



**UK Collaborative on  
Development Research**

# **UKCDR STRATEGY**

**The next 4 years  
(2018-2022)**



**Making research work  
for global development**



# Foreword

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In recent decades, there has been unprecedented global development progress. Since the 1990s, the world has managed to more than halve the numbers of child deaths and of people living in extreme poverty. But there is still much progress to be made, in a world that is rapidly changing and where major development, demographic and environmental transitions are bringing new challenges that require different transdisciplinary and innovative approaches. In 2015, recognising the complexity of the world in which we live, the UK along with 192 leaders across the world agreed on a set of 17 Global Goals (formerly the Sustainable Development Goals) to make the world a better place by 2030, by reducing poverty, ending hunger, halting climate change, strengthening global peace, and promoting prosperity.

The UK government continues to be committed to the UN target of spending 0.7% of its Gross National Income on foreign aid (Official Development Assistance, ODA). But in recognition of our changing world and the interlinkage and broad ambition of the global goals, in 2015, it adopted a greater cross-governmental approach to ODA. While the Department for International Development is still the main delivery channel, more aid is now administered by other departments to draw on their complementary skills.

UK Universities and research institutes have a long tradition of outstanding work in, for and with developing countries. The redistribution of the aid spend has resulted in a greater proportion of aid spending on research, to build on the UK's track record of research and scientific excellence. By 2021, we predict aid spend on research at £1.2bn, compared to just £390m in 2015.

At UKCDR, we firmly believe that research across disciplines and in partnership with low and middle income countries is essential to drive global development

progress. This changing funding landscape provides a fantastic opportunity to address the UN Global Goals through generation of knowledge. However, a greater number of players also calls for greater coherence, to ensure added value through enhanced synergy and complementarity and a reduced risk of potential duplication.

In line with these principles of greater coherence, inclusivity and partnership, we have reformed and renamed our Board, the HMG Strategic Coherence of ODA-funded Research (SCOR), and our organisation, the UK Collaborative for Development Research (UKCDR),<sup>1</sup> and developed a new strategy to frame our activities over the next four years.

In delivering this strategy we will stay true to our values of respect, diversity, integrity and collaboration. By providing greater coherence, cross-sectoral action and shared accountability, we will harness the true power of research to address global challenges.



**Dr Marta Tufet**  
*Executive Director, UKCDR*



**Professor Baron Peter Piot KCMG**  
*Chair of HMG Strategic Coherence of ODA-funded Research Board (SCOR)*

<sup>1</sup> Formerly known as UK Collaborative on Development Sciences (UKCDS)

# Introduction

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This strategy builds on the firm foundations laid since our establishment in 2008, aligns to the 2015 UK Aid Strategy and the UN Global Goals (formerly the Sustainable Development Goals), and provides the necessary flexibility to respond to the rapidly evolving world in which we operate. It comprises 4 integrated and overlapping aims:



**Mapping, analysis and foresight**



**Convening for collaboration and joint action**



**Sharing information, learning and best practice**



**A collective voice to shape policy**

At the core of our strategy is a principal commitment to data mapping, analysis and foresight, which underpins and guides each ensuing strand of our work. By mapping and analysing the ODA research spend across thematic, geographical and institutional boundaries, we will be in a unique position to advise and support our members and partners.

Our remaining activities are built upon this strong foundation of knowledge and evidence; whether convening funder fora to promote collaboration, supporting shared learning and guiding best practice, communicating and awareness-raising, or supporting coherent priority setting and informed decision making.

As a collaborative, we do not ourselves fund UK international development research, but instead perform a fundamental function that spans across UK government and other research funders. In building a coherent picture of the UK's spend on international development research, we strive to ensure that ODA-funded research addresses the major challenges that confront our evolving world; that any key funding gaps or duplications are brought to light, and that outcomes of research inform decisions on future priorities and strategic direction.

# UKCDR – A snapshot

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## Who we are

We are a collaborative of government and research funders working in international development. Our core contributing members include:



Department for  
Business, Energy  
& Industrial Strategy



Department  
for International  
Development



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

UK Research  
and Innovation



Our other members include the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Government Office for Science and the devolved government administrations in the UK.

Our wider stakeholders include the UK and international research community, research funding delivery partners, and the NGO, philanthropic and private sectors.

We are governed by HMG Strategic Coherence for ODA-funded Research (SCOR) Board. The SCOR Board is chaired by an independent member, Professor Peter Piot, and brings together the Chief Scientific Advisers and Directors of our core members. An advisory council comprising expertise from our wider members ensures we have a diversity of opinions and views from across the sector.

## Our vision

**Accelerated global development through the power of research and knowledge.**

## Our mission

**We exist to amplify the value and impact of research for global development by promoting coherence, collaboration and joint action among UK research funders.**

# Mapping, analysis and foresight



*“Maximising the value of public investment in research requires accessible, comprehensive and coherent information on what and where others are investing, and a strategic approach to allocating resources. Funders need comprehensive and sufficiently granular information on current and past activity to help identify funding gaps or duplication, inform and direct investments and strengthen rationale for investment.”*

**NAO Report 15 Nov 2017. Cross government funding of research and development.**

UKCDR aims to accelerate progress towards the 17 UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development by ensuring greater coherence and shared accountability among its members. As its underlying foundation, UKCDR maintains a strong focus on data mapping, analysis and foresight. This commitment to drive our strategic activities from a place of knowledge, analysis and evidence underpins each area we work in. To achieve greater coherence, we need to facilitate funders’ joint understanding of their activities and priorities and how these fit within the wider international development research landscape. We will do this through four objectives:

## Map major UK research ODA investments

We will coordinate the collection of standardised information on what is being funded and where it is being invested from across our members and wider stakeholders to obtain a comprehensive picture of the UK’s ODA research investments broadly, according to areas of particular interest and how they link to the 17 UN Global Goals.

## Identification of future international development and research trends

Recognising that scientific, societal and economic returns on investment are long-term, we will work with the research community in the UK and internationally to identify future global trends to inform and direct investments, so that today’s research investments have the greatest chance of addressing the challenges of the future.

## Data analysis and identification of funding gaps and opportunities

We will analyse information on research investments to identify strategic gaps that require new research, opportunities for synergy, complementarity and joint working and reduce the risk of duplication.

## Support the collective evaluation of impact

We will support efforts to collect standardised information to facilitate the joint evaluation of outcomes and impact of research investments across our members. This will help understand how the UK is contributing to the Global Goals through research and inform funding decisions and direction.

# Convening for collaboration and joint action

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It is widely recognised that no single organisation can tackle global challenges on its own. Greater dialogue and strategic coherence is needed across government funders, along with the engagement of civil society, business, philanthropy, academia and others, in order to enhance the effectiveness of international development efforts. We aim to draw on the complementary skills of our UK members and wider international stakeholders, by supporting them to work collaboratively and in partnership. Ultimately, we aim to achieve greater strategic coherence for joint action to address global challenges. To this end we have four objectives:

## Convene funder fora on key themes

We will convene impartial fora for discussion on key themes, identified through our mapping and analysis work, where joint or complementary research investment has the potential to increase impact for developing countries. We will encourage our members and stakeholders to work collaboratively to make a difference in gap or opportunity areas, to reduce the risk of duplication and share accountability.

## International outreach

We will engage with wider international stakeholders across sectors to contextualise our work, to understand priorities, to share and learn from each other and to identify further opportunities for collaboration or partnership to maximise research impact.

## Broker dialogue between sectors

We will be inclusive of all research disciplines and link up the research community with public, private and philanthropic sectors, to draw on different perspectives and expertise, to ensure research funding is informed by need and latest knowledge, and to increase the potential for future uptake of research outcomes.

## Respond to a changing landscape

We will retain flexibility to adapt and react to a shifting landscape, from changes in the distribution of funding, to new priorities due to emerging crises, whether they be environmental or man-made. We will convene our members and stakeholders to better coordinate a research response.

# Sharing information, learning and best practice

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To maximise impact of research investments for international development, we must understand what has or has not worked in the past and consider the context in which we are working to ensure we are applying best practice to achieve global outcomes for the future. Our members and the researchers they support collectively bring decades of expertise in working at the interface of research and international development. We need to make the most of this experience to amplify impact from research and support the research community to understand and respond to a dynamic funding landscape. We will do this following three objectives:

## Share information and knowledge

We will support our members to understand the international development environment, and key stakeholders and contexts in which research activities are needed. We will provide a single go-to source of information for researchers to help them navigate the funding landscape. We will transform our digital communication channels to reach and engage a wider range of researchers in the UK and internationally.

## Support shared learning

We will support our members to capture and share lessons learnt by convening them around specific areas of common interest. In so doing, we aim to ensure greater effectiveness of the UK's approach to support international development efforts and to maintain the UK in its leadership role in the international development community.

## Produce best practice guidance

We will identify areas where value can be added to the activities of our funders and convene experts from different sectors and regions to produce guidance on best practices to inform the development of their strategic activities. We will help the sector work better by developing and widely disseminating useful tools and resources.

# Being a collective voice to shape policy



Our members have a strong track record of delivering outcomes and impact for international development through the support of research and generation of knowledge. Our governing board, the SCOR Board, brings together the key decision-makers in relation to research and international development funding in the UK. Through the delivery of our strategic aims and our high-level SCOR Board, UKCDR is extremely well-positioned to provide a collective voice to inform and shape policy and strengthen the international profile and capacity of the UK research base for international development. We will do this through four main objectives:

## Support leadership and coordination

Through our SCOR Board we will support strong leadership and promote shared accountability. Together, we aim to ensure that UK research efforts to address global challenges are coherent and coordinated and government investments are maximised.

## Strengthening rationale for investments

Building on our efforts to support collective impact evaluation, we will encourage dialogue on whether the joint research investments of our members are achieving the desired outcomes, to support decisions about continuation of funding or to prompt decisions about the need to redirect efforts elsewhere.

## Support coherent priority setting

We will help navigate different cultural and institutional barriers across our members and promote dialogue at our SCOR Board to share and be clear about their priorities, opportunities and challenges. This will help ensure that efforts are aligned towards common goals, and reduce risks that efforts are not directed towards important challenges.

## Support informed decision making

Research knowledge is of greatest value when it is readily available and can be used by those who need it most. Across our activities, we will promote the funding of research knowledge that is usable and accessible and that has a better chance of influencing policy and practice and ultimately having an impact for people in low and middle income countries.

# Our values & principles

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The following values govern the way we work:



## WE ASPIRE TO

### Connect powerfully

- Harnessing the diversity of our thinking and approaches
- Enabling and driving collaboration to find better solutions
- Backing each other to deliver to our best
- Sharing our knowledge, networks and expertise to empower others

### Drive positive change

- Ambition and determination to make a real impact in the world
- A positive role model and motivator for others
- Taking pride in and communicating our accomplishments
- Celebrating each other and our overall successes

### Think freely

- Freedom to deliver great work, and holding ourselves accountable
- Challenging and encouraging others to explore new opportunities
- Confident to create our own material and have a voice
- Agile and nimble in our approach, always open to new ideas

### Act with purpose

- Outcomes focused, drive to deliver outstanding results for our stakeholders
- Pragmatic and useful in everything we do
- Empathy and understanding about what is really needed
- A desire to go the extra mile

# Our strategy aligns to the 2015 UK Aid Strategy and the UN Goals for Sustainable Development





**Get in  
touch**

**UKCDR**

c/o Wellcome Trust  
Gibbs Building  
215 Euston Road  
London  
NW1 2BE  
UK

**t:** +44 (0)20 7611 8327

**t:** @UKCDR

**e:** info@ukcdr.org.uk

**[ukcdr.org.uk](http://ukcdr.org.uk)**