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## Conclusion

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This report has highlighted a number of lessons learnt and challenges faced in DDRN's efforts to bring research into practice and practice into research. We have demonstrated that the achievements of the Network are closely related to the strengths and advantages of being a broad, inclusive and flexible network, and to finding ways of utilising members' capacities.

The core strength of DDRN is its members. The role of the Network secretariat has been to support members' interaction and to promote cross-fertilisation and learning among them in various ways. For example, by tailoring the contents of training workshops to the specific needs of the involved partners or projects and sharing responsibilities for preparation, training and follow-up activities among the involved partners.

The case of capacity-building of North-South partnerships on research communication which are described in Chapter 2 show that this approach has allowed for the immediate application of the lessons learnt and further development of outputs after the workshops. The case of training high level managers to strengthen University competence and practice for engagement with policy as outlined in Chapter 4, also shows how a needs-oriented approach that utilises members' and collaborators' joint capacities can enhance South-South learning and achieve a much greater impact.

### **Enhancing cross-fertilisation and learning**

The participatory working groups and task forces are results of DDRN's deliberate strategy of enhancing cross-fertilisation and learning among different stakeholder groups within research and development in Denmark and across different levels of experience and ages. These groups have contributed to strengthening the resource base by creating avenues where contacts are made and new relationships are created.



Above  
Group exercise,  
research  
communication  
workshop,  
Tanzania

Bringing together not only stakeholders from different professional categories, but also members representing different generations is a way of broadening inputs and perspectives and acknowledging that young people are the resources on which a society builds its future economic development. This is why DDRN has made a special effort to include young people through various activities targeting students. As a result, students' participation in working groups, conferences, seminars and other events organised by the Network has been enhanced and their access to information, knowledge and experiences improved.

The interests and needs of all of DDRN's different stakeholder groups have also been guiding principles in building the news services and website of DDRN. Entry points and focal areas on the website have been developed and continuously adjusted according to the interest of members at the same time as the overall structure of the website is easy to navigate. This strategy has resulted in a coherent and flexible information system as shown in Chapter 2.

Networking with other networks is another distinctive feature. DDRN neither knows everything, nor does everything on its own. The contributions by members have been boosted by secretariat staff accessing new, relevant information and engaging experts with experience and knowledge within areas of great relevance to the members and

users of DDRN. As shown in the analysis of communication activities in Chapter 2, being part of other networks and organisations working with research communication has been conducive to the development of new training concepts and tools on capacity building in research communication and outreach. This proactive networking with networks and international organisations has also enriched DDRN within other areas, for example, within agricultural research and research for policy influence. Within all these areas the ‘networking of networks’ has enabled DDRN to draw on and collaborate with leading experts and involve them in the Network’s activities as trainers, speakers, colleagues and facilitators.

The forming of strategic alliances with like-minded regional networks in Africa, can also be powerful tools for Southern inclusion. Through strategic alliances, activities can be taken to a higher level where decision makers can be reached for greater policy influence and change. The South-led initiative on promoting the role of higher education and research in development in Africa described in Chapter 4 is a good example of this.

### **Producing knowledge for development together**

In summary, much of the Network’s work is related to finding ways of addressing existing gaps and imbalances in North-South-South research cooperation in a constructive way and using the differences in capacities and capabilities as building blocks in existing and future collaboration initiatives. Seen from this perspective, the analysis and presentation of lessons in this report are also a contribution to current debates on equal partnerships and how to engage young people and non-traditional stakeholder groups in development research. Nevertheless, the main intention of this report has been to contribute to the understanding of what networks actually are and can be. By documenting, assessing and communicating some of the results and

by reflecting on the interactive processes and the enabling and hindering factors for making the Network a success, we hope to have made a modest contribution to deepening our understanding of networks, what they are, how they evolve and what value they bring to their members and users.

By engaging and providing services to its members and actively networking with a broad range of organisations, DDRN has become a widely acknowledged network that is valued by its members. It provides a sense of global outreach while managing to capture the interests of individual members. This, we believe, is a key to creating commitment and engagement in dynamic fora that can produce innovative and needs-based knowledge to promote development.