Development Policy Review Network

External Review

Final report 1 May 2010

ACRONYMS

AMIDSt	Amsterdam Institute for Metropolitan and International Development Studies of the University of Amsterdam
ASC	African Studies Centre / Afrika-Studiecentrum
CEDLA	Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation CERES Research School for Resource Studies for Development
CIDIN	Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen
DCO	DGIS' Cultural Cooperation, Education and Research Department
DGIS	Directorate General for International Cooperation
DPRN	Development Policy Review Network
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EU	European Union
HIVOS	Humanistisch Instituut voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking
IDP	Foundation for International Development Publications (publisher of The Broker)
ICCO	Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
KIT	Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen / Royal Tropical Institute
KNAW	Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NCDO	Nationale Commissie voor internationale samenwerking en Duurzame Ontwikkeling / National Commission for International Cooperation and Sustainable Development
NWO	Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PARTOS	Branch organisation for private organizations in development cooperation
PROVO	Programme for the Organisation of Development Cooperation
SID	Society for International Development
SNV	The Netherlands Development Organisation
VROM	Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment
VSNU	Association of Universities in the Netherlands
VWS	Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports
WOTRO	Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research
WRR	Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy
WUR	Wageningen University and Research Centre

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the twenty five interviewees for their support in conducting this external review of the Development Policy Review Network. They represent an interesting cross section of the Dutch community of policy makers, researchers and practitioners that is committed to combating poverty through international cooperation. I thank them for their frank inputs and their commitment to critical reflection to help strengthen the international development sector as a whole. I have learned a lot from these discussions.

My special thanks go to Mirjam Ros, Coordinator of DPRN, Kim de Vries, programme assistant at the DPRN Coordination Unit and Marije Severs, Staff and communication officer at WOTRO for their tireless efforts to provide me with the information and contacts to conduct this review.

Heinz Greijn
Learning for Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Development Policy Review Network (DPRN) was established in 2003 with the aim of bridging the gap between development policymakers, practitioners and scientists dealing with international cooperation and development studies.

Between 2004 and 2010, DPRN went through two implementation phases. Phase I of the project, which ran from 2004 to 2007, focused on convening regional meetings to facilitate exchanges between policymakers, practitioners and scientists. In addition, the DPRN Task Force organized one thematic meeting each year. In total 36 regional expert meetings and 3 thematic expert meetings with over 1650 participants took place over this period.

During Phase II from 2008 to 2010, a thematic approach was adopted. DPRN also began to convene online exchanges to complement scheduled meetings. With this more intensive engagement, DPRN sought to move beyond 'meeting each other' to encourage more structured policy reviews, joint agenda setting and inter-sectoral cooperation. Over the two-year period, DPRN organized five thematic processes, with each topic being selected through an open call for proposals. Parallel to this, the DPRN task force initiated one additional process each year. By March 2010 more than 1000 people had participated in these processes.

As the second phase drew to a close, the WOTRO asked Learning for Development (L4D), a Maastricht-based consultancy, to review the operations of the network from its inception. The aim of the review was twofold: 1. to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of current and past DPRN initiatives, and; develop a 'helicopter view' of related initiatives as a basis for gauging the future relevance of DPRN within the broader knowledge-for-development field.

Based on the evidence gathered and the informed opinions of the twenty five interviewees the review arrived at the following broad conclusions:

(1) DPRN has been **effective**: Within the Netherlands DPRN has made a significant contribution to bridging the gap between development policymakers, practitioners, scientists by creating a platform for regular exchanges and collaboration. However, it is too early to draw firm conclusions about the extent to which the DPRN process has strengthened the use of research findings in day to day policymaking and practice. At this stage it is only possible to speak in terms of general expectations. While there were varying views about the relevance of the DPRN processes undertaken so far, the overall perception among the stakeholders consulted for this study is that the network has enhanced the chances for greater uptake of research results in the future.

(2) DPRN has been **efficient**: When weighed against the relatively low costs, the outputs and outcomes generated in DPRN I and II suggest that the network used the available resources efficiently.

(3) DPRN has been **relevant**: The large number of proposals (71) submitted in response to the three annual calls suggests that there was strong interest across the three DPRN target groups to engage on key issues.

With regard to the future of the network, several key members of the Task Force stated that they were not in favour of moving into a third phase. With DPRN III being an unlikely option, therefore, one of the recommendations of this review is to maintain a form of DPRN that can serve as a low-threshold window to support individuals from the research, NGO or corporate sector interested in working on these issues. This platform would have the function of an incubator for innovative ideas linking development research, policy and practice. Unlike previous phases of DPRN, it would, however, not coordinate broad policy debates.

This review further recommends that WOTRO should be considered as a possible host for such a low threshold window. To convene the broader policy debates we recommend identifying a separate organisation, network or forum that is well positioned to so.

INTRODUCTION

In 2003, the Research School for Resource Studies for Development (CERES) initiated a network of development experts and policymakers in the Netherlands and Belgium who aim to reduce the gap between science, policy, development practice and the corporate sector. This initiative is known as the Development Policy Review Network (see http://www.DPRN.nl).

Since 2005 numerous organizations have been involved in the implementation of DPRN processes. The organizational structure of DPRN consists of a Task Force,[i] and a Coordination Unit[ii]. The Task Force acts as the steering committee or governing board of DPRN. Its membership reflects the core target groups of the network, namely representatives of research organizations, NGOs, and the corporate sector. In addition, two Dutch public institutions have observer status on the Task Force: the Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Foundation for the Advancement of Tropical Research (WOTRO), a division of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). The Coordination Unit handles the daily management and coordination of the network. DPRN is hosted by the International Development Studies (AMIDSt) of the University of Amsterdam.

When CERES launched this initiative, it did so based on the observation that the discussion in the Netherlands on development policies, their design, implementation and outcomes was generally perceived as lacking depth. Parliamentary and public debates were considered to be rather superficial, revolving around the same topic for years on end. Furthermore, the apparent gap between the worlds of policymakers and development scientists seemed difficult to bridge. While there was contact between the two groups, this was often on an ad hoc or individual basis, rather than in a structured context. This produced an image of two 'professions' standing back to back. It seemed that policymakers and staff of development organizations were not very interested in scientific research on development issues, whereas the Dutch scientific community showed little interest in development policy and practice.

Against this backdrop, DPRN described its mission as follows:

The Development Policy Review Network is committed to stimulating informed debate and discussion of issues related to the formulation and implementation of development policies, in particular those related to Dutch policies and aid organizations. The DPRN promotes information exchange and dialogue between scientists, policymakers and development practitioners in the Netherlands and Belgium by creating opportunities for different kinds of development experts to meet and exchange ideas and information.

Two subsidies from DGIS enabled the DPRN to implement its programmes. The first subsidy covered the first phase of the DPRN 2004-2007. The second subsidy, channelled through WOTRO, covered the second phase 2008-2010. During the second phase the mission was expanded to: include the business sector, strengthen the participation of policymakers, deepen the debate to achieve actual policy review, and introduce a stronger thematic focus.

At the start of the second phase, however, it was already foreseen that a third phase was not likely to be entered into within the same organizational set-up. Relations between policymakers, practitioners and researchers had evolved since 2003. A new DGIS policy on research for development was in place and new initiatives were being undertaken. Hence it was expected that only some of the functions of the DPRN would be required after 2010 and that new institutional arrangements would be needed.

This review therefore sought to contribute to this transition by providing insights on two broad questions: 1. assessing the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of current and past DPRN initiatives, and; developing a 'helicopter view' of related initiatives as a basis for gauging the future relevance of DPRN within the broader knowledge-for-development field.

1. THE REVIEW: OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Objectives
The purpose of this review is to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of DPRN's operations and to reflect on the relevance of the DPRN (the network itself) and its current activities in the context of a changing knowledge environment. Within the Netherlands, recent developments that have a bearing on the work of DPRN include the establishment of the Academy for International Co-operation" (IS Akademie); the emergence of various knowledge platforms; the changing role of WOTRO Science for Global Development; and organizational changes pertaining to knowledge management within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

This broad goal translates in the following specific objectives:
- To assess reported achievement of the objectives of the DPRN and the relevance of these vis-à-vis changes in the Dutch development sector;
- To establish what could be a useful purpose (added value) in the years to come of the DPRN network such as it has developed over the past years;
- To assess the potential for enhanced synergy and coherence within the field of knowledge (management) for development within the Dutch development sector and to advise on an appropriate mechanism for achieving this (institutional, procedural, et cetera).

1.2 Scope
The outcomes of the various DPRN processes over the years have already been addressed by the internal review and are further subject to regular monitoring on the basis of the logical framework[1]. This external review was therefore not expected to duplicate this work but to make an informed judgement, making use of the available material. Beyond that, the external review was expected to focus on the current and potential future relevance of the network and its activities.

The following definitions were adopted for the purposes of this review:

Effectiveness is defined as the extent to which the development intervention's objectives have been achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance. The assessment of the effectiveness is based on monitoring reports combined with the information and views obtained from the interviews.

Efficiency is defined as a measure of 'value for money'. In other words, how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results. It is usually very difficult to assess efficiency as ideally it would require benchmarking DPRN's operations with alternative options adopted by other networks and organizations with a comparable mission. This review was not expected to generate quantitative data on the efficiency of DPRN's operations and to compare these with the data of other organizations. The assessment of efficiency is therefore limited to making an informed judgement largely based on the views and experiences of the interviewees.

Relevance can be defined as the extent to which an initiative and its intended outputs or outcomes are consistent with prevailing policies and priorities and the

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[1] http://www.dprn.nl/drupal/sites/dprn.nl/files/file/general/Mid-term%20review%20DPRN.pdf

needs of intended beneficiaries. Relevance concerns the congruence between the perception of what is needed as envisioned by the initiative planners and the reality of what is needed from the perspective of intended beneficiaries. It also incorporates the concept of responsiveness – that is, the extent to which the initiative was able to respond to changing and emerging development priorities and needs in a responsive manner[2]. In the case of the DPRN, the intended beneficiaries are the researchers, policymakers, practitioners and people from the corporate sector for whose benefit the platform was installed.

1.3 Methodology

The methodology consisted of a study of documents (annex 1) combined with interviews with 25 stakeholders (annex 2). All but one of the interviews were conducted in the first half of March 2010.

Ten of the interviews were conducted face to face and fifteen through the telephone. The interviews focused on eliciting views and information on effectiveness, efficiency and relevance.

The sample of interviewees was taken in a way that it consisted of:
- Representatives of researchers, policymakers, practitioners and the private sector
- Men and women
- (Co-)organizers of DPRN activities in Phase I and II
- Participation of as many different thematic and regional process as possible
- Members of the DPRN Task Force and Coordination Unit

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[2] Definition used by UNDP, 2009 (Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation for Development Results)

2. CONTEXT

2.1 Capacity to generate and use research based evidence for development policy purposes

The establishment of DPRN in 2003 was a direct response to the perception that researchers, policymakers, and practitioners in the field of international development inhabit separate worlds. Likewise, their organizational dynamics, values and ways of handling evidence differ considerably. This leads to a situation where research-based knowledge is barely taken into consideration in the formulation of development policies and the shaping of actual practice on the ground. The founders of DPRN were convinced that the effectiveness of development policies and practices could be substantially enhanced if more attention was given to research.

Seven years after the establishment of DPRN progress has been made to bridge this gap. This is both a result of DPRN's efforts, and other developments during this period. Researchers, policymakers, and practitioners have had many opportunities to meet in seminars, conferences and workshops and have got to know each other better. Networks are emerging as well around specific topics. Nonetheless, according to the influential report *"Less Pretension, More Ambition: Development aid that makes a difference"* by the Netherland's Scientific Council for Government Policy (WWR), development cooperation in the Netherlands has yet to reach the stage whereby research-based evidence is effectively used for formulating policies and developing practices.

Although this divide between research, policy and practice is not an exclusively Dutch problem, a number of weaknesses in the country's knowledge system make it much more difficult to find solutions for the problem as compared to some other OECD countries. The WWR report identifies a number of these weaknesses, including:
- The very limited investments in research for development. Investments are low, not only compared to some other countries, notably the UK, but also compared to other knowledge sectors in the Netherlands. Benchmarking with other sectors indicates that investing approximately 300 million Euros/year (6% of the budget) in research should be considered a minimum whereas the current level of investments is estimated at 40 million Euros/year.
- Lack of clear and long term strategic choices (regional and sectoral) resulting in a fragmented allocation of resources over many research activities.
- There is no centre of knowledge connecting policymakers to researchers.

2.2 Initiatives to bridge the gap

The WRR Report identifies two options to improve the knowledge system in the Netherlands: investing in a coordinating institute or establishing knowledge networks. The Report further recommends investing in enhanced collaboration between researchers from the South and Dutch researchers. This would serve two purposes. It would help developing countries to establish local capacity that is required to develop home-grown development strategies and it would stimulate the combination of "global" and local knowledge for developing solutions that are innovative and context-specific. This is an improvement to the traditional notion of knowledge transfer from North to South, which has often resulted in inappropriate solutions.

The WRR Report mentions DPRN as one of initiatives that reflects renewed attention for generating knowledge that is relevant for development policy. Other initiatives referred to in the Report include: the IS Akademie; the changing role of WOTRO; the emerging Knowledge Platforms (Kenniskringen); and advances in knowledge management at DGIS.

2.3 The IS Akademie
The IS Akademie was established in 2005 to strengthen the quality of development cooperation policies by enhancing the interaction of policymakers and academia. The programme consists of a series of collaboration trajectories between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and selected academic institutions. Each trajectory focuses on a specific policy theme and starts with a call for proposals by the Ministry. After selection of a theme, policymakers and research institutes discuss and agree on the specifics of the research agenda, the research questions and the implementation of the trajectory. Activities may consist of traineeships, PhD research projects (including by members of staff of the Ministry), joint lectures, seminars and workshops. Each trajectory has a maximum duration of five years. Both partners contribute financial resources and the Ministry contributes up to a maximum of one million euro (max Euro 200,000/year). For the period 2005-2010, 14 million Euros were budgeted for the IS Akademie. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Education and Research Unit of the Cultural Cooperation, Education and Research Department, is responsible for establishing and managing the cooperation trajectories with partners including monitoring and quality control.

To date, the following trajectories have been launched:
1. HIV/AIDS (Universiteit van Amsterdam)
2. Education (Universiteit van Amsterdam)
3. Poverty policy and good governance (Universiteit Utrecht)
4. Civil society and Non-Governmental Development Organizations (Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen)
5. The African state (Afrika Studie Centrum, Universiteit van Leiden)
6. Migration and development (Maastricht University)
7. Renewable energy
8. Land Governance (Royal Tropical Institute, Universiteit Utrecht, Afrika Studie Centrum, Wageningen University, Agriterra, Hivos & Triodos)
9. Human Security and Fragile states (Clingendael Institute)

The IS Akademie was established more or less parallel to the DPRN and both initiatives aim to bridge the gap between the research communities, policymakers and practitioners. However, there are some significant differences in their organization and approach.
In the case of the DPRN the Task Force issues the calls for proposals and determines what themes will be addressed, whereas in the case of IS Akademie it is the Ministry that fulfils these roles. As a consequence the policymakers who are on the demand side of knowledge for policy-making purposes have a much stronger sense of ownership with regard to the IS Akademie. DPRN is "owned" by the DPRN Task Force hence it is more embedded in the sector as a whole.

A second key difference relates to the intensity of engagement. The IS Akademie facilitates partnerships between consortia of academic institutions and NGOs with the Ministry whereby both partners bring in substantial resources. While DPRN processes also involve partnerships between institutions, participating institutions are not

required to make such large contributions. Hence DPRN provides a low-threshold window for individual researchers or practitioners to initiate a process.

2.4 Knowledge platforms

In 2009 the Minister of Development Cooperation decided to initiate a number of theme-based knowledge platforms (Kenniskringen). These are consortia of expertise that can support policy development and strategy with regards to a specific theme. Five priority themes were identified: 1. growth and distribution of wealth, 2. sexual reproductive health and rights, 3. climate and renewable energy, 4. fragile states and 5. gender.

More concrete ideas on the scope and operations of the knowledge platforms are currently being developed. It is anticipated that the knowledge platforms will be composed of policymakers, academics and experts from the private sector and NGOs who will meet on a regular basis. Their main purpose will be the formulation of policy and research questions within a specific development related knowledge domain. Once the questions have been formulated, the task of formulating answers can be outsourced to for example, research institutes or consultancy firms.

A possible model for the knowledge platforms is provided by one an existing knowledge platform "avant la lettre": the Netherlands Platform for Global Health Policy and Health Systems Research. The platform, which resulted from the Dutch Schokland Agreement 'Knowledge for Health', aims to encourage cooperation and synergy between policy making, research and practice and to advocate for 'global health policy and health systems research'.

The objectives of the Platform are to:
• Join the forces of academic and non-academic knowledge centres, non-governmental and development organizations, state departments and research financiers with the aim being to contribute to better health systems in the developing countries;
• Make meaningful and effective use of Dutch knowledge on health and health systems for policymaking, monitoring and evaluation of global health systems.

The Platform is hosted by WOTRO. The members of the Platform meet three or four times a year. In addition, expert meetings are organized whenever policymakers submit a specific request for advice to the platform. In such a case the Executive Secretary of the Platform, who is a staff member of WOTRO, identifies experts with relevant expertise on the topic. Based on the deliberations and conclusions of the expert meeting the Executive Secretary formulates the advice. The annual budget of the platform amounts to approximately € 150,000, of which € 100,000 is provided by the Minister for Development Cooperation through NWO/WOTRO. Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports (VWS) subsidizes specific activities of the Platform on the basis of an annual work plan. On request of WOTRO, the Platform formulated an advice on a research programme on health policy and health systems. WOTRO together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have followed up the advice of the Platform and jointly fund a research programme on health policy and health. A call for proposals has been issued.

2.5 WOTRO
WOTRO is one of the eight divisions of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), an independent research funding organization. WOTRO's role is to connect supply with demand for development research. Through its own activities as well as through cooperation with other NWO divisions, WOTRO aims to ensure that, whenever possible, scientific research is relevant for issues related to development. WOTRO's strategy 2007-2010 consists of three main objectives:
- Increased excellent scientific research with relevance for development;
- Increased use of scientific research in development practice and policy;
- Synergy created through partnership and policy.

Through this third objective WOTRO assumes a brokering role between policymakers, practitioners and researchers that includes providing support services to platforms and networks. This might, for example, involve hosting, coordination and secretarial support as in the case of the above mentioned Netherlands Platform for Global Health Policy and Health Systems Research.

Another example is WOTRO's role in the MDG Profs Platform. MDG Profs Platform is an initiative of four umbrella organizations of Dutch knowledge institutes NWO-WOTRO, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), SAIL and Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) and the ministries of Foreign Affairs/DGIS, OCW and LNV. The MDG Profs Platform aims to:
- Enhance synergy and coherence between Dutch research policies that can be relevant for development;
- Facilitate more efficient and effective use of Dutch general research expertise for research for development

Out of the core WOTRO budget of €15 million per year, roughly 4 percent (€0.6 million/yr) is budgeted for strategic support services to networks and platforms. Complementary to these support services WOTRO has adopted a policy of funding research projects that are integrated into larger national or international networks. In this way WOTRO aims to achieve enhanced coherence between research activities.

2.6 Knowledge management at DGIS
Complementary to DGIS investments in the institutional knowledge infrastructure efforts are increasingly being made to improve knowledge management within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry is considered inadequate in its ability to articulate demand for the knowledge it needs. The system of rotating transfers and a recruitment policy that favour generalists is not conducive for developing specialist knowledge. Furthermore, work demands coupled with the incentive system are focused on production at the expense of staff time invested in reflection and learning[3].

To address this situation, the Ministry created the position of "Ambassador in General Service of Development Cooperation" (AMAD OS) in 2009, tasked with improving DGIS's knowledge policy and management. Four task forces have been established to support this new role. A taskforce on talent development focuses primarily on reducing barriers to the acquisition and use knowledge. Key measures in this include changing the incentive mechanisms and creating opportunities for staff to study, engage in research, or conduct traineeships. A second taskforce addresses human resources policy by exploring new career paths, not only for generalists and experts

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[3] "Bridging knowledge divides", Kim de Vries, 2009.

but also for circuit experts (staff who have gained their expertise through their career paths rather than through formal education). The final two taskforces address language and information & documentation.

2.7 DPRN's Niche

Within this whole constellation of science-policy interactions, DPRN fills the niche of a low-threshold window that makes it possible for dedicated individuals from the research, NGO and the corporate sectors (with the endorsement of their organizations) to set in motion processes that can trigger evidence-based thinking on very specific policy issues. "*Measuring results in development*" during DPRN Phase I, and several processes undertaken in DPRN Phase II (2008-2010) are a case in point. Some of the processes launched during the second phase addressed issues concerning gender mainstreaming, raising tax revenues, phosphorus depletion, social and ecological impacts of agro-fuel production, value chain governance, commercial pressures on land, microfinance and business development services, and genetically modified soy.

A second important role of the DPRN has been to organize or support the organization of broad policy debates. Examples of these are: "The Millennium Development Goals as a challenge for scientists and development practitioners" (2005); "European development cooperation: does more mean better?" (2007); "Understanding development better" (2008); "Structure follows strategy" (2009); and "Singing a new policy tune" (2009/2010).

3. THE DEVELOPMENT POLICY REVIEW NETWORK: OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

DPRN's main activity consists of organizing processes of exchange and collaboration involving researchers, policymakers, practitioners and representatives of the corporate sector. These processes consist of a mix of meetings and exchanges through virtual platforms. In addition to this main task DPRN also undertook a number of activities to support and add value to these processes. These include:

- Establishing a website (www.dprn.nl) to provide information on DPRN's mission, organization and activities and provide access to various documents resulting from, or relevant for, these activities.
- Developing a web-portal www.global-connections.nl to provide network-support facilities and background information about DPRN processes as well as access to a searchable database with information on development expertise in the Netherlands and Flanders. Global-Connections.nl also hosts the various process-specific websites. The web portal was a cooperative effort of DPRN with the African Studies Centre (ASC) and the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT).
- DPRN initiated Search4Dev (www.search4dev.nl), an online library that provides a one-stop access to documents from diverse Dutch organizations involved in international cooperation. The database was a joint initiative of DPRN, the KIT Information and Library Services and the Digital Production Centre of the University of Amsterdam. The day-to-day management is in the hands of KIT and is fully funded with DPRN resources.
- DPRN is actively involved in the Worldconnectors initiative (www.worldconnectors.nl), which was established by the National Commission for International Cooperation and Sustainable Development (NCDO) and the Society for International Development (SID). Worldconnectors are individuals and organizations that work to enhance dialogue across different professions, institutions, professions and (social) networks by discussing different themes and issues related to international cooperation and the global community. DPRN is both a member of the Steering Group[4] and its supporting Project Group.[5] Individual DPRN Task Force members also function as Worldconnectors.
- DPRN is represented in the Editorial Board [6] of The Broker (www.thebrokeronline.eu), a bimonthly magazine that aims to contribute to evidence-based policy making by encouraging exchanges between knowledge producers and development professionals. DPRN is also represented[7] in the publisher of The Broker, the Foundation fro International Development Publications (IDP)

DPRN has had two phases to date. Phase I (2004-2007) and Phase II (2008-2010). In Phase I the emphasis was on organizing expert meetings with a regional focus. Specialized research organizations were invited to convene the regional meetings during three consecutive years. The DPRN Task Force itself organized one thematic meeting per year. The aim of the meetings was to bring together scientists,

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[4] By Task Force member Prof. Dr. Ton Dietz

[5] By Dr. Koen Kusters (0.2 fte)

[6] By DPRN Coordinator Dr. Mirjam Ros

[7] By Task Force member Prof. Dr. Ton Dietz

policymakers and development practitioners from the Netherlands and Belgium with a view to exchanging knowledge and experience, and to achieving greater synergy in their work. The meetings offered participants an opportunity to find out "who is who" and "who is doing what" and provided a forum to discuss current and emerging developments requiring attention from both a scientific and development-oriented perspective. In total 36 regional expert meetings and 3 thematic expert meetings[8] were held during DPRN Phase I. In the course of the first phase the number of participants tended to decrease with time, and the overall participation of policymakers was low, although there was slight improvement towards the end of Phase I.

In 2007 a Mid-term evaluation was carried out by consultants from Context International Cooperation. Their main conclusions were that:
- DPRN addressed the limited dialogue between policymakers, researchers and development practitioners in a relevant way and the network helped to address the fragmentation of the development sector in the Netherlands.
- The strategy, the objectives and the mission of DPRN were coherent.
- All planned outputs had been realized.
- It was fair to assume that increasing cooperation among participants in DPRN was taking shape but that at that time it was not yet possible to substantiate this statement with hard empirical data.

In Phase II a thematic approach was adopted consisting of meetings combined with online exchanges. Hence, the goal during this phase was to move beyond 'meeting each other'. The Strategic Plan for 2008-2010 stated that meetings should focus more on: (i) policy review, (ii) common agenda setting and (iii) intersectoral cooperation. During Phase II five processes were selected each year based on an open call for proposals. Each proposal had to be submitted by a consortium consisting of at least two organizations representing two different sectors. In addition the DPRN task force initiated one process each year[9].

The resources to implement these activities came from DGIS through two subsidies. The first subsidy amounting to €878,000[10] was provided in the second part of Phase I (2005-2007), of which €734,257 was spent. The budget for Phase II, from 2008-2010 was €1.8 million[11]. The funds for the second phase were channelled via WOTRO.

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[8] "European development cooperation: does more mean better?" (2007), "Measuring results in development" (2006), "The Millennium Development Goals as a challenge for scientists and development practitioners" (2005).

[9]
Active DPRN Processes by end of 2009
- Structure follows strategy
- On track with gender
- Value chain governance
- Raising tax revenues
- Commercial land pressures
- Phosphorus depletion
- Agrofuels platform
- Singing a new policy tune
Finished processes by end of 2009
- Microfinance
- Gm soy debate
- Understanding development better

[10] Of which €263,000 was earmarked for establishing and maintaining a web portal

[11] Initially € 1.69 million, but later raised to € 1.83 million after including the under expenditure of Phase

During the second half of 2009 an internal progress review was undertaken. The review was carried out by Kim de Vries as part of a Master's Thesis for the AMID course of the Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen[12]. The review concluded that: DPRN has proven its relevance in bridging knowledge divides and catalyzing dialogue and knowledge sharing; and has created possibilities for interdepartmental cooperation and coherence processes.

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[12] Kim de Vries, 'Bridging knowledge divides. Strengthening research-policy linkages through the Development Policy Review Network'

4. EFFECTIVENESS

In this section an assessment is made of the extent to which DPRN's objectives have been achieved, or are expected to be achieved. The overall objective of DPRN from its inception has been to stimulate informed debate and discussion of issues related to the formulation and implementation of development policies. However, the specific objectives were modified during the duration of the project. Whereas in DPRN Phase I the focus was on bridging the gap through facilitating professionals to meet each other, the Task Force raised the level of ambition during the second phase to make a concrete contribution to: policy reviews, common agenda setting and stimulating inter-sectoral cooperation within the broader development cooperation sector in the Netherlands.

4.1 DPRN Phase I

Table 1 contains the intended outcomes of DPRN Phase I. With the exception of the last point, which was realized through the web-portal www.global-connections.nl, the mid-term external evaluation conducted in 2007 concluded that at that time it was too early to assess these outcomes after one phase of DPRN. The mid-term evaluation recommended that a more thorough study on the impact of DPRN. In its Strategic Plan for 2008-2010, DPRN announced that such an external evaluation of DPRN's impact would be carried out in 2010. However, such a thorough impact study is beyond the means and scope of this external review. Instead, this review is limited to an assessment based on the documentation available and the informed opinion of the interviewees.

Table 1: Intended results by the end of first phase of DPRN 2005-2007

1. Increased awareness among policymakers and practitioners of ongoing research in the regions;
2. Increased awareness among researchers of development policies relating to the regions;
3. A climate which is open to debate and discussion;
4. A greater role for research-based knowledge in the national debate on development and development policies;
5. A larger contribution by research to policy formulation and the development practice;
6. Increased synergy between development policies, practice and research through more of policymakers' and development practitioners' research questions into the research community;
7. Experience in joint analyses and the joint formulation of recommendations for research, policy and practice based on the aggregated experience of the three sectors;
8. Access to development expertise in the Netherlands via a searchable web portal.

During the first phase, 36 regional meetings were held and three thematic meetings were organized by the DPRN Task Force/Coordination Unit. In total 1,676 people participated at the meetings. Interviewees who organized or participated in the regional meetings and thematic meetings agree that these meetings were successful in establishing new contacts between practitioners, policymakers and researchers and that they contributed to an improved mutual understanding. In many cases participating at a DPRN event was the first opportunity that these different groups of professionals had ever had to discuss regional issues in a structured way. It must be noted, however, that the number of policymakers who attended these events was rather low (at 5% of all participants). Organizers of the regional meetings interviewed for this review all responded that it was hard to get the policymakers on board.

The interviewees believe that these meetings certainly contributed to a more open climate that was conducive for debate and discussion. The meetings also helped to

raise awareness among researchers of the region-specificity of development policies. The DPRN Coordination Unit and Task Force too learned that regional meetings that had adopted a thematic approach – in general those that were organized in the latter part of Phase I in 2006 and 2007 – attracted more participants than meetings with a more general agenda (primarily organized in 2005). This lesson was put to good use in developing the strategy for the second phase of DPRN.

In terms of their content, the regional meetings primarily focused on providing a forum for participants to share information and get to know each other better, rather than on developing a common agenda for action. It is difficult, therefore, to demonstrate clear causal links between these regional meetings and the inter-sectoral collaboration that began to emerge after these meetings.

The same applies to the thematic events organized by the Task Force during DPRN I. It was beyond the means of the DPRN Coordination Unit to keep track of initiatives triggered by these meetings but there is anecdotal evidence of spin-off effects. One example is the conference "Measuring results in development" that was organized as a follow up to the "Dijkstal report"[13]. This event inspired three organizations: the Inter church organisation for development cooperation (ICCO), the University of Amsterdam and Tamale University in Ghana to launch a partnership to develop innovative methods and tools for measuring results. The four-year project is funded by ICCO, the ICCO Alliance and Prisma and its advisory group includes representatives of policymakers (Policy and Operations Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (IOB), practitioners (SNV-Netherlands Development Organisation), researchers (Afrika Studie Centrum) and the private sector. This is a clear example of increased synergy between practice and research in terms of agenda setting and research. Furthermore, through the involvement of an African University, the partnership is also quite progressive, at least by Dutch standards.

The mid term evaluation conducted in 2007 concluded that: *"Although it is still too early to talk about outcome and impact, there are sufficient gains in this initiative. DPRN seems to be able to sustainably contribute to bridging the gap between policymakers, researchers and development practitioners in the Netherlands"*
Taking the example of the ICCO/UA/Tamale partnership and other initiatives mentioned by interviewees, one can plausibly conclude that DPRN Phase I has contributed to the intended outcomes 5. 6. and 7 in the table above. However, this case alone does not provide the 'hard' evidence required to make a well-founded claim of the outcomes achieved.

4.2 DPRN Phase II
Table 2 shows the objectives and intended outcomes of the strategic plan 2008-2010. The corresponding outcome indicators and targets were formulated with a view to achieving impact in terms of evidence-based research feeding into policies and practices. However, the indicators were formulated in such a way that many of them are difficult to measure. An example is outcome 3: *"Researchers address policy topics of the ministry and development organizations in their research activities."* A corresponding indicator to this outcome is *"Increase in number of policy topics addressed by research institutions"* with the target *"20% increase compared to 2007".* Given the time and resources available for this external review it is not possible to assess the extent to which these targets have been achieved. But even if

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[13] "Vertrouwen in een kwetsbare sector?" by the Commissie Draagvlak en Effectiviteit Ontwikkelingssamenwerking April 2006.

it were possible to measure the increase in number of policy topics addressed by research institutions it would be hard to assess to which extent this can be attributed to a DPRN process. Therefore this section focuses on the objectives and intended outcomes listed in table 2 which does not include the targets. These assessments are based on DPRN progress reports combined with the information and views obtained from the interviews.

Table 2: Intended results by the end of second phase of DPRN 2008-2010

Objectives	Outcomes
1. To promote information exchange, dialogue and mutual feedback between scientists, policymakers and development practitioners in the Netherlands and Flanders	1.1 Policymakers, practitioners and scientists from the Netherlands and Flanders have met on a regular basis to exchange information and discuss common interests and options for cooperation.
	1.2 Common interests and options for cooperation between policymakers, practitioners and scientists have been formulated.
	1.3 Researchers address policy topics of the ministry and development organizations in their research activities.
	1.4 Policymakers and practitioners use research results on specific themes or countries in their own activities.
2. To stimulate informed debate and a discussion of issues related to the formulation and implementation of development policies	2. Policy documents have been reviewed and commented on by researchers and practitioners.
3. To foster a climate of open debate and the exchange of ideas	3. Open and informed (national) debates and discussions on various themes related to development cooperation.
4. To enhance the impact of research-based knowledge on the political debate relating to development	4. The national debate on development policies is put on a higher level by incorporation of research-based knowledge.
5. To enhance the impact of research-based knowledge on the development practice	5.1 Policymakers make use of research.
	5.2 Practitioners make verifiable use of results of development–related research.
6. To align the contributions of research and practice with policy formulation	6. Policymakers use the results of research and lessons learned from non-governmental development interventions in their own activities.
7. To promote synergy between development policy, practice and research	7. More aligned policy and research agendas via effectively channelled research questions put to the research community.
8. To stimulate shared analyses and recommendations for research, policy and practice	8. Policymakers, researchers and development practitioners make use of joint analyses and formulation of recommendations for their own work in policy, research and practice respectively.
9. To provide access to development expertise in the Netherlands and Flanders via a searchable web portal	9.1 Development expertise is made accessible for the three targeted sectors of DPRN via the Global-Connections web portal.
	9.2 Publications available on university repositories are linked to the experts in the Global-Connections database.
	9.3 A repository has been created for non-academic publications such as policy documents, consultancy reports, journalistic work, etc.

Objective 1: To promote information exchange, dialogue and mutual feedback between scientists, policymakers and development practitioners in the Netherlands and Flanders

In DPRN II 1,047 people participated in one or more meetings over a period of two years. In total 25 meetings were held, including small workshops, seminars and conferences. In some processes, these meetings had a more regular character than in others. Participation by researchers, policymakers and practitioners from Flanders has been very limited but after deliberate efforts by the DPRN Coordination Unit to disseminate the call for proposals amongst Flemish organizations, there was a significant response from Belgium to the third call for proposals in December 2009 and (by stressing this as an important selection criterion in the call) substantial involvement of Flemish organizations in the proposals submitted by Dutch organizations.

Participation by policymakers and the corporate sector increased during DPRN II. With the shift from a regional approach to a more thematic focus the processes also began to attract greater interest among higher level policymakers and sector specialists in the ministry. Participation from the "corporate sector" - a category that was only explicitly mentioned as a target group in Phase II - was largely composed of consultants, but with growing interest from other businesses (outcome 1.1). The business sector was particularly involved in the architecture debate organized in 2009.

Table 3: Composition of participants in DPRN processes

	DPRN I	DPRN II (Until December 2009)
Researchers	37%	34%
Practitioners	34%	32%
Policymakers	10%	14%
Corporate sector	Not yet a separate category	16%
Other	19%	4%
Total number	1,676	1,047

Despite the fact that researchers constituted about one third of all participants, several interviewees (including researchers, policymakers and practitioners) expressed dissatisfaction about the reluctance to participate by many researchers who could have made a valuable contribution in the DPRN processes. Some possible reasons for this could include:
- Researchers easily lose interest in the type of broad policy debates organized by DPRN because discussions tend to become politicized and to drift away from research-based evidence.
- The resources provided by DPRN to facilitate these processes are too small to cater for extensive research. As a result, researchers are inclined to focus more on platforms offering better funding opportunities such as, for example, the IS Akademie.

During DPRN Phase II, common interests and options for cooperation between policymakers, practitioners and scientists (outcome 1.2) were formulated across all groups. This is because joint agenda setting was a prerequisite for selection of thematic process proposals.

For most processes, especially those with a more specialized thematic focus, researchers were able to address policy topics proposed by the ministry and

development organizations (outcome 1.3). In a few processes (for instance "On track with gender" and "Raising Tax Revenues") the research agenda was formulated during the DPRN process and the ensuing research was partly funded from the grant provided by DPRN. For processes where participating researchers were already working on relevant policy topics - from the perspective of the ministry and or development organizations – the processes simply facilitated further collaboration on such existing research strands. An example of this is the work on value chain governance and endogenous growth. In this context it is important to note that the duration of a DPRN process and the level of funding available was very limited and primarily meant to set, but not implement, research agendas.

Objective 2: To stimulate informed debate and a discussion of issues related to the formulation and implementation of development policies
Across all the processes policy documents were reviewed and commented on by researchers and practitioners (outcome 2.) The conclusions of these discussions were subsequently included in meeting reports. For most processes, however, there are no final process reports or policy briefs available that present the discussions and key policy outcomes in an accessible way. A notable exception is the report prepared by the Programme for the Organisation of Development Cooperation (PROVO) which has contributed to the debate on the aid architecture.

Objective 3: To foster a climate of open debate and the exchange of ideas
According to the participants interviewed for this review, the processes in which they were involved included debates and discussions on themes related to development cooperation (outcome 3.) Many facilitators and participants of DPRN processes commented that as a result of the DPRN-supported events numerous new contacts have been established within and across these group boundaries. Contacts were not only established or strengthened during implementation of a DPRN process but even before as part of developing the proposals. An added-value of the processes has been to help professionals from different sectors to understand each other better, which has led to enhanced mutual appreciation. There is no doubt that this has also triggered new collaborative initiatives although it is very difficult and beyond the scope of this external review to assess the number and type of spin-off activities that can plausibly be attributed to DPRN II.

Objective 4: To enhance the impact of research-based knowledge on the political debate relating to development
The intended outcome corresponding with this objective was that DPRN would help to raise the quality of the national debate on development policies by incorporating research-based knowledge (outcome 4.). This was a tall order for DPRN with its very limited resources, and especially in light of the tectonic shifts currently occurring in the Dutch political landscape. The WWR report[14] notes that from an intellectual point of view the Dutch development policy debate has lost much of its shine in recent years. It has degenerated into polarized stand-off between extreme viewpoints in which there is very little room for evidence-based arguments. While the debates initiated by the DPRN processes may be open and based on verifiable elements of recent research-based knowledge, the national *Zeitgeist* is not conducive and therefore the influence of DPRN processes on the political debate at the national level has been very limited.

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[14] WRR 2010 p. 33

Objective 5: To enhance the impact of research-based knowledge on the development practice, and
Objective 6: To align the contributions of research and practice with policy formulation

At this stage it is too early to draw conclusions on whether the DPRN process has enabled policymakers and practitioners use research results in their own activities (outcomes 1.4, 5.1, 5.2 and 6.1). There are two reasons for this:

- Most research requires many years to generate results. This is illustrated well by the above mentioned example of the ICCO-supported research on innovative methods for measuring results which is a spin-off effect from DPRN I. The four-year research project is still underway.
- Using research results to inform policymaking and shape practices is logically preceded by getting the issues on the agendas of policymakers and practitioners. This agenda setting takes up most of the duration of a DPRN process.

For the purposes of this review, therefore, one can only speak in terms of general expectations based on the trends so far. A good example is the process on phosphorus depletion, which has been successful in getting this issue on the Dutch and European policy agendas. Other processes that can be expected to generate useful input for policymakers and practitioners are on gender mainstreaming, tax revenue collection and value chain governance. In other cases, however, the value of the discussion, particularly for policymaking within the Netherlands, is less certain. An example is the genetically modified soy process, which is considered by policymakers within DGIS to be an issue that needs to be decided on by soy-producing countries. Many NGO actors are also opposed to opening the discussion on the sustainability of GM soy because they fear that this would legitimize genetic modification across the board. For other NGOs who are interested in the evidence before formulating a position this process will be of tremendous value determining their position.

A second DPRN process for which mixed results are expected is that on agrofuel production. The discussions will most likely be useful to the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM) while DGIS policymakers have remained rather aloof to the process.

From the documents and the interviews it seems likely that all or nearly all processes will contribute to policymakers and/or practitioners using research results. This however does not mean that all the targeted policymakers and practitioners have evaluated the results or the expected results as useful. One example is the process on micro-finance. While some respondents to this review believe that the results may be useful, one respondent indicated at an early stage that the topic added little value to what was already known.

Objective 7: To promote synergy between development policy, practice and research
The intended outcome that corresponds with this objective is measured in terms of:

- Number of research questions from policymakers included in research agendas of research centres/institutes;
- Number of research questions from practitioners included in research agendas of research centres/ institutes;
- Number of joint research proposals involving both researchers and policymakers and/or practitioners.

Most DPRN processes so far have focused on getting research-based evidence on the policy agenda and less on encouraging input from practitioners and policymakers to the research agenda. This modest approach is understandable given the limited resources available to DPRN. For policymakers, the IS Akademie is a more logical mechanism to get policy questions on the research agenda.

<u>Objective 8: Policymakers, researchers and development practitioners make use of joint analyses and formulation of recommendations for their own work in policy, research and practice respectively</u>
Since all DPRN processes involved sessions in which policy documents were reviewed and commented on (see also outcome 2.) it is likely that to some extent policymakers, researchers and development practitioners have made use of these joint analyses and formulation of recommendations for their own work. However it is still very difficult to access the insights gained during these joint analysis sessions. While reports of the various meetings can be downloaded from the DPRN website the main conclusions and insights are not presented in a user-friendly way. Several policymakers interviewed mentioned that the papers are often too long and difficult to read. The facilitator of one group emphasized the importance of packaging the same content in different formats geared to the needs of the targeted users. In the same vein, one member of the DPRN Task Force highlighted the need to use clear language. This is not only important for outreach to policymakers and practitioners but also to the corporate sector for which the development jargon is often incomprehensible. Chances that the insights will feed into policy, research, practice and the corporate sector can be greatly enhanced by documenting them in the format of accessible and easy-to-read policy briefs and other user friendly formats depending on the target group.

<u>Objective 9: To provide access to development expertise in the Netherlands and Flanders via a searchable web portal.</u>
As part of its process support activities, DPRN established a website (www.dprn.nl) providing information on its mission, organization, activities and documents resulting from, or relevant for, these activities. In addition, DPRN developed a searchable database on development expertise on www.global-connections.nl web portal, providing information on geographical, thematic and MDG expertise in the Netherlands and Flanders (outcome 9.1). Publications available on university repositories are accessible through the expert profiles in the Global-Connections database (outcome 9.2). This database was a collaborative effort of DPRN with the African Studies Centre (ASC). The combined audience target for the Global-Connections and DPRN websites was 100 users/day. The actual number of users per day amounted to an average of 48.

Currently the content on these websites is primarily targeted at the DPRN process participant. However, only a few of the DPRN interviewees for this review mentioned that they regularly use these websites. Some had never visited the websites at all. It may well be worth the effort to conduct a survey to find out how many participants of the processes actually use the process websites. A possible outcome of such a survey could be that most visitors are external to the DPRN processes. In that case there may be potential to increase the number of visitors by shifting the focus to an external audience which would require changes in the architecture and way the content is presented. An external audience is most likely more interested in the knowledge products of DPRN (policy briefs, position papers etc.) rather than the processes through which these products have been generated (meeting reports, progress reports etc).

Table 4: Web statistics

	2008		2009		
	DPRN website	Global-Connections	DPRN website	Global-Connections	
				Excl. process websites	Process websites
Unique visitors	3000	2486	3433	1607	5571
Visitors			5343	5924	10199
Page views	23,194		22,176	5924	41611

In addition to the DPRN-managed websites and databases described above, DPRN supported the KIT Information and Library Services[15] with the establishment of Search4Dev. Seach4dev is an online library that provides access to documents from Dutch organizations involved in international cooperation (outcome 9.3). Currently the repository contains over 1,200 documents from 19 organizations including non-academic publications such as policy documents, consultancy reports and media articles. The library is managed by KIT and fully funded with DPRN resources. There is clearly a demand for Search4dev services. Five organizations that applied to have their documents included could not be served due to lack of capacity.

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[15] In collaboration with the Digital Production Centre of the University of Amsterdam

5. EFFICIENCY

In view of the outputs and outcomes generated in DPRN I and II the actual costs for facilitating these processes have been quite low. Approximately 23% of the budget for DPRN Phase II was used for overall coordination costs including personnel costs and Task Force meeting costs. Meeting and travel costs of the Task Force amounted to approximately 0.5% of the budget for DPRN Phase II.

However it should be taken into consideration that a large part of the time invested by the organizations implementing the processes was not paid for from the DPRN budget and should be seen as a contribution by the participating organizations.

The midterm evaluation already concluded that the cost of the meetings convened as part of the processes was low in comparison to similar meetings organized elsewhere. Also the costs for establishing and maintaining the various web portals are proportionate and comparable to similar website portals established by other networks and organizations. The same applies to DPRN II.

In general the interviewees were very positive about the efficiency and quality of the support services by the DPRN Coordination Unit. The Coordination Unit was considered to be very responsive to inquiries and requests for support. Process facilitators appreciated the web management support services. The DPRN plans and progress reports are accessible and well written documents. A good example is the progress report of 2009 which gives a very good insight into the organization of the processes as well as some of the insights gained.

In the course of the two DPRN phases the Coordination Unit has acquired a very good understanding of the facilitation, knowledge brokering and advocacy skills required to bring a DPRN process to a successful conclusion. This wealth of knowledge is still largely tacit and is sometimes used to provide feedback during the meetings the Coordination Unit staff has twice a year with the facilitators of DPRN process. Ways to use this resource for example through using it more efficiently for process facilitators could be explored. One way of doing this would be developing a training module for facilitators.

6. RELEVANCE

From the context analysis in section 2 it can be concluded that DPRN fills two clear niches for which there is demonstrable demand:
- DPRN is a low-threshold window that makes it possible for dedicated individuals from the research, NGO and the corporate sector to easily launch processes to trigger evidence-based thinking on important policy issues.
- Organizing, or supporting the organization of broad policy debates.

The large number of proposals (71) submitted in response to three calls for proposals in DPRN II is a strong sign that there is a need for such a low-threshold window. This is supported by the fact that most DPRN II topics were submitted or endorsed by a mix of research organizations, NGOs and policymakers.

Although there are diverging views on the relevance of the conclusions of the broader policy debates organized in the framework of DPRN, the broad participation and the keen interests of various stakeholders in these debates shows that there is a need to organize such debates from time to time.

Among the interviewees for this review, researchers and practitioners rated the relevance of DPRN within a range from modest to high. Feedback from policymakers was much more mixed, with some of the processes being rated very highly while others received a very low value. There are several reasons why this may be the case:
- In at least three cases the topic was considered relevant but the conclusions were considered as not in line with the views of the policymakers or the topic was felt to be outside their sphere of competence;
- At least one process did not generate new insights according to the policymakers involved;
- In at least two processes communication with the policymakers was perceived to be poor to the extent that they lost track of what was going on.

With regard to these last two points important lessons may be drawn for the future with regard to the strong knowledge brokering and advocacy skills are required to facilitate a DPRN process effectively. Obviously the ability to conduct solid research and analyse the findings correctly are core capacities. But evidence itself is not enough. Other capacities are needed to drive the message home. Process facilitators must know and understand the key stakeholders in the policymaking process. They need to grasp and adapt to the dynamics of the political debate and bring to the fore relevant evidence at the right time. Another crucial capacity is the ability to communicate in a focused, succinct way using accessible language that policymakers can understand. Some of the process facilitators have done a superb job while others have been less successful. Studies from around the world with regard to the capacity to influence policy and practice indicate four key success factors[16]. These are the ability to:
- Focus on current policy problems and have clear objectives;
- Engage closely with policymakers throughout the process, from identifying the problem, undertaking the research itself and drawing out recommendations for policy and practice from the results;

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[16] "Impact of research on policy and practice" by John Young (ODI), published in Capacity.org Issue 35, December 2008

- Understand the political factors that may enhance or impede uptake and develop appropriate strategies to address them;
- Invest heavily in communication and engagement activities as well as the research itself and build strong relationships with key stakeholders.

Through its experience with managing the DPRN the Coordination Unit has developed valuable insights into the methods and skills required to steer a DPRN process towards outcomes. An approach needs to be developed to ensure that these insights are shared with future facilitators. Such an approach may consist of training, coaching and organizing exchange events for facilitators.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Effectiveness

Based on the evidence gathered and the informed opinions of the people interviewed it is safe to conclude that DPRN has been effective. Within the Netherlands DPRN has made a significant contribution to bridging the gap between development policymakers, practitioners, and scientists dealing with international cooperation and development studies. Many facilitators and participants of DPRN processes commented that as a result of the DPRN supported events numerous new contacts have been established within and across these group boundaries. Moreover, the processes have helped professionals from different sectors to understand each other better, which has lead to enhanced mutual appreciation.

Due to resource limitations, most DPRN II processes focused on getting research-based evidence on the policy agenda and less on facilitating contributions by practitioners and policymakers to inform the research agenda. It is still too early to conclude whether this approach DPRN II has worked and enhanced the uptake of research results by policymakers and practitioners. At this stage it is only possible to speak in terms of expectations. Although not all DPRN processes were considered to be equally relevant by all stakeholders, it seems likely that exposure to these policy debates has raised the likelihood that policymakers and practitioners will adopt more research results in their work. Further learning from the insights gained in these processes can be maximized by repackaging the process reports and outcomes in more accessible formats such as easy-to-read policy briefs and research reports.

More broadly, this review found that DPRN's effectiveness could be further enhanced through:
- Paying more attention to preparing the process facilitators for their tasks and investing in developing their facilitation, knowledge brokering and advocacy skills;
- Recognizing the importance of these roles by allocating more budget resources for facilitation.

A final strategy for adding value to DPRN's contribution is to establish mechanisms that connect a DPRN grant with follow-up funding for those policy issues or innovative ideas that require additional research. This is based on the observation by several interviewees that many researchers who could have made a valuable contribution were reluctant to participate in DPRN. The resources provided by DPRN to facilitate these processes are too small to cater for robust research activities. As a result, researchers prefer to focus their fundraising efforts on other sources such as for example IS Akademie.

7.2 Efficiency

When weighed against the outputs and outcomes generated in DPRN I and II, the costs of running the programme have been relatively low. According to interviewees, the Coordination Unit was responsive, supportive, and competent and has worked efficiently. Over the course of two DPRN phases the Coordination Unit has acquired a very good understanding of the facilitation, knowledge brokering and advocacy skills required to bring a DPRN process to a successful conclusion. Ways to mobilize this knowledge in a more efficient way to the benefit of the process facilitators need to be explored.

7.3 Relevance

The large number of proposals (71) submitted in response to three calls for proposals is a strong sign that there was demand for DPRN's facilitatory role. The fact that all topics of DPRN II were submitted or endorsed by a mix of research organizations, NGOs and policymakers further demonstrates their relevance. However, the individuals interviewed as part of this review tended to agree only on the relevance of organising DPRN processes. In terms of the relevance of the findings and conclusions of some of these processes, the views were much more mixed.

7.4 Future of DPRN: Recommendations

Already at the start of the second DPRN phase in 2008 it was foreseen that a third phase would be quite unlikely within the same organizational set-up. Relations between policymakers, practitioners and researchers had evolved since 2003. A new DGIS policy on research for development was in place and new initiatives were being undertaken like the IS Akademie, WOTRO and the Knowledge Platforms. Hence it was expected that only some of the functions of the DPRN would be required after 2010 and that new institutional arrangements would be need to be made for that. Furthermore, several active members of the Task Force have expressed in the interviews that they are not in favour of a third phase of DPRN which makes DPRN III an unlikely option.

DPRN has shown that there is a clear niche for a low-threshold window to support inspired and dedicated individuals from the research, NGO or corporate sector to initiate processes that aim to get important issues on the policy agenda or to develop innovative ideas that can contribute to more effective policies and practices.
There is also a clear demand for organizing broad policy debates from time to time[17]. It is, however, not self-evident that these two types of activities need to be undertaken within one organizational framework.

It is therefore recommended to maintain a DPRN-style low-threshold window to support individuals from the research, NGO or corporate sector to initiate (with the endorsement of their organizations) processes to bring new ideas to the policy arena. Such a facility could also work as an incubator for innovative ideas that can contribute to more effective policies and practices.

This review further recommends that:
- A decision on the establishment of such a facility should be made as soon as possible in order to ensure a seamless transition from DPRN II without losing either momentum or the knowledge gained on how to coordinate such processes.
- Mechanisms should be established to connect this incubator function with more substantial follow-up funding for those policy issues or innovative ideas that require additional research.
- The practice of calls for proposals should be continued, whereby the most promising ideas are selected by an independent forum with representation of researchers, policy makers, practitioners and the private sector. Since the

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[17] Broad policy debates initiated or supported by DPRN include: "The Millennium Development Goals as a challenge for scientists and development practitioners"; "European development cooperation: does more mean better?"; "Structure follows strategy"; "Understanding development better"; "Singing a new policy tune".

independent forum will assume an ownership role, decisions on the composition and leadership of such a forum need to be taken with care.

- Preferential treatment for initiatives that involve non-traditional International Co-operation/Development Co-operation actors and foreign actors especially from developing countries should be built into the selection criteria to stimulate creativity and as an antidote to intellectual 'in-breeding'.
- The knowledge brokering expertise developed by the DPRN Coordination Unit should be mobilized for future processes supported by this window.
- WOTRO should be considered as a possible host for such a low threshold window, as part of their current Strategic Support Activities or future strategy for knowledge synergy and modeled like the current WOTRO assessment procedures of calls for research proposals.
- A separate organization, network or forum should be identified to continue the broad policy debates.

The process sub-sites of the web portal www.global-connections.nl contain more valuable material than meets the eye. This is related to the fact that the web portal has been established to support the processes rather than as an online resource for outsiders. An external audience is most likely more interested in the knowledge products of DPRN (policy briefs, position papers etc.) rather than the processes through which these products have been generated (meeting reports, progress reports etc.) Therefore in order to enhance the outreach of knowledge products that have been developed in the framework of DPRN it is recommended to invest in repackaging this knowledge in well written policy briefs and other user-friendly formats and to make these easily accessible on the DPRN website. To ensure that maximum use is made of this investment, it will be necessary to maintain the DPRN website for a number of years at least.

Likewise, the data store containing information on expertise, institutions and publications in the field of development studies (www.global-connections.nl) as well as Search4Dev (www.search4dev.nl), contain many valuable data. It is impressive how much has been achieved in getting these systems established. However, both initiatives require substantial additional resources for further development, marketing and management.

It is recommended to develop for each of these initiatives a business case based on a market study which includes a competitive analysis of alternative solutions users have to acquire similar information.

ANNEX 1: DOCUMENTATION

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ANNEX 2: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Jan Abbink   Professor at the African Studies Centre and Co-organizer of the Regional Meetings on The Horn of Africa

Michiel Baud   Director of CEDLA and Professor in Latin American Studies at the University of Amsterdam, Co-organizer of the Regional Meetings on South America

Maarten Brouwer   Ambassador for Development Cooperation DGIS.

Ton Dietz   Professor in Human Geography at the University of Amsterdam, Member of the DPRN Task Force.

Jan Donner   President of the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), Chairman of the DPRN Task Force

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Frederik C. Haver Droeze Policymaker at DGIS involved in the DPRN tax revenue process

Charlotte van Hees Advisor International Policy VSNU

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Henk Molenaar	Executive Director of NWO-WOTRO, observing member of the DPRN Task Force, former policymaker at DGIS/DCO
Hans Rijneveld	Director MDF, Coordinator of the DPRN Processes: "Understanding Development Better" and "Singing a new policy tune"
Mirjam Ros-Tonen	DPRN Coordination Unit, Coordinator
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Josien Stremmelaar	Coordinator of the Hivos knowledge programme, co-organizer of the DPRN process on gender mainstreaming, participant in process on Value Chain Governance
Hans van der Veen	Policymaker at DGIS/DDE, involved in the DPRN microfinance process
Ella de Voogd	Policymaker at DGIS/DMH, co-organizer of the DPRN process on gender mainstreaming
Kim de Vries	DPRN Coordination Unit, programme assistant
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Guus Wattel	Policy maker, DGIS/DEC, observing member in DPRN Task Force
Karen Witsenburg	Both Ends, Team Policy Development, Coordinator DPRN Process on Agrofuels

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2. Dr Paul Hoebink, Associate Professor at the Centre for International Development Studies (CIDIN), Convener
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6. Ms Dieneke de Groot, Coordinator Research and Evaluation at the Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO)
7. Mr Pieter van Stuijvenberg, Director Euroconsult/BMB Mott MacDonald
8. Ms Jessie Bokhoven, Chief Strategy SNV
9. Mr Jan Gruiters, Director IKV Pax Christi Nederland
10. Mr Guus Wattel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (observer)
11. Dr Henk Molenaar, NWO/WOTRO (observer)
12. Dr André Leliveld, Academic researcher, African Studies Centre

[ii] Staffing of the DPRN Coordination Unit
1. Coordinator Dr. Mirjam Ros (0.4 fte)
2. Programme Assistant Drs. Kim de Vries (0.8 fte)
3. ICT support Joska Landré (0.5 fte)
4. Support to Worldconnectors Project Group Dr. Koen Kusters (0.2 fte)
5. Incidental student assistance / administrative support.