What has it achieved – is there evidence?
- What are the challenges in implementing the communication cycle?
- How can DFID continue to support research uptake?
- How can DFID demonstrate impact – an M&E system



RAPID Review

Methodology

- Review of RPC documents
- Interviews with RPC directors and COs
- Review of comparators and "state of knowledge"
- Workshop with DFID staff and selected others



Outputs

- Wide range of written outputs and meetings
- Clearly policy-oriented
- Few uses of popular media and stories
- Little investments in building networks



Processes and Structure

- Stakeholder consultations often lead to national advisory groups
- Most have dedicated communications post & communications working group
- Average spend is higher than 10%
- Organisational tension between researchers and comms staff



Monitoring & Evaluation

- RPCs have followed DFID requirements (Log -Frame)
- Little knowledge of appropriate M&E methods
- Little differentiation between quality of outputs, uptake and impact
- Little knowledge of how to monitor and evaluate partnerships and networks




Working Practices

- RPCs are seeking opportunities for policy engagement – stakeholder workshops
- Research is more demand driven, more applied, more multi-disciplinary and more open access
- More links between RPCs
- More multiplier funding being sought
- Serious reflection on North-South partnerships, but still a big challenge
- Incentives for the above are not clear





Getting Research Taken Up

- Several RPCs already made successful bids at getting research taken up
- They are focussing on pathways that will yield opportunities in the future
- International, national, sub-national levels of policy, DFID policy, civil society, media, academics




Capacity Strengthening

- Good opportunities for strengthening individual research and communication skills
- Some strengthening of southern capacity for research leadership but little discussion of the challenges
- Same for South-South exchange and collaboration
- RPCs reflecting as best they can on complexities of partnership and funding
- Little discussion of how to sustain capacity after the life of the RPC





Summary

- Best understood part of research communication cycle is **Stakeholder involvement**
 - Inception meetings, advisory groups, relationship building activities
 - Enabled higher quality involvement in policy processes
- Least understood part is **M&E**
 - How can we review the impact pathways we are creating?

Next steps

- Identify changes in behaviour among RPCs and reasons
 - Individual events
 - Longer term changes
- Explore cases of claimed impact and reasons
- Comparison with pre-10% rule research programmes
- Strategy for further improvement and M&E system

Some examples of new practices

- Stakeholder
- Building alliances
- Impact:
 - Increased attention to issues in UK rights
 - China approach (COMDIS)



Stories of success

- What is the story?
- Is there any information?
- What was the context?
- What did the behaviour change look like?
- What was the impact?
- What factors were successful?
- What comes next?
- Where can we support it?



Group work

- Share experiences of approaches to research communication
- Explore successes and challenges
- Identify support needed for more effective work
- (feedback on ODI's proposal for next steps)

ANNEX 5: GROUP WORK – RESONANCES/DIFFERENCES WITH ODI REPORT, OTHER CHALLENGES AND THE NEED FOR MORE SUPPORT

Resonances with the ODI report

- **Lack of knowledge regarding M&E**
- **Implementing strategies**
- **Lack of communication capacity**
- **Structural tension between communications and research**
- **Researchers not recognizing their own communications activities**
- **More examples of changes in behaviour**
- **Conceiving of 'policymakers' makers broadly, including grassroots leaders, is good**
- **The 10% have brought greater focus to communications**

Differences with the ODI report

- Some disciplines do have a culture of communications
- More networking is going on than is captured in the report
- Successful changes in behaviour need more recognition
- Proving impact is a challenge over a short time frame
- There is a need to formally acknowledge the complexity of engaging with policymakers
- There is a need for more guidance of phased strategies and on M&E

Successes for Research Communications

- More personal investment from partners locally
- Government ministries' uptake of research
- Equal visibility of partners in branding, etc.
- Building on long-term relationships
- Use of ICT to communicate internally and with partners to make communications easier and more efficient.
- Engaging with stakeholders in the design of research
- Communications training workshop involving all partners
- Translation of complex scientific information into accessible format used to open new doors
- Use of ICT and mass media for easy uptake & wider dissemination of results

Challenges for Research Communications

- Communications often defined as everything – it needs to be unpacked
- Capacity building
- How to institutionalize research communications?
- How to incentivise research communications?
- More motivation for individual researchers
- Donor leadership and consistency required
- Incentives and log-frames tend to over-emphasize outputs
- DFID engagement sometimes difficult at the country level
- Insufficient funding to develop long-term programmes and communications programmes

Where More Support is Needed?

- Clarity about the use of the DFID logo
- Longer-term funding, larger grants, more money for communications
- More practical support from DFID
- Longer term institutional knowledge needed, especially at DFID
- Establish peer support networks
- Recognize different types of impacts and indicators
- Additional help with communications strategies: templates for strategy and actions plans
- Need for better guidance on processes of decision-making to understand impact/ attribution
- Trainings and other workshops in countries/ regions—some directed particularly at senior staff people to get them fully on-board. Link these workshops to DFID country offices
- DFID country offices should be used as resource bases
- More training: Practical skills, policy/influencing pathways, media links
- Helping to overcome researcher resistance to communications
- Clearer evaluation requirements
- Revaluating the use of the logframe for research communications
- More donor coherence regarding M&E: simplify and streamline tools

ANNEX 6 PRESENTATION: THE POTENTIAL OF WEB 2.0 FOR RESEARCH COMMUNICATION

Web2+R4D
On plain paper

Euforic's perspective on trying to use the new web for communicating development research information
Chris Addison
DFID, London, July 2008



Web2: What should you know?

- **BLOGGING**
 - How to put content on the web
- **WIKIs**
 - How to write content as a group
- **TAGGING**
 - How to keyword your work (to find it again)
- **FEEDS**
 - How to move information across the web
- **MASHUPS**
 - How to bring the information together

Blogger home page

The library of links: tagging

Social Bookmarking - tagging

- Shared database of links (bookmarks)
- Free choice of tagging
- View bookmarks of others
- Annotate and use tags to produce lists for your website
- Find colleagues with similar interests

A new interface – feeds & mashups

In the past we would check a number of sites by visiting them. Only a few would have been updated or have relevant information

Now we can see the content on our own home page

Searching

New web2 services

- New content platforms
 - Slideshare.net
 - Youtube.com,
 - Blip.tv
 - Itunes.com

BLOG your news items to produce a feed and get indexed

Submit your documents to a Directory or repository Like R4D

Use your feed and Email form from R4D in your site

TAG or keyword Your outputs

Use other feeds and mashup on your site

ANNEX 7: GROUP WORK – SHARING EXPERIENCES WITH WEB 2.0 TECHNOLOGIES

What Web 2.0 tools are you already using?

Blogs
Short video clips
Sharepoint
Wikis
Email
CDs
SMS
ODI Facebook group
Adding to Wikipedia
www.commoncraft.com

Other Suggested Websites:

www.tacticaltechnologies.com
ODI toolkits for Research and Policy in Development:
<http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/Tools/Toolkits/index.html>
Policy briefs as a communication tool for development research
<http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/background-notes/0805-policy-briefs-as-a-communication-tool.pdf>
Strengthening humanitarian networks: The Network Functions Approach
<http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/background-notes/0804-strengthening-humanitarian-networks.pdf>
Making a difference: M&E of policy research
<http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/background-notes/0804-strengthening-humanitarian-networks.pdf>
Outcome Mapping Learning Community
www.outcomemapping.ca
http://www.slideshare.net/ODI_Webmaster/outcome-mapping-for-insight-to-impact-meeting/

How can others be encouraged to use them?

- The tools are free/cheap to try and experiment with—for now.
- Blogs are increasingly recognized as an intellectual endeavour.
- Web 2.0 tools permit immediate feedback and communication between partners.
- Tagging allows much broader and yet more targeted dissemination of information.
- More trainings and capacity-development workshops

What about those without access?

- Sites such as www.lowband.org allow websites to also function in low bandwidth versions that are more easily accessible to those with poor internet connectivity.
- There is a need to find successful examples of internet collaboration in the South.

What are the potentials for collaboration?

- Know your target audience – otherwise there will be no buy-in and your efforts may be wasted.
- The potential for collaboration is high if such internet-based projects are accessible and clearly defined, but with some flexibility. However like any other kind of relationship there must be continual efforts to build trust, accountability and safety.

ANNEX 8: FINAL WRAP-UP – BRINGING IDEAS TOGETHER

Experience

- lots of innovation
- more sharing/stories needed

Capacity Development

- guidance on processes and products
- how to juggle many balls

Strategy

- challenges of expanding research communications
- need for templates/methods to support research communications

Training/Workshops

- skills
- influencing policy
- different skills different organizational actors

Learning/M&E

- constrained by time and funding cycles
- M&E a big challenge
- need clear evaluation requirements
- current indicators inadequate
- moving 'beyond the logframe'
- more donor coherence

DFID Support Potentials

- longer term institutional support and more flexible funding
- be clear about purpose: proving and improving
- engagement at country level: DFID country offices as resource bases and also more effort to connect research communications activities to country offices
- clarity about branding/ownership

Community/Relationships

- structural issues: career development and incentives
- challenging relationships between researchers and communications officers
- need for peer support networks
- connecting with a wide/diverse range of policy actors

ANNEX 9: WORKSHOP EVALUATION

One Positive Aspect of the Workshop and One Negative

POSITIVES	NEGATIVES
Networking experience sharing, exposure to new communication technologies	
Positive meeting. Helpful to learn about using new technologies for communication	
Euforic presentation. Good overview of range of Web 2.0 tools we could be using	
Good opportunity to network and understand context of the research groups.	
Good group work	
Good groupwork – plenty of time to engage with key issues and share ideas	Day badly divided – lunch too late so long morning and short afternoon
Very well organised workshop and well facilitated	Could have included senior level researchers so that debates don't become 'siloed'
Useful space for this community and networking/ideas exchange	
A very useful day – clarified a lot of issues	Would be good to find out more about the marketing side of things
Good opportunity to discuss shared challenges and highlights	Would have liked to hear one or two formal(ish) presentations of good practice
Really great day, especially in terms of meeting so many people from other RPCs and putting faces to names within DFID – I look forward to the follow-up and it would be great to receive the full list of participants and email addresses	Building relationships
Good opportunity to talk	Not enough direction in groups
Meet with other RPC comms people	
ODI presentation	

POSITIVES	NEGATIVES
Great to meet and discuss strategies and lessons with other RPCs	Too short/rushed
Reassuring to know that we're all facing challenges	
Great opportunity to share experiences	
Useful suggestions for new tools, methods etc.	Need to meet more frequently and have a space for discussion in other ways (email group, discussion blog etc.)
Useful technology/web 2.0 info/break out groups	Focuses on DFID – not REALLY an opportunity to share methods and successes
Very informative, various presentations on new developments in DFID in terms of communication (but informal) policy unit and new R4D website	Food/lunch was not very good – poor choice, low protein
Info on web 2.0 technology and opportunities for RPCs to use these	When splitting into groups consider putting RPCs together – today grouping was random (by counting 1,2,3,4) which didn't allow sharing of experiences between RPCs
	Was a lot more focused on ICT - need also focus on other aspects/other communication channels and other aspects of comms work
Discussion of Web 2.0 especially RSS feeds	There was some lack of coordination of DFID speakers, which to some extent affected the content of the workshop
It was good to liaise with other communications staff about their approach to comms, especially dialogue with researchers and how to prioritise audiences	
Updates on DFID's research strategy were useful	
Learning about web 2.0 tools	Discussion around ODI research M+E not focused enough
Need for learning more and spending more time on actual communication tools and methods	
Great to meet other people in the field and realise I am not alone!	Would have liked to hear one or two formal(ish) presentations of good practice

POSITIVES	NEGATIVES
Could have a bit more space for groups so can hear each other without background noise	Meeting others and sharing experiences
Could have more information available as handouts especially for useful websites for web2.0 technologies and for training	Good content of day overall
A lot of information in a very short time – presentations felt very rushed	Good to hear about ODI’s assessment of research communication in RPCs
Sharing experiences, especially successful ones and less theory	Need to meet more frequently and have a space for discussion in other ways (email group, discussion blog etc.)
Great involvement	Maybe some more handouts/materials would have been useful
Great networking opportunity	Perhaps more groupwork discussion more focussed on specific issues (last session on web2.0 was very helpful)
Opportunity to meet colleagues working in similar circumstances	Maybe should have 2/3 workshops a year to cover specific topics e.g. networking, new technologies, south-south communications etc.
Learning from others’ experiences and getting new ideas	Sometimes very difficult to hear what people were saying – audio in room not very good
Very useful about future technologies and way to practically exploit them in our work	
Opportunity to meet with others involved in comms	
Exchange experiences	

THE DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: LEADING THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S FIGHT AGAINST WORLD POVERTY.

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