



**ANNUAL REPORT
2023/24**

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Table of Acronyms

ACU	Association of Commonwealth Universities
AFD	Agence Française de Développement
DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care
DSIT	Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
DRG	Disasters Research Group
ERG	Epidemics Preparedness and Response Group
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
GCRF	Global Challenges Research Fund
GloPID-R	Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HFF	Health Funders Forum
HIC	High-Income Country
HMG	His Majesty's Government
IAI	Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research
IDRC	International Development Research Center (Canada)
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IRDF	International Research Development Funders Forum
LMIC	Low- and Middle-Income Country
MODARI	Mapping ODA Research and Innovation
NERC	Natural Environmental Research Council
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
RCS	Research Capacity Strengthening
RCSG	Research Capacity Strengthening Group
REF	Research Excellence Framework
R&I	Research and innovation
SCOR	Strategic Coherence of ODA-funded Research Board
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGCI	Science Granting Councils Initiative
SRI	Sustainability Research and Innovation Congress
SSUNGA	Science Summit at the United Nations' General Assembly
PARC	Perivoli Africa Research Centre
UKCDR	UK Collaborative on Development Research
UKES	UK Engagement Survey
UKRI	UK Research and Innovation
UUKI	Universities UK International
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Foreword Interim SCOR Board Chair, Prof. Melissa Leach



Sustainable Development Goals are off track, while many global challenges persist or worsen.

It has been an exciting and important year for UKCDR. It is also a time of major change and challenge in the world and in the development sector, both in the UK and beyond. It is a privilege to introduce this report which documents some of UKCDR's many achievements, while also marking an important moment of reflection about the future. I took over as Chair of the SCOR Board, which oversees UKCDR, following the departure of Marie Staunton CBE, and it is an honour to build on her many contributions during a turbulent period. These milestones included: the COVID-19 crisis, when she helped direct UKCDR's research response, including a world-class tracker for COVID-19 research; the 2021 ODA reduction from 0.7% to 0.5% GNI; and three changes of government and two changes of government machinery – including the FCDO merger and the formation of DSIT. Marie's wise, pragmatic and humane approach to steering the Board through this period leaves it in a good place to meet the multiple challenges ahead. Our current era is one of multiple, intersecting crises and pressing development priorities.

The Sustainable Development Goals are off track, while many global challenges persist or worsen. These include climate change, biodiversity loss and associated natural disasters; protracted war and conflict; food, water and energy insecurities; debt crises and a lack of affordable finance; worsening inequalities and challenges around education; and challenges to democracy, political accountability and inclusion. The UK government's 2023 white paper on international development is a welcome articulation of priorities to help address these challenges, including tackling poverty, building climate adaptation and mitigation capabilities, addressing state fragility, new approaches to development finance, and strengthening and reforming the international system. Meanwhile there are valuable emphases on harnessing research and innovation, and on embedding mutual respect and equitable partnerships within the UK's development offer. Implementation and funding for these priorities is now key.

The SCOR Board remains a valuable co-ordination mechanism for UK-based funders to discuss and optimise their areas of activity and carve out a shared approach to international development research, showing how and why it matters. Achievements over the last period include fostering shared planning that maximises synergies, such as for COP28 on climate change; fostering shared reflections on lessons learned since the last UK Spending Review, such as from impact case studies; and convening debate about research approaches, such as around transdisciplinarity and partnership. SCOR has also overseen and supported many specific UKCDR achievements over FY23-24, from data mapping and analysis, including through the successful [MODARI](#) relaunch to improve the availability and consistency of data on ODA-funded research and innovation and significant contributions to [Pandemic PACT](#), to convening events that bring development professionals together for thought-provoking discussion, such as the UNGA Science Summit [session](#) co-hosted with Canada's International Development Research Center in September 2023. UKCDR has also undertaken sophisticated projects to distil lessons learned, policy pointers, and enabling frameworks to inform the work of funders and research practitioners, including [synthesising lessons from GCRF and Newton](#) to inform large fund design and [exploring the non-academic impact of UK-funded international development research](#). SCOR remains committed to steering UKCDR's work to make it as valuable as possible to UK-based research funders and the global international development research community.

Looking ahead, development research is more important than ever. It is vital to navigate uncertainties, identify opportunities, respond to people's real priorities, and ensure impact, so that constrained ODA budgets are spent accountably and well. Development research can also be top science, setting the bar for excellence, interdisciplinarity, relevance, and authentic and equitable international partnering. Building on SCOR and UKCDR contributions over the last year, we will develop further projects, syntheses, networks, and events to share lessons and shape and deliver the transformative agendas needed for challenging times, while also continuing to reflect on the best mechanisms to do so amid changing institutional configurations in UK government and globally. We hope you find this report helpful and inspiring and will continue to engage with us on this journey.



Development research is more important than ever. It is vital to navigate uncertainties, identify opportunities, respond to people's real priorities, and ensure impact.

Introduction by UKCDR Executive Director, Maggy Heintz



We showcased the role funders and delivery partners play in supporting evidence-informed decision-making processes for large funds.

The past year has been rich in activities and developments. This is as true for the broader international development research landscape as it is for UKCDR. Halfway through our [2022-2025 strategic period](#), I am glad to reflect on all UKCDR has achieved over the last financial year.

In 2023-2024, we used our expertise and collective voice to support His Majesty's Government (HMG) and other UK-based funders maximise the impact of research for development. The following compilation highlights what we have accomplished over the course of FY23-24 in several ways.

In synthesising the [learnings from publicly available evaluations of GCRF and the Newton Fund](#), we showcased the role funders and delivery partners play in supporting evidence-informed decision-making processes for large funds. To ensure funding is structured in the most effective and efficient way, we highlighted the need to formulate an overarching vision for what a fund wants to achieve, how it wants to achieve it, how progress will be measured, and who is accountable for driving priorities forward. Our report spotlighted other key areas for consideration, including a fund-level Theory of Change which should serve as a guide for planning and resourcing, alongside adequate timeframes for money to be allocated and spent. Greater alignment among funders around shared Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for monitoring and learning across the ODA landscape would also reflect the lessons learned from designing the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) and Newton Fund.

In [analysing the REF2021 impact case studies](#), we evidenced the breadth and impact of international development research conducted by UK higher education institutions. To provide funders and academics alike with the tools to maximise impact of this research, we published a framework of research enablers that encompasses six dimensions. These include: understanding of impact, funding approaches, co-production with research users, long-term equitable partnerships, embedded capacity strengthening, and operational processes.

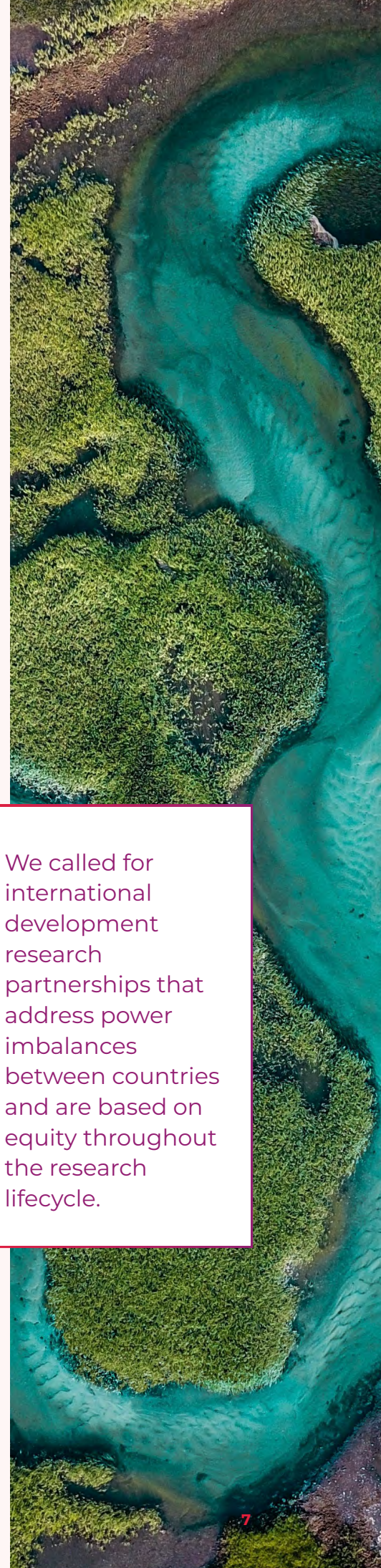
By supporting the transition from our [COVID-19 Research Tracker project](#) to the more encompassing [Pandemic Preparedness: Analytical Capacity and Funding Tracking \(Pandemic PACT\)](#) programme, we have [built on UKCDR's expertise in quantitative data analysis](#). This work has provided the research funding community with a tool to support the coordination of research preparedness and responses during new epidemics and pandemics, especially across Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs).

We have relaunched our [Mapping ODA Research and Innovation \(MODARI\) tool](#) and its database of ODA-funded projects is growing, improving the availability and consistency of data on ODA-funded research and innovation across UK government funders and implementing partners.

Over the course of the financial year, UKCDR used its extensive knowledge of the sector to submit a [response](#) to the call for evidence for the UK government's white paper on international development. We called for international development research partnerships that address power imbalances between countries and are based on equity throughout the research lifecycle. We also called for longer or more flexible funding cycles and an agile, transdisciplinary approach to research for development. The latter should include a clear end-to-end pathway to impact, flexibility to operational management, and collaborative and participatory work with non-academic stakeholders, practitioners, and policymakers, as well as engagement with local and diverse knowledge systems.

The government's [white paper on international development](#) was subsequently published in November 2023 and we very much welcomed the focus on science, technology, and partnerships. With a framework in place describing HMG's ambitions for international development and a general election on the horizon, the year ahead is an opportunity for UKCDR to help funders use their collective voice to make the case for continued funding in research for international development.

We called for international development research partnerships that address power imbalances between countries and are based on equity throughout the research lifecycle.





About UKCDR

Accelerating global
development through
the power of research
and knowledge

This report covers the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 (FY23-24). This section presents an overview of the UK Collaborative on Development Research (UKCDR), including information on our current funders, strategic direction, and priority areas.

1.1 Who we are

UKCDR is a dedicated team of experts working side-by-side with government departments and other research funders to amplify and enhance the value of the UK's investment in international development research. For over 15 years, we have brought UK-based research funders together to discuss priorities and coordinate efforts to maximise the impact of UK-funded international development research.

We are a neutral and impartial entity that provides the secretariat for, and is governed by, the [Strategic Coherence of ODA-funded Research \(SCOR\) Board](#).

Our core contributing members include:

- Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC);
- Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT);
- Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO);
- UK Research and Innovation (UKRI); and
- Wellcome.

1.2 Our strategy (2022-2025)

All UKCDR's work is underpinned by our mission and vision.

Our vision is to accelerate global development through the power of research and knowledge.

Our mission is to amplify the value and impact of research by promoting coherence, collaboration, and joint action among UK-based funders.

To enable our organisation to meet its strategic priorities, UKCDR is implementing an ambitious and outward-looking three-year [strategy](#). The current strategy covers the period 2022-2025. It stands on three pillars:

- Mapping, analysis and foresight;
- Convening for joint action; and
- Sharing information and best practice.

These pillars feed into our overarching ambition to use our expertise and collective voice. We do this to:

- Identify where UK research for development has been effective and shown value for money.
- Identify the overall impact of the UK's investment in research for development.
- Bridge the gap between what is funded and how it is delivered.
- Increase our impact by working with a range of influential funding bodies and foster relationships with core users (the international academic research community and the global development community).

- Foster dialogue, draw on complementary skills, initiate discussions and ensure representation and understanding of our international stakeholders' needs and priorities to jointly address global challenges.

UKCDR defines research for international development as research that addresses global challenges, in alignment with SDGs, and results in political, economic, social, health or environmental change for the benefit of LMICs, specific regions, and/or the global community.

Figure 1: Visualisation of UKCDR's strategy

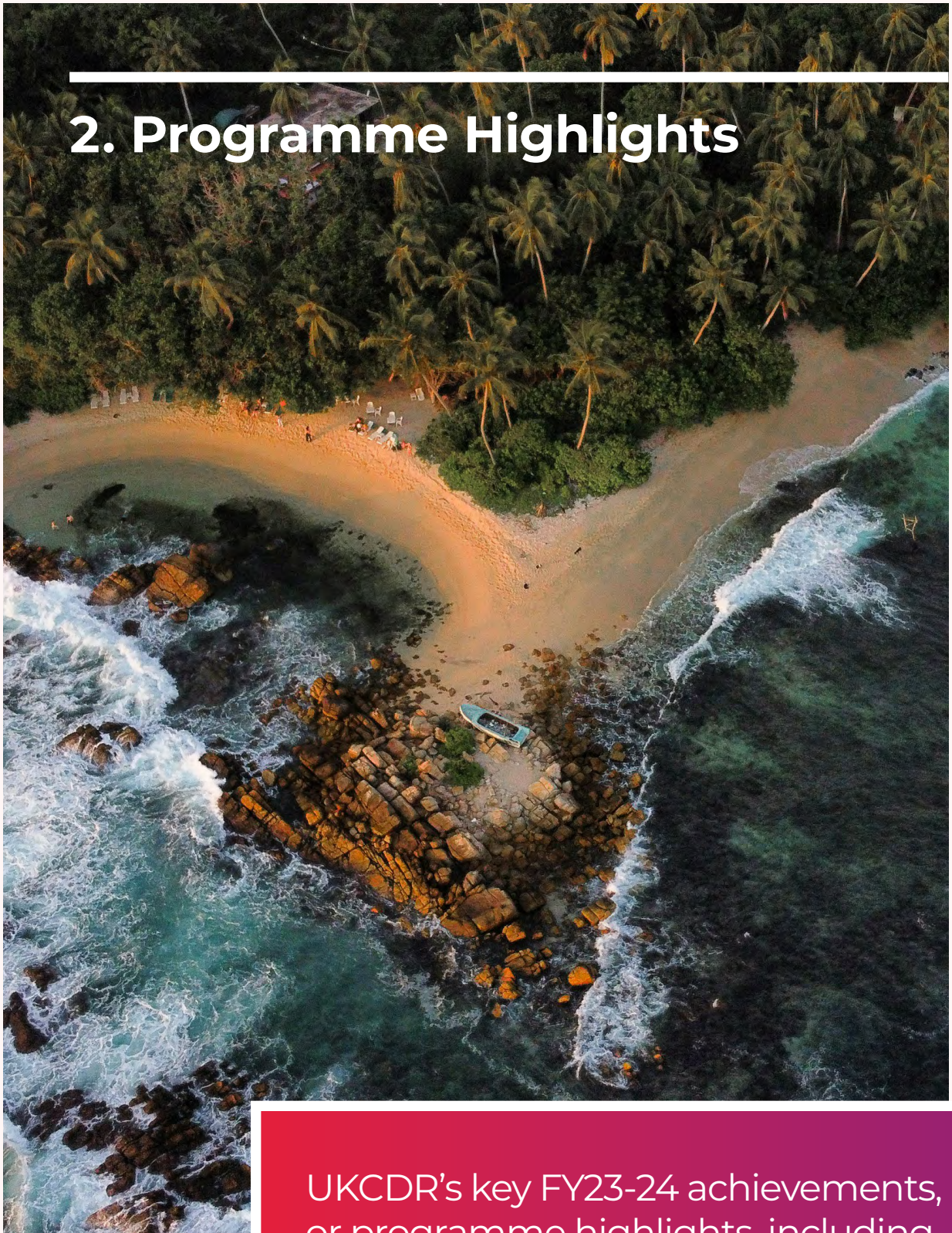


1.3 Our 2023-2024 priority areas

During FY23-24, UKCDR engaged in a range of projects in line with our three pillars. We focused on:

- **Distilling lessons learned to improve funders' practices.** Across many activities, and especially via our report on large fund design (see section 2.1), we have leveraged our research expertise to understand and demonstrate what funders do well and what could be improved.
- **Deepening understandings of impact across research for development.** UKCDR has produced one report and two case study booklets over the reporting period which explore and map different forms of research impact (see section 2.2).
- **Leveraging our data expertise to improve data transparency and visibility, coherence, and co-ordination among funders.** UKCDR has refined and augmented its data tools portfolio to ensure actors across the research ecosystem can understand funding trends on a wide range of topics.

2. Programme Highlights



UKCDR's key FY23-24 achievements, or programme highlights, including several major publications.

This section outlines UKCDR's key FY23-24 achievements, or programme highlights, including several major publications. Achievements in this section correspond primarily to pillar 3 (sharing information and best practice) and pillar 1 (mapping, analysis and foresight).

2.1 Synthesising lessons learned from large fund design

In 2023, the UK discontinued two of its Official Development Assistance (ODA) funds, the [Global Challenges Research Fund](#) (GCRF) and the [Newton Fund](#). Given the significant investment represented in these funds (£1.5 billion and £735 million, respectively), it was crucial to capture lessons from their implementation to inform future decision-making processes among UK-based funders of international development research. In May 2023, UKCDR published a [synthesis report](#) analysing 11 publicly available evaluations of the GCRF and Newton Fund. The report outlined the lessons learned in seven thematic areas and provided key policy pointers derived from these evaluations. Our objective was to preserve the funds' legacy and guide discussions on the future of UK ODA research funding among policymakers, research funders, and the broader research community.

The thematic areas in this report are fund-level strategy and governance; approach to funding; partnering with LMICs; delivering development impact; long-term sustainability; monitoring results and Value for Money; and gender equality, diversity and inclusion. Lessons learned and policy pointers within these thematic areas included:

- The UK research funding landscape is complex and needs consistent efforts to ensure coherence in large-scale investments like the GCRF and Newton Fund, and among various organisations involved in fund management and delivery.
- A fund's impact can be compromised without adequate timeframes for allocation and expenditure of funds, program rollout, defining strategic priorities, developing fund-level monitoring, evaluation and learning mechanisms, and establishing equitable partnerships with relevant stakeholders.
- Decision-making around timeframes is often influenced by political changes and may be beyond the control of those responsible for fund design and management.

The report highlighted three cross-cutting approaches that can boost a fund's sustainability in the long-term:

1. Equitable partnerships with LMICs, with a focus on improving ownership and knowledge exchange.
2. A deliberate focus on transdisciplinarity to maximise research impact and uptake beyond academia.
3. Investments to strengthen the capacity of research ecosystems (instead of focusing on individual researchers).

After the publication of the report, UKCDR disseminated key findings and delivered presentations across our members and stakeholder networks. These included the UK [Science and Innovation \(SIN\) Network](#), [Universities UK International](#) (UUKI), and [UK Engagement Survey](#) (UKES). The report was also highlighted in international development and research focused publications such as [Devex](#) and [Research Fortnight](#).

UKCDR's work to take this project forward centres on a selection of case studies highlighting the main mechanisms that funders use to spend ODA research money. Lessons learned from this project will inform how different approaches deliver development impact.

IN NUMBERS **Synthesising lessons learned from large fund design**



793

report views on UKCDR website



9

bespoke presentations, including:

- UK Science and Innovation Network
- UK Universities International
- DSIT ODA Management



6

known references to report by SCOR Board members when engaging with decision makers



9

proactive requests from stakeholders related to this work



3

references in other publications, including:

- IDS Literature Review
- Research Fortnight

“Very timely [...] this report will be of much interest to myself and the wider team.”
- UK-based research funder

2.2 The non-academic impact of UK-funded research for international development

The value and impact of research is at the heart of UKCDR’s mission. In an ever-changing international development sector, understanding the impact of research for international development is fundamental to addressing pressing challenges such as poverty and climate change.

Beyond academia, the broader impacts of research are seen through real-life applications that contribute to positive change. UKCDR has previously harnessed the [Research Excellence Framework’s](#) (REF) results to better understand the types of international development research projects undertaken by UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and their achieved impact. Based on REF2014 impact case studies, UKCDR published in 2015 an analysis of the [non-academic impact of international development research](#). During FY23-24, we continued to explore the nature of impact, now through the lens of [REF2021](#).

In September 2023, UKCDR published a [report](#) and an accompanying [case study booklet](#) on the landscape of research for international development conducted by UK-based HEIs. These publications formed part of a study that aimed to increase the effectiveness of international development research and its outcomes by providing key data mapping insights and best practice examples that funders, research institutions, and researchers could learn from. Activities included portfolio mapping, case study interviews, and a learning workshop. An expert group provided methodological guidance and technical feedback on the findings.


The report and case study booklet were launched at the 78th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) [Science Summit](#) in a session co-hosted by UKCDR and Canada's [International Development Research Center](#) (IDRC). During the session, we highlighted some of the key findings, including that REF2021 research projects for international development were highly interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary.

UKCDR also produced a new framework of research enablers to amplify development impact. The framework encompasses six dimensions:

- understanding of impact;
- funding approaches;
- co-production with research users;
- long-term equitable partnerships;
- embedded capacity strengthening; and
- operational processes.

Following the publication of the documents, UKCDR disseminated the methodology and key findings of the study across the research community. Engagement with funders, HEIs, and practitioners in the UK and internationally has stimulated discussions about how impact is understood and how funders and research institutions can leverage these understandings for sustainable and transformative change. For example, UKCDR contributed to Research England's consultation on the future of REF. UKCDR will soon publish an online open access data tool that will allow users to interact with the REF2021 impact case studies analysed for this study.


IN NUMBERS **The non-academic impact of UK-funded international development research**



9

bespoke presentations, including:


- Institute of Culture and Languages, University of London
- Centre for Global Mental Health, King's College London
- Universidad de La Sabana (Colombia)



8


closed-door meetings, including:

- NIHR / DHSC Impact and Evaluation Community
- Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)
- Research England




Findings discussed in 3 external outlets, including:

- Research Professional
- SciDev.net
- Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA)



1,555

report views on UKCDR website



830

case studies booklet views on UKCDR website

"This is a brilliant piece of work and extremely valuable to the development research community. It was my pleasure to follow your progress with the expert group, thank you for engaging us."

- UK-based research funder

2.3 The wide-reaching impact of research for international development

Research can generate effective and impactful outcomes across diverse contexts and in multiple forms. As such, research for international development can promote sustainable and inclusive growth, as envisioned in the UK's white paper on international development published in November 2023.

Real-world examples of the impact of research programmes and projects are vital to demonstrate the effectiveness and value of research in supporting the advancement of international development. For this reason, UKCDR has collated good practice case studies from UK-funded research around the world. Examples from UKCDR's [case studies hub](#) include our [impact success stories](#) collection which reflect the UK's leading role in generating research that advocates for and supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Adding to this evidence base, in April 2024 UKCDR published a [case study booklet](#) that illustrates the wide-reaching impact of international development research. The booklet contains seven case studies which demonstrate how research activities that primarily generate developmental impact in LMICs can also lead to wider benefits to the UK and around the world. These case studies were selected across different thematic areas and geographical locations and comprise a mix of ODA and non-ODA funded research. Each case study includes a summary of the research, the primary benefits achieved in LMIC contexts, and the secondary benefits that emerged in the UK, other countries, or globally.

This new collection of case studies broadens understandings of impact and how it can support development and sustainability in multiple contexts. For instance, primary benefits presented in the booklet include supporting the wellbeing of people with communication disabilities. Secondary benefits include informing policy changes and improving professional care practices for disadvantaged communities. Insights from the booklet should encourage researchers and their partners to maximise the benefits of their work so that their efforts help address global challenges and advance the SDGs.

Following the publication, UKCDR has engaged with research communities to disseminate the report and continues to support our members to showcase the great value of UK-funded research for international development.

IN NUMBERS **The wide-reaching impact of research for international development**

 2 scheduled presentations	 593 views on UKCDR website	<p><i>“Quite something to see how the work that funders put in can empower, enable, and establish equitable ways of working, and to recognise that doing so meaningfully amplifies real-world positive impact, often through unexpected ripple effects.”</i></p> <p>- UK-based research funder</p>
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2.4 Embedding equitable partnerships across our sector

Partnerships are critical to the UK's international development goals as envisioned in HMG's white paper on international development. Partnerships that support countries' own plans, prioritise their capabilities, and build their resilience will scale up and drive global development towards long-term reform and change. Based on mutual respect and a strong understanding of the context, UKCDR has continued to bring forward initiatives that build on genuinely equitable, strategic, and long-term partnerships between research funders, research institutions, and researchers in the UK and abroad.

UKCDR and [ESSENCE on Health Research](#)'s 2022 guidance document [Four Approaches to Equitable Research Partnerships](#) continues to help funders, research institutions, and research teams move from principles to practice in their pursuit of equitable partnerships. This guidance was referenced in HMG's white paper on international development. During FY23-24, UKCDR conducted several knowledge sharing and training sessions with a wide range of stakeholders. Tailored training sessions for professional services staff and researchers included sessions with the [Natural Environment Research Council](#) (NERC), Nottingham Research Managers, the [University of Cambridge](#), and the [International Network of Research Management Societies](#) (INORMS). Collaborative sessions were also held with the [Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research](#) (IAI), the [Belmont Forum](#), and [UNESCO](#) at the [Sustainability Research and Innovation Congress](#) (SRI) in June 2023. Finally, the guidance has informed the development of institutional partnerships policies, including that of the Wellcome Sanger Institute.

The publication has also been referenced in the [Africa Charter for Transformative Research Collaborations](#), co-created by key higher education and research bodies and constituencies in Africa to advance a richer and more just global scientific effort across the continent. In October 2023, UKCDR and the [Perivoli Africa Research Centre](#) (PARC) co-convened a first dialogue of key UK higher education, funder-based, and research actors to consider opportunities and approaches to realise the Africa Charter's ambitions. This first dialogue session affirmed the next steps needed to continue the discussion and identify concrete opportunities for supporting and advancing the charter.

Figure 2: UKCDR Executive Director, Maggy Heintz, takes part in PARC-UKCDR event in October 2023



Photo credit: PARC

With ongoing interest from the research community in embedding equitable partnerships, UKCDR is currently working on a project exploring equity at the funder level. The project aims to improve the types of partnerships that are established between research funders from different parts of the world, not limited to those between Northern and Southern countries. To this end, UKCDR is conducting two streams of analysis. One focuses on research funders based in High-Income Countries (HICs), while the other focuses on research funders based in LMICs. Lessons will be drawn from the analysis to help the continued evolution a more equitable research landscape.

2.5 Using our collective voice to promote research for international development

UKCDR is a co-ordination mechanism that helps our funders speak with a collective voice. All UKCDR activities across our three strategic pillars support this ambition. In FY23-24, the collective voice of UKCDR members informed three key outputs.

In July 2023, FCDO announced its intention to publish a white paper on international development that would build on the priorities outlined in the 2022 [International Development Strategy](#) and the objectives set in the [Integrated Review Refresh 2023](#). FCDO invited submissions of evidence to develop the white paper and UKCDR responded on behalf of its members.

Our response emphasised the centrality of research to effective international development funding that can help tackle the major challenges of our time. Conscious of the need to bridge the gap between what research is funded and how it is conducted, and per our strategy, UKCDR's response focused on practices in research for international development, highlighting several research enablers already identified in our published work. We underlined the need to embed equity in research partnerships, in accordance with UKCDR and ESSENCE on Health Research's [guidance](#) on this topic. We also noted the need for agile approaches to research for international development, with a particular emphasis on transdisciplinarity. Finally, we highlighted the importance of research capacity strengthening, in accordance with UKCDR's ['lessons learned' analysis](#) on this topic. UKCDR welcomes the resultant white paper and gladly notes its emphasis on research.

Beginning in late 2023, UKCDR has been preparing a narrative paper on behalf of our members in support of UK-funded research and innovation. This is complemented by a public paper demonstrating the value of the UK's investment in research for international development and highlighting the broad range of UK-funded research impacts around the world. These outputs acknowledge the need for a re-energised approach to UK-funded research for international development that is fit for our time, workable within financial constraints, and delivers the best of the UK's financial, scientific, and diplomatic capabilities. Through a series of case studies, it articulates the vital role of research in making progress towards the SDGs and maps the contributions of UK-funded research against the priorities outlined in the white paper on international development.

UKCDR's submission to the white paper, our narrative paper, and the associated public paper will help UK research funders, and particularly our members, to make the case for continued investment in research for international development. Aware of the fiscally challenging context we operate in, UKCDR uses evidence from our members' funding portfolios to demonstrate the real-world impact of international development research funding, and how this drives progress towards a more stable and equitable world.

2.6 Supporting coherence in research for development by sharing insights on practices

Organisations working in research for development must be able to understand emerging priorities, think reflexively about their own practices, and learn from others. Embedding these practices will ultimately improve coherence across our sector. In FY23-24, UKCDR coordinated a monthly blog series to help our team and partners achieve this ambition. The series, *Supporting coherence in research for development: Insights from the sector*, is hosted on the UKCDR website.

The series was structured around UKCDR’s three strategic pillars. Each pillar was explored via two blogs: one written by UKCDR team members and the other by authors from external organisations. The series benefited from a seventh and final blog by Marie Staunton C.B.E, former Chair of the SCOR Board, who departed her role in early 2024. Marie’s blog addressed the concept of ‘using our collective voice’ - the overarching ambition of all three strategic pillars.

In our own blog posts, UKCDR shared insights into the rationales, methodologies, and complexities behind our work. These were complemented by blogs from other authors which explored the meanings that concepts within our strategy have in different contexts. As this series was an opportunity for sector professionals to share and learn from each other’s professional insights, each blog contained pragmatic reflections on enablers and barriers to effectively delivering research for international development.

Strategic pillar	Blog title	Authors
Mapping, analysis and foresight	A new Dimension for understanding international collaboration: Mapping as a tool for assessing equitable partnerships	Anthony Bridgen and Pauline Rose, Cambridge Global Challenges
	Using data to achieve coherence: How UKCDR’s mapping & analysis can help the UK achieve its climate research investment goals	Adrian Bucher and Chantel Jones, UKCDR
Convening for joint action	Reflections on the value of ‘intermediaries’ for fair and practical collaboration in international development research	Francesco Obino, Global Development Network
	The power of convening: unveiling the role of UKCDR	Andrea Padilla, UKCDR
Sharing information and best practice	Sharing information and best practices to enable a well-informed, inclusive, and sustainable Americas	Edwin Castellanos, Science Director, Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research
	Beyond boundaries: UKCDR’s role in supporting the international development research landscape	Anisa Muzaffar and Andrea Padilla, UKCDR
Using our collective voice	Research for development — can UK-based funders keep up?	Marie Staunton CBE, Former Chair of SCOR Board

IN NUMBERS **Supporting coherence in research for development blog series**

 **1,214**

total views on our website

- Mapping, analysis and foresight: 698
- Convening for joint action: 329
- Sharing information and best practice: 117
- Using our collective voice: 70

 **179**

social media engagements

- 18 retweets and 13 LinkedIn reposts

 **5**

external authors

“Great piece on principles and challenges for research funders by outgoing SCOR Board Chair Marie Staunton.”

- Melissa Leach, Executive Director of the Institute of Development Studies and incoming SCOR Board Chair

2.7 Mapping ODA Research and Innovation (MODARI)

The [Mapping ODA Research and Innovation](#) (MODARI) project was launched in 2020 in response to the recognised need for stakeholders to access more joined-up and complete information on the UK’s ODA-funded research and innovation (R&I) activities. UKCDR has since been leading a cross-funder project aiming to:

- Improve the availability of ODA-funded R&I data, building on funders’ existing data collection and reporting systems; and
- Drive consistency across funders in the classification, monitoring, and capture of grants data and results from R&I activities.





To drive improvements and consistency in data collection, UKCDR coordinates a cross-funder stakeholder group, in which members share information and best practices and learn from each other. The group consists of ODA leads and representatives from FCDO, DSIT, DHSC, DEFRA, UKRI, and Wellcome.

In FY23-24, MODARI’s principal achievements included two updates of the ODA-funded R&I projects dataset and corresponding dashboard. These took place in July 2023 (following an 18-month gap) and January 2024. The updates improved the tool through the addition of a UK-only project map (demonstrating the UK and non-UK footprint), capturing R&I funds previously not included, and displaying active and closed projects for the first time. This interactive dashboard, updated on a six-monthly basis, allows users to explore current and past R&I projects via funder, fund, country (beneficiary or location of activity), and delivery partner. UKCDR also developed a comprehensive [signposting table](#), hosted on our website, which directs users to relevant sources of ODA funding for R&I. The table provides users with high-level information about the types of funding available, listing the funder and fund, and where to apply. It complements, and is complemented by, the [UKCDR Funding Finder](#), which advertises specific

calls. We also completed a review of the current results capture of ODA-funded R&I activities by identifying information published on outputs, outcomes, and impacts (where, by whom, and at what level of detail).

The UKCDR webpage hosting the MODARI tool was visited 835 times in FY23-24. There has been renewed interest among stakeholders, as evidenced by enquiries and positive feedback from users. The tool has been endorsed and promoted by key figures within FCDO, including the department's Chief Scientific Advisor, Professor Charlotte Watts, and the Head and Deputy Head of the Global Science Department. The tool has also been demonstrated in-person at FCDO [Research and Evidence Directorate's](#) (RED) Programme Clinic and a [video demonstration](#) is available on the UKCDR website. Known uses of the tool by funders include extracting data to produce programme lists for UK-funded projects in 20 priority countries, as well as contributing to briefing notes and data dashboards for high-level bilateral meetings.

IN NUMBERS MODARI

 7,400+ ODA-funded R&I projects	 >£9.5bn worth of projects captured	 Projects captured relate to 170 countries
<p><i>“By giving us a much better picture of the ODA R&D landscape across UK funders, MODARI is proving to be a valuable information tool for colleagues based in the UK, in our overseas network, and our partners in ODA-eligible countries. MODARI should be viewed as a priority, and I am keen to see how the platform evolves. Huge thanks to the MODARI team.”</i></p> <p>- Prof. Charlotte Watts, Chief Scientific Advisor and Director for Research and Evidence at FCDO</p>		 835 MODARI dashboard views on UKCDR website

2.8 UKCDR's climate change and international development research project tracker proof-of-concept

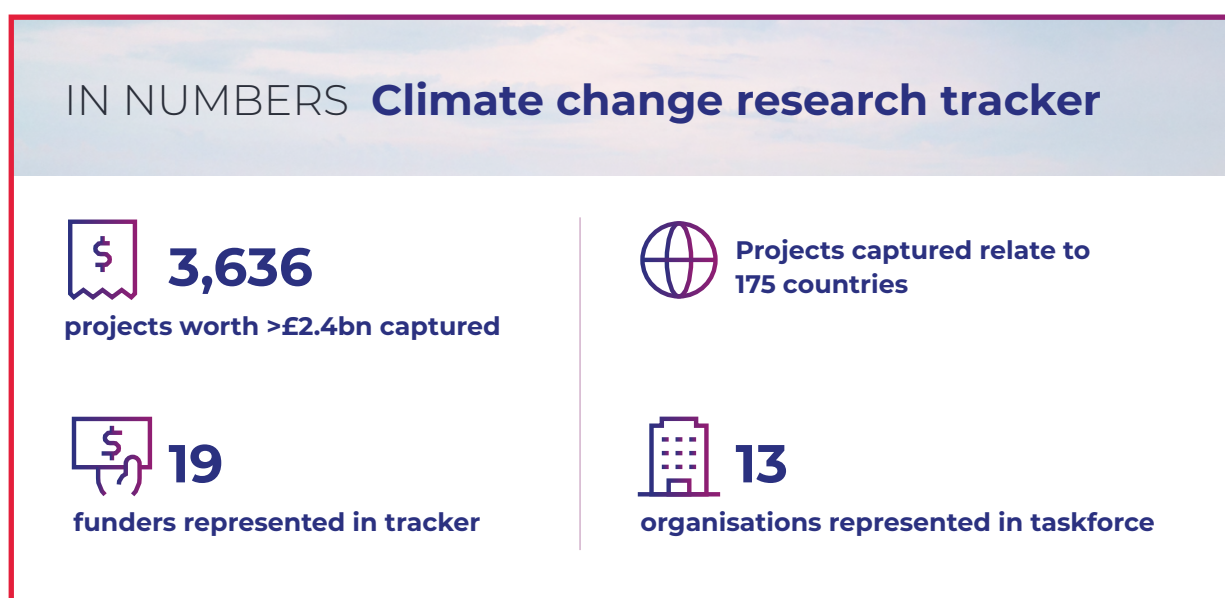
Considering the UK's ambition to take forward its leadership in climate change, as well as the urgency of the climate crisis, UKCDR began in 2023 to develop a proof-of-concept for a tool to track investments in climate change and research for international development.

FY23-24 saw huge progress in this area: UKCDR has developed a brand-new proof-of-concept tool, demonstrating that a baseline of climate change research can be obtained and built on. The tool, which is a live database of funded climate change research projects with a focus upon LMICs, aims to support funders and researchers to deliver a more effective and coherent response to the global challenges presented by climate change. Coordinated approaches at a research funding level are required to tackle the urgent and complex climate crisis, and the tool has received positive feedback that suggests funders could support its delivery.

A timebound taskforce was established to inform the scoping of the tracker and facilitate the development of its proof-of-concept. This taskforce comprises stakeholders who represent the tool's intended primary users. These stakeholders include representatives from 13 organisations, including UK-based research funders, international coordination mechanisms, and multilateral organisations.

A sophisticated and rigorous methodology was developed to acquire relevant projects for the tracker and categorise projects thematically and geographically in a semi-automated fashion. A corresponding interactive dashboard has been created to present the data in a user-friendly format. This tool gives users the ability to explore projects in more detail and glean key insights from the research landscape.

UKCDR colleagues met with the taskforce twice during the reporting period, as well as engaging with them (and other key stakeholders) frequently offline, to gather regular input and feedback. This consultation was undertaken to ensure the practicality, usability, and utility of the tracker and its underlying methodology. Based on feedback, a second version of the proof-of-concept tracking tool and corresponding dashboard has been developed, and further improvements are planned. The project benefits, including an enhanced understanding of the climate change research funding landscape, will be instrumental to funders in the UK and internationally as they make decisions on future funding programmes.



2.9 Global health security and the Pandemic PACT tool

Building on the success of the COVID-19 Research Coordination and Learning (COVID CIRCLE) initiative, UKCDR have again collaborated with the [Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness](#) (GloPID-R) secretariat on [Pandemic PACT](#) – the Pandemic Preparedness: Analytical Capacity and Funding Tracking programme. Pandemic PACT represents the evolution of COVID CIRCLE by tracking data on research funding and clinical evidence for a wider range of diseases with outbreak potential as well as broader preparedness activities.

During FY23-24, UKCDR worked with GloPID-R on the tracking element of this work to collate and analyse investment into research focusing on the diseases designated as a priority by the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), as well as other selected pathogens such as pandemic influenza, Mpox, and plague. Importantly, as this includes funding for research relating to COVID-19, one of the main activities under Pandemic PACT is the transfer of data from more

than 21,500 grants awarded by almost 400 funders around the world that were collated and coded under COVID CIRCLE.

Regarding background data processes, other key activities for UKCDR during FY23-24 include collaborative work on the:

- Development of the research categories and coding system to classify research projects.
- Data consultation sessions with technical leads at funder organisations to gather feedback on the proposed data fields for inclusion; the practicalities of the intended system to enter and store data; and their preferences on how to acquire grant-level data from their respective organisations.
- Creation, testing, and refining of the search strategy (including the development of disease-specific keywords) to be used to acquire new data for the broader range of diseases considered under Pandemic PACT.
- Translation of research classification and coding that were used as part of COVID CIRCLE to those developed under Pandemic PACT. During the reporting period, it was intended to translate the COVID CIRCLE categories for research grants awarded by GloPID-R and/or UKCDR member organisations at the first instance before rolling this out to other funding data at a subsequent stage of the project.

These activities, along with others, culminated in the official launch of Pandemic PACT in March 2024, featuring a showcase of an interactive tool that was developed to track and visualise the projects included in the grants database. Together with the other workstreams of this programme, Pandemic PACT will inform policy and decision-making and ensure that we are better prepared for future disease outbreaks.

Figure 3: Pandemic PACT team and stakeholders gather at launch event.



Photo credit: Andre Bailey

3. Convening for Joint Action



UKCDR's convening activities during FY23-24.

Convening for joint action is a pillar of the UKCDR Strategy (2022-2025). This section presents an overview of how UKCDR used its convening power during FY23-24 and the results this achieved.

3.1 UNGA Science Summit 2023

On 21 September 2023, UKCDR co-hosted a [session](#) at the [Science Summit at the United Nations' General Assembly](#) (SSUNGA) with Canada's [International Development Research Center](#) (IDRC). The session's theme was 'Creating positive futures to achieve the SDGs: the changing landscape of research for development.' Partnerships are at the heart of both UKCDR's strategy and SSUNGA's philosophy. By collaborating with IDRC for this event, we harnessed our collective expertise on research for international development and heard a range of perspectives on how to create an enabling research environment in an increasingly uncertain world.

This event brought together panelists from across the research for international development ecosystem, including voices from universities, think tanks and funders. We intentionally looked both forwards and backwards, combining an emphasis on lessons learned with a desire to tackle future problems proactively. To this end, attendees heard two presentations. Tanja Hichert, Strategic Foresight Advisor at the Centre for Sustainable Transitions at Stellenbosch University, explained how foresight methodologies can help predict emerging priorities in the face of global volatility. Andrea Padilla, Research and Policy Officer at UKCDR, shared insights from our recent analysis of the non-academic impact of international development research (see Section 2.2).

The panel was moderated by Dr Dorothy Ngila, Director of Strategic Partnerships at the National Research Foundation, South Africa. Panelists included:

- Andrea Ordóñez Llanos - Executive Director, Southern Voice;
- Mark Claydon-Smith - Deputy Director of International Funds, UKRI;
- Dr Charles Forsdick - Professor of French, University of Liverpool; and
- Francesco Obino - Director of Research Programmes, Global Development Network.

Discussion topics included how an emphasis on research impact can inadvertently reify existing power asymmetries by devaluing knowledge produced in LMIC contexts; the complexities surrounding equitable partnerships and the need for funders to be active champions in this area; and the value of systems thinking for holistically understanding the myriad roles of research.

IN NUMBERS **UNGA Science Summit 2023**



6

external speakers



100%

of attendees polled said the event met most or all their expectations

"Thank you, really stimulating discussion and with very interesting links to pursue."

- Attendee

3.2 UKCDR Funder Groups

UKCDR convenes five thematic funder groups. These groups exist to help members and stakeholders share learning, work collaboratively, and avoid duplication. The funder groups, which consist of representatives from UK-based research funders, are a crucial channel by which UKCDR convenes actors in the global research for international development sector to improve coherence, collaboration, and joint action.

Group name	Purpose	Number of meetings in FY23-24	Topics of discussion
Epidemics Preparedness and Response Group (ERG)	To provide funders with relevant information on programmes, projects, partnerships and future priorities to support collaboration on preparedness, response and coordination in the event of outbreaks.	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Perspectives on One Health research approaches which link the health of people, animals, and environment for epidemic prevention. ● Strengthening epidemic preparedness against potential outbreaks following the effects of climate change. ● Challenges and gaps in epidemic preparedness funding approaches.
Health Funders Forum (HFF)	To provide members with an overview of UK-funded global health research activity, including current or future priority areas, to support coherence of UK-funded global health research.	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● N/A (confidential).
Disasters Research Group (DRG)	<p>To deliver components of the UK's commitment to disaster risk reduction (DRR) by sharing information, reviewing trends, and guiding direction of future funding in disaster risk reduction, resilience, and management research;</p> <p>To promote coordination, networking and collaboration opportunities at the UK and international levels.</p>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Optimising engagement between the academic and funding communities. ● The importance of common definitions for decision making. ● Updates on key funding programmes, initiatives, collaborations, and activities in the sector.
Research Capacity Strengthening Group (RCSG)	To bring together UK funders and practitioners to share, learn, connect, and improve practices and coordination in RCS.	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Designing and implementing impactful post-PhD support programmes in Africa. ● Toolkit for funders on effective research capacity strengthening. ● Digital technology in capacity development. ● Good practice in supporting research capacity strengthening within international research consortia.
Cross-HMG Communications Group (xHMG Comms)	To bring together communications professionals from HMG research funders to understand priorities, disseminate project findings, and identify opportunities for co-ordination.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evolution of the ISPF. ● Ensuring researchers have consistent access to funding calls through cross-departmental funding finders. ● UK visibility in international forums, including COP28. ● Understanding and disseminating UKCDR's report on large fund design.
International Research Development Funders Forum (IRDF)	To bring together international funders of research for development, representing global perspectives from high- to low-income countries, exploring commonalities to improve research funding and practices through collaboration.	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How to communicate the reasons for, and results of, international development research funding.

UKCDR Funder Groups: Spotlight on the IRDFF

The International Research Development Funders Forum (IRDFF) is an inclusive meeting that explores commonality across global funders to improve research funding practices through collaboration. IRDFF is an international group of funders, representing global perspectives from high- to low-income countries.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the IRDFF was on hiatus following its final meeting hosted virtually by the Research Council of Norway in 2020. UKCDR reconvened the group in September 2022 to discuss the future of the forum and agree next steps. Given the consensus among members on the value of the group for sharing knowledge and working on cross-cutting issues, including UKCDR's work on equitable partnerships, it was agreed that the group should aim to meet three times per year and expand its membership to include funders from LMICs. The objective remains to share information and potentially invite non-funding partners to give presentations on topics of interest, as and when relevant.

Over the reporting period, the IRDFF was engaged in the preparation of an event co-organised by UKCDR and the [Agence française de développement](#) (AFD) as a side meeting to the [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's](#) (OECD) Science, Technology and Policy Ministerial, held in April 2024 on the theme of mobilising science for global challenges. IRDFF members attended the side session to discuss how to embed research enablers and optimise the production and accessibility of data in international development.

Figure 4: IRDFF members and others attend UKCDR-AFD event in April 2024





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