

International Development Committee: Beyond Aid: The Future UK Approach to Development

Response by the Wellcome Trust

September 2014

- We welcome the research-based culture that has flourished in recent years in the Department for International Development (DFID). DFID's Research and Evidence Department (RED) has an important role in connecting research and delivery for international development, and we greatly value its work.
- DFID plays a pivotal role in facilitating partnership working and identifying synergies between UK partners to maximise engagement in overseas activities. It is effective in leveraging funding and expertise from other funders and donors.
- DFID is a flagship for the UK's contribution to international development, going 'beyond aid'. It is a well-regarded international development actor and should continue to remain as an extremely important stand-alone government department in the longer term.
- Not only does DFID signal that international development is high priority for the UK government, it also has significant positive impact. Its research-related activities, such as research capacity strengthening, will continue to be vital in the UK's broader international strategy. DFID has worked effectively to adapt to recent changes in the global development landscape.

INTRODUCTION

1. As a global research funder committed to improving human and animal health, the Wellcome Trust recognises the importance of a clear vision for the UK's approach to international development, which is evidence-based and appropriately implemented and evaluated. This is particularly important given the impact of the UK's research policies in developing countries.
2. We welcome the opportunity to respond to this inquiry. We have partnered with DFID on a number of initiatives and are therefore pleased to comment on DFID's role in facilitating others to assist developing countries, its work in influencing policies in other departments and the longer term future of the department.
3. We have experience working effectively with DFID in jointly funded health research programmes and as valued partner in global activities. The Trust and DFID Research and Evidence Department (RED) have co-funded several major initiatives, including:
 - **Health Research and Capacity Strengthening:** a partnership specifically focused on strengthening capacity for health research in Kenya and Malawi and to improve its use in evidence-based decision making, policy formulation and implementation.

- **Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises (R2HC):** an initiative which aims to improve health outcomes by strengthening the evidence base for public health interventions in humanitarian crises. This programme most recently includes a rapid response call for research in Ebola.
 - **Global Health Trials:** a partnership established with DFID and MRC in 2009 to support late-stage trials to generate new knowledge about interventions that promise to contribute to the improvement of health in developing countries. This scheme is primarily focused on late stage (equivalent to phase III/IV) clinical and health intervention trials evaluating efficacy and effectiveness.
 - **Health Systems Research Initiative:** an initiative to fund research aimed at generating evidence to strengthen health systems and improve health outcomes in low- and middle-income countries.
4. Our relationship with DFID goes beyond co-funding, and we work together on a number of committees including the UK Collaborative for Development Science (UKCDS), which was established in 2006 with the specific aim of helping to coordinate research and international development. We also work together with DFID through the ESSENCE group of funders, coordinated through WHO.
 5. As a research funder, we value the complementarity of DFID as a government development organisation. DFID is an effective partner, working to leverage funding and expertise from other funders to maximise the impact of the UK's development spend. Engaging directly with DFID rather than going through multiple channels for approval has been positive and straightforward.
 6. Most recently, DFID's ability to recognise and respond quickly to humanitarian emergencies has been demonstrated by its willingness to partner with the Trust to announce a number of initiatives to help tackle the Ebola crisis in West Africa. Recognising the need for further research and the UK's strengths in the area, DFID has agreed to be one of the partners in an unprecedented international consortium assembled to accelerate collaborative multi-site trials of candidate Ebola vaccine.

DFID'S CURRENT AND FUTURE APPROACH TO RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

7. DFID connects research and delivery in international development, and this unique remit is a key strength. We note that the Committee's Terms of Reference do not mention research, but we believe that research aid policies must continue to be integrated to form an effective coherent development strategy.
8. Over the past few years, DFID has developed a strong scientific culture. This has been enhanced by the appointment of Professor Chris Whitty as Chief Science Adviser and Director of the Research Evidence Department, and the commitment of a significant budget for research. Effective policy must be underpinned by evidence and we welcome DFID's increased focus on the monitoring and evaluation of its programmes.
9. We do not believe that devolving DFID's research activities across the research councils or other agencies would be nearly as effective, and there is a risk that it would dilute the specific strengths and expertise highlighted above. Organisations such as UKCDS help

to ensure coordination of research, but DFID has an important role to play in its own right as a standalone department.

10. A key strength of DFID is its country offices, which inform the approach to international development with local knowledge and expertise. The research 'Hubs' established in China, India, and most recently East Africa are an interesting model to explore further and we look forward to seeing how these develop in the future. It will be important to continue to work to ensure a joined-up approach with other Government organisations operating in these countries, including UK Trade and Investment and the Science and Innovation Network.

Future approaches

11. In a changing global development landscape where low-income countries are increasingly becoming middle-income countries, DFID is successfully adapting its technical expertise and its role in sharing research policy. Research related activities, such as capacity strengthening will continue to be a crucial aspect of DFID's work.
12. We consider that DFID's pivotal role in linking research to the delivery of international development, and in facilitating collaborative work in development, will continue to be vital.
13. A dedicated department for international development not only makes clear that this is a priority area for the UK government, but provides a clear focus and budget for these activities. This allows DFID to play a pivotal role in facilitating collaborative working and identifying synergies between UK partners to maximise engagement in overseas activities and influence policy. We believe there is a long-term future for DFID as a stand-alone department.
14. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with DFID. We would be happy to provide further information or discuss our response in more detail.

The Wellcome Trust is a global charitable foundation dedicated to achieving extraordinary improvements in human and animal health. We support the brightest minds in biomedical research and the medical humanities. Our breadth of support includes public engagement, education and the application of research to improve health. We are independent of both political and commercial interests.