Research, policy and practice

Capacity development: Accra and beyond

This section highlights news and recent developments in the area of capacity development. The CD monitor is compiled in collaboration with UNDP's Capacity-Net.

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In the previous issue of *Capacity.Org*, Thomas Theisohn and James Hradsky described the Bonn Workshop Consensus, an effort to put capacity development on the Accra Agenda for Action. This CD Monitor looks at what has been achieved in Accra from a CD perspective.

The preparatory work flowing from the Bonn workshop 'Capacity development: Accra and beyond' made inroads into the capacity development debate. The Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) incorporated most of the Bonn workshop consensus points. Capacity was an issue in virtually all of the round table discussions at the High Level Forum. It was actually the central theme of some round tables, such as the one on ownership. The sector round table was
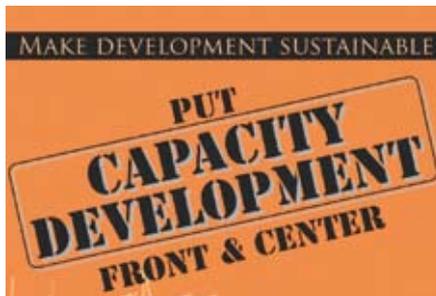
The LenCD sponsored outreach promoted the Bonn workshop consensus. The slogan 'Put capacity development front and centre' and related materials caught attention both at the CSO parallel forum and at the high-level forum.

remarkably well managed and emphasised the risks of a sector focus if systemic capacities, including public sector reform and incentive systems, are not addressed.

Moving toward 2011

These issues were examined at a side event sponsored by LenCD and the Partner Contact Group. Mustafa Mastoor, director general of the Ministry of Finance in Afghanistan, emphasised the priorities that the AAA was defining as starting points: the commitment to joint action and the importance of evaluating against explicit targets. Philippe Besson, senior advisor to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), saw the capacity development agenda significantly changing technical cooperation. Richard Manning, former chair of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and co-chair in Bonn, saw the next stage as focusing on how to build sustainable institutions. He urged the reconsideration of tertiary education and its role.

Emmanuel Akwetey, executive director of the Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG), Ghana, pressed for an even more inclusive High Level Forum 2011, with more interaction between civil society and government, and emphasised the importance of independent assessments.

The AAA actually establishes a heavy agenda for both developing and donor countries. They commit to working together at all levels to promote operational changes that make capacity development support more effective. It is stated that 'developing countries will systematically identify areas where there is a need to strengthen the capacity to perform and deliver services at all levels – national, sub-national, sectoral and thematic – and design strategies to address them'.

Donors also have a busy agenda aside from supporting those of developing countries in 'more responsive' ways. Their own capacities, including that to engage effectively on the national level, were subject to many remarks. An agreement was reached on 'jointly selecting and managing' technical cooperation and on promoting South-South cooperation for CD support.

If the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action are taken seriously, one should expect significant advances by 2011. The order of the day must be first to use this mandated space, and push hard on implementation and second to enforce accountability for change, because 'what can be measured can be done'. <

Links

- The full text of the AAA and all other documentation on the High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness is available at www.accrahlf.net.
- The CSO parallel forum that took place over the two days before the high-level forum brought together some 600 representatives from 325 civil society organisations and 88 countries. Eighty were selected and accredited to participate in the forum. More information on the CSO position is available at www.betteraid.org.

A heavy agenda on capacity development

The Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) has many references to capacity development. The following are at the core of the mutual commitments:

14. (…) Together, developing countries and donors will take the following actions to strengthen capacity development:
a) Developing countries will systematically identify areas where there is a need to strengthen the capacity to perform and deliver services at all levels – national, sub-national, sectoral and thematic – and design strategies to address them. Donors will strengthen their own capacity and skills to be more responsive to developing countries' needs.
b) Donors' support for capacity development will be demand-driven and designed to support country ownership. To this end, developing countries and donors will i) jointly select and manage technical cooperation, and ii) promote the provision of technical cooperation by local and regional resources, including through South-South cooperation.
c) Developing countries and donors will work together at all levels to promote operational changes that make capacity development support more effective.

Linking research–based evidence to policy and practice

This issue of *Capacity.Org* focuses on the link between research-based evidence, policy and practice. Researchers, policymakers, civil society organisations (CSOs) and practitioners in capacity development often live in very separate worlds. Their dynamics, values and ways of handling evidence are very different. As a result, research-based evidence is often only a minor factor when policies for development are formulated and practices shaped. Those involved in gathering evidence – researchers and increasingly non-government organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) – are convinced that the ability of policies and practices to combat poverty can be substantially enhanced if research is given more attention. In the guest column, Patrick Chabal presents the example of decentralisation policies. Despite mounting evidence that decentralisation does not always contribute to poverty reduction, it is still often zealously and uncritically embraced by policymakers and practitioners in capacity development.

The articles in this issue focus on the capacities required for making evidence-based policies and practices for development a reality. Obviously the ability to conduct solid research and analyse the findings correctly are core capacities which, in the case of many NGOs and CBOs, require strengthening. But evidence itself is not enough. Other capacities are needed to drive the message home. Researchers must know and understand key stakeholders in the policymaking process. They need to grasp and adapt to the dynamics of the political debate and bring to the fore relevant evidence at the right time. Another crucial capacity is the ability to communicate in a language that policymakers can understand.

In the feature article, John Young explains why it is difficult to feed research-based evidence into policy and practice and which capacities need to be strengthened. He presents a six-step approach that can help research organisations maximise the influence of research-based evidence on policy and practice. Paul Mably demonstrates how, since the early 1990s, a number of NGOs that focus on international trade policies have developed such capacities and have been able to influence trade policies in a very significant way.

Internal organisational capacity needs to be complemented by an enabling environment. Multiparty democracies are more conducive for research institutes and CSOs to engage in advocacy on the basis of researched evidence than are autocratic and oligarchic regimes. Rijit Sengupta explains how, in the well established democracy of India, a CSO has already developed second-generation tools and methods that lead to enhanced capacity to share research findings with Indian parliamentarians and to influence policymaking. The new approach focused much more on proper timing, choice of topics, good communication and the process was well aligned with the way the political agenda evolved.

The introduction of multiparty democracy in East and Southern Africa is much more recent. Research institutes and CSOs are still coming to grips with evidence-based approaches to advocacy. In these regions, work by a large group of researchers, including Nicola Jones, Joseph Bitature, William Kambona, Irene Alenga, Vivian Kazi, Deodatus Kakoko, Stephen Karekezi, John Kimani and Nicholas Owino, shows that good practices are emerging. However, evidence also indicates that there are a number of critical capacity gaps that need to be addressed, including research and analytical capacity, the ability to share and communicate knowledge, leadership credibility and accountability. A group of Latin American organisations have identified a very similar mix of key personal capabilities and organisational capacities that CSOs need to have in place in order to be successful in influencing policy with research-based evidence. Gala Díaz Langou elaborates on this in her article.

According to Ambassdor Mahamet Saleh Annadif, ambassador of the permanent mission of the African Union in Brussels, it is crucial that researchers and policymakers trust each other. Researchers must gain the trust of policymakers by relating to them, learning their views, exchanging ideas with them, going out into the field and talking to stakeholders. Policymakers on the other hand must be dedicated to transparent and accountable governance in order for the seeds of researched evidence to land on fertile soil.

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Linecir / Joerg Boethling

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Future issues
The next issue of *Capacity.org* will focus on water, sanitation and health.

Cover photo:
Hollandse Hoogte
Guatemala: recording farmer's problems

Working with complexity

Impact of research on policy and practice

It is difficult to feed research-based evidence into policy and practice. This article discusses which capacities need to be strengthened to increase the impact of research on policy.

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The world is changing rapidly in ways that often affect poor countries most. Economic, climate and population changes over the coming decades will have enormous implications for the challenge of reducing poverty by threatening access to food and water, worsening migration pressures and possibly increasing the chances of conflict. New research is essential for finding ways to prevent or mitigate the impact of these changes.

Donors are already spending over US$2 billion annually on development-related research. Yet there is widespread recognition that research alone is not enough. For research to have any impact, the results must inform and shape policies and programmes, and be adopted into practice.

Research donors increasingly acknowledge this. The UK Department for International Development (DFID), for example, will double spending on development research from US$200 to US$400 million per year over the next five years, and will invest equally in generating new knowledge and working to ensure it is used in policy and practice.

The challenge of maximising the impact of research on policy and practice is not unique to multilateral and bilateral donors.

Civil society organisations in developed and developing countries are not only engaged in practical programmes delivering services and strengthening systems to combat poverty directly, but are increasingly engaged in work to foster better development policies and programmes. Effective use of research-based knowledge is vital for both tasks.

This article outlines the difficulties in getting research-based evidence into policy and practice. It provides examples of what seems to work, describes a practical approach to developing effective strategies and identifies some of the capacity issues that need to be addressed.

Why is it so difficult?

Research results often need to be contested, debated and tested again before a consensus can be reached on recommendations for policy and practice. Even then many obstacles remain. Policy processes are very rarely linear and logical. Simply presenting research results to policymakers and expecting them to put the evidence into practice is very unlikely to work. Although most policy processes do involve a sequence of stages from agenda-setting through decision-making to implementation and evaluation, they rarely take place in an orderly fashion. Many agents are involved in affecting the process directly, and in trying to influence each other. While the whole process of policy has been described as 'a chaos of purposes and accidents', I prefer to use the terms complex, multifactorial and non-linear.

Research-based evidence often plays a very minor role in policy processes. A recent ODI study of factors influencing chronic poverty in Uganda found that only 2 of 25 were researchable issues. In a talk on evidence-based policymaking at ODI in 2003, Vincent Cable, a senior member of the UK parliament, said that politicians are practically incapable of using research-based evidence because, among other things, few are scientists, and they don't understand the concept of testing a hypothesis. In another ODI meeting, Phil Davies, then deputy director of the governmental and social research unit in the UK Cabinet Office, described how policymakers tend to be more heavily influenced by their own values, experience, expertise and judgement, the influence of lobbyists and pressure groups and pragmatism based on the amount of resources they have available rather than by research-based evidence. In developing country contexts, national policy processes are often distorted by international factors. Donor policies, for example, can be hugely influential in highly indebted countries.

Researchers wishing to maximise the impact of their work have to attract the interest of policymakers and practitioners and then convince them that a new policy or different approach is valuable, and foster the behavioural changes necessary to put them into practice.

What seems to work

Research-based evidence can contribute to policies and practices that have a dramatic impact on peoples' lives. One example is the Tanzania Essential Health Interventions Project (TEHIP), in which the results of household disease surveys were used to inform the development of health services focusing on the most common conditions, especially those affecting mothers and young children. This contributed to a 43 and 46% reduction in infant mortality in two districts of rural Tanzania between 2000 and 2003. Another example is the Decentralised Livestock Services in the Eastern Regions of Indonesia Project, in which a careful combination of pilot field-level projects, institutional research and proactive communication contributed to a 250% increase in farmer satisfaction with livestock services. Success stories quoted in DFID's new research strategy include a 22% reduction in neonatal mortality in Ghana by having women begin breastfeeding within the first hour after birth, and a 43% reduction in deaths among HIV positive children using a commonly available antibiotic.

These and other case studies from around the world illustrate the complexity of engaging with policy processes. There is no simple blueprint for what will work. What works in one context may not work in another. But it does appear that research projects and programmes are more likely to be successful when they
- focus on current policy problems and have clear objectives;
- engage closely with policymakers throughout the process, from identifying the problem, undertaking the research itself and drawing out recommendations for policy and practice from the results;
- understand the political factors which may enhance or impede uptake and develop appropriate strategies to address them;
- invest heavily in communication and engagement activities as well as the

Aids prevention billboard in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. UN AIDS researchers are starting to take a new approach to data, revealing dramatic evidence that the AIDS epidemic in Africa has started to reverse three decades of hard-won development gains.

research itself and build strong relationships with key stakeholders. Individual champions and opponents frequently play a major role, as does serendipity – or chance.

The implications of this are that engaging with policy requires more than just research skills. According to Simon Maxwell, director of ODI, if researchers want to be good policy entrepreneurs, they also need to synthesise simple, compelling stories from the results of the research. They need to be good networkers to work effectively with all the other stakeholders involved in the process, good engineers to build programmes that can generate convincing evidence at the right time and political 'fixers' who know who is making the decision and how to get to them. Or they need to work in multidisciplinary teams with others who have these skills.

A practical approach
Based on more than five years' experience providing advice to researchers, bilateral and multilateral development organisations and NGOs, ODI's Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) has come up with an iterative approach to developing a strategy to maximise the influence of research-based evidence on policy and practice (see Figure

1). It draws on concepts of complexity, on outcome-mapping tools developed by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Tools for Policy Engagement assembled and developed by the RAPID programme itself. The approach has been field tested through more than 30 workshops and training courses worldwide.

To use research-based evidence for promoting a specific policy or practice, the first step is to map the policy context around that issue and identify the key factors that may influence the policy process. RAPID has developed a simple checklist of questions to accomplish this, including questions about the key external agents, the political context itself, the research-based evidence and the other stakeholders who can help.

The second step is to identify the key influential stakeholders. RAPID's Alignment, Interest and Influence Matrix (AIIM) can be used to map agents along three dimensions (see Figure 2): the degree of alignment with the proposed policy (on the y axis), their level of interest in the issue (on the x axis) and their ability to exert influence on the policy process (on the z axis – or by otherwise indicating their degree of influence on the two-dimensional matrix). Agents who are highly interested and aligned should be natural allies and collaborators. Those who

are highly interested but not aligned need to be brought into alignment or somehow prevented from creating obstacles. Prompting enthusiasm among powerful agents who are highly aligned but not interested can increase the chance of success. Prompting enthusiasm among agents who are not highly aligned risks creating more tensions.

The third step is to identify the changes needed among the key stakeholders if they are to support the desired policy outcome. IDRC's Outcome Mapping approach emphasises that long-term impact only occurs through behavioural change that surpasses the lifetime of the project. Focusing on those agencies that it is possible to influence, it is important to describe as precisely as possible their current behaviour. Equally important is to describe the behaviour necessary to contribute to the required policy process (the 'outcome challenge') and to monitor the short- and medium-term intermediate behaviours (or 'progress markers') to ensure that priority stakeholders are moving in the right direction and responding to the programme's efforts.

Having identified the necessary behavioural changes, the fourth step is to develop a strategy to achieve the milestone

changes in the process. There are many strategic planning tools that can be used for this. Force Field Analysis is a flexible tool that helps identify the forces supporting and opposing the desired change and suggest concrete responses (see Figure 3). The forces can be ranked first according to their degree of influence over the change, and then according to the degree of control it is possible for the project team to exert over them. Activities can then be identified to reduce the negative forces and increase the positive ones. Sometimes it is not possible to influence agents directly and it is necessary to target others who can do so. This might mean rethinking the priority stakeholders. More sophisticated tools also exist for visualising strategies and actions, for example strategy maps.

The fifth step is to consider whether the project or programme has the necessary capacity to implement the strategy. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis is a well-known tool that can be used to identify whether a project has the necessary resources to achieve its objectives, and that also recognises the potential impact of external influences. Complexity theory conceptualises competence as an evolving set of systems, processes and skills to enable agents to make the right decisions and act, rather than as a predetermined set of capabilities. Competency frameworks can be used to map the existing and the desired competencies needed to influence policy and to track progress toward achieving them.

The sixth and final step is to develop a monitoring and learning system. This is not only to track progress, make any necessary adjustments and assess the effectiveness of the approach, but also to learn lessons for the future. Recording the results of these planning steps, noting the attainment of progress markers and achievement of improved competency levels, and keeping simple logs of unexpected events should allow the team to produce and use

knowledge about policy content, context, the strategy and activities, outcomes (behaviour changes), the skills, competencies and systems necessary. Crucial to the collection of knowledge are sharing it and using it. Intranet systems can be very useful, but sometimes the most basic face-to-face or telephone interactions can produce the best results. Understanding how people learn is also important.

Capacity development

Most of RAPID's work to date has been focused on building capacity at the individual level, partly through workshops and training courses, but also through longer-term partnerships and collaboration on national and global action research projects. RAPID has also been instrumental in creating two worldwide communities of practice of organisations and individuals keen to learn from each other about how to do it:

• the Evidence-based Policy in Development Network, which now has 20 core member organisations and over 400 people working to promote evidence-based policies across Asia, Africa and Latin America, and

• the Outcome Mapping Learning Community, which provides an online platform for outcome-mapping practitioners to learn new skills, share ideas and showcase good practice.

Substantial improvement in the use of research-based evidence in development policy and practice also requires effort at the institutional level. The aim is to improve organisational structures, processes, resources, management and governance issues so that local institutions are able to attract, train and retain capable staff. At the system level, effort should be made to improve national and regional innovation environments. A recent review of research donor approaches to capacity development identified a wide range of approaches to achieve this improvement including:

• research partnerships between Northern and Southern research institutions and universities;

• institutional support for universities in developing countries (particularly in sub-Saharan Africa);

• support for national research councils;

• funding for developing country institutions to access research and technical services of developing country partners;

• supporting communities of practice among researchers and policymakers working on a specific development problem or sector;

• supporting policymakers to become more aware of research-based evidence and more discerning consumers of it; and

• collaborative regional Masters and PhD programmes.

But donors need to adopt a more joint approach, both with each other and with different elements of the system. The informal International Forum of Research Donors provides an opportunity for research donors to start doing this, and many donors are developing more integrated approaches. DFID's Research into Use Programme, for example, uses an innovation system approach that includes work to strengthen the capacity of the poor to articulate demand, work to develop the information markets that serve them and work to explore innovative ways in which to supply information.

Conclusion

Improving the uptake of development research into policy and practice is not straightforward. Policy processes themselves are complex, multifactorial and non-linear. What works in one context may not work in another. A blueprint approach is unlikely to work. Successful examples tend to include common ingredients: a clear focus on current policy issues, political awareness and close engagement with policymakers, substantial investment in communication and engaging and cultivating local

Figure 1

Figure 2: The alignment interest influence matrix
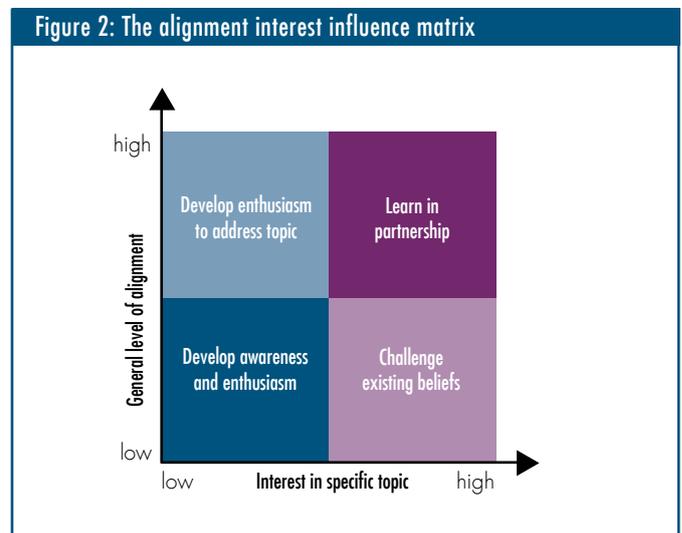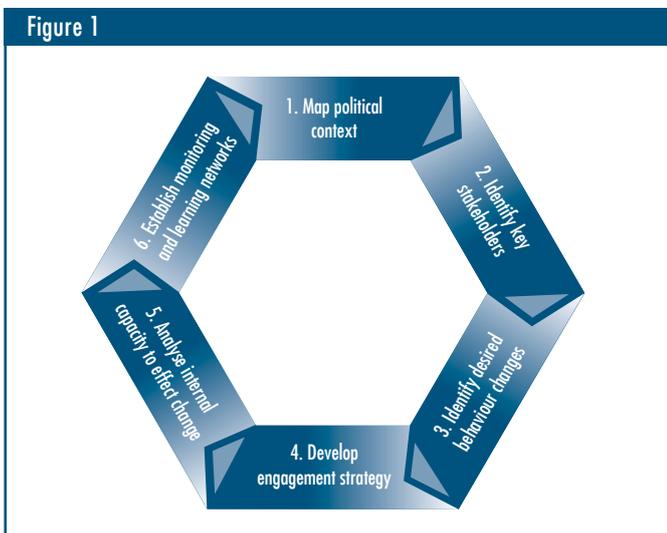
The Tanzania Essential Health Interventions Project (TEHIP) uses the results of household disease surveys to help health services focus on the most common health problems affecting mothers and young children.

champions, and seizing unexpected opportunities. But the recipe – the relative amounts of each ingredient and the order in which to blend them – is often unique for each situation.

Like the most creative cooks, good policy entrepreneurs make it up as they go along through an iterative series of steps, paying great attention to the results of each. Or, as Albert Hofmann, the Swiss chemist who discovered the properties of LSD by unintentionally absorbing it through his skin, wrote, 'It is true that it was a chance discovery, but it was the outcome of planned experiments, and these experiments took place in the framework of systematic pharmaceutical, chemical research. It could better be described as serendipity'.

Capacity development to promote greater use of research-based evidence in development policy and practice requires effort at individual, organisational and institutional level for all stakeholders – research providers, research users and intermediary groups. <
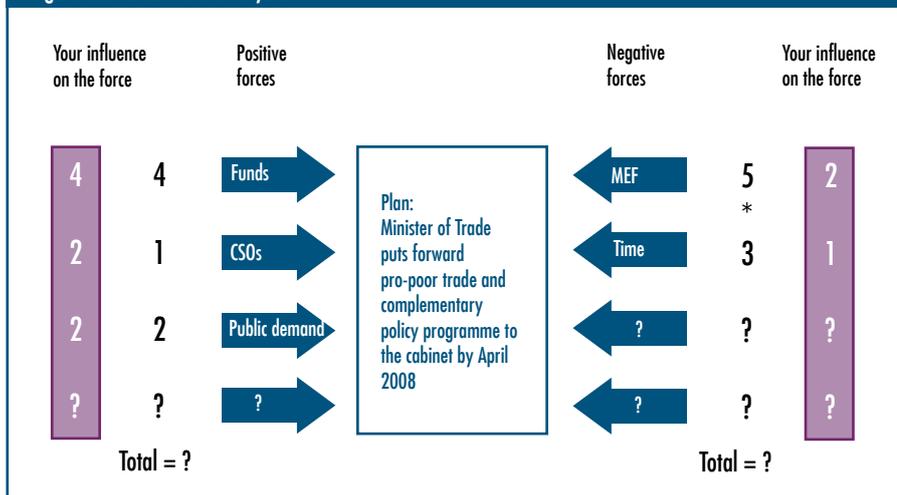
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- Court, J. and Maxwell, S. (eds) (2006) *Policy Entrepreneurship for Poverty Reduction: Bridging Research and Policy in International Development.* Practical Action Publishing.
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- Hovland, I. And Start, D. (2004) *Tools for Policy Impact: A Handbook for Researchers.* ODI.
- ODI. (2004) *Does Evidence Matter? An ODI Meeting Series Monograph.* October.

Links
- The RAPID programme at ODI: www.odi.org.uk/rapid
- Further information on SWOT analysis: www.odi.org.uk/rapid/Tools/Toolkits/Policy_Impact/SWOT_analysis.html
- The International Development Resource Center, Canada: www.idrc.ca/index_en.html
- The Evidence-based Policy in Development Network: www.ebpdn.org

Figure 3: Force field analysis

Your influence on the force	Positive forces	Plan	Negative forces		Your influence on the force
4 — 4	Funds →	Plan: Minister of Trade puts forward pro-poor trade and complementary policy programme to the cabinet by April 2008	← MEF	5 *	2
2 — 1	CSOs →		← Time	3	1
2 — 2	Public demand →		← ?	?	?
? — ?	? →		← ?	?	?
Total = ?				Total = ?	

Parliamentary outreach and advocacy in India

Aligning with the political process

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Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS) conducts research that helps shape policy in India.

CUTS is a civil society organisation that strives to influence national policies in the areas of international trade, competition, consumer protection and economic regulation. To achieve this, CUTS conducts research on issues of public interest and engages in advocacy and networking at various levels. Since its establishment in 1983 CUTS has been working closely with Indian parliamentarians, sharing its research findings and engaging in policy dialogues in order to facilitate the process of advocacy and influence social and economic policy.

The impact of these efforts was minimal in the organisation's initial years. However, since 2000 CUTS has gradually devised a strategy that combines establishing a close institutional relationship with select parliamentarians and maintaining a formal process of engaging them on policy matters. The new approach involved rethinking the topics of research and synchronising and aligning with the way the political agenda evolved in the country. CUTS identified key politicians with similar interests who were receptive to new ideas.

Influencing parliament

In 2001 CUTS introduced a tool called a 'bill blow-up', a document written in English that provides analysis of the salient features of a proposed bill. It poses questions intended to help parliamentarians find ways in which the bill, if it were to become law, should be structured for effective implementation.

CUTS prepares these documents for bills that relate to topics the organisation is researching. This way, relevant findings from its research activities can be presented at a time when policymakers are most receptive to them. Bill blow-ups have helped politicians have an informed debate on specific legislation in the parliament as well, thereby contributing to evidence-based policymaking.

In 2001 the Indian government drafted a competition bill that was set for discussion in the parliament. CUTS produced its first bill blow-up entitled, 'Competition Bill of India, 2001: A Right Step in the Right Direction'. Competition law is a subject that CUTS had researched in India and other Asian and African countries. CUTS analysed the bill and asked fundamental questions about some of its provisions, which it felt were contrary to the country's economic development, consumer welfare and poverty alleviation objectives. This bill blow-up was circulated among all the parliamentarians, who found it to be an informative and effective tool for facilitating an informed debate. Since then the organisation has continued to produce bill blow-ups, particularly on social and economic policy issues with which the organisation is actively engaged.

Initiating discussion

In 2005 this approach to policy advocacy was complemented by a forum of Indian parliamentarians created at the behest of five members of parliament representing different political parties. Through this Parliamentarians' Forum on Economic Policy Issues (PAR-FORE), a unique initiative in India, CUTS has established a non-partisan and informal platform where parliamentarians from different political parties discuss specific social and economic policy issues that are relevant to CUTS. These issues include trade, competition, regulatory reforms, investment and their cross linkages with other developmental policies in the country.

So far, nearly 40 MPs have joined the forum. CUTS invites the members of PAR-FORE for half-day discussions during ongoing sessions of parliament. The members gather to talk about policy issues that are being debated in parliament at the same time. To facilitate the discussions, CUTS develops four-page 'issue notes' on specific policy issues. An issue note summarises critical aspects of specific social and/or economic issues based on research done by CUTS.

In early 2007, drawing inspiration from PAR-FORE, CUTS initiated a similar state forum for legislators called Vidhayak Samvaad in Rajasthan. Chaired by the Honourable Sumitra Singh, Speaker of the State Legislative Assembly of Rajasthan, the forum has met a few times to discuss power and water.

Through bill blow-ups and PAR-FORE, CUTS has helped members of parliament better understand complex issues, which has enhanced the quality of policy debate in the country and resulted in better laws and policies. <

Resources
• For information on bill blow-ups see
  www.cuts-international.org/bill-blowup.htm
• Parliamentarians' Forum on Economic Policy Issues (PAR-FORE)
  www.cuts-international.org/parliamentary_forum.htm

Seeking evidence: Indian Parliament members visit Dhansar to observe the effects of aid programmes and talk with villagers.

Alamy / Terje Lillehoug

The role of research in EU–ACP trade negotiations

The importance of building trust

The European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries are currently negotiating new Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). AU Ambassador Mahamet Saleh Annadif believes that researchers can provide effective support for ACP negotiators in this complex process.

Ambassador Mahamet Saleh Annadif
African Union Ambassador to the EU

The EU and ACP countries are negotiating new Economic Partnership Agreements and a free trade area because the preferential trade agreements between the EU and ACP countries that were in place until January 2008 were incompatible with World Trade Organization rules. But the interpretation of article 24 of the GATT is not objective according to ACP countries.

And there is a lot at stake for ACP countries. Full trade liberalisation would mean that ACP countries lose their preferential treatment as compared to non-ACP countries with regard to trade with the EU. The implications for trade flows could be enormous. The European Commission has estimated that if ACP countries are charged the same tariffs on imports to the EU as non-ACP countries, the losses for West Africa could amount to over €1 billion, and for Central Africa about €360 million.

Mahamet Saleh Annadif, ambassador of the permanent mission of the African Union (AU) in Brussels, is charged with overseeing negotiations between the AU and the EU. He is therefore keen to receive and to share research evidence that may be relevant to the EPA negotiations. 'I receive information about development-related publications by email alert. I need to be informed myself, and I have to inform political leaders including presidents and ministers to help them to define our policies. The AU publishes a lot of information that serves as valuable input to research. We see from analyses and reports that some researchers make good use of this resource.'

Research indispensable

Interactions between researchers and policy makers are indispensable, Ambassador Annadif believes. 'All politicians, whatever happens, need to take decisions, and these need to be supported by firm arguments. The researcher comprehends all elements to enable objective judgements about certain issues. No politician can take himself seriously without being informed by elaborated research.' Ambassador Annadif

sees an important role for researchers in facilitating the process and in providing data that will stimulate discussions.

In April 2008, the AU permanent mission in Brussels assigned to the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) the task of facilitating the EPA negotiation process. ECDPM researchers have undertaken critical analyses of the interim EPAs that have been signed by some African nations and the EU, as well as a comparative analysis of how the agreements have worked out in practice in a number of Caribbean and Pacific countries. These research findings have now been been discussed at several seminars and international conferences. Ambassador Annadif appreciates the role that ECDPM has managed to play, since dialogue between the EU and the AU has not always been easy. Essential for the facilitation, Ambassador Annadif thinks, is that ECDPM is familiar with the issues of interest, which the researchers can only know after intensive consultations with stakeholders. 'They talk with all stakeholders, analyse their positions, and summarise points of agreement or controversy, enabling politicians to understand each other's concerns.'

Building trust

Although the potential of evidence-based research is gradually becoming clear, many African politicians and policy makers do not yet have confidence in researchers, notes Ambassador Annadif. Some are suspicious that researchers who have close relations with political structures – as in the case of ECDPM with the European Commission – may manipulate information.

'Researchers need to be more confident,' says Ambassador Annadif, 'and to convince policy makers of the objectivity of their research methods, data collection and analysis.' He understands the hesitation about researchers' credibility and objectivity, for every researcher is a human being talking to certain segments of society, but Ambassador Annadif is convinced that

politicians or their intermediaries are capable of making objective judgements based on evidence with certain margins of error. They will then select the information that can lead to good decisions.

Scientific language and clarity of reasoning may be a problem for politicians and policy makers, 'but what we reproach researchers for most,' Ambassador Annadif adds, 'is that they remain at their computers. We want see them in the field, talking to people involved in projects and those in need of support. They are the real researchers, not those who only collect information from internet.'

Good governance

The situation also needs to be improved on the side of politicians and policy makers, if they are to profit fully from the interaction between evidence-based research and policy making, Ambassador Annadif admits. Political leaders will need time to become more confident in researchers, but he sees positive developments emerging from the emphasis on the notion of good governance: 'Decision makers will be able to say: I administer in a transparent way, come and ask me questions. The more we move towards good governance, the more accommodating we will be about critical analysis, for it can really help us move forward.' <

Interview by Mirelle Vermeulen

Further reading

• Christopher Stevens et al. (2008) *The New EPAs: A Comparative Analysis of their Content and the Challenges for 2008*. ODI/ECDPM.

Links

• Non-partisan sourcing and knowledge sharing on ACP-EU trade: www.acp-eu-trade.org

Policy engagement in East and Southern Africa

Civil society organisations and legislators

In promoting evidence-based policy in developing countries, the links between civil society organisations and legislators in the research-policy-practice interface have been insufficiently studied.

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Policy engagement initiatives that focus on policymakers typically target powerful ministry officials, such as officials in ministries of finance and economics, who coordinate poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) processes. Due to the relative weakness of legislators in many developing countries, policy advocacy work directed toward them has been less common. But if one of good governance's aims is to promote a system of checks and balances among the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, then strengthening the pathways through which legislators access and make use of quality, policy-relevant research is important.

This article synthesises the findings from a four-country research project in East Africa (Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya) and Southern Africa (Zambia). The project explored the strengths and weaknesses of the formal and informal relationships and mechanisms that currently exist between civil society organisations (CSOs) – including think tanks, NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) – and parliamentarians, either individual members of parliament (MPs) or parliamentary committees. The research combined interviews with CSOs and parliamentarians as well as a literature analysis.

CSO/parliamentarian relationships

Links between CSOs and parliamentarians in East and Southern Africa can be largely traced back to the introduction of multi-party democracy, including the right to freedom of association, in the 1990s. The last decade in particular has seen a growing pattern of formal and informal types of interaction. As one CSO representative from the Straight Talk Foundation Uganda noted:

'First we create personal relationships with specific individuals, such as getting involved and participating in the social networks that they frequent. Then we schedule appointments with them so that now it becomes a formal process and create strategic partnerships. We access the relevant committees using the earlier established contacts as entry points'.

In Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, CSOs have made the greater effort at forming these relationships. Only in Kenya has a considerable initiative been taken by MPs. CSOs engage with individual MPs and, in Tanzania and Uganda in particular, also with specific parliamentary committees. Interestingly, MPs were more motivated to engage with CSOs based on their roles as service providers (for example, their ability to provide much needed basic services to their constituencies) than as providers of knowledge relevant to proposing, discussing and approving new legislation. Nevertheless, carefully tailored presentation of evidence, especially grassroots testimonies about development challenges and examples of regional or international best practices, was thought to strengthen MPs' reliance on CSO knowledge.

Good practices

Given that CSO/parliamentarian links are relatively recent in the region, a range of approaches and tools are being tested in the four case study countries. In addition to inviting MPs to attend or present at public discussion forums, workshops and seminars, we identified a number of innovative approaches through our research.

For instance, in Tanzania CSOs have organised large exhibitions of their work that illustrate how it relates to key emerging social and economic issues in Dodoma, the site of the Tanzanian parliament. They have also organised targeted training workshops for parliamentary select committees ahead of related debates and have sent requests to them to comment on draft bills proposed by civil society agents. As one representative of a CSO noted, 'We target select committees because most decisions are debated and decided on at the committee levels, not by individuals, nor by the whole parliament'.

In Kenya, the dissemination of short policy briefs, newsletters, magazines and brochures was found to be an effective way to promote the uptake of new research evidence by parliamentarians, especially in

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The case of the Kenyan energy bill

The development of the Kenyan energy bill (enacted in 2006) was overseen by the Ministry of Energy. At the stage when the draft energy policy had been developed, the ministry invited both CSOs involved in the energy sector as well as several MPs – especially those in the Select Committee on Energy, Communications and Public Works – for a consultative workshop. Having actively engaged on the key points of the energy policy, the workshop culminated in an amicable agreement that key CSOs in the energy sector world refine the energy policy for submission to the Ministry of Energy. The ministry would in turn format the policy document into a sessional paper for discussion in cabinet and, if approved, tabled in parliament as an energy bill for discussion among parliamentarians.

However, prior to the debate on the energy bill in parliament, a CSO initiative called e-Parliament organised a meeting on energy in Kenya involving several African national and regional parliamentarians. As a result, the wording of the energy bill was strengthened in several key areas: namely, energy efficiency labelling was highlighted, and the section on renewable energy expanded. Subsequently the energy bill went through parliament with limited difficulties and became law in December 2006. The factors that appear to have enabled the crucial link between the CSOs and parliamentarians were two-fold:

- **The extent to which an issue resonates with broader national policy agendas:** To parliamentarians, the key attraction of the energy bill was the provision for the establishment of an agency to accelerate rural electrification – a promise made to voters by virtually all politicians in rural areas without electricity. The proposal followed years of research by CSOs including AFREPREN/FWD.
- **The level of technical expertise demanded in a particular policy area:** In Kenya, parliamentarians are somewhat wary of the bureaucrats in ministries because they present issues in excessively technical terms, leaving little room for MPs to engage with them. Ministry bureaucrats can use technical and complex jargon to avoid or minimise MPs' close scrutiny. In this case parliamentarians turned to CSOs to provide digestible, independent and 'more trustworthy' technical expertise in the development of the energy bill.

Source: Karekezi, et al., 2008.

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highly technical sectors such as energy policy. Other favoured methods included the organisation of retreats to focus on a particular policy concern, which had the advantage of ensuring that parliamentarians were distanced from their daily routine and could engage more deeply in issues, and the involvement of CSOs in *barazas* – community-based meetings with MPs. In Uganda and Zambia, an important initiative has been the joint development by CSOs and parliamentarians of information and advocacy kits on specific issues, such as public health or natural resource management, which they then use as an entry point to raise awareness among the broader public, especially at the constituency level.

The Afrobarometer Network presents evidence of opinions on democratization and market developments to civil servants, NGOs and donor representatives in Tanzania.

Future challenges

Enhancing CSO and legislator capacities to engage in evidence-based policy debates and processes requires addressing a number of key challenges. First, any such initiative needs to be informed by an in-depth understanding of the political context. One area of particular concern relates to the atmosphere of relative distrust between CSOs and parliamentarians. A number of key parliamentarians raised concerns about the 'hidden agendas' and 'concealed work plans' of CSOs, and the fact that many CSOs are perceived as being 'too close to donors', given the general absence of alternative sources of funding. This distrust is further highlighted by ongoing discussions about NGO bills in all the case study countries, which seek to more closely monitor and regulate NGO activity. Our key informants indicated that such legislation may serve to undermine rather than promote close working relationships between CSOs and parliamentarians.

Second, our research strongly suggests that the capacity of both CSOs and parliamentarians to engage in evidence-informed policy processes needs to be strengthened. Many CSOs in the region have limited technical capacities (in research design, research management and policy analysis) to serve as effective knowledge providers and translators. Moreover, there is an urgent need to address leadership challenges within CSOs themselves (such as the 'founder syndrome', whereby CSOs' influence is based on the identity of their founder rather than on the basis of issue expertise, and limited accountability to constituents) in order to improve their credibility in the eyes of legislators. One recommendation that emerged to strengthen CSO legitimacy was for CSOs to work

through umbrella organisations, rather than on a piecemeal basis, which is the tendency in our case study countries other than Zambia.

Finally, as highlighted by the ongoing work of the Parliamentary Centre in Africa, there is also a growing recognition that capacity building support is required to increase the ability of parliamentarians to critically assess research findings, especially given the demands of the global knowledge economy.

Further reading

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• Hudson, A. (2007) *Parliaments and development*. ODI Briefing Paper. 18, April.
• Jones, N. and Tembo, F. (2008) *Promoting good governance through civil society-legislator linkages: Opportunities and challenges for policy engagement in developing country contexts*. Paper presented at the International Third Sector Research Conference in Barcelona.
• Kaare, S., Chowdhury, N. and Kazi, V. (2007) *The Power of Evidence in Advocacy: Resource Pack for Trainers on Evidence-Based Policy Advocacy in East Africa*. IDMC, ESRF and ODI.
• Karekezi, S., Kimani, J., Owino, N. and Mwera, D. (2008) *CSO-Parliamentarian Engagement in East Africa – Kenya Case on the Energy Sector*. AFREPREN.
• Mulenga, G. (2008) *CSO / Parliamentarian engagement: A case study of Zambia*. Volunteer Service Abroad: Lusaka.

Link

• The Parliamentary Centre in Africa
www.parlcent.ca/africa/index_e.php

Benefits of CSO-parliamentarian links

CSO-parliamentarian links can result in the following when CSO act as service providers:

• **Community projects:** CSOs undertake community projects that provide a wide range of services to constituents, including energy, water, schools and hospitals.
• **Jobs:** Job opportunities provided by some CSO projects have helped to alleviate social problems in communities, especially among the youth, thereby enhancing economic empowerment.
• **Relationship building:** CSOs have enhanced relationships between parliamentarians and youth and women's groups in their constituencies.
• **Community mobilisation:** CSOs assist in transforming local communities into viable groups that can carry out community work effectively.
• **Capacity development:** CSOs assist by imparting required skills that promote greater self-reliance among constituents.

In short, service-oriented CSOs may deliver tangible benefits to constituents, which parliamentarians hope to translate into greater grassroots legitimacy and, ultimately, votes during elections.

CSO-parliamentary links can result in the following when CSO act as knowledge providers:

• **Stronger voice:** Collaboration with CSOs can help MPs by augmenting their voice to push for parliamentary bills.
• **Critique of parliamentary proposals and draft bills:** CSOs can play a role in analysing legislative proposals and draft bills.
• **Information dissemination:** CSOs assist in sharing information and strengthening linkages with like-minded organisations on specific issues.
• **Evidence:** CSOs help obtain useful evidence in terms of policy papers for parliamentarians who are preparing motions in parliament.

Source: Adapted from Karekezi et al., 2008.

The impact of research on trade

NGOs provoke trade policy change

Since the mid-1990s, when trade policy was understood by only a few experts, NGO campaigns have done a lot to increase the public exposure and awareness of trade issues.

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Over the past decade NGOs have accumulated sufficient political influence to help change trade policy to better benefit the poor and marginalised. Many examples support this. Some are high profile, such as the NGO campaign that led to the August 2003 decision of WTO members to allow developing countries without pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity to use compulsory licences to import cheaper medicines under rules governing intellectual property. HIV/AIDS sufferers in Rwanda will soon be the first beneficiaries of this policy change. Other examples are less well known but equally important for 'making poverty history'. Consumers International has been influential in setting standards for drinking water supplies and sewage at the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO). These standards are applied in trade agreements and make it more likely for the poor to attain this basic human right where private suppliers are involved.

What accounts for this increased policy influence? According to several studies, whether NGO findings are understood and applied depends on the quality of the research and on the relationship between the NGO and policymakers. To have influence on policy,

- An NGO must remain current on trade issue trends and developments. It must 1) monitor, 2) anticipate, 3) recognise, 4) alert and 5) respond.
- Research must provide policymakers with facts, figures and technical analysis, and present viable solutions to real policy problems.
- Research must be 1) timely in its analysis, 2) nonpartisan in tone, 3) inclusive of all points of view, especially Southern perspectives, 4) constructive, 5) accurate and based on evidence of the effect policies will have on people and communities and 6) focused on current subjects of negotiation. It must take into account the political context and external influences that impact the issue and the players involved.
- An NGO must develop relationships both with groups that are experts on the ground in the South and with policymakers and

decision-makers in the North. Long-term, two-way links engender the necessary credibility and trust that leads to results.
- Research findings must be brought directly to the attention of policymakers in ways they understand, whether through written briefs or dialogues.
- Public education, communication and/or mobilisation campaigns must be used judiciously, to emphasise for policymakers the strength and breadth of public pressure for the desired policy changes. Broad networks of civil society groups have greater effect. (Not all NGOs become involved in public campaigning.)
- NGOs and civil society networks must be able to build research and influence capacity in-house and/or among local and international partners.

Numerous NGOs and networks have assimilated these characteristics and applied them to changing international trade policy. Examples include the Consumer Unity and Trust Society / Centre for International Trade, Economics and Environment (CUTS-CITEE), India, the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), Canada, and the Third World Network (TWN), Malaysia.

Three kinds of policy influence

NGOs have influenced international trade policy by affecting the nature of the policy debate, influencing existing policy regimes and developing new policy areas to safeguard or promote the interests of the poor. It is rarely possible to establish a strict causal link between NGO research or activity and a policy result. However, good research and solid relationships with policymakers are common elements of most successful cases.

- **Affecting the policy debate:** NGOs have changed the nature and terms of the policy debate, both in process and content. They have assisted representatives of social organisations to gain access to trade policy discussions at national and international levels. Oxfam International credits its research on the cotton trade with having persuaded four West African countries to examine how US cotton subsidies are affecting their producers, and to take their case to the WTO. Without this NGO

assistance, it is questionable whether West African cotton producers would have been heard at this level. Not only has their research and influence helped NGOs become more credible policy actors, it has helped make trade policy processes more transparent. Pressure from NGOs led to wider access to WTO documentation, and to outside parties presenting their perspectives at WTO and NAFTA dispute settlement proceedings.

- **Affecting existing policy regimes:** Efforts to change trade policy can affect formal norms such as standards and trade rules. They may also result in changes in policy positions or practices. South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) helped Nepal resist pressure to join the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) regime governing trade in plant varieties during negotiations on WTO accession. When countries seek membership in the WTO, they must undertake bilateral negotiations with any current member who wants to obtain concessions. Membership in UPOV is one such concession. It provides control over new plant varieties to internationally recognised plant breeders, which are often large multinational corporations. SAWTEE argued that plant breeders' rights would subject local farmers to the needs of these corporations, with negative consequences for domestic food production. The work of the Maquila Solidarity Network, Canada, resulted in several clothing manufacturers and importers requiring that their suppliers respect their workers' right to freedom of association and, in some cases, adopt labour codes of conduct.
- **Developing new trade policy areas:** NGOs have influenced innovative policy in areas where none existed previously. TWN and its partners take credit for helping to put the cross-border movement of genetically modified organisms on the agenda of the Convention on Biological Diversity. This eventually led to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Genetic Resources Action International (GRAIN), Spain, saw its policy on farmers' rights accepted at the FAO.

The case of ICTSD and the G33

The group of 33 developing countries (G33) at the WTO is concerned that trade rules in agriculture have been negative for their food and livelihood security, as well as for rural development. Current rules allow developed countries to highly subsidise food crop production. These countries can then inundate developing country markets with cheap imports that put local farmers out of business and endanger food security.

The G33 emerged from a bottom-up understanding among civil society agents – small-scale farmers, NGOs and academics – that special rules are required to protect food and livelihood security. Since 2003 the G33 has been pushing for WTO acceptance of the concepts of Special Products (SPs) and a Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM). SPs would provide higher tariff protection for specific products that are crucial to food security but cannot compete under current market conditions. An SSM would allow countries to raise tariffs temporarily to counteract sudden price fluctuations or import surges in vulnerable agricultural sectors. The WTO agreed to negotiate these two mechanisms in August 2004. In July 2008 WTO negotiations came to a standstill when agreement could not be reached on the SSM issue.

The Geneva-based NGO International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) responded to representatives of some G33 countries to help define the type of analysis that was needed to bring legitimacy and applicability to SP and SSM concepts at country level, at the G33 and at the WTO. ICTSD developed a methodology to facilitate the research in the countries which resulted in policy changes on SPs and SSM. These were essentially changes in position that evolved as new knowledge became available through research.

For research, the G33 relies on member countries and outside organisations such as the FAO and NGOs. Several G33 negotiators, experts and ICTSD together decided in September 2004 that multi-stakeholder consultations should take place at the country level to define indicators of the three development criteria (food security, livelihood security and rural development) so that countries could formulate their lists of SPs according to each country's economic and social situation.

Based on this decision, ICTSD commissioned six papers to flesh out the research strategy. It then developed a framework for involving all relevant stakeholders in consultations to identify where a country's vulnerabilities to imports lie, and which products should be protected by SPs and the SSM. This process was framed within a country's broader national strategy for agricultural development and poverty alleviation. Indicators were developed to identify the intended beneficiaries of SP/SSM flexibilities and the potential impacts of further liberalisation of the selected products on the economy and on specific populations. This framework gives countries a tool to formulate their positions at WTO negotiations, based on the effects on real people at the local level.

G33 negotiators and ambassadors designated six countries where the framework could be tested. ICTSD worked with national governments and local researchers to apply the methodology. This effort served to build links between local researchers, officials in capitals and local stakeholder groups such as farmers' organisations, the private sector and NGOs. The dialogues allowed these groups to be heard and strengthened the supporting evidence and relevance of the research. As well as identifying the special products that a country might put forward at the WTO, the

dialogues helped rank the products in order of importance according to each country's political or socioeconomic situation.

Another series of consultations was organised with the G33, other developing country groups, developed country representatives and non-state agents to analyse the outcomes of the process in the six countries. The country studies were found to be useful, and other studies have since been done –19 to date, employing local researchers as much as possible. This illustrates that ICTSD is a source of research but is more importantly a facilitator of a research and influencing process. It meets most of the criteria for NGO policy effectiveness (ICTSD does no public campaigning).

This research methodology has clear benefits. It involves G33 negotiators and ambassadors right from the start, consulting with them throughout. It puts researchers and officials in touch with those most impacted by liberalisation policies, and it disseminates research findings widely (without revealing information of value in negotiations), which attracts the interest of other countries in the G33 and beyond. And it helps countries define and prioritise products for SP and SSM protection, based on evidence. Countries involved in the studies share their new knowledge at the G33 coalition, and become more influential there.

Another benefit is capacity building. Local researchers, ministry officials and civil society participants improved their research skills and their conceptual and data analysis abilities in trade policy.

Elements of the research now appear in the evolving policies of the participating G33 countries, of the G33 and in WTO negotiations. Research has helped legitimise SPs and the SSM, translating the broad development concepts of food security, livelihood security and rural development into forms useful in trade negotiations. The G33 and its proposals are now taken more seriously by their negotiation opponents.

With WTO negotiations ongoing it is too early to predict what final form WTO policy on SPs and SSM will take – and hence what the gains for developing country food security will be – but it is entirely likely that the G33 proposals will be agreed upon in some form. <

Further Reading

- Court, J. Mendizabal, E, Osborne, D and Young J. (2006) *Policy Engagement: How Civil Society Can be More Effective.* RAPID, ODI. www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Publications/Policy_engagement.html
- Carden, F. and Neilson S. (2005) Confluence and influence: Building policy capacities in research networks, in *Global Knowledge Networks and International Development: Bridges across boundaries,* Stone D. and Maxwell, S. (eds) Routledge.
- ICTSD (2004) *Special Products and the Special Safeguard Mechanism: An Introduction to the Debate and Key Issues in the Context of WTO Agricultural Negotiations.* ICTSD Background Paper, Geneva. www.agtradepolicy.org/output/ictsd/dialogues/2004-09-30/ICTSD_paper.pdf

Pascal Lamy, Director-General of WTO, receives a petition by a group of international NGOs one day before the sixth WTO Ministerial Conference (Hong Kong, 12 December 2005).

Reuters / Bobby Yip

Research and policy in Latin America and the Caribbean

Developing capacities for policy influence

The Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth (CIPPEC) links research and policy to improve the livelihoods of people in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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CIPPEC advocates for greater use of research by civil society organisations (CSOs) and think tanks that are trying to influence decision-making processes in Argentina and Latin America. In 2005 CIPPEC consulted with the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in the UK to coordinate the Civil Society Partnerships Programme (CSPP) in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region. Since then, the organisation has developed methods of strengthening capacities for using research evidence when promoting pro-poor policies.

In Buenos Aires in 2007, the CSPP organised a workshop called Capacity Building for Policy Influence, which was attended by 15 representatives of Latin American CSOs. In 2008, the CSPP merged with the Global Development Network (GDN) LAC Capacity Building Programme. A 2008 workshop called Linking Research Communication to Policy Impact through Knowledge Management was organised by the GDN, the World Bank Institute (WBI) and CIPPEC. Twenty representatives of international organisations, universities, think tanks and government agencies participated.

The attendees of the workshops agreed that contemplating both sides of the Bridging Research and Policy (BRP) continuum – supply and demand (research and policy) – could have practical consequences for capacity development. These range from understanding the dynamics of each sector to integrating them in a joint capacity-building process. This article presents the findings of the workshops, focusing on the supply side and on the capacities that can be developed to strengthen the link between research and policy processes.

A second relevant issue identified during the workshops was the importance of complex contextual factors in the promotion of evidence-based public policy, such as economic, political and social instability, corruption and poor institutionalised mechanisms for interaction between state and civil society. Nevertheless, organisations often cannot alter contextual factors that are mainly derived externally. Thus, both workshops focused on endogenous factors (within the control of the organisations) that are relevant for evidence-based policy influence efforts that involve both personal and organisational capacities.

Personal characteristics

In terms of personal strengths relevant to influencing policy, being an effective communicator was recognised as a main factor – specifically, the ability to find common ground and communicate well with various audiences. These skills are required for getting issues onto the public policy agenda, which is the goal of many advocacy campaigns. Modifying or creating policies based on evidence requires 'translating' the technical language of research so that it is comprehensible for the relevant agents in the policymaking process. Good communication is important when seeking partners, building alliances and working in networks.

Another key personal characteristic identified in the workshops was creativity, which is useful when designing innovative campaigns that help communicate research to the policymakers, and in producing new links between both sectors. Creativity is also very helpful in coping with unexpected or changing circumstances and in resolving new problems. Creative people tend to identify and seize new opportunities.

Flexibility was the third personal factor cited. Pragmatism and tolerance help when reaching agreements and understanding other agents. Flexibility aids in understanding when changes need to be made to the original strategy.

The final characteristic discussed was legitimacy. To guide a successful policy influence campaign, the leader must have credibility, which is achieved through ethics, professional experience or technical training. This legitimacy helps establish the campaign and its leader as important agents in the policy change.

Participants agreed that we should think about the overall team strengths, because policy change processes often result from using all the skills of a team's diverse members. Therefore, capacity building initiatives should focus on the inclusion of persons with varying skills.

Regarding the organisational skills for policy influence, several factors were identified as important: the history or experience of the organisation; its staff or working team; its institutional communications strategy; its credibility; its funding; its transparency in the management of funds; and the capacity to generate alliances, among others. Thus, organisational capacity building efforts should focus on the organisation's human resources management (emphasising the quality of the research produced) and its communications and funding in order to develop credibility and improve its chances to impact policymaking processes.

There are no dominant endogenous variables that can predict policy influence. These factors may have different impacts depending on the political context, the policy issue up for debate and the technical capacities of policymakers and bureaucrats, among others. <

Further reading

• Braun, M., Chudnovsky, M., Ducoté, N. and Weyrauch, V. (2007) *A Comparative Study of Policy Research Institutes in Developing Countries*. CIPPEC.

Bridging research and policy to improve the livelihoods is full of challenges.

Hollandse Hoogte / F. Neukirchen
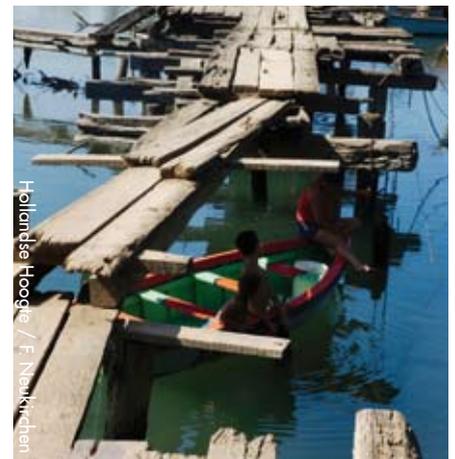
PUBLICATIONS

This section offers a selection of publications related to capacity development. A more extensive list can be found at www.capacity.org.

Evidence & Policy: A Journal of Research, Debate and Practice

Evidence & Policy is a peer-reviewed journal that focuses on the relationship between research evidence and the concerns of policy makers and practitioners, as well as researchers. International in scope and interdisciplinary in focus, it addresses the needs of those who provide public services, and those who provide the research base for evaluation and development across a wide range of social and public policy issues – from social care to education, from public health to criminal justice.
www.policypress.org.uk/journals/evidence_policy

Strategies for Impact and Policy Relevance

John Young, RAPID Programme, ODI, 2008
Over the last five years ODI's Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) programme has been involved in research and advisory and capacity development work with a wide range of organisations throughout the developing world keen to improve the impact of their research on policy and practice,

and has produced a wide range of practical guidelines and toolkits. Here's what we've learned, summarised in six simple lessons.
www.odi.org.uk/rapid/publications

Key Lessons for Up-scaling and Out-scaling of DFID Research
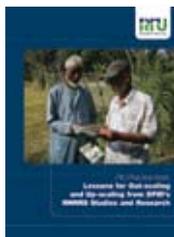
W. Richards, Research into Use Programme (RIU) Practice Note, DFID, 2008
This report consists of a series of short syntheses that bring together key lessons for up-scaling and out-scaling research, based on 19 key reviews, summaries and reports detailing DFID natural resources research. Each synthesis provides important background information and valuable key points, while the lessons learned are illustrated using examples and case studies.
www.research4development.info

Practitioner led research in Africa

By Rinus Van Klinken, Gerard Prinsen and Sef Slootweg
Introduction to a series of research studies carried out by SNV advisors on a range of topics relevant to their capacity development practice.
www.new.snvworld.org

IDRC in the Public Policy Process: A Strategic Evaluation of the Influence of Research on Public Policy

This study aims to clarify and document what the Centre (IDRC) means by 'policy influence'; to examine more systematically the extent to which and the ways in which the research it supports influences policy; and to examine the factors which affect the extent of policy influence resulting from its projects.
www.idrc.ca/en/ev-26606-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

Political Science? Strengthening Science–Policy Dialogue in Developing Countries

Nicola Jones, Harry Jones and Cora Walsh, ODI Working Paper 294, 2008
This study provides a multilayered analysis of the science–policy interface in developing countries. The findings confirm the need to tackle systemic barriers to institutionalising evidence-informed policy processes in the field of science, technology and innovation for development. They also shed light on ways in which the quality of policy dialogues on science and technology could be strengthened in order to enhance their value for pro-poor sustainable development policy and practice.
www.odi.org.uk/rapid/publications/rapid_WP_294.html

ORGANISATIONS, NETWORKS AND INITIATIVES

This section offers a selection of organisations, networks and initiatives concerned with capacity development. A more extensive list can be found at www.capacity.org.

ODI's Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) programme

RAPID aims to improve the use of research and evidence in development policy and practice through research, advice and debate. The RAPID programme has been researching the interface between research and policy for several years, and running workshops, seminars and courses for a diverse range of stakeholders.
www.odi.org.uk/rapid

Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) Toolkit

The increasing prominence of evidence-based principles has led to a need for government departments and agencies to have ways of accessing, harnessing and using the best available research evidence for effective policy making – and the

first step in this is to review what is already known. While existing evidence is clearly not the only source of information available to policy makers, it is an obvious and vitally important strategy to determine what is already known about the issue in question.
www.gsr.gov.uk/professional_guidance/

Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA)

REPOA is a Tanzanian NGO that recognises that research is central to economic growth and the eradication of poverty, and a basis for making decisions and designing interventions. REPOA seeks to build the capacity of, and mobilise stakeholders to understand the importance of research, and to facilitate the use of information for policy dialogue and development. REPOA specialises in economic and

social research and has a core staff of 13 researchers.
www.repoa.or.tz

GDN Global Research Project Bridging Research and Policy

The Global Development Network (GDN) is working in collaboration with 11 regional partners on the Global Research Project Bridging Research and Policy. The aim is to improve understanding of the links between research and policy, and to bridge the gap between researchers, policy makers and intermediary organisations such as media and professional associations in order to promote evidence-based policy making in low- and middle-income countries.
www.gdnet.org/middle.php?oid=175

Evidence-Based Policy in Development Network (EBPDN)

The Evidence-Based Policy in

Development Network website, established in the framework of ODI's Civil Society Partnership Programme, has been designed as a community website that provides: knowledge on bridging research and policy, details of members of the network, a directory of training and advisory expertise, discussion forums, and a partnership brokering area.
www.ebpdn.org

Civil Society Partnership Programme (CSPP)

ODI's Civil Society Partnership Programme (CSPP) aims to establish a worldwide community of practice for think-tanks, policy research institutes and similar organisations working in international development, to promote more evidence-based, pro-poor development policies.
www.odi.org.uk/cspp

GUEST COLUMN

Development industry assumptions

Evidence–based policies

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It is common to think that academic researchers and aid practitioners cannot communicate because they live in different worlds. The former are said to be concerned with formulating theories regardless of the complexities and contradictions of the evidence, while the latter are mandated to implement internationally sanctioned practical policies that are intended to improve lives. Each asks why the other doesn't understand how difficult their job is.

But if researchers and practitioners don't understand each other, it is not because the language they speak is different, but rather because it is the same. An academic looks to the evidence as interpreted from field material to support opinions. The practitioners justify their actions by referencing the most up-to-date development policies – policies that are based on academic research. Academics and practitioners are two sides of the same development industry coin.

To understand the conundrum of evidence-based policies, we must start with the three main assumptions of the development industry: that development can be 'engineered' by aid, that such aid is actually used for development and that outside practitioners can implement development policies that work.

All three are debatable. To start with, there is no historical precedent for aid-generated development – as is demonstrated by East Asia's massive and primarily self-propelled surge forward. Nor is there solid evidence that aid is actually used for development. Many recipient governments, especially in Africa, have no coherent development policies or lack the capacity to implement them. Aid is thus primarily deployed as budget support and serves to keep administrations running. Finally, it is simply unrealistic to expect that outside practitioners can make a crucial difference.

One topical example is decentralisation. The notion that decentralisation might have a positive effect on development has dual origins. One is that the state, which centralises and controls resources, including aid, has failed to provide the local services and infrastructure that are needed for development. The other is that transferring resources directly where they are needed will help make the local people more focused on the development aims they want achieved. However, the evidence for this was found in settings where development had already taken place, such as Europe or Asia, and from some areas, like Kerala in India, where there has long been a strong and dedicated provincial administration. We simply cannot assume that decentralisation will be as effective elsewhere.

The flaw is in seeing causality where there is merely correlation. Where the state is institutionalised, and the administration relatively adept, the devolution of revenues and services can, in certain circumstances, help to combat poverty and support development. What the global evidence shows is that the more efficient the state, the more likely it is that decentralisation will contribute to achieving these objectives. However, to see decentralisation as the means to improving service delivery, increasing accountability and, especially, engendering development is to assume a causality for which there is scant, if any, evidence. Policies that are not evidence based run the risk of failure, thus further discrediting the usefulness of aid.

So what can be done? Three points need attention. The first is aid policy. More aid does not automatically mean more development. It may be necessary to give aid, especially in emergencies or conflict resolution, but, pace Jeffrey Sachs, there is no compelling proof that more aid in itself will spur development. The second point is that analysts must pay attention to the evidence, particularly about state institutionalisation, rather than listen to those who pay the consultants. A first step would be to study the historical record: why, for instance, has East Asia developed whereas Africa has not? Here, Paul Collier's *The Bottom Billion* is simplistic and naive. Finally, Western practitioners must begin to study the evidence for themselves and thus acquire the capacity to challenge the assumptions on which policymakers make decisions. <