

# Linkages between researchers and legislators in developing countries

## A scoping study

---

Ajoy Datta and Nicola Jones

**Working Paper 332**

Results of ODI research presented  
in preliminary form for discussion  
and critical comment

**Working Paper 332**

**Linkages between researchers and legislators in  
developing countries**

**A scoping study**

**Ajoy Datta and Nicola Jones**

July 2011

Overseas Development Institute  
111 Westminster Bridge Road  
London SE1 7JD  
[www.odi.org.uk](http://www.odi.org.uk)

---

\* Disclaimer: The views presented in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of ODI.

# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Africa Parliamentary Centre in Ghana for the interviews they conducted with legislators from a wide range of countries in sub-Saharan Africa. We would also like to thank the following for their advice during the project and help in reviewing the paper: Alan Hudson, who was with ODI's Politics and Governance programme during the project; John Young, Deputy Director of ODI; Chandrika Nath from the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology; and Tony Worthington, UK Member of Parliament.

ISBN 978 1 907288 43 2  
Working Paper (Print) ISSN 1759 2909  
ODI Working Papers (Online) ISSN 1759 2917

© Overseas Development Institute 2011

Readers are encouraged to reproduce material from ODI Working Papers for their own publications, as long as they are not being sold commercially. For online use, we ask readers to link to the original resource on the ODI website. As copyright holder, ODI requests due acknowledgement and a copy of the publication.

# Contents

Acronyms	iv
Executive summary	v
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Legislator–research links: a framework</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. Legislator–researcher linkages</b>	<b>4</b>
3.1 Formal linkages	4
3.2 Informal mechanisms	8
<b>4. Some political factors</b>	<b>10</b>
4.1 The power of the executive	10
4.2 Legislative rules and structures	10
4.3 Political competition	10
4.4 External influences	11
4.5 Summary	12
<b>5. The nature of evidence</b>	<b>13</b>
5.1 Type and adequacy of evidence	13
5.2 Credibility of research	14
<b>6. Summary and key lessons</b>	<b>16</b>
References	18
Appendix: List of interviewees	19

## Acronyms

ACBF	African Capacity Building Foundation
AWEPA	Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa
CAPAN	National Assembly Development Policy Analysis Unit (Benin)
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CCEPA	National Civil Society Association for Water Access and Hygiene (Burkina Faso)
CGD	Center for Global Development (US)
CIES	Economic and Social Research Consortium (Peru)
CIPPEC	Centre for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth (Argentina)
CPA	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (UK)
CRS	Congressional Research Service (US)
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DIE	German Development Institute
EAA	East African Assembly
ECNA	Economic Committee of the National Assembly (Vietnam)
FAO	UN Food and Agricultural Organization
FLACSO	Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (Chile)
IDRC	International Development Research Centre (Canada)
INASP	International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (UK)
IPPR	Institute of Public Policy Research (UK)
ISSER	Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research (Ghana)
JCTR	Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (Zambia)
MEJN	Malawi Economic Justice Network
MP	Member of Parliament
NARS	National Assembly Research Services (Korea)
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NPC	National People's Congress (China)
ODI	Overseas Development Institute (UK)
PARP	Policy Analysis Research Project
POST	Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (UK)
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RAPID	Research and Policy in Development (ODI)
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community Forum
SADC PF	SADC Parliamentary Forum
SAES	Sudanese Agriculturalists Engineers Society
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SUNY	State University of New York
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNACAB	State Budget Control and Analysis Unit (Benin)
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
US	United States
USAID	US Agency for International Development
VASS	Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy (UK)

## Executive summary

The need for legislative information and research, especially in developing and transition countries, is growing as policy-making processes become more complex, particularly in the context of globalisation, regional integration and decentralisation. Since the executive branch of governments generally has access to a larger pool of knowledge and expertise than the national legislature, there is a need to address the imbalance in access to knowledge between the executive, legislature and judiciary in order to promote better quality policy-making. Better access to information and research can help empower legislatures to formulate and pass effective legislation and perform effective scrutiny of government. Using the Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) framework, this study maps the links between researchers and legislators in a number of transition and developing countries; explores the role of politics in influencing researcher–legislator linkages; and comments on the type of research produced as well as the credibility of the research/researchers.

Civil society organisations (CSO) particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, perhaps because of weak political parties, play a key role in representing grassroots constituencies in legislative processes. Legislative committee hearings across all legislatures tend to be a key mechanism through which researchers' voices can be heard in the processes of law-making and oversight. Some legislatures, particularly those in East Asia, have substantial in-house technocratic capacity, including library and research services and the capacity to commission research. In Sub-Saharan Africa, a number of (donor-funded) organisations have been set up to provide the legislature with input and capacity, particularly on management of public finances.

Researchers and experts, often from civil society, have been asked to provide evidence/give testimonies to individual legislators or parliamentary committees on an *ad hoc* basis, for example to help with drafting bills. Legislators in Korea and Taiwan, for example, have considerably more channels, which tend to be more institutionalised, through which they can collaborate with researchers than, say, Nigeria or Sudan.

Innovative mechanisms include the pairing scheme first trialled in the UK in 2001 and managed by the Royal Society, and adapted to the Ugandan context several years later. Legislators and legislative committees have links with external think-tanks dealing with a range of issues. In Sub-Saharan Africa, public financial management and economic policy are areas where researcher–legislator linkages are stronger and more visible. In Korea and Peru, institutional links mean that researchers are obliged to respond to requests for information from (national-level) legislators. Interestingly, opportunities for research institutes to inform the legislature may increase as state funding for government-affiliated research bodies decreases – as has been the case in Korea.

In Argentina, Chile, Korea, Peru and Taiwan, legislators access research through party-affiliated think-tanks. In Korea, publicly funded political parties must spend 30% of their budget on research legislators in their work. Further, researchers are often asked to provide advisory services to party officials and to contribute to policy development or give seminars at party retreats and conferences. Knowledge producers have collaborated with one another in their interactions with the legislature. There are also examples where different types of actors (such as scholars and activists) have come together to put pressure on the legislature. Moreover, legislators and (civil society) researchers have worked together to put pressure on the executive.

In several contexts, especially those in Latin America and East Asia, legislative staff, i.e. those attached to legislators or committees/commissions, play a key intermediary role between research, researchers and legislators. Specialist organisations also exist to translate complex knowledge into accessible research products for legislators and to link them to key researchers. Finally, although formal links between researchers and legislators are growing, informal linkages between research staff and legislators, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, tend to be more common.

Good research has the potential to move debates to more strategic levels and to narrow down areas of disagreement. While producing non-partisan and balanced research is a requirement for most research organisations, researchers' insights are more likely to be taken up by researchers if they engage more fully in policy debates. This may entail developing relationships in the long run and interacting with legislators at a higher level. However, this runs the risk of an advocacy organisation being perceived as having political inclinations. Tradeoffs often have to be made between perceptions of independence and influence on the policy process and on policy-makers.

Researcher-legislator linkages, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, tend to be stronger or more visible in areas that are perceived to require hard data, such as quantitative analyses. These include public financial management, particularly budgeting and budget control. In Sub-Saharan Africa, these formal mechanisms tend to be donor-funded and/or -inspired. Where hard data is concerned, research tends to be demand-oriented; in the softer sectors, CSOs have tended to take the initiative to engage legislators.

The relationship between political context factors and researcher-legislator links is very complex. Legislators' personal motivations, such as the desire for political advancement, to influence policy, for power in a legislative body and for private gain, can affect the way they view or use evidence in the policy process. The capacity provided by a legislature's procedures, structures and support mechanisms also influences the role of research in law-making and oversight processes. Donors also have played a significant role in the capacity building of legislative organs, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The nature of the evidence plays a key role in its uptake. Researchers need to work harder to ensure evidence is accessible by legislators. Evidence that is timely, independent and related to legislative decisions, that fits tightly with legislative processes and that is political acceptable and non-partisan is more likely to influence or at least inform legislation. Legislators emphasised the need for researchers to go beyond stating research findings to actually narrate a compelling story with practical policy recommendations. Moreover, evidence is more likely to be taken up if messages resonate with broader national policy agendas, such as economic growth. Given the pressures on their time and relatively low research literacy levels, research intended for legislators needs to be presented in short summaries, where possible illustrated by pictures and/or charts. Nevertheless, Legislators' staff prefer formats that present more detail.

## 1. Introduction

Improving the quality of policy debate and policy-making processes is a key part of improving the quality of life of a country's citizens (Court and Young, 2004). In recent years, there has been increasing interest in the interface between research, policy and practice, and a burgeoning literature on ways to forge bridges between researcher and policy-maker communities (Sumner and Jones, 2008). The emphasis of this has for the most part been on the role of the executive branch of government, in part because the bureaucracy in most developing countries is substantially more powerful and has been the primary target of donor policy engagement efforts, especially in poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP) development processes in low-income countries. Nevertheless, the debate has started paying attention also to the distinct role that the legislative branch of government plays in the policy process (see Court and Young, 2004; Worthington, 2007).

Political theory emphasises the legislature's key role in ensuring the rule of law – a basic minimum of good governance (Linz and Stepan, 1996) – through three key functions: legislation, oversight of the bureaucracy and representation of citizens' interests. By playing these roles effectively, it can contribute to state capability, accountability and responsiveness (Hudson and Wren, 2007). As civil society and public awareness of policy issues and active participation in the policy process have increased through political liberalisation (and/or formal democratisation), legislatures are being spurred to play a more substantive role in policy-making (Cohen and Arato, 1992; O'Donnell, 1995).

At the same time legislators, and their relationship with the executive, are under greater scrutiny by political parties, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the overwhelmingly present media, with the expectation that 'everything' should be instantly deliverable. Members of parliaments' (MPs') expense claims have undergone intense scrutiny in the UK. Civil society representatives in Korea observe and publicly critique the performance of legislators in their annual review of the bureaucracy (interview, June 2008). Equally, legislation in many cases has become a highly complex and technical matter, especially in the context of processes of globalisation, regional integration and decentralisation.

However, the executive, with access to its civil service, possesses significantly more knowledge and technical expertise to address these complexities than the legislature. How, then, can the relationship between the legislature and the executive be better balanced? Access to and application of information and research can improve decision-making on specific policy issues facing the legislature. More so, reliable facts and analyses can contribute to both a better understanding of the problems and more realistic and effective legislative solutions (Robinson, 2002).

Although there is a perception that legislators continue to lack access to relevant information and research on specific policy issues, it is unclear what kind of links, if any, legislators in developing countries have with research and researchers. The aim of this paper is thus to map the links between legislators and research<sup>1</sup> and researchers in a number of transition and developing countries.

Rather than providing a systematic review of linkages between researchers and legislators, the paper is intended as a guide to the type of linkages that exist in a range of different contexts. The research methods comprised a number of elements. A review of literature, which was limited, was undertaken to identify links between researchers and legislators.<sup>2</sup> In addition to this, the study conducted 18 semi-structured interviews (administered face to face and by telephone), each lasting between 30 and 90

---

<sup>1</sup> Research here is seen as formal and distinct from views and opinions of legislators' constituents.

<sup>2</sup> List of search terms and databases used: British Library of Development Studies: legislator AND research, legislature AND research, civil society AND policymaker, parliamentarians AND research. ingentaconnect: research AND parliamentarians, research AND legislator, research AND parliamentarians. International Bibliography of the Social Sciences: legislator AND research, legislature AND research, knowledge AND legislature, legislator AND researcher. Google Scholar: legislature AND research, research parliamentarians link, research institute AND legislature.

minutes, carried out by the authors with key informants such as parliamentarians, including those on legislative committees, as well as staff from legislative research services; academic institutions; government-affiliated research institutions; independent think-tanks; and research and policy networks. Moreover, the Africa Parliamentary Centre, based in Ghana, was commissioned to undertake a further 21 telephone interviews with similar stakeholders in seven African countries. See Appendix for a full list of interview respondents.

Countries were selected to ensure 1) a mix of low- and middle-income countries; 2) a range of parliamentary and presidential systems; 3) a mix of unicameral and bicameral systems; 4) a diversity of politico-cultural traditions (African, Confucian, Latin American); and 5) cases where there is an established or consolidating role for the legislative branch. A total of 18 developing and transition countries were studied: 10 from Sub-Saharan Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia); 3 from Latin America (Argentina, Chile and Peru); and 5 from Southeast and East Asia (China, Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam).

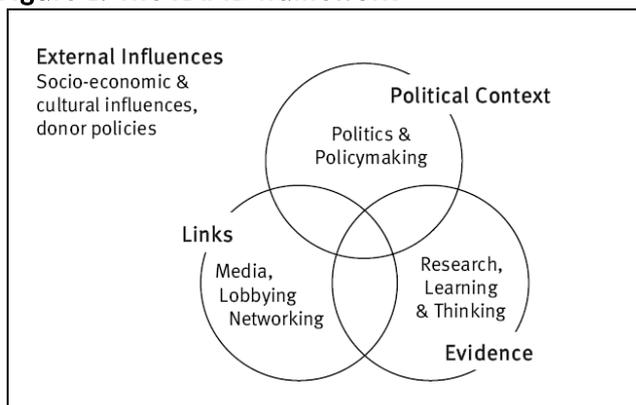
This paper provides a synthesis of the literature and the key informant interviews. Section 2 discusses possible frameworks to explain the role of research and its uptake in the legislature. It concludes by suggesting an analytical framework to structure the data. Section 3 maps and analyses links between researchers and legislators, both formal and informal. Section 4 explores some political factors which key informants suggested affected links between legislators and research. Section 5 discusses the nature of the research evidence that passes from researchers to legislators. The sixth and final section provides a summary of researcher–legislator linkages and suggests some key lessons regarding the effectiveness of mechanisms through which researchers and legislators interact, and ways in which these could be strengthened.

## 2. Legislator–research links: a framework

As the legislatures under study differ in terms of the national and political context in which they have developed; their structure; and – critically for this study – their information and research infrastructure and needs, we explored how the literature has classified different legislatures. Robinson develops Polsby’s framework, in which various levels of activity at which a legislature might function are identified as well as their need for information and research (Greenstein and Polsby, 1975, in Robinson and Gastelum, 1998). Four types of legislature are identified: 1) rubber stamp; 2) emerging; 3) arena; and 4) transformative. Most developing countries have legislatures that can be classified as emerging (since, broadly speaking, democratic history here is relatively brief), thus giving this framework little analytical purchase.

To organise the data, we instead used the Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) framework (Figure 1). This identifies four broad interlinked areas: 1) context (including politics and institutions); 2) evidence (research quality, researcher credibility and the framing of messages); 3) links (between researcher and policy-maker communities either formal or informal, the role of intermediaries, networks and campaigning strategies); and 4) external influences (including the role of donors, international discourses, global political or economic shocks, but also socioeconomic and cultural influences).

**Figure 1: The RAPID framework**



*Source:* Start and Hovland (2004).

Using this framework, we first mapped the linkages that legislators have with researchers, exploring ways in which to classify these. One way was to sort linkages according to the three key functions of the legislature: 1) providing a claim on legitimacy, based on representing the public or publics; 2) having some power (formal or symbolic) over law-making and; 3) providing oversight of the executive arm of government. We found that most linkages between legislators and research and researchers cut across all three functions.

Instead, we employ a different approach, looking at both formal and informal links. Under formal links, we assess links with researchers and intermediaries. ‘Researchers’ fall into three categories: those ‘in house’ (for instance libraries and research services); those from think-tanks affiliated with the legislature; and external links to technical capacity. External links include individual researchers; research institutes; research links with political parties; and research or expert networks and platforms. We highlight regional differences in legislator–researcher dynamics where possible.

Following the mapping of linkages, we discuss political factors such as the power of the executive, the rules and structures of legislatures, party fragmentation and cohesiveness and implications on legislator links with research. We also discuss the type and adequacy of the evidence/knowledge supplied and the role that the credibility of the researcher/research organisation plays in its consideration/use.

### 3. Legislator–researcher linkages

This section broadly maps out the mechanisms through which legislators (either as individuals or as a part of a commission or committee) and researchers (including those from civil society) collaborate to enhance legislators’ capacities to represent their constituents, draft and pass laws and conduct oversight of the executive. We look at both formal and informal links.

#### 3.1 Formal linkages

##### 3.1.1 Researchers

###### In-house technocratic capacity

Korea and Taiwan have their own publicly funded information and research services and the ability to commission research. In Korea, both the National Assembly Research Services (NARS) and the National Assembly Budget Office undertake a number of research projects, with related products released either in a targeted fashion or more widely, to coincide with relevant debates, bill readings and/or legislative processes (see Box 1 for more on researcher–legislator linkages in Korea and Taiwan). The Vietnamese National Assembly’s Centre for Information, Research and Library conducts research and provides information for all members of the National Assembly. However, in practice, it has limited capacity to see to the needs of its 500 members. As a consequence, legislators, particularly those on committees, rely on government reports to make decisions. In China, legislative committees comprise both bureaucrats and academics/scholars, facilitating regularised routine interactions between researchers and legislators.

In Latin America, Argentinean and Peruvian legislatures have libraries, while in Chile dedicated research services catering to the needs of its members (funded by public money) exist at both national and local government levels. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the World Bank-inspired African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) has helped establish policy research units in governments’ legislative arms to enhance the quality of policy debate and eventually policy decisions and outcomes.

#### Box 1: Legislator links with researchers and research organisations in Korea and Taiwan

In Korea and Taiwan, individual legislators or committees will often solicit the opinion of legal and academic experts, representatives of business and civic and research organisations through submissions of evidence and private meetings. Organisations selected are often seen as well-established and credible.

In Korea, links with knowledge producers extend to representatives of economic research institutes affiliated to large family-controlled and government-assisted corporate groups (or *chaebols*), such as Samsung and LG. There are about 80 nationally funded research institutes. Although there has been a gradual move since the mid-1990s to reduce the overall percentage of government core funding to these institutes, in order to promote greater research independence and semi-autonomous management systems, these institutes have nevertheless proved critical in providing the legislature (as well as the bureaucracy) with timely, policy-relevant research findings.

In Taiwan, legislative committees rely heavily on contacts with (often academic) researchers, either through informal but longstanding linkages with experts in particular fields (e.g. gender equality expertise is regularly sought from the Awakening Foundation), or through junior academics employed in party think-tanks. Given the Awakening Foundation’s expertise in gender mainstreaming, legislators and their staff tended to make requests for briefings and/or informal advice. Public/legislative hearings do not need to be convened directly by legislators. Civil society groups or foundations (typically involving activists and activist scholars) can also call hearings and then invite legislators to attend.

###### Affiliated think tanks

Some national assemblies in Sub-Saharan Africa, in the absence of, or to complement legislative information and research services, have developed formal relations with research organisations, mostly funded by external donors, to access technical support. Formal agreements or donor-funded mechanisms have tended to focus on management of public finances. The Nigerian National Assembly

receives support from the Policy Analysis Research Project (PARP) – an initiative funded by ACBF. Its mandate includes analysis of legislative bills and review of budgetary performance, through publications (distributed to legislators) such as bulletins and briefings and testimonies at committee hearings. The State University of New York (SUNY), through a project funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), provides inputs for each of the legislative committees during the budgeting process. It also posts interns to each of the committees to work as budget officers.

In Benin, two donor-funded projects have supported the legislative reform process, mainly in areas of budgeting: 1) the State Budget Control and Analysis Unit (UNACEB), which supports Parliament in the budgetary process with the assistance of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and intervenes mainly in the preparation and control of the budget; and 2) the National Assembly Development Policy Analysis Unit (CAPAN), funded by ACBF, whose mission is to build the capacities of national assemblies in policy analysis, drafting of bills and budget monitoring. CAPAN also promotes public engagement and helps to share experiences and learning with other parliaments in the sub-region. UNACEB is noted for its highly qualified macroeconomists and specialists in public finance, who often have PhDs, along with its specialised analytical/statistical software packages.

The Chinese National People's Congress (NPC), with 2,979 deputies/members elected from the provinces, has its own research agenda and commissions research institutes, such as the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), to provide analysis and policy recommendations. Some committee systems have the capacity to commission research/projects. In Korea, the committee system is relatively well-resourced, with committee chairs able to commission research organisations to undertake several projects a year, with additional money available on request. There is, however, considerable variation across policy areas, as the budget each committee has is proportional to the size of the ministry it is overseeing, which tends to be biased against social sector ministries and especially the ministry overseeing gender and family issues (Jones, 2006). Nevertheless, the chair of the Gender Equality and Families Committee (relatively small compared with, say, the finance and economics committee) has been able to commission five to six projects a year each in excess of \$10,000 in recent years. In Vietnam, a formal agreement between the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences (VASS) and the Economic Committee of the National Assembly (ECNA) was signed recently to improve communication between researchers and legislators. Within this, a project funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) aims to build skills among researchers within the Vietnam Economic Research Network and provide research at the request of legislators in ECNA.

## **External links to technocratic capacity**

### ***Individual researchers***

Researchers or experts, often from civil society or research organisations, from almost all contexts, have been asked in their capacity as individuals to provide evidence/give testimonies to individual legislators or legislative committees on an *ad hoc* basis, for example to help draft legislative bills. Legislators in Peru and Chile are particularly keen to draw on the expertise of university academics as well as think-tank directors.

In Uganda, a group of MPs has been 'paired' with scientists. Managed by the UK Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST), and drawing on a scheme first established in the UK by the Royal Society, the pairing scheme aims to build links between legislators and scientists. Training activities aim to improve the quality of science information available to legislators. At the time of writing, five pairs of Ugandan legislators and scientists had taken part. The legislators were members of the Committee on Science and Technology; the scientists came from the University of Uganda, and specialised in a range of disciplines: electrical engineering, bio-safety and bio-technology; ceramics; HIV/AIDS; and plastic waste disposal. The pairs carried out visits to the scientists' laboratory and the legislators' constituencies to learn more about each other's work.

### ***External think tanks***

Legislators or legislative committees may consult external think tanks. In Sub-Saharan Africa, civil society organisations (CSOs) play an important role in providing individual legislators and legislative committees with much-needed expert inputs to inform parliamentary debates (see Mandaville, 2004). In many fledgling legislatures, linkages are aligned with specific interests legislators have; the thematic specialism of their committee or commission; or issues of prime national importance. The issues are wide-ranging, from finance and economics; to human rights democratic governance; to gender and child rights. For example, in Rwanda, the Forum for Women Parliamentarians has strong relations with women's organisations such as Profemme. A member of the Sudanese legislature described links with the Sudanese Agriculturalists Engineers Society (SAES). Further examples include the support provided by the Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research (ISSER) at the University of Ghana to the Parliamentary Committee on Trade and Industry, and the support provided by Social Watch to the Benin National Assembly on issues such as gender and poverty. In Argentina, the Centre for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth (CIPPEC) provided testimony during hearings on the introduction of the access to information law.

Public financial management and economic policy are areas where researcher-legislator linkages tend to be stronger, more formalised and/or more visible. For instance, the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN) undertook budget analysis and developed detailed recommendations and simplified briefings for the Committee for Finance and Economic Planning in the National Assembly. It also supported a coalition of legislators (MPs) to scrutinise economic policies proposed by multilateral agencies and bilateral donors. In Zambia, the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) (also the secretariat of Jubilee Zambia) was highly influential in the development of pro-poor economic and tax policy through links with both the legislature and the executive. In China, the state's main priority has been economic development. Legislators have thus demanded research in economic and financial areas (this has historically been the case in other East Asian tiger countries, including Korea and Taiwan). However, with environmental and land issues becoming more important, there has been an increase in demand for related research from legislators.

In Peru, if legislators or their staff have a query, rather than go through their own networks, they can ask Congress to make an official request to knowledge producers/providers. In this case, the knowledge producer/provider is obliged to respond. However, advisors are generally reluctant to use this channel, as academics are less likely to respond. There was a feeling that academics perceived that Congress would either manipulate their information to suit political ends, in which case they would fail to reference them, or not use it at all. In Korea, research institutes are also obliged to respond to legislator requests for information analysis.

Civil society actors in Sub-Saharan Africa have managed exhibitions, retreats, training workshops and conferences to which individual legislators or legislative committees have been invited. CSOs in Tanzania have organised targeted training workshops for parliamentary select committees, as well as exhibitions in the National Assembly to raise awareness of key social policy issues. Other methods include the organisation of retreats to focus on a particular policy concern, which have the advantage of ensuring that parliamentarians are distanced from their daily routine and can engage more deeply on issues. In Peru and Argentina, CSO actors have asked legislators to speak at public events or contribute to meetings on specific issues. Some legislators are board members for CSOs. Board meetings are then spaces in which information may be passed from researchers to legislators.

Researchers' likelihood of working with legislators is also linked to funding patterns. For instance, research institutes, think tanks and other knowledge producers may be commissioned by the executive to undertake research and provide analysis on particular topics, limiting the space they have, and their scholarly independence, to undertake appropriate research and communicate findings to legislator communities. Conversely, opportunities for research institutes to influence the legislature may increase as state funding for government-affiliated research bodies decreases. This has been the case in Korea, where a reduction in core funding to government research organisations has led to a diversification of knowledge generators with whom legislative committees engage (interview, May 2008).

### **Box 2: Forging researcher–legislator links to strengthen Taiwanese policy-making**

Legislatures have to debate a wide range of policy issues, but are often faced with a lack of specialised expertise in specific policy areas. The history of gender legislation development in Taiwan provides a good example of the potential of researcher–legislator linkages in overcoming this challenge. In the late 1980s as part of a broader movement for political reforms, there was strong civil society pressure to tackle gender discrimination in the workplace, but legislators at the time had no experience in developing equal employment opportunities legislation. Instead, a small group of committed legislators worked closely together with a CSO, the Awakening Foundation, comprising gender activists, scholars and lawyers, to draft a bill. Although this version was subsequently diluted in the policy process, the draft was used as the basis for alternative versions by the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Economic Affairs, as well as the Taiwan Employers Association, ensuring that the basic principles were included in the final version passed some 12 years later. For the Awakening Foundation, the lengthy process was frustrating, but nevertheless enabled it to establish itself as a credible source of expertise on gender mainstreaming issues. In part because of the involvement of scholars from prestigious universities, which enjoy a high level of authority in Taiwan’s Confucian political culture, the foundation is now regularly consulted by individual legislators, legislative committees and civil servants for their views on new gender equality issues.

*Source:* Interview, 2008.

#### ***Research links with political parties***

In East Asia, political parties offer additional channels for research to feed into the legislative process. Research organisations may either independently or collaboratively give seminars at party conferences or talks at party retreats. In Korea, university professors participate in meetings hosted by different political parties as paper presenters or commentators. In Taiwan, owing to the overall high level of involvement by scholars in public life, a number of researchers work on a regular basis as consultants for political parties and function as key members of the party’s inner circle (see Box 2 for more on researcher–legislator linkages in Taiwan).

In a number of countries under study, the main political parties have affiliated research centres or have the capacity to commission research. In Korea, publicly funded political parties must spend 30% of their budget on a research centre to support legislators in their work. In Taiwan, while there is no formalised expenditure minimum, political parties operate their own think tanks, relying on a mixture of a small number of full-time staff, often junior researchers, and the consultancy services of senior university-based scholars. In Indonesia, factions (or political parties) contract consultants to do research for them, to back certain policy positions.

Mendizabal and Sample (2009) have documented the close and historical relationship between think tanks and political parties in Latin America, describing how this may take many forms. Some think tanks are established within parties, some are completely external and there is a broad spectrum in between. The relationship is generally shaped by the nature of the supply (the information offered by the research organisation) and the demand (the profile of politicians seeking information, their perception of the usefulness of evidence in policy-making, etc.). Think tanks fulfil different functions, such as drawing up proposals, legitimising policies, facilitating debate, providing technical staff for the parties and even protection of ideas and intellectuals.

#### ***Networks and platforms***

Knowledge producers may collaborate with one another when working with legislators. In Kenya, a network of CSOs engaged with the Parliament to enhance the quality of their inputs. Meanwhile, the National Civil Society Association for Water Access and Hygiene (CCEPA), a coalition of 29 organisations, including Plan International and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), advocating for enhanced access to water in Burkina Faso lobbied the National Assembly and presented findings from research on access to water. In Nigeria, PARP provides researchers without direct links with the National Assembly a platform to feed into legislative processes, effectively making them a coordinating body of sorts.

CSOs and parliamentarians have forged cooperative arrangements to put pressure on the executive branch for change. For instance, Musaka and Chingombe (n.d.) focus on alliances established between groups of parliamentarians and NGOs in Southern Africa. They highlight how these have convened

parliamentary hearings in both rural and urban settings and at regional level (e.g. the Southern Africa Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF) and the East African Assembly (EAA)) to address key social determinants of health. Cooperative relationships were useful not only for agenda setting but also for monitoring the executive's compliance with reform-oriented legislation.

In Peru, the Economic and Social Research Consortium (CIES), an umbrella organisation with over 30 institutional members from among Peruvian academic, research and governmental institutions and NGOs, has an agreement with the Peruvian legislature. This is broad-based and includes scope for providing training to legislators to improve their technical skills (including research and policy analysis), advising commissions, holding conferences and seminars and disseminating information and research. The agreement is a 12-month renewable contract (mirroring the term limits for those serving on commissions). CIES regularly produces magazines targeting legislators and other policy-makers, with articles often written by researchers/scholars. As well as responding to legislator requests on an issue-by-issue basis, they are also proactive. For instance, CIES produced a number of policy briefs on various issues of national significance, which provided a basis for discussion with different political parties at the time of the most recent general election.

Examples of different types of actors working together, such as CSOs and academics, to influence legislators were found in Korea, Peru and Taiwan. In Korea, civil society umbrella organisations bringing together academics and NGOs (many of whom were once colleagues in the anti-dictatorship movement of the 1970s and 1980s) have been instrumental in engaging with legislators around democratic transparency, gender equity and environmental protection legislation (Jones, 2006); in Peru, networks of academics and NGOs have been formed in order to influence legislative debates around poverty reduction and social exclusion; while in Taiwan, scholar-activist alliances have been critical in leading to legislative reform around drink driving and smoking bans.

### **3.1.2 Intermediaries**

In some contexts, knowledge intermediaries can play a key role in bridging the gap between legislators and researchers/academics. Organisations such as Asociación Civil Reflexión Democrática in Peru provide information to legislators and link them with knowledge producers, particularly universities. In fact, the director of this organisation was seen as the most important non-elected member of the Peruvian Congress, with responsibility for enforcing legislative rules and procedures within the legislature, ensuring his organisation a fair degree of visibility among congressmen and women.

In the three Latin American countries surveyed, more often than not it is legislators' staff who have links with researchers and thus are key intermediaries. For instance, in Peru, apart from secretaries and assistants, congressmen and women generally have two advisors, one technical and the other political. These advisors often have an extensive informal network, drawing on university institutions (possibly where they once studied, taught or undertook research); civil society knowledge producers and think tanks they may once have worked for or had close affiliations with; and trusted researchers and lobbyists. In fact, legislators' advisors are often targeted by a range of competing interest groups, such as labour unions, commerce, industry and citizens, who come with proposals to change or introduce laws. Well-funded interest groups, such as those for, say, mining and oil, often hire consultants to carry out research, which is presented to advisors of legislators who are, say, heads of congressional commissions or committees.

## **3.2 Informal mechanisms**

Despite the increasing prevalence of formal links emerging between researchers and research organisations, including between civil society actors (as knowledge generators and translators) and legislators, informal linkages between research staff and legislators tend to be more common. In Sub-Saharan Africa, social occasions, such as funerals and weddings, as well as professional and kin networks are all important sources of interaction (Jones and Tembo, 2008). Where formal linkages do exist, this owes to a good relationship with an individual legislator – typically an issue champion in a

particular field – rather than with a legislative committee. One CSO representative from the Straight Talk Foundation in 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 Latin America, legislators, before preparing a bill, often seek – on an informal basis – opinions from researchers/CSOs. In Peru, leading researchers tend to be close friends of legislators.

## 4. Some political factors

This section explores the political context and how this may affect the role of research and research uptake by legislators. We briefly discuss four factors that emerged during the research: the power of the executive, legislative procedures and structures, political competition and external influences.

### 4.1 The power of the executive

A key determinant of the effectiveness of legislators and thus their linkages with research is the extent to which other important power holders – most importantly executives and parties – cede, lose, share, exchange or let slip the power they hold. The range is wide, with authoritarian systems on one end, providing little political space, and more pluralistic and competitive systems on the other, providing more. Emerging legislatures, although increasing in strength, are still largely relatively weak, with the executive often unwilling to cede power. The executive's power to veto and rule by decree also determines the extent of a legislature's power to enact laws. For instance, the Benin National Assembly, which rejected the national budget, was overruled by the president, who pushed it through without legislative approval. With multiparty democracy in most African countries in its infancy, parliaments often lack the power they have been given constitutionally (Jones and Tembo, 2008). Moreover, in some systems, legislators have a monopoly on the right to introduce legislation directly, while in others legislators can consider only proposals that have originated in the executive.

Political will seems a strong determinant of the level of research uptake in the legislature. For example, in many countries with emerging legislatures, such as Peru and Korea, there is a perception that governments are increasingly facilitating the role of civilian expertise in legislative and policy-making processes. In Kenya, key informants suggested that, in the past, threatened by potential opposition, the executive may have blocked links between legislators and capacity-building organisations and knowledge producers. But in recent years, the Kenyan Parliament has been able to exercise some power in relation to the executive.

### 4.2 Legislative rules and structures

The capacity provided by a legislature's procedures and structures can influence its role in law-making and oversight processes, including the uptake of research by legislators. For instance, while the Nigerian Public Accounts Committee receives technical support from PARP, it also has accountability mechanisms through a constitutional arrangement with the Offices of the Auditor General and Accountant General. Further, in Kenya, the Parliamentary Service Act, passed in 2000, helped to enhance the autonomy of Parliament and was preceded by the formation of the Parliamentary Service Commission. On the other hand, legislatures may lack adequate legislative management processes, or those that exist may be poorly implemented.

### 4.3 Political competition

While emerging democratically elected legislatures allow for more voices and contestation in policy processes, they also tend to be subject to more political competition, sometimes resulting in higher levels of political uncertainty, policy-making under short time horizons and weaker research–policy linkages. In Peru, for instance, the legislature appears fragmented, with 10 political parties represented in Congress. Legislative processes can thus be long and complex, as consensus building takes time. In addition, legislators tend to work in silos, so their work goes uncoordinated. An extraordinary number of bills – sometimes 20 in a week – are proposed (often duplicating existing legislation). All this is exacerbated by short (12-month) term limits for commission members, with whom researchers often

have good links. Handovers are weak, and researchers often have to spend considerable time briefing new members.

Election time also sees legislators in many contexts keen to seek approval from the media (who are very influential in Argentina, for example, having forced the resignation of a number of legislators). The high level of political competition has often skewed legislators' incentives towards keeping political power rather than formulating and implementing evidence-informed policies. Legislators are often seen to use evidence as ammunition to back political/policy positions, to manipulate it to suit their purpose or to ignore it altogether. CIES in Peru is cautious in its dealings with legislators, well aware that its knowledge/resources can be 'used' for political gain. This was corroborated by legislators in the Peruvian Congress, who suggested CIES and other civil society actors tended to 'keep their distance,' despite wanting closer linkages.

While a fragmented party system is seen to complicate and lengthen legislative processes, blocking the impact of independent research (as in the Peruvian example above), too much party discipline can have a similar effect. For instance, in Argentina, both chambers of Congress are formed mainly by representatives of the ruling party, who tend to follow the party doctrine, resulting in little debate. In Benin, while a strong opposition party could in theory better oversee the activities of the executive, in practice it promotes highly polarised political debates, with legislators unable to act on evidence, having instead to 'toe the party line.' Key research findings that contradict a party line are unlikely to be brought to the table by legislators for discussion. Nevertheless, reform-oriented legislators in Korea picked up on research showing the judiciary had failed citizens owing to outdated and/or poor legislation and petitioned the broader National Assembly for legislative change. Ultimately, though, the influence of research rests on legislators' or the parties' interests and political will for policy change. Strong political parties in all contexts can then provide disincentives to the uptake of research in legislative processes.

Some argue that less competitive political systems may appear to present fewer incentives to be open to new knowledge. However, Korea and Taiwan – democratic but more politically stable (than say Argentina) – have numerous mechanisms through which legislators can acquire knowledge/research. Furthermore, China and Vietnam, which have one-party political systems, both place considerable emphasis on research. In fact, many argue there is a healthy level of debate within the NPC – with the Chinese policy-making arena open to experimentation and more receptive to debate than is assumed (ibid). Leonard (2008) argues that the political system in China has strengthened the role of intellectuals, owing to a lack of alternative sources of influence such as opposition parties, independent trade unions and the media, the latter of which is heavily controlled by the state/communist party. This is illustrated in the appointment of academics to the NPC's commission. Moreover, in Vietnam today, the state has demonstrated rising levels of political will in the application of policy research, as illustrated by the Research to Policy project to improve communication between VASS and ECNA. The prominent role of experts in policy-making in the East Asian region more generally may have more to do with the Confucian underpinnings of the political culture, which emphasise the critical role of education and scholarship as well as (more critically) the drive to maintain the high levels of economic development it has achieved in the past half century, and thus political legitimacy, and less to do with political liberalisation.

#### 4.4 External influences

Several international organisations exist to help strengthen parliaments and improve their evidence base, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. These include the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa (AWEPA), the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) and the African Technology Policy Studies Network. A number of legislators raised concerns about the hidden agendas and concealed work plans of CSOs and research organisations, given their closeness to donors and the

general absence of alternative funding. But Jones and Tembo (2008) suggest that donor support may play an important role in strengthening researcher–legislator linkages if the donor enjoys high credibility and if funding is medium to long term and is used to support the participation of legislators in high-profile, well-resourced events and processes.

## 4.5 Summary

Broadly speaking, legislatures under study, although increasing in strength, are still largely relatively weak, with executives often unwilling to cede power, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. Research-based evidence is one of many factors (and often a minor one) informing their functions. Leadership of legislative bodies and capacity provided by the legislature can influence the role of research in law-making and oversight processes. However, there seems to be little correlation between the level of plurality and the value placed on research, with both fragmented and cohesive polities creating both challenges and opportunities to the uptake of research. However, the countries under study in East Asia appear to place more value on knowledge and research, owing in part to their Confucian culture and the desire to protect high levels of economic development.

## 5. The nature of evidence

### 5.1 Type and adequacy of evidence

Not surprisingly, researchers across the study countries were almost unanimous in stating how busy legislators were. For instance, Peruvian congressmen and women spend up to 12 hours a day in Congress debating and voting for or against legislation, leaving little time for much else, including reading research findings. Key informants in Sub-Saharan Africa suggested that limited education and/or familiarity with research among some legislators had hindered researcher–legislator linkages. Several researchers suggested that older legislators often had limited schooling/education, constraining them in their ability to digest research/evidence or make use of publicly available information such as government statistics. On the other hand, presence of a critical mass of young, highly educated legislators with professional backgrounds, for example in Nigeria, was perceived to help promote an improved culture of evidence-based policy-making.

‘Digesting’ research, then, is often both a challenge and a luxury for legislators, who often have limited time and capacity (including familiarity and training). Although this creates significant challenges in promoting evidence-based policy-making and implementation, it places great emphasis on researchers to ensure their outputs are accessible to legislators. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the type of evidence that researchers provide is identified as an important dimension of effective researcher–legislator engagement.

Across all types of legislature, researchers and legislators alike suggested that research intended for legislators should be presented in the form of short summaries, with bullet points, whose messages are easy to grasp and illustrated with easy-to-understand charts and diagrams. In Kenya, the dissemination of short policy briefs, newsletters, magazines and brochures is seen as an effective way to promote the uptake of new research evidence by parliamentarians, especially highly technical sectors such as energy policy. Legislators are also more likely to take notice of research if the ideas they convey and the means through which they are communicated are fresh and innovative. For example, one legislator in the Korean National Assembly said that research findings presented through a well-produced short film had more impact on her than policy briefs.

However, for sensitive issues, such as natural resource management or economic policy, legislators may demand longer analyses. For instance, legislative bills on oil and new minerals in Ghana received detailed analyses from several interest groups and included cases studies on Iran, Norway and Venezuela. Meanwhile, legislators’ advisors/staff, whose role is often to mediate between researchers and their legislator, suggested they would prefer to read products with more detailed analysis.

Regarding actual outputs, research products presented to legislators or committees are wide-ranging and include workshop reports, policy briefs, short bulletins, guides and handbooks. Research products can often simply be short memos answering questions posed by legislative committees. In Peru and Argentina, journals/magazines targeting legislators featuring articles written by researchers were seen as effective. 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 and natural resource management, which they then use as an entry point to raise awareness among the broader public, especially at the constituency level. Box 3 provides insights into the types of evidence produced for legislators by UK and US legislative research services.

### **Box 3: Types of evidence supplied by the UK and US legislative research services**

The US Congressional Research Service (CRS) issues memos of variable length in a standard format in response to most questions and requests. It also prepares short (fewer than six pages) and long (six pages or more) reports. In advance of congressional hearings, the CRS produces briefings that profile witnesses and key issues to be presented. These allow it to provide more analysis and raise critical questions for legislators to ask.

The UK House of Commons Information Services issues three key products: research papers of variable length covering most bills; standard notes, of which there are 3,000 to 4,000 on a range of issues, such as food and fuel prices, which are updated regularly and accessible online; and targeted debate packs which provide enhanced coverage of key issues.

Researchers also provide verbal evidence, usually at inquiries, hearings, seminars and meetings, often accompanied by speeches and PowerPoint presentations. In the UK, verbal evidence at a committee inquiry will usually follow the submission of written evidence. Following a presentation, committee members often ask the researcher challenging questions around the findings.

In the US, congressional hearings are seen as a powerful way of bringing media (a key intermediary) and public attention to research findings, which can then promote legislative and/or policy change. Legislators noted that committees were one of the top three factors in decision-making in 18 states (Moncrief et al., 1996). The US CRS subsequently has guidelines for analysts presenting information at a congressional hearing.

In the UK, although the executive must respond to a select committee's report, it is not obliged to act on recommendations. Moreover, parliamentary committees (together with MPs) were ranked almost bottom of 13 different sources of influence (Canada Parliamentary Centre, 2004).

Baselines and quantitative survey data were highlighted universally as effective, especially if based on government data (Kenya), but use of grassroots testimonies, international publications and carefully contextualised local knowledge were also deemed important in creating a compelling policy narrative.

Most researchers working with legislatures determine the format/type of the research product themselves (Korea). Research organisations often produce short (between one and four pages) policy briefs/summaries, using professional but not academic language, for legislators who are generally perceived to have little time and only a modest understanding of the issue(s).

## **5.2 Credibility of research**

A high level of credibility of research and researchers among legislators can help improve research-legislator channels. For instance, in Peru, CIES has built up a solid reputation and strong links with committees and with individual legislators working in specific sectors and with two key departments in the legislature – the International Cooperation Office and the Commissions Department (which provide staffing and technical assistance to legislative committees). CIES is often the first organisation legislators turn to when they need information and analysis on social and economic policy issues.

However, too close a relationship between researchers and legislators can affect perceptions of researchers' political neutrality. This was a concern among some legislators interviewed. While key informants in Kenya, Nigeria and Rwanda perceived CSOs supporting their work as independent and non-partisan, those in Burkina Faso, Tanzania and Uganda suggested otherwise, expressing concerns about their limited political neutrality and proximity to donors, which led them to be cautious in their interactions with them. In Peru, some legislators perceived CIES to be to the 'left' of the political spectrum, resulting in a lack of trust.

In Burkina Faso, UNACEB's support to legislators in overseeing the government's public expenditure management had put it into an adversarial relationship with the government. UNACEB in Benin, critical of the government's management of public finances, has seen several members of the ruling party and executive – feeling their legitimacy threatened – accuse it of aligning with the opposition, questioning its political neutrality.

Moreover, in Ghana, newspaper reports linking key research institutions to agendas of political parties and donors has helped to discredit not just them but other research institutions as well, as others are ‘tarred with the same brush.’ In Benin, legislators were divided: some suggested NGOs were generally independent and non-partisan while others disagreed. Nevertheless, this is indicative of governments becoming increasingly reluctant to engage with CSOs, as is the case in Burkina Faso and is further illustrated by governments in Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Uganda and Zambia, pushing through legislative bills to curb the actions of NGOs, thus undermining rather than promoting closer relationships between CSOs and parliamentarians. In Peru, the current executive is less willing to interact with civil society, unlike the transition government of 2006.

## 6. Summary and key lessons

Table 1: Summary of types of linkages that exist between researchers and legislators in developing countries

Formal						Intermediaries	Informal
Researcher							
In house	Affiliated	External linkages					
		Individual	Think-tank	Political party	Network		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Libraries</li> <li>• Information and research services</li> <li>• Committees with financial capacity to commission research (Korea)</li> <li>• Scholars appointed to legislative committees (China, Vietnam)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Donor-funded organisations set up to provide the legislature with technical support (SSA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researchers, academics asked to provide evidence through testimonies at hearings, submission of evidence and private meetings to both committees and individual legislators</li> <li>• Legislator–scientist pairing scheme (Uganda)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic research institutes affiliated with large family-controlled and government-assisted corporate groups (Korea)</li> <li>• CSOs (mainly in SSA)</li> <li>• CSOs often asked to work with legislators to scrutinise policies</li> <li>• Institutional links between legislature and research organisations (where the latter are obliged to respond)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Junior academics in party think-tanks (Taiwan)</li> <li>• Political parties have affiliated research centres (Argentina, Korea, Taiwan)</li> <li>• Academics and researchers commissioned to provide advice (Indonesia, Taiwan) to political parties</li> <li>• Researchers asked to present at conferences and retreats (Korea, Taiwan)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy initiatives involving CSO coalitions targeting engagement with national parliaments</li> <li>• Umbrella organisation with formal agreement with legislature providing technical support, training and space for debate and dialogue (Peru)</li> <li>• Networks of academics and NGOs to influence legislative debates (Peru)</li> <li>• Scholar–activist alliances in promoting legislative reform (Taiwan)</li> <li>• Civil society umbrella organisations working with NGOs and academics engaging legislators on democracy, gender and the environment (Korea)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge intermediaries: that is organisations that specialise in knowledge translation for policy-makers including legislators</li> <li>• Legislative staff – legislator and legislative committee aides, assistants and advisors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funerals, weddings</li> <li>• Professional, social and kin networks</li> </ul>

Note: SSA = Sub-Saharan Africa.

Based on the analysis, we conclude by presenting a number of lessons for both researchers and legislators who want to enhance the processes through which research can inform legislative functions.

### For researchers

1. **As well as responding to legislator requests, researchers can influence the legislature by tracking key legislative debates and taking advantage of opportunities to feed in information and analysis.** This can be done through developing and sustaining an informal network of legislators and their staff and/or working through and with key intermediaries.
2. **Researchers have been proactive in feeding in information and analysis particularly related to social policy areas (as opposed to finance and economic areas), such as health, education, gender and child affairs.** This owes in large part to successful partnerships between researchers and civil society activists. These sectors tend to receive less attention from the legislature, partly because of the relatively small size of both the government ministry (as compared with, say, finance and economics) and the legislative committee which oversees their work.
3. **Building and sustaining good relationships with relevant legislators and/or legislative committees is a critical part of promoting uptake of research evidence in the legislative process.**
4. **Working in coalition on common issues enables researchers to use resources more efficiently and to have a louder voice when engaging with legislators.** Moreover, different types of actors such as CSOs and academics have often worked together successfully to influence legislative debates around poverty reduction and social exclusion.
5. **Research can be effective in shaping legislative debates if it is tailored to legislators' needs.** For example, research is more likely to have an impact on decision-making if it is clear and concise, professional but not academic in nature, timely, independent, related to legislative decisions and politically acceptable. Legislators are also more likely to take notice of research if the means through which it is communicated are innovative. They are more likely to listen to a story that will resonate with the media and public.

### For legislators

1. **Legislators can improve their research literacy and promote better understanding of their research needs through enhanced networking and joint working with researchers as well as with legislators from other countries.** Possible models include:
  - Institutional agreements with research institutes and/or civil society knowledge producers, so as to promote an ongoing flow of information, ideas and debate;
  - Promoting an official role for researchers to review the technical quality of legislative proposals;
  - Commissioning specific policy-relevant research and/or inviting the submission of evidence by well respected experts;
  - Organising seminars or convening public hearings to invite deliberation on specific policy issues with a range of stakeholders;
  - Increased funding for research support staff associated with each legislative committee;
  - Funding of a legislature-wide library research services facility; and
  - Study tours to neighbouring countries to exchange experiences.
2. **Enhanced commitment from the government (executive branch) to the role of evidence in the policy process can promote the uptake of research in the legislative process.** Many researchers interviewed suggested the political climate was becoming increasingly favourable to enhancing the role of research and evidence more broadly in the policy-making process.
3. **Although some research organisations are starting to track how their inputs are affecting the legislative process, more could be done to promote monitoring and evaluation of the use of research in legislative decision-making.** This will enable both researchers and legislators to learn what works and what does not, and ultimately to improve the quality of legislation and the legislative process.

## References

- Canada Parliamentary Centre (2004) 'Backgrounder: The New Member of Parliament and Committees.' Ottawa: Canada Parliamentary Centre.
- Cohen, J. and Arato, A. (1992) *Civil Society and Political Theory*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Court, J. and Young, J. (2004) 'Bridging Research and Policy in International Development: An Analytical and Practical Framework.' RAPID Briefing Paper 1. London: ODI.
- Hudson, A. (2006) 'CSOs and Parliamentary Committees: The UK's International Development Select Committee.' London: ODI.
- Hudson, A. and Wren, C. (2007) 'Parliamentary Strengthening in Developing Countries.' Final Report for DFID.
- Jones, N., with Tefera, B. and Woldehanna, T. (2008) 'Childhood Poverty and Evidence-based Policy Influencing in Ethiopia.' *Development and Practice* 18(3): 371-384.
- Jones, N. (2006) *Gender and the Political Opportunities of Democratization in South Korea*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jones, N. and Tembo, F. (2008) 'Promoting Good Governance through Civil Society–Legislator Linkages: Opportunities and challenges for Policy Engagement in Developing Country Contexts.' International Third Sector Research Conference. Barcelona, 9-12 July.
- Linz, J. and Stepan, A. (1996) *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Leonard, M (2008) 'China's New Intelligentsia.' *Prospect Magazine* 144, March.
- Mandaville, A. (2004) *Legislatures and Civil Society: Potential Partners in Poverty Reduction*. Washington, DC: NDI.
- Mendizabal, E. and Sample, K. (2009) 'Díme a Quien Escuchas y Te Diré Que Haces: Think Tanks y Partidos Políticos en América Latina.' Lima: IDEA International and ODI.
- Moncrief, G., Thompson, J.A. and Cassie, W. (1996) 'Revisiting the State of US State Legislature Research.' *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 21(3): 301-335.
- Musaka, G. and Chingombe, I. (n.d.) 'Building Equitable People-centred National Health Systems: The Role of Parliament and Parliamentary Committees in Health in East and Southern Africa.' Health Systems Knowledge Network/WHO/EQUINET report.
- O'Donnell, G. (1995) 'Delegative Democracy.' *Journal of Democracy* 5: 56-69.
- Robinson, W.H. (2002) 'Knowledge and Power: The Essential Connection between Research and the Work of Legislature.' Brussels: ECPRD.
- Robinson, W.H. and Gastelum, R. (eds) (1998) 'Parliamentary Libraries and Research Services in Central and Eastern Europe: Building More Effective Legislatures.' The Hague: International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions.
- Start, D. and Hovland, I. (2004) 'Tools for Policy Impact: A Handbook for Researchers.' London: ODI.
- Sumner, A. and Jones, N. (2008) 'The Politics of Pro-poor Policy Processes, Policy Influence and the Research–Policy Interface: Are Pro-poor Policy Processes Expert-led or Citizen-led?' London: ODI.
- Worthington, T. (2007) 'The Case for Invoking the Greater Use of Parliamentarians in Moving Agriculture up the Political Agenda: How to Do It?' Scoping Mission for Natural Resources International as part of the Research into Use Programme.

## Appendix: List of interviewees

Type of legislature	Region	Country	Legislator	Research organisation
Emerging legislature	Sub-Saharan Africa	Ghana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government Assurance Committee</li> <li>Deputy Minister</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parliamentary Centre, Africa Poverty Reduction Office</li> </ul>
		Nigeria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Accounts Committee</li> <li>Public Accounts Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Macroeconomist, PARP</li> </ul>
		Rwanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committee on Foreign Affairs</li> <li>Political Affairs Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Governance Advisory Council</li> </ul>
		Benin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parliamentary Group</li> <li>Finance Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNACEB</li> </ul>
		Burkina Faso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finance and Budget Committee</li> <li>Finance and Budget Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CCEPA</li> </ul>
		Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Accounts Committee</li> <li>Budget Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SUNY</li> </ul>
		Sudan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family, Women and Children Affairs Committee</li> <li>Economic Affairs Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNEP-SAES</li> </ul>
	Latin America	Argentina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Congressman</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CIPPEC</li> </ul>
		Peru	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Congresswomen (vice president of Congress)</li> <li>Congressman (member of 5 committees)</li> <li>Congressman (Committee of Andean, Amazonian and Afro-Peruvian populations and Environment and Ecology)</li> <li>Former Congressman's advisor</li> <li>Former Congresswoman's advisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CIES</li> <li>Social policy consultant</li> </ul>
		Chile		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FLACSO</li> </ul>
	East and Southeast Asia	China		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>China Policy Institute, University of Nottingham</li> </ul>
		Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender and Family Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Korea University</li> <li>National Assembly Research Services</li> <li>Korean Women's Development Institute</li> </ul>
		Taiwan		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Awakening Foundation/National Taiwan University</li> </ul>
Indonesia		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parliamentarian</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SMERU</li> </ul>	
Arena legislatures	Europe	UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ActionAid</li> <li>Christian Aid</li> <li>ODI</li> <li>UK House of Commons Information Services</li> <li>IPPR</li> </ul>
Transformative legislatures	Europe	Germany		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DIE</li> <li>Christian Democrats/Conservative Social Union Coalition</li> <li>Green Party</li> </ul>
	North America	US		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CGD</li> <li>CRS</li> </ul>



Overseas Development Institute  
111 Westminster Bridge Road  
London SE1 7JD  
UK

Tel: +44 (0)20 7922 0300

Fax: +44 (0)20 7922 0399

Email: [publications@odi.org.uk](mailto:publications@odi.org.uk)

Website: [www.odi.org.uk](http://www.odi.org.uk)

ISBN 978 1 907288 43 2

Working Paper (Print) ISSN 1759 2909

ODI Working Papers (Online) ISSN 1759 2917