

19th Global Development Conference

Bonn, Germany | 23-25 October 2019

SIDE EVENT

Building performing social science research systems in developing countries

Date Oct 25th, 2:30-5:15pm

Place Conference Room, Deutsches Evaluierungsinstitut der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit gGmbH (DEval), Bonn (few minutes walking distance from Conference venue)

The importance of social sciences for sustainable development cannot be understated: in its applied version, social science research offers solutions and recommendations to inform concrete action, contextualizing and furthering understanding of the world's most pressing development challenges; at the same time, social scientific enquiry questions critically and reflexively development objectives, the experience of development, its means, its narratives, its impact and the validity of the evidence and theories on which development efforts are designed and evaluated, at the local and global level.

This resonates strongly with a conception of local research *as* development, not just research *in* or *about* development. This conception underpins the vision and efforts of many institutions actively working to strengthen social science research systems as a strategic lever for more ownership and capacity in development across the globe.

Among these¹ are:

- the Global Development Network and its **Doing Research program**, which systematically investigates, in partnership with strong local researchers, the barriers and the enabling factors for doing social science research in developing countries;²
- INASP and its focus on **Equitable Knowledge Ecosystems**;³
- Politics&Ideas with its focus on the conditions and process for network building and co-creation between research and policy organizations and their leaders. Together with INASP, Politics&Ideas also produced the **Context Matters framework**, which helps development actors interested in a specific challenge to strategically identify real opportunities to advance evidence-based work in an inclusive and systemic way;⁴
- The Institute of Development Studies is also advancing the understanding and practice of **research-policy partnerships**;⁵
- HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and its **PERFORM program** which works with researchers, civil society and policy actors to strengthen knowledge ecosystems;⁶
- And many more.

The sum of existing efforts, however, does not add up to transformative change, and is unlikely to support, in time, the urgent needs imposed by climate change and sustainable development. Many recognise the urgent need for 'strategic exchange, alignment and multilateral collaboration'.⁷

¹ These are few programs that focus on both capacity building and research system strengthening.

² <https://www.gdn.int/doingresearch>

³ <https://www.inasp.info/EquitableKnowledgeEcosystems>

⁴ <http://cm.politicsandideas.org/homepage>

⁵ <https://bulletin.ids.ac.uk/idsbo/issue/view/237>

⁶ <http://www.perform.network/>

⁷ <https://council.science/current/news/funding-science-for-sustainability>

A wide coalition of actors and initiatives would go a long way to operationalise and leverage what has become a domestic policy agenda across many countries: strengthening research systems to support development debate and action. International agencies, global donors and national institutions need to support this endeavour in a coordinated manner.

The objective of this side event is to discuss the possible contours and rationale of such a global alliance, and delineate the steps that need to be taken to shape it and go forward: how to build the evidence pertaining to research systems, how to locally empower institutions that will play a major role in their development, how to secure wide buy-in at the country level, how to bring relevant technical and financial assistance, how to mobilize stakeholders in the launch, implementation and monitoring of the initiative, etc.?

The event will be structured in three sessions, each designed to leverage the collective intelligence of an existing but yet scattered community of practice around research systems strengthening, including representatives from international agencies, domestic policy makers, and global donors. Each group and participant will bring to the table, in a highly interactive discussion, their sense of what is desirable and realistic.

2:30pm to 3:45pm - Session 1: Moving forward: current efforts and future synergies.

What tested approaches and frameworks already exist for strengthening research systems across countries? What partnership model do they rely on? What points of contact and potential synergies exist across different programs?

[Format: pro-action café] A number of organizations that work on research system strengthening at the international level will be sharing their work, partnership models and, the questions that drive their current efforts – in a highly interactive format.

Group conversations will take place around 3 tables, and in rounds of 15 minutes, to allow everyone in the audience to be at every table. The organizations that sit at the table (up to 2) will make a short presentation about their work, their partnership model, and present the main open questions they are interested in. Participants will be able to respond, add questions, and decide which questions have an answer ('fruits to be picked') and which one still remain to be answered ('seeds to be planted'), noting them down on post-its of different colours that will be later put on a wall.

After the final round, the presenting organizations will be asked to share, in few words, their 'harvest' from the session, while the rest of the group will be asked to point out synergies across different tables and organizations.

Presenters will include: Francesco Obino/Daniel Fussy (Doing Research Program, GDN); John Young/Jon Harle (INASP); Vanesa Weyrauch (Politics&Ideas); Arnaldo Pellini (ODI); James Georgalakis (IDS); Martin Dietz, PERFORM, HELVETAS.

Moderator: Fred Carden, member of the global advisory group to the Doing Research program

3:45 to 4:30pm Session 2: Strengthening national social science research systems? Views from domestic stakeholders.

What are the perceived issues and needs of research systems in developing countries, from the perspective of those in charge of strengthening them? What is the role of international

partnerships, beyond funding? What is the balance between international and domestic mobilisation of resources and support that can be sustained?

[Format: talk show] The policy makers in the room will be asked to talk about the ‘fruits’ and ‘seeds’ they have noted down in Session 1, placing them in the context of their work and the country context in which they work.

Policy makers will include: Omar Lopez (Director of National System of Research, Science Council of Panama, SENACYT) and Prof. Paulina Pannen (Senior Adviser to Indonesia’s Minister for Academics, in representation of Indonesia’s Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education).

Moderator: Mathieu Denis, Science Director, International Science Council

4:30 to 5:15 Session 3: The case for a global alliance: what kind of global alliance for research systems strengthening would be likely to be supported?

What type of broad partnership, shared funding models and coordination mechanisms are viable for international donors interested in strengthening research systems in the global South? What role do donors expect to play? What do they expect to happen?

[Format: open fish-bowl] Representatives of donor organizations interested in strengthening research and knowledge systems will discuss their own ‘harvest’ from the first 2 sessions, and discuss their own questions, in the context of their current work on research systems and their interest in a larger. One or more spot in the ‘bowl’ will be free to anyone else to join the conversation, in turns.

Individuals will include: Sarah Botton (Research Department, AFD), Peter Taylor (Director of Strategic Development, IDRC)

Moderator: Shanta Devarajan, Professor of Practice, Georgetown University, and co-Chair of the Global Advisory Group of the Doing Research program

Given the small size of the group (a group of 35 people coming from national research councils, international donor organizations, and Southern ‘research on research’ scholars are expected) all sessions are expected to be interactive.

A visual facilitator will be ‘graphically recording’ the event on a paper wall in the room, and participants and moderators will be able to refer to the mural as it is created.

PARTICIPANTS LIST

First Name	Last Name	Organization/Country
Nyein Chan	Aung	Center for Economic and Social Development (CESD), Myanmar
Sarah	Botton	AFD, France
Benjamin	Buclet	CREED, France
Fred	Carden	Using Evidence Inc., Canada
João	Costa	GDN
Luis Pablo	Cuba	Center for the Studies of Social and Economic Realities (CERES), Bolivia
Madhuri	Dass	GDN
Mathieu	Denis	International Science Council
Shanta	Devarajan	Georgetown University's Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, USA
Martin	Dietz	HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, Switzerland
Abiodun	Egbetokun	National Centre for Technology Management (NACETEM), Nigeria
Andy	Frost	Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, UK
Daniel	Fussy	GDN
Charlotte	Galloway	Myanmar Research Center at the Australian National University, Australia
James	Georgalakis	Institute of Development Studies, UK
Jana-Chin Rue	Glutting	Center for Economic and Social Development (CESD), Myanmar
Jon	Harle	INASP, UK
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Omar	Lopez	SENACYT, Panama
Jon-Andri	Lys	KPFE, Switzerland
Harriet	Mutonyi	Uganda Martyrs University, Uganda
Ramona Angelescu	Naqvi	GDN
Francesco	Obino	GDN
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Paulina	Pannen	Minister for Academics, Indonesia
Arnaldo	Pellini	Overseas Development Institute, UK
Erika	Perez-Leon	On Think Tanks
Gorana	Radovanovic	HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, Switzerland
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