

The Evidence-based Policy in Development Network

RAPID Research and Capacity-building Programme

This seven year DFID-funded programme 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. Most members will be in developing countries, but the programme will also foster collaboration between countries and across the boundary between North and South. The programme will help members to support each other through training, exchange visits, and sharing of information, and collaborate on projects to generate and use research-based evidence to improve development policy at national, regional and global level.

The first phase (April 2004 – March 2006) included background research followed by twenty consultative workshops, seminars and meetings in Africa, South and South-East Asia and Latin America. These helped ODI to identify a core group of southern organisations keen to work together to learn more about how CSOs use research-based evidence. Collaborative work on ten country-level projects, and four global projects has provided useful lessons, and contributed to a wide range of publications including working papers, policy briefs and toolkits.

Directors and senior staff from twenty southern policy research institutes, think tanks and NGOs in Asia, Africa and Latin America, have met twice to discuss progress and plan the next phase of the programme.

The emphasis of the programme in the second phase (April 2006 – March 2008) is to establish the community of practice. The initial membership of the community will include the individuals and organisations who have already been working with ODI through the regional consultations, small scale collaborative projects and global projects. As the work progresses, and the community takes

shape, other organisations and individuals will be invited to join, so that eventually the community will include a wide range of members, including visitors who simply wish to make use of information and resources on the community website. More active members will include individuals and organisations who wish to publish relevant information, or links to relevant information on their own websites; organisations providing relevant services, for example institutional development, or communication services; organisations which collaborate on specific time-limited projects; and organisations with broader partnerships, which collaborate on a range of projects over a longer period.

Key activities to establish the community of practice will include:

- A wide range of **capacity development** activities including: practical training (multiplied through training of trainers); staff exchanges and secondments; and institutional development support from ODI and other organisations.
- Small-scale **collaborative projects** between community members. These might include practical action-research projects aiming to generate and use research-based evidence to influence a specific policy process at national, regional and global level, or research and information activities.
- Establishing a **community website** which will provide: knowledge on bridging research and policy; details of members of the network; a directory of training and advisory expertise; discussion fora; project areas; and a partnership brokering area.
- Other forms of **information and knowledge exchange** through: conferences, workshops, and seminars; printed and web-based publications; and links with other networks.
- General **management and support** activities, including the procedures for membership;

The RAPID Group

ODI's Research and Policy in Development Group (RAPID) aims to improve the use of research and evidence in development policy and practice through research, advice and debate. The programme has four main themes:

- The use of evidence in policy identification, development and implementation;
- Improving communication and information systems for development agencies;
- Better knowledge management to enhance the impact of development agencies;
- Promotion and capacity building for evidence-based policy.

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collaborative projects; recruitment of new members; fundraising; and M&E.

Community members will work together on:

- Gathering and synthesising lessons on how CSOs can use research-based evidence to influence pro-poor policy, from community member's own projects and other sources, and a limited amount of new research.
- Production of practical, useful information materials, including: a 'state-of-the-art' report on Civil Society, Evidence and Policy Influence; a series of short four-page briefing papers and information materials for the website; and a set of 'how to do it' guidelines and training materials for CSOs.
- Development and establishment of a small number of international collaborative projects addressing regional or global development issues, such as international aid architecture; food security in Southern Africa; trade – access to markets and subsidies; debt cancellation;

environment and climate change; PRSPs and the MDGs; and HIV/AIDS.

ODI will lead these activities for the next two years. Thereafter, once the community is well established and other members are able to take over leadership of specific roles, ODI will participate as an equal member of the community, capitalising on its location in the north and good contacts in northern development policy processes, to help southern CSOs engage in global development policy issues. While DFID funds will support core activities in each of these outcomes, resources from other donors will be sought for additional activities. The programme will be managed by ODI, guided by a small group of external advisers including the Heads of three Southern think tanks and international experts.

Partner organisations are keen to incorporate new approaches they learn from each other to improve the impact of their work; below are three examples.

Case Studies

AFREPREN: Making energy policy in Africa more pro-poor and evidence-based

Africa Energy Policy Research Network is working to promote a more pro-poor and evidence-based policy framework. AFREPREN brings together 106 African energy researchers and policymakers from Africa who have a long-term interest in energy research and progressive policymaking.

Since its initiation in 1989, AFREPREN has successfully implemented over 220 national, regional and Africa-wide energy policy research projects involving over 200 African researchers and policymakers from 19 countries of eastern and southern Africa and forged close collaborative links with several northern and western African energy researchers, policymakers and institutions. ODI has been working with AFREPREN on a range of activities to generate better evidence and improve energy policy in Africa, for example:

- Research: A study of the impact of NGOs and think tanks on energy policy in sub-Saharan Africa. The five-country (Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe) comparative study focused on assessing the impact of research on energy policy and to propose options that will ensure greater impact. Key findings focused on the challenges posed by the policy context, the need to include researchers in the policy process and the need to develop policy advocacy skills among CSOs.
- Networking and Training: A workshop in Nairobi, jointly organised by ODI and AFREPREN, which focused on how CSOs can use evidence to promote pro-poor policies. It was a forum for CSOs in Kenya to discuss the opportunities and challenges they face when they try to inform policy

and share experiences about what works and doesn't work, learn about the latest worldwide research and practice in this area, and identify gaps for future work.

- Policy Engagement: A project to promote a more pro-poor and evidence-based energy policy in Kenya. Based on AFREPREN research, the main aim is to reduce the import tax and VAT on kerosene stoves thereby making such stoves affordable. The AFREPREN Director chaired a taskforce negotiating a performance framework between the President's office and the Ministry of Energy. Progress so far has included adding a target on reducing kerosene stove taxes to the performance framework for the Ministry of Energy. The challenge now is to actually get the change through cabinet and into policy.

CIPPEC: Enhancing public policies through research in Argentina

The Center for the Implementation of Public Policies promoting Equity and Growth is an independent non-profit organisation working to establish a just, democratic and efficient State in Argentina to improve citizens' quality of life. It does this by analysing and promoting public policies that foster equity and growth.

CIPPEC was created in 2000 by 11 young professionals, from various fields and with differing political points of view, to conduct research and implement evidence-based policies in the areas of Education, Fiscal Policy, Health Care, Transparency and Justice. In 2005 it added the areas of Political Institutions and Local Public Management.

CIPPEC's involvement in this programme has so far included:

- Organising and hosting a consultative workshop to learn about the role of research-based evidence in Argentina from other CSOs, think tanks, and development and policy research institutes.
- Participating, with representatives of 16 other think tanks from around the world, in a three-day planning workshop in the UK to develop the next phase of the network.
- Collaborating on a workshop at the UNESCO.
- Organising a meeting to launch a network of CSOs interested in using research to influence policymaking in Latin America, providing a space for participants to express their needs and interest in participating in such a network.

Through its involvement with RAPID, CIPPEC has been able to further its knowledge of specific tools and methodologies to address the complexities of policymaking processes, as well as learn about best practices from similar organisations in Argentina and other developing countries. As a consequence, CIPPEC has started its own programme to strengthen its internal capacity to translate research into realistic policy proposals and recommendations, and to share these ideas and learn more from other CSOs in the region.

CIPPEC and ODI are also engaged in a longer term collaboration on work in this area. Activities in Latin America so far have included conducting a 'Training of Trainers' programme with regional and national organisations, and creating and sustaining a CSO network in Latin America to exchange information, knowledge and experiences about how to bridge the gap between research and policymaking.

CIPPEC's recent successes include:

- Influencing the text of the Law of Educational Funding. In a document of public policies elaborated by the areas of Education and Fiscal Policy, CIPPEC supported and recommended: to soften the financial goal of the project because the original goal would have definitely implied a non-fulfillment of the law in the case of economic stagnation; and, to include an article that calls to generate information that helps the monitoring of the law. Both recommendations were introduced in the law sanctioned by the Senate.
- Contributing to the derogation of the Ley de Lemas in Santa Fe. The work carried out together with academic professionals and local NGOs in the province of Santa Fe contributed to change the electoral system, called 'Ley de lemas'. This system allowed a candidate for governor with scarce popular votes win elections due to the addition of votes from diverse sub-candidates (sublemas) from the same political party. In this sense, CIPPEC improved the playing rules in order to guarantee a more equitable political competence in one of the most important electoral districts of the country.

Unnayan Onneshan: Advising and monitoring pro-poor policy

Unnayan Onneshan, a think tank based in Bangladesh, has been involved in this programme since July 2005. This North-South partnership aims to improve the use of research-based evidence to promote pro-poor national and international development policies.

As a think tank, much of the Unnayan Onneshan's work is about promoting pro-poor public policies. Research outputs are designed to reframe policy debates and help citizens as well as policy entrepreneurs make better choices by providing the information they need. Integrated stakeholder-learning and consensus-building workshops are an important part of the organisations 'thinking', research and dialogue process.

Unnayan Onneshan is a young organisation and while some of its researchers have many years of research, teaching and consultancy to their credit, the think tank is also dedicated to developing younger team members. Capacity development is a key requirement for the institute. It hopes to benefit from ODI's long experience, especially with government bodies.

Unnayan Onneshan's involvement with the programme so far has included:

- Organising and hosting a consultative workshop for ODI to learn about the role of research-based evidence in Bangladesh from other think tanks, development and policy research institutes.
- As a member of the Forum for the Future of Aid discussion network, with expert research, briefing and consulting support, dedicated to the international aid system – the so-called 'aid architecture' and how it evolves over time.
- Participating, with representatives of 16 other think tanks from around the world, in a planning workshop in the UK to develop the next phase of the network.

The partnership has already enabled Unnayan Onneshan to better engage with national and international organisations, and to identify pathways by which civil society and social movements can better influence policy, and by integrating capacity building and research. Some of Unnayan Onneshan's recent work includes:

- Unnayan Onneshan at the United Nations: Rashed Titumir from Unnayan Onneshan spoke at the United Nations General Assembly's Informal Interactive Hearings on the Implementation of the Programme of Action on market access and export opportunities for the Least Developed Countries, held in New York on 22nd June 2006. Rashed spoke on how globalisation is failing to enhance productive capacities of LDC countries and what steps should be urgently undertaken to make globalisation work for the global poor.
- Millennium Development Goals: A Reality Check. The Bangladesh Public Policy Watch 2005

presented an independent review of progress towards the MDGs in Bangladesh, to see how well the Bangladesh and donor governments have lived up to the promises they made in New York in September 2000.

- **Undercutting Small Farmers: Rice Trade in Bangladesh and WTO Negotiations.** A report on the catastrophic impact of forced liberalisation on Bangladesh agriculture which indicates it will take 43 years to achieve the target of the Millennium Development Goals.
- **Non-agricultural Market Access at the WTO: A Case Study of Apparel Trade of Bangladesh.** An independent review of implementation of the results of the meetings in Marrakesh, Singapore, Geneva and Doha in the run up to the Hong Kong meeting.

- **Doha Round and Least Developed Countries.** The people of the least developed countries are told that free trade will create opportunity for all, speed up growth and do away with poverty. This report illustrates how practices in the international trading system are far removed from the rhetoric: rich countries continue to tilt the playing field against the poor.
- **Slippery Slopes: How Hong Kong Empowers Rich Countries to Choke the LDCs.** This rapid assessment provides a brief account of the outcome of the Hong Kong Ministerial and examines whether they delivered on the promise of improved market access.

Please contact **John Young** on j.young@odi.org.uk or see www.odi.org.uk/rapid/projects/ppa0001 and visit the programme website www.ebpdn.org for further information.

Recent Publications

Policy Engagement: How civil society can be more effective, *J. Court, E. Mendizabal, D. Osborne and J. Young*

Policy Engagement for Poverty Reduction: How civil society can be more effective, *J. Court*, ODI Briefing Paper 3

Bridging Research and Policy in International Development: An Analytical and Practical Framework, *J. Young and J. Court*, ODI Briefing Paper

Working Papers

Bringing Community-learned Knowledge into the Policy Debate: The Case of Legal Aid Centres, *Ursula Grant, I. Hovland and Z. Curran*, ODI Working Paper 277

Building Effective Research Policy Networks: Linking Function and Form, *E. Mendizabal*, ODI Working Paper 276

CSO Capacity for Policy Engagement: Lessons Learned from the CSPP Consultations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, *N. Chowdhury, C. Finlay-Notman and I. Hovland*, ODI Working Paper 272

Understanding Networks: The Functions of Research Policy Networks, *E. Mendizabal*, ODI Working Paper 271

Capacity Development for Policy Advocacy: Current thinking and approaches among agencies supporting Civil Society Organisations, *M. Blagescu and J. Young*, ODI Working Paper 260

Partnerships and Accountability: Current thinking and approaches among agencies supporting Civil Society Organisations, *M. Blagescu and J. Young*, ODI Working Paper 255

Networks and Policy Processes in International Development: A literature review, *E. Perkin and J. Court*, ODI Working Paper 252

Civil Society Participation in Health Research and Policy: A review of models, mechanisms and measures, *S. Kuruvilla*, ODI Working Paper 251

How Civil Society Organisations Use Evidence to Influence Policy Processes: A literature review, *A. Pollard and J. Court*, ODI Working Paper 249

RAPID Toolkits

Mapping Political Context: A Toolkit for Civil Society Organisations, *R. Nash, A. Hudson and C. Luttrell*

Tools for Knowledge and Learning: A Guide for Development and Humanitarian Organisations, *B. Ramalingam*

A Toolkit for Progressive Policymakers in Developing Countries, *S. Sutcliffe and J. Court*
Successful Communication: A Toolkit for Researchers and Civil Society Organisations, *I. Hovland*

Tools for Policy Impact: A Handbook for Researchers, *D. Start and I. Hovland*



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