

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.

The RAPID Programme

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

Overseas Development Institute

ODI is the UK's leading independent think-tank on international development and humanitarian issues.

- General **management and support** activities, including the procedures for membership; 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.

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

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

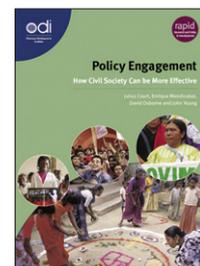
Mapping Political Context: A Toolkit for Civil Society Organisations, *R. Nash, A. Hudson and C. Luttrell*

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*



Overseas Development Institute

111 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JD

Tel: +44 (0)20 7922 0300

Fax: +44 (0)20 7922 0399

Email: publications@odi.org.uk

© Overseas Development Institute 2007