

Knowledge for Resilience

**Building an Agenda for Improved Research
Support in Fragile Contexts**



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Knowledge for Resilience: Building an Agenda for Improved Research Support in Fragile Contexts



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Overview

Knowledge ecosystems can strengthen resilience in fragile places. Knowledge ecosystems can identify and shed light on critical issues facing states and societies, provide recommendations for how to address those issues through better governance and foster spaces for people to come together to discuss and decide future directions.¹ Unfortunately, places in need of research and insight on governance and resilience are often most difficult for knowledge ecosystems to operate well. Individuals and organizations that produce, share and use research for governance—including research institutions, schools and higher education institutions, civil society and policymakers—often need investment and support.

In addition to local investments, international partnerships can play a critical role to strengthen knowledge ecosystems. Academic, government and multilateral sources agree that investing in research positively impacts, inter alia, the socioeconomic growth and the development of human capital and capacity.² The question is how partners come together to strengthen knowledge ecosystems for better governance. Many of the shortcomings of current partnerships are known, including the way research tends to be funded through short-term projects aligning with external research priorities and how grants focus on project outputs rather than on building longer-term institutional capacity. Yet innovations in international investments in knowledge ecosystems abound. Bilateral, multilateral and private philanthropic partners have pursued innovations in the way they support knowledge ecosystems for resilience and governance in fragile states. Some of these innovations are well known while others have had quiet success and can usefully be shared.

This inquiry aimed to identify priorities for change and build consensus on possible avenues for future action among many stakeholders within knowledge ecosystems and bridge communities that are not always in dialogue. As part of the inquiry, the Institute for State Effectiveness (ISE) sought to understand: 1) how international partnerships are currently working to support better research and knowledge for improved governance; 2) what innovations have occurred in these partnerships; 3) what constraints remain that prevent further innovation; and 4) what can be done to overcome these constraints for better partnerships.

As part of the inquiry, the project team: 1) conducted a review of relevant literature and practice; 2) conducted data analysis into current funding practices and priorities; 3) held a series of

consultations and interviews with over 30 individuals representing 22 research organizations, universities, multilateral forums and bilateral development partners; and 4) co-convened a workshop with development partners to validate and discuss the findings from the project.³ Due to COVID-19, all project activities were conducted remotely, including remote consultations with individuals in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and North and South America. Consultations and the workshop were conducted off-the-record to allow for a frank discussion.

As a result of the analysis and consultations, nine areas emerged where further innovations in international partnerships should be considered:

- Setting research agendas and questions collaboratively
- Cultivating diverse partner organizations
- Managing risk throughout the partnership cycle
- Building networks and capacity for evidence use
- Using context-appropriate monitoring and evaluation methods
- Building capacity of research organizations
- Addressing the time gap between research production and application
- Exchanging lessons among research funders
- Fostering forums for all stakeholders to discuss innovations

The paper will proceed with 1) an analysis of the goal of resilient knowledge ecosystems; 2) recent trends and current practices in international partnerships, including data analysis into what development partners fund and how; 3) recommendations for future innovations, derived from current practice and consultations; and 4) some topics for future consideration and discussion.

One recurring concern among consulted experts was the agility of international partners to change the ways they support and sustain knowledge ecosystems in fragile states. Some believe that the private sector is adapting to changes in the field and innovating more rapidly, whereas traditional development partners, including bilateral donors, are not keeping pace.⁴ How development partners, as well as others from different parts of the knowledge ecosystem, come together to share lessons from innovations and begin to anticipate future issues will impact how these ecosystems work toward better governance and development outcomes in the coming years.

1. For the purposes of this report, “knowledge ecosystems” are defined as “users and producers of knowledge that are organized around a joint knowledge search,” in this case for better governance. Specifically, actors within knowledge ecosystems include including researchers, funders, networks, consortia, advocacy groups, civil society, policymakers and decision-makers. This paper draws on the definition of “knowledge ecosystems” from Järvi, K., Alpanopoulou, A. & Ritala, P. 2018. “[Organization of Knowledge Ecosystems: Prefigurative and Partial Forms](#).” Research Policy, 47, 1523-1537.

2. See, e.g., DFID. 2014. “[What is the evidence on the impact of research on international development?](#)” A DFID literature review.” Gyberg, V. 2013. “[Aiding Science - Swedish research aid policy 1973-2008](#).” Linköping Studies in Arts and Science, The Department of Thematic Studies – Technology and Social Change; Currie-Alder, B. 2015. “[Research for the Developing World: Public Funding from Australia, Canada, and the UK](#).” Oxford Scholarship Online; and Robinson, L., Ritchie, E., Kenny, C. 2019. “[UK Research Aid: Tied, Opaque, and Off-Topic?](#)” CGD Policy Paper 152, Center for Global Development.

3. The July 2021 workshop was co-convened with Canada’s International Development Research Center and the US Agency for International Development. See Annex for the full list of consulted organizations.

4. Ingram, G. & Lord, K. 2019. “Global Development Disrupted – Findings from a Survey of 93 leaders.” The Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Global-Development-Disrupted.pdf>.

Introduction: The Goal of Building Strong Research Systems in Difficult Contexts

The strategic landscape facing fragile states has shifted in recent years. It is widely accepted that fragility is a multi-dimensional concept, with economic, environmental, political, security and societal aspects.⁵ Some countries have been beset by political instability, most notably marked by several recent coups (Sudan, Myanmar, Guinea and Mali). Longer-term peace processes that once looked robust now seem at risk in different ways (for example, Mozambique, Colombia and the Balkans). On the economic front, corruption and criminality continue to flourish. Civic participation has been limited by disinformation and the space for civil society is closing. Climate change is impacting many developing countries and will serve as a driver of further fragility and possibly conflict. These fragility challenges have been compounded by the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, which has widened social and economic inequality in many places and eroded development gains in others. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), before the COVID-19 pandemic, fragile states accounted for 23 percent of the world's population and nearly 77 percent of those living in extreme poverty.⁶ The pandemic has almost certainly increased those proportions.

Amid these headwinds facing fragile states, there are opportunities to make advances. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, eight fragile states were on track to reach the first Sustainable Development Goal (poverty eradication).⁷ This economic momentum could be re-captured with good institutions, policies and plans. Additionally, leaders and policymakers are increasingly turning attention to how the world, including fragile states, emerges from the pandemic and look toward the future, including building resilience against future shocks. Initiatives such as U.S.'s Build Back Better World strategy and the momentum around the COP26 climate conference seek to support future resilience against fragility.

Knowledge ecosystems can help improve the resilience of states and societies by helping to set governance and policy agendas. Researchers, universities, and think tanks in fragile states identify critical issues, opportunities and challenges facing states. Perhaps more importantly, these actors can also identify the assets of a place and society that can be marshaled to seize such opportunities. Knowledge ecosystems can be spaces where people can come together to discuss and decide on common agendas and future directions. Analysis and research produced can inform decision-making and implementation of policy. Finally, knowledge ecosystems

can produce comparative lessons from other places or history.

Unfortunately, fragile states—the places most in need of research and insight on governance and resilience—often have weaknesses in their knowledge ecosystems. Data from fragile contexts is often scarce or of poor quality. Research organizations in these environments frequently have low institutional capacity and are underfunded. Evidence use in policymaking may also be lacking. In turn, these weaknesses in knowledge ecosystems can perpetuate issues of weak governance in a country.

Efforts to strengthen knowledge ecosystems in fragile states occur both through domestic investment and international partnerships. The strategies international partners employ, the processes by which they seek to realize their program goals, the ways they develop desired outcomes and the extent to which they forge trust-based partnerships with grantee partners all have a significant effect on the quality and impact of research, as well as on the health of the overall knowledge ecosystem. While funding approaches and modalities vary, there is a consensus among both donors and researchers that more needs to be done to improve the performance of research programming and funding as an instrument for development and catalyst of better governance. This priority was endorsed by 60 stakeholders—think tanks, universities, research funders, research councils, and others—at a gathering in Amman, Jordan in March 2019.⁸

The shortcomings of current partnerships are known. Research tends to be funded through short-term projects that respond primarily to externally driven research priorities via highly tailored calls for proposals, risking crowding out local priorities and dynamism within the sector. This can distort the knowledge ecosystem, limit evidence use and ultimately be counterproductive to donor program goals. How donors fund in fragile contexts is as important as what they fund. Grants do not always emphasize organizational health, instead focusing on project outputs. This can shortchange the goal of supporting the development of a healthy local knowledge ecosystem. Research produced is not always relevant for policy or programmatic decisions, as it is often produced on longer time horizons and the barriers to publication may mean that it does not reach intended audiences.

Resetting partnerships is not just an ethical imperative but also a matter of effectiveness. In today's globalized world, given that the concepts produced by research travel across borders and networks, these concepts do not remain “local”—they have the power to shape donor-country policy toward fragile states. When donors

5. “States of Fragility 2020.” Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/states-of-fragility-fa5a6770-en.htm>.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. The working conference was held on occasion of the [opening of IDRC's Middle East and North Africa Office](#). For more context, see the [literature review](#) and [background paper](#).

ensure research agendas are driven by local realities, it can lead to more informed bilateral and global policy that works to support knowledge ecosystems and governance conditions in challenging contexts.

International Partnerships: Recent Trends and Current State of Play

International support for knowledge ecosystems has evolved, particularly over the last decade in the number of international funders, partnership models, supported sectors and instruments. This section provides an overview of recent trends in how international support has changed and what it looks like today.

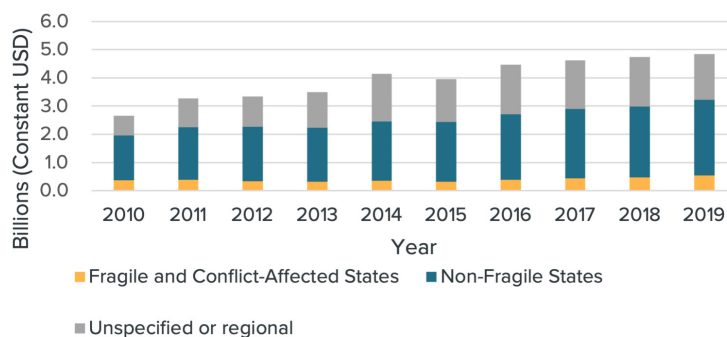
International funders

The landscape of international partners of knowledge ecosystems in fragile states has changed over the last decade, namely, in that there is a greater diversity of partners, and they are offering more resources. International development partners supporting knowledge ecosystems now range from bilateral development agencies and multilateral institutions to private philanthropies, universities and think tanks based in the Global North looking to make connections with similar institutions in developing countries. According to the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), DAC members increased from 11 in 1960 to 30 today.⁹ All DAC members support research in some way. There has been a rapid rise of non-DAC bilateral donors in recent years, notably Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, though the levels of support to research that these funders provide is opaque.¹⁰ Private philanthropies also play a significant role in supporting knowledge ecosystems in fragile states. The Peace and Security Funders Group, an umbrella association for private philanthropies, estimates that there are over 450 total funders of research and evaluation related to peace and security topics, and the number of active funders increased from 78 in 2012 to 118 in 2019.¹¹ The Peace and Security Funders Group estimated that in the last decade, philanthropic funders contributed roughly \$500 million to grants supporting research on peace and security.¹²

Though international support to knowledge ecosystems remains relatively low compared to other development priorities, levels of support have increased in the last decade. The official development

assistance (ODA) classification of assistance to “teaching institutions, research institutes or think tanks” has represented between 2.6-4.1 percent of total ODA to developing countries over the last ten years, and between 1.5-2.3 percent of total ODA to fragile situations.¹³ Though this channel of ODA does not likely capture all support to knowledge ecosystems, it does indicate that fragile states receive only roughly half the amount of research support to developed countries. The levels of support also vary by geography. For example, recent analysis on the state of research investment and international support for research in Africa estimates that just 0.8 percent of total aid provided to Sub-Saharan Africa is for research, with most of that support targeted in just a handful of countries, including Ethiopia, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda.¹⁴ Increases in international support to knowledge ecosystems in developing countries are significantly outpacing increases of support to fragile states. From 2010 to 2019, ODA to teaching institutions, research institutes and think tanks in developing countries overall nearly doubled, growing from US\$2.7 billion to US\$4.8 billion (in constant 2019 US\$), an 82.4 percent increase. While the proportion of ODA towards research institutions in fragile states also increased, it grew by only half, or 49.7 percent.^{15,16}

Official Development Assistance to Teaching Institutions, Research Institutes or Think Tanks



9. [Development finance data](#). OECD-DAC.

10. Custer, S., Rice, Z., Masaki, T., Latourell, R., & Parks, B.C. (2015). “Listening to Leaders: Which Development Partners Do They Prefer and Why?” Williamsburg, VA: AidData at William & Mary. <https://www.aiddata.org/publications/listening-to-leaders-which-development-partners-do-they-prefer-and-why>.

11. [Peace and Security Funding Map](#). Foundation Maps.

12. Ibid.

13. [Creditor Reporting System](#). OECD.

14. See, e.g., D'Aiglepiere R. and Botton, S. 2020. “Rethinking International Funding of African Research. Towards a Coalition of Stakeholders,” AFD Policy Paper No 3, March; UKCDR 2020. “[UK Research Funding for Development in Nigeria: An analysis of funding and reach \(2014-2019\)](#).”

15. OECD Creditor Reporting System.

16. For purposes of this paper, the term “fragile states” refers to those countries included on the [World Bank's annual list of fragile and conflict-affected situations](#). The category of “unspecified” countries refers to the category included as part of the OECD's Creditor Reporting System and seems to refer to either non-country-specific or general, topical initiatives.

Table 1. A Taxonomy of Support for Research in Fragile Contexts

Category of Support	Actions	Level of Support	Location	Type of Support
Grants	Individual grants for students, academic research, dissertations, post-doctoral work and scholars-at-risk		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In country Abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial
		Individual		
Research programs, including think tanks	Field research, analysis and studies		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In country Abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Partnership and co-production
		Institutional		
		Individual		
Conferences and meetings to promote research and exchange	Conferences, seminars, colloquia, workshops, events, etc. which may produce articles, books, journals, edited volumes, etc.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In country Within an institution or ministry Abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Partnership and co-production In kind
		Institutional		
		Individual		
Personal and professional development	Research training, executive education programs, skills workshops, secondments to government agencies	Public policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In country Within an institution or ministry Abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial
		Institutional		
		Individual		
Improvement of teaching facilities and resources	Infrastructure, connectivity, ICT, research labs and equipment	Public policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within an institution or ministry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial In kind
		Institutional		
Multi-country research facilities and researcher networks	Research centers, mixed research units, university networks and researcher networks	Public policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In country Within an institution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Partnership and co-production
		Institutional		
		Individual		
Budget support	Loans or grants to public authorities to fund public policies	Public policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial

A Taxonomy of Support

A classification of possible partnerships may be useful to understand where, how and why international support to knowledge ecosystems is targeted. A proposed taxonomy of support category, instrument, location and type is outlined in Table 1.¹⁷ International support can be channeled to individual, institutional or policy levels in different ways and for various reasons.

- **Individuals, including students, scholars and researchers:** Assistance may be channeled to individuals for a variety of reasons. First, demand has skyrocketed among rising generations in developing countries to pursue tertiary education. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), between 2000 and 2015 the number of students enrolled in higher

education institutions in developing countries increased from 99.7 million to 214.1 million.¹⁸ Millions more students pursue tertiary education at institutions in the Global North. Second, providing individual assistance can help preserve academic freedom. It is sometimes difficult for scholars or researchers with dissident views to find positions in universities, particularly those affiliated with the state.¹⁹ Third, involving people with lived experience of specific issues, such as forced displacement, can result in more policy-relevant research.²⁰ Fourth, support to individual scholars within diaspora communities can maintain a network of scholarship on specific issues facing states or societies.

- **Institutions, including universities and centers at universities:** Support to higher education institutions can

17. Adapted from D'Aiglepierrre R. and Botton, S., with input from consultations.

18. Di Gropello, E., et al. 2017. "Higher Education for Development: An Evaluation of the World Bank Group's Support." Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

19. For example, see [Scholars at Risk Network](#)

20. For example, see [Local Engagement Refugee Research Network](#)

go beyond educating students and instead serve three purposes: (1) teaching and learning, (2) research and (3) community engagement.²¹ Networks of research centers can allow for connections between individuals and organizations, promoting cross-country comparisons and regional approaches to research topics.²²

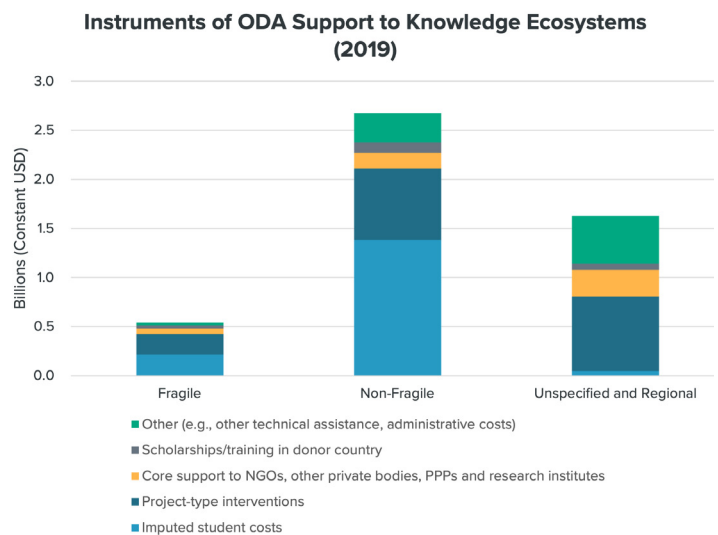
- **Public policy:** International development partners can advance public policy and decision-making in fragile states in several ways. First, independent research organizations, including think tanks, can influence policy and decision-making through specialized, quality research and innovative solutions.²³ Such organizations can also prompt public debate on critical issues by producing and disseminating analysis that is rigorous but not academic. In this way, they can bridge knowledge and practice.²⁴ Second, networks of researchers can bring together diverse viewpoints on a subject to provide decision-makers with a range of opinions and analyses to factor into their work. Finally, direct funding to fragile state governments can facilitate public policy implementation and strengthen domestic institutions, such as central statistics offices.

Development partners use various instruments to support knowledge ecosystems at the individual, institutional and policy levels. At the individual level, the largest component of bilateral assistance goes to imputed (indirect) student costs for post-secondary students from developing countries to study either in donor country institutions or in their own domestic institutions.²⁵ In 2019, the OECD reported that bilateral donors contributed \$1.49 billion towards imputed student costs and scholarships for students from developing countries, up from \$909 million in 2010.²⁶ Similar assistance to students from fragile states totaled \$248 million in 2019, up from \$106 million in 2010.²⁷ There is a debate about the purpose of these types of programs. Proponents contend that this type of assistance builds stronger knowledge ecosystems in the long term while critics argue that because much of these student costs are directed toward institutions in donor countries, and across a variety of academic disciplines, this type of assistance does little to build knowledge ecosystems in fragile states to help solve development and governance challenges.²⁸

Project-based assistance, as compared to core support, continues to be a significant portion of the type of assistance that goes

toward knowledge ecosystems in fragile states. While public and private funders alike employ a mix of funding methods, research and interviews suggest that bilateral donors prefer grant making through project calls, often on a competitive basis. An increase in project funding (as opposed to core institutional funding) is generally seen as detrimental to the sector, with several researchers arguing that it creates uncertainty and severely affects research quality.²⁹ Short-term requests for proposals often prescribe research areas identified by external actors, making the sector increasingly supply-driven and neglecting locally identified priorities.³⁰ The dominant funding model also favors an outcome-oriented view on projects. Funders regularly demand evidence-based results, which, as observed by several interviewees in this project, shifts the focus from the research process itself to tangible results, further incentivizing narrower research and discouraging risk-taking.

Core support lags project-type support to knowledge ecosystems. This is borne out by recent OECD reporting. As a proportion of development assistance to teaching institutions and think tanks, donors in 2019 contributed more core support to institutions in fragile states than they did to other developing countries. Specifically, 11 percent of support to teaching institutions and think tanks in fragile states was core support, compared to six percent of support as core support to teaching institutions in other developing states.³¹



21. Di Gropello et al.

22. For example, see the Carnegie Corporation of New York's support to [higher education and research in Africa](#)

23. OECD (2008). "Endowments for Think Tanks in Developing Countries: What Role for Private Foundations and Official Donors?" Paris: OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/site/oecdgfd/40234540.pdf>.

24. For example, see IDRC's [Think Tank Initiative](#)

25. OECD Creditor Reporting System

26. Ibid

27. Ibid.

28. Mawer, M. 2017. "Approaches to Analyzing the Outcomes of International Scholarship Programs for Higher Education," *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 21(3), 230-245. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315316687009>.

29. Korlaar, L., Steur, J., den Hertog, P., te Velde, R., Liliškis, S. 2014. "The effectiveness of national research funding systems. Final Policy Brief, European Commission, DG Research and Innovation." <https://www.dialogic.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/2013.109-1422.pdf>.

30. D'Aiglepiere R. and Botton.

31. OECD Creditor Reporting System

Table 2. Research Support by Sector (USD)

	Fragile States	Non-Fragile States	Regional	Unspecified
2010	Governance: \$140M	Health: \$296M	Education: \$55M	Health: \$180M
	Education: \$33M	Education: \$92M	Governance: \$20M	Multi-sector: \$67M
	Health: \$30M	Governance: \$58M	Agriculture: \$20M	Education: \$41M
	Agriculture: \$17M	Energy & Environment: \$58M	Energy & Environment: \$18M	Agriculture: \$38M
	Multi-sector: \$11M	Agriculture: \$38M	Water & Sanitation: \$15M	Governance: \$33M

2019	Education: \$71M	Health: \$335M	Energy & Environment: \$60M	Health: \$357M
	Governance: \$70M	Education: \$249M	Multi-sector: \$50M	Multi-sector: \$251M
	Health: \$65M	Agriculture: \$137M	Health: \$34M	Agriculture: \$150M
	Agriculture: \$27M	Multi-sector: \$133M	Education: \$30M	Governance: \$119M
	Multi-sector: \$25M	Energy & Environment: \$122M	Governance: \$25M	Education: \$116M

Sectoral Priorities

In the last decade, international support has gone toward a diversity of sectoral research priorities. Literature indicates that most research assistance goes towards agricultural, environmental and health-related research in developing countries, including in Sub-Saharan Africa.³² Data from the OECD validates that over the last decade, the top two sectors of research supported by OECD members were health and education.³³ The chart below summarizes the research sectors that OECD members supported in 2010 and 2019. The numbers below do not include scholarships or imputed student costs, but rather projects, core support and other support (including technical assistance).

While health and education have been consistent top priorities for international support to research in developing countries, there is a different trend for research in fragile states, where governance-related research figures more prominently. According to the OECD, in 2010, investment in research relating to governance far outpaced other top priorities, which included education, health, agriculture and multi-sectoral research.³⁴ In fact, investment in governance research (\$140 million) was still more than the next four sectors combined (\$91 million). But by 2019, research on governance

in fragile states (\$70 million) slipped in rank, falling just behind education-related research (\$71 million). The sectors of research funded in fragile states became more diversified. Between 2010 and 2019, governance-related but non-country-specific research more than tripled, expanding from \$33 million to \$119 million. This may indicate a move toward more thematic-focused rather than country-specific governance research. Governance-related research fell out of the top five sectors for developing countries between 2010 and 2019.

Three research sectors that experienced growth between 2010 and 2019 include agriculture, energy and the environment and multi-sectoral research. The growth of multi-sectoral research on fragile states, developing countries, regional issues and non-country-specific initiatives indicates a more dynamic, integrated conceptualization of research and analysis.

Innovations and Recommendations

Robust research ecosystems have the potential to strengthen governance and resilience in politically difficult contexts, and international partnerships can improve those ecosystems. Important innovations have occurred in the ways that partners are working

32. D'Aiglepiere, R. and Botton.

33. OECD-DAC Development finance data

34. Ibid.

to support knowledge ecosystems and several lessons have been learned through these innovations. This section aims to summarize findings from consultations and interviews with over 30 individuals from research organizations, think tanks, universities, research networks, bilateral funders, philanthropic foundations and multilateral organizations, as well as a review of current practice. The resulting nine recommendations give practical examples of innovative practices already being implemented with a view to grow these innovations and make them more mainstream. Recommendations correspond to different stages of the knowledge cycle as well as to ways research partnerships are created, sustained and evolve.

1. Setting research agendas and questions. A recurring theme from the consultations was that research could be less externally imposed and more locally-driven. Research funders' agendas are influenced by their own domestic priorities, including their foreign and development policy goals (e.g., gender equality, environment and climate change), but the majority of individuals consulted agreed that research agendas can and should be more locally-driven. Local governments and researchers are best placed to identify issues and priorities that can help support better governance, alleviate drivers of conflict and fragility, improve service delivery in response to people's expectations and build resilience. Several innovative initiatives have been attempted to shift the terms of research partnerships. Some of these partnerships have included improved methods of understanding local context, creating platforms for more locally-led solutions to local challenges and providing flexible, long-term financial support that would allow for local organizations to respond to and anticipate issues as they evolve, helping to bolster policy relevance.

➔ **The Swiss Programme for Research on Global Issues for Development (r4d)** is an example of how research funders can design calls for proposals that allow for flexibility in topics for researchers from developing countries. The r4d program has been a collaboration between the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) to support research aimed at solving local issues, but with a focus on low- and middle-income countries. There have been open calls for proposals organized around social conflicts, employment, food security, ecosystems and public health. In addition, there have been three open calls for proposals on issues of local urgency. The open calls have been designed for joint research between a Swiss research organization and one organization from a low- or middle-income country. The grants under the open call opportunity included up to four years of support, representing a medium-term investment in research partnerships.³⁵ One of the r4d programs,

Surveillance and response to zoonotic diseases in Maya communities of Guatemala: A case for One Health, looks at the burden of zoonotic outbreaks in rural areas where most of the population is of Maya origin with extremely low measures on the Human Development Index indicators. By allowing for locally-driven research, this project was able to target an important gap in knowledge on unknown zoonotic diseases affecting rural populations. This project started with a joint problem definition which led to a transdisciplinary process, involving multiple stakeholders from scientific and local communities, as well as the public and private sectors, allowing for targeted research that addresses local needs while providing a pathway to implement solutions concluded in the research.³⁶

In consultations, researchers and funders both noted the importance of including research and insight produced by people who have the lived experience of issues related to fragility, conflict, and violence, beyond foreign researchers or scholars who conduct "fieldwork" in those places. There are notable efforts by NGOs and research institutions that are seeking to make funding and policy development practices more inclusive of people with those lived experiences.

➔ **The Local Engagement Refugee Research Network (LERRN)**³⁷ is a team of researchers and practitioners committed to promoting protection and solutions with and for refugees. It aims to ensure that refugee research, policy and practice are shaped by a more inclusive, equitable and informed collective engagement of civil society. LERRN's work is focused in the Global South and responds to the needs and opportunities identified by partners in major refugee-hosting countries. Crucially, LERRN's researchers have lived experiences of forced displacement. For example, the current working paper *Repatriation as a Durable Solution: Refugee Perspectives on Repatriation Policies and Education in Dadaab Refugee Camp*, Abulogn Okello investigates a new policy implemented by the Government of Kenya that repatriates Somali refugees to Somalia and relocates other nationalities to Kakuma. He investigates the relationship between repatriation policy, demographic change and educational systems in Dadaab and shows how the shrinking of the refugee camp due to repatriation has contributed to the closure of organizations that offer education, resulting in significant effects on the continuity of education. As a teacher in elementary and secondary schools in the Dadaab refugee camps himself, Abulogn Okello's research is a strong example of how LERRN enables individuals to raise and investigate questions directly relevant in their communities.³⁸

35. See [Research on Global Issues for Development \(r4d program\)](#)

36. "Surveillance and response to zoonotic diseases in Maya communities of Guatemala: A case for One Health." 2018. r4d. <http://www.r4d.ch/modules/thematically-open-research/one-health-in-guatemala>.

37. See [Local Engagement Refugee Research Network](#)

38. Okello, A. 2021. "Surveillance and response to zoonotic diseases in Maya communities of Guatemala: A case for One Health." LERRN. <https://carleton.ca/lerrn/2021/repatriation-as-a-durable-solution-refugee-perspectives-on-repatriation-policies-and-education-in-dadaab-refugee-camp/>.

2. Cultivating a diversity of partner organizations. In consultations, both researchers and research funders expressed difficulties in evolving Global North-Global South partnership models beyond either a select number of flagship Global South universities and research institutions, or institutions that are located in capital cities only, thereby excluding organizations from other local areas. Research donors described practical difficulties in identifying and accessing developing country institutions located in remote or rural areas. There are creative ways to build partnerships beyond flagship research organizations, including with more localized research organizations, including partnering with umbrella organizations or organizations that in turn cultivate relationships with more localized researchers and research organizations.

➔ **Fundación Ideas para La Paz (FIP)**, based in Bogotá, Colombia, is an example of an independent think tank that works with a variety of stakeholders across different areas in Colombia on peace and security issues. FIP works with citizens, government officials, the private sector and a network of local organizations across different areas of Colombia in support of the mission “to generate knowledge, propose initiatives, develop practices and accompany processes to contribute to the construction of a stable and lasting peace in Colombia.”³⁹ As an intermediary organization, FIP works with this diverse network to understand conflict dynamics and drivers of stability or instability and crime. It also works to identify and strengthen local capacities for peace. One of their reports, *A dangerous climate: deforestation, climate change and violence against environmental defenders in the Colombian Amazon*, was carried out by FIP and Adelphi but collaborated with the World Wildlife Federation (WWF), Foundation for Conservation and Sustainable Development (FCDS), Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) Colombia, Amazon Conservation Team (ACT), Gaia Amazonas Foundation, and Tropenbos. As a result of the strong array of organizations involved in this research project, the report contains specific and actionable recommendations for different groups of stakeholders in the short, medium and long term that consider local experience and expertise. The diversity of partner organizations, from international NGOs like WWF to a local organization like FZS allows for multiple perspectives and sets of expertise in creating innovative solutions through research.⁴⁰

In consultations, researchers also highlighted the usefulness of opportunities to build their networks, with other researchers from developing countries as well as with researchers in the Global North. Conferences, symposia and other gatherings help build these networks and foster opportunities for future collaboration. Consulted experts said that often, quality research is already available in many local contexts, but local researchers and think

tanks are not well known. Databases or mapping exercises could be useful in trying to capture the range of what exists so development partners can better target their support.⁴¹

3. Managing risk throughout the partnership cycle. Managing risk was one of the challenges that research funders described in broadening and maintaining partnerships. At the beginning of partnerships, research funders described the lead time and due diligence required to get acquainted with the work of institutions or organizations previously unknown to them, which can make it difficult to cultivate new grantmaking relationships. Third-party, expert organizations can play a role in assessing the capacity of research organizations and give funding organizations confidence in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of potential grantees.

➔ **The African Academy of Sciences**, a non-profit, apolitical organization in Africa that works to accelerate development progress and improve quality of life in Africa through science has partnered with the organization Management Accounting for NGOs to develop a pan-African Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP). The GFGP aims “to digitize, standardize and de-risk the due diligence process for both funders and grant receivers.”⁴² It includes a portal, the Global Grant Community platform, that allows grantmakers and grant seekers to share good practices in the grantmaking and grant management cycles. Grant-seeking organizations, for example, can use the GFGP standards as a blueprint to improve their grant management processes and then seek pre-certification for compliance. GFGP also links to a network of audit firms licensed to undertake site audits for GFGP compliance. Grantmaking partners span multilateral, bilateral and philanthropic funders, including the African Union, U.K. Research and Innovation, the U.K. National Institute for Health Research, Wellcome and the IKEA Foundation, among others.

Another critical risk to manage during partnerships is the risk researchers and research organizations face in emergency and deteriorating situations. Many consulted researchers discussed the need for specific protocols or measures that research funders could take in rapidly deteriorating situations to ensure the safety and protection of researchers as well as of research and data, which may be sensitive. Researchers said that they would value the opportunity to engage with funders to discuss and agree on protocols in advance of emergency situations. They also iterated they would value emergency financial assistance or a contingency line-item that could support emergency travel costs if needed.

39. See [Fundación Ideas para La Paz](#)

40. Vergara Garzón Carlos, J. 2021. “Un clima peligroso: Deforestación, cambio climático y violencia contra los defensores ambientales en la Amazonía colombiana.” FIP. <https://www.ideaspaz.org/publications/posts/2058>.

41. The University of Pennsylvania publishes [an annual ranking of local think tanks](#)

42. See African Academy of Sciences’ [Global Grant Community](#)

4. Building networks and capacity for evidence use. Researchers discussed the challenges of publishing their work, reaching the right audiences and ensuring that their research is useful to decision-making and further investigation. Often there is pressure to produce articles for peer-reviewed academic journals and other publications based in the Global North. Many researchers described that building a track record of publication in these journals and outlets contributes to their credibility as researchers, making them more likely to receive grants and contracts from international research funders. Some researchers noted the difficulties of being published in these journals, particularly if they were not based at research universities but at think tanks or policy research organizations.

Both researchers and funders highlighted shortcomings in over-emphasizing the importance of peer-reviewed journals. First is the timing misalignments between academia and policymaking. Publishing research in peer-reviewed journals may meet the “gold standard” of academic research, but long lead times may mean that when the research is finally published, the context has shifted or the opportunity for the findings to have policy impact has been overtaken by events. Decision-making cycles for policy and development programs are shorter than academic investigations. Publishing research should be done with dynamic political environments in mind to be relevant to policy decision-making. Second, peer-reviewed journals may not reach the right audiences. One challenge relates to access. Many journals are not open access and require costly subscriptions or fees for people to obtain the article. This limits the audience to those at institutions with the means of subscribing to or accessing the research findings. Third, focusing on peer-reviewed journals may again reinforce externally driven agendas or topics.

Concerning policy and programmatic impact, some interviewees described the misalignment between the local supply and demand for information and research, namely the disconnect between researchers and local policymakers or decision-makers. They noted that policymakers may not understand or see the value of local-produced research. Education or training of decisionmakers to understand how they can use information in support of better policy or development outcomes is needed.

➔ **The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU),**⁴³ an independent research institute, involves policymakers in preliminary research findings as a way to bring them into the process and demonstrate how they can benefit from and use the research. Networks like AREU allow for improved

research in areas where data is often unreliable, difficult to extract and constantly changing. For example, *A Taxing Narrative: Miscalculating Revenues and Misunderstanding the Conflict in Afghanistan* combats widely-held assumptions through detailed empirical accounts of Taliban revenues. AREU shows that tax rates levied on drugs by the Taliban are significantly less than the U.N. and others claim. In the past, false estimates of the Taliban’s finances have hurt the ability of diplomatic and military officials to understand the situation in Afghanistan, including why rural populations may or may not support the Taliban. Such errors can be prevented in the future through networks such as AREU and their ability to utilize strong local networks and collect data even in difficult environments like Afghanistan.⁴⁴

- ➔ **The American University of Beirut’s Center for Civic Engagement and Community Service** has partnered with the **Kayany Foundation**⁴⁵ to support the education needs of refugee and migrant students. As an example of a partnership between local universities and smaller think tanks and NGOs to enable broader capacity development, the Kayany Foundation works to provide primary and middle education and employment skills training for migrants. In exchange, partners at AUB better understand and learn from needs on the ground in diverse communities in Lebanon, which can help in their research and scholarship.
- ➔ There are examples of hybrid publications and formats that allow for researchers to contribute early findings, published on a preliminary basis and more flexible timeline. The **Stanford Social Innovation Review**, for example, offers a specific section of “What’s Next” for “promising but not yet proven solutions.”⁴⁶
- ➔ Think tanks and research organizations such as the **Development Workshop**⁴⁷ in Angola can work at the request of the national government on specific policy priorities or questions, in this case on housing issues. The Development Workshop was founded in Angola in 1981. Because of its long history, individuals who served as early-career research assistants at the Development Workshop and understand its mission and capacities have since sought out its research in their role as public servants. This speaks to the value of long-term partnerships, both between international funders and research organizations, in addition to the networks and partnerships that organizations build for policy impact.
- ➔ The **Aga Khan Development Network**⁴⁸ in Afghanistan conducts seminars for policymakers with the Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, as well as other researchers, to bridge the gap between the demand for and supply of research. Researchers present their findings to policymakers and receive their feedback on what would be most useful to their policy priorities and decision-making.

One ongoing issue that surfaced in consultations was how to

43. See [Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit](#)

44. Mansfield, D. 2021. “A Taxing Narrative: Miscalculating Revenues and Misunderstanding the Conflict in Afghanistan. AREU. <https://areu.org.af/publication/2106/>.

45. See [Kayany Foundation](#)

46. See [Stanford Social Innovation Review](#)

47. See [Development Workshop](#)

48. See [Aga Khan Development Network](#)

generate policy impact in the most constrained or challenging of situations. How can the research community increase their impact in places where research is not welcome to - or in fact may threaten - policymakers or one or more powerful groups? Situations including Venezuela and Syria were cited as examples of places where research and information may be threatening to political leaders and may place researchers in danger.

5. Using context-appropriate monitoring and evaluation (M&E) methods. There have not been systematic attempts to understand whether and how research is making a difference in fragile and difficult contexts. As Bush and Duggan describe, “the interplay of context, knowledge production and research utilization is not easily untangled, let alone measured.”⁴⁹ Conventional approaches to the evaluation of research tend to be linear, which does not reflect the reality of its impact. Research activities may also be a part of a broader development project or program, one that might include training, education, technical assistance or service delivery components, and it may be difficult to differentiate the impact of research activities in isolation from other activities, or M&E may focus on the effectiveness of the project or program as a whole.⁵⁰ M&E may also be overly-focused on the accountability and efficient use of resources rather than learning impacts, or other less-easily measured activities. There has been some diversification of M&E methods, including a growing recognition of methods beyond standard logframes. Outcome mapping, for example, is one such approach, which goes beyond measuring deliverables and includes evaluating intended behavioral changes alongside outcomes, focusing on the process of how change happens. These and other participatory processes may be more relevant for dynamic contexts, including places with governance or fragility challenges.

➔ The U.K.’s **Impact Initiative for International Development Research**⁵¹ worked to increase the impact of the U.K.’s Economic and Social Research Council and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office’s research support. A report looking at the lessons of the last six years of the Impact Initiative’s work noted that a broader definition of impact was needed for research. Focusing on direct policy change may be difficult to attribute to any one project in the project’s timescale, and therefore the U.K. emphasized changes to networks and relationships as impactful over the medium and long term.

6. Building the capacity of research organizations. In consultations, researchers and funding partners reiterated the importance of building the capacity of research organizations to strengthen the landscape of partners in developing countries. Critical to this is

moving beyond the project-based model and investing in long-term, core support of these organizations.

➔ **IDRC’s Think Tank Initiative**⁵² was an 11-year project that provided independent policy research organizations in developing countries with core, non-earmarked funding so the organizations “could attract, retain and build local talent, develop an independent research program, and invest in public outreach to ensure that research results informed and influenced national and regional policy debates.” When the program ended in 2019, it had supported 43 think tanks in 20 countries with core funding.

Research funders recognized that some grantees may start from a low baseline of institutional capacity. Researchers were also candid that their strengths lie in the academic fields or specialized sectors in which they trained and cultivated expertise. They may not have received training in the management skills necessary to establish and run a research organization. Funders and researchers reported that honest conversations about the strengths and shortcomings of the research organizations were typically helpful in building trust and relationships. When organizational shortcomings were acknowledged they could then be turned into capacity-building goals.

➔ In some cases, the **U.K.’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office** and its partners conduct a joint assessment of organizational capacity and include this baseline assessment in project agreements for full transparency. The project agreement then includes steps and benchmarks to grow and monitor increased capacity and a portion of funding is tied to meeting these benchmarks.

7. Addressing the time gap between research production and application. Many of the experts consulted commented that there is a mismatch between research production and application. Academic research typically has longer timelines between investigation and publication. By the time that that research is published, particularly in peer-reviewed journals, too often the relevant policy or decision-making window is closed. Yet there is evidence that the peacebuilding field understands the limitations of research and how research can support decision-making. A survey of over 200 experts in the peacebuilding field discovered that participants “responded differently to the question of what kind of research was necessary for something to be evidence-based compared to the question of what kind of evidence was sufficient for them to use or endorse approaches in their own work, to funders, and to policymakers.”⁵³ According to the authors, this indicates that survey participants understand “that the role of research and evidence is not always

49. Bush, K., & Duggan, C. 2021. *Evaluation in the extreme: research, impact and politics in violently divided societies*. SAGE.

50. Ibid.

51. See [Impact Initiative for International Development Research](#)

52. See IDRC’s [Think Tank Initiative](#)

53. Seyle, C., Heyborne, S., Baumgardner-Zuzik, J., and DeYoung, S. (2021). “Some Credible Evidence: Perceptions about the Evidence Base in the Peacebuilding Field.” Broomfield, CO and Washington, DC: One Earth Future and Alliance for Peacebuilding.

to provide answers on the ideal step forward. Instead, the role of evidence is often to provide a best-guess next step forward as part of a longer research process.”⁵⁴

One way to narrow the gap between research production and application is through adopting more rapid research methodologies. Research methodologies that listen to local stakeholders and respect local expertise and experience are important in this vein. There are anthropological techniques, including stakeholder mapping, appreciative inquiry and other interviewing approaches, that allow for rapid assessment of local stakeholders and conditions. These rapid appraisals are also better suited to the short timelines facing policy and decision-makers. Another way that research production can support policy and programmatic decision-making is through quick meta-analyses. Rather than original research that takes time to launch and execute, meta-analyses can provide insights for specific policy questions.⁵⁵

8. Exchanging lessons among research funders. As previously noted, it will be the aggregate efforts of individual “changemakers” and influencers within funding institutions to produce broader shifts in research partnerships. These individual program staff need support from within their organizations and among like-minded peers at other organizations to exchange lessons of what innovations have been attempted and lessons learned in the process. It is important for these forums – which can connect bilateral, multilateral and philanthropic donors - to serve as neutral spaces for honest learning and exchange, to discuss obstacles of further change and collaborate on ways to overcome those constraints.

➔ There are existing forums that speak to certain aspects of knowledge ecosystems to strengthen fragile places. For example, the **Peace and Security Funders Group** is a platform for private philanthropic foundations and donors to gather for “catalyzing learning, fostering connections, and taking action to transform ourselves, our institutions and our sector.”⁵⁶ While it focuses more on support to peace and security programming, it is one type of example of forums among funders that can be replicated or adapted to the research field. To understand the landscape of donors active in the peace and security space, the Peace and Security Funders Group also maintains the Peace and Security Funding Index⁵⁷ and the Peace and Security Funding Map⁵⁸ Another platform is the **International Research for Development Funders Forum**, which aims to

connect funders of development-related research but is not specifically focused on fragile contexts⁵⁹

9. Fostering forums for all stakeholders to discuss innovations.

In addition to a space for research funders to convene to discuss specific challenges, a forum where all segments of the knowledge ecosystem (i.e., researchers, research funders, research networks and consortia, advocates, policymakers and decision-makers) can come together to understand trends, share their latest findings and discuss innovations and future directions would be beneficial. Notable efforts led by NGOs and research institutions that are seeking to make funding and policy development practices more inclusive include:

➔ **Co-Impact – Local Coalition Accelerator**, a new platform to bridge bilateral, multilateral, philanthropic and local actors to support the capacity of local, community-based organizations to meaningfully participate in larger-scale systems change, and to directly access the significant multi- and bilateral financing that is currently channeled nearly exclusively through U.N. or INGO vehicles⁶⁰

➔ **Nexus**, a platform for locally-led change, aspires to pioneer a paradigm shift and a locally-driven agenda for change by building partnerships between communities, civil society and the public and private sectors in Somalia.⁶¹ Nexus aims to advance a new community-driven model of partnership that can promote the growth of peaceful, thriving and empowered communities in Somalia and Somaliland, and implement integrated and sustainable interventions across the triple nexus of humanitarian, development and peace efforts. As Nexus demonstrates, forums for multiple stakeholders are especially important in states like Somalia where “conflict dynamics in Somalia are both vertical and horizontal, including between armed groups, clans and subclans, with a diversity of conflict drivers.”⁶² Nexus’ wide scope of partnerships allows for an “intricate and deep system for peacebuilding and conflict resolution” where building unique frameworks for supporting women, providing conflict resolution training and standardizing preemptive humanitarian measures, among other initiatives, are possible in a uniquely challenging humanitarian environment due to the wide range of stakeholders involved.

➔ The **Radical Flexibility Fund** is a new fund seeking to improve the foreign assistance model to more efficiently and effectively channel resources to individuals, networks and civil society organizations.⁶³ The Fund works with stakeholders and clients to gather information about new financing approaches; uses that information to

54. Ibid.

55. See, for example, Connable, B. (2021). “[The State of Peace and Development in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique: Summary Meta-Analysis of Available Research, Analysis and Official Reports as of Early July 2021](#).” Washington, DC: DT Institute.

56. See [Peace and Security Funders Group](#)

57. See [Peace and Security Funding Index](#)

58. See [Peace and Security Funding Map](#)

59. See [International Research for Development Funders Forum](#)

60. See The Share Trust’s [Local Coalition Accelerator](#)

61. See Adeso’s [Nexus](#)

62. “Impact.” Adeso, <https://adesoafrika.org/impact/>.

63. See [Radical Flexibility Fund](#)

design and facilitate processes led by grassroots organizations to effectively and sustainably resource work in their communities; supports the generation of locally-led knowledge; and, monitors and disseminates the learning and impact of these new approaches.

➔ The **#ShiftThePower Movement**, introduced by the Global Fund for Community Foundations in 2016, calls for a paradigm shift to address the inherent power imbalances of the international aid system.⁶⁴ The campaign successfully encouraged many large INGOs to reflect on their practices and make practical changes which have resulted in several tangible outcomes. These include a ‘Shift the Power’ manifesto outlining the movement’s principles and values, which was signed by several organizations in 2019; the **RINGO Project** which seeks to reimagine how global civil society is shaped;⁶⁵ and the **Shift-The-Power Lab** led by a consortium of organizations that aims to better understand power imbalances in international aid and develop a tool for analyzing power in partnerships for development.⁶⁶

There may be opportunities for this community of practice to sustain engagement and dialogue on these issues, either through quarterly or semi-annual meetings among members or via external international conferences and convenings, such as the World Bank Fragility Forum. There would be opportunities to learn from and adapt practices and insights from related initiatives (including those outlined above) in tangential fields. Additionally, as a community of practice looks to cohere, it may consider articulating a set of principles or guidelines on supporting research that can foster dialogue between communities and policymakers in fragile states to build resilience and ultimately improve governance.

Conclusion and Next Phase

An important function of research is to build spaces for dialogue and the exchange of ideas and solutions towards better governance, particularly in challenging contexts. Research and knowledge at pivotal moments can help build inclusive governance, foster accountability and support resilience. Development partnerships can support research and knowledge ecosystems, but these partnerships could be made more effective. Development partners need to move away from traditional top-down approaches in funding and increase efforts in fostering local ownership. Effective capacity building can be supported through long-term funding and building relationships that go beyond monetary support. Transparency and monitoring of research assistance can be improved in more creative ways. Coordination and exchange with other stakeholders can counter damaging effects of increasing aid fragmentation and enable funders to learn from each other’s experiences and best practices to develop and support sustainable local research

sectors. These changes can add up to stronger partnerships for more resilient knowledge ecosystems.

Innovative initiatives hold potential for change as they can disseminate good practices and help influence larger institutional dynamics, but existing efforts have yet to come close to systemic transformation. Structural barriers to realizing large-scale transformation are significant and the change process can be slow. In this context, it is vital to recognize and uphold the value of individual “changemakers” and influencers within institutions that are pioneering innovations on a small scale. Even seemingly small shifts in the way individual program staff conduct business, along with consistent communication of the importance and impact of those changes both internally and externally, can build toward broader shifts. To increase their chances of success, change agents need to come together to learn from each other and jointly communicate the importance of the change agenda. A working group or community of practice among program staff within bilateral donors would thus be an important development. Principles of shared goals, openly acknowledging different incentives and reducing hierarchy and centralized strategy can lend themselves to more successful communities of practice and learning exchanges.⁶⁷ More needs to be done to connect efforts at innovation and build public pressure and demand for systemic shifts in how research is supported.

Based on individual consultations as well as from the workshop in July 2021, several ideas emerged that a community of practice might consider taking on in greater detail in the future. These issues include, but are not limited to:

- **The mismatch between the scope of academic research and research needed for policy, implementation and tangible impact.** Often, in response to calls for research, projects synthesize existing studies or are not detailed enough to inform specific policy decisions. Other times, academic research results in overly detailed analysis or is too narrowly tailored to be relevant for more general policy decisions. There is an opportunity to match the scope of research for the relevant policy or programmatic question.
- **The need to adjust the time required to produce research and analysis, particularly to meet the needs of policymaking windows.** The production and publication of research and analysis, particularly peer-reviewed research, can extend beyond a relevant policy window, risking their usefulness. Decision-making windows are becoming shorter as well, as events require faster reactions and leaders struggle to anticipate opportunities. The need for relevant and timely research and analysis will only increase in the future.
- **Beyond academic research, questions remain about**

64. See the Global Fund for Community Foundations’ [#ShiftThePower](#)

65. See [RINGO Project](#)

66. See the Spindle’s [Shift-The-Power Lab](#)

67. Seyle, C., & Connolly, M. 2020. International Lessons on Building Resilient, Cross-Sector Partnerships. Stanford Social Innovation Review. <https://doi.org/10.48558/PPB8-G118>.

alternative ways to generate knowledge and evidence and to promote impact. There is a perception among many that evidence for impact mainly comes from academic and affiliated organizations, but this is not the full picture. Policy-relevant knowledge, data and information is being produced from many different sources and the key question is how to recognize, share and apply it effectively.

- **Changes in the digital environment have made navigating the information space more difficult.** Misinformation and disinformation muddy the waters, making it challenging at times to discern relevant and extraneous information. Meanwhile, data and digital advances have increased the amount and variety of information that policymakers can utilize. Identifying the right sources and metrics can help inform more evidence-based decision-making.
- Different evaluation frameworks can allow for comparability and sharing across different initiatives. In consultations, many experts said that having common points of reference would be useful in understanding the potential for collaboration. Rooting evaluation frameworks in existing benchmarks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, for example, would allow for comparability across the different initiatives. Peer-to-peer networks can be created around these common frameworks.

A majority of experts consulted for this project iterated that it would be useful to sustain dialogue over these critical issues facing knowledge ecosystems in fragile states to strengthen the institutions, cultivate expertise and share insights and learnings in service of the ultimate goal of improving governance and building resilience.

ANNEX: List of Consulted Organizations

Institution	Country
Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization	Canada
Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit	Afghanistan
Aga Khan Foundation Canada	Canada
Arab Reform Initiative	France
Arab Resistance for Democracy and Development	Jordan
Birzeit University	Palestine
Carleton University	Canada
Center for Lebanese Studies	Lebanon
Development Workshop	Angola
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office	U.K.
Fundación Ideas para la Paz	Colombia
INASP	U.K.
Japan Science and Technology Agency	Japan
Lancet-AUB Commission on Syria - Health in Conflict	Lebanon
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development	France
Southern Voice	India
Sudan Knowledge	Sudan/U.K.
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	Switzerland
Universidad Simon Bolivar	Venezuela
University of the Witwatersrand	South Africa