



Australian Government

AusAID

15 March 2010

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee
on Industry, Science and Innovation
PO Box 6021
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

Inquiry into Australia's International Research Collaboration

Please find attached AusAID's submission to the Inquiry into Australia's International Research Collaboration.

AusAID welcomes this opportunity to outline the Agency's efforts to support international development research linkages.

Please note the contact officer details for the inquiry below:

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Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Proctor'.

Murray Proctor
Deputy Director General, Program Enabling Division



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SUBMISSION TO PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY ON INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH COLLABORATION

Introduction

The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), has been a strong supporter of research to promote development, particularly in the Asia Pacific region. Over the past three years the Agency's focus on research further increased with the release of the *AusAID Development Research Strategy (2008 – 2010)*¹. This strategy outlines the following objectives for AusAID's research investment.

- > To develop partner country capacity to solve local problems
- > To build a stronger evidence base for policy and programs
- > To create incentives for innovative ideas and strategies to addressing existing and merging development challenges
- > To deepen the pool of academic expertise about and within countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

In order to further these objectives the strategy includes AusAID's commitment to

- > More research funding
- > New quality assurance and control processes
- > A greater focus on research communication
- > Sustainable capacity building to undertake and use research
- > Further leveraging of linkages for research.

AusAID funds research to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development. We aim to do this through supporting quality research on current and emerging practical development challenges where results are communicated and applied to influence development. We have a focus on building capacity both to undertake and use development research, particularly in our partner countries, but also within Australia.

AusAID's research funding has increased over 30% per annum over the past three years with over \$77 million in research funding distributed by AusAID in 2008/09. Our largest areas of research focus include health and HIV (25%), food security and rural development (23%), governance (including conflict and fragility) (14%) and economics (12%).

¹ The AusAID research strategy is available on the AusAID website at <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/research>

The nature and extent of existing international research collaboration

AusAID engages in, and supports, collaboration between Australian and international researchers (both in high income and in developing countries).

Partnership and collaboration with developing country partners in research

AusAID and ACIAR, as the two largest providers of Australian Government international development assistance, have a key role to play in supporting collaboration between Australia and developing country research communities. International experience shows that local research organisations in developing countries often enjoy greater access to and leverage with stakeholders and research users in their country. It is important to support the creation of a vibrant research and policy analysis community in developing countries to enable them to anticipate and provide solutions to their own development challenges.

Long term partnership is a key mechanism through which AusAID funds development research and many of these are “*focused on building stronger links between Australian and developing country research organisations*” (AusAID Development Research Strategy 2008-2010 Pg 4). AusAID has a number of partnerships with key developing country research organisations. These include (among many others):

- > National Research Institutes in areas such as agriculture and health in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Cambodia
- > Local and regional universities such as the University of the South Pacific and
- > Independent research institutes and think tanks such as SMERU Research Institute in Indonesia.

Many of these partners have links with Australian universities and research institutes. The Australian research community can play a key role in bringing expertise and other resources to research collaborations with developing country research institutions.

Similarly a number of AusAID’s partnerships with Australian research groups include collaborative activities with research and policy organisations in developing countries. These include collaborative research projects, joint research and policy forums and / or research training and capacity support. ACIAR is one of AusAID’s most important research partners and the Centre implements much of AusAID funding support to food security and rural development research. ACIAR also works to build collaboration between Australian and developing country researchers and research users (see separate ACIAR submission).

Collaboration with the broader international development research community

AusAID partners with and supports leading international institutions that are active in development research. These include key universities and institutions in the United States such as Harvard, Yale and New York Universities as well as the Centre for Global Development in Washington, institutions in the United Kingdom including Oxford

University, the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Sussex and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

AusAID fosters engagement between Australian decision-makers and the Australian research community with international research partners that are conducting high impact development research and analysis that is influential within global development policy debates. Leading international development analysts and researchers visit Australia under funding provided through AusAID research partnerships. Visits generally involve meetings with AusAID and other government departments as well as seminar presentations often including or at Australian universities. AusAID's ongoing research partnerships with leading international institutions in development research and their visits to Australia provide the Australian government and research community with access to leading international thinking and emerging perspectives in development and aid effectiveness. Recent and upcoming visits include:

- > Professor Peter Walker, Director and Dr Andrew Wilder both of the Feinstein International Centre at Tufts University in the United States
- > Dr Barnett Rubin under a partnership with the Center on International Cooperation at New York University
- > Dr Gerardo della Paolera, President of the Global Development Network.

AusAID funds and motivates Australian participation in global development research programs as members of research teams, mentors or on advisory committees. This includes World Bank and other multilateral research programs or other global development research networks and organisations such as the Global Development Network or the Poverty and Economics Policy Research Network.

Supporting collaboration through research grant awards

The Australian Development Research Awards (ADRA)—AusAID's agency wide annual competitive research grant scheme—is open to research organisations in Australia and internationally. Three rounds of ADRA, 2007, 2008 and 2009, have been conducted with \$25.6 million awarded under this scheme to date. This covers eighty research projects on health, HIV, food security, economics, governance, environment and climate change, gender, disability, education and development effectiveness. Research grants under the ADRA scheme run from one to four years (maximum of three years in the 2008 and 2009 rounds) and projects have been and will continue to be completed between 2009 and 2013. Around two thirds of the successful research projects involve collaboration between Australian and developing country research organisations and a quarter with international developed country research groups.

Additional competitive grant schemes are run on specific topics or countries through relevant AusAID programs and a number of these are open to Australian and international research groups. Resulting grants frequently involve collaboration between Australian and developing country researchers and, at times, other international research institutes. These include, among others, support provided to the National AIDS Council Secretariat in Papua New Guinea for large research grants through AusAID PNG HIV

support program, Sanap Wantaim, as well as the recent 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) research grants managed by the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect at the University of Queensland.

Other mechanisms through which AusAID supports Australian – international research collaboration

AusAID's Public Sector Linkages Program (PSLP), though largely training and general capacity building focused, has also funded activities that link Australian researchers and developing partner country governments. In recent years, for example, this has included support to CSIRO links on a number of activities including capacity building of APEC country governments in National Carbon Accounting to facilitate their entry to carbon trading markets and working with the Philippines Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB) on sustainable forestry to improve rural livelihoods in the country.

AusAID scholarships fund post graduate studies at Australian Universities for candidates from selected developing countries. These often lead to greater linkages between the partner country and Australian research institutions upon the candidates return to their home country. AusAID's Australian Leadership Awards Fellowships (ALAF) are open to a wide range of Australian organisations who demonstrate ongoing linkages with counterpart overseas organisations. ALAF funds short term study, research and professional attachments in Australia for potential leaders in their field.²

AusAID also funds attendance by individuals (including researchers) from eligible developing countries at Australian and international development oriented seminars through our International Seminar Support Scheme.³ In the past 12 months around a quarter of these were hosted by Australian universities or other research institutions and therefore provide opportunity for networking and further collaborative links to be established between Australian and international researchers.

Benefits to Australia from international research collaboration

Research collaboration between Australian and developing country research communities bring benefits to Australian researchers through:

- > greater understanding of causes and impacts of development challenges not faced in an Australian context
- > access to unique information and datasets for analysis
- > greater links with potential users such as policy makers or community based organisations through their relationships with local researchers, so that research can have a positive and practical impact on development in our region and more broadly.

² Further information on the Australian Leadership Awards Fellowships including past recipient organisations and eligible countries can be found at <http://www.usaid.gov.au/scholar/alaafellow.cfm>

³ Details of the International Seminar Support Scheme can be found at http://www.usaid.gov.au/business/other_opps/isss.cfm

Australian–developing country research collaboration can improve the effectiveness of the Australian aid program when Australian expertise positively contributes to the development of a sustainable in-country development research community in our partner countries that can inform and respond to the needs of their own government, industries, civil society groups and communities. It also gives the Australian Government access to development research within Australia that appropriately reflects the needs and priorities of our partner countries.

International (particularly United States and European) agencies, research groups and think tanks are often at the forefront of setting global development related agendas. Partnerships between AusAID and international research organisations, and the collaborative links with the Australian research community that these support, give the Australian government and research community access to leading emerging ideas and agendas in development. They also draw the attention of leading international thinkers toward our region of the Asia Pacific where relatively little of the global development research agenda is concentrated but where often unique and intractable challenges of development are faced requiring further research.

AusAID funds research ultimately to improve development outcomes. Gaining research that is targeted in both topic and communication to the needs of its key users both in Australia and in developing country is essential. International research organisations have a longer history and greater community of applied development research that impacts global, domestic and developing country policy. Collaborative links between Australian and these international research groups can further build expertise within the Australian research community to generate and communicate development research that can readily inform decision making. This is needed for Australia to develop contestable evidence that informs programming and policy design and dialogue locally, with partner countries and internationally.

Key drivers of international research collaboration support at AusAID

As the scale of Australian development assistance increases good independent evidence to both inform and evaluate the aid program's policies and activities is essential to maintain contestability and continually improve development effectiveness. Pathways to progress key Australian Government development assistance priorities, such as the Millennium Development Goals, are usefully underpinned by analysis on what works and what does not in what types of settings, whilst bearing in mind the specific context of each of our partner countries. Research can importantly contribute to a base of evidence for informed policy dialogue in Australia, with developing country partners and internationally.

It is therefore important that AusAID:

- > has a broad base of research expertise and information in areas central to the aid program
- > assists partner countries to increasingly demand, produce and use research to inform development strategies

- > fosters partnerships that can bring different perspectives and expertise on key development challenges
- > access international cutting edge information and ideas on key current and emerging development challenges
- > contributes to building a research community in Australia that is at the forefront of regional and international development research and debate.

Principles and strategies for AusAID support to international research engagement

Though working globally in development research support, AusAID has a focus on promoting greater international engagement with development issues facing the Asia Pacific region in which Australia is located.

AusAID funds research to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development. AusAID's consideration of research partnerships is based on "*the organisations' ability to generate quality research and to demonstrate the impact of their research*" (AusAID Development Research Strategy, 2008-2010, pg 4). This is underpinned by our objective to fund quality research that is produced and communicated in a way that promotes its uptake for decision making and ultimately its impact on development.

The nexus between applied policy research and quality research of academic merit can be overemphasised. Development research can be both applied in nature as well as of good academic quality and merit. Fields of research are often progressed most effectively through being applied to practical real world challenges. Difficulties are sometimes experienced in funding and obtaining research that usefully combines these objectives. This is a key principle in AusAID's support to research including our international engagement.

AusAID aims to fund partnerships between Australian and developing country research organisations that are based on principles of equity and mutual respect. The Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (KFPE) has formulated eleven principles of research partnership that are widely referred to and used by development research donors internationally⁴. AusAID includes the sustainability of capacity built in and by all partners in the research engagement in its evaluation of research collaboration between Australia and developing country researchers.

⁴ For further details on the partnership principles and their implementation refer to the KFPE website at http://www.kfpe.ch/key_activities/publications/guidelines/guidelines_e.php