



## RDI Network Committee Meeting

5 June, 1:30pm-3:30pm

### Web conference

**Attendees:** Tessa Hillgrove (Chair), Jo Crawford, Juliet Willetts, Kurt Seemann, Gareth Beyers, Elise Klein, Mike Toole, Philippa Smales, Jenny Vaccari

**Apologies:** Rochelle Spencer, Peter Westoby, Thomas Soem, Robyn Mildon, Saba Mebrahtu, Sumera Jabeen

#### 1) Welcome

The chair opened the meeting, acknowledged country and noted attendance.

The committee discussed prioritisation in the agenda, noting low attendance.

**Action:** The secretariat will follow up with committee members not in the meeting regarding opportunities to meet gaps in the work-plan (as per Agenda Item 3)

It was noted that there may be need for another committee meeting to be convened before the planned September timing.

February Committee meeting minutes (Attachment A)

Edits shared by committee member in advance were noted and agreed to.

The list of action items from the February meeting was reviewed with updates shared on outstanding items. Activities relating to the ethical practice resources (work-plan outcome 1) and responsibility allocated within the secretariat and committee to carry forward.

**Action:** The secretariat will provide a backgrounding paper on the ethical guidelines and associated resources, and their value to ethics committees, to be shared with all committee.

**Action:** The secretariat will follow up with committee members who offered insights to share to assist with promoting and further developing the resources.

**Decision:** The February Committee meeting minutes were accepted with agreed amendments as per discussion.

Committee membership update

The secretariat updated the committee on the results of the recent elections to fill NGO representative vacancies. Saba Mebrahtu will join as a representative from Oxfam (noting her role covers also Monash), and Sumera Jabeen will join as a representative from World Vision.

## 2) Updates on DFAT and MEL

### DFAT Relationship Update

The committee was updated on key interactions between the Network and DFAT in the past 3 months.

Particular note was given to the content of a meeting held between the ACFID co-chair, the secretariat and DFAT representatives in March, which included:

- A request to the Network to produce an urbanisation background paper for DFAT.
- Informing the Network of an upcoming external review of the Network to be carried out by DFAT.

The committee was updated on the process and progress of the review, noting a validation workshop of findings to be held with the Network and DFAT on June 12, and a final report due by June 30.

It was highlighted that the urbanisation paper production process had been negotiated to align more closely with the strengths of the Network, and ensuring benefit to the Network membership.

The committee discussed how the urbanisation paper and the external review – in combination – may inform the committee's thinking regarding strategic planning for the future of the Network. It was noted that the draft program proposal for the Network had progressed since February, but was currently on hold pending the findings of the external review. The committee was informed that there will be opportunity to engage in progressing this further during July.

The committee discussed how they might be able to provide input to both the urbanisation paper and the external review, for those not already involved. It was noted that key messages around the Network's unique offering of expertise and access should continue to be communicated.

### MEL Update

The secretariat updated the Committee on ongoing monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) processes.

The committee were updated that the Network has engaged a consultant to review the existing MEL framework, and undertake data collection – as a response to our learnings from the mid-term review process. This was planned prior to us knowing of the DFAT external review, and is running in parallel (with some initial data shared).

It was noted the process to date has been helpful and will establish good processes for our end of program evaluation, as well as beyond into future programs. All committee members will be contacted to set up an interview with the consultant, as part of the gathering of qualitative data.

Committee Paper B is an updated template for the Committee to use to enter relevant MEL data on an ongoing basis.

**Action:** All committee to consider and report to the secretariat individuals that represent the outer circle of the Network with impact to share through this process.

The committee discussed alternative ideas for how to capture quality MEL data, and discussed opportunities around face-to-face meetings as key.

**Action:** All committee to review updated MEL input template (Paper B) and insert data.

### 3) Year 3 work-plan update

In light of low representation, the chair directed that this discussion will focus on a) what's been achieved and b) activities that may be of concern in terms of progressing.

The secretariat talked the committee through the updated work-plan (Attachment C), particularly addressing items that are not currently on track to be achieved within the target timeframe.

- Outcome 1.2: As per earlier discussion in this meeting, to be addressed offline.
- Outcome 1.3: Secretariat updated the committee that DFAT have recently agreed to host two half-day ethical practice workshops for their staff.
- Outcome 1.5: Pilot of voluntary peer review process is a concern. Noted the history: a mock ethics review had happened and background research was done under the last grant. Unclear as to what can be done within the next five months, with the exception of documenting learnings from the IWDA trial experience.  
The committee agreed it would be possible to de-prioritise this work, given a lack of apparent or current demand on the part of NGOs – which is where the work initially was conceived.  
**Action:** The two new NGO representatives will be introduced to the activity, and will be asked to gauge their organisational experience/interest in the area.
- Outcome 3.1.2: RDI Conference 2019. Invitations to host have been sent to universities and Eols are due on 15 June.  
**Decision:** Committee members will be invited to join a conference committee following selection of host/theme (along with broader call to Network).
- Outcome 3.1.6: Networking events – Secretariat extended an invitation for committee members to nominate to host a networking event for RDI Network  
**Action:** All committee to consider hosting a networking event and contact Jenny with ideas.

The chair acknowledged the work of the Secretariat in continuing to drive the scope of activities underway through the work-plan.

### 4) Looking ahead/talking about the future

The purpose of the agenda item was introduced, broken down into two parts:

1. Engagement planning: How do we get Network products in the right hands, and facilitate their use in the sector? We will discuss how we expand our strategies.
2. Draft program plan 2018-2021: Seeking thoughts on responding to direct requests for research, and additionally on means of engagement with the private sector.

#### Part 1: Engagement brainstorm - Committee Paper D

The Paper was drafted aiming to expand our engagement strategies for four discrete products from the Network's growing suite of resources. Tessa reminded the committee of the evidence on uptake as highlighted by our own research on impact presented in the ADRAS report. The five identified facilitators impact are categorised as:

1. Prior familiarity with research context and users from the beginning
2. Planning for impact: starting with the end in mind
3. Proactive engagement with end users
4. Influential outputs, tailored fit-for purpose design

## 5. Ongoing engagement with users, thinking of the end game.

The committee were guided through a brainstorming exercise, designating attention to the four resources highlighted in the paper:

- The Find an Expert portal
- The Development studies Review report
- How to Partner for Development Research
- Research Communications and Uptake snapshot

Committee were directly specifically to consider target audiences, and specific actions that could be progressed individually, or collectively, by the Network.

### Find an Expert

Proposed actions:

- Raise the profile and visibility of the portal within DFAT
- Promote more actively through ACFID channels e.g. communities of practice.
- An interactive activity as part of ACFID conference
- Design and communication tweaks of the portal itself were noted.

**Action:** Secretariat to follow up on the proposed ideas with the website sub-group.

### Development Studies report

Proposed actions:

- Align engagement with existing course review processes taking place within universities.
- Use and connect with student groups, e.g. postgraduate student groups on social media, seeking to influence their feedback into internal university course review processes.

**Action:** Secretariat to progress ideas with the output sub-group.

### Research communications and uptake snapshot (and ADRAS report):

Proposed actions:

- Additional target audiences to be added to existing list would be discrete research centres, and university leadership in the impact space (usually relatively new area in unis)
- ACFID Conference would be a good opportunity to share and generate engagement.
- Break down the snapshot into practical cheat sheets for research producers.

More generally, RDI Network/ACFID could consider launching podcasts, or a Whirlpool-style forum to boost overall profile or topic-based discussion.

### How to Partner for Development Research

Proposed actions:

- Target audience list needs to be much more specific - specifying within NGOs which roles and individuals engage in research, and in partnerships. Suggested performing a job title search or equivalent.
- Ongoing regular promotion on the website and social media.

- Water for Women program as an opportune moment in time – this represents a series of research partnerships which could be targeted through engaging the facilitating contractor, GHD. Similarly, could approach the Health Security fund in DFAT.

**Action:** The committee will contact GHD regarding sharing the partnership guide with all parties involved in Water for Women.

**Decision:** Due to running out of time in the meeting, it was agreed to postpone the program proposal discussions (Part 2, Agenda item 4) until a future meeting following the validation workshop.

## **5) Wrap Up**

The chair thanked the committee members for joining the meeting, and acknowledged the ongoing contribution of outgoing and continuing fellow co-chairs to the committee.

Next meeting: Noting there may be need for an extraordinary meeting in the meantime to bring in more numbers on the committee into discussions - the next scheduled quarterly meeting will be face-to-face in Sydney in September.