ESRC-DFID Strategic Advisory Team

Report

Review of ESRC-DFID Joint Scheme for Research on International Development (Poverty Alleviation)

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Executive Summary

This report presents an initial desk review and analysis of the ESRC-DFID Joint Scheme for Research on International Development (Poverty Alleviation) and its impact based on analysis of standard documentation produced by award holders under the scheme. Launched in 2005, the ESRC-DFID Scheme has now funded five rounds of research in two Phases. The last round of Phase 2 was launched in July 2011 for projects to commence during 2012. At the time of the review, the Scheme’s Strategic Advisory Team (SAT) had information about the first five rounds, which had funded 83 projects involving researchers from 25 countries.

The 46 projects funded under Phase 1 of the Scheme were reviewed by the SAT in more detail. The majority of research supported by the Scheme had been conducted in Africa and South Asia, both regions with a well-established need. Overall, research had been conducted in 47 countries. Whilst projects had addressed a very wide range of specific research questions, the review found five generic questions that captured the Scheme’s overall research contribution. These were:

- What makes people poor and keeps them in poverty?
- How do people move out of poverty?
- What types of poverty interventions help people to move out of poverty?
- Improving the evidence base for development policy and practice.
- Developing new methodologies.

The analysis of the Scheme’s impact highlighted the very important academic output from projects, reflecting the Scheme’s approach linking research excellence and development impact. Projects were found to be publishing much of their work in world-class peer-reviewed publications, albeit in many cases a number of years after projects had closed, which is partly due to the long publication lead times in the best journals. It should be expected that this is an area of output and impact that will grow significantly over the coming years as more projects mature to completion giving researchers the opportunity for publication.

Progress against the Scheme’s current objective to deliver a pathway to development impact was less well documented, partly because of the need for additional time required to build non-academic impact from research projects, but also partly because of the difficulty in assessing different kinds of impact. In Phase 1, projects were only asked in the application process to outline plans for communication, and it was clear that this had primarily led to a passive approach to impact, using activities such as end of project publications, policy briefs and workshops. In contrast, all Phase 2 projects have been asked to supply detailed Impact Plans (Round 1) or Pathway to Impact documents (Rounds 2 and 3).

A number of Phase 1 projects had adopted more active approaches to building impact and it was clear that this was already leading to potential benefits in terms of enhanced potential impact. Central to this was early engagement with potential users or other beneficiaries of research in the co-design, implementation and use of research.

The SAT has also published a draft Impact Strategy for the Scheme which draws upon other research programme experience and provides guidance to projects and the Scheme as a whole in terms of building and capturing development impact. This Strategy will be revised after consultation with ERSC-DFID researchers drawing upon similar work undertaken by the related ESPA programme (www.espa.ac.uk/impact). The 2012 Impact Strategy will underlie the SAT’s future
work programme and support of projects to enhance the overall impact of the Scheme.

The SAT is also now conducting further analysis of Scheme funded research, including a direct contact with a number of award holders to ascertain all outputs that have been produced and to discuss research impact with them in more detail during 2012.
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BBSRC</td>
<td>Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-I</td>
<td>Co-Investigator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGIAR</td>
<td>Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defra</td>
<td>Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>EOA</td>
<td>End of Award (report)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESDS</td>
<td>Economic and Social Data Service (ESRC data library)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESPA</td>
<td>Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESRC</td>
<td>Economic and Social Research Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEFCE</td>
<td>Higher Education Funding Council for England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSRID</td>
<td>Joint Scheme for Research on International Development (Poverty-Alleviation) (ESRC-DFID)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIS</td>
<td>Management Information System(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIS</td>
<td>Management Information System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NERC</td>
<td>Natural Environment Research Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI</td>
<td>Principal Investigator (Leader of a RC project)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC</td>
<td>Research Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCUK</td>
<td>Research Councils United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REF</td>
<td>Research Excellence Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REF2014</td>
<td>Research Excellence Framework 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELU</td>
<td>Rural Economy and land Use (programme)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>Strategic Advisory Team (of the ESRC-DFID JSRID)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSC</td>
<td>Shared Serviced Centre (of the UK Research Councils)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOK</td>
<td>Web of Knowledge (<a href="http://wok.mimas.ac.uk/">http://wok.mimas.ac.uk/</a>)</td>
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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

1.1.1 The primary purpose of this report was to map the research from phase 1, understand what topics had been covered and what questions asked, identify areas for synthesis and reflect on research quality, emerging impacts and ways to maximise them in the future.

1.2 The ESRC-DFID Joint Scheme

1.2.1 The ESRC-DFID Joint Scheme for Research on International Development (Poverty Alleviation), (JSRID) was first launched in 2005 as a major new joint research initiative between the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The Scheme’s design benefited from the experience derived from earlier DFID Research Council (RC) collaborations including those involving the Medical Research Council (MRC) and Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC).

1.2.2 The investment in the JSRID came at a time when there was increasing interest from both DFID and a number of Research Councils in collaborative working to generate high quality (world class) research evidence to inform and influence international development. The Scheme was designed to build upon the recognised strengths of both partners, DFID as a world-leading international development agency and ESRC for its rigorous and objective processes for the commissioning and managing of academic research. The investment also came at a time when both agencies were strengthening their commitment to link investments in generating research evidence, to impact in this for development. This was further strengthened through the subsequent adoption of the cross Research Council narrative on Pathways to Impact delivered through research excellence (RCUK’s “Excellence with Impact” agenda).

1.2.3 In November 2010, the Scheme appointed a Strategic Advisory Team (SAT) based at the University of Edinburgh to advise on impact, but specifically to “lead on securing and enhancing the impact on policy and practice of the research funded under the… scheme”. This report represents the first major output of the SAT and reports on the findings of preliminary research by the SAT describing the outputs and impact of activities funded during Phase 1 of the Scheme. This work will continue for the duration of 2011, with a more comprehensive report based on systematic analysis of evidence describing the Scheme scheduled to be published early in 2012.

1.2.4 The purpose of this report was to provide the Scheme’s funders with an objective overview of the Scheme’s achievements based upon the best available evidence available to the SAT. During the SAT’s review it became apparent that there are a number of issues relating to the systems used by the Scheme for the reporting and capture of outcomes and impact by projects. These issues and the associated challenges relating to availability and quality of evidence have limited the depth of the current review. The reasons underlying these issues and options to resolve them are discussed in more detail in the SAT’s Inception Report finalised in December 2011.

1.2.5 As part of the SAT’s work programme for 2011, there are now a series of activities being implemented to capture additional information describing, outputs, outcomes and impact from projects. This process will also capture additional information to document the pathways to impact, the theory of change associated with the impact and the links back to data and research activities supported by the Scheme (attribution). This new information will inform the more comprehensive review to be published in 2012.
2 The review method

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The Scheme’s SAT provides an academic perspective based on practical experience of generating research excellence with development impact within the remit of the scheme. The SAT has produced a draft Impact Strategy for the JSRID working in conjunction with the closely related Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation Programme (ESPA) funded by DFID, ESRC and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). The Impact Strategy (Annex 1) has been produced to provide a framework to build and describe impact in the Scheme.

2.1.2 The Impact Strategy draws upon on the concepts of Pathways to Impact\(^1\) (UK Research Councils, as implemented as the ESRC Impact Toolkit\(^2\)), with a narrative on the theory of change (DFID), and the emerging process of assessing impact\(^3\) coordinated by the UK’s Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in advance of the first Research Excellence Framework (REF) assessment in 2012 (REF2014).

2.2 Conceptualising the pathway to development impact

2.2.1 For the purpose of this review, the SAT has applied a framework based upon the draft Impact Strategy. The meant that the projects funded under Phase 1 of the Scheme were reviewed using the following questions:

1. **What** were the main outcomes of the research? 
   This included a review of the delivery of research excellence expected by both funders.

2. **Who** has or will benefit from the research? **How** will they benefit and **Why**?

3. **How** have projects engaged with potential beneficiaries to build impact?

4. **How** can the impact of individual projects be assessed, and through extension, describe the impact of the overall programme?

2.3 The review process

2.3.1 The review was conducted by members of the SAT using available documentation to collate the best available evidence of the outcomes and impact of the Scheme, to date. The review focused on Phase 1 of the Scheme, but parts of this report also refer to components of Phase 2, where appropriate to add to the overall narrative and understanding of the Scheme.

2.3.2 The SAT reviewed all available documents, consisting of research applications, regular reporting summaries and outputs from projects. Most of the reporting available for review, was the result of self-reporting by projects and had not previously been subject to systematic programme-level analysis. The SAT has now commenced a process of engagement with the Scheme’s projects to enhance the range of impact evidence available for future reviews.

2.3.3 The review process concentrated on Phase 1 projects that had been completed as these had the most thorough sets of documentation and reporting. Management documentation, including research proposals and regular reports were collated by

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1. [http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/kei/impacts/Pages/home.aspx](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/kei/impacts/Pages/home.aspx)
ESRC and provided to the SAT. ESRC were also able to provide data documenting the researchers involved in the scheme as an extract from their management information system. The SAT’s access to research outputs depended on links provided via ESRC’s research outcome database on their website4, supplemented by systematically searching through journal databases, publisher’s websites and institutional web pages.

2.4 Data available for the review
2.4.1 Data available for the review were grouped as follows:

**Documentation about the Scheme:**
This included documentation available publically (eg on the ESRC website) and guidance to projects and reviewers that were provided directly by ESRC and DFID. These documents were used to construct the timeline describing the way that the Scheme has developed (Section 3).

**Data extracts on projects and researchers:**
These data were extracted from the Management Information System (MIS) supporting ESRC bespoke grant systems and from March 2011 run by the Shared Services Centre (SSC) of Research Councils UK (RCUK). It provided details on funded projects and researchers. Data availability from this source was limited for the current study by SSC’s transition programme for their MIS at the time of the SAT study. These data were used to generate the statistics on projects (Section 3) and partnerships (Section 7).

**Research proposals and internal reporting:**
These documents were provided by ESRC and DFID from their file systems and then collated by the SAT for analysis. This work was constrained by relevant information being unavailable as is documented in Annex 2.

**External reporting by projects:**
Major reports produced by projects, including final reports and publications are now placed in the public domain on the ESRC website. This process is subject to self-reporting by projects and includes the option to provide hyperlinks to other repositories. Where possible the SAT were able to obtain original copies of outputs, but in many cases this could not be done when the links provided by projects were either no longer available or password protected, or in some cases, where no links were provided. As a result of this review process, PIs of all projects are encouraged to update outcomes information on the ESRC Research Outcomes System6. Please refer to the ESRC-DFID web pages6 for updated information about project outcomes.

The available documentation on research proposals and reporting (internal and external) were used to compile information describing the research and impact highlights in this report (Sections 4 and 5).

2.5 Quality control of available data
2.5.1 The SAT’s research process and utilisation of data that had been collected before the SAT had been established necessitated a process of quality control before analysis. This highlighted a number of issues and challenges that will be addressed in the SAT’s Inception report and work programme. Four main themes emerged:

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4 www.esrc.ac.uk
5 http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/Pages/ResearchOutcomesProject.aspx
6 http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/funding-opportunities/international-funding/esrc-dfid/index.aspx
1. **Quantitative data were inconsistent.** This was most apparent in relation to programme-level indicators of outputs and outcomes (e.g., numbers of publications attributed to projects and the Scheme were inconsistently provided). As a result, the SAT were unable to utilise these data for the current report and have commenced a new activity to work with projects to collate all relevant outputs. There were also limitations in the data extract provided from SSC and work is ongoing to improve the quality of this information available for future analysis.

2. **Availability of reports varied between projects.** The main reason for this was that the majority of projects in Phase 1 have yet to complete their full reporting cycle, which includes an impact report that is completed one year after the project closes. The current availability of reports is summarised in Annex. The main analysis concentrated on projects with the most complete set of reports, this included those which had been subject to external peer review, and those with comprehensive audit trails of excellent research linking to verifiable impact.

3. **Variable quality of reporting.** The SAT’s review of documentation highlighted a very high degree of variation in the quality of reporting by projects. A number of projects provided excellent documentation of their achievements and a narrative of how their research had been put into use by local stakeholders. This type of reporting fitted well with the concept of a pathway to development impact described in the SAT’s Impact Strategy. Unfortunately, the majority of projects did not provide material that could be used to generate a robust analysis of impact of the Scheme. The SAT will work with projects to enhance the quality of future reporting, which will become part of the Scheme-level component of the new Research Councils UK Research Outcomes System.  

4. **Reporting formats.** Projects are required to report to ESRC and DFID during implementation and after closure of projects. Most of the reporting formats used by the Scheme use standard formats from one of the funders (e.g., ESRC Final and Impact Reports, DFID High Level Indicators) and these may not necessarily capture the nuanced impact narrative of a programme jointly implemented by a research council and DFID. Some of the reporting formats have been modified to meet the needs of the Scheme, but this review highlights that more will need to be done. The SAT’s Inception report will suggest ways that reporting systems could be improved to enhance the quality of information captured whilst also reducing the reporting burden on projects.

2.6 Limitations for systematic or meta-analysis

2.6.1 The issues on data quality highlighted above meant that the current review was subject to a number of very significant limitations for systematic or meta-analysis of the programme. For this reason, this review is based upon best available evidence with a mixed approach linking limited quantitative analysis (where data quality was assured) with a more extensive narrative analysis, which largely was based upon self-reporting by projects. In many cases, it was not possible to verify the impact narratives provided by projects as described by the draft Impact Strategy for the Scheme.

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7 [http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/Pages/ResearchOutcomesProject.aspx](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/Pages/ResearchOutcomesProject.aspx)
2.7 Future activities to enhance data availability and quality

2.7.1 As has been described above, the SAT has now put in place a series of suggested actions to improve the data and reporting quality available for future analysis. These are discussed in more detail as part of the SAT’s Inception Report.

2.7.2 The main components of this are:

1. **Implementation of the Impact Strategy for the Scheme.** Once this Strategy is approved, its implementation by individual projects and at programme-level will provide an integrated framework to conceptualise, build and assess impact.

2. **Capturing and securing research outcomes.** The SAT has already commenced a process to fill the gaps in the availability of research outcomes (including specifically publications) to where possible\(^8\) place copies in secure storage. The Inception Report will include a proposal to enhance this process based on models previously implemented by the UK’s Darwin Initiative, and the Rural Economy and Land Use Programme.

3. **Improving future reporting.** The SAT will be proposing changes to reporting systems and formats to enhance the way that the Scheme’s impact is reported.

\(^8\) Copyright restrictions will be a limitation.
3 The Evolution of the ESRC-DFID Scheme

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 When first launched in 2005, the Scheme had the aims and approaches summarised in Box 1. At the time that the call was launched, many of features outlined here represented a radical departure from "business as usual" for both ESRC and DFID.

| **Aim:** | “to enhance the quality and impact of social science research addressing the key international development goal of reducing poverty amongst the poorest countries and peoples of the world. The new scheme will foster high-quality basic research that enhances understanding, develops thinking and facilitates policy on this most difficult and fundamental issue” |
| **Scope:** | “The main scope of the scheme is to fund basic research that has an eventual and demonstrable relevance to the international development agenda for reducing poverty. Beyond this broad thrust, the scheme is non-prescriptive in terms of the research topics and type of project that will be supported. Flexibility is a major feature of the scheme, and this concept occurs throughout this section defining the scope of the scheme. The intent is to commission the best and most appropriate projects to address the issues identified by applicants, and NOT to inhibit intellectual creativity.” |
| **Research challenges:** | were stated to “include but are not limited to: |
| - understanding and creating the socio-economic conditions that are necessary to facilitate the alleviation of poverty; |
| - new theoretical and conceptual thinking about the nature of development and the conditions under which development and poverty alleviation can be delivered; |
| - methodological challenges posed by international comparative work in different social, economic and cultural settings; |
| - paucity of datasets, especially micro-level or longitudinal data.” |
| **Partnership:** | was stated as being “another feature of the scheme, operating at both the research project level and the research exploitation stage. The scheme enables the bringing together of academics from developing countries with their UK peers, but new partnerships within the UK social science community and wider academic community are also strongly encouraged. Formal partnerships and collaborators in the research process are not a pre-requisite for support under the scheme”. |
| **International dimension:** | The call stated that “the scheme is open to researchers based in recognised higher education institutions, research organisations or organisations with a credible research capacity … Researchers may be based in both UK and non-UK organisations with recognised research capacity”. |

Box 1 Key aspects of the design of the JSRID as detailed in the first call for proposals issued in August 2005.

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9 Text extracted from the first call for proposals issued in May 2005.
3.1.2 For ESRC, it was their first major exploration funding social science supporting international development. The most important change in terms of modality was the recognition of the requirement to allow projects to be truly international, by allowing participation of international researchers, including as the intellectual leader of projects, as the Principal Investigator (PI).

3.1.3 From DFID’s perspective, their significant investment in the Scheme marked a recognition of the importance of high quality research and evidence and its role in informing development policy and practice, and perhaps more significantly, the role of social science and interdisciplinary studies in supporting international development.

3.1.4 To date (June 2011) the Scheme has implemented 5 rounds of funding in two phases, with the final round of the Phase 2 being launched at the end of June 2011.

3.1.5 When first launched in 2005, the announcement of opportunity had a single theme, relating to poverty reduction. Whilst the call stated that projects would be required to deliver “basic research that has an eventual and demonstrable relevance to the international development agenda for reducing poverty”. It was then noted that “beyond this broad thrust, the scheme is non-prescriptive in terms of the research topics and type of project that will be supported”. The flexibility of the scheme was stressed and it is clear that researchers responded to the flexibility from the diversity of projects funded during the early calls.

3.1.6 The Scheme retained a similar approach for the first three rounds of funding (Phase 1) up to the third call issued in 2007. During that time, there was significant progress in terms of improving the documentation provided to applicants, and the back-office systems supporting the call, whilst what was asked of researchers remained essentially the same. In 2009, Phase 2 was launched with the major innovation of providing guidance in the form of three thematic areas for the call whilst also maintaining the general programme theme of poverty reduction.

3.1.7 The concept of priority research themes were introduced at the first call of Phase 2 and have remained since then. This was introduced after an external evaluation of Phase 1 found that the Scheme was funding quality, but disparate, research – hence themes were intended to create a critical mass of thinking in specific areas. At the same time, the Scheme has maintained a general theme of poverty reduction and to date during the first two calls in Phase 2, the majority of funded projects have come from the general theme as opposed to the priority themes. This is an approach that has been kept under regular review by the funders and the Scheme’s Advisory Committee.
3.2 Funded projects (Phase 1)

3.2.1 Details of the number and value of projects funded under Phase 1 of the Scheme are provided as Table 1, with 46 projects funded up to a total value of £12.9 million. The first Round of Phase 2 added a further 17 projects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Round</th>
<th>Year Launched</th>
<th>Projects Started</th>
<th>Project Value</th>
<th>Number Funded</th>
<th>Total Value (£k GBP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>£100k - £700k</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>£3,558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>up to £700k</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>£6,089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>£100k - £250k</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>£3,260</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Totals**

46 £12,906

Table 1 Summary of calls issued under Phase 1 of the ESRC-DFID Scheme.

3.3 Geographic coverage

3.3.1 The ESRC-DFID Scheme has been very flexible in terms of the geographic location of projects that can be funded. The guides to applicants have consistently stated that whilst the preference is that results should benefit poor people in low income countries, the location of the actual research is not restricted. There have been no significant changes in the instructions to applicants throughout the lifetime of the Scheme.

3.4 The impact agenda

3.4.1 Impact has been one area of continual evolution in the Scheme. The first call in 2005, impact was considered passively as part of communication to and engagement with potential end users. This remained the case for the duration of Phase 1, with minor changes in the specifications and instructions provided to applicants and reviewers.

3.4.2 The first call in Phase 2 (2009) marked a significant change with the introduction of a requirement to include a dedicated component of the application to describe a project’s proposed impact plan. Applicants were asked to consider three key questions:

- Who will benefit from this research?
- How will they benefit from this research?
- What will be done to ensure that they have the opportunity to benefit from this research?

3.4.3 In 2010, in conjunction with other Research Councils, the ESRC-DFID Scheme adopted the terminology of “Pathways to Impact” and again required applicants to specify what they would be doing to ensure that their research had the potential to generate impact relevant to the Scheme.

3.4.4 Examination of a selection of applications and funded projects demonstrates a clear shift in behaviour by applicants, reviewers and the selection panel, with the articulation of a credible pathway to potential impact becoming a more explicit component in determining the selection of successful applications. It has also resulted in a change in the way that projects are designed and implemented, with many projects choosing to proactively engage with end-users much earlier in the research process, including during the design phase. End-users (eg policymakers) have also become an increasingly common partner or participant in projects, marking the shift from passive engagement to active involvement in research.
It is extremely important to note that the very significant changes in the way that the ESRC-DFID Scheme has asked their projects to build impact have not yet had sufficient time to fully demonstrate resulting benefits.

The first projects that were required to provide an impact plan commenced research activities in 2010 and their research will run up to at least 2013. For this reason, the evidence documenting the benefits of this process is only likely to become fully apparent from 2015 and beyond.

What can be said at this stage is that the adoption of Impact Plans in 2009 and the Pathway to Impact from 2010 has resulted in significant changes in the ways that many projects are designed and implemented in a way that is adopting examples of best practice to build impact from social science research.

3.5 Innovation and experimentation

3.5.1 As is apparent in the sections above, the ESRC-DFID Scheme has been characterised by a willingness to innovate and experiment in the way that development research is commissioned and funded in the UK. This progress has been built upon a productive and supportive partnership between ESRC and DFID and most importantly their staff involved in the Scheme. The partnership has recognised the respective strengths that each organisation contributes and then asks, how can the Scheme work differently to deliver benefits to the world’s poor. Business as Usual has been innovation!

In many ways, one of the most significant impacts of the Scheme at programme level has been to change the way the DFID works with Research Councils to generate world class research to deliver development impact. Increasingly, this is being achieved through working in partnership with developing country researchers from around the world. The fact that this has now been adopted by other programmes is a testament to one of the Scheme’s greatest strengths, but this also presents a risk in that the degree of innovation that was involved could easily be forgotten.

3.6 External drivers of change (for the Scheme)

3.6.1 Many of the drivers of the changes detailed above have come from within the scheme, including from being open to learn from previous efforts. There have, however been very significant external drivers of change which have influenced the Scheme. In many ways these have accelerated in the last year (2010-11) presenting some very important challenges and opportunities over the next few years.

3.6.2 Within DFID, the process of significant change commenced with the publication of DFID’s Research Strategy (2008-2013), followed by the appointment of Professor Chris Whitty as Director of Research and subsequently additionally DFID’s Chief Scientific Advisor. Soon after, DFID’s research activities were restructured into a new Research and Evidence Division (RED). These changes reinforced DFID’s commitment to the generation and use of world-class research supporting international development and at that time the ESRC-DFID Scheme was one of DFID’s initial investments in social science research designed specifically to deliver this.

3.6.3 With ESRC and the Research Councils, the most direct change to influence the ESRC-DFID scheme has been the new emphasis on research excellence with impact and associated changes in application and evaluation procedures.

3.6.4 A very positive change in ESRC was the launch of a new website\footnote{www.esrc.ac.uk} in 2011 which makes information about ESRC’s activities and investments more readily accessible.
to all stakeholders. Each project now has its own page with links to all outputs (results) that have been reported to ESRC. This has been an important step to help ensure that the products of research investments are both accessible and placed in secure long-term storage. The launch of the new site has provided a simplified way for projects to deposit research outputs, but this remains a process that has variable levels of compliance.

3.6.5 In addition to the changes in DFID and ESRC, at national level, the planned shift from the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) to the planned Research Excellence Framework will challenge researchers to report their work in different ways. This has already been captured in the Impact Strategy proposed for the Scheme. The new emphasis on providing narratives describing impact and the need to link these to evidence of research outputs now means that researchers will have a greater incentive to ensure that their research makes a difference, and to generate evidence of how this happens. The drive from the REF process, could be a major opportunity for the ESRC-DFID Scheme in the coming year, given the Scheme’s focus on capturing and narrating tangible development impact. The high importance of REF to UK academics and their institutions means that making links between the Scheme’s impact agenda and REF will provide a way to motivate UK researchers to provide evidence to the Scheme of the impact of their research.

3.6.6 The election of the Coalition Government in May 2010 and new Ministerial Teams for DFID and in the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (for the Research Councils) has further strengthened the demand to show the pathways to impact for all research investments as well as the need for high quality evidence underpinning policy and practice. This combined with the requirement to implement and demonstrate efficiency and value for money, means that programmes like the ESRC-DFID Scheme are now being required to provide robust evidence of the return on investment in research, in a way that has never been required before. As is described in the next section, this is putting pressure on existing reporting systems which were not designed to meet the requirements now be requested of all public investment in the United Kingdom.

3.7 Future opportunities and challenges

3.7.1 Many of the most recent external drivers of change represent major opportunities and significant challenges for the ESRC-DFID Scheme over the next five to 10 years. The impact agenda, combined with the REF process will mean that researchers will be required to place more emphasis on building credible pathways to impact, while research funders will be required to find new ways to support, assess and document this process.

3.7.2 The new emphasis on evidence of impact, at both project and programme level will require the development of new ways of working. For projects, researchers will be required to document and archive the data they generate, to be able to demonstrate that their analysis is robust and to describe how research has or may deliver impact. For ESRC and DFID, there will be a requirement to enhance the systems and processes used to describe the work that the programme delivers and the impact derived from this. The Scheme’s SAT see this as an immediate challenge.

3.7.3 DFID has already stated their requirement that there is significant progress in making programmes, including the ESRC-DFID Scheme, more open to developing country researchers and institutions. Work is starting to scope how this might be achieved, and this currently suggests that it will require a combination of modifications to the application process along with well-targeted capacity strengthening activities, designed to remove barriers (actual and perceived) that may prevent southern researchers from playing a more significant role in the ESRC-DFID Scheme and other similar research programmes.
3.7.4 A potentially very significant challenge will emerge over the next few years. When the Scheme was first launched, researchers were challenged to produce results that would support poverty reduction and other Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which have the target date of 2015. Projects to be funded in the final call of Phase 2 of the Scheme will be still be operational in 2015, with expected impact in most cases several years after that. For that reason, the Scheme should now be asking what the global development process may look like after 2015 and the MDGs. It is also clear that some of the publications and evidence generated by projects in the Scheme have a contribution to make to the debate on post MDG priorities, perhaps through some of the synthesis activities suggested in Table 6.
4 Research and evidence highlights

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This review has utilised the available evidence to assess research and evidence highlights for projects funded under Phase 1 of the ESRC-DFID Scheme. As detailed in Section 2, verifiable data availability has limited the extent of analysis that was possible for this report. Future analysis and reporting will be strengthened by the SAT’s planned activities designed to capture and secure a full range of quality-controlled evidence of the Scheme’s outcomes and impact.

4.1.2 The quantitative data reported here were derived from a simple meta-analysis of written reports from Phase 1 projects during the SAT review. The quality of the quantitative dataset was limited by the quality of self-reporting by projects. Work in now underway for the SAT to contact all projects to update and verify the outputs and outcomes they have reported.

4.2 Thematic coverage

4.2.1 This report was designed to focus on the contribution of projects funded under Phase 1 of the Scheme, which did not have thematic priorities (which were introduced in Phase 2). For this reason, the thematic analysis presented here has adopted the approach of assessing which projects were contributing to specific Millennium Development Goals and then to record any additional themes that emerged from the analysis.

4.2.2 It must be stressed that this is a subjective process open to differing interpretation. For example, it could be questioned if projects that focus on poverty of people well above the UN’s poverty line (US $1.25, Purchase Power Parity corrected) should be included as contributing to MDG1 (Reducing extreme poverty and hunger). The Education MDG created a similar challenge in that a number of projects were concentrating on secondary and higher education which are both outside the remit of MDG 2 (Primary Education).

4.2.3 For the purpose of this review, the broadest definitions of the MDG themes were adopted. The preliminary analysis of the Scheme’s contributions to the MDGs is presented as Table 2.

4.2.4 As would be expected of a research programme designed to generate evidence supporting poverty alleviation, the majority of projects have a broad link to MDG1 and poverty reduction.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MDG</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Poverty reduction</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Some projects were not able to articulate a clear link between their research and potential alleviation of poverty. This number includes several projects that focused on people living in moderate poverty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>These projects include a number working on secondary and higher education (outside the MDGs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Gender</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>The majority of projects with a gender focus were funded before the explicit link to gender provided in Phase 2 of the Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Child health</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Maternal health</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. HIV, Malaria and other disease</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Environment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Global partnership</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total assessed</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>All projects funded under Phase 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Analysis of the contribution to the MDGs of projects funded under the ESRC-DFID scheme. 46 projects were assessed. Note some projects speak to more than one MDG.

(Subjective assessment by the SAT based on available documentation)

4.2.5 The spread of projects across the other MDGs is relatively even, suggesting that to date the Scheme has been successful in providing research and evidence relevant to the broader MDG process. This quality of this mapping exercise will be improved when SAT conducts its evidence “mining” exercise over the period up to the end of 2011.

4.3 Emerging themes

4.3.1 A number of additional themes emerged during the review of existing projects. These are described in Table 3. A process to link projects to these themes will be completed during 2011 as the SAT collates evidence and documents generated by projects.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research theme</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion and exclusion</td>
<td>A group of projects have considered how poor people can be marginalised from the development “process” including specifically from the benefits of GDP-based growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban poverty</td>
<td>Projects have considered how poverty affects urban populations as well as the poverty status of people who have recently migrated to cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>A number of projects have considered the impact of economic growth on poverty reduction (both positive and negative).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of development interventions</td>
<td>Projects have studied the results generated through the implementation of specific development processes such as conditional and welfare payments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and testing new research methodologies (including impact assessment)</td>
<td>Several projects have either developed new research methods or applied existing research methods in new contexts (eg to support development research)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3  Emerging research themes in projects funded in Phase 1 of the ESRC-DFID Scheme.

4.4 Research questions and methodologies

4.4.1 Projects in the Scheme have adopted a wide variety of research questions and methods. At the time of the review, the most comprehensive information describing the types of research undertaken by the programme was contained in the original proposals. This information has been manually extracted and collated as Annex 4.

4.4.2 Examination of the projects suggests that the Scheme has been successful in promoting innovative research, with a significant number of projects adopting multidisciplinary research approaches, and mixed research methods (qualitative and quantitative). The number of projects adopting some degree of quantitative approach has been significant, which has meant that the Scheme is now producing a range of evidence products that can inform development discourse, policy and practice. This will be documented further by the SAT as they refresh the records of evidence that has been produced by the Scheme.

4.4.3 The range of research questions proposed by projects is broad and at this stage of analysis, only a very high level of categorisation was possible. The categories presented as Table 4 have been worded from the perspective of a potential user of research. As these generic questions emerged during the initial review it has not been possible to provide a systematic analysis of which projects can be grouped under one or more of the high-level research questions. This will be undertaken as part of a more comprehensive review once the SAT have collated all available research evidence that has been generated by the Scheme to date.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What makes people poor and keeps them in poverty?</td>
<td>Research in this category has examined the underlying causes of poverty (eg lack of education, poor health) as well as understanding factors that contribute to preventing people from moving out of poverty (eg exclusion from the benefits of broad-based economic growth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do people move out of poverty?</td>
<td>A number of studies have investigating the processes by which people move out of poverty. This has included researching the impact of beneficial policy interventions, investment in health and educations and the role of the private sector in poverty reduction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What types of policy interventions help people to move out of poverty?</td>
<td>A number of projects have generated evidence on the impacts of policies designed to reduce poverty, and also the impacts on poverty on other types of policy interventions. A series of very important observations are starting to emerge, including that the extreme poor in society may be marginalised from the policy process and are sometimes unable to benefit from implementation of policies (which is why the Impact strategy now asks projects to describe both positive and negative impacts). Examples of the impacts of other types of policy include studies of the poverty impact of migration to cities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Generating a new evidence-base for development policy and practice.</td>
<td>Research in this category has addressed a critical constraint which is the lack of robust evidence to inform development policy and practice. Activities have included generating improved poverty data disaggregated by gender, age or social group, and understanding the flow of financial resources to target poverty within communities and families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Developing new methodologies.</td>
<td>A number of projects have developed new and innovative methodologies designed to improve understanding and generate new evidence relevant to development policy and practice, for example participatory research with children regarding their experience of transportation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 High-level research questions emerging from the review of Phase 1 of the ESRC-DFID Scheme. (Based on the SAT’s subjective categorisation of Phase 1 projects)
4.5 Geographic coverage

4.5.1 The flexibility designed into the ESRC-DFID Scheme has meant that geographic location has not been an explicit selection criterion for projects. A positive outcome of this is that research has been conducted in a wide range of social, economic and cultural contexts as shown in Table 5.

4.5.2 The majority of projects in Phase 1 of the Scheme have been working in Africa and South Asia, both among DFID’s priority regions. There are also a significant number of projects with activities in other regions and middle-income countries which has helped to provide a broader evidence-base of the types of activities and interventions likely to reduce poverty.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Asia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Afghanistan, Tajikistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>India, Sri Lanka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Peru, Honduras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Botswana, South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Asia</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Yemen, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE Asia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Geographic coverage of projects funded under the Phase 1 of the ESRC-DFID Scheme. These data report the locations of research activity as opposed to the locations of funded researchers. (Please note that several projects are active in more than one country)

4.6 Potential themes for future synthesis

4.6.1 The SAT was asked to identify a range of possible themes for future synthesis reports. The initial analysis of projects and the development themes that they have addressed suggests the following possibilities (Table 6).

4.6.2 It is recognised that the range of potential thematic areas will change as the portfolio of research funded by the Scheme grows and as projects report their work and findings. More themes will also emerge over the next few years as thematic projects funded under Phase 2 of the Scheme start to deliver research and evidence products.

4.6.3 It may also be possible to include emerging development themes (eg development in post-conflict states or the post-MDG agenda). A useful approach would be for the SAT to work with DFID staff to identify key forthcoming global (or regional) policy events that evidence from the Scheme could feed into, or to generate key framing
questions, for example what does funded research say about the relationship between growth and poverty? What methodologies and measures might improve our definition of poverty? What pathways were used to inform policy and practice? Where possible, this should be done over a two-year planning horizon.

4.6.4 We envisage synthesise reports as being short and highly focused (at least in their final iteration). In this way they will provide direction to future research and provide researchers with a quick and accessible means to engage with Scheme datasets and findings and build on them. Something akin to a more detailed version of the appendix 3 project synthesises might provide a template.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Contribution of the ESRC-DFID Scheme to the MDGs</td>
<td>This could be split into two reports: a) Contribution to global poverty reduction; b) Contribution to MDGs 2-9. An alternative approach would be to conduct a sequence of analytical studies for selected MDGs (eg health and education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Equity and inclusion</td>
<td>A number of approaches would be possible, including linking with projects looking at economic growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Urbanisation</td>
<td>The core question here would be to consider the key challenges and opportunities associated with urbanisation and to consider how the Scheme’s research has contributed to understanding these issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Development paradigms and approaches</td>
<td>This could include examining evidence supporting existing approaches at both macro (eg broad-based economic growth) and micro scales (eg family payments).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. New social science research methodologies for international development</td>
<td>This synthesis would recognise that several projects have adopted innovative research techniques which may be of interest and relevance in other contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Regional and national datasets</td>
<td>This synthesis would organise data in such a way as to speak directly to specific geographic regions, which may highlight other opportunities for synthesis and follow on research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 Suggestions for potential topics for thematic studies of the ESRC-DFID scheme.
5 Impact Highlights

5.1 The changing impact agenda

5.1.1 The way that the Scheme and individual projects conceptualise and build impact has been one of the most important changes in the Scheme since it was launched in 2005. Projects during Phase 1 of the Scheme were expected to produce a communications plan as opposed to the impact plans required from Phase 2 of the Scheme.

5.1.2 The articulation of the difference between academic and non-academic (or development) impact introduced in Phase 2 (for projects funded since 2010) represented a radical change in the way that projects were expected to work. It is clear that the requirements for impact plans (projects funded in 2010) and pathways to impact (projects funded in 2011) has resulted in a significant shift in the way that projects are designed and implemented.

5.1.3 Many more projects are now having early and active engagement with potential users of research, including during the design of projects. The shift from largely passive communication strategies to participatory processes to build impact should mean that the Scheme is now much better placed to deliver benefits to the world’s poor. Unfortunately, it is still too early to be able to provide objective evidence going beyond the very positive changes in project applications.

5.1.4 In this review of Phase 1 projects it is extremely important to recognise that all of these projects were funded before there was a requirement to define how non-academic impact would be achieved. As all Phase 1 projects were only required to define their communication activities, it should be expected that this would be the main type of engagement that would be seen in these projects.

5.2 The role of the Strategic Advisory Team (SAT)

5.2.1 With the establishment of the Strategic Advisory Team in 2010, the Scheme now has a group dedicated to assisting projects and the programme to build and record impact, and support the Scheme’s development. The SAT will work with projects and colleagues in DFID and across the RCs to ensure that projects are more effective in building their development impact, and that the nature of this impact is captured. This is a process made more difficult by the increasing realisation that impact pathways are complex, non-linear processes often influenced by chance events. The production of the SAT’s Impact Strategy (Annex 1) is an important first step in this process. The SAT’s Inception Report will outline how this will be implemented.

5.3 Impact of Phase 1 Projects

5.3.1 Phase 1 projects primarily documented the delivery of academic impact, with an increasing number of high-profile academic publications having been delivered. There are some examples of projects going to the next stage on a potential pathway to impact by working with other stakeholders (including local stakeholders) to use the research evidence to inform policy and practice. Methods adopted by projects have been largely passive and based on communication which is consistent with the requirements of the Scheme at the time that the projects were funded.

5.3.2 Projects in Phase 1 of the Scheme pre-dated RCUK’s Excellence with Impact narrative and hence it is possible to see a number of projects which have had academic impact but limited documented development impact (including potential

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11 Please note, that as stated previously accurate integrative statistics are not currently available for the Scheme.
impact described by researchers). There are also a few projects which have better examples of development impact, but where this has not been supported by international standard academic research (e.g., no peer-reviewed publications). There are very few projects in the Phase 1 portfolio of research that can be currently be considered to demonstrate excellence with impact.

5.3.3 This report has used the approach of documenting ten projects which illustrate the types of impact that have been generated by the Scheme during Phase 1. The projects were selected on the basis of having the most comprehensive documentation providing examples that are linked to evidence that can be verified. This means that most examples came from Calls 1 and 2. The examples detailed are not comprehensive and this list will be extended during 2011 as the SAT continues its work to review progress in the Scheme.

5.3.4 A summary of the projects reviewed in detail is provided as Annex 3. Of these ten projects, only one, RES-167-25-0110\(^{12}\) had provided a new-style ESRC Impact Report at the time of this review (another four were available for other projects).

5.4 Academic impact

5.4.1 It is the case that academic impact has been the main contribution of research funded under Phase 1 of the ESRC-DFID Scheme to date. The fifteen projects which are described in more detail in Annex 3 give examples of the quality and volume of high-quality academic publications that have been produced by some projects. These projects include the ten\(^{13}\) for which the SAT have the most detailed reporting (including external evaluations) and an additional five projects that emerged as useful examples during the review process.

5.4.2 The example providing the highest number of academic outputs is project RES-167-25-0028\(^{14}\) which has produced 9 academic papers considering the impact of access to transport for young people in South Africa, Ghana, and Malawi. This project was led by Dr. Gina Porter at the University of Durham. This project has also generated a viable pathway to development impact through a partnership with the International Forum for Rural Transport and Development. Additional academic papers resulting from this project are expected during 2011 and 2012.

5.4.3 Another project reporting a very large number of publications is RES-167-25-0124\(^ {15}\) investigating human development and poverty reduction in developing countries, working largely in Latin America. One of the major policy outcomes reported by this project was an analysis of conditional cash transfers in Mexico. The policy recommendation was that financial support for education should move from supporting primary to secondary education. As the world starts to discuss the post-2015 development agenda, research results such as described above will play an important role in providing evidence to inform the debate that identifies future priorities and opportunities in key areas including education. These results illustrate a number of challenges when assessing the impact of projects funded early in the Scheme. The funding from ESRC-DFID co-financed a wider programme of work and for this reason it is very difficult to assess which outcomes can be attributed to the project and to what degree this is the case. This is a common problem in research. Also, this award raises the question of how far the lessons from research in a middle-income country can be transferred to a low-income context.


\(^{13}\) A further three projects now have external reviews, but these documents were not available to the SAT at the time that this analysis was undertaken.


\(^{15}\) [http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0124/read](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0124/read)
5.4.4 The challenge of the lead time required to publish academic papers in a three-year research project is illustrated by project RES-167-25-0251 which developed new research based on analysis of game playing. The project examined power relationships and tactical approaches to allocation of resources in families which could have significant implications for the design of social payment systems once the data have been fully analysed and published. By the end of the project they had generated a significant new dataset from studies in Nigeria, Uganda, Ethiopia, India and published a number of internal reports. Work is on-going to publish a series of peer-reviewed academic papers, but this could take up to an additional two years after completion of the project and even longer to achieve development impact.

5.4.5 The benefits of working in effective partnership with developing country researchers and institutions is demonstrated by project RES-167-25-0005 working in China. This project on urban poverty and property rights has, in partnership, generated a significant new dataset on urban disenfranchisement which is now in the public domain as a global public good through ESRC’s Economic and Social Data Service. There have been at least four academic publications, and the project reports that there has been significant local capacity strengthening with local researchers having been successful in obtaining follow-on funding from Chinese agencies. Other projects which have generated globally significant data sets include RES-167-25-0078 investigating issues of participation in higher education in Ghana and Tanzania; RES-167-25-0157 generating data on poverty of ethnic minorities in Vietnam; and (RES-167-25-0251) a comparative study in Nigeria, Uganda, Ethiopia and India which used experimental games to investigate different models of the allocation of financial resources within families.

5.4.6 The theme of the benefits of partnership continues with project RES-167-25-0110 working in India and Nepal considering the regulation, distribution and consumption of pharmaceuticals in India and Nepal. The project has produced three academic papers including one of the first published in open access format in the Scheme. Evidence of policy demand for products of research from this project is described in a project report that details how one of the UK project staff was seconded for five months to co-ordinate Nepal’s National TB Control Programme’s application for funding from the Global Fund. Other projects that benefitted from effective partnerships with local researchers and policy stakeholders include RES-167-25-0005 (China, urban poverty), RES-167-25-0157 (Vietnam, assessing poverty of ethnic minorities), RES-167-25-0241 assessing the link between health security and disaster resilience in Bangladesh and RES-167-25-0142 working on the social stigma associated with TB in Asia.

5.4.7 A number of projects have made significant contributions by generating comprehensive data and evidence to evaluate, and often challenging “established fact” in mainstream development thinking. A good example of this is project RES-167-25-0236 working in India which documents that children born in Muslim families have higher survival rates, even though their families have lower educational and economic status than comparative Hindu families. It is suggested that this provides evidence of the importance of social networks in determining health outcomes (challenging the assumption that income and education are the main

\[16 \text{http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0251-A/read}\]
\[17 \text{http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0005/read}\]
\[18 \text{http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0078/read}\]
\[19 \text{http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0157/read}\]
\[20 \text{http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0241/read}\]
\[21 \text{http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0142/read}\]
\[22 \text{http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0236/read}\]
Project RES-167-25-0167\textsuperscript{23} produced data linking food security and health (HIV/AIDS) in Malawi and Lesotho. As a result of this work, the researchers challenged the assumption that HIV/AIDS would have a long-term systematic impact on food security. Project RES-167-25-0058\textsuperscript{24} looks at intra-household relations and well-being in Uganda. The project reported the generation of a significant database from interviews in Uganda, but did not have sufficient time during the period of the award to undertake comprehensive analysis. This project had been externally reviewed positively, but the SAT could not find evidence of any of the publications listed by self-reporting on this project, and the data were not yet available on the ESDS website.

5.4.8 Other projects have contributed evidence to areas of topical debate. A good example is project RES-167-25-0187\textsuperscript{25} working in South Africa which asked the question: “Can genetically modified crops bring a green revolution to SSA [Sub-Saharan Africa]? This project produced findings that were unexpected by the researchers. They found that herbicide resistant crops (HT varieties, designed for developed countries) were more popular with farmers than the Bt varieties “designed” for subsistence farming. Their research suggested that this was because the crop was more compatible with existing low-tillage systems in use in the KwaZulu-Natal region, and noted that any loss of labour associated with reductions in tillage was probably compensated by the additional labour requirements for harvest. One challenge with this research is that it may be difficult to transfer the conclusions to other locations, illustrating the value of multi-location or multi-context comparative studies used in a number of other studies.

5.4.9 Innovative approaches to research and the development of new methodologies is a theme that emerges from a number of Phase 1 projects. These include RES-167-25-0028 which worked with young people in Africa to collaboratively generate research on the importance of transport for access to education and health services. Projects in China (RES-167-25-0005) and Vietnam (RES-167-25-0157) have provided strong evidence of the importance of collecting socially and geographically disaggregated poverty data to design targeted policies to help avoid marginalisation and exclusion of parts of society during periods of rapid economic growth (and urbanisation). In Bangladesh, Project RES-167-25-0241 described the importance of having locally grounded definitions of health security when assessing the link between health and vulnerability to disasters. These projects provide very strong evidence that a “one-size fits all” approach to poverty alleviation policies does not work in rapidly developing economies and a changing world.

5.4.10 Two projects have illustrated the value of applying new research approaches in the development context. Projects RES-167-25-0372\textsuperscript{26} (Zimbabwe) and RES-167-25-0251 (Nigeria, Uganda, Ethiopia and India) demonstrated the value of experimental studies using games to explore the behaviour of groups and individuals. Project RES-167-25-0251 also demonstrated the value of designing projects to generate comparative data from contrasting socio-economic contexts. Project RES-167-25-0124 contributed by developing new methods for household surveys, based on previous work in Latin America and then applied these to a study in Nepal.

5.4.11 There review identified a significant contrast between projects which have published peer reviewed articles, and those which have not. A number of projects have to date only reported internal or non-peer reviewed publications. The SAT’s review highlighted the value of having independent peer review of the research conducted.

\textsuperscript{23}http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0167/read
\textsuperscript{24}http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0058/read
\textsuperscript{25}http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0187/read
\textsuperscript{26}http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0372/read
by the Scheme. One example highlighted is Project RES-167-25-037127 which reports that the significant reductions in poverty in Ghana were associated with a shift towards informal employment. To date, the project had only provided links to internal working papers. As a result the SAT will continue to emphasise the need for projects to demonstrate the link between research excellence and development impact as detailed in the Scheme’s draft Impact Strategy.

5.4.12 The examples given here illustrate some of the many academic achievements of projects funded under Phase 1 of the Scheme. Many projects have reported that data analysis, interpretation and publication will continue for several years after the project “closed”. It will be important for the funders and SAT to continue engaging with projects to capture the outcomes of this process, especially for those that have not yet reported significant research or development outcomes.

5.5 Development impact
5.5.1 The ESRC-DFID scheme is a programme that asks researchers to generate world-class academic research that has the potential to change lives in the future. For this reason it is accepted that for most projects, there will be a time lag between the research being completed and the potential non-academic or development impact. This process or pathway to impact, has now been made explicit for projects funded under Phase 2 of the Scheme.

5.5.2 The expectation that projects would build a pathway to development impact was not explicit for Phase 1 projects, but in spite of this, the SAT review has found a number of excellent examples in this review. The SAT’s proposed Impact Strategy will also help projects to build on this in the future.

5.5.3 All of the projects listed in Annex 3 have started to make the link between their research evidence and policy designed to alleviate poverty. The way that this has been achieved and the potential outcomes is currently only partially documented as most projects had not completed an ESRC Impact Report at the time of the review. Documenting these links and understanding the pathway to impact, theories of change and the way that poor people can or are benefitting will be a priority research activity for the SAT over the coming years.

5.5.4 The potential links between research and development impact were highlighted in the previous section. In this review, the SAT assessed that there is not yet sufficient evidence to discuss actual development impacts. Simply it is still too early to do so, and the Scheme needs to adopt improved methods to capture development impact (discussed in the SAT’s Inception Report). Instead the next sections discuss the important issues of understanding the ways that projects have started to build their pathways to potential future development impact.

5.6 The way that projects have built their impact
5.6.1 The most important characteristic shared by the projects highlighted in Annex 3 is that their potential development impact is built upon their world class research. Each of the examples has generated high quality research, relevant to the aims of the programme and in most cases this research has or will be published in international peer reviewed journals.

5.6.2 Projects funded under Phase 1, were only required to produce a communication plan and all projects described in this review have used a range of well-targeted conventional communication activities (workshops, conference presentations etc). These types of activities are essentially passive, in that projects provide potential

27http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0371/read
end-users with information. These also usually happen at the end of the research process.

5.6.3 What is more interesting is the number of projects that have started to use a range of more active approaches to building impact. A key step here has been to ensure that there is early engagement with potential end-users of research, so that they can be active participants during the design, implementation and application of research. Effectively the projects are showing the importance of partnership in building impact. This is discussed in more detail in Section 7 of this document.

5.6.4 Projects which illustrate the benefits of early engagement with potential end-users of research include RES-167-25-0110 (Regulation of the pharmaceutical industry in South Asia), RES-167-25-0142 (Stigma associated with TB in South Asia) and RES-167-25-0157 (Poverty of ethnic minorities in Vietnam).

5.6.5 A number of projects also demonstrated the value of including local researchers as full partners in the research process; these included the three projects listed above. In addition, project RES-167-25-0028 empowered young people in Ghana, Malawi and South Africa to be part of the research team in the project examining the way that access to transport influences the opportunities available to them and their peers.

5.6.6 Many Phase 1 projects have reported additional types of development impact, but these were very difficult to verify based on the information available for the SAT’s review. Several projects reported that they had produced policy briefs, but in virtually all cases, these documents were not available for review and there was limited information about the way that the suggested policy changes would improve the lives of the poor. The SAT’s Inception Report will suggest a range of actions to improve the way that this information is captured in the future.
6 Capacity Strengthening

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The ESRC-DFID Scheme was always intended to primarily support world-class research, generating research and evidence supporting global poverty reduction. As such, any capacity building activities were expected to represent a modest component of overall activity and normally be intended to enhance either the ability to generate research (for researchers) or to put research into use (for researchers and end-users of research).

6.1.2 From the first round of the ESRC-DFID Scheme, guidance to applicants and reviewers has stressed that the Scheme was principally designed to support research. As such the majority of capacity strengthening undertaken by projects has been focused on individuals and their ability to design, implement and use development research.

6.1.3 With the appointment of the SAT in November 2010, the programme gained a mechanism for limited additional capacity strengthening at the level of the programme and the SAT is currently planning to consult with stakeholders as part of a scoping exercise to determine where this investment might be most effective.

6.1.4 As capacity building (or strengthening) has been an area of evolving practice in the Scheme, this part of the report includes discussion of activities under Phase 1 and 2 of the Scheme.

6.2 Individual capacity strengthening (by projects)

6.2.1 Only a few of the early projects funded under the Scheme had significant capacity strengthening components. One reason for this, was that many of the early projects were largely staffed by UK researchers and there were limited opportunities for developing country staff to participate in the research. Since that time both the guidelines provided to applicants and the resulting design of projects have changed to promote much greater involvement of developing country researchers.

6.2.2 Most current projects now have some degree of capacity strengthening for individual developing country researchers, usually to provide specific research skills or to enhance impact through communication and engagement in the policy process. These are considered appropriate activities for projects and more examples of activities and achievements will be collated by the SAT during 2012.

6.3 Individual capacity strengthening (PhD Studentships)

6.3.1 Applicants to the ESRC-DFID all have the option of applying for additional funding for linked PhD studentships which provide an opportunity for an individual to undertake training to obtain a PhD whilst also contributing to the project. To date, a total of nine PhD studentships have been awarded, six under Phase 1 and a further three in Phase 2. The opportunity for non-EU students to undertake a project linked PhD whilst registered at a UK University is a further strength and innovation of the programme, emerging from the collaboration between ESRC and DFID.

6.3.2 The studentships have been very effective in promoting research collaboration between Universities in the UK and predominantly developing countries in support of the Scheme.

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28 One joint award was made with Italy and another in the UK.
Figure 1 PhD Studentships funded under Phases 1 and 2 of the ESRC-DFID Scheme

6.4 Research design and management (institutional capacity)

6.4.1 The Scheme has not yet been able to demonstrate significant progress in its objective of having an increasing number of projects designed and led by developing country researchers. It is increasingly clear that one reason for the low success rate for proposals led by developing country researchers is their lack of experience in the production of successful applications for consideration under the Research Councils’ peer review systems. A review by SAT of proposals rejected under the most recently completed ESRC-DFID call (projects funded in 2011) identified a number of proposals that had been graded as having very good science, but were poor in other areas such as articulating the way the project will work or be managed.

6.4.2 If developing country researchers are to become successful in bidding for funding under peer reviewed systems, it is likely that they will require additional support to strengthen their ability to compete with UK researchers who have much more experience and well-established institutional support systems. This challenge was highlighted during a series of discussion with DFID and RCUK regional staff who have experience of supporting local applicants for programmes including the ESRC-DFID Scheme.

6.4.3 The ESRC-DFID SAT have decided to implement a small programme of support to build capacity to design and write better proposals for the ESRC-DFID Scheme. During 2011, this support will be trialled in South Asia working with the local RCUK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>UK Institution</th>
<th>Partner Institution</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Student’s Nationality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>University of Brighton</td>
<td>University of the Western Cape</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>South African</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>University of KwaZulu-Natal</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>South African</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>University of Dar es Salaam</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>Tanzanian</td>
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<tr>
<td>RES-167-25-0078</td>
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<td>University of Cape Coast</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>Ghanaian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Jahangirmagar University, Dhaka</td>
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<td>Bangladeshi</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>University of Nairobi</td>
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<td>Kenyan</td>
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<td>Universita degli Studi di Milano</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Italian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0037/read
http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0076/read
http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0297/read
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http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0461/read
http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0596/read
and DFID offices. Progress and lessons learnt will be reviewed before considering extending this support to other regions, including specifically Sub-Saharan Africa in 2012 and beyond. In the African context, it will also be important to assess what is already being supported by initiatives such as DFID’s Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) and other development research funders such as Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC).
7 Building partnerships

7.1 The role of partnerships in delivering excellence with impact

7.1.1 Each of the projects highlighted for impact in Section 4 are also examples where their success has involved some degree of collaboration with local partners (individuals and institutions). It is clear that partnership plays an important role in most of the potentially high-impact projects that have been funded under the ESRC-DFID Scheme. The ESRC-DFID scheme has demonstrated a steady drive to promote effective engagement between researchers and other relevant stakeholders with an interest in the result and application of development research.

7.2 Engaging developing country participants

7.2.1 Applicants to the ESRC-DFID Scheme are encouraged to engage and work with stakeholders in developing countries, but this is not a requirement for funding. The instructions to applicants have changed over the first five calls (documentation was available up to Call 2 of Phase 2) to provide more information to detail how partnerships involving developing country participants are permitted. These have, however, not yet gone as far as saying that such partnerships would be encouraged, for example as a way to enhance the quality of the research and its potential impact.

7.2.2 The permissive approach to engagement with developing country participants has to some extent been successful. An examination of the composition of research teams over the first five calls does demonstrate a shift towards increasing participation by researchers (and research users) from developing countries. To date, the majority of the “Developing Country Researchers” have been resident in middle income countries and have included a number of individuals who are nationals of developed countries (eg the United Kingdom and United States) who are working in a developing country, often for an international organisation.

7.2.3 The participation of developing country researchers as full participants in the ESRC-DFID scheme only became an explicit objective from the 2009 call when a Logical Framework was adopted for Phase 2. This included as Output 3 the objective of delivering “Strengthened capacity of Southern Researchers to lead and manage research” with indicators of (1) Number of bids from Southern Institutions, (2) “Proportion of successful Southern led bids” and (3) “Number of successful Southern led bids who have attended workshops and received specific support”. During Phase 2 Call 1 there were two successful proposals awarded to Southern institutions, out of 20 total awards. They were RES-167-25-0593, led by Dr AM Ibáñez at Uni de los Andes, and RES-167-25-0520, led by Mr M Walton of Harvard University and held at the Centre for Policy Research, India.

7.2.4 Closer examination of project documentation demonstrates that there are a significant number of individuals from developing countries, who are participants in projects, but their details are not captured by either standard management information or reporting systems. These issues will be explored in the SAT’s Inception report.
7.3 Engaging developing country researchers and institutions

7.3.1 The Logical Framework introduced with Phase 2 of the Scheme stated ambitious targets to enhance the participation of developing country researchers in the Scheme. There is now some concern\textsuperscript{35} that more progress has not been seen (after two calls), but the data presented below show very clearly that there has been significant improvement in creating opportunities for developing country researchers since the first round was launched in 2005.

7.4 Scientific leadership

7.4.1 The only objective measure of scientific leadership currently available for the Scheme is the description of the Principal Investigators (PIs) for funded projects. As is clearly demonstrated in Table 7, the academic leadership for projects remains firmly located with UK researchers and is actually higher in Phase 2. In both Phases, there are projects which have PIs located in developing countries, but the data are partially misleading since they include two projects where the PI was a developed country national working in an international institution located in a developing country (Indonesia and India).

7.4.2 To date there is no evidence of an increase in the number of successful projects that have been submitted (led) by a developing country researcher. The most recently awarded projects (2011) continue this pattern with all 17 funded projects being awarded to European institutions (all but one in the UK, the remaining one in France).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mexico</td>
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<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Indonesia</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colombia</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 Geographic spread (location) of Principal Investigators in funded ESRC-DFID Scheme projects (funded up to 2011). These data show the geographic location of the PI (but not their nationality).

7.5 Building partnerships

7.5.1 Building effective research partnerships goes beyond the named individual acting in the leadership role (ie the PI for ESRC-DFID Scheme projects). There are additional data describing the ESRC-DFID Scheme which provides a much more positive narrative of change and partnership building when we consider the full composition of the research team on ESRC-DFID projects. The SAT currently has the details of PIs and Co Investigators for all projects funded up to 2011. There is further information describing additional partners in projects, but this requires further processing (and checking with projects) before it can be used in quantitative analysis.

\textsuperscript{35} Especially from within DFID.
7.5.2 The analysis presented in Table 8 describes PIs and associated Co-Is for projects funded up to 2011. This shows that whilst UK researchers clearly form the majority of posts funded directly by the Scheme, that there has been a shift between Phases 1 and 2. In Phase 1, 76 per cent of the research posts were located in the United Kingdom and this had dropped to 63 per cent by the second round of Phase 2. The majority of this shift has been in favour of developing country researchers, with the second highest number of researchers now coming from India. The drop in the proportion of researchers from developed countries is also illustrated by the data for researchers from the United States (Phase 1, ranked second at 6.5 per cent, Phase 2, ranked sixth equal at 1.6 per cent of posts). This shift is an important first step in delivering against the DFID objective of promoting the participation of developing country researchers in the programme. Initial examination of data describing other research partners (ie non Co-I staff) suggests that when they can be included in the analysis, the message of enhanced engagement with developing country researchers will be further strengthened.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8  ESRC-DFID researchers (PI and Co-I) by country of residence and Phase of the Scheme (projects funded up to 2011)

7.5.3 The positive trend of enhanced participation of developing country researchers is seen for both low and middle income countries (Table 9). The proportional increase in the number of researchers from low income countries is nearly 250 per cent between Phase 1 and 2, whilst the equivalent for researchers from middle income countries is an increase of 60 per cent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Income Status</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>83.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>69.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 Distribution of ESRC-DFID researchers by country income group (Using World Bank 2011 statistics on income status).

7.5.4 The significant reduction in the proportion of funded researchers from high income (developed countries) demonstrates an important shift in the way that projects are being implemented to encourage more co-generation of knowledge. It is important to recognise that even though there have been significant and positive change in the programme, there is still much to be done. For example, even with a major increase of the proportion of researchers coming from low income developing countries, they still only represent 5.6 per cent of funded researchers in Phase 2.

7.5.5 As detailed above, there has been progress in creating opportunities for developing country researchers to be part of ESRC-DFID projects. To date, most of this has occurred in a few countries and these have largely been of middle income status. The next challenges must be to create more opportunities for researchers in low income countries to participate in the Scheme, and to have developing country researchers progressing to the point that they are designing and leading successful projects. These issues and options to address them will be discussed in the SAT’s Inception Report.

7.6 Learning lessons from other programmes: Defra’s Darwin Initiative

7.6.1 The ESRC-DFID scheme’s ambition of increasing the number of Southern-led research proposals is shared with a number of other programmes in the UK and internationally. One of the longest established programmes in the UK is the Darwin Initiative funded by Defra until 2011 and from the 2011 jointly by Defra and DFID. The Darwin Initiative was established as part of the UK’s commitments to the 1991 Rio Earth Summit as a global collaborative research programme designed to feed evidence into the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity. From its first call, the Darwin Initiative had explicit requirements for capacity building and working in partnership with developing country stakeholders.

7.6.2 Examining the partnerships behind projects from the Darwin Initiative ([darwin.defra.gov.uk](http://darwin.defra.gov.uk)) shows a pattern of the development of long-term collaborative research with developing country partners enhancing their contribution to the research process as they acquire new skills through the programme.

7.6.3 It is only now, after twenty years of the Initiative, that the programme is changing to shift the balance of expectation to consider research projects which are led by developing country institutions and researchers. Whilst undoubtedly, this could have happened earlier, it is unlikely that many would have been successful in the first ten years of the programme, as the Darwin Initiative also selects projects on the basis of excellence.

7.6.4 The lesson for the ESRC-DFID scheme is that low levels of success of projects led by developing country researchers in probably to be expected during the early years
of a programme of this nature. Time is required for researchers to learn how to design, implement and report research projects to the standard expected of the standard research council peer review process.

7.6.5 The SAT’s Inception Report will suggest a range of actions that could be expected to accelerate the process to generate successful bids led by developing country researchers.

7.7 Links with DFID country offices
7.7.1 There is increasing interest and demand from within DFID to ensure that DFID country offices and their development partners can benefit from research and evidence generated by DFID programmes and other related research activities. The ESRC-DFID Scheme is seen as generating evidence of potential relevance in a range of DFID countries and regions.

7.7.2 At the time of this review, the SAT had very limited objective information available about how projects had interacted with DFID offices. Projects will be requested to provide this information as part of the refreshing of evidence from projects to be conducted during the remainder of 2011.

7.7.3 New initiatives within DFID including DFID’s South Asia Research Hub for are likely to create opportunities to enhance the links with DFID country offices both in terms of identifying research questions and in enhancing the pathways to uptake and eventual impact.
8 Sustainability

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 The SAT’s preliminary review of sustainability of the Scheme has highlighted three themes discussed below. These are sustainability of: (1) Research outputs, (2) Research activities and partnerships and (3) Impact.

8.2 Sustainability and accessibility of research outputs.

8.2.1 ESRC-DFID projects are required to provide details of all research outcomes via self-reporting to the ESRC website. The SAT used this resource extensively during this review and this process highlighted quite significant variation between projects in securing the sustainability of their research outcomes. Where projects were able to either provide copies of publications or a hyperlink to secure storage locations such as a publisher’s website or institutional repository, it was clear that the publications were secure. A significant number of entries did not use this approach and instead provided hyperlinks to project or departmental websites. An alarming number of these links were non-functional even less than a year after completion of the project. It is clear from this review, that this method of recording outcomes is neither secure nor sustainable. There were also a minority of reported outcomes that had no link to verifiable evidence, most frequently those relating to impacts or the pathway to impact (eg policy briefs).

8.2.2 The SAT also had access to other reports detailing research outcomes (eg ESRC Final End of Award (EOA) reports and the DFID High-Level Indicator Report) and found that these sources and the evidence cited there were even more difficult to verify. This is an issue that will be addressed in more detail in the SAT’s Inception Report.

8.2.3 Another issue highlighted during the SAT’s review related to accessibility to research outcomes. The SAT had access to one of the UK’s most comprehensive library system, but even with that, there were a number of publications that would have only been accessible through a pay per download system. Whilst the SAT did have access to nearly all of the mainstream academic publications through the UK Federation system, they did note that most of the links to academic publications would not be available to potential end users of research including specifically DFID staff in the UK or in-country. It is likely that some developing country researchers would benefit from schemes for free access for developing country researchers, but it is important to note that this availability would not extend to policy makers in those countries. These observations highlight the importance of (1) moving towards open access publications for the Scheme, (2) encouraging more projects to publish summaries of their key academic findings and place these in the public domain and (3), assisting projects to enhance the accessibility (and sustainability) of research outcomes.

8.2.4 Projects in the ESRC-DFID Scheme are also required to submit data generated by their research with one of two ESRC data libraries. Many projects reported that have submitted their data, but only a limited number have been published on either library. Discussions with projects and representatives from data libraries highlighted two challenges, the first is the high transaction cost for projects in archiving data, a process that by its nature tends to occur once projects have closed. The second is that whilst projects are required to submit data, the data libraries are not required to accept it if it does not meet their standards on quality and relevance and there is no additional support (or funding) provided to assist projects to meet this requirement.
8.2.5 With the UK Government drive towards an Open Data policy, it is likely that the ESRC-DFID Scheme may need to consider ways to help and encourage projects to meet their requirements to ensure the sustainability of both data and publications. The UK’s Rural Economy and Land Use (RELU) programme may provide a model for the ESRC-DFID Scheme, as does the Darwin Information System used by Defra in support of their programme. In both cases, the programmes provide a portal to assist projects in reporting and securing research outputs (and outcomes) as well as having staff available to provide support and some degree of quality control.

8.2.6 Issues relating to the sustainability of research outcomes will be discussed in more detail as part of the SAT’s Inception Report.

8.3 Sustainability of research activities and partnerships

8.3.1 Sustainability of research activities and partnerships is at present best described by recording follow-up applications and funding. The evidence currently available is patchy, but there are a number of examples that can be highlighted where results or partnerships from ESRC-DFID projects have contributed to other programmes.

8.3.2 Examples of projects applying for or receiving follow-on funding include RES-167-25-0005 where researchers at partner institutions in China have received three Chinese National Science Foundation projects and the research of project RES-167-25-0170, which was a direct contribution to and had a direct impact on the design of work programmes in a consortium bid for a DFID Research Programme Consortium.

8.3.3 Other projects have generated experience that has influenced other programmes. Project RES-167-25-0372 has influenced the CGIAR’s challenge programme on water and food and project RES-167-25-0257 has links with and has influenced the UK’s Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation Programme (ESPA).

8.3.4 In addition to these examples, a total of two projects have also received follow-on Knowledge Exchange funding from the ESRC, these are: RES-167-25-0078, (Widening Participation in Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania: Developing an Equity Scorecard) and RES-167-25-0422 (Contested development?: intimate partner violence and women’s employment in urban and rural Tanzania). The outcomes of these awards will be reported at a later date.

8.4 Sustainability of development impact

8.4.1 The assessment of actual or potential sustainability of development impact is inherently more difficult than the discussion of academic impact presented in the previous two sections. As has been discussed earlier in this report, it will take some time for the development impact of the Scheme to become fully apparent and hence even longer to be able to assess sustainability.

8.4.2 The draft Impact Strategy presented as Annex 1 is again relevant here. It stresses the need for projects to collect baseline information which can be used to assess progress, as well as documenting which groups in society are likely to benefit from the research. The SAT’s review of existing documentation highlighted that this information currently does not exist for most if not all ESRC-DFID funded projects. This will become a critical gap if either individual projects or the whole programme is evaluated in the future. The SAT’s Inception Report will suggest ways that this could be addressed for both current and future projects.

37 http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0170/read
38 Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
39 http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/Grants/RES-167-25-0257/read
40 http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-167-25-0422/read
9 Conclusions

9.1 The strengths and overall contribution of the Scheme

9.1.1 Since 2005, the ESRC-DFID Joint Scheme for Research on International Development (Poverty Alleviation) has provided global leadership in its innovative approach generating evidence from world-class development research. It is clear that the partnership between DFID and ESRC has produced a programme that builds on the strengths of both organisations, namely DFID’s focus on using research evidence to reduce poverty, and ESRC’s remit to generate research excellence and a pathway to impact.

9.1.2 The high degree of demand for the Scheme and the very high quality research that has been funded demonstrates that the Scheme has also captured the imagination of researchers around the world, including a rapidly growing number of developing country researchers who are becoming full partners in research projects. In most projects there has also been very good links to potential users of research, including communities, policy groups and the private sector.

9.1.3 The research highlights from the Scheme (Section 4) have covered all of the MDGs with nearly all projects making a significant research contribution to the future reduction of global poverty. This review highlights five generic themes or research questions that the Scheme is now starting to address, all of which are of significant interest to development practitioners around the world. These are:

- What makes people poor and keeps them in poverty?
- How do people move out of poverty?
- What types of poverty interventions help people to move out of poverty?
- Improving the evidence base for development policy and practice.
- Developing new methodologies.

9.1.4 Future reports by the SAT will be able to highlight the contributions of specific projects to each of these questions after available documentation and evidence has been subject to further systematic analysis.

9.1.5 The geographic coverage of the Scheme has been broad, but the majority of research has been conducted in regions of greatest need, specifically Africa and South Asia.

9.1.6 The impact story of the Scheme to date has been built upon the generation of world-class research (and academic publications) which is now starting to be put into use through partnerships between researchers and potential beneficiaries. Early lessons are starting to emerge from the Scheme in terms of building impact. It seems that one of the most useful approaches is to seek early engagement with end users and other beneficiaries in the research project. Projects which have included a range of users in the co-design of research and its implementation and application currently seem most likely to produce early development impact. This is an important lesson for the design of projects in the future as well as for the design of any potential follow-on Phase for the Scheme.

9.1.7 The success of the Scheme also depends on establishing partnerships (eg between groups of researchers, or between researchers and research users) and capacity strengthening (eg to design and implement research, or to user research). There is now a body of experience and evidence being generated by projects which could feed into a reflexive process to design future support by projects and the Scheme as a whole. One area of priority identified by the SAT was strengthening the capacity of
developing country researchers to design and write competitive research proposals. The SAT will pilot a package of support for stakeholders in South Asia during July 2011 working with DFID and RCUK stakeholders based in India. Other potential priority areas will be discussed in the SAT’s Inception Report.

9.2 Opportunities to enhance impact

9.2.1 The review and the closely related Inception report have identified a number of options to further enhance the impact of the Scheme, both in terms of academic impact and development impact. The SAT’s proposed Impact Strategy for the Scheme is central to this and provides a practical framework for both building and recording impact. The adoption of the Pathways to Impact approach as a requirement for projects funded under Phase 2 of the Scheme has been an important advance, and the SAT’s Impact Strategy builds upon this, making links to DFID’s Theory of Change narrative and the proposed approach to capturing impact from the 2014 Research Excellence Framework. Adopting these approaches will require changes in the way that projects work (eg early engagement with potential end-users of research) and in the way that projects report their activities and outcomes.

9.2.2 The opportunities to enhance impact in the Scheme and a range of options to achieve this will be major component of the SAT’s Inception Report.

9.3 Constraints to capturing and delivering impact

9.3.1 The review has highlighted a number of constraints to delivering impact that will feed into the SAT’s Inception Report. These emerge from the discussion of sustainability (Section 8) and the discussion of methodological constraints (Section 2). In terms of the review method, it is clear that current reporting templates and processes are not capturing significant information required to both record and enhance impact. The SAT’s Inception Report will detail possible changes in reporting to enhance the Scheme’s impact and its description. The review has also highlighted the need for urgent action to enhance the capture of the full range of research outcomes in ways that ensure long-term secure storage (sustainability) as well as enhancing the accessibility of research outputs from the Scheme.

9.4 Next steps and the way forward

9.4.1 This report is essentially an interim report describing the nature of the Scheme and highlights of its achievement, mainly focusing on Phase 1. It coincides with the completion of the SAT’s Impact strategy and both documents feed into the Inception Report and proposed workplan for the remainder of the SAT’s contract.

9.4.2 The immediate priorities to follow-up this report will be to commence a programme of work to collaborate with projects to capture and describe the full range of existing research outcomes from funded projects. This will feed into a more comprehensive review of the Scheme and from 2012 a series of potential thematic reviews (eg the contribution of the Scheme to the MDGs). The SAT will also work with colleagues in DFID and ESRC to design a programme of support for researchers, institutions and projects to further enhance their work and the overall impact of the Scheme.