

## Chapter 9 Recommendations and the Way Forward

### 9.1 Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – DFID should exploit its comparative advantage in natural resources research for development.

- 9.1.1 In the 10 years of its existence, RNRSS has achieved good science outcomes (4.4) and programmes have largely been successful in meeting their target Outputs (3.2), although the evidence of ultimate impact remains elusive at present (5.5).
- 9.1.2 The total value of RNRSS project funding, which was £ 190 million from 1995 to 2004 (PARC, Annex 9) could have been dispersed through bilateral channels or through CGIAR and other international players or through a mix of these. In the absence of this having been done, it is impossible to say whether it would have achieved more or less than RNRSS did. The value of DFID RNRSS is roughly 10% of CGIAR funding, significant but not equal. DFID itself considers that, as a founder member and important contributor, it has increased the poverty focus within CGIAR and has increased the emphasis given to capacity building (7.2). Whether this could have been done so effectively without RNRSS remains an open question.
- 9.1.3 As a proxy, it is useful to look at what RNRSS has achieved. Firstly, there has been research funded in a large number of countries (PARC states 27 main partners for 7 programmes but the total is many times greater once all partners are included). Funds have been dispersed across all three tropical regions, with a preponderance of expenditure in Africa (56%) followed by Asia (32%) and Latin America (12%). Because research activities are multi-partner and multi-country, it is impossible to assign accurately the value of support given on a country by country basis, as distinct from the expenditure within a specific country.
- 9.1.4 As shown in their Annual Reports, and confirmed by the Specialists' Reports (Annex 10) individual programmes have engaged with a great number of, predominantly southern, partners and actors and the southern focus is increasing (6.5). Programme Managers have used a range of innovative instruments, including small studies and funding for workshops and meetings as well as more formal projects to engage with researchers, and this diversity of approach is not normally present in other mechanisms. Allowing Programme Managers flexibility in this regard is a very positive reflection on wider DFID RNRSS management. Details of the range of approaches are clear from the PARC listing of activities funded by the various programmes (Annex 9).
- 9.1.5 The response of Programme Managers to the paradigm shift in policy in the 1997 White Paper (4.2) shows an effective rise to the challenge presented. This has been reflected in the changing balance between science and social science in the programmes, although the extent of the change has varied (see the Specialists' Reports in Annex 10).
- 9.1.6 DFID was the world leader in developing, refining and applying the Livelihoods approach to development (5.2). By ensuring that Programme Managers took up this approach, DFID became the first research service provider to work in this way and the positive response of programmes to seeing ultimate beneficiaries as key stakeholders gives DFID a unique position globally with its understanding of the research – development continuum. The more recent planning and reporting frameworks (Annex 10 and Table 3) of all programmes are strong evidence of the adoption of the Livelihoods framework, as noted above.
- 9.1.7 The use of research clusters and encouragement of multidisciplinary research has been a very important mechanism in securing the change in approach and content required, as noted above in respect of Livelihoods concepts (5.5 and Annex 10). The commitment of programmes to the poverty focus is evidenced in both their Logical Frameworks and the nature of the research supported. However, there is also an important sea-change in the fact that all programmes now talk and report in terms of a poverty framework from the indicators in the Logical Framework through the calls for concept notes to the reports of the research activities. Programme Managers have responded positively and effectively to the requirements laid on them in this respect (4.2). Given the driving force throughout RNRSS of poverty impact, there is urgent need to improve the objective assessment of poverty impact, as opposed to what is currently possible (Recommendation 8).

- 9.1.8 The direction and encouragement given to Programme Managers to follow the policy change and span the science / development continuum has not just resulted in appropriate research activities. Through the use of clusters and partnerships, it has led to changes in UK institutions being supported and to the fostering of stronger, cooperative UK / collaborator / southern institution links. This has the potential to be reinforced and developed and provides a core of expertise familiar with the science and development continuum and with the poverty and Livelihoods framework (4.5, 6.5). This will be beneficial to long term positive impact.
- 9.1.9 Nevertheless, it is impossible to judge effectively the precise impact of much of the work funded. The lack of mainstream objective baseline and monitoring data (5.1) means that formal assessment of impact is almost impossible at this time, although there have been a number of specific studies which do show good impact (5.5). As noted above, recommendations are given to remedy this situation.
- 9.1.10 The full benefit from DFID comparative advantage in RNR research requires effective uptake to ensure that the beneficiaries have access to the findings and that research capacity in partner countries is built to allow continuation and adaptation. Once DFID moved away from the extensive field based programmes noted in the Yellow Brick as a major (but not exclusive) user of the findings, a conundrum was created for Programme Managers. Funding could never allow any significant uptake activity much beyond the preparation of material and promulgation workshops. Furthermore, capacity building was specifically excluded from Programme Managers' ToRs, although there were different interpretations of the rules, none of which seems to have been questioned by DFID (6.2).
- 9.1.11 The result is that RNRRS, whilst being increasingly demand-led in its activities (4.5, 5.2) can only adopt a supply-push approach to uptake. This is neither effective nor efficient. If it is to secure the best outcome from its RNR research funding, DFID will need to address the capacity building and uptake issues raised (Recommendations 6 and 7).
- 9.1.12 Overall, 10 years of investment in RNRRS has led to an effective, responsive programme, congruent with and supportive of DFID policies. Science and technology, especially in agriculture, are critical for developing countries to increase food security, engage in global trade and find a route out of poverty (7.2).
- 9.1.13 RNRRS, through flexible and responsive management (6.2) has created a balanced, poverty focused research portfolio of great diversity across NR fields. This is linked through an enormous, active network of researchers, policy leaders and other stakeholders (7.2) giving solid potential to support policy and practice changes for effective poverty reduction.
- 9.1.14 RNRRS has also created a massive knowledge base. The benefits, particularly of more recent changes are only just beginning to accrue (5.5) and it is important that these are fully captured and utilised (Recommendation 9).

**Recommendation 2 - DFID should continue to fund natural resource management research, with improved efficiency and effectiveness.**

- 9.1.15 RNRRS has achieved good science (4.1) and has largely met its Output targets (3.2). In the process of so doing, it has generated a huge resource of information through a variety of media including both the traditional peer reviewed publications and a host of innovative approaches (4.4).
- 9.1.16 In the process of delivering their programmes, Programme Managers have created a substantial, complex and multi-disciplinary international network of researchers covering UK institutions and individuals, collaborators and partners. Since 1998, this has been increasingly dominated by southern partners (6.5). The individual programmes have been an important source of support to many southern actors and institutions (6.5).
- 9.1.17 The size and scope of RNRRS has been widely recognised as an important contributor to international RNR research, by CGIAR institutions and bilateral agencies as well as by researchers and sector players in southern countries (Country visit reports, Annex 8, personal knowledge of Core Team and Specialists).

- 9.1.18 The major changes to DFID aid policy (1997 and 2000 White Papers) required Programme Managers to adapt the approach and scope of their programmes. The evidence from the Specialists and (4.2, 6.3) shows that this has been successfully achieved in respect of the focus and balance of the work funded. The speed and effectiveness of the response demonstrates clearly that Programme Managers have been able to adapt their programmes to respond to changes in DFID policy. The role of CRD in allowing this high degree of flexibility has been crucial in this (6.2).
- 9.1.19 The introduction of the Livelihoods approach is probably the most important recognisable change in response to the increasing poverty focus of DFID. It is widely accepted that success within a Livelihoods framework requires there to be effective technical systems to underpin other actions (5.2). Programmes have adopted to varying degrees a livelihood framework for programme management and decision making, LPP and FRP being perhaps the most advanced in this as evidenced in their Annual Reports and research strategy publications.
- 9.1.20 LPP and FRP in particular may have a long time horizon between project initiation and implementation of results (5.5), up to a decade and beyond, due to the life-cycle of trees and livestock. Given, however, that the major change in RNRRS was the 1997 White Paper, the impacts of the changed priorities and approaches are only just coming on stream and it is important that these be allowed to accrue fully (Recommendation 9).
- 9.1.21 In a research programme, it is expected that there will be instances of failure as hypotheses are being developed and tested out. It would not be realistic to expect every hypothesis to work in practice. Positive impacts on poverty are, however, beginning to emerge from the RNRRS. The findings of this evaluation emphasise that it is critical to maintain support and to continue to fund applied, adaptive and basic research to secure the desired impacts from work already commenced (5.6).
- 9.1.22 Despite the positive elements noted above, and the importance of positive professional opinion on the value of RNRRS, the lack of formal M&E systems, of strategy wide approaches and of impact baseline and monitoring data make it hard at the present time to present substantial formal evidence of impact (5.5). These elements are reflected in Recommendation 8 of this report.
- 9.1.23 By creating a strategy founded on needs-based researchable problems (6.1), DFID has a valuable model, which has further benefited from a flexible approach to overall management. The Programme “structure” largely evolved from historical “discipline” based groups rather than from a problem orientation. Strengthened strategy-wide coordination, including participation of southern institutions, would remedy this and build upon cross-programme synergies, furthering Programme Managers’ initiatives (e.g. AHP, LPP and FRP with LPP in Calliandra fodder research – Annex 10).

**Recommendation 3 – DFID should transparently set priorities for RNRRS in terms of the mix of international and national public goods it is expected to produce and deliver to meet its stated goal of alleviating poverty in developing countries.**

- 9.1.24 The new *Research Funding Framework* defines the objective for research as “To promote the production and uptake of technologies and policies that will contribute to poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.” Under *Sustainable Agriculture Especially in Africa*, the new funding framework identifies 3 intertwined approaches: participation, technology and access. Only the second of these approaches relates to the generation of new technologies and practices and the specific examples given imply adaptation and application rather than fundamental research.
- 9.1.25 DFID must decide on the key objectives that it wishes to address, are these:
- to deliver new knowledge?
  - to link stakeholders to existing knowledge?
  - to demonstrate benefits in order to influence national processes and systems?
  - to build sustainable links between research institutions?
  - to build capacity in southern research institutions? or,
  - a combination of the above?

- 9.1.26 In the light of the Sustainable Agriculture Especially in Africa framework, all of these, with the exception of the first appear to be relevant, suggesting that a combination of them is likely to be the most appropriate way forward. Provided that the technology exists, it can be argued that more focus on applied research, dissemination and capacity building activities in the UK as well as in developing countries is needed.
- 9.1.27 Most importantly, only after determination of what it seeks to achieve can DFID begin to implement the other recommendations from this study on governance, uptake and capacity building and select the best model for delivery: i.e .how it will be achieved. Given DFID poverty reduction aims, this process should mirror the work of the programmes themselves (4.4, 6.5) and engage with southern stakeholders at all stages of the process of developing the new approach, thus capturing the benefits of engagement with southern partners and stakeholder representatives, and their participation in setting priorities as well as formulating research plans, achieved by individual programmes, especially more recently
- 9.1.28 The recent trend in all Programmes and the overall strategy to be more applied and adaptive needs to be maintained to increase the poverty impact but there will still be need for some basic research. DFID needs to determine how and by whom this will be funded. The focus should remain on research targeted at addressing problems and relieving constraints faced by large numbers of poor people, of which there are many good examples already within RNRRS (Specialists' Reports, Annex 10 and Table 10, below).
- 9.1.29 There are lessons from the use of logical frameworks (3.3) which could have evolved through more regular revision than has been the case. Such evolution, as well as incorporating M&E findings (Recommendation 8) would also benefit from active stakeholder and southern partner engagement, reflecting the increasing dominance of southern institutions as research leaders (4.4, 6.5) and the importance of including stakeholder views in setting criteria strongly grounded in poverty reduction (3.5). This would also help secure good impact assessment practices.
- 9.1.30 In the Yellow Brick, NRSP was given a pivotal role in coordinating research across the other programmes (6.2). This was subsequently dropped and the opportunities for cross programme work have not been fully exploited (4.5, 6.2). The substantial changes within programmes to generate cross / multi-disciplinarity (4.5) could be further enhanced as part of the process, leading to improved overall strategy coherence.
- 9.1.31 In order to determine the most appropriate option for the future natural resources research management, DFID must define its precise objectives for natural sciences research (7.6). For example, is the new scheme primarily intended to deliver new knowledge? Link stakeholders into existing knowledge so that they can use it in their specific circumstances? Demonstrate benefits in order to influence national processes and systems? Build sustainable links between research institutions? Build capacities in southern research institutions? or some combination?
- 9.1.32 Broadly, five options for the future scheme can be identified and are described in more detail in the report (7.6):
- An open competitive model, similar to the approach adopted by UK research funding councils.
  - Improved contracted research: continue with a number of contracted-out commodity/discipline-based research programmes along the lines of the existing RNRRS.
  - Global consortia: discipline-based and broadly in line with the existing development research centre model, with a group of partners pursuing a long-term demand-driven research agenda.
  - Country-based consortia: similar to Option 2 but country-specific in a limited number of locations.
  - A combination of the above options: a scheme which includes several different funding channels to achieve different objectives.

9.1.33 Each of these models has significant features, advantages and disadvantages which must be taken into account in determining the future management arrangements for natural resources research (7.7). Option 1 should be favoured if innovation and leading-edge fundamental research (IPGs) are prioritised. Options 2 and 3 both offer the potential to achieve a balance between international and national public goods, and between research, dissemination and capacity building. However, Option 2 places more emphasis on funding research across a wide agenda with a variety of degrees of competition, while Option 3 places more emphasis on continuity and southern representation. Option 4 should be favoured if demand-led country-level adaptive research is prioritised. Option 5 would be appropriate if DFID wants to achieve a combination of objectives. Before a decision is made, DFID must decide what it wishes to achieve.

9.1.34 There have been a number of solid success stories from all Programmes (7.8, Specialists’ Reports, Annex 10). All these have at least one of the following characteristics:

- A research theme which has been followed through a number of related projects, from basic research, through local adaptation and application, to regional or international dissemination.
- Bridging identified gaps in the research agenda.
- Grounded in an objective analysis of the priority problems of the poor
- With an effective and dynamic network of researchers and other stakeholders

9.1.35 The evaluation has identified that the research themes from Chapter 7 and shown in Table 10 could be starting points for DFID to start a transparent process to identify critical themes for future research. It does so with the important rider that the themes must be engaged within a clear overarching research strategy and effective mechanisms to ensure evolution in the light of changing circumstances.

**Table 10 Possible Research Themes**

Research Programme	Themes
	deliberately between UK and Institutions in the South.
Crop Post Harvest Programme (CPHP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross cutting theme linking farmers to Markets</li> <li>• Food safety and nutrition need to be prioritised from existing themes.</li> <li>• New Themes related to the roles of climate change, changing crop profiles, non-food crops and natural products need to be developed.</li> </ul>
Crop protection Programme (CPP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insect pests in Sub-Saharan Africa.</li> <li>• Sustainable disease control in Sub-Saharan Africa.</li> <li>• Weed problems in rice in Asia and balances with environment and human health issues.</li> </ul>
Plant Sciences Research Programme (PSP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crop transformation cluster.</li> <li>• Participatory crop improvement cluster.</li> <li>• Marker assisted selection.</li> <li>• Seed priming and associated agronomy research.</li> </ul>
Forestry Research Programme (FRP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain active review of needs.</li> <li>• Focus on clusters with elements that relate to wider forest and tree functions within trade, poverty and livelihood support.</li> <li>• Support to international policy processes.</li> </ul>
Natural Resource Systems Programme (NRSP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cross programme initiative with stronger focus on the environments in partner countries including the socio-political issues.</li> <li>• Bangladesh suites 1-3 Delivering empowerment and poverty alleviation through integrated land management strategies. Expand this to new countries.</li> <li>• Bolivia suite 2 Scaling up strategies, ready to be expanded to new countries.</li> <li>• East Africa suite 1-3 with contribution to new knowledge, capacity building and policy impacts.</li> <li>• India suite 1 with important findings on policy processes and service delivery.</li> </ul>

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**Recommendation 4 – DFID RNR research funding should allow and encourage maximum flexibility in terms of funding – including commissioned studies, sponsored meetings and temporal clusters as well as larger and longer duration projects**

- 9.1.36 Programme managers have proved innovative in developing a range of approaches in addition to the standard 1 to 3 year “project” (6.4). The flexibility of approach to allow short studies and similar initiatives has been very helpful to making progress (Specialists’ Reports, Annex 10).
- 9.1.37 The Concept Note to Project memorandum phase, while quite time consuming, has facilitated development of multidisciplinary teams and led to much better communication within these (4.5, 7.8). It has also reduced the risk (in the management sense) inherent in relying on one or two collaborators only (4.6). Programme Managers have used their capacity to commission sequential projects without necessarily making recourse to full competitive tendering, which has allowed longer term research to be funded (6.4). Clusters that are allowed to evolve and adapt, including engaging new collaborators with new expertise, also have the capacity to function for a longer period than 3 years and are useful in this regard (4.3).
- 9.1.38 In order to optimise responsiveness and balance, funding options should be as flexible as possible with a wide range of approaches being utilised, from short commissioned studies and issues papers to longer projects (5+ years) if basic science is required. The ability of Programme Managers to respond quickly to policy and information gaps through small studies of various types has undoubtedly helped the programmes to be engaged in relevant policy work and to facilitate the work and skills building of contracting partners. Transparency obviously needs to be observed as does equity in fund allocation. There are strong indications that within clusters, having at least one contractor familiar with RNRSS processes and procedures has been helpful (7.8).

**Recommendation 5 – Management of RNRSS needs to be strengthened in:**

- a. Overall governance structure
- b. Strengthening of PACs
- c. Development of more effective quality assurance and of project and programme M&E systems
- d. Adoption of best practice project cycle management

- 9.1.39 Overall governance has been characterised by a light touch (6.2), which has been responsive and supportive. Programme Managers’ contractual obligations have been clearly, if voluminously, defined in their Terms of Reference (6.2) although this has not precluded flexibility. There has been substantial written reporting but a lack of synthesis, leading to limited cross-programme synopses (6.2). Considerable reliance has been placed on CRD/Lead Adviser annual reviews (6.2) to monitor progress. Although individual Programme Managers, together with Lead Advisers and PAC members do maintain contact, the lack of formalised structures means that the full opportunity to exploit strategy-wide synergy is not taken.
- 9.1.40 Quality assurance at Programme and strategy level is thus much less rigorous than that applied to individual projects and programme activities (6.2). The PARC review (Annex 9) was an attempt at a late stage to remedy the lack of strategy-wide analysis.
- 9.1.41 Although PACs are pivotal to the governance system (Figure 3) there are major differences in the level of engagement (6.2) and much depends on the relationship between individual Programme Managers and their PACs (6.2). The level of interest of Lead Advisers also seems to be significant. PACs have no formal cross-programme communication channels (6.2).
- 9.1.42 PACs undertake varying degrees of engagement in the formal management and quality assurance of their programme (6.4). Some programmes utilise Thematic Leaders (FRP), local coordinators (PSP) or contracted specialists (CPP) within their PAC structure (6.3). There is scope for clarifying PAC roles and responsibilities to achieve strategy-wide consistency (6.2). With one exception (CPHP) PAC members are UK based, although with extensive overseas experience (6.2).

- 9.1.43 Programme decisions on funding of projects and other activities were found to be flexibly made within the RNRRS guidelines (6.4). Discussions with contractors within the UK and overseas found widespread agreement that PACs and Programme Managers had performed well in this regard (6.4).
- 9.1.44 The selection process for all projects follows a standardised system of Concept Note through to full Project Memorandum (6.4) with major screening at the Concept Note stage. Both focused and open calls are made (6.4) and the degree of concentration amongst contractors, which was criticised in earlier years, has reduced in recent years. This provides a robust basis for selection.
- 9.1.45 The adoption of the cluster approach together with a range of alternatives to formal projects means that any future funding strategy will need to develop new guidelines for funding allocation (6.4).
- 9.1.46 Programmes have developed their own systems for M&E of progress, which vary widely (6.4). Despite this, there is no evidence of insufficiency but the lack of standardisation makes strategy-wide performance measurement very difficult (6.4 and Recommendation 8).
- 9.1.47 All Programmes appear to have performed well, despite a range of management models and systems (6.4). Nevertheless, there appears to be scope for refining project cycle management to strengthen and incorporate good practices. Key elements include (6.4) flexible contracting, support during the project preparation process, minimising delay in tendering, maintaining good contact with researchers, building cross-institutional links through training and education, providing support to partners through mentoring and clusters, applying effective and transparent evaluation within a standardised monitoring system.
- 9.1.48 The individual Programmes have generated a massive information resource based on printed and electronic documentation, and a whole host of other output media from project material. Increasingly this is being made available on the Web (6.2). Various initiatives for centrally based information dissemination appear to have fallen by the wayside over the years and there is scope for a strategy-wide review and decision on how to make best use of the knowledge and information base. Programme level information is generally well regarded by users (4.4).

**Recommendation 6 – Uptake systems need to be identified within research activities and to be supported at policy level to achieve optimal impact and delivery of benefits**

- 9.1.49 Research results require uptake systems in order to deliver benefits to practitioners; capacity building is also necessary if national researchers are to be able to take on progressively more research tasks.
- 9.1.50 Throughout the 10 year period of RNRRS, assumptions in the Logical Frameworks of the programmes and the strategy as a whole (3.4) have drawn attention for the need for an enabling environment, including uptake and capacity building mechanisms, to secure effective delivery of benefits. In 1994, DFID field projects and programmes were an important, but not exclusive, provider of support to wider uptake and capacity building activities, thus aiding directly the securing of impact for the identified ultimate beneficiaries. With the changes in aid delivery policy, notably the 1997 White Paper, this has changed with progressively greater reliance being placed on others, including national governments, to secure the delivery of uptake and impact.
- 9.1.51 Since then, all Programmes have increasingly incorporated a mix of specific projects, or built appropriate aspects into projects, to support strengthening of the enabling environment, including explicit support for policy, institutions and associated processes. Programmes have also initiated work on uptake and capacity building as a direct response to being committed to achieving research outputs focused on securing poverty reduction (4.2).
- 9.1.52 There remains a danger that with the more complex channels now available, valuable information becomes locked up in “supply-push” dissemination systems without the necessary “demand-pull” to ensure free flow.

- 9.1.53 All programmes have addressed policy level dissemination and this has undoubtedly assisted in creating an enabling environment (e.g. FRP water cluster facilitation of water policy change in India and South Africa – Annex 10). Research programmes alone, however, cannot obviate the need for investment to provide resources for uptake delivery systems and processes for all stakeholders. The example above indicates the level of resources that are needed for this.
- 9.1.54 Although Programmes have already established some activities to assist in uptake, there appears to be scope for DFID to further this process through its political links with other organisations such as bilateral and international donors, development banks and other key players, including private sector organisations where these are relevant. Such approaches would be assisted by strong central information systems (6.2).

**Recommendation 7 – Capacity building at 3 levels needs to be built into future work: professional development of researchers; policy makers, decision makers and extension workers; and, institutional strengthening**

- 9.1.55 Capacity building needs to be seen as much wider than simply supporting formal research qualifications and improved research management. If research is to deliver impact and to be sustained, then capacity building is required for policy and delivery institutions and actors, as well as for research institutions, which also need support in improving their strategic level planning and management of research (6.5).
- 9.1.56 Without Capacity Building in partner countries, especially in Africa (6.5) where losses of skilled human resources have been particularly severe, the potential impacts from supported research will not accrue nor will the benefits to future national research activities materialise. The individual Programmes have interpreted the strictures on support for Capacity Building in a variety of ways. Some have observed the letter of their terms of reference while others have largely ignored these. DFID appears to have accepted both extremes of interpretation (6.5).
- 9.1.57 The increasing engagement of southern partners in RNRRS, facilitated by initiatives aimed at developing capability in research leadership (as with the cluster approach for example) has reached a 50/50 balance in some Programmes (6.5) and leading southern authorship of publications is approaching this level (Table 6). Within RNRRS, although capacity building incentives were excluded for the first 8 years (6.5) programmes have adopted a comprehensive range of approaches, (6.5) including short training events and facilitating higher level qualifications. There has also been valuable mentoring of individual researchers and support through small grants and commissions and for attendance at meetings and conferences (6.5, Specialists’ Reports, Annex 10; PARC Report, Annex 9).
- 9.1.58 The cluster approach, together with the system of participatory development of Project Memoranda is particularly valuable in assisting partner institution researchers to develop their skills in formulating demand led research. It also exposes them to the systems and standards of internationally competitive funding, as distinct from the usually less rigorous systems when large donor-funded projects and programmes are in place.
- 9.1.59 Although the formal capacity building can be replaced by other donor support, the informal mentoring of individuals has been of particular value, especially in those institutions where senior researchers are few and far between (6.4). The capacity to maintain this type of support needs to be included in any future strategy (6.5).
- 9.1.60 The extent to which devolution of leadership to southern partners is practicable depends on the policy/technical balance and the institutional capacity in administrative matters such as financial control systems as well as the availability of reliable communication systems (4.7).
- 9.1.61 Overall, capacity building in any future support should continue to include developing research expertise but needs to also include support for policy and delivery institutions and their personnel in order to promote uptake and adoption. Strategic level research management capacity also needs attention to ensure balanced and effective programmes which deliver results that are taken up and adopted (6.5). It is perhaps only major research institutional capacity building, including infrastructure and facilities, which is beyond the scope of RNRRS and similar initiatives (6.5).

**Recommendation 8 – External evaluation processes (both strategy wide and programme level) need to be put in place to complement formalised M&E systems**

- 9.1.62 There is considerable diversity among Programmes in the extent to which they make use of external evaluations (6.4). There is no doubt that external evaluation is helpful for creating new insights and for securing improved transparency.
- 9.1.63 M&E systems have not been developed in a coherent manner across the Programmes, although individually, Programmes undertake such activities (4.6, 6.4). Given the desire to utilise nested Logical Frameworks for key Programme and strategy-wide management, it would seem prudent to make use of an integrated, strategy-wide M&E system. Such a system should include but not be limited to gathering of information and data for impact assessment. Some activities are already being undertaken to achieve this end (5.5).
- 9.1.64 An effective M&E and Impact Assessment system would facilitate the strategy-wide management, improve coherence and, through information feedback, allow regular fine-tuning of Logical Frameworks and associated output to purpose review at Programme and strategy levels (3.4).
- 9.1.65 A formal, independent external evaluation process (both strategy wide and programme level) that ensures evaluation say every 5 years would be helpful for future management and also ensure that effective impact assessment was being carried out.

**Recommendation 9 – Transitional arrangements should be made to ensure that the benefits of existing and ongoing work, and their accruing impact, are not lost**

- 9.1.66 Despite lack of conclusive evidence for most of the programmes, there are indications that much of the ongoing work is likely to have an impact in the future (5.6). There is a significant risk of undermining this potential impact if provision is not made to accommodate ongoing work while consideration is being given to the optimal future strategy. If projects are wound up, research teams and active, functioning clusters with no expectation of new short-term funding will become scattered and engaged elsewhere. It therefore appears sensible for a period of transition funding (7.7) to allow time for:
- Determination of future priorities;
  - Selection of the most appropriate management options;
  - Identification of thematic areas.
- 9.1.67 It is also recommended that during a further period of funding, resources be earmarked specifically for capturing the professional and institutional memories from the individual RNRRS programmes in order to support management of the change process into any new research funding strategy with the minimal loss of information and experience.
- 9.2 The Way Forward
- 9.2.1 There are clear arguments for continuing funding to NR research but decisions need to be made in a timely way on how best to carry this forward effectively. Based on the recommendations and findings outlined in this report, we suggest the following process for taking work forward to agree on the future strategy.
- 9.2.2 Using this evaluation as a starting point, an issues paper should be drafted outlining the key research constraints to be addressed. This will need to take into account the overall focus of DFID in the light of its new research funding framework. This defines the objective for research as *‘to promote the production and uptake of technologies and policies that will contribute to poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals’*.

9.2.3 Key questions to be addressed include:

- What are the key problems/constraints in NRM?
- What is being done and by whom?
- What are DFID key objectives in its strategy?
- What areas are not being addressed and whether they are appropriate for DFID support or whether should DFID be encouraging others to provide support.
- Where appropriate for DFID support, are these appropriate for the research programme, or are there other DFID mechanisms that would be more appropriate?
- What themes should DFID address?

9.2.4 This paper should be circulated to key stakeholders internally and externally, including “southern” stakeholders and actors as well as other key institutions and players in development research delivery. Thereafter a series of regional stakeholder workshops should be held to discuss and develop the issues and determine DFID’s niche.

9.2.5 Once the strategic level approach has been clarified and agreed, research themes can be confirmed, noting the need for cross-disciplinary approaches.

9.2.6 A clear impact assessment strategy needs to be formulated and designed, making sure that the process becomes fully integrated into the management of research to provide support and feedback throughout the project cycle.

9.2.7 In parallel, further internal DFID consideration will be required on the most appropriate management structure to achieve this. This can be set within the outline options presented in this evaluation (Chapter 7).

9.2.8 Whatever model of governance and themes is selected, there will be need for clear guidance on project design to include capacity building, allocation of resources for impact assessment, and the establishment of clear baseline data from which impact can be measured.