



**Memorandum of Understanding in Support of Better Health
for the Poor**

- An Irish Collaboration for Global Health Research

Between

Development Cooperation Ireland

and

Health Research Board

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Background and Purpose

Millions of poor people in developing countries die or suffer ill-health every year from largely preventable or treatable causes. While much progress has been made, relatively modest investments in research on the health problems of developing countries could go a long way towards achieving better health outcomes and improved quality of life.

Strong national health systems are needed to deliver health care interventions to improve health and achieve the health-related Millennium Development Goals. Research has a crucial part to play in strengthening health systems, improving the equitable distribution of high quality health services, and advancing human development. Research is also an essential component of strong health systems for informed and knowledgeable action to improve people's health and accelerate development.

Many of the health problems experienced in developing countries are truly global health issues that transcend national boundaries. Health events in other countries increasingly impact on the health of people on the island of Ireland and the Irish health system. In addition to improving the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of official development assistance, investing in global health research and also contribute to the knowledge base and the protection of the health of people in Ireland and the world as a whole.

Development Cooperation Ireland (DCI) attaches priority to the health of people in poor countries and recognises the importance of health research to better meet health needs. In increasing its support for health research, DCI has sought to collaborate with and strengthen the Irish research community.

Ireland is at the forefront of health research, with strong academic institutions and research centres, a well-trained pool of researchers, many health professionals with experience of working in developing countries and a dynamic healthcare industry. It has much to offer the global health research agenda, as witnessed by the recent establishment of the Irish Forum for Global Health, a network of people from the education and research community that are concerned with issues that impact on the health of populations at a global level.

This Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) provides a framework for future cooperation and collaboration between DCI and the Health Research Board (HRB). It is of mutual benefit to both organisations, enabling the HRB to develop its interest in global health and DCI to promote health research and its strategic priorities through Irish institutions and researchers. It provides a framework for future collaborative opportunities that may arise such as the recently established European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership.

Mission of Development Cooperation Ireland

Development Cooperation Ireland is the official development assistance programme of the Irish Government. It has as its absolute priority the reduction of poverty, inequality and exclusion in developing countries. Addressing poor health is a priority of DCI as this is both a cause and consequence of poverty.

DCI's health policy goal is to improve the health of the world's poor people as an integral aspect of sustainable development and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Its strategy is to work through partnerships at national, regional and international level. The main partners are national governments, UN agencies, the EU, global health partnerships, civil society organisations and Irish institutions.

The principal focus is on meeting the needs of the poor and marginalised through support at country level. DCI adopts a multi-sectoral approach taking account of the determinants of health. The principal instrument used to support health sector development is the sector wide approach. DCI works closely with other partners to build effective and sustainable health systems. Support is given to strengthen institutional capacities, including human resources, so that poor people have improved access to essential health services.

Health research is an important component of DCI's support in health. Support is directed towards the implementation of high quality research and to increase research capacity in developing countries. In 2004, DCI spent approximately €6 million on health-related research, mainly for research and development of new technologies in malaria and HIV/AIDS. DCI also gives priority to research in health systems and supports operational research that can contribute to development of international best practice in health, with a focus on reaching the poorest. DCI is keen to promote international partnerships in health research, including partnerships involving Irish institutions.

Mission of the Health Research Board

The Health Research Board is a statutory body with responsibility for funding, commissioning and supporting health research. It works to achieve its mission of "improving health through research and information" by funding research projects and programmes on the basis of open, competitive peer-review calls, by building research capacity through training and fellowship awards and by funding infrastructure for health research. *Making Knowledge Work for Health: A Strategy for Health Research*, published by the Department of Health and Children in 2001, provides a framework for the development of health research by the HRB and is built on a foundation of partnership and cooperation.

The HRB has well-established links with research institutes, health agencies, research charities and research networks in Ireland and abroad. It has experience in collaborative working and joint initiatives through its involvement in the Ireland-Northern Ireland-National Cancer Institute Cancer Consortium, through joint calls with the Wellcome Trust in the UK, through joint working with the R&D Office in Northern Ireland and the UK Cochrane Centre in provision of national access to the Cochrane Library and through co-funded calls with the Medical Research Charities Group.

The HRB has a strong track record in peer-review of research and has well-established processes and procedures for managing research calls to ensure excellence and relevance. As a specialist funding agency, the HRB is familiar with the complex governance issues that are vital for effective research management and through this MoU, the HRB will contribute its people, processes and expertise to manage, review and administer awards in research in global health, framed around the strategic objectives of DCI.

While the HRB does not have an explicit mandate to fund global health, it funds and continues to fund research projects relevant to developing countries through its open call mechanism. Through its Research and Development for Health division, it promotes taking a more strategic approach to funding research linked to major health and social care priorities. The HRB supports the work of the recently established Irish Forum for Global Health and through its Research and Development for Health division, is the national focal point for the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership. Further developments within the HRB include an amendment to the existing HRB project and programme grants to enable Irish-based researchers to conduct their research, where appropriate, in developing countries and an opportunity through the HRB summer studentship scheme for undergraduates to gain invaluable experience by travelling to participate in research in developing countries.

Shared principles and approaches

Together, the two partners, funded by the Irish Government, can bring considerable expertise to bear on health problems in developing countries and global health priorities: DCI with its considerable development experience and its emphasis on evidence-based health development and the HRB with its leadership in health research and its strong tradition of excellence in research through the peer-review process.

Both partners have a number of shared principles underpinning any joint activity:

- Partnership and collaboration;
- Excellence in research;
- Research linked to the strategic objectives of DCI;
- A focus on research that strengthens health systems;
- Capacity building for researchers in developing countries;
- Competitive and open calls with international peer review;
- Openness and transparency;
- Dissemination of research findings to inform policy, public health and health care decision-making.

Framework Arrangement

Through this MOU DCI and HRB agree to collaborate in global health research. The necessary contractual and legal arrangements between the parties will be specific to the research projects and programmes carried out under the collaboration and contained in the relevant project / programme documents.

The aims of the collaboration are to:

- (1) generate research evidence directly related to DCI policy areas;
- (2) contribute to building research capacity in developing countries;
- (3) promote research into global health issues in Ireland.
- (4) build capacity of researchers in Ireland in global health research

Under this MoU, both DCI and the HRB will seek to provide information to each other at senior level about their respective strategies and priorities and will agree and publish joint calls for research into global health as funds permit. Funding will be made available for these calls by DCI and the HRB will develop, publish and administer these calls using its personnel and well-established processes and procedures in research management. The priorities of each research call will be based around the strategic priorities of DCI. While the HRB will administer calls, DCI will participate in an initial review of research proposals to ensure that they are relevant to the policy agenda of DCI. DCI will also participate on and make nominations to the committee making the final recommendations about funding. Final recommendations for funding will be approved by the Board of the HRB. The HRB will

administer the payment of awards to research institutions and ensure effective research governance standards are met throughout. DCI will decide on the publishing, reporting and dissemination criteria for research awards in advance of any call.

Forms of contact and liaison

The Director General of DCI and the Chief Executive Officer of the HRB will take responsibility for signing the MoU. The Health Adviser in DCI and the Head of the Research and Development for Health at the HRB will maintain regular contact with each other and oversee the implementation of the research awards scheme.

Review meetings

In the first quarter and last quarter of every year, there will be a formal meeting of senior representatives of DCI and HRB to:

- Consider and compare DCI and HRB priorities and plans;
- Review and evaluate progress in areas of joint interest, including joint initiatives;
- Review projects/programmes funded by DCI or co-funded with the HRB, the results achieved and the potential development impact;
- Consider any new or emerging areas of strategic interest, and actions appropriate to addressing them;
- Review the operation of this Memorandum.

The agenda for these review meetings will cover all the above items and any others agreed between the parties. Arrangements for the meetings, and for any follow-up actions, will be agreed between the Health Adviser of DCI and the Head of the Research and Development for Health at the HRB.

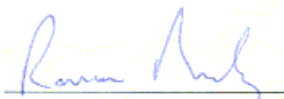
A formal review of the partnership will be undertaken after two years, involving the Director General of DCI and the Chief Executive Officer of the HRB.

Dissemination

This document will be published on the websites of both DCI and the HRB. All calls for applications and all research awards made under this Collaboration will also be published on both websites.

The MoU is intended to last for two years from the date of signature in the first instance, but with the intention of subsequent review and renewal.

Signatory from DCI



Mr. Ronan Murphy
Director General
Development Cooperation Ireland

Date: 20 October 2005

Signatory from HRB



Dr. Ruth Barrington
Chief Executive Officer
Health Research Board

Date: 20.10.2005