

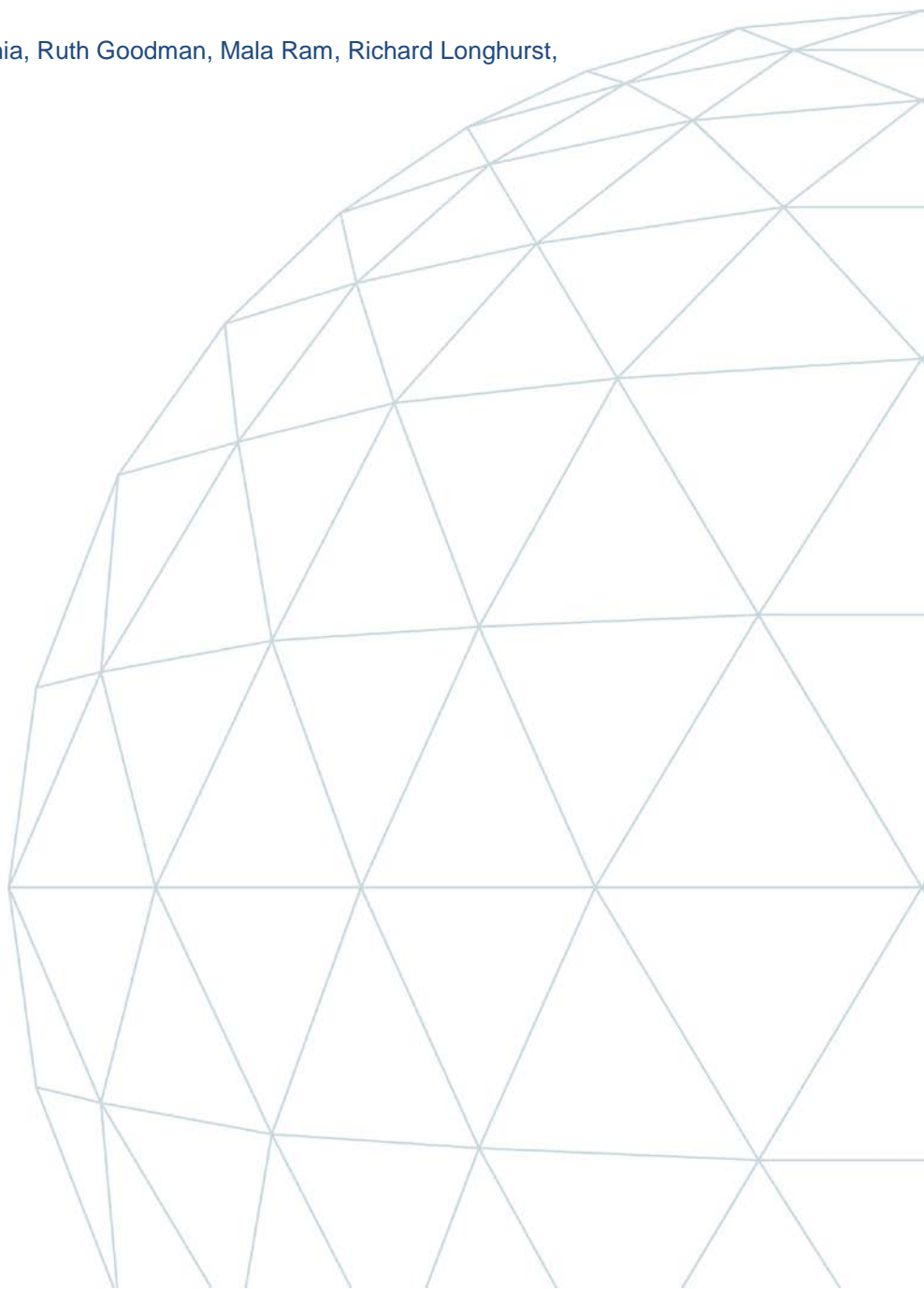


## **Evaluating the Impact of the ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research**

Reference Number: RE140168ESRC

### **Final report to ESRC and DFID (March 2016)**

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# Executive Summary

## INTRODUCTION TO THE EVALUATION

### Overview of the Fund

The ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research, instigated in 2005, aims to provide a more robust conceptual and empirical basis for development, and deliver demonstrable impact on policy and practice for poverty reduction in developing countries. The specific focus of the Joint Fund is on delivering economic and societal impact - defined by the ESRC as “*the demonstrable contribution that excellent social and economic research makes to society and the economy, of benefit to individuals, organisations and nations*”<sup>1</sup> - through influencing relevant policies and practice. The aspiration is that this will in turn impact on wider goals relating to poverty alleviation/reduction.

Since the Joint Fund’s inception, total funding has amounted to £62m, with the majority supporting small to medium sized research grants. Under phases 1 and 2, the geographic focus of these grants was determined by their relevance to the main aim of the Fund, namely research that supports poverty alleviation amongst the poorest countries. By phase 3, the call specifications were refined, requesting that funded research “*should generate new knowledge of international relevance that has the greatest potential to benefit the lives of poor people in Low-Income Countries (LICs)*”<sup>2</sup>. Across 101 small/medium research grants under phases 1 and 2, research was conducted in over 55 different countries and 8 regions.

Section 1.2 provides further information on the Fund’s key features, governance arrangements and reporting requirements.

### Evaluation framework

ECORYS, alongside our partner the Institute of Development Studies, was commissioned in October 2014 to evaluate the impact of the Joint Fund on policy makers, practitioners, and other stakeholder groups. We also sought to identify the most important determinants of impact. The evaluation focused on assessing the achievements of phase 1 and 2 grants, since most of these were complete or near to completion at the time of the study. This meant that the evaluation covered 101 research grants, 46 small/medium grants from phase 1, and 55 small/medium grants from phase 2.

The ESRC’s Impact Toolkit outlines three specific types of policy and practice impact - instrumental, conceptual, and capacity building<sup>3</sup> - which formed the basis for the evaluation’s conceptual framework for assessing impact. It was also recognised, a priori, that these impacts lie “*on a broad continuum, ranging from conceptual impacts (including informing debates, directions in thinking and culture that lead to developments in policy and practice) through to instrumental impacts (e.g. directly influencing changes in policy or practice), and capacity building impacts (through the transfer of people and skills across the researcher/user interface)*”<sup>4</sup>.

The basic theory of change underpinning the Joint Fund implies that policy makers and other non-academic stakeholders find the research relevant and of value, take it up, and apply it to help address their development goals (economic, social, governance etc.). DFID identifies four interrelated and ongoing components of such ‘pathways to impact’ for research: stakeholder engagement; capacity

<sup>1</sup> ESRC, *What is Impact?*, <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/evaluation-and-impact/what-is-impact/>, accessed at 29.01.2015

<sup>2</sup> See the OECD DAC list of ODA recipients effective for reporting on 2014, 2015 and 2016 flows : <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/DAC%20List%20of%20ODA%20Recipients%202014%20final.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> ESRC, (2011). *Branching Out: New Directions in Impact Evaluation from the ESRC’s Evaluation Committee*, p. 5.

building; communication; and monitoring and evaluating uptake<sup>5</sup>. This further guided the evaluation's assessment of the specific routes through which policy and practice impacts are achieved, as well as the determinants of impact and enabling factors.

The evaluation also takes note of the ESRC Evaluation Committee's perspective that research impact generally takes place "over a long period of time", and may operate through "a wide variety of mechanisms, rather than working in a linear fashion"<sup>6</sup>. Reflecting this, Barakat et al<sup>7</sup> identified a process of 'cumulative influence', including four ongoing stages of research impact<sup>8</sup>. The results of the evaluation were also analysed through the lens of this model, to help assess the progress of Joint Fund research towards delivering longer-term impacts, and to identify what might be done to accelerate this process. Section 1.3 provides further details of the evaluation framework.

### Methodology and study challenges

The evaluation encompassed the following methods: a desk review of the activities, impact plans, and results all phase 1 and 2 projects; an online survey of Joint Fund researchers to expand upon this information; and the completion of 20 case studies. In terms of notable study challenges/limitations, some researchers responding to the survey had difficulties in identifying the specific impact of their funded project, for example vis-à-vis other research that they had carried out in the same area, and given other significant influences on policy. This reflects the model of cumulative influence, and lack of a straightforward causal chain between individual research outputs and policy change. However, the case study research in particular was used to verify the nature and depth of reported impacts, to assess the contribution of research outputs vis-à-vis other policy drivers, as well as to explore in more depth the pathways to impact and determinants of impact. Secondly, the evaluation's aggregate assessment of impact is based principally upon the self-reported impacts of Joint Fund researchers. Nonetheless, any bias in the findings can be said to be limited by the tendency of Joint Fund researchers to err on the side of caution in claiming impacts, as well as the evaluation team's further efforts to disaggregate the type/level of impact achieved across each category, based upon the triangulation of evaluation evidence. Full details of the methodology and its limitations are provided in sections 1.4-5.

## KEY FINDINGS ON RESEARCH IMPACT

In chapter 2, we examine how the outputs and findings from Joint Fund research have been utilised and applied by policy makers, practitioners and other research users, and have contributed towards policy and/or practice change.

**Capacity building impacts** - technical and personal skills development – were reported by three quarters of all Joint Fund projects (section 2.2). 56% of projects reported capacity building impacts amongst members of the research team, 28% in terms of research partner organisations (the vast majority of which were based in the South), and 15% on end users of the research. This suggests that capacity building was interpreted (and employed) by the majority of projects as a way of increasing the quality of their research, rather than to support the transfer of skills across the researcher/user interface<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, only a minority of Joint Fund projects had conducted in-depth assessments of their capacity

<sup>5</sup> DFID, (May 2013). *Research Uptake Guidance: a guide for DFID-funded research programmes*

<sup>6</sup> ESRC, (2011). *Branching Out: New Directions in Impact Evaluation from the ESRC's Evaluation Committee*, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Barakat, S, Waldman, T, Varisco, A. (2014). *Understanding Influence: Summary Report for DFID: Draft for discussion with government stakeholders*. From the project 'The Influence of DfID-Sponsored State Building-Oriented Research on British Policy in Fragile, Post-Conflict Environments' (RES-167-25-0596).

<sup>8</sup> The model identifies four stages of impact, from early stages when research may be more exploratory and academic in nature, to a more interactive relationship between research and policy makers, and culminating in a change in policy.

<sup>9</sup> Whilst capacity building is not a specific objective of the Joint Fund, call specifications under phases 1 and 2 recognise that capacity building activities may be addressed as part of the research process itself.

building impact and/or were able to corroborate their reported outcomes. Conducting case study research enabled greater insight to be gained into the capacity building impacts of Joint Fund projects. Examples of the range of capacity building impacts are set out below.

Project	Details of capacity building impact
Widening Participation in Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania <sup>10</sup>	The research team were purposefully composed of researchers in the early, mid and late stages of their career, to ensure that the team could use and learn a range of skills from each other. In-country researchers have subsequently reported access to wider networks and other research opportunities.
Improving Educational Evaluation and Quality in China <sup>11</sup>	The research team worked with the National Institute of Educational Sciences (NIES) as the in-country partner. To upskill NIES researchers, the research team organised training in areas such as empirical research design, educational evaluation methodology, and statistical analysis techniques. Following the study, there was evidence that NIES researchers had considered the implications of the methods and findings for their own research, developed related projects and reviewed their practices of conducting empirical research. This is significant given the NIES are the national body responsible for monitoring and evaluating school quality in China.
Pregnancy termination trajectories in Zambia <sup>12</sup>	Health practitioners and media professionals received targeted training through the study. The former were trained on the legal framework around providing abortion services, and on how to engage with media professionals. The latter were trained on how to research and report on the topic of unsafe abortions. Evidence suggests that the professionals engaged on the project applied the training to their own work; for example the media professionals generated ideas for articles and radio programmes that were subsequently produced on the subject of abortion.

**Conceptual impacts** - defined as increased understanding of policy issues and reframing debates - were the most prevalent type of impact across the Joint Fund, and reported by 85 projects (section 2.3). Conceptual impacts were further categorised by end beneficiary, and it was found that 48% of projects impacted on researchers/academics, 62% on practitioners, and 43% on policymakers. There was evidence of significant overlap between interpretations of conceptual and capacity building impacts with regards to academics and researchers, suggesting that the two impacts are inter-related and mutually reinforcing. Conceptual impact amongst policymakers has the potential to change understanding at a higher level and to influence a much wider group; however the evidence confirmed that such processes (and their translation into instrumental impact) are subject to significant external influence, and that this takes time to come to fruition. Furthermore, whilst a majority of Joint Fund projects provided corroborative evidence of their conceptual impact, this sometimes focused more on the processes involved in generating impact, rather than the results per se. Examples of the different types of conceptual impact are as follows:

Project	Details of conceptual impact
What Development Interventions Work? The long-term impact and cost-effectiveness	The anti-poverty research in Bangladesh, which tracked participants over long periods following a range of interventions, was one of the first projects to use large numbers of life histories combined with survey data. This methodology has since been used by other organisations including not only the project partner Chronic Poverty Research

<sup>10</sup> Morley, L (2006-2010) *Widening Participation in Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania: Developing an Equity Scorecard*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0078

<sup>11</sup> Thomas, S (2008-2010) *Improving Educational Evaluation and Quality in China*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0353

<sup>12</sup> Coast, E (2011-2014) *Pregnancy termination trajectories in Zambia: the socio-economic costs*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0626; Impact maximisation grant 2014 – 2015

Project	Details of conceptual impact
of anti-poverty interventions in Bangladesh <sup>13</sup>	Centre (CPRC), but also the Stimulating Household Improvements Results in Economic Empowerment (SHIREE) programme in Bangladesh.
Poverty and maternal health in Ghana: A spatial analysis of exclusion from care <sup>14</sup>	The project aimed to strengthen empirical understanding of the impact of distance on accessing maternal health services. The research produced a map which visualised maternal health indicators for each district in Ghana. The map helped government agencies to understand why targets on maternal health service uptake had not been met, where resources should be prioritised, and what should be considered in future strategies to increase service efficacy.
Lone Mothers in South Africa - The role of social security in respecting and protecting dignity <sup>15</sup>	Researchers sought to raise awareness that whilst lone mothers may receive the Child Support Grant (CSG), they are not eligible for social assistance in their own right unless they are disabled. The case study research suggests that policymakers had shown interest in the findings and that they acknowledged their importance, as confirmed by senior representatives of UNICEF and the Department for Social Development. The former has subsequently prepared a concept note for an internal consultation event within government on the universalisation of the Child Support Grant.

**Instrumental impacts** - defined as influencing the development of policy, practice or service provision, shaping legislation, and altering behaviour – were reported by just over one third of projects (35%) across phases 1 and 2 (section 2.4). Whilst a relatively small number of Joint Fund projects overall (14%) provided evidence that their research findings had been used to directly inform policy, around one fifth of Joint Fund projects reported direct instrumental impacts on practice. In the case of the latter, there was often concurrent evidence of capacity building and conceptual impacts. Positively, the evidence suggests that in the majority of all of these cases, the instrumental impact was substantive and attributable to the Joint Fund. Nonetheless, a minority of researchers were more cautious about claiming that their project had impacted directly on changing policy and practice. This was either due to a lack of concrete evidence and/or an awareness of other significant influences or drivers of policy change. Where projects had specifically impacted on changing community practices and behaviour, there was also emerging evidence of wider economic and societal impact. Examples of instrumental impact are as follows:

Project	Examples of instrumental impact
Inter-Agency Research on Strengthening Community Based Child Protection for Vulnerable Children <sup>16</sup>	The research findings stimulated new thinking around how to enable grassroots processes of child protection and align these with government and formal systems. The research team were then able to exploit the supportive political context to ensure that these ideas informed the decision-making of the Child Protection Committee. As a result of this activity, evidence from the case study research suggests that the research influenced the development of Sierra Leone's new Child and Family Welfare Policy (i.e. through stakeholder interviews and citations of the research in policy documents).

<sup>13</sup> Quisumbing, A (2008-2010) *What Development Interventions Work? The long-term impact and cost-effectiveness of anti-poverty interventions in Bangladesh*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0361

<sup>14</sup> Matthews, Z (2008-2011), *Poverty and maternal health in Ghana: A spatial analysis of exclusion from care*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0343

<sup>15</sup> Noble, M (2011-2014) *Lone Mothers in South Africa - The role of social security in respecting and protecting dignity*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0642

<sup>16</sup> Wessells, M (2013-2015) *Inter-Agency Research on Strengthening Community Based Child Protection for Vulnerable Children*, Phase 2, ES/J017663/1

Project	Examples of instrumental impact
Shame, social exclusion and the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes: A study in seven countries <sup>17</sup>	The PI wrote a briefing paper drawing on the Joint Fund research which argued that treating beneficiaries with respect is not only a response to social justice but could have positive effects on policy effectiveness. The research paper was shared with influential key stakeholders, who had previously attended a workshop arranged by the research team. As a result of the briefing paper and significant engagement with key stakeholders, an amendment was included as part of ILO Recommendation 202.
Nutritional Improvement for Children in Urban Chile and Kenya <sup>18</sup>	Communities reported improvement in child health and nutrition as a result of the changes in practice initiated by the project research (such as vegetable farming and hygiene practices). Several individuals were able to generate a higher income through the sale of vegetables and other income generating activities they had learnt to conduct. Improved level of sanitation and waste disposal has also been observed.

**Cross-portfolio analysis** (section 2.5) suggests that there are strong inter-relationships between capacity building, conceptual and instrumental impacts. Across Joint Fund projects, capacity building and conceptual impacts were far more likely to occur in combination and may be mutually reinforcing or linear and consecutive. Instrumental impacts only tended to occur in combination with others - most commonly instrumental impact was achieved when both capacity building and conceptual impacts had been delivered. For example, there was evidence that where capacity building had been effective, professionals and/or community groups then continued to apply the new knowledge and skills gained within their day-to-day work. This reflects the model of cumulative influence, which suggests that a critical mass of research activity is required in order to effect policy change.

We also reviewed any evidence of longer-term impacts on **poverty alleviation/reduction** as a result of Joint Fund-inspired changes to policy and practice (section 2.6). Only a small number of Joint Fund projects provided evidence that their research had led to wider impacts on poverty reduction. This was largely a reflection of the stage of impact reached by the majority of Joint Fund projects (assessed as stage 2, according to the model of cumulative influence). However there were also very few examples of Joint Fund research projects that had attempted to evaluate or had access to external evidence to prove that their policy or practice impacts had translated into social and economic outcomes. This highlights the value of conducting external programme evaluations, and of conducting further evaluation of Joint Fund projects in the future to help capture longer-term impacts.

## KEY FINDINGS ON DETERMINANTS OF IMPACT

### Planning and monitoring impact (section 3.2)

Impact plans - developed at the proposal stage - were assessed according to the following criteria: the clarity of the intended research impacts; the extent to which researchers expressed an understanding of how impact would be achieved; and whether a detailed plan was in place, specifying the steps and activities required to achieve the intended impact. According to these criteria, the majority of Joint Fund projects demonstrated evidence of 'good' impact strategies (although more projects from phase 2 than phase 1 were rated as having an 'excellent' strategy<sup>19</sup>). A higher proportion of Joint Fund projects reporting instrumental impact was also found where projects were rated as having 'good' or 'excellent' impact strategies, compared with all projects. Overall, however, our findings suggest that effective impact

<sup>17</sup> Walker, R (2010-2012/13) *Shame, social exclusion and the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes: A study in seven countries*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0557

<sup>18</sup> Pridmore, P (2010-2014) *Nutritional Improvement for children in urban Chile and Kenya*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0461

<sup>19</sup> Reflecting the introduction of the more detailed 'Pathways to Impact' document under phase 2 of the Joint Fund.

strategies and planning are an important but not sufficient condition/factor for generating research impact. This is in part due to a process in which translating social science research into practice is both dynamic and influenced by a variety of enabling and hindering factors, some of which exist outside of a researcher's control. Finally, monitoring practices varied greatly across the grants, and generally the majority of researchers were focused on monitoring outputs rather than outcomes.

### **Types of stakeholder engaged** (section 3.3)

For the purposes of this evaluation, a stakeholder was identified as any person, group or institution that has an interest in and/or will be influenced by the research<sup>20</sup>. When considering the grants that achieved impact in at least one category (instrumental, conceptual, and capacity building), 93% of impact-achieving grants had prior relationships with the stakeholders in place. On average, projects engaged with 5 types of stakeholder including: national and international policy makers; NGOs/INGOs; universities and think tanks; private companies; and community groups/members of the public. Whilst the specific stakeholders to be engaged will be influenced by the individual aims of a research project, there was some variation in the level of impact associated with different types of stakeholder. Grants which involved international policy and NGO actors were found to be slightly less likely to report impact than those engaging with other national level stakeholders. The ability to recognise the openness of stakeholders to research findings, and to engage stakeholders who can help researchers to develop a deeper understanding of context, were also acknowledged as important success factors. Conversely, the relative lack of time and/or financial constraints amongst some stakeholders acted as barriers to impact.

### **Methods of engagement and dissemination** (section 3.4)

Consulting with stakeholders during the early stages of the research grant (i.e. bid design stage) was important to ensure that Joint Fund research was policy relevant, and that outputs met stakeholder information needs. Methods which involved ongoing, face-to-face, and interactive methods of engagement with stakeholders, embodying principles of co-production of research, were also key facilitating factors in achieving impact. This was achieved in a variety of ways, including through informal methods of engagement, through dissemination workshops and seminars, and most powerfully through setting up formal advisory, steering or consultative groups, involving policy makers and other relevant stakeholders. Tailoring outputs for specific audiences was found to be particularly effective, for example through the dissemination of accessible policy briefs translated into the local language, as well as the development of non-traditional outputs such as scorecards, blogs, and short films.

### **Researchers and partners enabling impact** (sections 3.5 and 3.7)

The role and profile of all members of the research team, including in-country partners, played a key role in facilitating impact. Understandably, we found that there were links between the experience and reputation of the research team in the topic area and subsequent research uptake. The evidence also confirms that high quality research increases the likelihood of research uptake (and particularly when innovative methods have been employed to strengthen the evidence base). Involving a range of in-country research partners helped to maximise the range of different impacts achieved. On average, each grant worked with 3 different types of in-country partner. In order of frequency, these included universities, NGOs, international nongovernmental organisations (INGOs), national and international policy makers, think tanks and other intermediaries and private companies. Working with Southern-based researchers and in-country partners led to the following: increased understanding of local policy, practice and cultural contexts; access to established stakeholder networks; prior experience and involvement in the policy field; and an understanding of how to communicate research to target users.

<sup>20</sup> This definition includes research participants, those involved in service provision, as well as those involved in policy making processes those not those fulfilling the role of grant partners.

### The role of context (section 3.6)

As indicated above, understanding of the policy context was an important determinant of impact for Joint Fund projects. Whilst timeliness and topicality were further enabling factors of research uptake, this also emphasises how contexts are dynamic and changing, requiring multiple and ongoing methods to understand context and how this may impact on research. Where understanding of the policy context was derived from more in-depth approaches - such as through advisory groups and/or the combined knowledge of the research team - the data suggests that projects were therefore more likely to achieve impact. Secondly, while politically-related contextual situations are beyond the control of researchers, some Joint Fund researchers were able to implement mitigation strategies. Targeting a core set of stakeholders within government less at risk of staff turnover was one example of this. Joint Fund researchers had much less control over the funding levels and allocations of government, as well as external challenges to their work. Overall, it was found that challenging political contexts was not a major determinant of impact for Joint Fund research specifically. This perhaps reflects the careful design of Joint Fund projects, and the efforts made by researchers to understand the policy context, as much as the mitigation strategies employed.

### Sustainable impact and cumulative influence (section 3.7)

Joint Fund projects reported that it was difficult to generate impact within the grant timescale. A number of processes and factors were important in enabling more sustainable impact. Successful projects in particular linked to other relevant programmes of funded research, in order to extend dissemination and the potential for research uptake. The production and accessibility of high quality research outputs, effective capacity building activities, and establishing mechanisms for ongoing engagement with stakeholders were seen as further important factors for enabling sustainable impact. Whilst the model of cumulative influence suggests a longer-term process, evidence from the evaluation suggests that 'intermediaries' can be deployed at different stages of research uptake – and not only when there is a significant body of research which is ready to be 'translated' for policy makers. This reflects for example the opportunity for producers and users of the research to also act as intermediary organisations. This may be particularly critical for research that is tackling new or challenging topics.

### Determinants of impact

The following table summarises the determinants of research impact (all types of impact) that were identified across the Joint Fund, cross referenced to the relevant sections of the report.

Category	Negative determinant	Positive determinant
Planning for impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of time/funding for impact generating activities (section 3.7)</li><li>• Short grant timeframe for impact to be realised (section 3.7)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategies for knowledge exchange (section 3.2)</li><li>• Well planned and effective engagement (section 3.4)</li><li>• Links to further research, related projects, and funding (section 3.7)</li></ul>
Researchers and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Absence of potential partners/opportunities to collaborate (section 3.5)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access to relevant networks (section 3.3)</li><li>• Good reputation and institutions lending credibility (section 3.5)</li><li>• Dedicated and diverse team of researchers including in-country partners (section 3.5)</li><li>• Quality portfolio of research activity (section 3.7)</li></ul>
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of interest in the research</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identification of key stakeholders</li></ul>

Category	Negative determinant	Positive determinant
	(section 3.4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulties in engaging stakeholders (section 3.4)</li> </ul>	(section 3.3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing strong relationships with key stakeholders (section 3.3)</li> <li>Stakeholders are also research partners/intermediaries (section 3.5)</li> </ul>
Engagement and dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low stakeholder capacity (time and financial) to act on findings (section 3.6)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging stakeholders early and at all stages of the grant (section 3.4)</li> <li>Interactive modes of engagement (including project steering groups) (section 3.4)</li> <li>Tailored and accessible outputs (section 3.4)</li> <li>Formal/informal engagement following the grant (section 3.4)</li> <li>Effective capacity building activity (section 3.7)</li> </ul>
	Variable determinant	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicity and media (section 3.4)</li> </ul>	
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political instability (section 3.6)</li> <li>Complex situations (section 3.6)</li> <li>Government distribution of funds (section 3.6)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Windows of opportunity (section 3.2)</li> <li>Receptiveness of policy actors (section 3.4)</li> <li>Understanding policy/practice/cultural contexts (section 3.6)</li> <li>Risk mitigation strategies (section 3.6)</li> </ul>
	Variable determinant	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timeliness/topicality (section 3.6)</li> </ul>	

Reflecting on the combination of positive determinants that specifically drove **instrumental impact**, while effective impact planning was an important factor in this process, existing relationships with stakeholders and working with Southern research partners then provided the leverage which allowed effective impact plans to be realised in practice. Projects which engaged with civil society organisations and government stakeholders from the outset (using the mechanism of steering groups in particular), increased the probability that research would be of direct benefit to non-academic stakeholders. It was also clear from the evidence base that delivering capacity building and conceptual impacts are either mutually supportive, or important preconditions, for delivering instrumental impact.

## CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT (ACHIEVING AND MAXIMISING IMPACT)

The range and depths of impact achieved across the Fund highlighted in this evaluation are laudable given the well documented disconnect between research and policy making<sup>21</sup>, the complex issue of local context and the fact that policy makers are frequently rotated into new portfolios. Whilst our findings corroborate the general consensus that research is only one of the factors influencing the policy-making

<sup>21</sup> See for example Kiregyera, B, *The evidence gap and its impact on public policy and decision-making in developing countries* 2010; Hallsworth, M., Parker, S., Rutter, J., *Policy Making in the real world: evidence and analysis*, Institute for Government, 2011

process<sup>22</sup>, there were positive signs of tangible policy/practice change from a minority of projects, as well as the possibility of further impacts in the future.

Our findings suggest that the key enabling factors of Joint Fund research impact include effective impact planning (instrumental impacts), strong existing connections with stakeholder groups, ongoing and proactive stakeholder engagement, a diverse set of (in-country) research partners, and the production of high quality research. A favourable external context is also important, including for example taking advantage of ‘windows of opportunity’, and building upon pre-existing portfolios of research. For sustainable impact, extending the research through accessing follow-on funding, and effective capacity building of end-users in order to transfer knowledge and skills, were also signalled as important factors

The key lessons and recommendations from the evaluation, for both grantees and DFID-ESRC, are as follows. The full list can be found in chapter 4.

No.	Lesson learnt	Recommendation
<b>For researchers of poverty alleviation and related topics, and grantees under the Joint Fund</b>		
1.	While projects were broadly working towards aims of policy influence, they tended to be less specific in articulating exactly what type of impact (conceptual, instrumental and/or capacity building) they intended to bring about, as well as about the mechanisms through which the research would achieve these impacts.	Developing a Theory of Change (ToC) would encourage researchers to make explicit what is their understanding and assumptions of how the application of their research results will play out in practice. Specifically, researchers should: (a) articulate the change they want to bring about and the mechanisms by which they anticipate this happening; and (b) focus on research uptake. We would also recommend that the ToC is developed and agreed by members of the research team in order to facilitate a collaborative approach to implementation.
2.	Research uptake is facilitated through support of relevant in-country partners. Benefits of working with such partners include: investigating whether there is sufficient demand for the research amongst users; that effective dissemination can be supported through these partnerships; and that users can be actively supported to make use of the findings. We also found that links to other relevant funded projects and programmes also increases the likelihood of research uptake.	Grantees should seek to engage and develop relationships with relevant in-country partners to facilitate research uptake. In-country partners can act as enablers of impact by: strengthening knowledge of the policy context; helping to shape and undertake the research to address user needs; providing access to stakeholder networks; and amplifying research dissemination by acting as knowledge brokers/intermediaries. Links to other relevant funded projects and programmes should also be made by grantees where possible. This could also be facilitated through the Evidence and Policy Directorate (EPD) <sup>23</sup> , which has been tasked with identifying synergies between grant holders. This includes supporting grant holders to exploit and influence engagement opportunities on both an individual and collective basis.
3.	Advisory groups were seen as valuable to the grant and its subsequent impact, for example, by ensuring that the research was relevant to the target stakeholders and supporting dissemination of the research findings.	In order to develop country consultative groups, it is necessary to: (a) carefully consider the composition of the group to ensure that the members are the most relevant in terms of their knowledge, skills, interests and experience but also with sufficient influence to take research findings forward into the policy arena; (b) budget and plan for the

<sup>22</sup> See for example: Newman et al, *The International Conference on Evidence-Informed Policy Making*, 2013

<sup>23</sup> Please note that the EPD has recently be renamed ‘The Impact Initiative’, <http://www.theimpactinitiative.net/>

No.	Lesson learnt	Recommendation
	Other open and interactive methods, such as co-production of research, are also associated with impactful projects.	time required for meetings and consistent communication to keep members engaged; and (c) set out to potential members the benefits of joining. The potential of co-producing research with target stakeholders, where relevant, should also be investigated by grantees.
No.	Lesson learnt	Recommendation
For ESRC-DFID and other donors funding developmental research		
1.	The experience and reputation of members of the research team in the specific topic area are important factors in facilitating research uptake. In addition, the involvement of southern-based researchers and in-country partners, alongside established relationships with research users, tends to facilitate impact.	<p>The profile of the research teams should be taken into consideration by donors when deciding on research grants to be funded. The Joint Fund should also continue to encourage PIs to engage with and develop research teams involving in-country researchers/partners.</p> <p>Proposals should also require researchers to indicate the prior relationships they possess with in-country researchers, partners, and other relevant stakeholders (including policy makers/practitioners). We emphasise, however, that this should not preclude the engagement of new policy stakeholders by researchers, providing that well planned and intensive user engagement activities are developed and subsequently implemented.</p>
2.	Sufficient planning needs to take place at the project design stage to ensure researchers come to grips with the specific political, economic, and social context in the country of focus. We found that projects were less specific in setting specific impact milestones and targets. Conversely, a higher proportion of Joint Fund projects reporting instrumental impact was found within projects rated as having 'good' or 'excellent' impact strategies, compared with all projects.	<p>To help researchers create feasible and realistic strategies for impact, requirements for completing the pathways to impact document could be modified to encourage greater specificity in relation to identifying target audiences, and outlining methods for communication and engagement<sup>24</sup>. Although the relevance and importance of different stakeholders and communication outlets is likely to change as the grant progresses, setting this out in detail at the outset will provide an initial action plan which can be updated as the research develops.</p> <p>As part of the pathways to impact document, researchers could be asked to develop a Theory of Change (ToC). This ToC document could potentially be revisited annually and updated to reflect any changes.</p> <p>ESRC and DFID should consider asking researchers to develop project plans and budgets related to a specific period, post completion of the research, when researchers focus their attention on impact generation.</p>
3.	The majority of researchers in phases 1 and 2 focused on monitoring outputs (i.e. dissemination events, publications), rather	ESRC and DFID should consider the development of a range of outcome indicators to help monitor impact across the Fund. These could then be outlined in the pathways to

<sup>24</sup> The current guidance for completing the pathways to impact in phase 3 requires applicants to consider and address "clear mapping of beneficiaries and target audiences". An explicit instruction to identify specific individuals and organisations could be included here. Similarly, in the current guidance where applicants are asked to consider and address "methods for communication and engagement", applicants could be asked to identify specific events for engagement and provide details of communication outlets they would approach, for example, name specific local and national media outlets which researchers deem appropriate and potentially interested to disseminate their research findings. See: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/funding/funding-opportunities/esrc-dfid/phase-3-call-3/je-s-guidance-for-applicants/>

No.	Lesson learnt	Recommendation
	<p>than outcomes related to impact.</p>	<p>impact plan. In addition, we recommend that ESRC-DFID require grantees to report on impact annually over the course of each research contract. The continued establishment of Researchfish as the central location for researchers to log outcomes and impacts may aid such monitoring, as well as building upon the more detailed typology and indicators of conceptual, capacity building and instrumental impact developed through this evaluation project.</p> <p>Whilst ESRC and DFID recommend that a minimum of 10% of the overall budget should be allocated to delivering the activities outlined in the pathways to impact plan, we recommend that researchers indicate what specific impact generation activities they have carried out - as well as the total value of such activities - as part of project reporting requirements.</p> <p>Measuring the full impacts of research under the Joint Fund is necessarily longer-term in nature, and may fall outside the period of the research grant. Potential options for capturing this evidence over a longer time period include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An additional evaluation funding stream which grantees of completed projects could apply for, contingent upon presenting strong evidence of interim impacts (i.e. capacity building, conceptual or instrumental).</li> <li>• Commissioning follow-on/longitudinal external impact evaluations of successful Joint Fund projects (across the portfolio, or focused on specific regions or themes)</li> </ul>

# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 About the evaluation

The ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research - instigated in 2005 - aims to provide a more robust conceptual and empirical basis for development; and deliver demonstrable impact on policy and practice for poverty reduction in developing countries. ECORYS, alongside our partner the Institute of Development Studies, were commissioned in October 2014 to evaluate the impact of the Joint Fund on policy makers, practitioners, and other groups outside academia.

The following chapter provides an overview of: the Joint Fund, its governance arrangements and reporting requirements; the evaluation aims and objectives, conceptual framework and methodology; and study challenges and limitations of the data.

## 1.2 Overview of the Joint Fund

### 1.2.1 Key features of the Joint Fund

The ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research was initiated in August 2005 to help provide a more robust conceptual and empirical basis for development, and to enhance the quality and impact of social science research on poverty reduction. Specifically, the Joint Fund was launched with the aim of funding **world class social scientific research relating to economic, social and policy development in less-developed countries**, which proves useful to, is taken up by and can be **applied by policy makers and other relevant stakeholders** to address **international development goals** (i.e. policy and practice for poverty reduction).<sup>25</sup>

Since the Joint Fund's inception in 2005, total funding has amounted to £62m (£39.5m from DFID and £22.5m from the ESRC), defrayed across three phases of research (table 1.1). A number of different types of grant have been made available during the various phases of the Fund. The majority of these have been small to medium sized grants. These grants have focused on a number of different themes and countries (single and multiple country focus), as well as embracing a variety of methodical approaches.

Table 1.1 Summary of grants awarded under the ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research

Phase	Dates of Funding	Types of grants and status of completion
1	2005-2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>46 small/medium research grants, awarded through three calls (funding between £100,000 to £700,000; and duration of 1-3 years).</li></ul>
2	2009-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>65 grants in total, comprising:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>55 small/medium research grants awarded through three calls (funding between £100,000 to £500,000 and a duration of 1-3 years).</li><li>3 Impact Maximisation grants and 1 Emerging Opportunities grant awarded through a pilot Impact and Engagement scheme<sup>26</sup>.</li><li>6 Evidence Synthesis Research Awards (ESRA).</li></ul></li><li>29 small/medium grants were ongoing at the time of the evaluation.</li></ul>

<sup>25</sup> ESRC, (2013). *Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research: Guiding principles on uptake, impact and communication of research*.

<sup>26</sup> A second call for Impact Maximisation Grants was in progress at the time of the evaluation, and due to close to applications in mid-December 2015

3	Up to 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25 small/medium research grants: 13 from Call 1; and 12 from Call 2 (Call 3 projects were being commissioned at the time of the evaluation).</li> <li>7 Development Frontiers call 1 research grants, with 4 receiving a second phase of funding (a second call was due in 2016).</li> <li>2 Research Programme grants.</li> </ul>
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Source: DFID-ESRC Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research (2015)

Under phases 1 and 2, the **geographic focus** for small/medium research grants was “*determined by their relevance to the main aim of this Fund, namely research that supports the alleviation of poverty amongst the poorest countries and peoples of the world*”. Further, there was no prescribed list of what constitutes the poorest countries and peoples<sup>27</sup>. However, by phase 3, it was specified within the call specifications that funded research “*should generate new knowledge of international relevance that has the greatest potential to benefit the lives of poor people in Low-Income Countries (LICs)*”<sup>28</sup>. It was also indicated that research could be conducted in Middle-Income Countries (MICs) “*when it can be clearly demonstrated that the research will generate new knowledge of global relevance that has the potential to benefit the lives of poor people in Low-Income Countries*”<sup>29</sup>.

Out of 101 small/medium research grants under phases 1 and 2, research was conducted in over 55 different countries, and 8 regions (including the Middle East and North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, Americas, Central Asia, and South Asia). A total of 48 of these projects involved research in a single country, and 47 research in two or more countries. The latter projects either looked at one issue across countries in a specific region (e.g. India, Sri Lanka and Nepal) or else purposefully compared the situation in very different countries (e.g. Kenya and Chile). Five projects looked at whole continents or global data; one was a purely theoretical piece which did not involve specific country data (a full list of projects is provided in annex 1).

As indicated in table 1.1, the **thematic focus of small/medium research grants** has evolved since the Fund’s inception in 2005. Under phase 1, there was a general thematic focus on issues with potential impact on policy/practice for poverty reduction. Key themes included: education; gender; child health; disease; environment; and global partnership. Under phase 2, applications were requested but not limited to the following six themes: cities and development; development in a changing world; economic crisis, poverty and growth; inequality and development; population and development; security, conflict and development. Within the current phase, proposals are required to respond to at least one of the following overarching questions:

- What approaches are most effective in enabling the poorest to exit and stay out of poverty, and under what conditions can such approaches be replicated elsewhere and at scale?<sup>30</sup>
- What political and institutional conditions are associated with effective poverty reduction and development, and what can domestic and external actors do to promote these conditions?
- What measures can be taken to reduce the risks and impact of violence and instability on the poorest and increase the effectiveness of peacebuilding, state-building and wider development interventions in fragile and conflict-affected situations?<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Following a review of annual call specifications under phases 1 – 3 of the Joint Fund

<sup>28</sup> See the OECD DAC list of ODA recipients effective for reporting on 2014, 2015 and 2016 flows: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/documentupload/DAC%20List%20of%20ODA%20Recipients%202014%20final.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> See for example, Phase 3, Call 1 Specification

<sup>30</sup> Wording of these questions was adjusted between calls 1 and 2 of phase 3, but has remained the same for call 3.

Under phases 1 and 2 – the focus of this evaluation - the Joint Fund has funded a wide variety of small/medium research grants, as can be seen from the table below:

**Table 1.2 Project research themes under phases 1 and 2 (categorisation by the evaluation team)<sup>32</sup>**

Research theme	No. of projects	Examples of projects
Legislation and development	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Lay and Institutional Knowledge of Domestic Violence Law: Towards Active Citizenship in Rural and Urban Cambodia”</li> <li>• “Legislating and implementing welfare policy reforms: What works politically in Africa and why?”</li> </ul>
Health	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Poverty and maternal health in Ghana: A spatial analysis of exclusion from care”</li> <li>• “The design and evaluation of a mobile learning intervention for the training and supervision of community health workers”</li> </ul>
Education	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Student Performance in National Examinations: the dynamics of language in school achievement”</li> <li>• “Improving Educational Evaluation and Quality in China”</li> </ul>
Community mobilisation/ political participation	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The social conditions for successful community mobilisation: Learning from sex worker led projects in India”</li> <li>• “Social Movements and Poverty”</li> </ul>
Infrastructure/ Transport/ Technology	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Infrastructure and Development: Evidence from India and Kenya”</li> <li>• “The impact of mobile phones on young people’s lives and life chances in sub-Saharan Africa”</li> </ul>
Cities and development	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Building a Brighter Future: A Randomized Evaluation of Slum-Housing Upgrading”</li> <li>• “Urban Growth and Poverty in Mining Africa”</li> </ul>
Inequality and development	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Ethnic Minority (under)development in Vietnam”</li> <li>• “The Long Run History of Economic Inequality”</li> </ul>
Economic Development	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Finance and formalisation as mechanisms for poverty reduction in Africa”</li> <li>• “Trade Liberalisation, Job Reallocation and Poverty”</li> </ul>
Development effectiveness and measurement	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “What Development Interventions Work? The long-term impact and cost-effectiveness of anti-poverty interventions in Bangladesh”</li> <li>• “Multidimensional Poverty: Enriching Methodologies of Measurement &amp; Policy Analysis”</li> </ul>
Agricultural development	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Farm scale and viability: an assessment of black economic empowerment in sugar production in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa”</li> <li>• “Factor endowments, biased technological change, wages and poverty reduction: can genetically modified crops bring a Green Revolution to SSA?”</li> </ul>
Environment	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Tropical forests in poverty alleviation: from household data to global-comparative analysis”</li> <li>• “Community and institutional responses to the challenges facing poor urban people in an era of global warming in Bangladesh”</li> </ul>

<sup>31</sup> Proposals under phase 3 were also requested to incorporate consideration of measurement and metrics, as well as structural inequalities. The latter include those based on gender, age, disability, ethnicity, race, religion, class, educational status and spatial factors.

<sup>32</sup> Please note that some projects addressed multiple themes, and are therefore counted more than once in this table.

Research theme	No. of projects	Examples of projects
Disease	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Stigma and discrimination associated with TB in Asia”</li> <li>• “How can schools help African children cope with the impacts of disease and poverty?”</li> </ul>
Gender	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Gender, education and global poverty reduction initiatives”</li> <li>• “Contested development?: intimate partner violence and women's employment in urban and rural Tanzania”</li> </ul>
Livelihoods	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Mining, Social Networks and Rural Livelihoods in Bangladesh”</li> <li>• “Development in the ‘raw’: What livelihood trajectories and poverty outcomes tell us about welfare regimes and resilience in Afghanistan”</li> </ul>
Security, conflict and development	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Achieving Policy Coherence in Challenging Environments: Risk Management and Aid Culture in Sudan and Afghanistan”</li> <li>• “The Economic and Social Consequences of Armed Conflict in Colombia”</li> </ul>
Migration	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Temporary Migration and Economic Development: the Triple-Win Policy Vision applied to North Africa”</li> <li>• “The Development of Migrant Villages under China's Rapid Urbanization: Implications for Poverty and Slum Policies”</li> </ul>
Well-being	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Wellbeing and Poverty Pathways”</li> <li>• “Marriage, Power and Wellbeing”</li> </ul>

Alongside the small/medium grants of the Joint Fund, a number of other types of grants were introduced from **phase 2** onwards, including:

- **Impact Engagement Scheme<sup>33</sup>**, which incorporates the following:
  - **Emerging Opportunities Grants:** providing funding for small-scale (up to £10,000) and short-term activities, such as particular impact and knowledge exchange-focused activities by existing grant-holders designed to capitalise on emerging opportunities.
  - **Impact Maximisation Grant:** supporting larger-scale follow-on work packages (£25,000-£100,000) of up to 12 months by existing grant-holders aimed at maximising the development impact of ESRC/DFID funded research (outside of academia) – on the individual project level or through linking across projects.
- **Evidence Synthesis Research Awards (ESRAs):** providing a review and synthesis of evidence on an identified theme generated by scheme-funded research, assessing its existing and potential contribution to the Joint Fund’s aims, and identifying key gaps to be considered in future research calls<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> All activities funded through an Impact and Engagement grant were to be completed by 31 March 2016.

<sup>34</sup> ESRAs were not be evaluated as part of this particular impact evaluation. This was agreed with the ESRC during the inception phase of the evaluation. To date, 6 ESRAs have been funded: 2 in 2013 on social protection, and food security respectively; 3 commissioned in 2014 and due to be published soon on research methods, gender, and children and young people; and 1 commissioned in 2015 and underway on health.

Whilst **phase 3** still focuses predominantly on small and medium research grants, Development Frontiers Research Grants were introduced to support innovative, ‘blue skies’ research on poverty alleviation<sup>35</sup>. In addition, Research Programmes have been commissioned under this phase. These encompass larger programmes of work (up to 3 years, up to £2 million) on two under-researched themes: poverty in urban spaces; and disability, inequality and poverty<sup>36</sup>.

## 1.2.2 Governance arrangements

The Joint Fund is governed by a management group of ESRC and DFID officers who are jointly responsible for management, administration and policy development of the Joint Fund and other collaborative research programmes funded by the two organisations. The Secretariat for the Joint Fund is based at the ESRC and is responsible for delivering research commissioning for the programmes, day-to-day liaison with research investments, and programme support functions.

In addition, the Joint Fund has been supported by several strategic bodies during its lifetime, namely the International Advisory Committee (IAC), and the Strategic Advisory Team (SAT), both established in 2010. The key responsibilities of these bodies are summarised in the table below.

**Table 1.3 Key responsibilities for the IAC and SAT**

International Advisory Committee (IAC)	Strategic Advisory Team (SAT)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise on <b>general strategy</b> for the ESRC/DFID Joint Fund in order for it to achieve its overall objectives, acting as a <b>critical friend</b> in relation to the overall shape, academic direction and policy relevance of the research programme.</li> <li>• Assist with <b>horizon scanning</b> and propose the themes for each annual call.</li> <li>• Provide advice on how to <b>maximise the impact</b> of the fund, and specifically on the development of the overall communication plan; supporting the programme in the dissemination of its research outputs to key audiences and potential users of the research; and offering pathways into user communities.</li> <li>• Advise on the themes for, methodology, and use of planned research synthesis work.</li> <li>• Advise on ways to maximise <b>Southern participation</b> in the Joint Fund.</li> <li>• Members of the Advisory Group are encouraged to take on an <b>ambassadorial role</b>, promoting the Joint Fund and networking on its behalf where feasible and appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set out a <b>strategic plan</b> for increasing the uptake of the Joint Fund’s research by policymakers and practitioners;</li> <li>• Identify and establish effective mechanisms for securing and maximising impact of research funded through the Joint Fund;</li> <li>• <b>Identify key policy windows</b> and opportunities and plan for strategic engagement;</li> <li>• Lead on drafting a <b>Communications and Impact Strategy</b> for the programme;</li> <li>• Review current and closing awards (including identifying the potential opportunities for further impact of that research, for example through considering opportunities for up-scaling or out- scaling work);</li> <li>• Identify and suggest to the funders possible clusters of awards for synthesis work (to be commissioned competitively);</li> </ul> <p>Sustain <b>regular contact with potential users</b> of the research in order to understand their needs and priorities, and raise awareness of the research funded through the Joint Fund.</p>

*Source: Individual Terms of References for establishing an International Advisory Committee and the Strategic Advisory Team respectively, DFID-ESRC Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research*

<sup>35</sup> Call 1 were awarded via small grants (up to £100,000; 18 months) with an option for a further 18 months of funding of up to £200,000 following a stage-gating process

<sup>36</sup> These grants are intended to support innovation and act as hubs of research excellence in the specific areas of study.

At the time of the evaluation, the IAC had not recently been called upon (although members were consulted in the development of the evaluation specification), since the Joint Fund was largely in the delivery rather than development stage. Nonetheless, it was reported by ESRC that the funders were in discussion around how best to secure this type of high-level advice for the programme going forwards.

The Strategic Advisory Team (SAT) played a more practical role helping ‘to build and record impact and support the Joint Fund’s development’<sup>37</sup>. However, the SAT contract was ended in 2013 and, in March 2015, its key responsibilities were transferred to the Evidence and Policy Directorate (EPD). The EPD is designed to increase the uptake and impact of the Joint Fund - as well as the Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems programme - both of which are funded through the ESRC-DFID Strategic Partnership. Tasked with identifying synergies between the programmes and grant holders - and supporting them collectively and individually to exploit influencing and engagement opportunities - the EPD also aims to communicate and share the programme’s research effectively across a range of relevant audiences<sup>38</sup>.

### 1.2.3 Project reporting requirements

In addition to the initial Award Proposal, each Joint Fund project is required to produce a range of monitoring and evaluation reports (reflecting other ESRC grants). The suite of documentation required (at the time of the evaluation) is summarised in Table 1.4. The table also lists the main sections within each document where details of the planned/actual outputs, outcomes and impact of each project are recorded.

**Table 1.4 Current documentation required of research commissioned under the Joint Fund**

Document	Key aspects relating to impact reporting
<b>Award Proposal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project objectives</li> <li>• Impact Plan/Pathways to Impact</li> </ul>
<b>Annual Progress Report</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outputs to date</li> <li>• Progress and plans related to impact and engagement strategies</li> <li>• Examples of capacity building activities undertaken</li> </ul>
<b>End of Award Reports (within 3 months of project completion)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pathways to Impact (Dissemination and Engagement strategy)</li> <li>• Impact to date</li> <li>• Anticipated/potential future impacts</li> </ul>
<b>Impact Reports (within 12 months after award end)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scientific impact</li> <li>• Economic and societal impact</li> <li>• Potential future impact, and difficulties which limited impact</li> </ul>
<b>Rapporteur summaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researchers nominated rapporteurs. Three to four rapporteurs assess a project and provide a ranking (good, very good, outstanding)</li> <li>• Rapporteur summaries are not available for all projects.</li> </ul>

Since November 2014 - and in common with all UK Research Council funded researchers - the ESRC has required Joint Fund researchers to report their impacts via the online system *Researchfish* (including

<sup>37</sup> DFID and ESRC, (December 2011). *DFID Strategic Advisory Team: Review of ESRC-DFID Joint Scheme for Research on International Development*.

<sup>38</sup> Please note that the EPD has recently be renamed ‘The Impact Initiative’, <http://www.theimpactinitiative.net/>

uploading the End of Award and Impact Reports)<sup>39</sup>. Whilst this system had only just begun to be used at the start of this evaluation, where Joint Fund researchers sent additional documents uploaded onto Researchfish to the evaluation team, these were also assessed as part of the desk review.

In addition to other requirements, it is evident that a significant emphasis is placed upon planning for and recording impact within these documents (these sections therefore also provided the main focus of the evaluation desk review). This reflects the specific expectation that Joint Fund researchers will devise and implement a research uptake strategy from the outset of their projects (i.e. activities that will facilitate and contribute to the use of the research by policy makers, practitioners and other development actors). DFID and ESRC have also emphasised that research impact under the Joint Fund must be demonstrable; it is not enough simply to report on the activities and outputs that have been delivered to promote research impact under each project's uptake strategy. The reporting requirements therefore also oblige researchers to provide a credible and plausible assessment of the nature and range of impacts that their specific research has delivered (including that it has been taken up and used by policy makers and practitioners, and that it has led to improvements in services or business, changes in the physical environment, redistribution of incomes and wealth, etc.).

It is also important to note that these requirements were clarified and solidified over time. By Phase 2 of the Joint Fund (2009 onwards) an increased focus was apparent on the need for applicants to demonstrate the relevance and applicability of their proposed research to policy and practice change. This included the additional expectation that *"all research funded demonstrates effective demand from, and practical relevance to, decision makers and practitioners in the field."* Researchers were also increasingly required to set out how they planned to achieve an impact as part of their proposed research. Under Phase 1, applicants set out an 'engagement strategy', outlining the likely end-users and beneficiaries of the research and activities for engaging with them. By Phase 2, applicants were required to draw up an Impact Plan (Calls 1/2) or Pathways to Impact document (Call 3), which addressed the following three 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?<sup>40</sup>

It was recommended that a minimum of 10% of the overall budget should be dedicated to delivering the activities outlined in the Impact Plan. Through this change, it was hoped that engagement with end-users would take place through all phases of the research, and not just at the end of the project.

## 1.3 Evaluation Framework

### 1.3.1 Aims and scope of the evaluation

The evaluation has sought to assess the impact of research funded through the Joint Fund on policy and practice. A previous evaluation of the Joint Fund, carried out in 2012, focused on the research

<sup>39</sup> Researchers report impact in terms of publications, dissemination events, use of social media, key findings etc. See <https://www.researchfish.com/>.

<sup>40</sup> The specific guidance provided to researchers in developing their Pathways to Impact statement included the following: identify and actively engage relevant users of research and stakeholders at appropriate stages; articulate a clear understanding of the context and needs of users and consider ways for the proposed research to meet these needs or impact upon understanding of these needs; outline the planning and management of associated activities including timing, personnel, skills, budget, deliverables and their feasibility; and include evidence of any existing engagement with relevant end users.

commissioned, partnerships and management processes, as well as organisation and management of the Fund<sup>41</sup>. This evaluation report builds on these findings but is more clearly focused on the degree and nature of research impacts achieved.

Given the main aim of assessing effectiveness and impact (and in line with the initial evaluation Terms of Reference) this evaluation focuses on assessing the achievements of phase 1 and phase 2 projects<sup>42</sup>, the majority of which were completed or near to completion at the time of the study. The evaluation therefore covers a total of 101 Joint Fund projects (46 small/medium grants funded under phase 1, and the 55 small/medium grants awarded under phase 2).

Evaluating the impact of the Joint Fund is important not only for accountability purposes, but also to help explore the processes underpinning impact in order to inform future research programmes. As part of the assessment, the evaluation also sought to clarify how Joint Fund research findings were accessed, utilised and applied and by whom, and to identify examples of good practice. Lessons learnt were then distilled with regards to the key internal processes and external contextual factors that enable (and constrain) impact on policy and practice.

Finally, this evaluation aims to inform future impact evaluations in this area, through identifying lessons for further evaluations of the Joint Fund, including building an iterative picture of the impact of the programme over time.

The main users of this evaluation are DFID and ESRC. Other audiences include those researchers and their partners funded through the Joint Fund, the wider academic community, policy makers, practitioners and other research users and donors.

### 1.3.2 Conceptual framework

#### 1.3.2.1 *Defining research impact*

Across their partnership programmes, DFID and ESRC have attempted to build a detailed and shared understanding of research impact, as articulated in the Research Council UK (RCUK) 'Pathways to Impact', ESRC's 'Impact Toolkit' and DFID's 'Research Uptake Guidance'.<sup>43</sup> Research impact is defined in both academic<sup>44</sup> and economic and societal terms.

The specific focus of the Joint Fund is on delivering economic and societal impact, which is defined by RCUK and ESRC as **the demonstrable contribution that excellent social and economic research makes to society and the economy, of benefit to individuals, organisations and nations**. The Research Councils UK's typology of economic and social impact<sup>45</sup> illustrates the breadth and depth of these impacts, some or all of which may be observed through the Joint Fund:

<sup>41</sup> INTRAC (January 2012). *Evaluation of the ESRC-DFID Joint Scheme for Research on International Development* (P2100057). Research Councils UK.

<sup>42</sup> Whilst 14 small/medium research grants had been awarded under the first call of phase 3, none had been completed at the time of the evaluation. They were therefore not examined since it was assumed that insufficient time had elapsed for the majority to have achieved any impact, and/or for their impacts to be sufficiently evidenced through available project documentation.

<sup>43</sup> See following Webpages: RCUK's 'Pathways to Impact' (<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/innovation/impacts/>); ESRC's 'Impact Toolkit' ([www.esrc.ac.uk/impact-toolkit](http://www.esrc.ac.uk/impact-toolkit)); DFID's 'Research Uptake Guidance' ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-uptake-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-uptake-guidance)).

<sup>44</sup> Within these documents academic impact is defined as 'the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to academic advances, across and within disciplines, including significant advances in understanding, methods, theory and application'.

<sup>45</sup> This is further summarised in the above documents as: fostering global economic performance, and specifically the economic competitiveness of the United Kingdom; increasing the effectiveness of public services and policy; and enhancing quality of life, health and creative output.

- Contributing towards evidence-based policy-making and influencing public policies and legislation at a local, regional, national and international level;
- Shaping and enhancing the effectiveness of public services;
- Transforming evidence based policy in practice and influencing and informing practitioners and professional practice;
- Improving social welfare, social cohesion, quality of life, health and well-being;
- Changing organisational culture and practices;
- Enhancing the research capacity, knowledge and skills of policy makers;
- Attracting R & D investment from global business;
- Contribution to regeneration and economic development.

Economic and societal impact through the Joint Fund is to be delivered through influencing relevant policies and practice (although delivering academic impact, through the excellence of the research and enhancing the empirical evidence base for development, can be seen as a complementary and supporting goal). The aspiration is that this will in turn impact on wider goals relating to poverty alleviation/reduction (for example the outcomes linked to the Sustainable Development Goals).

For impact evaluation purposes, it is useful to distinguish between **research impacts on policy and practice, and wider impacts on socio-economic conditions**, or outcomes. Typically the former may become more apparent over the short-to-medium term (as research uptake strategies are implemented and come to fruition in the form of policy/practice change), and are more measurable as well as attributable to the research project. The latter impacts (and in the case of the Joint Fund poverty reduction, including the range of associated outcomes related to the Sustainable Development Goals, for instance) will most likely accrue over the longer-term, due to the time lag of policy/practice change coming into effect (and delivering benefits to citizens, businesses, and the environment). These impacts are understandably less easy to attribute to the research project through traditional evaluation; socio-economic outcomes must firstly be attributed to the policy change itself, ideally requiring an additional impact evaluation of the policy or practice, as well as an assessment of the contribution of the funded research project<sup>46</sup>.

Evaluations which seek to assess wider impacts also typically focus on quantifying the socio-economic impact of a single policy (for example the Education Maintenance Allowance within the UK context), and then attempt to 'track back' from this the influence of research<sup>47</sup>. This contrasts with the Joint Fund evaluation's remit of assessing the impacts of a whole portfolio of projects. This evaluation will therefore **focus on assessing the more immediate impacts on policy and practice**, as an important contributor towards longer-term poverty alleviation (although where evidence of wider impacts on poverty reduction is available or cited we include this in the analysis)<sup>48</sup>.

The ESRC's Impact Toolkit outlines three specific types of policy and practice impacts - **instrumental**; **conceptual**; and **capacity building** impacts - which provide the main conceptual framework for the

<sup>46</sup> Further elaboration on this categorisation of research impacts, and examples of different types of research impact evaluations, can be found in the 2011 discussion paper 'Branching Out: New Directions in Impact Evaluation from the ESRC's Evaluation Committee'.

<sup>47</sup> ESRC, (2011). *Branching Out: New Directions in Impact Evaluation from the ESRC's Evaluation Committee*, pp. 8-9. The paper also notes that such studies have recognised the limits to quantification of research impact in this manner.

<sup>48</sup> Recognising the challenges for this study in measuring longer-term impacts, the ITT for this evaluation included a commitment to undertaking further follow-up evaluation of Phase 1-2 Joint Fund projects.

evaluation's assessment of impact. Whilst these can apply to both academic and economic and societal impacts, the ESRC's Evaluation Committee frames these in the context of assessing economic and societal impacts as follows:

*"The ESRC recognises that the nature of social science research impact lies on a broad continuum, ranging from conceptual impacts (including informing debates, directions in thinking and culture that lead to developments in policy and practice) through to instrumental impacts (e.g. directly influencing changes in policy or practice), and capacity building impacts (through the transfer of people and skills across the researcher/user interface)"<sup>49</sup>.*

The Evaluation Committee noted in 2011 that incidences of direct instrumental impact on policy and practice within the social sciences are comparatively rare. It was also concluded that to more fully determine the value of social science contributions to policy making, **further focus is required on exploring the conceptual influence of social science research** on particular policies (for example through detailed analysis of the research influences on government publications)<sup>50</sup>. The conceptual framework above was informed by the work of Nutley et al (2007), who also recognise the potentially less tangible/identifiable nature of conceptual impacts, defining the difference between conceptual and instrumental impacts as follows:

*"Broadly, instrumental use refers to the direct impact of research on policy and practice decisions. It identifies the influence of a specific piece of research in making a specific decision or in defining the solution to a specific problem, and represents a widely held view of what research use means. Conceptual use is a much more wide-ranging definition of research use, comprising the complex and often indirect ways in which research can have an impact on the knowledge, understanding and attitudes of policy makers and practitioners. It happens where research changes ways of thinking, alerting policy makers and practitioners to an issue or playing a more general 'consciousness-raising role'. Such uses of research may be less demonstrable but are not less important than more instrumental forms of use"<sup>51</sup>.*

In classifying and assessing the impact of Joint Fund projects, the evaluation is also cognisant of the fact that **these impacts are often closely related and may overlap with each other**. For instance, capacity building activities (commonly facilitated for example through the placement of doctoral graduates within user organisations<sup>52</sup>), may lead to or have concomitant aims of enhancing conceptual understanding amongst policy makers, or more direct instrumental impacts. By enhancing the empirical evidence base for development, conceptual impact can – over a given time period and in combination with other contributory factors - lead to instrumental impact. A 2013 ESRC report, adopting a case study approach to exploring the social science contribution to practice, confirms that:

*"This is not simply a case of 'stacking up' disparate types of impacts; instead, very often types of impacts are interwoven. Most evidently, conceptual impacts and capacity-building may be inextricable; in addition, for example, instrumental impacts may rest upon capacity-building and/or be the manifestation of conceptual impacts"<sup>53</sup>.*

<sup>49</sup> *ibid*, p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> *ibid*, p. 10.

<sup>51</sup> Nutley, S., Walter, I. and Davis, H. (2007). *Using Evidence. How Research can Inform Public Services*. Bristol: Policy Press, p. 36.

<sup>52</sup> ESRC, (April 2013). *Cultivating Connections: Innovation and Consolidation in the ESRC's Impact Evaluation Programme*.

<sup>53</sup> Meagher, L. and Technology Development Group (2013). *Research Impact on Practice: Case Study Analysis*. ESRC.

### 1.3.2.2 *Pathways to impact and cumulative influence*

The basic theory of change underpinning the Joint Fund therefore implies that policy makers and other non-academic stakeholders find the research relevant and of value, take it up, and apply it to help address their development goals (economic, social, governance etc.). DFID identifies **four interrelated (and on-going) components to research uptake**<sup>54</sup>; these are necessary components of the 'pathways to impact' for social science research:

- **Stakeholder engagement** (initial stakeholder and context mapping; tailoring the research design accordingly; on-going engagement; interactive discussions of findings<sup>55</sup>);
- **Capacity building** (assessing internal and external capacity; designing and implementing a strategy to support both supply of and demand for research evidence; monitoring and adaptation);
- **Communicating** (designing a communication strategy; findings synthesis; packaging and dissemination of emerging results; adaptation of communication strategy);
- **Monitoring and evaluating uptake** (including design of research uptake objectives and reflection in logical framework; monitoring uptake; adaptation of research uptake objectives).

This framework will guide the evaluation's process assessment of the routes through which Joint Fund policy and practice impacts are achieved (to a greater or lesser extent), the identification of associated success/enabling factors (see section 1.3.2.3), and the generation of lessons learnt for future programmes.

The evaluation nonetheless also takes note of the ESRC Evaluation Committee's view that ESRC impact generally takes place "*over a long period of time*", and may operate through "*a wide variety of mechanisms, rather than working in a linear fashion through particular programmes, projects or other activities*"<sup>56</sup>. Reflecting this, Barakat et al, through an ESRC-DFID funded project<sup>57</sup>, identified a process of '**cumulative influence**', and from this developed an idealised model of research impact. This emphasises the iterative as well as direct-indirect nature of the pathways through which research may eventually gain traction with policy makers and practitioners, through four stages of impact (table 1.6).

<sup>54</sup> DFID, (May 2013). *Research Uptake Guidance: a guide for DFID-funded research programmes*.

<sup>55</sup> Evidence of a two-way relationship includes the involvement of researchers in policy working groups/policy forums, or in relevant advisory roles in the policy-making process.

<sup>56</sup> ESRC, (2011). *Branching Out: New Directions in Impact Evaluation from the ESRC's Evaluation Committee*, p. 10.

<sup>57</sup> Barakat, S, Waldman, T, Varisco, A. (2014). *Understanding Influence: Summary Report for DFID: Draft for discussion with government stakeholders*. From the project 'The Influence of DFID-Sponsored State Building-Oriented Research on British Policy in Fragile, Post-Conflict Environments' (RES-167-25-0596).

**Table 1.5 Cumulative influence model**

Stage	Processes by which impact is achieved
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early research emerges – speculative, theoretical and exploratory</li> <li>• Mainly academic in nature and style – working papers, journals, etc.</li> <li>• Little resonance in policy circles and little awareness or uptake</li> <li>• Few opportunities for dissemination or communication</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Body of research grows – issues clarified, empirical case studies emerge</li> <li>• Interest provoked in policy networks – begins to inform think tank and policy research organisation outputs</li> <li>• Research sections in government begin to disseminate findings from funded centres</li> <li>• Tentative engagement in policy circles – debate started, issue awareness</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Powerful and broad consensus emerges in the research</li> <li>• Intermediaries ‘translate’ findings for officials, policy entrepreneurs promote the issue within government policy windows exploited</li> <li>• Partial adoption in policy; leads to demand for further research</li> <li>• Issues become part of mainstream policy discourse</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full adoption in policy</li> <li>• Research consolidation, refinement and strengthening – gaps identified and new studies commissioned (centrally and in country)</li> <li>• International and national policy and research engagement around the subject intensifies</li> <li>• More interactive and cooperative relationship between research and policy makers</li> </ul>

Source: Barakat, S, Waldman, T, Varisco, A. (2014), *Understanding Influence: Summary Report for DFID*

Barakat et al concluded that “*influence is achieved over time as the body of evidence and research on a particular subject accumulates, coalesces and strengthens*”<sup>58</sup>. It is also evident from the cumulative influence model that the successful contribution of any one research project will be heavily dependent upon context.

Applying this model to the Joint Fund, it is unlikely that individual research projects would be able to wield such comprehensive and long-term influence (at least within the timeframe of individual ESRC-DFID funded activities and particularly where challenging or controversial topics are in focus). A more realistic aim might be to generate initial conceptual interest in a topic, with a view to stimulating follow-on research and debate (i.e. reaching stage 2 of the model). However, the work of Barakat et al also implies that by building on existing streams of research and/or policy interest, and more generally a favourable context (i.e. enabling factors external to the project itself) Joint Fund projects may conceivably be able to achieve policy influence at stages 3 or even 4.

The cumulative influence model is applied by this evaluation to help shed further light on which phases of impact and associated processes are demonstrated by Joint Fund projects, and which are not. It is also applied to help test the relevance of the model more widely, and to generate new insights into where individual projects can make a useful contribution to longer-term processes of research uptake, and critically the contextual factors that facilitate this.

### 1.3.2.3 *Understanding enabling factors*

The ESRC has already undertaken work to identify the contingent or enabling factors involved in successful research uptake and pathways to impact (in terms of both process and the external context in

<sup>58</sup> Barakat, S, Waldman, T, Varisco, A. (2014), p.17.

which findings are communicated). The ESRC Evaluation Committee's '*Cultivating Connections*' report (2013)<sup>59</sup> identifies the following key 'impact enablers' from earlier studies:

- **Established relationships** and networks with user communities.
- **Well-planned user engagement and knowledge exchange** strategies (using targeted and accessible formats).
- **Involving users at all stages** of the research (including **co-production** of knowledge and evidence where appropriate).
- The involvement of intermediaries or **knowledge brokers** as translators, amplifiers, network providers (to channel research findings into the policy making process).
- **Portfolios of research activity** that build reputations with research users.
- **Good management** and infrastructural support.
- **Understanding of policy/practice contexts**, including timescales and the agenda setting process (to ensure that research is policy relevant to help foster demand, and is produced at the most receptive points within the policy cycle).

The importance of establishing ongoing and long-term relationships with research users is highlighted as a key enabling factor within all of the evaluation studies analysed. In turn, these relationships are "*the foundation of other impact determinants, facilitating an understanding of policy contexts, the involvement of users in the scoping and co-production of research, and the development of appropriate knowledge exchange mechanisms*"<sup>60</sup>. Successful engagement in turn requires researchers who have the skills to develop positive working relationships with policy makers.

Understanding the policy making process, and where and when best to act, once again highlights the importance of a **supportive context** in facilitating social science impact. Engagement and communication with individual policy makers is likely to be much less effective where significant demand-side barriers to research uptake exist at an institutional level (for example linked to political culture)<sup>61</sup>. The evaluation therefore also explores the prominence of such issues in facilitating or constraining impact across the Joint Fund, as well as whether and how Joint Fund projects were able to anticipate the opportunities and problems which may arise<sup>62</sup>.

### 1.3.3 Evaluation questions

The above theoretical frameworks - taken alongside the aims of the evaluation - were used to develop the key research questions and sub-questions for the evaluation. Outlined in the table on the following page, these encompass issues of process, impact, enabling factors and lessons learnt. We also indicate which of the specific research methods used in this study (i.e. desk review, survey, case studies) are of most relevance to each of the identified questions.

<sup>59</sup> ESRC, (April 2013). *Cultivating Connections: Innovation and Consolidation in the ESRC's Impact Evaluation Programme*.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 16

<sup>61</sup> ODI, *Evidence-Based Policymaking: What is it? How does it work? What relevance for developing countries?*, 2005

<sup>62</sup> It is useful to note that increasing demand for research from policy makers, through intervening at a more systemic level and attempting to influence attitudes and behaviours, is the focus of a current £1.6 million DFID initiative, Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (<https://bcureglobal.wordpress.com/>).

Table 1.6 Overview of the key evaluation questions and study methods

Research questions	Sub-questions	Relevant study methods		
		<i>Desk/ Literature review</i>	<i>Survey of researchers</i>	<i>Case study research</i>
1. In which ways has research funded through the Joint Fund been provided to, accessed, utilised and applied by policy makers, practitioners and other research users?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How was the research made relevant to the issues and challenges faced by development policy makers and practitioners (as well as those living in poverty)?</li> <li>What user engagement strategies were established, and followed at different stages?</li> <li>What range of stakeholders was engaged, to enable knowledge exchange and promote impact generation?</li> <li>How were the findings and outputs from project research communicated and disseminated to target stakeholders?</li> <li>How aware were relevant policymakers, practitioners and other stakeholders of the Joint Fund, the researchers and research funded?</li> </ul>	√√	√√	√√
2. To what degree has research funded through the Joint Fund contributed to or influenced the development of policy or practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How were the findings and outputs from project research utilised and applied by policy makers, practitioners, and other research users?</li> <li>What range and depth of policy and practice impacts are observed (instrumental; conceptual; capacity building)?</li> <li>What examples of good practice in research into policy making exist across the Joint Fund?</li> </ul>	√	√√	√√√
3. What are the range and extent of impacts to which the research funded through the Joint Fund has contributed (or appears likely to)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent and how has the Joint Fund contributed towards wider social and economic outcomes (with a focus on poverty reduction)?</li> </ul>	√	√√	√√√

Research questions	Sub-questions	Relevant study methods		
		<i>Desk/ Literature review</i>	<i>Survey of researchers</i>	<i>Case study research</i>
4. What are the processes through which impacts have been generated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What pathways to impact (internal process + external context) can be identified across the Joint Fund?</li> <li>To what extent can observed impacts be attributed to the Joint Fund?</li> </ul>	√	√	√√√
5. What factors determine the effectiveness of pathways to impact (in terms of internal characteristics of research projects and external context)?	<p>To what extent, and how, have the following factors enabled or constrained impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>whether the research was demand driven;</li> <li>whether projects were part of an established portfolio or ongoing research;</li> <li>the extent to which research was 'co-produced' by Southern partners (researchers and stakeholders);</li> <li>whether the research involved multiple stakeholder partnerships (at local, national and international levels);</li> <li>the range, depth and frequency of relationships between researchers and stakeholders (and the planning underpinning this);</li> <li>whether research uptake strategies involved capacity building/efforts to boost demand for research;</li> <li>evidence of the involvement of knowledge brokers<sup>63</sup>;</li> <li>the level of programme management and infrastructural support; and</li> <li>supportive external contexts, including the policy making process, 'windows of opportunity' and other external factors.</li> </ul>	√	√√	√√√

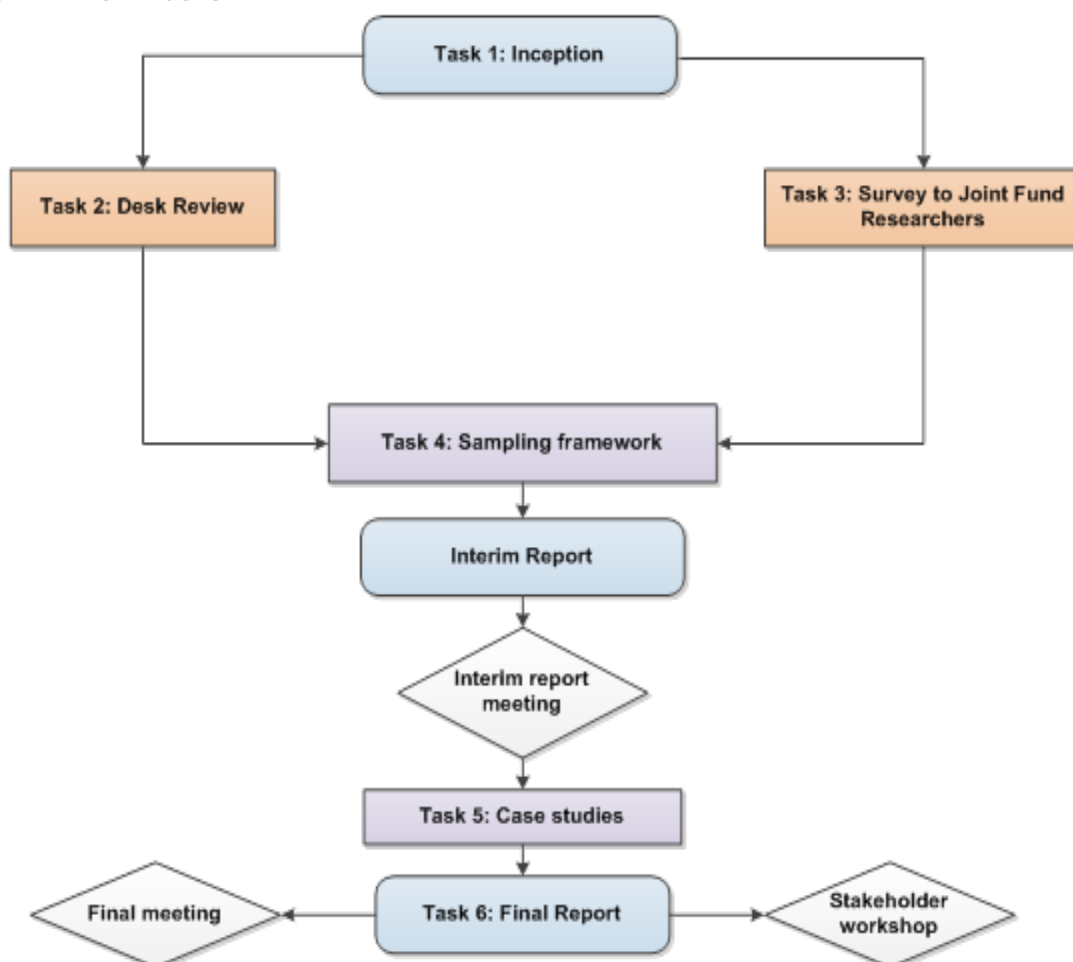
<sup>63</sup> Whereas 'research communicators' will aim for a change in a specific policy or practice, knowledge brokers may strive for a broader change in the information-seeking and decision-making behaviour of policy actors. Activities would be deemed a success if decision makers were to consider a more diverse range of evidence to inform decision-making (leading for example to enhanced conceptual understanding): see Fisher, C. (2012) *Policy influence or evidence-informed policy: what is the difference?*

Research questions	Sub-questions	Relevant study methods		
		<i>Desk/ Literature review</i>	<i>Survey of researchers</i>	<i>Case study research</i>
6. What good practice and lessons can be identified to support the development of impact generation and identification of routes to impact in international development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the key lessons with regards impact generation, developing routes to impact and enabling factors?</li> </ul>	√	√√	√√√
7. What lessons can be learned on the development of methodology for future impact evaluation studies in this area, and of this fund specifically?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How should future evaluations of the Joint Fund build on the methods and results of this evaluation?</li> <li>What are the lessons for further impact evaluations of this and similar research funds?</li> </ul>	√√√	√√√	√√√

## 1.4 Methodology

The following diagram illustrates the key work tasks underpinning our methodological approach. This section will provide a brief overview of the key tasks completed during the evaluation.

Figure 1.1 Work Tasks



The completion of the **desk review (task 2)** allowed the evaluation team to identify initial associations between effective projects (in terms of impact) and different research approaches, evidence of theories of change, and different strategies and levels of research uptake. The documentation for each individual research project was assessed upon a range of criteria. This included: research theme and approach; planned impact; Pathways to Impact outputs/outcomes; and evidence of impact. Documentation reviewed included the funding proposals, End of Award Reports, Progress Reports, Rapporteur Summaries, and Impact Reports. A total of 260 documents were reviewed as part of this task<sup>64</sup>.

The online/telephone **survey (task 3)** allowed individual researchers the opportunity to provide their views and supporting evidence on the impact of their research. The questionnaire - which included both

<sup>64</sup> The funding proposals of 99 projects were reviewed as part of the desk review (2 were unavailable). For thirty-five Phase 2 projects (and one Phase 1 project) it should be noted that there was incomplete documentation relating to impact reporting (i.e. End of Award Report and/or Impact Report); however these projects were contacted as part of the survey.

closed and open-ended questions - covered the following key areas: planned impact; the role of in-country researchers and partners; stakeholder engagement; research impact; and challenges and success factors for achieving impact. The e-survey was sent out to the PIs<sup>65</sup> of all 101 Phase 1 and 2 projects in early February 2015 and was kept open until the end of March 2015. In total, this equated to 96 PIs (since 5 projects were led by the same PI in each phase). Respondents were able to complete the survey online or by telephone. In total, 52 responses to the survey were received (20 responses from Phase 1 and 32 responses from Phase 2, a response rate of 54.17%)<sup>66</sup>. Amongst those who responded to the survey, 13 researchers were included who - at the time of the survey - were yet to have submitted their final reports to the ESRC. The survey questionnaire can be found in annex 2 of this report.

Following the completion of the desk review and survey, a **sampling framework (task 4)** was developed. A selection of projects was shortlisted to represent a number of variables. These included:

- *Evidence and range of impact:* incorporating those projects which had been successful in achieving and evidencing their impact, as well as others which not achieved the impact originally sought;
- *Pathways to impact:* the selected projects had taken different approaches to achieving their impact, in relation team composition and stakeholder engagement, for example;
- *Phase and state of completion:* we felt it was important to represent a range of projects from both Phase 1 and 2 of the Fund;
- *Research theme and country:* we sought to have a relatively even spread of research topics and countries of research.

The **case study research (task 5)** aimed to generate good practice of research uptake and impact delivered through the Joint Fund, as well as verify and assess the importance of research inputs vis-à-vis other policy change drivers. It also sought to explore in more depth pathways to impact and project-related and external (context-related) enabling factors facilitating policy change, with a view to generating lessons learnt.

Whereas 16 of the 20 case studies were based on telephone interviews, four involved members of the evaluation team travelling to the respective countries in which the research had been conducted. Logistical and security issues, evidence of impact, support from the research team and the availability of users were key determining factors in selecting appropriate in-country case studies.

The following sources of information were used in conducting the case study research:

- Semi-Structured Interviews with members of the research team (i.e. PI, Co-I and in-country researchers);
- Semi-Structured Interviews with research users and partners which included national and local policy makers, employees of research institutes or international institutions, and NGO staff;
- Various documents the researchers had submitted to the Joint Fund (i.e. the proposal, key progress reports, End of Award and Impact reports), as well as other relevant supporting documentary evidence (i.e. government policy documents, conference publications, etc.). Some PIs also shared their Researchfish entries with the evaluation team.

<sup>65</sup> In some cases the PI referred the task of completing the survey on to a Co-I or whichever researcher had been in charge of monitoring impact for the project team.

<sup>66</sup> Four of the respondents had been funded twice for different projects in Phase 1 and 2. However, in their responses they clarified which project they were completing the survey on behalf of.

The reporting template for the case studies can be found in annex 3, the full list of case studies at annex 4, and summaries of the 20 completed case studies at annex 5 (providing summaries of the objectives, impacts achieved, and key determinants of impact for each project examined under the case study research).

## 1.5 Study challenges and limitations

We identified a number of challenges during the implementation of the evaluation:

- The length of time that has elapsed since the research was conducted. This is clearly pertinent to early Phase 1 projects, and provided challenges for researchers in recalling and reporting specific details of the impact of their research. PIs from Phase 2 projects also displayed a greater willingness to participate; this was reflected in the response rate to the survey (65%). The evaluation team sought to address this challenge by cross-analysing evidence collated as part of both the desk review and survey stages in order to provide an aggregate assessment of trends across the Joint Fund.
- The aggregate assessment of impact is assembled principally from the self-reported impacts of Joint Fund researchers, and therefore could be said to be affected by bias. However, the evaluation team found that Joint Fund researchers tended to err on the side of caution in claiming impact, and were keen not over-claim the influence and reach of their work, given general recognition of the complexity of the policy making process. Furthermore, based upon the cumulative evidence, the evaluation team sought to further categorise the impacts, extending the existing typology to provide further nuance to the assessment of aggregate impacts delivered in capacity building, conceptual and instrumental terms.
- Responses to the survey indicated that some researchers appeared to have difficulties in identifying the specific impact that their project funded through the ESRC-DFID Joint Fund had delivered, vis-à-vis other research they had carried out in the same area. This is not surprising given the model of cumulative influence and lack of straightforward causal chains between individual research outputs, take-up by policy makers and policy change. This emphasised the value of conducting in-depth case study research, during which the evaluation team explored impact pathways and attribution in more detail, and were able to assess the relative importance of Joint Fund research in enabling policy and practice impacts alongside interaction with other factors.
- There was a challenge in arranging case studies where PIs had subsequently lost contact with the key stakeholders in the country of focus, in part since their links with stakeholders remained relatively recent. For those projects that had been completed before 2010, it was not uncommon for policy makers and practitioners to have moved posts in the intervening period. In such cases, the evaluation team advised and supported Joint Fund researchers on potential approaches to locate the contact details of relevant stakeholders.
- We discerned, and received feedback from some Joint Fund Researchers, of what could be termed 'reporting fatigue'. Researchers reported that they had reported such impacts previously within a range of other formats, in particular *Researchfish*. In these cases, we explained to Joint Researchers that the focus of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Joint Fund in achieving policy and practice impacts as a whole, and over the longer-term, as well as to identify transferable lessons from across the Fund including effective pathways to impact.

## 1.6 Structure of the report

The remainder of the final report is divided into 3 chapters: the evaluation of research impacts; approaches to research uptake and determinants of impact; and conclusions and lessons learnt. These chapters are structured as follows:

**Research impacts (chapter 2)** covers the following:

- Analysis of the extent to which the Joint Fund has contributed to capacity building, conceptual, and instrumental impacts across Phases One and Two, including refinement of the typology and good practice examples of successful pathways to impact.
- Consideration of any evidence, at this early stage, of wider impact on poverty alleviation/reduction as a result of Joint Fund research.
- Where the progress of Joint Fund research impact lies with respect to the cumulative influence model.

**Approaches to research uptake and determinants of impact (Chapter 3)** focuses on the following areas:

- **Planning for impact:** the extent and value of well-planned impact strategies, as well as how impact is monitored by Joint Fund projects.
- **Stakeholders engaged:** the value of engagement with a range of stakeholders as well as established relationship in facilitating research uptake.
- **Methods of stakeholder engagement and dissemination:** the timing and frequency of engagement, the different mechanisms of engagement, and what proved most effective in facilitating impact.
- **Profile of researchers and partners:** the characteristics of researchers and grant partners, and how this influenced impact.
- **Context:** the importance of understanding the external context to facilitating research impact, and the extent to which contextual issues have constrained impact.
- **Portfolios of research:** and other contributory factors to the sustainability of Joint Fund research impact, including comparison with the process pathways outlined in the cumulative influence model.
- **Determinants of impact:** summary of positive and negative factors affecting research uptake and impact.

**Chapter 4** provides the conclusions to the study, before drawing out the main lessons learnt for future research grants on effective approaches to supporting research uptake and providing recommendations for grantees, donors and evaluators.

The following **annexes** are included:

- Full list of projects under Phases 1 and 2 (small and medium research grants) (**annex 1**).
- Survey questionnaire (**annex 2**).
- Case study reporting template (**annex 3**).
- List of case studies conducted as part of the study (**annex 4**).
- Summaries of key findings of the 20 case studies (**annex 5**).
- Categorisation model for Joint Fund grantees' strategies for impact (**annex 6**).

## 2.0 Research impacts

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter principally examines how the findings and outputs from Joint Fund research have been utilised and applied by policy makers, practitioners and other research users, in order to contribute towards policy and/or practice change. As outlined in the previous chapter, policy and practice impacts are defined as follows:

Table 2.1 Types of policy and practice impact

Type of Impact	Description
<b>Instrumental</b>	Influencing the development of policy, practice or service provision, shaping legislation, altering behaviour
<b>Conceptual</b>	Contributing to the understanding of policy issues, reframing debates
<b>Capacity Building</b>	Through technical and personal skill development

**Sections 2.2 - 2.4** include a quantification of the scale of impact across Joint Fund projects (phases 1 and 2) taking each impact in turn<sup>67</sup>. We also provide further refinement of the typology with accompanying analysis in order to explore the depth of impact. This analysis includes illustrative good practice examples drawn from the case study research, which highlight successful pathways to impact, the processes involved and the contribution of external factors.

This is followed (**section 2.5**) by an assessment of the aggregate level of impact across the Joint Fund, which includes identifying the areas of overlap between different impact types.

Finally (**section 2.6**), we review any evidence of longer-term impacts on poverty alleviation/reduction as a result of Joint Fund-inspired changes to policy and practice, including evidence that research was relevant to these issues. Linked to this, we comment on the broad stages of impact reached by Joint Fund projects, with reference to the model of cumulative influence.

### 2.2 Capacity building impact - technical and personal skill development

Based upon combined analysis of data from the desk review, survey and case studies, a wide range of individuals and groups benefitted from capacity building activities and developed their personal and/or technical skills through the Joint Fund. These can be divided into the following groups:

- Members of the research team;
- Research partner organisations;
- End users of the research findings.

<sup>67</sup> Final assessments were based on the End of Award reports, Impact reports, survey responses and case study information – depending on which provided the most up-to-date information on each project's impact. Note that the base number of projects reviewed with available data (100) was similar to the number of Phase 1-2 projects funded overall (101), and hence the figures cited are also equivalent to percentage levels of achievement.

Table 2.2 details the number of Joint Fund projects reporting an impact on each specific group, and provides further details of the nature of the impact in each case.

**Table 2.2 Types and incidence of capacity building impacts across the Joint Fund (Phases 1-2)**

Beneficiary group	Number/% projects	Impact observed
<b>Joint Fund researchers</b>	56 (26 Phase 1, 30 Phase 2)	Joint Fund researchers (including local researchers) advanced their knowledge and experience of specific methodologies, of undertaking field work, of publishing articles and/or of working in a multi-disciplinary research team. Researchers advanced their qualifications and careers as a result.
<b>Partner organisations</b>	28 (11 Phase 1, 17 Phase 2)	Research partner research organisations benefited from the transfer of skills from their staff involved in Joint Fund projects. This also relates to data collection, analysis and disseminating research, but impacts at an organisational level, for example through the development of related research work.
<b>End users</b>	15 (6 Phase 1, 9 Phase 2)	The skills of individuals and organisations that used the findings were increased as a result of targeted and collaborative capacity building activity. Researchers trained professionals/practitioners in using new evaluation tools, how project findings related to their day-to-day work, and how to collect and analyse data. There was also evidence of capacity building of individuals and groups within the community. Effective activities may in turn contribute towards informing conceptual debates and/or practice change.
<b>Impact on at least one of the groups above</b>	75 <sup>68</sup> (35 Phase 1, 40 Phase 2)	-

Source: Joint Fund project documentation; Ecorys survey; Ecorys case studies. Base = 100 projects.

**Key finding:** Overall, 75 individual projects (i.e. 75%) reported a capacity building impact. Members of Joint Fund project research teams and partner organisations were significantly the most common beneficiary group (reported by 69% of Joint Fund projects in total). Capacity building was interpreted and used by the majority of projects as a way of increasing the quality of their research/future research through building the skills of their consortia (rather than to help transfer skills across the researcher/user interface; impacts on end users accounted for only 15% of projects).

Although Joint Fund projects were able to describe what capacity building activities they had carried out, the information provided to substantiate claims of impact within the project documentation (and in response to the evaluation survey) often lacked detail, for example in relation to how many individuals had benefited from capacity building activities, and in what specific skill areas. There was also a lack of corroborative evidence of the end result or benefits of such activity. 23 projects provided some form of evidence; this included describing members of the research teams who had passed PhDs, gained higher positions in academia, or who had received scholarships for further research, as well as descriptions of how partner organisations had implemented the skills gained following the Joint Fund project.

<sup>68</sup> In terms of overlap, this was most common amongst projects reporting both capacity building impacts on members of the research team and on research partner organisations, accounting for 15 projects.

Triangulation of the evaluation evidence, drawing heavily on the new case study evidence generated by the study, was therefore employed in order to help explore the nature and depth of capacity building impacts in more detail across each beneficiary group. These impacts are examined in turn below.

**Key finding:** *Only a minority of Joint Fund projects had conducted in-depth assessments of their capacity building impact, and were able to evidence the outcomes of capacity building activity. This emphasises the value of conducting case study research in order to facilitate greater insights into the nature and depth of capacity building impact achieved by social science research, as well as the need for more sophisticated self-evaluation approaches.*

### 2.2.1 Capacity building impact on Joint Fund researchers

Over half (56) of Phase 1 and Phase 2 projects under the Joint Fund described capacity building activities where researchers within the team were trained in new skills for that specific project. Whilst ESRC and DFID have consistently emphasised that the Joint Fund does not fund capacity building per se, both bodies recognise that capacity building activities may be addressed as part of the research process itself (and providing that it contributes to the quality and impact of the research). As the call specifications outline, “capacity building elements should be set out in relation to the core intellectual agenda of the research proposal and not treated separately”<sup>69</sup>.

In most examples the activities pursued involved research methodology training, including in research design, interviewing techniques, or data analysis. For some projects, this training was very specific. For example, for a project mapping maternal health indicators across Ghana<sup>70</sup> the researchers received training in Geographic Information Systems in order to analyse spatial datasets. This was considered to be necessary to help generate findings from the project that were meaningful to non-academics.

In other cases, capacity building for the research team included subject-specific training. For example, as part of a project exploring clinical and public health trials in three countries<sup>71</sup>, the research team received significant training in medical anthropology, bioethics, science and technology studies, and in international development (as well as training in qualitative research). This training was necessary for the research team to understand the complexity of the issues related to the study.

There was also evidence that hosting dissemination events and workshops with stakeholders developed additional research uptake skills within research teams. These skills gained typically included public speaking and presentation skills, as well as critical thinking and strategies for advocacy. For example, for a project investigating the relationship between shame and poverty<sup>72</sup>, the PIs and Co-Is purposefully adopted a collaborative approach to their dissemination workshops with policymakers. By hosting the events and actively involving key users in this process, the team gained experience in developing a more research user-friendly dissemination strategy.

As a consequence of developing such skills and experiences on Joint Fund projects, frequently junior level researchers progressed in their careers through either a promotion or a new job, others completed a doctorate as part of the project (or went on to study for one), and some received awards or funding for

<sup>69</sup> See for example, Phase 2, Call 2 call specification.

<sup>70</sup> Matthews, Z (2008-2011) *Poverty and maternal health in Ghana: A spatial analysis of exclusion from care*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0343

<sup>71</sup> Jeffery, R (2010-2013) *Biomedical and Health Experimentation in South Asia: Critical Perspectives on collaboration, governance and competition*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0110

<sup>72</sup> Walker, R (2010-2012/13) *Shame, social exclusion and the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes: A study in seven countries*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0557

further research. For example, a project team involved in a study on child mobility in sub-Saharan Africa<sup>73</sup> acquired the relevant experience to apply for and secure a second grant to investigate the impact of mobile phones on the lives of young people. The follow-on project involved many of the same researchers and communities, and it was reported that this led to a more efficient set-up phase.

The following case study summary provides a more detailed example of capacity building impact amongst members of a Joint Fund project research team, and how this advanced the careers of team researchers.

**Table 2.3 Case study: capacity building of Joint Fund researchers**

#### **Project aims**

The Widening Participation in Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania (WPHEGT) study<sup>74</sup> aimed to provide policy-makers, higher education managers and community organisations with new knowledge on how Higher Education (HE) institutions can include representation from wider social constituencies and contribute to poverty alleviation. The second aim of the project was to develop research capacity in the partner countries.

#### **Pathway to impact**

Capacity building in the partner countries was achieved in two ways. Firstly, the in-country teams were trained extensively in the research methodology. Secondly, the teams were composed of researchers in the early, mid and late stages of their career, to ensure that the team could use and learn a range of skills from each other. As capacity building was a main aim of the study, it was a priority for the PIs to support an effective approach to building skills within their teams.

#### **Evidence of impact**

The success of this training is evidenced by the progression of researchers involved in the project. A doctoral student based in Ghana achieved an Education Doctorate through her research for the project. Her research focused on the entry of non-traditional students (adults) into HE. The student reflected that her successes in completing the doctorate were due to receiving expert guidance from her supervisors and funding to access the resources she needed. Further, she reported that the connections made through the project had led to other research opportunities (including a teacher preparation in Africa project led by the University of Sussex). Another postgraduate student conducted work for the project in Tanzania. This student completed with an M.Phil and has since taken up a role in politics. She is now an MP representing the Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo political party in Tanzania.

It should also be noted that the findings of the project were successfully employed to deliver increased conceptual understanding as well as instrumental impact on school policies (see section 2.4.3).

**Key finding:** 56% of Joint Fund projects reported that their researchers (both junior and senior) had benefited from capacity building activities and outcomes. This included examples of members of Joint Fund research teams gaining doctorates, subsequently applying the skills which they had gained through their engagement on projects, and further developing their research careers.

<sup>73</sup> Porter, G (2006-2010) *Children, transport and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa: developing a child-centred evidence base to improve policy and change thinking across Africa*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0028

<sup>74</sup> Morley, L (2006-2010) *Widening Participation in Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania: Developing an Equity Scorecard*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0078

## 2.2.2 Capacity building impact on research partner organisations

28 projects indicated that the types of skills transfer described above had impacted on the capacity of their research partners at an organisational level. This transfer occurs both formally as well as informally, for example where trained project researchers arrange ways to communicate and discuss their new skills with other colleagues (such as through discussions or internal seminars). Through the case study research, it was then evident that the skills gained may be used as a basis for partner organisations to expand or develop their research work.

For example, in a project testing the long-term impact and cost-effectiveness of anti-poverty interventions in Bangladesh<sup>75</sup>, researchers in Bangladesh were trained to conduct the survey, which resulted in a “very good batch of qualitative researchers” in the view of the research team. This reportedly helped to develop the technical skills of the data collection team at DATA<sup>76</sup>, the in-country partners, and enabled them to grow from 5 core staff to a staff of approximately 200. Similarly, the training received as part of the Joint-Fund project investigating Biomedical and Health Experimentation in South Asia<sup>77</sup> led Social Science Baha, the partner organisation in Nepal, to increase their capacity to investigate and advocate for research ethics. The organisation is now making plans to start the first social science research ethics committee in Nepal.

In some cases, the partner benefitting from skills training was already a leading research organisation within the subject area and/or country of focus. Combined with the capacity building impact, it was felt that this increased the potential for ongoing delivery of high quality, policy relevant research work beyond the period of the Joint Fund.

The following case study provided evidence of significant capacity building impacts, delivered through both formal and informal routes, for a leading national research institute.

**Table 2.4 Case study: capacity building of research partner organisations**

### **Project aims**

The study Improving Educational Evaluation and Quality in China<sup>78</sup> aimed to investigate the effectiveness and contextual features of schools in China and the local application of innovative school evaluation methods to educational policy and practice in urban and rural secondary schools. The partner organisation involved in the research - the National Institute of Educational Sciences (NIES) - is the national body in China responsible for collecting data for schools, and monitoring and evaluating school quality.

### **Pathway to impact**

To train the NIES researchers, the research team organised a 3 month, full-time training course. The training was conducted at Bristol University and covered a range of technical and research skills, including: empirical research design; educational evaluation methodology; statistical analysis techniques; qualitative data analysis; and the introduction of new concepts in teacher development such as ‘professional learning communities’. The NIES researchers also learnt to use a specific type of

<sup>75</sup> Quisumbing, A (2008-2010) *What Development Interventions Work? The long-term impact and cost-effectiveness of anti-poverty interventions in Bangladesh*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0361

<sup>76</sup> <http://www.databd.org>

<sup>77</sup> Jeffery, R (2010-2013) *Biomedical and Health Experimentation in South Asia: Critical Perspectives on collaboration, governance and competition*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0110

<sup>78</sup> Thomas, S (2008-2010) *Improving Educational Evaluation and Quality in China*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0353

**Table 2.4 Case study: capacity building of research partner organisations**

quantitative software and had access to materials provided by Bristol University, such as online training software<sup>79</sup> and guidelines on the methodological approach. Although only five researchers were trained for the project (with an additional 3 NIES researchers trained under the follow-on project funded under phase 2<sup>80</sup>), the PI and Co-I also reported that the trained researchers informally transferred their skills to others within NIES through seminars and discussions.

It should be noted that the PI had an existing relationship with NIES through previous projects (funded by the British Council). The established relationship between the PI and the partner organisation provided a supportive context - not least in the level of trust between the two parties - in order to achieve greater capacity building impact.

### **Evidence of impact**

Collecting and analysing large-scale longitudinal datasets was regarded as a particularly valuable capacity-building experience for NIES researchers. The PI reported that NIES researchers provided a range of useful inputs into the project such as feedback on the survey design (with the Co-I supporting translation where required). Following this, there was evidence that researchers had considered the implications of the methods and findings for their own research, developed related projects (primary and junior secondary levels) and reviewed their practices of conducting empirical research. This is significant given the NIES are the national body responsible for monitoring and evaluating school quality in China. In addition, a number of NIES project researchers were promoted since their involvement in the project. For example, one NIES researcher was promoted to head of the NIES Information Centre, which provides a repository for quantitative research data<sup>81</sup>.

**Key finding:** 28% of Joint Fund projects from Phases 1- 2 reported capacity building impacts on their research partner organisations (through both formal and informal routes). Positively, the vast majority of these organisations (26) were based outside of the UK. The evidence suggests that organisational level impact can lead to deeper and more diffuse capacity building outcomes than at an individual level, such as the scaling-up of Joint Fund research themes and methods, their transfer to follow-on projects, and the mainstreaming of approaches within sectors of public policy research in developing countries.

## **2.2.3 Capacity building impact on end users**

A relatively small number of Joint Fund projects (15) demonstrated that they had delivered capacity building impacts for their end research-users. Joint Fund researchers recognised that these tended to result from purposeful and collaborative activities designed to build capacity, beyond simply disseminating the findings of their research. The range of research users benefitting from this impact included professionals working in related fields through to individuals from community groups.

### **2.2.3.1 Professional/practitioner groups**

Capacity building of professionals and practitioners resulted in the development of skills that were relevant to their day-to-day work (including helping other groups within society). The range of professionals who received training reflects the diversity of subjects within the Joint Fund, with individual

<sup>79</sup> These online training modules were developed by Bristol University independently of the research supported through the Joint Fund but were utilised in this case to support delivery.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas, S (2010-2014), *Improving Teacher Development and Educational Quality in China (IEEQC)*, RES-167-025-0428

<sup>81</sup> According to the Impact Report (and subsequently confirmed by the PI and Co-I during their respective interviews). The Information Centre was set up to increase the quantity of datasets collected by NIES. Moreover, the PI felt the datasets this department collates 'are clearly informed by the datasets collected during the IEEQC project'.

projects engaging child protection workers<sup>82</sup>, teachers<sup>83</sup>, conservation practitioners<sup>84</sup>, journalists and medical professionals<sup>85</sup> (see table 2.5) as well as planning officials<sup>86</sup>. Across these cases, it was observed that such activities tended to have complementary aims of impacting on practice change (i.e. instrumental impact) and/or informing conceptual debates.

In a further example, architectural students were engaged in capacity building activities for a project that aimed to increase understanding about climate change effects on urban Bangladesh<sup>87</sup>. The research team developed an approach that engaged directly with trainee architects, with a focus on supporting their technical skills and awareness. The goal of such support was to change the mind-set for the next generation and inspire new solutions for urban poor communities vulnerable to the effects of climate change (architects may otherwise focus their design ideas and efforts on high-income settlements). The assistant professor reported that the project proved effective at sensitising students to issues of poverty as well as developing their skills in housing design. Subsequently, two professors who taught the programme enrolled on doctorates to study low-income housing development, and two of the students went on to pursue careers at NGOs to further assist on issues relating to serving low income communities.

Some training of professional groups was intended from the outset, whereas other engagement with professionals took place as a result of 'windows of opportunity' opening during project implementation. In terms of the aforementioned project targeting planning officials (investigating the development of migrant villages) Chinese planning officials received professional development training in London from the PI as part of the work plan. Subsequent to this, the PI was invited by the Director of the Guangdong Housing and Urban and Rural Development Department to organise an additional workshop, funded by the Chinese government, focusing on village improvement alongside other issues.

The following project in Zambia illustrates how capacity building, in combination with dissemination activity, helped to embed study findings amongst key professionals and stimulate emerging practice change and debate.

**Table 2.5 Case study of capacity building of practitioners**

#### **Project aims**

The project 'Pregnancy termination trajectories in Zambia'<sup>88</sup> had three aims: to understand abortion and abortion-related services in Zambia; to estimate the socio-economic implications of safe abortion and post abortion care for women; and to understand why safe abortion services are not used more fully. The team chose Zambia because, unlike most African countries, abortion is legal. However, there is still a stigma surrounding women who have abortions, and hence a high occurrence of unsafe abortions. The team knew that medical professionals and related advocacy groups would be interested in their findings if they helped bring down the rate of unsafe abortions.

<sup>82</sup> Wessells, M (2013-2015) *Inter-Agency Research on Strengthening Community Based Child Protection for Vulnerable Children*, Phase 2, ES/J017663/1

<sup>83</sup> Walker, R (2010-2012/13) *Shame, social exclusion and the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes: A study in seven countries*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0557

<sup>84</sup> Wilkie, D (2013-2016) *Measuring complex outcomes of environment and development interventions*, Phase 2, ES/J018155/1

<sup>85</sup> *ibid*

<sup>86</sup> Wu, F (2010-2012) *The Development of Migrant Villages under China's Rapid Urbanization: Implications for Poverty and Slum Policies*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0448

<sup>87</sup> Hulme, D (2010-2014) *Community and institutional responses to the challenges facing poor urban people in an era of global warming in Bangladesh*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0510

<sup>88</sup> Coast, E (2011-2014) *Pregnancy termination trajectories in Zambia: the socio-economic costs*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0626; Impact maximisation grant 2014 – 2015

**Table 2.5 Case study of capacity building of practitioners**

### **Pathway to impact**

The project produced the first national estimates of the health system costs of abortion in Zambia, showing that each year, unsafe abortion costs the Zambian health system up to US\$0.4 million more than if the pregnancies were terminated safely and legally. To increase knowledge and skills in relation to pregnancy terminations amongst professionals the research team combined capacity building with their dissemination events. The collaborative approach at the events invited professionals to learn from the findings, share their skills and meet other professionals.

The first group engaged by the research team were reproductive and sexual health practitioners (including obstetrician gynaecologists). The research team trained the doctors and health practitioners on the legal framework around providing abortion services, and on how to engage with media professionals (around safe abortions). The links to this group were made through the in-country partner working on the project.

The second group engaged with at the events were media professionals. The team decided to engage journalists, presenters and producers more closely with the research when they realised that the media played a key role in shaping the public's opinion on abortion and education on the subject. The events combined the research findings with training for producers of a radio programme for young adults on how to research and report on the topic of unsafe abortions.

### **Evidence of impact**

This approach to capacity building increased the opportunities for the research to deliver a more lasting impact. The collaborative approach meant that as the professionals learnt from the research they were able to immediately apply it to their own work (i.e. generating further instrumental impacts on practice; see section 2.4.3). For example, based upon the training, the media professionals generated ideas for news articles and radio programmes that were subsequently produced on the subject of abortion. As one research user described:

*'[The training] was highly beneficial in equipping the producers to produce programmes that are of good quality and contain information that is helpful for the people.'*

The network of professionals newly educated on the findings was also reported to have contributed towards generating conceptual impacts, through informing the public debate in Zambia. For example, the training provided an opportunity for the researchers to introduce research users to each other, linking up journalists and producers with specialist doctors they could interview on the subject of abortion.

**Key finding:** Only 15% of Joint Fund projects reported direct capacity building impacts on the end users of their research (including both practitioner and community groups). Of these, the majority worked collaboratively with professional/practitioner groups to enhance the potential for sustainable knowledge and skills transfer (and achieve greater impact overall). Where such transfer occurs successfully, the evidence suggests that this can contribute to/provide the preconditions for further conceptual as well as instrumental impacts.

### **2.2.3.2 Community groups**

Capacity building at the community level tended to involve the development of knowledge and skills related to the research topic, taking part in data collection<sup>89</sup>, and the research outputs. Impacts were evidenced by subsequent changes in practice (as well as the associated empowerment of individuals or

<sup>89</sup> For example: Porter, G (2006-2010) *Children, transport and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa: developing a child-centred evidence base to improve policy and change thinking across Africa*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0028

civil society groups). Such activities also helped to engender community buy-in to participating in the research.

The aim of one such Joint Fund project was to research the most effective ways of changing knowledge, attitudes and practices relating to the social determinants of child malnutrition at a municipal and community level in Chile and Kenya<sup>90</sup>. The project went about this by teaching a range of skills to groups of women (as well as health workers) to help them improve nutrition and food security, generate income, strengthen psychosocial support and prevent domestic violence. The development of new skills through capacity building activities further resulted in instrumental impacts on specific community practices (see table 2.14, section 2.4.3), underpinned by positive empowerment effects at an individual level. For example, it was reported that the new skills had given community members the confidence to speak up in public, to pass on the knowledge gained and to seek further training.

A detailed example of capacity building impact with community groups is provided below.

**Table 2.6 Case study of capacity building of community groups**

#### **Project aims**

As part of a study investigating the vulnerabilities of street traders operating in urban areas in India, Senegal, South Africa and Tanzania<sup>91</sup>, researchers sought to develop the skills of street trader associations to work more productively.

#### **Pathway to impact**

A key output from the project was an evaluation toolkit for trader associations (as well as other groups) to audit the strengths and weaknesses of the existing regulatory context for street trading and make decisions about locating street traders and choosing suitable locations. The evaluation tool was tested by SEWA, and several user groups provided feedback on the tool. It was also distributed to municipal authority staff in Dar es Salaam.

In Dar es Salaam, Tanzania the researchers supported Mchikichini Marketing Cooperative (MCHIMACO), a street trader organisation with 7,000-10,000 members, to learn how to organise the group, negotiate with local authorities and understand the risks of trading in a complex legal and regulatory environment. The research team also forged links between MCHIMACO and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), another street trader organisation working in Tanzania. In Ahmedabad, India, staff from the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), another street trader association, were trained by the research team in conducting surveys amongst their members. In Dakar, Senegal, the research team organised a series of workshops with representatives from the five main street trader associations. The associations were very disparate and previously had not worked together. The aim of the meetings was to support the organisations to form a committee, develop a common agenda, and jointly lobby for legislative change and improved urban management.

Engagement and interaction between the two groups was facilitated by strong pre-existing connections between the research team and street trader organisations in the countries. It was also felt that the in-depth and ongoing nature of the capacity building delivered was likely to help increase and sustain the impact of the research project. Indeed, the researchers have continued to work with the street trader organisations beyond the Joint Fund project.

<sup>90</sup> Pridmore, P (2010-2014) *Nutritional Improvement for children in urban Chile and Kenya*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0461

<sup>91</sup> Brown, A (2010-2013) *Making Space for the Poor: Law, Rights, Regulation and Street-Trade in the 21st Century*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0591

**Table 2.6 Case study of capacity building of community groups****Evidence of impact**

Some of the supported street trader associations used the project findings and skills gained in negotiations with local and national governments, in order to make a case for the right to space of street traders in their respective cities. In Dar es Salaam, MCHIMACO were able to use the negotiation skills that they learnt to successfully secure a contract with the city authority to conduct maintenance and cleaning of their market areas. The connection with WIEGO also strengthened MCHIMACO as an organisation, and made them aware of the benefits of linking up with other associations.

**Key finding:** *A small minority of Joint Fund projects involved direct engagement of community groups in training activities, as the end users of the research (moving beyond simply seeing the community as the subject of primary data collection). Through empowering individuals, this can help to ensure that the new skills gained are translated into practice change, and that project impacts are more sustainable.*

## 2.3 Conceptual impact - understanding of policy issues, reframing debates

Based upon evidence from the desk review, survey data and case studies, conceptual research impacts can be further categorised by end beneficiary. The key beneficiary groups include: researchers/academics; practitioners; and policy makers. A summary of the incidence of conceptual impacts across the Joint Fund for each of these groups is included in Table 2.7. Overall, conceptual impact was the most prevalent of the three impact types; 85 projects reported a conceptual impact in total.

**Table 2.7 Types and incidence of conceptual impacts across the Joint Fund (Phases 1-2)**

Beneficiary group	Number/% of projects reporting impact	Impact observed
<b>Researchers/ academics</b>	48 (27 Phase 1, 21 Phase 2)	Projects delivered conceptual impact within the research community by advancing methodologies, developing new research tools, bringing new issues to attention, and contributing new evidence to existing debates.
<b>Practitioners</b>	62 (30 Phase 1, 32 Phase 2)	Researchers contributed to practitioner understanding of issues, suggested new ways of working or brought new issues to their attention.
<b>Policy makers</b>	43 (21 Phase 1, 22 Phase 2)	Researchers contributed to policy maker understanding of an issue or policy, suggested reforms or new laws/regulations, or brought new issues to their attention.
<b>Impact on at least one of the groups above</b>	85 (42 Phase 1, 43 Phase 2)	-

Source: Joint Fund project documentation; Ecorys survey; Ecorys case studies. Base = 100 projects.

**Key finding:** *Conceptual impacts were the most prevalent reported impact across Joint Fund research (85% of projects). Researchers engaged with and delivered conceptual impacts most frequently amongst practitioners (62% of projects); 43% of projects observed conceptual impacts amongst policy makers.*

The evaluation found that some Joint Fund researchers struggled to describe in detail, and especially to evidence, their conceptual impact. Whilst 62 projects were able to provide some form of corroborative evidence, the quality and relevance of this evidence was mixed. This may be due to the subjective nature of conceptual impact, and associated difficulties with measurement, but also definitional issues.

Many PIs mentioned securing follow-on funding to undertake further research on a topic, gaining media attention, receiving invitations to speak at events or meetings, or positive feedback from users. Whilst such indicators are of relevance to achieving conceptual impact (and particularly processes/routes to impact), they are less indicative of enhanced understanding of policy issues or reframing of debates per se. More compelling evidence of conceptual impacts cited by Joint Fund projects included where research findings were directly referenced in policy documents or speeches, or when research methodologies were taken up (and cited) by other researchers in their work.

**Key finding:** *Whilst a majority of Joint Fund projects (reviewed and surveyed) provided corroborative evidence of their conceptual impact, this sometimes focused more on the processes involved in generating impact, rather than the results per se.*

The quality and depth of conceptual impacts under each of the sub-categories are examined in greater detail below, drawing upon the case study research.

### 2.3.1 Conceptual impact on researchers/academics

48 projects reported a conceptual impact amongst the research community (and particularly academic researchers). These projects interpreted conceptual impacts as gaining new subject knowledge, as well as the development and utilisation of new and innovative methodologies, techniques, technologies, and cross-disciplinary approaches. Alongside improved levels of understanding amongst individual Joint Fund researchers, this also reportedly helped to increase their academic profile. Most commonly this resulted in the researchers developing follow-on work in the same subject and/or geographic location.

For example, the team investigating climate change effects in urban Bangladesh<sup>92</sup> are currently working together on another project comparing ecosystem structures in urban Bangladesh and Tanzania ('EcoPoor'), funded through Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation (ESPA). The PI and Co-I felt that the Joint Fund project had helped to improve their approaches to field research through developing a new methodology for engaging directly with urban poor communities, as well as by improving their understanding of the key issues relating to the subject area. The Joint Fund project also helped to expand their networks and reputations as experts in the field of urban research.

Whilst the findings from such research may not seem immediately relevant to policy makers and practitioners, the testing of innovative approaches and initial hypotheses are of value if they result in an increased level of conceptual understanding within the research community. If these methodologies and findings are subsequently taken up by other researchers, the body of research will further expand, increasing the longer-term potential to influence key stakeholders outside of academia (including policy makers, practitioners, the media and the wider public).

<sup>92</sup> Hulme, D (2010-2014) *Community and institutional responses to the challenges facing poor urban people in an era of global warming in Bangladesh*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0510

Suggesting wider resonance within the research community, it was reported that the methodologies, techniques and approaches used by Joint Fund researchers across some of their projects were replicated by other academics and researchers. Key examples of this include:

- Following successful ethnographic research into the benefits of community-based child protection strategies in Sierra Leone<sup>93</sup>, projects involving similar methodologies have been used to conduct work in Kenya, Somaliland and Puntland, with the aim of introducing community-based approaches to child protection systems in these countries.
- The anti-poverty research in Bangladesh<sup>94</sup>, which tracked participants over long periods following a range of interventions, was one of the first projects to use large numbers of life histories combined with survey data. This methodology has since been used by other organisations including not only the project partner Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC), but also the Stimulating Household Improvements Results in Economic Empowerment (SHIREE) programme in Bangladesh.

This category of impact included some projects where, although impacts on policy makers (and/or practitioners) were planned, Joint Fund researchers reported that the study findings did not support such an impact. Therefore they had not pursued stimulating any further influence outside of academia (see Table 2.8 below).

**Table 2.8 Case study of conceptual impact on researchers/academics**

#### **Project aims**

A qualitative research project tested the 'New Variant Famine' hypothesis, which posited a causal link between high HIV prevalence and recent food insecurity in southern Africa<sup>95</sup>. The research examined whether the ways in which AIDS was impacting on children was likely to diminish their prospects of food security in adult life by impacting on livelihoods choices.

#### **Pathways to impact**

The researchers had intended to work with young people, development practitioners and policy makers in order to develop guidelines for appropriate policy responses and interventions to support AIDS-affected young people in achieving sustainable livelihoods.

#### **Evidence of impact**

The findings from the project did not show a clear and unequivocal relationship between AIDS and the livelihood choices of young people. The research indicated diverse ways in which AIDS impacts on livelihoods and prospects, but no systematic pattern. Conversely, the researchers did not feel that they had enough evidence to warrant advocating against relevant interventions targeting AIDS-affected youth.

Given these findings, the scope for impact was less than anticipated. The research team published papers that have been cited in other academic publications, and presented at academic conferences, but felt that their findings did not present clear enough policy messages to generate further impact in the form of policy or practice change. The team organised events for key stakeholder groups to discuss their findings, but did not pursue any wider engagement within policy circles.

<sup>93</sup> Wessells, M (2013-2015) *Inter-Agency Research on Strengthening Community Based Child Protection for Vulnerable Children*, Phase 2, ES/J017663/1

<sup>94</sup> Quisumbing, A (2008-2010) *What Development Interventions Work? The long-term impact and cost-effectiveness of anti-poverty interventions in Bangladesh*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0361

<sup>95</sup> Ansell, N (2007-2009) *Averting 'New Variant Famine' in Southern Africa: building food-secure livelihoods with AIDS-affected young people*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0167

**Key finding:** *There was evidence of significant overlap between researcher interpretations of conceptual (academic) and capacity building (researcher) impacts. Whilst this makes categorisation for evaluation purposes difficult, it suggests that the two impacts are inter-related and mutually reinforcing within the sphere of researcher/producer beneficiaries. Where conceptual impacts within the research community were reported only, the benefits for external user groups were sometimes less clear. It is acknowledged however that this can contribute to longer-term processes of cumulative influence, particularly where successful research concepts and approaches are replicated to help build a credible body of knowledge. Conversely, it should be recognised though that not all research projects will generate sufficiently compelling evidence to influence conceptual debates and/or policy; in such cases impact will likely be limited to academic circles.*

### 2.3.2 Conceptual impact on practitioners

62 projects reported a conceptual impact on professionals/practitioners working outside of academia. These groups included project beneficiaries working in the third-sector, public services, government and other professional groups, with responsibilities for improving services and/or advocacy and influence over policymaking. Where Joint Fund researchers successfully engaged practitioner groups, the end result was that the findings either provided information which generated understanding of a new policy issue, or else helped to reconceptualise an existing idea, which then attracted an increased level of attention. Whether such conceptual impacts had further translated into instrumental impacts on day-to-day practice was not always clear; some researchers found this difficult to evidence (see section 2.4.4).

For most researchers, the route to delivering conceptual impact with respect to practitioners involved sharing their projects' findings and research outputs through planned dissemination activities. For example, in a study investigating child mobility in Ghana<sup>96</sup> the research team conducted awareness raising workshops with teachers and education officers (as well as relevant government ministers and school pupils) to discuss findings on how the accessibility of services relates to child life chances. Workshops of this kind were different to other dissemination events as they were purposefully planned to communicate the findings to non-academic audiences. They involved the careful selection and engagement of professionals and organisations working in key fields related to a research project, to ensure that new ideas and findings would be relevant to practice<sup>97</sup>.

Secondly, there were also instances where practitioner organisations themselves were aware of the research – as a result of publication of the results through the media for example – and directly sought to engage with Joint Fund researchers. In some cases the requests for outputs were because the findings supported current practice; in others because the results could potentially alter professional practice by challenging established perceptions held by practitioners. For example, in a study investigating mining and social networks in Bangladesh<sup>98</sup>, the research yielded surprising results that people did not migrate from their homes as a result of extractive activities. The results of the project compelled practitioners to reassess the implications of mining for rural villages and how they engaged with local communities.

Thirdly, and less frequently, conceptual impact was achieved with practitioners by directly engaging them in the process of research. In the study that tested approaches to education evaluation in China<sup>99</sup>, participating schools were involved in the data collection activities, and therefore engaged directly with

<sup>96</sup> Porter, G (2006-2010) *Children, transport and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa: developing a child-centred evidence base to improve policy and change thinking across Africa*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0028

<sup>97</sup> Section 3.4 provides more details of the processes employed to engagement and dissemination taken by Joint Fund researchers, as well as specific project examples.

<sup>98</sup> Gardner, K (2008-2011) *Mining, Social Networks and Rural Livelihoods in Bangladesh*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0297

<sup>99</sup> Thomas, S (2008-2010) *Improving Educational Evaluation and Quality in China*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0353

new measures of school performance<sup>100</sup> (the PI had previously tested the research model). This engagement approach helped to illustrate to school teachers the benefits of new concepts of self-evaluation and 'professional learning communities' within their area of practice. The research team nonetheless reflected that further work was still needed to ensure that this new understanding was embedded and that the approach impacted on professional practice over the long-term.

The example below provides a strong example of how re-analysis of existing data through a Joint Fund project helped the research team to communicate conceptual issues (access to services and service uptake) to a wide range of professional groups.

**Table 2.9 Case study: conceptual impact on practitioners**

### **Project aims**

A project investigating poverty and maternal health in Ghana aimed to strengthen empirical understanding of the impact of distance on accessing maternal health services (and how the effectiveness of existing services could be improved)<sup>101</sup>. Specifically, the research team sought to produce a map which could be of use to a range of professional groups. The map was based on analysis of multiple datasets and visualised maternal health indicators for each district in Ghana.

### **Pathway to impact**

The map itself was relevant to stakeholder groups as well as providing an engaging visual output from the project. This presentation of maternal health indicators in the form of a map was firstly useful to professional groups interested in maternal wellbeing and survival (it combined individual, population, and contextual information on maternal well-being in an accessible way). Secondly, the map was useful to wider academic and government agency groups, because the indicators provided an effective proxy for other inequalities and the map was therefore relevant to a range of disciplines, including, public health, social policy, geography, and demography.

The map and study findings were disseminated at a main one-day national dissemination event and at two Ghana Health Summits, attended by government policy makers and practitioners. In addition, the map was made available and accessible through a number of websites. It was also first launched on International Day of the Midwife by the First Lady of Ghana, which generated enhanced media and public interest.

In addition to producing the map, the project initiated a data sharing agreement with a UN sponsored study investigating emergency obstetrics and new-born care, also in Ghana. Working collaboratively with this study and other concurrent policy initiatives allowed the team to avoid duplication of effort as well as enhancing opportunities to engage with stakeholders.

It is important to note that parallel government activities resulted in a supportive policy environment. For instance, the government was running a fee-exemption scheme in some districts for maternal health services at childbirth. The government had also increased the number of community health planning and service centres in more remote, rural, and poor areas. Furthermore, such initiatives led by the government had not been as effective as they could have been (due to low take-up). This meant that the generation of new information on relevant maternal health and poverty issues was well received, and there were opportunities to translate the findings into practice.

<sup>100</sup> The size of the country relative to the project budget available meant that the research team decided to focus their specific data collation and analysis activities within 3 provinces in China. Data was collated over four consecutive student cohorts, and involved over 120 participating schools from 2009 to 2012.

<sup>101</sup> Matthews, Z (2008-2011), *Poverty and maternal health in Ghana: A spatial analysis of exclusion from care*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0343

### Evidence of impact

In terms of practical influence, the map helped government agencies to understand why targets on maternal health service uptake had not been met, where resources should be prioritised, and what should be considered in future strategies to increase service efficacy. More generally, through partnering with advocacy organisations (including the Alliance for Reproductive Health Rights), awareness of maternal health issues in Ghana was raised both in country and internationally. Finally, the analysis methods, datasets and research findings were further utilised and built upon by the partners in new projects and in other countries (for example the Evidence for Action project<sup>102</sup>).

**Key finding:** *The predominant reported conceptual impact on practitioners (62% of projects), which aimed to increase understanding of new or existing policy issues, was generated through a variety of mechanisms. These included the engagement of practitioners as a result of targeted and purposeful dissemination activities, through independent requests for information from practitioners, and through the direct involvement of targeted practitioner groups in Joint Fund research activities. There was evidence that not all Joint Fund Projects which delivered a conceptual impact on practitioners subsequently recorded changes in the practice or behaviour of stakeholder groups.*

### 2.3.3 Conceptual impact on policymakers

43 Joint Fund projects reported conceptual impacts with regards to policymakers. Conceptual impact on policymakers was also generated through their direct engagement via Joint Fund dissemination activities, as well as through more informal policy networks. The impact of this tended to be articulated as helping policymakers to understand an issue or an idea, as well as to explain its relevance to policy. Once again, this held the potential to help further generate instrumental impact, although this had not been achieved in all cases reviewed.

To achieve conceptual impact with policy makers, researchers planned dissemination events, which they invited relevant government representatives and other stakeholders to attend (described further in section 3.4). There were also examples of research teams developing more interactive consultative groups with key policy makers. Engagement through consultative groups allowed researchers to increase the level of understanding of core groups of policy makers and practitioners related to their research topics. In the study on child mobility and transport in sub-Saharan Africa<sup>103</sup>, the research team purposefully brought together an in-country advisory group comprised of policy makers, practitioners, union representatives and other stakeholders, who engaged with all aspects of the research throughout the project. This inclusion of policy makers from government ministries and regional departments within Country Consultative Groups (CCGs) enabled the project to expand its conceptual impact beyond intermediary and practitioner organisations (such as UNICEF and the International Forum for Rural Transport Development). Specifically, policymakers gained a greater appreciation of the ability of children to understand their own problems, and the importance of child mobility for their social and economic well-being (leading to instrumental impacts on teacher training policy, as well as potential/emerging impacts on the national curriculum: see section 2.4.1).

<sup>102</sup> Civil society partners such as the Alliance for Reproductive Health Rights are carrying out monitoring of related government health services, and the research findings are being used to engage the UN Secretary General's Commission for Information and Accountability. For further information see <http://www.evidence4action.net/>

<sup>103</sup> Porter, G (2006-2010) *Children, transport and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa: developing a child-centred evidence base to improve policy and change thinking across Africa*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0028

On other projects, policy maker engagement occurred on a more informal basis. In these projects, the research team exploited their own networks with key stakeholders in order to attempt to influence policy thinking. Where this was the case, it was more difficult for the research team to evidence when as well as the extent to which conceptual impact had occurred in practice. For example, on a project mapping social movements in Peru and South Africa<sup>104</sup>, the Co-I was invited to have discussions with the Director of Housing in Durban about moving forward community-led housing initiatives. These discussions took place prior to, during and for a few years after the project ended. The Co-I also reflected that whilst the Director of Housing was supportive of the changes she was advocating, it was not confirmed whether or how the information was used to inform policy.

The example below provides an example of a Joint Fund project which successfully challenged existing ideas and gained the attention of policymakers. However this had yet to translate into policy change (i.e. more instrumental impacts) at the time of the evaluation.

**Table 2.10 Case study of conceptual impact on policymakers**

#### **Project aims**

In a project in South Africa, researchers sought to contribute to debate and inform social security policy in relation to low income lone mothers<sup>105</sup>. In particular, the researchers wanted to raise awareness about the fact that, whilst lone mothers may receive the Child Support Grant (CSG), they are not eligible for social assistance in their own right unless they are disabled. Qualitative fieldwork was undertaken in South Africa by researchers from Oxford University and the University of Western Cape (UWC). The South African Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) collaborated through conducting the South African Social Attitudes Survey 2012, in which there was a module on attitudes about social security, dignity and social solidarity. The researchers placed lone mothers, an often marginalised group, at the centre of the study, purposefully including quotes from lone mothers and focusing on their perspective as disadvantaged caregivers.

#### **Pathway to impact**

A dissemination conference was arranged by Policy Action Network: Children (established by HSRC, UNICEF South Africa and the Office of the Presidency). It was particularly well attended, partly because a wider group of stakeholders were invited using HSRC contacts, but also through the Co-I's existing connections within the South African government. After the event, HSRC invited the researchers to produce a special report about the conference and the project's main findings for their HSRC Review publication, which is widely disseminated to policy makers and government. The project researchers also produced short policy briefs on different aspects of the research. The programme manager for South Africa's Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development (PSPPD)<sup>106</sup> considered that the policy briefs were useful for colleagues in government, who have limited time to digest detailed research findings. Finally, further demand to use the findings was stimulated through training for government stakeholders through DFID's BCURE programme.

#### **Evidence of impact**

Following the research, the PI was able to demonstrate that policymakers had shown interest in the findings and that they acknowledged their importance. The Chief of Social Policy at UNICEF (South Africa) and the Acting Deputy Director General for the South African Department for Social Development (DSD) both confirmed that the research had helped to provide a voice to a group previously viewed

<sup>104</sup> Bebbington, A (2007-2010) *Social Movements and Poverty*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0170

<sup>105</sup> Noble, M (2011-2014) *Lone Mothers in South Africa - The role of social security in respecting and protecting dignity*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0642

<sup>106</sup> Located within the South African Presidency's Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME).

**Table 2.10 Case study of conceptual impact on policymakers**

negatively in South Africa. Stakeholders described the research as an “*eye opener*”, shedding light on an issue which they had been unaware of. Project researchers reported that one policy maker was using the research findings to help challenge preconceptions: “*when people are mouthing off negatively about lone mothers getting pregnant in order to get the CSG, [the policy maker] reads them quotations from our report and it stops them in their tracks.*”

While key stakeholders were promoting the research findings and acknowledged their positive contribution to debates, they also acknowledged a lack of progress in translation into policy change: “[*the research*] *has not at this point translated into tangible policy adjustments, but it has added an important dimension to the policy debate which has been largely missing.*” The DSD reported that they wanted to introduce a caregivers’ grant, and that the research had strengthened their case; however the DSD were not actively pursuing this option since they had other policy priorities at the time.

The project researchers, as well as other advocates for the findings, were still actively working towards maximising policy impact, at the time of this evaluation. For example, the Chief of Social Policy at UNICEF was asked to prepare a concept note for an internal consultation event within government on the universalisation of the CSG. Influenced, amongst other things, by the findings of the Joint Fund research, the options presented were broadened to include the introduction of a grant for lone mothers.

In some cases, it was reported that projects had found it difficult to gain the attention of policymakers at all, limiting the level of conceptual impact achieved. This was due to either competing policy initiatives, popularity of other ideas, or a long standing mind-set in the country that was difficult to change. There were also instances in which it was judged not to be prudent to exploit opportunities to engage with policy makers, given the political environment of the country in focus. For example, one PI working on a project focused on political empowerment of groups living in poverty was approached by a senior member of the opposition political party to write a piece on the difficulties facing the government’s anti-poverty programme. The PI reflected that, while this presented an opportunity to influence policy, it was also likely that the work would be taken out of context and overtly political. Therefore the offer to write a paper was not taken up.

**Key finding:** 43% of Joint Fund projects reported conceptual impacts on policy makers. While conceptual change with practitioners tends to have a smaller sphere of influence - i.e. focused within their own work - conceptual impact with policymakers has the potential to change understanding at a higher level and to influence a much wider group. As conceptual understanding with policy makers develops, increasingly findings are shared and may eventually inform policy. However evidence from the Joint Fund suggests that processes of conceptual impact - and their translation into instrumental impact - are subject to significant external influences at all stages, and that this may take time to come to fruition (in line with the cumulative influence model).

## 2.4 Instrumental impact - influencing policy, practice and service provision

To help provide an assessment of the breadth and depth of instrumental impact achieved, we identified three important and overlapping dimensions from the evidence base: the focus of instrumental impact (policy or practice); the degree of instrumental impact (substantive versus emerging); and attribution (whether instrumental impacts were directly or indirectly attributable to the Joint Fund project). Table 2.11 details the incidence of Joint Fund project impact across these categories.

**Table 2.11 Dimensions and incidence of instrumental impact across the Joint Fund (Phases 1-2)**

Dimension	Sub-category	Impact observed	Number/% projects
<b>Focus of impact</b>	Policy	Projects had changed/were changing legislation, resolutions or government strategies	20 (10 Phase 1; 10 Phase 2) (14 direct, 6 indirect)
	Practice	Projects had changed/were changing ways of working, service provision, as well as behaviour	26 (14 Phase 1; 12 Phase 2) (21 direct, 5 indirect)
<b>Degree of impact</b>	Substantive	Projects influenced a change in policy or practice (which had already taken place)	29 (15 Phase 1; 14 Phase 2)
	Emerging	Projects initiated a process of change (but which had not yet led to changes in policy or practice at the time of the evaluation).	6 (3 Phase 1; 3 Phase 2)
<b>Attribution of impact</b>	Direct	Change that was clearly attributable to the project and its findings, and substantiated by the following evidence: citations of research/findings in policy papers or strategies; letters from policy makers or practitioners acknowledging their interaction or influence; records of meetings with key stakeholders; and/or researchers having contributed to draft policy documents	27 (15 Phase 1; 12 Phase 2)
	Indirect	Change that was only indirectly attributable to a project and its findings, and substantiated by strong circumstantial evidence (e.g. a policy or practice change which took place after stakeholders had engaged with the researchers or their findings).	8 (3 Phase 1; 5 Phase 2)
<b>All projects reporting instrumental impacts</b>			35 (18 Phase 1; 17 Phase 2)
<i>Source: Joint Fund project documentation; Ecorys survey; Ecorys case studies. Base = 100 projects.</i>			

Overall, 35 Joint Fund projects (Phases 1 and 2) reported an instrumental impact. In general, it was found that Joint Fund researchers exhibited caution in claiming that changes in policy and practice had resulted from their actions. The difficulties of substantiating policy impact due to the reluctance of policy makers to acknowledge the influence of single pieces of research was stated. Furthermore, some researchers reported that they would not necessarily be aware of changes in practice as a result of their findings, and particularly in relation to the behaviour change of individuals.

A greater incidence of instrumental impact on practice than on policy was evident (26 compared with 20 Joint Fund projects; 11 projects were considered to have achieved instrumental impact across both policy and practice). The majority of Joint Fund projects that reported an instrumental impact were classified as having had a substantive instrumental impact (15 projects from Phase 1 and 14 from Phase 2 had impacted on a policy or practice change that had already taken place). Positively, the majority of projects also felt that the policy or practice change (whether substantive or emerging) was attributable to their Joint Fund project (27 projects). Direct instrumental impacts on practice were able to be substantiated to a greater degree than impacts on policy (81% of practice instrumental impacts were directly attributable to Joint Fund projects, as opposed to 70% of policy instrumental impacts).

In a number of the cases illustrated below, it was clear that capacity building and/or conceptual impacts had helped to provide the preconditions for instrumental impacts to occur on policy and practice (although this is not guaranteed).

**Key finding:** *Amongst those Joint Fund projects that felt confident enough to claim an instrumental impact (35% of projects across phases 1 and 2), the evidence suggests that this impact was in the majority of cases substantive and attributable to the Joint Fund (underpinned for example by capacity building and/or conceptual impact). Just under one third of those projects reported some impact on both policy and practice. Analysis of all data suggests no major differences in the incidence and type of reported impacts between phases 1 and 2 of the Joint Fund.*

The analyses below provide more detail of the depth of instrumental impact achieved in terms of both policy and practice change. In each case, we assess whether the impacts were directly or indirectly attributable to the Joint Fund.

#### 2.4.1 Direct instrumental impact on policy

Researchers from 14 Joint Fund projects described how their findings had been used to directly inform long-term policies, strategies and/or curricula. For these projects, the research teams were confident that their evidence had been used in the policymaking process, for example through being specifically cited in final policy documentation. It is noted that the examples cited below were explored earlier in this chapter; this highlights how the pathways to achieving instrumental policy impact for Joint Fund research may include delivering capacity building and/or conceptual impacts through stakeholder engagement activity.

For example, the aforementioned research in Ghana<sup>107</sup> demonstrated that children with restricted access to transport have difficulties accessing key services (e.g. education) which affect their longer-term life chances. The findings were disseminated to key school officials as part of efforts to raise awareness and achieve conceptual impact (see section 2.3.3). Supported by existing stakeholder connections at the University of Cape Coast, the Joint Fund research team was then able to use the findings to influence the design of the teacher training curriculum within the Institute of Education. As a result, teachers studying at the university will now be more aware of child mobility issues - particularly pertaining to a child's journey to school - and should therefore be more understanding and less punitive in relation to the late arrival of children into school. The Director General of the Ghana Education Service also stated that he wanted to review the national curriculum to ensure that children across the country are taught about child mobility and transport (however this required funding which was not available at the time).

Projects that achieved instrumental impact often reported that they had taken advantage of a 'window of opportunity', meaning that the research outputs were well timed to inform a particular policy-making process. For example, on a project investigating the relationship between shame and poverty<sup>108</sup>, the PI was alerted to draft Recommendation 202 (Autonomous Recommendation on the Social Protection Floor) from the International Labour Organisation (ILO)<sup>109</sup>. In response to the alert, the PI wrote a relevant briefing paper drawing on the Joint Fund research (which argued that treating beneficiaries with respect is not only a response to social justice but could have positive effects on policy effectiveness). The research paper was shared with influential key stakeholders, who had previously attended a workshop arranged by

<sup>107</sup> Porter, G (2006-2010) *Children, transport and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa: developing a child-centred evidence base to improve policy and change thinking across Africa*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0028

<sup>108</sup> Walker, R (2010-2012/13) *Shame, social exclusion and the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes: A study in seven countries*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0557

<sup>109</sup> This recommendation establishes a set of principles pertaining to the design of social security systems and protection schemes, and is a key policy tool for influencing the development of social protection policies in 185 ILO member countries.

the research team<sup>110</sup>. As a result of the briefing paper and discussion with key stakeholders, an amendment was included as part of ILO Recommendation 202. Norway, South Korea and Italy agreed to support the amendment, and the briefing paper was also shared with the UK, Pakistan and South Africa. The PI described Recommendation 202 as a 'vehicle' which had enabled the research to achieve greater impact.

Similarly, the project exploring community approaches to child protection in Sierra Leone achieved policy impact supported by multiple stakeholder engagement activities and capacity building and conceptual impacts, as well as the timing of the research, but also through building upon a wider programme of research/other funding sources to help generate a critical mass of influential findings. Further detail of this case is provided below.

**Table 2.12 Case study: instrumental impact on policy (direct and substantive)**

### **Project aims**

The Joint Fund project 'Inter-Agency Research on Strengthening Community Based Child Protection for Vulnerable Children'<sup>111</sup> advocated for community driven approaches to developing national child protection systems in Sierra Leone. In addition, researchers sought to contribute to global learning regarding what works in strengthening and measuring the effectiveness of national child protection systems.

### **Pathway to impact**

The research team arranged workshops throughout the project to actively engage research users and build capacity amongst practitioners. The PI also disseminated the findings at external meetings and conferences, including a meeting of the global Child Protection Working Group (CPWG). In addition, the team had access to regular meetings of the national Child Protection Committee, which is chaired by Sierra Leone's Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA), and includes UNICEF and other national and international NGOs. These meetings provided an important opportunity to share findings with key stakeholders and to discuss their relevance to national policy and practice. The success of this engagement was due to one of the project's in country researchers, who was a seconded employee from UNICEF with an existing good relationship with the MSWGCA (as well as the fact that the findings were relevant to fulfilling the committee's objectives).

Furthermore, the external context was highly favourable to facilitating positive impacts. Firstly, the Joint Fund project was part of an ongoing programme of inter-agency research in Sierra Leone. An accompanying ethnographic component of the research to understand how child-protection systems had been working in Sierra Leone, and the development and implementation of community-based interventions, were funded through other sources. The ESRC-DFID Joint Fund project built upon these other components, by supporting the empirical testing of the effectiveness of the pilot community-led interventions, and the systematic measurement of relevant outcomes.

Secondly, when the research project began Sierra Leone was focused on the implementation of the Child Rights Act (2007), which represented a 'top-down' approach to educating villages about child rights and encouraging people to report violations, via legally mandated Child Welfare Committees (CWCs). The timing of the study was pertinent as the country was at a key strategic moment in the implementation of the Act; stakeholders were becoming aware that CWCs were not working as intended, and were in the process of deciding whether to strengthen CWCs or to adopt a different policy towards child welfare (with no new structures such as CWCs).

<sup>110</sup> It was at this workshop where the PI was alerted to ILO recommendation 202.

<sup>111</sup> Wessells, M (2013-2015) *Inter-Agency Research on Strengthening Community Based Child Protection for Vulnerable Children*, Phase 2, ES/J017663/1

### Evidence of impact

The research findings stimulated new thinking around how to enable grassroots processes of child protection and align these with government and formal systems (conceptual impact). The research team were then able to exploit the supportive political context to ensure that these ideas informed the decision making of the Child Protection Committee. As a result of this activity, the PI claimed that the Joint Fund research had an instrumental impact through influencing the development of Sierra Leone's new Child and Family Welfare Policy. They explained that their research is cited repeatedly in the policy and that the revised policy builds on the positive outcomes for children achieved through a community-driven approach. This claim was corroborated by a government official interviewed, who was involved with the project and reported that the research "brought a lot of ideas which we used and developed in the policy". Furthermore, the study presentations were said to have raised the profile of community driven child protection work more widely, for example amongst international networks of NGOs. In response to this, the PI had routinely received requests for related papers and project tools.

**Key finding:** *A relatively small number of Joint Fund projects across phases 1 and 2 (around 14%) provided evidence that their research findings had been used to directly inform new or revised policy. It was evident from the case study examples that high quality research and proactive stakeholder engagement (linked to capacity building and/or conceptual impact) had contributed towards delivering instrumental impact. Other enabling factors were also important to the cases (given the complexity of the policy making process and cumulative influence). These included the existence of strong personal connections with stakeholder groups, as well as a favourable external context, where for example 'windows of opportunity' informed the timing of research, and projects were designed to build upon pre-existing research activities. Enabling factors are explored more systematically in chapter 3.*

#### 2.4.2 Indirect instrumental impact on policy

A further 6 projects were associated with relevant policy changes, but research teams were less confident that their research had been used directly, and/or that other influences had not significantly contributed in the policy making process. Whilst the research teams were able to provide information on their engagement with policymakers, they understood less about the specific contribution of their findings. Since the contributions of the research to policy change could therefore not be directly substantiated, and/or there was circumstantial evidence which suggested that other factors may have played a more significant role, researchers representing these projects adopted a more circumspect position on claiming impact.

For example, following a Joint Fund project in Columbia<sup>112</sup> a ban was implemented on aerial spraying of glyphosate, a potentially carcinogenic pesticide. The researchers working on the project had produced a paper illustrating the negative impact that glyphosate has on health, and its ineffectiveness in destroying coca plants. The research findings resulted in significant media coverage questioning the use of aerial spraying of crops. This helped to raise the profile of the research and stimulate public and government debate on the issue. Although the project and research team were confident that they had influenced the debate and final outcome, they were aware that other scientists from different disciplines had also provided important contributions leading to the policy change. A second project example is provided by Joint Fund research mapping the issues relating to clinical health trials in India, Sri Lanka and Nepal (Table 2.13).

<sup>112</sup> Ibáñez, A (2010-2012) *The Economic and Social Consequences of Armed Conflict in Colombia: Evidence for Designing Effective Policies in Conflict and Post-Conflict Regions*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0593

**Table 2.13 Case study: instrumental impact on policy (indirect and substantive)**

### Project aims

The Joint Fund project 'Biomedical Health Experimentation in South Asia (BHESA)'<sup>113</sup> investigated public health and clinical trials in India, Sri Lanka and Nepal. Alongside mapping health experimental activities in these countries, the project conducted interviews with stakeholders including clinical trials investigators, contract research organisation staff, sponsors, regulators, ethics committee members, pharma company staff, and civil society.

### Pathway to impact

At the time of the research in Sri Lanka, clinical trials were being expanded and a Clinical Trials Act was being debated. This presented an opportunity for the research team to directly engage with policy makers, since the findings were relevant to the specific individual drafting the policy. As the network of clinical and public health trials professionals is small size in Sri Lanka, and the in-country collaborator was well connected, the team was able to interview all stakeholders who were involved in writing the Clinical Trials Act. In India, there had been two recent high-profile Supreme Court cases involving clinical trial companies that had not paid compensation for injuries and deaths during trials, creating 'political space' to discuss the issue. The Co-I was subsequently invited to attend consultative committees set up by the government to review Indian legislation on the registration and regulation of ethics committees and clinical trials. At these meetings the Co-I was able to use the research findings to inform the work of the consultations. In Nepal, the researchers organised an ethics workshop and a dissemination event and invited the Nepal Health Research Council, staff from the Ministry of Health, large health institutions and senior professors. They also held personal meetings with stakeholders as opportunities arose.

### Evidence of impact

The research team were aware of changes that had been made to clinical trial regulations in each country since the Joint Fund project began. However, they were cautious about claiming any direct impact on these processes, since there was evidence that other and potentially more significant factors were influencing change:

- In terms of claiming any research impact on developing the Clinical Trials Act policy in Sri Lanka, the Sri Lankan collaborator considered that any influence that they had delivered had been in the context of a pre-existing process of change. It should also be noted that, at the time of the interview, the Act remained at the draft stage, and that there was competing political debate around whether to expand the clinical trials industry as a source of national income.
- In India, changes were made to the regulation of clinical trials, such as the procedures relating to recording patient consent and compensation for injury and death during drug trials. The Indian Government had nonetheless already set up consultative committees in response to growing awareness and attention from academic and media channels on issues relating to the ethics and regulation of clinical trials. While the Co-I was able to contribute findings to the policymaking processes, the team was cautious not to over-claim their influence on the Indian Supreme Court and changes in subsequent legislation. As the researchers commented: *"We did provide input into all this. But I would not say that we had enough strength [alone]."*
- Similarly in Nepal, the Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC) made changes to how it monitors and regulates clinical trials. These changes may possibly have been informed by regular interactions with the Joint Fund research team. However, there was limited evidence to prove this influence, and thus the research team did not attribute these changes to their project.

<sup>113</sup> Jeffery, R (2010-2013) *Biomedical and Health Experimentation in South Asia: Critical Perspectives on collaboration, governance and competition*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0110

### 2.4.3 Direct instrumental impact on practice

21 Joint Fund projects were able to evidence practice that had directly changed as a result of their research findings. In the cases described below, direct impacts on practice were again linked to significant levels of capacity building and/or conceptual impact on target stakeholder groups (hence some of these Joint Fund projects were described earlier in the chapter).

For example, stakeholder groups were engaged in capacity building activities, and as a result they learnt skills that changed their professional or community practices. As discussed in table 2.5 (section 2.2.3), as part of the project 'Pregnancy termination trajectories in Zambia: the socio-economic costs'<sup>114</sup> media professionals were taught new skills in how to report on the issue of abortion. This changed the way that producers gathered material to report on abortion-related news items, through looking for more stories from 'real people' within communities to demonstrate what was happening on the ground. In the case of a small number of projects, these capacity building impacts led to practice and specific behaviour changes at a community level. This type of impact was corroborated with evidence of more adaptive behaviours, as well as longer-term improvements in poverty levels (i.e. socio-economic conditions) within local communities, as illustrated by the project case below.

**Table 2.14 Case study: instrumental impact on practice (direct and substantive/emerging)**

#### **Project aims**

The 'Nutritional Improvement for Children in Urban Chile and Kenya project'<sup>115</sup> tested whether nutrition, obesity and hygiene issues could be addressed through small scale community interventions.

#### **Pathway to impact**

As part of the research, three community groups in Chaani, Kenya received capacity building training in various areas, including:

- Nutrition, hygienic child care, and correct breastfeeding practices.
- Income generating activities; e.g. soap-making, bead-making, tie-dye techniques.
- Vegetable farming in small spaces using polythene bags ('balcony farming').
- Energy-saving practices (energy efficient cookers without charcoal were provided).
- Preparing waste to use for manure on the vegetable farm.
- Psychosocial support training for the young mothers.
- Domestic violence prevention and mitigation.

As a consequence, community members were empowered to tackle their own problems, and reported increased confidence.

#### **Evidence of impact**

The training had a positive impact on child feeding practices, as well as malnutrition prevention and treatment practices in the area. It also boosted people's activism in other areas (for example the organisation of rubbish collection initiatives, because they had learnt that inadequate waste practices can lead to disease).

One year on from the end of this project, there was evidence in the community of sustained practice change derived from the training, contributing to wider economic and societal benefits. For example:

- They had a greater supply of fresh vegetables (due to the balcony farming introduced to them).

<sup>114</sup> Coast, E (2011-2014) *Pregnancy termination trajectories in Zambia: the socio-economic costs*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0626; Impact maximisation grant 2014 – 2015

<sup>115</sup> Pridmore, P (2010-2014) *Nutritional Improvement for children in urban Chile and Kenya*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0461

**Table 2.14 Case study: instrumental impact on practice (direct and substantive/emerging)**

- Community members reported improved nutrition levels amongst their children.
- Several individuals were able to generate a higher income through the sale of vegetables and other income generating activities that they had learnt (and gained in confidence as a result).
- Improved levels of sanitation and waste disposal were observed.
- Community members had gained the confidence to access further training.

During the field visit, all community members interviewed provided testimonies that the changes in practice had led to improved nutrition, reductions in malnutrition and improved hygiene levels in Chaani.

Furthermore, in Chile, the in-country coordinator working on the project reported that whilst there had previously been a theoretical understanding of the importance of evidence, the study helped to create a working method that could be adopted by the community based Urban Nutrition Working Groups (UNWG), supporting further conceptual impacts on practitioners.

The project aiming to widen participation at university in Ghana and Tanzania<sup>116</sup> firstly delivered impacts at a conceptual level. The findings developed new knowledge that students with a low socioeconomic status were finding it hard to enter universities because of the application fee (the evidence also showed that some universities might hold five or six places, despite applicants having been accepted somewhere else, blocking access to other students). The director at a relevant policy organisation, the Tanzanian Commission for Universities (TCU), was in a position to act on this evidence and introduced a centralised admissions system – similar to UCAS in the UK. Now applicants apply through the TCU to all universities, and only pay one fee. The TCU Director viewed the decision to implement this system as having been directly influenced by the research project.

For some projects, the instrumental impact relating to practice was facilitated through partner organisations engaging other professionals in the research. For example, one project aimed to improve practice within the environmental sector through collaboration between university academics (at University College London, Imperial College and University of Colorado) and the Wildlife Conservation Society<sup>117</sup>. Specifically, this project sought to identify affordable, replicable and credible ways to assess the human wellbeing impacts of environment-development activities. As a consequence of the project collaboration, the research team reported that 20 programmes of the Wildlife Conservation Society were using a newly designed tool that assesses trends in human wellbeing – *the basic necessities survey* – and that other programmes were keen to roll out methods that detect trends in wellbeing. The relatively rapid implementation of the findings into professional practice was facilitated by existing relationships between the research team and the Wildlife Conservation Society.

**Key finding:** *Around one fifth of Joint Fund projects reported direct instrumental impacts on practice. Here, there was also concurrent evidence of strong capacity building and conceptual impacts relating to the research. Where projects had impacted directly on changing community practices and behaviour, there was also emerging evidence of wider economic and societal impact.*

#### 2.4.4 Indirect instrumental impact on practice

A small number of projects (five across the Fund) were able to identify relevant practices that had changed, but found it harder to evidence how their research had specifically been used. In these cases,

<sup>116</sup> Morley, L (2006-2010) *Widening Participation in Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania: Developing an Equity Scorecard*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0078

<sup>117</sup> Wilkie, D (2013-2016) *Measuring complex outcomes of environment and development interventions*, Phase 2, ES/J018155/1

the researchers were aware of a link with their research but acknowledged that other contributing factors - such as the existence of ongoing initiatives - may have had a stronger influence on the practice change.

For example, for the project investigating climate change effects in urban areas in Bangladesh<sup>118</sup>, the research team conducted workshops with two settlements to discuss the research findings. Following these events there were significant changes in both areas to improve drainage and flooding infrastructure, in response to the issue of climate change. However, the research team argued that the dissemination events could not have been the sole reason for the changes that occurred in these areas. Instead, they reflected that their events may have acted as a catalyst and helped to speed up change, by bringing together local stakeholders and engaging them in debate around issues that were already being raised in the area.

In a similar example in China, improvements were implemented within informal settlements that reflected Joint Fund research findings (see Table 2.15). However, the researchers were aware of other contextual factors that had influenced decision making, and therefore that it may not have been their research which led directly to the changes. Again, it can be observed that Joint Fund research may have played a catalytic, but not necessarily the principal role in delivering changes to practice.

**Table 2.15 Case study: instrumental impact on practice (indirect and substantive)**

#### **Project aims**

Research on the development of migrant villages in China<sup>119</sup> aimed to: investigate the dynamics of migrant village evolution and Chinese redevelopment practices; identify the scope for in-situ upgrading as an alternative to wholesale redevelopment policies; and inform Chinese policy makers and provide learning feedback to wider international development communities to cope with the 'challenge of slums'.

#### **Pathway to impact**

The research conducted 15 interviews and a questionnaire survey that sampled 20 migrant villages in three major cities in China (Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou).

#### **Evidence of impact**

One area of impact reported by the research was in Guangzhou, an informal settlement in Guangdong province. Consistent with the research findings, practice in the area was changed from demolition to incremental development, with houses maintained in order to accommodate migrant workers. While avoiding claiming a direct causal link between their research and the change (other contributing factors were described that could have triggered take-up of the research), the researchers nonetheless felt that their work had made a positive contribution to change. Firstly, the findings were said to have confirmed for policy makers what they already knew (anecdotally) was happening in the settlements; the supply of new empirical evidence may have allowed them to be more confident in their thinking. The research findings also demonstrated the importance of migrant worker villages to maintaining a competitive economy. The new insights into the economic value of these informal settlements may have helped to influence thinking around their sustainable development.

**Key finding:** *Within the group of Joint Fund projects with reported instrumental impacts, a minority of researchers were more cautious about claiming that their project had impacted directly on changing*

<sup>118</sup> Hulme, D (2010-2014) *Community and institutional responses to the challenges facing poor urban people in an era of global warming in Bangladesh*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0510

<sup>119</sup> Wu, F (2010-2012) *The Development of Migrant Villages under China's Rapid Urbanization: Implications for Poverty and Slum Policies*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0448

*policy and practice. They tended to consider that circumstantial evidence alone is not sufficient to claim attribution, and/or were aware of other significant influences or drivers of policy change. Nonetheless, it is possible that such projects still made positive contributions towards an overall trajectory of change, for example through providing new corroborative evidence for policy makers, practitioners and the media to consider whilst reviewing the wider evidence base and policy options.*

## 2.5 Cross-portfolio analysis

It was clear from the previous analysis in this chapter, both at the aggregate level and at the level of individual Joint Fund cases, that capacity building, conceptual and instrumental impacts were sometimes delivered in combination. The following table details the incidence of Joint Fund projects reporting both single and combined impacts, across all possible combinations of impact.

**Table 2.16 Type and incidence of combined impacts across the Joint Fund (Phases 1-2)**

Impacts reported	Number/% of projects
No impact to report (at the time of the evaluation)	9
Only capacity building (no other impact)	6
Only conceptual (no other impact)	13
Only instrumental (no other impact)	0
Capacity building and conceptual (no instrumental)	37
Capacity building and instrumental (no conceptual)	0
Conceptual and instrumental (no capacity building)	3
All 3 types of impact	32

*Source: Joint Fund project documentation; Ecorys survey; Ecorys case studies. Base = 100 projects.*

Amongst those projects that reported an impact, projects far more commonly reported multiple impacts than a single impact alone (i.e. only capacity building or conceptual or instrumental impacts); the latter amounted to around 19% of projects. The most prevalent combination of impacts was projects reporting both capacity building and conceptual impacts together (excluding instrumental impact), evident across 37% of projects.

Tellingly, no projects reported instrumental impacts alone; instrumental impacts were only achieved in combination with other impacts (35% of projects), and in the vast majority of cases where all three impacts were reported as having been generated (32% of projects). No conceptual and instrumental only combinations of impact were reported. On the other hand, it is clear from this analysis and the cases reviewed in this chapter that whilst capacity and conceptual impacts may be a necessary precondition and/or facilitate instrumental impact, they are not in themselves sufficient. 9% of Joint Fund projects reported no impact at all.

**Key finding:** *Across the Joint Fund, there appears to have been strong inter-relationships between impacts - capacity building and conceptual impacts were far more likely to occur in combination, and may be mutually reinforcing or linear and consecutive. Instrumental impacts only occurred in combination with others - most commonly instrumental impact was achieved where both capacity building and conceptual impacts had occurred. This reflects the challenges inherent in impacting upon the policy making process, and the model of cumulative influence which suggests that a critical mass*

of activity is required in order to effect change.

## 2.6 Impact on poverty alleviation/reduction

The ultimate aim of the Joint Fund is to alleviate poverty through stimulating capacity, conceptual and instrumental impacts on relevant policies and practice. Chapter one noted that in order to fully quantify the longer-term effects of social science research, specific impact evaluations are required of the relevant policy or practice change on improving social and economic conditions (involving the gathering/analysis of data from a suitable sample of people affected by the change). This would need to be conducted in addition to the evaluation of the contribution of the research to the policy or practice change.

It was not possible to conduct such in-depth assessments as part of this portfolio evaluation. One way to help assess, ex-ante, whether projects or programmes are likely to contribute to social and economic impacts is to investigate their relevance to issues such as poverty in-country, policy agendas and particular groups. The following table summarises how Joint Fund researchers evidenced that there was such demand for their work.

**Table 2.17 Types of demand for research identified by researchers**

Driver of demand	Description
<b>Need for the research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In some cases need related to a moral/ethical/human rights issue that needed to be addressed. For example, the prevalence of unsafe abortion in Zambia, off road access to markets and women's safety in rural areas, and lone mothers' rights to social security.</li> <li>• Need was also described in terms of a gap in existing research, e.g. a scarcity of impact evaluations in the environment-development sector.</li> </ul>
<b>Relevance to policy agenda</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The relevance of the issues that the research was addressing to the policy agendas in the countries where the research was being conducted was identified as evidence of demand. This was strongly emphasised in 4 of the case studies. For example, one PI explained that through local knowledge and an in-depth understanding of the policy context from the in-country researchers, the research team were aware of the interest from government in issues of development and urbanisation – <i>"those in the policy field were looking for answers"</i>.</li> <li>• Some researchers spoke of the policy agenda more broadly; for example one PI explained how the two research countries were chosen because both the national governments were encouraging multi-sectoral approaches to dealing with public health issues. Notably, of the 4 case studies, two achieved substantial instrumental impact and all 4 achieved conceptual and capacity building impact.</li> </ul>
<b>Demand from specific audiences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In some cases the researchers identified audiences/interest groups who wanted the information generated. For example, there was demand for research into unsafe abortion from advocacy groups interested in bringing the rates of unsafe abortion down<sup>120</sup>.</li> <li>• Other descriptions of demand included researchers having encountered interest in the</li> </ul>

<sup>120</sup> Coast, E (2011-2014) *Pregnancy termination trajectories in Zambia: the socio-economic costs*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0626; Impact maximisation grant 2014 – 2015

Driver of demand	Description
	<p>research through their professional networks, and from potential non-academic users in the grant countries<sup>121</sup>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In one case the PI was aware of demand for the research topic from within his own organisation. He noted that staff within his organisation were struggling with how to measure human wellbeing impacts, but were under increasing pressure from donors to do so.</li> </ul>

The research team also interrogated the project documentation and explored anecdotally with award holders to test whether any evidence of wider impacts existed for Joint Fund projects. It should be noted however that given the complexities involved, and the tendency of Joint Fund researchers to adopt a conservative assessment of their impact, it cannot be assumed that those researchers who failed to provide such accounts did so because their project had *not* resulted in, or would not facilitate in the future, a wider economic or societal benefit. In the absence of gathering the necessary evidence, researchers were rightly reluctant to claim that they had made a difference to society or the economy. Where such impact on wider population groups was cited, it was also not possible to independently verify all accounts.

Rather than providing a conclusive assessment, the evidence collated nonetheless serves to illustrate the potential of Joint Fund interventions to help reduce poverty over the long-term, and the ways in which some projects have been able to demonstrate this. Based upon the data available, six projects reported delivering wider social and/or economic outcomes. These outcomes are summarised in table 2.18.

As was to be expected, direct evidence of impacts on wider economic and societal conditions was limited at this stage and its measurement had not featured significantly as part of the evaluation efforts of Joint Fund researchers. One significant exception was where the robust measurement of reductions in indicators of poverty, as a result of new services or practices piloted through action research (or packages of research activity), was a significant component of Joint Fund projects (as indicated in the table). Whilst this was understandably limited to small population groups targeted by the pilot, where impact evaluations had been undertaken, this provided evidence to suggest that any approaches subsequently adopted more widely at a policy level would have strong potential to impact positively on economic or societal outcomes across larger population groups.

Otherwise, conducting such impact evaluation work lay beyond the scope, resources and timescales available to Joint Fund projects. Impact assessment generally requires complex and time-consuming measurements, including collaboration from various stakeholders. In general, Joint Fund researchers considered there to have been a lack of sufficient resources to conduct follow-up evaluation themselves, and to assess more fully the impacts achieved (see section 3.2.3).

<sup>121</sup> For example: Ansell, N (2007-2009) *Averting 'New Variant Famine' in Southern Africa: building food-secure livelihoods with AIDS-affected young people*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0167

**Table 2.18 Evidence of economic and social benefits under the Joint Fund**

Project	Details of impact	Source of evidence
<b>Strengthening ODFL (open, distance, flexible learning) systems to increase education access and attainment for young people in high HIV prevalence SADC countries, RES-167-25-0217, 2007-2010</b>	The researchers were able to demonstrate an enhanced quality of life in children in the intervention classes resulting from improved psychosocial health and wellbeing and increased collaboration and co-operation between pupils to support learning. There was also evidence of reduced school drop-outs, and increased levels of attendance and achievement.	Evaluated through a Random Controlled Trial (RCT) intervention of self-study learner guides (see Impact Report completed as part of the Joint Fund project).
<b>Nutritional improvement for children in urban Chile and Kenya, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0461, 2010-2014</b>	The study focussed on the issues of child obesity in Chile and child undernutrition in Kenya. Communities reported improvement in child health and nutrition as a result of the changes in practice initiated by the project research (such as vegetable farming and hygiene practices). Several individuals were able to generate a higher income through the sale of vegetables and other income generating activities they had learnt to conduct. Improved level of sanitation and waste disposal has also been observed. All community members interviewed as part of the case study research provided testimonies that the changes in practice led to improved nutrition, reductions in malnutrition, and improved hygiene levels in Chaani.	Case study research and survey responses conducted through this evaluation.
<b>Identifying barriers to TB diagnosis and treatment under a new rapid diagnostic scheme, RES-167-25-0387, 2008-2012</b>	Research findings and suggested change in practice led to an increased use of health extension workers to deliver diagnosis services closer to communities which most require such services. This has provided increased levels of access for women, the elderly and children. As a result, TB notifications have more than doubled, with a significant improvement in treatment outcomes (see Yassin et al 2013 <sup>122</sup> ). The approach has now been expanded to four additional zones to expand from a population base of 3 to 7 million and further scale-up is being planned.	Survey conducted through this evaluation. See also research conducted by Yassin et al 2013.

<sup>122</sup> Yassin, Datiko, Tulloch, Markos, Aschalew, Shargie, Dangisso, Komatsu, Sahu, Blok, Cuevas, Theobald (2013). Innovative Community-Based Approaches Doubled Tuberculosis Case Notification and Improve Treatment Outcome in Southern Ethiopia, DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0063174

Project	Details of impact	Source of evidence
<b>Citizens and the state in urban India, RES-167-25-0520, 2010-2012</b>	The research involved an in-depth investigation on emergent citizenship and public goods provision. As a result of the research, there was a demonstrable increased level of understanding and awareness of the methods of public action and how to engage with politicians and state representatives amongst slum dwellers and their local leaders. For instance, the elected representatives in one slum locality have engaged with local and state level politicians and succeeded in connecting the city water supply to their dwellings, resulting in an improved standard of living.	Impact Report completed as part of the Joint Fund project.
<b>Inter-Agency Research on Strengthening Community-Based Child Protection for Vulnerable Children in Sierra Leone, Phase 2, ES/J017663/1, 2013-2015</b>	The project sought to strengthen child protection practice in Sierra Leone through robust documentation and testing of community-driven action that links communities with aspects of the formal protection system. Evidence collated during the case study suggests the research influenced the development of the new Child and Family Welfare Policy in the country. Initial findings from the subsequent impact evaluation of the community interventions revealed that a major reduction in teenage pregnancies has since occurred. In addition, greater supportive linkages between the communities and the formal health system have been established.	An impact evaluation of community interventions was conducted following the change in policy. The findings related to reduced teenage pregnancies and improved linkages between communities and the formal health system have also been reported in a peer-reviewed academic journal <sup>123</sup> .
<b>Children, transport and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0028, 2006-2010</b>	This project investigated mobility issues faced by children through child-centred research in three sub-Saharan African countries. A robust evidence based was generated which continues to be used to raise awareness of child transport needs and mobility constraints, and to promote child-friendly accessibility policies. The project has led to improved confidence, skills and employability of the child researchers trained on the project (and who are now working with on their second ESRC DFID project).	Case study research under this evaluation.

<sup>123</sup> Wessells, M. (2015) Bottom-up approaches to strengthening child protection systems: Placing children, families, and communities at the center. Child Abuse and Neglect. Volume 43: 8-21

Lack of evidence notwithstanding, it is also understandable that there was little evidence of wider social and economic impacts, given the stage that many Joint Fund projects had reached along the continuum of policy influence. Reflecting on the model of cumulative influence<sup>124</sup> presented in chapter one, the impact of most Joint Fund research can be located at stage 2 (across the four stages of influence), with evidence for example of growth in the body of research, interest provoked in policy (and practitioner) networks, and tentative engagement in policy circles. It should be noted that this might be a particularly relevant and positive outcome for projects involving issues (theoretical and/or more applied) that are particularly new and/or contextually controversial, compared with research projects that have addressed a problem that is already widely acknowledged. Only a minority of projects had reached stage 3, as indicated for example by evidence of the following: emerging consensus around a research topic (for example where a project had built upon a wider programme of studies); translation of research outputs for relevant audiences; exploitation of policy windows; and partial adoption in policy. Full adoption in policy (at stage 4) remained an aspiration for some and beyond the scope of other Joint Fund projects. Nonetheless, stage 4 level impacts represent an important precondition for delivering wider social and economic outcomes, such as poverty alleviation, across a national or population-group level.

It should be noted that these challenges were recognised by ESRC-DFID; the ITT document for this evaluation included a commitment to undertaking further follow-up evaluation of Phase 1-2 Joint Fund projects, to explore more fully their longer-term impact.

**Key finding:** *A small number of Joint Fund projects provided evidence that their research had led to wider impacts on poverty reduction. Those projects which involved the direct piloting and robust evaluation of successful new community, health or other public services understandably had evidence of such impacts at their disposal. Otherwise, there were very few examples of Joint Fund research projects which had attempted to evaluate or had access to external evidence to prove that their policy or practice impact had translated into social and economic outcomes. This was also a reflection of the stage of impact reached by the majority of Joint Fund projects, along the possible continuum of influence. ESRC-DFID intend to undertake longer-term follow-up evaluation of phase 1-2 projects, which could help to capture such impacts.*

## 2.7 Conclusions

In this chapter we have examined how the findings and outputs from Joint Fund research have been utilised and applied by policy makers, practitioners and other research users, in order to contribute towards policy and/or practice change. Alongside a quantification of the scale of impact across Joint Fund projects (Phases 1 and 2), we sought to further refine the typology of impacts. This analysis highlighted project pathways to impact and considered the extent to which any policy or practice change can be attributed to the Joint Fund.

**Capacity building** was reported amongst members of the research team, research partner organisations, and end users of the research findings. Whilst capacity building was reported as an impact in 75 projects, members of Joint Fund project research teams and partner organisations were significantly the most common beneficiary group (reported by 69% of Joint Fund projects in total). Rather than to support transfer skills across the researcher/user interface - impacts on end users accounted for only 15% of projects - capacity building was interpreted and used by the majority of projects as a way of increasing the quality of their research/future research. However, evidence suggests that only a minority of Joint Fund projects had conducted in-depth assessments of their capacity building impact, and were

<sup>124</sup> Barakat, S, Waldman, T, Varisco, A., *Understanding influence: Summary report for DFID*, 2014 (funded through the DFID-ESRC Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research)

able to evidence the outcomes of capacity building activity. This emphasises the value of conducting case study research in order to facilitate greater insights into the nature and depth of capacity building impact achieved by social science research, as well as the need for more sophisticated self-evaluation approaches.

**Conceptual impact** - categorised as increased understanding of policy issues and reframing debates - was the most prevalent impact across the Fund (a total of 85 projects). This impact can be further categorised by end beneficiary, with key groups including: researchers/academics (48% of projects); practitioners (62% of projects); and policy makers (43% of projects). For the first group, there was evidence of significant overlap between researcher interpretations of conceptual (academic) and capacity building (researcher) impacts. This suggests that the two impacts are inter-related and mutually reinforcing within the sphere of researcher/producer beneficiaries. While conceptual change with practitioners tends to have a smaller sphere of influence - i.e. focused within their own work - conceptual impact with policymakers has the potential to change understanding at a higher level and to influence a much wider group. However evidence from the Joint Fund suggests that processes of conceptual impact (and their translation into instrumental impact) are subject to significant external influences at all stages, and that this may take time to come to fruition. We would also like to highlight that some Joint Fund researchers struggled to evidence their conceptual impact due to the subjective nature of such impact, as well as associated difficulties with measurement. Therefore, whilst a majority of Joint Fund projects provided corroborative evidence of their conceptual impact, this sometimes focused more on the processes involved in generating impact, rather than the results per se.

Amongst those Joint Fund projects that felt confident enough to claim an **instrumental impact** - indicated by 35% of projects across phases 1 and 2 - the evidence suggests that this impact was in the majority of cases substantive and attributable to the Joint Fund. Whilst a relatively small number of Joint Fund projects across the two phases (around 14%) provided evidence that their research findings had been used to directly inform new or revised policy, around one fifth of Joint Fund projects reported direct instrumental impacts on practice. In the case of the latter, there was concurrent evidence of strong capacity building and conceptual impacts relating to the research. Where projects had impacted directly on changing community practices and behaviour, there was also emerging evidence of wider economic and societal impact. Finally, within the group of Joint Fund projects with reported instrumental impacts, a minority of researchers were more cautious about claiming that their project had impacted directly on changing policy and practice, either through a lack of concrete evidence and/or an awareness of other significant influences or drivers of policy change. In such cases, it is possible that such projects still made positive contributions towards an overall trajectory of change.

Our assessment of the **aggregate level of impact across the Joint Fund** suggests that there is a strong inter-relationship between capacity building, conceptual and instrumental impacts. Capacity building and conceptual impacts were far more likely to occur in combination, and may be mutually reinforcing or linear and consecutive. Instrumental impacts only occurred in combination with others - most commonly instrumental impact was achieved where both capacity building and conceptual impacts had occurred. This reflects the challenges inherent in impacting upon the policy making process, and the model of cumulative influence which suggests that a critical mass of activity is required in order to effect change.

Finally, we reviewed any evidence of **longer-term impacts on poverty alleviation/reduction** as a result of Joint Fund-inspired changes to policy and practice. A small number of Joint Fund projects provided evidence that their research had led to wider impacts on poverty reduction. Those projects which involved the direct piloting and robust evaluation of successful new community, health or other public services understandably had evidence of such impacts at their disposal. Otherwise, there were very few examples of Joint Fund research projects which had attempted to evaluate or had access to external evidence to prove that their policy or practice impact had translated into social and economic outcomes. This was also

a reflection of the stage of impact reached by the majority of Joint Fund projects, along the possible continuum of influence. The continued monitoring and evaluation of the Joint Fund - including of phases 1 and 2 - increases the likelihood of capturing evidence of longer-term impacts on poverty alleviation, as well as impacts on policy and practice.

## 3.0 Approaches to research uptake and determinants of impact

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the strategies and practices employed by Joint Fund researchers to increase the uptake of their work, how successful these processes were in generating impact, and why. It also assesses the impact of the external context in terms of constraining impact.

These issues are explored through the lens of the following processes:

- Understanding, planning and monitoring of impact (section 3.2).
- Range of stakeholders engaged, established relationships, and engagement with DFID (section 3.3).
- User engagement and dissemination approaches, and when they were adopted (section 3.4).
- Mix of researchers and in-country partners undertaking the research (section 3.5).
- Developing an understanding of context, and mitigation of the risks posed by context (section 3.6).
- Building upon portfolios of research, and other strategies adopted to support sustainability and/or accelerate impact (section 3.7).

From this analysis we then distil the main factors which determined the effectiveness of pathways to impact, and enabled or constrained research impact through the Joint Fund (section 3.8).

This chapter draws on the framework of drivers identified in the ESRC's 'Cultivating Connections' report<sup>125</sup>, as described in chapter one, as well as the full range of data gathered through the evaluation (grant documentation, survey responses from Joint Fund researchers, and case studies).

### 3.2 Planning and monitoring impact

The *Cultivating Connections* report stresses the importance of '**well-planned user engagement and knowledge engagement strategies**' for facilitating impact. The prerequisite for planning such research uptake activity, and targeting relevant stakeholders, is to understand the intended impact of any research, and the mechanisms through which this will be achieved. It is also important to have some way of monitoring impacts in practice, both for accountability purposes and in order that strategies may be modified where necessary. In this section, we assess the extent to which researchers had such an understanding at the proposal stage, as well as plans for how their impact would be achieved, and further to this actively monitored project impact. We then assess the extent to which having an initial strong conceptual and practical understanding of impact (i.e. an effective impact strategy) correlates with Joint Fund projects that were impactful in practice, as well as providing a more qualitative assessment of the value of effective impact planning. We conclude this section with an assessment of the extent to which Joint Fund researchers have monitored and evaluated their research impacts (as a prerequisite for example for refining their user engagement/knowledge engagement strategies where required).

<sup>125</sup> ESRC Evaluation Committee, *Cultivating Connections*, April 2013, <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/research/evaluation-and-impact/cultivating-connections-innovation-and-consolidation-in-the-esrc-s-impact-evaluation-programme/>

### 3.2.1 Effective strategies for impact

As part of the desk review, the funding applications from 99 phase 1 and 2 grants<sup>126</sup> were assessed. We focused on these discernible indicators which allowed for an efficient cross-comparison of projects supported through the Joint Fund:

- Clarity of the intended research impacts.
- Extent to which researchers expressed an understanding of their project's 'theory of change', outlining how and why the project would achieve its intended impact, within the specific context of the research.
- Whether a detailed plan was in place, specifying the steps and activities required to achieve the intended impact.

Research grants were rated across these categories on a four-point scale: 'basic'; 'fair'; 'good'; and 'excellent' (full definitions of the categorisation can be found in annex 6). It should be noted that judgements were made on the basis of the original research proposals<sup>127</sup>, and may therefore not reflect all planned activities by researchers.

- **Clarity of intended impacts:** providing greater clarity on intended research impacts provides a clearer goal toward which to aim, the goal in turn helping inform what actions and approaches are best suited to achieving the impact goal. Based upon their proposals, the majority of Joint Fund projects (63 out of 99 projects, or 64%) were judged to have a 'good' understanding of the impacts that they wanted to achieve; these were equally split between phase 1 and 2 projects. 11 further projects provided very specific detail, and were considered by the evaluation team to have an 'excellent' understanding of their intended impact (in this case, ten were from phase 2 of the Joint Fund). 25 projects were rated as 'fair' and two as 'basic' in terms of clarity of impact. Overall, there was therefore greater clarity of impact associated with phase 2 projects. This is partly a reflection of the increased level of detail that was required in developing an Impact Plan under phase 2, which included: the specific circumstances they wanted to change; the target stakeholders they wished to engage with; and the political decisions they wanted to influence or any other outcomes that they expected from their findings. In some cases, descriptions of intended impact tended to focus on research outputs such as the guidelines and recommendations that would be generated, rather than actual impacts, and in particular articulation of the capacity building, conceptual, and/or instrumental change that is anticipated.
- **Understanding of how impact would be achieved:** at the proposal stage, 45% of grants demonstrated a 'good' understanding of how they would achieve their impact, and 28% an 'excellent' understanding. Again, phase 2 projects were more likely to warrant an 'excellent' rating (seventeen phase 2 projects, compared with eleven phase 1 projects). Many proposals explained the context and previous research that the project would contribute to. However, whilst researchers were not asked to draw up a detailed theory of change as such, by explicitly stating the mechanisms by which their impacts would be achieved - along with identifying factors likely to hinder or facilitate that change in a given context - some researchers demonstrated more clearly that they had assessed the feasibility of their impact strategies. 26 grants demonstrated only a 'fair' or 'basic' level of understanding of how their impact would be achieved. Such grants provided minimal or no information on the above. It should be noted that a lack of identification of the mechanisms by which researchers anticipate their

<sup>126</sup> These included 46 grants from Phase 1 and 53 from Phase 2. For two Phase 2 grants the proposals were unavailable for review.

<sup>127</sup> The funding application includes the impact plan. The reporting template for the latter document has been adjusted over time, from a relatively brief document in the early stages of phase 1 ('Communication Engagement Plan') to a much more detailed document ('Pathways to Impact') by phase 2.

grants would generate impact may simply reflect a lack of requirement to provide this, rather than a lack of any theory itself.

- **Specificity of activities to achieve impact:** a similar picture emerged with regards to the level of detail in which proposals described specific activities that the researchers would conduct in order to achieve their desired impact. Some researchers named the institutions or even individuals that they wanted to collaborate with in terms of delivery and dissemination; others named conferences, journals and (social) media channels that they wanted to utilise; others provided a timeline of workshops that they would run and who would be invited. Such detail provides the foundations for a clear and measurable plan for achieving research impact. Overall, twenty-four Joint Fund grants were assessed as providing an 'excellent' level of detail in terms of their plans for delivering impact. 58 provided a 'good' level of detail, 14 'fair' and 3 'basic'. Weaker impact plans were characterised by vague and general statements about broad engagement groups, and were unlikely to provide an effective roadmap to achieving impact. Phase 2 grants were more likely to have 'excellent' (19) or 'good' (31) plans in place. This may again be attributed to the changes in requirements; for phase 2, applicants were required to draw up an Impact Plan (Call 1/2) or Pathways to Impact document (Call 3).

More detailed analysis of the impact plans and Pathways to Impact relating to the 20 evaluation case studies revealed that, more generally, strategies have **lacked specific milestones and targets**. When these were provided, they tended to relate to workshops. While it is important to have dissemination workshops in place, the holding of such an event is not, in itself, an impact (it is an event which may facilitate the research having an impact). Whilst this does not facilitate the measurement of impact (see section 3.2.3), there is a question here over what the researchers can control and, correspondingly, what they are happy to commit to. While holding an event is - bar extenuating circumstances - within their control, attendees taking action based on the information they receive at such an event is not. We also recognise that impact plans alone do not provide a route to impact, and that researchers require the appropriate mechanisms and flexibility to respond to opportunities as they arise over the course of a research project.

### 3.2.2 The value of impact strategies

#### 3.2.2.1 Relationship with Joint Fund impacts

From 99 phase 1 and phase 2 grants, 59 were rated as 'excellent' or 'good' across all three of the above categories (indicative of detailed or 'effective' impact strategies); only 5 grants were rated as 'fair' or 'basic' across all three categories. In general terms, this appears to be reflected in the positive levels of impact reported across the Joint Fund (when looking at all three categories of impact).

Further analysis is inconclusive with regards to how critical effective impact strategies are in facilitating impact. When analysed against the grants that achieved impacts in at least one category (instrumental, conceptual or capacity building), it was found that 71% of impactful projects had good or excellent clarity to their intended impacts, 70% had a good or excellent understanding of how their impact would be achieved, and 78% had a good or excellent impact plan (in line with or slightly lower than across all projects). These findings suggest that effective impact strategies and planning is an important but not necessarily critical condition/factor in the facilitation of research impact overall<sup>128</sup>.

<sup>128</sup> This would appear to be backed up by our analysis which showed little correlation between the Phases in which an ESRC-DFID grant was awarded, and the impact that the grant reported (despite the fact that impact planning requirements were increased during Phase 2). However, it should also be noted that less time had elapsed for Phase 2 grants to deliver and evidence an impact (which could be particularly critical in instrumental terms). Hence no firm conclusions should be drawn from this at this stage.

Breaking this down another way, of those projects rated as 'excellent' and 'good' in their impact planning, 41% achieved instrumental impacts in practice, 61% achieved conceptual impacts, and 61% achieved capacity building impacts. This adds nuance to the finding above by suggesting that effective impact planning is particularly important for the achievement of instrumental impacts (35% Joint Fund projects overall reported instrumental impacts), but perhaps less critical for delivering capacity building and conceptual impacts in every case.

**Key finding:** *The majority of Joint Fund projects from phases 1 and 2 demonstrated evidence of 'good' impact strategies and planning at the proposal stage. Projects on the whole demonstrated some understanding of their intended impacts, activities, target audience, and context. More projects from phase 2 were rated as 'excellent' than projects from phase 1, reflecting the introduction of the 'Pathways to Impact' document. A number of areas for improvement were identified. For example, projects were less specific in articulating exactly what type of impact (in conceptual, instrumental and capacity building terms) that their research was seeking to bring about, or in setting specific impact milestones and targets. A higher proportion of Joint Fund projects reporting instrumental impact was found within projects rated as having 'good' or 'excellent' impact strategies, compared with all projects.*

### 3.2.2.2 Perspectives of Joint Fund researchers

Twenty-three survey respondents, around half, reported that they did not necessarily adhere to their impact plan in practice, and had to adjust it as the grant progressed and relations developed. In such cases, this was often because researchers had taken advantage of opportunities that had arisen unexpectedly, and engaged with stakeholders that were not specified at the proposal stage. For instance, this included research teams who invited policy makers to join their in-country steering groups during the early stages of a project (the initial impact plan may have focused on familiar stakeholders, such as international NGOs or national research institutes, who the research teams knew at that stage would be amenable to joining such groups)<sup>129</sup>.

This alludes to the importance of contextual factors (in this case in the form of unforeseen opportunities) and their substantial influence on what impact is achieved. While contextual factors are out of the control of researchers, their ability to recognise and take advantage of these factors is within their control. This may include the use of in-country networks to keep abreast of ongoing debates and windows of opportunity at both international and local levels, and taking appropriate steps to feed into this process at key moments (the influence of contextual factors is further considered in section 3.6).

Secondly, the type of stakeholders that should be engaged and the dissemination methods to be used will partly depend on the success or emerging findings of the research. In this context, it was commented by some Joint Fund researchers that providing an impact plan before the research commences and findings emerge is therefore not always feasible. For example:

*"What is hard at the early stage is that we cannot predict the research findings - some of the expected associations were not significant, and so did not merit trying to achieve policy impact".*

Such debates do not negate the value of planning for impact. Reflecting on this, case study interviewees revealed an acknowledgement of the value of thinking thorough impact pathways at the proposal stage. One PI noted *"developing an impact plan during the research design stage was a helpful task, particularly in terms of developing an effective user engagement strategy"*. Another stated that developing an impact plan during the research design stage ensured the research team actively developed activities that were

<sup>129</sup> See for example, Porter, G (2006-2010) *Children, transport and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa: developing a child-centred evidence base to improve policy and change thinking across Africa*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0028

relevant for policy makers. In addition, another PI reflected that the research was funded before the pathways to impact plan was part of the application process, but that she thought it would have been useful to her to have created such a plan. One PI, while noting that the observed impact may differ from that anticipated, articulated the benefits as follows: *“It makes you think through how knowledge might be transferred and what is seen at the beginning to be realistic pathways of how that can happen and the degree to which that happens and how the project unfolds is always going to be to some degree different from that”*.

In sum however, the extent to which impact strategies and plans can accurately predict impact can only be approximate. In line with this reality, Joint Fund grantees are not held accountable to their impact plans in a formal sense, and there is no ‘penalty’ for such disparity. This indicates a healthy recognition by ESRC and DFID that plans for impact will shift and change during the lifetime of a research project. Indeed, ESRC and DFID suggest that once awarded a grant, plans should be refined and developed into an impact strategy and communications plan, drawing on their guidance. However there was no requirement to submit these as part of phases 1 and 2.

Having mechanisms in place to monitor the accuracy of impact planning as the research develops, so as to account for changes and, where appropriate, to consider/encourage alternative routes to impact if those initially intended turn out not to be viable, could be useful in maximising future opportunities for impact.

**Key finding:** *The process of translating social science research into practice is both dynamic and influenced by a variety of enabling and hindering factors, some of which exist outside of the researcher’s control. This provides one explanation for the lack of a stronger association between effective impact strategies and the impacts achieved by Joint Fund projects. Whilst the exercise of thinking through an impact plan was perceived by Joint Fund researchers as a useful exercise in itself, impact plans may therefore not necessarily provide the road map to impact in practice. Opportunities for impact may arise outside of this, and researchers need the mechanisms and flexibility to be able to respond to such opportunities. Impact strategies should therefore be revisited throughout the research to reflect on the pathway to impact and adjust the approach if necessary.*

### 3.2.3 Monitoring of research impact

Theories of change may be introduced and impact plans strengthened, but in order that these remain live documents and can continue to inform research uptake activity, mechanisms need to be in place to continuously monitor progress towards impact goals.

Survey responses revealed that researchers monitored the impacts of their research in various ways. The following mechanisms for impact monitoring were identified:

- **Dissemination and engagement logs** - recording dissemination events held, the types of audiences who attended, and contacts made.
- **Citation tracking** - monitoring the number of citations of various publications, sales figures of published work, and using **web-metrics** to monitor page views and numbers of downloads from the grant website.
- **Monitoring policy documents** and related academic research.

- **Community level monitoring;** for example, in one case<sup>130</sup> community level monitoring was undertaken by working group members convened as part of the research, which included practitioners and community members. Updates on impact were reported during monthly meetings.
- Use of **Researchfish:** launched in June 2012, Researchfish is an online facility used by over 90 funders including all 7 UK Research Councils, which enables research funders and research organisations to track the impacts of their investments, and researchers to log the outputs, outcomes and impacts of their work. It has been used as part of the Joint Fund since November 2014.

In addition, more **informal mechanisms for monitoring of impact** were described, such as taking opportunities to ask steering group members whether there had been any incidences of impact. More indirect forms of monitoring impact were also mentioned; some researchers kept themselves aware of policy developments in their topic or country of interest, interacted with other researchers who work on similar issues, and made observations during subsequent field trips. Three phase 1 respondents<sup>131</sup> mentioned having been part of Research Excellence Framework studies<sup>132</sup>, which influenced their monitoring activities.

Although monitoring practices varied greatly across the grants, generally the majority of researchers were focused on monitoring outputs. Thoroughly measuring the impact of their research on policy, practice, the society or the economy was felt to lie outside the budget and timeframe of most grants. Of those who did have mechanisms in place to monitor impact, these were also sometimes terminated on completion of the grant though lack of resources (63% survey respondents continued undertaking monitoring activities after grant completion). However, for most grants there was also little difference between how they monitored impact during and after the grant period. Furthermore, the type of monitoring activities described and the length of those activities did not tend to differ between phase 1 and 2.

Reflecting on the monitoring of impact, lack of resources to undertake monitoring (along with other impact activities) was seen as the main factor in impact not being monitored. Reflecting on the use of Researchfish, one PI also noted that the categories to describe (pathways to) impact that were provided did not fit with the 'diffuse' methods through which their grant had an impact.

In cases where more comprehensive impact monitoring took place, this involved a self-evaluation approach that was systematic rather than ad-hoc, and monitoring of a range of different forms of impact that might emerge e.g. via citation tracking, stakeholder engagement logs. Some researchers have continued to monitor their outputs, the demand for their work and policy changes in their field intensively. This data has been used to apply for funds to undertake further dissemination and engagement activities or to conduct follow-on research.

The Joint Fund project focused on researching pregnancy terminations in Zambia<sup>133</sup> provides an instructive example of this, as well as the factors which enabled a more comprehensive approach. The project was subsequently awarded an ESRC-DFID Joint Fund Impact Maximisation grant, and with this

<sup>130</sup> Pridmore, P (2010-2014) *Nutritional Improvement for children in urban Chile and Kenya, Phase 2*, RES-167-25-0461

<sup>131</sup> Ansell, N (2007-2009) *Averting 'New Variant Famine' in Southern Africa: building food-secure livelihoods with AIDS-affected young people*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0167; Porter, G (2006-2010) *Children, transport and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa: developing a child-centred evidence base to improve policy and change thinking across Africa*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0028; Morley, L (2006-2010) *Widening Participation in Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania: Developing an Equity Scorecard*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0078

<sup>132</sup> The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the new system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions. One of the new assessment criteria introduced for REF 2014 was the wider societal impact of university research. This included the submission of 'impact case studies' where research had translated into real-life applications with broad benefits to society, the economy, politics and the environment. <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/rsrch/REFimpact/>

<sup>133</sup> Coast, E (2011-2014) *Pregnancy termination trajectories in Zambia: the socio-economic costs*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0626; Impact maximisation grant 2014 – 2015

was able to fund a member of staff dedicated to monitoring and reporting on impact. The broad user groups and some specific organisations had been identified by the team at the proposal stage in 2011. However, having tried some avenues of user engagement during the first grant period, receiving the Impact Maximisation Grant then allowed the team to undertake a more thorough stakeholder analysis in 2014 to focus and refine their approach to research uptake. For every dissemination activity recorded on *Researchfish*, researchers endeavoured to describe the audience, analyse their reach in detail and connect this back to their theory of change. They captured download counts, web analytics, and social media measures to measure the influence of the grant on public debate. A researcher commented: *“If we didn’t have [the impact grant], very little of what we’ve done could have happened. You don’t have the flexibility, the time, the money to go back to [the research site]. It’s not something that can just happen on top of a research project”*. In this example, it is clear that accessing further resources was a critical factor in enabling self-evaluation of Joint Fund impact.

**Key finding:** *There is a lack of systematic monitoring of outcomes/impacts amongst Joint Fund researchers, and a mixed level of projects tracking their impact beyond the lifetime of the grant. This is despite the introduction of resources such as Researchfish, and the evident benefits to some Joint Fund projects which measured their results using multiple indicators and methods. The principal feedback was that a lack of resources is the main constraint on self-evaluation.*

### 3.3 Stakeholder relationships

In this section we will discover which stakeholders were involved with the Joint Fund grants and how this influenced impact. The section then moves on to include analysis of the role played by **‘established relationships with stakeholders and user communities’** (specifically referenced as a driver of impact within *Cultivating Connections*) and the specific types of engagement between DFID and the researchers.

#### 3.3.1 Range of stakeholders engaged

In the survey, a stakeholder was identified as *“any person, group or institution that has an interest in and/or will be influenced by the research”* This definition includes research participants, those involved in service provision, as well as those involved in policy making processes (but not those considered grant partners).

Joint Fund researchers were asked in the survey to identify their key stakeholders. The responses suggest that a great diversity of stakeholders have been engaged through the Joint Fund. By classifying these by type, we calculated the proportion of projects engaging each type of stakeholder that achieved impact. The results are detailed in Table 3.1. Those respondents that listed “other” types of stakeholders specified intergovernmental organisations and donors including DFID, USAID, World Bank, World Health Organisation and UNICEF, as well as media stakeholders.

**Table 3.1 Projects achieving impact against type of stakeholder engaged**

Type of stakeholder	Number of projects	
	Total	Proportion reporting impact*
National policy makers	32	30 (94%)
International policy makers	28	26 (93%)
INGOs (international non-governmental organisations)	25	22 (88%)
NGOs and community organisations (CSOs/CBOs)	23	21 (91%)
Universities	17	16 (94%)
Ultimate beneficiaries of research (e.g. poor individuals or communities)	16	16 (100%)
Think tanks and other relevant intermediaries	10	10 (100%)
Private companies	7	7 (100%)

Source: survey

\*Number of projects reporting at least one type of impact (capacity building/conceptual/instrumental)

It can be seen that the highest level of impact achievement was found in projects that identified and directly engaged with individuals or communities that were the subject of the research (i.e. the 'ultimate beneficiaries of the research'). Whilst such engagement was not a feature of all Joint Fund projects, the high level of reported impact achievement is likely related to the interactive and empowering ways in which relevant projects engaged with poorer communities (for example through capacity building activity). The inclusion of universities as a key stakeholder was also found to be a positive determinant of impact, reflecting in turn the extent of researcher/academic conceptual impacts evident across phases 1 and 2 of the Joint Fund. As with in-country partners (see section 3.5.2), the involvement of local and national policy and civil society stakeholders, rather than their international counterparts, was found to predict a slightly higher rate of success.

However, in terms of transferable findings, the more pertinent point is that the engagement of different types of stakeholder is associated with different types of impact. There is no one single stakeholder type that is significantly more likely to result in impact, and can help deliver a 'quick win' (other internal and external factors are likely to be more important determinants of impact). Similar to the findings on developing a diverse partnership, a range of stakeholders therefore tended to be engaged by Joint Fund projects (on average 4 types of stakeholder per project).

**Key finding:** *The engagement of different stakeholder types is associated with generating different types of impact (rather than being a strong determinant of impact per se). The specific stakeholders to be engaged will be informed by the individual aims of each project. Nonetheless, it follows that engaging a diversity of stakeholder types increases the potential to deliver positive results across the spectrum of capacity building, conceptual and instrumental impacts.*

### 3.3.2 Prior relationships with stakeholders

Through the survey and case studies there was very little mention of official stakeholder mapping exercises. Instead, stakeholders tended to be identified from the existing networks of Joint Fund PIs and Co-Is, or through previous research undertaken by the PIs and/or Co-Is.

Throughout the survey and case studies, respondents commonly talked about existing strong relationships with key stakeholders. In the survey, respondents were asked to what extent they had relevant connections to stakeholders before they embarked on their research, and the extent to which they felt that these connections had influenced their impact. The majority of respondents (90%) had prior stakeholder relationships and only two respondents felt that these did not contribute to generating impact.

When, in a separate question, researchers were asked about the key factors that they felt had facilitated their ability to have an impact, respondents commented on their relationships with stakeholders, which were often described as long-standing and were often personal. For example:

*“Existing contacts from previous research activities or through colleagues. Personal contacts play a major role in gaining access to stakeholders.”*

*“The PI has been doing research in Sri Lanka since 1969 and the post-doc fellow since 2000. This long term connections with local researchers and policy makers shaped the whole research project since its inception”.*

*“These connections influenced our impact to a huge degree; without them, we would be 'cold-calling' policy makers, rather than being introduced as resource-persons by institutions of authority within the world of African government policy-making.”*

Source: survey

When considering the grants that achieved impact in at least one category (instrumental, conceptual or capacity building) in isolation, a slightly higher proportion of impact achieving grants (93%) had prior relationships with stakeholders than all projects. Therefore these existing relationships can be identified as a positive determinant of research impact.

This finding confirms the importance attached in *Cultivating Connections* to existing relationships and networks, as a driver of impact. It also fits with the model of cumulative influence. However there is an important caveat to this lesson learnt. Impact can still be achieved where there are no existing relationships between researchers and key stakeholders. For example, the PI undertaking maternal health research in Ghana<sup>134</sup> made a concerted effort at the beginning of the grant to liaise directly with the director of the family planning government department and persisted in building new relationships between the researchers, grant partners, and the government stakeholders, which led to impact.

**Key finding:** *Established connections with research users is a positive determinant of impact; there is a clear advantage to generating impact for researchers that have existing relationships with stakeholders, particularly those in-country. Nonetheless, this does not preclude the engagement of new policy stakeholders by researchers, providing that well planned and intensive user engagement activities are implemented.*

### 3.3.3 DFID engagement

The evaluation team were specifically requested to investigate the extent to which Joint Fund project researchers engaged with DFID offices, and if so whether this supported impact. This also relates to the impact driver of ‘**good management and infrastructure support**’ identified in *Cultivating Connections*.

<sup>134</sup> Matthews, Z (2008-2011), *Poverty and maternal health in Ghana: A spatial analysis of exclusion from care*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0343

The types of engagement reported between Joint Fund researchers and DFID stakeholders were diverse. Some survey respondents reported receiving assistance with their methodology and research questions, having DFID representatives on their advisory boards, or being able to use DFID premises for stakeholder meetings in-country. Other forms of engagement included researchers giving seminars on the findings in front of DFID staff or staff attending events put on by a research team. There were also a great number of respondents who had no engagement with DFID staff at all. This included those who had attempted to liaise with the head office or country offices but were unsuccessful (they did not receive a response, or lost contact).

The views of grantees on DFID's support for impact generation differed. The PI in one case study commented on how they *"appreciated the efforts of DFID...to help researchers think through how to have an impact on policy"*. However, another PI remarked that they *"were expected to possess impact skills without any support"*. Overall, and despite the possible benefits of DFID involvement, none of the survey respondents explicitly attributed any of their impact to interactions with or support from DFID staff.

There was no difference in responses between phase 1 and 2 projects, or from those awarded Impact Maximisation grants. Instead, the findings emphasised the highly individualised nature of engagement with DFID staff during the funded research. A recurring theme was the difficulty of keeping in contact with a DFID country office amidst staff turnover. One case study noted numerous attempts to engage with DFID country offices on the research but that there was seemingly no interest at the time. The researchers thought that *"being able to influence such important donors would have helped to increase impact"*. Another PI who also had difficulties engaging with a DFID country office requested *"clear guidance from DFID on how they would like their funded academics to work with DFID in-country offices"*. In this case study, the PI recognised the value of DFID country offices *"identifying stakeholders and facilitating the linkages between the research team and stakeholders [yet this] was not fully realised"*.

Whilst the level of engagement with DFID may have been insufficient to help facilitate impact, one counter perspective was that a closer association between DFID and the research findings may have created barriers to impact in certain situations. One in-country researcher suggested that - depending on the country context - researchers may need to state very clearly that the co-funder DFID has no influence on the research or its outcomes. This would reassure policy stakeholders that the fund itself is not seeking to influence policies or developments in third world countries, which would also have negative implications for researchers' reputation and the success of the research.

### 3.4 Approaches to stakeholder engagement and dissemination

DFID identifies stakeholder engagement as a critical component of research uptake<sup>135</sup>. In this section we explore the timing and frequency of stakeholder engagement, the different mechanisms of engagement and dissemination, and the factors that are influential in effective engagement. In addition to stakeholder engagement this section also addresses research dissemination and outputs.

#### 3.4.1 Timing and frequency of engagement

*Cultivating Connections* stresses the importance of **'involving users at all stages of the research'**. The survey therefore asked Joint Fund researchers to provide details of the timing of their engagement with stakeholders<sup>136</sup>. Positively, over 90% of respondents engaged some of their stakeholders from an early

<sup>135</sup> DFID's 'Research Uptake Guidance' ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-uptake-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-uptake-guidance)).

<sup>136</sup> Stakeholders were asked to identify all key stakeholder groups for their research (in order of importance). They were then asked to describe the following for each stakeholder: the processes by which they were engaged; at what point they were engaged; and the mechanisms used to carry out that engagement (i.e. workshops, informal consultation, etc.)

stage (bid design and/or inception stages). Over two thirds of respondents (67%) described engagement activities taking place at all stages of their grant (including also during the delivery of the grant and at the dissemination stage). The highest volume of stakeholder engagements nonetheless occurred at the dissemination stage (with almost as many reported engagements during dissemination as at the bid design and inception stages combined).

Based upon the case study evidence, where stakeholder engagement took place at the **proposal design stage**, the purpose and benefits of these early engagements were as follows:

- **To identify contexts with sufficient demand for undertaking the research:** in two case study examples the researchers engaged with policy makers at an early stage to help decide on appropriate country/countries to conduct the research. For example, in one study (child protection policy in Sierra Leone)<sup>137</sup> the researchers knew they needed to work in a country where they would get strong UNICEF backing and support, as a key agency working on their research topic.
- **To gain buy-in to the research:** in the example above, UNICEF Sierra Leone in turn discussed the decision to become involved in the research with the national Child Protection Committee and other relevant national and international NGOs, before agreeing to become involved. This process of asking for volunteers meant that the research, according to one partner interviewed, “*fell into fertile earth*”, with stakeholders subsequently eager to learn from the research, and the government on board from the beginning. In a further case study examining the project focused on widening participation in higher education in sub-Saharan Africa<sup>138</sup>, the PI spoke of how engaging stakeholders at the grant design stage, who could use the research to inform their policy and practice, helped to ensure there was an audience for the research findings once they emerged.
- **To assess any challenges associated with the study location(s):** to understand more about the context in which the research would be conducted and to gain an understanding of the evidence needs for that country/region.
- **To inform the research design:** engagement with non-policymaker stakeholders to inform research design. This included engagement with NGOs and private organisations.

In interviews for at least 6 of the case studies, stakeholders (including DFID advisors, members of staff from prominent NGOs, and senior civil servants) confirmed that there is an important role for early engagement in the subsequent achievement of impact. They further articulated the benefits of stakeholder engagement at the design stage as determining what the information needs of stakeholders are, and ensuring that the research being planned is what is most needed.

The latter point is crucial, and relates again to the importance of firstly identifying appropriate contexts within which to carry out social science research that aims to influence policy. Otherwise, regardless of the effort invested by Joint Fund researchers and the approaches taken, factors outside of their control may compromise the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement. When researchers were asked through the survey what factors they felt had hindered their ability to have an impact, just under a third of respondents reported a **lack of interest in the research** amongst stakeholders, or **difficulties in engaging stakeholders**. Reasons as to why there was a lack of interest included that research questions and findings were not defined in a way that resonated with stakeholders, or more significantly that the research findings were politically disagreeable:

<sup>137</sup> Wessells, M (2013-2015) *Inter-Agency Research on Strengthening Community Based Child Protection for Vulnerable Children*, Phase 2, ES/J017663/1

<sup>138</sup> Morley, L (2006-2010) *Widening Participation in Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania: Developing an Equity Scorecard*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0078

*"The topic of the research closed some doors. In China in particular there was little official interest in the topic."*

*"Some research findings are more politically palatable than others. Findings that challenge powerful interests make it difficult to engage powerful groups, no matter how it is framed."*

Source: survey

The unwillingness of stakeholders to engage with specific issues - for example, the lives of the urban poor - was highlighted. In that example, it was reported that some key policy makers perceived that if improvements were made to the lives of the urban poor, then migration from rural areas would increase, and that this would therefore worsen existing problems in urban areas. There was also evidence of governments being more broadly unreceptive towards poverty alleviation. A researcher interviewed for a further case study felt that: *"The research had taken place in a period when the government of the time was hostile to critical research, and to NGOs and social movements, and was largely unwilling to consider the potential role of social movements in poverty reduction"*.

The majority of case study findings (15 case studies) also highlighted the importance of involving stakeholders **at all stages** of the research. For example, in a study in Colombia exploring evidence for designing effective policies in conflict and post-conflict regions<sup>139</sup>, continuous engagement and targeting dissemination aided impact. During the design stage of the project, the research team were in contact with policy makers to establish the relevance of the topic to the country and the ways in which the research findings should be disseminated. They set up an advisory committee to ensure participation of different stakeholder groups including governmental officials, entrepreneurs and NGOs working in conflict regions. For each paper produced by the project, a meeting was then organised with the committee. Bi-annual workshops were also held to receive expert input from stakeholders and to disseminate emerging results. Ensuring stakeholders were aware and engaged with the research from the outset appeared to influence the extent to which the results of the study (on the impact of aerial fumigation on health outcomes) were presented in meetings with government officials from the Ministry of Foreign Relations and the Ministry of Defence, the staff at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and the U.S. Embassy in Bogota.

**Key finding:** *There is evidence that stakeholder consultation at the bid design stage is important for researchers to ensure that their research is policy relevant, and that outputs meet stakeholder information needs. Regular communication and interaction with stakeholders also keeps the research issue on their agenda and keeps stakeholders engaged through to the dissemination stage.*

### 3.4.2 Methods of stakeholder engagement

#### 3.4.2.1 Written and media communications

**Written communications** including policy briefs, reports for specific audiences, and research papers and articles were commonly employed by Joint Fund researchers as a dissemination tool.

For example, based upon the survey and case study evidence, twenty-one phase 1 and 2 grants reported that they had written **policy briefs**<sup>140</sup>. These were often distributed at dissemination workshops and in some cases were sent out to key stakeholders. While the effectiveness of policy briefs is sometimes

<sup>139</sup> Ibáñez, A (2010-2012) *The Economic and Social Consequences of Armed Conflict in Colombia: Evidence for Designing Effective Policies in Conflict and Post-Conflict Regions*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0593

<sup>140</sup> A policy brief can be defined as 'a concise summary of a particular issue, the policy options to deal with it, and some recommendations on the best option. It is aimed at government policymakers and others who are interested in formulating or influencing policy' (What are policy briefs? FAO <http://www.fao.org/docrep/014/i2195e/i2195e03.pdf>)

questioned, the policy brief was a popular tool for Joint Fund researchers to communicate their findings to a policy audience. For a policy brief to be fit for purpose, the format, writing style and length all need to be taken into account by the author. As explicitly acknowledged by one case study project<sup>141</sup>, policy briefs are characterised by an accessible writing style and clear layout so as to be accessible for a wider audience. This includes ensuring that the key research message is clear in the first few lines. As specified by a Livelihoods Adviser at DFID, *“the communication should not start with the details of the methodology, where the money will come from etc. as this is not what the policy maker needs to know.”*

Building on this, in some cases grants generated creative, visual outputs which due to their nature may have been more engaging for stakeholders. In addition to mapping outputs, in one study<sup>142</sup> equity scorecards were produced by which to assess the equity of African universities. The PI and Co-I spoke about the accessibility of the equity scorecards in communicating research findings to non-academic audiences. Both mapping and scorecards facilitate the communication of complex statistical data in at-a-glance accessible formats to provide a snapshot of what was happening on a particular issue.

Making research outputs available in local languages as well as in English was also identified as a tool for engaging with different audiences. For example, at the time of the evaluation, in-country researchers working on the grant on street traders' rights<sup>143</sup> had produced a summary paper of the findings and recommendations in English that was to be translated into local languages and printed in hard copy for dissemination to street vendors.

In all cases, written findings were shared via traditional routes of publishing research papers and presenting at conferences. In some cases, **social media** was also used by researchers, with blogs a common medium in this regard (based upon 10 survey respondents and a further 2 case studies<sup>144</sup>). One researcher on a Joint Fund project<sup>145</sup> explained that the research team used social media to share research progress and outputs with academics and practitioners in an accessible way. Across the survey and case studies, 4 grants mentioned the use of Twitter (or its in-country equivalent) and 2 grants reported using Facebook.

In general, the majority of PIs consulted through the survey did not report receiving greater publicity (whether through being invited to conference presentations, interviews or mentions in the media) to be a causal factor in generating impact. However, further exploration of this issue through the case studies revealed that specific **media engagement** can be important in some research contexts (and at certain stages of the impact pathway). Here, public awareness of research findings and pressure on policy actors was increased through television, radio, print, and online media. For example, in the grant researching the highly contentious health issue of abortion in Zambia<sup>146</sup>, an innovative method led to more prominent, international media coverage. In acknowledgement of the role of the media in shaping the public's opinion and educating people on the subject, the research team decided to engage journalists more closely. They therefore combined dissemination of findings with training for producers of a radio programme for young adults on how to research and report on the topic.

<sup>141</sup> Ansell, N (2007-2009) *Averting 'New Variant Famine' in Southern Africa: building food-secure livelihoods with AIDS-affected young people*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0167

<sup>142</sup> Morley, L (2006-2010) *Widening Participation in Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania: Developing an Equity Scorecard*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0078

<sup>143</sup> Brown, A (2010-2013) *Making Space for the Poor: Law, Rights, Regulation and Street-Trade in the 21st Century*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0591

<sup>144</sup> For example: Gardner, K (2008-2011) *Mining, Social Networks and Rural Livelihoods in Bangladesh*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0297 and Ibáñez, A (2010-2012) *The Economic and Social Consequences of Armed Conflict in Colombia: Evidence for Designing Effective Policies in Conflict and Post-Conflict Regions*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0593

<sup>145</sup> Wilkie, D (2013-2016) *Measuring complex outcomes of environment and development interventions*, Phase 2, ES/J018155/1

<sup>146</sup> Coast, E (2011-2014) *Pregnancy termination trajectories in Zambia: the socio-economic costs*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0626; Impact maximisation grant 2014 – 2015

This mixed finding is likely to be partly due to the fact that perspectives on the benefits of media exposure vary. Five PIs specifically highlighted reservations in the use of the media for research dissemination. In three case studies, PIs who were engaging national politicians reported that they had actively tried to avoid media mentions, as in their particular country political contexts, public attention could have jeopardised their impact. In two other cases<sup>147</sup> PIs explained that they were prepared to work with the media, but that this was only useful once their ideas were at a mature stage and could be shared more widely. One project highlighted how negative discourses around social security in the media had been a challenge in terms of achieving impact. Whilst the researchers drafted press releases to challenge these negative discourses, they felt that the impact of such press releases was ultimately unpredictable and difficult to control, and could conceivably do more harm than good. They felt that their primary aim was to influence policy makers rather than the public, and were conscious that some of their activities within the media may jeopardise their ability to influence policy makers by sparking more negative public debate

**Key finding:** *The predominant approach implemented by grants to increase research uptake and successfully generate impact has been the customisation of research communication to stakeholders - in other words the tailoring outputs for different stakeholders. This has included tailored and accessible policy briefs, and also in a minority of cases use of social media and more creative outputs such as maps and scorecards. Alternative outputs illustrate how research communication can go beyond research papers and policy briefs. Media and public engagement can help to generate impact, but only where the context is supportive and research findings will resonate.*

### 3.4.2.2 Face to face engagement

The importance of face-to-face engagement with target stakeholders was emphasised in building relationships, in comparison to more passive, one-way communication mechanisms (e.g. policy briefs). This style of engagement was seen as effective since it allows stakeholders to respond to the research findings and for discussion and sharing of ideas to take place.

This aligns with one of the most common engagement methods reported by survey respondents, **dissemination workshops**. All completed studies conducted some form of dissemination workshop. Most commonly, dissemination workshops included relevant NGOs, policymakers, academics and in some cases, donors. In some cases multiple workshops were held to address different audiences. In 6 of the case studies, PI's spoke of workshop aims as disseminating the findings but also discussing with stakeholders the significance of the findings and their relevance to policy and practice. In one example<sup>148</sup>, dissemination workshops created an opportunity for researchers to develop the capacity of stakeholders attending these events to understand, adapt and implement the research findings, and in another<sup>149</sup> to contextualise the findings from a comparative perspective, and to involve participants in dialogue about their policy implications.

Similarly, **presentations** were given to policy and practitioner audiences (in non-conference settings), for example relevant professional associations. For example, for a grant examining the outcomes of environment and development interventions<sup>150</sup> the PI spoke at the annual meeting of the Conservation Measures Partnership, a joint venture of conservation organisations which aims to develop, test and promote principles and tools to credibly assess and improve the effectiveness of conservation actions.

<sup>147</sup> Hulme, D (2010-2014) *Community and institutional responses to the challenges facing poor urban people in an era of global warming in Bangladesh*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0510; and Williams, G (2008-2010) *Embedding poor people's voices in local governance: participation and political empowerment in India*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0268

<sup>148</sup> Thomas, S (2008-2010) *Improving Educational Evaluation and Quality in China*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0353

<sup>149</sup> Walker, R (2010-2012/13) *Shame, social exclusion and the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes: A study in seven countries*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0557

<sup>150</sup> Wilkie, D (2013-2016) *Measuring complex outcomes of environment and development interventions*, Phase 2, ES/J018155/1

Relevant official bodies provide access to specialist groups for whom the research should be of particular concern, and with whom the researchers can share ideas as well as providing potential opportunities for dissemination and collaboration opportunities.

Several researchers highlighted workshops and seminars as having a 'snow-ball effect', whereby one event would lead to another dissemination opportunity. One researcher on a Joint Fund project<sup>151</sup> explained how seminars led to follow-up discussions with key policy makers held over dinner, and/or through subsequent visits to their offices or via e-mail communication. Another project<sup>152</sup> described how one workshop resulted in a key stakeholder requesting more details and follow-up discussions on the applicability of the approaches advocated by the researchers to their own programmes. Overall, 5 case study researchers spoke of taking opportunities for direct dissemination via **meetings**, which differed from workshops through engaging smaller and very specific audiences. For example, in a grant looking at the dynamics of migrant village evolution in China<sup>153</sup>, researchers took advantage of field visits as an opportunity to keep organisations, particular local government and village officials, informed on the progress of the research and emerging findings.

In particular, the importance of **advisory, steering, or country consultative groups** was recognised by some PIs. These provide a more ongoing and interactive mechanism for ensuring that research responds to the policy environment, for receiving and giving stakeholder feedback, and for ensuring that research findings are appropriately translated to different audiences<sup>154</sup>. The membership of these advisory groups differed depending on the nature of the grant, but typically included a broad range of stakeholders who could advise the research team on the running of the project and its dissemination. This included high-level policy actors whom the researchers would eventually want to take on their policy recommendations (for example, in the case of the project looking at widening participation in higher education<sup>155</sup>, NGOs and the National Council for Tertiary Education). One PI also identified their advisory group as playing a role in monitoring the dissemination plans and enhancing communication with stakeholders more widely.

Based upon the case study research, advisory groups have been particularly effective in enabling impact; the end result was that such groups served to further establish buy-in from stakeholders and to create a more receptive audience in preparation for disseminating the results. For example the sub-Saharan mobility grant<sup>156</sup> had country consultative groups, a form of advisory group, in each country of research, which provided input into the research questions, learnt about intermediary results, suggested revisions to the work plan, helped with the dissemination of results, and also acted on the findings. Reflecting on the value of advisory groups, consultees for the case study of the global warming grant in Bangladesh<sup>157</sup> noted the involvement of widely known, high-profile advisory members in the research, which ensured that the project's regional events were attended by senior stakeholders and that dissemination had maximum impact.

Finally, further evidence shed light on what works in terms of advisory groups. The practice of assigning roles and responsibilities to group members as well as ensuring that the group is mutually beneficial were

<sup>151</sup> Pridmore, P (2010-2014) *Nutritional Improvement for children in urban Chile and Kenya*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0461

<sup>152</sup> Wilkie, D (2013-2016) *Measuring complex outcomes of environment and development interventions*, Phase 2, ES/J018155/1

<sup>153</sup> Wu, F (2010-2012) *The Development of Migrant Villages under China's Rapid Urbanization: Implications for Poverty and Slum Policies*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0448

<sup>154</sup> See for example: Hulme, D (2010-2014) *Community and institutional responses to the challenges facing poor urban people in an era of global warming in Bangladesh*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0510; and Morley, L (2006-2010) *Widening Participation in Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania: Developing an Equity Scorecard*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0078

<sup>155</sup> Morley, L (2006-2010) *Widening Participation in Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania: Developing an Equity Scorecard*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0078

<sup>156</sup> Porter, G (2006-2010) *Children, transport and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa: developing a child-centred evidence base to improve policy and change thinking across Africa*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0028

<sup>157</sup> Hulme, D (2010-2014) *Community and institutional responses to the challenges facing poor urban people in an era of global warming in Bangladesh*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0510

seen as important for establishing ownership and accountability, and for maintaining an active and engaged group. In addition, having representatives from different professions and levels of influence enabled members of the working groups to pool expertise, as well as overcome barriers to inter-sectoral collaboration.

It should be noted that despite their reported effectiveness in terms of supporting projects and facilitating research uptake, advisory groups were evident in only a minority of Joint Fund projects, with the desk based review and survey identifying 8 instances where such groups were set up from the start of the research.

Many researchers also valued **informal communication** with key stakeholders; some highlighted the importance of complementing formal mechanisms with more informal mechanisms. Less formalised engagement was more ad-hoc, with researchers taking the opportunities to engage wherever they arose. For example, one PI spoke of taking advantage of field visits as an opportunity to keep organisations informed of the progress of the research via face-to-face meetings, while another explained that each time they visited one of the study countries an event would be set up with the advisory group comprising of the intended users of the research.

The broader finding is that interactive methods of stakeholder engagement proved a fruitful mode of engagement for Joint Fund research projects. Looking at the child protection case study in Sierra Leone<sup>158</sup> for example, early, continuous *and* collaborative engagement with key policy stakeholders was critical in gaining buy-in and a sense of ownership of the research. A government official interviewed described the research as “*highly consultative*”, “*participatory*”, and “*a dialogue*”, with good working relationships between the government, researchers and NGOs. Three of the case studies provided direct evidence of how **co-production of knowledge** can facilitate impact. For example, in the study looking at the development of migrant villages in China<sup>159</sup> policy makers consulted with at all stages of the research and government officials were instrumental in helping to set up the running of a survey. The Planning Bureau introduced the researchers to local government and village officials to aid with its administration. A researcher used the term ‘co-investigation’ to describe the involvement and relationship with policy makers in the project:

*“Often it can be like outsiders come in to criticise what they [government] are doing, whereas in this case we were trying to find out things we both don’t know. It is important for them to feel this is useful, to feel like it is on their agenda too”.*

**Key finding:** Face to face engagement with stakeholders is an obvious and key facilitating factor in achieving impact. This has been achieved in a variety of ways, including through dissemination workshops and seminars, advisory, steering and consultative groups, and through more informal methods of engagement. Steering groups in particular, which tended to involve policy makers and other relevant research stakeholders, were seen as extremely valuable in supporting and guiding Joint Fund grants and facilitating their subsequent impact. However only a minority of Joint Fund projects set up and drew on the resource of steering groups (the evaluation has generated useful lessons for setting up and maintaining such groups). Informal communications with policy makers rely on researchers taking advantage of ad hoc engagement opportunities. Whichever methods are used to engage stakeholders, ongoing and interactive methods, including co-production of research, are associated with impactful research projects.

<sup>158</sup> Wessells, M (2013-2015) *Inter-Agency Research on Strengthening Community Based Child Protection for Vulnerable Children*, Phase 2, ES/J017663/1

<sup>159</sup> Wu, F (2010-2012) *The Development of Migrant Villages under China's Rapid Urbanization: Implications for Poverty and Slum Policies*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0448

Acting as a catalyst to the mix of stakeholders engaged, the methods pursued and the duration of this engagement, the case studies also highlighted the importance of the more intangible factor of the commitment and dedication of the research teams to promoting research uptake. For example, the case study of the project grant investigating lone mothers in South Africa<sup>160</sup> discovered that the researchers had been determined and persistent in creating opportunities to disseminate the research findings, and in influencing policy and practice. A high-level multilateral representative stakeholder who was interviewed considered that the researchers were *“doing a good job to try and make sure the research and recommendations are going to make it to the policy table”* and that they had gone *“the extra mile”*.

### 3.5 Profile of researchers and in-country partners

Joint Fund research grants are generally not planned and implemented by a PI alone. Co-Is, research assistants, and partner organisations contribute to the research and its uptake, particularly those in-country. This could include roles that align with a further impact driver identified in *Cultivating Connections*, the involvement of **‘intermediaries or knowledge brokers as translators, amplifiers and network providers’**. In this section we explore the characteristics and roles of the researchers and their partners involved in Joint Fund projects, and how this has influenced impact.

#### 3.5.1 Profile of researchers

A fifth of survey respondents cited the **quality of researchers**, and the **quality of the research**, as a contributing factor to their grant’s impact. This was further validated by stakeholders interviewed for the case studies. As part of the case study of the Joint Fund project researching the impact and cost-effectiveness of anti-poverty interventions in Bangladesh<sup>161</sup>, an interviewee who had previously worked for the DFID country office in the country remarked on the importance of researcher reputation in research achieving impact. However, the stakeholder further qualified this by stating that the main factor influencing impact is the content of the work (i.e. the robustness of the research). Case study interviewees also reported innovative methods that had been used to improve evidence bases, and other approaches to increase the quality of the research. For example the research into child mobility across multiple countries<sup>162</sup> trained child researchers to help gather data from their peers rather than adult researchers alone.

Existing researcher reputations can also have an enabling effect on impact. For example, the case study of the Joint Fund research into the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes in 7 countries<sup>163</sup> highlighted the importance of the good reputation of the researchers and their institutions lending credibility. The PI was from a prestigious university which acted as an important pull factor for a range of influential stakeholders. It was stated that: *“The Oxford brand...meant that we were able to attract senior representatives from organisations that we wished to influence”*.

**Key finding:** *Quality research is appreciated by stakeholders and encourages uptake of it, especially when innovative methods have been employed to strengthen the evidence base. Researcher experience in the topic area and institutional reputation are also factors influencing research uptake.*

<sup>160</sup> Noble, M (2011-2014) *Lone Mothers in South Africa - The role of social security in respecting and protecting dignity*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0642

<sup>161</sup> Quisumbing, A (2008-2010) *What Development Interventions Work? The long-term impact and cost-effectiveness of anti-poverty interventions in Bangladesh*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0361

<sup>162</sup> Porter, G (2006-2010) *Children, transport and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa: developing a child-centred evidence base to improve policy and change thinking across Africa*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0028

<sup>163</sup> Walker, R (2010-2012/13) *Shame, social exclusion and the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes: A study in seven countries*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0557

### 3.5.2 Southern-based researchers and in-country partners

From the analysis of the desk review 90% of grants involved **southern-based researchers**. These researchers were either named as investigators in the grant proposal or were directly involved with the research activities. 41% of grants named southern-based Co-Is in the proposal document. 73% of survey respondents (36) described southern-based researchers as 'equal research partners'.

According to the survey data, the functions that in-country researchers carried out varied across grants (for example as part of 43 projects they were involved in data collection, whilst for 32 projects southern researchers were involved in reporting). A much smaller proportion of projects specified dissemination or impact work, including influencing policy makers. In general, Joint Fund projects involving southern-based researchers in any function were slightly more likely to have reported positive impacts (instrumental, conceptual, and/or capacity building) than all projects. However, this was achieved regardless of the tasks southern-based researchers carried out during the research process (varying from 90% to 97% of projects depending upon their role). Moreover, with less than half of these impact achieving grants having a southern-based researcher as a co-investigator, the named role may not influence impact.

**Key finding:** *Impact is commonly (but not exclusively) achieved in grants involving southern-based researchers. This is regardless of the specific role assigned to southern-based researchers.*

The benefits that come from involving southern-based researchers are of course contingent upon a wide range of external and internal factors (including the quality of the northern based researchers working on research activities). The specific added-value of southern-based researchers can nonetheless be explored through the data that the evaluation collected on the broader category of in-country partners.

We define an in-country research partner as 'any person, group or institution that significantly contributed to the delivery of the research grant, and that is either based or frequently carries out work directly in the country where research is being undertaken'. Overwhelmingly, PIs identified their in-country partners as being crucial in ensuring an understanding of context and in facilitating the research and its uptake. Our summation of the desk review, survey, and case studies found the value of in-country partners fell into the following categories:

- **In-country partners were connected to stakeholder networks:** this delivered a wide range of benefits. Firstly, connection to networks helped to provide insights into the gaps in research and relevant policy debates at the time. Secondly, for the study investigating clinical and public health trials in three South Asian countries<sup>164</sup>, the PI noted that by choosing individuals and institutions as partners who were already embedded within research and discussions around clinical trials in-country, the researchers were able to gain access to stakeholders more easily to conduct interviews and to disseminate findings. Finally, connections to networks also helped to increase research uptake. The grant partners in the maternal health project in Ghana<sup>165</sup> included non-governmental organisations and civil society coalitions relating to maternal health advocacy and community engagement. This facilitated a direct link for the research to be disseminated to those whose job it is to lobby for policy change and to help communities better their own lives. Even more directly, for the Joint Fund project bridging the environment and development sectors<sup>166</sup>, having a practitioner/implementing organisation as a partner greatly facilitated impact. This was because the partner was able to ensure that the research and its outputs were highly tailored to the needs of its

<sup>164</sup> Jeffery, R (2010-2013) *Biomedical and Health Experimentation in South Asia: Critical Perspectives on collaboration, governance and competition*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0110

<sup>165</sup> Matthews, Z (2008-2011), *Poverty and maternal health in Ghana: A spatial analysis of exclusion from care*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0343

<sup>166</sup> Wilkie, D (2013-2016) *Measuring complex outcomes of environment and development interventions*, Phase 2, ES/J018155/1

own programmes and staff, and through promotion of the findings within the organisation the partner greatly increased the speed with which the research results could feed into practice. The importance of ‘established relationships and networks with user communities’ was also highlighted in the ESRC’s *Cultivating Connections* report.

*“Impact depended completely on the NGO partner to recruit participants, who attended because of their knowledge of the NGO.”*

Source: survey

- **Partners had conducted similar work in the area before:** partners having conducted similar work in the area before facilitated an understanding of the policy landscape, as well as relationships with stakeholders. For example, prior to their Joint Fund grant examining how AIDS, in interaction with other factors, was impacting on the livelihood activities, opportunities and choices of young people in rural Lesotho and Malawi<sup>167</sup> the Centre for the Analysis of South African Social Policy (CASASP, University of Oxford) undertook a multi-year collaboration with the South African Department for Social Development (DSD), funded by DFID, called the Strengthening Analytical Capacity for Evidence Based Decision Making (SACED) Programme. This involved teaching social policy to civil servants, as well as conducting research of direct relevance to the current grant. This prior collaboration increased the UK researchers and southern-based partners’ knowledge of the policy context, policy actors, and how the social security system worked, as well as developing fieldwork experience of the context in which grant beneficiaries were operating. This further reflects the enabling factor ‘portfolios of research activity that build reputations with research users’ in the *Cultivating Connections* report.

*“They provided an in-country infrastructure for the research that gave it spaces within which to discuss findings with others, and also gave the research an institutional legitimacy tied to the legitimacy of the organizations.”*

Source: survey

- **Partners were already involved in the policy field:** particularly in the case of non-academic partners, PIs highlighted how in-country partners were already involved and influential in policy. For example, for the grant exploring affordable, replicable and credible ways to assess the human wellbeing impacts of environment-development activities<sup>168</sup> the PI explained how grant partners for the case study interventions were all active in shaping national policy regarding the management of environmental resources. As such, the research team were well placed to engage key decision-makers in the research. Similarly, for the grant examining the notion that poverty induces shame and social exclusion with negative effects on individual and economic performance<sup>169</sup>, the PI reported that each institutional partner of the grant team (including the Institute of Rural Management, Gurajat, and Markerere Institute of Social Research) had an established track record of working with local NGOs and government officials in policy-relevant research. In this way, engaging with local partners ensured that Joint Fund researchers had a stronger understanding of policy/practice contexts, identified as further important driver of impact in *Cultivating Connections*.

*“The substantial positive impact within Vietnam was primarily due to the high standing and respect enjoyed by our partners.”*

Source: survey

<sup>167</sup> Ansell, N (2007-2009) *Averting ‘New Variant Famine’ in Southern Africa: building food-secure livelihoods with AIDS-affected young people*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0167

<sup>168</sup> Wilkie, D (2013-2016) *Measuring complex outcomes of environment and development interventions*, Phase 2, ES/J018155/1

<sup>169</sup> Walker, R (2010-2012/13) *Shame, social exclusion and the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes: A study in seven countries*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0557

- **Partners had understanding of how to enable research to be relevant to users/translate research for users:** case study interviewees emphasised the importance of in-country partners having the necessary contextual knowledge and expertise to engage with different stakeholders effectively. For example in the study investigating the dynamics of and redevelopment practices for migrant villages in China<sup>170</sup>, a researcher interviewed talked about the framework used to conduct interviews with local officials, explaining how it is “*quite reasonable to discuss with the local officials and to negotiate with them and this worked according to the plan*”. It is interesting to note that only 8 survey respondents explicitly acknowledged working with ‘knowledge brokers’ (e.g. in-house communications specialists, external interest groups or online networks); however this is likely due to the fact that in many cases in-country research partners were effectively providing this function.

*“I think that they were critical in helping us understand the policy context and getting the message of the research across to those on the frontline.”*

*“Research consultants were also very important to help devise the right messages and strategies that would work locally.”*

Source: survey

**Key finding:** *In-country partners in Joint Fund projects have enabled impact through strengthening knowledge of the policy context and helping to shape and undertake the research to fulfil user needs. Partners can also provide access to stakeholder networks, help penetrate policy debates and amplify research dissemination through acting as knowledge brokers. This reflects the role of in-country partners as intermediaries/knowledge brokers highlighted in Cultivating Connections.*

From the evidence gathered through the survey, researchers involved different types of in-country partner. To account for this variation we disaggregated projects by the type of partner involved, and then calculated what proportion of grants achieved at least one type of impact. This data is presented in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2 Projects achieving impact against type of in-country partner**

Type of in-country partner	Number of projects	
	Total	Proportion reporting impact*
Universities	35	33 (94%)
NGOs (non-governmental organisations) and community organisations (CSOs/CBOs)	25	23 (92%)
INGOs (international non-governmental organisations)	24	22 (92%)
National policy makers	22	21 (95%)
International policy makers	16	16 (100%)
Think tanks and other intermediaries	11	9 (82%)
Private companies	9	9 (100%)

Source: survey

\*Number of projects reporting at least one type of impact (capacity building/conceptual/instrumental)

<sup>170</sup> Wu, F (2010-2012) *The Development of Migrant Villages under China's Rapid Urbanization: Implications for Poverty and Slum Policies*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0448

The majority of projects involving in-country partners (82% or greater) achieved impact. Where partners were think tanks and intermediaries or private companies the grants always succeeded in generating impact (however given the relatively small number of respondents involved, we cannot be certain this finding would be replicable across other grants). Whilst the higher level of impact associated with having staff and researchers from universities as in-country partners (compared with policy makers for example) may appear surprising, this is likely due to the fact that significant proportions of Joint Fund researchers reported capacity building and conceptual impacts from their projects.

The more pertinent finding is that involving a range of different in-country partners can help to maximise impacts and may facilitate different types of impact, due to the varying insights and capacities that different partner types can bring. On average, each grant had 3 different types of partner. In a case study on global warming in Bangladesh<sup>171</sup>, the researchers and partners that included NGO practitioners and local academics together brought the skills and experience that was needed to collect quality field data and frame the findings according to stakeholder needs. They were then able to disseminate the findings directly to “*Bangladeshi intelligentsia*”, whom they were already connected to, and who in turn regularly socialised with ministers and other key stakeholders.

**Key finding:** *Grantees have broadened the skills and experience to generate impact by involving a variety of in-country partners from different types of organisations and institutions.*

Conversely, it was uncovered through the case study interviews that the absence of potential partners in-country, where there are no opportunities to collaborate on research uptake and advocacy activities as well as in the research itself, can be a barrier to achieving impact. In one multi-country grant, despite partnering with an international multi-stakeholder network, impact was hindered by the absence of a local intermediary who could sustain dissemination, lobby for change, or follow-up on the promises of politicians. In another grant, this time researching the laws and regulations of street trade, there were few NGOs with research uptake capacity that the grant could partner with on dissemination and engagement activities.

### 3.6 External context

*Cultivating Connections* identifies ‘**understanding of policy/practice contexts and timescales**’ as an important driver of research impact. This is because there are significant external influences on the impact that a research grant can have (which can act as both enabling and constraining factors), and which differ according to the specific context.

The evaluation evidence confirms that context interacts with impact in different ways. Given its overarching importance as an enabler of impact, this section first of all provides a summative assessment of the contribution of contextual understanding to impact, and how this can best be increased. It then moves on to assess whether and how any specific risks/challenges associated with the political environment have been mitigated (as well as their significance overall as a determinant of impact). The role of other contextual factors (practice and cultural) are also briefly considered. The in-depth case studies in particular allowed the evaluation team to explore the issue of context in detail.

<sup>171</sup> Hulme, D (2010-2014) *Community and institutional responses to the challenges facing poor urban people in an era of global warming in Bangladesh*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0510

### 3.6.1 Understanding of the policy context

Contextual understanding has been referenced throughout this chapter as a factor in the planning and implementation of successful research uptake. Through the survey, one third of Joint Fund PIs confirmed that an understanding of the policy context was a key factor that facilitated their ability to deliver research impact. Understanding of the policy context for example informed stakeholder mapping and engagement, knowledge mobilisation strategies, and pathways to impact. One respondent described how their research team's strong understanding of the policy environment "*enabled a dialogue with stakeholders in India, ILO and UNDP*".

Through the case study research, an ability to recognise the openness of stakeholders to research findings, and especially the **receptiveness of different policy actors**, was acknowledged by researchers as being particularly important with regards to understanding the policy context. In a case study of Joint Fund research carried out in two states in India, and targeting different stakeholders, the main factor that emerged as influencing the extent to which the research achieved impact was the extent to which policy makers were engaged with the research community. This notion was mirrored by a government official who commented that "*in certain states such as Kerala, policy makers are engaged with the research community and they engage with them. There is meaningful engagement*". By contrast in West Bengal, where the government had been in power for over thirty years but was on the cusp of losing power (and hence may have been less responsive to its electorate), it was reported that it was much more difficult to gain policy engagement.

A related issue, supported by an understanding of context, is **timeliness**. Just under one fifth of survey respondents felt that the timeliness/topicality of their research, which generated interest in Joint Fund findings, was a key factor that facilitated their ability to deliver an impact. This could be a reflection of the needs of stakeholders, for example when government recognises the need to include civil society input into a specific decision-making process to validate their policies<sup>172</sup>. Alternatively, this may reflect the successful formulation of research questions relevant to the policy context. According to one researcher working on a Joint Fund project<sup>173</sup>, they were "*building on concepts that are very much relevant and quite hot at the moment*".

Timeliness can also relate to building on similar research running in parallel. A case study of one project<sup>174</sup> recognised that other researchers in South Africa were approaching the same issue, which added to the critical mass of those proposing similar policy recommendations. Advocacy groups were also advocating for some of the changes proposed by the grant researchers.

Elsewhere in this chapter, contextual understanding is reported as a benefit of the careful selection of in-country partners, of ongoing and interactive methods of stakeholder engagement, and in relation to existing portfolios of research. Survey responses from 45 projects provided a useful indication of the steps taken by researchers across the Joint Fund to increase their understanding of the policy context. The range of mechanisms and approaches that researchers' pursued is summarised in Table 3.3.

<sup>172</sup> See for example: Hulme, D (2010-2014) *Community and institutional responses to the challenges facing poor urban people in an era of global warming in Bangladesh*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0510

<sup>173</sup> Wilkie, D (2013-2016) *Measuring complex outcomes of environment and development interventions*, Phase 2, ES/J018155/1

<sup>174</sup> Noble, M (2011-2014) *Lone Mothers in South Africa - The role of social security in respecting and protecting dignity*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0642

**Table 3.3 Key activities researchers took to increase their understanding of the policy context**

Mechanism/ approach taken	Number of projects	Grants achieving impact	Description
Consultation/ engagement with relevant policy makers	43	40 (93%)	96% of the respondents reported that they had engaged/consulted with relevant policy stakeholders, including through meetings, interviews, dialogue and discussions. A quarter of survey respondents were able to describe more formal mechanisms through which this was achieved, namely workshops and seminars. For instance, one respondent described a grant launch workshop and stakeholder consultation attended by researchers, policy makers and programme officials from government and civil society institutions, multilateral and bilateral agencies, and local academic and research institutions.
Reviews of relevant documentation/ literature	18	17 (94%)	Around one third of respondents described reviews of documents, including academic literature and policy documents.
Prior knowledge of policy context	12	12 (100%)	Around one quarter of respondents referred to their prior knowledge of the policy context, gained through previous work and experience.
Selection of relevant partners	9	8 (89%)	Just under one quarter of respondents stated that they chose research partners who were embedded in the policy context.
Setting up country consultation groups / advisory / steering groups	8	8 (100%)	Less than one quarter described setting up country consultation groups/advisory/steering groups.
Development of relevant fieldwork methods	6	5 (83%)	Less than one quarter described how their fieldwork methods, such as interviews and surveys, provided information on the policy context.

Source: Survey

Interestingly, significantly more Joint Fund projects reported use of consultation/engagement with relevant policy makers to understand the policy context through the survey, compared with other methods. The evidence suggests that this is an important, but not sufficient precondition for generating impact. Where other (and potentially more in-depth) methods were employed, including desk reviews and use of advisory groups, these projects demonstrated similar or greater incidence of impact (albeit based upon responses from smaller samples of projects using these methods).

It should be noted that one Co-I reflected that when it came to undertaking their field work, this took them in different directions than those indicated by their initial policy mapping and that, in hindsight they could have spent less time on this initial policy mapping. This also highlights the importance of using multiple methods to understand the context of research. For example, in addition to more formalised methods such as workshops and document reviews, some researchers emphasised their own extensive experience of living and/or working in the country where the research was being conducted. One survey respondent described the importance of *“prior understanding (from years of research) of politics and the policy process in India”*. According to the data, such projects also achieved a high incidence of impact. Perhaps tellingly, one of the very few grants which reported no type of impact also appeared to have little or no prior in-country experience.

**Key finding:** *Understanding of the policy context has been an important determinant of impact for Joint Fund projects. Where understanding of the policy context is derived from more in-depth approaches such as advisory groups and literature reviews, as well as being based upon personal experience and knowledge, the data suggests that projects are more likely to achieve impact. Such methods were not employed by all Joint Fund projects. When research is timely and topical due to a demand for it, there will be research uptake. This also emphasises how contexts are dynamic and changing, requiring multiple and ongoing methods to understand context and how this will impact on the research.*

## 3.6.2 Context as an inhibiting factor

### 3.6.2.1 Political constraints

**Political instability** was a contextual barrier frequently encountered by Joint Fund projects. For example:

*“The death of the president in September 2014 led to a period of political uncertainty and made it hard to find interested stakeholders in the ministry. Newspapers focused on political news and there was no space for the research findings to be mentioned in the media”.*

*“A general policy environment that was characterized by competition between major donors and confounded by military and security priorities.”*

Source: survey

Researchers interviewed for one case study from sub-Saharan Africa recognised that each government minister enters office with new ideas and initiatives but very rarely do they get implemented properly before a different minister gets put in post and changes strategy. They noted that the frequent turnover of ministers necessitates repeat relationship and capacity building. However, the researchers involved in this project were able to recognise this problem and planned engagement to mitigate the factor by developing, via an international NGO, partnerships with key mid-level managers who stay in post longer-term. The ongoing involvement of the NGO in the grant also provided stability. In Peru, researchers into social movements and poverty<sup>175</sup> also tried to mitigate the effects of staff turnover within ministries by cultivating relationships with parts of the government with more stable staffing.

Examples of where political activities such as elections and strikes disrupted the undertaking of research and dissemination events were also evident. These are unlikely to be major determinants of impact over the longer-term, but are worth mentioning as a challenge faced in generating impact. For example, in South Africa, elections delayed dissemination events because policy makers were unlikely to be engaged with the research in this period. Increased levels of social unrest in some areas also delayed fieldwork. In Bangladesh, frequent strike action, or *hartels*, lasting up to three days were reported. This could disrupt fieldwork and dissemination events if they coincided.

Through the case studies, a deeper investigation into impact barriers led us to identify **complex situations** as a further determinant of impact. This includes examples where researchers found themselves in competition in the policy space with other types of stakeholders, including those with diametrically opposed views. For example, research which sought to influence the practices and regulations in clinical trials<sup>176</sup> faced an industry with the resources and networks to lobby governments for clinical trials to remain under-regulated. Similarly, research conducted into pregnancy terminations in

<sup>175</sup> Bebbington, A (2007-2010) *Social Movements and Poverty*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0170

<sup>176</sup> Jeffery, R (2010-2013) *Biomedical and Health Experimentation in South Asia: Critical Perspectives on collaboration, governance and competition*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0110

Zambia<sup>177</sup> was undertaken at a time when an alliance of doctors had submitted a clause to be included within the Zambian constitution - which was under review at the time - which stated that life begins at conception, thus making abortion illegal. Despite regular discourse in both policy and public arenas, topicality may not facilitate impact if the issue is overly contentious

Conversely, low numbers of influential stakeholders engaged within a topic area could represent both an enabling and constraining factor. For example, in the case of the multi-country study focused on street traders<sup>178</sup>, the number of actors that were undertaking research, or lobbying on behalf of informal economy actors, was much smaller in Tanzania than in India. Whilst the Tanzanian country partner was one of a few urban sociologists in the country, and therefore frequently consulted by various stakeholders on his work with street traders, it meant that there were fewer NGOs or other relevant bodies working in the area with which he could collaborate to increase engagement and support dissemination. In India, the urban planning and informal economy space is much more crowded, and hence the competition to gain the attention of policy makers was greater.

Finally, in some of the case studies, **government (and other stakeholder) resourcing constraints** was highlighted as a hindering factor to acting on the research findings. In some situations, recommendations from researchers had gained traction in conceptual terms; however further impacts could not be realised without funds to put this into practice. For example, in one case it was reported that while Ministry staff were aware of the research findings and convinced that the approaches advocated were the correct ones, the specific Ministry's capacity in terms of low levels of funding and human resource weaknesses had constrained its ability to implement the findings. With regards to a policy body in Tanzania, it was noted that whilst it had been generally receptive to a Joint Fund project's recommendation, the body did not know how to fund its implementation. In one East African country, a grant was impeded by the devolution of powers to county level. A case study interviewee reported: *"The flow of funds from [the capital] to the counties, to sub-counties and into programmes is not functioning. There are ongoing tensions between county and national level about the new processes"*. Finally, a related point of concern was raised by southern-based researchers in one case study, which it was felt would affect future and related research impacts: *"successful bidding for funds and projects with government ministries often relies on political affinity rather than the quality of the researcher"*.

Such evidence provides interesting insights into the diversity of contextual challenges that social science researchers can face in delivering impact. Nonetheless, reflecting on their overall significance as potential inhibitors of impact, and whether researchers have effective strategies to address them, only 8 survey respondents cited difficult contextual factors, including political contexts and policy environments, as a major hindrance to their ability to deliver an impact.

**Key finding:** *Politically-related contextual situations are beyond the control of researchers, but Joint Fund researchers were able to implement mitigation strategies, for example to deal with political instability. Finding a core set of stakeholders within government less at risk of staff turnover was key in this respect. Ultimately, researchers have less control over the funding levels and allocations of government, as well as external challenge to their work. Overall however, challenging political contexts did not appear to be a major determinant of impact for Joint Fund research. This perhaps reflects the careful design of projects and efforts made to understand the policy context, as much as the mitigation strategies employed.*

<sup>177</sup> Abortion is currently legal in the country.

<sup>178</sup> Brown, A (2010-2013) *Making Space for the Poor: Law, Rights, Regulation and Street-Trade in the 21st Century*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0591

### 3.6.2.2 Practice and cultural contexts

The ESRC's *Cultivating Connections* report emphasises the importance of understanding **practice contexts** as well as policy and the political environment. In some research contexts for example, high quality secondary data is a scarce resource (this may also be partly political, based upon a resistance to collate and publish data at a national level). This can limit the robustness of the research being undertaken, in turn constraining impact. Longer-term, the lack of reliable data in many developing countries presents a further barrier to researchers and policy makers evaluating the impact of poverty alleviation policies. In the case of the Joint Fund, one case study project<sup>179</sup> sought advice from experienced practitioners on local engagement and data collection.

The case studies also revealed that an understanding of **cultural context** can be important. As exemplified by the maternal health-focused research in Ghana<sup>180</sup>, strategies can be devised to overcome cultural barriers and facilitate impact generation. The sexual and reproductive health partner organisation was aware of a cultural barrier inhibiting the uptake of medically supervised births (some women actively chose not to seek out modern medical services since they wanted to give birth in a traditional way). The partners in this research grant successfully advocated for traditional birth methods to be medically supervised in some health facilities in more remote areas where traditional births were still favoured.

## 3.7 Portfolios of research (and other strategies for sustainable impact)

Research projects may involve an optimal mix of planning for impact, well-qualified researchers, relevant in-country partners, diversity of stakeholders and engaging dissemination activities, which are well grounded in the context and an appreciation of risk. However, the model of cumulative influence emphasises the length of time that it can take for social science research to translate into policy change (whilst Joint Fund research projects for the most part were 1-3 years in duration).

Reflecting this challenge, a quarter of the survey respondents reported that a **lack of time and/or funding for impact generating activities** had constrained the impact of their grants. Respondents stated that researchers did not have time within the funding period to carry out all of the activities and produce all the materials which could have helped to increase their impact. It was stressed that impact generation can take a long time, and that the grant timeframes were relatively short. As part of the case study research, Joint Fund researchers also commented on the lack of time for engaging in dissemination and impact activities, highlighting the impact work that they would have liked to have undertaken, but were not able to do because the period for which the grant was funded had come to an end. For example, in one study researchers had planned to produce briefing notes specifically targeted at policy makers and to conduct dissemination workshops aimed at policy makers, but did not do so due to a lack of time.

Some of the ways in which impactful Joint Fund projects circumvented the challenge of timescale was through **situating Joint Fund grants within ongoing research and related practitioner programmes, as well as through accessing other funding streams**. This reflects the *Cultivating Connections* report's identification of **'portfolios of research activity that build reputations with research users'** as one of the major drivers of impact, as well as more broadly the **model of cumulative influence**. In at least 4 case studies, such linkages were evident in the generation of impact.

<sup>179</sup> Hulme, D (2010-2014) *Community and institutional responses to the challenges facing poor urban people in an era of global warming in Bangladesh*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0510

<sup>180</sup> Matthews, Z (2008-2011), *Poverty and maternal health in Ghana: A spatial analysis of exclusion from care*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0343

For example, one researcher focused on the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes across 7 countries<sup>181</sup> felt that the research grant represented “*the culmination of forty years working on the policy interface*”. Additionally, where follow-on funding was accessed, this provided practical opportunities to re-use data from Joint Fund projects, or to work with the same stakeholders and community members again. Such involvement strengthened the conceptual impact of their work, as they continued to have influence with stakeholder groups, whilst holding the potential to support instrumental impacts further down the line.

For example, in the project investigating education and transport mobility<sup>182</sup>, extra funding was secured from a different donor to provide additional research outputs. This included a book written and designed by the project’s child researchers based upon their own findings, which was then printed and disseminated widely. For other researchers, that had not been able to deliver policy impacts beyond phase 2 of the cumulative influence model during the lifetime of their Joint Fund project (see section 2.6), securing further funding allowed researchers to expand or to deepen their research (potentially leading to phase 3 impacts). For example, the project team which conducted successful research into unsafe pregnancy terminations in Zambia<sup>183</sup>, and which had begun to stimulate high-level interest within policy circles, then secured additional funds to continue their research on access to safe and unsafe abortion in rural areas of Zambia and help to further strengthen the existing weak national data set. Building on existing research streams, and/or using the findings of Joint Fund research to access follow-on research funding in that field, shows that some Joint Fund researchers understood the concept of cumulative influence, and how to harness external factors and opportunities to maximise impact.

Through the case study research, interviews with users and producers of Joint Fund research were used to further explore perceptions of how they would ensure sustainable impacts, beyond the period of funding. Whilst Joint Fund researchers were understandably cautious in claiming future benefits derived from their projects, a general pattern emerged as to some of the further processes and factors which researchers felt would facilitate longer-term impact. In addition to engaging in further research, the following were mentioned most frequently:

- Some Joint Fund researchers made efforts to **maintain networks of high-level and influential stakeholders** within government, academic and civil society bodies. This was undertaken either formally through other projects, or on an informal basis. Through conducting ongoing engagement researchers were more optimistic about the sustainability of their impact, as project knowledge and resources were more likely to be continued to be used in a meaningful way. According to one of the researchers investigating social movements and poverty in two countries<sup>184</sup> “*in terms of impact, so much happens through additional work, beyond what is funded and beyond the funding period*”. Six researchers appeared to have taken up specific advisory role (roles and topic areas included for the Bangladeshi government, a regional town planning board in China, the Board of Directors of a charity, UN Post-2015 urban sustainability goals, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and a consultancy on natural resource management). A research team member from the project investigating social movements in Peru and South Africa<sup>185</sup> also reflected that such processes in turn represent more evidence of the conceptual impact of research: “*Anyway that the core [project] team ... become involved subsequently in policy discussions ... and we all are in different ways, is partly an effect of this project, because of what we learnt along the way.*”

<sup>181</sup> Walker, R (2010-2012/13) *Shame, social exclusion and the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes: A study in seven countries*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0557

<sup>182</sup> Porter, G (2006-2010) *Children, transport and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa: developing a child-centred evidence base to improve policy and change thinking across Africa*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0028

<sup>183</sup> Coast, E (2011-2014) *Pregnancy termination trajectories in Zambia: the socio-economic costs*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0626; Impact maximisation grant 2014 – 2015

<sup>184</sup> Bebbington, A (2007-2010) *Social Movements and Poverty*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0170

<sup>185</sup> Bebbington, A (2007-2010) *Social Movements and Poverty*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0170

- Projects purposefully **designed and made accessible high quality research outputs** (i.e. research reports such as policy briefings or journal articles), publishing them online on websites available to the public, and commonly linked through a university homepage. This helped to ensure that the knowledge developed on the project could still be used to inform policy and other debates with different groups. However, if such outputs could only be accessed through specific networks or memberships (for example, through a password-protected research journal), then this was likely to limit the potential of the production of research outputs to provide an enabling factor.
- In projects where the **capacity building of skills was engaging and effective**, researchers felt that this would support sustainable impact, and provided evidence of researchers, other professionals and community groups continuing to use the new skills to support their work, organisations or livelihoods. One project<sup>186</sup> provided evidence of an attempt to address this issue more systemically, through linking the Joint Fund research to a capacity building training course for civil servants (funded through the BCURE programme), where the findings were presented as an example of how research can inform the implementation of policies.

**Key finding:** *Joint Fund projects reported that it was difficult to generate impact within the timescale of the grant. Chapter one of this report also anticipated that it would be challenging for Joint Fund projects, working in isolation, to impact substantively on policy. A number of processes and factors were important in enabling more sustained impacts from Joint Fund research. The findings suggest that these include factors within the control of researchers, and not just a supportive external context. Successful projects in particular linked to other relevant funded projects and programmes, in order to extend dissemination and research uptake. The production and accessibility of high quality research outputs, effective capacity building activities, and mechanisms for ongoing engagement with stakeholders were also seen to be important enabling factors of sustainable impact.*

Another approach to investigating this issue is to assess the research uptake processes pursued by impactful Joint Fund projects, against the journey implied by the model of cumulative influence. Broadly speaking, the iterative processes outlined in the model were reflected in the activities and developmental stages of Joint Fund research (and particularly with regards to stage 2, as outlined in the previous chapter). However, the use of **multi-stakeholder consultative or project steering groups** throughout the duration of a project did suggest one deviation. Through effectively helping to accelerate engagement and interest in policy circles, this resource enabled greater progress from stages 1/2 through to 3 in the model, and hence greater impact despite the relatively short timeframe of most Joint Fund projects. In this regard, the evaluation team notes that it is positive that an early-engagement stakeholder workshop is required under the requirements for the call for proposals for phase 3 of the Joint Fund<sup>187</sup>.

**Key finding:** *Projects that engaged with civil society organisations and government partners from the outset, using the mechanism of steering groups, increased the probability that the research was of direct benefit to academic and non-academic stakeholders.*

The cumulative model suggests that a significant body of research needs to be developed before intermediaries are sequentially engaged to 'translate' the findings for policy makers. We found that there are exceptions to this process. For example, the Joint Fund project exploring the link between stigma and poverty in seven selected countries<sup>188</sup> **engaged intermediaries from an early stage**. Related to this, the

<sup>186</sup> Noble, M (2011-2014) *Lone Mothers in South Africa - The role of social security in respecting and protecting dignity*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0642

<sup>187</sup> See for example: ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research Grants Call 2014-15, Guidance for Reviewers, Phase 3, Call 3, <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/funding/funding-opportunities/esrc-dfid/phase-3-call-3/esrc-dfid-joint-fund-for-poverty-alleviation-research-grants-call-2014-15-guidance-for-reviewers-pdf/>

<sup>188</sup> Walker, R (2010-2012/13) *Shame, social exclusion and the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes: A study in seven countries*, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0557

role and identity of an intermediary may also be more flexible and amorphous than the model implies, with examples of projects in which partners and stakeholders played a role as producers, translators and users of the research. For instance, the PI leading research examining the outcomes of environment and development interventions<sup>189</sup> was also Director of Conservation Measures at a key practitioner organisation, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). This greatly increased the speed with which the results were able to feed into practice. WCS has been able to train its own staff in some of the approaches that have resulted from the research, and to influence partners.

**Key finding:** Evidence collated by the evaluation team suggests that ‘intermediaries’ can be engaged at different stages of the process – and not only when there is a significant body of research which is ready to be ‘translated’ for policy makers. This reflects the opportunity for producers and users of the research to also act as intermediary organisations.

Finally, the model of cumulative influence does not explicitly recognise the role and benefits of capacity building activity. Whilst the majority of survey respondents reported this as an impact of their research, it was also potentially a key facilitator of further impacts, be they conceptual or instrumental (and again within a shorter timeframe than is implied by processes of cumulative influence). The focus and depth of capacity building varied by Joint Fund project; whilst many supported the skills development of in-country research team members, others developed the skills of stakeholders (e.g. community groups and practitioners), fostering both demand for and practical use of Joint Fund research findings and outputs. As a researcher for the project focused on educational evaluation and quality in China<sup>190</sup> stated, through developing the skills of southern based researchers and users of the research their intention was “to spread a seed and keep encouraging others to make it grow”.

### 3.8 Determinants of impact

Throughout this chapter information was synthesized from grant documentation, survey responses, and case study findings to understand the processes that Joint Fund projects pursued in order to facilitate research uptake and impact, as well as the barriers that they faced. We identified commonalities of impact-achieving grants relating to impact planning (particularly for instrumental impacts), researcher reputation and diversity of partners, diversity and interactive modes of stakeholder engagement, contextual understanding, and risk mitigation. This has helped us to better understand what the determinants of impact are.

#### 3.8.1 Summary of impact determinants

Table 3.4 summarises the predominant determinants of research impact that we identified across the Joint Fund grants, both positive and negative. These are cross referenced to the relevant sections of the chapter.

**Table 3.4 Determinants of impact (positive and negative)**

Category	Negative determinant	Positive determinant
<b>Planning for impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of time/funding for impact generating activities (section 3.7)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategies for knowledge exchange (section 3.2)</li> <li>Well planned and effective engagement</li> </ul>

<sup>189</sup> Wilkie, D (2013-2016) *Measuring complex outcomes of environment and development interventions*, Phase 2, ES/J018155/1

<sup>190</sup> Thomas, S (2008-2010) *Improving Educational Evaluation and Quality in China*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0353

Category	Negative determinant	Positive determinant
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short grant timeframe for impact to be realised (section 3.7)</li> </ul>	(section 3.4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Links to further research, related projects, and funding (section 3.7)</li> </ul>
<b>Researchers and partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of potential partners/opportunities to collaborate (section 3.5)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to relevant networks (section 3.3)</li> <li>Good reputation and institutions lending credibility (section 3.5)</li> <li>Dedicated and diverse team of researchers including in-country partners (section 3.5)</li> <li>Quality portfolio of research activity (section 3.7)</li> </ul>
<b>Stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of interest in the research (section 3.4)</li> <li>Difficulties in engaging stakeholders (section 3.4)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identification of key stakeholders (section 3.3)</li> <li>Existing strong relationships with key stakeholders (section 3.3)</li> <li>Stakeholders are also research partners/intermediaries (section 3.5)</li> </ul>
<b>Engagement and dissemination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low stakeholder capacity (time and financial) to act on findings (section 3.6)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging stakeholders early and at all stages of the grant (section 3.4)</li> <li>Interactive modes of engagement (including project steering groups) (section 3.4)</li> <li>Tailored and accessible outputs (section 3.4)</li> <li>Formal/informal engagement following the grant (section 3.4)</li> <li>Effective capacity building activity (section 3.7)</li> </ul>
	<b>Variable determinant</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publicity and media (section 3.4)</li> </ul>	
<b>Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political instability (section 3.6)</li> <li>Complex situations (section 3.6)</li> <li>Government distribution of funds (section 3.6)</li> <li>Lack of secondary data to help show impact (section 3.6)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Windows of opportunity (section 3.2)</li> <li>Receptiveness of policy actors (section 3.4)</li> <li>Understanding policy/practice/cultural contexts (section 3.6)</li> <li>Risk mitigation strategies (section 3.6)</li> </ul>
	<b>Variable determinant</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timeliness/topicality (see section 3.6)</li> </ul>	

Positive determinants of impact equivalent to those listed in *Cultivating Connections* are included in this summary table. However, we discovered that there are other important determinants which can facilitate impact. We were also able to identify what the negative determinants are that affect the impact of research grants.

### 3.8.2 Determinants facilitating high and low impact

Where the survey generated sufficient responses on a specific process issue, we were able to more systematically assess the relationship between processes of research uptake and achieving research impact. This was hindered somewhat by the fact that the vast majority of Joint Fund projects reported at least one impact from their research, as well as the overall sample size achieved by the survey (although some interesting comparative insights were gained). It was particularly difficult to assess the degree to which grants have benefitted from different determinants, and to rank them. In this respect, it is important to remember that determinants do not act independently from one another (and that it may in fact be their interactions and interconnectivities as determinants that drive impact). Thus some determinants, despite being evident within a particular research project, may not be influential to the impact of that project. Those grants which did not achieve impact were supported by some positive determinants. Conversely, negative determinants also affected grants which managed to attain impact.

Given the difficulties in quantifying the contribution of different determinants, it is important to consider the grantees' opinions of what most facilitated and hindered the impact of their grants. For grants which generated high levels of impact, including wider economic and social outcomes, the following five factors were most frequently identified by grantees (table 3.5). These positive determinants have been listed and mapped against the equivalent drivers from the *Cultivating Connections* report to demonstrate the similarities.

**Table 3.5 Positive determinants of Joint Fund projects achieving high impact**

Grantee identified positive determinants	Cultivating Connections determinants
Understanding policy/practice/cultural contexts	Understanding of policy/practice contexts and timescales
Engaging stakeholders early and at all stages	Involving users at all stages of the research
Existing strong relationships with key stakeholders	Established relationships and networks with user communities
The engagement of key stakeholders (key in regards to grant relevancy rather than high level)	Well-planned user engagement and knowledge exchange strategies
Quality portfolio of research activity	Portfolios of research activity that build reputations with stakeholders

'Good management and infrastructural support' and the 'involvement of intermediaries' are the two drivers of impact from the *Cultivating Connections* report that were not frequently directly identified by the grantees who achieved impact. Nonetheless, this does not mean these drivers had no effect on impact. Case study qualitative evidence substantiated the importance of the role that project partners have played as intermediaries and knowledge brokers in research uptake. The processes associated with effective management and infrastructural support, were explored in the previous evaluation of the Joint Fund.

Conversely, the five barriers, or negative determinants of impact highlighted most frequently by grantees who did not demonstrate any conceptual or instrumental impact are listed in table 3.6.

**Table 3.6 Negative determinants of Joint Fund projects achieving low impact**

Grantee identified negative determinants
Financial constraints for generating activities and staff for impact work
Short project timeframes to realise impact
Political instability including high turnover of policy makers
Low capacity of in-country stakeholders to act on research findings

The lack of financial and human resources, as well as time, are constraints which could be addressed through modifying the design of research grant programmes and funding mechanisms. The other difficulties, encountered by both high and low impact grants, relate to the context in which the research was carried out and the capacity or interest of stakeholders to bring about change. To counteract these negative determinants, researchers must put in place mitigation strategies, or else more carefully design their research projects based upon strong contextual understanding.

### 3.8.3 Specific determinants of instrumental impact

The evaluation team were also asked to examine the positive determinants of impact for the 35 grants reporting instrumental impact<sup>191</sup>. There was no significant difference in the opinion of survey respondents who achieved instrumental impact compared to all survey respondents in the identification of key determinants of impact (as outlined in Table 3.5 above). Through further cross-tabulation of the evidence we found the following with regards to instrumental impact-achieving grants:

- 97.1% (34 grants) had prior relationships with users (either through PI/Co-I or partner).
- 94.3% (33 grants) involved southern based researchers.
- 85.7% (30 grants) had excellent or good clarity on the impact to be achieved.
- 82.9% (29 grants) had excellent or good theory of how impact will be achieved.
- 77.1% (27 grants) had excellent or good impact plan/steps/activities outlined.

In considering the positive determinants of instrumental impact, rather than looking at factors in isolation, we can instead consider the optimal grouping of factors that together serve to facilitate impact. The positive determinants of impact for those grants which achieved instrumental impact indicate that robust impact planning is a critical factor in facilitating impact. These projects indicated the following in their impact plans: clarity of the intended research impacts; an understanding of their project's 'theory of change' (that is, how and why the project would achieve its intended impact, within the specific context of the research); and had detailed impact plans in place (specifying the steps and activities required to achieve the intended impact). However, also highly prevalent for these instrumental impact grants were working with southern-based researchers and prior relationships with stakeholders either through the PI, Co-Is, or research partners. These findings indicate therefore that while impact planning is a crucial factor in achieving impact, existing relationships with stakeholders and working with Southern-based researchers are crucial for those impact plans to be realised.

The importance of stakeholder relationships was apparent throughout our analyses. For example, in chapter two we described a grant in Ghana<sup>192</sup> which had influenced the design of the teacher training curriculum; this was facilitated by existing stakeholder connections which enabled the engagement of influential stakeholders in the research findings. Our programme-level assessment of prior relationships with stakeholders (section 3.3) corroborated the value of these existing stakeholder relationships in achieving impact. As one survey respondent noted, without existing stakeholder connections they "would be 'cold-calling' policy makers, rather than being introduced as resource-persons by institutions of authority within the world of African government policy-making".

<sup>191</sup> Please note, given the small sample size for this analyses should be taken with caution and considered in light of the wider findings of the evaluation.

<sup>192</sup> Porter, G (2006-2010) *Children, transport and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa: developing a child-centred evidence base to improve policy and change thinking across Africa*, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0028

As described in section 3.5 of the report, country-based researchers and in-country partners were crucial for developing an understanding of context and in facilitating the research and its uptake. The added value of working with in-country partners included their connections to stakeholder networks and their involvement in the policy field, which assisted with engaging stakeholders in the work. Other functions included being able to tailor outputs to the information needs of those stakeholders, in some cases serving as knowledge brokers. Section 2.4 described a successful grant in Sierra Leone<sup>193</sup> where the team had access to regular meetings of the national Child Protection Committee, chaired by Sierra Leone's Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA). The success of this engagement was due to one of the project in country researchers, who was a seconded employee from UNICEF with an existing good relationship with the MSWGCA, as well as to the relevance of findings communicated to the Committee.

Conversely, such partnerships are also important to help mitigate the major threats to research projects in generating instrumental impact. Amongst those projects that did not achieve any instrumental impact, we found that the two most prominent difficulties faced were financial constraints for generating activities and staff for impact work, and a lack of interest in the research and its findings. Grantees not achieving instrumental impact in particular highlighted the difficulty of engaging high level stakeholders (e.g. due to hierarchy or lack of time), which strong existing stakeholder relationships and appropriate in-country partners can help resolve.

### 3.9 Conclusions

This chapter explored the strategies and practices employed by Joint Fund researchers to increase the uptake of their work, and how successful these processes were in generating impact. We examined the following: the extent to which impacts were understood and pathways to impact planned; the profile of specific researchers and in-country partners undertaking the research; the range of stakeholders engaged; the user engagement and dissemination approaches adopted; and the role of context in facilitating or hindering impact.

Our findings suggest that effective **impact strategies and planning** are important, but not sufficient conditions/factors in the facilitation of research impact. This is, in part, due to a process in which translating social science research into practice is both dynamic and influenced by a variety of enabling and hindering factors, some of which exist outside of the researcher's control. Nonetheless, the majority of Joint Fund projects demonstrated evidence of 'good' impact strategies, though a greater proportion of projects from phase 2 were rated as 'excellent' than projects from the earlier phase. This was a reflection of the more detailed 'Pathways to Impact' document which grantees were required to complete under phase 2. A higher proportion of Joint Fund projects reporting instrumental impact was also found within projects rated as having 'good' or 'excellent' impact strategies, compared with all projects. Finally, monitoring practices varied greatly across the grants, though generally the majority of researchers were focused on monitoring outputs rather than outcomes.

The specific **stakeholders to be engaged** will be influenced by the individual aims of each research project, and is associated with generating different types of impact (rather than being a strong determinant of impact per se). Nonetheless, a number of key findings emerged in relation to the types of stakeholders engaged and subsequent research uptake and impact. Firstly, the grants which engaged with international policy and NGO actors were slightly less likely on average to report an impact than

<sup>193</sup> Wessells, M (2013-2015) *Inter-Agency Research on Strengthening Community Based Child Protection for Vulnerable Children*, Phase 2, ES/J017663/1

projects which engaged with national governments and other in-country stakeholders. Secondly, when considering the grants that achieved impact in at least one category (instrumental, conceptual, and capacity building), 93% of impact achieving grants had prior relationships with the stakeholders. Third, the ability to recognise the openness of stakeholders to research findings, and their understanding of the policy context, were also acknowledged by researchers as particularly important. Fourth, the relative lack of time and/or financial constraints amongst stakeholders acted as barriers to impact.

In terms of **user engagement and dissemination**, the findings suggest that consulting with stakeholders at the early stage of the grant (i.e. bid design stage) was important to ensure that the research is policy relevant, and that outputs meet stakeholder information needs. Methods which involved ongoing and interactive methods were associated with impactful research. For example, advisory or steering groups involving policy makers and other relevant research stakeholders were seen as extremely valuable in supporting and guiding Joint Fund grants and facilitating their subsequent impact. Other forms of face to face engagement included dissemination workshops and seminars, and more informal methods of engagement (i.e. researchers taking advantage of ad hoc engagement opportunities). Tailoring outputs for specific audiences was found to be particularly effective, for example through the dissemination of accessible policy briefs translated into the local language, as well as the development of non-traditional outputs such as scorecards, blogs, and short films.

The **role and profile of all members of the research team**, including in-country partners, play a key role in facilitating impact. The credibility of researchers, their portfolio of research, and the institutions at which they are based contributes to successful engagement with stakeholders. The evidence also suggests that high quality research increases the likelihood of research uptake, particularly when innovative methods have been employed to strengthen the evidence base. Involving a range of in-country research partners helped to maximise the range of different impacts achieved. Working with southern-based researchers and in-country partners often led to the following: increased understanding of local policy, practice and cultural contexts; access to established stakeholder networks; prior experience and involvement in the policy field; and an understanding of how to communicate research to target users.

As indicated above, understanding of the **policy context** has been an important determinant of impact for Joint Fund projects. Further, whilst timeliness and topicality were enabling factors for research uptake, they also emphasise how contexts are dynamic and changing, requiring multiple and ongoing methods to understand context and how this will impact on the research. Whilst politically-related contextual situations are beyond the control of researchers, they are able to implement mitigation strategies. Finding a core set of stakeholders within government less at risk of staff turnover was key in this respect. Ultimately, researchers have less control over the funding levels and allocations of government, as well as external challenge to their work. Overall however, challenging political contexts did not appear to be a major determinant of impact for Joint Fund research. This perhaps reflects the careful design of projects and efforts made to understand the policy context, as much as the mitigation strategies employed.

Joint Fund projects reported that it was difficult to generate impact within the grant **timescale**. A number of processes and factors were important in enabling more sustainable impact. Successful projects in particular linked to other relevant programmes of funded research, in order to extend dissemination and the potential for research uptake. The production and accessibility of high quality research outputs, effective capacity building activities, and establishing mechanisms for ongoing engagement with stakeholders were seen as further important factors for enabling sustainable impact. Whilst the model of cumulative influence suggests a longer-term process, evidence from the evaluation suggests that 'intermediaries' can be deployed at different stages of research uptake – and not only when there is a significant body of research which is ready to be 'translated' for policy makers. This reflects for example the opportunity for producers and users of the research to also act as intermediary organisations. This may be particularly critical for research that is tackling new or challenging topics.

Reflecting on the **combination of positive determinants** that specifically drive instrumental impact, it appears that while effective impact planning is an important factor in this process, existing relationships with stakeholders, and working with Southern-based researchers, provide the leverage which allows effective impact plans to be realised in practice. Furthermore, as was clear from the previous chapter, delivering capacity building and conceptual impacts are either mutually supportive or important preconditions for delivering instrumental impact.

## 4.0 Overall lessons and conclusions

This final section draws together the conclusions of the evaluation and on the process of conducting the research. Finally, we list the main lessons learned, and provide a detailed set of recommendations for both researchers and the funders of development research.

### 4.1 Conclusions on impact of fund

First, our findings corroborate the general consensus<sup>194</sup> that research is only one of the factors influencing the policy-making process and subsequently achieving impact on poverty reduction. This is not surprising in view of the long term characteristics of influencing change in policy and practice, embedding impact, and ultimately reducing poverty, which require a very long chain of events and actors. Other barriers include the well documented disconnect between research and policy making across the world<sup>195</sup> and the often temporary nature of policy makers and other key stakeholders in their respective positions. Given the complexity and unpredictability of this context, the range and depth of impact achieved across the Joint Fund and evidenced in the evaluation are laudable.

Second, whilst grantees reported difficulties in seeking to generate impact within the timescale of the grant, a number of processes and factors were important in enabling more sustained impacts from Joint Fund research. The findings suggest that these include factors within the control of researchers, and not just a supportive external context. Successful projects in particular linked to other relevant funded project and programmes, in order to extend dissemination and research uptake. The production and accessibility of high quality research outputs, effective capacity building activities, and mechanisms for ongoing engagement with stakeholders were also seen to be important enabling factors of sustainable impact. For example, this was demonstrated most clearly in those projects in which capacity building had been effective, where the evidence indicates that researchers, other professionals and community groups then continued to use the new skills gained to support their work. This was exemplified by one such project in which the Co-I expressed their clear intention *“to spread a seed and keep encouraging others to make it grow”*.

Thirdly, there was evidence of some internal tensions regarding the implementation of research and imperative to promote impact. The emphasis on influencing changes in policy and practice can present challenges in maintaining the quality and integrity of research. It involves a cultural change for researchers that should not be under-estimated, and may take some time to evolve. Different disciplines also work to different levels of relevance. As noted to the evaluators by some PIs, there has to be a juggling of innovative, more theoretical research and policy relevance; the impact agenda can alter the perspectives of researchers into implementing a particular type of research that can show change in the short term - that ‘more’ impact is better. This generates pressures to develop relationships with a new set of stakeholders, some of whom may be unfamiliar to researchers. There is also a risk that research that is politically sensitive could be marginalised, with pressure to bury uncomfortable and radical truths, and to claim over-ambitious findings. Development Frontiers Research Grants - designed to support innovative, ‘blue skies’ research on poverty alleviation<sup>196</sup> within phase 3 of the Joint Fund – sought to address some of the issues highlighted above by funding research where the nature of impact is expected to be very

<sup>194</sup> See for example: Newman et al, *The International Conference on Evidence-Informed Policy Making*, 2013

<sup>195</sup> See for example Kiregyera, B, *The evidence gap and its impact on public policy and decision-making in developing countries* 2010; Hallsworth, M., Parker, S., Rutter, J., *Policy Making in the real world: evidence and analysis*, Institute for Government, 2011

<sup>196</sup> Call 1 were awarded via small grants (up to £100,000; 18 months) with an option for a further 18 months of funding of up to £200,000 following a stage-gating process

low, but will bring value in other respects such as addressing a sensitive subject or breaking ground in other ways.

#### 4.1.1 Types of impact

Three quarters of all phase 1 and 2 projects reported **capacity building** impacts. When disaggregated by target group, we found that: 56% of projects reported capacity building impact amongst members of the research team; 28% amongst research partner organisations (93% of which were based outside the UK); and 15% on the end users of the research findings. Rather than to support the transfer of skills across the researcher/user interface, capacity building was therefore interpreted and used by the majority of projects as a way of increasing the quality of their research/future research.

**Conceptual impact** was the most prevalent impact across the Fund (85% of all projects in phases 1 and 2). Conceptual impact can be further categorised by end beneficiary, with key groups including: researchers/academics (48% of projects); practitioners (62%); and policy makers (43%). For the first group, there was evidence of significant overlap between researcher interpretations of conceptual (academic) and capacity building (researcher) impacts. This suggests that the two impacts are inter-related and mutually reinforcing within the sphere of researcher/producer beneficiaries. While conceptual change with practitioners tends to have a smaller sphere of influence - i.e. focused within their own work - conceptual impact with policymakers has the potential to change understanding at a higher level and to influence a much wider group. At this latter level, there was often an acknowledgment that whilst policy change may have been relevant and desirable, this had not yet been enacted due to other constraining factors (such as funding, the political environment, views of other stakeholders etc.).

**Instrumental impact** was demonstrated by 35% of projects across Phases 1 and 2. The evidence suggests that this impact was in the majority of cases substantive and attributable to the Joint Fund (i.e. with citations of their research in policy papers, letters from policy makers or practitioners acknowledging their interaction, records of meetings with key stakeholders or evidence of researchers feeding into draft policy documents). Whilst a relatively small number of Joint Fund projects across the two phases (around 14%) provided evidence that their research findings had been used to directly inform new or revised policy, around one fifth of Joint Fund projects reported direct instrumental impacts on practice. Those projects that influenced practitioner organisations may have been more effective (in the short-term) than those that sought to directly engage with policy makers due to the increased flexibility and lower levels of bureaucracy associated with this level of stakeholder organisation. There was also often concurrent evidence of strong capacity building or conceptual impacts at this level, as well as socio-economic impact.

**Cross-portfolio analysis** suggests that there is a strong inter-relationship between capacity building, conceptual and instrumental impacts. Capacity building and conceptual impacts were far more likely to occur in combination, and may be mutually reinforcing or linear and consecutive. Instrumental impacts only occurred in combination with others - most commonly instrumental impact was achieved where both capacity building and conceptual impacts had occurred. This reflects the challenges inherent in impacting upon the policy making process and the model of cumulative influence, which suggest that a critical mass of activity is required in order to effect policy change.

We also reviewed any evidence of **longer-term impacts on poverty alleviation/reduction** as a result of Joint Fund-inspired changes to policy and practice. A small number of Joint Fund projects provided evidence that their research had led to wider impacts on poverty reduction. This was a reflection of the stage of impact reached by the majority of Joint Fund projects, along the possible continuum of influence.

We located the impact of most Joint Fund research at stage 2 (across the four stages of cumulative influence<sup>197</sup>), with evidence for example of growth in the body of research, interest provoked in policy (and practitioner) networks, and tentative engagement in policy circles. This may be a particularly positive outcome for early-stage research projects involving issues that are particularly new or challenging within in their field. Nonetheless, ESRC and DFID have signalled their commitment to assessing the impact of the Joint Fund as a whole through on-going monitoring and the commissioning of appropriate external evaluations. This increases the likelihood of capturing evidence of longer-term impacts on poverty alleviation.

#### 4.1.2 Determinants of impact

The **choice of research partner** affects who a project is able to reach. As one Principal Investigator (PI) interviewed put it, *“it matters who you work with, as to which audiences will pay more or less attention, and the extent to which your work is going to seem more or less accessible to different audiences.”* In support of this claim, the majority of grants (88% or greater) achieved impact while involving in-country partners. In-country partners are enablers of impact through strengthening knowledge of the policy context and helping to shape and undertake the research to fulfil user needs. Partners can also provide access to stakeholder networks, help penetrate policy debates and amplify research dissemination through acting as knowledge brokers. In addition, we found that **quality research** - combined with researcher experience in the topic area and institutional reputation - is appreciated by stakeholders and encourages research uptake.

Our findings suggest that effective **impact strategy and planning** is an important, but not sufficient condition/factor in the facilitation of research impact. This is, in part, due to a process in which translating social science research into practice is both dynamic and influenced by a variety of enabling and hindering factors, some of which exist outside of a researcher's control. Nonetheless, sufficient planning also needs to take place at the project design stage to ensure researchers get to grips with the specific political, economic, and social context of the country in focus. Our analysis suggests that the majority of Joint Fund projects demonstrated evidence of 'good' impact strategies, though a greater proportion of projects from phase 2 were rated as 'excellent'. A higher proportion of Joint Fund projects reporting instrumental impact was also found within projects rated as having 'good' or 'excellent' impact strategies, compared with all projects. Finally, monitoring practices varied greatly across the grants, though generally the majority of researchers were focused on monitoring outputs rather than outcomes.

The **engagement of different stakeholder types** is associated with generating different types of impact (rather than being a strong determinant of impact per se). The specific stakeholders to be engaged were typically informed by the individual aims of each project, though generally speaking we found that engaging a diversity of stakeholder types increased the potential to deliver positive results across the spectrum of capacity building, conceptual and instrumental impacts. Further, **established connections with research users** are a positive determinant of impact. Nonetheless, this should not preclude the engagement of new policy stakeholders by researchers, providing that well planned and intensive user engagement activities are implemented.

**Early stakeholder engagement** is critical. Examples of good practice included the convening of workshops and consultative groups with potential users in the design phase of the project. This gave researchers the opportunity to gather feedback from users on the usefulness of the potential research approach and its objectives, and allowed users to share their concerns and articulate their specific needs (i.e. knowledge or evidence gaps) as well as their preferred formats for dissemination. Further, our

<sup>197</sup> Barakat, S, Waldman, T, Varisco, A., *Understanding influence: Summary report for DFID*, 2014 (funded through the DFID-ESRC Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research)

findings suggest that the majority of grantees sought to **tailor their outputs** for different stakeholders. This included tailored and accessible policy briefs (which were often translated into local languages), and in a minority of cases more creative outputs such as maps and scorecards. In particular, methods which involved **ongoing, face-to-face and more interactive forms of engagement**, leading to the co-production of research with target stakeholders, were associated with impactful research. These methods included informal meetings and engagement, dissemination workshops and seminars, and formal **advisory, steering and consultative groups**, with the latter proving particularly valuable. Finally, media and public engagement can help to generate impact. Researchers should consider the wider public and media as stakeholders in their stakeholder engagement as part of their research uptake plan. Although these audiences may not be appropriate to all grants, this should be carefully assessed when creating communication and engagement plans.

Whilst **timeliness and topicality** were enabling factors for research uptake, they also emphasise how contexts are dynamic and changing, requiring **multiple and ongoing methods to understand context** and how this will impact on the research. Whilst politically-related contextual situations are beyond the control of researchers, they are able to implement **mitigation strategies**. Ultimately, researchers have less control over the funding levels and allocations of government, as well as external challenge to their work. Overall however, challenging political contexts did not appear to be a major determinant of impact for Joint Fund research. This reflects the careful design of Joint Fund projects and the efforts made to understand the policy context, as much as the mitigation strategies employed.

Specifically in terms of **driving instrumental impacts**, whilst effective impact planning is an important factor in this process, existing relationships with stakeholders and working with Southern-based researchers provide the leverage which allows effective impact plans to be realised in practice. Furthermore, delivering capacity building and conceptual impacts are either mutually supportive, or important preconditions, for delivering instrumental impact.

## 4.2 Future evaluations of the Joint Fund

This report makes some useful contributions to the evaluation literature on the impacts of research. Firstly, the evaluation helped to refine the typology of research impact, building on the existing work of ESRC and Research Councils UK, by developing a set of sub-typologies that can be applied and further refined by future studies. It also tested out the model of cumulative influence, and suggested some caveats to its application in practice. Secondly, we have added weight to the importance of conducting longer-term impact evaluation work, not only to explore whether instrumental impacts from social science research come to fruition, but also specifically to assess the resultant impacts on social and economic outcomes, including poverty reduction. Finally, this evaluation has created the specific foundations to continue such longer-term impact evaluation work with phase 1 and 2 Joint Fund grants. This has been achieved by expending significant effort on gaining the buy-in of Joint Fund researchers to external evaluation and its benefits, through systematically cataloguing the interim results of the portfolio of Joint Fund projects, and through identifying a sub-set of projects which might be expected to generate more significant impacts over the longer-term.

Our suggestions for conducting future external evaluations of research impact are as follows:

- It is useful to apply more detailed typologies of impact in order to add more nuance to the understanding of impact achievements, as well as to differentiate between impacts on policy, practice, and behaviour, and longer-term impact on poverty and other socio-economic conditions.
- The differentiation of impact emphasises the need for evaluations of research impact to operate within longer time-frames. Ideally, this requires evaluation across two stages, adopting a longitudinal

research approach with projects that firstly assesses capacity building, conceptual and instrumental impacts (as far as these have been realised) in the shorter-term, followed by impacts on social and economic outcomes over the longer-term.

- Impact evaluations at all stages should not neglect issues of process and context. Understanding pathways to impact and the determinants of impact are key to evidencing the contribution of social science research to the policy making process (and any resultant socio-economic outcomes), given the complex systems, influences and factors involved. Experimental approaches to impact assessment would likely not be feasible nor be able to evidence the contribution - particularly of individual research studies - in sufficient depth.
- Given that the assessment of impact, process and contextual variables is itself a complex endeavour, it is recommended that longer term follow-up evaluations of social science research focus on individual or smaller samples of research projects. This would allow for a more in-depth assessment combining both tracking forward and tracking back approaches, engagement with existing research on poverty reduction (or other outcomes), and/or new primary research, including survey work of the ultimate beneficiaries of policy change (where secondary data is lacking).

### 4.3 Lessons and recommendations

Based upon the evidence from the evaluation, we have identified a comprehensive set of key lessons and recommendations<sup>198</sup> for the following groups:

- Researchers of poverty alleviation and related topics, including grantees under the Joint Fund (table 4.1).
- ESRC-DFID and other donors and funders of development research (table 4.2).

**Table 4.1 Lessons and recommendations for researchers**

No.	Lesson learnt	Recommendation
1.	While projects were broadly working towards aims of policy influence, they tended to be less specific in articulating exactly what type of impact (conceptual, instrumental and/or capacity building) they intended to bring about, as well as about the mechanisms through which the research would achieve the impacts..	Developing a Theory of Change (ToC) would encourage researchers to make explicit what is their understanding and assumptions of how the application of their research results will play out in practice. Specifically, researchers should: (a) articulate the change they want to bring about and the mechanisms by which they anticipate this happening; and (b) focus on research uptake. We would also recommend that the ToC be developed and agreed by members of the research team in order to facilitate a collaborative approach to implementation.
2.	Pathways to impact plans are often not revisited and adapted as new opportunities emerge and contexts are better understood or undergo shifts.	Grantees should be asked to revisit and adapt pathways to impact plans throughout the grant timeframe. Updating the pathways to impact plan will also ensure that the donor is made aware of shifts and can potentially advise and support where necessary.
3.	Regardless of how necessary and relevant	By understanding the policy landscape researchers can

<sup>198</sup> The information provided here has been generalised on the best evidence available from this evaluation. However it is important to remember that all the lessons and recommendations may not be universally applicable since the parties involved, the research and the context in which research is undertaken can differ greatly.

No.	Lesson learnt	Recommendation
	<p>research may be to issues such as poverty alleviation, knowledge of the policy landscape and understanding stakeholder needs, interests and agendas is critical for determining the extent to which they are likely to engage with a given piece of research.</p> <p>An understanding of policy/practice contexts is also likely to facilitate recognition of windows of opportunity, and in particular, researchers' willingness to take advantage of such opportunities.</p>	<p>gain insights into who is likely to engage with them and be supportive of their work, and how messages should be shaped. In cases where a policy audience may not be receptive it is especially important that researchers identify and engage with other stakeholders who will support their work and who have a voice within the policy arena.</p> <p>While unexpected opportunities are by their nature unplanned, researchers can be proactive in taking up or creating opportunities to engage with stakeholders and build relationships which, in turn, may increase and diversify the opportunities for impact later on.</p>
4.	<p>Research uptake is facilitated through support of relevant in-country partners. Benefits of working with such partners include: investigating whether there is sufficient demand for the research amongst users; that effective dissemination can be supported through these partnerships; and that users can be actively supported to make use of the findings. We also found that links to other relevant funded projects and programmes also increases the likelihood of research uptake.</p>	<p>Grantees should seek to engage and develop relationships with relevant in-country partners to facilitate research uptake. In-country partners can act as enablers of impact by: strengthening knowledge of the policy context; helping to shape and undertake the research to address user needs; providing access to stakeholder networks; and amplifying research dissemination by acting as knowledge brokers/intermediaries. Links to other relevant funded projects and programmes should also be made by grantees where possible. This could also be facilitated through the Evidence and Policy Directorate (EPD)<sup>199</sup>, which has been tasked with identifying synergies between grant holders. This includes supporting grant holders to exploit and influence engagement opportunities on both an individual and collective basis.</p>
5.	<p>Engagement of relevant stakeholders should take place as early as possible. Examples of good practice include the convening of workshops and consultative groups with potential users in the design phase of the project. This gives researchers the opportunity for feedback from users on the usefulness of the potential research approach and objectives, and allows users to share their concerns and articulate their specific needs (i.e. knowledge or evidence gaps) as well as their preferred formats for dissemination.</p>	<p>Researchers should seek to engage with stakeholders during the bid design stage. Such engagement can be used to aid researchers' own understanding of what is of most interest or concern to the target stakeholder groups, which can subsequently inform research design and dissemination approaches.</p>
6.	<p>Advisory groups were seen as valuable to the grant and its subsequent impact, for example, by ensuring that the research was relevant to the target stakeholders and supporting dissemination of the research findings.</p> <p>Other open and interactive methods, such as co-production of research, are also associated with impactful projects.</p>	<p>In order to develop country consultative groups, it is necessary to: (a) carefully consider the composition of the group to ensure that the members are the most relevant in terms of their knowledge, skills, interests and experience but also with sufficient influence to take research findings forward into the policy arena; (b) budget and plan for the time required for meetings and consistent communication to keep members engaged; and (c) set out to potential members the benefits of joining.</p>

<sup>199</sup> Please note that the EPD has recently be renamed 'The Impact Initiative', <http://www.theimpactinitiative.net/>

No.	Lesson learnt	Recommendation
		The potential of co-producing research with target stakeholders, where relevant, should also be investigated by grantees.
7.	The most appropriate mediums for dissemination depend upon the country context, the message to be communicated and what audience the researchers are trying to reach. Across phases 1 and 2 of the Fund, our findings suggest the face-to-face engagement is particularly effective in allowing users to engage and respond with research findings (i.e. workshops, consultative groups, ad hoc meetings, etc.). Such face-to-face engagement should be complemented by a range of written formats appropriate to the audience and translated into local languages (providing there are sufficient funds to do so).	Dissemination needs to be tailored carefully to different audiences. We therefore recommend that researchers develop a comprehensive communications strategy at an early stage of the project. Such a strategy should: identify the target stakeholders; recognise the roles and levels of influence of each stakeholder; and develop key messages that are appropriate for the policy context in the country of research. It may be suitable to engage with in-country communications experts to advise on suitable dissemination mechanisms.
8.	Media and public engagement can help to generate impact.	Researchers should consider the wider public and media as stakeholders in their stakeholder engagement as part of their research uptake plan. Although these audiences may not be appropriate to a given grant this should be carefully assessed when creating communication and engagement plans.
9.	Researchers do not necessarily have the appropriate skills for dissemination, particularly in seeking to tailor their communications to different audiences. Researchers may therefore need to bring in additional skills sets to help them understand their audience needs and support the development of alternative, visually arresting outputs, for example.	The skills required for impact are very different from core research and scholarship skills. Therefore, grantees may wish consider recruiting specialist knowledge/communication professionals to support the development of tailored outputs. However, developing such outputs - such as alternative, visually arresting outputs - that are accessible and engaging to stakeholders may be time consuming and costly and so these need to be budgeted for accordingly.
10.	Whilst the mitigation strategies of Joint Fund researchers can be learnt from and employed, there will be inevitable trade-offs - in some contexts - between research which is necessary and relevant and research which is most likely to gain traction. Factors to take into account include the potential for significant (government and non-governmental) opposition and funding constraints that are outside of the influence of researchers.	Whilst not proving a major constraint on the impact of Joint Fund research, the importance of external factors and their level of influence need to be promoted to, and thoroughly researched, by grant applicants. At the same time, we recognise that the researcher's role is not to hold governments accountable or improve funding processes directly. The principal role of researchers in such circumstances where there are financing issues, for example, is to expand the evidence base on their topic of research and highlight recommendations to the government of where and how funds should be spent to bring about economic and social benefits.
11.	Politically-related contextual situations are beyond the control of researchers. However some situations such as elections are planned in advance and therefore need to be taken into consideration by researchers when planning activities. Politically charged public disruptions such as riots can take place spontaneously, but the likelihood of these can also be assessed in advance.	It is important for researchers to manage of the risks of undertaking work in contexts where political instability can have a negative impact on the grant. Under these circumstances we recommend that contingency plans are drawn up to maximise the effectiveness of the research undertaken and the uptake activities.

No.	Lesson learnt	Recommendation
12.	The majority of researchers in phases 1 and 2 focused on monitoring outputs (i.e. dissemination events, publications), rather than outcomes related to impact.	Grantees should be required to monitor impact outcomes. We recommend the following: developing relevant M&E indicators in order to track impact; identifying possible data sources by which this information could be obtained; and budgeting for such activities to take place. Researchers should also consider assigning responsibilities early on so it is clear who will be monitoring what, how often, how this information will be reported on, and the quality assurance review process. The continued establishment of Researchfish as the central location for researchers to log outcomes and impacts may aid such monitoring. Some accessible tools can also be utilised to support the collection of data to monitor impact <sup>200</sup> .

**Table 4.2 Lessons and recommendations for ESRC-DFID and other funders of development research**

No.	Lesson learnt	Recommendation
1.	The experience and reputation of members of the research team in the specific topic area are important factors in facilitating research uptake. In addition, the involvement of southern-based researchers and in-country partners, alongside established relationships with research users, tends to facilitate impact.	<p>The profile of the research teams should be taken into consideration by donors when deciding on research grants to be funded. The Joint Fund should also continue to encourage PIs to engage with and develop research teams involving in-country researchers/partners.</p> <p>Proposals should also require researchers to indicate the prior relationships they possess with in-country researchers, partners, and other relevant stakeholders (including policy makers/practitioners). We emphasise, however, that this should not preclude the engagement of new policy stakeholders by researchers, providing that well planned and intensive user engagement activities are developed and subsequently implemented.</p>
2.	Sufficient planning needs to take place at the project design stage to ensure researchers come to grips with the specific political, economic, and social context in the country of focus. We found that projects were less specific in setting specific impact milestones and targets. Conversely, a higher proportion of Joint Fund projects reporting instrumental impact was found within projects rated as having 'good' or 'excellent' impact strategies, compared with all projects. We also found that the extra effort that researchers put	<p>To help researchers create feasible and realistic strategies for impact, requirements for completing the pathways to impact document could be modified to encourage greater specificity in relation to identifying target audiences, and outlining methods for communication and engagement<sup>201</sup>. Although the relevance and importance of different stakeholders and communication outlets is likely to change as the grant progresses, setting this out in detail at the outset will provide an initial action plan which can be updated as the research develops.</p> <p>As part of the pathways to impact document, researchers</p>

<sup>200</sup> For example, there are tools for collecting and analysing website metrics such as document downloads and number of site visitors. Tools such as Google Analytics can be set up to deliver regular progress reports on factors that are of particular interest to the researchers. To aid the citation tracking, citation alerts can be set up to automatically inform the researcher when information appears on the web pertaining to a particular piece of research.

<sup>201</sup> The current guidance for completing the pathways to impact in phase 3 requires applicants to consider and address "clear mapping of beneficiaries and target audiences". An explicit instruction to identify specific individuals and organisations could be included here. Similarly, in the current guidance where applicants are asked to consider and address "methods for communication and engagement", applicants could be asked to identify specific events for engagement and provide details of communication outlets they would approach, for example, name specific local and national media outlets which researchers deem appropriate and potentially interested to disseminate their research findings. See: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/funding/funding-opportunities/esrc-dfid/phase-3-call-3/je-s-guidance-for-applicants/>

No.	Lesson learnt	Recommendation
	into research uptake, such as persistent dissemination beyond the grant term, can lead to impact.	<p>could be asked to develop a Theory of Change (ToC) (see lesson/recommendation 1 for researchers). This ToC document could potentially be revisited annually and updated to reflect any changes.</p> <p>ESRC and DFID should consider asking researchers to develop project plans and budgets related to a specific period, post completion of the research, when researchers focus their attention on impact generation.</p>
3.	Researchers do not necessarily have the appropriate skills for dissemination, particularly in seeking to tailor their communications to different audiences. For instance, we found that social media was under-utilised across phases 1 and 2 of the Fund.	The skills required for impact are very different from core research and scholarship skills. The newly developed Evidence and Policy Directorate (EPD) will be able to support in this regard, particularly since the directorate is tasked with communicating and sharing the programme's research effectively across a range of relevant audiences.
4.	Evidence suggests that only a minority of Joint Fund projects had conducted in-depth assessments of their capacity building impact, and were able to evidence the outcomes of capacity building activity.	This emphasises the value of conducting case study research in order to facilitate greater insights into the nature and depth of capacity building impact achieved by social science research. ESRC-DFID may also wish to consider developing guidelines for more sophisticated self-evaluation approaches for researchers to monitor such impacts.
5.	Evidence was inconclusive as to the role of good management and infrastructure support from donors (e.g. DFID country offices) in facilitating impact. There is some evidence, however, that researchers found it difficult to communicate with DFID country offices.	To increase the potential for donor support to facilitate the impact of future grants it is important to ensure that researchers understand what role donors can play in supporting their research and how best researchers can access this support. This information could be provided in the form of a set of guidelines and key contacts provided to all funded researchers. To ensure continuity of support, mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that where there is staff turnover in DFID country offices, for example, researchers are informed of such changes.
6.	The majority of researchers in phases 1 and 2 focused on monitoring outputs (i.e. dissemination events, publications), rather than outcomes related to impact.	<p>ESRC and DFID should consider the development of a range of outcome indicators to help monitor impact across the Fund. These could then be outlined in the pathways to impact plan. In addition, we recommend that ESRC-DFID require grantees to report on impact annually over the course of each research contract. The continued establishment of Researchfish as the central location for researchers to log outcomes and impacts may aid such monitoring, as well as building upon the more detailed typology and indicators of conceptual, capacity building and instrumental impact developed through this evaluation project.</p> <p>The Joint Fund also might consider appointing an evaluation and learning advisor (as a consultant) to engage with the research teams to help ensure the most relevant and appropriate information was being collected in an accessible and shareable format through the research. Retrospective data generated some</p>

No.	Lesson learnt	Recommendation
		<p>years after the research can be unreliable; instead of relying on donor reports and the recollection of researchers, evaluators are likely to gain a more accurate pool of data with which to work by conducting an M&amp;E scoping exercise while the grants were underway.</p> <p>Whilst ESRC and DFID recommend that a minimum of 10% of the overall budget should be allocated to delivering the activities outlined in the pathways to impact plan, we recommend that researchers indicate what specific impact generation activities they have carried out - as well as the total value of such activities - as part of project reporting requirements.</p> <p>Measuring the full impacts of research under the Joint Fund is necessarily longer-term in nature, and may fall outside the period of the research grant. Potential options for capturing this evidence over a longer time period include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An additional evaluation funding stream which grantees of completed projects could apply for, contingent upon presenting strong evidence of interim impacts (i.e. capacity building, conceptual or instrumental).</li> <li>• Commissioning follow-on/longitudinal external impact evaluations of successful Joint Fund projects (across the portfolio, or focused on specific regions or themes)</li> </ul>

## **Annex One: Full list of projects by country**

## Annex One: Full list of projects by country

Please note that 47 research projects involved research in two or more countries, whereas a total 48 projects involved research in a single country only.

No.	Title	Reference Number		Funding period	Country/countries of focus
		ES	RES		
PHASE 1					
1.	Urban Poverty and Property Rights Changes in China	ES/D002206/1	RES-167-25-0005	2006-2008	China
2.	Livelihoods after land reform: the poverty impacts of land redistribution in southern Africa	ES/D002621/1	RES-167-25-0037	2006-2010	South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia
3.	Children, transport and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa	ES/D002745/1	RES-167-25-0028	2006-2010	Ghana, Malawi, South Africa
4.	Marriage, Power and Wellbeing	ES/D003431/1	RES-167-25-0058	2006-2008	Uganda
5.	Demographic and poverty dynamics in an African population with high AIDS mortality and implications for social policy	ES/D003520/1	RES-167-25-0076	2006-2010	South Africa
6.	Widening Participation in Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania	ES/D003547/1	RES-167-25-0078	2006-2010	Ghana, Tanzania
7.	Tracing pharmaceuticals in South Asia	ES/D003725/1	RES-167-25-0110	2006-2009	Nepal, India
8.	Trade Liberalisation, Job Reallocation and Poverty	ES/D003822/1	RES-167-25-0121	2008-2010	Colombia
9.	Human development and poverty reduction in developing countries	ES/D003849/1	RES-167-25-0124	2006-2009	Colombia, Mexico, Nepal, India
10.	Stigma and discrimination associated with TB in Asia	ES/E01304X/1	RES-167-25-0142	2007-2009	Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan
11.	Ethnic Minority (under)development in Vietnam	ES/E013430/1	RES-167-25-0157	2006-2008	Vietnam
12.	Averting 'New Variant Famine' in Southern Africa	ES/E013635/1	RES-167-25-0167	2007-2009	Malawi, Lesotho
13.	Aid salary discrepancies and development workers' performance	ES/E013651/1	RES-167-25-0169	2007-2010	Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, China, India, Malawi, Uganda
14.	Social Movements and Poverty	ES/E01366X/1	RES-167-25-0170	2007-2010	Peru, South Africa

15.	Factor endowments, biased technological change, wages and poverty reduction: can genetically modified crops bring a green revolution to SSA?	ES/E013864/1	RES-167-25-0187	2006-2008	Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Asia
16.	Left behind in transition? Poverty, social networks and social support amongst older people in Central Asia and the Caucasus	ES/E013945/1	RES-167-25-0191	2007-2009	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan
17.	The social conditions for successful community mobilisation: Learning from sex worker led projects in India: analyse key social conditions and org structures to successful community mobilisation;	ES/E013961/1	RES-167-25-0193	2007-2010	India
18.	Governance Implications of Private Standards Initiatives in Agri-Food Chains	ES/E013988/1	RES-167-25-0195	2007-2010	Kenya
19.	Infrastructure and Development: Evidence from India and Kenya	ES/E014356/1	RES-167-25-0214	2007-2010	India, Kenya
20.	Strengthening ODFL (open, distance, flexible learning) systems to increase education access and attainment for young people in high HIV prevalence SADC countries	ES/E014410/1	RES-167-25-0217	2007-2010	Malawi, Lesotho
21.	Religion and Childhood Death in India	ES/E014801/1	RES-167-25-0236	2007-2009	India
22.	The meaning of health security for disaster resilience in Bangladesh	ES/E014852/1	RES-167-25-0241	2007-2008	Bangladesh
23.	The Gansu Survey of Children and Families, Wave 3	ES/E014518/1	RES-167-25-0250	2007-2010	China
24.	The intra-household allocation of resources	RES-167-25-0251-A	RES-167-25-0251-A	2007-2008	India, Nigeria, Ethiopia
25.	Tropical forests in poverty alleviation: from household data to global-comparative analysis	ES/E021816/1	RES-167-25-0257	2008-2011	24 countries across Asia, Africa, Latin America
26.	Impact Evaluation of Performance-based Contracting for General Health and HIV/AIDS Services in Rwanda	ES/E021832/1	RES-167-25-0259	2008-2012	Rwanda
27.	Gender, education and global poverty reduction initiatives	ES/E021859/1	RES-167-25-0260	2007-2011	Kenya, South Africa
28.	Student Performance in National Examinations: the dynamics of language in school achievement	ES/E021913/1	RES-167-25-0263	2007-2010	Tanzania

29.	Embedding poor people's voices in local governance: participation and political empowerment in India	ES/E021964/1	RES-167-25-0268	2008-2010	India
30.	Development in the 'raw': What livelihood trajectories and poverty outcomes tell us about welfare regimes and resilience in Afghanistan	ES/F026080/1	RES-167-25-0285	2008-2010	Afghanistan
31.	Transforming livelihoods: work, migration and poverty in the Tiruppur garment cluster, India	ES/F026633/1	RES-167-25-0296	2008-2010	India
32.	Mining, Social Networks and Rural Livelihoods in Bangladesh	ES/F026641/1	RES-167-25-0297	2008-2011	Bangladesh
33.	Development discourses: higher education and poverty reduction in South Africa	ES/F026749/1	RES-167-25-0302	2008-2009	South Africa
34.	Building a Brighter Future: A Randomized Evaluation of Slum-Housing Upgrading	ES/F026900/1	RES-167-25-0317	2008-2010	Peru, El Salvador, Uruguay
35.	Avon in Africa: Reducing Poverty Through Global Exchange	ES/F026943/1	RES-167-25-0321	2008-2010	South Africa
36.	Linking Migration, Reproduction and Wellbeing: Exploring The Reproductive Strategies of Low-Income Rural-Urban Migrants in Vietnam	ES/F027028/1	RES-167-25-0327	2008-2011	Vietnam
37.	Enforcing Transparency: Enhancing Poor People's Access to Information in India	ES/F027141/1	RES-167-25-0337	2008-2011	India
38.	Poverty and maternal health in Ghana: A spatial analysis of exclusion from care	ES/F027206/1	RES-167-25-0343	2008-2011	Ghana
39.	Improving Educational Evaluation and Quality in China	ES/F027303/1	RES-167-25-0353	2008-2011	China
40.	What Development Interventions Work? The long-term impact and cost-effectiveness of anti-poverty interventions in Bangladesh	ES/F027419/1	RES-167-25-0361	2008-2010	Bangladesh
41.	Chronic Poverty and Aspirations Failures	ES/F027443/1	RES-167-25-0364	2008-2009	Argentina, India
42.	Proposal to conceptually integrate social determinants of health research and capabilities approach to development and social justice.	ES/F02679X/1	RES-167-25-0369	2008-2010	Theoretical only
43.	Finance and formalisation as mechanisms for poverty reduction in Africa	ES/F027524/1	RES-167-25-0371	2008-2009	Ghana, Tanzania

44.	An experimental analysis of network and group formation for collective action	ES/F027532/1	RES-167-25-0372	2008-2010	Zimbabwe
45.	Identifying barriers to TB diagnosis and treatment under a new rapid diagnostic scheme.	ES/F027702/1	RES-167-25-0387	2008-2012	Nigeria, Ethiopia, Yemen
46.	Contested development?: intimate partner violence and women's employment in urban and rural Tanzania	ES/F027974/1	RES-167-25-0422	2008-2010	Tanzania
PHASE 2					
47.	Improving Teacher Development and Educational Quality in China: Examining Schools as Professional Learning Communities	ES/H030352/1	RES-167-25-0428	2010-2014	China
48.	Achieving Policy Coherence in Challenging Environments: Risk Management and Aid Culture in Sudan and Afghanistan	ES/H03269X/1	RES-167-25-0439	2010-2013	Afghanistan, Sudan
49.	Challenging the Investment Climate Paradigm: governance, investment and poverty reduction in Vietnam	ES/H032940/1	RES-167-25-0443	2010-2013	Vietnam
50.	The Development of Migrant Villages under China's Rapid Urbanization: Implications for Poverty and Slum Policies	ES/H033025/1	RES-167-25-0448	2010-2012	China
51.	Healthy Urbanisation/ Nutritional Improvement for children in urban Chile and Kenya (NICK) Change of name early on in the project	ES/H033211/1	RES-167-25-0461	2010-2014	Kenya, Chile
52.	Alcohol Control, Poverty and Development in South Africa	ES/H033351/1	RES-167-25-0473	2010-2013	South Africa
53.	Agency and Governance in Contexts of Civil Conflict	ES/H033459/1	RES-167-25-0481	2010-2013	India, South Africa, Colombia, Lebanon, Cote d'Ivoire
54.	Understanding the Tipping Point of Urban Conflict: Violence, Cities, and Poverty Reduction in the Developing World: Santiago, Dili, Nairobi, Patna	ES/H033475/1	RES-167-25-0483	2010-2012	Kenya, India, Chile, Timor Leste
55.	Urban Growth and Poverty in Mining Africa	ES/H033521/1	RES-167-25-0488	2010-2013	Ghana, Tanzania, Angola
56.	Biomedical and Health Experimentation in South Asia: Critical Perspectives on collaboration, governance and competition	ES/H033726/1	RES-167-25-0503	2010-2013	India, Nepal, Sri Lanka

57.	Wellbeing and Poverty Pathways	ES/H033769/1	RES-167-25-0507	2010-2014	Zambia, India
58.	Community and institutional responses to the challenges facing poor urban people in an era of global warming in Bangladesh	ES/H033793/1	RES-167-25-0510	2010-2014	Bangladesh
59.	Citizens and the state in urban India: an in-depth investigation on emergent citizenship and public goods provision	ES/H033912/1	RES-167-25-0520	2010-2012	India
60.	Shame, social exclusion and the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes: A study in seven countries	ES/H034307/1	RES-167-25-0557	2010-2012	India, Uganda, Chile, Pakistan, South Korea, Norway
61.	Local governance, urban mobility and poverty reduction. Lessons from Medellín, Colombia	ES/H034366/1	RES-167-25-0562	2010-2012	Colombia
62.	Understanding External Determinants of the Effectiveness of Cash Conditional Transfers	ES/H034374/1	RES-167-25-0563	2010-2013	Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Argentina
63.	Challenging the Development Paradigm: assessing accountability and equity of global institutions in climate-change governance responses to the poor	ES/H034528/1	RES-167-25-0576	2010-2013	Ghana
64.	Making Space for the Poor: Law, Rights, Regulation and Street-Trade in the 21st Century	ES/H034692/1	RES-167-25-0591	2010-2013	India, South Africa, Tanzania, Senegal
65.	The Economic and Social Consequences of Armed Conflict in Colombia: Evidence for Designing Effective Policies in Conflict and Post-Conflict Regions	ES/H034714/1	RES-167-25-0593	2010-2012	Colombia
66.	The Influence of DFID-Sponsored State Building-Oriented Research on British Policy in Fragile, Post-Conflict Environments	ES/H035877/1	RES-167-25-0596	2011-2013	Nepal, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, UK
67.	Multidimensional Poverty: Enriching Methodologies of Measurement & Policy Analysis	ES/I032827/1	RES-167-25-0617	2011-2014	Mexico, Peru, Bangladesh
68.	Pregnancy termination trajectories in Zambia: the socio-economic costs	ES/I032967/1	RES-167-25-0626	2011-2014	Zambia
69.	The Long Run History of Economic Inequality	ES/I033114/1	RES-167-25-0640	2012-2014	Global
70.	Lone Mothers in South Africa - The role of social security in respecting and protecting dignity	ES/I033130/1	RES-167-25-0642	2011-2014	South Africa

71.	How can schools help African children cope with the impacts of disease and poverty? An investigation of 'AIDS competent' schools in rural Zimbabwe	ES/I033459/1	RES-167-25-0672	2012-2014	Zimbabwe
72.	Lay and Institutional Knowledges of Domestic Violence Law: Towards Active Citizenship in Rural and Urban Cambodia	ES/I033475/1	RES-167-25-0674	2012-2015	Cambodia
73.	Temporary Migration and Economic Development: the Triple-Win Policy Vision applied to North Africa	ES/I033521/1	RES-167-25-0678	2012-2014	Egypt, Morocco
74.	Socio-economic inequalities and the MDGs: building evidence to support equitable improvement in maternal and newborn health in Asia & Africa	ES/I033572/1	RES-167-25-0682	2011-2015	India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Malawi
75.	Labour Conditions and the Working Poor in China and India	ES/I033599/1	RES-167-25-0684	2011-2014	China, India
76.	Resources, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Technology and Work in Production and Distribution Systems: Rice in India	ES/I033769/1	RES-167-25-0700	2011-2014	India
77.	The Promises of Fibre-Optic Broadband: A Pipeline for Economic Development in East Africa	ES/I033777/1	RES-167-25-0701	2011-2014	Kenya, Rwanda
78.	Charity, Philanthropy and Development in Colombo, Sri Lanka	ES/I033890/1	RES-167-25-0713	2011-2014	Sri Lanka
79.	Leveraging Buying Power for Development - Ethical consumption and public procurement in Chile and Brazil	ES/I033904/1	RES-167-25-0714	2011-2013	Chile, Brazil
80.	Menstruation and the cycle of poverty: Does the provision of sanitary pads improve the attendance and educational outcomes of girls in school?	ES/I034145/1	RES-167-25-0737	2011-2014	Uganda
81.	Expanding Education to Reduce Poverty: Public and private provision	ES/I034153/1	RES-167-25-0738	2011-2013	Ghana
82.	Farm scale and viability: an assessment of black economic empowerment in sugar production in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa.	ES/I034242/1	RES-167-25-0746	2011-2015	South Africa
83.	The Economic and Social Effects of Care Dependence in Later Life	ES/I034331/1	RES-167-25-0754	2011-2013	Peru, Mexico, China, Nigeria

84.	Is clash of institutions a cause of rural poverty?	ES/J017620/1	n/a	2013-2015	Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea
85.	Inter-Agency Research on Strengthening Community Based Child Protection for Vulnerable Children in Sierra Leone	ES/J017663/1	n/a	2013-2015	Sierra Leone
86.	Tangled in their own (safety)-nets'? Resilience, adaptability, and transformability of fishing communities in the face of the World fisheries crisis	ES/J017825/1	n/a	2012-2015	Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Ghana, Fiji
87.	Energy Scarcity, Food Supply Chain Transformation, and Poverty Reduction in the Emerging Economies: the Case of Brazil, China, and India	ES/J017841/1	n/a	2012-2014	China, Brazil, India
88.	Legislating and implementing welfare policy reforms: What works politically in Africa and why?	ES/J018058/1	n/a	2012-2015	Africa
89.	The impact of mobile phones on young people's lives and life chances in sub-Saharan Africa: a three country study to inform policy and practice	ES/J018082/1	n/a	2012-2015	Ghana, Malawi, South Africa
90.	Impact assessment based on self-reported attribution in complex contexts of rural livelihood transformations in Africa	ES/J018090/1	n/a	2012-2015	Malawi, Ethiopia
91.	New mobile citizens and waterpoint sustainability in rural Africa	ES/J018120/1	n/a	2012-2015	Africa
92.	Measuring complex outcomes of environment and development interventions	ES/J018155/1	n/a	2012-2015	Cambodia, Tanzania
93.	Food riots and food rights: the moral and political economy of accountability for hunger	ES/J018317/1	n/a	2012-2014	India, Bangladesh, Kenya, Mozambique
94.	Understanding resilience in later life in a low resource setting	ES/J018392/1	n/a	2012-2015	Kenya
95.	The design and evaluation of a mobile learning intervention for the training and supervision of community health workers	ES/J018619/1	n/a	2012-2014	Kenya
96.	Field experiment on the behavioural foundations of inter-group discrimination and its effects on public good provision in India	ES/J018643/1	n/a	2012-2015	India
97.	ICTs and the changing health knowledge economy: how people find health information in Bangladesh	ES/J018651/1	n/a	2012-2015	Bangladesh

98.	Social Protection and Disability: Policy Lessons from Vietnam	ES/J018864/1	n/a	2012-2014	Vietnam
99.	Broadcast media, ICT-generated public opinion and political accountability in Africa	ES/J018945/1	n/a	2012-2014	Kenya, Zambia
100.	Labour law, development and poverty alleviation in low and middle-income countries	ES/J019402/1	n/a	2015-2016	Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Chile, South Africa, India
101.	Institutional Arrangements in Land Deals in Africa: Local Impacts of Global Resource Scarcity	ES/J01754X/1	n/a	2012-2015	Kenya, Ghana, Zambia

## **Annex Two: Survey questionnaire**

# Annex Two: Survey questionnaire

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## Introduction

Ecorys and Institute of Development Studies have been commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Department for International Development (DFID) to conduct an evaluation study to assess the impact of research funded through the ESRC-DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation Research (the scheme) on policy makers, practitioners, and other groups outside academia.

Since its inception in 2005, the scheme has funded social science research on issues relating to economic, social and policy development in low-income countries. An explicit aim of the scheme is to deliver demonstrable impact on policy and practice for poverty reduction in developing countries.

As part of this evaluation we are asking a key researcher from each funded project to complete a survey exploring the impact of the activity supported through the grant they were involved with and the pathways by which that impact is achieved. We hope this will give you an opportunity to expand on the information you have provided in your End of Award and/or Impact Report and allow us to explore the processes underpinning impact to aid lesson learning for future programmes.

We are particularly keen on exploring the demonstrable impact of your research. We would therefore be most grateful if you could a) give us your view on the impact your research has achieved and b) provide evidence for this as far as possible. You may want to draw on monitoring activities you conducted, website links, media coverage of your research, etc. In your description of impact, please be as specific as possible (i.e. who or what have you influenced, how did this change come about?).

Please note, this survey is being sent to all grantees of the Joint Fund. Given that individual grantees will be at different stages in the research process, some questions may not be relevant to you. Please use your own judgement here providing a 'not applicable' response when appropriate, though we would be grateful if you could provide a short explanation as to why this is the case.

The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. You can complete the survey within multiple sessions and simply return to the page you were working on by clicking on the link in the email we sent you. Your answers will be saved automatically.

If you have any questions about the survey or the evaluation process please do not hesitate to contact us on e-mail: [Victoria.Pelka@uk.ecorys.com](mailto:Victoria.Pelka@uk.ecorys.com).

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## QUESTIONNAIRE TEMPLATE

### Key details

Date of submission of final research report (month/year or Not applicable).

### Desired Impact

To begin, we would like to know a little more about the intended impact of your work.

1. Please provide a paragraph describing the intended impact of your research project.
2. Please describe the steps you took to increase your understanding of the policy context of your research project.

### Ways of working

We are interested in the role that ways of working play in pathways to impact, in particular the involvement of in-country researchers and in-country partners

1. a. Did the research involve in-country researchers?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Not applicable
- b. Please tick all applicable functions that in-country researchers fulfilled.

Function in the research team	Please tick as appropriate
Equal research partner(s)	
Field research/ supporting data collation	
Data processing (transcription, data cleaning, analysis)	
Analyst/ developing research findings and report writing	
Other: Please specify .....	

2. What role did in-country researchers play in influencing the impact of your research (e.g. in producing the research, disseminating the findings)?
3. a. What types of in-country partners did you engage with during your project?

A **partner** is any person, group or institution that significantly contributed to the delivery of your research project (design or implementation of research). By partner we do not mean your target audience with who you aim(ed) to share your research findings (those fall into the category of 'stakeholders' and will be covered later in this survey). If you feel that your partners and stakeholders overlap, feel free to mention them in both parts of the survey.

Type of in-country partner	Please tick as appropriate
NGOs (non-governmental organisations) and community organisations (CSOs/CBOs)	
INGOs (international non-governmental organisations)	
National policy makers	
International policy makers	
Think tanks and other relevant 'intermediaries'	
Private companies	
Universities	
Other: Please specify .....	

b. To what extent did each of these identified in-country partners influence the impact of your project?

### Engaging with stakeholders

In this section we are interested in finding out how you identified and engaged with stakeholders and the role that stakeholders played in the impact of your research. A **stakeholder** is any person, group or institution that has an interest in and/or will be influenced by your research. These might include research participants, those involved in service provision or those involved in policy making processes.

- Please identify the key stakeholder groups for your research (Please begin by naming each specific stakeholder in order of importance (this could be either an individual or organisation), with the stakeholder you deem the most important first. Next, use the drop down menus on the right to categorise the type of stakeholder.)

Name of stakeholder	Please select the type of stakeholder
	NGOs (non-governmental organisations) and community organisations (CSOs/CBOs)
	INGOs (international non-governmental organisations)
	National policy makers
	International policy makers
	Think tanks and other relevant 'intermediaries'
	Private companies
	Ultimate beneficiaries of research (e.g. poor individuals or communities)

Name of stakeholder	Please select the type of stakeholder
	Universities
	Other: Please specify .....

2. For each stakeholder group:

- Please describe the process by which you identified xxxx to be involved on your project.
- State at what point(s) in the research project you engaged with xxxxx.

Stage	Please tick as appropriate
Prior to undertaking the research, at bid design stage	
During the inception phase, i.e. the period immediately following the award of the funding	
During the delivery of the project	
At the dissemination stage	
Other: Please specify .....	

- Please describe the mechanisms you used to engage with xxxx at each stage of engagement including the dissemination stage (i.e. workshops, conferences, informal consultation, etc.).
  - Describe the most effective mechanisms of stakeholder engagement in relation to this research project.
  - In your view, clarify to what extent your engagement with these stakeholders played a part in your impact (please also feel free to include instances where stakeholders instigated the engagement with you themselves, explaining how this came about).
3. a. To what extent did you have relevant connections to research users and policy makers before you embarked on the research?
- b. To what extent do you feel these connections influenced your impact?
4. Did you engage with others, beyond the stakeholder groups identified above, who work to promote a body of evidence to which your research could contribute (e.g. policy/science advisors, knowledge brokers, media and other intermediaries)? If so, please describe the type of stakeholder and their role in promoting your research.
5. Please provide a brief description of the events held to engage stakeholders in the research, during the research and at dissemination, including their purpose, the size and type of the audience, and timeframe.
6. On reflection, do you feel that the stakeholder groups you chose to engage with were the best groups for expanding the impact of your work? Please explain your answer.

## The impact of your research

This section focuses on the impact outside of academia that your research has had to date. We realise that some projects are not long since completion or are still in progress and we will take this into account at the point of analysis. We would also like to hear about activity supported through Impact Maximisation Awards.

1. Beyond your reporting requirements to ESRC, how did/do you monitor what impact your research was/is having?
2. If your project is completed, are you still monitoring the impact of your research? (Yes, No, Not applicable) If so, how?
3. Please provide any examples of the impact your research has had to date.

*ESRC distinguishes 3 forms of impact:*

- **Instrumental:** *influencing the development of policy, practice or service provision, shaping legislation, altering behaviour.*
- **Conceptual:** *contributing to the understanding of policy issues, reframing debates.*
- **Capacity building:** *through technical and personal skill development.*

You may be able to provide example(s) for each category of impact or it may be that your impact falls under more than one of the categories. Most importantly, for each example of impact you describe please be as **specific** as possible and please state what **evidence** you can provide for this impact.

4. Are you aware of any mentions of your scheme-funded research or research findings in the media and if so, did an impact arise from this?
  - a. If yes, please describe in as much detail as possible including the media type/source, the reason for mention, the nature of the debate (e.g. support, debate, criticism etc.) as well as your perceptions of the accuracy by which your ideas were represented and any notable consequences of the media mention.
  - b. What evidence can you provide to demonstrate the impact of these media citations/mentions?
5. Are you aware of any citations of your scheme-funded research or research findings in policy documents? If so, can you please provide the details, with hyperlinks to the documents whenever possible.
6. Invitations to researchers:
  - a. Did researchers on your project take up advisory roles, present work, participate in conferences and meetings, or to attend high profile events as a direct result of the research?
  - b. If so, please describe the impact that arose from this, giving evidence where possible.
7. Has your research had the level and type of impact you anticipated at the outset of the project? If the nature of impact differed from what you anticipated at the outset, please explain how and why you feel this is.

8. Do you think that submitting ideas on communication and engagement / a Pathway to Impact Plan to the ESRC during the application stage made a difference to your actual impact? Please explain your answer.
9. Please describe how DFID staff have been engaged with your project (i.e. during the research, or in supporting dissemination) and how this has influenced your impact.

### **Challenges and success factors for achieving impact**

Whether and how research and associated activity achieves impact is typically subject to a vast array of factors, many of which may be outside the control of the project. Here we are interested in finding out what factors you perceive to have been most crucial in your work achieving impact and what you perceive as the greatest challenges to your work achieving impact.

1. What were the key factors that you feel facilitated/aided your ability to have an impact (i.e. effective engagement with research users, strong understanding of policy/practice context, specific external factors, working with other projects and programmes, etc.)? Please list in order of importance, with a corresponding brief explanation for each factor.
2. Please give an explanation of the key factors that you feel hindered your ability to have an impact (please list in order of importance, with a corresponding brief explanation for each factor).
3. Please describe any mechanisms put in place for dealing with these challenges.
4. Is there anything you could have done, or would do differently in future, which might have improved the impact of your work?

### **Next steps**

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.

In the coming months we will be constructing a number of case studies to further explore the impact of scheme-funded research and so we may be in touch with you again. In the meantime:

1. Is there anyone, perhaps a user of your research, you think we should speak with to help us better understand the impact of your project? Please provide name, role and contact details for each individual, as well as any notes about why you think they should be contacted.
2. Is this email address the best way of contacting you? If no, please type alternative email address.

## **Annex Three: Case study reporting template**

# Annex Three: Case study reporting template

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## 1. Overview

Please provide a short 150 words summary, including objectives, activities and target group

## 2. Evaluating Pathways to Impact

Please describe your findings for each of the sub-categories below. Should there be some additional sub-categories that you feel are relevant in relation to pathways to impact then please add accordingly.

### a. Relevance of research for users

(What approaches did researchers take to understand the policy landscape, i.e. mapping exercises, situational analysis; engagement of users in drafting of initial research questions)

### b. User engagement

(Existence of user engagement strategies; identification of research users; how were research users engaged, by whom and at what stages, how was research communicated and utilised by users)

### c. Dissemination

How effectively were findings and outputs from the project disseminated to a range of stakeholders? (i.e. analysis of any events held; media outreach; website and social media traffic; feedback from users)

## 2 Evaluating Research Impacts

### a. Planning for impact

Assessment of Pathway to Impact Plan at proposal stage (detail, depth). Was the Pathways to Impact plan monitored? Which targets were set? Review the project documentation in particular for relevant details here.

### b. Range and depth of impacts

What are the range and depth of impacts that the research is known to have achieved? (include clear evidence of demonstrable impact, and explain **how** and **why** the impacts were achieved in practice/key mechanisms of change). How does this reflect expectations/project aims? What was not achieved (to date)? Were there any unexpected impacts?

### c. Sustainability and Future impacts

(Assessment of whether the achieved impacts are likely to be sustained; any outstanding or anticipated future impacts)

### d. Strength of evidence base

*Describe the evidence used to substantiate the types of impact described above. Mention any challenges encountered in collection of evidence.*

### e. What were the other contributory drivers of impact?

*Please describe the other external influences/events resulting in or constraining impact*

### f. Comparison with Cumulative Influence model

*The following model represents an idealised pathway to impact for research, emphasising the iterative and cumulative process through which research may eventually gain traction with policy makers and practitioners. Clearly such a comprehensive approach will not be possible for all projects, but we can use the model to help shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of ESRC-DFID projects, as well as to generate new insights into how research can impact on policy (for example when projects have to deliver over a shorter time frame).*

*Please describe how well the pathway and outcomes of the case study project fits with this model, both overall, and in terms of which phases and indicators of impact were present (and which were not). Did the project do anything for example to 'fast-track' its impact, circumventing certain stages of the model, or was it limited in generating 'cumulative influence'? Use this analysis to provide a summary assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the effectiveness of the project, and its pathway to impact.*

Phase	Examples of impact
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Early research emerges – speculative, theoretical and exploratory;</li><li>• Mainly academic in nature and style – working papers, journals, etc;</li><li>• Little resonance in policy circles and little awareness or uptake;</li><li>• Few opportunities for dissemination or communication.</li></ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Body of research grows – issues clarified, empirical case studies emerge;</li><li>• Interest provoked in policy networks – begins to inform think tank and policy research organisation outputs;</li><li>• Research sections in government begin to disseminate findings from funded centres;</li><li>• Tentative engagement in policy circles – debate started, issue awareness.</li></ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Powerful and broad consensus emerges in the research;</li><li>• Intermediaries 'translate' findings for officials, policy entrepreneurs promote the issue within government policy windows exploited;</li><li>• Partial adoption in policy; leads to demand for further research;</li><li>• Issues become part of mainstream policy discourse.</li></ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Full adoption in policy;</li><li>• Research consolidation, refinement and strengthening – gaps identified and new studies commissioned (centrally and in country);</li><li>• International and national policy and research engagement around the subject intensifies;</li><li>• More interactive and cooperative relationship between research and policy makers.</li></ul>

### 3 Evaluating success factors

#### a. Key success factors

*Which key factors (project activities and processes) contributed to the success of the research? (i.e. understanding of research policy and timescales, effective engagement with users, use of suitable catalysts/champions of change, working with other projects/programmes). How did this relate to external context factors?*

#### b. Key inhibiting factors

### 4 Lessons learnt and identifying good practice

What lessons can be identified to support the development of impact generation? Is there anything you would have done differently? To what degree can the project be seen as (transferable) good practice (please qualify your judgement)? Are there any lessons on the development of methodology for future impact evaluation studies in this area, and of this scheme specifically?

### 5 List of people interviewed

Name	Job Title	Organisation	Role in Project

## **Annex Four: List of case studies**

## Annex Four: List of case studies

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### In-country field visits

1. Porter, G (2006-2010) Children, transport and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa: developing a child-centred evidence base to improve policy and change thinking across Africa, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0028
2. Pridmore, P (2010-2014) Nutritional Improvement for children in urban Chile and Kenya, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0461
3. Hulme, D (2010-2014) Community and institutional responses to the challenges facing poor urban people in an era of global warming in Bangladesh, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0510
4. Matthews, Z (2008-2011), Poverty and maternal health in Ghana: A spatial analysis of exclusion from care, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0343

### Telephone case studies

1. Noble, M (2011-2014) Lone Mothers in South Africa - The role of social security in respecting and protecting dignity, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0642
2. Ansell, N (2007-2009) Averting 'New Variant Famine' in Southern Africa: building food-secure livelihoods with AIDS-affected young people, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0167
3. Bebbington, A (2007-2010) Social Movements and Poverty, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0170
4. Wu, F (2010-2012) The Development of Migrant Villages under China's Rapid Urbanization: Implications for Poverty and Slum Policies, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0448
5. Williams, G (2008-2010) Embedding poor people's voices in local governance: participation and political empowerment in India, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0268
6. Wessells, M (2013-2015) Inter-Agency Research on Strengthening Community Based Child Protection for Vulnerable Children, Phase 2, ES/J017663/1
7. Brown, A (2010-2013) Making Space for the Poor: Law, Rights, Regulation and Street-Trade in the 21st Century, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0591
8. Coast, E (2011-2014) Pregnancy termination trajectories in Zambia: the socio-economic costs , Phase 2, RES-167-25-0626; Impact maximisation grant 2014 – 2015
9. Wilkie, D (2013-2016) Measuring complex outcomes of environment and development interventions, Phase 2, ES/J018155/1
10. Walker, R (2010-2012/13) Shame, social exclusion and the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes: A study in seven countries, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0557
11. Jeffery, R (2010-2013) Biomedical and Health Experimentation in South Asia: Critical Perspectives on collaboration, governance and competition, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0110
12. Thomas, S (2008-2010) Improving Educational Evaluation and Quality in China, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0353
13. Morley, L (2006-2010) Widening Participation in Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania: Developing an Equity Scorecard, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0078

14. Ibáñez, A (2010-2012) The Economic and Social Consequences of Armed Conflict in Colombia: Evidence for Designing Effective Policies in Conflict and Post-Conflict Regions, Phase 2, RES-167-25-0593
15. Gardner, K (2008-2011) Mining, Social Networks and Rural Livelihoods in Bangladesh, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0297
16. Quisumbing, A (2008-2010) What Development Interventions Work? The long-term impact and cost-effectiveness of anti-poverty interventions in Bangladesh, Phase 1, RES-167-25-0361

## **Annex Five: Summaries of the key findings of the 20 case studies**

## Annex Five: Summaries of key findings of the 20 case studies

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### 1. Children, transport, and mobility in sub-Saharan Africa: developing a child-centred evidence base to improve policy and change thinking across Africa, Dr Gina Porter, 2006-2010, RES-167-25-0028, Phase 1 (in-country case study)

This project investigated mobility issues faced by children through child-centred research in three sub-Saharan African countries (Ghana, Malawi, and South Africa). Constraints on access to education, health, and livelihoods were explored in diverse settings. Child and adult researchers were trained in mobility research methods and carried out quantitative and qualitative data collection, alongside interviews and focus group discussions with relevant community members.

**Impact achieved:** In terms of capacity building impacts, the child researchers learnt how to undertake research and collect data, create presentations and speak in public; the teachers of the child researchers were sensitised to the ethical issues in research particularly pertaining to research with child subjects before the data collection took place; the southern based researchers learnt how to work with child researchers and increased their knowledge of methods for studying mobility. With regards to conceptual impact, this project provided the first multi-site evidence base and comparative account of children's daily mobility difficulties in sub-Saharan Africa. In doing so, it has raised the profile of mobility issues and service accessibility in social development discourse. In addition, the Institute of Education at the University of Cape Coast has adapted its teacher training curriculum to include information about child mobility issues (instrumental impact).

**Key determinants of impact:** First, the prior relationships that the northern and southern-based researchers had with partners and stakeholders - nationally and internationally - were a key determinant of impact. Second, the Country Consultative Groups were instrumental to the project. The range of local, regional, national, and international stakeholders in the group inputted into the outline of the research questions; learnt about intermediary results and suggested revisions to the work plan accordingly; helped with dissemination of the results; and acted on the findings. Third, the involvement of child researchers was vital to understanding the mobility issues faced. The contribution of the child researchers also allowed for better community engagement and advocacy messaging. In addition, the project carried out pilot studies before full field surveying took place, and extra funding was obtained to provide additional research outputs to be used in dissemination.

### 2. Nutritional Improvement for children in urban Chile and Kenya (NICK), Professor Pat Judith Pridmore, 2010-2014, RES-167-25-0461, Phase 2 (in-country case study)

The study 'Nutritional Improvement for children in urban Chile and Kenya' (NICK) focussed on the issues of child obesity in Chile and child undernutrition in Kenya. The study facilitated participatory action research to find the most effective ways to change knowledge, attitudes and practices relating to the social determinants of child malnutrition at municipal and community level. As part of the study, relevant practitioners tackling malnutrition and community members from the informal settlements were brought together to form Urban Nutrition Working Groups (UNWGs). The study sought to build capacity of UNWG members to work inter-sectorally to develop, implement and evaluate small scale actions to change social determinants of child malnutrition.

**Impact achieved:** Capacity building impact was realised the local junior researchers, members of the UNWGs and the target communities. The participation of the in-country junior researchers in the study was linked to PhD scholarships. Members of the UNWGs in both countries gained skills in critically thinking and shared learning about interventions on nutrition and the practicalities of inter-sectoral collaboration. Capacity building activities in Kenya and Chile were tailored to the particular needs of the communities. In relation to conceptual impact, the study has helped to strengthen the evidence base on 'what works' to enable inter-sectoral urban planning – an approach that gained increasing recognition on an international level. The study has also helped to increase demand for research in the counties it operated in. The project had a very direct instrumental impact in both countries by setting up and running the UNWGs successfully therefore i) influencing how different sectors and professionals worked together to find solutions to child malnutrition and ii) providing training and resources to communities in informal settlements. For example, in Kenya the field visit revealed that the data generated by the anthropometric surveys are being used by the County government of Mombasa to inform the design of programmes and services.

**Key determinants of impact:** First, the engagement of in-country researchers with the detailed local policy understanding, track record in the area of study, and access to relevant networks. Second, the engagement strategy of forming UNWGs with specific roles and responsibilities for each member played a key role in enabling impact. The mix of these groups, with representatives from different professions and levels of influence enabled the group to pool expertise but also overcome barriers to inter-sectoral collaboration. Third, regular dissemination events structured the research phases and engaged policy makers effectively, whilst also enhancing their appreciation for and understanding of research. Finally, the researchers understood that part of their role involved capacity building and engagement with relevant stakeholders.

### 3. Community and institutional responses to the challenges facing poor urban people in an era of global warming in Bangladesh, Professor David Hulme, 2010-2014, RES-167-25-0510, Phase 2 (in-country case study)

The project explored climate change impacts and adaptation in poor urban settlements of Bangladesh. The research aimed to raise awareness and understanding of climate change impacts on urban poor communities at four research user levels: people who live in low-income city dwellings (urban poor); local and national policymakers and professionals; and professional communities involved in housing design (architects).

**Impact achieved:** The project built capacity of 25 in-country researchers and 30-40 architectural students. In addition, by involving a national advisory panel in the design and engagement of the research, these high-profile experts gained skills and knowledge that they can continue to draw on in their work. With community groups and slum dwellers, the team felt there was a change in their understanding of climate change issues. Partly due to their networking in policy circles, and their reputation as urban researchers, members of the research team have been invited to contribute to several policy initiatives relating to the urban poor. In terms of changes in practice, there have been major improvements to drains and flooding infrastructure in two settlements. However, the team were conservative in attributing their research as a significant causal factor in these improvements.

**Key determinants of impact:** First, the research team had access to key stakeholder networks which enabled them to seek advice on their research design, engage appropriately with local communities and disseminate their findings to influential policymakers. For instance, they involved widely known, high-profile advisory members in the research which ensured that the regional events were attended by senior stakeholders and the dissemination had stronger impact. Second, high quality training of in-country

researchers enabled the newly-trained team to form an independent research organisation as a resource to support future urban research.

#### **4. Poverty and maternal health in Ghana: a spatial analysis of exclusion from care, Professor Zoe Matthews, 2008-2011, RES-167-25-0343, Phase 1 (in-country case study)**

The project involved close collaboration between northern and southern based researchers; government analysts; and local and international civil society and non-governmental organisations working in the fields of demography, health, and geography. It used existing data sets to spatially analyse the relationship between poverty and poorly utilised maternal health services in Ghana.

**Impact achieved:** The technical skills for researchers and analysts involved in the study - in the Centre of Remote Sensing and Geographical Information Services (CERGIS) and the Regional Institute of Population Studies (RIPS), University of Ghana - were developed in spatial analysis. Government analysts and technicians were also trained in advanced statistical and spatial skills and are able to run complex analyses across all the data they hold. In terms of conceptual impact, the research improved empirical understanding of the impact distances have to accessing maternal health services and its link with poverty. With respect to health strategies, the study has informed how resources should be allocated and prioritised to improve maternal health.

**Key determinants of impact:** First, through the project, the research team developed a good working relationship with the Ghana Family Health Division (the government division of the Ministry of Health responsible for maternal and child policies). Second, this project disseminated the research findings for both academic and non-academic audiences. The maps (mapping maternal health services in the country) worked in engaging a wide variety of stakeholders. Third, the project partners included non-governmental organisations and civil society coalitions on maternal health advocacy and community engagement. This allowed a direct link for the research to be disseminated to those whose job it is to lobby for policy change and to help communities improve their own lives. Fourth, the timing of this research coincided with an influx of donor funding for the MDG Acceleration Framework.

#### **5. Lone Mothers in South Africa – The role of Society in respecting and protecting dignity, Professor Michael William Noble, 2011-2014, RES-167-25-0642, Phase 2**

The project investigated the extent to which social security plays a role in respecting and protecting dignity for lone mothers in South Africa. A primary aim of the project was to inform the social security policy making and implementation process for the benefit of low income lone mothers.

**Impact achieved:** Following the research, the PI was able to claim that policymakers had shown interest in the findings and acknowledged their importance (by adding an important dimension to the policy debate); however they acknowledged that there had been minimal policy changes to date.

**Key determinants of impact:** First, through previous research, the team possessed a strong understanding of the policy/practice context in relation to social security design and implementation. Second, the researchers' had strong links with policy makers and influencers. Third, the research was of high quality, and was recognised as such by key policy makers (i.e. the Chief of Social Policy at UNICEF). Fourth, the research team felt that submitting ideas on communication and engagement to the ESRC during the application stage helped them to think through the communication and engagement issues upfront and plan for them.

## **6. Averting 'New Variant Famine' in Southern Africa: building food-secure livelihoods with AIDS-affected young people, Dr Nicola Ansell, 2007-2009, RES-167-25-0167, Phase 1**

The 'New Variant Famine' hypothesis, which was popular at the time the research was undertaken, posits a causal link between high HIV prevalence and recent food insecurity in southern Africa. The research examined whether the way in which AIDS was impinging on children was likely to diminish their prospects of food security in adult life. The research was based on extensive qualitative fieldwork conducted in two rural villages in Malawi and Lesotho, including participatory research with young people, as well as interviews with policy makers and other key informants to explore the linkages with macro-level policies and processes.

**Impact achieved:** The findings from the project did not show clear and unequivocal effects of a relationship between AIDS and the livelihood choices of young people. Given the findings did not present clear policy messages, the scope for impact was less than anticipated. In terms of capacity building, the project engaged 14 local research assistants who were able to develop their skills. Conceptual impact was mainly at an academic level, for instance, the researchers published papers that have been cited in other academic publications.

**Key determinants of impact:** The researchers' considerable efforts to engage and disseminate widely during the project period meant that the project created the potential for considerable impact. However, the nature of the findings meant that this potential was not fully realised. Aspects of the project which worked well included the National Steering Groups, and the dissemination workshops. The former were helpful in terms of understanding the policy contexts, as well as for providing local contextual knowledge to facilitate fieldwork.

## **7. Social Movements and Poverty, Professor Anthony James Bebbington, 2007-2010, RES-167-25-0170, Phase 1**

Working in Peru and South Africa in partnership with the University of the Western Cape and the Peruvian Centre of Social Studies (CEPES), this research sought to explore the relationship between social movements and poverty reduction. In addition, the research sought to promote discussion among social movement leaders and researchers concerned with social movements about the role of social movements in poverty reduction agendas. It also aimed to generate knowledge to help a variety of other actors (government, non-government and international) better understand social movements and so be better able to interact with them constructively.

**Impact achieved:** In terms of conceptual impact, the research project influenced the inclusion of a strong social movements component into the design of the DFID funded Effective States and Inclusive Development (ESID) research programme at Manchester in which the PI and Co-I are highly involved. Project researchers in South Africa also took up opportunities where they were invited to engage with policy makers, and may have influenced policy debates. There are various indications that the project has had an instrumental impact on the policy or practice of actors of different types, including social movements, UN agencies, NGOs, and government officials. However, these impacts, suggested by interviewees, are hard to attribute with much certainty to the research.

**Key determinants of impact:** First, the networks of all of the researchers involved in the project, as well as their credibility and track records built up throughout their careers, have facilitated project impact. Second, the Co-I who led the South African research felt that building relationships with those who are

interested in making use of the research for the benefit of poor people, and in a position to use it, was critical. Third, the in-country partners contributed to the project's impact. The research partners, CEPES and the Programme in Land and Agrarian Studies at the University of the Western Cape, provided an in-country infrastructure for the research, and also gave the research an institutional legitimacy tied to the legitimacy of the organisations.

#### **8. The development of migrant villages under China's rapid urbanization: implications for poverty and slum policies, Professor Fulong Wu, 2010-2012, RES-167-25-0448, Phase 2**

This research aimed to: investigate the dynamics of migrant village evolution in China; examine Chinese redevelopment practices for migrant villages; identify the scope for in-situ upgrading as an alternative to the current wholesale redevelopment policy; and, inform Chinese policy makers and provide learning feedback to wider international development communities to cope with the 'Challenge of Slums'.

**Impact achieved:** Two types of capacity building impact emerged from the research: building capacity of masters' students and early career researchers, and continuing professional development for Chinese planning officials. Conceptual impact included invitations to join advisory roles within policy circles, as well as further research in the topic area led by the PI. Consistent with the research findings, practice in Guangdong province has changed from demolition to incremental changes with houses maintained to accommodate migrant workers. However, the researchers did exercise an element of caution when asked whether the change could be directly attributed to the project and its findings.

**Key determinants of impact:** First, in-country collaborators acted as an important bridge between the researchers and the policy makers. In-country partners provided networks and established relationships with people in government, as well as an understanding of how to communicate to different stakeholders. Second, co-construction of knowledge was also an important determinant (i.e. working together with those in the policy field so that both the researchers and policy stakeholders are playing an active role in the generation of the research). Third, there was existing demand for the research. The issues covered in the research were already on the radar of key government officials. Fourth, collaborating with others concerned with the same issues helps create a stronger body of evidence.

#### **9. Embedding Poor People's Voices in Local Governance: participation and political empowerment in India, Dr Glyn Owain Williams, 2008-2010, RES-167-25-0268, Phase 1**

The project looked at three related aspects of political empowerment (poor people's political capabilities, their political space, and their substantive citizenship). It was grounded in the detailed study of four selected locales in West Bengal and Kerala. Activities included field work, the production of qualitative datasets, publication of research findings in a range of targeted academic outlets, and sustained engagement of local beneficiaries through dissemination events to develop their opportunities for activism, networking, and contribution to policy debate.

**Impact achieved:** In terms of capacity building, the PI reports that an unintended outcome of research was capacity building for the team of field assistants involved in the project. There is some evidence to suggest this research stimulated additional research - particularly of the individuals directly involved (conceptual impact) - though this occurred mainly at an academic level.

**Key determinants of impact:** A factor that emerged as influencing the extent to which the research had impact was the extent to which policy makers were or were not engaged with the research community.

Whilst policy makers were engaged with the research community in Kerala, in West Bengal it was reportedly more difficult to attract engagement of policy makers. The status of in-country research institute - who had been working with the state government since the 1970s - was also seen as a facilitating factor impact. Interviewees felt that a lack of time and resources allocated to dissemination activities hindered greater impact.

#### **10. Inter-Agency Research on Strengthening Community-Based Child Protection for Vulnerable Children in Sierra Leone, Professor Michael Wessells, 2013-2015, ES/J017663/1, Phase 2**

The project aims to strengthen child protection practice in Sierra Leone through robust documentation and testing of community-driven action that links communities with aspects of the formal system. The research seeks to test the effectiveness of such interventions through systematic measurement of contextually appropriate measures of children's protection and well-being outcomes, using a quasi-experimental design. The interventions aim to reduce teenage pregnancy through community-led work on family planning, sexual and reproductive health education, and life skills.

**Impact achieved:** The project has built the capacity of the national research team through research training. The project has also included ongoing capacity building for child protection workers across Sierra Leone. The research has had a conceptual impact through stimulating new thinking about how to align and enable collaboration of grassroots processes of child protection with those of the government and formal systems in Sierra Leone and beyond. Instrumental impact was also reported by interviewees through influencing the development of the new Child and Family Welfare Policy (which has cited the research explicitly in the policy document).

**Key determinants of impact:** First, researchers chose to conduct this research in a country where there was already a demand for the findings, and at a key strategic moment with respect to national policy. This existing demand greatly assisted engagement of stakeholders with the research. Second, early, continuous, collaborative engagement with key policy stakeholders was critical in getting buy-in and a sense of ownership. Third, strong relationships with key actors on policy change, particularly within UNICEF, greatly facilitated impact. Fourth, the Joint Fund funded research project is part of a larger package of research activity in Sierra Leone. The project is also part of a wider, global programme, made up of key international agencies working on community-based child protection.

#### **11. Making Space for the Poor: Law, Rights, Regulation and Street-Trade in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Professor Alison Brown, 2010-2013, RES-167-25-0591, Phase 2**

With a focus on street trade, the research sought to understand the risks and vulnerabilities to urban livelihoods of operating in plural and contradictory legal and regulatory environments. It analysed the dynamics of street trade, its formal and informal regulation and critical conflicts for street traders, such as harassment and evictions.

**Impact achieved:** The researchers were able to build the capacity of the street trader organisations through tailored support in response to their needs. For example, some research outputs were instrumental in court cases fought by street vendor associations in different locations. The conceptual impact is considered to be great as there is evidence to support that project ideas have been taken up by practitioners on a national and international level and a greater research interest in the area of informal economies has been created. However, it is not known how widely the evaluation toolkit has been used so far and whether it was instrumental in any decision-making on a policy level.

**Key determinants of impact:** First, having in-country collaborators who have the necessary networks, academic background and credibility facilitated the research process and dissemination. Second, the researchers saw it as important that all team members had a long history of research in the topic. Third, a responsive research design which took account of the local context and needs was regarded as important. The close links and continued engagement of street trader organisations were crucial to making the research methods implementable and outputs useful to the ultimate beneficiaries of this project. Fourth, continuous dissemination to - and feedback from - practitioners and policy makers on a local and international level was a key determinant of impact.

## **12. Pregnancy termination trajectories in Zambia: the socio-economic costs, Dr Ernestina Coast, 2011-2014, RES-167-25-0626, Phase 2; Impact maximisation grant 2014-15**

The study had the following objectives: Understand the role that socio-economic circumstances play in the seeking of abortion and abortion-related services in Zambia; estimate and compare the socio-economic implications of safe abortion and post abortion care (PAC) for women and their households; and understand how and why safe abortion services are not used more fully.

**Impact achieved:** The study has successfully built the capacity of local researchers, journalists and doctors. It also had a conceptual impact in terms of contributing new knowledge to the public and political debate around unsafe abortion (the study provided the first national estimates of health system costs of abortion in Zambia) and has reignited discussions around the topic. The findings have been used by many different actors. Instrumentally the project has, up to now, had less impact but it seems very likely that the findings will feed into policy making and service provision in the future.

**Key determinants of impact:** First, the choice of an in-country partner (who is a medical expert in the field of study) added credibility to the research, as well as access to the necessary networks to practitioners and policy circles. However, having non-Zambian researchers on the team was also crucial and made the findings less vulnerable to accusations of being biased. Second, taking a collaborative approach with target stakeholders and combining dissemination with skill sharing was regarded as important. Third, the project engaged with a wide variety of stakeholders, enabling multiple pathways through which the research had and could have an impact not just in the short duration of the project but also in the longer term. In addition, the impact maximisation grant has provided the funds for a member of staff dedicated to monitoring and reporting on impact.

## **13. Measuring complex outcomes of environment and development interventions, Dr David Wilkie, 2013-2016, ES/J018155/1, Phase 2**

The project aims to improve the implementation of policies in the environment-development sector through enhanced understanding of what works, based on more appropriate measurement of results. The project seeks to identify affordable, replicable and credible ways to assess the human wellbeing impacts of environment-development activities, and encourage their adoption by practitioners and funders. It brings together the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS, an environmental organization implementing programmes in over 60 countries), two UK academics from University College London and Imperial College and a USA academic from the University of Colorado at Boulder, as well as local and national partners.

**Impact achieved:** Conceptual impact has occurred mainly at an academic level. Through academic seminars and publications, project researchers have engaged academic researchers in the field of

environmental conservation in the UK and worldwide with concepts of human wellbeing and methods of impact evaluation. In terms of changes in practice - according to a number of interviewees - approximately 20 WCS programmes are already using a particular tool developed through the Joint Fund research and promoted within WCS as a way to detect trends in human wellbeing in the field. In addition, the PI advised the USAID Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) on how best to monitor and report human wellbeing impacts of CARPE activities.

**Key determinants of impact:** First, since one of the research partners is an implementing organisation - rather than a research organisation - the research could be disseminated particularly quickly and effectively. Second, the strong pre-existing networks and relationships of project researchers with research users, as well as their good reputations, have been, and are likely to be in the future, important in facilitating impact. These relationships have also facilitated the creation of synergies with areas of related work. Third, the relevance and timeliness of the research topic has facilitated engagement and impact. Fourth, the project has created fora where potential research users can be listened to, allowing research outputs to be tailored to users' needs.

#### **14. Shame, social exclusion and the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes: A study in seven countries, Professor Robert Walker, 2010-2012/13, RES-167-25-0557, Phase 2**

The research sought to investigate the theoretical proposition that poverty induces shame and social inclusion with negative effects on individual and economic performance. By seeking to explore Amartya Sen's contention that shame is a universal attribute of poverty common to people experiencing poverty in all societies, the core empirical research was undertaken in diverse settings within seven countries: Uganda, India, China, Pakistan, Korea, the UK; and Norway.

**Impact achieved:** This project has certainly achieved a range of capacity building impacts, particularly in enhancing the skills of the southern-based researchers. Reported outcomes include improved skills in developing methodologies and research proposals, as well as improved confidence levels to engage with policy makers. In terms of impact in academia, the project has developed new empirical evidence to support the theoretical analysis of shame as an important dimension of poverty across the world. The evidence collated through the project has also made an important contribution to policy debates in this area, both nationally and internationally. The project directly influenced the introduction of the principle that governments should have 'respect for the rights and dignity of people covered by the social security guarantees' as an amendment to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Recommendation 202 on social protection at the 101st Session of the Congress.

**Key determinants of impact:** The significant level of experience and engagement of the core research team in the topic was noteworthy. There was also a clear division of responsibilities and good internal communication. Linked to this, research led by a PI from a prestigious university acted as an important pull factor for a range of influential stakeholders. Further, necessary funding resources were made available at key stages (beyond the support from the Joint Fund). A clear and targeted user engagement strategy was also discernible. In particular, this involved the research team working within the policy making processes of their targeted stakeholders.

#### **15. Biomedical and Health Experimentation in South Asia: Critical Perspectives on collaboration, governance and competition, Professor Roger Jeffery, 2010-2013, RES-167-25-0110, Phase 2**

The researchers explored clinical and public health trials in three South Asian countries to explore the following: whether experimental health interventions and clinical trials provide South Asian countries with

the opportunity to move up the knowledge value-chain; the impact on public health programmes; and the evidence of increased local control over the global processes of medical research and the ways in which they are regulated.

**Impact achieved:** The conceptual contribution of this research project has been significant. The findings have been widely used and debated in all countries, particularly in India. Capacity building impact was documented for the research assistants and the Nepali partner organisation. In their reports to the ESRC as well as in the case study interviews, the researchers stressed that all instrumental impact achieved was indirect and cumulative. In all study sites, legislative and regulatory changes have taken place during or after the project and the team members were in contact with the relevant stakeholders involved in those processes. However, the team was not able to assess which part their specific contribution played in any of these changes.

**Key determinants of impact:** First, the research has built on previous work that the researchers had conducted in this area in the three countries. The established reputation in their fields helped to gain the trust of interviewees as well as access to relevant networks. Second, collaboration with key individuals and organisations in country - particularly those active in the research ethics topic - provided access to relevant high-level stakeholders. This also ensured that the project findings continue to feed into local debates after the end of the project. Third, the choice of type of partner - i.e. in India and in Nepal the partners were NGOs and were therefore quite independent from any political debate or business interest - provided advantages in working on such a contentious topic. Finally, the timing of the research was very favourable – mostly so in India which was not anticipated by the team; but also in Sri Lanka where the team was aware of the Clinical Trials Act being under review.

**16. Improving Educational Evaluation and Quality in China (IEEQC), 2008-2010, RES-167-25-0353; and Improving Teacher Development and Educational Quality in China (ITDEQC), 2010-2014, RES-167-025-0428. Professor Sally Thomas, Phase 1**

2 projects have been funded under the same PI in this topic and country of focus. First, the IEEQC study aimed to investigate the effectiveness and contextual features of schools in China and the local application of innovative school evaluation methods to educational policy and practice in rural and urban secondary schools. Second, the ITDEQC project sought to investigate the nature and extent of teachers' professional development and learning in China as well as the relevance and utility of the concept of professional learning communities to enhance and evaluate teacher quality and school effectiveness in rural and urban secondary schools.

**Impact achieved:** Capacity building was a key component to the project. All NIES<sup>1</sup> (National Institute of Educational Sciences, the in-country partner) and Local Education Authority<sup>2</sup> researchers on both projects (i.e. the southern-based researchers) were the beneficiaries of capacity building in: empirical research design; educational evaluation methodology; statistical analysis techniques; and qualitative data analysis. Some of the capacity building outcomes outlined above clearly overlap with the conceptual impact of the research. The skills transferred to the southern-based researchers have increased

<sup>1</sup> This national body is responsible for monitoring and evaluating school quality in China, with the authority to collect data in schools and the capability to involve stakeholders from all levels of the education system in the research and in the dissemination of findings.

<sup>2</sup> In total, three LEAs and 120+ senior secondary schools in China collected detailed survey data in 2009-2012 to create alternative measures of school performance. LEA staff received guidance to ensure data quality.

understanding of how and when to use the methods of data collection, analysis and educational evaluation. In particular, there is clear evidence of Chinese researchers using the methods adopted through the Joint Fund projects to undertake further research in this topic area in China. As the body of research in this area is growing, there is also evidence of increasing influence on policy debates.

**Key determinants of impact:** Effective user engagement was a significant factor enabling impact. Users were engaged early within the project, and in the case of the LEAs and participating schools, were given a prominent role in carrying out the research. Further, the use of in-country researchers from NIES - with whom the PI had been involved with since 1997 – not only transferred capacity directly to those involved but also supported the communication of the research to a wider audience. It was also important that the project worked with a key national body – the NIES – through a collaborative process. This ensured that the latter had a key stake in the research, and allowed them to provide their inputs and ideas into the research design and implementation.

#### **17. Widening Participation in Higher Education in Ghana and Tanzania: Developing an Equity Scorecard, Professor Louise Morley, 2006-2010, RES-167-25-0078, Phase 1**

The objective of the research was to provide policy-makers, higher education managers and community organisations with new knowledge on how higher education institutions can include representation from wider social constituencies and contribute to poverty alleviation. An additional aim of the project was capacity building through the provision of research training for the researchers involved and the composition of research teams with early, mid and late career international researchers.

**Impact achieved:** In terms of capacity building impacts, a doctoral student based in Ghana achieved an Education Doctorate through her research as part of this project. It was also reported that the findings on sexual harassment have helped to re-frame debates by providing evidence that could be used to re-assess existing policy and practical support interventions. The research findings also generated a lot of public debate in the media. The findings indicated that students with low socioeconomic status were finding it hard to enter universities because of the application fee. For each university the student applied for they had to pay separate fee. The director at a relevant policy organisation, the Tanzanian Commission for Universities (TCU), was in a position to act on this evidence and introduce a centralised admission system – similar to UCAS in the UK. Now applicants apply to TCU to all the universities by paying only one fee. The TCU Director sees the decision to implement this central system as being directly influenced by the research.

**Key determinants of impact:** First, the engagement of advisory groups and other key stakeholders enabled greater impact. Second, dissemination included high profile events and significant media engagement. In addition, findings were communicated in a way that is tailored to the audience. Third, the research team possessed good policy contacts, including in-country networks. Fourth, the demand for research into wider participation in higher education in the countries of focus was high.

#### **18. The Economic and Social Consequences of Armed Conflict in Colombia: Evidence for Designing Effective Policies in Conflict and Post-Conflict Regions, Dr Ana Maria Ibáñez, 2010-2012, RES-167-25-0593, Phase 2**

The overall objective of the research was to shed light on the appropriate policies that should be designed and carried out in conflict and post-conflict regions and provide empirical evidence that could be of interest to foreign governments, multilateral agencies and NGOs working in countries currently experiencing confrontations within its borders and those that are in a post-conflict period. The research used two methodologies: i) the development of microeconomic based theoretical models and ii) the

empirical estimation of these channels. The research used a combination of five unique micro-level panel data sets for Colombia to empirically estimate the effects that armed conflict has on economic activities in the manufacturing and agricultural sector as well as on health outcomes.

**Impact achieved:** The researchers working on the project produced a paper illustrating the negative impact glyphosate has on health and its ineffectiveness of destroying coca plants. The shocking research findings meant that there significant media coverage questioning the use of aerial spraying of crops. This helped to raise the profile of the research and stimulate public and government debate on the issue. Although the project and research team were confident that they had influenced the debate and final outcome, they were aware that other scientists from different disciplines had also provided important contributions leading to the policy change.

**Key determinants of impact:** Concerning the aerial spraying impact on health in Colombia, one key success factor for achieving impact was the methods used and the extensive dataset analysed. A key success factor for this project to have achieved impact was producing dissemination products for a variety of audiences. The project was also led and carried out by local researchers rather than those of other nationalities. There was a strong understanding of the policy context and the researchers already had many connections with stakeholders from the national government. In addition, stakeholders were engaged from the inception phase. The impact of this project may have not been so easy to attain if the key stakeholders had not been engaged until the later stages of the project.

#### **19. Mining, Social Networks and Rural Livelihoods in Bangladesh, Professor Katy Gardner, 2008-2011, RES-167-25-0297, Phase 1**

The research was centred on two linked case studies which aimed to research the (1) the impact of mining on rural livelihoods and social networks in Bangladesh; (2) the 'fault lines' around which the differential effects of mining are experienced; (3) the policies and practices of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and 'good practice' in the mining industry; and (4) the ways in which resistance to mining is mobilised. As a result, the research aimed to generate policy recommendations, tools and 'best practice' guides, aiming to reduce the negative impacts of mining and displacement on affected populations, as well as providing insights into practices of CSR.

**Impact achieved:** The research has provided surprising results that people did not migrate from their home as a result of extractive activities. Given the expected finding was that people tended to move away from such activities, the results of the project compelled practitioners to reassess the implications of mining in rural villages, as well as how they sought to engage with local communities.

**Key determinants of impact:** First, there was for a demand for such research by NGOs in Bangladesh. Second, the methodological approach taken can also be seen as a success factor with the anthropological approach generating rich, contextualised and relevant findings. Third, the project engaged heavily with the media which helped bring the research into the public eye and bring the research topics into public discussion. Fourth, it was critical to work with in-country researchers, especially given the lack of similar research having been undertaken before and the volatile political environment.

## **20. What Development Interventions Work? The long-term impact and cost-effectiveness of anti-poverty interventions in Bangladesh, Agnes Reynes Quisumbing, 2008-2010, RES-167-25-0361, Phase 1**

The objectives of the research are: (1) to estimate the long-term impact of three antipoverty interventions (microfinance, agricultural technologies, and educational transfers) on a range of monetary and nonmonetary measures of well-being; and (2) compare the cost-effectiveness of these interventions in attaining their poverty-reduction and other development objectives. As a result, the research aimed to enable policymakers, donors, and other stakeholders to evaluate the short-term and long-term impacts of different interventions, contribute towards the design of future anti-poverty programs in South Asia and stir a public debate and influence policy agenda on anti-poverty interventions.

**Impact achieved:** The research, which tracked participants over longer periods following a range of interventions, was one of the first projects to use large numbers of life histories combined with survey data. This methodology has since been used by other organisations, including their project partners the Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC).

**Key determinants of impact:** The research team possessed long established in-country relationships which facilitated impact. There was also a demand for such research from relevant stakeholders on what impact different interventions have on the dynamics on poverty. In addition, the good reputation of the researchers – along with the quality of the research itself – was also reported to be important.

## **Annex six: Categorisation model for Joint Fund grantees' strategies for impact**

## Annex Six: Categorisation model for Joint Fund grantees' strategies for impact

Rating	Clarity of impact to be achieved	Understanding of how impact will be achieved	Specificity of activities to achieve impact
<b>Excellent</b>	Proposal mentioned specific policy/ ministry/ division/ city or individuals and potentially outlined the change in legislation/ behaviour/ circumstances it wanted to achieve	<p>Proposal shows good awareness of the relevant policy/ practice context;</p> <p>Mentions a great number of factors which will facilitate or hinder the successful implementation of the impact plan;</p> <p>Substantiates convincingly why specific activities planned will lead to the impact outlined</p>	Proposal mentioned a high number of specific activities, including the names of journals researchers wanted to publish in, conferences they wanted to speak at (and when), specific actors (organisations, individuals, ministries) they wanted to engage; outlined an engagement plan (who would be involved when and how); mentioned which dissemination channels they wanted to use such as a website, social media or TV
<b>Good</b>	Proposal mentioned a legislation/ an organisation/ a strategy they wanted to impact on, but was not specific about the change they wanted to see	<p>Proposal shows some awareness of the relevant policy/ practice context;</p> <p>Mentions a number factors which will facilitate or hinder the successful implementation of the impact plan;</p> <p>Sometimes substantiates why specific activities planned will lead to the impact outlined</p>	Proposal mentioned fewer of the above possible activities but still included a good amount of detail (specific stakeholders, timing of activities, names of journals, etc.)
<b>Fair</b>	Proposal identified groups of beneficiaries but no specific organisations/departments/ communities were identified. Proposal outlined the anticipated change the research would bring about but this was very broad and the mechanisms by which this change would be achieved were not provided.	<p>Proposal shows little awareness of the specific policy/practice context;</p> <p>Proposal mentions few factors which will facilitate/hinder the anticipated impact;</p> <p>Proposal rarely substantiates why specific activities will lead to the anticipated impact</p>	Proposal mentioned a fair amount of the above possible activities but few or none in detail.
<b>Basic</b>	No impact outlined (in many cases what researchers reported as 'impact' were actually objectives of the research itself and not the impact of it)	Proposal does not include any of the above.	Proposal mentioned a minimal number of the above activities, (typically publishing in journals, speaking at academic conferences)