



LESSONS LEARNED FROM ODA RESEARCH FUNDS

Annex: methodology

2023

Methodology

This synthesis report is based on a desk review and analysis of publicly available evaluation documents of the GCRF and the Newton Fund. This section outlines how the desk review and analysis were conducted.

1. Selection of relevant evaluation documents

In July 2022, publicly available evaluations of the GCRF and the Newton Fund were identified. Two criteria were applied to select the data for inclusion in the review:

- Only final reports were considered and inception reports were excluded; and
- Annexes were consulted but excluded for data extraction

The table below indicates the 11 reports selected for data extraction.

FUND	AUTHOR(S)	SOURCE	YEAR	TITLE
GCRF	N/A	ICAI - Independent Commission for Aid Impact	2017	Global Challenges Research Fund. A rapid review
	N/A	ICAI - Independent Commission for Aid Impact	2019	ICAI follow-up of: Global Challenges Research Fund. A summary of ICAI's full follow up
	Julian Barr, Billy Bryan, Peter Kolarz, Xavier Potau, Mel Punton, Paul Simmonds and Isabel Vogel (Itad Technopolis)	BEIS	2019	GCRF Evaluation - Foundation Stage. Final Report
	Isabel Vogel, Victoria Sword-Daniels and Susan Guthrie (Itad and RAND Europe)	BEIS	2022	Evaluation of the Global Challenges Research Fund - Stage 1a: Synthesis Report of evidence on integration of relevance, fairness, gender, poverty and social inclusion in funded activities
	Susan Guthrie, Tom Ling, Catriona Manville, Mann Virdee, Ben Baruch, Hamish Evans, Carolina Feijao, Joe Francombe, Cagla Stevenson (Itad and RAND Europe)	BEIS	2022	Evaluation of the Global Challenges Research Fund - Stage 1a: Review of Management Processes

FUND	AUTHOR(S)	SOURCE	YEAR	TITLE
THE NEWTON FUND	N/A	ICAI - Independent Commission for Aid Impact	2019	The Newton Fund - A performance review
	N/A	ICAI - Independent Commission for Aid Impact	2020	ICAI follow-up: The Newton Fund
	Aoife Murray, Katherine Stewart, Krishna Vyas, Jamie Fotheringham, Marco Antonielli and Ewan Snedden (Tetra Tech)	BEIS	2022	The Newton Fund - Final Evaluation Report
	Katherine Stewart, Ewan Snedden, Youngjin Kim and Marco Antonielli (Tetra Tech)	BEIS	2022	The Newton Fund - UK Secondary Benefits Study
	Marco Antonielli (Tetra Tech)	BEIS	2022	Final Evaluation of the Newton Fund - Research Quality Synthesis Report
	Coffey	BEIS	2018	Newton Fund Process Evaluation Report. Final report

2. Data extraction

Given that each study used a different evaluation framework, it was decided not to try and create an a priori framework to extract key information across all documents selected (deductive approach). Instead, an **inductive approach** was adopted: all 11 documents were read and relevant lessons learned extracted into a database and categorised as 'strengths/ success factors' or 'weaknesses/limitations'.

3. Thematic coding and analysis

Once the database had been created, each lesson was coded (again using an inductive approach) by its main theme. All the lessons that pertained to the same theme were then grouped together. During this phase, nine thematic areas were identified:

1. Fund ownership;
2. Strategic direction;
3. Interdisciplinary work;
4. Partnership with Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs);
5. Approach to funding;
6. Delivering development impact;
7. Long-term sustainability;
8. Monitoring results and Value for Money (VfM); and
9. Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI)

4. Synthesis and write-up

During the write-up of the report, the nine initial thematic areas were condensed into seven to avoid repetition and present a more concise synthesis of lessons learned. In each thematic area, key lessons learned from the GCRF and the Newton Fund were summarised in parallel. Reflections on the policy implications of the lessons learned were then provided to guide the development and implementation of future Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding. These 'policy pointers' are intended to support discussion on the future of ODA-funded research in the UK among funders, policymakers and the wider research community.

Limitations and caveats

The main limitation of this methodological approach is that this report is based solely on key findings from existing documents. This is because the aim was to distil and condense lessons learned from GCRF and Newton Fund evaluations in an accessible way. Any gaps present in the evaluations were not filled with additional research (i.e. primary data collection). All the limitations of the evaluations synthesised in this report, therefore, are also limitations of this report. This includes any asymmetries between GCRF and Newton Fund evaluations.

Another limitation is the timing of this synthesis exercise. Discussions on the need to produce a synthesis of lessons learned originated in the aftermath of the announcement that the GCRF and the Newton Fund would be discontinued and a new International Science Partnerships Fund would be launched in 2023. Research activities started in July 2022, this date being a compromise between the need to publish a synthesis on time to inform a discussion on the future of ODA-funded research and the availability of sufficient evidence to produce a synthesis. This means that relevant evaluations published after July 2022 are not included.