Assessing the impact of research relevant to international development: sharing lessons and improving coherence

Wellcome Trust, London; 24th January 2012

Objectives

This event aimed to enable DFID, the Research Councils and other funders and stakeholders to further consider how research impact can be recognised and assessed when it comes to international development. It brought together people who have been considering some of the issues around research impact, but have not had the opportunity to meet before.

Key conclusions and next steps

Engaging the research community
- Training for researchers on communication and engagement is required, but dedicated staff to assist with these activities are also needed – we can't expect researchers to do everything
- A workshop should be held to explore lessons learnt in the context of impact, rather than only hearing about success stories; a 'failure' conference

Conceptualising impact
- Identify how to ensure that impacts are real and not constructed (verification is key – particularly where beneficiaries are in the South)

Capturing impact
- Systems for capturing impact must be simplified and cover a full range of outputs/activities: research outcomes, relationships/partnerships, capacity building.
- There must be demonstrable benefits of capturing outputs to both funders and researchers, e.g. through links to REF

Assessing impact
- A one day session solely looking at impact assessment, bringing in more practitioners including southern partners, think tanks, academics, stakeholders

UKCDS and ESPA will work with participants to bring together the relevant people to make progress in aligning approaches to impact amongst funders.

Contents

Note of the meeting

Introduction - Andree Carter and Paul van Gardingen

Andree Carter explained that the event was organised in response to demand from funding organisations for a more joined up approach to research impact. The intention was to share experiences to date of creating, capturing and assessing research impact as funders and researchers, and consider how participating organisation might work more closely in future.

Paul van Gardingen reported that he had received feedback from researchers who say that they are receiving mixed messages about impact, e.g. through different processes for the Research Councils and the REF (Research Excellence Framework). However the processes are not that different, but the use of different language does not help with understanding.

Higher Education Funding Council for England's approach to research impact in the REF - Kim Hackett, HEFCE

The new Research Excellence Framework will replace the Research Assessment Exercise in 2014. It will inform funding allocations, provide accountability for public funding by making the contribution of research to society more explicit, and provide benchmarks for institutions. The panel criteria and working methods were published at the end of January 2012. Further internal systems will be developed during 2012, and institutions will make submissions by the end of 2013.

There are three elements to the REF:
- Outputs (similar to RAE): 65%
- Impact: 20%
- Environment: 15%

The definition of impact for the REF is:

- An effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia
- Impact **includes** an effect, change or benefit to:
    - The activity, attitude, awareness, behaviour, capacity, opportunity, performance, policy, practice, process or understanding
    - Of an audience, beneficiary, community, constituency, organisation or individuals
    - In any geographic location whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally
- It **excludes** impacts on research or the advancement of academic knowledge within HE; and impacts on teaching or other activities within the submitting HEI

The REF aims to assess impact already achieved (in period 2008-2013), rather than predicting future impact. The impact submissions will consist of an impact template (worth 20% of submission) and case studies (80%). The case studies will be limited to four pages highlighting what the research was, how it contributed to impact, what the impact was, who it affected and how. The studies must be predominantly equivalent to 2* quality, and demonstrate that the impact would not have occurred or would be substantially reduced if the research had not taken place. The case studies should include qualitative and quantitative evidence, as well as independent sources which could be used to verify the claims made. The criteria for assessing impacts are **reach** and **significance**:

Four star	Outstanding impacts in terms of their reach and significance
Three star	Very considerable impacts in terms of their reach and significance
Two star	Considerable impacts in terms of their reach and significance
One star	Recognised but modest impacts in terms of their reach and significance
Unclassified	The impact is of little or no reach and significance; or the impact was not eligible; or the impact was not underpinned by excellent research produced by the submitted unit

During 2010 there was a pilot of the impact approach using 29 institutions and 5 expert panels. Each institution submitted a range of case studies. The panels found the case studies effective, and were able to distinguish impact of institutions.

For further information visit: www.ref.ac.uk or email: info@ref.ac.uk

Q&A session:

Q   What is an 'independent source' for the purposes of verifying claims?
A   The need for independent sources to verify claims of impact is simply to avoid anecdotal statements. Submissions are expected to provide sources from a user organisation, or another research institution, which HEFCE staff can contact for verification if required.

Q   There seems to be some contradiction in terms of reporting impact already created, and demonstrating potential populations that could be reached.
A   Reach is understood by the panels not as just the absolute numbers of a case study, but rather the nature of the impact (e.g. the amount achieved relative to the

potential). 'Potential' refers to the possible reach of the impact, rather than possible future impact.

Q   What about the political dimension of potential impact? If research is blocked due to political agendas, does that decrease the value of impact?

A   The panels recognise that there are external factors in the creation of impact. The criteria are quite descriptive about the nature of impact; contribution to wider debate and knowledge is valid as well as uptake to policy etc.

Q   Is there any weighting to UK vs. international impact? (e.g. flooding in east Anglia vs. Bangladesh). UK economic impact may be higher, but affect fewer people.

A   The scale of impact will be judged on more than just economic factors. There is no inherent preference for UK impact.

Q   Are there any criteria that look to scaling up or scaling out?

A   Not for the case studies. The template will include a section on the unit's strategy to enable researchers to enhance impact in future and mechanisms for this.

Q   The timescale is for 2008-2013, but what about research that occurred before 2008?

A   The impacts assessed must be during the period from 2008-2013, but the supporting research can be from 1993 onwards.

The Research Councils' approach to research impact - Mari Williams, BBSRC

Research Councils must assess impact to demonstrate accountability and make the case for funding as part of formal reporting requirements to BIS. Unlike the REF process, Research Councils do include academic impact, as well as 'economic and societal impacts'

Researchers are expected to demonstrate an awareness of what is going to be different on the basis of their research (vital for the case for funding), and what they will do to encourage impact. For development research we must be thinking about potential change in people's lives, through local economies etc. It is expected that researchers will publish widely, beyond traditional media, to engage with a wider audience. The Councils do not expect every researcher to tick every box, but they are expected to think broadly about impact, and where appropriate make contact with user groups. Applications for funding should include explicit statements about a commitment to 'pathways to impact'.

Research Councils capture evidence using the e-VAL (used by MRC and STFC) and ROS (Research Outcomes System used by AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, ESRC and NERC (from 2013)) systems. The aim is to collect data to evaluate programmes and research activities, to demonstrate the impact of RC investments. Institutions can do bulk uploads or PIs can upload on a grant by grant basis. Researchers should not be required to report different things to different funders.

The types of things that researchers are expected to report using ROS are: publications, other research outputs, collaborations, communication, exploitation, recognition, staff development, further funding, impact (short statements against clear guidance). ROS is based on and uses Je-S, so that all submissions are related to specific grants. But the RCs

recognise that researchers have different funders, and outputs can be associated with more than one grant.

Q&A and discussion:

Q   What is the purpose of the two systems of assessment? Do they represent different pots of money?
A   The two processes represent two sides of a dual-support system for UK research. Around half of public money for research goes through funding councils for on-going support of research institutions, paying staff salaries etc. Part of that allocation is judged by the quality of research coming from the institutions, using REF. The RCs fund the research costs of individual projects and programmes. Thus both contribute to different aspects of the same activity. For RCs, the important unit of assessment is the research project, so the potential impact of research is important in making decisions about what research to fund. For funding councils and REF, the assessment is of research already carried out, and the unit of assessment is the institution. RCs also evaluate what has come out of research that they have funded, and if researchers are not declaring outputs then future funding can be withheld until they do.

•   Using case studies always overestimates the impact of research. An alternative is episode study which tracks back from a significant change to the find input of research, but this tends to underestimate the impact of research. Ideally we want to find a middle-ground between the two.

Q   Why are there two RC systems (e-VAL and ROS)?
A   The new systems were initially looked at four years ago, with the intention of having a single RC system. The tender submitted in May 2010 was over the threshold for the new coalition government.

MRC has been using e-VAL since 2009, ROS was launched in November 2011. MRC currently has a 97% compliance rate on e-VAL (which will be called Research Fish later this year). It will then be used by all biomedical funders, which is more relevant for researchers as co-funding is with other biomedical funders, not other RCs. Research Fish will be fully interoperable with ROS.

Q   ROD data is not currently in the public domain – what will be the policy for ROS?
A   It is not currently public, although individual councils do have the option to publicise outcomes, link their websites to ROS etc. It may be made public at a later date.

Some RCs (e.g. ESRC) already have a policy of publicising all outputs on their websites. This is in the interest of researchers and supports the REF process.

Q   Will REF information be in the public domain?
A   All submission information (metadata, not submissions), and non-confidential case studies will be available after exercise.

Q   There is a need to ensure compatibility of data types and definitions; e.g. 'collaboration': will that require an output or is a discussion sufficient?

A   The technical specification for ROS reflects the intention to have single system for all RCs so there is already a lot of compatibility across RCs.

ESPA/ESRC-DFID is currently mapping ROS against DFID R4D output types, with a view to harmonising metadata.

Users have to look to range of funders to find impact, this needs to be improved.

Q   Third party evidence can be quite difficult to obtain in development (e.g. asking a policy maker for a statement can put them in difficult position)

A   One way is simply by providing contact details for someone who could corroborate a claim, it does not have to be a public statement.

DFID's approach to research impact – Andrew Shaw, DFID

The Research and Evidence Division vision is to "To support DFID to become world class in **using evidence to drive value for money and development impact**; to **influence other donors** to be the same, and to provide **better evidence to all decision makers** in development". For DFID, impact means improving the lives of people living in poverty (beyond the academic).

Documents relevant to results capture include: Operational plan(s), Business cases, Theory of Change, Logframes, Annual reviews, Project completion reports, M&E Plans, R4D. All DFID research should appear on R4D. The High Level Indicators exercise will not be repeated in future.

The Results Framework draws on theory of change and operational plans. It initially concentrates on the 'measurable middle' of the results chain, especially outputs including key indicators (DFID metadata). Such indicators are:
- number of publications: total and peer reviewed
- % of publications available open access
- number of systematic reviews / evidence papers
- number of products / new technologies approved
- number of visits to / downloads from R4D
- number of business cases referred for poor use of evidence
- % of research led by Southern institution
- % of programmes undertaking gender analysis
- % of programmes achieving intermediate outcomes

The business case procedure for funding research programmes means that the DFID staff member that is in charge of a programme must demonstrate an understanding of the research and how the investment fills a gap. It is recognised that demonstrating the likely impact of research is difficult; DFID is learning from researchers about what impact means and how best to capture it.

ESPA Impact Strategy - Paul van Gardingen

ESPA projects are ensuring that local researchers are working with local communities and collecting new data. People and wellbeing are at the heart of the ESPA research strategy and impact strategy. The [Making an Impact](#) series highlights how projects are already making a difference, these outputs will be linked with ROS and other project outputs from next year.

The "ABC" of ESPA's Impact:
- **A**ttribution to the research project
- **B**uilding communities for research and impact
- **C**onceptualising impact
- **C**apturing impact
- **C**ommunicating impact

Questions for researchers:
- Who will use your research?
  - Who are the intended ultimate beneficiaries?
- How will your research be used?
  - How will the lives of poor people be changed by your research being put into use?
- What will your project do to ensure that that this happens?
  - What needs to be done to track the development impact of your work?

These questions need to be thought about from the first day of research.

ESPA Theory of Change - Isabel Vogel

Theory of Change (ToC) is at the opposite end of impact process to the capturing and tracking of outputs. It is the conceptual side, outlining how to think about research.

Theory of Change: structured technique for understanding how and why a programme is likely to contribute to long-term change in the issue context.

ToC is currently being used by DFID as well as some North American funders and foundations, but there is not a lot of leadership in the global south. ToC conceptualises what needs to change and why, and complements the Logframe, which is a management tool.

ToC encourages you to zoom out from the research programme to look at different scales and influences of change, from short-term changes with a direct influence (partners, collaborators, immediate research users) to medium-term changes with indirect influence (policy shapers, knowledge networks, planners, practitioners, stakeholder groups). It is clear that external factors exert a stronger and stronger influence as you zoom out.

This gives a conceptual model of impact (not a literal, linear description of change), which helps to provide a feasible story for research contribution, and gives a sense of purpose and momentum to research. Remember that it's a rough guide to change that can be revised and adapted as the journey unfolds.

Q&A and discussion:

Q   **Working with a specific funder can lead us to produce the sort of story that they want to hear to fulfil their own exercises, but may not match our own theories and concepts.** We tend to come up with our own models for e.g. participation, but how do you bridge the gulf and stop people telling what you want to hear. It is also a shame that ToC has developed without much southern input.

A   Less risk of a disconnect if you are both thinking along these lines, thinking about wider concepts

ToC can illustrate the true value of collaboration between the RCs and DFID, and the importance of putting all outputs in the public domain. RC research must be world class, objective, peer reviewed, and in the public domain, with no political filter. We all need to hear stories about what is difficult, as well as what is convenient/success stories.

[Research Unit for Research Utilisation](#) has done work which demonstrates how to think broadly about how research is used conceptually and strategically.

The [ODI Rapid programme](#) thinks in terms of five levels of policy influence: discourse, attitudes, approaches, policy statement and legislation, behaviour change.

Q   **Projects don't last that long, is ToC exercise useful for individual projects?**
A   It's much more appropriate at programme level; for example, ESPA has had 2,000 researchers so far, with a few hundred currently active. [Helen Suich](#) will work with new projects about how to fit their contribution into the ESPA ToC, we do not expect them to design their own.

Impact stories

Thomas Sikor, University of East Anglia
ESPA Project: Just ecosystem management: linking ecosystem services with poverty alleviation

Three main activities of engagement: capacity building, consultancy, and media outreach have helped with increasing the chance of having impact.

Capacity building included PhD students and follow-on funding from ESRC for junior analysts, with clear outputs including policy briefs. The effect of follow-on funding is diffuse and long term, but does not go away. It allows messages from the project to be 'translated' to a wider audience, and strengthens networks.

Consultancy on UN-REDD included authorship on reports and technical expertise for pilot activities. This resulted in immediate update by the government and UN agencies; very tangible and measurable impacts, but policy changes frequently and the effect on practice is less clear.

The media outreach came in the form of a press briefing in December 2011, in response to concerns over illegal logging. This had a huge impact in the national news, came three days before a ministerial press conference, and led to high level meeting. However a change in awareness and policy uptake remains to be seen. The opportunity for this press briefing would have been missed if the local Vietnamese people had not been so strongly engaged and highlighted the opportunity.

Impact is about the reception of research, resulting from signals and receptiveness. How can we influence this reception? Possible indicators include long-term involvement and sustained partnerships. Returning PhD students can act as translators for findings, they will move on and can be champions of change.

There is also the importance of luck: we are not always aware of the key moments when impacts occur.

Further information about Thomas' current ESPA project can be found in the project's Impact Note.

Discussion:
- INGO community has a lot of expertise in terms of uptake of research, communication, e.g. Oxfam research for advocacy/real world impact. The ODI programme Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) has an extensive literature. There needs to be better communicating and sharing of this with researchers.
- Theory of Change also discusses receptiveness of context. Need to also think about what our focus should be in assessing impact; most focus is on policy, but also of relevance is long-term capacity strengthening etc.
- There is an MRC research unit in Gambia which was set up in 1947. The local population is comfortable and familiar with the laboratory, there is a mutual trust. The unit also provides services to the community, and the local population can see the practical outputs of research there.

- [IDRC](#) in Canada demonstrates the importance of building relationships, and recognising opportunities, which cannot be fully planned. Models we currently have to measuring change *ex ante* don't really serve us here.

Simon Carpenter, Institute of Animal Health
CIDLID project: Monitoring and Intervention Strategies for Bluetongue Virus (BTV) Epidemics in Rural India

This project was preceded by a long history of Bluetongue research in the UK. Through long-term funding and expertise, eradication was possible in 2008, with high economic impact which helped to justify funding.

In India the project aimed to predict outbreaks and improve intervention strategies. The circumstances and behaviours surrounding BTV are very different, e.g. high number of other diseases, monsoon-driven outbreaks, misdiagnoses of other diseases as BTV, ineffective use of insecticides as a preventative measure.

Impact in the context of veterinary/disease science can be measured through eradication (the "gold standard") or through impacts of predictive modelling (vaccination uptake, condition monitoring, disease profiles) and improved husbandry techniques.

Discussion

- In this context, impacts occur on relatively short timescales of a few years, and are presumably easier to capture than other development impacts.
- This example highlights the positive effect of sustaining a critical mass of expertise in these areas. Decades of research in the UK has been rapidly utilised elsewhere.
- It also shows the useful engagement with NGOs as user groups. This is already widely done with the disasters community, but we need a wider idea of how to work with NGOs.

Fulong Wu, University College London
ESRC-DFID Projects: Urban Poverty and Property Rights Changes in China & The Development of Migrant Villages under China's Rapid Urbanization: Implications for Poverty and Slum Policies

These projects have shown that there is a need to understand poverty conditions by social groups. In migrant villages the government is building high-rises, but the researchers argue that migrant villages are not slums, that they provide affordable housing, working space and small markets.

Impact resulted from utilising a strong evidence-base to justify surprising outcomes. The research contradicted existing policies and has shown the need to target specific neighbourhoods with alternative redevelopment policies.

Informal engagement with users has been important; beyond standard dissemination activities, there needs to be a dialogue with planners and officials. The research team assisted with a request to train the directors of the planning bureau and combined this with sharing their research outputs.

Another key activity is enabling local research capacities of partners; they are not just 'helpers' for the project, but can act as mediators for research impacts, interfacing with the

government and local activists. Their capacities must be developed, rather than asking them to help the project.

One project has led to four featured newspaper articles in *China Daily*, helping to raise the debate in wider circles. However, the research is still limited in terms of impact and predominantly reflects the research team's own curiosities. Research can be seen as a process of creating impacts; it is an activity within which impacts are embedded. It is intended that in the future, the team's research projects will have demonstration projects such as with a user group to demonstrate the possibility of urban redevelopment.

Discussion

- As with the Tomas Sikor's project, this highlighted again the importance of relationships. On the micro-scale our relationships are the most important things (e.g. with colleagues, family etc.) and this seems to hold true at the project level too.

Q   Does being a PI with local ties assist with creating impact?

A   Speaking the local language, and having former colleagues in-country is a benefit. Local partners are often ex-PhD students who have gone back to China and now work in NGOs and other organisations.

Q   Do you feel that it would be possible to have these impacts without your own history and relationships?

A   My background is not essential, there is currently lots of exchange between the UK and China, including a visitor scheme (Chinese scholarship council). A research project is not just one process, we need to think as a team, use our colleagues, students etc. UK researchers do tend to have an advantage of greater publication experience.

Q   From the perspective of DFID, it is vital to show how research in China be made relevant to other places, how can we do this?

A   It is very useful for us to think about potential impact in other places such as Indian slums or Brazilian favelas. A unique development history does present a certain context, so comparative studies are useful.

Breakout groups

Four breakout groups were held to discuss the following topics:
1. Engaging the research community
2. Conceptualising impact
3. Capturing impact
4. Assessing impact

Detailed notes are in Appendix B

Key conclusions and next steps

Group 1:
- We need targeted training for researchers on communication and engagement, but also dedicated staff to assist with these activities – we can't expect researchers to do everything
- It would be very useful to have a workshop exploring lessons learnt in the context of impact, rather than only hearing about success stories

Group 2:
- Need to identify how to ensure that impacts are real and not constructed (verification is key – particularly where beneficiaries are in the South)

Group 3:
- Systems for capturing impact must be simplified and cover a full range of outputs/activities: research outcomes, relationships/partnerships, capacity building.
- There must be demonstrable benefits of capturing outputs to both funders and researchers, e.g. through links to REF

Group 4:
- It would be useful to have a one day session solely looking at impact assessment, bringing in more practitioners including southern partners, think tanks, academics, stakeholders

Appendix A - Acronyms

AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
BBSRC	Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council
CIDLID	Combating Infectious Diseases of Livestock for International Development
DFID	Department for International Development
EPSRC	Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council
ESPA	Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
Je-S	Joint Electronic Submissions system
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MRC	Medical Research Council
NERC	Natural Environment Research Council
PI	Principal Investigator
R4D	Research for Development (DFID)
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
RAPID	Research and Policy in Development
RC	Research Council
RED	Research and Evidence Division (DFID)
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
REF	Research Excellence Framework
ROD	Research Outputs Database
ROS	Research Outcomes System
STFC	Science and Technology Facilities Council
ToC	Theory of Change
UKCDS	UK Collaborative on Development Sciences
UN-REDD	United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries

Appendix B – Notes from breakout groups

Engaging the research community

- How do we encourage and enable researchers to see reporting for impact assessment as something important rather than another administrative burden?
- How do we minimise the burden of reporting on researchers?
- Language of research – finding a way that captures everything (e.g. ToC) but can still be shared with the wider community
- All science that is relevant for development (not just development science)
- Definitions – what is impact?
- Prioritisation is an issue for career scientists, what do you concentrate on? Outreach, innovation, corporate relationships etc. in addition to conducting research! Cultural/temporal issue for people who've not been engaged with this before
- Fallacy that working in development can't produce high quality research or outputs
- Reporting more than once is not fair
- Multiple frameworks are nightmare for researcher and manager. Reporting to school, HEFCE, RC, funders. Do frameworks reflect what we actually do? Case studies show that research is much more long-term, not just one project. How can we expect people to report on impact from a single project? Development requires long term relationships, trust, capacity strengthening etc.
- Practically researchers describe what they've done; attribution is another issue. Funders acknowledge that there are other funders etc.: "contribution" rather than "attribution"
- Non peer-reviewed documents rarely have any attribution so it can be impossible to find who funded research.
- What is REF definition of contribution? If the REF criteria works, then RCs should be using it. If the indicators work, RCs should use them.
- Expectations of researchers now which go well beyond our own training.
- Presenting success stories and narratives, talking up our research, contradicts scientific method of erring on side of caution
- All of these activities will result in us doing less and less science. Especially managers and higher level researchers.
- Funders want researchers to flag up opportunities – not necessarily do them all themselves
- Learning from failure – researchers could use a workshop looking at this. We are in danger of airbrushing it out through pressure to report positives
- Funding for formal training for communication for researchers? Provision for communication/engagement experts within research projects/programmes
- Exploit new technologies for communication, internet, mobile
- Link with impact specialists within universities
- Don't pile everything on to researchers

Conceptualising impact

- Failed projects and discussion of failure are always a learning experience, but there are political issues about how openly this can be discussed (e.g. with funders and especially with public money)
- The workshop has focussed on supply-driven research, but from the demand side, there should also be stakeholder engagement during the research development processes, as well as during and after the research
- There can be a contradiction between researchers viewing themselves as developing new evidence, but being seen by stakeholders as a flow of resources and provider of opportunities, which can mean local people make strategic choices about what they can achieve through the researcher and the project. Thus, there should be a focus/stress placed on the development/maintenance of long run relationships for external researchers, if they are to operate most successfully, and (often) make research processes less extractive
- The ToC can be used to ask questions of why people would want to use a piece of research at the beginning of the process, and provide a way of thinking about how to engage different stakeholders to achieve this use. Questions about whether a ToC is a mechanistic approach depends largely on who is involved and how it is applied
- Questions can also be asked about how 'planned change' reflects reality - with consequential validity indicating that people may only work toward the objectives they will be assessed against (i.e. as identified in a ToC)
- The political economy of the local context will also be important in influencing how the research can be designed and implemented (e.g. whether researchers have to work with/through certain organisations, local-level power structures and access to information), which can have a strong influence over potential impact. Providing better information in a form usable by marginalised groups (i.e. those for some reason not included in the research design process) can level the playing field, and spread the information beyond the identified 'policy makers'
- Ideas about impact should also consider how to take account of counter-narratives - i.e. who challenges the case studies provided? Also, improved channels of representation from the grass roots to the government and/or funder level should improve the likelihood that impact is understood as people's lived realities
- It is necessary to think about how to ensure impacts are real rather than constructed (i.e. for the purpose of the impact exercise)

Capturing impact

- More medium-term information/ indicators need to be collected relating to relationships/partnerships and capacity building as these are usually crucial for maximising impact
- ROS (and any other systems) need to align with institutional repositories that will be used for extracting information for the REF. This includes harmonising the impact template and case studies and potentially agreeing in a minimum data set so that researchers can record one set of information that is relevant to them all
- Incentives for data capture need to be seriously considered to get good quality data
- A data coordinator who can be called on for help by those entering data can make a valuable difference to how a system is perceived and how well it works.

Assessing Impact

- There is a range of methodologies being adopted with consultants commonly being employed to undertake the assessment in order to have some "independence" although there are both positives and negatives to this approach. Agreed that there should be a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures.
- Case studies were frequently used to get the impact story across but these tend to over-estimate the value of research. The use of episode studies is another approach although this tends to under-estimate the value of research.
- Problems of attribution and ethical issues were considered important but concluded the lack of capacity was the most limiting factor.
- The champions of the research are important for impact not least for their energy but sometimes, impact does just happen by chance.
- In conclusion, there is much to be done and a more detailed session on assessing impact would be most welcome but should include a range of practitioners plus representatives from southern partners, think tanks etc.