



Environment for Development Evaluation GLOBEN EfD 2021-2023

EnvEcon Evaluation 2024

May, 2024

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Reference

EnvEcon (2024), EfD Initiative Evaluation 2024, Dublin: EnvEcon

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Preface

This evaluation follows from the 2020 evaluation of the Capacity Building Program (CBP) in Environmental Economics and the Environment for Development (EfD) Initiative led by the Environmental Economics Unit (EEU) at University of Gothenburg (UoG), which covered the 2015-2019 period. This 2024 evaluation is focused on the current agreement between GLOBEN (Sida's unit for Global Cooperation on Environment) and EfD. Specifically, this evaluation focuses on activities described in 'A proposal for funding for Environmental for Development 2021-2024' submitted to Sida on 5th October 2020, hereafter referred to as the GLOBEN EfD program. Thus, whilst allowing for some broader connected considerations and trends, the evaluation is based primarily on performance in relation to that recent funding, and we understand that this evaluation will be used to inform discussions regarding a potential further round of funding and support for EfD in the period from 2025-2029. Whilst recognising the focus period of the evaluation, we believe it would be inappropriate to fully isolate the years 2021 to end of 2023 in this assessment, and, as such, we do allow for a somewhat broader and more holistic approach in this evaluation of the EfD Initiative.

Abbreviations

| | |
|-----------|---|
| ACDI | African Climate and Development Initiative |
| BlueRforD | Blue Resources for Development |
| CATIE | Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Centre |
| CBP | Capacity Building Program |
| CC | Coordination Committee |
| CEA | Country Environmental Analysis |
| CPC | Collaborative Program Committee |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States |
| EDI | Equality Diversity and Inclusion |
| EEU | Environmental Economics Unit |
| EEPC | Environmental Economics Program in China |
| Efd | Environment for Development Initiative |
| EPfd | Emissions Pricing for Development |
| EPRU | Environmental Economics Policy Research Unit |
| FC | Forestry Collaborative |
| FTE | Full-time Equivalent (staff member or student) |
| GH | Global Hub |
| IGE | Inclusive Green Economy |
| IUCN | International Unit for the Conservation of Nature |
| MCC | Mercator Research Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change |
| MIMI | Master Indicator Management Information – Efd’s system for recording and reporting data |
| NatCap | Natural Capital Collaborative |
| OECD-DAC | Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| RA | Research Assessment |
| RAE | Research Assessment Exercise |
| RC | Research Committee |
| REF | Research Evaluation Framework |
| RFF | Resources for the Future |

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|----------------------------|--|
| RUBEN | Research Unit of Behavioural and Neuro-economics Research |
| SALDRU | South African Labour Development Research Unit |
| SETI | Sustainable Energy Transitions Initiative |
| SCOPE | Sustainable Consumption and Production |
| Sida | Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency |
| SWOT | Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats |
| ToR | The terms of reference for this evaluation |
| UCD | University College Dublin |
| UoG | University of Gothenburg |
| WinEED | Women in Environmental Economics for Development |
| WUR | Wageningen University and Research |
| Definition of Terms | |
| Efd Network | This refers to the 12 Efd Centres, 9 academic partners and the Global Hub |
| Efd Partners | Academic partners mostly based in the Global North e.g. Resources for the Future |
| Established Centres | The centres that were established prior to 2018. These include Central America, Colombia, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Chile, India, Vietnam. (China was initially a centre but is now a partner). |
| New-Wave Centres | The Efd Centres established after 2018. These include Uganda, Ghana and Nigeria |
| Efd Centres | The established and new-wave centres as defined above. |

1. Executive Summary

The vision of the EfD Initiative is judged by our evaluation team to remain sound in terms of the overall intervention logic. The 2024 evaluation has also found continued evidence relevant to the current period, which indicates that the EfD Network is delivering research, policy impact and many broader positive spillover effects in the Global South. The evaluation finds that the EfD Initiative has offered an efficient and effective deployment of the GLOBEN EfD resources, and that it has successfully leveraged funds and capacity to secure higher levels of external funding for greater impact. The findings of our Research Evaluation Framework assessment of the Network, overall, show significant improvements in the research environment of the majority of the longer established centres and a good research environment in the newer centres. Research performance remains strong with an improved emphasis on applied research with significant potential for impact locally. There is also evidence of enhanced cooperation across the Network in research and impact and many examples of high-quality cooperation between policymakers and centre members with direct impacts on environmental policy design for positive development interventions.

We believe that long-standing, broad scope, interdisciplinary global networks are both rare and valuable. The world will increasingly need locally-embedded, globally-supported entities who can deliver robust, evidence-based support to policymakers in the context of major resource and environmental challenges in the Global South from air to water and climate to waste. Whilst EfD is more diverse than some specialist funding sources may prefer, we believe the answer is not to make any substantive change, but rather to win over funders and policy actors to the merits of the approach, or indeed reimagining and tailoring the manner in which the EfD Initiative might be conveyed to those more specialist funders. This will involve the Global Hub investing in the promotion of the Network as a whole, in promoting and connecting the capabilities of supported local centres and by designing and communicating a coherent and comprehensive strategy for the Collaborative Programs that align to substantial opportunities which can benefit all centres in the Network. Each of these facets of EfD should then be professionally tailored to the interests of a broader mix of funds and policy, and the Global Hub will have a key role in influencing and identifying opportunities, and thereafter responding to and realising opportunities for the EfD Network to deliver more impact.

In regard to the sustainability of the EfD Initiative, it is worthwhile to recall that, at the time of the 2015-2019 evaluation of the EfD Initiative, the EfD Network was in a state of dynamic change. In broad terms, that prior evaluation found clear evidence of strong research performance, confirmations of policy impact and a commitment to enhancing the operational efficiency, resilience, and effectiveness of EfD in the Global South, particularly within Africa. The core recommendations of that evaluation can be captured under summarised headings of:

- ❖ Operational improvements and key service provision from a central coordinating unit.
- ❖ Realising more of the benefits of the network model for people, research and policy impacts.
- ❖ Investing in and implementing change in respect of the promotion of EfD activities and EfD research.
- ❖ Building resilience – in all its forms e.g. financial, personnel, institutional – across the EfD Network.

The GLOBEN EfD agreement from 2021-2024 has overlapped with major external challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic and a number of conflicts across the globe. Thus there are many factors that have presented real challenges for the EfD Network during this timeframe. At a more localised scale for EfD, we have seen evidence of how personnel change, political shifts and altered institutional arrangements have tested the resilience of the Network. Therefore, in regard to sustainability, an important initial finding to highlight from this evaluation is our positive view in respect of the resilience of the EfD Network in regard to both external and internal challenges. The Global Hub, and the EfD Network more broadly, have navigated this period well, and we believe that the institutional memory of how to respond and repair the Network, when facing myriad challenges (that will surely come again), is an important step for sustaining the EfD Network and maintaining progress on the EfD vision. A full explanation of our recommendations is presented in Section 8 of this report. Summary points include:

- Recommendation 1** Support the development of a Network to support the vital role of EfD support staff.
- Recommendation 2** Enhance the service infrastructure for the support professionals in the EfD Network, including improved systems to manage scale and streamlined reporting and data uploads.
- Recommendation 3** Move with the times. Utilise AI for personalised learning and development, supporting grant writing, funding opportunities' identification, and research data analysis.
- Recommendation 4** Undertake an administrative review of committees to identify how and where efficiencies may be realised in terms of operation.
- Recommendation 5** Ensure electronic journal access as a minimum standard across all centres. Take a coherent approach to ensuring open-access publishing support for centres. Collect data on academic workloads and consider ways to free-up time for impactful research.
- Recommendation 6** Place an emphasis on exploring what it means to provide a supportive environment for a diverse range of researchers. Sustain investment in gender-based research and researchers.
- Recommendation 7** Develop the Global Hub as an efficient 'clearing house' for donor funds and channelling.
- Recommendation 8** Provide clarity on the Collaboratives including as leveraging their points of difference for donor funding, establishing their focus, number and operation, and whether they should be based on thematic priorities or on the basis of leadership and location factors.
- Recommendation 9** Support the collaboratives by providing dedicated coordinators for effective communication and coordination.
- Recommendation 10** Design and adopt multiple marketing angles for EfD, Centres and Collaboratives.
- Recommendation 11** Build and maintain systems for resilience and rebuilding of the EfD Network.
- Recommendation 12** Recognise non-linear Centre development and the Network role in providing stability.

2. Introduction

This report follows the Inception report plan that was approved by the Global Hub in February 2024. A rigorous and established methodology has been used with attention to data collection, data collation and systematic and structured analysis. Regarding metrics data, these have been obtained from the Global Hub and the MIMI system – a master file structure for coordinating data recording and reporting at EfD. Whilst outliers have been queried, metrics are mostly accepted as provided to us in the evaluation and independent verification was neither planned nor possible. Data sources, methods and processes are explained in the main report or appendices. To enhance readability, whilst preserving transparency, in some cases a summary is given in the main report, with additional detail in appendices. This final report has been developed and delivered in accordance with Sida’s Evaluation Handbook Guidelines (2020), which also aligns well with the OECD/DAC guidelines (2010) that were followed in the prior evaluation in 2020. This coherence of approach should improve the usability of the piece and allow for comparative assessment of progress across the 2011-2014, 2015-2019, and current evaluation period (2021-2023).

EnvEcon is grateful to all of the stakeholders who participated in this process. This comprises the staff of the Global Hub, the main staff of the Centres, survey and focus-group respondents, external partners, policy stakeholders and funding organizations. These evaluations rely on the participation and goodwill of many people, and the support provided for this evaluation has been excellent. As well as our thanks, we note that this capacity to collect and collate data is in and of itself a positive indicator for the operation and management quality of EfD.

3. Evaluated Intervention

The EfD Initiative has clearly defined its vision, goals and the underlying theory of change in a concise and coherent manner. We recognise the EfD Strategic Plan 2021-2025 as our source material for the current vision and theory of change. This strategic plan from 2020 was informed by the 2020 evaluation of the EfD Initiative and was the relevant strategic document at the outset of the GLOBEN EfD funding agreement. That strategic document provides a clear vision statement for the EfD Initiative as follows:

“Inclusive sustainable development in the Global South founded on efficient management of the environment, natural resources, and climate change impacts.”

In terms of the overarching goal of the EfD Initiative, the EfD Strategic Plan 2021-2025 once again provides a clear statement, which highlights the thematic impact priorities and the means through which the EfD Initiative will seek to effect change in the Global South:

“EfD contributes to evidence-based domestic and international policies for poverty reduction, gender equality and environmental and resource management, including climate change impacts in the Global South through integrated capacity development, knowledge sharing, research and policy engagement.”

We observe that the activities of the EfD Initiative have been centred around institutional development, capacity development, policy relevant research, policy engagement, and policy impact. These areas then encompass education, research-environment support, raising research standards, conducting research for evidence-based policies, nurturing a research-policy interface and directly contributing to policy change that aligns with the goals and vision of EfD. However, EfD is also operating in a dynamic and challenging environment and therefore it must also remain dynamic and open in regard to challenges and opportunities for it to realise the defined vision and goals.

As stated, the vision is to foster sustainable economic growth and better well-being by using environmental economics to enhance the efficient use of natural resources and the environment. The use of environmental economics for this vision is through that strengthening of local analytical skills, producing sound and relevant analyses, and communicating and promoting constructive policy change in the Centres' host countries that help to reduce poverty and protect and manage natural resources to good effect. The focus is on creating positive impacts.

The theory of change in this context is that local expertise that meets international standards will support realisation of this vision, and furthermore that the transfer of expertise and knowledge across the Network will ensure that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. To make this overall change happen, the EfD Initiative works to fill the "gaps" in institutional development, academic capacity building, policy research and policy interaction and communication, whilst also providing virtual and physical spaces to enhance knowledge exchange of best practice in research, impact and policy transfer.

Following the OECD/DAC guidelines (OECD, 2010) and Sida's Evaluation Handbook (2020), EnvEcon is now evaluating the GLOBEN EfD program on performance in the 2021-2024 period in relation to its mission, vision and the aligned priorities of the funding agency Sida. However, we must also consider whether the overall theory of change remains appropriate and relevant in this context. Our perspective on the overall theory of change remains that EfD is pursuing an appropriate and relevant strategy to deliver on its vision and realise its defined goals. This evaluation assesses the performance and impact of EfD, and the outcomes are detailed in the following sections. Separate to those evaluation findings, we also believe that it is important prior to emphasise in this context that the sheer scale and persistence of the challenges that exist in respect of the 'gaps' in the Global South that EfD seeks to address are indicative of the ongoing importance of such work in delivering change and positive impact outcomes.

4. Evidence and Methodology Overview

Our approach to this evaluation is once again built on the methods and evidence types that had been successfully employed in the 2015-2019 evaluation. There are a number of reasons for retaining that common methodology over time. First and foremost, adopting a similar approach in this evaluation offers coherence and continuity that better enables the client to understand the developments, and relative changes, within the EfD Initiative over time. Secondary reasons for the approach are that our prior methodology was well received by the client and stakeholders, and equipped us with the necessary insights to offer clear and practical recommendations as part of the process.

That said, in any evaluation, it is important to review and, as appropriate, adjust methods to ensure they remain relevant and suitable. For this purpose, the team have considered criticisms and advances in the field of evaluation. Lebel and McLean (2018) offered an opinion in *Nature* that was highlighted as part of the 2020 evaluation and which remains highly relevant to this evaluation and context. They question the ability of certain conventional methods and metrics (e.g. number of papers, citations) to evaluate the quality, and more importantly, the impact of research and related initiatives to bring about positive change. We are confident that our 2020 method, as revised for this evaluation, remains valid and valuable in the context of their general critique. Specifically, with our approach:

- We provide open opportunities to the Network participants to contribute to the evaluation process.
- We stimulate responses through site visits, remote surveys, focus groups and individual meetings.
- We evaluate the quality of the research environments through reporting and/or visual inspection.
- We consider the impact and value of research through direct engagements with external stakeholders.
- We consider the alignment of work to localised priorities and needs in terms of research and policy.
- We consider non-traditional impacts and changes (e.g. individual development, connections).
- We consider traditional and non-traditional outputs (e.g. policy reports, campaigns, policy events).
- We recognise the broader field of relevant journals (e.g. those within environmental economics).
- We consider the quality of the research and not simply the quality of the outlet (e.g. journal or book).
- We review impact stories and search for evidence of positive spill overs (e.g. South-South linkages).
- We adopt a systematic, quantitative and qualitative approach underpinned by defined evidence bases.
- We guide the creation of a comprehensive underlying evidence base that the Global Hub can share.

We have also considered our approach for its relevance and effectiveness in regard to evaluating the performance of EfD. We are confident that the proposed approach balances rigour with realism in terms of evaluative detail, and the approach followed has been detailed in the 2023 inception report (EnvEcon, 2023), which was provided to the client in the early phases of this EfD evaluation and accepted in February 2024. As a reminder of the evidence on which this evaluation is based, Table 1 offers a summary of sources and methods employed in this 2024 evaluation.

Table 1. Description of Evidence Source Categories

| Evidence Source/Method | Description |
|---|---|
| Research Assessment | Submitted data for our Research Assessment (RA) Framework served as the major evidence base on which to assess the quality of the centres, their research environments, research outputs and impact. Our specific adapted RA methodology is applied again in this evaluation, and this is explained in the relevant section of the report and as an appendix. The responses from each EfD centre, that underpin our RA assessment, are also available as individual excel files from the Global Hub. The focus in this evaluation has been researchers based at the centres, thus research associates (more often based in the north) have been excluded. |
| Research Outputs | Publications, individual papers, and annual reports were considered as part of the RA process, and also in a broader fashion for establishing a perspective on the EfD Initiative development and research focus over the past years. Files and links to files were provided to us via the Global Hub and are available via the Global Hub. |
| MIMI Data | The MIMI database was developed in 2015 and offers a coherent structure for recording a wide variety of quantitative data across the EfD Centres. The updated data in this system for the period 2021-present was utilised in the evaluation for key quantitative metrics. We also took note of the extended period beyond GLOBEN EfD (2021-2024) in order to offer a better perspective of trends in specific metrics. |
| Centre evaluation questionnaires | Each of the EfD Centres was required to complete an evaluation questionnaire. The design of this questionnaire remains in keeping with the Sida evaluation guidelines and OECD/DAC guidelines. Specifically, recognising aspects of relevance, efficiency, impact and so forth. The questions elicited stated responses in regard to numerous defined aspects of the evaluation – such as plans for funding diversification, thoughts on strategy and so on. A modified format was also created for newer EfD Centres to gather their perspectives at the outset of their engagement with the EfD Initiative. In all cases, additional opportunities for direct engagement were offered to allow for circumventive contact with the evaluators for sensitive issues. The completed questionnaires for each centre are available via the Global Hub. |
| Policy impact case studies | The evaluation process required the Centres to compile and report a series of policy impact case studies as part of the process. These studies were considered in the RA and broader evaluation. We offered some latitude regarding the timing of ‘impact’ associated with the case studies due to the non-linear nature, and time lag, of same. |
| External stakeholder questionnaire | The evaluation process required the Centres to share an external contact questionnaire with relevant external stakeholders or end-users of EfD research advice. There was a reasonably |

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| | good response rate (17 in all) complemented by direct external stakeholder meetings as part of the two missions to Kenya and South Africa. |
| Online meetings | The evaluation team held online meetings with key personnel in EfD as well as broader stakeholders. These included Susanna Olai, Gunnar Köhlin, Olof Drakenberg, Pam Fredman and Alejandro Lopez Feldman. Further online meetings took place as part of the missions where stakeholders could not meet in person. |
| Visit to Gothenburg | The evaluation team will travel to Gothenburg as part of the final report delivery process to engage with the Global Hub, broader EfD Network stakeholders and Sida. |
| Centre Visit to Kenya | An evaluator travelled to Kenya to conduct an on-site review of the centre, staff, researchers and associated external stakeholders in March 2024. |
| Centre Visit to South Africa | An evaluation team travelled to South Africa to conduct an on-site review of the centre, staff, researchers and associated external stakeholders in Feb/March 2024. |
| Administrative Materials | Reports on operation and administration, the four-year proposal that guided the GLOBEN EfD program ‘A proposal for funding for Environment for Development 2021-2024’, contracts, audit reports, financial reports, budgets, structural organisation material, policy documents, EfD evaluation reports, and more, have been shared and considered as part of the evaluation. These documents have further assisted in understanding the operation and structure of the EfD Network and research. |
| Web analytics | Summary analytical data relating to the EfD website have been provided for the core website at www.efdinitiative.org . Key metrics on website traffic were considered as well as the findings of a strategy to drive further interest and interactions. |
| Prior evaluations | The prior reviews of Holmberg (2006), Alberts (2010) and EnvEcon (2014) and (2020) were considered as part of this review. However, the evaluation report has been developed to be considered as a stand-alone contemporary review. |
| Memos and Thoughts | A variety of other documentation including memos, and informal notes and so forth have also been considered where provided. For example, thought pieces material relating to the Collaborative Programs has been reviewed to understand specific aspects of their design, their status, and the strategy for the future. All material has been collated at the Global Hub. |
| Annual Country Reports | The annual country reports to the Global Hub for the centres have been reviewed. |
| Strategic plan | The EfD Strategic Plan 2021-2025 (2020) has been provided and considered. |

4.1. Centre Groupings and Data Availability

We define two categories of Centres within this evaluation. First, we refer to Centres, which have been established prior to 2018, as **‘Established Centres’**. This grouping includes Central America, China, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Chile, Colombia, India, and Vietnam. Although grouped together for this evaluation, we recognise that there are unique and varying needs and circumstances that can manifest (e.g. personnel loss, political change) in all cases. Caution is, therefore, required such that these ‘older’ established Centres are not necessarily assumed to be more financially, politically or institutionally stable than more recent additions to the EfD Network. Second, we refer to Centres which have been established from 2018 onwards as **‘New Wave Centres’**. This grouping includes Ghana, Nigeria, and Uganda. As we wish to provide equal opportunity for all to contribute to the evaluation process, we have engaged all centres for their input and insights; however, it is recognised that, in some cases, it may be challenging to respond to questions as a comparatively newer centre. There are also further entities within the Network which are referred to as **‘EfD Partners’** and these are mainly based in the Global North. They include Resources for the Future (RFF) in Washington USA, Duke University in the USA, Environmental Economics Program in China (EEPC) at Peking University, Mercator Research Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change (MCC) in Berlin, Portland State University Institute for Economics and the Environment in the USA, Toulouse School of Economics Energy and Climate Centre in France, University College Dublin (UCD) in Ireland, Wageningen University and Research (WUR) in the Netherlands and the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. These bodies are recognised as part of the EfD Network but are not evaluated in the same manner given that they are well-established high-performing research operations that serve different roles within the overall EfD Network. In terms of underlying quantitative data, the information available for the evaluation runs up to the end of the year 2023. As such, when data are presented on this time horizon, it should be noted that the *New Wave* centres have been integrating and developing over this time period.

Finally, we note that, since 2021, only the centres in Africa (excluding South Africa) receive core funding for the development of their centres. All other centres receive funding solely to manage the Collaborative Programs and research activities for the benefit of least and lower-middle income countries with which they are engaged as part of their EfD involvement.

5. Evolution of the EfD Program

Since the 2020 evaluation, EfD has undergone some substantial changes and has further grown in terms of number of personnel, volumes of research and the scale of general activity. The evolution of EfD since the prior evaluation, with a focus on the 2021 phase under the GLOBEN EfD agreement, is considered under six separate headings below. Extended data from 2013 is often provided in the metrics charts to offer contextual insight on trends over that extended period of time, however, the analytical focus is on the data from 2021 onwards. It is important to note here that we use the data from the MIMI files which are based on self-reporting from the centres. Therefore,

unless otherwise specified, the data discussed only covers the centres and not the Global Hub or the Efd partners. Note also that we exclude China from certain charts in this section. This is because at the end of 2023, the Forestry Collaborative, previously hosted at the Efd China Centre was subsumed into the NatCap Collaborative hosted in South Africa and China also changes to become an Efd partner. Therefore, unless otherwise stated, the data in the charts generally excludes the China Centre. However, the full data and details for all centres are available in the data provided from the Global Hub.

5.1. Structural Changes and Linkages

Since its inception in 2007, the Efd Network has evolved and grown. From an initial six centres in 2007, the Network grew to ten centres in 2016 and, later, 13 centres in 2019. As of 2023, there are 12 centres in the Network after Efd China at Peking University transitioned to become a partner, bringing the total number of Efd Partners to the nine defined in section 4.1. The Network is coordinated by the Efd Global Hub, which was formally established in 2019, and is currently based at the School of Business, Economics and Law at University of Gothenburg. The Global Hub is led by the Efd Director Gunnar Köhlin, who reports to the Dean of the School of Business, Economics and Law. The Director oversees the operations, promotion and development of the Efd Global Hub and the broader Network. Figure 1 gives an overview of the Efd organization as presently structured.

1. Efd Advisory Board

The Director is supported by the Advisory Board which was established in 2019. At the time of establishment, the Board's responsibility, among other functions, was to ensure legal, fiscal and managerial oversight. However, as the mentioned responsibilities could not formally lie outside the jurisdiction of the Global Hub host institution, they are currently managed by the Efd Director and the Dean. Therefore, the current responsibilities of the Advisory Board include advising the Director on the overarching objectives, strategy and implementation, and overseeing the funding strategy and principles around the Efd brand. The Efd Network (via the Coordination Committee) nominates four persons, and the Faculty Board of the School of Business, Economics and Law nominates three persons to the Advisory Board. The Advisory Board is formally appointed by the Dean. The Dean also appoints the Director based on nomination from the Advisory Board. At least two Advisory Board members are changed every three years. The representation of one gender -unless there are valid reasons – must not be less than 40% of the total number of members. Efd's Advisory Board currently consists of Pam Fredman, Åsa Löfgren, Chantal Line Carpentier, Marie Stenseke, Edwin Muchapondwa, Martine Visser and Kevin Urama.

2. Global Hub

The Global Hub coordinates the Network. To support its growth, the Global Hub has made adjustments to its staff capacity following a recommendation to do so in the 2015-2019 evaluation. The centre expanded its

communications, data management and finance teams since 2020 to facilitate the smooth running of administrative functions and to improve on timely financial transfers to centres. There are additional plans in 2024 to set up a support services Network within the Efd Network geared towards the improvement of information flows between the centres and the Global Hub.

The work of the Global Hub during this evaluation period has attracted additional programs that align with the Efd mission, and which involve the centres and collaborative programs. The Inclusive Green Economy (IGE) program, which is an extensive capacity development program in Eastern Africa, is an example of this. The objectives of the IGE program align well with Efd's goals of delivering a positive change through its work. By partnering with Efd members in the host countries, the program seeks to ensure that green economy policies receive broad acceptance and are integrated into the policymaking process. One of the avenues through which the program aims to action this is through the training of civil servants regarding policy tools that help facilitate the transition towards an Inclusive Green Economy. Other supporting organisations to the Global Hub include Efd Consulting which is not yet active at the time of this evaluation, and Efd International which is currently dormant.

The Efd Network also includes a number of committees that support its running and operation in different capacities. The principal active committees in the Network are as follows:

1. Efd Coordination Committee

This committee mainly deals with institutional issues affecting the centres. As such, the members take part in the centre reaccreditation process, which is a quality assurance process that aims to improve and maintain the quality of the institutions in the Efd Network. The Coordination Committee (CC) also provides input to the Global Hub on related strategies, priorities, policies or major changes. The CC is comprised of the Efd centre directors. Members of the Committee elect the CC chair who is also a member of the Advisory Board. This creates a pathway for information flows directly from the centres to the Global Hub.

2. Efd Research Committee

The Research Committee (RC) oversees the research processes within the Network and aims to ensure quality and impactful research outputs. The RC screens research proposals within the Network and decides on resource/funding allocation of the proposed projects. The allocation decisions are based on predefined criteria such as how relevant the proposed project is to the Network's themes of interest and the potential scale of impact. The feedback channels by the RC serve as learning opportunities for researchers to improve the quality of their outputs.

3. Efd Collaborative Program Committee

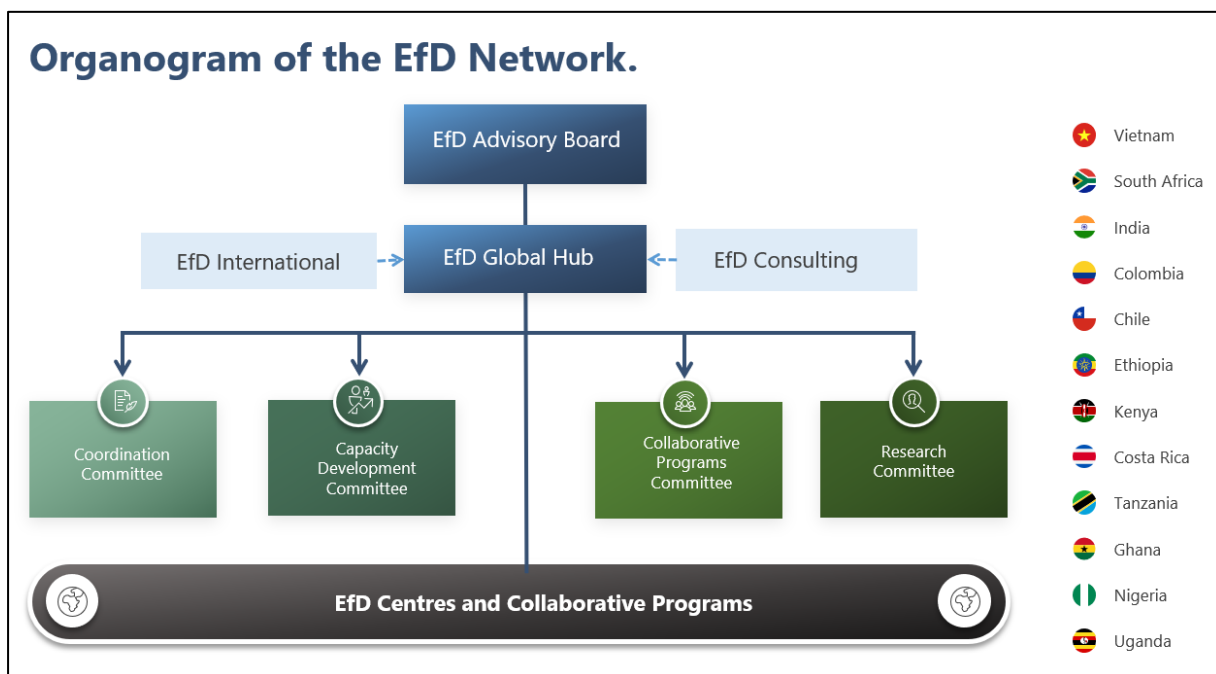
The Collaborative Program Committee (CPC) was formally established in 2022 with the main objective being to promote applied cross-country research and policy analysis, mainly through the Collaborative Programs. As such, the CPC leverages Efd's infrastructure and expertise from multiple centres to produce high-impact policy research

and address key policy challenges. The CPC therefore reports to the Global Hub on issues relating to the Collaborative Programs, including sharing success stories and strategies to help improve collaboration and management of the Collaborative Programs.

4. EfD Capacity Development Committee

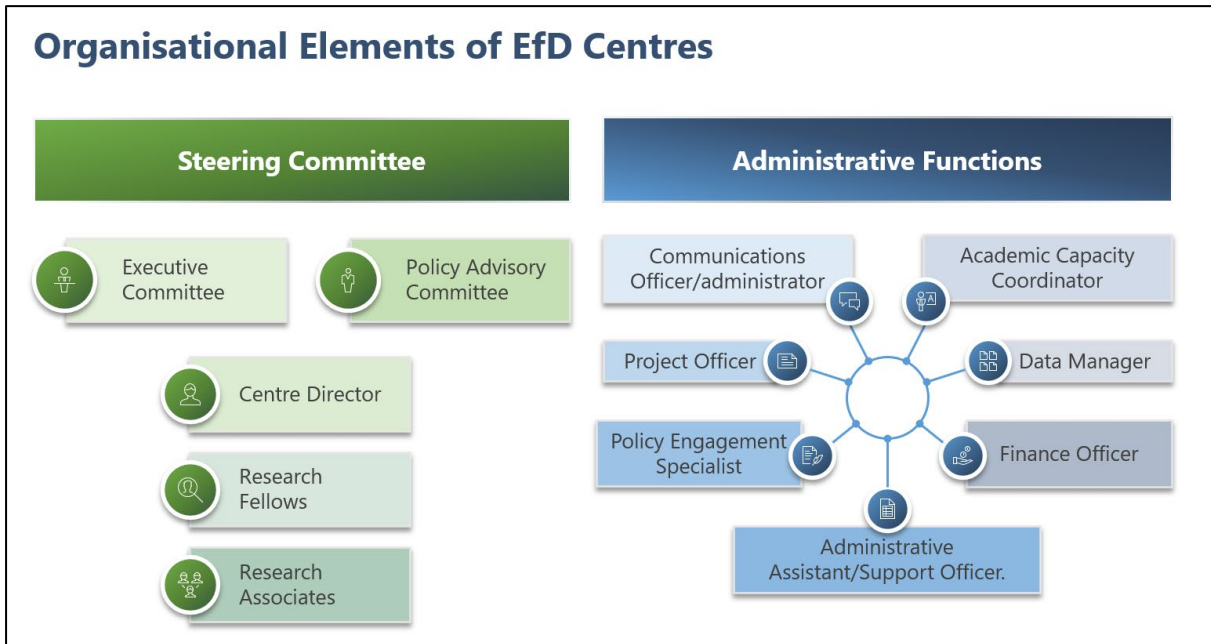
The primary focus of this committee is academic and policy-related capacity development. It oversees the Network’s activities to support researchers such as summer courses for existing graduate programs, tailored courses for early career researchers, development of a joint program in Climate Change and Sustainable Development, civil servant training on the IGE program and place-based education training for teachers from EfD centres among others.

Figure 1. Organisational Structure of EfD.



The individual EfD centres are typically hosted within leading academic institutions, with the exception of Ethiopia, which is hosted by a government ‘think tank’ called the Policy Studies Institute, while Central America is hosted by the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Centre (CATIE). For the case of Ethiopia, following political unrest in the country and leadership changes due to the death of the previous director, plans are underway to shift the centre to Addis Ababa University.

Figure 2. Organizational Elements of Individual EfD Centres.



At the individual centre level, there are some variations to the organisational structures in terms of staffing. For instance, centres that are involved in the IGE program will typically have a policy engagement specialist or an academic-capacity coordinator. However, not all centres will have an active need for these roles. Figure 2 offers an illustrative overview of the organisational elements of the individual EfD centres.

Figure 3 shows the evolution of the overall EfD Network (excluding the partners) in terms of staffing over the past ten years. There has been strong growth in the number of part-time staff since 2017, with a new peak reached in 2023. Full-time staff have also been steadily increasing during the current evaluation period, reaching a new peak in 2023, with the number of associate staff is almost levelling off at a plateau level above that of the prior 2015-2019 evaluation period’s figure. The overall increase in the Network is partly attributable to the onboarding of the *New Wave* centres in the Network, i.e., Nigeria, Ghana and Uganda in 2019. However, overall it is clear that the number of personnel across the centres under the EfD umbrella has generally grown further in this period and has reached a substantial scale of well over 400 personnel. Figure 4 indicates the increased capacity across different staff categories over time. There has been particular growth in the number of senior researchers, with a notable jump in 2023. Beyond this, the number of administrative staff has grown somewhat, and numbers of researchers and junior researchers have remained consistent over the evaluation period.

Figure 3. Total staffing by employment status in the EfD Centres

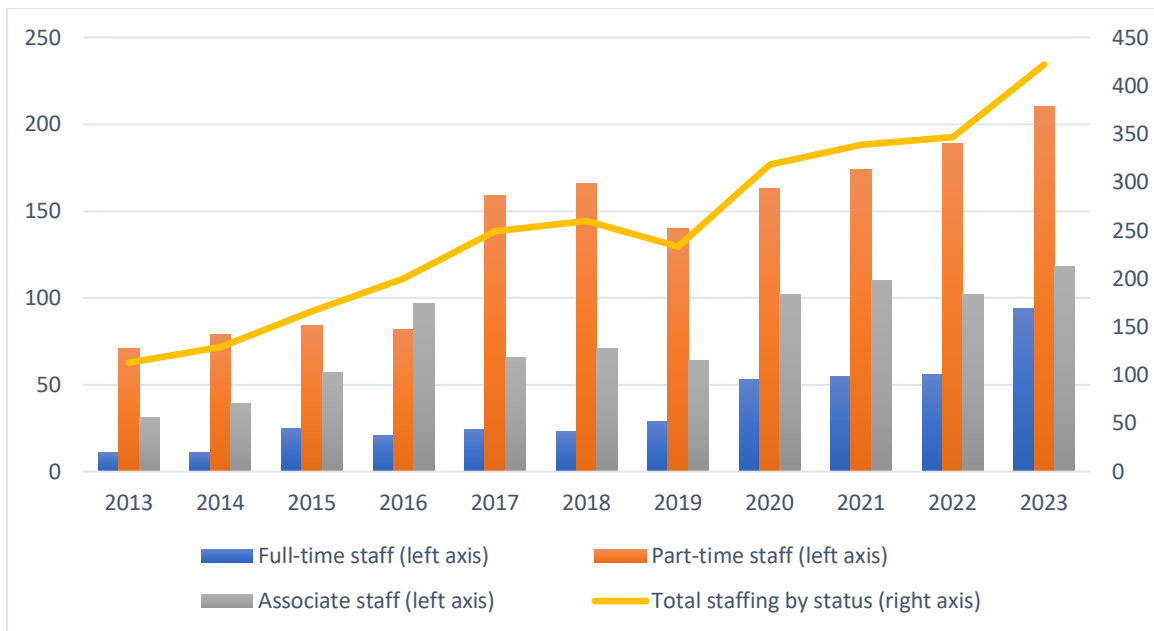
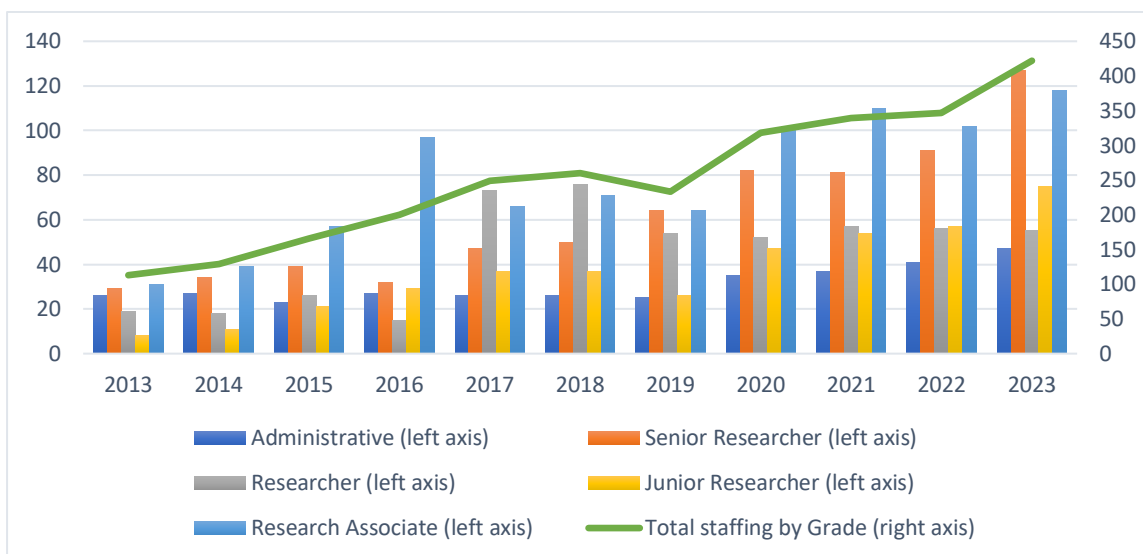


Figure 4. Total staffing by category in the EfD Centres



Relevant to Figure 4, and future evaluations, we note that, as of May 2023, the title of senior research fellow was removed following a review by the EfD Research Committee. The position had previously been opened up in 2018 to allow more women and early career researchers to apply for research funding. However, given the change in eligibility criteria, the position of senior research fellow lost some relevance and was thus removed. Following this change, there have been discussions between the centres and the Global Hub as to how best to ensure clear definitions of roles so as to achieve consistency across the EfD Network into the future.

Overall, these data indicate that the Network has achieved greater scale and has realised some of the potential for attracting new research capacity and supporting human capital development. This bodes well for the Network in terms of potential research outputs and wider policy impact. With the Network expansion in the current evaluation period, and further potential expansion into the future, we anticipate that there could be additional operational pressures that arise from having to support a larger Network. In light of this, we, *inter alia*, recommend improved support and collaboration capacity for the professional support staff at the centres.

5.2. Financial Sustainability of the Program

In the previous evaluation period, funding was channelled through the centres to support both operations and research. From the current evaluation period onwards, funding across all centres is channelled through the Collaborative Programs. Only the African centres, with the exception of South Africa, currently receive funding from the Global Hub for day-to-day operations with the aim of fostering quality research environments. The other centres access EfD funding primarily through the Collaborative Programs, as either host or participating partner.

In terms of financial sustainability, it has long been expected that, as the centres grow, they should increasingly leverage funding from other sources to become more active and impactful. The EfD funding supports research that delivers impact, but also can serve as seed funding to realise opportunities for added impactful research. In our evaluation, we have considered funding that flows in through the centres from different sources and aggregated these over the Network. Figures 5, 6 and 7 provide the aggregated financial metrics for the EfD Centres.

Figure 5. Funding Sources of the EfD Centres

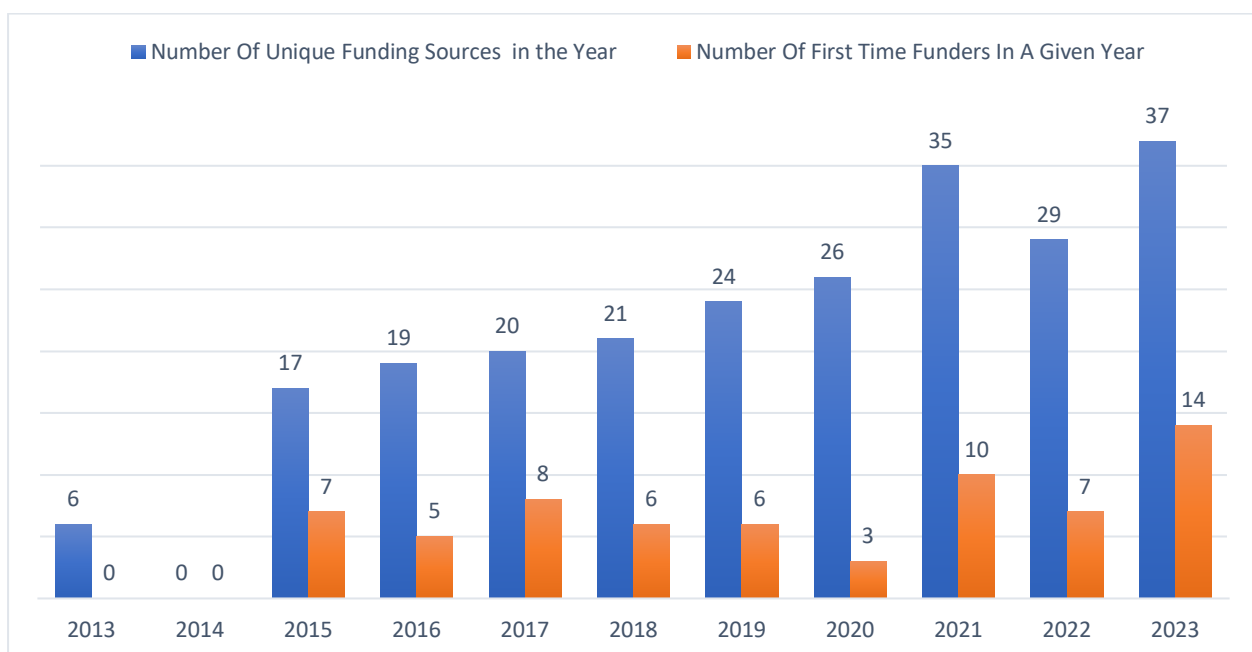
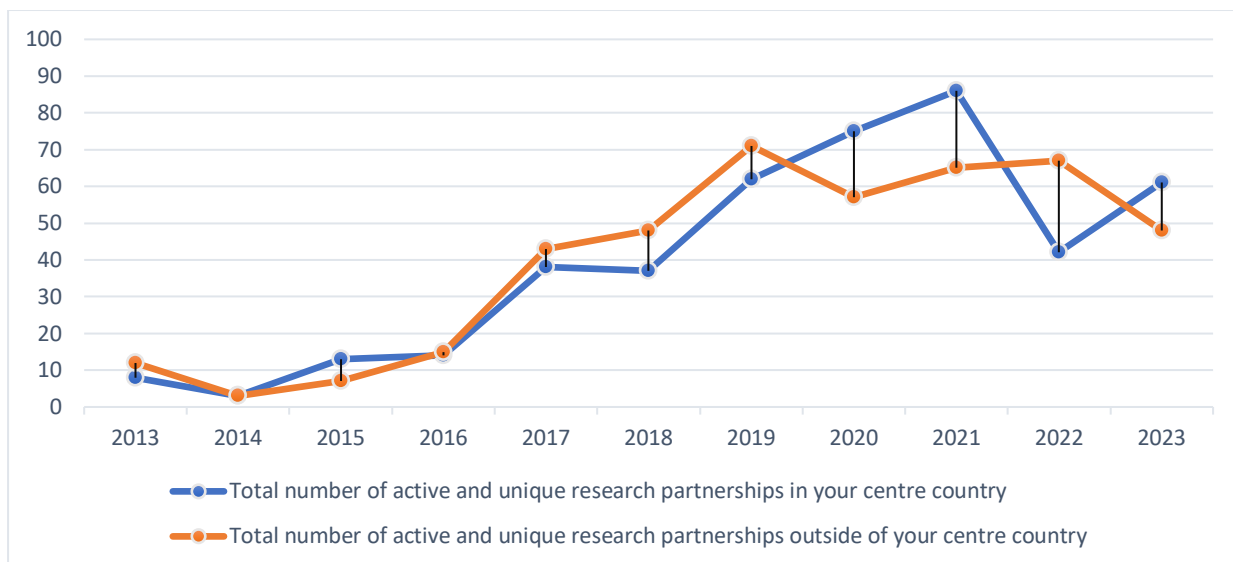


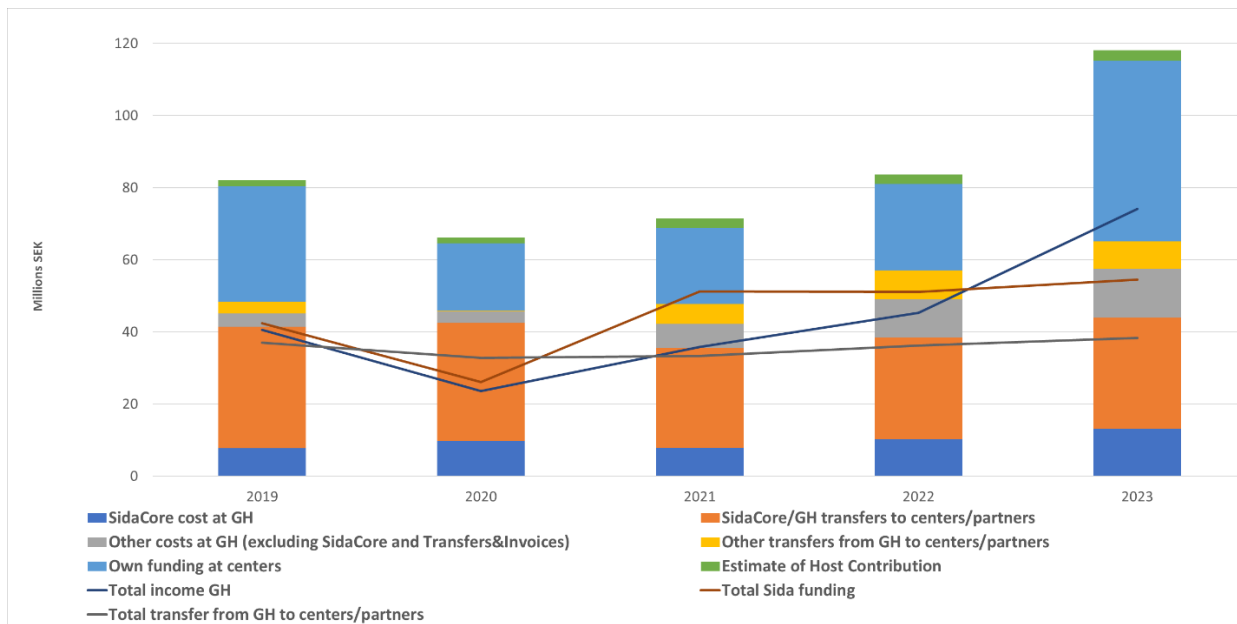
Figure 5 shows that the overall number of funding sources for the centres have significantly increased as of 2023, with notable highs in both 2021 and 2023. Since the last evaluation that covered the period ending 2018, there has been a 76% increase in the number of unique funding sources and a 133% increase in the number of first-time funders coming into the Network. The latter is a particularly encouraging indicator of innovation and ambition in respect of identifying and realising new funding opportunities. The trend displayed in Figure 5 suggests that the EfD Centres have the ability to grow financially and therefore to become more financially stable in the coming years. This will be important to expand their scale and scope. We also understand that there are a number of potential new angles for funding opportunities which represent exactly the type of initiatives that should be leveraged out of the strong foundations that have been built with EfD.

Figure 6. Research Partnerships of the EfD Centres



In terms of research partnerships, Figure 6 shows the parallel growth of in-country and outside-country research partnerships across the Network centres. There is some annual volatility, however, on a yearly average, since 2020 there has been an increase in the annual number of research partnerships compared to the previous evaluation period for both in-country and outside-country research, increasing from an annual average of approximately 33 to 66 for in-country collaborations and from approximately 37 to 59 for external partnerships respectively. With the onboarding and growth of the *New Wave* centres in the current evaluation period, an increase in the annual number of research partnerships in the overall Network is to be expected. However, on an individual centre basis, it is our view that additional efforts may be necessary to further develop the research capacity and visibility of the Network, and to ensure that a vibrant and active level of collaboration and interaction across the Network is sustained.

Figure 7. Financial Sustainability of the EfD Centres and the Global Hub



The data used in Figure 7 was not entirely sourced from the MIMI files and as such, the metrics also include transfers from the Global Hub to EfD partners but not the budgets of the partners, along with MIMI data on the estimate of host contribution and own funding at centres. As mentioned in section 5.1, since 2020, the Global Hub unit has expanded its communications, data management and finance teams to support the smooth running of administrative functions and to improve on timely transfers to the centres. This has partly contributed to the rise in costs at the Global Hub unit as shown in Figure 7. The total transfers from the Global Hub to the centres and partners has also increased since the start of the current evaluation period in 2021. The total amount at the end of 2023 is only marginally higher than the amount at the end of the previous evaluation covering the period ending in 2019. The Sida core funding remains the largest share of the total transfers to the centres, contributing about 90% of the transfers in 2019 and about 80% in 2023. EfD centres also receive additional financial support through GH transfers outside the Sida core funding. This amount has more than doubled since the last evaluation covering the period ending 2019.

Own funding from the centres represents the amounts of external funding received by the EfD Centres outside of GH transfers. There have been significant increases in this metric which suggests that the centres are generally getting better at attracting external funders. On average, the amount of such external funding per centre¹ increased from 2.7 million SEK in 2019 to 4.2 million SEK in 2023, a 57% increase. The estimate of host contribution² per centre increased by 68% from about 143,000 SEK in 2019 to 240,000 SEK in 2023. While both of the discussed

¹ Averaging across 12 EfD Centres as the China Centre is not included in this chart. In terms of financial metrics, China is an outlier (for instance, the China Centre alone accounts for nearly 67% of the total annual estimate of host contribution) and thus has been excluded to give a more realistic image of the performance of the EfD Centres.

metrics decreased in 2020, they have been increasing steadily on a yearly basis during the current evaluation period. Overall, even though the Sida funding constitutes a large portion of funds in the Efd centres, the increases in host contributions and external funding are encouraging.

Based on the feedback from the centres received in our surveys, we note that, despite improved financial stability metrics, funding still remains as a major challenge and concern among the centres. This is, of course, not uncommon and should be expected as a perennial focus for research organisations especially in Sub Saharan Africa. However, whilst it is reasonable to expect that centres must continue to invest efforts in securing funding for research to deliver impact, it is also, of course, worthwhile to consider how the Efd Network as a whole may streamline and support such activities. Based on our assessment and engagement with the Efd Centres and Global Hub, and, indeed, following up on recommendations from 2020 to provide key centralised support services, we believe that the Global Hub should increasingly seek to fulfil a role as a donor-funds clearing house. This would involve identifying funding opportunities, promoting the merits of the Efd Network, matchmaking funds to research and impact strategies, and then supporting their capture and channelling through the Network. This is further explained in the recommendations section of the report. Figure 8 contains the key generic funding sources for the Efd Network.

Figure 8. Potential sources of funding for the Efd Initiative



5.3. Efd Program Research Process

The Research Committee (RC) is the primary body that oversees the research process within the Efd Network. The RC represents a pool of credible expertise and experience. Members are nominated by centres or the Global

Hub from relevant fields and are then appointed by the Efd Advisory Board on three-year renewable terms. The RC chair is also appointed by the Advisory Board. The Executive Director, Research Director and Coordinator of the Collaborative Programs are *ex officio* members of the committee.

The committee screens research programs of the Network and decides on the allocation of resources from the Research Fund based on the merits of the proposed projects and centres' capacity. The committee also decides on the allocation of grants to researchers from participating centres on pertinent themes, donor priorities, and grants to Collaborative Research Programs. Generally, allocation of funds is divided between three research pillars:

1. Pillar One: Build applied research capacity for sub-Sahara African centres.
2. Pillar Two: Multi-country and synthesis studies on poverty-gender relevant environmental research.
3. Pillar Three: Earmarked research for Collaborative Programs.

Figure 9. Overview of the research funding process.

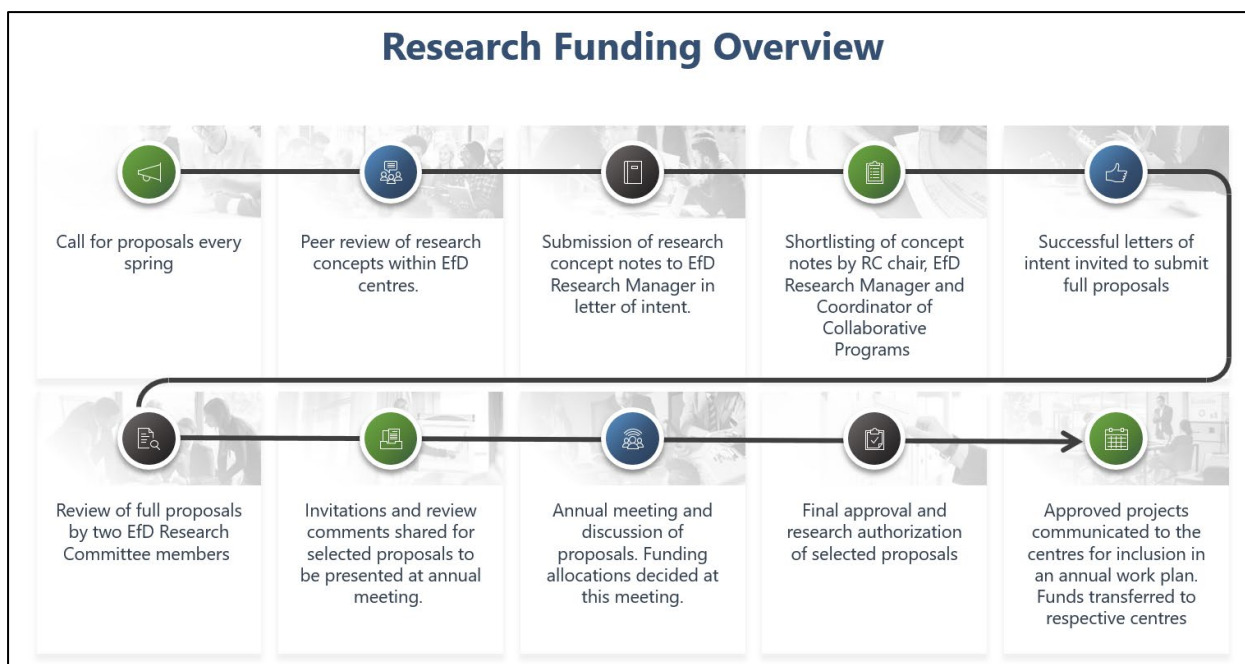


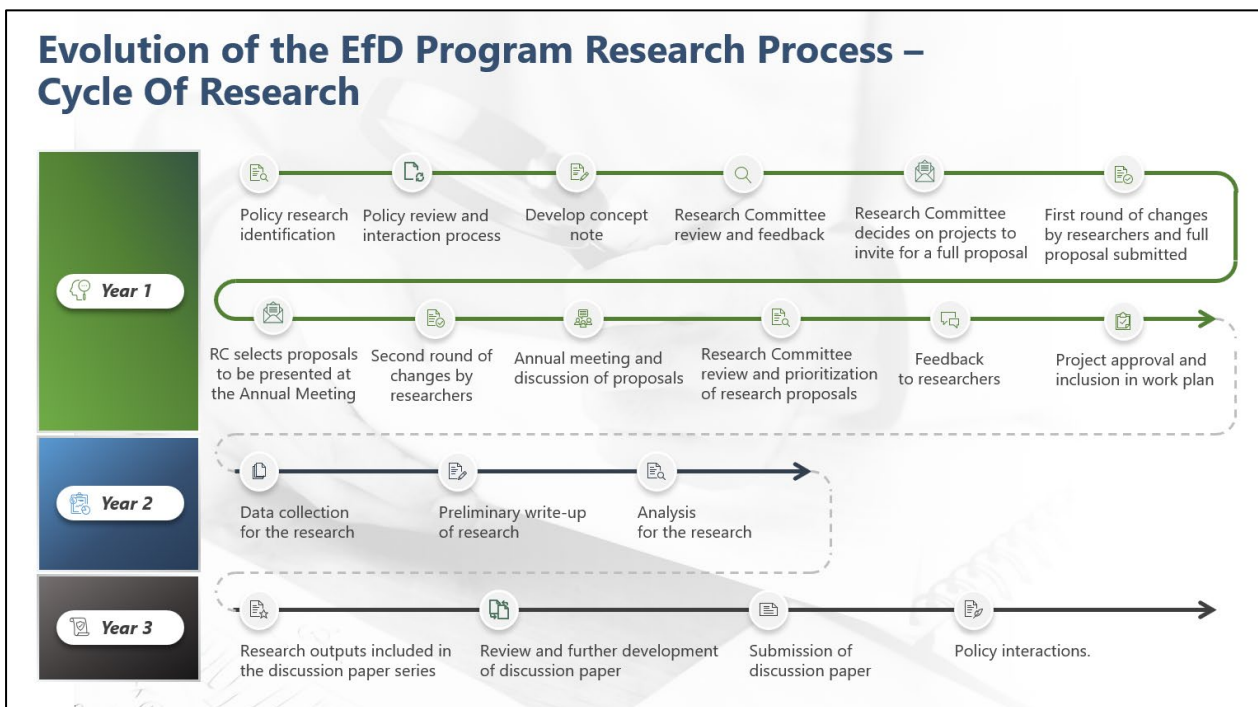
Figure 9 details the steps research proposals in the Network go through from inception through to approval and funding. Funding for the projects is currently released in one rather than two instalments as had been done previously. This change was instituted in order to help reduce the administrative burden of multiple payments. Failure to submit the deliverables within the required timeline will however result in forfeiture of funding and ineligibility to apply for the next round of funding until the deliverables have been submitted and accepted.

With the recent removal of the senior research fellow category, targeted research funding for early career researchers is now available through the Efd early-career research-fellowship program. This, together with the special calls for

proposals from the early career program by the Research Committee in 2022, encouraged submissions from early researchers and two proposals were approved for 2023. Following a recommendation from the previous evaluation, the Research Committee also offer feedback on the failed proposals which may have encouraged more submissions from early career researchers in the next research cycle. Three proposals are now being approved for 2024.

Additional capacity building is provided by a peer-review process instituted for research proposals submitted to the EfD Research Fund and for the EfD Discussion Paper Series, where the Research Committee and the Discussion Paper Editorial Board give strategic and academic guidance to researchers. The Global Hub also contributes to helping researchers advance the quality of their work by providing networking platforms and professional editing assistance. An updated overview of the general research cycle is presented in Figure 10.

Figure 10. Research Cycle Overview



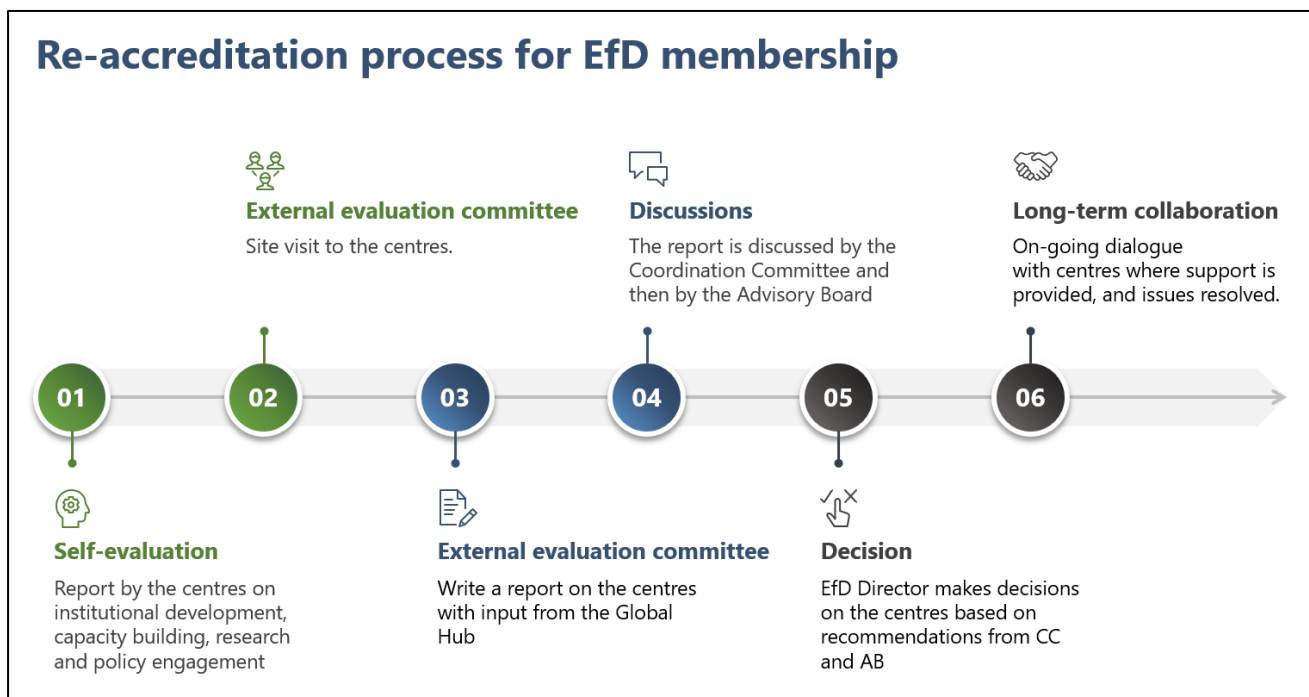
Overall, the research process functions well, however, some have raised concerns about the overall efficiency of the system, and this may be even more relevant as the Collaborative Programs increase their activity. We did not find evidence to suggest specific changes at this point, however, we would recommend that the Global Hub plan to review the efficiency of the research process within EfD more generally to see where improvements may be made.

5.4. EfD Quality Assurance Process for Centres

The Evaluation Expert Committee, led by Edwin Muchapondwa, conducts evaluations of the centres every five years as part of a comprehensive quality assurance process aimed at strengthening both individual centres and the

Network as a whole. During the re-accreditation process, summarised in Figure 11, the centres are assessed on their performance in the past five years, their strategies are scrutinised and new developments, such as institutionalisation or leadership changes, are considered. The evaluation of performance is carried out based on the core pillars of Institution Development, Policy-Relevant Research, Academic Capacity Building, Policy Interaction, and International Collaboration.

Figure 11. Centre Reaccreditation Process



The Global Hub provides their input to the evaluation committee, especially the administrative and finance teams, which then feeds into the committee report. Recommendations to the individual centres following the evaluation by the committee are followed up via a management response, in annual work plans, bi-annual meetings between centres and the Global Hub leadership, centre visits by the Global Hub, and in the next evaluation.

In the latest evaluation in 2022/2023, the committee found that, while most of the centres have made significant progress in each of the core pillars, they face constraints mostly resulting from lack of sufficient funding. As such, they recommended the need for more dialogue between the Global Hub and the centres to address issues related to fund disbursements and authorisation for prior-year reserves. The work of the Committee remains a useful means of recording progress and recommending change as the Network evolves. Furthermore, we believe that some of our recommendations, in terms of categorising the stages or, rather, status of centres, along more nuanced means of assessment, could be readily considered for use as part of the future quality assurance and assessments of centres.

5.5. Focus on: Gender Research and Women in the Network

Gender equality has been at the core of the work supported by Sida through the EfD Network. The mainstreaming of gender-based themes into the work of EfD is apparent from the research assessment process (Section 6) and importantly there is evidence of well organised encouragement of female participation in the EfD Network.

Figure 12. Staffing and Student Gender Ratios (Females/Total) in the EfD Centres.

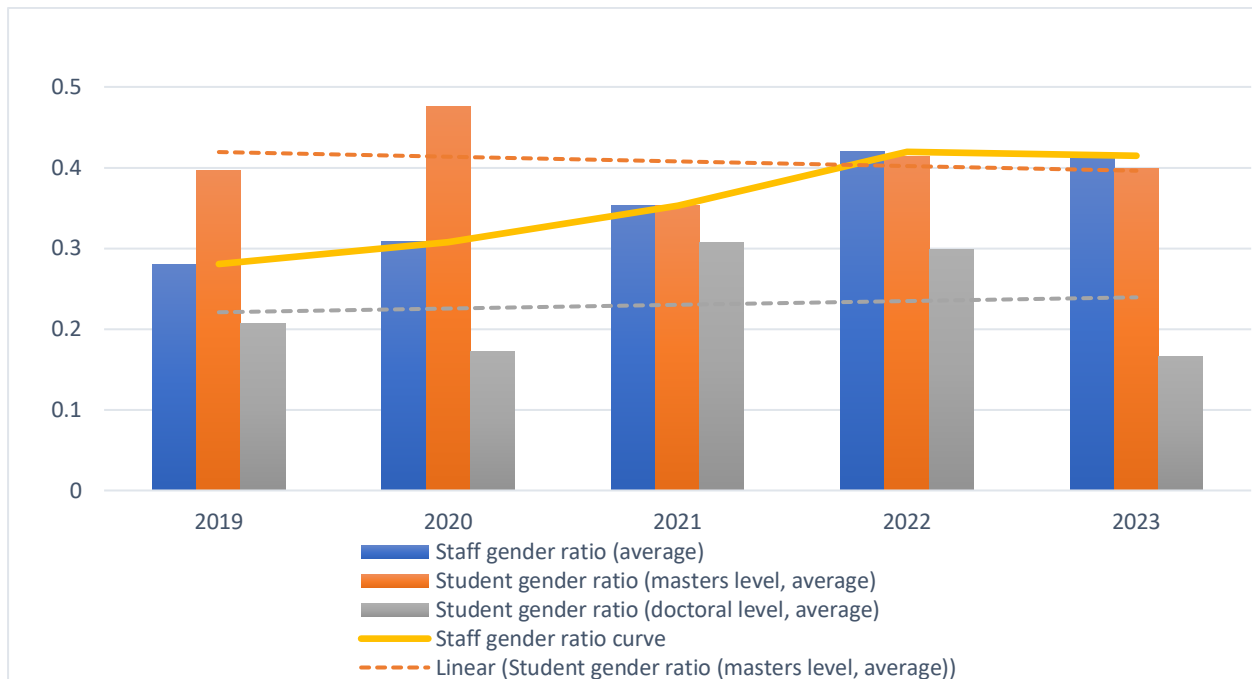


Figure 12 reveals the average staff gender ratios across the Network excluding the EfD partners and the Global Hub. These are calculated as the ratio of female staff or students to the total staff or students across the EfD Centres. In this chart, we include data from the China Centre³. Since 2019, there is a marked increase in female staffing ratios from roughly 28% in 2019 to 41% in 2023. The trendline on the average student gender ratio at master’s level shows a slight decline in female participation over time. Although the ratio for doctoral level students significantly picked up after 2020, it has been declining since then and as of 2023, it is lower than the 2019 average.

In the current evaluation, Centres were asked whether or not EfD membership has enhanced female participation, progression and recognition within their respective host institution, and whether the Centres have implemented specific actions with regard to gender in terms of staffing balance, career advancement and progression, and the inclusion of gender issues within their research agendas. The responses showed that, while none of the centres have specific gender action plans or strategies in place, efforts are being made to encourage female participation. Such

³ The inclusion of China in this case is majorly based on the fact that researchers from the China Centre have been active participants in the work and research surrounding gender issues.

efforts include incentivised female participation in postgraduate programs, training and mentorship opportunities for women, conference presentations and encouraged linkages to the WinEED collaborative.

The Research Committee plays a key role in ensuring that gender-based themes are mainstreamed into the centres' research projects. Based on the 2021 and 2022 annual reports, in an effort to encourage female participation and gender related issues in research, the RC requires that centres include in their proposal applications how their research will contribute to certain key themes, one of them being gender, and that at least one of the researchers in the team should be female. At the early career stage, the RC encourages female participation through the Early Careers Fellows program, which currently has higher female participation (11 out of 20). Through such efforts, 11 out of 16 projects in 2022 and 7 out of 15 projects in the 2023 cycle had a gender aspect to them. As the centres seek to comply with the RC's requirements, and also secure more funding, gender themes are being mainstreamed into research. This is encouraging, yet we would also encourage ongoing vigilance that topics remain meaningful.

In the Efd Network, the WinEED collaborative has been instrumental in promoting gender balance and enhancing female visibility in environmental economics in the Global South. In 2021, the collaborative conducted a literature review examining women's contributions in economics to give visibility to the remarkable contributions of various women in environmental economics, and to also assess the patterns and challenges women face in the discipline. The work done under this initiative will serve as the base to design future interventions that seek to create a more inclusive environment for future generations of women in the field. WinEED members also travelled to Ghana and Nigeria during the current evaluation period to create awareness of the platform for young female researchers in the region and to foster international collaboration. While in Nigeria, they organized an in-person workshop to help women improve their skills in research grant writing and to strengthen the capacities of women in the Network.

In the 16th (2022) and 17th (2023) annual Efd meetings, WinEED played an active role in selecting research papers with a gender analysis component for presentation at the meetings. Some of the key issues addressed from these sessions surrounded topics such as women's access to water and land, and the political economy of gender mainstreaming in energy access. There were also open sessions of the collaborative to discuss challenges faces by women in academia and in the Efd centres specifically, with the aim of initiating a discussion on potential solutions. WinEED has provided a platform for female researchers to get involved from an early career stage and has, thus, heavily influenced the proportion of women involved in and active in the Efd Network. Currently, the collaborative has more than 60 female researchers and as of 2022, WinEED was the most active collaborative in terms of utilising the website and social media platforms such as Twitter to engage with its members and promote activity.

5.6. The Collaborative Programs

The Collaborative Programs promote applied cross-country research and policy analysis. One advantage is the concentration of thematic expertise and a more balanced approach to delivering progress on important challenges, another is, in theory, supporting more 'copycat policy transfers' where lessons from one centre's policy interventions

and interactions can be adapted and applied to similar situations at other centres. This ‘copycat’ concept was a recommendation in the prior evaluation of 2020 to support greater impact from developed research and expertise across the Efd Network, and the further development of the Collaboratives can align well with delivering further intra-network impact and information sharing. The Collaboratives also offer opportunities to leverage expertise from multiple centres within the Network, to foster collaboration, to realise new opportunities, and to significantly expand the range and depth of capacity available for addressing specific policy challenges.

The running of Efd’s Collaborative Programs in Network is overseen by the Collaborative Program Committee, which was established in 2022. The CPC meets biannually to discuss the primary challenges faced by the collaboratives, to consider any success stories, and to engage with policymakers at a global level. This is a new committee and, as such, we appreciate that structures and systems are still taking shape. As the programs have developed, there have been regular meetings between the Collaborative Programs’ coordinator and the program leaders to develop effective governance structures and help formulate pathways for the programs to achieve their objectives. As such, steering committees have been established for each of the Collaborative Programs to help guide and focus the programs’ work. During this evaluation period, the major structural change was in the reassignment of centres to become hosts for Collaborative Programs.

Figure 13. Efd’s Collaborative Programs

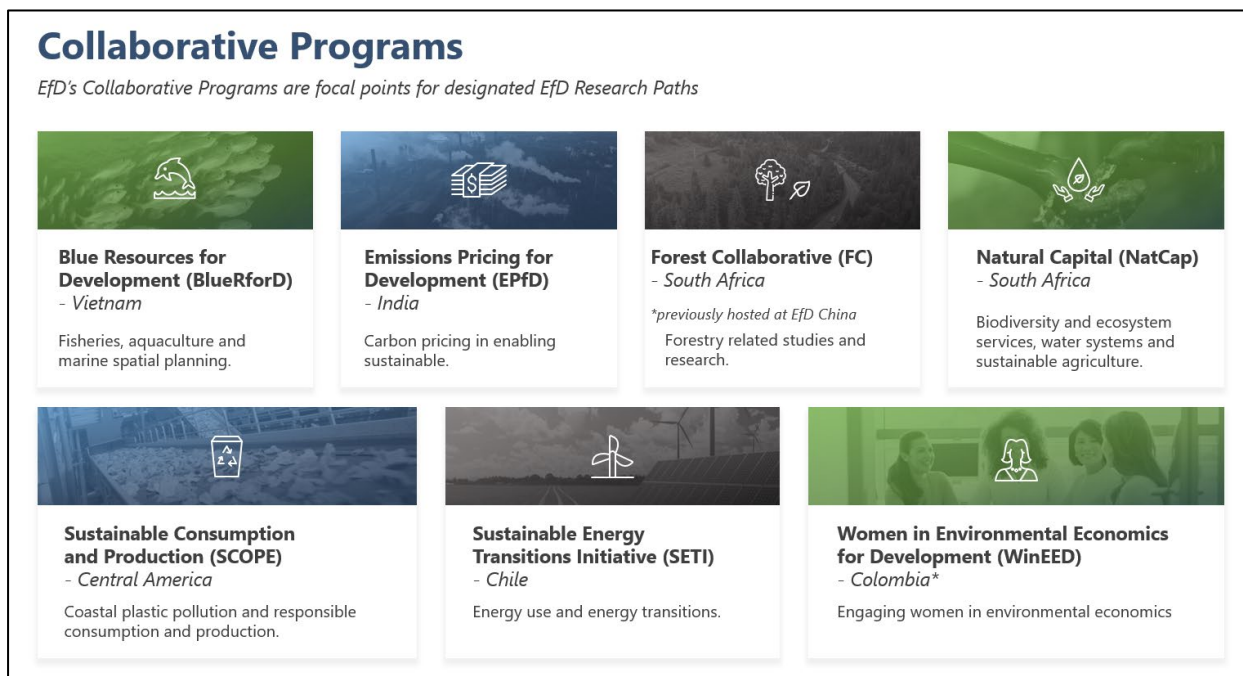


Figure 13 shows Efd’s Collaborative Programs with their host countries and focus areas. The matching of centres and the collaborative theme was mainly based on the research orientation of the centre at the time. For instance, Vietnam became the host for BlueRforD based on the importance of fisheries and coastal management in Vietnam and its existing research profile. South Africa was an active participant in the Ecosystems Services Accounting for

Development program, but in order to match better with the research at the centre, the theme was expanded to natural capital accounting, conservation, water resources and sustainable agriculture. Thus, the South African centre now hosts the NatCap collaborative.

There have been some structural changes in the Collaborative Programs in recent years in terms of their host institutions and, in some cases, their research themes. The expansion of the research theme at the South African centre made it difficult to distinguish the work done under each of NatCap and the Forest Collaborative that was based at China. Given the transition of the China centre within EfD to an affiliate role, it was decided that the Forest Collaborative would be merged with the NatCap Collaborative hosted at the South African centre in an attempt to consolidate efforts and funds in one collaborative. For the case of WinEED, the matching with the Colombian centre was initially done out of necessity rather than alignment of research focus. While the researchers at EfD Colombia have been active in applying for research funding, and they publish in top journals, the research at the centre is spread across many different areas such as transport and air pollution, fisheries, forestry etc. Thus, due to the misalignment of research themes, the decision to host WinEED at the Colombian centre is currently under consideration. SCOPE was initially known as Sustainable Management of Coastal and Marine Resources-CmaR but later redefined its focus to Sustainable Development Goal 12 on responsible consumption and production. The program currently looks to identify leverage points and interventions that enable transformative changes at consumer and producer level, in harmony with the natural environment.

The Collaborative Programs have made contributions to various fields while promoting international collaboration within the Network. The NatCap collaborative, for example, has run projects to address water burden-sharing in developing countries that involved the South African, Kenyan and Central American centres, and other projects on the impact of carbon-trading schemes on mangrove forests involving the South African, Kenyan and Tanzanian centres. From 2020-2023, SETI has been committed to fostering impactful policy dialogues and, as such, the collaborative has initiated seven policy panels involving members from, *inter alia*, UN Environment, Clean Air Task Force, Ministries of Energy and Environment in Chile and Ghana, Practical Action Kenya, and ECOWAS.

These programs also provide the opportunity for copycat policy transfers. For instance, under the BlueRforD collaborative, Nigeria and Ghana were involved in a project that aimed to transfer knowledge to Nigerian policymakers from Ghana's experience designing and implementing a fisheries management plan that regulates fishing efforts based on bioeconomic analysis of fisheries data. This project facilitated the training of Nigerian officers on bioeconomic analysis and saw to the continuous interaction of policymakers and researchers in the two countries to develop a fisheries management plan for Nigeria.

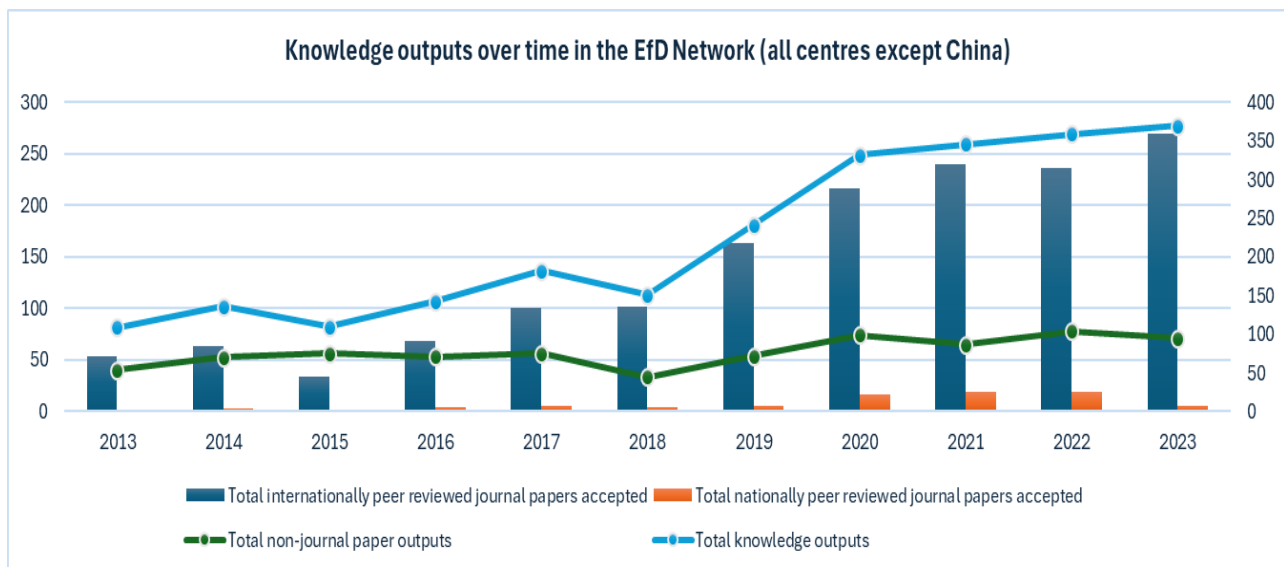
Overall, we find that the collaboratives offer great promise and can serve a vital role in the EfD Network strengthening the intervention logic. Efforts to strengthen the collaboratives themselves are encouraged as they have wider policy impact and funding-leverage potential. However, we believe there is also a need for greater clarity and coherence in their definition and organisation, and, also, in regard to the expectations for the programs in terms

of performance and collaboration. Specific recommendations regarding EfD’s Collaborative Programs are included under recommendations in chapter 8 of this report.

6. The Research Assessment

An important indicator of the success of the EfD Initiative is the quality of research output from the Network. Figure 14 shows good growth of knowledge outputs over time with particularly strong growth in internationally peer-reviewed academic publications. This demonstrates the improved capacity for academic research across the Network and similarly reflects the priorities of EfD researchers. However, as in the 2020 evaluation, to supplement the quantitative findings, we implemented a comprehensive research assessment methodology to study not only the quantity of research, but also the quality, research environment and impact. A summary of the Research Assessment is provided in this section and the full analysis is contained in Appendix 4.

Figure 14. Knowledge Outputs over Time in EfD Centres



The EnvEcon Research Assessment Tool has an underlying methodology that assesses the quality and quantity of scholarly outputs in terms of academic standing. However, given the intervention logic of the program in terms of the development objectives of Sida-funded programs, it is critical to recognise and evaluate the broader impact of the research outputs beyond traditional academic measures. The methodology for the RA is identical to the 2020 evaluation to allow for comparisons to be made. The EnvEcon Research Assessment tool encapsulates a broader approach compared to traditional metrics analysis. In common with research evaluations such as the UK REF, the assessment considers three ‘profiles’ - the quality of the research outputs, the impact of the research outputs beyond

academia, and the quality of the research environment. We utilise a star rating from 0 to 4 to assess these attributes. There is, of course, quite a degree of subjectivity about this approach but this is unavoidable and is the norm in research assessment exercises internationally.

The following data were utilised for the research assessment:

- Information on EfD Fellows selected to be included in the submission. This information includes Centre, name, position, year of appointment, details of four publications for consideration, and details of impact for any ‘non-traditional’ publications returned. In common with most research assessment exercises, Centres were not asked to return all Research Fellows for assessment. 80% of the EfD Research Fellows in each Centre were included.
- Details of publications and other forms of output produced during the publication period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2023. In the prior evaluations, we utilised a period of around 4.5 years as a window to give an overall impression of the productivity rate of a given researcher. This evaluation covers a shorter time period and so is a tougher benchmark than in prior evaluations and this should be borne in mind.
- Up to four impact case studies from each Centre demonstrating the impact of Centre research.
- An assessment of the overall research environment using data obtained in the rest of the evaluation process.
- Reflecting that, in the social sciences, the most significant impacts tend to result from the cumulative expertise of an individual researcher, case studies of EfD Fellows who the Network believes encapsulate this idea of impact through cumulative expertise. These are included as illustrative examples.

The criteria for assessing the quality of outputs used were originality, significance and rigour.

6.1. Research Assessment - Output Evaluation

The Centres are categorized in this evaluation using the headings described in section 4.1. Specifically, the ‘**Established Centres**’ which were established prior to 2018, and the ‘**New Wave Centres**’ which were established from 2018 onwards. In the 2020 evaluation we had centres we referred to as ‘The Stars’, Resources for the Future (RFF) and the EfD Centre in Gothenburg University. These have now been joined in the Network by seven other institutions in the global north and are categorized as ‘EfD Partners’. While these institutions are recognized as part of the Network, they are not evaluated given that they are well established high performing research operations that serve a different role within the overall Network.

Thirteen centres made returns with a total of 172 researchers assessed. Those carrying the title of research fellow were counted whereas national and international associates were not included in the assessment. Around 550 papers were assessed (up from 308 papers in the last evaluation). If quantity was the only indicator of success utilised, the Network would be highly rated judging by our need to put together a panel to undertake the assessment and the number of weeks over which we read and assessed the papers! For what are now the established centres, around

75% of their research submitted for review is of international standard (Table 2) with the remainder being limited (although not in impact value) to more local interest or a non-return. Given the small numbers returned, the impact that can result from one or two RFs leaving, and the varying numbers of Fellows in the centres (larger centres will show greater variation), care must be taken when comparing centres and interpreting the figures presented in Table 2, suffice to say that Chile, Central America and South Africa are performing particularly well. Tanzania returned a high number of RFs that have just finished a PhD so that probably explains a reduction in the percentage of highest scoring papers.

Given that a key objective is to build a capacity for high-quality research for development intervention, it was our view in 2014 that a score of 50% or more of research output being scored in category 2* or above, i.e. internationally recognised research would be a very good result. We are seeing clearly the fruits of the Network and the support it provides as, essentially, all Centres have continued to perform well above this standard in terms of the quality of research output. Moreover, this evaluation was a more demanding standard as the period of evaluation was around a year and a half shorter. We could have adjusted the method and required fewer papers in our evaluation but, consistent with most research evaluations, it is reasonable to expect that academic standards rise over the years and so the test becomes more demanding. We were pleased to see that the centres met the higher standard as, given the strong performance in the 2020 figures, the best we could have hoped to see would be for the centres overall to match that performance.

We are of the view that, given that impact is the main purpose of funding the centres, we should not overly focus on the difference between a 2* or 3* score, as the aim is to have international-quality research making a local impact. It is notable that some centres (e.g. Central America, China and Ethiopia) appear to be doing more locally relevant work (that is more likely to return a 2* if internationally published rather than a 3*) and this may well be a strong indicator of a continued, and possibly improved, local impact.

The New Wave Centres of Ghana Nigeria and Uganda are rather remarkable in terms of the quality of their performance (Table 3). 63% of their output is in the internationally recognised category for excellence and rigour. Ghana is particularly strong with 80% of its output returned for assessment scoring as internationally excellent or above. This makes it clear that, while all Centres are not at the same stage of development, it is not correct to assume that these 'older' established Centres are always more successful than more recent additions to the EfD Network and, it cannot be assumed that all centres will continue to advance nor that they will do so at the same pace.

Table 2. The Established Centres – Research Output Results

| | Quality Profile | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | (Percentage of research activity at each quality level) | | | | |
| | Internationally leading 4* | Internationally excellent 3* | Internationally recognised 2* | Nationally recognised 1* | Unclassified or missing 0* |
| China 2014 | 0 | 33 | 67 | 0 | 0 |
| China 2020 | 42 | 31 | 4 | 5 | 18 |
| China 2023 | 7 | 31 | 58 | 2 | 2 |
| Costa Rica (CA) 2014 | 0 | 14 | 73 | 13 | 0 |
| Central America (CR) 2020 | 10 | 40 | 20 | 10 | 20 |
| Central America (CR) 2023 | 19 | 38 | 25 | 6 | 12 |
| Ethiopia 2014 | 0 | 11 | 67 | 16 | 6 |
| Ethiopia 2020 | 8 | 75 | 13 | 0 | 4 |
| Ethiopia 2023 | 0 | 34 | 33 | 33 | 0 |
| Kenya 2014 | 0 | 5 | 35 | 40 | 20 |
| Kenya 2020 | 0 | 44 | 33 | 14 | 9 |
| Kenya 2023 | 0 | 10 | 37 | 37 | 16 |
| South Africa 2014 | 0 | 23 | 37 | 22 | 7 |
| South Africa 2020 | 13 | 56 | 31 | 0 | 0 |
| South Africa 2023 | 3 | 26 | 47 | 6 | 18 |
| Tanzania 2014 | 0 | 13 | 50 | 37 | 0 |
| Tanzania 2020 | 3 | 31 | 37 | 13 | 16 |
| Tanzania 2023 | 2 | 5 | 39 | 22 | 32 |
| Chile 2020 | 4 | 46 | 29 | 7 | 14 |
| Chile 2023 | 4 | 25 | 48 | 13 | 10 |
| India 2020 | 8 | 37 | 38 | 16 | 1 |
| India 2023 | 8 | 17 | 48 | 12 | 15 |
| Vietnam 2020 | 3 | 59 | 28 | 10 | 0 |
| Vietnam 2023 | 0 | 10 | 50 | 12 | 28 |
| Colombia 2020 | 24 | 60 | 12 | 4 | 0 |
| Colombia 2023 | 0 | 10 | 29 | 24 | 37 |

Table 3. The New Wave Centres – Research Output Results

| | Quality Profile | | | | |
|---------|---|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | (Percentage of research activity at each quality level) | | | | |
| | Internationally leading 4* | Internationally excellent 3* | Internationally recognised 2* | Nationally recognised 1* | Unclassified or missing 0* |
| Ghana | 1 | 14 | 65 | 15 | 4 |
| Nigeria | 0 | 4 | 51 | 41 | 4 |
| Uganda | 1 | 3 | 48 | 38 | 10 |

6.2. Research Assessment - Environment Evaluation

As part of the evaluation, we requested a description of the research facility and research infrastructure at each Centre. Our focus for the evaluation is on existing key research infrastructure capacities, and thereafter evidence of improvement on the 2020 evaluation of the established centres and an assessment of what, if anything, may merit further improvement in the *New Wave* centres.

When evaluating the centres themselves in terms of research environment, we do not expect them to meet the standards of excellence one would find in a well-resourced top university in a high-income country. However, what we are looking for in the evaluation is evidence of improvement (or retaining a strong position) on the 2020 evaluation of the established centres and an assessment of what needs improving in the *New Wave* centres.

As part of the evaluation, we requested a description of the physical research facility at each Centre. These are described in detail in Appendix 3. Tanzania has held its 3* rating as does Kenya. However, both will need open-access agreements to retain their competitive position. Unfortunately, Ethiopia is operating below competitive international standards as access to online journals has still not been resolved and there will be a need to develop some publishing agreements to enhance the citation rates of their staff. Chile, on the other hand appears to have solved its journal access issues and its campuses score close to internationally competitive standards (3-4*). Central America has come up to a competitive international standard and appears to have an excellent environment for research while the campuses in Colombia are adjudged to be close to or at international standards. South Africa remains internationally competitive despite challenging economic issues. China still reports the best standards of the reviewed centres and India reports world-class research facilities. Vietnam retains its 4* rating. Of the *New Wave* centres, Nigeria comes in at a 3* with Ghana reporting a 2-3* rating. The principal issues in the new centres relate to computer hardware and open-access publishing support.

The good news is we see most Centres operating at, or close, to international standard in terms of research environment and only one has slipped back in its rating. We would recommend that EfD place some focus on Ethiopia, examines the issue of open-access publishing agreements which are giving well-resourced institutions in the global north a significant advantage, and we also recommend that EfD places an emphasis on exploring with its centres what it means to provide “a supportive environment for diverse set of staff, EDI policies, gender-based supports, working from home opportunities etc.” as some of the answers were less than convincing, so there may be some confusion regarding this new criterion included for this evaluation.

Overall, when it comes to the Research Environment assessment, we now rate most of the Centres between 3* and 4*. For the EfD initiative, and for the Centres themselves, this is a remarkable achievement. This is particularly the case given that we would expect that teaching and administrative loads are likely higher in these Centres than in the leading universities in high-income countries which can afford administrative and technical support and normally have more opportunities for teaching buyouts and a lower student: staff ratio.

While the results are very reassuring, there is work to do on several of the centres, and international competition intensifies from well-funded institutions in high-income countries so it will be a case of running to stand still to maintain the positions of the centres so they continue to provide a research environment that can address the environment and development challenges in the regions.

6.3. Research Assessment - Impact Evaluation

In this section we consider impact in various forms and at varied scales. These include the overall EfD Initiative impact through to the activities of individual Centres and researchers.

EfD Program Impact

Our analysis shows that, overall, the impact of EfD Initiative beyond academia continues to be excellent, as may be expected in a program where development intervention impact is the ultimate defined goal. Our expert judgement is that the Global Hub should be ranked in the 4* category in terms of its impact, given that the majority of its work has considerable and, in many ways, outstanding impacts in terms of “reach and significance”. The role of the collaboratives has clearly positively influenced the impact case studies to which we refer below, and we could see clear evidence of cross-fertilisation of ideas between centres and a transfer of policy prescriptions across borders.

EfD Centre Research Impact

On an individual Centre level, we asked all 13 Centres to return four case studies for analysis to assist us in understanding their research impacts at local level and beyond. Appendix 3 contains the questionnaire templates sent to all centres and Appendix 9 contains all the case studies. In 2014, all Centres provided four impact case studies

each. In 2020, these returns were somewhat less complete than the prior evaluation. For this report, South Africa, Chile, China and Vietnam were the only centres to provide the maximum four which allowed for the presentation of an initiative that failed, which we believe to be an important part of the process of learning and improving approaches to impact and suggests centres that are pushing boundaries. Central America returned three case studies while Colombia, India, Tanzania and Kenya returned two each. Of the *New Wave*, Ghana provided 3 and Nigeria and Uganda 2 each, which is appropriate for what are newer centres. Disappointingly Ethiopia did not provide impact returns in the timeframe. Boxes 1, 2 and 3 provide three shortened examples while Appendix 4 contains examples from all centres.

The work done in the case studies showcases the centres laying pathways and leveraging positions to influence policy in different capacities. Through the stakeholder engagement demonstrated in these reports, centres have also been able to leverage funding from interested stakeholders, such as the World Bank, with aligned interests. The impact of the work done in these projects varies across centres, with some centres leveraging the collaboratives for international impact and others utilising local networks to influence local policies. This all speaks to the potential of the EfD Network to contribute to positive change and impact globally. Overall, the quality of these impact case studies has improved. However, more efforts are needed to ensure that the centres make further improvements, such as cataloguing negative cases to provide learning experiences and recalling throughout the value of recording cases of impact.

Box 1: Policy Impact Story A – Building awareness and capacities.

Mainstreaming Natural Capital Accounting into Nigeria’s Policy and Programs

Globally, low and middle income countries are more dependent on their natural capital and resources for economic growth and development. This is the case for Nigeria where natural capital and assets are the primary drivers of economic growth. However, despite being systemically important, there have not been systems in place for natural capital accounting to ensure a sustainable and environmentally friendly use of resources for economic growth.

EfD Nigeria piloted the mainstreaming of Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) into government policy through stakeholder engagement with key ministries such as the Ministry of Environment and the education and training of technical officers in relevant ministries on NCA. The centre’s efforts attracted attention from the World Bank who provided funding for the project “Towards Natural Capital Accounting for Nigeria” as part of the Climate Resilience and Environmental Management Program of Advisory Services and Analytics (CREM-PASA) technical assistance project.

The project is creating awareness in the country on the importance of natural capital accounting, and the centre’s policy influence has helped mainstream aspects of natural accounting into policy. For instance, a land accounting tool is currently being developed to be used in the Agro-Climatic Resilience in Semi-Arid Landscapes (ACReSAL) project. The overall project will have far-reaching impacts to different sectors of the Nigerian community in different capacities.

Box 2: Policy Impact Story B – Negative case lessons**Climate Change Adaptation and Development in Rural Areas of Low and Middle Income Countries**

The aim of this project was to address the challenges of climate change adaptation in the ag-energy sector. Specifically, the project aimed to support small farm holders and SMEs in agriculture-energy value chains by providing scientific evidence to guide climate finance decisions in vulnerable areas disproportionately exposed to climate risk. The scale of the project was intended to be an inter-country collaboration with Chile, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Nigeria and India, led by various organizations including SETI, Shell Foundation, EfD and Resources for the Future. The scale of the project meant that the policy implications would have been more expansive. It also meant that many stakeholders had to be engaged to bring the project to completion. However, due to unforeseen challenges in reaching policymakers and key stakeholders such as lingering effects of Covid-19 and delayed funding, the project experienced serious delays. With the initial timeline of one year starting in 2022, the project is still on-going as of 2024.

The project kicked off by EfD Chile would have contributed to the understanding of interventions needed to improve the resilience of rural populations to climate risks in the different countries, along with fostering better collaboration between policymakers, researchers and private sector stakeholders. Lessons for the other centres based on this experience are on the importance of co-ordinating risk when working with multiple stakeholders accounting for factors that would disproportionately affect stakeholder engagement. This would inform the provision of support for the different teams involved in the engagement.

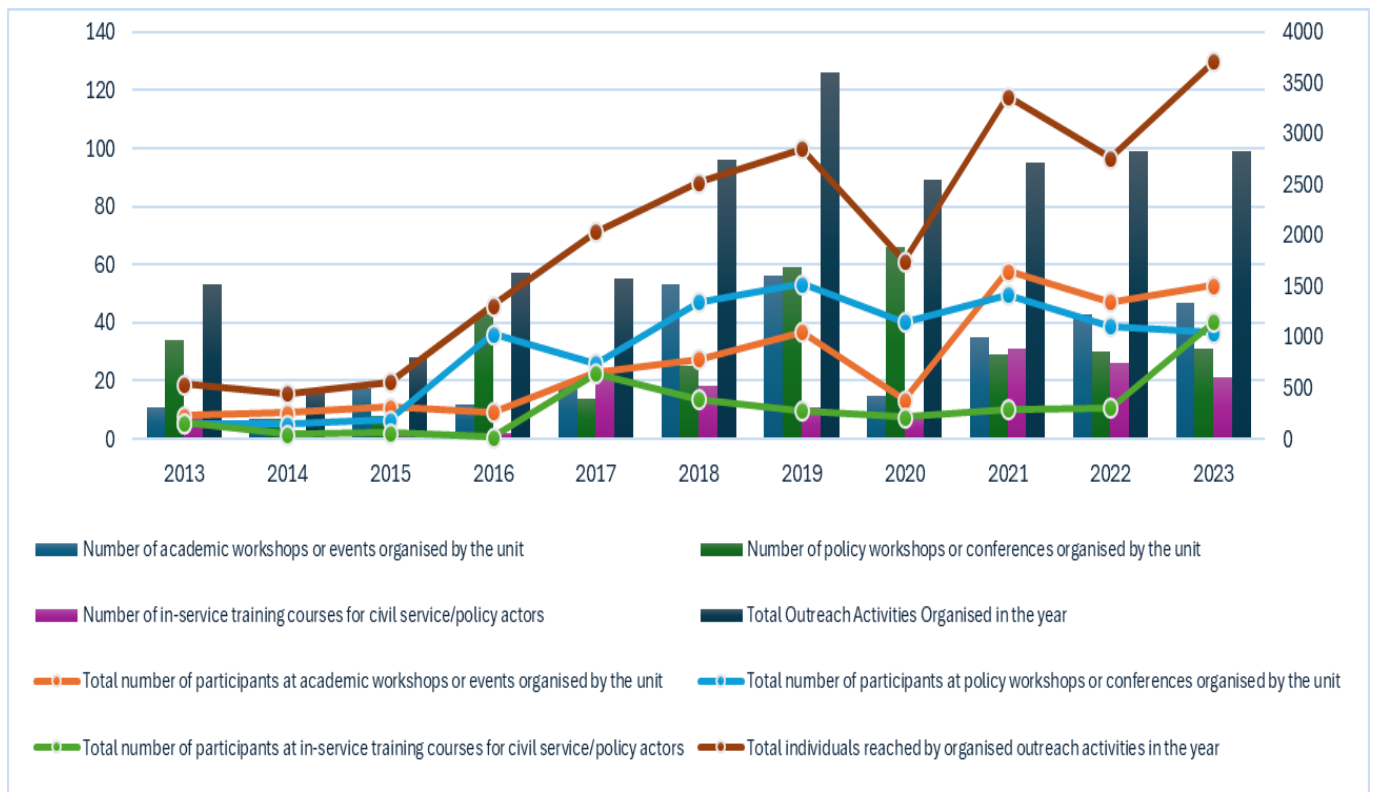
Box 3: Policy Impact Story C – Localised policy support**Adoption of LPG Cooking Technology among Food Vendors in Uganda**

Globally, more than 3 billion people rely on biomass fuels for cooking and heating in their homes. In sub-Saharan Africa, biomass (firewood and charcoal) is the primary fuel source for households and local food vendors. Burning biomass releases gaseous pollutants and particulates which negatively impact the environment through air pollution and forest depletion. The resultant air pollution has been the primary cause of premature deaths at home in East Africa.

Continued biomass fuel use is due to the fact that it is cheap to obtain and more readily available as compared to cleaner energy alternatives. For the case of Kampala, EfD Uganda found that high initial costs and safety concerns were the major barriers to LPG cookers adoption rates. The study done in this respect looked into ways to incentivize food vendors to shift from biomass fuel cookers to LPG cookers by testing the effect of hire purchase and hire purchase schemes with learning opportunities.

Participating food vendors were educated on the benefits of LPG stoves as compared to charcoal stoves and their benefits to the environment. This helped create awareness beyond the participants of the study as there was an observed shift and continued use (refills) by other vendors and their households as well as employees at the college involved in the study. Further research on the project could look to expand the area of impact and incentivize shifts to cleaner energy use.

Figure 15. Outreach activity metrics in the EfD Centres



In broader terms we see from Figure 15 that outreach activities to promote EfD activities and research have steadily grown over time. On average, the total number of outreach activities during the current evaluation period is about 98 per annum compared to 72.4 per annum in the 2020 evaluation period. The average number of individuals reached by these activities has almost doubled since the last evaluation, going up from about 1850 individuals in the 2015-2019 period to about 3200 individuals in the 2021-2023 period. This indicates that a larger number of academics and policy stakeholders are engaged via multiple modes and that the Network presence is also growing.

Impact of the Individual

In addition to the impact of specific research, in the 2015-2019 evaluation, we considered the growing and sustained impact of the individuals that have developed skills, experience and connections through their engagements with EfD. This impact can be more difficult to track. Nevertheless, it is important to celebrate such impact as it will provide an example to others as to what can be achieved. Therefore, we again select a small number of individuals, and summarise from their own words, how EfD has impacted upon them, and how they in turn are working to deliver further impact in their local environments.

Professor Martine Visser

Centre Director for EPRU, Efd South Africa; Professor at School of Economics, University of Cape Town; Research



Prof. Visser joined the Efd Network in 2007, when the South African centre was established, after being awarded her PhD from the University of Gothenburg in 2006. Since then, she has been affiliated with multiple organizations such as the Research Unit of Behavioural and Neuro-economics Research (RUBEN), the South African Labour Development Research Unit (SALDRU) and she is currently the research chair of the African Climate and Development Initiative (ACDI). Through her commendable work on ecological infrastructure and nature-based solutions, Prof Visser was awarded the prestigious Governance and Economics of Ecological Infrastructure Research Chair in 2022. She will leverage this platform to expand research within the NatCap Collaborative Program which aims to improve knowledge and empirical experience of valuing ecosystem services and biodiversity, water systems, and sustainable agriculture across the Global South.

Her primary focus in recent years has been on Behavioural Economics and understanding pro-social behaviour. While pro-social behaviour, as she explains, can be derived from the fair distribution of rights and responsibilities of shared resources, she adds that it also focuses on society's needs for joint provision of ecological public goods such as water infrastructure, wetlands and soil conservation. Combining this with her previous work on nature-based solutions, Prof Visser has led a number of impactful projects such as nudging interventions to drive water-saving behaviours during Cape Town's catastrophic Day Zero drought. Prof Visser's exemplary leadership and involvement in the Network enables her to draw together a diverse array of stakeholders, academics and policymakers to work on exciting and impactful projects involving diverse knowledge fields.

Dr Ebele Amaechina

Agricultural Economist; Senior Lecturer in the Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Nigeria; Research



Dr Amaechina embodies one of the key principles of Efd that calls for making a positive change through impactful research. She reiterates that policy formulation should stem from locally relevant research evidence to ensure that the resulting policies address real problems. In this, Dr Amaechina highlights challenges that come with academia in low-income countries that partly stifles the pathways for evidence-based research to support policy formulation. The include inadequate training, limited access to research funding, poor mentoring, heavy administrative or teaching loads and poor research infrastructure. Efd support through researchers' training, access to research funding and collaborative opportunities have helped alleviate the aforementioned challenges for researchers like Dr Amaechina.

Thanks to Efd support, Dr Amaechina is part of joint project between Efd Ghana and Nigeria which aims to address the challenges posed by open-access and illegal fishing. Through this project, she is part of the team that will deliver a fisheries management plan specifically tailored for pelagic species in Nigeria which will also play an important role in addressing the transboundary nature of fisheries in the West Africa region, whilst also fostering collaboration. Aside from that she also championed for the inclusion of a gender dimension in Nigeria's Sea Fishery Act which is under review by the Nigerian National Assembly. Dr Amaechina is a good example of how researchers in the Efd Network can leverage the support and opportunities to contribute towards making a positive change.

Dr Monica Lambon-Quayefio

Senior Lecturer at the Department of Economics, University of Ghana; Researcher at the Africa Centre of Excellence



Dr Lambon-Quayefio's research focuses broadly on human development issues. She studies topics such as gender and the labour market, and closely linked to that, social protection and education. She also explores the agricultural sector, especially in relation to technology that has the potential to improve welfare. She holds a doctorate degree in Economics from Clark University, USA. Currently she is visiting the Department of Economics Centre for the Study of African Economics at University of Oxford. Her interest in environmental economics was cultivated through her interaction with the Efd Initiative that engaged her interest in learning how to use resources to improve livelihoods.

Mentorship and networking opportunities have been key aspects of the Efd Initiative that Dr Lambon-Quayefio values. She has had the chance to collaborate with leading academics in the Network and acquired valuable skills that would otherwise not be taught in a structured PhD program. In her capacity as a lecturer, she returns the favour by mentoring PhD students and involving them in her own research projects, which is unusual for most academic institutions in Africa due to constraints such as limited research funding and high teaching loads.

In her desire to contribute to impactful policy formulation, Dr Lambon-Quayefio believes that initiating interactions between researchers and policymakers at an early stage and being ready to act when the window of opportunity opens up are key factors to help more researchers reach impact. This is demonstrated through a research project led by Dr Lambon-Quayefio that seeks to facilitate knowledge exchange between policymakers and researchers regarding past fossil fuel reforms and carbon market regimes in Ghana and Nigeria. Ghana has successfully completed the deregulation of its downstream sector, whereas Nigeria has only just embarked on this journey and is grappling with the challenges stemming from the recent removal of fuel subsidies. Through this project, stakeholders in Nigeria will be able to draw lessons from Ghana's experience and energy stakeholders in both countries will gain access to new research insights valuable for advancing the development of effective pricing schemes and strategies. The collaborative effort through the project underscores the importance of interdisciplinary research and cross-border cooperation in addressing complex environmental challenges with the overall goal of building a more sustainable future.

Dr Matías Piaggio

Senior Efd Research Fellow, Senior Economist in the Environment, Natural Resource and the Blue Economy Global



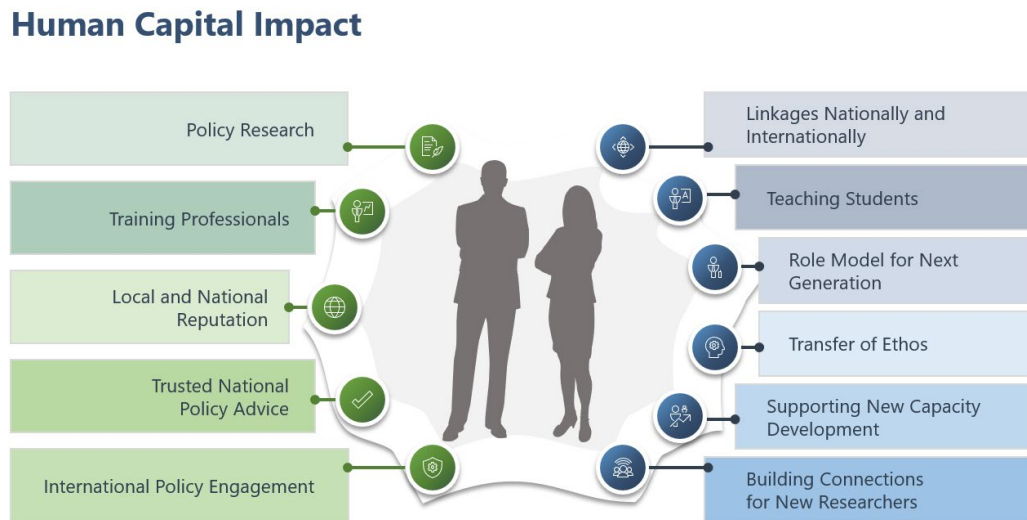
Dr Piaggio's work focuses on quantifying the benefits that people obtain from nature, how to design instruments to influence individuals' choices to enhance habitat conservation and pollution reduction, and on evaluating the impact of conservation policies on nature and human well-being. At the beginning of his career, Dr Piaggio was affiliated with the LACEEP network which gave him valuable skills and networking opportunities with leading academics in his field. He later on went to join Efd Central America at CATIE after working as an associate professor at Universidad de la República in Uruguay. During his time at CATIE, he held a leading role in Efd's ESAforD program which aimed to identify the value of ecosystem services by linking biophysical and socioeconomic data. This program grew out of Efd identifying both a need for and a lack of capacity in this area. ESAforD was Dr Piaggio's first multi-country collaboration which was not only a valuable learning experience but also turned out to be an important part of his CV when applying for future positions. ESAforD is now integrated into Efd's NatCap

collaborative that has a strong focus on cross-country analysis, which Dr Piaggio believes is an approach that could reveal important insights for policy makers.

Dr Piaggio's work at CATIE on biodiversity valuation and national accounting was an area that few economists had ventured in at the time. Therefore, as he developed his specialization, demand for his expertise and skillset increased and eventually led him to a role as Economist at the International Unit for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and later on as Senior Economist at the World Bank. Though his latter roles have a slightly different approach than in academia, Dr Piaggio finds that his involvement in academic networks such as Efd has been extremely valuable in helping him stay relevant at a technical level and in the quality assurance of his work. The Efd Network has also been an important way of maintaining connections with leading academics in various fields.

Figure 16 provides a summary then of the ways in which EfD supports and structures can develop human capital that can, and often will, have broader extended impacts into the future that go far above and beyond their research. These modes of human capital impact are diverse and remain as previously detailed in the prior evaluation of EfD.

Figure 16 Modes through which Human Capital Furthers Impact



Online Impact and the EfD Website

The EfD website is a valuable source of information in relation to the Network but is also a critical tool in building awareness of and interaction with EfD activities, as well as by offering multiple purpose driven facades to cater to the interests of specific stakeholders, collaborators and potential funders. The metrics for the EfD website during this evaluation period are very positive, with the site now realising approximately 85,000 unique visitors per year. This is reported as being almost twice as many as was the case in 2020. The sub-page on the University of Gothenburg website now realises only about 1,200 visitors per year. The EfD website has an established presence.

Approximately 60% find EfD by organic search, whereas approximately 33% visit the site by direct entry of the URL. In 2023 almost 6,000 EfD publications were downloaded directly from the site. Impressively, given that a high share find the site by organic search, the EfD site has a reasonably low bounce rate (i.e. leaving after reading one piece) of 20%, thus the content holds interest and invites further exploration and reading.

The site is characterised by good design and regular updating, and there is evidence of a commitment to further development and impact. The initiative in 2021 to run a pilot campaign with a social media agency, Trickle, to promote 3 articles and 3 publications demonstrated a substantial spike in web visitors and followers. Whilst such metrics can mislead and be manipulated, there is promise in a more strategic approach to promoting EfD. Specifically, a campaign to build the profile, activities and collaborative and funding interest of the Collaborative Programs would merit strong consideration once they are ready.

6.4. Research Assessment - Overall Rating

The results of the research evaluation depend, of course, on the evaluation criteria utilised and also on peer-review and expert opinion in making a judgment on quality. As we stated at the outset of this section, there is quite a degree of subjectivity about this approach, but it is unavoidable and is the norm in research assessment exercises. Due to issues of the small scale, in the overall profile, we decided not to divide the Centres and rather give an indicative quality standard to the Centres as a whole.

In general, our view is that, although we did not assign specific weights to the different quality standards for the ‘impact’ and ‘environment’ subprofiles, we can state that the inclusion of these factors to the evaluation of the research under the ‘output’ subprofile would support the overall research evaluation results so the output subprofile accurately reflects the quality of the Centres themselves. Across all the EfD Centres, around 75% of the submitted research activities are considered to be of a quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour. This matches up well to the 2020 score for the original six centres and is what we would have expected as the 2020 standard was surprisingly high and the time period for this evaluation is shorter and, therefore, more demanding in requiring the same returns as the last evaluation. The *New Wave* centres appear to have the potential to meet the standard of the ten more firmly established centres.

In the 2020 evaluation, we listed a threat, namely, the concern that, as the Centres improve their research performance, they may become less interested in impact. This would be a problem given the intervention logic of the EfD Network. We are glad to see that the research performance has held steady and, from the review of the articles, it appears that, overall, there is more emphasis on locally impactful research which is internationally relevant and published in good quality journals. We believe this is a very reassuring outcome of the research assessment. We see some really excellent impact but were disappointed that one centre did not make an impact return and believe this should be taken up with the Centre concerned as it should not be considered acceptable when impact is a core motivation for the EfD Network. The few Centres that returned a fourth impact case study, where we asked for details of an impact approach that failed to work, should be congratulated for trying something and being willing to fail. This may suggest that other Centres are overly risk-averse and should push themselves harder to provide policy impact in areas where it might be more challenging. This is something that might be discussed amongst the Network.

7. Evaluation Conclusions

This section delivers the evaluation conclusions for the current evaluation period in relation to the overall EfD Initiative performance under the key OECD/DAC headings of Relevance, Efficiency, Sustainability, Effectiveness and Impact. These findings combine the quantitative and qualitative results of the evaluation with the perspectives of the evaluation team. The conclusions offer independent evidence-based insights and interpretation of the performance of EfD in this period, under each heading. This section is followed by a SWOT analysis as a precursor

to the final part of the evaluation, where we articulate actionable recommendations for development of EfD under clearly defined themes. In this section, we also make reference to the outcomes of the self-reported ranking by the EfD centres themselves in respect of certain elements, for example, their sense of ownership and control over research directions for their centre. These aspects do not determine the conclusions of the evaluation but represent the stated EfD centre perceptions.

RELEVANCE

On the broader contextual level, we find that that intervention logic and relevance of the EfD Initiative remains sound. We believe that such long-standing, broad scope, and interdisciplinary global networks are both rare and valuable. We also believe that the world will increasingly need locally-embedded, globally-supported entities which can deliver robust, evidence-based support to policymakers in the context of major resource and environmental challenges. Whilst the vision of EfD is ambitious, it is an important one, and the opportunities for EfD research, and researchers, to support important policy interventions, at a comparatively-modest research-investment cost, remains very strong.

On the more specific level of the relevance of EfD research to localised needs, in particular across Africa, there is also broad agreement between the evaluators and the EfD Centres themselves that there is evidence of a strong sense of ownership and control over the determination and delivery of their research, and, furthermore, that this aligns well with local and national needs. As part of the contact sheet returns, this aspect of ‘ownership’ scored an average of above 8 out of 10⁴ for all of the EfD centres, and the associated commentaries were also very positive. It reflects well on the relevance of the work that the centres themselves feel they have ownership and direction. Moreover, there is also important evidence from external policy stakeholders for each of the centres, which suggests that the research and activities of those EfD centres are highly relevant to their localised policy needs in key thematic areas from air pollution and health to water resource management. The positive engagement from multiple external policy actors is itself an encouraging marker for the success and development of a research-policy interface at each EfD centre.

EFFICIENCY

The EfD Initiative has grown further in terms of scale, output and impact. This has been achieved without any comparable shift in the resources provided under the GLOBEN EfD agreement. The performance in our Research Assessment, combined with the insight from the financial metrics data reported in this evaluation, all point to strong

⁴ All reported results from these queries are on a 1 to 10 scale – 10 representing the highest or best score.

and efficient returns on investment with increased productivity. The financial data also confirm the successful crowding-in and co-funding of EfD activities, which points to a growing attractiveness of EfD association for funders and positive performances by researchers and EfD leaders in respect of realising additional opportunities for the Network. The leveraging of the Network to attract additional funding opportunities, to connect with strong collaborators and to deliver additional impact can, with good management, support further ongoing improvements in efficiency through scale efficiencies, systems-based efficiencies and experience. However, we would recommend that the Global Hub and individual centres themselves remain vigilant in respect to both financial efficiency and time efficiency throughout the activities of the EfD Network. Efficiency is not a given, and the returns on investment to support the overall goals of EfD must remain the key benchmark for justifying investments and actions. From a centre perspective, we also note the encouraging perspective from the centres themselves. As part of the self-reported survey of centres, the efficiency of the EfD funding in terms of delivering impact was ranked at an average of 8.5 of 10. Coupled with generally favourable external audits of funding, we are satisfied that the EfD Network is highly efficient per SEK of funding provided.

In specific relation to financial audit, this evaluation covers the GLOBEN EfD funding agreement of 160m SEK (in addition to prior carryover of just under 10m SEK) for a four-year activity period from 2021 to 2024. As per the terms of the agreement, the funding is to cover expenditures on research, Collaborative Programs, centre functions, and Network functions, all with a view to supporting and advancing EfD's mission. We have not conducted an in-depth review of financial accounts and reporting, as the funding is mandated to be audited independently as part of the umbrella funding agreement. We have, however, reviewed the findings of the centralised audit function, and note that there are occasional challenges arising across the larger Network to be addressed. These include delays on payments and delays on audit processes. The Global Hub for EfD has recognised these issues and has engaged to address them. There is also evidence of further improved systems in this funding period (e.g. reporting templates) and an interest in enhancing the overall operational efficiency of the Network into the future. As such, whilst there are some administrative aspects to address that relate to efficiency, overall our evaluation is favourable.

SUSTAINABILITY

The EfD Network has demonstrated commendable resilience throughout the GLOBEN EfD funding period. It has been a time of major global challenges – including COVID-19 and national and international conflicts. There have also been centre-specific challenges in terms of personnel loss, political upheaval and institutional challenges (e.g. for the Ethiopia centre). Furthermore, these challenges have arisen in a period where the Network has been integrating newer members, introducing new administrative and operational systems, and undertaking an ambitious revision of the research funding strategy to encompass the Collaborative Programs. From the research assessment, our evaluation finds that the centres, and the broader EfD Network, have continued to perform admirably in this context in terms of output and impact. We also acknowledge from the metrics, and strategic discussions with the

Global Hub, the successes of EfD in addressing key aspects of their future sustainability in terms of diversification of funding and additional strategic partnerships with the Global North. This adaptability and resilience suggest a sustainable path for EfD and a relatively low risk environment for public funds.

However, we would add that we believe it is extremely important that EfD develops and records an institutional memory of the challenges faced and the lessons learned, as there will certainly be further challenges ahead. EfD should seek to make a virtue from their adaptability so as to ensure that strategies for supporting resilience are in place. Specifically, we believe that managing and maintaining a stable and strong Network, working to identify and land opportunities for new resources, and responding when nodes in the EfD Network face particular challenges should form a key role for the Global Hub to maintain the sustainability and impact of the EfD Network into the future. On a broader note, we would also highlight the importance for both centres, and the Global Hub, to remember the value and performance of the Network as a whole. Centres and individuals compete within EfD for resources, which is understandable. However, whilst priorities and incentives can differ for individuals and centres at different stages, there should be an effort made to clarify and communicate the value of the overall EfD Network performance, and how successes at that broader scale can and should contribute back towards the core EfD goals.

EFFECTIVENESS

The EfD Initiative has continued to be successful in pursuing its goals of building resilient local capacity, producing strong and useful policy analyses, influencing policy change and delivering impact. This is, again, in evidence from the scale and stability of the EfD membership, the quality and range of the research outputs, and the interactions with and feedback from the policy system. Our evaluation of these aspects is based upon the metrics, stakeholder outreach and research assessment process, and corresponds closely to the perspective of the prior evaluation.

The effectiveness of EfD is also supported by the policy stakeholder engagement and interest in the work of EfD centres. In essence the ‘gap analysis’ model of the EfD Initiative has clearly identified important barriers, and in working to address these gaps, EfD is proving to be an important and effective model for intervention and impact.

IMPACT

Over time, the EfD Initiative has been successful in building local capacity, producing high-quality and relevant research, and engaging with policymakers and stakeholders to deliver impact aligned to the EfD vision. The EfD Initiative has also now created a stronger brand identity, and the collaborative research programs will offer yet further opportunity to scale up activities, realise new efficiencies and enhance the overall EfD impact. On the basis of our research assessment, the GLOBEN support of EfD has enabled a continued positive impact on research outputs, research capacity and research quality across the EfD Network. Research performance remains strong with

an improved emphasis on applied research with significant potential for impact locally, with evidence of enhanced cooperation across the Network in research and impact and many examples of high-quality cooperation between policymakers and centre members with direct impact on environmental policy design for positive development interventions. These positive impacts, as well as a clear appetite and ongoing interest and desire for interactions with Efd research, have then been validated through sampled engagement with specifically identified policy stakeholders in the Efd centre countries.

At this stage it is clear that Efd is maturing in terms of the structure and systems, and it appears well equipped to continue to deliver impact on local needs in the Network. However, the Efd Initiative also faces both challenges and opportunities for improving impact. One ongoing challenge remains developing its capacity to record and communicate policy impact, so as to better leverage the values of Efd work for further research support and further impact, as well as ensuring that locally relevant robust research finds its way through the local policy systems to deliver positive change. A key challenge will then be managing the resource allocation to the Collaborative Programs to leverage their collective strength to support additional activity and impact across the Efd Network as a whole.

7.1. SWOT Analysis

Introduction

The SWOT analysis in this evaluation offers our own external summary perspective on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that we believe are most relevant to the Efd Network at this point in time. Perspectives provided by the centres in respect of their own SWOT analysis of Efd have been identified as part of the contact sheets returns. However, whilst considered, these have not necessarily been included below. Instead, we highlight the major themes that we as external evaluators identify under each heading for Efd at this juncture.

STRENGTHS

Global Network and Global Collaboration: Efd's extensive Network fosters collaboration and knowledge exchange between the Global North and South, and also within the Global South. This value of the Network and collaboration enhances research output quality and facilitates important knowledge and experience transfers. In this aspect the increasing scale and broad geographic scope of Efd represents an important value and strength of Efd.

High-Quality Research: Our evaluation finds that the Efd Initiative continues to deliver academic rigor and high-quality internationally recognised research. The quality and relevance of the research outputs remains a key strength and there is no sign of a diminution in local impact as the quality improves.

Policy-Relevant Research: EfD’s research is well aligned with local interests and policymaker needs. The prioritisation of policy-relevant research, and the strengthening relationships with policymakers and local needs represents an important and positive attribute for the EfD Network in the context of delivering impactful research.

Capacity Building: EfD continues to fulfil an extremely important role in capacity building. Research environments have mostly improved at the Centres and, whilst the GLOBEN EfD funding has a specific focus, it is apparent to the evaluation team that spillover effects connected to the EfD centres and of course the more direct capacity building outcomes from other funding that has been secured for the broader EfD mission, has continued to support capacity development in the Global South, particularly in Africa.

Visibility and Recognition: EfD has established trust from governmental, non-governmental, and educational partners. There is more than can be done to promote EfD in various forms, so as to capture further opportunities. However, membership, engagement, policymaker feedback and website data all suggest the brand is developing.

WEAKNESSES

Resource Constraints: Constraints on funding, and the reliance on a few major sources, may hinder EfD’s ability to fully realise its research and policy engagement potential. Whilst resource constraints are a common complaint in many research environments, it does appear that the need for what EfD can provide across the Global South is substantial, and, thus, working to enhance resources available for realising the EfD vision remains important.

Administrative Challenges: Coordination and bureaucracy across the Network for reporting, finance and communications can be cumbersome, affecting efficiency. However, strong financial, administrative and research related reporting is also necessary. Finding the balance and seeking out efficiencies remains a challenge. We would expect that the Global Hub, functional templates and systems, and indeed AI will be relevant to the EfD response and there is a need to enhance the support Network amongst the non-academic staff of the Centres without whom none of the impact would be possible.

Narrower Outreach: EfD has many positive stories to tell, and the key stakeholders are policy actors. However, there may be opportunity and value in extending the outreach of EfD to gain recognition in wider public circles. It is challenging to build such a broad profile, but the relevance of the work should afford scope to broaden the reach.

Identity and Focus: With a broad range of themes, and a focus on addressing multiple ‘gaps’, EfD may be perceived in some quarters as having a lack of clarity on priorities. This may limit the opportunities available.

Staff and Researcher Burnout: EfD is focused on impact, but the priorities of the individual researcher may understandably differ and change over time for a variety of reasons. Maintaining interest and incentive for researchers and key personnel is a challenge for all large organisations and EfD is no different in this respect.

OPPORTUNITIES

Cross-disciplinary Collaborations: Engaging with research institutions outside environmental economics can bring fresh perspectives, broader scope interdisciplinary research, and potentially greater interest and impact.

Diverse Funding Sources: Actively seeking funding from governmental grants, philanthropic foundations, and corporate partnerships can support financial stability. EfD has made progress, and we understand some new major opportunities are in prospect. Ultimately diversification and scale of funding will remain an opportunity and goal.

Policy Advisory Roles: Seeking more policy advisory roles could strengthen EfD's influence on policy decisions, as well as connecting EfD research findings and research capacities more closely to the policy system. This connection could help develop EfD staff at an individual level and can also offer valuable guidance to the dynamic development of the strategy around EfD research, the focus of the collaboratives and so on.

Engagement with Private Sector: Partnerships with industries can offer applied research opportunities and real-world impact. This remains an ongoing opportunity to explore for the EfD Network, enhanced by a stronger recognition, through ESG and sustainability reporting, that enterprise must be part of the solution to environmental challenges. We believe that the scale of the EfD Network, the thematic expertise in important areas of environment and economic development, could all serve to make EfD – in a number of forms, whether a centre, a Network or a collaborative – an attractive research partner.

Expansion and Visibility: EfD could explore new areas of research and extend activities to untapped geographic areas and topics. Visibility of the EfD brand and capacities, promoted in targeted ways, will create new opportunity.

THREATS

Financial Instability: Overreliance on a limited number of main funding sources can pose a threat to sustainability.

Policy Priority Shifts: Political instability can impact on policy ambition and action, which in turn can limit the opportunity and capacity for an EfD centre to effect change. Furthermore, rapid changes in environmental policy priorities in centre countries may fall in areas outside of the expertise of a given centre and this could threaten the capacity of that centre to secure adequate research funding, and, indeed, to undertake research that delivers impact.

Competition for Funding and in Research Output: Increasing international competition for environmental research funding may challenge resource acquisition. Similarly, internal competition for funding must find a balance such that EfD centres and individuals feel they have adequate opportunity to secure funding and do not become alienated from EfD activities. While the research environment in most centres has improved, it is a case of running to stand still and there is a need to further improve the environments to remain internationally competitive.

Global Dynamics and Conflicts: Changes in global dynamics and political conflicts could disrupt funding and collaborations. There has been some evidence of this in the recent years, and EfD should remain aware of the risks and challenges that may exist for centres and researchers within the EfD Network.

Staff Turnover: High turnover rates, especially in critical administrative roles, could affect continuity and efficiency. As EfD activities grow, retaining part-time staff who juggle responsibilities between the centre and their main jobs becomes increasingly difficult. The incentives for EfD participation should remain a consideration, and succession planning for key staff in the overall EfD Network should be reviewed to ensure that the EfD Network is resilient.

Identity Crisis: We encountered some evidence of concern that a focus on Collaborative Programs may overshadow individual centre identities and local research priorities. Understanding and communicating a coherent strategy on the collaboratives, open call research funding, and EfD generally can help counter disenfranchisement.

8. Recommendations

Our evaluation recommendations are grouped under three categories of heading – Operational, Strategic and Organisational⁵. The terms of reference for this evaluation highlighted specific areas of interest for the recommendations, and we have endeavoured to relate the findings of our evaluation to these areas. A summary of the alignment is as follows. Aspects of financial sustainability are considered with regard to growth and diversification of external funding in this evaluation, and these aspects are related principally to recommendations 3, 7, 8, and 10. Institutional sustainability and the approach to monitoring and managing of challenges is captured in recommendations 11 and 12. Administrative sustainability and performance is also captured within recommendations 11 and 12, but with a number of specific points also highlighted in recommendations 1, 2 and 3. The relevance and policy impact of EfD research remains at the very core of the EfD initiative overall, and this is touched upon throughout the evaluation more generally, with relevant guidance in recommendations 7, 8, 9 and 10. Recommendations 7 through to 10 also address strategy to secure more funding, to promote and enhance research collaborations, to realise program synergies (in particular across Sida-funded projects) and to strengthen Network support functions including data management, communications, and administration. Regarding gender and equal treatment in the context of both institutions and research, these aspects are considered in the evaluation, and related to Recommendations 6 and 8. As a final note of introduction, we note that these 2024 recommendations include certain recommendation elements that align with recommendations made as part of the prior evaluation in 2020. We would stress that the presence of similar former recommendations from the 2015-2019 evaluation does not necessarily reflect a lack of progress on those recommendations. Rather it highlights that these are ongoing challenges (e.g. resilience), ambitions (e.g. efficiency) and priorities (e.g. copy-cat policy) to be pursued.

⁵ Appendix 8 includes a synthesis of recommendations from the centres and EfD staff as part of the contact sheet engagements, missions and remote meetings. These ‘EfD originating’ recommendations have been considered, and are, in some cases, reflected in our recommendations. However, those contributions are distinct internal contributions to the future strategy.

8.1. Operational

The prior evaluation recommended ongoing efforts to enhance efficiency in the EfD Network, and some of this was to be achieved through centralised services, such as those now being offered from the Global Hub.

Recommendation 1 **Include Support Services Networking in EfD**

The growth of the EfD Network and the efficiency and effectiveness of the Network is strongly influenced by the performance and presence of a competent network of supporting professionals. This includes financing and reporting roles as well as logistical and broader administrative support. Whilst there has been an understandable focus on the interactions between the researchers within the Network, this has not been the case for the professional support staff. We expect that the current size and potential growth of the Network will bring additional operational pressures, and, in this regard, we believe there is value in the support services engaging more with one another, and indeed in collaborating to design and implement efficient processes across the Network. Aligned feedback from support professionals we interviewed confirmed this position and confirmed that transfer of knowledge across the Network is important for these staff and not just for researchers. We would provisionally suggest that specific engagement at the annual meeting is an option, along with perhaps a bi-annual remote meeting of support professionals to identify, discuss and strategize how to maintain efficient operations in such things as reporting, tendering and general operation.

Recommendation 2 **Initial Initiatives to Consider for the Support Professionals**

A support professionals' network will benefit from some focus to their initial engagements, and as such we would recommend two areas where they could interact and engage based on their experiences as follows:

A) Systems to manage scale

A systems-chain analysis of issues and delays for administrative functions could be conducted where issues have been identified by the support professionals. So, for example, in the case of late payments or delayed reporting, identify the root cause and opportunities to address. Where the issue is particularly problematic or present across the EfD Network, then the support professionals' network can be engaged to consider how the issue may be best addressed to the satisfaction of all parties involved (e.g. donor, Global Hub, centre, host institution administrators).

b) Streamlined Reporting

As one area to explore, the Support Professionals could consider an increasingly standardised online reporting structure for each centre and/or collaborative to complete via an online form that then populates to a secure cloud-based database. This could be an extension and adaptation of the MIMI system. It could assist with standardising inputs and reporting cycles and providing more rapid access. Standardised data entry can provide some challenges,

but there are workarounds. An issue that arose in the evaluation was the need for multiple entries of the same information into different templates and every effort should be made to ensure that information only needs to be generated once. There is value in clearly defined efforts to seek operational efficiencies for EfD.

It is also a possibility that the change could occur on the donor side, whereby they coordinate to ensure that they do not require duplication or excessive reporting. This is challenging across donors, but feasible across programs from the same donor. As such this may be an area to explore within Sida.

Recommendation 3 Multiple potential roles for AI across EfD

AI adoption should be considered as a priority within the EfD Network as there are both potential risks and substantial opportunities that will be associated with AI for the EfD Network ahead. We offer four associated recommendations to consider and explore in this context.

A. Adopt AI for Personalised Learning and Development

Recommendation: The role of AI in personalised learning and development represents a critical opportunity for EfD. There is already much development in this space from primary education (e.g. Shiksha Copilot in India) to personalised tutoring in higher education and research. This aspect of AI could offer much enhanced and tailored teaching and learning at scale and near-zero marginal cost. Deploying AI-powered learning platforms, with translation services, to offer personalised training and development programmes for researchers and staff is viable and should be explored. An EfD-trained platform could recognise individual learning needs, tailor content accordingly, and thereby support capacity development whilst broadening the reach and impact of the EfD Network and its members.

B. Utilize AI for Grant Writing and Funding Opportunities Identification

Recommendation: Grant writing and proposal management is time consuming. AI solutions to assist in grant writing for potential funding opportunities for EfD will represent a real opportunity for competing for extra funding with lower overhead. In practice, such tools can support EfD by the tailoring and drafting of an initial proposal based on master proposal formats from EfD that are maintained and populated by the Global Hub, Collaboratives and Centres with high quality content. AI tools will also increasingly assist with identifying relevant funding opportunities (e.g. similar to www.tenderlake.com) in time and this should be revisited by EfD in time.

C. Use AI for Enhanced Project Management

Recommendation: AI-driven project management tools could assist the centres and Global Hub in terms of streamlining the coordination of research activities and administration across the EfD Network. Existing and emerging tools can optimise resource allocation, track project progress, and support administrative-reporting tasks. Whilst these capacities need further development, there is value for the future in this area that should be tapped. AI should also be considered in the context of evaluation of research output quality and impact.

D. Implement AI for Research Data Analysis

Recommendation: Increasingly, AI tools will be used for analysing large datasets to uncover trends, predictions, and insights – and this will also be relevant to EfD research. Whilst a somewhat generic recommendation, there is substantial cloud-based computing power that can be tapped in support of research in the EfD Network, and it is an area of research, particularly for large data sets (e.g. on natural resources), that should be explored, and the results shared. Similarly, AI will increasingly be used to create simulations and models for policy support, and EfD could aim to be at the forefront of such work in the Global South, perhaps via one of the Collaborative Programs.

Recommendation 4 Administrative Review of Committees

As any network grows in size and activity, there can be a leaning towards the creation of new committees and sub-committees to manage decision-making. Membership of such committees can also be of value to individuals in terms of their own status and CV. However, it is important that EfD, as a whole, remains guided by the stated goals of EfD, and also that principles of efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and impact are applied in regard to committees. We would recommend a concise in-house review of the membership and role of committees to be guided by consideration of the contribution to the overall goals, and those evaluative principles identified. As an example, the Research Committee has an influential role in the direction and distribution of resources in the EfD Network. As the Network grows and becomes increasingly outward facing in terms of funding and research collaborations, it will be worthwhile to review the role of this committee and to identify how and where efficiencies may be realised in terms of operation.

Recommendation 5 Research Time, Journal Access and Publishing Support

In rating the centres' research environments in section 6, we note that most centres have improved their standards bringing them close to high-quality international standards, with only Ethiopia slipping on its previous rating. We recommend that some focus should be placed on Ethiopia to examine the issue of access to journals. There needs to be a direct intervention in this regard. A further focus needs to be on finding ways to provide centres with some open-access publishing agreements; without this, the researchers in those centres risk falling behind on citation rates and impact should their papers remain behind paywalls while those in high-income countries can afford to ensure their papers are open access. Finally, it recommended that the Network collect data on the academic workload of its Fellows as it is to be expected that teaching and administrative loads are likely higher in the Centres than in the leading universities in high-income countries. This would be an important consideration in future assessments of the research environment of the centres and may provide opportunities for the Network to find ways to support the creation of more time for impactful research.

Recommendation 6 Inclusive Research Environment and Research

In the contact sheets, we asked centres to include the supports they have in place to cater for diverse staff, EDI policies, gender-based supports, working from home supports, etc. Based on the feedback we received, some of the centres do not appear to be clear on what is meant by providing a supportive environment in this context. We recommend that the Global Hub places an emphasis on exploring what is meant to provide a supportive environment for a diverse range of researchers so that the centres are clear on what approaches they might implement to ensure support for researchers of all types and backgrounds.

Related to this we believe that the Global Hub should maintain efforts to ensure that related themes, in particular gender, continue to feature meaningfully in the research of EfD. The performance of EfD in terms of incorporating gender as a theme in research has been impressive, however, it is also important to identify the areas where that research can deliver impact and change. There is obviously an ongoing role for WinEED in this regard – both by considering gender in research team balance, as well as specifically in initiating research on timely, targeted topics.

8.2. Strategic

The prior evaluation recommendations regarding the prioritisation of impact outcomes, building policy connections, and branding and communicating EfD work to greater effect, all remain valid. However, this evaluation identifies four specific primary strategic-development recommendations to be advanced in the next phase.

Recommendation 7 Develop GH as clearing house for donor funds and channelling

As the Network has grown and matured, the role of the Global Hub has been to coordinate and support the Network. This is a critical role that essentially represents the frame around which the EfD Initiative has been built. That supporting and coordinating role will remain important and provides an administrative and institutional memory backstop for EfD. However, as EfD further develops, there is an important central role to be played by the Global Hub in terms of initiating or at least identifying opportunities for the EfD Network, and then targeting and realising funding opportunities. In essence, the Global Hub could develop specialist skills, connections and templates that focus more on serving as a clearing house for donor and project funds, and the subsequent channelling/crowding-in of those funds for greater impact across the EfD Network in the Global South. Whilst centres are also motivated to secure resources, a mission focused Global Hub doing so would offer certain efficiencies and could specialise in this role. The subsequent recommendations are also particularly relevant to this leveraging of the EfD brand to good effect.

Recommendation 8 **Clarity on Collaboratives**

The Collaborative Programs offer sufficient merit to be developed as part of the Efd goals. The Collaboratives represent a key pathway for the implementation of high impact copycat policy transfers across the centres. By engaging multiple centres, the Programs allow for the borrowing of strong methodologies or evidence-based approaches to policy change that delivered tangible results in one centre being applied to another centre, adjusting of course for country-specific factors. This allows for global learning opportunities within the Network.

We believe that the initial focus regarding the Collaborative Programs should be on using their funding pillar (Pillar 3 – see section 5.3) to position and leverage themselves to target more specialist donors for projects of scale. In effect this would involve CPs identifying specific challenges where the CP could offer a strong point of difference to other operators. This could relate to the geographical scope, on-the-ground local researchers, pathways into policymakers that exist in the Network, or indeed the breadth and depth of thematic specific research, the access to particular data sets and so on. Ultimately the collaboratives must identify their advantages, develop them as appropriate, and then to communicate them in pursuit of opportunities. In this regard, we also note that funding priorities can change, and, as such, the collaboratives may need to be restructured or refocused to align over time.

Our view on the Collaborative Programs as a concept is positive, yet there still remains some uncertainty over their focus, number and operation. This must be addressed as a priority. The decision over whether to design collaboratives based on thematic priorities and opportunities or, rather, on the basis of who is available to lead and where, should be considered.

The number of collaboratives is perhaps too great, and, at least at this point, there could be value in consolidating the number. It also is perhaps worth considering whether WinEED should be a collaborative or a network within the Network. This evaluation has found a favourable level of female participation and gender-focused research elements in Efd work. Also, in relation to participation in the Collaborative Programs, we would not necessarily recommend rulesets but, rather, guidelines. It is important to encourage, for example, young researchers to engage, but a rule set may be restrictive and counterproductive for the design of efficient Collaborative Program projects.

With regard to future relevance, we would also suggest that the balance between the Collaborative Program research agenda and the open research call funding will require review and management to ensure that all centres can maintain a strong sense of ownership and deliver locally relevant research and policy impact. The collaboratives offer positive long-term development opportunities for funding and impact, but we would advise some caution to ensure that they do not merely ringfence general research funds for narrower interests. In brief, the objective in the next phase should be on designing a coherent offering for the collaboratives that is aligned to opportunities, which then leverages the value of the Network in all its forms, including the substantial existing body of thematic research in each area that has been generated within the Efd Network. The investment in the collaboratives should, therefore, be more focused on unlocking additional funding opportunities to the benefit of the broader Network, as opposed to simply incrementally adding to the general stock of thematic research within the overall Efd Network. The latter

can still be supported via the general research funds, which remain critical to supporting broad based research, in particular within Africa, which stimulates activity in those centres and delivers the localised impact on policy choices.

Recommendation 9 Leverage the Collaboratives

Establish dedicated coordinators for effective communication and coordination: Each Collaborative Program, especially NatCap which contains many themes, should have a dedicated coordinator. These coordinators will play a crucial role in facilitating communication among different themes, researchers, the centre, and the Global Hub. They can also identify, organise, and coordinate applications for external grants. Having dedicated coordinators will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the CPs by ensuring smooth communication and coordination. This should also make it easier for centres to reach out to designated person(s) in the CPs when looking for support in a related proposal/project. These individuals can also drive the promotion and profile of the collaboratives to leverage the collective power for realising new opportunities for funding and impact.

Recommendation 10 Multiple Marketing Angles for Efd, Centres and Collaboratives

The Network, individual centres, and the collaboratives represent the three faces of the Efd Initiative. The Global Hub has an important role in coordinating and communicating what Efd has to offer, in a manner that reflects the interests of funders and policy actors. It is recommended that the Global Hub take on the challenge of developing multiple marketing angles and associated material and online presences for the Efd Network as a whole, for the individual localised centres, and for the Collaborative Programs.

The website will be important for this, as it should be possible to view it for the individual centre, the Network as a whole, and the individual collaboratives. Creating multiple facades that can be presented by Efd (e.g. centre in a country, collaborative on a theme, Network as a whole) to different opportunities (e.g. policy funders in the local country, special interests and opportunities on a theme, major bilateral donors) should create more opportunities.

8.3. Organisational

In the prior evaluation, resilience was highlighted as a key dimension for development as the Efd Network matures. We find that the Efd Network has performed admirably in the midst of the myriad challenges that were posed from 2019 onwards, and that it is important to assimilate these lessons and experience for managing into the future.

Recommendation 11 Build systems for resilience and rebuilding

The Efd Network has expanded and developed since the last evaluation. Whilst centres have not necessarily converged on a common level of performance or outputs, there is a broad maturing in performance objectively

identified across the Network. However, we recognise that centres will not always develop positively in a given funding period. Thus, whilst the EfD Network and Global Hub can develop systems and implement supports to aid progress and impact, it is also appropriate to recognise the potential for unforeseen and/or external events to impact upon individual centres and indeed the Network as a whole.

As a case in point, the Ethiopian centre has faced a number of challenges in the evaluation period, which has presented many challenges in terms of its operation and output. In such cases, our evaluation does not find fault, but rather we see these cases as a reminder to stress the importance of the Network both recognising the quality of resilience and the learned lessons from such challenges as being of particular value. Centres will not always be progressing upwards on a curve, internal and external shocks may shift a centre backwards on a specific aspect of growth. The need for resilience is particularly relevant in a development context and so it should be remembered that this is a crucial role for the Network. We recommend that a concise review be developed in the aftermath of such difficulties to prepare internal guidance on appropriate strategies to support resilience in centres faced with such challenges in the future (e.g. sudden loss of key personnel, rapid change in institutional arrangements). Whilst there is not necessarily a definitive solution strategy to all such eventualities, experience and options should be noted for EfD's institutional memory and should be highlighted as a benefit of the Network.

Recommendation 12 **Recognise non-linear development of Centres**

In the context of resilience and development, it is also noted that there are varied lenses through which the progression and status of a centre may be judged. We believe that even a qualitative appraisal of the status of a centre each year, along a small number of status metrics would be of value to the management of the Network. Specifically, we feel that a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of centres in different contexts (e.g. scale, research environment, leadership, local opportunities) can offer a useful means for the Global Hub and potentially donors to understand the varied needs that may exist across the Network and to thereby enable tailored supports to be channelled accordingly to maintain stability and enhance the ongoing impact from EfD funds.

In the context of recommendation 12 we can also suggest illustrative alternative centre appraisal themes which cover categories of Scale, Advantages, Influence, Leadership, and Stability (SAILS). These have been included in Appendix 7. However, we would recommend that the EfD Network and Global Hub engage to define their own more nuanced means of qualitatively (or quantitatively) assigning a status to centres across a small number of alternative themes that go beyond the 'new centre' or 'established centre'. We find that the following categories would merit consideration in this context. The approach could involve a manageable three-point scale in each context, as illustrated in the graphics that follow.

9. Closing Summary

There are many positive attributes and achievements of the EfD Initiative that have been identified and verified as part of this evaluation for the GLOBEN EfD agreement. EfD's global Network continues to facilitate extensive collaboration and knowledge transfer, which has been found to support research quantity, quality and local impact. The initiative is recognised and valued by external policy holders for producing high-quality, policy-relevant research in the Global South, which aligns with local needs and international academic standards. Moreover, EfD has now established a trusted brand that has made some progress on increased visibility and recognition.

However, the challenges which the EfD Initiative works to address are many. There has been a successful leveraging of Sida support to greater effect, but there will remain ample opportunity for further resources to deliver further activity and impact. In this vein EfD is making encouraging movements to further enhance efficiency in the operation; to diversify and grow funding supports; to reorganize and rebrand major thematic offerings; to embrace and manage the challenges that arise with scale and time; and to hold true to the vision and mission that remains relevant and important.

Our recommendations encourage EfD to embed the nuance and lessons of organizational challenges into the Global Hub such that it becomes increasingly proficient at monitoring and managing change and challenges (e.g. staff incentives, succession planning, political instability). Our recommendations also touch on the need to pay close attention to administrative operations and roles, and to move with the times as new technology, primarily AI, will unquestionably present opportunities and difficulties into the future. Finally, we recommend that considerable effort is invested in structuring and promoting the collaboratives in the next phase of development.

EfD merits ongoing support and has, we believe, the structures to deliver greater impact with increased support into the future. How EfD presents itself and organizes itself with respect to the opportunities for support will have a substantive impact on what can be achieved in the next stages of the EfD story. There is no shortage of need.

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