

Minutes

RDI Network Committee Meeting

Date	20/02/2020		
Time	9am – 5pm		
Location	Care Australia Office; Ground floor; 243 Northbourne Avenue; Lyneham ACT 2602		
Chair	Juliet Willetts		
Meeting Contact	Philippa Smales		
Attendees	Sarah Burrows Juliet Willetts Mary-Ann Nicholas Elise Klein (via Zoom) Philippa Smales	Yadira Hazel (via Zoom) Kurt Seemann Katie Chalk Rochelle Spencer Whitney Yip	George Goddard Eleanor Jackson Susanne Schmeidl David Shaw Mai Linh Nguyen
Apologies	Peter Westoby, Tom Sloan		

1. Welcome (Chair)

Key points:

- Minutes of October meeting approved and accepted
- New members of the committee; Eleanor Jackson, David Shaw and George Goddard
- New co-chair of the committee; Mary-Ann Nicholas

2. Program Updates (As listed)

Key points:

- Climate change and the Pacific research with DFAT (Sarah)
 - Public document of [‘Building Together: Seven principles for engaging civil society to deliver resilient, inclusive and sustainable infrastructure in the Pacific islands’](#) was released at the 2020 Australasian AID conference
 - Rebecca McNaught and Sally Baker (co-authors) spoke on a panel at the AAC as part of the release
 - AIFPP have requested a briefing; scheduled for 28 Feb 2020
 - DFAT version to be released soon with an internal launch scheduled for Thursday 14 May; DFAT version of the report contains much more specific entry points and aligns more closely with DFAT interests
 - Committee notes the hard work of the steering group in supporting this major piece of work
- Research advocates (Juliet)
 - 3-4 ‘research advocates’ from 12 organisations across the sector; universities, NGOs, DFAT and private contractors etc were invited to take part in RDI Network’s action research project
 - The aim of the project to evaluate and change organisational culture on research use, uptake and communication. Research advocates participate in

- workshops, mentoring and develop and lead their own 'action research' project within their organisation
- The [initial workshop was held in Oct 2019](#), and a mini-workshop was held in Melbourne (for Melbourne-based research advocates) in Feb 2020. A final workshop is scheduled for 1 May 2020
 - The project has also developed a scoring card, '[Scorecard on Research for Development](#)' (aka SORD) for organisations to use
 - Initial findings from the project:
 - Need to change organisational culture around research use and uptake
 - Need to build into contracts; time and resources dedicated to research
 - Need to support professionals to make the case for research use and uptake
 - CBM/Nossal inclusive guidance (Philippa)
 - CBM and Nossal approached DFAT to develop guidance around disability-inclusive practices for research. DFAT suggested that CBM and Nossal collaborate with the RDI Network
 - Currently at the report, '*Research for All: Making Development Research Inclusive of People with Disabilities*' is at the design stage; awaiting final feedback from DFAT and scheduled for release in late-March
 - Practical guide to enhancing research impact (Philippa)
 - The report, '[Enhancing Research Impact in Development](#)' (aka ERIID) was release at the Development Studies Association Australia (DSAA) conference in early Feb 2020
 - It detailed the 5 facilitators of research impact outlined in a different RDI Network report, '[Evidence to Impact: Development contributions of Australian aid funded research](#)'. The report also highlights practical tools and case studies to guide researchers on enhancing impact
 - Rochelle has shared the report amongst her colleagues at Murdoch University and has started utilising the tools
 - Output 3.1.2: Research comms and uptake supplementary resources (Whitney)
 - Juliet, Yadira and Whitney are scheduled to meet in late Feb to discuss next steps, potential options and solutions
 - DFAT ethics project (Philippa)
 - DFAT has given its approval for the RDI Network to develop a new ethical framework for the ODA, development policymakers and procurement
 - Philippa will be leading the project; on the team are also Anna Noonan, Human Rights & Social Justice Consultant, and Cameron Hill, senior consultant at Whitelum Group
 - As Philippa will be dedicating one-day per week to the project, a new position, 'Network Officer' has been created to backfill Philippa's duties for the duration of the project
 - This position has been advertised, interviewed and offered to a candidate with a tentative start date of 3 March 2020. It is a part-time, 3-day per fortnight role.
 - The ethics project will also have an advisory group (instead of a steering group) comprising of selected individuals from universities, NGOs, DFAT, CSIRO etc.

Project team. There will also be a working group within DFAT to support quality control and assurance

- Work on the project has now started with the first consultation with DFAT scheduled in March 2020

3. Year 2 Project Planning (As listed)

Key points:

- **Output 1.5 'development futures' (Elise- by Zoom, Katie, Rochelle)**
 - Committee enthusiasm for organising workshops to 'future-plan' for the sector; both to increase discussion and reflections of what the future may hold for development
 - Sarah indicated that ACFID may co-fund this initiative as it dovetails nicely with their own strategic planning; also a project that may also interest ACIAR and be a potential source of funding
 - Initial thoughts for this project revolved around developing a set of pre-mortem activities (worst case scenarios) for attendees to work through; after some discussion with Gitte, a facilitated, collaborative approach to a full-day workshop was believed to be a better way forward
 - Facilitators that offer such a workshop, often called 'Futurists', may cost \$10,000 and up. This is not in the RDI Network's budget
 - Alternative options suggested:
 - Juliet – to contact 'futurists' scholars at UTS
 - Kurt – to facilitate as he has experience in this kind of work
 - Sarah – to contact some people at ANU who do 'blue horizon planning'
 - Speak to Richard Slaughter who also does this kind of future-planning work
 - Rochelle mentioned that young people are well-versed in type of planning and that the workshop/s held need to have age-diversity for a more effective outcome (also diversity of class, gender and ethnicities)
- **Output 2.2 'ethical research practice' (Susanne, Kurt, Tom)**
 - ToR for this project is with Kurt, Susanne and Philippa for final edits and approval
 - Aim for this to impact research ethics in universities in program implementation (as opposed to current practice where ethics is only concerned with the research process)
 - Kurt and Susanne note that there is already a lot of resources, materials and discussions on ethics guidelines, but it is being used?
 - Potential for this project to map all the current ethics guidelines available to practitioners and researchers and analyse the gap; opportunity to apply for Linkage Program grant
 - Potential to work with a consultant to support mapping of current resources and guidelines
 - Potential questions that need answering before project commences:
 - What is this project's public good rationale?

- What is the return on investment (ROI)?
 - Potential solutions to save costs:
 - Run the mapping through an UNSW course; Masters students
 - Draw labour from ANU's internship program
- **Output 3.3 and 3.4 'skills and capacities' (Mary-Ann, Yadira)**
 - Output is categorised by two audiences, 'Research Users' and 'Research Producers', while interlinked require different capacity-building skills
 - This is quite a large project and team is looking to refine the scope of the project
 - Key questions to be addressed:
 - What skills do users and producers need?
 - How to deliver these skills to time-poor, overworked users and producers?
 - If this project is about skills development, then is project about awareness-building or capacity-building?
 - *Research Users:*
 - Who are our users? Need to define who they are so we can build appropriate capacity-building activities/tools/processes
 - What exist already to skill-up users of research? Who can we ask?
 - Ideas for how to build capacity of users:
 - Capacity assessment tool that identifies capacity needed and prompts resources available
 - Committee enthusiasm for a capacity assessment tool
 - Workshops (uptake) with a skilled trainer such as Train the trainer; online training is tricky so needs follow-up in practice
 - 'Fastrack your Impact' workshops with Mark Reed were a hit with attendees – perhaps run them again?
 - Creation of practical tools
 - Ideas for shifting Organisational Culture
 - Reflective practices with trained facilitator as part of regular learning practice to contextualise evidence learning and thus increase capacity to use evidence
 - Campaign to shift behavior change (ex. Dumb Ways to Die); funnel process which includes engaging people on a surface level and providing activities/prompts for deeper engagement for those that want it.
 - Advocate for budget lines for research time and resources
 - Kurt noted that universities are already starting to develop courses and units on utilising social media and marketing strategies to skill-up researchers to broaden the impact of their work
 - *Research Producers:*
 - Defined as mostly academics; challenges with this group as awareness for skills update is low so what capacity do we want to build (awareness vs up-skilling)?

- Co-design educational experience with academics mapping their universities' systems and processes may be an approach to lower resistance to up-skilling
 - Current solutions and approaches do not consider university/DFAT/donor settings and environment to 'empower' producers to change their ways
 - RDI Network's outputs need to be practical for the environment that the academics/policymakers are in
- To influence organisational change for research producers, all 6 domains in the SORD needs to be addressed

4. Health Check (Philippa)

Key points:

- 10 committee member participants took the survey; survey results on Mailchimp
- RDI Network doing well on most communications to committee; questions that came forward to address:
 - The need to grow and engage Network members?
 - How do committee members communicate the Network's work better to their own organisations?
 - The committee's role with engaging with Network members?
 - The committee's role in finding funding for the Network?
 - The committee's role in risk assessment of the Network?
 - How do committee members best balance their roles and responsibilities for work and the Network?
- Committee members would like to know more about the quarterly meetings with DFAT

5. Beyond Year 2 Strategic Thinking (Juliet, Mary-Ann)

Key points:

- Covered the [history of the RDI Network](#); timeline and major projects listed
- RDI Network's vision and mission are:
 - **(Vision):** Effective, equitable international development through evidence and collaboration
 - **(Mission):** More than the sum of the parts: bringing together enquiry, evidence, practice, policy, and people, to strengthen development outcomes
- RDI Network's key goals (currently) are:
 - RDI Network members are actively debating and synthesising current development thinking and ideas
 - RDI Network members are identifying and addressing opportunities, incentives and barriers to the production and use of policy-practice-relevant research
 - RDI Network member skills in research communication and uptake are improving
- Current SORD results from 'users' and 'producers' summarised; the sector has self-scored themselves much lower than expected with systems and processes the scoring the lowest
- Looking forward; major milestones

- New aid review recommendations will be released in May; will influence the sector and therefore, the RDI Network may need to change priorities to be responsive to sector needs
- October 2020 to start discussing with DFAT regarding another 3-year funding grant
- October 2021 is when this current grant will end
- **ACTIVITY: Best things about the RDI Network**
Sticky note activity where participants addressed the question about the 'best part of the RDI Network'. These were the following themes:

Knowledge Exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Knowledge exchange – conference, reports, events ● Reflection – reports, events, conferences ● Way to know what is going on in the sector - the newsletter ● Source of knowledge for small orgs that is otherwise inaccessible – the website, free resources and newsletter
Facilitating Sector Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High profile platform for collaboration within the sector – website, members, conference, face-to-face forums ● Network – conference and events ● Convergence of academics and practitioners – RDI Conference, steering groups ● Collective shaping of priorities, outputs and outcomes - a network that is well structured ● Partnerships and relationships across the sector – networking and org set-up supports that organically ● Partnerships and connections as well as tools and guidance – flexibility of outcomes
Champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Forward thinking – reports and conference ● Solidarity and coordination – <i>reduces ??? (could not decipher)</i> – the network ● Champions for change – especially in think and doing – individual participants ● Diversity of voices – broad representation from NGO sector and from academic disciplines ● Decision making embedded into day-to-day practice research – open membership and balanced committee ● Emphasis on ethical systems and processes – research, sector engagement and sector elevation ● Information for the sector – values other ideas, leadership group are energised and care for the members, conference
ACFID Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Role/support of ACFID in the Network – leverage off each other, consolidated engagement with DFAT ● Committee of 6 NGOs, 6 Unis and ACFID on the steering committee – diverse opinions, rigorous debates and decision-making
Distilling knowledge & guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resources and tools – harnessing and mobilising capacity to produce instruments to guide good development/research practices ● Guidance knowledge transfer – tools and reports

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant, high-quality advisory publications – planning long-term relationships with experts and repeat consultancies • Guidance and resources – expertise / time / \$ • Influencing and changing the culture in the sector re research use – guidance docs and engagement • Clear guidance on how to produce and use research – walking the talk – best practice • Development of evidence-informed guidance and tools for the sector – funding (and commitment by members) • Distilling <u>nuance</u> in the steps / skills / strategies to facilitate effective use of evidence – an evolving stream of work that continues to build on previous work
Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing neutral, open, thoughtful convening spaces • A <u>secretariat</u> (and partners) that can organise such spaces (^) • A <u>culture</u> that supports open dialogue • Individual capacity and opportunities – develop knowledge and thinking capacity - Network is warm, inclusive, supports non-hierarchical discussions • Inclusivity, enabler, structure & processes • Connections and contestation / debate / learning between academics and practioners • Open forum / network

- **ACTIVITY: What’s critical to discuss, and what’s not?**
Sticky dot voting activity. These were the following votes:

CRITICAL – TO BE DISCUSSED AND PART OF THE PLANNING PROCESS		
Votes	Topic	Discussion
7 green dots 6 yellow dots	Funding and financial sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DFAT is a critical relationship • Ongoing influence of DFAT
3 green dots 3 yellow dots	3 outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debate/thinking • Structures/incentives • Skills/capacities 	
1 green dot 1 yellow dot	ACFID partnership (and other partnerships to explore)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What’s RDI Network’s scope? • What is ACFID changes direction – what is RDI Network’s role? • International & indigenous partnerships • Other partnerships for more income “all eggs in one basket”
MEDIUM – LIKELY TO CHANGE		
10 yellow dots	Make-up / profile of Network participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who do we need to attract / work with beyond Australia? • How to work better and support Indigenous organisations?

8 yellow dots	DFAT engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types • Intensity • When 	
3 yellow dots	Governance (eg. Committee structure & ToR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability of voluntary nature • Partnerships • Communications outward from committee to members • Flying / Funding • Accountability • Need more document clarity • ToR is ridged and needs to be more flexible with who's in the group (eg. Private sector and indigenous groups)
1 yellow dot	Secretariat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size / make up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size (for growth of the organisation) • Ethics of volunteers and interns – RDI Network is a network with lots of connections so how to utilise that power to improve diversity in the aid sector (eg. Paid work / positions to 'open the door' for marginalised and vulnerable people in the sector who may not get such opportunities)
LOW		
No dots	Vision & Mission	

- **ACTIVITY: Engaging Close Community | Engaging the Network**
Committee divided into two groups to discuss 'pie in the sky solutions' for the following topics:

Group 1: Engaging the wider Network	Group 2: Committee's role in the Network
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey the wider network to gauge passive members and potentially active members • How to engage / funnel currently passive members who want to be active members but cannot commit time to steering groups / committee? (ie. Students) • Who are not members? Why? What can we offer to attract to become members? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private sector • Students • Government bodies / policymakers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee to be deeply involved in decision-making and strategic planning • Need a SWOT analysis / survey the committee for areas of expertise and connections to leverage • Need a decision-tree and guideline of actions • Retreat for strategic planning and decision-making • Consultations with key members, with key partners and similar organisations in a different industry • Can we utilise some of the Network's own tools and guidance to 'make impact' eg the ERIID

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who do we want to attract as members in the future? Who are the future players in the space? • Do we want to attract private philanthropists and fundraisers? • Current active members – what can we offer them? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retreats • Listening circles • How to engage wider Network and demonstrate / model the Network's core value of collaboration? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could we piggy-back on existing events to survey wider Network of members? • Host multiple sessions to build relationships with Network members? • Engage more passive members with social media (ie. 1min video for their LinkedIn) • How to engage and partner with other peak organisations for more reach? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RAID / ACR etc 	
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• **ACTIVITY: Strategic Planning Timeline**

Committee consensus on timeline for strategic planning. See Appendix for typed version.

PREPARATION			CONSULTATION		DECISIONS		CONFIRM
Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email database clean • Mapping of 'close only' (internal circle) – Philippa and all committee members • Context analysis of trends & futures (build off ACFID and discuss within committee) • SWOT analysis (Susanne & students) • Scanning/mapping potential funding partners (Network Officer) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritisation of who and how • SWOT analysis (Susanne & students) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Engl process</i> • Survey (members) • Qs for learning circles / FGDs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Networking events ○ May – Brisbane ○ April/May ○ Sydney TBC • SWOT analysis (Susanne & students) • Key success measures from different perspectives 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee meeting (2/day retreat) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense check at ACFID conference

6. Communications, branding and MEL (Whitney)

Key points:

- Overview of marketing and communications (MARCOMMS) currently
- **ACTIVITY: The RDI Network exists because...**
 - Committee consensus that the pitch needs re-working
- **ACTIVITY: Elevator pitches**
Sticky dot voting activity. Green: most liked, yellow: most disliked. Votes as follows:

MOST LIKED	
Votes	Pitch
4 green dots	'Find An Expert' Database No one knows everything. To promote collaborative work, the RDI Network has made it easier to find research partners for your next project. The 'Find An Expert' database curates a list of development experts and consultants from around the world. Log onto to the RDI Network website to search today.
3 green dots	Action Research Project: Enhancing Research Use in International Development We all know that facts and information help us make better decisions. But not all humanitarian services and programs are designed using evidence and best-practice research. So, the RDI Network brought together 20 representatives from 13 different organisations to help them use research better and make it more accessible. This included an internal audit of their own organisation's use of research. Through mentoring, workshops and a self-identified project, the representatives learned how to systemise research use, and how to influence the right people at the right time in the right way.
3 green dots	Ethical Practice Starter Kit As scholars, practitioners and students working to make a difference to people's lives across the globe; it is an essential that we do it culturally-appropriately, ethically and without further widening the power gap. The RDI Network has developed an online training module for organisations to improve staff skills in ethical conduct and practice. This professional development unit holistically gives organisations an overview of strengths, weakness and opportunities to improve the culture of ethical inquiry within the organisation.
2 green dots	Scorecard on Research for Development (SORD) To keep encouraging the development sector to make better decisions backed up by evidence and research, the RDI Network has developed a 'scorecard' for organisations to review themselves on their internal support and systems for using evidence and research in projects. This scorecard looks holistically at an organisation's culture, support systems, skills, resources and motivation of staff and leadership for research use. Using this scorecard, or SORD gives organisations an overview of strengths, weakness and opportunities to improve.
1 green dot	Enhancing Research Impact in International Development (ERIID) Research is all about making a difference. But one can't make a difference if nobody can, or wants to read the work. The RDI Network has designed and developed a framework for academics and research producers to guide their projects to be more relevant, accessible, and successful at influencing the right people at the right time in the right way.

1 green dot	<p>Conducting Research in the Region: Ethics Approval Processes</p> <p>Throughout history, unequal power distribution has existed between people and countries. They still exist now. As scholars, practitioners and students working across the globe; it is essential that we do it culturally-appropriately, ethically and without further widening the power gap. The RDI Network has developed a set of step-by-step guides on gaining ethical approval for research and evaluation in another country. There are currently guides for the process in Asia, and in the Pacific Islands.</p>
1 green dot	<p>Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) Workshop</p> <p>FPAR is an innovative approach to centring women’s ideas and perspectives in research and advocacy. The RDI Network, in collaboration with Murdoch University and Edith Cowen University, deliver a practical workshop on how to best up-skill and empower marginalised and vulnerable women to take on their own research and advocacy. This is a workshop for practitioners interested in gender equality, activism and with a belief in grassroots movements.</p>
NEUTRAL	
1 green dot 1 yellow dot	<p>Being Effective: Research Communication & Uptake Resources</p> <p>Research is all about making a difference. But one can’t make a difference if nobody can, or wants to read the work. The RDI Network is designing a three-point approach to raising the use of research and evidence in the sector. One, we need educate more practitioners about why using evidence is a better way to make decisions and policies. Two, we need to help busy practitioners to easily access and read research daily. Three, we need to teach scholars and academics how to deliver research in short form. No more ‘too long, didn’t read’, and no more ‘death by PowerPoint’.</p>
MOST DISLIKED	
1 yellow dot	<p>Building Together: civil society engagement and infrastructure in the Pacific islands</p> <p>You know how Australia is investing more money into building new roads and facilities in the Pacific? It’s important that Australia gets it right; our involvement needs to be ethical, to empower local community, and break down entrenched inequalities. The RDI Network, in collaboration with Pacific Connections (Australia) have produced a report with seven recommendations to follow for shared decision-making and accountability. These recommendations have been provided to DFAT, and all organisations working in the Pacific are encouraged to follow them too.</p>
1 yellow dot	<p>Research for All: Making Development Research Inclusive of People with Disabilities</p> <p>People with disabilities have different needs and resources to be able to participate in life. This includes participating in research and evaluation projects. For example; using easy-to-understand language, providing transport costs and/or extra time to complete questionnaires. The RDI Network, in partnership with CBM and Nossal Institute for Global Health have produced a practical guide to ensure research projects are inclusive and accessible for people with disabilities. The guide provides tools, case studies and resources for scholars, practitioners and students.</p>

1 yellow dot	<p>Development in the Urban Era: Six strategies for better managing urbanisation in Asia and the Pacific</p> <p>All over the globe, more and more people are moving to cities and towns. A sudden growth of people can lead to many inequities; increase in crime, poverty, unsafe housing and food shortages. Not to mention, badly built cities can cause a lot environmental damage too. The RDI Network, in collaboration with Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), wrote a how-to guide with six different solutions for international government bodies to better manage people moving from the countryside to towns and cities.</p>
2 yellow dots	<p>The Research for Development Impact Conference (RDI Conference)</p> <p>Most organisations find it difficult to share knowledge, tools and processes; especially with work in developing countries where staff travelling all over the world. So, the RDI Network hosts a conference every two years to get together people working in the development, aid & humanitarian sector to learn from each other, and other experts from similar industries.</p>
3 yellow dots	<p>Ethical Principles and Guidelines for Research and Evaluation in Development</p> <p>Throughout history, unequal power distribution has existed between people. They still exist now. As scholars, practitioners and students of working across the globe studying and making a difference to marginalised and vulnerable people's lives; it is essential that we do it culturally-appropriately, ethically and without further widening the power gap. The RDI Network has developed a set of guidelines and principles to formally enshrine the rights of the people we study and help. These guidelines provide practical advice and reflective questions to ensure researchers understand the positive, negative and long-term effects (intended or unintended) when planning, designing and/or undertaking a research project.</p>
3 yellow dots	<p>The Research for Development Impact Network (RDI Network)</p> <p>You know how many countries in the world still struggle with access to clean water, safe housing, and well-resourced hospitals? The RDI Network provides guidance, practical tools, and advice on how to work ethically and effectively in those countries, and with the local community. In fact, the Network formalised and instituted Principles and Guidelines for ethical research and evaluation in development for the sector.</p>
4 yellow dots	<p>Development of ethical research guidelines for Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)</p> <p>The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) does a lot of work overseas. Now in 2020, DFAT has decided it was time to update their decision-making processes. DFAT wants to enshrine ethical conduct as <i>the</i> top priority. The RDI Network is working with DFAT to systemise and streamline ethical decision-making in every department; from contractors, to procurement, to service delivery.</p>

- **ACTIVITY: Outcomes, Signals and Measures**
 - Discussion on current Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) needed as current activities are only Monitoring
 - Moved to next committee meeting; out of time

7. Next steps (Chair)

Key points:

- Next meeting in May 2020 via Zoom
- Committee enthusiasm for a 'strategic planning retreat' in August/September 2020
- Committee members shared their recent and upcoming projects and events

