

SO YOU WANT YOUR RESEARCH TO INFLUENCE CHANGE?

**Evidence-based insights for development actors
to increase development impact**

Research for Development Impact Network

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A collaboration between
the Australian Council for
International Development
and Australian universities

Acknowledgements

Debbie Muirhead, Fred Hollows Foundation (consultant leading the 'Evidence to Impact' study)

Jane Hutchison, RDI Network Steering Group member

Philippa Smales, RDI Network and Partnerships Manager

Jenny Vaccari, RDI Network Communications Coordinator

The RDI Network

We support production and use of evidence to improve development impact

The Research for Development Impact (RDI) Network is a network of **practitioners, researchers and evaluators** working in international development and global social justice

The Network exists to lead, stimulate and support:

- Effective, ethical development research practice
- Cross-sector partnerships and linkages
- Uptake and use of evidence in policy and practice

Funded through DFAT and the Australian aid program



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Research and evidence matter.... but....

Good quality development research improves effectiveness and is an important precursor to innovation – but there are diverse barriers and challenges to its use

- Limited mechanisms to coordinate and consolidate need, production, developments, evidence across sectors
- Practical challenges to align demand for and supply of evidence across multiple and diverse development actors
- Significant scope to strengthen amount, quality and impact of research for development
 - but requires detailed and practical understanding of incentives, constraints, opportunities, requirements
 - and action to address

Towards change



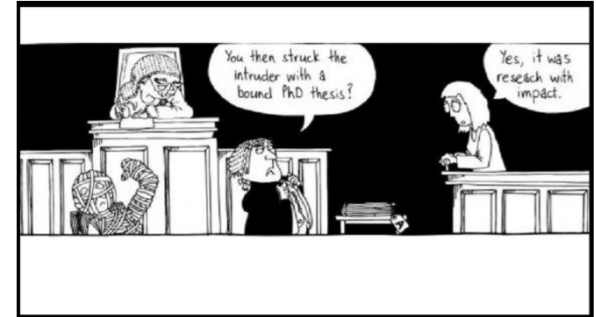
CALLING ALL RESEARCH PRODUCERS, TRANSLATORS AND KNOWLEDGE BROKERS!

8 DEC 2017



By RDI Network

Research and evaluation methods



Research Communications and Uptake:
An open survey of practice in the international development sector

You are invited to participate in an open survey of the international development sector on the topic of research communications and uptake. The survey will be used by the Network to help us build a robust picture of the current practice in this area, and relies on the participation of **research producers, translators and knowledge brokers**.



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Why the Evidence to Impact study...



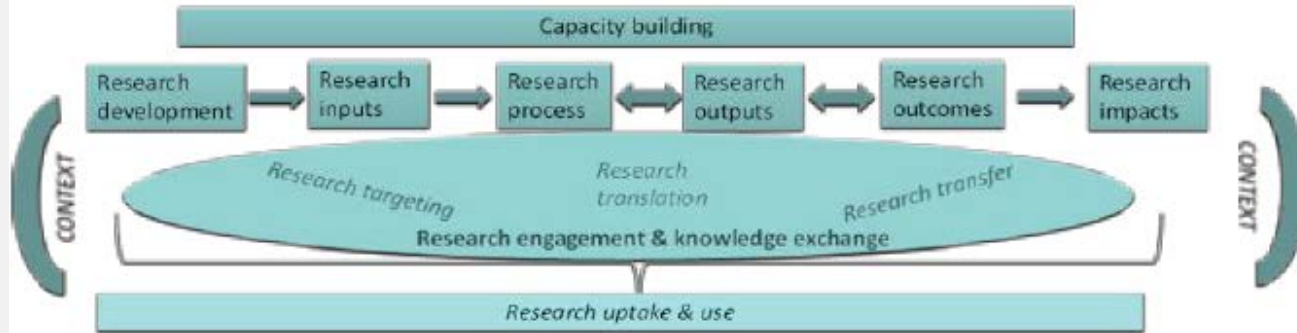
Why document research outcomes and impact?

Why a focus on ADRAS grants specifically?

- A substantial investment (A\$58m), via a transparent, competitive mechanism
- ODE 2015 evaluation focused only on uptake within DFAT
 - development research aims to influence a wide range of actors (e.g. partner country governments, partner research institutions etc.)
- ADRAS funded 'design' elements to achieve development outcomes
 - eg prioritised collaboration with developing country researchers, inclusion of end-users
- Grants increased the development research community within Australia, engagement of a broad range of universities in the aid program
- Intended to balance new ideas and directions ('blue sky') with production of evidence related to development policies and priorities

New framework developed to explore research for development impact

Figure 1: Framework for Exploring Research for Development Impacts (FERDI)



Capacity building	Product development	Policy	Practice / systems / sector	Economic / societal
The development of attributes, skills and systems that increase quality and quantity of research conduct, uptake and use.	Contribution to new or improved products or technologies. May be through improvements to enabling environment, direct development, testing or scaling.	Contribution to new or changed policy narratives or content locally, nationally, regionally or globally.	Contribution to changes in ways of doing things on the ground and / or the beliefs or systems that govern them.	Changes in wider social / economic benefits such as job creation economic growth, improved equity, social capital.

Commissioned by the RDI Network, developed by consultant Debbie Muirhead with the RDI Network Committee

What the study tells us about the current policy context for research...

Based on the views of 25 informants (DFAT staff, other development research funders and key development research institution staff):

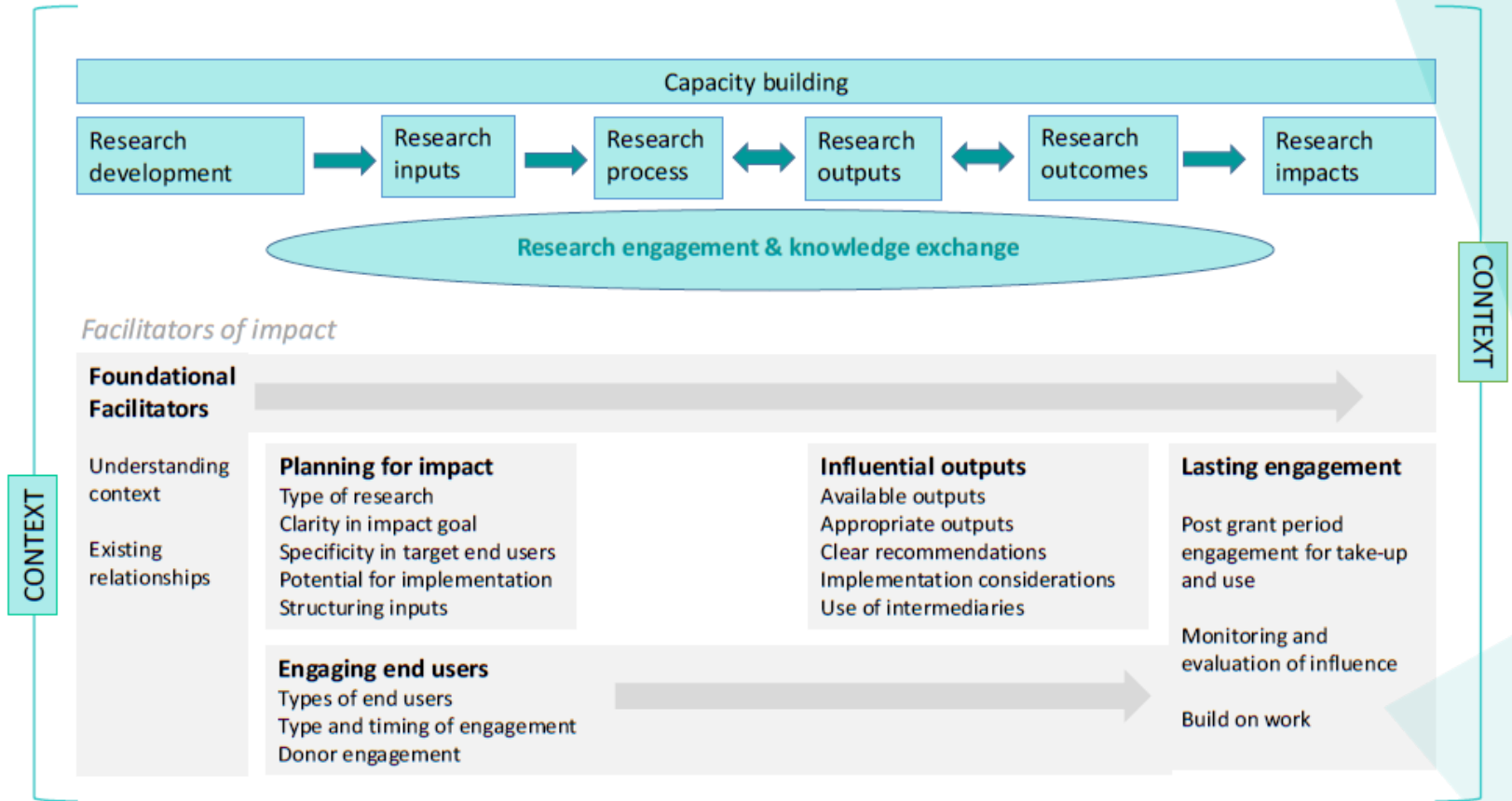
1. **Mixed views on the importance and relevance of research**
2. **Research evidence continues to be used in sector strategies, and internal advocacy for resource allocation to issues of social or economic development**
3. **Research evidence not adequately drawn on as the basis for aid investment plans**
4. **Support for and use of research concentrated in sector groups**
5. **Commissioned research perceived to require strong oversight to ensure it met DFAT and partner needs**

What the study tells us about facilitating impact...

1. **Foundational facilitators:** familiarity and prior engagement with research context and users
2. **Planning for impact:** intentional focus on impact and integrated methods for its achievement
3. **Engaging end users:** proactive engagement and co-production of knowledge
4. **Influential outputs:** tailored fit-for-purpose design of outputs
5. **Lasting engagement :** Ongoing engagement and continuity of relationships

Where these facilitators were present, many development contributions were documented, including policy changes, practice and system changes, capacity changes

Mapping facilitators of impact to the FERDI



Funded research contributed to policy, practice, products & capacity...

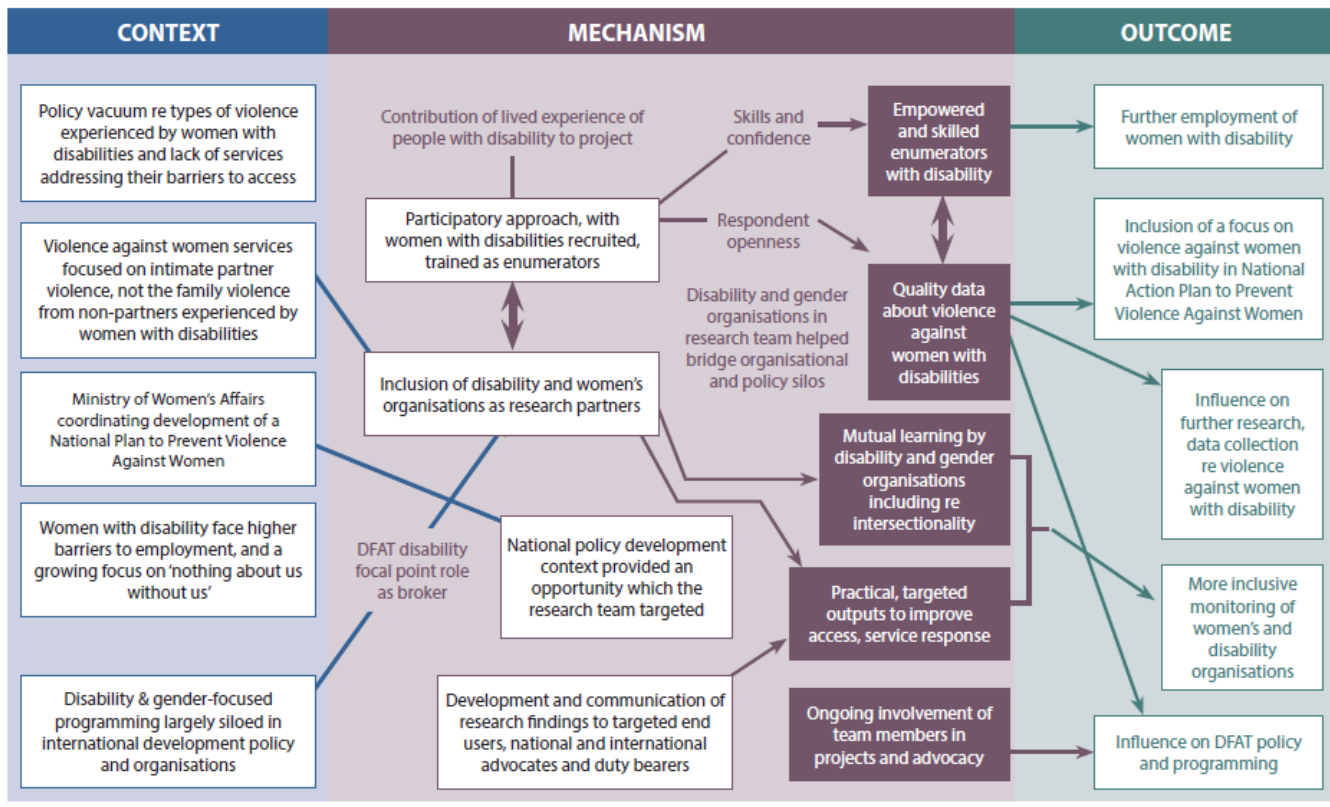
Study documents
multiple development
contributions

Table A: Summary of ADRAS research contribution to development outcomes

OUTCOME CATEGORY	EXAMPLES OF ADRAS CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUTCOMES
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Country-relevant addition to new law: The 2016 Papua New Guinea (PNG) tobacco control act created a separation between village customary regulations for local small-scale tobacco producers and national framework for large companies.▶ Change in tax policy: Fiji taxation policy was changed to reduce palm oil use and increase consumption of fruit and vegetables to address rising obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs).▶ Evidence-informed policy decision: Roll-out of Health Equity Funds (HEF) over Community Based Health Insurance (CBHI) for health care coverage of poorer households in Cambodia and Laos.▶ Influenced DFAT monitoring: Gender composition of community committees was adopted as an indicator for DFAT gender-inclusiveness monitoring.▶ Influenced policy: Research insights and the situation of women with disabilities were referenced in the Cambodian National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women 2014–2018.▶ A gender-responsive budget was developed to support Timor Leste's domestic violence law.▶ Informed quality standards: ADRAS research informed quality standards for early childhood education in Indonesia.▶ Informed policy requirements: School textbook authors were required to undergo gender awareness training in Indonesia.

...through three pathway types (targeted, enabled, emergent)

Triple jeopardy—gender based violence and disability in Cambodia



...and maps several case study outcome pathways

‘Facilitators of impact’ point to the importance of research partnerships...



... as a way to support research uptake and development impact

- But what does this look like in practice? – and how do you partner well, when individuals and institutions have different drivers, cultures, rhythms, incentives, time frames and accountabilities?
- Guide consolidates evidence and practice across sectors and actors to support effective partnerships and short-cut learning

Research communications and translation: sneak preview of survey results....

Confirmed need for greater skills in research communications

1. More than 50% of respondents have never used any resources to support improved research communications
2. More than 70% have never received any formal training in research communications
3. More than 70% reported they would benefit in further upskilling in research communications

Incentive structures need to be tackled too

1. Almost 80% 'strongly agree' with "I value the influence research can have in real-world policy and practice situations"
2. More than 50% 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' that "Efforts I make towards research communications are **rewarded and recognised** by my peers"

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Research communications and translation: sneak preview of survey results....

Facilitator	Sector snapshot (based on 87 responses)
1. Foundational facilitators: familiarity and prior engagement with research context and users	✓ Pre-existing relationships with research partners in 'some' or 'all' projects (>80% of respondents)
2. Planning for impact: intentional focus on impact and integrated methods for its achievement	✗ Users as part of research team and users in steering groups – mixed results with some respondents (>15%) reporting these strategies were in 'no projects'
3. Engaging end users: proactive engagement and co-production of knowledge	✗ Users engaged in multiple ways throughout research process (>10% reporting these strategies were in 'no projects', and only 8% in 'all projects')
4. Influential outputs: tailored fit-for-purpose design of outputs	✗ Only 15% of respondents develop specific research communication and engagement strategies in 'all projects'
5. Lasting engagement: Ongoing engagement and continuity of relationships	✗ More than 30% respondents do not monitor uptake projects beyond life of project for any projects

Key messages, next steps

- Strengthening development impact requires research focused on impact, and its uptake and use.
- This requires
 - action and change from individuals, institutions
 - incentives, requirements, frameworks, tools aligned with evidence
 - Ongoing engagement, networks and collaboration to better align research demand and supply in real world contexts
- Research communications and translation survey results will provide further guidance re capacity development needs and priorities
- Detailed recommendations from ADRAS study for development funders, development researchers and representative research bodies and networks (eg, Universities Australia) will guide RDI Network efforts
- More is needed to address structures and incentives that drive behaviour

SO YOU WANT YOUR RESEARCH TO INFLUENCE CHANGE?

Take action!

Thank you

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