

Forewords

The world around us is constantly changing and, now more than ever, investment in research and development is critical to understanding the sources of, and devising solutions for, major global challenges. Global development progress depends on robust science and evidence to produce informed policy and effect meaningful, long-lasting change, ensuring that all parts of our global society have a voice.

Individual research projects increase knowledge and have the potential to produce impacts. However, no project can act in isolation from what has gone before, what comes after, or the work that surrounds it. The ESRC-FCDO Strategic Partnership has ensured that diverse portfolios of research are able to come together to become far more than the sum of their parts.

The knowledge brokering provided by the Impact Initiative has enabled networks of research and researchers to identify both structured and opportunistic pathways to enhance knowledge for development, ensuring that the best, high-quality, robust evidence is highlighted. Likewise, synthesising research that combines around a common theme can greatly enhance its potential to be heard, understood, and acted on. The volume, quality, and accessibility of the impact stories generated out of the ESRC-FCDO partnership is testament to its success.

This report is a celebration of the research, researchers, and research brokers, as well as an opportunity for reflection on what has been learned. For me, the take-home message is that we can do more, and do it better, when we do it together in partnership – researchers, policymakers, knowledge managers, brokers, and funders.

Pamela Mason

Head of International Development,
Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

The last year has provided a stark reminder of the complex, changing and interconnected challenges that we face as a global community, and the vital role that rigorous research, scientific innovation and new knowledge plays in allowing us to meet them. Investment in research and development is a critical enabler for evidence-based policymaking. To ensure research translates into impact on policy and practice we need to better understand how to deliver robust evidence to the right actors, at the right time and in the right way.

This report is an important guide for those involved in the generation and use of evidence. It documents the pathways that individual researchers and research projects have taken to achieve impact; how research programmes and knowledge managers can build networks, broker knowledge and synthesise evidence; and how bodies of research have been brought together to ensure that the impacts of individual research programmes are greater than the sum of their parts.

The report demonstrates the value of the ESRC-FCDO Strategic Partnership and the important contribution of the Impact Initiative. This combination of a strong drive for policy-relevance and academic rigour with innovative approaches to networking, synthesis and case studies has demonstrated not only direct impact on policy and practice, but also important lessons on 'how' this can be achieved that can be built upon.

Julia Kemp

Deputy Director of the Research Department,
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)