

COMMUNICATING RESEARCH FOR UTILISATION (“CRU”): Specialist Professional and Institutional Capacity Building in Africa

Scoping Study commissioned by DFID Research and Evidence Division; Research Uptake Team

Background

DFID proposes to support the more systematic communication of Global Public Goods research by building the capacity and skills of researchers, and the institutions in which they work; and by strengthening the enabling environment for research to be taken up and used in development policy and practice.

DFID’s Research Strategy 2008 – 2013 pledges to put equal effort into both producing new knowledge and technologies, as well as making sure that developing countries and the wider development community use them. DFID has committed to spend up to 30% of the total £1bn committed to research ‘in making research available, accessible and useable through a range of means.’

The extensive consultation which informed the Research Strategy called for DFID to continue their role as ‘thought leaders’ in the area of research communication. But there was broad recognition that better research communications on its own will not guarantee research uptake, and that in Africa the current levels of awareness and capacity need to be improved.

The Working Paper on Research Communication which accompanies the Strategy <http://www.research4development.info/PDF/Outputs/Consultation/ResearchStrategyWorkingPaperfinalcommunicationsP1.pdf> identified support needed in three connected areas. First, to improve the incentives for researchers to communicate; second to build skills at personal and institutional levels to more effectively communicate so that the conditions for uptake by identified users of research evidence are identified, planned and optimised; and third to strengthen the capacity and demand for evidence in policy and practice.

Following on from the DFID-funded African Research Communication Support Facility seminar held in Stellenbosch, South Africa in September 2009, during which the need for specialist capacity in strategic research communication management and research communication skills in sub-Saharan universities and research institutions was established, DFID has now commissioned a more extensive study to establish the current levels of capacity to create and use development research evidence and the demand for capacity-building support.

The study will be undertaken in sub-Saharan Africa in consultation with universities, institutions including governments and NGOs, agencies and development research programmes, at regional and national levels.

The scoping study partners are the Association of Commonwealth Universities, Dr John Kirkland, j.kirkland@acu.ac.uk; the Centre for Research into Science and Technology, Professor Johann Mouton, jm6@sun.ac.za; and Organisation Systems Development, Diana Coates, diana.coates@gmail.com. Contact the Co-ordinator, Diana Coates at OSD for further details.

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