Australian National University

DEVELOPMENT BULLETIN 79

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PARTNERING FOR IMPACT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

THEMES

- New approaches to development research
- The realities of research partnerships
- Evidence, policy and practice
- Using research networks and alliances
- Does participatory research support sustainable development?

Development Studies Network

The Development Bulletin

The Development Bulletin has, for 30 years, been the journal of the Development Studies Network based at the Crawford School of Public Policy, The Australian National University. It is an occasional publication providing at least one issue a year. For 30 years each issue has focused on a specific, topical development theme providing a multi-disciplinary perspective on a range of opinions on development activities, theories, and research. The journal includes commissioned and submitted papers and is available in hard copy or online for free download. Authors include academics, development professionals, those working in non-government and government organisations, consultants, teachers, community leaders, politicians and students of development in the Pacific and Asia. Development Bulletin papers are short and concise with a word limit of 3,500.

Together the 79 issues provide a valuable history of social and economic development, development theory, policy, practice and development studies in the Pacific. They are available online.

Free download

The Development Bulletin is available online for free download and can be freely copied and used on condition that the source is acknowledged. In addition to the Development Bulletin, our website also has a collection of 87 papers on women and gender issues in the Pacific. Most are written by Pacific Island women.

http:Crawford.anu.edu.au/rmap/devnet/dev-bulletin.php

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Cover photos

Left: Partnering for literacy, Nepal.
(Photo: United Mission to Nepal, Transform Aid International)

Right: Health workers collaborating with UNICEF to development child immunisation messages Malaita, Solomon Islands. (Photo: Pamela Thomas)

Back: Learning lab on food and nutrition security, Katmandu, Nepal. (Photo: Robyn Alders)

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Issue 79 January 2018

PARTNERING FOR IMPACT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Innovative research is the focus of this issue. The papers, case studies and reports consider the results of research partnerships between academics, development practitioners, village communities and policy-makers in Australia and our neighbours. Most papers are selected from those presented at the international conference “Partnering for impact on sustainable development”, hosted by The University of Sydney, June 13-14, 2017, under the auspices of the Research for Development Impact (RDI) Network who also provided support for this publication.

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Development Studies Network

RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT IMPACT NETWORK

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

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Australian National University

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Preface

The Research for Development Impact (RDI) Network

The Research for Development Impact (RDI) Network is a collaboration between the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and Australian universities. It functions as a network of practitioners, researchers and evaluators working in international development and exists to foster collaboration between these stakeholders. The Network promotes high quality and ethical development research, supporting translation of that research as evidence to be applied in effective policy and practice.

The RDI Network began in 2009 as a partnership between ACFID Member NGOs and Australian universities, and has formerly been known as the Universities Linkages Network and the ACFID University Network. In 2016 the Network launched under its current name and embarked on a new phase in the era of the 2030 Global Agenda.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) require concerted action, including rigorous research and evidence to inform their achievement and their monitoring. The RDI Network has committed to address this need, working to shape a policy agenda that values research, and operating through a participatory and inclusive community of policy and practice encompassing participants both in Australia and more broadly.

Working in close partnership with ACFID, the Network functions as a key cross-sectoral platform for shared learning and action in the international development sector. Strategic leadership and oversight of the Network is provided by the Research for Development Impact Committee, comprising representative members of universities and NGOs equally. The Network is financially supported by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

The RDI Network has the following core objectives:

1. Champion and provide leadership in effective development research, evidence and practice.
2. Strengthen cross-sector partnerships and linkages, including stimulating and supporting partnerships between ACFID members and Australian universities.
3. Improve sector capacity to undertake effective and ethical development research and education.
4. Improve uptake and use of research and expertise to inform policy, practice and discourse across the Australian development sector and more broadly.

The Network is free and open to all practitioners, academics, students, policymakers and evaluators working in international development. To become involved you can subscribe to receive our monthly newsletter by visiting the website www.rdinetwork.org.au.

The RDI Conference (formerly the ACFID University Network Conference) is the Network's flagship event and is one of the most anticipated events in the Australian development sector calendar. The Conference is a valuable forum for genuine cross-sectoral learning and collaboration. This issue of the *Development Bulletin* includes some of the papers from the 6th RDI Conference held in June 2017 at the University of Sydney. The selected papers reflect the conference theme, '*Partnering for Impact on Sustainable Development: Collaboration, coordination, solidarity*'.

Reflecting on partnering for impact on sustainable development

Thomas Soem, the University of Sydney and Jenny Vaccari, RDI Network

In a rapidly changing international environment and increasingly constrained resources, the potential to catalyse skills and expertise through collaborative ways of working becomes more and more important. The need to adapt and design policy and practice in response to quality research and evaluation is, and always has been, imperative, and yet the practice of sourcing, translating and applying evidence continues to occur inconsistently across development projects and programs.

In the era of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the international community has been offered a clear roadmap towards a more just, equitable and sustainable future. However, how we best follow this roadmap in terms of what works and what doesn't, remains uncertain. One signpost can be found in SDG17 which calls on the international community to 'revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development', recognising that this goal provides a basis for the approach of each of the other 16 Goals.

To carry this approach forward, the RDI Conference in 2017 aimed to convene the expertise of academics, practitioners and policy-makers to build a robust collection of quality, relevant research which points us towards maximising development impact. Fostering cross-sector dialogues, we sought new approaches to development practice which challenge traditional disciplinary boundaries and thinking, and which have radical potential for achieving sustainable development globally.

This year's RDI Conference host, the University of Sydney, has harnessed some of its outstanding researchers, networks and partnerships to address vital global challenges and in partnering with the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and the Research for Development Impact (RDI) Network, highlights its commitment to high-quality and high-impact collaborations.

The University of Sydney's motivation for supporting the conference was to provide an open platform for new ideas, robust debate and to showcase partnerships, collaboration and solidarity. These objectives were met by the 400 plus attendees and are reflected in the many co-authored interdisciplinary research papers in this journal.

The diversity of voices represented here are a testament to the diversity of partners needed to achieve development impact. Not only do we need our international institutions and leaders to provide political and policy drivers for development action, but we also need the practice expertise of NGOs and the private sector, the academic rigour of universities, the questioning of students, and the nuanced understanding of local community voices.

We hope that this collection of papers offers you both insight and encouragement to work towards greater research impact and sustainable development goals. We look forward to continuing this journey together.

Introduction

Reviewing the experience of partnering for impact on sustainable development

Pamela Thomas, The Australian National University

This issue of *Development Bulletin* provides insights from the practical experiences of those who have applied new approaches to development research and practice through working in partnerships. The papers cover a wide range of development partnerships covering different stages of development processes—research, planning and evaluation, implementation and review—and consider community, and private/public partnerships. The outcomes, the challenges and the rewards, vary. What is clear is that at any stage, partnerships provide new, valuable insights, new opportunities and more inclusive and informed development activities that allow for greater impact on achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Together the papers provide a blueprint for working in partnership for development impact.

The papers in this issue provide an example of research partnerships in action. The papers, many of them written in university/NGO partnerships provide valuable information and insights into working in partnership for sustainable development. They consider the realities of working in partnerships—what are the benefits, what are the difficulties, what makes partnerships effective, and what restricts their effectiveness?

In the words of Helen Clark, former administrator of the United Nations Development Program and former Prime Minister of New Zealand, 'In achieving the sustainable development goals, we face challenges that no one nation, sector or organisation can address effectively on its own. The power of partnership is that we each contribute according to our capacities to get results…partnerships, are not just about money—they are about solidarity, exchange of knowledge and best practices and support for the acquisition of technology and building the capacity to innovate.' And, she reminds us that 'A key requirement for sustainable development is sustainable peace…peace needed for sustainable development will not be the product of early warning systems, nor the despatch of mediators or peacekeepers but the positive outcome of long-term development processes.'

Innovative approaches to supporting sustainable development

This issue of *Development Bulletin* includes examples of a number of innovative approaches to partnerships for sustainable development. They include giving engineering students firsthand experience in developing countries, providing sustainable fisheries partnerships in Indonesia, the importance of collaborating with children in community-based research, the development of alumni regional study tours and the creation of partnerships with neighbouring countries.

Engineers Without Borders, an NGO which partners with universities, provides opportunities for engineering students to learn about development perspectives through on-the-ground projects that empower students to participate directly in community based programmes and activities focussed on poverty alleviation and sustainable development. The programme provides young engineers with knowledge of global issues such as poverty and disadvantage. As the authors state: 'Australian engineering graduates must be motivated to face and be capable of tackling global issues such as poverty and disadvantage, as they have a critical role to play in achieving the SDGs.'

Sustainable fisheries will provide an increasingly vital food source as populations increase but the marine resources in many developing countries are declining rapidly. The Seafood Savers programme in Indonesia is establishing innovative fisheries partnerships by creating linkages between the business sector, retailers and consumers, small-scale fishermen and government to improve value chains and introduce responsible fishing through a certification process. Gondwe and Slattery address the issue of building on alumni engagement through alumni

regional study tours. These activities help establish partnerships with neighbouring countries that allows alumni to learn good practices from neighbours and develop feasible solutions to specific developmental challenges.

Research partnerships: Some realities

As several papers point out, productive partnerships do not just happen. They require careful planning, establishment of agreed management and methods, willingness of all partners to adapt, and time—time to develop an agreed methodology, time to agree to changes where necessary, and time to learn from the results.

Winterford, Gero et al address the issue of time and the extent to which engaging children and youth in development, contributes to development effectiveness—a question that until now has remained largely unanswered. Working in a joint agency research partnership over three years in Fiji, Laos and Nepal they found that engaging young people in development established important partnerships within communities. More importantly, they learned that working in joint agency research partnerships required an inclusive approach, planning and ongoing reflection by all partners as well as refinement of practice, established rules of engagement, a clear understanding of ways of working, roles, responsibilities and protocols for decision making. 'In order to create a shared and co-created research design, time and money is needed to allow for input from all partners…this needs to be planned for and managed.' These key findings are reinforced by those of Leahy et al, reporting on multi-partner research collaboration in a WASH study in Vietnam.

Participatory action research (PAR) was used by Fernandes, Cantrill et al to address complex social and public health issues in Nepal, India and Afghanistan with a focus on improving mental health. A multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral and multi-context collaboration included a research reference group in Australia, government and non-government organisations and communities in study countries. The methodology included the innovative use of photovoice, which authors explain, was 'vital to explore the lived experience of those with psychosocial disability and allowed the research to be accessible to all.' The reality of their research partnership was that while community-based participatory action research produces excellent results it was very time consuming. Different cultural concepts of time had to be taken into account and time was needed to adapt to local changes. They found that a commitment to knowledge sharing, translation and utilisation was vital. Time was also an issue discussed by Njoto et al, reporting on an Indonesian integrated programme to address mental health practices. They found that working together with provincial and district health workers and community volunteers was very time consuming but resulted in more accurate data and improved mental health care. They hope it will result in an urgently needed community-based mental health reform programme.

The importance of ethics in research partnerships was stressed by Carter and O'Callaghan. Carter warns of the likelihood of conflict when working in partnerships. 'It is not uncommon for partners and projects to be confronted with a range of obstacles and tensions…when researchers from diverse backgrounds…with different values and different knowledge systems…are expected to collaborate.' Working with marginalised farmers, the landless, women and small holders alongside larger farming households required an ethical approach and deeper, more deliberative engagement with ethical issues. O'Callaghan raises ethical research issues based on her extensive observations of research undertaken on mining sites in Africa and the negative impacts of rapid, uninformed, sometimes unethical and value-laden approaches frequently used by fly in-fly out researchers.

Do partnerships and inclusion support sustainable development?

Partnering with the private sector can provide additional equity challenges as Gero, Glendining and Jiwanji discuss in their 'real world example of a partnership between the private sector, government, an NGO and the community'. In developing and trialling a conceptual framework for private sector involvement in climate change adaptation in Fiji they found it was vital to provide mutual benefits for all partners. It was also essential to ensure careful alignment with the local cultural and geographical contexts where, as in some Pacific Island societies, the collective is prioritised over the individual, which does not align well with how businesses usually operate, and where it can be culturally acceptable for an unequal distribution of power. Sanderson also found that the issue of power and power structures were important when negotiating partnerships for improving humanitarian responses after urban disasters. 'Effective recovery works best when it works through and strengthens existing structures...letting go of power and control means agencies ceding greater power of decision making and agency to existing power structures.'

Leahy et al collaborated with Vietnam and Australian university researchers, and Australian and Vietnamese NGOs to explore the intersection between SDG goals five and six. These SDGs focus on gender equality and clean water and sanitation and to examine the impact of an international water, sanitation and hygiene monitoring tool. They make the point that while their research found considerable positive strategic gender changes and the partnership resulted in capacity building for both Australian and Vietnamese organisations involved, for the results of research to have greater impact, the findings must reach those who can use them. All results were translated into Vietnamese.

A very successful health partnership between Cuba and Timor-Leste resulted in 800 Timorese being trained as doctors after six years study in Cuba and an internship in Timor-Leste following which they began 'social service' in rural areas as general basic doctors. Anderson's research shows that 'the Cuban Timor-Leste health partnership has had a powerful but under-remarked impact on the Timorese health system'.

Reviewing participation and collaboration in urban renewal of ancient cities in Iran, Assadpour and Melles found that traditional top down planning and lack of residents' opportunities to have any voice in planning renewal projects had led to the rapid destruction of old and important residential areas and displacement of thousands of urban residents. As they point out, historically change in these cities was very slow and incremental and allowed for adaptation of sites and residents.

Networks, coalitions and inclusion for development impact

Brimacombe and Roche consider the political and social importance of coalitions—how they are formed and their role in achieving social, political and economic goals that could not be achieved by individuals or individual organisations. They provide examples of how important 'formative events' can be in promoting coalition formation including that of PNG's anti-sorcery related violence coalition, catalysed in response to murders of prominent human rights defenders. In their analysis of 17 coalitions and networks, Chalk and Pilkinton present information on how coalitions or networked 'action' add value to that of individual organisations. The outcomes they found are empowerment and greater participation of civil society in policy dialogue that lead to development outcomes that benefit most marginalised groups.

Reporting on a social research project that focuses on pro-poor collaborative development and women's inclusion in Pakistan smallholder agriculture, Chambers et al found that collaboration with others outside the house was an important way to achieve economic outcomes that are often not possible if working individually or within the household. This included joint selling of outputs, joint purchase of inputs and building a community storage facility.

Promoting knowledge partnerships for sustainable agriculture

Promoting information and knowledge is an important aspect of development impact and one that is often overlooked, most specifically in disseminating scientific information in ways that are readily understood. Partnerships and networks can provide important hubs for disseminating knowledge for development. The papers in this section provide different perspectives on sharing information and learning.

Partnerships to support knowledge of sustainable agriculture, agricultural intensification and adequate nutrition provide an important focus of this issue of *Development Bulletin*. Cosijn, Williams and Hall of the CSIRO consider the urgent need for innovation in agricultural production in Indonesia if the current GDP is to be maintained. However, the challenge in fostering agricultural innovation is the systemic failing between knowledge generation and putting this knowledge to use. Their paper reflects on a project to catalyse agricultural innovation by bringing research institutes and the private sector together in partnership. Alders et al agree that there are immense challenges ahead for agriculture, food and nutrition security in our region and that malnutrition and under nutrition are on-going problems. To achieve SDG2–Zero Hunger:

> …we have to produce more food off a decreasing area of agricultural land without further damaging the environment but…this requires political goodwill, appropriate policy and legislative settings, incentives and farmer education as much as technical innovation…the limiting factor is not access to scientific knowledge but our tendency to work in silos.

One solution they propose is the new Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Security Community of Practice that will leverage an extensive body of knowledge and provide a forum for sharing and learning—a community where new ideas will be discussed and generated providing a platform for collaboration and joint activities to prevent hunger.

In considering sustainable agricultural intensification in Cambodia, Tan and Martin et al consider the importance of knowledge in promoting sustainable agroecosystems rather than the usual methods of intensification based on use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. They show that the key policy and institutional aspects for scaling up agro-ecosystems and cropping patterns are to encourage public-private partnerships based on creation of farmer groups that collectively obtain knowledge. They also recommend the education of farmers' children in school to stimulate them 'with exciting farming innovations'.

Communicating scientific agricultural information is the theme of Rahmat and Purwaningrum's paper on the production and use of palm oil in Malaysia. While there is fairly widespread public concern about the rapid expansion of oil palm plantations, the authors point to the limited knowledge of the value of palm oil biodiesel and biofuel. They recommend that research and scientific knowledge production of biodiesel and biofuel should be supported by science communication.

We hope that this very varied collection of papers provide you with evidence of the value of working in partnerships. As Helen Clark advised in her keynote address to the RDI Network conference at The University of Sydney in June 2017:

> On meeting national and international development goals, there is more than enough work for all of us—the issue is how to maximise impact with available resources. This requires a willingness to work together and coordinate closely…Sustainable development is not something that happens to someone else somewhere else. It is a collective challenge that requires a collective response.