

Draft Speech to the London International Development Centre

Word count: 2000 (Approx 16 minutes)

Thanks Andy for that kind introduction. I have to say I think you were too modest in your description of how the new London International Development Centre came about – it is of course greatly thanks to your endeavours that we are able to celebrate the launch of the centre today.

I would also like to thank Jeff Waage and his team for their work in organising today's event, and I'd particularly like to thank them - and all of you - for your patience in waiting for me today.

The new London International Development Centre, as Andy was saying, will play a unique role in the UK development research community - bringing together researchers from disciplines as diverse as international law, economics, pharmacy and education.

In many of these areas, the Bloomsbury Colleges are at the forefront of development research. The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine has been at the forefront of both developing and finding the best ways to distribute insecticide treated bed nets.

This kind of work has helped many countries to dramatically increase the number of households with at least one bed net. For instance in Kenya, where the UK has supported a programme to distribute 11 million bed nets – coverage has increased from nearly zero to two-thirds of all households.

Closer to home, DFID is supporting the Institute of Education to assess the quality and impact of development awareness teaching in primary, secondary and tertiary education. I believe this kind of work is vital in ensuring that future generations in this country recognise their place in an interconnected world – and the rights and responsibilities that come with it.

But by bringing together the different research disciplines represented here today, the London International Development Centre will represent more than the sum of its parts. It is the range of perspectives in the new centre that will help to ensure that research fully reflects the lives of the people we are trying to help – lives that cannot be subdivided into different disciplines.

For we know that tackling sickness does not simply require new forms of treatment – but also the trade rules to ensure that treatment can be made at an affordable price and the institutions to ensure that public money goes where it is intended.

The centre will also provide a valuable role as a platform for debate here in London about issues of vital importance to tackling poverty – such as last Friday's timely session at SOAS on food and water security. I'll say a little more about DFID's efforts on food security later.

Research changes lives

All of us here today know the impact that research has in improving and saving lives. In our lifetime we have seen the eradication of smallpox and the devastating cattle disease known as rinderpest. We are close to ridding the world of polio.

I'm proud that much of this progress has been underpinned by the UK research community working with research partners across the developing world, and often supported by the Department for International Development. But I am not complacent – instead I am determined that we build on our strong position.

That's why we ran a consultation last year to develop a new research strategy. We talked directly to over 1000 users and producers of research in seven developing countries and the UK, and received over 750 replies to an electronic survey. I'm enormously grateful for the responses we received, and I'd like to thank those of you who contributed.

Today I am launching the result of that worldwide conversation - DFID's first five year strategy for research. It confirms that the UK will become the leading donor country for development research – with an investment, I can announce today, of £1 billion over the next five years.

This level of investment, together with the research expertise represented in this room will, I believe, put the United Kingdom at the forefront of research for development around the world.

Yet with the opportunity this affords comes a responsibility – to ensure that research provides the hard evidence we need to make an impact on the lives of the poorest people around the world. I will say more a little later in my remarks about how DFID will change the way we work with you and others to ensure that we put research to the best possible use.

Global challenges and opportunities

But first, I'd like to say a little about the six themes that will form the body of our research over the next five years:

- Climate change;
- Agriculture;
- Growth;
- Health;
- Governance in challenging environments; and
- Longer term development opportunities

Because of limited time, I can only give a flavour of how we will work in each of these areas – the full strategy, available from our website from today, gives a much fuller picture. As with the London International Development Centre,

these themes will be woven together to reflect the interconnected nature of the opportunities and challenges facing poor people around the world.

The recent and sharp rise in the global price of food is of course one such challenge. We know that climbing prices are hitting the poorest the hardest – indeed the number of people facing hunger is growing for the first time in decades.

Later this afternoon, I will chair a meeting at Number 10 to discuss the international community's response to rising food prices. Colleagues from across government, including the Prime Minister and Hilary Benn, will be present, as will leading experts from the UK research community – including Andrew Dorward, Paul Collier and Simon Maxwell. We will also host experts from around the world – including [Jacques Diouf of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, Joachim von Brown of the Inter Food Policy Research Institute and] Josette Sheeran of the World Food Programme.

We will discuss both the action needed now to help the world's poorest people to cope, and the steps needed to address the underlying causes of the current hardship. This Government is determined to take action on both of these fronts.

Indeed I can announce today that the United Kingdom is pledging £30 million to support the World Food Programme's work in some of the countries most affected by food price inflation – including Zimbabwe, Somalia and Kenya. We will also provide £25 million this year for social protection in Ethiopia.

Beyond such immediate action, research will play an important part of our longer-term response. We will need research to develop food that is more nutritious and produces greater yields; to understand the new pressures of a changing environment; and to ensure that developing countries have the economic base to put knowledge to good use.

So DFID is doubling our funding for research on agriculture, fisheries and forestry to £80 million a year by 2010. Such funding makes a real difference. The new rice for Africa – or NERICA – supported by DFID, helped to increase rice production across Africa last year by 6 percent to 22 million tonnes.

I announced in February this year that DFID will invest £100 million over the next five years for research into the science, as well as the social and economic impact, of climate change for the most vulnerable developing countries.

And our research will contain a major new strand on economic growth, including - as I announced last month - an investment of at least £37 million over the next three years to establish a new international growth centre. This network of world experts – from academics to investors – will support governments to address their own particular growth needs.

Our second new research strand - alongside growth – is for more anticipatory research to identify future challenges and opportunities facing developing countries, to ensure an earlier response. This is something that many of you wanted us to do more on. And it will be vital as both an early warning system for future challenges of the magnitude of rising food prices, and to establish what benefit can be brought for the poorest from new technologies and trends.

One of the strong messages that came back from our consultation was the high value put on DFID's research into health systems – and that is in no small part thanks to the work of Professor Ann Mills and Dr Kara Hanson and their colleagues here today.

We will continue our research into health systems. We will also continue research to counter one of the greatest inequities in today's world - that just ten per cent of the global research on health is carried out on diseases which affect 90 per cent of the world's population.

And we will also continue to invest in research to find new ways of tackling the toughest social and governance problems in the most fragile and challenging environments. Because, even considering the globalisation of trade, and the cross border issues of disease and climate change, the most important actors in deciding the future of developing countries are still their governments, institutions and citizens.

Putting research into use – ensuring uptake and impact

As I said a little earlier, I believe that this substantial increase in funding for research brings both opportunity and responsibility.

And the resounding message that we heard from developing countries in our consultation is that we need to do more to make global development research more relevant to their particular needs. To ensure that the research we fund is properly focused on outcomes: making better policy; influencing our partners; and ultimately tackling poverty.

It seems a truism to say that the focus of development research must be to ensure development impact. But I believe – and our consultation confirmed - that too often it is not the case. We need to change values and incentives.

Many of the policy problems facing developing countries are not new. Providing clean water. Building infrastructure. Delivering quality education. We don't need new answers, we often just need to apply the answers we already have.

Yet new answers are what the research community thrives on – to be published, to be noticed, requires researchers to be original and interesting. And the risk is carving out an academic niche in one area when the real priorities for reducing poverty lie elsewhere.

So my commitment is that DFID's research funding in all of the areas I have mentioned will have as its objective the joining of research with policy and practice – to make a difference. And that means not only commissioning new research, but looking at what knowledge already exists, and making it newly relevant.

To ensure that research is relevant and put to best use, we will change how we work internally, and with our partners, in three ways.

First we will strengthen our capacity to better guide and manage research and ensure research results are widely known about and more likely to be used. We will do this both in the UK and in developing countries.

Second, we will create a new service to promote and communicate research results, to get more of your findings to those who need them at the right time and in the right way.

Third, and I believe most importantly, we will support developing countries to increase their capacity to do, access and use research. This will ensure that research can be put to good use where it is needed. Only by working together as partners can we ensure that research is relevant and put into practice. We must discard any notion that strengthening research capacity means second-rate research.

Conclusion

Before I pass you on to Jeff I would just like to reiterate how pleased I am to be here today to celebrate the launch of the London International Development Centre.

The spirit of partnership between your colleges in setting up this new venture is exactly the kind of endeavour we need if we are to meet the promises that the world made seven years ago and enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals.

As our Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, has said, we have in the past thought too much of the Millennium Development Goals as something that governments have got to do between themselves. We cannot meet this development emergency without the collective action of governments, the private sector, NGOs, faith groups and yes – researchers.

So I would like to say congratulations on forging this partnership within a partnership. And I would like to wish you the very best in ensuring its success. We march together towards the same goal. Thank you.