

**Final Report**

# **Global Development Network independent evaluation 2013**

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# Independent Evaluation of the Global Development Network

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## Contents

Executive summary .....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	xi
List of Acronyms.....	xii
List of Tables .....	xiii
List of Figures .....	xiii
1. Background to the Independent Evaluation .....	1
1.1 Background to GDN .....	1
1.2 GDN’s mission .....	1
1.3 GDN’s Theory of Change.....	3
1.4 Previous evaluations of GDN .....	4
2. Terms of reference for the 2013 Independent Evaluation .....	6
2.1 Objectives of the evaluation .....	6
2.2 Research questions .....	7
3. Methodology.....	8
3.1 Inception phase.....	8
3.2 Data collection .....	8
3.2.1 Desk research.....	9
3.2.2 Online surveys.....	9
3.2.3 Semi-structured interviews.....	10
3.2.4 Output quality review .....	10
3.2.5 Attendance at GDN/RNP events .....	11
3.3 Approach to analysis .....	11
4. Evaluation findings.....	11
4.1 Overall achievement of stated objectives .....	12
4.2 Outcomes, effectiveness and impact.....	16
4.2.1 Overall impact and expectations .....	16
4.2.2 Targeting of GDN research capacity building activities .....	18
4.2.3 Quantity and quality of research outputs.....	20
4.2.4 Contribution to Researcher Capacity Building.....	25

4.2.5	Gender differences in reported RCB.....	30
4.2.6	Comparison between recipients of multiple and single grants.....	32
4.2.7	GNet.....	33
4.2.8	Policy dialogues.....	37
4.2.9	Challenges to implementation.....	39
4.3	Relevance.....	40
4.3.1	Consistency of GDN’s activities with the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries.....	41
4.3.2	Perceived levels of duplication in RCB activities.....	42
4.3.3	Annual Conference.....	43
4.3.4	GNet.....	46
4.3.5	Disciplinary relevance.....	48
4.4	Efficiency and value for money.....	49
4.4.1	Value for money.....	51
4.4.2	Financial management, reporting and compliance.....	52
4.4.3	Financial sustainability.....	53
4.5	Sustainability.....	54
4.5.1	Sustaining the ‘network of networks’.....	54
4.5.2	Sustainability and GNet.....	55
4.6	Management and Operations.....	55
4.6.1	Structure and relations.....	55
4.6.2	Policies and procedures.....	57
4.6.3	Monitoring and Evaluation.....	58
5	Conclusions and recommendations.....	58
5.1	Overall conclusions.....	58
5.2	Overall achievement of stated objectives.....	59
5.3	Outcomes, effectiveness and impact.....	60
5.4	Relevance.....	62
5.5	Efficiency and value for money.....	62
5.6	Sustainability.....	63
5.7	Management and Operations.....	63
5.8	Recommendations.....	64
	Annexes.....	69
A	Terms of Reference.....	69
B	Survey questionnaires.....	70

C	Interview schedules .....	71
D	Output review sampling and template .....	72
E	Data .....	76
F	Figures and charts .....	77
G	Additional tables on gender disaggregation of RCB outcomes .....	96

## Executive summary

### Background and Terms of Reference

The Global Development Network (GDN) is an International Organisation with headquarters in New Delhi and offices in Cairo and Washington DC. GDN's mission is to be a 'Global Network that empowers researchers in developing countries and transition economies, strengthens research skills, and mobilises research for public policy'. Its activities and programmes are guided by a Theory of Change which links research capacity building in developing countries and transition economies to better informed policy and eventually to improved social and economic outcomes in those regions. It works with Regional Network Partners (RNPs) in all regions of the world.

The 2013 Independent Evaluation (IE) was commissioned by GDN to assess the effectiveness, impact, value for money and sustainability of GDN's activities to date and to identify lessons learnt and areas for improvement, both for GDN and for the donor community. The IE was to focus on the period since the previous IE in 2007. Six sets of evaluation questions were posed in the Terms of Reference (TOR): Overall achievement of stated objectives; Outcomes, effectiveness and impact; Relevance; Efficiency and value for money; Sustainability; and Management and operations.

### Methodology

The methods comprised desk research, online surveys for 12 categories of stakeholders, interviews with 52 individuals, a review of the quality of 37 outputs from research grants funded through GDN-supported programmes and observation and participation in selected GDN and RNP events.

### Findings and conclusions

The findings are reported in full in section 4 of the main report under the six main evaluation questions posed in the TOR. The conclusions based on these findings are presented below.

#### *Main overall conclusions*

1. GDN is undergoing significant and positive change. This is associated with the most recent change of Presidency and Board chair, but represents a continuation of an earlier trend towards greater clarity of focus on GDN's core objective of research capacity building (RCB). Data from interviews and surveys point to an improvement in governance, transparency, relationships between GDN and RNPs, engagement of Board and Assembly in strategic planning, and in proactive engagement with donors.
2. GDN is meeting its RCB objectives to a substantial extent. Key to this is the value-added services and support it provides to those who win GDN research grants either directly or through RNPs. There are some areas that could be strengthened (mentoring, post-completion support for publication and policy engagement) but the core business of GDN is being addressed effectively.
3. Although the vision, mission and objectives of GDN are now clearer, and more effectively articulated and shared, than previously, awareness and visibility of GDN among its potential constituency (social science researchers working on policy-relevant research in developing and transition countries, and the policy community) is still less than it should be for a networking organisation with a global position and credentials. More effort to bring GDN to

the attention of a wider audience, and to involve new people in GDN activities, would strengthen GDN's position when negotiating with donors and funding partners.

4. A recurring question during the IE has been about what GDN's comparative advantage is, vis-à-vis RNPs and other funders and providers of RCB. The more clearly this can be articulated and shared, and the more clearly it is seen in the ways GDN implements its activities, the more effective will be GDN's efforts to convince donors / funders that it has something unique to offer that is worth supporting.

#### *Overall achievement of stated objectives*

5. There is a high level of satisfaction among stakeholders about the extent to which GDN has achieved its objectives in the past five years, particularly in relation to RCB. Actively engaged stakeholders report high levels of satisfaction with GDN.
6. A key factor in its achievement of objectives, and a distinctive feature of how GDN and the RNPs work, is the value added to the research grants through, for example, training, peer review, mentoring, conference, GDNNet.
7. While the focus on RCB may mean that 'informing policy' is less likely to be achieved, particularly through Regional Research Competition (RRC) funding, experience of successful GRPs (where lead researchers are at a more experienced level than most RRC winners) shows it is possible to deliver both RCB and policy relevant research. Some of the lessons from GRPs could be brought into RRCs.
8. The planned broadening of disciplinary focus beyond economics is seen in topics for AMCs and GRPs, but less so for RRCs.

#### *Outcomes, effectiveness and impact*

9. It is conceptually and practically impossible to attribute change in economic and social development indicators to GDN's activities, research outputs and policy engagement. However, well documented stories of change / influence are a valid approach to building up evidence on this.
10. There is inconsistency in the quality and intensity of mentoring. Mentoring is recognised as a very valuable support, particularly (but not only) to younger / early career researchers. But it is rated relatively low for effectiveness (and, later, for value for money) compared to other activities because of the variability and inconsistency with which it is done. Careful pairing of mentor and mentee is essential. Clearer guidelines on roles, responsibilities and expectations for both mentor and mentee could be spelled out, including for the period after completion of the grant, and compliance monitored.
11. Face to face contact is highly valued by grantees, and recognised as important by donors and other stakeholders as an essential feature of successful networking. However the high cost of cross-regional meetings and conferences makes it essential that these events are carefully planned, implemented and followed up.
12. With respect to targeting, survey respondents say GDN targets early career researchers, multi-disciplines and female researchers at least 'reasonably well'. However, while Global Research Project (GRP) calls for proposals do target RCB (in specific methodologies and techniques), they do not target early career researchers. Even RRC calls for proposals issued by RNPs do not always specifically target early career researchers.

13. The quality of sampled research outputs shows an upward gradient from RRC, through Awards and Medals Competitions (AMC) to GRP. While this might reflect the fact that the experience and expertise of recipients of grants increases from RRC to GRPs, qualitative data suggest that the way GRP teams are supported also has an influence.
14. Ethical considerations are generally absent or inadequately addressed in research outputs. The importance of ethical conduct of research should be stressed in calls for proposals, assessment of proposals, implementation of research projects, RCB training and mentoring.
15. More emphasis is needed on bringing funded research outputs to academic publication. This is important for individual researchers' careers and promotion prospects as well as being a widely accepted indicator of successful outcome of research within the academic community.
16. GDN and RNP grant processes (with peer review and support before finalisation of proposals) are effective in improving quality of proposals and enhancing skills and confidence of researchers.
17. Recipients of GDN funding report high level of continued (post completion of their grant) impact on their research output and their ability to secure research funding; they report less continued impact for their contacts and interactions with policy stakeholders.
18. GDNet makes a positive contribution to researcher capacity building through the training offered, through providing an outlet for publicising and disseminating grantees' research and through networking opportunities.
19. Policy dialogues help to raise the profile of GDN, not only among the policy community but also with organisations whom GDN partners in holding the dialogues. Critical issues with the dialogues include getting the right participants; the extent to which they give (and should give) direct access for grantees to policy makers; and whether follow up is adequate and appropriately documented.

#### *Relevance*

20. There is a high level of consistency between what GDN does and the needs and priorities of its beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries.
21. While there is some perceived duplication between GDN and other providers, this is seen as complementary and enriching the opportunities for beneficiaries rather than being a source of inefficiency.
22. Some donors fund individual RNPs (or, rather, their host institutions) as well as GDN globally; this is appropriate as the RNPs and their hosts are independent bodies with their own programmes. To the extent that GDN centrally, and the RNPs regionally, play roles that complement and enhance each other's programmes, they should not be seen as competitors for funding. Indeed, a clear articulation of roles and complementarities will make joint approaches to donors for funding an appropriate option. The 2013 GDN-RNP partnership charter is an important step towards this.
23. There is a high level of satisfaction with the annual conferences; recent changes to increase participation by younger researchers, while maintaining the input of world-renowned experts, are making them more effective in RCB and (though this is difficult to measure objectively) better value for money. The conferences also are a key driver of awareness of GDN amongst currently 'non-engaged' researchers.

24. Awareness and use of GNet, while increasing globally, is not as high as it might be, even among researchers within RNPs and funded by GDN programmes.

#### *Efficiency and value for money*

25. Overall, stakeholders see GDN activities as giving value for money. In respect of specific activities, donors and Board members question the value for money of mentoring and Policy Dialogues as they are currently implemented.
26. GDN's financial management, reporting and compliance comply with internationally recognised good practice, as shown in auditors' reports and supported by survey and interview data.
27. Current donors' willingness to consider future funding has increased in recent years, largely because of improvements in GDN's engagement with them. The fact that they are less willing to fund core operations and overheads than more visible activities and research projects is a concern that GDN needs to address: continued effort is needed to articulate the importance of a strong headquarters operation to ensure all the value added support can be sustained.
28. In a difficult funding environment since the global financial crisis of 2008, GDN has done well in continuing to secure funding from diverse sources for its RCB activities. However, the decline in funding available for research programmes is affecting the balance of its activities which in turn has had a negative impact on the relationship with RNPs, prompting the process which has led to the 2013 draft Charter and a more recent improvement in relations.
29. The proportion of GDN's overall spending that goes to fund research grant programmes has fallen during the period covered by the IE. As grants and competitions are seen as the core of GDN's support for RCB, it is important for GDN to keep this under review and seek funding opportunities that will fund these activities.
30. GDN's aspiration to retain its global reach and to be a global network of networks faces the challenge that the RNPs vary in capacity and in financial dependence on GDN. The financially stronger and longer established RNPs are putting substantial resources into running RRCs, which enhances the apparent cost-effectiveness and value for money of GDN's input. The more recently established networks require a greater level of financial and human resource from GDN. In a limited resource environment, this raises the question of how it should prioritise its activities.

#### *Sustainability*

31. A high proportion of RRC / GDN grantees remains active in their field after completion of their grant and cites the funding and support from GDN as important contributions to their career development.
32. GNet is a key element in GDN's ability to sustain the 'network of networks' and to maximise the reach and impact of the research it supports. With the current project-based GNet funding ending in 2014 it is essential that the knowledge capture, processing and sharing function becomes fully integrated into GDN. Making use of GNet's expertise with social media is one of the benefits that would accrue from this integration; they are proving

an effective way for researchers to keep in touch informally and to share their outputs and findings; they can equally become an effective means for GDN to raise its profile.

### *Management and operations*

33. GDN staff are highly competent and committed to the mission of the organisation.
34. Assembly and Board have distinctive roles and are able to discharge these effectively. The working relationships between senior management, Board and Assembly are good.
35. Procedures set out in the Staff Manual cover all the main areas that could be expected to be included. Staff are in general satisfied with processes and procedures; however two areas where GDN should further review its procedures in order to comply with best organisational practice are how grievances are handled and the staff appraisal process.
36. GDN puts a lot of resource into monitoring and evaluation. It needs to ensure as complete data capture as possible to ensure its databases are fit for purpose and up to date in order to facilitate the efficient conduct of future evaluations. The collection of baseline data against which to assess changes in research capacity over the lifetime of a grant and beyond has been started; we would encourage this to be continued.
37. The role of the GDN M&E team vis-à-vis external evaluators of GDN activities and programmes should be given some consideration. In the present IE, involvement of GDN staff in the details of the evaluation have enhanced quality and relevance of data collection, but have consumed both contracted time of the IE (20 person days on questionnaire design out of a total 95 person days) and elapsed time, contributing to the surveys being launched and closed later than planned.
38. The pay-off for putting resources into M&E comes from the use of findings to improve implementation of ongoing activities and to learn lessons for the future from completed activities. It is important that opportunities for this learning, and for then putting those lessons into practice, are created and used effectively.

### **Recommendations**

1. GDN should seek to raise expectations and aspirations in regard to policy engagement, without compromising its priority focus on RCB. As already acknowledged by GDN, there is scope for bringing some of the lessons from successful GRPs into the way in which RNPs run the RRCs. Better links to policy can be achieved through careful selection of research topics, mentoring by people with experience of linking research to policy, training, and post-completion support. The policy lab approach, which offers longer term interaction between researchers and policy makers over a specific policy concern, is a promising innovation and should be monitored for its effect on the level and quality of engagement with policy makers. More could be done to highlight policy links on the website, through case studies or blogs around successful translation of research findings into information to support policy.
2. GDN should make more effort to bring itself to the attention of a wider audience within both research and policy communities, and to involve new people in GDN activities. This would strengthen GDN's position when negotiating with donors and funding partners. GDN could make more effective use of social media in reaching and building relationships with its target audiences.

3. GDN should articulate clearly what its comparative advantage is vis-à-vis both RNPs and other funders and providers of RCB. With the former, this could be between those things that are best done at regional level and those that can be done more efficiently or effectively at global level. With the latter, this could be in the distinctive set of support activities and processes it has for researchers who have research grants from GDN. It should then make this comparative advantage clear not only in what it says, but also in how it uses its resources. Positive moves have already been made towards this articulation, most recently at the Board meeting in June 2013, though IE interviews suggest it is not yet fully communicated to stakeholders.
4. GDN should seek ways of further increasing the disciplinary diversity of RRC grants, beyond economics. Where the disciplinary focus of RNPs makes this difficult, GDN and their RNPs should consider partnering with other regional institutions with greater coverage of non-economics social science research.
5. The quality of mentoring should be enhanced and made more consistent. Careful pairing of mentor and mentee is essential. Clearer guidelines on roles, responsibilities and expectations for both mentor and mentee should be spelled out, including for a period following the completion of the grant, and compliance monitored.
6. The annual conference should be continued, subject to funding being available. It is a high priority activity. RNPs should be given a voice in deciding topics that are relevant in their own specific regions. In the interests of RCB, the programmes must be planned to give high levels of structured interaction between expert speakers and early career researchers. Enabling the participation of these younger researchers is essential to their development as researchers because they are less likely than their more experienced peers to have funding to attend regional and international disciplinary conferences.
7. RNPs should be encouraged to review their calls for proposals and criteria for assessing and selecting proposals for funding, to ensure they are appropriately targeted. Where the RNP's own disciplinary focus makes it difficult to broaden the focus beyond economics, opportunities should be considered for bringing other partners within the region into the process (see also Recommendation 4 above).
8. The importance of ethical conduct of research should be stressed in calls for proposals, assessment of proposals, implementation of research activities, RCB training and mentoring. As part of GDN's commitment to building the capacity of researchers, it should include consideration of ethical issues among the topics and skills covered in the training and mentoring offered to grantees; information on good ethical practice, with examples from GDN-funded research, should be made available on the website; and ethical dimensions should be made explicit in calls for proposals and in the criteria used by reviewers and GDN in assessing and providing feedback on proposals.
9. More emphasis is needed on bringing funded research outputs to academic publication. After completion of a grant, GDN should consider continuing to support (through mentors, RNPs and HQ GDN staff) grantees to develop their outputs into journal-quality papers. This could be made the subject of a separate follow-on competitive grant, so that support is targeted where it is most likely to have a positive result. A journal prize award a few years after completion of a GDN

research grant can be a good example of incentivising grantees to produce quality papers in high impact journals.

10. GDN should identify opportunities for increasing the relevance and impact of Policy Dialogues (PDs). This will include inclusion of clearer objectives and linking PDs to the strategy of GDN; identifying the most appropriate participants; designing the programme around the need for interaction and dialogue rather than formal presentation of research findings; following up to continue the dialogue; and ensuring the discussions and any follow up are appropriately documented.
11. GDN and RNPs should consider making joint approaches to donors and funders, with proposals that capitalise on the complementarities between them and the comparative advantages of each. This could include a greater role for RNPs in future GRPs.
12. GDN should review the procedures set out in the Staff Manual regarding (a) handling grievances (to cover situations where a grievance is with the President) and (b) staff appraisal to ensure these comply to best organisational practice in terms of objectivity, transparency and equity.
13. GDN needs to keep its databases up to date in order to facilitate the efficient conduct of evaluations. The collection of baseline data against which to assess changes in research capacity over the lifetime of a grant and beyond has been started and should be continued.
14. The role of the GDN M&E team vis-à-vis external evaluators of GDN activities and programmes, and their level of involvement, should be clearly spelled out in TORs for evaluation contracts.
15. GDN should increase the time and resources available for reflecting on and learning from monitoring and evaluation, centrally and within and between regional networks, and for then supporting the putting of those lessons into practice.

## **Acknowledgements**

The IE team is grateful for the opportunity to undertake the Independent Evaluation. The GDN team in New Delhi facilitated the process throughout by making relevant documentation available and by responding to requests for information. Comments received from GDN management on a draft report submitted in December 2013, and on a draft final report presented to the GDN Board of Directors in January 2014, have also been helpful in finalising the report and recommendations.

The team acknowledges the time and thought that those who were interviewed for the Independent Evaluation and who completed survey questionnaires contributed to the process.

## List of Acronyms

AERC	African Economic Research Consortium (GDN Regional Network Partner for Sub-Saharan Africa)
AMC	Awards and Medals Competition (GDN) also known as GDAMC (see below)
BREAD	Bureau for Research and Economic Analysis of Development (GDN Regional Network Partner for North America)
CERGE-EI	Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education - Economics Institute (GDN Regional Network Partner for Eastern and Central Europe)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EADN	East Asian Development Network (GDN Regional Network Partner for East Asia)
EERC	Economics Education and Research Consortium (GDN Regional Network Partner for Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States)
Eldis	Electronic Development and Environment Information System – Institute of Development Studies Sussex UK
ERF	Economic Research Forum (GDN Regional Network Partner in the Middle East and North Africa)
EUDN	European Development Research Network (GDN Regional Network Partner for Western Europe)
GDAMC	Global Development Awards and Medal Competition (GDN)
GDN	Global Development Network
GNet	GDN's online knowledge services portal ( <a href="http://www.gdnet.org">www.gdnet.org</a> )
GRC	Global Research Competition (GDN)
GRCBP	Global Research Capacity Building Program (GDN)
GPR	Global Program Review
GRP	Global Research Project (GDN)
HEI	Higher Education Institutes
HQ	Headquarters
IE	Independent Evaluation
IEG	Independent Evaluation Group (World Bank)
IRP	Inter-regional Research Project (GDN)
LACEA	Latin American and Caribbean Economic Association (GDN Regional Network Partner)
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
NORC	National Organization for Research at the University of Chicago
ODN	Oceania Development Network (GDN Regional Network Partner)
PD	Policy Dialogue (GDN)
PEM	Strengthening Institutions of Improve Public Expenditure Accountability (GDN – GRP)
RCB	Research capacity building
RNP	Regional Network Partner (GDN)
RRC	Regional Research Competition (GDN)
SANEI	South Asia Network of Economic Research Institutes (GDN Regional Network Partner)
ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of reference
VoG	Varieties of Governance: Effective Public Service Delivery (GDN – GRP)
WiiW	The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies

## List of Tables

Table 1 GDN changes in leadership 2007 - 2012 .....	1
Table 2: GDN Ongoing and Current Projects .....	3
Table 3 Stakeholder categories/response rates to IE surveys .....	9
Table 4 Number of interviews by stakeholder category .....	10
Table 5 Base numbers (n) for percentages in survey data .....	12
Table 6 RCB objectives and eligibility criteria in GRPs .....	19
Table 7 Proportion of grantee and RRC winners reporting different types of output from their grant (%), and 'near miss' applicants reporting different types of output since applying to GDN (%).....	20
Table 8 Range and mean quality scores for sampled outputs (overall mean of 26 criteria).....	23
Table 9 Output summary mean scores for GDN grant categories by quality criteria.....	23
Table 10 Grantees' rating of contribution of the overall grant process to specific areas of researcher capacity .....	26
Table 11 Grantee and RRC survey respondents reporting specific outcomes, from GDN and non-GDN funded research, after completion of their grant (%) .....	28
Table 12 Gender breakdown of RRC and Grantee survey respondents .....	30
Table 13 Mean level of change to their research reported by grantees by gender .....	31
Table 14 Grantees attending review workshops by grant type and gender (%) .....	31
Table 15 Mean percentage of grantees reporting outcomes by grant and gender .....	31
Table 16 Grantees interacting with various contacts by gender and grant type (%) .....	32
Table 17 Multiple and single RRC grant recipients attendance at review workshops (%) .....	33
Table 18 Multiple and single RRC grantees producing outputs from their grants (%) .....	33
Table 19 GDN conference evaluation report for two conferences: 2013 Manila and 2012 Budapest conferences.....	44
Table 20 Use of GDN website by gender (%).....	47
Table 21 GDN spending by item, 2007-08 and 2012-13 .....	50
Table 22 Donor, Board, RNP and Mentor views on value for money for GDN activities (%) .....	52
Table 23 Donors' willingness to consider future funding (mean scores by area).....	53

## List of Figures

Figure 1 How well has GDN been able to achieve its stated objectives over the last five years (% of survey respondents) .....	13
Figure 2 Overall satisfaction with GDN .....	14
Figure 3 Change in research created by grant process (grantee and RRC survey respondents).....	26
Figure 4 How effectively has GDN identified constraints and challenges to implementing its activities in the 2007 to 2013 period?.....	39
Figure 5 Perceived impact of donor requirements on GDN's ability to deliver research capacity building .....	40
Figure 6 Frequency of GDN use by grantees, RRC winners and conference delegates.....	48
Figure 7 Donors and Board members views on how satisfactory financial management, reporting and compliance are.....	52

## 1. Background to the Independent Evaluation

In order to understand the context for the current evaluation of GDN this section outlines GDN’s mission and vision, the recent history of the organisation in relation to the development of its strategy and the ‘theory of change’ integral to its objectives.

### 1.1 Background to GDN

The Global Development Network (GDN) is an International Organisation that supports research in economics and social sciences in developing countries and transition economies and connects researchers and development research institutes globally. Founded in 1999, GDN is headquartered in New Delhi, with offices in Cairo and Washington D.C.

GDN works in collaboration with 11 Regional Network Partners (RNPs)<sup>1</sup>, as well as international donor organisations and governments, research institutes, academic institutions, think tanks and individual researchers worldwide.

### 1.2 GDN’s mission

GDN’s vision<sup>2</sup> is to:

- Support researchers in developing countries and transition economies to generate and share high quality applied social science research to inform policymaking and advance social and economic development.

GDN’s mission is to be:

- A Global Network that empowers researchers in developing countries and transition economies, strengthens research skills, and mobilises research for public policy.

For the purposes of understanding GDN’s arrival at this mission statement and its theory of change over the period covered by this evaluation some explanation of the organisational context is pertinent.

Since 2007 GDN has experienced two changes in President and one change in Chair as indicated in Table 1 below. With these changes and in response to the changes in the operating context have come a number of iterations of GDN vision, mission and business plan as follows.

Table 1 GDN changes in leadership 2007 - 2012

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
President	Gobind Nankani	Gobind Nankani	Gerado della Paolera	Gerado della Paolera	Gerado della Paolera	Pierre Jacquet
Chair	Ernesto Zedillo	Ernesto Zedillo	Ernesto Zedillo	Ernesto Zedillo	Alan Winters	Alan Winters

Source: GDN Annual Reports

<sup>1</sup> Located in Bangladesh, Belgium, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Fiji, Japan, Kenya, the Philippines, Ukraine and USA.

<sup>2</sup> As stated in the Terms of Reference for the Independent Evaluation of the Global Development Network (2013), amended / updated on advice from GDN management

GDN's Annual report of 2007 states its objectives to be: Support to researchers, strengthen ties with RNPs, greater links with policy community and improve sustainability/income diversification, largely reflecting recommendations made in the 2007 IE.

In 2010 GDN incorporated the findings of the 2009 World Bank Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) and developed the GDN 'Blue Print' in January 2010 which captured GDN's present (at that time) perceived shortcomings and attributes, and presented an initial proposal for future strategic directions along with the ingredients needed to move forward and steps ahead for the consolidation of a solid and transient institution. June 2010 saw the development of a draft strategic plan for 2010 – 2015 which later turned into the Business Plan for 2011-2016 submitted by President della Paolera and approved by the Board of Directors in June 2011.

The Business Plan 2011- 2016 cites that the GDN vision is to build 'A critical mass of accomplished and renowned economists and social scientists in the developing and transition countries who are globally interconnected and produce good research to impact public policy'. It goes on to articulate an outline results framework:

**Goal (Impact):** Improved social and economic development in developing and transition countries. **Purpose (Outcome):** Public policy and social and economic development in developing and transition countries is informed by multidisciplinary social science research from GDN fellows. **Intermediate Outcome:** A critical mass of accomplished, renowned and globally interconnected economists and social scientists in the developing and transition countries. **Outputs:** GDN fellows have the knowledge, skills and behaviors to: 1. network globally and connect with geographically dispersed fellows for scholarly purposes; 2. excel in policy research areas set by GDN and its partners; 3. communicate effectively, engage, influence, lead and have impact; 4. ensure knowledge and skills grow and sustain.<sup>3</sup>

An important element of the Business Plan was to bring the various research funding programmes of GDN into a single framework, the Global Research Capacity Building Program (GRCBP). This was designed as a hierarchical progression of research capacity building starting from the Regional Research Competitions (RRC) and progressing through Global Research Competitions (GRC) to Global Research Projects (GRPs) with the Awards and Medals Competition (AMC) rewarding excellence in research performance and outputs.

A mid-term Strategy Review of the Business Plan in 2013 saw GDN refocusing and redefining its mandate on research capacity building (RCB) and clearly articulating the global and collective goods and services it will provide. Building research capacity now includes individual skills, organisational capacity and the institutional environment. RCB promotes local ownership of development policies, enabling countries to choose their own development paths, contributing to aid effectiveness, and enriches on-going policy debates. Attracting core, multi-year funding becomes a key objective.

This culminates in the latest strategic communication from GDN entitled 'Introducing GDN' which states a clear aspiration to 'Empower researchers from developing and transition countries' through a philosophy of developing good quality research that informs policy by providing research skills and research communication skills development.

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<sup>3</sup> This is now elaborated in GDN's 2013 'Logframe for the Global Research Capacity Building Program'

GDN's current portfolio of research capacity building activities is summarised in the table below:

**Table 2: GDN Ongoing and Current Projects<sup>4</sup>**

Project Name	Number of Grants	Grant Information
Regional Research Competitions	93	Average size approximately US\$ 10,000
Global Research Competition	6	Grants size up to US\$ 32,000
Strengthening Institutions to Improve Public Expenditure Accountability (GRP)	14	GBP 2 million in total grants
Supporting Policy Research to Inform Agricultural Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (GRP)	10	Approximately US\$ 3 million including grants and policy outreach
Urbanization and Development: Delving Deeper into the Nexus (GRP)	5	Grant size up to US\$ 30,000
Varieties of Governance: Effective Public Service Delivery (GRP)	16	Total project size US\$ 2.16 million

The GDN board has been relatively stable during 2007 – 2013 with 33 individuals occupying the 18 board positions. The RNP heads also remained relatively unchanged until 2010 when seven of the eleven RNP heads were new to post. In 2008 GDN was established as a public international organisation with the required three ratifications, namely from India, Colombia and Sri Lanka. Two additional states became party to the GDN Agreement: Spain (April 2010) and Hungary (October 2012). Each member state appoints one representative to the Assembly of GDN which maintains general oversight of GDN's activities and appoints the Board of Directors.

### 1.3 GDN's Theory of Change

The evaluation framework takes its lead from the GDN Theory of Change (ToC). This is summarised on the GDN website:

*"GDN believes that significant contributions to development can be made by:*

- *Supporting the capacity development of economists and social scientists in developing and transition countries;*
- *Connecting them as a cadre of specialists across the developing world; and*
- *Ensuring that the cadre becomes self-sustainable."*<sup>5</sup>

Those 'significant contributions' are elsewhere elaborated as coming through policy being informed by good, policy relevant, multidisciplinary social science research carried out by a 'critical mass of accomplished and renowned economists and social scientists'. 'Capacity development' or 'research capacity building' is defined in terms of four domains: global interconnectedness; knowledge and intellectual abilities; communication, engagement and impact; and continuing professional development<sup>6</sup>.

The ToC also underpins the intervention logic reflected in the logical frameworks for various elements of GDN's programme and activities (including those for the GRCBP, for GDNNet and GRPs). The evaluation questions outlined in the next section create a framework for the IE to interrogate

<sup>4</sup> As shown in TOR for the IE, p. 7. Data presumably refer to calendar year 2013.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.gdn.int/> Accessed 9/1/2014

<sup>6</sup> Logframe for the GRCBP (2013)

that logic, assessing where possible the extent to which GDN's activities and programmes and activities are contributing to this change process.

#### **1.4 Previous evaluations of GDN**

Previous Independent Evaluations of GDN were undertaken in 2004 and 2007. The 2007 evaluation and subsequent World Bank IEG review in 2009 are relevant to this evaluation in terms of assessing progress and the outcomes of recommendations coming out of those evaluations. The 2007 evaluation's overall findings were positive with GDN generally being perceived to provide unique, relevant, and valuable services to its numerous stakeholders.

The process evaluation indicated progress in the areas of governance structures, financial sustainability, broadening reach and deepening capacity building, specifically:

- creating Board audit, executive, and program committees, and forming a Donor Advisory Council
- showing that its activities are scalable during fiscal crises and reducing reliance on World Bank through income diversification
- broadening the reach (representation) across beneficiary types through GDN's centrally-run activities and across some regionally-run activities
- planning to deepen or broaden capacity building effects through individualised training activities to match target constituencies' priorities.

The impact evaluation found grantee satisfaction with GDN's overall portfolio of activities on average was between high and medium (the second or third highest rating on a five point Likert scale) but closer to high, especially among respondents from sub-Saharan Africa. The evaluation went on to suggest:

- moderate individual-level effects from GDN-funded capacity building and knowledge creation activities
- broader impacts in some regions where GDN's efforts accompany those of other actors with similar goals such as RNPs (Regional Network Partners)
- no evidence of policy impacts or that this was an appropriate objective, but found evidence of building capacity so that researchers are capable of policy relevant research
- differences across regions in uniformity in quality of capacity building from GDN-funded regional research competition (RRC) activities.

A total of 50 recommendations were made based on the findings of the 2007 independent evaluation. Those highlighted in the executive summary focused on clarity and communication, governance, relationships, policy relevance and financial sustainability:

- clarifying and communicating disciplinary focus
- increasing the strength of board governance and management capacity and reviewing and strengthening key human resource and management policies
- maintaining or increasing staff expertise in research and fundraising
- better monitoring of grant fund distribution by categories of researchers and overhead costs
- clarifying the extent to which RNPs are considered and treated as partners versus grantees, and increasing quality of learning across RNPs

- increased openness to inputs from donors and network partners
- increasing capacity in policy relevance and links with policy makers
- continuing to reduce income volatility and look to long term funding sustainability for example through developing new relationships at the World Bank, and further developing joint fundraising with RNPs.

The IEG Global Program Review 2008 assessed the relevance and effectiveness of GDN over its 10-years and the World Bank's performance as a major partner. The review drew on the two independent evaluations of GDN and other internal and external assessments of specific aspects of the programme. It also incorporated interviews conducted in late 2008 with key GDN stakeholders.

**Overall objectives and relevance:** In terms of monitoring GDN's overall objectives and relevance, the review highlighted the inherent difficulty of assessing activities aimed at building research capacity and influencing policy, and found that GDN was weak in setting and tracking clear and monitorable outcome objectives. It found relevance to be moderately strong, with the record of outputs being strong, and the achievement of program outcome objectives moderate. The review concluded that GDN as a network of networks is well designed for pursuing its objective, but suggested that key questions for GDN going forward should include:

- (a) how to ensure that its new activities reinforce rather than distract from the contribution of its existing core activities to achieving GDN's intended outcomes, and
- (b) how to monitor and evaluate programme outcomes.

In addition, in relation to communicating objectives and approach, the review suggested GDN lacks a clear statement on the extent to which its goal is to address inadequacies that are due to a shortage of development-related research, poor quality research, or inadequate policy relevance of existing work. It had not identified where its specific comparative advantage lies in relation to these inadequacies, resulting in a continued lack of consensus among key stakeholders on the relative importance of its three objectives, systematic approach or log frame.

**Governance and internal relationships:** The review identified a range of governance problems relating to the Board, working relationships, cross-regional working and communication.

There was a conflict of interest identified, posed by the Board members who are nominated by RNPs and are in an ambiguous position of representing the interests of their specific regions as well as exercising rigorous oversight of the performance of GDN overall.

In relation to RNPs the review found that GDN had not adequately defined the mutual responsibilities and working relationships of its Secretariat and RNPs in the design and implementation of GDN-supported activities. RNPs were not members of the Board and therefore not principally and directly engaged in GDN's research agenda-setting function currently carried out by the Board. The review observed that the working relationships between GDN and the RNPs were seen to be not well developed, and suggested that GDN strengthen its global services to the RNPs where there is potential for effectiveness and efficiency gains through such undertakings as cross regional capacity building, standard setting and fund-raising. It also suggested GDN seek to increase the RNPs' voice in the design and implementation of GDN activities — thus making them true partners.

On a positive note, the review concluded that GDN has handled resource allocations, administrative costs, and financial management efficiently although hampered by governance structure, working relations with its RNPs, and uncertain financial sustainability.

**Building capacity for research and policy relevance:** While findings indicated that that GDN-funded research had led to an increase in the dissemination of their work through papers, journal articles, and books, there was insufficient cumulative evidence to be able to assess the overall quality, newness, or policy relevance of the research output. The review felt that GDN's efforts to strengthen the policy relevance of research training and output remained weak. GDN was found to have been moderately effective in building research capacity at the individual level; however, while all interviewees agreed that capacity building is a key objective of GDN, most stated that the capacity building effort was not systematically designed. The review suggested that GDN needed to do better in dealing with variations in the capacity and performance of the different RNPs in building research excellence and informing policy.

**Financial sustainability:** The review concluded that there was an urgent need to improve financial sustainability.

## 2. Terms of reference for the 2013 Independent Evaluation

### 2.1 Objectives of the evaluation

The principal purposes of this evaluation are to:

1. Measure and assess the effectiveness, impact, value for money and sustainability of GDN's activities to date
2. Identify lessons learnt and areas for improvement, both for GDN and for the donor community.

The GDN Board of Directors commissioned this Independent Evaluation (IE)<sup>7</sup> to provide impartial insight and assessment on the effectiveness and impact of GDN's strategy and activities. The evaluation focuses on a critical examination of the stated role of GDN and the extent to which it has positioned itself to achieve its research capacity building and networking objectives. It includes consideration of how GDN's strategy and activities should be continued or modified. The recommendations and lessons learnt generated from the evaluation exercise are intended to be used in improving GDN's support to its constituents. For the full terms of reference for the IE see Annex A.

The evaluation covers all aspects of GDN's strategy and activities and assesses its reach and effectiveness from a global perspective and its outputs, outcomes and impact at an individual level and institutional level (where relevant). It also assesses the extent to which GDN meets the expressed needs of its constituents, namely – researchers in developing countries and transition economies, Regional Network Partners, other partners, donors and the policy community.

The evaluation covers the time period from 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2013 with the last Independent Evaluation being undertaken for the period to 30 June 2007.

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<sup>7</sup> The evaluation is funded by the World Bank and mandated under the DGF funding given to GDN.

## 2.2 Research questions

This evaluation addresses issues and questions in relation to the effectiveness, impact, value for money and sustainability of GDN activities as well as the operational effectiveness of GDN in reaching its stated goals.

Key evaluation questions were developed during the inception phase of the IE from the set of terms of reference questions and issues below.

- 1 **Overall:** To what extent has GDN achieved its stated objectives?
- 2 **Outcomes, Effectiveness and Impact:** What is the overall impact of GDN activities and how does this compare with what was expected? Did GDN address the intended target constituents and what was the actual coverage? What is the volume and quality of outputs and outcomes of GDN activities? To what extent have activities contributed to research capacity building and networking? To what extent has the research contributed to development? In hindsight, how could the activities have been improved? To what extent were constraints and challenges - both internal and external – faced and addressed in implementing activities?
- 3 **Relevance:** To what extent are GDN’s activities consistent with the needs and priorities of the target beneficiaries? To what extent is GDN complementing or competing with other research capacity building initiatives? To what extent are the design, strategic approaches and priorities appropriate for achieving GDN’s objectives? Are the activities designed to build research capacity and foster networking for researchers in developing countries and transition economies? To what extent have donor's grant making policies and practices helped or hindered the objective of research capacity building at GDN?
- 4 **Efficiency and Value for Money:** To what extent has GDN been cost-effective? Does GDN reflect value for money? To what extent are there obvious links between significant expenditures and key outputs? To what extent has the financial management, reporting and compliance been adhered to and have they been satisfactory, particularly from the perspective of donors? To what extent does GDN have a clear and realistic plan for resource mobilization and risk diversification?
- 5 **Sustainability:** What is the potential for continuation of the impact and benefits achieved by GDN’s activities? What are the respective roles of GDN and its partners (including Regional Network Partners) in achieving and sustaining the outcomes? To what extent has GDN effectively collaborated with global, regional and country-level partners and stakeholders?
- 6 **Management and Operations:** Is GDN appropriately structured to achieve its stated goal? To what extent have GDN’s management arrangements been effective in facilitating decision making? To what extent does GDN have proper, transparent, accountable and fair management and financial procedures? How effectively and efficiently has GDN carried out its administrative and managerial responsibilities including managing grants and external relationships?

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Inception phase

The inception phase of the evaluation focused on gaining an overview and understanding of GDN with the aims of: identifying the scope of the evaluation; identifying any differences in perspective, concerns or expectations on the evaluation process to be taken into account; establishing key questions that complement or elaborate on the terms of reference; and informing the detailed development of the evaluation (framework, methodology, tools for data collection, analysis and indicators).

During the inception phase the evaluators interviewed 8 stakeholders including the Chair and President of GDN, as well as representatives from the GDN Board, the World Bank and two RNPs.

The final inception report was submitted on 16<sup>th</sup> September 2013 and included an evaluation framework appendix summarising for each of the evaluation questions and sub-questions, key indicators, data requirements, stakeholders from whom data was sought and data collection methods. It identified baseline data where possible and where comparable with data collection for the 2013 IE as well as the following categories of stakeholders for the evaluation process:

- RNP Heads/Co-ordinators
- Donors and funders- organisations and individual contacts
- GDN Staff
- GDN Assembly members
- GDN Board Members
- AMC/GRP/GRC/IRP grantees
- Mentors
- RRC grantee
- GDN Conference delegates
- Near miss grantees (from all grant programmes)
- Policymakers
- Heads of Higher Education Institutes (HEI).

Alongside these broad categories a further and cross-cutting group is 'Users/Subscribers of GDNet', GDN's knowledge services portal, whose input is sought by GDNet annually through an online survey. Input from this stakeholder group is incorporated through analysis of the review of this data undertaken by GDNet and DFID as funders of the programme.

### 3.2 Data collection

Data collection for the IE involved a range of primary and secondary sources.

**Primary data** were collected through online surveys, semi-structured interviews, observation of GDN activities (Policy Dialogue; RRC workshop etc.) and quality review of research outputs.

**Secondary data** came from desk research, focusing on the range of documentation provided by GDN including annual reports, details of funding programmes, evaluation reports, minutes of meetings etc.

### 3.2.1 Desk research

Desk research was undertaken to provide a full understanding of the organisation, to feed into the questionnaire development, for analysis against the key questions of the evaluations and to triangulate findings from the surveys and interviews. This process included reference, where relevant, to other ongoing or recent GDN evaluations including: DFID Year 2 Review of GDN (2013); NORC evaluation of Public Expenditure and Monitoring GRP; Final Evaluation of Varieties of Governance: Effective Public Service Delivery GRP; and Urbanization and Development: Delving Deeper into the Nexus GRP.

### 3.2.2 Online surveys

Online surveys were developed to target the key stakeholder groups identified during the inception phase of the evaluation with questions specifically relevant to their experience of GDN's activities. Email contact information from the GDN database was used to promote the survey with a prize draw for grantees completing the survey. Samples were selected from databases held by GDN apart from development researchers with no previous engagement with GDN.

**Table 3 Stakeholder categories/response rates to IE surveys**

	Sample size	Bounced or opted out	Completed	Response rate (%)
RNP Heads/Co-ordinators	41	4	21	56.8
Donors - organisations	20		8	40.0
GDN Staff	38		13	34.2
GDN Board	36		10	27.8
AMC/GRP/GRC/IRP grantees	336		91	27.1
Donor - individual contacts	32		8	25.0
Mentors	109	2	24	22.4
RRC grantee	794		162	20.4
Conference delegates	987	40	133	14.0
Near miss grantees	195	8	24	12.8
Policy - organisations	35		2	5.7
Higher Education Institutes (HEI)	36		2	5.6
'Non-engaged' development researchers <sup>8</sup>	n/a	n/a	74	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>2659</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>19.1</b>

Response rates to the survey varied considerably. Stakeholders with a closer relationship to GDN and interest/motivation towards the evaluation process provided the highest response rate (and were from the smaller sample size groups). Samples for the grant programmes were based on the contact data held by GDN on past and present grantees within the evaluation period. There were 253 responses from the combined grantee group (RRC alongside the other grant programmes), a 24% response rate from the overall figure of 1130 grantees. The evaluation team encountered difficulty in gaining responses from policy and HEI stakeholders, perhaps suggesting that the IE

<sup>8</sup> Development researchers with no previous interaction with GDN could not be sampled from GDN databases; these were self-identified following email contact between the IE team and senior academics in 15 universities in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe who circulated the survey link to researchers in their departments.

process was either not a high priority to those stakeholders or not perceived as relevant to them. Response rates from staff and the GDN Board, although among the higher response rates, are not as high as would be expected from the commissioning organisation. To some extent participation in the interview process may have precluded some staff/board responses to the survey although we have no data to suggest that this happened to any great extent. Interviewees were requested during their interviews to also complete the online survey.

### 3.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used with a cross section of stakeholders with questions developed from the terms of reference during the inception phase. Interviews took place face-to-face during the evaluation team’s visit to Delhi (IE visit), Prague (RRC workshop visit), Vienna and Abuja (Policy Dialogues) and via Skype or telephone. Sampling of interviewees was a mixture of purposive (e.g. to ensure a representative range of donors, and of disciplinary background among Board members) and stratified random (for grantees). Overall 52 stakeholders were interviewed during the evaluation process. An informal focus group was also held for Delhi based staff, which was attended by seven additional staff members.

**Table 4 Number of interviews by stakeholder category**

Stakeholder group	Number of interviews	Further information
GDN grantees	12	GRP; 3 AMC (one grantee had been awarded both an RRC and AMC grant); 2 RRC 6 face-to-face interviews
RNP heads/co-ordinators	10	
Donors	4	
GDN Board	6	1 Board member interviewed twice (inception, and main evaluation phase)
GDN Staff	13	6 face-to-face during IE visit to GDN Delhi office
GDN Assembly	4	includes 2 face-to-face interviews during IE visit to GDN Delhi office
Policymakers/Press	4	

### 3.2.4 Output quality review

An output review was carried out to assess the quality of selected tangible outputs (papers) from GDN funded research grants within the 2007 to 2013 evaluation period. A total of 38 papers were randomly sampled from the list of outputs provided by GDN. These outputs were obtained from three categories of GDN funded research grantees including 18 from the Regional Research Competitions (RRC), 8 from the Awards and Medals Competitions (AMC), and 12 from the Global Research Projects (GRP) (see Annex D). Under the RRC category, output samples were specifically drawn from the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), Economics Education and Research Consortium (EERC), and the South Asia Network of Economic Research Institutes (SANEI). The AMC sample was drawn from the Outstanding Research on Development (ORD) awards for Latin America and the Caribbean, and for South Asia. Outputs from six GRPs were drawn from across the globe but representing the different regions that GDN’s activities cover. The outputs were selected by the IE team; GDN then provided anonymised copies which were made available to the reviewers.

Of the 18 RRC grants selected, one (from EERC) had been withdrawn at the request of the grantee, and three (all from AERC) were not available despite the projects having been completed. Three replacements from AERC were selected, giving a final sample of 17 RRC outputs and 37 in total. The review was conducted by a team of four experts in the field of GDN focus research areas from Africa and Europe<sup>9</sup>.

### **3.2.5 Attendance at GDN/RNP events**

Evaluation team members made four visits during the evaluation process (including the inception phase) during which interviews and a focus group and were undertaken. These events were:

- CERGE-EI RRC workshop in Prague, 15<sup>th</sup> August 2013
- Visit to GDN headquarters in New Delhi (week beginning 7<sup>th</sup> October 2013)
- 'Jobs Wanted: Youth in Southeast Europe' Policy Dialogue (in partnership with The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (WiiW), World Bank, Austrian Ministry of Finance) – 21<sup>st</sup> October 2013
- PEM Policy Dialogue, Abuja, Nigeria – 4<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

### **3.3 Approach to analysis**

Survey questionnaires were made available online and the appropriate link was emailed to each sample with a covering text agreed with GDN. After the surveys were closed, the data were cleaned to remove significantly incomplete responses and duplicate responses caused by re-entering the survey, and then downloaded as Excel files. Quantitative data were subject to simple descriptive statistical analysis, resulting in the tables and figures used in this report. Many of the closed questions used Likert-type scales. A range of Likert scales have been used. Where the question is the same as in the 2007 IE it has been asked using the same rating scale. For new questions the most appropriate scale has been used. Each question has been asked consistently across each stakeholder group in each version of the questionnaire.

Responses to open ended questions were scrutinised for themes and coded. Interviews were recorded as contemporaneous notes in standard templates. The completed templates were scrutinised for comments relating to the evaluation questions and themes were then identified under each question. Data from the output quality review were subject to simple descriptive statistics. Data and analysis from concurrent evaluations of projects (in particular those of recently completed GRPs) were used for comparison and to provide additional insight.

## **4 Evaluation findings**

The findings are presented here in subsections which link to the six core questions posed in the TOR. Survey percentages are based on the total number of valid responses received for each question which may not be the same as the total number of respondents to each survey, as shown in Table 5. Populations of some categories are small, and percentages based on low base numbers need to be treated with caution. Where appropriate, in the following subsections we triangulate survey data findings with qualitative data from interviews and from other sources (including GRP evaluations). More generally, all surveys face potential response bias: this is particularly the case with online

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<sup>9</sup> Summary of reviewer expertise is in Annex D.

surveys where response rates are generally lower than face to face and telephone surveys. We do not know whether RRC awardee and other grantee respondents, for example, are those who feel they have benefitted more from GDN than those who chose not to respond. While we sought to maximise response through offering a prize draw and through repeated invitations to participate, we cannot rule out the possibility of response bias.

**Table 5 Base numbers (n) for percentages in survey data**

	Conference	RRC	Grantee	Staff	Mentors	RNP	Board	Donors	N Miss
n=	120	162	73	9	23	20	10	8	24

#### 4.1 Overall achievement of stated objectives

The core objective of GDN is research capacity building (RCB) in developing and transition countries, so that in the future, policy making can be informed by more high quality social science research from within those countries and regions. GDN’s approach to RCB focuses mainly on the individual researcher and his or her skills and competences (including interaction skills), rather than on the institutional environment within which the researcher works<sup>10</sup>. The activities and services provided are designed to facilitate the development of these skills and competences. The extent to which this has been achieved was explored in the surveys and interviews, and from secondary GDN documentation<sup>11</sup>.

All categories of survey respondents were positive about how well GDN had achieved its objectives in the period covered by the IE, with only a small minority in each case recording a negative view (Figure 1). This minority was largest for Board and donor respondents, 20% of whom responded ‘not well’. Mentors were the only group recording a substantial ‘don’t know’ response. The proportion who felt that GDN has articulated clear, explicit unambiguous objectives and a clear mission ‘well’ or ‘very well’ is between 70 and 80 percent for all categories apart from donors (62%) (Figure F 3)<sup>12</sup>.

In comparing 2013 data to 2007, RNP and donors consider GDN to be better in this area than in 2007 and GDN board members consider the situation to be worse than 2007 with staff considering the situation to be about the same. (See Figure F 41 in Annex F.)

In a follow up question respondents were asked ‘how do you think that happened?’ Those who had received grants pointed to the efforts of the RNPs and the deliberate involvement of young, early career researchers. Others mentioned the contribution that mentoring made, though there were some comments on the need to improve this: mentoring is seen as an important mark of GDN’s approach but it is not always making the contribution it should – a theme that appeared in several other parts of the survey and interviews. More generally, the value added to research grants (i.e. services, activities and support beyond the financial award itself), a strategic focus on research

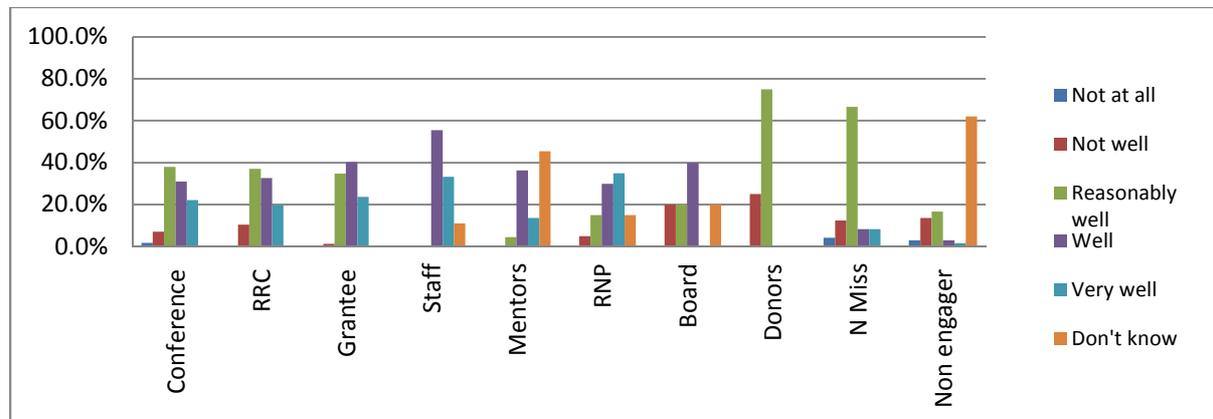
<sup>10</sup> As discussed in the June 2013 Mid-Term Strategic Review (draft discussion paper ‘A global partnership network for research capacity building: IMPLEMENTING GDN’s 2011-2016 BUSINESS PLAN’, GDN does address some aspects of the institutional environment through facilitating opportunities for networking and engaging with policy makers; but the working environment of the researcher within his or her HEI or research institute is not a specific target of GDN activities.

<sup>11</sup> GDN has recently put in place a process for establishing baseline data for future grantees so that more objective assessments can be made of RCB achieved through research grants and competitions.

<sup>12</sup> Figure references beginning with F (F1, F2, ...) refer to figures in Annex F.

topics and the provision of a platform for policy dialogue were also cited as enabling GDN substantially to achieve its RCB objectives.

Figure 1 How well has GDN been able to achieve its stated objectives over the last five years (% of survey respondents)<sup>13</sup>



Data from the surveys show GDN is best known, among those who engage with the research competitions and conference participants, for its research grants, the annual conference and networking (Figure F 1). Less well known are the seven other services and activities listed in the questionnaire which contribute directly to RCB, including providing access to research materials, policy dialogues and training among others. Less than half of grant recipients ticked ‘mentoring’ and ‘technical training’, for example. This is surprising, given that grant recipients should have had access to these services during the period of their grant. Patchy regional coverage of mentoring was also noted in the 2007 IE. For ‘non-engaged’ development researchers, GDN is best known for its annual conferences (45%), providing access to research and journals (41%) and training (41%), while other value added activities which are distinctive features of GDN’s approach to RCB are less well known.

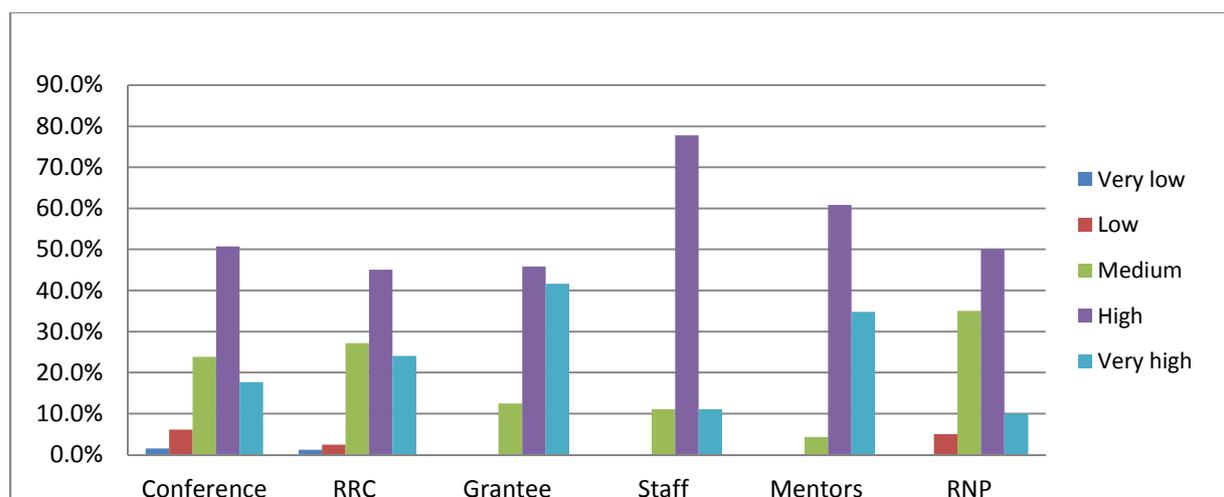
Those who have engaged with the grant and competition process (RRC, grantee, near miss) have the highest perception of GDN’s visibility and profile (Figure F 2). Those with a broader knowledge of the field are more circumspect, with Board members being the least likely to say that GDN is known and recognised for what it seeks to achieve to a ‘good’ or ‘great’ extent. Most ‘non engaged’ development researchers said either that they did not know (36%) or that GDN was known ‘not at all’ or ‘to some extent’

Overall analysis of the interview data suggests GDN’s profile could be higher. Heads of RNPs, among others, felt that GDN is ‘known well by a limited group of researchers’, and particularly by those connected with the institutes at which RNPs are based, but the overall profile within the research community (across all categories of interview respondents) was seen as not as high as it should be. However, some interviewees pointed to a possible upward trend in the past year, following an earlier dip in the aftermath of the spinoff (from the World Bank) and relocation of GDN.

The majority of respondents in categories involved either in delivering GDN services or as grant recipients rated their overall satisfaction with GDN high or very high (Figure 2).

<sup>13</sup> In this and subsequent figures, responses from two sets of grantees are presented: ‘RRC’ refers to those who have received grants from their respective Regional Research Competitions, ‘Grantee’ refers to those who have received funding from AMCs, GRCs or GRPs.

Figure 2 Overall satisfaction with GDN



An open ended question on strengths, weaknesses and issues that GDN should consider brought a wide range of comments from grant recipients (RRC, AMC, GRC and GRP). The majority of these suggest that GDN could improve on what it is already doing by doing more of it (calls / competitions, grants, follow through into dissemination and policy), by targeting or focusing its work (on countries with least research capacity, on activities which regional and/or disciplinary networks and societies do not or cannot do, beyond economics), or enhancing the quality of particular activities (mentoring, improving outputs to a standard suitable for academic journals). The main strengths identified were the support services and activities which went along with the receipt of a grant.

The evidence above suggesting that the overall objective of RCB is being achieved to quite a high extent is supported by monitoring and evaluation reports on three GRPs<sup>14</sup> that were concluded during the IE period. PEM Mid-Term Review (MTR) in 2011 concluded that there was measurable improvement in quality of the researchers' outputs, there was an increase in the policy community's perception of the participating organisations' (POs) as sources of useful information, research, and recommendations, and POs were seen as enhancing government accountability for quality of expenditure<sup>15</sup>. The Varieties of Governance evaluation report (Phase 1) found that researchers improved their understanding of the conditions for effective public service delivery, enhanced their research skills by applying new methodological approaches and cross-country comparisons and, though to a lesser extent, enhanced their communication and dissemination skills during the course of the project<sup>16</sup>. The Moving out of Poverty evaluation in 2010 found evidence that research(er) capacity had been built through the project, especially in methods and tools, multidisciplinary, and combining quantitative and qualitative methods and data.<sup>17</sup>

Interview feedback (from all groups) suggests that GDN's RCB objective is being achieved through the range of research activities it supports – this is subjective and perception based but provides

<sup>14</sup> While each GRP has its own unique set of objectives, they all have RCB as one of their objectives.

<sup>15</sup> NORC 2011. 'Strengthening Institutions to Improve Public Expenditure Accountability' project: Mid-Term Review. University of Chicago

<sup>16</sup> Blomeyer & Sanz SL 2013. Phase 1 report: External Final Evaluation of the Global Research Project 'Varieties of Governance: Effective Public Service Delivery'. Guadalajara

<sup>17</sup> Mathur, K. 2010. External Evaluation of the Moving Out of Poverty Project. Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur.

some useful insight and examples of how the range of stakeholders engaging with GDN assess its achievement of its objectives:

- Grantees – all (12) either agreed that GDN was achieving its objectives or had contributed more specifically to their professional development. Grantees were able to give examples of their own experience (and that of their colleagues) rather than direct evidence of larger scale change: e.g. communicating the outcomes of research; building the capacity of their institution through involvement in the research project; and contact with policymakers for the first time.
- RNP Heads – emphasised the importance of RRCs to achieving the RCB objectives of GDN (particularly as they reflect local/regional research priorities most accurately):  
*research is being done that wouldn't otherwise be done and [we're] getting publications of a higher quality. (R07)*
- Donors - donor feedback included: that GDN's vision/strategy towards its objectives is now clearer (D01); the need to have the data/evidence to assess whether GDN is achieving its objectives; and specific positive feedback on a project funded by a donor (OSF – Varieties of Governance)
- Assembly – interviewees expressed broad agreement that GDN objectives are clear but felt unable to assess the extent of its achievement of objectives partly as a result of not having access to this data but also some concerns over the sustained impact, funding and structure of the organisation (also a positive comment that GDN achieves a lot due to the attributes of its staff and decentralised structure).

Linkage to informing policy making was felt to be weaker (in comparison to the RCB objective):

*I think one weakness in our programme is to translate studies into concrete policy recommendations. I saw that during my term as Regional Co-ordinator. [There] needs to be a mechanism to harness these studies into policy notes/recommendations. (R01)*

There were, however, specific examples of the way in which researchers worked with policy makers (as a result of their research – G09) or how their projects specifically drew in policy makers and politicians (G07). There is also difficulty in directly attributing policy change or development to specific input from GDN activities. Some respondents suggested the most direct link may be through GDN alumni taking career moves into policy or political roles. A few examples were given of direct changes resulting from GDN (GRP) research such as take up of 'indoor residual spraying' as a malaria control strategy by the Government of Uganda.

Interview feedback from RNP heads also suggests that, through GRPs and the recently introduced GRCs, cross-fertilisation of research across regions and sharing knowledge between regional networks has been moderately successful given the budgetary constraints that GDN is working within. The fundamental challenge identified by respondents was on achieving genuine collaboration within the funding parameters of GDN's programmes. It is perhaps also indicative of the different capacities of RNPs and the different roles that they have within GDN's network of networks: for example BREAD and GDN Japan have a distinct interest in the potential for partnership development in research whereas other partners are focused on the RCB aims of GDN with researchers at an early stage of their career.

While all donor interviewees endorsed the idea that enhancing research capacity in developing countries and transition economies is important, one was particularly emphatic on the need for policy makers in developing and transition countries to be able to access top quality research in their own countries and regions and not to have to rely on what international donor agencies tell them. This interviewee [D02] stressed that ‘checks and balances are needed’ in the advice available; countries need people who can critique and contradict what the international development organisations say.

Some interviewees suggested the relatively weak achievement of policy-related objectives may be an inevitable consequence of the primary focus on RCB; targeting younger, early career researchers in countries where capacity is known to be weak is less likely in the short term to produce research that is useful to policy makers – research that has the quality and the credibility to be heard.

## 4.2 Outcomes, effectiveness and impact

### 4.2.1 Overall impact and expectations

According to the GDN Theory of Change (ToC), the impact of GDN’s RCB activities will be seen in ‘Improved social and economic development in developing and transition countries’. The overall conclusion from the discussion below and new data from GRP evaluations is that the first part of the ToC has been validated and achieved, but that the final step of improved social and economic development is difficult to attribute to research capacity enhancement in developing countries and transition economies. However, case studies presented in the recent PEM evaluation, articulating a project-specific Theory of Change in participating countries, do show that when a clear link is demonstrated between a research project (both the process of project implementation, and the substantive outputs and their dissemination) and a policy outcome, there is clear potential for attributable social and economic change.<sup>18</sup>

In the survey, GDN board, donors and RNP heads and administrators were asked for their view on the contribution that GDN’s work had made to development. Their responses to the pre-coded question showed the greatest perceived contributions to development to be: global forum for exchange of ideas, knowledge sharing of developing country research and voice for developing country researchers. Least impact was seen to be the use of research findings and the implementation of recommendations by Government (Figure F 4). This impact was most ‘less than expected’ in links between policy makers and research, implementation by Government and influencing policy or policy change. Overall, however, the impact in all areas listed matched or exceeded expectations (Figure F 5), suggesting that stakeholders have only a limited expectation of GDN research having a discernible impact on policy. This may seem reasonable, particularly for RRC grants. However, as noted elsewhere in this report, the recent evaluation of the PEM GRP does show, through a narrative approach, that links can be discerned from research process and research outputs, to policy impact.

When data for each group are disaggregated the picture is more nuanced (Figure F 6, Figure F 7, Figure F 8, Figure F 9, Figure F 10 and Figure F 11). Respondents to the RNP survey (RNP heads and senior administrators), with perhaps a more regional focus, are more likely to feel that links between

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<sup>18</sup> E.g. ToC flowcharts for Guatemala and Armenia, and to a lesser extent the ‘most significant results’

research and policy making, and discernible impact on policy and change, have been achieved than donors and Board members.

In the interviews, all categories of interviewee acknowledged that it is impossible to measure impact, given the multitude of factors that influence social and economic development. Some pointed to anecdotal evidence of policy change that had been informed by (among others) GDN-sponsored research. However the overall view was that it is difficult to make a strong link between RCB and the overarching goal of GDN's contribution to advancing social and economic development. Most saw this as inevitable given the difficulty of attribution while some saw it as a consequence of the focus and content of GDN-supported research (e.g. on economics rather than broader social policy issues):

*It's a long shot! Ambitious to say that it would make an impact on development. (G04/05)*

*We need to tackle more social issues – need to have a stronger social impact. (R02)*

This interviewee (R02) also felt that GDN needs to be able to explain its work more clearly outside the (economic) research community. This reflects a more pervasive (though not universal) view among interviewees that efforts to broaden the disciplinary focus of RRCs (in particular) have not yet gone far enough.

Looking at specific RCB services activities, interviewees made several comments:

**AMC:** Insufficient funding and some grant administration issues were highlighted by AMC grantees – particularly where research projects are planned around the full AMC award and 2nd place awardees are expected to deliver research as per the original proposal but with reduced funding. Where mentors are involved, their support is very positively reviewed; it is seen as effective (timely; responsive) and offering potential for ongoing professional relationships.

GDNNet is seen by award winners as a useful vehicle for them to promote and make visible their research findings and written outputs. GDNNet has also worked with grantees on presenting their work at the GDN Annual Conference, which is appreciated.

**Conference:** overall the value and effectiveness of GDN's annual conference was highly rated by nearly all interviewees who had attended (although the majority of grantees interviewed had not attended):

*An opportunity for networking, both Manila and Budapest. At Manila training on presentation skills was done only for the finalists – maybe they [GDN] could think of enlarging the group to be trained. This year was also important for dissemination and a forum to present research ideas as well as the Award (G02)*

One RNP Head felt that conference funding would be better spent supporting research outputs (R07), suggesting that substantial savings could be made by making the conference biennial or every 18 months.

**RRCs:** Interview feedback from RNP Heads suggests that RRCs provide the 'core' activity that GDN is best known for through the RNPs in the regions – they also best reflect local research priorities as

research areas are defined by the researchers themselves. RNP heads also reported improvements in the quality of research outputs over the course of support in the GDN grant process:

*Colleagues act as mentors – they see a marked improvement from proposal stage to first draft and final draft (R01)*

*See a lot of progress in improving analytical capabilities. (R02)*

Overall feedback on the grant administration process was positive, though there was some inconsistency in grantees' experience of support (particularly in relation to GRP and AMC grantees) and in clarity of TOR, both what was expected and the limitations placed upon grantees to seek and find further funding (AMC). The value of regional and international workshops was highlighted, particularly by GRP interviewees, as successful fora for sharing learning and direct input into (for example) methodology and analysis approaches.

### **RNP benefits**

The institutional background and geographical context for RNPs defined what RNP Heads described as the benefits of being part of the GDN 'network of networks':

- networking (with researchers and in seeking joint research projects) as a benefit to all. For BREAD and GDN Japan the motivation is in working with Southern researchers with capacity to undertake global research projects.
- global standards and benchmarking – research reviewed by mentors/providing input of a higher standard than would be achievable if research institutes/partners stood alone
- information sharing – “availability of recent and updated resources” (R08)
- capacity building (particularly in relation to Southern network partners) – proportional to funding received from GDN; also depending on individuals' initiative within RNPs
- the new 2013 (draft) Partnership Charter on GDN – RNP relationships addresses some of the past constraints and concerns.

#### **4.2.2 Targeting of GDN research capacity building activities**

The TOR asked whether GDN is addressing the intended target constituents and what was the actual coverage. The principal target constituency is economics and other social science researchers in developing countries and transition economies: these are clearly targeted in RRC and GRP calls for proposals and eligibility criteria. GDN's GRCBP<sup>19</sup> further identifies early career researchers as those with whom GDN particularly wants to engage. These are targeted in the RRCs, through eligibility criteria which state: 'Individuals and teams of up to three early-career researchers are invited to apply in their respective regions. Participants represent one or more disciplines in the social sciences'<sup>20</sup>. However the calls for proposals from individual RNPs who manage the RRC competitions do not necessarily include this 'early career' criterion (e.g. the CERGE-EI Call for the 14<sup>th</sup> annual GDN RRC, 2013-2014)<sup>21</sup>.

A review of five GRP calls for proposals shows that RCB is specified in all either as an objective or in the description of 'project attributes'. Eligibility criteria specify developing and transition nationality

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<sup>19</sup> Global Researcher Capacity Building Program, portrayed as a progression starting with RRCs, through GRCs and onto GRPs.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.gdn.int/html/page11.php?MID=3&SID=24&SSID=3> Accessed 1/12/2013

<sup>21</sup> [http://www.cerge-ei.cz/pdf/gdn/GDN\\_CEE\\_RRC14\\_Call.pdf](http://www.cerge-ei.cz/pdf/gdn/GDN_CEE_RRC14_Call.pdf) Accessed 1/12/2013

and residence requirements but say nothing about stage of career or age of principal researcher or team members (Table 6). GRP selection criteria generally include specific areas of expertise – working with particular kinds of data, using particular methods of analysis, experience of working on particular policy-related issues. GRPs are generally targeted at building capacity in specific techniques rather than the capacity of researchers at a particular stage of career.

**Table 6 RCB objectives and eligibility criteria in GRPs**

	Project (date of call)	RCB objective	Eligibility
1	Varieties of Governance: Effective Public Service Delivery (2009)	Contributing to building research capacity of research teams through external advisors, workshops, training and peer reviews (#4 of 5 objectives)	lead researcher and 50% of team to be citizens of developing/transition countries; no specification re. age, stage of career
2	Development on the Move: Measuring and Optimizing the Economic and Social Impacts of Migration (2007)	Building research capacity in the developing and transition countries (#4 of 5 objectives)	at least two researchers with different disciplinary backgrounds; lead researcher and 50% of team to be citizens of, and currently residing in, developing / transition countries; no specification re. age, stage of career
3	Strengthening Institutions to Improve Public Expenditure Accountability (2008)	Achieve institutional and individual development (#1 of 5 objectives)	institutions with management and researchers who are citizens and currently residing in a developing or transition country; project researchers must be citizens of, and at least 50% residing in, a developing or transition country; no specification re. age, stage of career
4	Urbanization and development: delving deeper into the nexus (2011)	Provide opportunities for researchers from Latin America and Asia to engage in meaningful academic collaborations in a globally interconnected way (#2 of 2 objectives)	researchers in developing and transition countries in Latin America and Asia; Principal Investigator (PI) and 50% team to be currently residing in developing and transition countries in Latin America and Asia; no specification re. age, stage of career
5	Promoting Innovative Programs from the Developing World: Towards Realizing the Health MDGs in Africa and Asia (2006)	No RCB objective among the 3 goals; but RCB is the first of three ‘project attributes’; e.g. ‘Each researcher will be linked to an expert who will guide and provide mentoring to ensure that the studies draw on current best practices and meet professional standards in terms of theoretical and methodological soundness’	researchers with advanced qualifications (Ph.D) in the social sciences or public health and/or prior experience in evaluation techniques or health related research, who are nationals of and currently reside in a developing or transition country

In the survey responses, targeting was seen as a feature of GDN’s programmes. Ninety per cent of survey respondents thought that GDN targeted early researchers, researchers from a wide range of disciplines and female researchers reasonably well, well or very well. GDN grantees and RRC

competition winners are the most positive about GDN’s effective targeting of these groups while board members and donors are the least positive (Figure F 12 to Figure F 15). The IE team looked at the possibility of using data from the GDN grant and grantee database to explore the extent to which different target categories were successful in the various research grant programmes, but the capture of demographic data on the database is too patchy for meaningful analysis. Of 2731 records in the ‘grantee view’ of the M&E database<sup>22</sup>, 1294 were identified in the gender field as male, 567 as female and 868 (32%) with no gender. Other fields relevant for assessing targeting (including date of birth, discipline) were even more patchy than for gender.

#### 4.2.3 Quantity and quality of research outputs

The TOR asks what the volume and quality of outputs and outcomes of GDN activities is. We focus here on the written outputs of research competitions and projects. Other activities are addressed in other sections of the report.

We have not synthesised, from the various GDN data sources, the numbers of published outputs from research competitions and grants in the evaluation period. Our impression, from the process of identifying and accessing outputs for the quality review (see below) is that while GDN aspires to having electronic copies of all outputs, not all are yet available. Nor are all published outputs from GDN funded research available on GDNNet, making an accurate count or inventory of outputs impossible.

Grantees and competition winners were asked in the survey how many published outputs had directly resulted from their grant. Interestingly RRC respondents were at least as likely as other grantees to have had a paper published in an international refereed journal while the non-RRC grantees were more likely to have produced a policy brief and published an article in the popular media (Table 7). This suggests that the greater emphasis given in AMC and GRP to policy outputs, and perhaps more systematic mentoring in this area, is effective. The greater emphasis on systematic mentoring in GRPs is written into the objectives and contracts for several of these projects, suggesting that a similar emphasis in the guidelines and contracts for delivery of RRCs on mentoring might improve the level of formal publication of research outputs in outlets other than institutional working papers.

**Table 7 Proportion of grantee and RRC winners reporting different types of output from their grant (%), and ‘near miss’ applicants reporting different types of output since applying to GDN (%)**

Type of publication	AMC , GRC, GRP grantees (%)	RRC winners (%)	Near miss applicants (%)
Working paper	82	86	81
Paper in international refereed journal	40	47	65
Paper in national or regional journal	43	54	65
Chapter in a volume	29	23	55
Policy brief	63	47	50
Article in the popular media	44	26	47

Although not directly comparable (because they are not linked to a specific grant), data from unsuccessful ‘near miss’ applicants to both RRC and other programmes are also presented in Table 7.

<sup>22</sup> on <https://creator.zoho.com>; accessed 9/1/2014

No conclusions can be drawn from this comparison but it does show that those who are not successful in bids to win GDN research funding do continue to produce research outputs.

The survey results were echoed in interview responses from grantees. There was a shared aim and aspiration to publish but variable levels of achievement towards this aim. Two interviewees (RRC – CERGE-EI) had successfully published their GDN research outputs in journals, others had produced policy briefs and working papers with the aims of working up to published work.

For the quality review of outputs, each of the sampled outputs was assessed against 26 different standard criteria that were grouped under 13 themes (see review template in Annex D) ranging from the suitability of the title of outputs to the quality of the abstract/executive summary, originality of research, clarity of research objectives and the methods employed in conducting the research project. Other criteria considered include; the adequacy of the reporting of results and findings, how sufficiently the results were discussed, whether the conclusions were supported by the results and the recommendations based on evidence, the policy relevance and implications from the study, overall research paper quality, whether ethical issues had been appropriately addressed and adherence to standard referencing procedures. The criteria finally considered the potential for publication of such a paper (with or without revision) in different forms or categories of outlet including; in international journals, national journals, book chapters, as working papers, or whether the paper is not publishable. Each output was rated on a five point scale on each criterion (1 = not at all; 5 = to a very great extent). A score at or above the mid-point of 3 is generally considered as “Adequate”, while a rating less than 3 is generally considered as “Not adequate or Poor”. The mean scores have sometimes been converted into percentages for clarity of descriptions.

Overall, the output review and analysis against all the criteria measured show an output quality of 62% for all GDN funded research grants and projects within the evaluation period. It also shows that less than half (48%) of the papers were deemed suitable for a journal publication. This figure is exactly the same as that in a previous output review conducted for the 2007 IE which showed that only 48% of the papers reviewed were assessed to be publishable in a journal<sup>23</sup>. The review and analysis of the current evaluation also show that 13% of the papers were adjudged publishable as a book chapter and 35% as a Working Paper. Only 6% of all the papers assessed (two papers, both from RRCs) were adjudged not publishable. This is a significant reduction from the previous assessment that identified up to 15% of papers as not publishable.

The most adequate (mean rating=4.0) criterion based on the assessments by the reviewers was in choosing an informative, interesting title for the research output that is relevant and to the point. This was followed by the researchers ensuring that all the works cited in the text have been appropriately referenced under the reference section (mean=3.5). This finding suggests that researchers take time to craft a useful title for their projects as well as counter-check that all works cited are referenced appropriately. This may also have been as a result of GDN’s mentoring processes and feedback mechanisms for young researchers.

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<sup>23</sup> Shapiro, M.D., Mull, S., and Khanna, T. (2007) Evaluation of the Global Development Network, 2007. MDS Associates, LLC · 600 Roosevelt Blvd. · Falls Church, VA 22044 USA.

Amongst the 26 criteria used in assessing the quality of papers, only one was found to be consistently low in scores with mean score of 2.0 (40%) showing an overall poor performance of the papers in this area. This criterion asks whether ethical considerations were appropriately taken into account in the study design of projects reported in the sampled outputs. The poor performance under this criterion suggests that GDN has not adequately emphasised and enforced the need for ethical considerations to be identified and addressed during the processes of calls for proposals, research proposal assessments, methodological reviews, draft reporting, through to the final reporting of findings. Research ethics are a set of principles about how researchers and research organisations should conduct themselves when dealing with research participants, other researchers and colleagues, the users of their research, and society in general. Particularly relevant to the social sciences are ethics associated with projects involving human participants, including conducting surveys, focus groups and the use of secondary data on individuals. Typical considerations include: recruiting study participants and informed consent; keeping data secure and confidential; making procedures, methods and findings transparent so that they can be assessed; and the issue of safety and risk. It is important to conduct research in line with ethical standards in order to respect and cause no harm to the participants; as a sign of respect for other researchers and those who will use the research; as a professional requirement particularly in some disciplines where failure to do so may result in disciplinary procedures; as a requirement to obtain funding; to avoid embarrassment from the research community; and to ensure that research involving human beings, including using questionnaires and focus groups, must be passed by an Ethics Committee whose job it is to confirm that the research conforms to a set of ethical guidelines. If ethics are considered and addressed appropriately, this should make sure that the work is acceptable to the research community and other users of the research results. GDN should therefore raise awareness and build capacity around ethical considerations in research projects for their grantees going forward.

Other criteria with low mean scores (< 3.0) include: results/findings not related to existing body of knowledge and relevant theories (mean=2.8); implications for theory, practice and or policy not discussed adequately and appropriately (mean=2.8); recommendations not clearly based on the evidence presented from the study findings (mean=2.7); and policy implications not adequately and clearly identified and described in the study (mean=2.7). These themes suggest that in most of the papers findings were not adequately discussed and recommendations were not derived for policymaking. This is not uncommon for academic researchers who often find it difficult to follow through policy research studies into practical or feasible recommendations for policymaking. Given GDN's mission, these low scoring areas are ones that should be highlighted in future training and mentoring.

Comparison across the three categories of grantees show that the overall mean quality of the papers was highest for the GRP outputs (mean=3.4 or 68%) followed by the AMC outputs (mean=3.1 or 62%) and lastly the RRC outputs (mean=2.8 or 56%) (Table 8). This result is also similar to the 2007 evaluation result which showed some evidence that the GRP papers exhibited greater originality, clarity, and better use of methods than the RRC papers. This suggests that more research capacity building efforts and approaches are required for all the GDN grantees but most especially for the RRCs. Half (13) of the criteria used to assess the output reviews were on average 'Not adequate' for the RRC output category compared to only four for the AMC output category and one criterion for the GRP output category which is the lack of ethical considerations that cuts across all categories. The paper with the lowest quality (mean=1.5 or a score of 30%) was also recorded under the RRC

category while the papers with the highest quality score was recorded under the AMC and GRP categories (mean=4.3 and 4.1 respectively). The mean scores for each criterion and grant category are shown in Table 9.

**Table 8 Range and mean quality scores for sampled outputs (overall mean of 26 criteria)<sup>24</sup>**

	Outputs reviewed (n)	low	mean	high
RRC	14	1.5	2.8	3.8
AMC	8	2.3	3.1	4.3
GRP	12	2.6	3.4	4.1

**Table 9 Output summary mean scores for GDN grant categories by quality criteria**

S/n	Criteria	Mean scores for GDN Grant Categories		
		RRC	AMC	GRP
<b>1</b>	<b>Title</b>			
	i. Is the title informative, interesting and to the point?	3.2	3.7	3.6
<b>2</b>	<b>Abstract or Executive Summary (ES)</b>			
	i. Does the Abstract or ES summarise the main points of the study adequately and accurately?	2.7	3.4	3
<b>3</b>	<b>Originality</b>			
	i. Does the research show originality in approach?	3.0	3.3	3.1
<b>4</b>	<b>Clarity of research objectives</b>			
	i. Is the problem statement clearly stated?	2.9	3.3	3.7
	ii. Are the research questions and / or objectives clearly and concisely stated?	3.3	3.3	3.6
	iii. Is the background information adequate and strong enough to support the study's objectives?	3.0	3.4	3.5
<b>5</b>	<b>Methods</b>			
	i. Is the study design evident and appropriate?	3.0	3.3	3.8
	ii. Is the study design described adequately?	2.8	3.3	3.6
	iii. Is the sample size appropriate and adequate?	3.1	3.4	3.6
	iv. Is the data collection method appropriate and adequately described?	3.0	3.5	3.5
	v. Are the analytical methods clearly described, justified and appropriate?	2.7	2.7	3.4
	vi. Were ethical considerations appropriately taken into account in the study design?	2.2	1.3	2.1
<b>6</b>	<b>Results/findings</b>			
	i. Are the results reported in sufficient detail?	3.1	3.3	3.8
	ii. Are the statistical results meaningful and appropriate?	2.7	3.6	3.7
<b>7</b>	<b>Discussion</b>			
	i. Are the results sufficiently interpreted in relation to the original objectives and/or research questions?	3.0	3.5	3.7

<sup>24</sup> Each paper was scored on the extent to which it met each of 26 criteria on a scale of 1 ('not at all') to 5 ('to a very great extent')

S/n	Criteria	Mean scores for GDN Grant Categories		
		RRC	AMC	GRP
	ii. Have the findings been related to the existing body of knowledge and relevant theories?	2.4	3.0	3.2
	iii. Are the implications (for theory, for practice, and/or for policy) discussed adequately and appropriately?	2.4	2.8	3.2
<b>8</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>			
	i. Are the conclusions supported by the results?	2.7	3.3	3.7
<b>9</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>			
	i. Are recommendations clearly based on the evidence presented from the study findings?	2.2	3.0	3.1
	ii. Are recommendations implementable?	3.0	3.2	3.1
<b>10</b>	<b>Policy relevance</b>			
	i. Does the study have any policy relevance?	3.2	3.5	3.5
	ii. Has any policy implications from the study been clearly identified and described?	2.3	2.6	3.1
<b>11</b>	<b>Overall Research Paper Quality</b>			
	i. Does the study contribute to the body of knowledge in its field?	2.5	3.1	3.5
<b>12</b>	<b>References and cited sources</b>			
	i. Does the research take appropriate account of previous research on the topic?	2.5	3.3	3.3
	ii. Have all the works cited in the text been appropriately referenced?	3.8	3.8	4.3
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.8</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.4</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Publication Potential (Frequency from multiple responses)<sup>25</sup></b>			
	International Refereed Journals	4	4	2
	National Journals	5	1	7
	Chapters in Books	3	-	3
	Working Papers	5	3	6
	Not publishable	2	-	-

Implications of this review of output quality are:

- there is a tension between commitment to RCB for early career researchers and the commitment to policy-relevant research; if the core mission is RCB, then more effort must go in to building capacity in the weak areas, e.g. through improving consistency of mentoring, with clear guidelines on expectations for both mentor and mentee; and more (financial) support to RNPs to hold regional training on research capacity in the weak areas
- after completion of grant, GDN should consider continuing to support (through mentors, RNPs and HQ GDN staff) grantees to develop their outputs into journal-quality papers; this is

supported by other data from the evaluation, including comments from grantees on how GDN could improve their support

- the higher scores for GRP could be simply because the grantees are more advanced and experienced to begin with; but other data from the evaluation suggest that it is in part due to the more structured engagement and support that is built into the GRP process (e.g. conclusions from separate evaluations of individual GRPs)
- the lack of consideration of ethical issues is disturbing and should be addressed, for all the reasons pointed out above. There seems to be a general lack of appreciation of ethics in research among grantees. While the IE team did not see evidence of infringement of ethical principles, it was not specifically looking for them; and because ethical issues were not reported in research outputs there is no way of assessing whether or not, for example, survey respondents and interviewees participated on the basis of informed consent with the option (and a clear process) for withdrawing from research, or whether appropriate permissions had been given for use of secondary personal data.

The IE team has looked at recent (2013) evaluation reports of GRPs which include a quality review of outputs. While the approach and data are different, they do lend support to the IE findings on output quality. The output quality review for the Urbanisation GRP is in an Annex to the main GRP report and is not summarised in the main report. Data are descriptive, but do point to weaknesses in linking evidence to conclusions and recommendation, and also in the quality of writing. For the PEM GRP (“Strengthening Institutions to Improve Public Expenditure Accountability”), the participating organisations (POs) demonstrated an improvement in their report writing capabilities. Scores from an overall assessment showed an increase by about 7% over the observation period. Notably, the first reports produced by the project were on average of lower quality than non-project reports but by project end the project-produced reports were on average of higher quality than non-project reports, suggesting that POs at first struggled with the analysis and writing of project reports but by project end had greatly improved.<sup>26</sup>

#### 4.2.4 Contribution to Researcher Capacity Building

The TOR asked to what extent activities have contributed to research capacity building<sup>27</sup> and networking. This was addressed in the survey by asking grantees and RRC winners how their research changed as a result of the grant process, and how the grant contributed to their development as researchers. This latter question carried ten pre-coded responses, based on the areas of researcher capacity that GDN has articulated in the context of its GRCBP and M&E framework, with respondents asked to indicate the extent to which the overall grant process had contributed to their capacity on a five point scale.

##### *How the grant process changed the research*

Over a four point scale GDN grantees considered the change in their research due to the grant process to be 3.0 (mean across five criteria) and 2.8 for RRC winners. This compares with a 2.1 to 2.3

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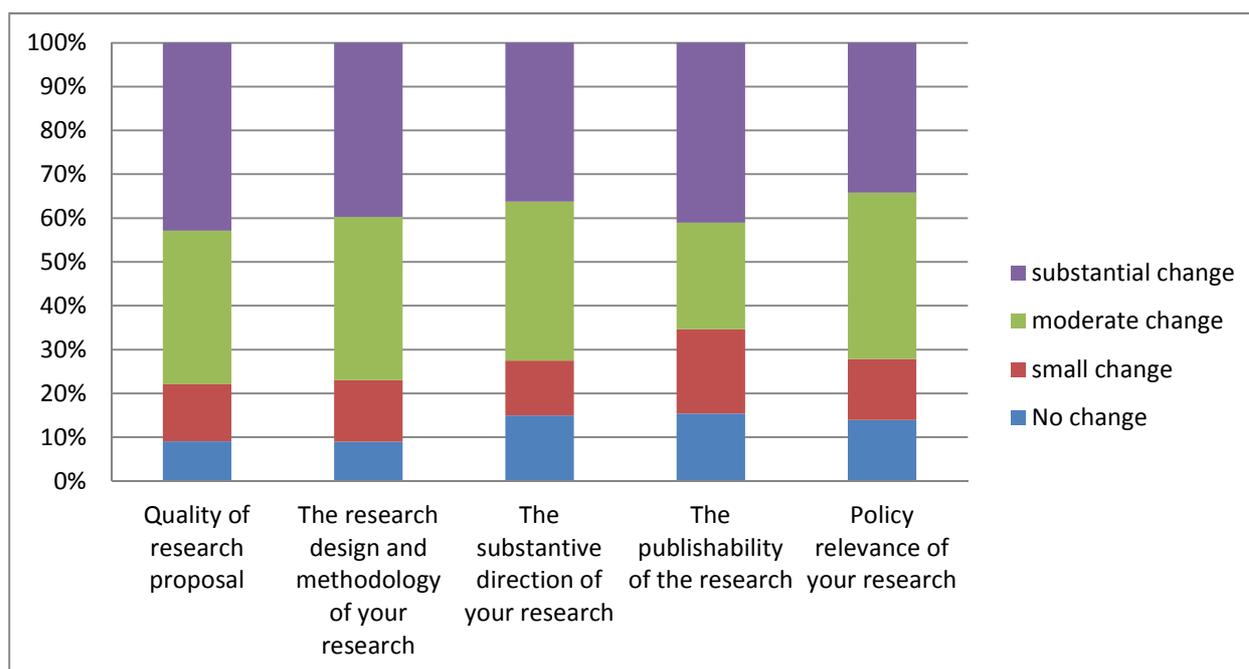
<sup>26</sup> PEM evaluation report December 2013

<sup>27</sup> As made clear in the TOR for the IE, GDN’s approach to ‘research capacity building’ focuses on the capacity of individual researchers (including their capacity for networking); hence we use both ‘researcher’ and ‘research’ capacity building to describe GDN’s capacity building objectives.

change for RRC winners cited in 2007<sup>28</sup>, indicating that GDN is having a greater level of positive change to grantees’ research than in 2007.

For both RRC winners and AMC, GRC and GRP grantees, the biggest change (‘substantial change’ plus ‘moderate change’) was in the quality of their research proposal (Figure 3) with the second biggest change being the research design and methodology for GDN grantees and publishability of research for RRC winners. RRC winners were less likely to state that the grant process changed the overall direction of the research. These data suggest the early engagement with grantees, in workshops and through mentors, to develop their proposal before the research begins has paid off.

**Figure 3 Change in research created by grant process (grantee and RRC survey respondents)**



*Contribution of grant process to researcher development*

On how the grant process has contributed to personal and career development the largest contribution for GDN grantees is in professional visibility, academic output, subject knowledge and career advancement, and for RRC grantees it is to academic output, subject knowledge, contacts with other researchers and ability to write research reports (Table 10). On the five point scale provided, the average score for contribution to researcher development in all areas was 3.8 for GDN grantees and 3.5 for RRC winners. The only area with a mean rating of less than the mid-point of 3 (‘medium value’) was contact with policy makers, for RRC respondents.

**Table 10 Grantees’ rating of contribution of the overall grant process to specific areas of researcher capacity**

Area of skill / competence / capacity	AMC , GRC, GRP (mean rating*)	RRC (mean rating)
Ability to introduce recommendations into policy debate	3.51	3.12
Academic output	3.99	3.94
Career advancement	3.91	3.35

<sup>28</sup> IE 2007 report Executive Summary page 4

Area of skill / competence / capacity	AMC , GRC, GRP (mean rating*)	RRC (mean rating)
Contacts with policy makers	3.40	2.70
Contacts with researchers	3.89	3.67
Knowledge of the subject	3.93	3.78
Professional visibility (presentations, press)	4.00	3.37
Technical skills - research design, methodology, analysis	3.81	3.59
Ability to design policy relevant research	3.69	3.49
Ability to write research reports	3.79	3.65

\*Scale 1 (very low) to 5 (very high)

RNP heads and administrators were asked to comment to what extent researchers' capacity in the same area had changed between 2007 and 2013. They stated that the most positive change occurred in developing policy relevant research and in developing relationships with other researchers; these areas are also where they consider GDN to have been the greatest causal factor of the change.

The 2007 IE used the same question and scale as those reported in Table 10 and provided an outcome rating of circa 3.1 for career advancement with RRC grantees reporting a higher rating. In the 2013 IE the figure for career advancement is 3.91 for GDN grantees and 3.35 for RRC grantees indicating that this trend is reversed in 2013 but that overall impact on career advancement is higher.<sup>29</sup>

Professional visibility rating score in 2007 IE is estimated at 2.6; in 2013 this is reported as 4.0 for GDN grantees and 3.37 for RRC grantees again indicating improved performance in this area.<sup>30</sup>

#### *Outcomes directly resulting from the grant*

Of the 211 respondents to this question from both GDN grantees and RRC winners the most frequently occurring outcomes directly resulting from the grant are presenting their research in an academic event (87%) and producing a working paper (85%) (Figure F 16). These are important outcomes for researchers. Other outcomes were reported by less than half the respondents, including producing an article in an international refereed journal (45%), receiving a non GDN research grant (35%), producing a chapter for a volume (25%), receiving a promotion (24%) and receiving a job offer (16%). The pattern is similar for both categories of respondent. Compared to outputs reported in 2007, the 2013 level of publishing in an international journal is similar (50% in 2007) and lower for publishing in a national or regional journal (60% in 2007 compared with 50% in 2013) and lower for chapters or volumes for a book (60% in 2007) and working papers (just under 100% in 2007)<sup>31</sup>.

#### *Outcomes after grant completion*

Recipients of GDN research funding continue to conduct policy relevant research after their grant has ended, whether funded by further GDN grants or from elsewhere. Both grantees and RRC winners report high levels of continuing activity in conventional academic outlets (journals,

<sup>29</sup> IE 2007 report page 41

<sup>30</sup> IE 2007 report page 42

<sup>31</sup> The lack of tables in the 2007 IE report make it difficult to make direct comparisons without conducting primary analysis on the raw survey data

conferences, working papers, policy briefs, and book chapters) and receipt of research grants (though this is lower for RRC winners than the more experienced researchers who have received AMC, GRC or GRP funding). But as seen in Table 11, more than half the respondents have been involved in one or more type of policy and non-academic dissemination event. (See Figure F 18 and Figure F 19 for more detail.)

**Table 11 Grantee and RRC survey respondents reporting specific outcomes, from GDN and non-GDN funded research, after completion of their grant (%)**

Outcome	Grantees (%)	RRC (%)
Produced: Working paper	88.6%	90.3%
Produced: Article in an international refereed journal	63.2%	60.9%
Produced: Article for a national or regional journal	65.2%	73.3%
Produced: Chapter for a volume	58.0%	53.8%
Produced: Policy brief	72.1%	56.9%
Produced: Article for the popular media	60.3%	46.1%
Presented in: Academic event (conference/seminar)	87.7%	93.9%
Presented in: Policy briefing/round table discussion	67.1%	67.6%
Presented in: Press conference / Media outreach	52.9%	38.2%
Distributed report, paper, policy brief to potential policymakers (via email, paper, etc.)	80.3%	66.0%
Discussed ideas related to the research with potential policymakers	77.1%	65.2%
Distributed report, paper, or policy brief to an implementing NGO	60.3%	37.5%
Discussed ideas related to the research with an implementing NGO	61.2%	38.5%
Received: Promotion	50.0%	37.2%
Received: Job offer	43.7%	29.1%
Received: Research grant (excluding GDN grants)	71.8%	58.9%

It is reasonable to conclude based on the findings above that GDN research grants and the regional competitions together with the various supporting activities are making a substantial contribution to researcher capacity building. Earlier comments on possible response bias should, however, be borne in mind.

Recent evaluations of GRPs also found evidence of substantial research and researcher capacity building. The Urbanisation GRP draft evaluation report concluded with respect to capacity building:

*Capacity building is observed in terms of enabling certain researchers, individually and as a team, plus institutions to incorporate new tools and methodology for more precise, accurate and credible research. The grant encourages researchers to be more disciplined and rigorous in their analysis under the guidance of a mentor. The role of the mentor was critical for the research teams that worked across different countries. The mentors provided specific guidance in the subject and methodology to orientate the research. On the other hand, mentors that guided teams operating in a single country embraced a role that was mostly to act as validators of capabilities and findings reached.....*

*From the perspective of human resource development, it was observed that the grant enabled the opportunity to enhance research capabilities by introducing concepts and methodologies that contributed to the improvement of the research team's professional profile, afterwards teams have become more relevant in roles of academia and consultancy. The comparison of CVs from*

*before and after the GDN grant shows that in some cases researchers achieved further professional and academic engagement as a result of the research carried out with GDN, and when they didn't, teams did at least continue to investigate the same subject. Professional development and research capacity has been assessed as a major outcome of the grant, particularly in the field of communication skills and statistical analysis. [page 40]*

The “Strengthening Institutions to Improve Public Expenditure Accountability” (PEM) project aimed to strengthen the capacity of the 15 participating policy research organisations over a five-year period to monitor and analyse public expenditure choices, processes and impacts and to engage constructively with policy officials to recommend improvements. The project’s ultimate goal was more capable, accountable and responsive governments in the countries where the project operated. The PEM evaluation report showed promising evidence of attainment and significant progress towards building the capacity of the participating organisations (POs). This was observed in the increased quality of report writing and in improved communications practices with other stakeholders including policymakers, the media and civil society actors. Most of those who had interacted with the project-produced research had used the research but there was limited impact of this research on policy. However, the project was not as successful in creating a strong network of institutions, communication and sharing of experiences and analysis results among POs outside of the global conferences.<sup>32</sup>

### *Case Studies*

The following two case studies, drawn from interviews with two specific grantees, illustrate several of the points made above about RCB.

**Case 1:** Multiple Award grantee – 2010 RRC; 2012 AMC Japanese Award for Outstanding Research on Development (administered by CERGE-EI)

This case study highlights the difference that GDN’s RCB approach can make to the capacity and career of individual researchers. An economist grantee from Macedonia cited his experience of both RRC and AMC awards as providing impetus and capacity building at the start of his career but commented that a satisfactory level of research skills was needed in order to apply them:

*“It was a good entry point, building capacity rather than at a higher level at which some EU programmes are targeted.”*

GDN funding and capacity building through mentoring was used as a platform from which to build towards seeking funding from a wider range of research programmes: SIDA, World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Support during the grant: An interim meeting of grantees within the region proved very useful, an opportunity to meet the research reviewers and gain feedback. CERGE provided a workshop on dissemination of research and supporting the process of publication. Networking was an important facet of the GDN support package and rated as the greatest area of capacity increase during the grant processes with the GDN annual conferences in Manila and Budapest playing a significant role, alongside tailored training from GDN in presenting research findings:

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<sup>32</sup> PEM Evaluation Report December 2013

*“At Manila training was available on presentation skills.”*

Outputs and outcomes: These events proved useful for dissemination of research findings and the researcher is going on to publish his work in the ‘Emerging Markets Finance and Trade’ journal which has high Journal Citation Index factor (about 1). The researcher fed back that he felt the GDN grant process had enhanced his confidence and ability to write project proposals and deliver research projects. Since the GDN grants he has gone on to become an Assistant Professor.

#### **Case 2:** 2008 AMC Grantee – administered by ODN

This example highlights some of the challenges that can arise through the grant process and the need for consistent systems and approaches to the delivery of AMC grants. The grantee received an Award for Outstanding Research on Development in 2008.

The grantee received support from a mentor in Australia which proved valuable both for the delivery of the research project and future collaboration between the two.

Challenges: The grantee raised issues over the process of funding release and meeting the costs of the research as a result of this. There appeared to be lack of clarity over this despite acceptance of the final report for the project, and delay in releasing the final payment. However the grantee has been able to put papers forward for publication. Further feedback was for GDN to consider how it diversifies its competitions in the region to include disciplines other than economics and to encourage inter-disciplinary work:

*“The only issue I have is that most competitions are aligned towards economics, it would be good to include business and other areas.”*

Networking was a vital component of the GDN support:

*“The conference in Kuwait was very good. I attended each presentation. It was mind-boggling but very useful!”*

In this grantee’s view GDN enables researchers with different levels of experience to get on a shared platform and to establish research priorities from the ‘bottom up’.

#### **4.2.5 Gender differences in reported RCB**

Survey responses according to gender are shown in Table 12. The split between female and male respondents is slightly higher than that reported in the 2007 IE (29 to 30%). As noted elsewhere in the report, it has not been possible from the grantee data sets provided to ascertain how representative this response is across all grantees because of missing data in the gender field of the M&E database.

**Table 12 Gender breakdown of RRC and Grantee survey respondents**

	<b>Female (n)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Male (n)</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Total (n)</b>
GDN grantees	33	37.9	54	62.1	87
RRC grantees	62	39.5	95	60.5	157
Total	95	38.9	149	61.1	244

In analysing survey responses against gender the following differences were established.

Male grantees cited a slightly greater level of change to their research through the grant process than women across all indicators, those being; quality of research proposal, research design and methodology, substantive direction of your research, publishability of the research, policy relevance of your research. The average levels of change over the four point scale are shown in Table 13.

**Table 13 Mean level of change to their research reported by grantees by gender**

	Female	Male
GDN grantee	2.8	3.1
RRC grantee	2.8	2.9
Mean	2.8	3.0

Male grantees are more likely than female grantees to attend review workshops for their project or report (Table 14).

**Table 14 Grantees attending review workshops by grant type and gender (%)**

	GDN Grantee - Female	GDN Grantee - Male	Difference	RRC - Female	RRC - Male	Difference
None	34.4	29.2	5.2	25.0	18.3	6.7
One	31.3	10.4	20.8	33.3	32.3	1.1
Two	18.8	14.6	4.2	15.0	15.1	-0.1
Three	12.5	25.0	-12.5	18.3	19.4	-1.0
Four or more	3.1	20.8	-17.7	8.3	15.1	-6.7

Female grantees cite lower outcomes directly resulting from their GDN grant than their male counterparts for both GDN grantees and RRC grantees. However the difference is most notable for female GDN grantees who report lower outcomes than male grantees in all areas apart from producing an article in an international refereed journal in which they cite higher incidence.

For RRC grantees females cite higher outputs or outcomes immediately resulting from the grant in four areas: produced article for the popular media, presented in an academic event, received a promotion or received a job offer.

However when reporting post grant outcomes female GDN grantees (i.e. other than RRC) report higher incidences of outcomes than their male counterparts with far higher reports of having produced an article for the popular media, presented in an academic event, received a promotion or received a job offer.

**Table 15 Mean percentage of grantees reporting outcomes by grant and gender**

	Female - GDN grantee	Male - GDN grantee	Difference	Female - RRC	Male - RRC	Difference
Directly resulting from grant	43.0	57.5	-14.5	41.0	42.1	-1.1
After grant completion	68.1	64.8	3.4	54.4	56.9	-2.5

Female GDN grantees cite higher levels of contacts with researchers, mentors, policy makers and NGOs they met through the grants process, while female RRC researchers stated higher levels of contacts with researchers and mentors than their male counterparts but lower level of contacts with researchers they had mentored, policy makers and NGO contacts (Table 16).

**Table 16 Grantees interacting with various contacts by gender and grant type (%)**

	<b>GDN grantee - Female</b>	<b>GDN grantee - Male</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>RRC - Female</b>	<b>RRC Male</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Other researchers met through the grant	82.8	67.4	15.3	82.0	74.5	7.5
The mentors/resource persons/experts involved in the grant	72.4	56.1	16.3	71.7	64.8	6.8
Other researchers that you mentored using what you have gained from the grant process	64.3	58.1	6.1	56.9	62.5	-5.6
Policymakers or NGOs you met through the grants process	77.8	55.8	22.0	32.8	39.3	-6.6

Female grantees cited a greater level of continuation of work in the same thematic area as their GDN grant and female GDN grantees stated higher levels of further developing the research carried out through the GDN grant.

	<b>GDN grantee Female</b>	<b>GDN grantee Male</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>RRC Female</b>	<b>RRC Male</b>	<b>Difference</b>
.. continued to work in the same thematic area as your GDN grant?						
No	6.9	16.3	-9.4	11.9	17.2	-5.3
Yes	89.7	81.4	8.3	84.7	78.5	6.3
.. further developed the research carried out through the GDN grant?						
No	22.2	32.6	-10.3	35.8	28.4	7.4
Yes	77.8	60.5	17.3	62.3	67.0	-4.8

The survey data show that both male and female grantees experience RCB and that the specific differences noted above do not suggest any systematic gendered bias in RCB outcomes.<sup>33</sup>

#### **4.2.6 Comparison between recipients of multiple and single grants**

Of the 162 RRC grantees who responded to the survey 32 had received more than one award from GDN. These grantees tended to have worked in research longer, in the range 11-15 years rather than first time grantees who have worked in research for 6-10 years. The majority of survey results were similar for the multiple and single grantees, however the following differences were found.

<sup>33</sup> For more detail, see Tables G1 to G.3 in Annex G

Multiple grantees were more likely to attend more review workshops than first time grantees (Table 17). This did not result in higher levels of change in the research proposal, methodology used, extent of producing published outputs or other factors.

**Table 17 Multiple and single RRC grant recipients attendance at review workshops (%)**

	<b>Multiple grantee %</b>	<b>Single grantee %</b>
No review workshop	16.1	22.8
One	25.8	35.4
Two	3.2	17.3
Three	22.6	17.3
Four or more	32.3	7.1

Multiple grantees cite higher levels of outputs from their RRC grant both directly from the grant and after grant completion (Table 18). Directly from the grant multiple grantees cite higher levels of: discussing ideas related to the research with an implementing NGO, distributing report, paper, or policy brief to potential policymakers, distributing report, paper, or policy brief to an implementing NGO and having received a non GDN research grant and less well than single grantees at producing an article in an international, national or regional journal.

After the grant multiple grantees further build on the factors above and add to them higher levels of producing an article for a national or regional journal and distributing report, paper, or policy brief to potential policymakers.<sup>34</sup>

**Table 18 Multiple and single RRC grantees producing outputs from their grants (%)**

	<b>Multiple grantee</b>	<b>Single grantee</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Average % outputs <u>directly</u> from grant	46.3	40.2	6.0
Average % outputs after grant completion	65.6	55.2	10.4

#### **4.2.7 GNet**

This section discusses the outputs, effectiveness and impact of GNet, drawing on secondary documentation<sup>35</sup> and interviews conducted by the IE team. IE survey data on awareness and use of GNet are reported in section 4.3.4.

GNet describes itself as: ‘a knowledge hub that brings together and communicates policy-relevant research from the Global South. It aims to be an internationally recognised focal point/ knowledge broker for development research to inform policy debate. [It]is a partnership with regional networks and leading experts in the field. [It] provides access to on-line journals and data, synthesises and communicates Southern research, and strengthens research communications capacity.’ (GNet

<sup>34</sup> For more detail, see Tables G.4 and G.5 in Annex G

<sup>35</sup> Secondary sources used for the sub-sections on GNet are: Barr, Julian (2009) GNet Output to Purpose Review – DFID Central Research Department; Gregorowski, R. (2011) GNet Baseline and M&E Framework; Gregorowski, R. & Dubber J. (2012) GNet M&E Report 2013 – Year 1; Gregorowski, R. & Dubber J. (2013) GNet M&E Report 2013 – Year 2; GNet Logframe version 10, May 2012; GNet Stats Report up to August 2013; DFID GNet Annual Review April 2013; DFID GNet Annual Review 2012

website ([cloud1.gdnet.org/cms.php?id=gdnet](http://cloud1.gdnet.org/cms.php?id=gdnet)). Its aim has been to support the generation, sharing and application of knowledge for development with a particular focus on the communication of research knowledge generated in the global South.

GdNet staff described the range of the information and capacity building services that are integrated within GdNet's overall approach. Blogging has become an increasingly significant area of work, both to promote and inform around GdN events and in sharing information pertinent to the target researcher audience (with 104 blog posts by GdNet on events and southern perspectives):

*"It takes time to build an audience, we did it bit by bit. Initially [blogging] was very much event driven, then we added RNP events such as the ERF annual conference and LACEA conference. We have to ensure regular content updating [to grow and maintain the audience]." (S07)*

Training provided by GdNet focuses on 3 main areas: training RNP researchers to support writing policy briefs and in media training; training for GdN grantees (this has focused primarily on PEM GRP grantees); and presentation skills training for AMC award winners. In both year 1 and 2 of the DFID funded programme GdNet's M&E reports suggest a 50% increase in the confidence of researchers following training in both presentation and policy brief skills (equating to a 1 point increase on a 5 point scale).

During the timeframe for the IE GdNet has been predominantly funded by DFID and the World Bank; DGIS also provided funding up to 2011. DFID has funded GdNet over the period 2010-2014 with an overall budget of £3,520,000. The DFID Output to Purpose review (2009) recommended an increased policy focus for GdNet's work (alongside GdN's strategy). Expected results from the GdNet logframe (2010-14) articulate this emphasis as follows:

- 1) Southern research is better informed by current ideas and knowledge
- 2) Researchers are better able to communicate their research to policy
- 3) Knowledge networking between researchers and with policy actors increased
- 4) Lessons about effective knowledge brokering in the global South learnt and communicated.

DFID has undertaken reviews of GdNet both in the previous phase of funding up to 2008 and as an annual process in the funding period 2010-2014. Results from the Output to Purpose Review of 2009 show that most project outputs were nearly or completely achieved and awarded an OPR score of 2. Currently the project logframe is used as an effective M&E tool for this area of GdN's work. GdNet administers an annual web survey – last undertaken Dec 2012 with a 6% return rate: 13,292 GdNet members received the Year 2 survey and of this number 721 completed the survey (5.4%) and 151 partially completed it (1.1%), giving an overall response rate of 6.5%.

### *Effectiveness of GdNet*

Analysis of GdNet's Monitoring and Evaluation reports alongside DFID's annual review process suggests that GdNet makes a specific contribution to the research capacity building and the ability of researchers to inform policy with limitations in evidence on the latter area. Both reports and interview feedback highlight the difficulty in demonstrating the link between research outputs and influence or uptake by policy makers; it is similarly difficult to assemble evidence of the impacts of networking and interaction. Within GdNet there is expertise and experience of the benefits of increased use of social media both for sharing learning and to promote research outputs. GdNet has

also developed tailored training to support researchers in communicating their research findings and evaluation of this suggests a positive impact on researchers' confidence in this area.

Findings from **DFID's Annual Review 2013** were that Output 1 (**Southern research better informed by current ideas and knowledge**) 'moderately did not meet expectation (B)'. GNet has shown strong growth in the number of researchers using the site – a 51% increase in visitors to the site during 2012 (34,709 visitors per month). Up to August 2013 this has risen to a monthly average of 42,559 visitors per month. 396 Southern organisations added profiles onto the site in 2012, doubling the growth rate of 2011. However the proportion of all visitors from the South has fallen (from 39% in 2011 to 32% in 2012, with a further dip up to August 2012 of 27%). This statistic must be interpreted alongside the overall growth in numbers of visitors to the site. There was a decline in use of e-journals from the site. The DFID review suggests this is due to the plethora of online tools requiring registration and profile management with a resultant negative impact on the capacity or motivation of researchers to maintain or add their GNet profile. The IE team noted the following trends since the last DFID review (from January - August 2013)<sup>36</sup>:

- A 6% growth in total number of document abstracts to 21,159
- A 22% growth in visitors to an average of 42,559 per month
- Increase in the number of views of Abstracts - 421,668 from January – August 2013 set against a total of 333,000 for 2012
- Continuing decline in number of researchers accessing online journals: an average of 72 per month in comparison with 84 per month (2012).

In the second output area '**Researchers better able to communicate their research to policy**' DFID indicated that GNet 'met expectation' (A) through the delivery of capacity building events focusing on research presentation skills (particularly for AMC awardees and most recently delivered in Budapest) and Policy Brief training (most recently in Nairobi and Arusha). Participants in the 2012 events indicated a 50% increase in confidence in these areas by self-assessment before and after the events. GNet also uses a 'pledge approach' to follow up with trainees 3 and 12 months after a training event, whereby trainees commit to a particular outcome as a result of their participation. Interview feedback from staff suggests that this is particularly effective in gathering specific case studies demonstrating positive changes as a result of trainees' participation.

GNet's third output area '**Knowledge networking between researchers and with policy actors increased**' was rated as 'met expectation (A)' in the DFID 2013 review. This was assessed on the basis of sustained or increased blog views; subscriptions; views and click-throughs to GNet social media such as Twitter and YouTube. The IE team finds that this output represents a particular strength of GNet of relevance, and for greater integration, across GDN. Over the last two years blog views increased from 12809 to 15916 in year 2 (24% increase); and Twitter followers increased from 450 in 2011 to 1673 in 2013 (272% increase) providing evidence of the growing significance of social media for researchers and its future development by GDN. The importance of social media literacy was highlighted in interviews with GNet staff:

*"Nowadays it is difficult to exist without a social media presence – we try to provide social media events even remotely, [and we are] trying to integrate this into GDN broader activities."*

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<sup>36</sup> Data provided by the GNet team

GNet has led on use of social media within the organisation (e.g. blogging, on-line videos) and it is gradually being integrated across GDN with work across GNet staff and the GDN Delhi IT team. More can be done (cost effectively) with social media, in particular raising the profile of GDN and its outputs. There would also be merit in building the capacity of researchers to use social media effectively. Experience of GNet suggests patchy take up by researchers (within and outside GDN network) to date. Staff interviewees from the Cairo office, for example, cited the experience of the GDN Bogota conference in 2011 at which there were high levels of uptake of social media (e.g. use of Twitter; blogging) whereas in other areas (some African nations, for example) poor internet access or knowledge/use of Web 2 tools is more limited.<sup>37</sup>

DFID found that the fourth output area '**Lessons about effective knowledge brokering in the global South learnt and communicated**' 'moderately did not meet expectation (B)'. There were concerns over the launch of a micro-site <http://www.politicsandideas.org> , and the investment required in this, and the argument presented that information could have been provided through GNet rather than in a new site. Indeed GDN is now pursuing greater integration of GNet in the final phase of DFID funding to June 2014.

Contributions to this output area range from publications, to presentations at and participation in events, to online discussion groups. For example, GDN has produced a range of papers including 'Implementing a gender audit of an online knowledge service: the experience of GNet', which was presented to the IDS hosted workshop of Knowledge Brokers in March 2013. GDN also attended a number of learning events including the World Bank's 'Mobilizing Knowledge Networks for Development' in June 2012 and the ITOCA and IDS event 'Mobilising Knowledge for Development Learning Event' in November 2012. GDN instituted an online discussion group on LinkedIn (<http://linkd.in/ConnectSouth>) and presented a Case Study at the K\* conference<sup>38</sup> in April 2012 in Canada on 'GNet: from Knowledge Hub to Knowledge Broker'.

As with assessment and evaluation for GDN's overarching RCB aims, **monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of GNet's work** remains a difficult area. Some approaches which the IE team view as particularly relevant in relation to the issues and concerns mentioned above are:

- assessing the overall quality of the knowledge base - this needs to be balanced against the unique perspective brought by Southern researchers. DFID proposed that GNet include reference to their 'How to Note – Assessing the Strength of Evidence' on the site
- success metrics for this area of work require definition, looking beyond simple uptake statistics and trying to tackle the difficulty of measuring 'interaction' information between researchers
- ad-hoc Research to Policy seminars require follow up to assess impact
- use of a policy lab approach, i.e. longer term interaction between researchers and policy makers over a specific policy concern, was also raised as a productive approach by GNet staff

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<sup>37</sup> As pointed out to the IE team by GDN: 'On the central importance of social media to achieving GDN's aim, GDN's experience is not limited to GNet, but was also significantly enhanced through the GATES' funded GRP on agricultural development'.

<sup>38</sup> K\* 2012 brought together 'knowledge intermediaries working across the knowledge-policy interface all over the globe, to share experience, lessons learned and build a global community of knowledge practitioners'. For more, see <http://www.odi.org.uk/node/5283> Accessed 18/12/2013

- little analysis of skills (used by researchers) and what research is being taken up as a result of GDNNet support (for example by theme or region).

This quotation from the most recent DFID review summarises clearly the potential and future role for GDNNet (or an integrated version of GDNNet):

*“The programme is well placed to build on the perceived disconnect between Southern research, which is primarily seen as responding to real and practical problems, and Northern research which is regarded by some as feeding into journal literature with little impact on real world problems. In its role as a knowledge broker, the programme should be in a position to showcase more how it contributes to informing specific policy questions and debates, and signposts good quality research evidence, regardless of provenance. This is something the programme does as a matter of course, but is not reflected sufficiently in monitoring reports.” (p.12)*

Over the course of the DFID funded programme GDNNet commissioned M&E reports for the years 2011 (produced July 2012) and 2012 (produced April 2013), following the establishment of baseline indicators in 2010. The essence of the Year 1 report was to highlight the progress the GDNNet team made in generating a robust knowledge and evidence base relating to the provision of knowledge services and capacity support to Southern researchers; 8 case studies are described in the Year 1 report of knowledge into use in the policy process. The Year 2 report investigates GDNNet’s progress in facilitating ‘ownership’ of the evidence base – synthesising knowledge and developing best practice.<sup>39</sup>

#### 4.2.8 Policy dialogues

An important element in research capacity is the ability to link research to policy. This can happen through choice of topic and research problem; the selection of a robust research design and methodology that can deliver convincing evidence; the ability to write for policy and advocacy as well as academic audiences; and having (or creating) opportunities to present and discuss the policy implications of research. Policy Dialogues (PD) are part of GDN’s approach to creating such opportunities. Within GDN’s Theory of Change, PDs can be seen as part of the mechanism through which ‘good policy research’ becomes ‘properly applied’: i.e. PDs provide a forum not only for policy makers to be made aware of research findings, but also for discussion on the implications of those findings. They are intended as a forum for debate, discussion and awareness-raising of issues.

Feedback from the IE on PDs comes from interviews and survey data, from observation and interaction during two recent PDs, in Vienna and in Abuja, and a review of agendas, papers and lists of participants made available by GDN. The main points emerging are grouped here under three main themes although there is obviously some overlap.

#### **Opportunities for dialogue, profile-raising and partnership development**

PDs provide GDN with an opportunity to raise profile with policy makers, politicians, media and the research community. A positive example of this was the Vienna PD (21<sup>st</sup> Oct 2013) ‘Jobs Wanted: Youth in Southeast Europe’ organised by WiiW alongside World Bank, Austrian Ministry of Finance and GDN. There were clear opportunities for dialogue and profile raising here as a result of high

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<sup>39</sup> Neither report has an executive summary or conclusion so it is not possible to make an assessment of change/comparison with the DFID reviews within the time available.

level participation and representation from the EU and World Bank, and senior politicians/ministers from the region. Grantees led and gave input into panel discussions developing their profile, and overall there was press attendance.

PDs are useful fora and vehicles for partnership development with potential stakeholders including institutions (e.g. American University of Beirut; Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS) Indonesia) and think tanks (WiiW in Vienna). However GDN does not currently document what has resulted in terms of partnership development following PDs.

### **Policy relevance and influence of PDs**

Survey and interview feedback suggests RRC and other grantees want more contact with policymakers and in theory PDs are an appropriate mechanism. However questions have been raised as to the benefits and levels of participation of GDN grantees in PDs. In Abuja for example, grantees were present and provided input on their research relevant to their country, but felt that the attendance from policy makers was not high enough for them to have any influence on policy. This is backed up by qualitative data from the survey suggesting that it is easier to engage with technocrats than politicians – i.e. with senior civil servants than their ministers. Similar findings are reported in the recent evaluations of the Governance and PEM GRPs.

One potential blockage to achieving the objective of policy influence is that themes for PDs outside those related to GRPs (particularly those held in Delhi during 2010) suggest an academic focus rather than a policy outcome focus.

PDs function with the aims of debate, discussion and awareness-raising of issues but also with the intention that this will influence policy. There is some evidence from interviews that particularly regional workshops have resulted in changes in policy at national government level – e.g. change in policy towards e-waste workers in Ghana and impact on malaria control policy and practice in Uganda.

There are questions about follow-up evaluation of the individual, partnership and policy outcomes of PDs. For example at the Vienna PD there was an evaluation of the content/administration of the day but it is not clear how this kind of event evaluation is followed up. We assume that this would depend on how the role of PDs are perceived within GDN and would also involve a joint approach with the other partners organising them.

### **Integration of PDs with GRPs and RNPs**

In terms of objectives, integration of PDs with GRPs appears useful and relevant. GRP grantees highlighted the benefit of a PD approach alongside other outputs such as workshops. For example the GRP PD agenda for Indonesia (9<sup>th</sup> April 2013) included specific PD objectives relating to:

- sharing good practice, including key successes and challenges, in effective public expenditure and service delivery in health, education and water sectors;
- understanding similarities and contextual differences in planning and implementation of effective public expenditure and service delivery among developing countries to improve the outcomes in health, education and water sectors

- discussing opportunities in which the policy community and research institutions can mutually work best to address social and development issues in developing countries.

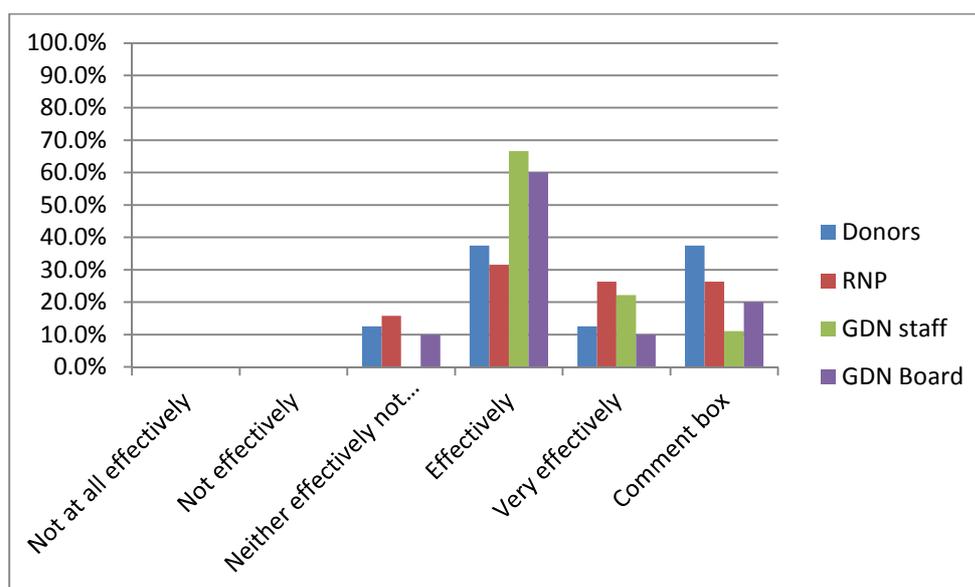
Interviews with and survey responses from Board members and RNPs raise the question of what should GDN's, as opposed to RNPs' role be in organising PDs. This is part of a wider theme running through several of the interviews and survey responses of the need for GDN to identify and articulate clearly its comparative advantage and the value that it can add to what RNPs can (and do) implement effectively by themselves. For example, is there a role for GDN in facilitating inter-regional or global PD events, while RNPs continue with regional PDs where they have a comparative advantage in bringing in key players from within their region? The GDN review suggests that PDs need to be tied in thematically with the priorities of RNPs.

Overall, based on our observation, review of PD topics and records of PD outputs we conclude that a more structured approach to, and clearly defined objectives for, PDs would enable easier assessment as to whether they are contributing towards GDN's RCB and/or policy aims; and that systematic follow up to the immediate outcomes of PDs may result in more sustained dialogue and potential influence on policy.

#### 4.2.9 Challenges to implementation

The TOR asked the team to consider the extent to which GDN had faced and addressed constraints and challenges – both internal and external – in implementing GDN activities. This question was put to donor, Board, staff and RNP survey respondents. Overall 86% considered that GDN had effectively identified constraints and challenges to implementing its activities in the 2007 to 2013 period (Figure 4). No specific examples were given in response to a follow up open question. However comments in interviews suggested that improving the diversity of funding sources and addressing tensions between RNPs and GDN in a constructive way (leading to the 2013 Charter) are two examples of GDN's readiness to confront challenges and constraints.

Figure 4 How effectively has GDN identified constraints and challenges to implementing its activities in the 2007 to 2013 period?

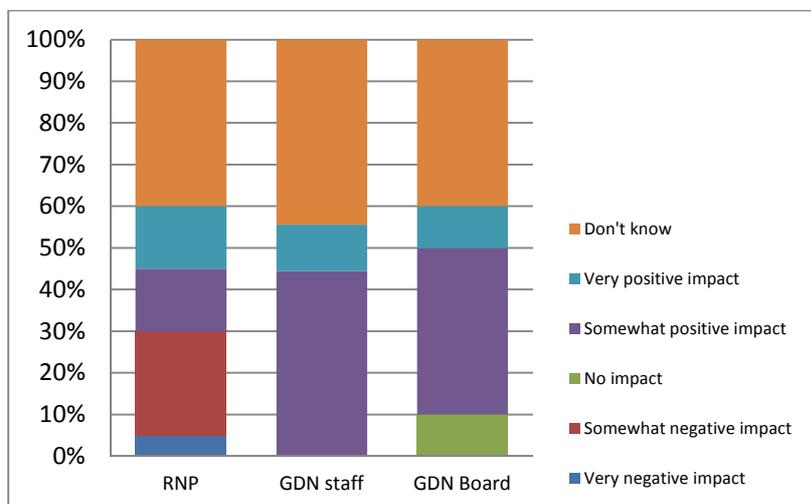


Questions had been raised in the inception phase over whether the requirements and objectives of donors / funders were having an undue impact on GDN’s ability to focus its activities on RCB. Some of those interviewed during inception felt that where funders are interested in the delivery of high quality, policy relevant research findings, RCB may be relegated to a secondary priority. Most of the IE survey respondents from RNP, Board and GDN staff did not know whether there was either a positive or negative impact of donor requirements (Figure 5). Of those who expressed a view, however, most felt there was a positive (‘very’ or ‘somewhat’) impact. RNP heads and administrators were the one category who saw negative impact. Although this was not specifically followed up in an open question, comments from interviews suggest there may be a view that the trend in overall funding had been away from support from RRCs to GRPs<sup>40</sup> and that the latter are less specifically focused on RCB. One RNP interviewee suggested that GDN had become:

*‘overly centre driven, a little too donor driven, for example with research priorities (for GRPs) driven by donor requirements’ [R07]*

One would expect RNP heads to be critical of a decline in funding for the RRCs that they manage. However, there is a strategic issue for GDN to tackle here. Over the period covered by the IE, the proportion of GDN’s overall spending that goes to fund RRCs (and GRPs) has fallen (section 4.4). If the RRCs are to remain the basic building block of GDN’s RCB offer, then a strategic approach to deciding on an appropriate balance of spending on them, and to seeking funds to maintain this balance is needed.

Figure 5 Perceived impact of donor requirements on GDN's ability to deliver research capacity building



### 4.3 Relevance

The TOR asked the IE team to consider the relevance of GDN’s activities to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries. This was approached by asking those who received direct funding from GDN – RRC winners, AMC, GRC and GRP grantees, and conference delegates – what their RCB needs are and the extent to which the various activities associated with their participation in GDN programmes

<sup>40</sup> As shown later in this report, however, this perception is not supported by the actual pattern of spending: funding for GRPs and RRCs has fallen by the same proportion in the 2007 – 2013 period (section 4.4).

met those needs. Further questions asked them to rate the value of the different activities and services. Given the current discussions about the future of GDN and the scale, frequency and format of the Annual Development Conferences, the surveys and interviews also explored stakeholders' views on the continued relevance and usefulness of these, together with questions on the extent of duplication between GDN and other providers of RCB services.

#### **4.3.1 Consistency of GDN's activities with the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries**

The questionnaires listed 11 areas of research, and research-policy linkage, competence and respondents were asked to indicate which of these they needed support in. All 11 were selected by over half of three categories of beneficiaries (grantees, RRC winners and GDN-supported conference delegates) (Figure F 20). RRC winners were more likely than grantees to select four of them: analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, writing research reports, writing papers for journal publication, and understanding and using an appropriate range of research methods. The seven areas where grantees were more likely to indicate a need for support include communicating policy recommendations and developing their professional visibility. The one selected by most (over 80% in all three categories) was developing relationships with researchers. 'Non-engaged' development researchers (Figure F 20) were less likely than the other three categories to identify each of the 11 areas. The difference was greatest for subject knowledge, writing research reports and matching communication to audience needs. They were closest to the 'engaged' categories in relation to designing policy relevant research, understanding and use of an appropriate range of research methods and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. 'Non-engagers' were asked about their access to each of the 11 areas: grants, research communications training, networking opportunities with policy makers, technical training, peer review workshops and mentoring are the least accessible to them.

When asked how well these needs had been met by GDN's RCB activities, most were very positive with over 60% saying that they had been met 'well' or 'very well' for most of the 11 areas (Figure F 21, Figure F 22, Figure F 23). Scores of less than 50% were recorded for writing papers for journals (grantees, conference delegates), developing relationships with policy makers (RRC winners, conference delegates) and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data (conference delegates). Highest satisfaction was with developing relationships with researchers (grantees, RRC winners, conference delegates), subject knowledge and writing research reports (grantees, RRC winners).

Beneficiaries' rating of how valuable the different GDN research capacity building initiatives are was very positive, with at least 70% perceiving each activity to be useful (Figure F 24, Figure F 25, Figure F 26). After grants the most valuable for GDN grantees and regional research competitions winners are:

1. Conference
2. Review workshops
3. Mentoring
4. Networking.

Conference delegates regarded review workshops, mentoring and technical training to be the most valuable.

Overall, there is a high level of consistency. RCB activities are satisfying the RC needs of the majority of beneficiaries.

In the interviews, grantees were asked what support they would need in future to further increase the quality of their research outputs and their personal research capacity. Responses covered a wide range; those that were mentioned most frequently and supported by survey responses were:

- Further mentoring from senior academics *"Most benefit from the mentoring approach – and being able to write papers for journal publications. Happy to have cooperation with more advanced researchers."* (G03)
- Access/advice for further funding
- Career development advice – advancing within academic institutions/research bodies
- Developing relationships (within the research community) – this example from India G04/05 *"it's hard in such a big and bureaucratic country."*
- Maintaining/further developing relationships with policy makers
- Support with next steps following on from initial research outputs/papers: more robust communication of policy recommendations from research, and writing papers for journal publication.

#### 4.3.2 Perceived levels of duplication in RCB activities

As was made clear by several interviewees, GDN is by no means the only organisation that provides research grants for social scientists in developing and transition countries. Indeed, those RNPs that were established before GDN was created already had a good record of attracting funds for research grants for their members. The IE was asked to consider the extent to which GDN was adding value to this area of support rather than simply duplicating what others are doing. This question was put to survey respondents.

For responding GDN grantees, RRC winners and conference delegates, 11% considered there to be 'a lot' of duplication of GDN activities with other research capacity building activities, 36% thought there was a little duplication and 53% thought there was no duplication at all. Highest levels of duplication were perceived in GDN's annual conference, GDNet and networking opportunities (Figure F 27). This perspective, that there is relatively little duplication, is shared by RNP heads and administrators; however staff and mentors consider there to be greater overlap with activities of other organisations (Figure F 28). The perception of overlap in relation to conferences is supported by the 'non-engaged' development researchers for whom conferences were more accessible than other areas of research support (section 4.3.1 above).

In response to an open ended question asking for examples, most of the 12 grantees' replies gave examples of other organisations that give research grants. However there was no suggestion that this reduces the relevance of GDN; the value added activities that go along with a GDN grant (e.g. mentoring, training) are not provided by all other grant-awarding bodies. Similarly for the RRC winners: their 16 comments about other providers of services did not suggest this meant that GDN services were any less valuable to them, with the exception of provision of access to journals which some academics already have through their employing university.

The interviews gave a richer perspective, with interviewees playing down the extent of competitive duplication. Two broad points were made; first, that with such a huge need for enhanced research

capacity, there is room for several providers; second, that there are aspects of GDN's approach which are distinctive and enable it to complement activities of other providers. These distinctive features include its:

- support to young researchers “*a good entry point*” (G02)
- global reach (and potential for increasing researchers' professional networks/learning as a result of this)
- clear focus on research capacity building.

These themes arose across all interview groups.

### 4.3.3 Annual Conference

Interviews during the Inception Phase raised questions about the continued relevance and cost-effectiveness of the Conference.

Six GDN conferences organised from 2008 to 2013 were assessed to find out the key issues regarding the purpose of the conferences, the themes and sub-themes, the range of participants, the regions and countries they come from, as well as impacts expected from such conferences. Deductions were drawn from the following GDN conferences.

- The Ninth Annual Global Development Conference on *Security for Development: Confronting Threats to Survival and Safety* held from 29 January 2008 to 5 February 2008 in Brisbane, Australia.
- The Tenth Annual Global Development Conference on *Natural Resources and Development* held from 3 February 2009 to 5 February 2009 in Kuwait, Kuwait City.
- The Eleventh Annual Global Development Conference on *Regional and Global Integration: Quo Vadis?* held from 16 January 2010 to 18 January 2010 in Prague, Czech Republic.
- The Twelfth Annual Global Development Conference on *Financing Development in a Post-Crisis World: The Need for a Fresh Look* held from 13 January 2011 to 15 January 2011 in Bogotá, Colombia.
- The Thirteenth Annual Global Development Conference on *Urbanization and Development: Delving Deeper into the Nexus* held from 16 June 2012 to 18 June 2012 in Budapest, Hungary.
- The Fourteenth Annual Global Development Conference on *Inequality, Social Protection and Inclusive Growth* held from 19-21 June 2013 at the Asian Development Bank Headquarters, Manila, the Philippines.

Overall, GDN's annual conferences aim to connect developing countries' researchers with the world's most influential researchers, corporate leaders and political figures on a common platform where they can interact with each other, share research work and discuss the most pressing challenges in social and economic development. The defining features of the GDN conference are the empowerment of researchers in developing countries, the strengthening of research skills and the mobilization of research for public policy. Key distinguishing features in GDN's conferences are: number of participants, theme selected and range of issues discussed, and the regions and countries represented in the conference from across the globe. The conferences provide promising, early-career researchers from developing countries with the opportunity to showcase their research at an international forum and benefit from interaction with world-renowned academics, policymakers, and development practitioners. This underscores the positive implication for capacity building that is

a central element of GDN’s mission. Held in a different region of the world each year, the conferences provide the venue for exchange of ideas on the most pressing development challenges with internationally renowned researchers, heads of government, representatives of national and international organisations and policymakers.

The theme for each year’s conference has always been driven by the socio-economic situation of the time and the priorities of GDN’s stakeholders. However, it certainly addresses a topical social and economic development objective of the developing and transition countries. Speakers for the events are usually carefully selected from among experts and professionals in the identified thematic areas from across the regions that GDN operates in; this includes keynote speakers, plenary speakers, and parallel session speakers. These participants also are usually drawn from across different categories of stakeholders including local and international researchers, policymakers, private sector actors, development partners, and the media. This is to ensure opportunity for cross-fertilisation of ideas and knowledge both vertically and horizontally. Pre-conference workshops and business meetings provide the venue for in-depth discussions on a variety of research themes. The usually three-day event has supported between 300-500 participants during each year’s conference. The keynote and plenary speakers usually engage the entire conference participants prior to breaking out into parallel sessions to discuss specialised sub-themes. A range of partners (about 20 or more) usually support GDN’s annual conference each year.

The GDN Board of Directors meets during the annual conferences to discuss progress in GDN activities in the previous year and provide strategic direction for future activities. Members of the Board of Directors and GDN staff also hold series of consultations with the Regional Network Partners. The GDN Advisory Committee brings together representatives of agencies supporting GDN’s mission and activities to provide an update on developments in the previous year and welcome suggestions on future courses of action.

A summary of the outcomes of conference evaluations for the 2013 (Manila) and 2012 (Budapest) conferences is presented in Table 19.

**Table 19 GDN conference evaluation report for two conferences: 2013 Manila and 2012 Budapest conferences**

S/n	Selected criteria	Selected Conferences	
		Manila	Budapest
1.	Date	19-21 June 2013	16-18 June 2012
2.	Conference theme	'Inequality, Social Protection and Inclusive Growth'	Urbanization and Development: Delving Deeper into the Nexus
3.	Key message from conference	How social protection helps to improve the inclusive growth in different countries across the world	focused on the overall important nexus between urbanization and development by adopting a truly holistic as well as interdisciplinary approach including by examining how urbanization as a whole, affects development altogether, thus moving beyond approaches focusing only on the economic aspects of the urbanization process
4.	Number of attendees	560	274

S/n	Selected criteria	Selected Conferences	
5.	Number of countries represented	59	59
6.	Class of attendees	Researchers (both internationally renowned and early-career), representatives from national and international organisations, donors, policymakers, and the media.	Researchers, policymakers, media, internationally renowned resource persons
7.	Feedback from participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of feedback</li> <li>• Perception on conference quality               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Keynote</li> <li>○ Plenary</li> <li>○ Parallel</li> <li>○ Overall conference</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Worth of conference attendance</li> <li>• Recommendation for other colleagues to attend GDN conference</li> <li>• Relevance of conference to participant's work</li> <li>• Right mix of participants</li> <li>• Information sharing and networking opportunities</li> <li>• Influence on knowledge</li> <li>• Influence on action (application to field of work)</li> <li>• Shared learning from conference with others</li> <li>• Developed a blog or an article as a result of conference attendance</li> <li>• Improved confidence and visibility of researchers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 167 (42% excluding the media)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Very high quality (4 out of 5)</li> <li>○ Very high quality (4.1 out of 5)</li> <li>○ High quality (3.9 out of 5)</li> <li>○ High quality (3.7 out of 5)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 83%</li> <li>• 97%</li> <li>• 79%</li> <li>• 64%</li> <li>• 80%</li> <li>• 80%</li> <li>• 95%</li> <li>• 60%</li> <li>• 10%</li> <li>• 70%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 84 (31% response rate)</li> <li>•               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ High</li> <li>○ High</li> <li>○ Very high</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 89%</li> <li>• 97%</li> <li>• 52%</li> <li>• 85%</li> <li>• 85%</li> <li>• 80%</li> <li>• 65%</li> <li>-</li> <li>-</li> <li>-</li> </ul>

The main findings from this review of conferences are:

- Participants are happy with the GDN annual conferences and see the platform as very useful in building/strengthening their career development.
- Participants attest to high quality of conference sessions especially with the keynote and plenary sessions. They however noted that the quality of the parallel sessions will need to improve.
- Participants have utilised the conference opportunities to develop strong networks in their chosen fields which have helped them advance significantly in their chosen fields. This is because the networking and information sharing opportunities have continued beyond the conference.
- Early-career researchers have found the conferences especially very useful in shaping their research focus as well as partnerships with other researchers, and identification of mentors.
- Participants have built more confidence and world outlook in their areas of expertise.
- Participants have applied the knowledge and skills obtained from attending GDN's conferences in their chosen fields as well as advised their colleagues to engage with GDN's activities.
- Survey data suggest that the conference is a major driver of profile raising for GDN, particularly amongst those with no previous engagement with GDN.

Key take-away points are:

- Participants have continued to note the need to bring diversity into GDN's annual conferences by making the theme/sub-themes multidisciplinary with panellists from many different countries especially practitioners in their chosen fields.
- There is a general low output coming out from participants who attended GDN conferences in terms of articles and blogs. There is need therefore to emphasise this lapse in the communication strategy of GDN for annual conferences.
- There is need for GDN to plan to make conference papers available ahead of the conferences either in electronic or in hard copies.
- Media coverage and press releases from the conference are greatly encouraged and should be continued to increase the visibility and wide publicity of outcomes from each conference with the aim of making desired impacts.

#### **4.3.4 GNet**

Feedback from interviews suggests that awareness and use of GNet by researchers engaged on GDN activities and within RNPs is limited. GNet staff acknowledged the difficulty of achieving integration but suggested that certain activities such as AMCs and GRPs lend themselves to integration – AMCs partly as a result of the newsworthiness of the Award process and GRPs because of the events involved with these programmes. GNet currently contracts some RNPs (CERGE-EI; EERC) to deliver 'Regional Windows' within the website – maintaining and updating features, news and funding opportunities, research papers, profiles of researchers and organisations based in the region. Others are either managed in-house or through consultants. Staff interview feedback suggested that the regional ownership of the Regional Windows is imperative to the success of the site:

*“Regional perspective is a priority. RNPs contract ending March 2014 – still the relationship has been kept consistent and coherent. If they found GDNNet was not giving them what it takes then they may not continue – so this really counts.” (GDNNet staff member)*

Staff also identified a key barrier to the relevance of GDNNet, the predominant use of English as GDN’s lingua franca, although translations into Spanish for the LAC region and French for the French speaking countries in the sub-Saharan African region already feature:

*“One of the main barriers in relationships with RNPs and wider is the language barrier. In the African region we need to be working in French and in the LAC region Spanish as well as English. Staff in the GDNNet team have been responsible for translations. This has been giving us headaches. Reaching for the global South involves Arabic, French, Spanish as well as English. GDN can learn from this.” (S06)*

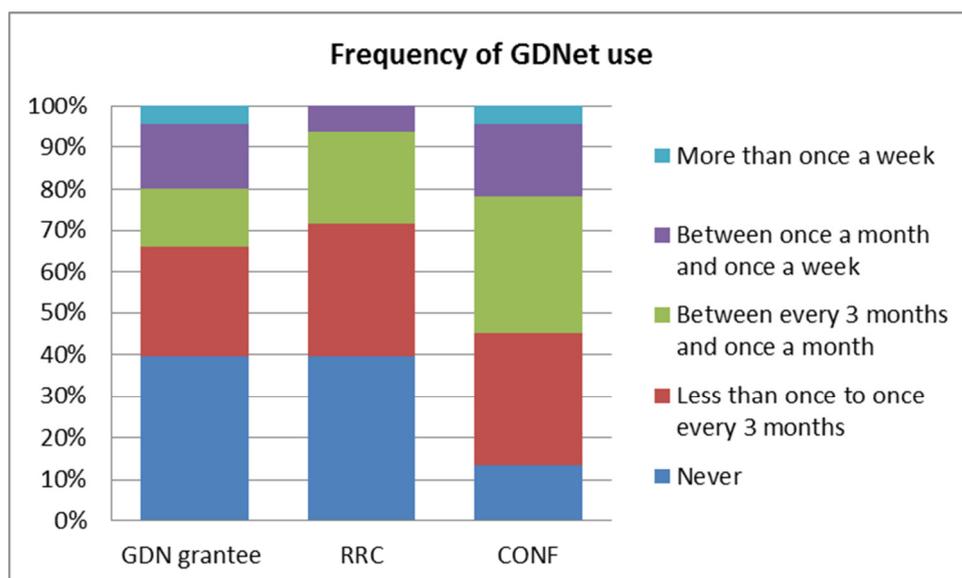
GDNNet has also benefited from sharing an office with the RNP ERF – representatives of staff from both organisations acknowledged that this had led to greater involvement in each other’s areas of work, for instance communications training for ERF staff, where previously the linkage was less strong.

Data from the survey also show limited use by researchers funded through RRCs, AMC, GRP and GRC, with around 40% never using GDNNet (Table 20, Figure 6).

**Table 20 Use of GDNNet website by gender (%)**

<b>Have you registered with a profile on the GDNNet website?</b>	<b>GDN grantee Female</b>	<b>GDN grantee Male</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>RRC Female</b>	<b>RRC Male</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Yes, I am registered with a profile on GDNNet and updated my profile over 24 months ago	47.8	51.6	-3.8	40.9	46.2	-5.2
Yes, I am registered with a profile on GDNNet and have updated my profile in the last 24 months	8.7	12.9	-4.2	13.6	12.8	0.8
Yes, I'm registered with a profile on GDNNet and have updated my profile in the last 12 months	26.1	6.5	19.6	4.5	5.1	-0.6
No, I'm a public access user without a registered profile	17.4	29.0	-11.6	40.9	35.9	5.0
<b>During the last 12 months how often have you visited the GDNNet website or relevant regional window?</b>	<b>GDN grantee Female</b>	<b>GDN grantee Male</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>RRC Female</b>	<b>RRC Male</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Less than once to once every three months	45.8	41.9	3.9	39.1	42.1	-3.0
Between every three months and once a month	29.2	19.4	9.8	39.1	23.7	15.4
Between once a month to once a week	16.7	32.3	-15.6	17.4	26.3	-8.9
More than once a week	8.3	6.5	1.9	4.3	7.9	-3.5

Figure 6 Frequency of GdNet use by grantees, RRC winners and conference delegates



Looking to the future, with the end of DFID funding for GdNet in 2014, staff interviewees emphasised the wider coverage of GdNet beyond GDN-funded research and grantees. They expressed the hope that this would not be lost in the integration of what is now the GdNet function within GDN’s online services. They also expressed the need to keep a focus on encouraging better use of Southern research, which at least one interviewee saw as a unique feature of GdNet.

Open source/data approaches are being explored for the ongoing upkeep of the GdNet research database, enabling researchers to take greater responsibility for uploading and maintaining papers/resources on the website. This is partly responding to funding uncertainty and partly a move for GdNet to become more responsive and user-led.

#### 4.3.5 Disciplinary relevance

GDN original disciplinary focus was in economics, and specifically those quantitative traditions in economics that are most closely associated with the analysis of development policy and its impacts. Over the years, this has broadened into a more multi-disciplinary focus. This is seen not only in the evolution of explicit statements about vision and mission, but also in calls for proposals for GRPs and RRCs, and in the composition of the Board.

Among RNP Heads/staff interviewed there was mostly agreement about the multi-disciplinary approach that GDN is now taking (and new RNP Heads appeared to be most forthright in espousing this):

*“Need to have people from other sciences etc. into the committees. At the end of the day we cross-fertilise – ‘the best science is produced at the intersection of sciences’.” (R02)*

But equally there was awareness that economics still provides the cornerstone of the organisation’s disciplinary approach and dominates research themes; the same interviewee (quoted above) felt that the 2013 Manila conference agenda had been mostly relevant to economists. The IE team did not analyse the trend in disciplinary focus of awards (has there, for example, been an increase in the proportion of awards going to non-economists?); among the survey respondents, though, 77% of RRC respondents who indicated the discipline of their first degree (n=159) was economics, compared

to 62% of the other grantees (n=91). This suggests that the RRCs are more dominated by economics than the AMCs, GRCs and GRPs, perhaps reflecting the disciplinary focus of the host institutions of many of the RNPs. Sixteen other disciplines were represented among the grantees and 18 among the RRC winners. The IE team looked at the GDN M&E database for data on the academic disciplines of grantees, but there are currently too many missing values in the discipline fields to make this worthwhile.

#### 4.4 Efficiency and value for money

This is an important area, but one in which definitive, objective conclusions are difficult because the value assigned to an activity or outcome depends on the perspective of different stakeholders. With RCB it is more difficult still, because measuring RCB outcomes is beyond the scope of a short, wide-ranging study such as this IE. The team has approached value for money (VfM) questions by seeking the views of stakeholders and by analysing the costs of implementing GDN activities.

To set the context for this section, we first present the overall level of spending by GDN at the beginning and end of the IE period.<sup>41</sup>

Overall GDN turnover fell from \$9m in financial year (FY) 2007-08 to \$8.6m in FY 2012-13, representing a 5% fall in nominal terms but considerably more in real, inflation-adjusted terms. Within this total, the spending on the three main research grant programmes (RRC, AMC, GRP) fell by 20%; the amount spent on grants within those programmes as a proportion of total spend on each programme is much higher for RRCs than GRPs but fell for both programmes, from 95% to 80% for RRCs and from 54% to 42% for GRPs, between the start and the end of the IE period (Table 21). This higher grant to total programme cost proportion for RRCs reflects the facts that several of the RNPs cover much of the overhead costs associated with the RRCs from their own funds, and that the GRPs involve more intensive management and other complementary activities and support funded by GDN.

For expenditure items the combination of salaries, payroll taxes, benefits, stipends and honoraria are the only area with continual year on year increases, growing between 2007 and 2013 by 64%. In FY2007-08 these items made up 10.4% of total expenditure and in 2012-13 17.9% (Table 21).

Overall spending (excluding secretariat costs) on the three main research grant streams has fallen by 19.9% in nominal terms during the IE period, which represents a much bigger fall in real terms. Distribution between the three has remained the same; any perception among RNPs of a relative decline in funding of RRCs compared to GRPs is incorrect; the fall in RRC funding (19.6%) is proportionately almost the same as the fall in GRP (19.1%) and total research programme funding. It is, however, the case that research programme funding fell as a proportion of overall GDN spending from 61.8% to 51.8%. We do not have a view on the merits or demerits of this, but it is something that the Board will want to monitor to ensure that GDN's core mission of research capacity building is reflected in spending patterns.

Other expenditure items of note include: accounting and auditing costs which appear particularly low for an organisation of GDN's turnover, rent which at \$364k is a significant cost to GDN and 'Other Expenses' which fluctuate between \$13k and \$160k and it may be useful for GDN to

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<sup>41</sup> Financial analysis reported here has been done by the IE team, using data supplied by GDN Secretariat.

disaggregate this latter budget line for improved financial management information. In particular, it is difficult from the data provided to the IE team to calculate an overall overhead cost, which is of interest to funders and seen as an indicator of efficiency in spending on programme activities.

**Table 21 GDN spending by item, 2007-08 and 2012-13 (USD and % change)**

<b>Item</b>	<b>2007-2008</b>	<b>2012-2013 unaudited</b>	<b>% change 2007 to 2013</b>
Salaries	832,944	1,311,543	57%
Payroll taxes and benefits	29,381	233,386	694%
Accounting and auditing	7,000	6,712	-4%
Advertising and recruitment	35,314	3,037	-91%
<b>Awards</b>	<b>142,500</b>	<b>92,500</b>	<b>-35%</b>
Bank charges	5,546	18,247	229%
Communications, Internet service	10,279	44,533	333%
Consulting	56,802	826,899	1356%
Depreciation and amortization	95,471	144,582	51%
Dues and subscriptions	25,240	24,133	-4%
Maintenance and equipment rental	34,857	5,686	-84%
Governing Body meetings	43,080	37,201	-14%
Hospitality	12,460		-100%
Hotel Facilities	350,885	205,785	-41%
Insurance	1,149	28,778	2405%
Legal	51,775	49,599	-4%
Meetings and seminars	1,391,611	388,561	-72%
Postage, delivery, and mail service	29,768	2,003	-93%
<b>Grants</b>	<b>3,956,675</b>	<b>3,964,619<sup>42</sup></b>	<b>0%</b>
Professional services	780,145		-100%
Printing and reproduction	29,311	21,018	-28%
Rent	132,654	364,731	175%
Stipends and Honoraria	81,050	3,500	-96%
Supplies	23,104	34,084	48%
Telephone	68,097	17,604	-74%
Training	50,204	419	-99%
Travel	697,317	758,091	9%
Utilities	15,943	16,623	4%
Other expenses	63,494	36,651	-42%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,054,056</b>	<b>8,640,484</b>	<b>-5%</b>
<i>Spend on RRC</i>	<i>2,377,333</i>	<i>1,911,822</i>	<i>-20%</i>
<i>Spend on AMC</i>	<i>327,039</i>	<i>231,825</i>	<i>-29%</i>
<i>Spend on GRP</i>	<i>2,892,080</i>	<i>2,340,245</i>	<i>-20%</i>
<i>Total spend on RRC, AMC, GRP</i>	<i>5,596,452</i>	<i>4,483,892</i>	<i>-20%</i>
<i>Spend on grants as % of RRC</i>	<i>95.7%</i>	<i>80.3%</i>	
<i>Spend on grants as % of AMC</i>	<i>43.6%</i>	<i>58.2%</i>	

<sup>42</sup> The 'grants' figure for 2012-13 includes \$1,246,840 under the GDNet column.

Item	2007-2008	2012-2013 unaudited	% change 2007 to 2013
<i>Spend on grants as % of GRP</i>	54.3%	42.5%	

#### 4.4.1 Value for money

Interview responses provide some evidence that GDN is providing value for money – to some extent as a result of the unpaid/unbudgeted input of RNP partners and “*trying to do more than it has resources for*” (B02).

RNP Heads described a **shared context of diminishing funding** both from GDN and other funders, alongside a general drive for ‘more for less’; some respondents suggested that this created a ‘hunger’ and willingness to innovate or be creative in how their work was funded. Undeniably there have been some reductions to what RNPs can achieve through funding/association with GDN:

*“EADN budget ... was \$400,000 per year now \$110,000. Can barely support 10 researchers. They cannot go into primary data gathering so there are limitations in the relevance and policy impact (but no choice on this).”*

RNP subsidy of GDN activities:

*“We (PIDS) subsidise GDN activities so there is a lot of value for money - through staff time and mentors (I request 10 experts from the Philippines to be mentors – paid a very modest honorarium). The effort we give is more than the simple budget from GDN. I never drew a salary.”*

A similar situation prevails for CERGE-EI:

*“We are devoting more resources than we are being paid for including my time and graduates assigned to work on abstract etc.” (R07)*

For developed region RNPs, such as BREAD (R04), there is an implicit subsidy in that academics contribute time to support GDN activities, some of which is paid for (where the activity in question is a formal component of a donor-funded project) but much of which is not. This was not raised as a problem, but simply to note that engaging more northern academics more intensively in supporting GDN’s mission will depend on them seeing some professional and academic benefit to them as well as the satisfaction of contributing to an inherently beneficial outcome.

Several of the Board member and donor interviewees subjectively compared the cost of grants and other services with those of other providers they are familiar with. On this basis, GDN compared favourably, particularly on the research grants. Interviewees generally see GDN as providing good value for money: there were very few comments in the interviews indicating any concerns over value for money.

Survey responses on value for money are summarised in Table 22 and presented in more detail in Figure F 29, Figure F 30 and Figure F 31. The two categories who are most closely involved in the details of implementation of (some) activities give overall higher scores than those with a broader perspective (donors and Board members). The latter see mentoring and research communication training as representing low value for money. More than 50% of the donors give high scores to grants (as do the three other categories), the annual conference, networking, access to research and journals (through GDNNet), policy dialogues and peer review workshops. Board members are much less likely to see policy dialogues and peer review workshops as representing good value for money.

**Table 22 Donor, Board, RNP and Mentor views on value for money for GDN activities (%)**

	Donors		Board		RNP		Mentors	
	low	high	low	high	low	high	low	high
Grants	14	86	20	80	10	90	14	86
Mentoring	71	29	80	20	33	67	5	95
Access to research, journals, resources	38	62	44	56	25	75	6	94
Research communications training	75	25	75	25	37	63	21	89
Networking	38	62	40	60	6	94	21	79
Policy dialogues	43	57	89	11	47	53	20	80
Technical training (research design, analysis)	71	29	60	40	33	67	19	81
Peer review workshops	43	57	78	22	32	68	25	75
Conference	29	71	40	60	30	70	25	75

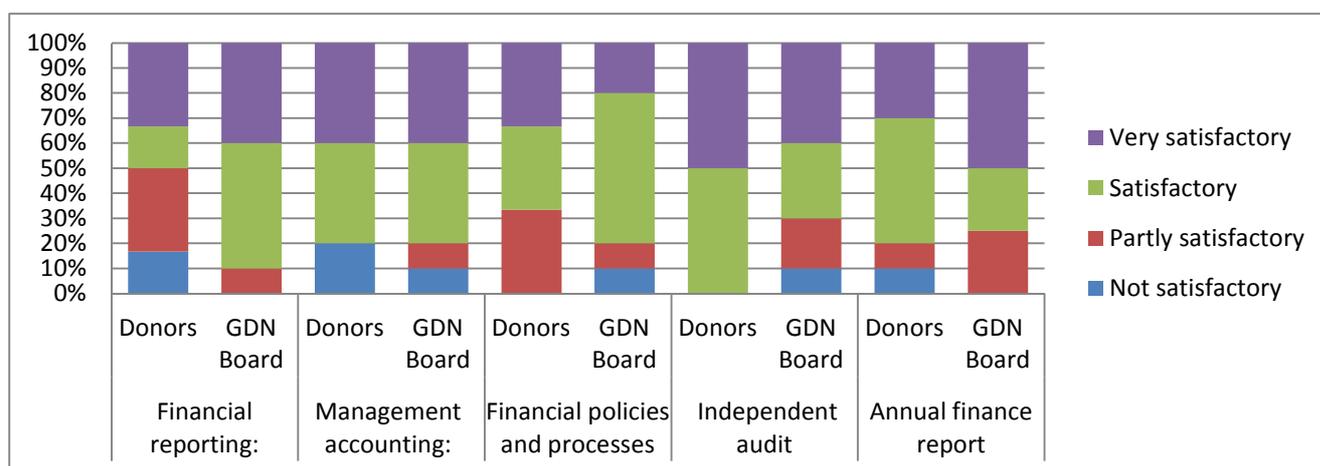
Note: 'low' = not at all + some + moderate extent; 'high' = good + great + very great extent

The DFID review of GDNNet indicates that it sees GDNNet as representing value for money over the range of economy, efficiency and effectiveness indicators including comparison with other DFID funded knowledge services (e.g. Eldis) on the basis of size of team (8 staff), cost per researcher trained, cost per web site visitor, ratio between salaries and activities. However no specific data are provided in the review.

#### 4.4.2 Financial management, reporting and compliance

Predominantly financial reporting is considered to be satisfactory or very satisfactory. Donors have indicated they are less satisfied than board members in financial reporting, management accounting and annual finance report, and satisfied or very satisfied with independent audit. However there is no evidence from the qualitative interview data to elaborate on any specific concerns; it may simply be that donors have a particularly critical eye on these matters and are intrinsically less likely to give high scores than other stakeholders.

**Figure 7 Donors and Board members views on how satisfactory financial management, reporting and compliance are**



In considering GDN's ideal donor base, the majority of donors and board members agree that they would like to see GDN with 10 donors, with donors preferring no more than 20% of funding to come from one donor and board members no more than 10% coming from one donor.

Over a four point scale (1=low, 4=high) donors indicated they would consider future funding in the nine areas shown, in descending order of willingness to fund, in Table 23. A challenge for GDN is that the lowest score is for core operations and overhead costs; if donors are not prepared to fund these

areas adequately, then the ability of GDN to manage the more attractive (to donors) research grants and knowledge sharing will be compromised.

**Table 23 Donors' willingness to consider future funding (mean scores by area)**

Area / activity	Willingness to fund (mean)
Events for knowledge sharing and networking between researchers and policy makers	3.50
Research grants for developing or transition country researchers	3.13
Research grants for inter- country or inter-regional research in developing / transition countries	3.13
Online access to developing country research, resources and journals	2.88
Mentoring/one-to-one support	2.86
Training or workshops to develop research skills of developing country researchers	2.75
Research medal/prize for a high quality paper or proposal	2.75
Scholarships for researchers to participate in technical workshops /networking events /visits for inter-country research	2.38
Core operations and overhead costs	2.13

#### 4.4.3 Financial sustainability

The 2007 IE noted that GDN had made good progress in moving away from financial dependence on the World Bank, with the number of donors / funders increasing and the proportion of funding from the World Bank decreasing. The World Bank has given notice that core funding will cease and that future funding will be on the basis of successful proposals for specific projects and activities. Not surprisingly, interviewees particularly from Board and Assembly members but also from GDN staff voiced concerns about future levels and sources of funding; overall, though, interviewees were fairly optimistic.

Views from the surveys on future financial sustainability of GDN are mixed, with donors most positive and RNPs most sceptical about GDN's income portfolio for the next 10 years. GDN staff have the highest proportion of 'don't know' responses. Overall, the survey responses indicate there is concern about future levels of funding, with relatively few responses at the upper end of the scale offered in the survey (Figure F 32).

As for GDN's ability to attract funds over the past five years, the majority view is that this has been achieved to a good extent. Donors and RNP are most positive about past funding with GDN board the most sceptical (Figure F 33). Respondents were, however, cautious about the extent to which GDN has clear and realistic plans for resource mobilisation and the diversification of financial risk, and the extent of financial stability and diversity of donor base for achieving planned activities and goals (Figure F 34, Figure F 35).

The IE team's view on financial sustainability is that GDN's income data shows success since 2007 in increasing the range of organisations that provide funding for its activities. There is a current challenge created by the tailing off of several streams of funding at the same time, which is caused in part by past success in winning new funding. But our assessment is that the Board and management have adopted a pro-active strategy to address this challenge, with several funding proposals under consideration and in preparation, and that donors find the current GDN set up and management is in good shape to deliver funded projects to a high level of effectiveness and efficiency.

## 4.5 Sustainability

The TOR ask what is the potential for continuation of the impact and benefits achieved by GDN's activities, what are the respective roles of GDN and its partners (including Regional Network Partners) in achieving and sustaining the outcomes, and to what extent has GDN effectively collaborated with global, regional and country-level partners and stakeholders?

### 4.5.1 Sustaining the 'network of networks'

Sustainability will depend on, among other factors, the RNPs remaining convinced that the benefits to them and researchers in their regions outweigh the costs of engagement with GDN. Interviews and review of documents during the Inception phase suggested there have been tensions between the RNPs and GDN, with some feeling that the network was being driven too much from the centre, despite the RNPs being represented on the Board of GDN. This was explored further in subsequent interviews and in the IE surveys.

Themes from the interviews relating to sustainability include:

- the need to maintain contact with researchers after GDN funded research activity has been completed – this was heard from both grantees and staff in GDN's Cairo office, who see the benefits to the organisation as well as to the individual researchers of maintaining the researcher network/relationship
- the benefits of establishing a more joined up fundraising strategy involving RNPs – this specifically came from ERF who engage with funders such as the African Development Bank but is relevant to other RNPs who receive or seek funding from the same sources as GDN
- the question of how far GDN complements rather than competes with RNPs; this highlights the difficulty of attribution of outputs achieved by GDN through RNPs. GDN's comparative advantage is 'global' and cross-fertilisation of ideas and networking between the regions and should perhaps be focusing on that. This begs the question of whether GDN is a networking organisation rather than a vehicle for channelling funds to RNPs
- in relation to policy, is GDN's global role to bring together policy makers and researchers from across different regions rather than within a region, which is something RNPs are better placed to do? (B01)
- the consistent view that the process of developing a charter setting out the respective roles and responsibilities of GDN and RNPs has been a positive one, reducing tensions that had arisen.

An important aspect of sustainability is the continued involvement of network members, particularly grantees, in the field of social science research and/or policy. In the survey, research grantees were asked whether had been in contact with other researchers, mentors, mentees or policy makers since the completion of their grant. Data are shown in Figure F 36 and Figure F 37. Most RRC respondents had maintained contact with researchers they had met during the grant (85%), their mentors (70%) and with policy stakeholders (policy makers, NGOs implementing development programmes) (55%). A similar pattern is seen for the other grantees (AMC, GRC, GRP). The survey data do not indicate how long the contact continues, but the Figures suggest that for most of those who report post-grant contact this is more than a single ad hoc contact.

The majority of grantees also said they have continued to work in the same research field (Figure F 38) and are likely to stay in touch with GDN in the future (Figure F 39, Figure F 40).

#### 4.5.2 Sustainability and GDNNet

Current funding of GDNNet by DFID comes to an end in June 2014. GDN have already begun the process of reviewing and managing this phase, encapsulated in the document – ‘Proposal for Managing End of DFID funding for GDNNet’. On the basis of the knowledge hub represented by GDNNet and its innovative approaches to building the capacity of researchers in communicating their research outcomes the IE team endorses GDNNet’s proposal of partial integration of the GDNNet programme into GDN. This will involve:

- reviewing the GDNNet programme's skills, values and content and aligning them with GDN's strategic objectives
- bringing GDNNet content and services into GDN's corporate website and migrating data to RNPs and other online knowledge brokers (such as Eldis)
- documenting the GDN Cairo Team's institutional knowledge and making it available for public access
- supporting partners to make use of GDNNet Open Data in their own services. This initiative has already progressed significantly and aims to enable RNPs to make use of GDNNet data about their region.

From staff interview feedback it is clear that the uncertainty over the future of GDNNet is unsettling, both professionally and for GDNNet’s relationships with RNPs that are contracted to deliver ‘Regional Windows’ within the website. The next six months will require careful management to ensure that the legacy of GDNNet is not lost and that crucial partners (in particular RNPs) involved in the delivery of GDNNet stay engaged with the niche role that GDNNet has developed.

## 4.6 Management and Operations

### 4.6.1 Structure and relations

Interviewees expressed a range of views about the structure of the network and the operation of headquarter functions, as shown in the following:

**Staffing** – there is a strongly held view that GDN staff, in Delhi, Cairo and Washington, are committed and highly competent. The predominant view among donor, Board, Assembly, grantee and RNP interviewees, and in responses from these categories of stakeholder to open ended questions in the surveys, is that they appreciate the quality and professionalism of the support they have received and regard this as one of the defining features of GDN.

**Structure** – although one funder raised a question about the sustainability of networks where they are an imposed structure rather than an organic network that grows on the basis of the interest, specialism and needs of researchers, the dominant view that comes across from interviews and open-ended survey responses is that the overall structure works well but that tensions do arise from time to time between centre and RNP. It is important to note that GDN does have in place mechanisms to articulate and address these tensions, as seen in the 2013 GDN-RNP Charter.

#### RNPs

- Relationships between RNPs and GDN Delhi/President have improved since arrival of the current President, as a result of processes such as the RNP charter, and a greater emphasis

on listening to RNPs and agendas being open to their input; some interviewees suggested that relationships between GDN HQ and RNPs had become difficult due to a stance and approach that was seen as hierarchical and centralised. However with the recent GRC programme, themes/topics were developed centrally, with RNPs asked to nominate researchers rather than have input into development of the topic(s).

- ERF suggested the inter-relationships between RNPs are underutilised – elsewhere (CERGE El) there was comment that funding does not permit the desirable depth of cross-fertilisation and joint/partnership project working
- Chief Finance Officer and other finance staff from GDN Delhi visit 2 RNPs each year for a finance review and ‘gap analysis’ if necessary – ODN (one of the more recently established RNPs) described this as a helpful process: hands-on explanation of GDN and funder reporting requirements and processes, and addressing specific issues that have arisen in financial reporting, are among the main benefits to both parties.

**Position of HQ in Delhi** – 2 interviewees (one RNP, one assembly) mentioned the Delhi siting of the organisation’s HQ as a disadvantage to GDN in achieving its aims (connectivity to international funders, climate and closeness to other similar organisations). The office in Washington is seen as essential for establishing and maintaining relationships with existing/potential donors and fundraising (as well as profile).

**Management and administrative systems** in place for the range of GDN activities were positively reviewed and perceived as fit for purpose; however, while most RNP interviewees indicated they knew where to go for information (within GDN Delhi) there was a comment from ERF that the central structure could be more clearly articulated. Board feedback (B01) spoke of the delicate balance between providing the academic/intellectual rigour, reputation and framework necessary to guide the organisation and the capacity to ‘make the train run on time’ (i.e. operational / administrative capabilities) which GDN appears to be striking at the moment.

**Staff** (14 interviews and a focus group discussion with staff in the Delhi office) indicated that supervision, policy and personal development opportunities were in place for them to realise their potential within the organisation. GDN staff in particular commented on the closeness of the team, a non-hierarchical approach to raising concerns and ideas and support from managers in driving through innovation (such as a shared approach to staff use of social media). The views of donors and RNP heads corroborate this positive feedback:

*“My interaction shows that they are very effective and efficient. The GDN President himself is a very respected and highly recognised academic and researcher and is well respected by the RNP Heads.” (R08)*

There was some reference from staff in GDH Delhi to **wage disparities** – between project and administrative staff and between expatriate staff and local staff, against the broader commitment of the current President towards creating a staff structure with the ‘same treatment for all’. More generally, there was appreciation for the role/leadership of the President and his approach to communicating with and developing staff and encouraging staff progression; this was perceived as a positive development within the GDN Delhi staff team.

Both **GDN Delhi and GDN staff** fed back that there had been increased interaction between the sites/teams (compared minimal interaction in the past) partly as a result of the deliberate aim of

increased integration with GNet's DFID funding coming to an end and through the staff retreat (used by staff as a visioning and team building exercise).

**The effectiveness of the Board has progressed over the last 2 years** – using working committees; establishing a shared vision on the RCB objective of GDN; and with better information available to undertake their responsibilities than previously (B02); one RNP Head (R01) commented that the Board now included individuals (“*high profile experts*”) that could benefit future fundraising of GDN with donors.

**Assembly** – feedback from Assembly interviewees suggests that they are kept well informed but that the distinctive role/added value of the Assembly (as opposed the Board) is not clear to all:

*“GDN has a dual identity: International Organisation ( IO) and an academic network; the former should not get in the way of the latter. It would be helpful to define the role of member states of the IO. What are they there for?” (A01)*

#### 4.6.2 Policies and procedures

Two sets of policies were provided to the evaluation team; i) Staff Manual November 2012 and ii) GDN Accounting Manual March 2009. In January 2014 a November 2013 revision of the Staff manual was provided which, although it sits outside of the IE window, the evaluation team has incorporated.

In reviewing the Staff Manual the main areas that could be expected to be included are covered by the manual. However two areas for concern are how grievances are handled and the staff appraisal process as detailed below.

1. The staff manual states that grievance and disputes should be addressed to the line manager or supervisor but does not allow for circumstance where grievances are with the President.
2. The staff appraisal process as set out does not provide adequate guidance to ensure objective, transparent and consistent scoring of staff progress. Current scoring of progress is on a subjective scale of ‘unsatisfactory’ to ‘exceptional’ and does not seek to develop competencies within staff members. These scores indicate levels of performance bonus payments thus objective scoring matrices should be sought to provide equity between staff and value for money for the organisation.

Through interviews, focus group and requests for evidence to support manual and policies being delivered in practice it became clear that:

- Personnel records are incomplete for many staff members
- Leave absence and sickness records are accessible by IT staff hence the confidentiality policy as stated in the Staff manual 2.3.4 ‘Access to Employment Records’ is not being adhered to and should be updated appropriately
- No records exist for grievances or disciplinary actions brought; we were informed that none have been brought during the evaluation period
- No monitoring of medical claims was being captured by GDN so GDN cannot be assured of value for money from their providers
- Working from home entitlement was being granted outside the parameters stated in the policy

- A number of staff stated that they had not received information on policy changes or knew where to look for updates
- Some staff were accumulating high levels of overtime/comp off time that was not being taken which could find GDN negligent in their duty of care to employees and provides inaccurate costing of activities.

In reviewing the Accounting Manual we found clear statements of intent for guidelines for sign off and expenditure authority within the organisation; these processes could be made more accessible to staff by including a flow chart of the process. We were informed that the document had been in the process of being updated for the last 6 months but this was yet to be completed.

#### 4.6.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

GDN is committed to monitoring and evaluating all its programmes and has devoted considerable resources, both internally and through contracting outside consultants, to the M&E function. The IE team sees this as a very positive feature of GDN but feels that more could be done to ensure that data are available to facilitate both internal and external M&E. Although databases have been and are being developed to track grants and grantees, and to establish baseline indicators of research capacity, there are gaps in the data captured, as noted in earlier sections of this report.

Resources committed to M&E have their pay off in the effective use of the data collected, for reporting to donors and for learning within the organisation. There were contrasting views expressed by interviewees on this aspect of GDN's activities: among RNP interviews for example, some felt that that GDN spends too much time and effort on M&E and documentation, while others suggested there is not enough communication and information from GDN Delhi to be able to participate proactively in programmes, learn from completed projects and programmes, and support funding bids and programme development. Our overall conclusion is that more could be done to synthesise the lessons learned from evaluations and share these within the broader GDN network.

An example comes from GDNNet's approach to M&E for training and workshops. As part of the DFID funded programme they deliver direct training to researchers on communicating the outcomes of their research. At the end of the session participants 'pledge' what they will do as a result of what they have learned; this is followed up on after 3 months and 1 year and has led to many tangible examples of the way in which researchers have taken up learning from their involvement with GDNNet (in an area that is hard to pin down with largely 'soft' outcomes). This is an approach which could be integrated more broadly into GDN's M&E tool kit.

## 5 Conclusions and recommendations

We begin with some overarching conclusions before going on to more specific conclusions grouped under the six main TOR headings<sup>43</sup>.

### 5.1 Overall conclusions

1. GDN is undergoing significant and positive change. This is associated with the most recent change of Presidency and Board chair, but represents a continuation of an earlier trend towards greater clarity of focus on the core objective of research capacity building (RCB). Data from

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<sup>43</sup> Evidence on which these conclusions are based is set out in the respective sub-sections of Section 4 of the report.

interviews and surveys point to an improvement in governance, transparency, relationships between GDN and RNPs, engagement of Board and Assembly in strategic planning, and in proactive engagement with donors. Board members feel that they are better informed and more able to play their part in guidance and governance.

2. GDN is meeting its RCB objectives to a substantial extent. Key to this is the value-added services and support it provides to those who win GDN research grants either directly or through RNPs. There are some areas that could be strengthened (mentoring, post-completion support for publication, policy engagement) but the core business of GDN is being addressed effectively.
3. There seem to be limited expectations in terms of policy influence/ engagement, particularly for RRCs. The GRPs show that there need not be too great a trade-off between RCB and informing policy. There may be scope for bringing some of the lessons from successful GRPs into the way in which RNPs run the RRCs. Better links to policy can be achieved through careful selection of research topics, mentoring by people with experience of linking research to policy, training, and post-completion support. The IE team notes GDN plans to implement a 'policy lab' approach in its programmes; this focuses on organising the interaction between researchers and policy-makers before the actual start and even definition of a research programme, so that stock is taken of what is academically known, of what questions remain relevant for policy-makers, and an effort is undertaken to formulate these policy-questions into researchable questions that the program will try to address. This approach builds on experience of interaction with policy makers in GRPs and has potential for increasing engagement.
4. Although the vision, mission and objectives of GDN are now clearer, and more effectively articulated and shared, than previously, awareness and visibility of GDN among its potential constituency (social science researchers working on policy-relevant research in developing and transition countries, and the policy community) is still less than it should be for a networking organisation with a global position and credentials. More effort to bring GDN to the attention of a wider audience, and to involve new people in GDN activities, would strengthen GDN's position when negotiating with donors and funding partners.
5. A recurring question during the IE, raised in interviews and in survey responses, has been about what GDN's comparative advantage is, vis-à-vis RNPs and other funders and providers of RCB. The more clearly this can be articulated and shared, and the more clearly it is seen in the ways GDN implements its activities, the more effective will be GDN's efforts to convince donors / funders that it has something unique to offer that is worth supporting.

## **5.2 Overall achievement of stated objectives**

1. There is a high level of satisfaction among stakeholders about the extent to which GDN has achieved its objectives in the past five years, particularly in relation to RCB. Actively engaged stakeholders report high level of satisfaction with GDN
2. A key factor in its achievement of objectives, and a distinctive feature of how GDN and the RNPs work, is the value added to the research grants through supporting activities (training, peer review, mentoring, conference and GDNNet).

3. While the focus on RCB may mean that ‘informing policy’ is less likely to be achieved, particularly through RRC funding, experience of successful GRPs shows it is possible to deliver RCB and policy relevant research, where lead researchers are at a more experienced level than most RRC winners. As suggested above, some of the lessons from GRPs could be brought into RRCs.
4. The planned broadening of disciplinary focus beyond economics is seen in topics for AMCs and GRPs, but less so for RRCs.

### 5.3 Outcomes, effectiveness and impact

1. It is conceptually and practically impossible to attribute change in economic and social development indicators to GDN’s activities, research outputs and policy engagement. However, well documented stories of change / influence are a valid approach to building up evidence on this<sup>44</sup>
2. There is inconsistency in the quality and intensity of mentoring. Mentoring is recognised as a very valuable support, particularly (but not only) to younger / early career researchers. But it is rated relatively low for effectiveness (and, later, for value for money) compared to other activities because of the variability and inconsistency with which it is done. Careful pairing of mentor and mentee is essential. Clearer guidelines on roles, responsibilities and expectations for both mentor and mentee could be spelled out, including for the post-completion of the grant, and compliance monitored.
3. Face to face contact is highly valued by grantees, and recognised as important by donors and other stakeholders as an essential feature of successful networking. However the high cost of cross-regional meetings and conferences makes it essential that these events are carefully planned, implemented and followed.
4. With respect to targeting, survey respondents say GDN targets early career researchers, multi-disciplines and female researchers at least ‘reasonably well’. However, while GRP calls for proposals do target RCB (in specific methodologies and techniques), they do not target early career researchers, Even RRC calls for proposals do not always specifically target early career researchers.
5. The quality of sampled research outputs shows an upward gradient from RRC, through AMC to GRP. While this might reflect the fact that the experience and expertise of recipients of grants increases from RRC, to GRPs, qualitative data suggest that the way GRP teams are supported also has an influence.
6. Ethical considerations are generally absent or inadequately addressed in research outputs. The importance of ethical conduct of research should be stressed in calls for proposals, assessment of proposals, implementation of research projects, RCB training and mentoring.
7. More emphasis is needed on bringing funded research outputs to academic publication. This is important for individual researchers’ careers and promotion prospects as well as being a widely accepted indicator of successful outcome of research within the academic community. After

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<sup>44</sup> cf. the ‘impact case studies’ being used as evidence of research impact in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework exercise in UK higher education institutions

completion of a grant, GDN should consider continuing to support (through mentors, RNPs and HQ GDN staff) grantees to develop their outputs into journal-quality papers. This could be made the subject of a separate competitive grant, so that support is targeted where it is most likely to have a positive result.

8. GDN and RNP grant processes (with peer review and support before finalisation of proposals) is effective in improving quality of proposals and enhancing skills and confidence of researchers.
9. Recipients of GDN funding report a high level of continued (post completion of their grant) impact on their research output and their ability to secure research funding; they report less continued impact for their contacts and interactions with policy stakeholders.
10. GDN makes a positive contribution to researcher capacity building. Our analysis (section 4.2.7), combining the DFID reviews (drawing on annual GDN M&E reports) and website statistics provided by GDN, suggests a contribution to researcher capacity building in the following areas:

- (a) profiling and promoting Southern research and researchers, which is GDN's unique aspect - 12,692 researcher profiles 75% of which are Southern researchers (as at August 2012, the latest statistic available to the IE). GDN's M&E report for 2012 elicited 424 responses from researchers citing examples of GDN informing their research including building contacts with other researchers (e.g. 'through the South Asia research window a German team of researchers contacted me for further research details'); being connected with a community of researchers (e.g. 'GDN is indirectly crucial to my research. Its online services are particularly helpful for a researcher like me')
- (b) building the capacity of researchers directly through the training component of GDN (focusing on improving researchers' skills in writing policy briefs and presenting the outcomes of their work). The post training workshop improvements in researcher confidence are stated earlier (section 4.2.7). 133 southern researchers have been trained (71 in four face to face workshops and 62 in four online courses<sup>45</sup>).

The difficulty, highlighted by both GDN in its M&E report and in the DFID reviews, is in capturing tangible capacity building outcomes resulting from engagement with GDN either online or as result of its training services. Some innovative approaches have been taken to tackling this issue including the case study approach of GDN's M&E report and the 'pledge' follow up from GDN training (explained above), but it remains challenging to isolate the input of GDN over the range of sources and resources that researchers draw on.

11. Policy dialogues help to raise the profile of GDN, not only among the policy community but also with organisations whom GDN partners in holding the dialogues. Critical issues with the dialogues include getting the right participants; the extent to which they give (and should give) direct access for grantees to policy makers; and whether follow up is adequate and appropriately documented.

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<sup>45</sup> Cited in DFID monitoring report 2013, based on data from GDN reports.

## 5.4 Relevance

1. There is a high level of consistency between what GDN does and the needs and priorities of its beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries.
2. While there is some perceived duplication between GDN and other providers, this is seen as complementary and enriching the opportunities for beneficiaries rather than being a source of inefficiency.
3. Some donors fund individual RNPs (or, rather, their host institutions) as well as GDN globally; this is appropriate as the RNPs and their hosts are independent bodies with their own programmes. To the extent that GDN centrally, and the RNPs regionally, play roles that complement and enhance each others' programmes, they should not be seen as competitors for funding. Indeed, a clear articulation of roles and complementarities will make joint approaches to donors for funding an appropriate option.
4. There is a high level of satisfaction with the annual conferences; recent changes to increase participation by younger researchers, while maintaining the input of world-renowned experts, are making them more effective in RCB and (though this is difficult to measure objectively) better value for money.
5. Awareness and use of GDNNet, while increasing globally, is not as high as it might be, even among researchers within RNPs and funded by GDN programmes.

## 5.5 Efficiency and value for money

1. Overall, stakeholders see GDN's activities as giving value for money. In respect of specific activities, donors and Board members question the value for money of mentoring and Policy Dialogues as they are currently implemented.
2. GDN's financial management, reporting and compliance comply with internationally recognised good practice.
3. Current donors' willingness to consider future funding has increased in recent years, largely because of improvements in GDN's engagement with them. The fact that they are less willing to fund core operations and overheads than more visible activities and research projects is a concern that GDN needs to address: continued effort is needed to articulate the importance of a strong headquarters' operation to ensure all the value added support can be sustained.
4. In a difficult funding environment since the global financial crisis of 2008, GDN has done well in continuing to secure funding from diverse sources for its RCB activities. However, the decline in funding available for RRCs is affecting the balance of its activities which in turn has had a negative impact on the relationship with RNPs, prompting the process which has led to the 2013 draft Charter and a more recent improvement in relations.
5. The proportion of GDN's overall spending that goes to fund research grant programmes has fallen during the period covered by the IE. As grants and competitions are seen as the core of GDN's support for RCB, it is important for GDN to keep this under review and seek funding opportunities that will fund these activities.

6. GDN's aspiration to retain its global reach and to be a global network of networks faces the challenge that the RNPs vary in capacity and in financial dependence on GDN. The financially stronger and longer established RNPs are putting substantial resources into running RRCs, which enhances the apparent cost-effectiveness and value for money of GDN's input. The more recently established networks require a greater level of financial and human resource from GDN. In a limited resource environment, this raises the question of how it should prioritise its activities.

## 5.6 Sustainability

1. A high proportion of RRC / GDN grantees remains active in their field after completion of their grant and cites the funding and support from GDN as important contributions to their career development.
2. GDNNet is a key element in GDN's ability to sustain the 'network of networks' and to maximise the reach and impact of the research it supports. With the current project-based GDNNet funding ending in 2014 it is essential that the knowledge capture, processing and sharing function becomes fully integrated into GDN. Making use of GDNNet's expertise with social media is one of the benefits that would accrue for this integration; they are proving an effective way for researchers to keep in touch informally and to share their outputs and findings; they can equally become an effective means for GDN to raise its profile.

## 5.7 Management and Operations

1. GDN staff are highly competent and committed to the mission of the organisation.
2. Assembly and Board have distinctive roles and are able to discharge these effectively. The working relationships between senior management, Board and Assembly are good.
3. Procedures set out in the Staff Manual cover all the main areas that could be expected to be included. Staff are generally satisfied with processes and procedures; however two areas where GDN should further review its procedures in order to comply with best organisational practice are how grievances are handled and the staff appraisal process (section 4.6.2).
4. GDN puts a lot of resource into monitoring and evaluation. It needs to ensure as complete data capture as possible to ensure its databases are fit for purpose and up to date in order to facilitate the efficient conduct of future evaluations. The collection of baseline data against which to assess changes in research capacity over the lifetime of a grant and beyond has been started; we would encourage this to be continued.
5. The role of the GDN M&E team vis-à-vis external evaluators of GDN activities and programmes should be given some consideration. In the present IE, involvement of GDN staff in the details of the evaluation have enhanced quality and relevance of data collection, but have consumed both contracted time of the IE (20 person days on questionnaire design out of a total 95 person days) and elapsed time, contributing to the surveys being launched and closed later than planned.
6. The pay-off for putting resources into M&E comes from the use of findings to improve implementation of ongoing activities and to learning lessons from the future from completed

activities. It is important that opportunities for this learning, and for them putting those lessons into practice, are created and used effectively.

## 5.8 Recommendations

Several of the following recommendations endorse positive changes that have been initiated by GDN in the past few years, identify ways in which those changes have not yet been fully effected and offer suggestions on how to build on them. Others (particularly 8, on ethical issues) represent concerns that have not yet been addressed by GDN and should perhaps receive particular attention.

1. GDN should seek to raise expectations/ aspirations in regard to policy engagement, without compromising its priority focus on RCB, particularly for RRC winners.

Although the core mission of GDN is research capacity building, the aim of this is to enhance the contribution that local and regional research in developing countries and transition economies can make to informing development policy and policy making. Understanding of policy processes, and skills in identifying and communicating policy implications of research, are therefore important elements of research capacity and therefore of RCB. From interviews (section 4.1), links to policy making emerged as an area where achievement of GDN objectives was felt to be lower than others. This is supported by the review of outputs where RRC outputs scored a mean 3.2/5 for policy relevance in the research itself, but only 2.3/5 for identifying and describing the policy implications (compared with 3.5 and 3.1 for GRP outputs) (Table 9).

As already acknowledged by GDN, there is scope for bringing some of the lessons from successful GRPs into the way in which RNPs run the RRCs. Better links to policy can be achieved through careful selection of research topics, mentoring by people with experience of linking research to policy, training, and post-completion support. The policy lab approach is a promising innovation and should be monitored for its effect on the level and quality of engagement with policy makers. More could be done to highlight policy links on the GDN and RNP websites, through case studies or blogs around successful translation of research findings into information to support policy.

2. GDN should make more effort to bring GDN to the attention of a wider audience within both research and policy communities, and to involve new people in GDN activities. This would strengthen GDN's position when negotiating with donors and funding partners.

The survey of development researchers who have not previously engaged with GDN suggests that GDN is not widely known among social science researchers in developing countries and transition economies beyond those with links to the RNPs. This finding is reinforced by interviewees (donors, policy makers, Board and Assembly members, RNP heads) who felt that, among their own peers, GDN is not widely known or looked to as a primary source of policy relevant research or of RCB. Given that those engaging with GDN are positive about its success in achieving its RCB objectives, expanding the network (globally and regionally) has real potential for increasing the impact of GDN. Clearly there are limits to what can be done to expand the reach of research grant funding and RCB training without additional funding; however, being able to demonstrate a greater reach would add credibility to GDN's approaches to existing and potential new funders. GDN globally, and RNPs regionally, could be more proactive in drawing

other institutions and disciplines into calls for research competitions. GDN could make more effective use of social media in reaching and building relationships with its target audiences.

3. GDN should articulate clearly what its comparative advantage is vis-à-vis both RNPs, and other funders and providers of RCB. It should then make this comparative advantage clear not only in what it says, but also in how it uses its resources.

With respect to RNPs, the distinction could be between those things that are best done at regional level and those that can be done more efficiently or effectively at global level. With respect to other RCB funders and providers, the comparative advantage could be in the distinctive set of support activities and processes it has in place for researchers who have research grants from GDN. Positive moves have already been made towards this articulation, most recently at the Board meeting in June 2013, and (with respect to RNPs) through the 2013 GDN-RNP Partnership Charter. However, interviews conducted during the IE suggest it is not yet fully communicated to stakeholders, including to donors.

4. GDN should seek ways of further increasing the disciplinary diversity of RRC grants, beyond economics.

The contribution of social sciences other than economics to policy making and analysis is now widely acknowledged and is seen in the work of policy think tanks across the world. GDN is committed to supporting RCB for a wider range of policy relevant social science disciplines, a commitment that is reflected in the current composition of the GDN Board of Directors. However, as shown in section 4.3.5, RRC winners are predominantly economists, to a greater extent than AMC and GRPs. Where the disciplinary focus of RNPs makes it difficult to increase the representation of non-economics social sciences, GDN and their RNPs should consider partnering with additional regional institutions with greater coverage of non-economics social science research.

5. The quality of mentoring should be enhanced and made more consistent.

Quantitative and qualitative data from the survey questionnaires show (section 4.1) that mentoring is seen as a crucial contributor to the RCB that GDN supports, but the experience of both mentors and mentees is very variable. Careful pairing of mentor and mentee is essential. Clearer guidelines on roles, responsibilities and expectations for both mentor and mentee should be spelled out, including for a period following the completion of the grant, and compliance monitored. Mentors should be expected to discuss ethical issues with their mentees and to provide support towards academic publication of outputs.

6. The annual conference should be continued, subject to funding being available. It is a high priority activity.

Younger, early career researchers in particular welcome the opportunity for networking and establishing contacts with their peers and with global leaders in their field. RNPs should be given a voice in deciding topics that are relevant in their own regions. In the interests of RCB, the programmes must be planned to give high levels of structured interaction between expert speakers and early career researchers. Enabling the participation of these younger researchers is essential to their development as researchers because they are less likely than their more

experienced peers to have funding to attend regional and international disciplinary conferences. GDN is to be commended for the changes they have recently made to the annual conference, including making more places and funding available for younger researchers.

7. RNPs should be encouraged to review their calls for proposals and criteria for assessing and selecting proposals for funding, to ensure they are appropriately targeted.

Provision of RCB opportunities to early career researchers is part of the GDN mission and theory of change. However, currently, calls for proposals and competitions do not always target early career researchers (section 4.2.2). With RRCs, while GDN's global call invites proposals from early career researchers, this is not always explicit in the calls issued by the RNPs themselves. Gaps in the GDN awardee database makes it difficult to monitor the extent to which early career researchers are represented among RRC winners and other awardees. Where the RNP's own disciplinary focus makes it difficult to broaden the focus beyond economics, opportunities should be considered for bringing other partners within the region into the process (see also Recommendation 4 above).

8. The importance of ethical conduct of research should be stressed in calls for proposals, assessment of proposals, implementation of project activities, RCB training and mentoring.

Researchers need to understand that there are ethical dimensions in all research and that these are particularly pertinent when policies affecting large numbers of people may be influenced by the findings, and when research involves collection of information from or about 'human subjects', i.e. people. The quality review of outputs (section 4.2.3) showed that ethical issues were not adequately considered in reports and papers from the main research grant programmes funded through GDN. Review of GRP and RRC competition 'calls' shows that ethical issues are not drawn to researchers' attention. Academic journals are increasingly insisting that ethical issues are explicitly addressed in papers accepted for publication; and many academic funding bodies require applicants to identify ethical issues and state how they propose to deal with them in the conduct of their research.

There are two lines of action for GDN to pursue. First, as part of its commitment to building researcher capacity, it should include consideration of ethical issues among the topics and skills covered in the training offered to grantees. This can be reinforced by including support on ethical issues among the responsibilities of mentors; and by having information on good ethical practice, with examples from GDN-funded research, available on the website. Second, ethical dimensions should be made explicit in calls for proposals and in the criteria used by reviewers and GDN in assessing proposals. It is not suggested that GDN set up its own ethical scrutiny procedure; however, GDN should consider (a) including a section in all research proposal and competition templates where researchers outline the ethical issues and how they will be addressed in the research, and (b) requiring all grantees to demonstrate (after the award but before data collection begins) that their research has been reviewed through the relevant ethical clearance procedure in their home institution and/or government and has been given permission to proceed.

9. More emphasis is needed on bringing funded research outputs to academic publication.

From the quality review of outputs and from survey data, the extent to which GDN-funded research awards lead to the preparation of outputs in a form suitable for publication in international peer-reviewed journals is less than would be expected of programmes committed to RCB. The ability to write up research for academic publication is an important part of researcher capacity. In all regions of the world, researchers' career progression is influenced by their publication record. After completion of a grant, GDN should consider continuing to support (through mentors, RNPs and HQ GDN staff) grantees to develop their outputs into journal-quality papers. This could be made the subject of a separate, follow on competitive grant, so that support is targeted where it is most likely to have a positive result. A journal prize award a few years after completion of GDN research grant can be a good example of incentivising grantees to produce quality papers in high impact journals

10. GDN should identify opportunities for increasing the relevance and impact of Policy Dialogues.

Linking research to policy is central to GDN's vision and theory of change. The effort that currently goes into this is not seen, by key stakeholders, as offering as high value for money as other activities. The IE team's own observations and a review of policy dialogue agenda, reports and lists of participants also suggests that Policy Dialogues do not always have the most appropriate people participating (section 4.2.8). Increasing the relevance and impact of Policy Dialogues would come from the inclusion of clearer objectives and linking PDs to the strategy of GDN; identifying the most appropriate participants; designing the programme around the need for interaction rather than formal presentation of research findings; following up to continue the dialogue; and ensuring the discussions and any follow up are appropriately documented.

11. GDN and RNPs should consider making joint approaches to donors and funders, with proposals that capitalise on the complementarities between them and the comparative advantages of each. This could include a greater role for RNPs in future GRPs. The recent innovation of a 'global RRC' is to be welcomed as a step in this direction.
12. GDN should review the procedures set out in the Staff Manual regarding (a) handling grievances (to cover situations where a grievance is with the President) and (b) staff appraisal to ensure these comply to best organisational practice in terms of objectivity, transparency and equity (section 4.6.2).
13. GDN needs to keep its databases up to date in order to facilitate the efficient conduct of evaluations.

The collection of baseline data against which to assess changes in research capacity over the lifetime of a grant and beyond has been started and should be continued. However, as noted in section 4.3.5 and elsewhere in the report, existing databases have too many missing values to be useful for M&E purposes. The grant and grantee database lacks gender and discipline data for a large proportion of grantees; and research outputs from GDN funded research is not always available online. It is important that adequate staff resource is allocated to the task of ensuring databases are maintained, including the chasing up of missing data.

14. The role of the GDN M&E team vis-à-vis external evaluators of GDN activities and programmes, and their level of involvement, should be clearly spelled out in TORs for evaluation contracts.

GDN's M&E team is highly competent and professional, and throughout the process of the IE were always helpful in responding to queries and providing access to information. However they were more involved in the detail of the IE than the IE team had expected. This in no way compromised the independence of the evaluation but did lead to the team spending more time (person days, and elapsed time) in completing key elements of the IE process. There are diminishing returns to time spend on successive revision of questionnaires, for example.

15. GDN should increase the time and resources available for reflecting on and learning from monitoring and evaluation, centrally and within and between regional networks, and for then supporting the putting of those lessons into practice.

Interview and survey data from the IE suggest there is not always enough time to learn from programme experience and from M&E; and in particular, not enough time and thought given to how to put those lessons into practice. While some of the recent developments within GDN's programmes are clearly the result of reflection and learning, a more systematic approach to lesson learning would be advantageous, for example through specific agenda items in management meetings and staff consultations for reflection on evaluation reports from GRPs, conferences and other programmes.

## Annexes

Annex A, B, C, D and E are available upon request. For further information, please write to Ms. Savi Mull, Head - Monitoring and Evaluation ([smull@gdn.int](mailto:smull@gdn.int)).

## F Figures and charts

Figure F 1

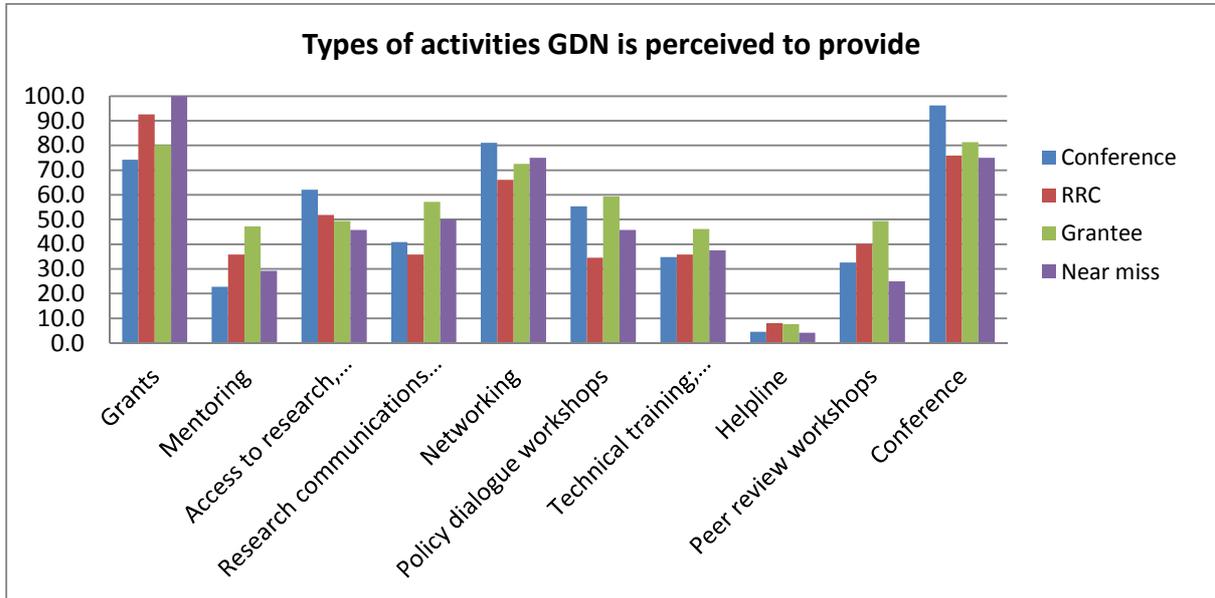


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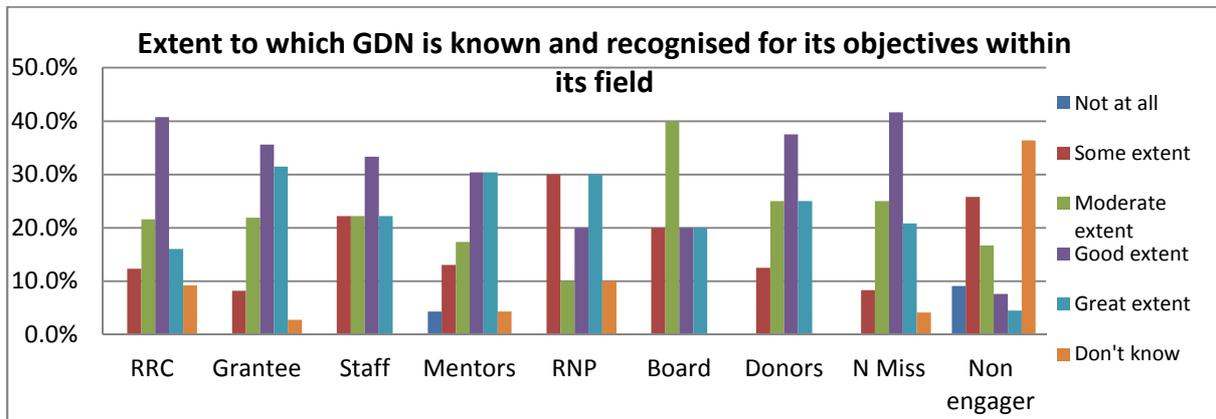


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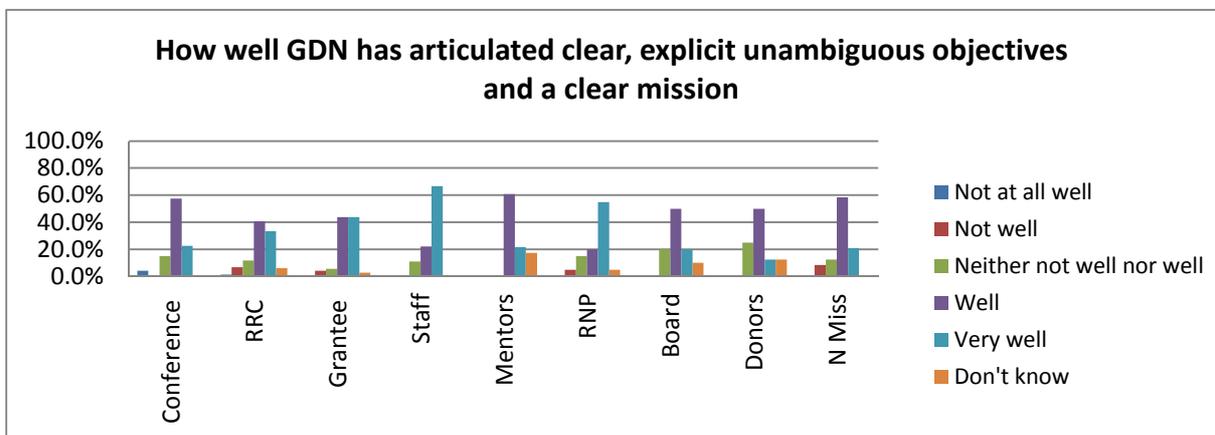


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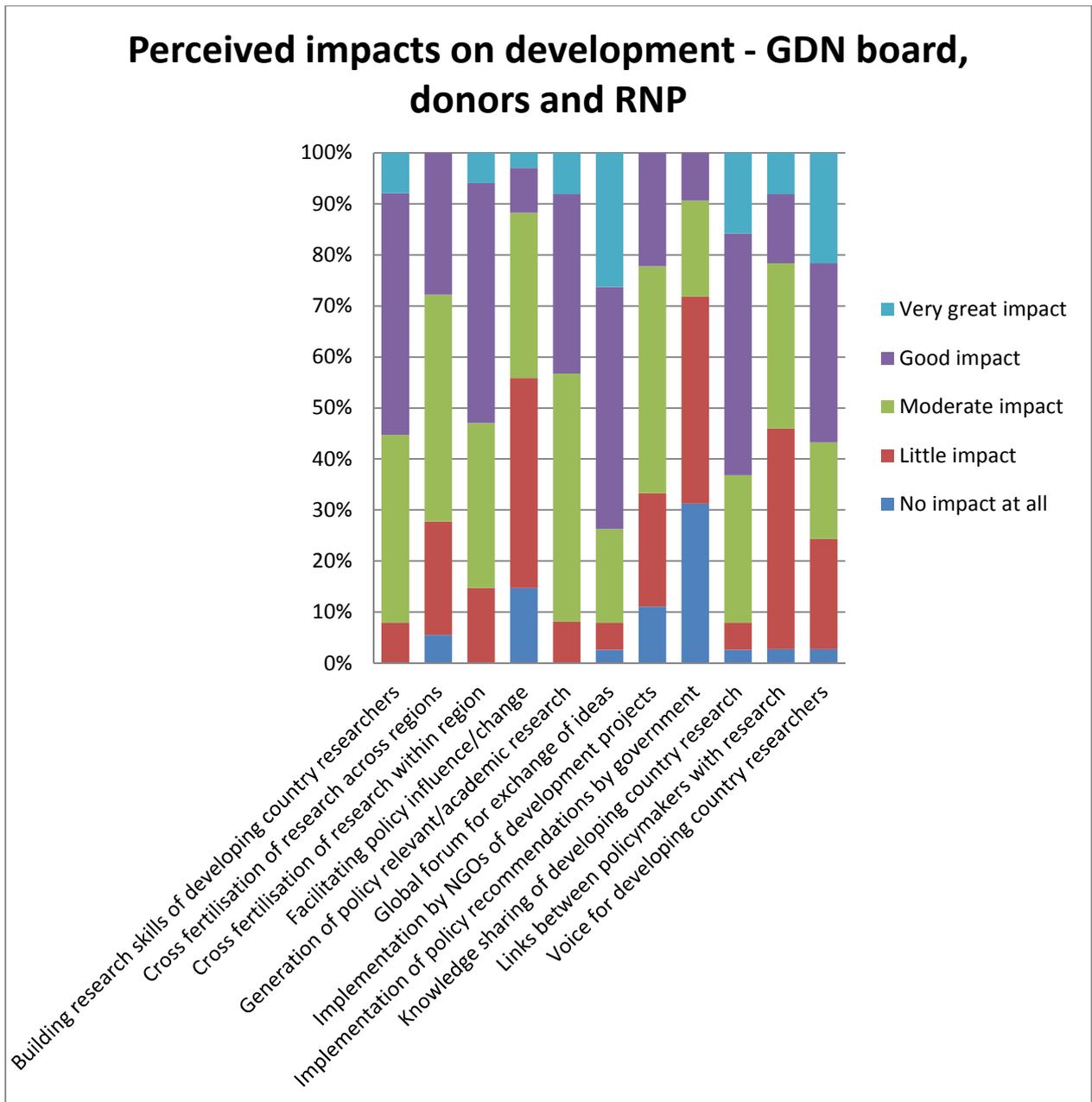


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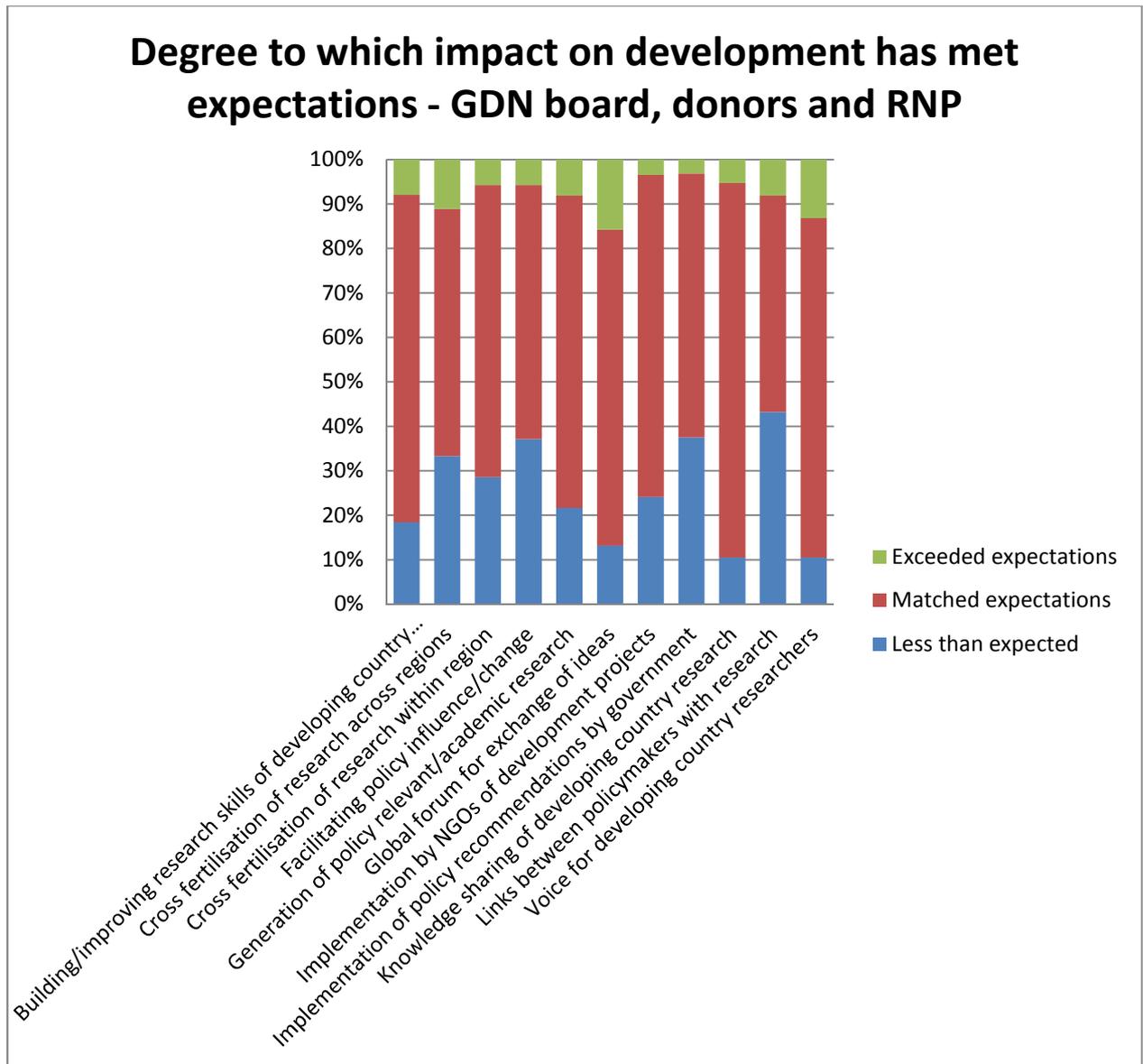


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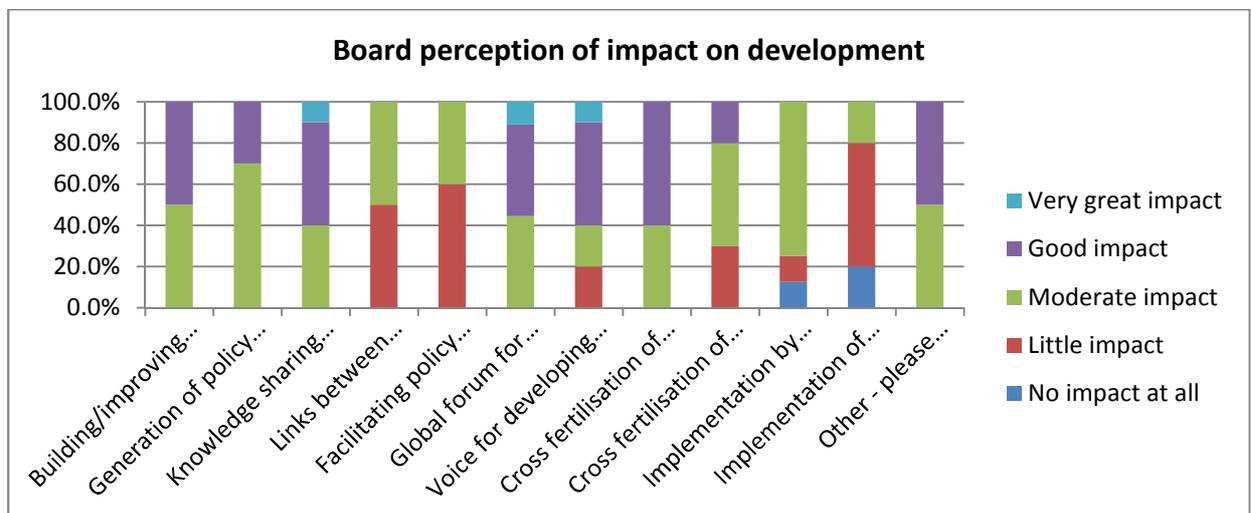


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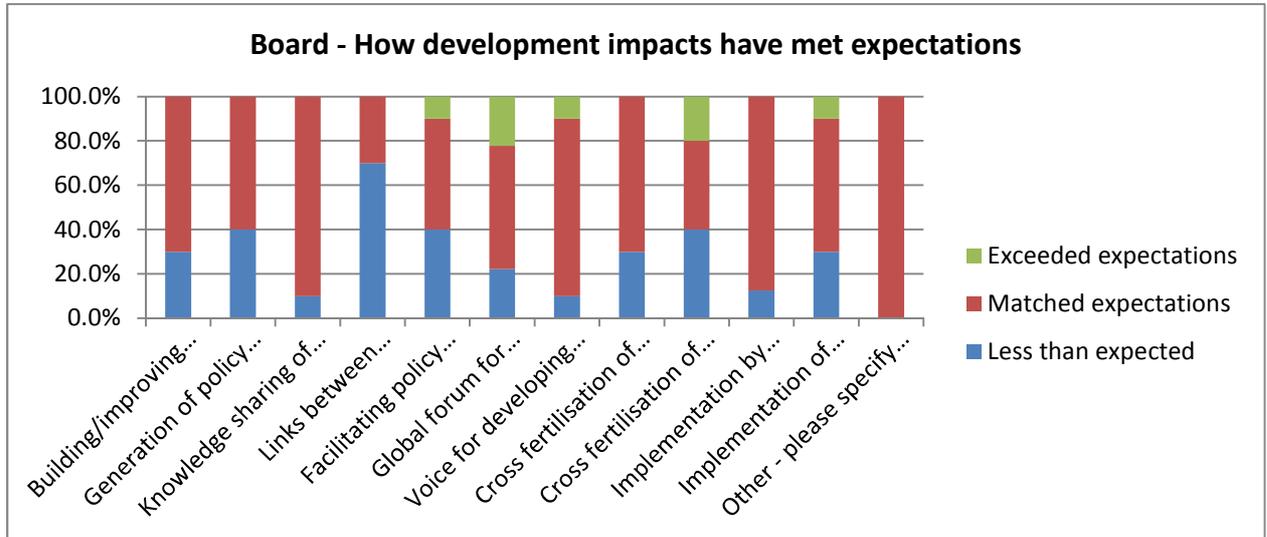


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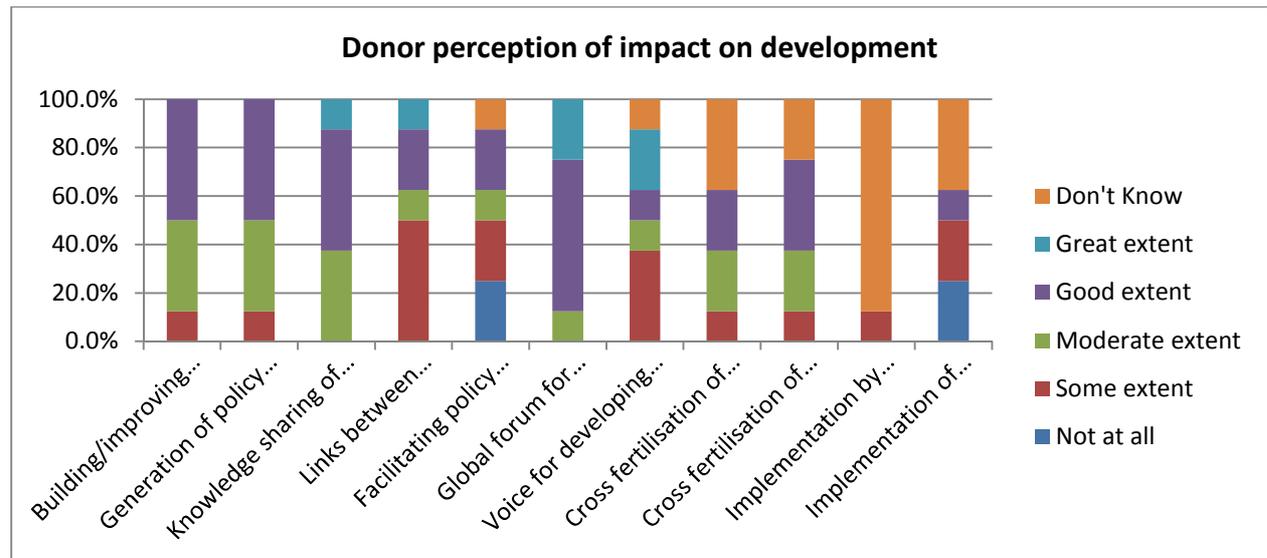


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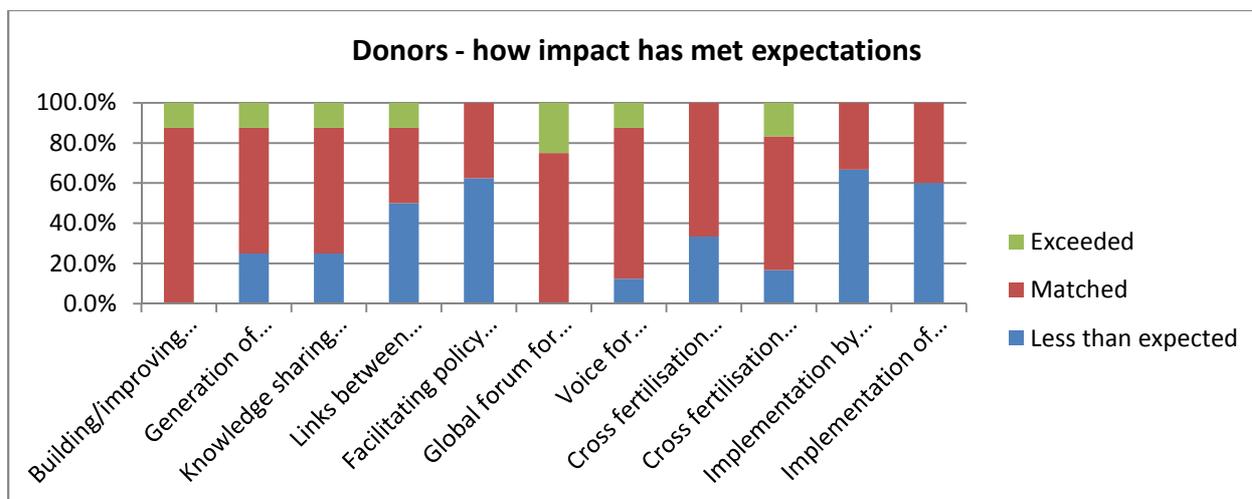


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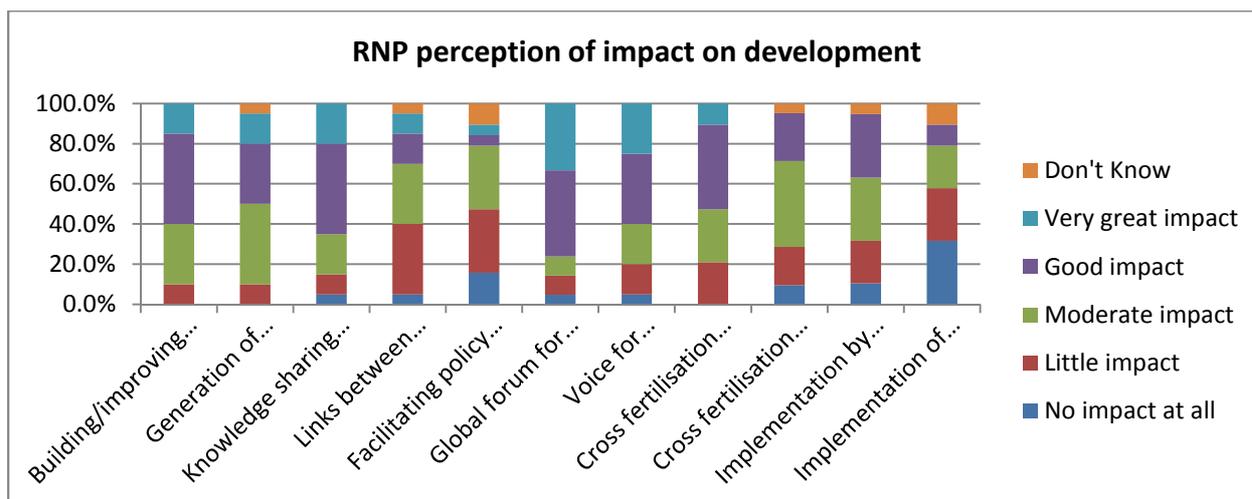


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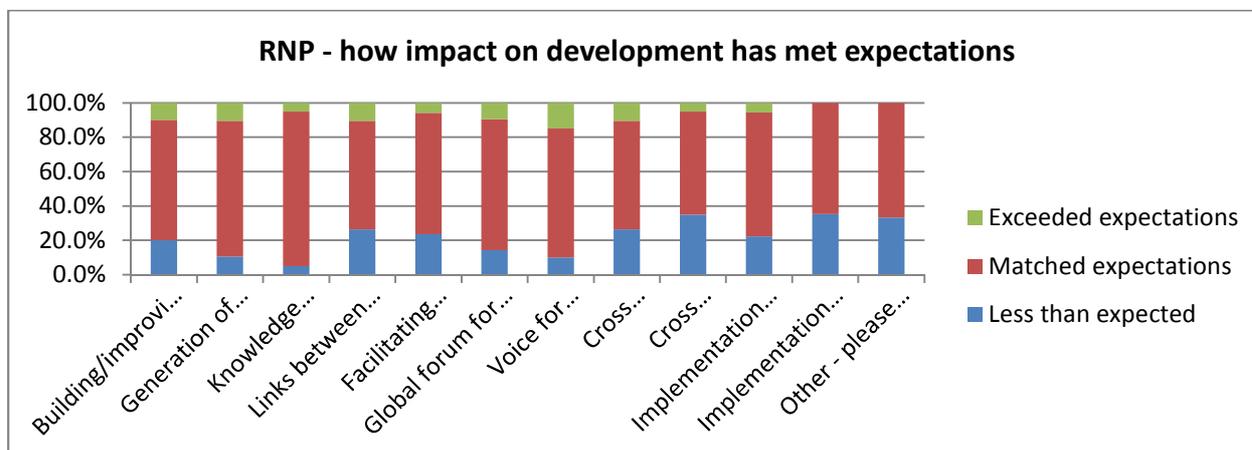


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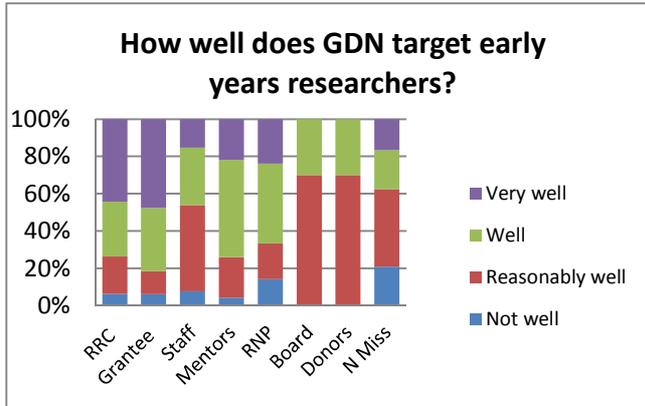


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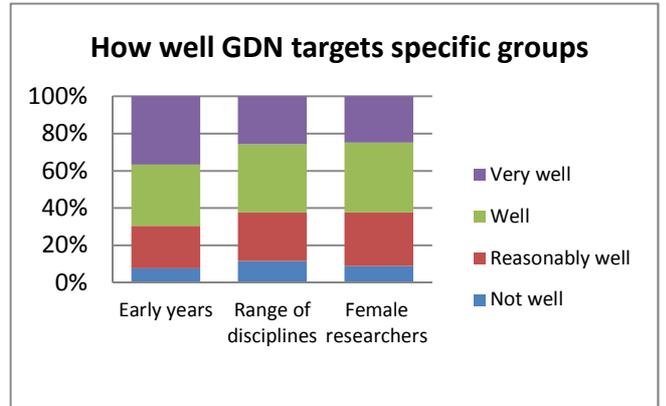


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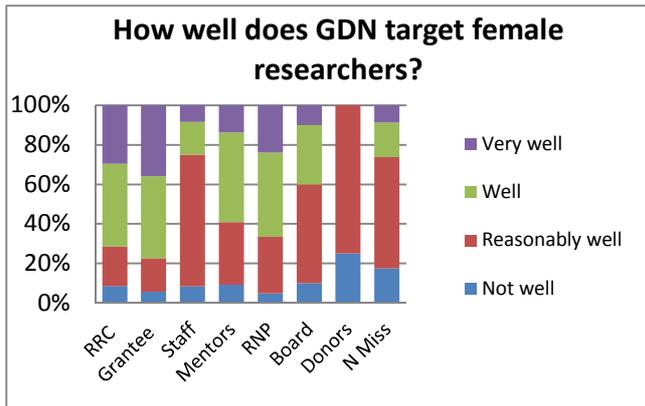


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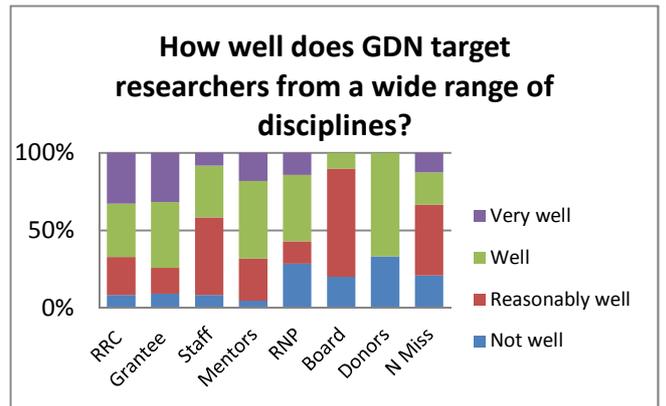


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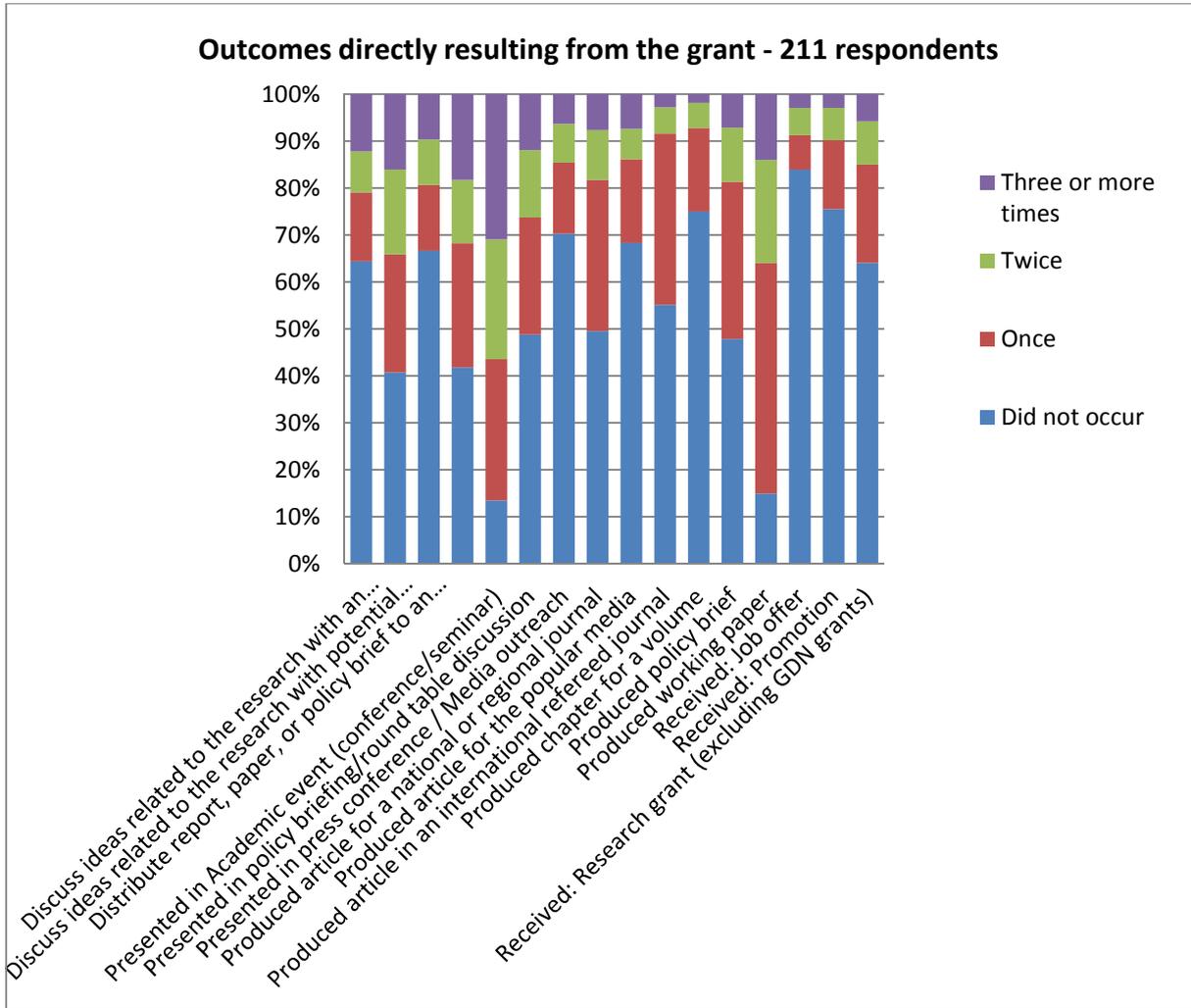


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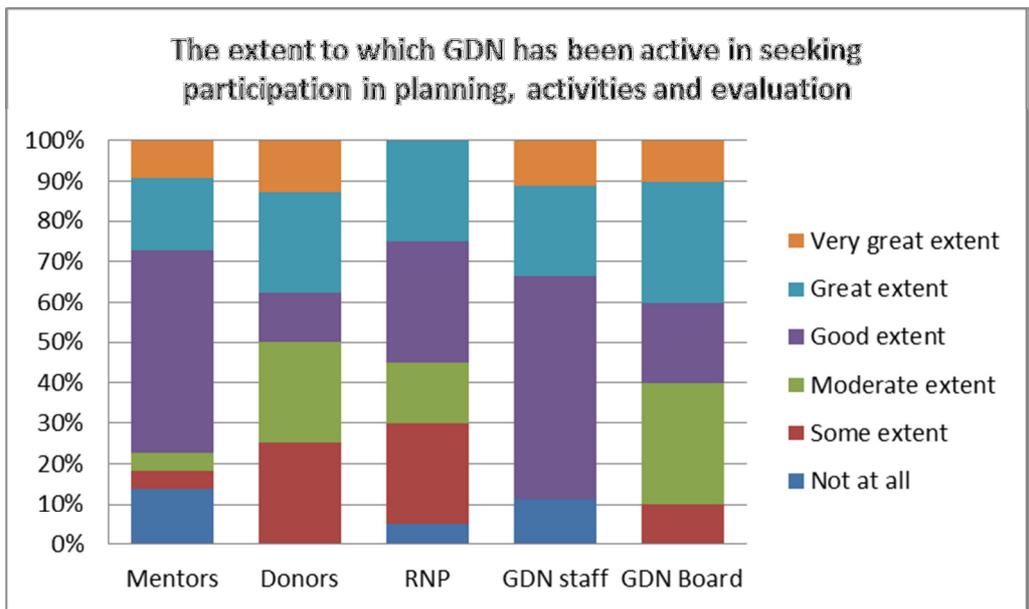


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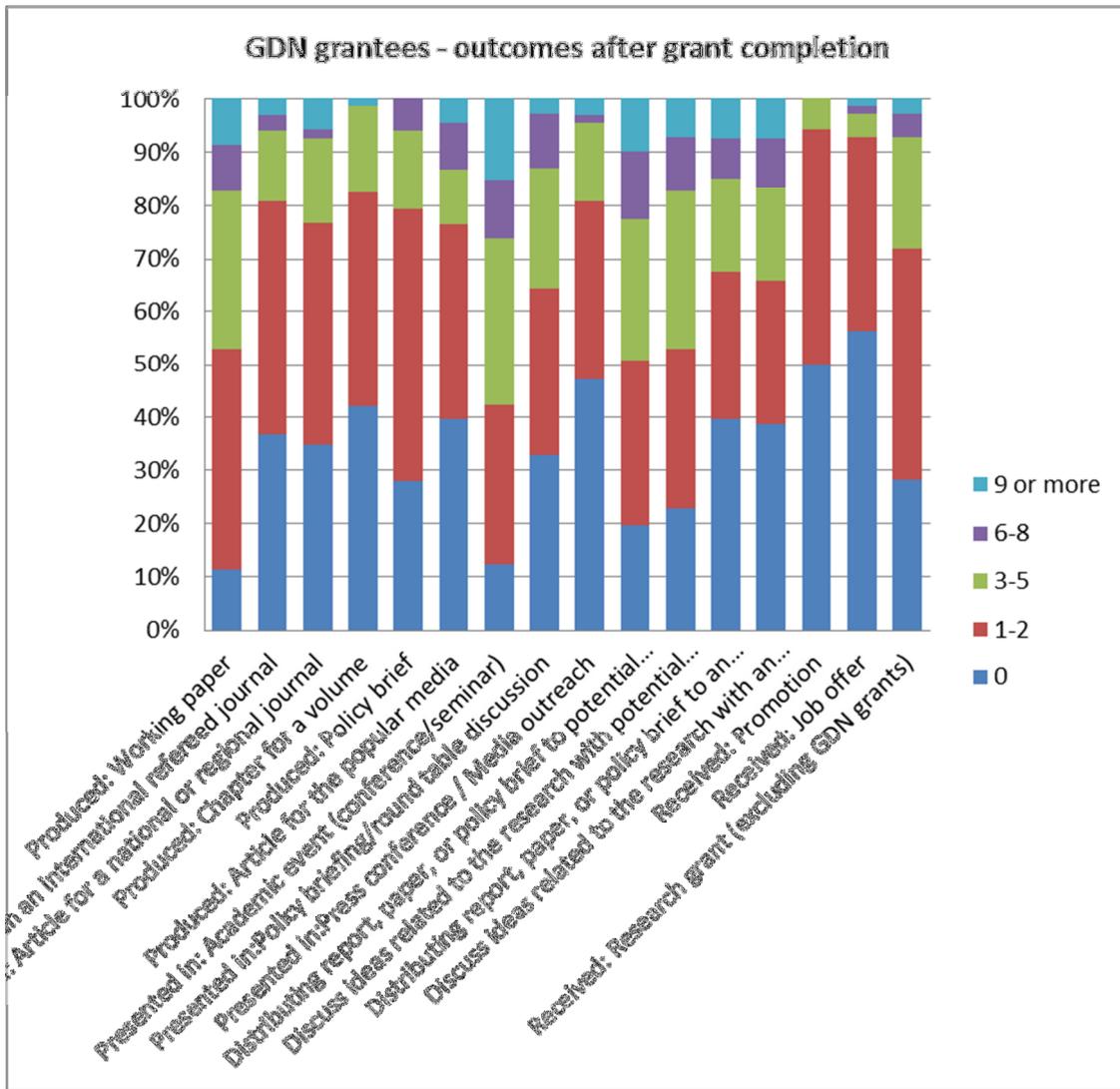


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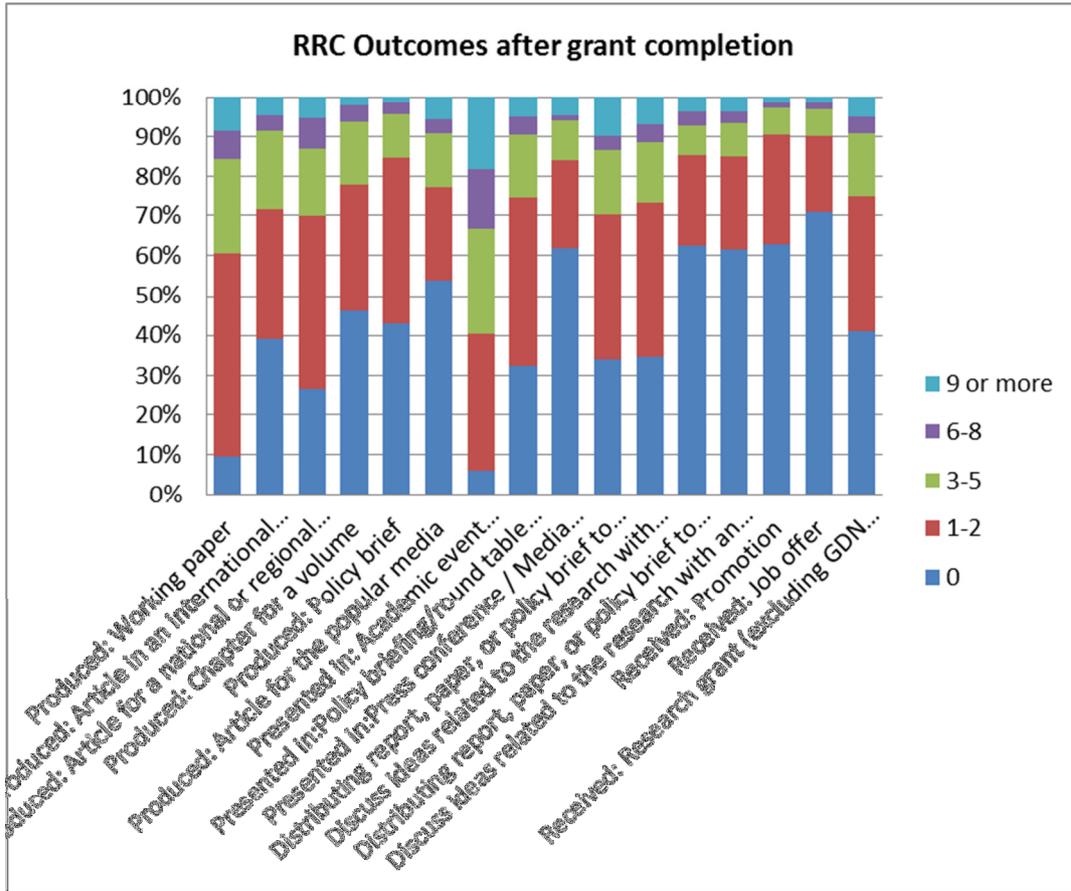


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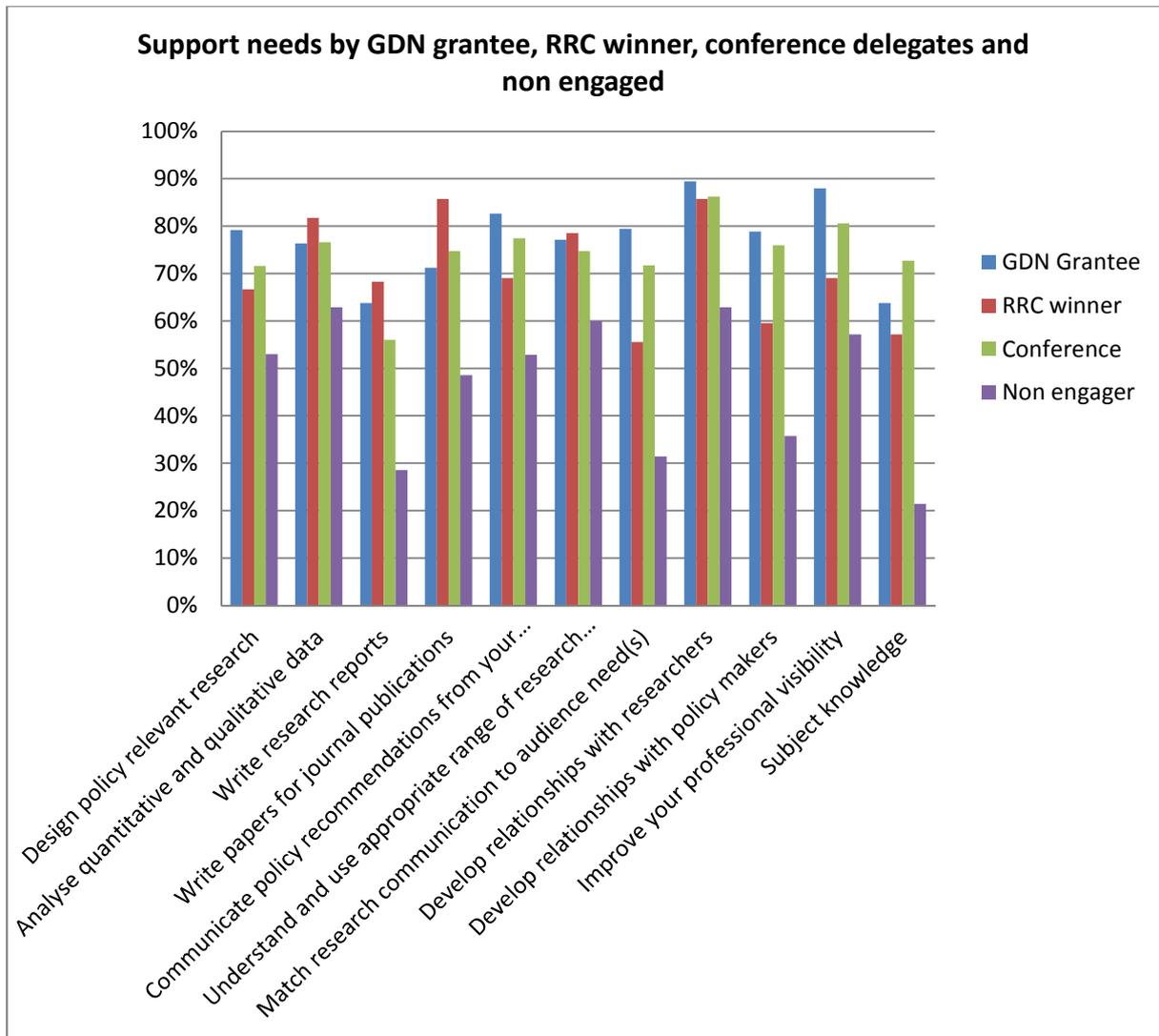


Figure F 21 GDN Grantee - How well needs were met by GDN's RCB activities

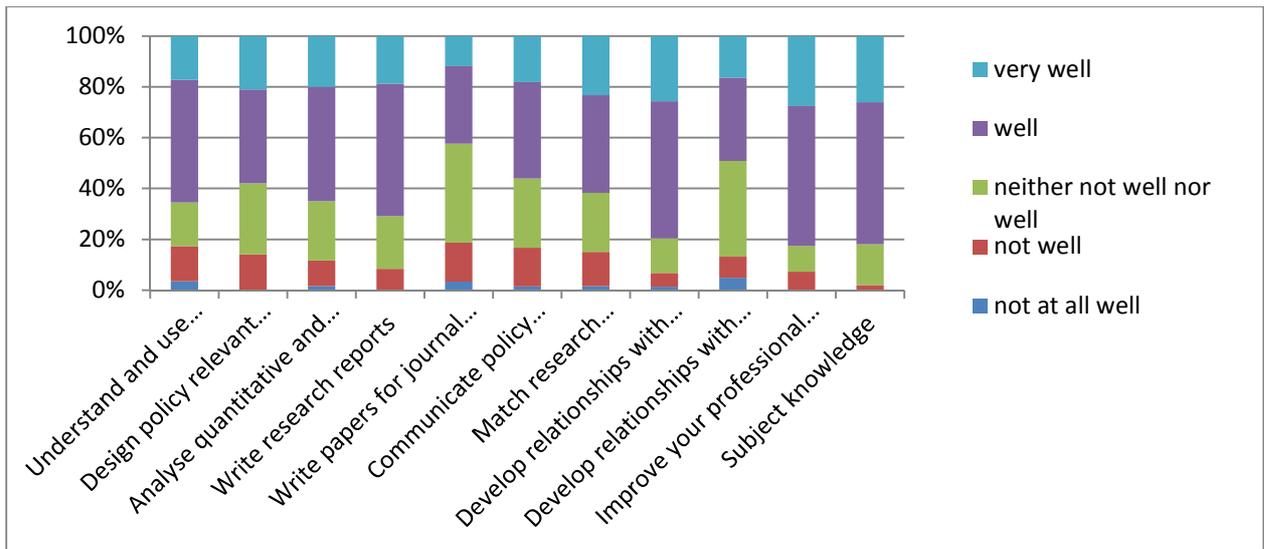


Figure F 22 RRC winner - How well needs have been met by GDN's RCB activities

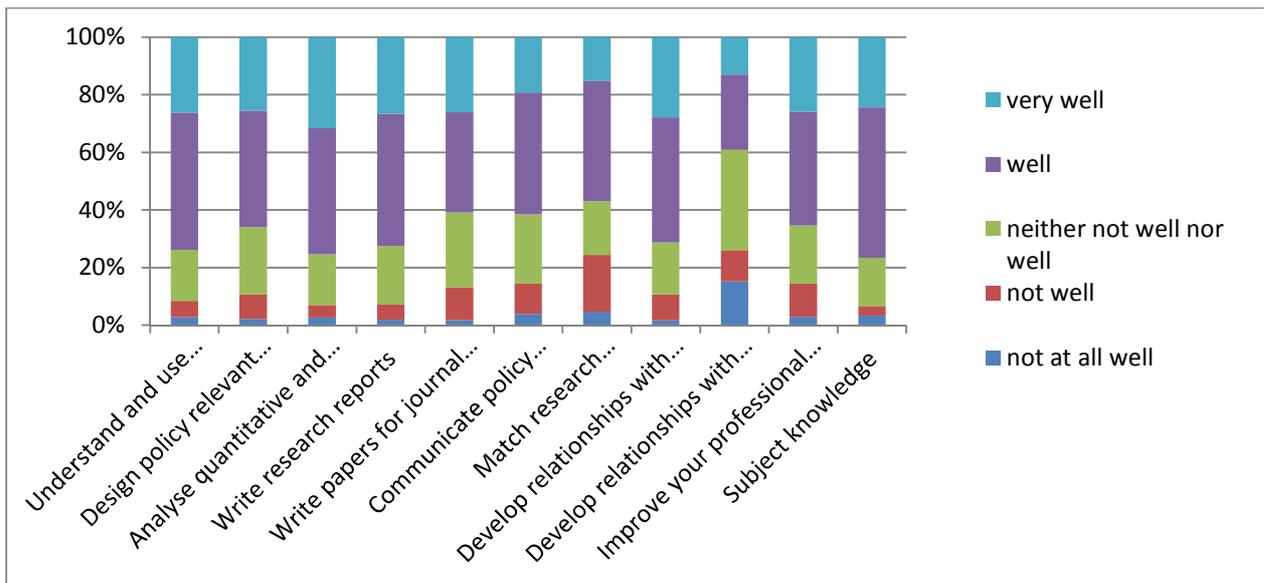


Figure F 23 Conference delegate - How well needs have been met by GDN's RCB activities

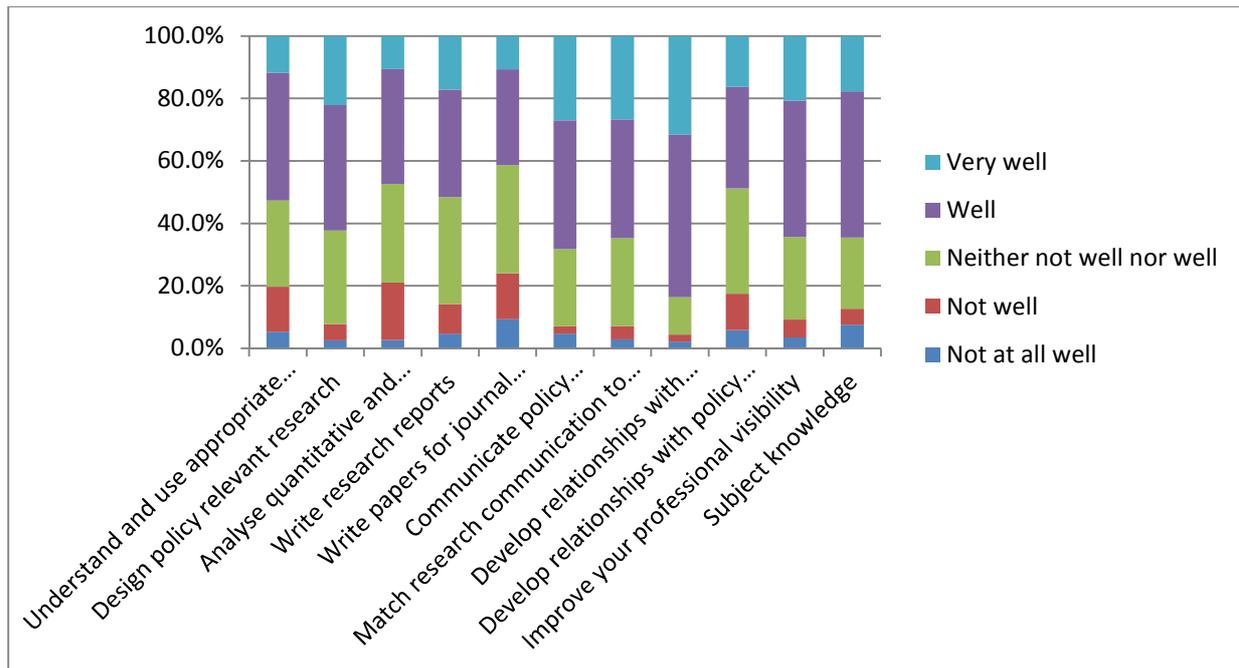


Figure F 24 How valuable RNP and GDN activities have been for RRC winners

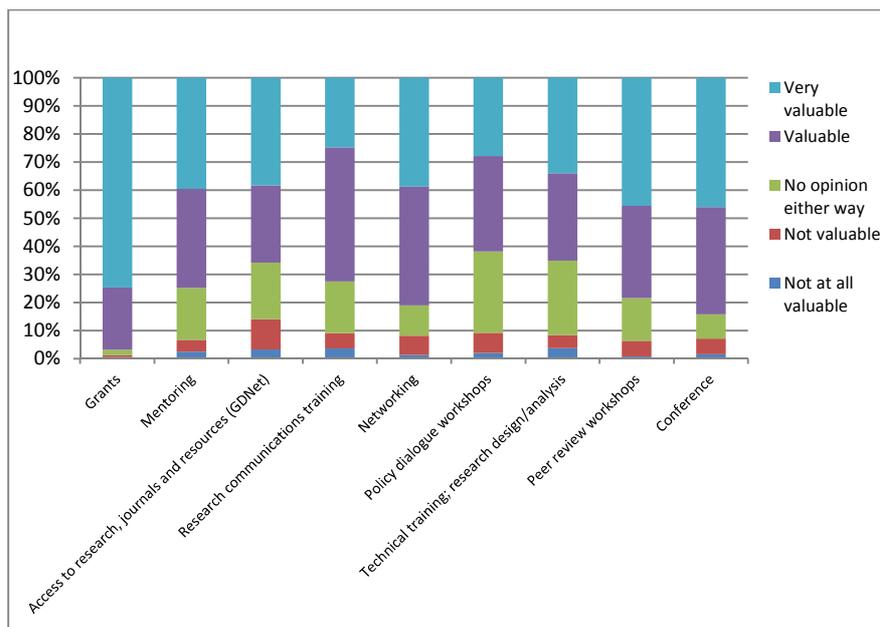


Figure F 25 How valuable RNP and GDN activities have been for GDN grantees

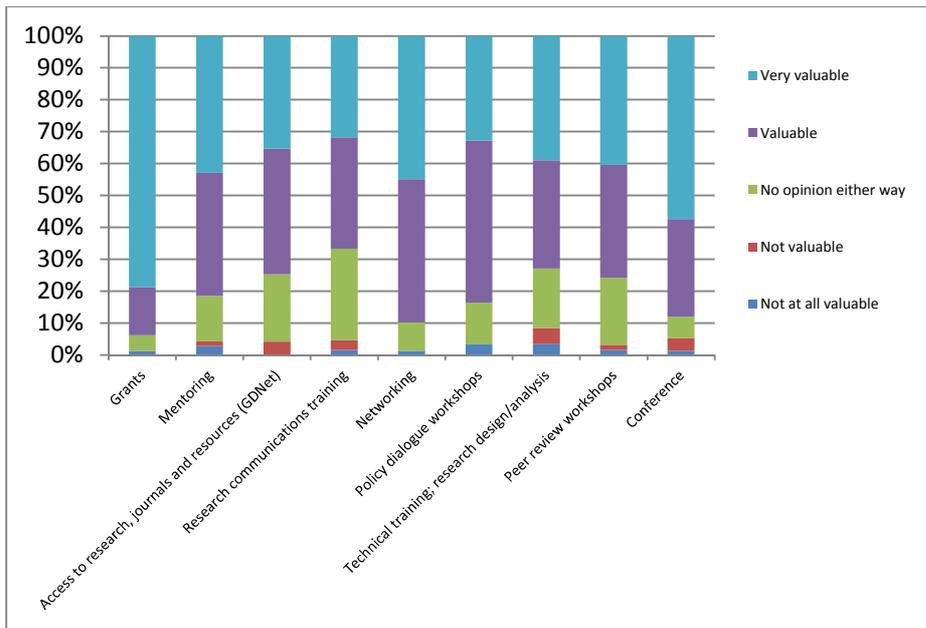


Figure F 26 How valuable RNP and GDN activities have been for Conference delegates

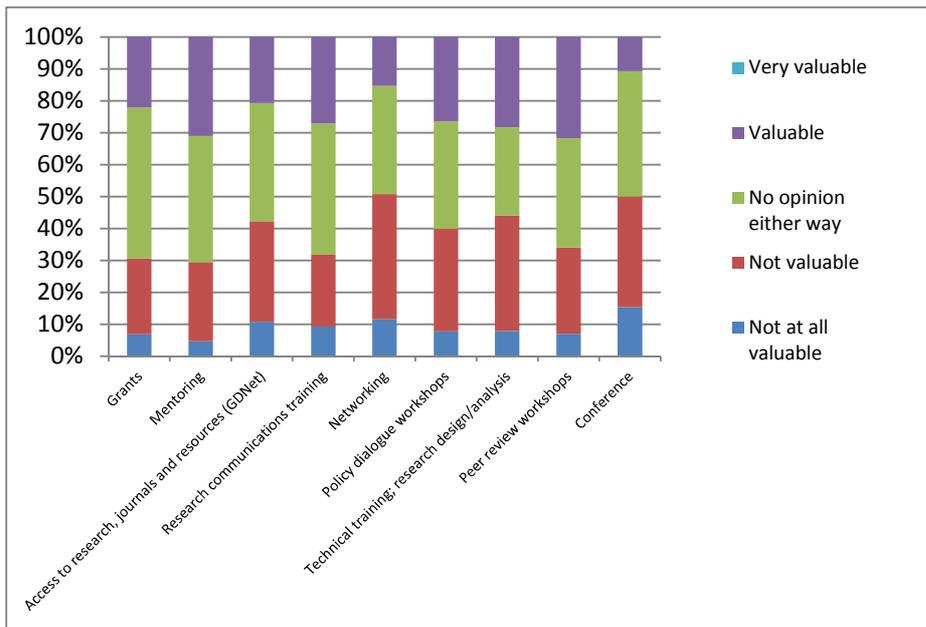


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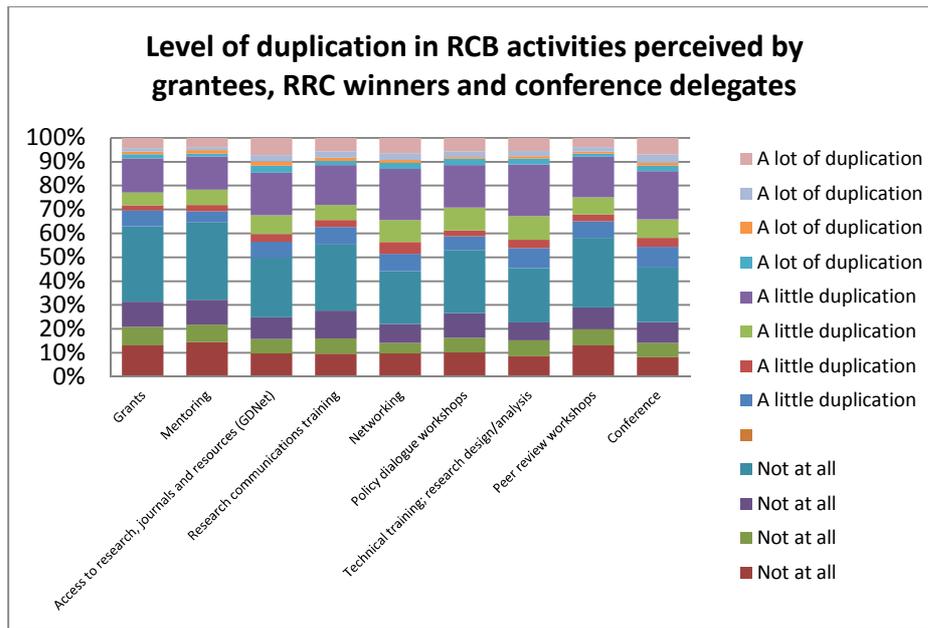


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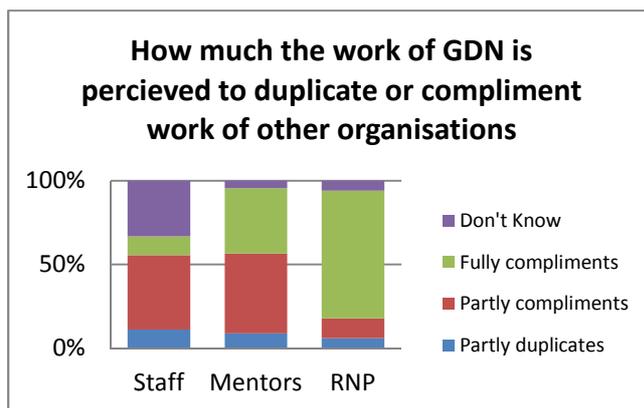


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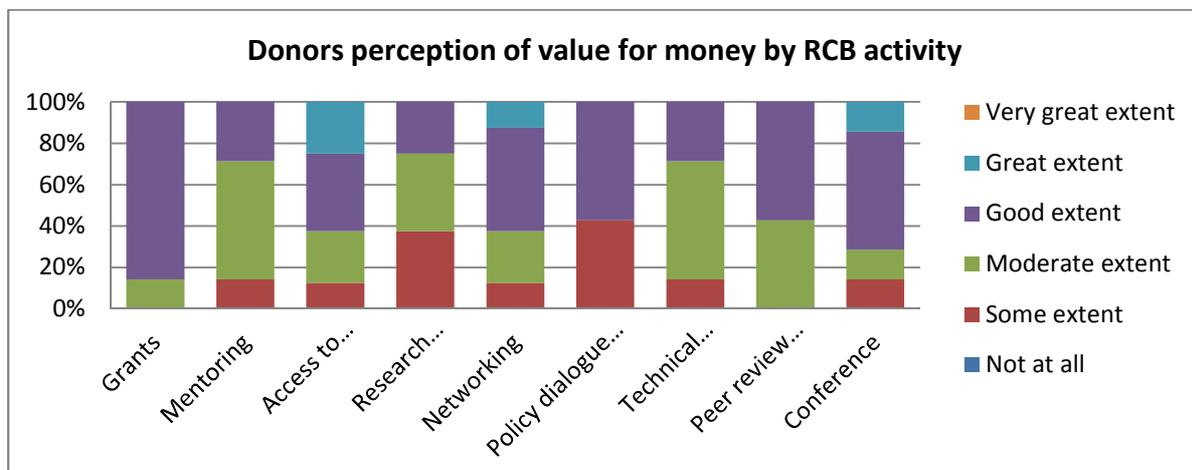


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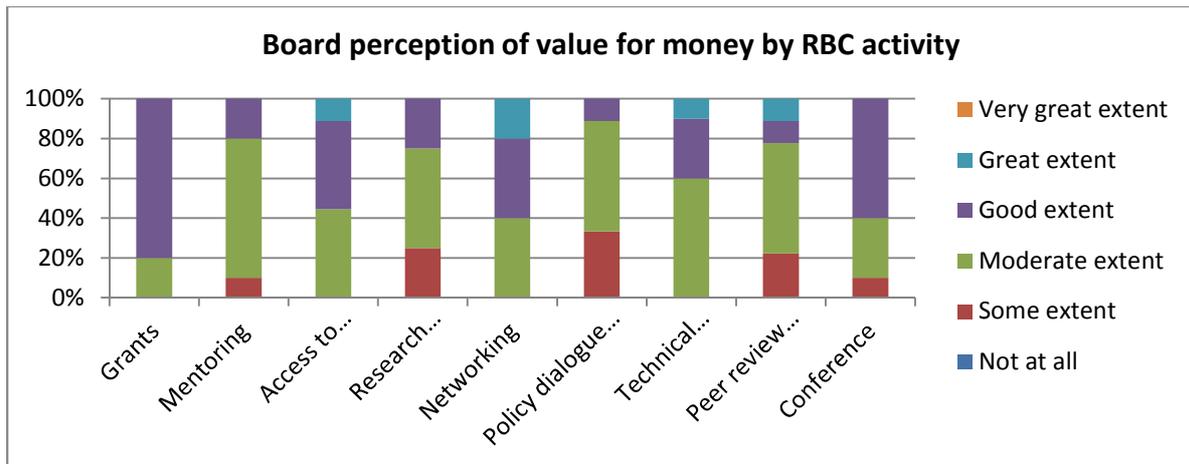


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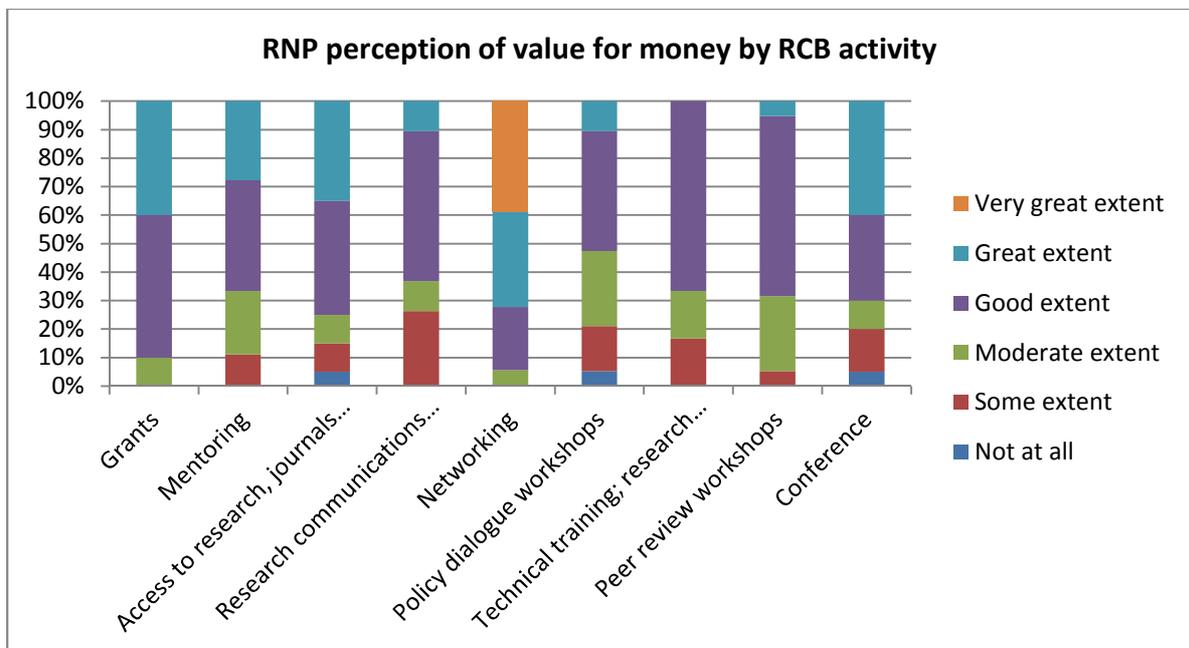


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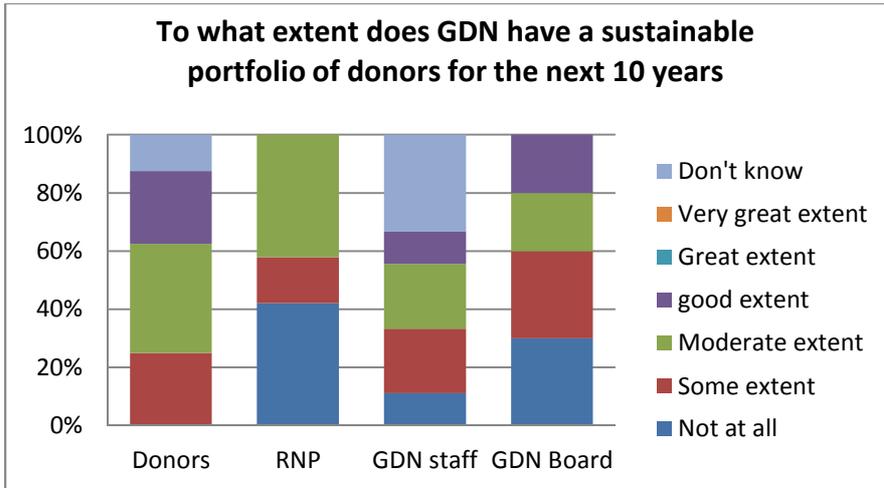


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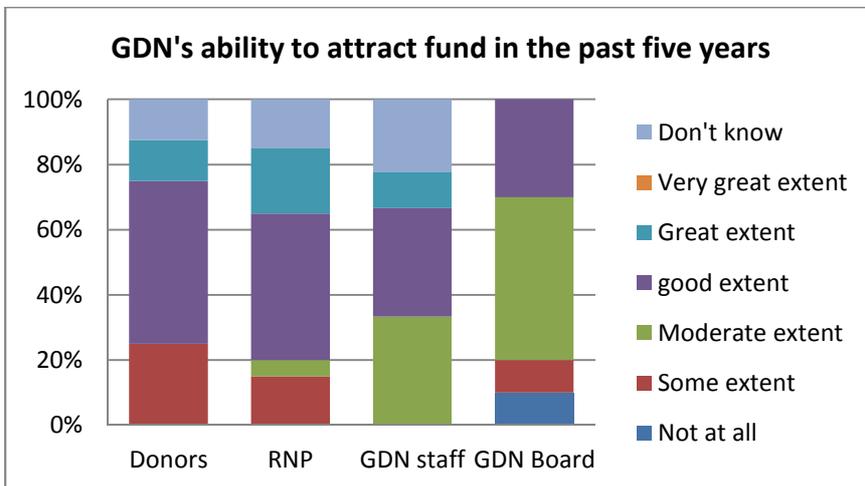


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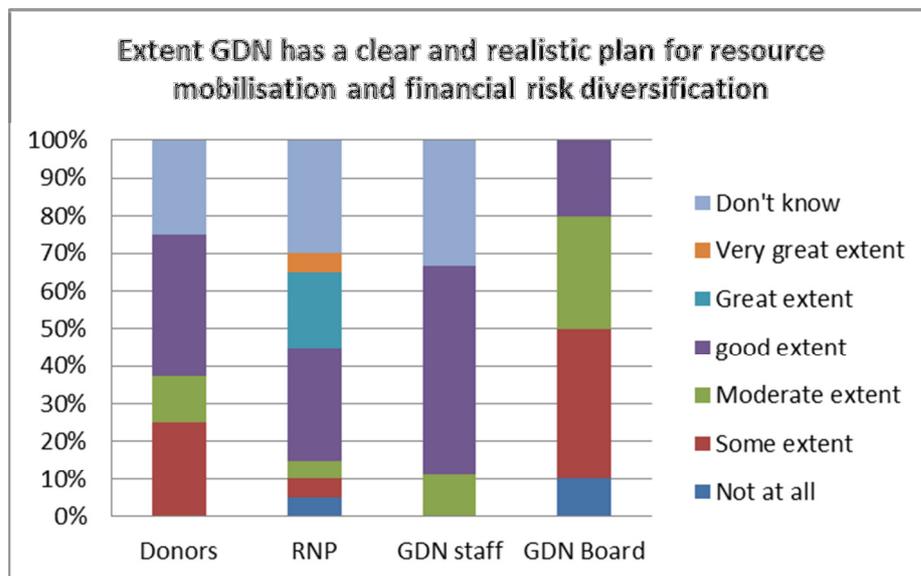


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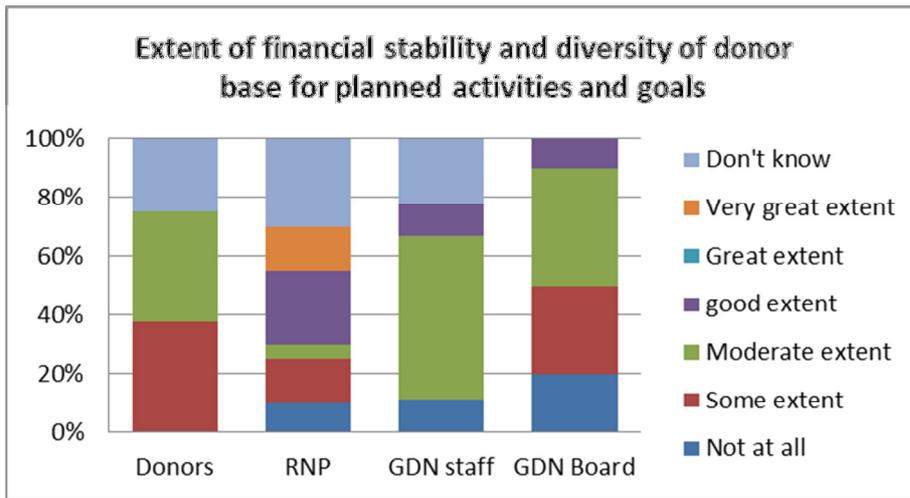


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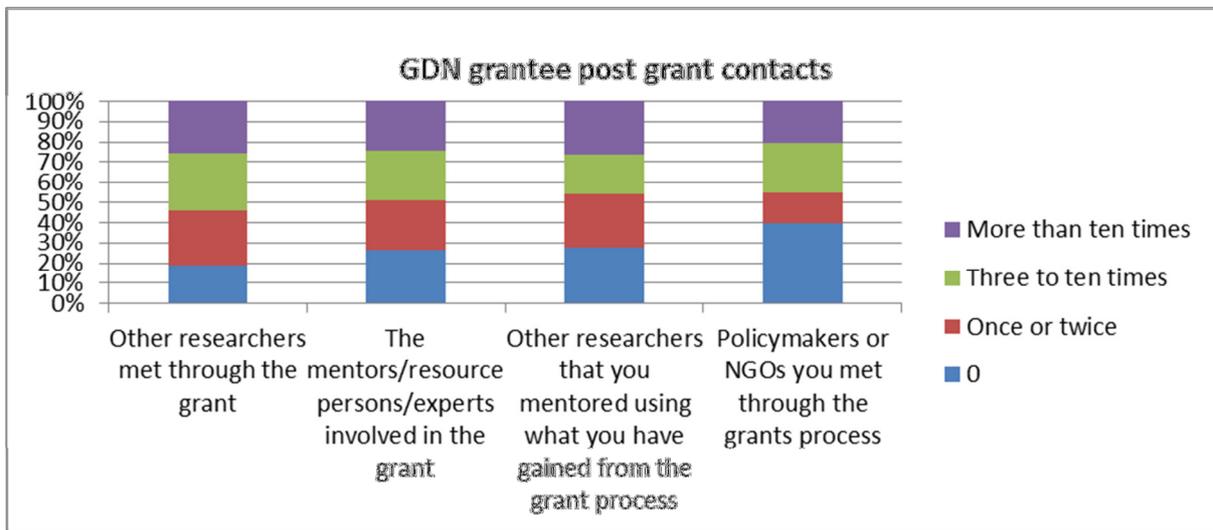


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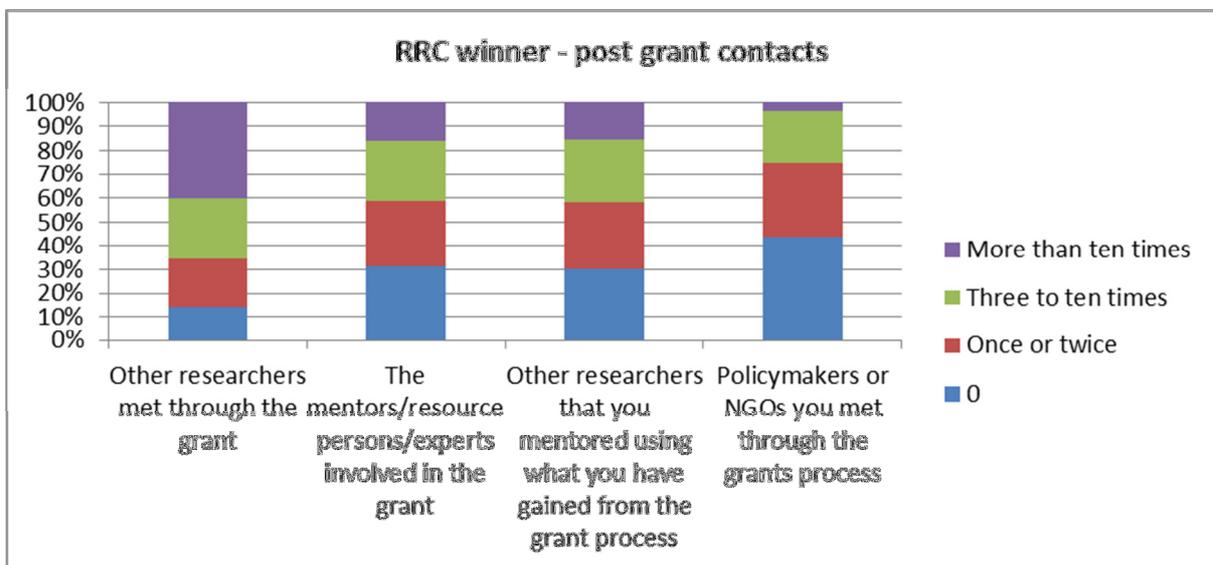


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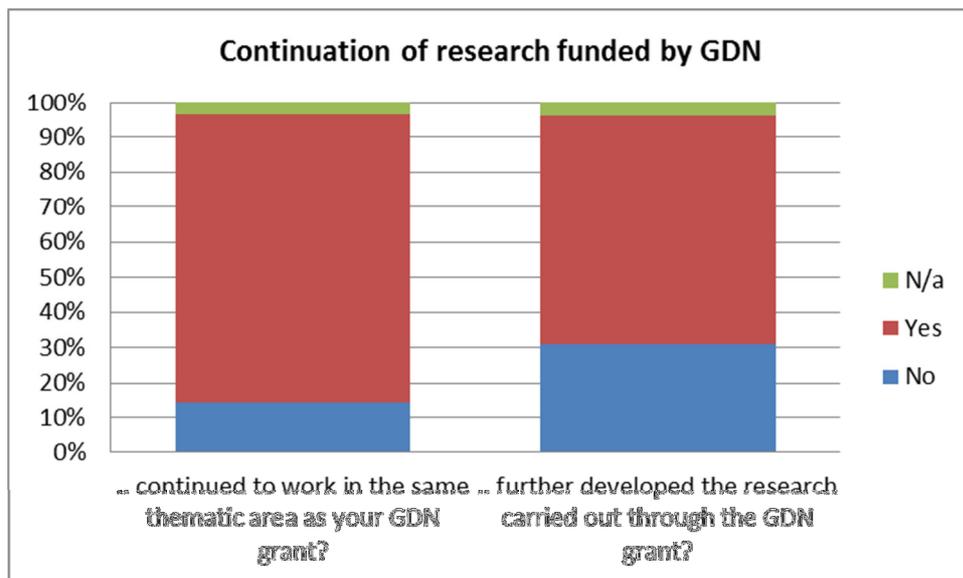


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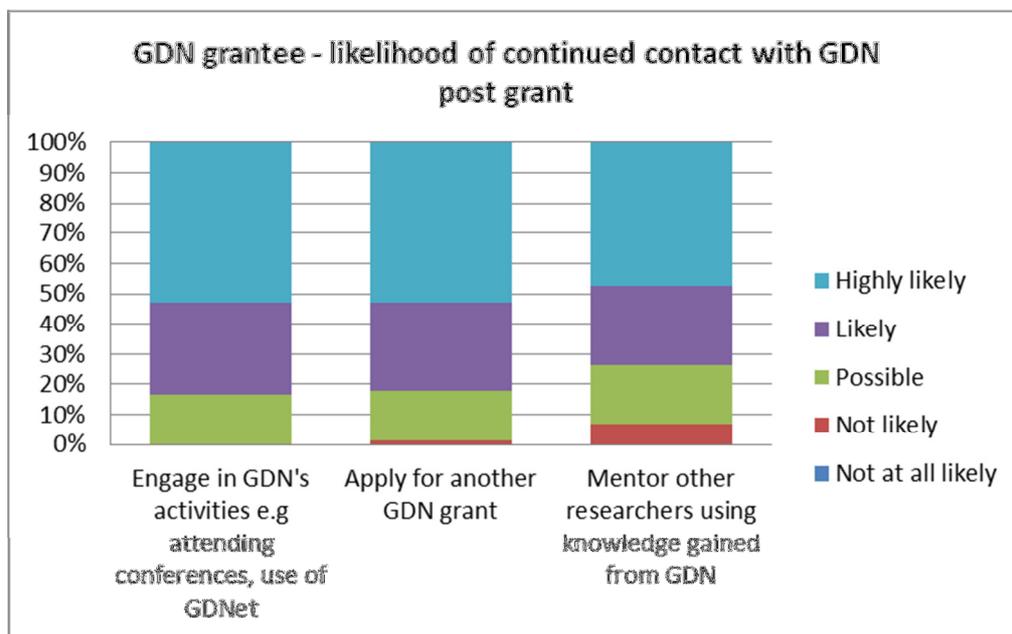


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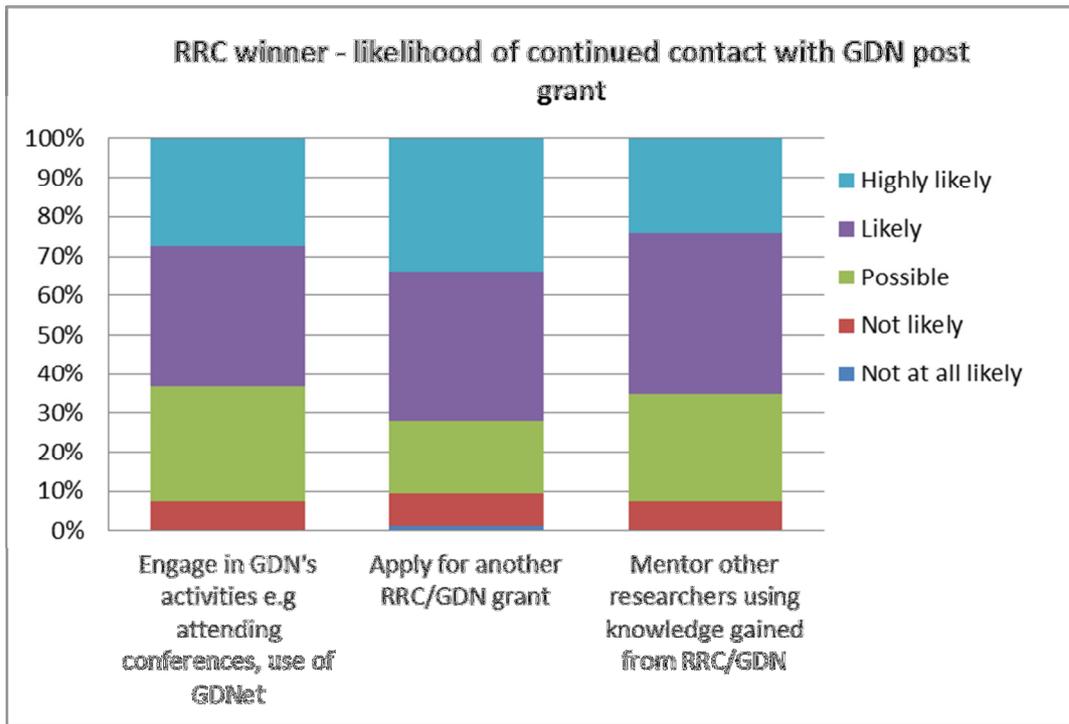
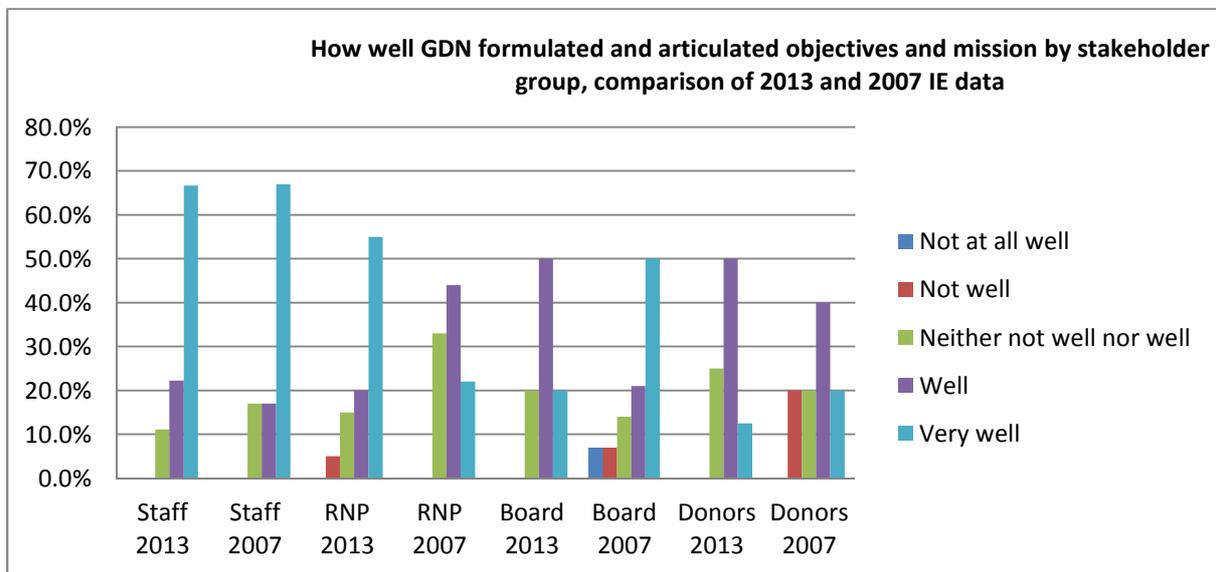


Figure F 41



## G Additional tables on gender disaggregation of RCB outcomes

**Table G.1 Percent of grantees who cited at least one of the following outputs directly resulting from their GDN grant**

	GDN grantee - Female	GDN grantee - Male	Difference	RRC - Female	RRC - Male	Difference
Produced working paper	73.3	90.5	-17.1	88.1	84.6	3.5
Produced article in an international refereed journal	46.2	37.5	8.7	40.4	49.4	-9.1
Produced article for a national or regional journal	44.0	43.6	0.4	52.7	54.7	-1.9
Produced chapter for a volume	26.9	31.7	-4.8	18.9	25.9	-7.0
Produced policy brief	48.1	75.0	-26.9	48.1	45.9	2.3
Produced article for the popular media	36.0	50.0	-14.0	34.0	21.7	12.3
Presented in Academic event (conference/seminar)	79.3	81.8	-2.5	94.6	86.7	8.0
Presented in policy briefing/round table discussion	46.4	73.2	-26.7	40.4	48.2	-7.9
Presented in press conference / Media outreach	33.3	58.5	-25.2	19.2	20.7	-1.5
Distributing report, paper, or policy brief to potential policymakers (via email, paper, etc.)	59.3	71.8	-12.5	52.8	54.1	-1.3
Discuss ideas related to the research with potential policymakers	60.7	71.4	-10.7	50.9	56.6	-5.7
Distributing report, paper, or policy brief to an implementing NGO	33.3	57.1	-23.8	25.0	27.7	-2.7
Discuss ideas related to the research with an implementing NGO	34.6	64.3	-29.7	23.1	29.3	-6.2
Received: Promotion	25.9	30.0	-4.1	24.0	20.2	3.8
Received: Job offer	14.8	28.6	-13.8	15.7	11.0	4.7
Received: Research grant (excluding GDN grants)	25.9	54.8	-28.8	27.5	36.1	-8.7
Average	43.0	57.5	-14.5	41.0	42.1	-1.1

**Table G.2 Percentage of grantees indicating they had done at least one of the following regardless of language, theme, or source of funding AFTER THE GRANT completion. Either GDN funded or not;**

	Female - GDN grantee	Male - GDN grantee	Difference	Female - RRC	Male - RRC	Difference
Produced: Working paper	82.8	92.5	-9.7	86.4	92.3	-5.9
Produced: Article in an international refereed journal	69.0	57.9	11.1	56.9	62.2	-5.3
Produced: Chapter for a volume	57.1	57.5	-0.4	54.4	53.5	0.9
Produced: Policy brief	75.0	69.2	5.8	52.8	59.8	-6.9
Produced: Article for the popular media	67.9	53.8	14.0	47.4	46.3	1.0
Presented in: Academic event (conference/seminar)	93.3	85.7	7.6	96.4	92.2	4.1
Presented in:Policy briefing/round table discussion	71.4	65.9	5.6	67.9	66.3	1.7
Presented in:Press conference / Media outreach	55.6	52.5	3.1	34.7	41.3	-6.6
Distributing report, paper, or policy brief to potential policymakers (via email, paper, etc.)	75.0	83.3	-8.3	64.8	65.5	-0.7
Discuss ideas related to the research with potential policymakers	71.4	80.5	-9.1	66.7	63.5	3.1
Distributing report, paper, or policy brief to an implementing NGO	57.1	61.5	-4.4	35.2	40.0	-4.8
Discuss ideas related to the research with an implementing NGO	55.6	64.1	-8.5	37.0	40.5	-3.5
Received: Promotion	60.7	41.5	19.3	29.4	41.7	-12.3
Received: Job offer	62.1	31.7	30.4	25.5	30.9	-5.4
Received: Research grant (excluding GDN grants)	67.9	73.8	-6.0	60.8	57.5	3.3
Average	68.1	64.8	3.4	54.4	56.9	-2.5

**Table G.3 Percentage of grantees by frequency of contact since completing the grant**

	GDN grantee - Female	GDN grantee - Male	Difference	RRC - Female	RRC Male	Difference
Other researchers met through the grant						
0	17.2	32.6	-15.3	18.0	25.5	-7.5
Once or twice	37.9	39.5	-1.6	55.7	40.4	15.3
Three to ten times	24.1	23.3	0.9	16.4	26.6	-10.2
More than ten times	20.7	4.7	16.0	9.8	7.4	2.4
The mentors/resource persons/experts involved in the grant						
0	27.6	43.9	-16.3	28.3	35.2	-6.8
Once or twice	48.3	26.8	21.4	45.0	38.5	6.5
Three to ten times	20.7	24.4	-3.7	18.3	22.0	-3.6
More than ten times	3.4	4.9	-1.4	8.3	4.4	3.9
Other researchers that you mentored using what you have gained from the grant process						
0	35.7	41.9	-6.1	43.1	37.5	5.6
Once or twice	28.6	41.9	-13.3	46.6	30.7	15.9
Three to ten times	28.6	9.3	19.3	6.9	27.3	-20.4
More than ten times	7.1	7.0	0.2	3.4	4.5	-1.1
Policymakers or NGOs you met through the grants process						
0	22.2	44.2	-22.0	67.2	60.7	6.6
Once or twice	44.4	32.6	11.9	29.3	21.3	8.0
Three to ten times	25.9	18.6	7.3	3.4	16.9	-13.4
More than ten times	7.4	4.7	2.8	0.0	1.1	-1.1

**Table G.4 Percentage of multiple and single grantees indicating at least one of the following had occurred as a direct result of their GDN grant**

	Multiple grantee	Single grantee	Difference
Produced working paper	96.9	83.7	13.1
Produced article in an international refereed journal	40.0	48.4	-8.4
Produced article for a national or regional journal	40.0	48.4	-8.4
Produced chapter for a volume	32.0	20.9	11.1
Produced policy brief	56.0	44.8	11.2
Produced article for the popular media	24.0	26.5	-2.5
Presented in Academic event (conference/seminar)	92.9	89.3	3.6
Presented in policy briefing/round table discussion	50.0	45.1	4.9
Presented in press conference / Media outreach	20.8	20.5	0.3
Distributing report, paper, or policy brief to potential policymakers (via email, paper, etc.)	69.2	51.3	17.9
Discuss ideas related to the research with potential policymakers	61.5	53.5	8.0
Distributing report, paper, or policy brief to an implementing NGO	40.0	23.2	16.8
Discuss ideas related to the research with an implementing	44.0	22.5	21.5

	<b>Multiple grantee</b>	<b>Single grantee</b>	<b>Difference</b>
NGO			
Received: Promotion	20.8	22.3	-1.5
Received: Job offer	8.0	13.6	-5.6
Received: Research grant (excluding GDN grants)	44.0	29.7	14.3
Average	46.3	40.2	6.0

**Table G.5 Percentage of grantees indicating at least one of the following had occurred after the grant completion**

	<b>Multiple grantee</b>	<b>Single grantee</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Produced working paper	93.5	89.5	4.0
Produced article in an international refereed journal	57.1	61.8	-4.6
Produced article for a national or regional journal	88.5	70.0	18.5
Produced chapter for a volume	66.7	50.8	15.8
Produced policy brief	64.0	55.4	8.6
Produced article for the popular media	46.4	46.0	0.4
Presented in Academic event (conference/seminar)	96.3	93.4	2.9
Presented in policy briefing/round table discussion	76.9	65.5	11.4
Presented in press conference / Media outreach	48.0	35.8	12.2
Distributing report, paper, or policy brief to potential policymakers (via email, paper, etc.)	80.8	62.6	18.2
Discuss ideas related to the research with potential policymakers	68.0	64.7	3.3
Distributing report, paper, or policy brief to an implementing NGO	60.0	32.4	27.6
Discuss ideas related to the research with an implementing NGO	56.5	34.8	21.7
Received: Promotion	32.0	38.4	-6.4
Received: Job offer	40.0	26.6	13.4
Received: Research grant (excluding GDN grants)	74.1	55.3	18.8
Average	65.6	55.2	10.4