



ReCom

Research and
Communication
on Foreign Aid

2011-2013



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A child carries a cage in a mountainous area of Sapa, Viet Nam.

Based on enrollment data, about 72 million children of primary school age in the developing world were not in school in 2005; 57 per cent of those were girls (UN Millennium Development Goals Report).

Photo ID 491881. 23/06/2011. Sapa, Viet Nam.



'Aid will only continue to be relevant if it becomes a vehicle for enabling governments to strengthen their management of domestic revenues.'

Paul Collier

WIDER Working Paper No. 2012/005: How to spend it: The organization of public spending and aid effectiveness

PHOTO © UN PHOTO / KIBAE PARK


Research and Communication on Foreign Aid

In the ReCom programme social scientists research and communicate what works, and what could work, in development assistance – including the potential to scale up and transfer small but successful interventions as larger aid programmes.

The research programme is co-ordinated by UNU-WIDER and implemented in partnership with Danida (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, International Development Cooperation) and Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). The Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) and the UNU-WIDER global network of partner institutions and researchers are also involved in ReCom research. Through the creation and sharing of

this knowledge, ReCom is focused on improving aid practice and policy, thereby increasing the benefits of aid for recipient countries.

Currently, the evidence for what works in aid is fragmented and not easily accessible thereby limiting, in particular, the transfer of successful interventions across countries. There is limited evidence for what works on a large scale – understanding this is a key objective if more aid is to be used well, and if challenges such as adaption to climate change are to be met successfully. The ReCom programme adds to the existing evidence base and communicates with policy makers and the broader audience 'what aid has done, and what aid can do better in the future'.



'Fighting unemployment is a legitimate policy challenge. However, the greater policy challenge is to generate higher earnings for those who are already working.'

Gary Fields

WIDER Working Paper No. 2012/086:
Aid, growth, and jobs

Why ReCom?

Foreign aid is a complex and multi-faceted issue involving many countries, institutions, and people—researchers, aid officials, policy makers, NGOs, companies, consultants, civil society organizations. To understand better and improve its effectiveness requires a multi-disciplinary approach, bringing together the best social scientists on each topic. Better understanding can only come from mobilizing a global network of development researchers, policy makers and practitioners to share their knowledge on what works and what could work.

No single person can grasp all of the dimensions of aid. This is especially true when we take into account the complex ways in which aid interacts with global public goods such as health, peace and security. It is the power of the network that gives ReCom its credibility as a source of knowledge on development and aid. To be of use the new knowledge generated by research must be customized and shared. This can only be done by effective communication with national policy makers, aid officials, parliamentarians, and other practitioners in NGOs and social movements. Communication is as important to ReCom's success as research.

A knowledge-sharing process therefore involves the exchange of information and views. Knowledge creation and sharing interact. Discussion of the results of research sets up new questions for further investigation. Discussion also captures the insights of policy makers and practitioners, which then feed back into further rounds of knowledge creation and sharing. This is the core of ReCom.

Themes

The thematic focus of the research programme covers five key issues in international development assistance:

- > Growth and Employment
- > Governance and Fragility
- > Social Sectors
- > Gender Equality
- > Environment and Climate Change

Poverty and inequality cuts across all these issues, for there can be no sustained poverty reduction without achievements for aid in each. By these means, ReCom is also helping to shape the debate on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the post-2015 development agenda.

'The majority of the world's poor, by income poverty and multi-dimensional poverty, now live in countries officially classified by the World Bank as middle-income countries.'

Andy Sumner

WIDER Working Paper No. 2013/062: Global poverty, aid, and middle-income countries: are the country classifications moribund or is global poverty in the process of 'nationalizing'?



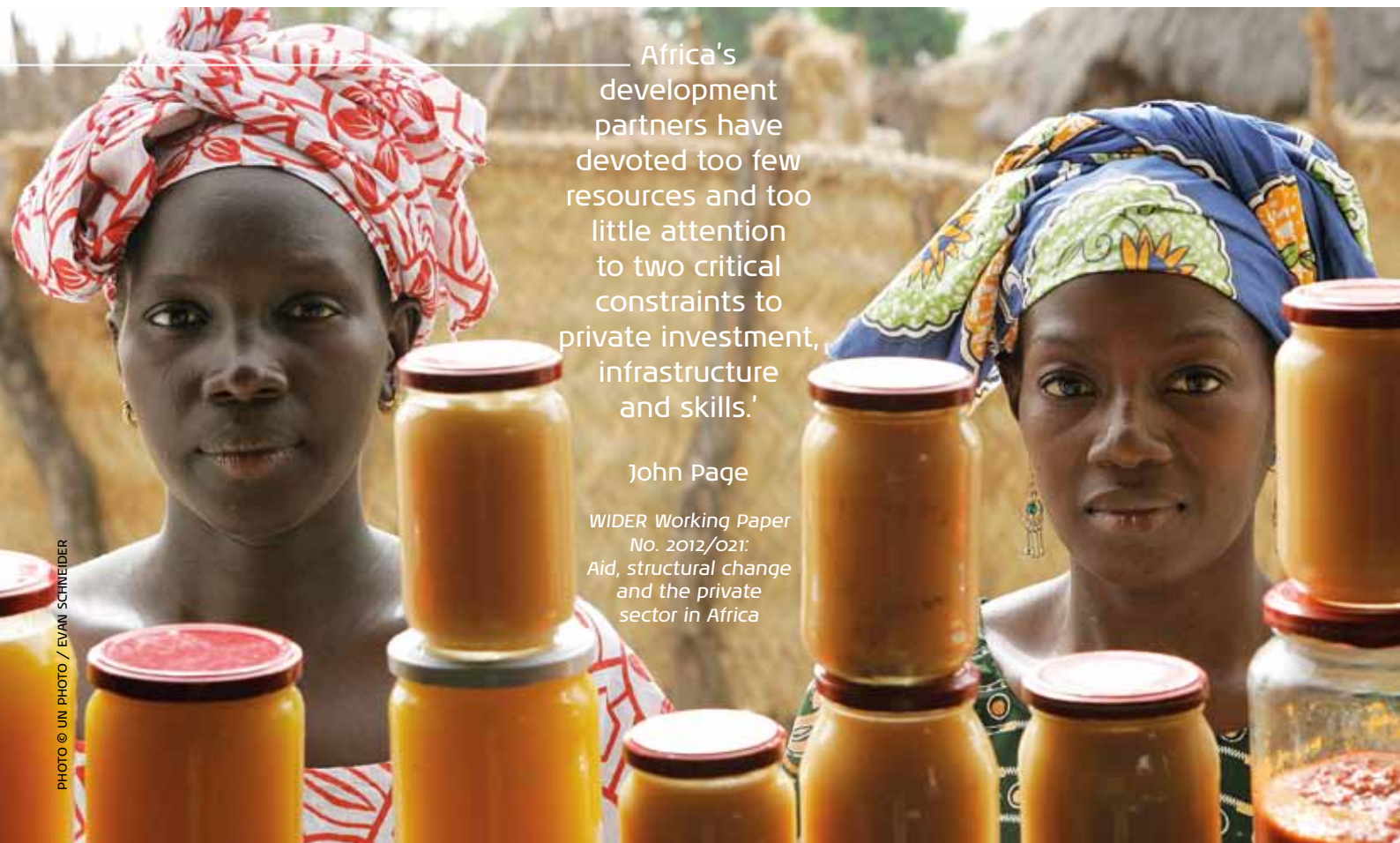
PHOTO © WORLD BANK / DOMINIC CHAVEZ

Research

Around 250 international social scientists are involved in the research. By the end of 2013 more than 200 working papers will have been published and seven ReCom Results Meetings held. Research findings are compiled in position papers, one for each theme, that are 'living documents' until the research programme is wrapped up at the end of 2013. These are handy documents for users who prefer an easily digestible overview of the accumulated knowledge.

UNU-WIDER executes the research in close collaboration with its extensive network. Strong partnerships have been built, notably with the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) in Nairobi, an Africa-wide network of economists.

UNU-WIDER also partners with other UN bodies, such as the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), as well as international think tanks such as the Brookings Institution. There are also contributions from the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS).



Africa's development partners have devoted too few resources and too little attention to two critical constraints to private investment, infrastructure and skills.'

John Page

*WIDER Working Paper
No. 2012/021:
Aid, structural change
and the private
sector in Africa*

Communication

We can have an informed debate on aid only when opinions are based on high-quality research. Effective communication of research creates potential for such informed debate.

Current aid practice and policy is challenged by a large number of complex issues including conflict, climate change, and the emergence of new aid donors. Many developing economies are growing, a success in part due to aid itself. For these countries aid can still help, but it must work in partnership with private capital flows and help to mobilize more public revenue from growth itself. ReCom communicates these new trends and challenges, and what they mean for aid practice and for achieving aid effectiveness.

ReCom communicates with development agencies and national policy makers. Many of these also spread research evidence to larger audiences. Within development agencies, ReCom is communicating with champions for the issues, who spread the messages further into the practice and policy of the agency. ReCom also communicates knowledge on aid in ways that can be taken up by the media and the general public.

The process of knowledge transfer consists of both products and activities. The products include research publications, policy briefs, and a website dedicated to the communication of ReCom research (www.wider.unu.edu/recom).

Social platforms (YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Slide Share, etc.), podcasts and videos are used to disseminate the knowledge produced through ReCom. People-to-people knowledge sharing is achieved through results meetings, conferences and seminars.

'Reforming water institutions and assisting communities in finding ways to improve the efficiency with which they manage their water resources is an area in which investments will bear high returns in the future.'

Thomas W. Hertel

*Draft WIDER Working Paper:
Land, environment and
climate: contributing to
the global public good*

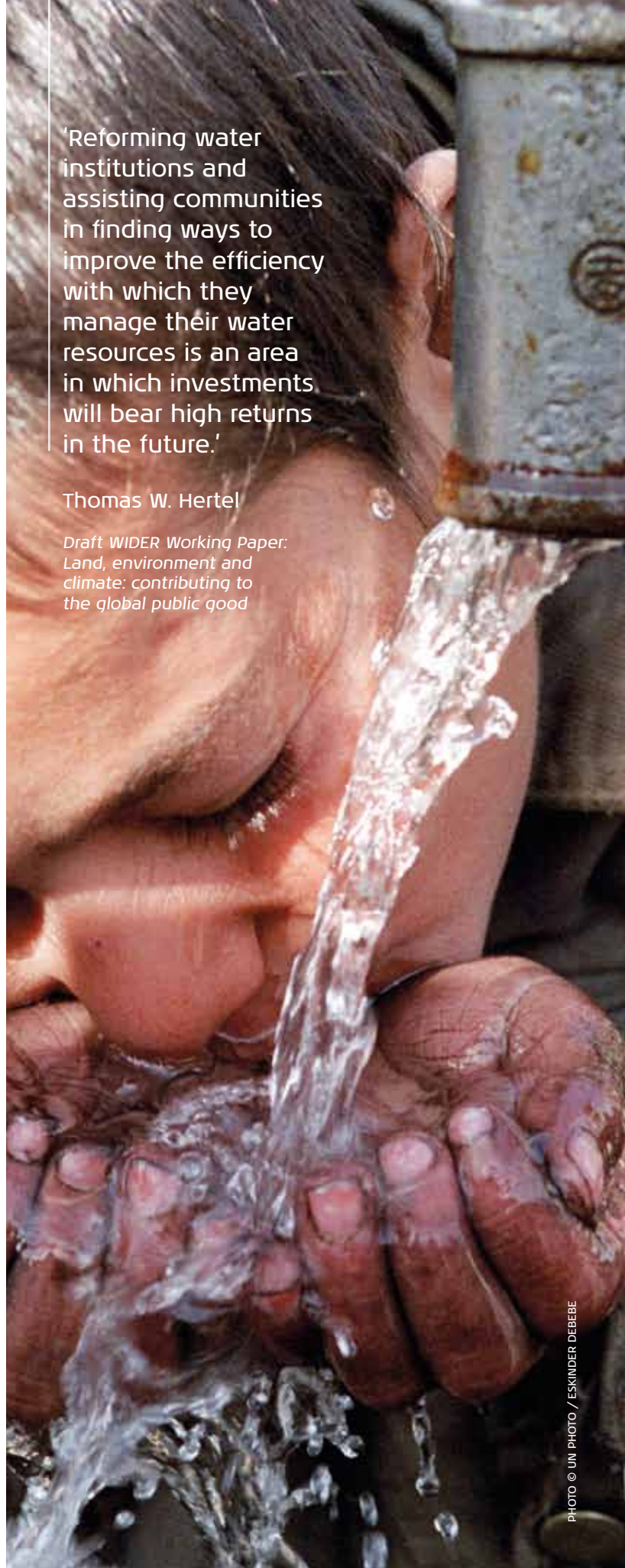
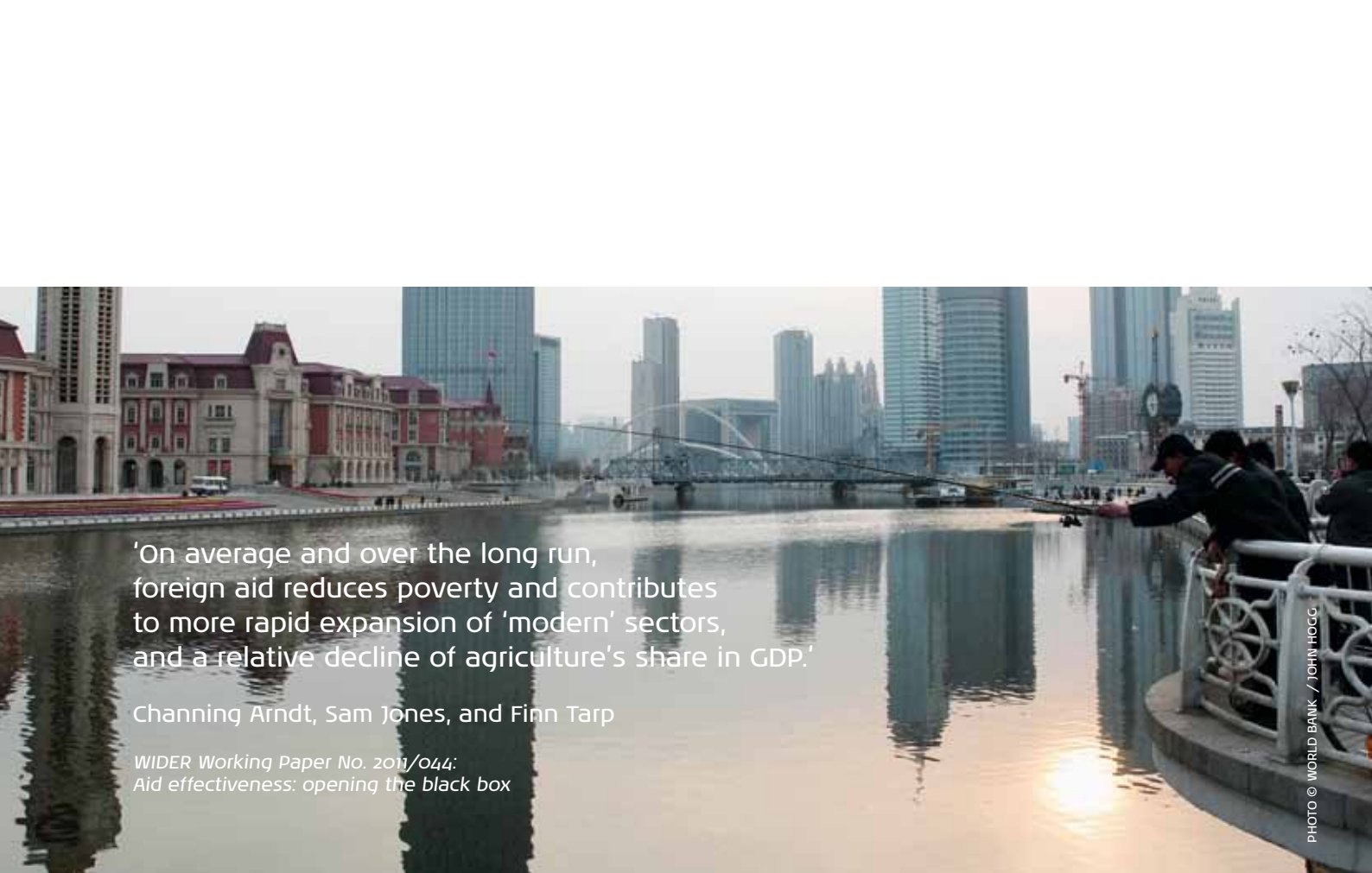


PHOTO © UN PHOTO / ESKINDER DEBEBE



'On average and over the long run,
foreign aid reduces poverty and contributes
to more rapid expansion of 'modern' sectors,
and a relative decline of agriculture's share in GDP.'

Channing Arndt, Sam Jones, and Finn Tarp

*WIDER Working Paper No. 2011/044:
Aid effectiveness: opening the black box*

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More about ReCom

wider.unu.edu/recom



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