

# **CSO Capacity for Policy Engagement: Lessons Learned from the CSPP Consultations in Africa, Asia and Latin America**

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Naved Chowdhury, Chelsie Finlay-Notman  
and Ingie Hovland

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in preliminary form for discussion  
and critical comment



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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| AAS       | Agricultural Advisory Services  |
| CBO       | Community-based organisation  |
| CDRI      | Cambodia Development Resource Institute   |
| CEDEP     | Centre for the Development of People, Ghana   |
| CG        | Consultative Group  |
| CIPPEC    | Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth, Argentina |
| CSO       | Civil society organisation  |
| CSPP      | Civil Society Partnerships Programme  |
| DFID      | Department for International Development  |
| DIN       | Development in Nigeria (Nigeria)  |
| EAC       | Export agriculture crops  |
| ESRF      | Economic and Social Research Foundation, Tanzania                                       |
| FCRA      | Fair Credit Reporting Act   |
| gNETPAD   | Ghana Network for Participatory Development   |
| IIED      | International Institute for Environment and Development                                 |
| ILDIS     | Latin American Institute of Social Research (Bolivia)                                   |
| INESOR    | Institute of Economic and Social Research   |
| INGO      | international non-governmental organisation   |
| IPS       | Institute of Policy Studies, Sri Lanka  |
| ITDG      | Intermediate Technology Development Group   |
| KKP       | Coalition of Participatory Policy (Koalisi Kebijakan Participative)                     |
| MEJN      | Malawi Economic Justice Network   |
| MDGs      | Millennium Development Goals  |
| MPRS      | Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy   |
| NAADS     | National Agricultural Advisory Services   |
| NGO       | Non-governmental organisation   |
| NGO-CSWG  | NGO Child Survival Working Group (MEDICAM)  |
| NGO-RHPWG | NGO Reproductive Health Partnership Working Group (MEDICAM)                             |
| ODI       | Overseas Development Institute  |
| PDA       | Participatory Development Associates  |
| PPA       | Partnerships Programme Agreement  |
| PPE       | Priority Poverty Expenditure  |
| PRP       | Parliamentary Reforms Programme   |
| PRSP      | Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers   |
| RAPID     | Research and Policy in Development Group, ODI   |
| TRIPs     | Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights  |
| TWG       | Technical Working Group   |
| WTO       | World Trade Organization  |

# Executive Summary

The nature of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in development work is changing, but how successfully – and leading where? While there is still a strong demand for CSOs to ‘sustain the good work’ in terms of direct service delivery, there is also a growing need for civil society to participate in policy processes, in order to bring about sustained long-term change. Surprisingly, there is very little systematic research on how CSOs all over the world are influencing policy processes, especially from the point of view of those actually involved in the policymaking process in the South.

This paper was written as part of the Civil Society Partnerships Programme (CSPP) funded by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID) and administered by the Research and Policy in Development Group (RAPID) at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), London. The CSPP aims to improve the capacity of Southern CSOs to influence pro-poor policy. During its first phase, the CSPP undertook a range of consultations across the world. Workshops and seminars were held in Southern Africa (Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique), Eastern Africa (Tanzania and Uganda), and West Africa (Ghana and Nigeria), South Asia (Bangladesh and Sri Lanka) South East Asia (Indonesia, Cambodia and Thailand) and Latin America (Peru, Bolivia and Argentina). Participants at these events were mainly from research institutes, national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and networks, along with a wide spectrum of stakeholders interested in the issue of bridging research and policy – including government officials, international NGOs and bilateral and multilateral donors. In total, approximately 800 members of civil society were in attendance. The events were organised in partnership with Southern policy research institutes in each country.

The aim of the CSPP consultations was to explore the views of Southern CSOs and other stakeholders on the issues of evidence-based policy engagement. Participants at the consultations discussed the opportunities and challenges for CSOs when using evidence to inform policy, presented lessons and best practice in this area, shared experiences about ongoing activities and identified opportunities for collaborative work. This paper aims to compare and contrast the lessons that emerged from the CSPP Southern consultations regarding the use of evidence-based policy-engagement, and for ODI to learn what role it may take in aiding CSO involvement in policy processes in the future, especially through the CSPP.

The first section of the paper deals with the influence of the political context on CSO impact on policy processes – from ‘internal’ factors such governmental structures, capacity and attitudes; to the political context of the country; to the wider ‘external’ influence of international politics. The second part of the paper presents the importance of good, timely, appropriate and well-presented evidence when trying to influence policymaking, as well as associated problems. The third section looks at the potentially limiting factors of CSO capacity (from financial capacity to resources) and links, and explores the importance of networks. Fourthly the paper covers external factors that influence the policymaking process, including the cases where donors have expansive control over research and policy processes. Finally, the last section of this paper summarises and presents the lessons on evidence-based policy-engagement that emerged from the consultations, and includes a section on specific recommendations and next steps for the CSPP as suggested by conference attendees.



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background: CSOs and the CSPP

The nature of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in development work is changing, but how successfully – and leading where? While some research has been undertaken to explore the changing dynamics of civil society participation in national and international policy processes, they are largely based on the experience of influential Northern players. Surprisingly, there is very little systematic research on how CSOs all over the world are influencing policy processes, especially from the point of view of those actually involved in the policymaking process in the South.

In the last 15 years increased democratisation and economic decentralisation in the South has been coupled with an increased global awareness of the importance of development work. The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), for example, were agreed at the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000 and nearly 190 countries have since signed up to them. But while there is still a strong demand for CSOs to ‘sustain the good work’ in terms of direct service delivery, there is also a growing need for civil society to participate in policy processes, in order to bring about sustained long-term change.

This paper was written as part of the Civil Society Partnerships Programme (CSPP), funded by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), which aims to improve the capacity of Southern CSOs to influence pro-poor policy. ODI is undertaking this programme between 2005 and 2011. It is administered by ODI’s Research and Policy in Development Group (RAPID), which aims to improve the use of research in development policy and practice through improved knowledge about research/policy links, improved knowledge management, learning systems and communication, and improved awareness of the importance of research. Further information is available at [www.odi.org.uk/cspp](http://www.odi.org.uk/cspp) and [www.odi.org.uk/rapid](http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid).

CSPP research during the first phase has focused on two broad questions: i) Does evidence matter to CSO work, and if so how, when and why? And ii) Can use of evidence improve the legitimacy and effectiveness of CSOs? Work has included literature reviews, cases studies, expert meetings and conferences. The report *Policy Engagement: How Civil Society Can Be More Effective* presents the main findings of this work. It focuses on four main issues: i) Why evidence is important for CSOs aiming to influence policy; ii) What the obstacles restricting CSO use of evidence for policy influence are; iii) What the possible solutions are and what CSOs need to do; and iv) How to do it. It cited the political context as the main obstacle to CSO influence in policymaking, as well as CSOs’ attitudes towards evidence-use. A lack of resources or capacity; communication and packaging of evidence, and the lack of networks, were also key issues that CSOs needed to address. For further information see [www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Achievements/Research](http://www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Achievements/Research).

## 1.2 The CSPP Southern consultations

The objective of this paper is to explore the views of Southern CSOs on the issues of evidence-based policy engagement. During its first phase the CSPP conducted a series of consultative seminars and workshops in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The aim was to provide a forum for representatives from policy research institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as other stakeholders, to come together. Participants discussed the opportunities and challenges for CSOs when using evidence to inform policy, presented lessons and best practice in this area, shared experiences about ongoing activities and identified opportunities for collaborative work.

Workshops and seminars were held in Southern Africa (Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique), Eastern Africa (Tanzania and Uganda), and West Africa (Ghana and Nigeria), South Asia (Bangladesh and Sri Lanka) South East Asia (Indonesia, Cambodia and Thailand) and Latin America (Peru, Bolivia and

<sup>1</sup> Court, J., E. Mendizabal, D. Osborne and J. Young (2006). The full report and a summary are available at [www.odi.org.uk/Rapid/Publications/Policy\\_engagement.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/Rapid/Publications/Policy_engagement.html)

Argentina). Participants at these events were mainly from research institutes, national NGOs and networks, along with a wide spectrum of stakeholders interested in the issue of bridging research and policy – including government officials, international NGOs and bilateral and multilateral donors. In total, approximately 800 members of civil society were in attendance. For a full list of consultations, see the Appendix.

The events were organised in partnership with Southern policy research institutes in each country: Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN) (Malawi); Institute of Economic and Social Research (INESOR), University of Zambia, (Zambia); Cruzeiro do Sul (Mozambique); Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF) (Tanzania); FARM Africa (Uganda); Participatory Development Associates (PDA), the Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP) and Ghana Network for Participatory Development (gNETPAD) (Ghana); Development in Nigeria (DIN) (Nigeria); Centre for Poverty Analysis (Sri Lanka); Unnayan Onneshan: Centre for Research and Action on Development (Bangladesh); Yappika: Civil Society Alliance for Democracy (Indonesia); MEDICAM (Cambodia); Latin American Institute of Social Research (ILDIS) (Bolivia); and Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth (CIPPEC) (Argentina).

In many of these workshops there was also a strong presence of bureaucrats and politicians who are strongly involved in policymaking. Indeed, it was very positive to see such a strong governmental influence at many of these conferences, and to know that both CSOs and governments shared the same broad developmental goals, especially in once autocratic countries. (Although it should be noted here that in some cases, governmental officials refused to listen to CSO experiences or even left the conferences early.)

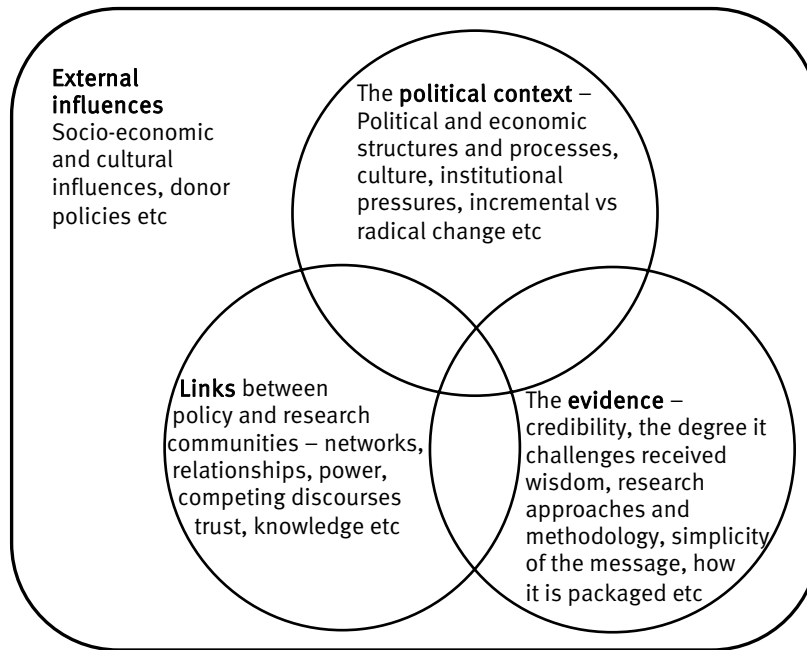
Presentation and sharing of case studies made up a crucial part of the consultations, enabling CSOs to share experiences and learn from others. The presented case studies and the discussions covered a wide range of issues highlighting CSO experience in research and policy, including: Budget Monitoring (Malawi); Transparency and Public Participation in National Budgets (Zambia); Poverty Monitoring (Mozambique); Agricultural Extension Services by NGOs (Uganda); NGO Policy and Poverty Reduction Action Plan (Tanzania); Government and Community Collaboration in a Waste Management Programme (Ghana); Participation of CSOs in Environmental Policy of Cross River State (Nigeria); Link between Evidence and Policy in Trade, Energy, Agriculture and Environment (Sri Lanka); Poverty and Unemployment (Bangladesh); Evidence and Policy: Lessons Learnt, Opportunities and Constraints (Cambodia); Experience of Public Participation in Policymaking (Indonesia); Role of Institutions in the Reform the Electoral System in Santa Fe (Argentina); and Application of Environmental law resulting from Petroleum Contamination (Bolivia). For further information see [www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations](http://www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations).

### 1.3 Aims and approach

This paper aims to compare and contrast the lessons learned at the CSPP Southern consultations regarding the use of evidence-based policy-engagement, to share experiences and ideas, and for ODI to learn what role it may take in aiding CSO involvement in policy processes in the future, especially through the CSPP. While this document can be used as a platform to present the issues that have emerged through the consultations across the world, we wish to note at the outset that every situation is unique, just as every country's culture, history, size, population, political systems, financial situation and infrastructures (to name just a few examples) are unique, and this should also be taken into account when reading the paper. There is no single prescriptive model to follow when seeking to improve CSOs' evidence-based policy-engagement, but there are many strategic options that CSOs can consider in light of their own context.

The consultations often used the RAPID framework (see figure 1) to frame the discussions around evidence-use and policy engagement. The issues that emerged have therefore loosely been grouped under the following four chapter headings in this paper: Policy and political context (chapter 2); Evidence (chapter 3); Capacity and links (chapter 4); and External influences (chapter 5).

Figure 1: The RAPID framework



Since these dimensions of policy engagement overlap, many cross-references will be made between the various sections of the paper.

- Chapter 2 deals with the influence of the political context on CSO impact on policy processes – from ‘internal’ factors such governmental structures, capacity and attitudes; to the political context of the country; to the wider ‘external’ influence of international politics.
- Chapter 3 presents the importance of good, timely, appropriate and well-presented evidence when trying to influence policymaking, as well as associated problems.
- Chapter 4 looks at the potentially limiting factors of CSO capacity (from financial capacity to resources), as well as the importance of links and networks.
- Chapter 5 covers external factors that influence the policymaking process – including the control that donors may influence over research and policy processes.
- Finally, the last section of this paper brings together lessons learned, and presents recommendations and ‘next steps’ as suggested by conference attendees. This includes some specific recommendations for ODI and the CSPP.

## 2 Policy and Political Context

Policymaking is not neutral; it is an inherently political process. From the consultations it seems that political factors have the greatest effect on the policymaking process – from internal political factors, such as governmental structures and capacity, to international political factors that enforce policy change.

### 2.1 Political context

Most crucially, participants at the consultations stressed the importance of CSOs understanding the political context of the country, both currently and historically. Political contexts have often made it hard for CSOs to get involved in policy processes, especially where democratic rule is relatively new and, as noted in the Nigerian context, ‘People are not used to living in democratic societies’. Often democracy is still more a concept than a practice, and politics does not necessarily represent the people.

*‘People are not used to living in democratic societies.’*  
(From the Nigeria consultation)

As Jenny Pearce, Professor of Latin American Politics at the University of Bradford, noted in her recent speech to ODI, ‘States and Civil Societies in the New Aid Approach’, many states are currently going through periods of democratic transition, particularly in the Latin American context.<sup>2</sup> Many of these are already formal democracies but lack full realisation of citizenship rights and have poorly functioning formal institutions. In general, surveys have shown that political parties and legislatures in Latin America are the least trusted institutions among citizens, ranking well below the Church and even the armed forces. This is clearly a problem if political parties are to be vehicles to represent citizen demands, as shown in the situation uncovered in the case study presented by Yappika on public participation in policy formulation in Indonesia.

#### **Case Study 1: Public participation in policy formulation in Indonesia**

The case study by Yappika (Civil Society Alliance for Democracy) describes the experiences of Coalition of Participatory Policy (KKP – Koalisi Kebijakan Partisipatif) in using evidence for advocating participatory policy development. Advocacy efforts by KKP on the draft legislation on Procedures for law formulation (RUU – Tentang Tata Cara Pembentukan Peraturan Perundang-Undangan) culminated into the first united effort in establishing a foundation for public participation in policy formulation in Indonesia. Despite the plethora of recent institutions working for democratisation of policy processes in Indonesia, the shadow of an authoritarian way of governance is still strongly entrenched. As a consequence, its dominant characteristics and main actors strongly reflect and sustain a process that distances people from the process of policy formulation. In order to change this situation through its continuous advocacy work, KKP has been able to achieve the following: increased public support and awareness regarding policy development and support from the members of the parliament, particularly from the five largest factions in the House of Representatives, for adopting its recommendation on people’s right to participate in policy formulation processes. KKP has realised that while the methods and techniques used to make policy more evidence-based can be varied and innovative, the impact of evidence, however, largely depends on its robustness vis a vis the dominant discourses, the nature and objectives of the political parties and the openness of the legislative procedures.

### 2.2 Political institutions

Another issue to emerge from the consultations was that all too often politicians feel they have little independence regarding voting on policy proposals, as they are not confident to vote against their party’s line. It is clear that in many cases, CSO efforts are severely hampered by the low-level functioning of political institutions, particularly at lower levels. Some participants noted that this was

<sup>2</sup> Pearce, J. (2006) Presentation at ‘States and Civil Societies in the New Aid Approach’ Meeting, 15th March 2006.

not made better by the low interest in research that some policymakers have. In almost every country there are research institutions that are either wholly funded by government (e.g. the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies) or partially funded by government (e.g. the Centre for Social and Economic Studies in Indonesia), but in reality both seem to have only limited impact on advancing policymakers' interest in research.

In the African consultations, the problem of the 'Politics of Participation' was brought up repeatedly. In order for policymakers to be seen to be fair and open, a CSO is invited to join the agenda-setting 'debate', but only once the government has made up its mind, and made a decision irrespective of the outcome of the debate with the CSOs. Moreover, in many cases policies are formed as a reaction to a crisis, such as in Malawi, where the discussion on the food policy only started during the food crisis. There is therefore little time for sustained research, and even where research may already have been conducted, policy is again formed irrespective of this. In these situations, to have any impact on policy, reform of the entire political system would be necessary – in other words, changing the process, not just the policy.

In some scenarios the product of this lack of community involvement is an increasingly confrontational relationship between civil society and the state and the de-institutionalisation of politics. As Jenny Pearce also noted in her speech, since the late 1980s 14 elected presidents have been unable to finish their constitutional terms in office, having been forced out by protest. This is particularly a challenge for donors, whose existing models of partnerships assume that state, civil society and markets share common interests.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.3 Political will

Indeed, another seemingly apparent but nevertheless important issue that was raised in the consultations was that of 'political will' – that governments must share the same goals or 'perceptions' as CSOs to take an interest in the first place. There are ways of 'forcing' an agenda into the political arena, as will be discussed later, but governments must be aware (or made aware) of the importance of the agenda and the direction in which the agenda is heading, because it is just as important that governments continue to uphold these goals during the lengthy policy process, particularly during the later monitoring and evaluation stages. Naturally unstable political contexts, such as those in Latin America, will increase the risk of policies being rejected at later stages by subsequent governments. In the Bangladesh seminar it was pointed out that the policy on women that had been adopted by the government in 1997 in line with the Beijing Platform for Action, had recently been amended because of a change in policymakers; a major setback for women's empowerment.

On the other hand, the fact that members of government took an active role in many of the CSPP consultations (for example in Mozambique, Zambia, Indonesia, and others) could be a very positive sign. However it was noted by Naved Chowdhury (ODI) that in some cases government officials were uninterested in the discussions, and at times even left during the middle of the conference. This shows that to have impact on policy processes, CSOs need to be aware of any incentive for the policymakers to be interested in research.

## 2.4 Political trust and credibility

In many cases governments are still very wary of or even mistrust CSOs (as indeed many CSOs continue to mistrust governments – an equally serious issue). Even in cases where governments were willing to work with CSOs, in the consultations there were frequent references to CSOs feeling they were treated as 'subcontractors' and not as equals.

The 'credibility' of CSOs is often questioned by policymakers – not just the credibility of the source of their research (an issue that will be addressed later in the paper), but the credibility of the CSOs' ability to provide an accurate, fair and critical analysis. This was the case for example in the project that

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<sup>3</sup> Pearce, *ibid.*

tested the Bwalo process – a widely-used community consultation process in Malawi – which faced enormous opposition by the Food Security National Consultative Forum and is still yet to be accepted by the wider development community. Additionally, as will be expanded on later, the influence of donor agendas on CSO work further weakens their credibility in the eyes of policymakers.

On a more positive note, in some contexts CSOs have a relatively long history of interaction with policymakers, so ‘policy influence’ is primarily concerned with building on previous CSO research and advocacy work, as noted in Bolivia, or ‘filling in gaps in policies’, as noted in the Sri Lankan context.

## 2.5 Accountability and access to information

So what could be done to improve relations between policymakers and CSOs? First of all let us consider this from the perspective of the policymakers and other government officials – what could they do?

CSOs repeatedly mentioned the need for policymakers to work on being more open and accommodating in their attitudes towards CSO involvement in policy processes. CSOs felt that they needed to be taken more seriously and needed credible platforms or ‘entry points’ from which they could join the policymaking process. If there could be less bureaucracy and red tape this would make consultations easier.

Access to information was a contentious point. As information is regarded as the key to power, access to data is very limited in certain countries (specifically where services are state-controlled). Not only do CSOs in these countries lack access to official data, but they may be prohibited from performing their own research. Where resources are nationally owned, suggestions for policies must be deemed acceptable to policymakers in order for research to be accepted. This has several implications, as illustrated in the following three examples:

- It was noted at the Bangladesh conference that even where it is possible to perform independent research, in some cases CSOs are wary of publishing their findings if these are perceived to be contradicting the government.
- In Mozambique the comment was made that individuals’ access to data varies even within government itself – it is a question of authority. Therefore CSOs’ ability to access accurate information is seriously impeded, not to mention the access of those the government is meant to be representing.
- In Cambodia, a strong point was made about the ‘danger’ and intimidation of isolated people in rural areas when trying to access information. It was stressed that it should be the role of the CSOs to gather and present the information, not only to the policymakers, but also back to local communities.

It must be taken into account that without access to accurate information it is difficult not only to put forward an informed argument to policymakers, but moreover to even understand the true depth of the situation and to create an agenda. In order to overcome this if governments are not forthcoming with the necessary information, CSOs may need to be more pro-active in data-gathering and compel policymakers to deal with the issue.

Involvement should also be a two-way process, with governments getting involved in CSO work through means such as ‘Peer Reviews’, as mentioned in the Zambian conferences. This improves understanding, accountability and most of all trust between the two groups, and helps the credibility of CSOs. Moreover, this is a good way to monitor that the research being done is appropriate and communicated effectively (another issue that will be dealt with later in the Evidence section of this paper). It also enhances the credibility of the research when a methodology is used that involves a diverse group of stakeholders, including the end consumer, e.g. the policymakers and bureaucrats, as shown by the case study on land reform in Mozambique.

### **Case Study 2: Evidence and policy: a case study on land reform in Mozambique**

Cruzeiro de Sul's case study illustrated how advocacy by civil society led to equitable land distribution in Mozambique. Motivated by the proposal that no rural dweller should be without land, 200 NGOs, churches and academics got together and launched a Mozambican civil society campaign – the Land Campaign. The Land Campaign proclaimed that in all villages in Mozambique all male and female rural dwellers have rights to land through occupation. The Land Campaign also maintained that in order to avoid conflicts over land, partnerships should be established between rural dwellers and businesses. In 1997 the new Land Law was approved after a big struggle between civil society and the private sector which, to the delight of the civil society, did not call for privatisation of land. At the same time, the following suggestions were integrated into the Law: acknowledgement of the rights of poor people even in the absence of any title in their name; acceptance of land as security for investment; and a single system for land owned by families or private sector, putting an end to dualism. The impact of this relatively more equitable distribution of land has been evident, with the most notable changes in agricultural productivity – which has risen nine per cent per year, an increase of domestic and international investment, and a dramatic decrease in the number of landless people in Mozambique. It is easy to realise that the new land law is a mix of modern and customary (traditional) law which has helped to minimise the incidence of conflicts over land. Not surprisingly, the study has also unearthed some interesting findings: access to credible information is still a challenge for civil society, with the majority of public sector employees not willing to share it with the public; there is a communication gap between different levels of government and, more importantly, between government and civil society; and the little information that is available often does not get to the population outside Maputo City due to the lack of means of communication. Finally, communities need to be proactive so that they do not become dependent on the policymakers for change. The study showed that proactive policy engagement helps to institutionalise a culture of collaboration with the government that is dynamic, equitable and participative.

In the Tanzania consultation, CSOs felt that governments need to be more transparent and accountable for their actions, by allowing easier access to official figures. A success story in this field comes from Zambia, where one of the outcomes of the Transparency and Participation Comparative Study (October 1999) is that civil society is free to monitor the implementation of the budget and to conduct independent research.

### **Case Study 3: Evidence and policy: budget transparency and participation in Zambia**

The Institute of Economic and Social Research (INESOR) case study in Zambia was part of a larger piece of research in which researchers from 10 African countries came together to undertake a cross-country analysis to identify major weaknesses in the budget process, explore how research by civil society can assist in overcoming these weaknesses, and suggest how a platform for the involvement of civil society in the budgetary process and decisions can be developed. The major findings of the study are: i) while the legal framework that guides the budgetary process in Zambia exists, it is particularly weak in the area of procuring and managing domestic and external debt; ii) a substantial number of financial transactions take place outside the established financial system in Zambia, contributing to under-reporting of national economic activity; iii) the total resource envelope of the government is unknown because of weak accounting and information management systems; iv) government officials' lack of skills in budget management has brought the watchdog role of various ministries and institutions under question; and v) pre-budget consultations between civil society, parliament and government are particularly weak. The study findings are expected to be a factor in designing the Parliamentary Reforms Programme (PRP) which seeks to improve the role and accountability of the parliament and other national institutions in budget formulation in Zambia.

## **2.6 Interaction between CSOs and government**

Although this may not be realistic in every country, many of the consultations voiced a clear demand for capacity development activities for policymakers, to help them understand more of CSOs' work and intentions, their backgrounds, aims and methods, and how partnerships between the two groups could be mutually beneficial. Changing the attitudes and structures of policymakers (specifically in governments) is not easy, and in some cases is almost idealistic. However, several suggestions were raised at the consultations concerning how CSOs could help make this change easier, or at least improve progress in working with policymakers in the current situation.

The most significant answer that was repeatedly given in all the discussions was the importance of CSOs' sustained 'engagement' with policymakers, in the form of a continuous commitment to relationship-building at all levels – through both formal and informal networks, inside and outside of

government. A detailed discussion about networks can be found below (in Chapter 4), dealing with what networks really are and why they are necessary, as well as between whom networks should be formed and what benefit they can provide. But with specific regard to relationships between CSOs and policymakers there was a repeated call for CSOs to get more involved in governmental structures – from having representatives in the National Assembly (as suggested in Zambia), to following the Sri Lankan suggestion of getting involved in Parliamentary select committees or even government taskforces and local governmental bodies. As quoted in the Ugandan context: ‘Success relies on local government support.’ In this way, as seen in the case study below from ESRF in Tanzania, CSOs can really find out what issues are being discussed by government.

#### **Case Study 4: CSO-government engagement: the case of ESRF, Tanzania**

The Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF) is a Tanzanian think tank that assists the Government of Tanzania in developing various policies for the country. ESRF gathers evidence through its wide portfolio of work such as research, commissioned studies, policy dialogue and capacity building. In this context, it was asserted that studies and research undertaken by ESRF have impacted on policy in Tanzania. Examples include: social and economic impact of HIV/AIDS in Tanzania; Trade and Poverty issues in Tanzania; the Participatory Poverty Assessment; and public expenditure reviews. In order to strengthen its credibility with the policymakers, ESRF puts emphasis on extensive consultation with the government institutions, while developing appropriate research methodologies, publishing research papers regularly (e.g. quota expenditure reviews), organising public seminars, workshops and policy dialogues and capacity development through training for other CSOs in Tanzania. The challenges faced by ESRF, quite appropriately, resonated with the comments made by CSOs elsewhere. These were limited financial resources, low demand from the private sector, retention of quality staff and an overall development environment where the agenda is set by different stakeholders making the policy process complex and varied. The presentation was concluded with remarks that ESRF has contributed substantially in making development research in Tanzania credible, so that in the future policies in Tanzania will have substantial research built into them; policymakers in Tanzania are now more accommodating to civil society involvement and therefore, to sustain this involvement, there is a urgent need to explore effective ways of financing policy research.

An issue which was also mentioned during the consultations, especially in Latin America, was what can be termed ‘peer pressure’ from CSOs themselves. There is always a danger that if one CSO is seen to be engaging very closely with policymakers then the other CSOs perceive it to be a ‘lackey’ of the government. In addition the CSOs themselves feel that if they engage too closely with the government, they run the risk of losing their independence.

*‘Success relies on local government support.’*

(From the Uganda consultation)

The Argentinean discussions stressed the importance of having ‘academic support’ or at least an ‘institutional presence’ in legislative committees. Similarly, in the Cambodian workshop, Dr Sin Somuny, Executive Director of MEDICAM, presented a case study on the organisation as an example of a Cambodian CSO that advocates for policy change. In his case study he confirmed the importance of CSO involvement in governmental discussion forums. This is particularly important in e.g. the high-level policy forum of the Consultative Group (CG). This is a platform where the donor community, CSO representatives, the private sector, and the top decision-makers of the Government meet annually. The CG discusses how much funding to provide to the Government, what priority agenda the money should be used for, and what benchmarks to monitor for the outcomes of government implementation. Dr. Somuny also spoke of the 18 Technical Working Groups (TWGs) for priority sectors that were established by the Royal Government of Cambodia and its link with the CG. These groups decide on sector strategies, develop action plans to ensure they are met, initiate strategic debates for policy change and formulation, and monitor and evaluate policy implementation. Each group is chaired by a member of Government and is co-chaired by a key donor. Only some NGOs are currently members of these working groups. To engage more fully with policy, Dr Somuny recommended that all CSOs should work more closely with the TWGs of the government.



*‘All CSOs should work more closely with the Technical Working Groups of the government.’*  
(From the Cambodia consultation)

MEDICAM itself is a key member of several TWGs, including ones for overall health, HIV/AIDS, food security and nutrition, and planning and poverty reduction (PPR). To increase the strength of its members' voices even more, MEDICAM has also formed its own NGO working groups: the NGO Reproductive Health Partnership Working Group (NGO-RHPWG) and the NGO Child Survival Working Group (NGO-CSWG).

Furthermore, informal networks can often be just as, if not more beneficial when trying to influence policy. In Sri Lanka the experience of the Institute of Policy Studies with regards to trade policy issues shows that policy influence can be done not just through major publications and tackling policymakers through formal means, but rather through short reports, closed door meetings, participation in committees and informal discussions with policymakers and relevant bureaucrats.

However, once again the importance of knowing individual countries' cultural contexts is vital here. In the Nigerian meeting, for example, it was stressed that CSOs should not try to get involved in governmental structures, as this perceived 'monitoring' of the government breeds feelings of mistrust and confrontation. The Nigerian participants also noted that CSOs should in general not be seen to be affiliated with any particular political party, as this will immediately undermine their credibility, both nationally and internationally, and could severely limit relationships with future governments.

## 2.7 Flexibility and negotiation

Several consultation participants noted that flexibility and negotiation were two important assets for good relationship-building skills. Just as governments need to listen to and work with CSOs, so CSOs need to listen to governments and realise when they are asking too much – whether in reality a particular policy is practical, and if it would be possible to implement it with the available financial or technical resources. Moreover, if many independent CSOs are trying to get involved in the policymaking process, each with their own agenda, aims and methods, how are policymakers to prioritise one project or CSO over another without bias or coming under criticism? Suggestions for how to overcome these problems will be explained in further detail in subsequent chapters.

Having said that, in the Indonesian consultation it was stressed that: 'When building links with governments it is very important to be cautious of the degree of compromise to be made.' The 'degree of compromise' CSOs are prepared to make must be especially carefully considered in situations where information is controlled or withheld by governments. As one of the key roles of many CSOs is to be a voice to those who cannot speak out, so their beliefs, aims and right to be heard should not be compromised for the wrong reasons, such as in the Bangladesh context mentioned above, where intimidation has been known to obstruct the publication of research findings.

*‘When building links with governments it is very important to be cautious of the degree of compromise to be made.’*  
(From the Indonesia consultation)

In some consultations it was agreed that following an approach of 'constructive criticism', rather than 'finger-pointing' and laying blame on policymakers for previous failings, was an appropriate approach. In other words, CSOs should be firm but constructive, as this lowers the risk of confrontation with policymakers. The value of effective communication of evidence to policymakers will be tackled properly in the Evidence chapter below, but it should be noted here that certain attendees believed evidence-based solutions suggested by CSOs would most likely be accepted if they were in line with and complemented governmental ideologies, such as was the case in Sri Lanka with the DEA and Agriculture policy below.

### **Case Study 5: Evidence-policy link in agriculture policy in Sri Lanka**

The case study from the Department of Export Agriculture (DEA) of the Government of Sri Lanka examines how findings from a technology adoption research programme have successfully influenced agricultural extension policy of Sri Lanka. Extension is one of the important government interventions in the promotion of the export agriculture crops (EAC) in Sri Lanka, which comprises spices and coffee, cocoa and essential oils. New research undertaken in the DEA as a response to various formal and informal discussions with the growers in different areas showed that there were low rates of technology transfer and willingness to adopt newer technologies in the EAC sector. The survey findings resulted in a change in strategy regarding extension which included: collectivising farmers to form village clusters, organising them into community-based organisations (CBOs) and linking every cluster with an extension officer. The assertion was that this strategy is cost effective and has a higher extension reach with better demonstrative effect. The Sri Lankan Ministry of Agriculture accepted the concept of cluster approach as a basis for its future extension work. There will be separate budget allocation to facilitate clustering, CBO formation, and associated training for both the farmers and extension officers.

It should also be noted that this policy of placating or appeasing governments was not shared by all consultation attendees. In contrast to the DEA and Agriculture policy mentioned above, Sri Lankan delegates mentioned the possible value of threatening litigation action against the government or ‘creating a media din’ to put governments under pressure, as described in the case study below.

### **Case Study 6: Influencing policies in Sri Lanka: the experience of EFL**

This case study presents the experience of Environment Foundation Limited (EFL), a CSO mainly consisting of lawyers working on environmental policy issues in Sri Lanka. EFL uses three types of methods to influence policy through their work and activities: representation, participation, and, most importantly, litigation. The first two methods are considered to be ‘low intensity’ mechanisms of influence where evidence is presented to policymakers and discussed. Representations are carried out by volunteer groups when it is known that a policy is being drafted or under discussion. Interventions or representations may not be solicited by the policymakers. Participation, on the other hand, is where the voluntary groups are requested to contribute to policymaking committees or working groups. The final method – litigation – is what is termed a ‘high intensity’ method. In this case policy change is demanded by seeking action through the judiciary process. While litigation is seen as the tool of last resort, it is always included in the larger package of tools used to influence policy. A policy cannot be taken to courts prior to its draft being prepared, but if there is no policy, litigation can create a situation where the court issues an order which influences a future policy. The specific case of how the above model was used can be seen in the case where evidence was being brought to bear on the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) negotiations and its implication for Sri Lanka. The study particularly explains section 27 of the TRIPs Agreement regarding patenting of indigenous plants and micro organisms.

In Bolivia there was even mention of the potential advantages of engaging in constructive ‘conflict’ with the government – i.e. CSOs encouraging and mobilising people in rallies and demonstrations. Again, local cultural practises and historical and political backgrounds could determine the effectiveness of these approaches.

From a CSO perspective, provoking or taking advantage of turbulent political situations can have both positive and negative impacts. On the negative side, an unsettled state of affairs can lead to difficulties in forming essential long-term networks between CSOs and policymakers. Moreover, as mentioned above, associations with previous governments can raise current policymakers’ and donors’ mistrust of certain CSOs and lower their credibility. Thus there is a fine line to be drawn for CSOs between networking with governments and seemingly being allied with them. However on the positive side, changes in government can be a good time to form new relationships where there have previously been weaknesses and to suggest new proposals, especially in the run-up to elections. The end of the Suharto era, for example, created space for Indonesian CSOs to begin to play a part in the policymaking process. It could also be a good time to motivate civil activism to ‘get the local voice heard’, so CSOs should improve their capacity to exploit this situation, should the time come. In Uganda, Argentina, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Tanzania, the need to acknowledge political changes as opportunities was emphasised.

It is also undeniable that international political pressure has a great bearing on policymaking, and CSOs, particularly international NGOs (INGOs) and those with strong international relationships, should use this to their advantage. However, consultations participants noted that care must be taken to ensure that agendas are ‘locally owned’ and not dictated by external influences, as has sometimes previously been the case. This problem will be expanded upon in a later chapter on External Influences.

### 3 Evidence

As we have already seen in the previous section, policymakers will not always recognise CSOs and their research in the policymaking process. As was noted in the Cambodian NGO forum, ‘In a largely corrupt political environment, evidence is still useful but reduced in effectiveness, as the motives of those with political responsibility are not always determined by evidence-based advocacy.’

Against this background it becomes very important for CSOs to build their own capacity to generate and use evidence in the most constructive and compelling manner. This is closely linked with their ability to engage with policymakers; as noted in many of the workshops, ‘The link between research and policy influence is cyclical – they feed into each other in a complimentary way’ (Nigeria).

*‘The link between research and policy influence is cyclical – they feed into each other in a complimentary way.’*

(From the Nigeria consultation)

#### 3.1 Timely, relevant and reliable information

Often CSO work is held back by weak political structures and a lack of ‘entry points’, and it would be more effective to train professionals in governments how to work with CSOs. But in reality this is not always possible. So instead, where policymakers and CSOs can work together, it has been established that CSOs must have access to solid, appropriate research that produces accurate, usable evidence, as much to affirm their credibility to policymakers, and help form good relationships, as to actually use in the policymaking process itself, as seen from the case study from Cambodia below.

##### **Case Study 7: Evidence and policy in Cambodia: lessons learnt, opportunities and constraints**

This case study from Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) draws out cross-cutting issues concerning evidence and policy from a development project currently being implemented in the Tonal sap region in Cambodia. The main issues presented are: i) It is important to develop a reputation among the stakeholders through research activities that is considered to be credible by the clients; ii) Good research creates better informed researchers; iii) The trend in Cambodia is to produce qualitative rather than quantitative analyses by the CSO community, which is often considered to be ‘soft’ by the policymakers; iv) Policy advocacy and analysis is about providing opportunities for public debate with and among different stakeholders and people have different ideas about objectives that can compete with and complement each other, and this discussion enriches the process and assist in exploring the best option; v) Donors have a disproportionate amount of influence over policy processes in Cambodia and therefore research needs to be aware of donor considerations; vi) While much work goes into policy development and ensuring that policy processes are participative, the implementation of these policies clearly takes a backseat to political considerations in Cambodia.

One of the clearest outcomes from the consultations was the importance of robust evidence in ensuring that policy is relevant and will in fact help those it is meant to be benefiting. It emerged in the Tanzanian consultations that until recently, there was no link between evidence-based research and policymaking, and undoubtedly this is true of a number of other countries too. While there are no universal criteria for ‘good evidence’ or an easy linear model that will transform research into policy, the practical need for ‘timely, relevant and reliable information’ could not be over-emphasised. In both the Ghanaian and Bangladeshi consultations, great importance was attached to long-term evidence gathering and the current lack of it: ‘Many active NGOs currently fail to document evidence when working with communities; instead they drop into communities for short periods to gather information.’

*‘Many active NGOs currently fail to document evidence when working with communities; instead they drop into communities for short periods to gather information.’*

(From the Ghana consultation)

### Case Study 8: Community composting project in Ghana

The case study from Ghana detailed a composting project that was facilitated by a CSO called Legal Resource Centre (LRC), with two communities in Accra, namely Nima and Mamobi. The project had the twin objectives of providing employable skills to the unemployed youths in the community and managing the composting activities through active collaboration between the people and the authorities. Analyses of the policy environment revealed that although the necessary laws and regulations exist on making sanitation accessible to all Ghanaians, it was the lack of implementation that hindered their effectiveness. Composting was not considered to be an acceptable way of using the waste generated, and therefore in rural Ghana this was hardly practiced. The study drew attention to various factors that influenced the decision of government on whether composting should be encouraged through supportive policies, including: advocacy and lobbying by LRC for efficient and affordable sanitation services; cooperation of the community in generating evidence regarding their needs for sanitation services; and collaboration between various government ministries and institutions. The approach of gathering evidence over a long period of time increased the authenticity of the data, while the resultant qualitative and quantitative analysis also made it more credible. The experience showed that documentation of data is crucial in making sure there is a better chance of a successful impact of research on policy.

Delegates at the consultations generally agreed that high-quality empirical evidence with simple analysis was more effective than more elaborate qualitative studies in ensuring that agendas accurately represent the social need (as well as for credibility reasons). There seemed to be some difference of opinion over whether the quantity of research was important. In Uganda for example, where there seems to have been a lack of research in many areas, the quantity of research seemed to be of greater importance than elsewhere. In Malawi, Tanzania or Cambodia, on the other hand, too much information was actually considered off-putting to many policymakers.

Often the problem is not that of a lack of research, but rather a lack of appropriate research that can actually be used. All too often different CSOs perform their own research on the same issues, which can be not only a waste of resources but provides policymakers with confusing, contrasting evidence. Another role of CSO networks would therefore be to develop tools to cross-check evidence (especially governmental figures) for similarities and differences, and either 'harmonise' it, as was suggested in Zambia, or present all the options to policymakers, as Malawi representatives preferred. Either way, documenting all efforts would prevent unnecessary duplication of research.

As has been mentioned repeatedly, historical and cultural factors must be taken into account when considering the likely effectiveness of a policy, and local information collected over a long period of time is imperative. Bolivian representatives emphasised the need for researchers to broaden their concepts of investigation, as verbal and visual documentaries, case studies and general observations could provide key evidence. Getting local communities involved in research is essential in ensuring that the social issues that are considered to be their highest priority is being addressed by the research. It is also essential that evidence produced from research should be fed back to local communities to ensure that it is correct and relevant and this can be done in several ways (e.g. through the media, as discussed further below).

*'Researchers need to broaden their concepts of investigation – verbal and visual documentaries, case studies and general observations can provide key evidence.'*

(From the Bolivia consultation)

Policymakers must be presented with the full picture and be able to compare previous successes or failures with current information in their evaluations. For the same reasons CSOs must also ensure they keep policymakers up to date throughout the policymaking process with their current findings. CSOs should also look back at why, in the past, certain issues fostered by social mobilisation have influenced policy faster or to a greater extent than others, as shown in the case study below from Bangladesh which explains how politics plays a bigger role in determining rice prices in Bangladesh than the market forces.

### Case Study 9: Evidence and policy in Bangladesh: lessons learnt, opportunities and constraints

This study by the Unnayan Onneshan analyses the evidence behind the increasing price of rice in Bangladesh and provides insights into the rice trading system. The case study shows that middlemen play a key role in deciding the price of rice in the country and that the high cost of inputs, fertiliser, and irrigation, compounded by the poor access of farmers to formal credit systems, are the main reasons behind the high price of rice. In this regard the study asserts that the government could take appropriate measures to maintain the stability of the market price of essentials by declaring a fixed rate for procurement of rice. In order to bring changes in the policy based on the evidence of price hikes and farmers' share of the price, Unnayan Onneshan is advocating for a comprehensive rice pricing agreement between farmers and the government which will offer farmers the opportunity to sell their harvest to licensed mills at a fixed price. The study also draws attention to the issue of subsidy to agricultural produce in Bangladesh, which is less than two per cent of the total output in agriculture, although the permissible amount is 10 per cent under World Trade Organization (WTO) rules. This is creating a difference between importing (Bangladesh) and exporting countries' (e.g. USA, Australia) terms of trade, with exporting countries enjoying a bigger advantage. Based on this evidence, it proposes an alternative policy option to fund the Net Food Importing LDCs which will allow them to provide financial support to the farmers, at least to the level permitted by the WTO. Unnayan Onneshan is advocating for the establishment of a compensatory fund for food importing least developed countries.

## 3.2 Effective communication

Another clear lesson to be learned from the consultations was that effective communication of evidence to policymakers (and others) is imperative. In some cases, such as in Bangladesh and Cambodia, policymakers were simply unaware of the existence of quality research. Evidence should be packaged in a simple way to make it easy to use. Often over-complicated, technical reports and excessive statistics are off-putting to policymakers. As mentioned in Chapter 2 above, in the Sri Lankan IPS Trade Policy experience, short reports (along with informal meetings and networking) were more effective than major publications.

An important point that was raised in the African consultations was that knowledge exchange in Africa is largely an oral exercise rather than a written one, and therefore technical reports will clearly not be very effective. As mentioned by the Information Minister of Zambia, 'Research needs to be brought into the public arena so that it is not an intellectual exercise for a few, but rather a tool for solutions for millions of poor people.'

*'Research needs to be brought into the public arena so that it is not an intellectual exercise for a few, but rather a tool for solutions for millions of poor people.'*

(From the Zambia consultation)

Language can be a deciding issue, especially where evidence is presented in a foreign language (for example, where research has been performed by international organisations), instead of the local language. Often it is not the policymakers but their secretaries who have first access to research documents, and if they are not translated into the local language they might not be recognised as important or valid documents, and so may never even reach the policymaker. Even when the policymaker does find it important, this does not guarantee implementation on the ground. CSOs must also consider language technicalities when presenting the information back to local communities, as will be covered in more detail further below.

Information needs to be explained and communicated to policymakers in such a way that real solutions and benefits are obvious, such as in this Sri Lankan case study.

### **Case Study 10: Evidence-policy link in the alternative energy development policies in Sri Lanka**

This case study from the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG), Sri Lanka describes how small-scale energy projects implemented in several villages and lessons learned from these endeavours helped to promote the use of micro hydro schemes as a low cost alternative source of energy in Sri Lanka. While demonstrating the viability of the micro-hydro option for electricity generation in Sri Lanka, a few interesting aspects were identified: the functioning of electricity consumers' society is an effective model for ensuring community participation and ownership of the programme; political affiliations are a major factor in extending the grid and therefore the projects staff need to be aware of this factor; a significant consideration for providing energy to remote communities is the cost of grid extension; and the state and politicians see access to energy as a good source of political gain. On the issue of policy implication of any small scale project, the leaders and the officials were impressed by the success stories from the field level. Through consistent and sustained advocacy by the communities and the dissemination of information on benefits to the local population, the Sri Lankan government, particularly the various provincial councils have started to allocate funds for micro hydro power generation in their provinces. Over the last four years, the allocation for decentralised alternate sources of energy which includes micro hydro has increased to about 25 per cent of the amount allocated for overall power sector. For the period 2006-2010, the provincial councils have budgeted significant amounts of money to develop alternative energy sources including micro hydro.

Scare-mongering tactics were on the whole thought to be an ineffective way of influencing policymaking, as policymakers refused to be 'bullied' into formulating policies. Instead, participants in the consultations thought it better to have actual working examples where similar policies have worked elsewhere, as in the case study above.

### **3.3 Timing and planning**

Timing is a significant factor in the presentation of evidence. As mentioned in Chapter 2, matters such as general elections or international political pressures can have great influence on the success or failure of converting agendas into implemented policies. Moreover the right advocate must be selected to present the findings – selected for their skills as much as their expertise on the subject. They must understand the policy process, including understanding who to present the evidence to and how, according to the context, whether networking would be an effective means of getting the evidence acknowledged (and then whether to follow a more formal or informal approach) or whether a more aggressive 'high intensity' approach would be necessary to put pressure on policymakers, as described in the Influencing Policies in Sri Lanka case study above.

The use of innovative and original suggestions in research was thought to be a good way of catching policymakers' attention in Argentina. As suggested in Uganda, rather than provoking negative reactions in policymakers by constantly raising controversial issues, tackling a 'subsidiary' issue where the government feels less threatened could be a more successful way to raise key questions, since successfully addressing one particular agenda could raise awareness of other interconnected agendas, and so could promote a wave of social policy change.

In sum, evidence should be presented by the right people, to the right people, in the right way and at the right time.

### **3.4 Attribution and impact assessment**

But despite these lessons that CSOs can learn from, it was repeatedly asked, particularly in the African consultations, how one can prove that research is actually having an impact on policy. The extent of impact on a policy takes time to judge and those involved and affected by it may vary. Kaima of FARM-Africa in Uganda noted in his case study that research evidence does not always have the same success in different contexts. As an illustration it was noted that in Thailand CSOs have played a vital role in combating HIV spread and the symptoms of HIV fell immediately, unlike in Southern Africa and Uganda where the CSOs have had less success in impacting the policy on HIV/AIDS. Tanzanian delegates suggested that to assess the impact of CSO contribution on policy processes, it is important to assess how rich the policy document is in comparison to what was there before.

One useful suggestion is that certain 'success indicators' need to be drawn up in the planning stages. The indicators must take into account that successful policy influence is not always a tangible quantity. Sometimes it can be expressed through greater awareness among policymakers, or in greater use of evidence in specific policy debates. And even when research does lead to tangible and structural change, Zambian attendees pointed out that in their situation, there can be a serious delay between policy formulation and implementation, so that in order to achieve the predetermined 'success indicators' CSOs must have the capacity and intention to be involved in every level of the policymaking process.

## 4 Capacity and Links

One of the most frequently recurring lessons learned from the consultations was that in order to improve their interaction with policymakers, CSOs need to improve their own capacity. ‘Capacity’ is a very broad term, covering many aspects, from policy advocacy skills to technical knowledge, research skills and resources. Clearly, capacity development takes time. Ideally policymakers too need to work on their capacity and skills (see the case study below), not only to be more accommodating to CSOs, but also to be more aware of the available research and able to make better use of it in policymaking. But again, institutional change cannot be forced upon governments – so what can CSOs do with regards to capacity development to improve themselves?

### Case Study 11: National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), Uganda

National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) of Uganda is part of an Africa-wide network for Agricultural Advisory Services (AAS) that was formed in an effort to foster and enhance experience sharing and lesson-learning on AAS in Sub-Saharan Africa. The rationale behind NAADS is the failure of the traditional extension approach to bring about greater productivity and expansion of agriculture in Uganda, despite costly government interventions. A key feature of this problem is the lack of effective approaches to empower farmers, hence the emphasis in NAADS’ approach is to empower farmers to demand and control agricultural advisory services. Coupled with this is the need to have efficient and sustainable service delivery. While NAADS provides the biggest source of financing for advisory services, through a budget support arrangement involving government and development partners, there is no clear effort by the government to enhance the capacity of CSOs in agricultural advisory services and policy research. While there are several networks in the country lobbying and advocating with NAADS, e.g. the Coalition for Effective Extensions Delivery and Gender Alliance on NAADS, there is no evidence to suggest that this has had any impact on policy. Therefore, although the trend towards private service delivery is positive in Uganda, there are still important gaps that need to be tackled. The main reasons for inadequate performance of service providers revolve around issues of technical competency, use of participatory and practical extension approaches, and application of knowledge and skills acquired. Not surprisingly, therefore, progress on development of private sector oriented service provider networks is quite slow. This has left service provider firms working in an isolated way, and not having a common voice to negotiate with local governments, or to ensure that farmers obtain value for money.

### 4.1 Choosing roles and responsibilities

First of all CSOs need to decide which path they wish to follow, as many are still confused as to their responsibilities. While there is still a strong demand for CSOs to ‘sustain the good work’ in terms of direct service delivery, there is an increasing pull for civil society to participate in policy processes. Even having decided to follow the policy-influence path, CSOs’ functions can still vary greatly – from being an independent research-based organisation, to an advocacy-based role, or, with sufficient resources, combining the two.

In Indonesia, for example, suggestions were made that CSOs’ main priority should be to act as an intermediary between local communities and government or as a lead ‘networker’ within government. However, other delegates frequently stressed the importance of providing accurate, relevant research by CSOs to influence policymaking. In Tanzania and Argentina it was suggested that international CSOs should train indigenous researchers, as they have a better understanding of cultural and historical factors and might even appear more credible to policymakers. The feeling from Bolivia was that civil society’s role was more to educate and mobilise the people to confront their own government and hold them to account. In Bolivia, as in Sri Lanka, it is accepted that most policies are formed as reactions to crises, so there is therefore a lack of applied research, and time is not taken to consider the evidence that does exist.

Moreover, CSOs’ level of representation and involvement in policy formation will be determined by their ethical principles. It is vital therefore, that CSOs have clear aims, methods and beliefs, as much for their own understanding as for their credibility in others’ eyes. CSOs need to recognise the full extent of their chosen role; policy-influencing is not simply about research and advocacy, and does not end once the agenda is set. They must be prepared to continue their work throughout the entire policymaking process.



## 4.2 Understanding policy processes

Indeed, one of the biggest issues to emerge from the Indonesian, Sri Lankan, Ugandan and Zambian consultations was that CSOs must work harder at understanding how the whole policy process works in their respective countries. It is a complex process with overlapping phases, including agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making and policy implementation, as well as the processes of monitoring and evaluation, adjusting or terminating the policy. Even within these phases, there are many sub-levels.

For example – looking at agenda setting – from the CSO point of view, issues must firstly be acknowledged and prioritised, research must be performed and analysed to make sure evidence is relevant, and the right people must be targeted in the right way, at the right time with the right methods, as discussed at the end of Chapter 3 above. All this must be done simply in order to put this on the agenda for policymakers.

It is important for CSOs to fully understand how each of these stages work in order to ensure that their work influences all stages of policymaking and ensure that at no point does the policy deviate from the original aims. It is not sufficient merely to present the evidence to the policymakers and assume that the rest will take care of itself.

## 4.3 Financial, technical and human resources

Another key finding to come out of Mozambique and Malawi was that in some cases CSOs feel they are too busy with other (e.g. direct service delivery) work to get involved in policy processes, especially in the final stages of monitoring and evaluation of the policy. This undoubtedly also has to do with a lack of a different sort of capacity, namely resources.

To get involved in policy-influencing, CSOs must have sound resources. Ideally CSOs would have the knowledge as well as the resources to undertake their own in-house research, but it is accepted that not every CSO will have the capacity to do this due to financial and technical limitations, among other capacity issues. The lack of technical or expert knowledge and skills among CSOs was cited as being one of the biggest impediments to their effective policy-influencing.

It is imperative therefore for every CSO to have access to good quality evidence, and networking between CSOs, for example, can make this possible. It is important too that the smaller CSOs have the capacity to correctly analyse others' research and make good use of it to avoid contradictory, irrelevant or confusing evidence being presented to policymakers. Unfortunately this seems to be where consultation participants believed many CSOs currently fell short.

CSOs themselves pointed out the problem of retaining quality staff in an increasingly competitive job market, particularly where there seems to be a lack of clarity about roles, responsibilities, training and opportunities, especially amongst researchers. It is essential to find a way to motivate and retain good staff. In Bangladesh, academic researchers noted their difficulties of fitting into a 'predominantly activist organisational culture', and this might push them to leave the CSOs.

But it was not just in the research arena that CSOs were noted to lack important skills. The MEJN case study in Malawi, for example, observed: 'While the political space is opening for civil society participation in policy processes, the lack of capacity and policy advocacy skills among CSOs is the greatest drawback that requires urgent redress.' As Lwanga-Ntale points out, CSOs need to have the capacity to be 'able to effectively participate in international debates, thereby bringing out [a Southern] voice' (quoted in Menocal and Rogerson 2006:6). According to Alina Rocha Menocal and Andrew Rogerson (2006), few Southern CSOs have begun to build this capacity, so support for these CSOs is crucial.

*'While the political space is opening for civil society participation in policy processes, the lack of capacity and policy advocacy skills among CSOs is the greatest drawback that requires urgent redress.'*

(From the Malawi consultation)

## 4.4 Collaboration

Following on from the NAADS experience in Uganda, another lesson that was frequently cited was the importance that CSOs in one country work together, to form a 'united voice' on policy, rather than compete for resources and 'entry points'. Very few CSOs actually have the capacity to influence policy all the time. More details about the general benefits of relationship-building or networking are given further below. For now we can note that collaboration enables CSOs to:

- pool resources (including technical knowledge) and infrastructure;
- cut administrative costs;
- combine local knowledge with international resources (and funding);
- learn from others' previous successes and failures; and
- prevent duplicated, contradictory or misinterpreted research.

Moreover, it would improve the credibility of INGOs to have better 'local knowledge', and it would improve the credibility of smaller, grassroots CSOs to be affiliated with known research bodies – important not only in the eyes of the policymakers but in those of potential donors too.

Indeed it was suggested in Indonesia that CSOs should also focus on building community-level input; in other words improve local peoples' capacity to collect data and perform research, as well as informing them of their rights and mobilising them to stand up for them, as seen in the FARM Africa case study below.

### **Case Study 12: Food and Agriculture Research Management (FARM Africa), Uganda**

FARM Africa is a UK-based NGO working with smallholder farmers and herders in six countries in Africa. It has been providing funding for technology transfer projects to contribute to the realisation of farmers' dreams and enable them to appreciate the need to demand appropriate policies to accelerate development. This project involves the implementation of a Dairy Goat and Animal Health Project in the districts of Mbale and Sironko in Eastern Uganda. In one and a half years of working with smallholder farmers, support has been drawn from the participating communities, local governments and collaborating institutions. The project has given communities goats, both local and toggenburg breeds and trained farmers and extension staff to manage the project. Institutional arrangements are underway to develop the skills of communities to empower them to sustain the project activities. Lessons have been drawn from the experiences of working with rural farmers and other stakeholders, such as: success of the project needs support from local government; there is a need to develop the capacity of local institutions, e.g. breeder associations; there has been a change of attitude among the majority of the farmers towards commercialisation of agriculture; and project success has generated demand even in areas outside the project area. The case study highlighted how the CSO has targeted policy through: use of contact farmers and private service providers in offering agricultural extension services; promoting commercialisation of agriculture in line with the Government of Uganda's policy Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture; and targeting poverty reduction by empowering farmer groups in decision-making.

Uniting CSOs that are working towards the same goals also has the added bonuses of giving them strength in numbers when engaging with policymakers, and means that policymakers no longer have to choose between agendas.

In Uganda, it was suggested that CSOs should focus on their own specialised interest areas (such as health, sanitation, agriculture, etc) rather than trying to stretch their resources to cover all corners. This could be very effective if CSOs were to work together and pool resources. Take for example the case study presented by MEDICAM in the Cambodian workshop: The history of civil war and genocide in Cambodia has given birth to a multitude of individual CSOs, specifically involved in direct service delivery. Competition between these CSOs has become a serious issue, especially for smaller local

CSOs. The CSOs with the most resources, normally ‘external’ or at least externally-funded organisations tend to come out on top. It is important however that the voices of local NGOs, representing local people’s priorities, are heard. It is the function of the CSO to transform local people’s insight into applicable evidence through their own expertise. One of MEDICAM’s main aims is to incorporate and work with local NGOs, to combine their own obvious advantages as an international organisation with local knowledge to make sure policy agendas are ‘locally owned’.

#### **Case Study 13: MEDICAM Cambodia: research, advocacy and policy influence**

The MEDICAM case study provides a brief overview of the work the organisation has done regarding evidence and policy over the last few years. Established in 1998, Medical is a network of organisations working on health issues in Cambodia. MEDICAM’s activities include information sharing, advocacy, capacity development and representing the voice and concerns of CSOs working in the health sector in Cambodia. MEDICAM uses various forums to present its opinion; apart from the national assembly and government ministries, MEDICAM is also a member of various technical groups that are linked to the Consultative Group (CG) where the donor community, CSO representatives, the private sector and policymakers meet annually to make decisions regarding the development agenda of Cambodia. To further consolidate its input, MEDICAM has also formed its own NGO working groups: the NGO Reproductive Health Partnership Working Group (NGO-RHPWG) and the NGO Child Survival Working Group (NGO-CSEG). This study also shows how the development process in Cambodia is highly influenced by donors. The challenges identified by MEDICAM regarding the general policy development in Cambodia are: the questions around the quality of research-based information produced by the CSOs; weak networking among the CSOs in Cambodia; lack of harmonisation of research and advocacy efforts by the CSOs; and the general environment of mistrust and ‘finger pointing’ between the CSO community and the government. The significant lessons learned by MEDICAM through its policy advocacy work include: the realisation that empirical evidence is the best way to influence policymakers in Cambodia; the inputs by CSOs need to be well documented; CSOs should engage with the government by providing constructive criticism rather than being confrontational; and last but not least, informal agreement with the government and the donors before the official event assists in reaching the required change in policy.

## **4.5 Involving all stakeholders**

All stakeholders (including donors and local communities) should be involved from the initial stages of gathering evidence, so that all individual aims and methods as well as collective aims and methods will be highlighted, the division and allocation of resources is clear, and trust, understanding and even interest will be upheld within the network. It is here that questions should be aired and solutions established for potential problems that may arise later in the process. In this way everybody involved should be clear as to their own roles and responsibilities and should maximise the chances of the agenda being implemented and continued. Most importantly, by including local voices in the agenda-setting process, it will go some way towards ensuring that policies are ‘locally owned’.

In Tanzania there seemed to be serious resentment that researchers, policymakers and even donors live in a very different world to those whom policy should be helping, and that they sometimes appear ignorant of their public’s true needs. In Indonesia it was suggested that policymakers themselves should become involved right from the start of the planning process and evidence gathering, to ensure that the research undertaken produces workable evidence that they will easily be able to use (cf. the importance of the way in which evidence is presented, discussed above).

In Menocal and Rogerson (2006) it is noted that contributors to the Southern Voices project highlight how the asymmetric treatment of ‘local’ versus ‘international development experts’ is contributing to a brain drain across Southern countries. In order to treat all partners as ‘equal’, ‘it seems essential for donors to deal with these imbalances in knowledge production and expertise’ (ibid). Indeed, a participant at the Cambodian workshop made the point that, ‘If people are not part of the process of developing the solution and don’t feel any ownership of it, it will not be accepted as easily.’ Moreover, getting policymakers involved at such an early stage improves the interaction between them and the local community and they can see the need for themselves.

*'If people are not part of the process of developing the solution and don't feel any ownership of it, it will not be accepted as easily.'*

(From the Cambodia consultation)

## 4.6 Networks

One recommendation was reinforced throughout the consultations more than any other – namely the role of networks. Specific networks between particular participants and the benefits they bring have been discussed above, such as how networking between CSOs and policymakers can improve credibility and trust on both parts, and how CSOs working with local communities can ensure that policy is pro-poor, for example. But 'networking' is a very broad term, and as it evidently carries great importance for consultation participants, the first part of this section is dedicated to further explaining the overall role, importance, functions and problems of networks in policymaking.

The value of creating successful networks between all actors involved in policy processes right from the initial stages – including local communities, CSOs, policymakers, researchers, international governments and donors (or other external influences) – could not be more highly stressed in the consultations. It is vital that everyone understands others' objectives, beliefs, strengths, weaknesses and concerns so that the relationships are not only strategic and mutually beneficial but effective and durable. To be effective, relationships need to be binding. Relationship-building ensures that policies really are 'mutually accountable', as emphasised by the World Bank in their Global Monitoring Report 2005 and are less likely to fail later on if problems occur. It improves transparency, credibility and accountability on the part of all involved, and develops trust by 'bridging the gap' between local communities and the government.

As noted in the Zambian conference, 'Networks cut across the political divide'. Good relationships between policymakers and local communities (or the CSOs that represent them) mean that policy is more likely to accurately represent the people they are trying to represent, and makes research agendas more likely to be accepted by policymakers, as shown below in the case study from Malawi.

*'Networks cut across the political divide.'*

(From the Zambia consultation)

### **Case Study 14: Civil society participation in the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy**

Taking the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy (MPRS) as an example, the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN) case study discusses key issues of participation in policy processes by CSOs in Malawi. Although the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) called for an extensive broad-based participatory process that not only involved the government, but also members of civil society, especially the poor, in the design of policies that will affect their lives, this was not an easy challenge to overcome in Malawi. The participation of CSOs in MPRS was ensured through consistent advocacy by civil society, while external development partners also put considerable pressure on the government to include them. The Malawian CSOs have been engaged in the budget monitoring process by analysing expenditures in different sectors under PPE (Priority Poverty Expenditure). The contribution of civil society consisted of the submission of sectoral networks to the parliament on PPEs and monitoring citizens' satisfaction with the quality of the public services using the service delivery satisfaction survey. The study highlighted several important issues: the diverse agenda of the civil society community makes it difficult to have a common voice on policy issues; the lack of financial resources and skilled staff frequently exacerbates their limited capacity to analyse complex quantitative data; and most important of all, it is difficult to harmonise the grassroots evidence from different areas of the country in order for it to be effectively linked to the policy debate.

Networks are more effective than individuals at producing, sharing and strengthening evidence. In Nigeria it was pointed out that in terms of obtaining good quality research, uniting a broad spectrum of experts from different backgrounds and perspectives (for example lawyers, journalists and scientists) will increase researchers' accuracy and credibility in the eyes of donors. Informal networks can be

especially useful, as they can often help to reduce much of the bureaucracy involved in policy processes. Feeding information into ‘lower levels’ of governmental structures (such as local authorities) can often be a much more effective way of getting evidence acknowledged than approaching ‘higher levels’. Forums between the network partners were noted as an important way of discussing and evaluating feedback and maintaining good, workable relationships.

However, one must remember that different network functions will not be effective in all situations; for example, networks can act as filters, amplifiers, conveners and providers, depending on the situation. One of the key lessons to come out of the International Forum for Rural Transport and Development – Latin America (IFRTDAL) workshop in Cuba and a recommendation to the networks in Peru is that of the role of the ‘ayayero’.

#### **Case Study 15: The role of the ‘ayayero’**

In Latin American popular music there is always a point in a song when the mood calms down and the tempo slows down to a waltz. After a few moments, when the audience is beginning to get used to the new rhythm, someone, in the crowd or in the band, steps up and shouts: ‘Ay-ay-ay-ay-ay!’ And the music livens up again and people get up on their seats and the dance kicks off. This is the ‘ayayero’, in Peru, or ‘gritero’ (literally, shouter) in Colombia. In Africa, this would be similar to an ‘ululation’. The ‘ayayero’ is not just some enthusiastic musician or a publican. S/he has been charged with that responsibility and has had to prepare well for it. Being an ayayero requires not only an excellent understanding of the music itself, but also of the audience and its mood that particular night. They must be able to identify ‘amateur ayayeros’ in the audience (who will pick up the lead right away); choose the right moment to change the tempo of the music (either prolonging the waltz or cutting it short). The ‘ayayero’, however, is not responsible for the chords played after his ‘Ay-ay-ay-ay-ay!’ The songs are usually chosen by the band leader (who is not always the singer) by means of frequent informal conversations with the audience. It is his/her role to encourage them to put forward requests, identify the options and choose them and their order. Band leaders facilitate (or ‘facipulate’, depending on their own ability to improvise) the process.

The same is true in networks, particularly those that require active participation of their members. Networks, for a proper functioning, need a facilitator but also an ‘ayayero’. The ‘ayayero’s’ role is to identify the ebbs in the discussions, the key subjects that members respond to and gather allies to follow up motivating calls with concrete ideas and proposals. S/he can, if that is to be his/her role, also act as a facilitator. But the ‘ayayero’s’ main responsibility is to motivate, to wake the members up, to shock them (sometimes) into action (of any sort), and to remind them of old promises and ideas that have been quiet for a while. Often, networks rely on their managers to fulfil this role. Network coordinators assume the responsibility to motivate the members and try to liven up their debates. Unfortunately, both roles require full-time attention and dedication. The ‘ayayero’ cannot take his/her eyes off the group, while the coordinator needs to deal with administrative and logistical issues that often happen in the background and away from the members. Just like in Peruvian popular music, the ‘ayayero’ could be someone in the secretariat of the network (i.e. in the band) or a member (i.e. in the audience). When setting up a list serve, for example, list managers need to keep a balance between the time they dedicate to safeguarding the technology and motivating and guiding the discussion. This is why most e-mail forums also have a team of moderators – usually located in different parts of the world to guarantee that there will be someone awake enough at any given time. Therefore, a key recommendation to networks is to identify those roles within their group of members or managers, define the exact extent of their responsibilities, and provide them with the necessary resources. A good ‘ayayero’ can be the difference between an active and ever-growing network and a dying one; or between a hit and a flop.

*Source:* [www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Projects/PPA0103/Ayayero.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Projects/PPA0103/Ayayero.html)

Furthermore, different networks require different structures for maximum effectiveness, and specific networks will need to carefully consider how many and which functions they can carry out successfully. The networks CAMPE in Bangladesh, KPD in Indonesia and One Sky in Nigeria have all had fundamental roles in generating knowledge and research in education, governance, democratisation and environment respectively, but their success relied on having a clear strategy and focusing their work to organise information and analysis from different network members. Indeed, networks face many and wide-ranging problems; from unequal access amongst members and escalating transaction costs with increasing distances between members across many different countries, to the knock-on effect on the network of individuals’ problems. These challenges must be dealt with openly and clearly.

## 4.7 Financial resources, planning and budgeting

Creating networks of CSOs increases the need for capacity development with regards to planning and budgeting. In any project, thorough planning of all the stages of policymaking is important to ensure that the right research is being undertaken and that it will consequently be delivered in a practical manner. Much comment was made in the consultations about CSOs rushing through affairs without thorough planning, and thus they are weak when facing hurdles and regularly lose sight of goals in their desperation to ‘do something’. Tanzanian representatives in particular highlighted the need for improved accuracy of research planning, noting, ‘Failure in policies should not always be attributed to a lack of research information; it could be the result of poor issue identification or poor prioritisation.’

*‘Failure in policies should not always be attributed to a lack of research information; it could be the result of poor issue identification or poor prioritisation.’*

(From the Tanzania consultation)

With regards to money as a limiting factor for CSOs, it must first of all be stressed that the value of money spent on research and policy engagement will outweigh the initial costs if it actually leads to positive policy change. Thus ideally these values should not be compromised for the sake of money. But as demonstrated in the MEDICAM case study, those with more money often have more voice.

The very nature of civil society work means that funding and allocation of money is another clearly contentious issue, especially as private sector funding for research is relatively new. The influence of donors on policymaking and specifically on research will be addressed in further detail in the ‘External Influences’ section below, but with regards to financial capacity, what lessons learned in the consultations can CSOs use to make their role in policymaking more effective?

Several participants noted that the importance of sound budgeting cannot be stressed enough. All factors, including possible problems, should be considered during the planning stage and included as a contingency plan in the budget. Networking has further benefits as uniting organisations that are working towards the same goals will naturally help to share and even reduce costs, and external donors will be more likely to give funding, as the network will be seen to be more serious, with better resources and more chance of success. With regards to reducing expenditure, delegates in Uganda suggested making use of government figures for research (where possible), and the internet:

- The Forum on the Future of Aid ([www.futureofaid.net](http://www.futureofaid.net)) for example, was created as an initiative of ODI's project on Southern Voices for Change in the International Aid System, to encourage online dialogue and discussion on research and opinions about how the international aid system currently works and whether and how it could be reformed.
- ‘Choike’ ([www.choike.org/nuevo\\_eng](http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng)) is dedicated to improving the visibility of work done by NGOs and social movements from the South. It serves as a platform where citizen groups can disseminate their work and at the same time enrich it with information from diverse sources, which is presented from the perspective of Southern civil society.

Personal observations from local NGOs can also be a vital form of ‘evidence’, as can simple cost-effective measures, such as talking with local communities to understand their social needs. Ideally, donors need to be flexible with regards to CSOs’ changing needs, and this will be clear from the start through CSOs’ contingency budgeting. But in Tanzania, it was noted that currently funding for policy research still only goes to mainstream policy research organisations, not into the private sector, meaning there is no ‘systematic’ way to develop agendas, and funding is not necessarily going to the highest priority cases. CSOs on the other hand need to explore opportunities of raising funds locally. In Latin America, especially in Argentina, donations are tax deductible. CSOs in other regions need to put pressure on the government to allow the same.

In reality, CSOs may need to learn not to depend so much on money and learn how to make their voices heard in other ways, for example by improving their networking skills and credibility. The Trade Policy in Sri Lanka case study (below) is a good example of this; with only 15 per cent of their funding coming

from the government they are relatively financially independent; the remaining 85 per cent of their funding comes from funded research and interest from an endowment fund.

#### **Case Study 16: Trade policy in Sri Lanka**

The case study from the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) in Sri Lanka focused on the area of linkages between research and policy influence in the area of trade policy formulation. Trade policy is formulated at three levels, namely: national level, bilateral/regional level, and at the multilateral level under the WTO. The study focuses primarily on research related to the bilateral/regional level agreements on trade policy, where necessary drawing examples of broader research impacts in areas of policy as well. The IPS began to actively concentrate on the implications of trade agreements on Sri Lanka's economy from its inception in 1995. IPS has only produced one-off reports, but has undertaken a continuous assessment of the various agreements as they were negotiated. The key issues examined were to assess whether such agreements are likely to result in a net welfare gain or loss to the Sri Lankan economy and making policy recommendations to adopt a more coherent framework in formulating future agreements, in terms of countries selected, scope of liberalisation, etc. Dissemination of the research output has included published reports and articles, and presentation of papers at conferences, both locally and internationally. Recent examples of IPS representation include that of the Macro and Trade Policy Framework Steering Committee and the Task Force on Trade set up to drive the policy programme of the government, and involvement in the Trade and Tariff Cluster under the National Council for Economic Development. In policy terms, it is difficult to determine whether a particular research output has led to any policy change per se. Nevertheless, this system of consistent engagement has opened a certain degree of space for the IPS to influence the policymaking process on trade issues in Sri Lanka.

## **4.8 Using the media**

In order to share and validate evidence used in policy formulation with local communities, CSOs need to use 'links'. In this context, 'links' can be their own network (as discussed above), the media, public events, popular arts and/or competitions.

In particular, delegates at the consultations noted that the media could be a useful means of reporting findings back to grassroots level, especially where research covered a wide-ranging area. It is as important for CSOs to act as a voice for those not in a position to speak out (especially for those who feel speaking out would endanger themselves, such as in China or Cambodia), as for them to report findings back to these people, and the media could be a convenient method to carry out both these roles. Furthermore, the media could be encouraged to promote CSO success stories (such as the ITDG success story in Sri Lanka), and help boost CSO credibility.

In the same way the media can be used as a 'high intensity approach' for CSOs facing policymakers. It could be a valuable means of maintaining debates, forcing research to be taken into account in policy discussions, and increasing awareness and understanding of issues, on both national and international scale. This is especially beneficial if CSOs feel they are not being taken seriously by policymakers. It is undeniable that politicians are forced to take more interest in issues when they come to public attention, in either a positive or negative way.

Two good examples of this were given in the Bolivian seminar. The first was the case study of military conscription by Juan Ramón Quintana, where mass media spread research evidence and demonstrated the violations of the conscript's human rights, forcing the Armed Forces to openly address the topic. The second is on the Environmental law as described below.

### **Case Study 17: Environmental law in Bolivia**

This case study presented and discussed during the group work at the Bolivian consultation emphasises the application of environmental law and explains how social mobilisation can be based on evidence to strengthen its impact on policy. This specific case was an oil spill that contaminated 190km of land, caused by a rupture in the Sica Sica – Arica oil pipeline, controlled and managed by the Transredes – an international company. The oil pipeline was fractured due to flooding at Rio Desaguadero but Transredes, the company responsible, did not promptly manage the rupture. The CSOs from Oruro, with the support of some NGOs, generated international support for subsequent research to analyse the impact of oil spill. These CSOs called for the implementation of the Environmental Law – a law that had never been applied, and a strong communication campaign was launched to publicise the spill and its impact. The mobilisation of civil society, united over the complaints, proved to be a catalyst. Eventually, the Bolivian Ministry of Sustainable Development authorised environmental audits and Transredes was found responsible and was forced to pay the indemnities.

In terms of media capacity, there are also many limiting factors. One of the biggest problems mentioned at the consultations was that information rarely leaves the cities, as there is little way of communicating it to rural areas. The literacy levels of people in rural areas are sometimes quite low, so print media can be ineffective, and financial constraints limit broadcast journalism. In areas of geographical extremes, such as mountainous regions, investment in the necessary technical equipment may not be cost effective. Furthermore, information must be translated into local languages, which further adds to the costs.

In the Malawi, Zambia and Bangladesh consultations (see case study below), the problem seemed to be not so much a lack of access to the media, but rather a lack of interest from the media on research. It was noted that journalists instead preferred to cover stories they considered to be of interest for the general public.

Another key factor that must be taken into account when using the media is the degree to which political influence is involved; from state-owned television or radio stations, to legislation over what may and may not be broadcast, such as for example the strict controls over the internet and other media in China.

In cases where the media is not a realistic option for CSOs to use or where further public support is needed to be mobilised, consultation participants also suggested the use of other forms of engagement, including public seminars, workshops, and forums such as TWGs in Cambodia; all of which are vital for debates, sharing of ideas and training.

### **Case Study 18: Lost in the queue: poverty and employment in Bangladesh**

This study from Unnayan Onneshan asserts that while there has been a modest decline in poverty in Bangladesh, there has also been incremental increase in inequality. The study shows that while the poverty reduction rate has been one percentage point a year since the early 1990s, the overall Gini index of inequality increased from 0.259 to 0.306 during the same period. The rate of unemployment and under-employment has therefore increased due to insufficient job creation in both the formal and the informal sectors. The case study shows that existing government policies are not adequate to address the issue of unemployment in Bangladesh, and some alternative directions are therefore needed which should include the provision of employment guarantee act. Unnayan Onneshan is engaged in influencing policy uptake of an employment guarantee act in Bangladesh for establishing workers' rights and ensuring their economic security through: i) constituency building with trade union movements; ii) providing input to specialised agencies in the form of advice and research; iii) networking with international organisations for changes in the metanarratives; and iv) working with the media to disseminate information and hold monthly meetings.

Popular arts too should not be overlooked as a means of generating public interest and understanding, such as plays or musical concerts. Competitions, such as essay writing, stimulate debates. The importance of public awareness and mobilisation on policy influence is clearly seen in the Argentinean case study below.



**Case Study 19: The role of research in reforming the electoral system in Santa Fe, Argentina**

This case study from CIPPEC – the Centre for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth (Argentina), explains the leading role played by CSOs and other institutions in the reform of an electoral system in the province of Santa Fe, called ‘ley de lemas’. It details the process that led to the abolition of an electoral system that was not supported by the majority of the Argentinean people and its replacement by an alternative one, based on a consensus that emerged from research produced and disseminated by academics and CSOs, facilitated by CIPPEC. The strategy included participatory diagnosis, the promotion of public debate, and specific advocacy strategies such as achieving the signature of commitment letters by main candidates for governorship. While upcoming elections worked as a window of opportunity for the process of influence, the relevance of the proposals was increased by academic support for the research, as well as the institutional presence of CSOs at legislative committees. Participation of various stakeholders and media exposure throughout the project were key to maintaining interest in the debate. The credibility of the recommendations was enhanced because the proposals reflected a social demand and were articulated in short and concise documents. It was agreed that the reform could only be made by the Legislature and therefore politicians were included in the process from the beginning.

## 5 External Influences

Policymakers and CSOs are not the only actors in the policymaking process. While their capacities and approaches naturally influence the extent to which evidence affects policymaking, other external factors also have a great deal of sway over policy processes. During the discussions in the consultations, the main external factor that frequently arose was the power of money and access to financial resources in policymaking, specifically in the research arena.

### 5.1 Donor funding

Access to funding and donor influence over policymaking has been mentioned several times already in this paper. It is undeniable that policymaking in countries in the South is often influenced by bilateral and multilateral aid programmes. In Bangladesh, Cambodia, Malawi and Mozambique in particular, it was repeated that donors can sometimes come to have an unhealthy control over the policymaking process because of the dynamics of funding. One of the problems that consultation participants highlighted was the fact that policymaking has been very much a stakeholder-driven operating environment, where the most important stakeholders tend to be those with the most funding, instead of agendas being locally-owned. This may be because donors sometimes have other interests in giving financial funding or it may be because donors (especially international donors) sometimes lack the local knowledge to understand the actual agenda priorities, and may end up endorsing a position they know little about (Gariyo 2002, quoted in Menocal and Rogerson 2006:12).

In her speech to ODI in March 2006, Professor Pearce observed that donor organisations will naturally aim to work with research institutions that fit their criteria and understand their reference points and ideas, especially with regards to financial matters. In reality, this is more often than not Northern NGOs, whose members share similar backgrounds but have the benefit of local knowledge and influence. This may exclude smaller, local grassroots organisations from receiving funding, despite the fact that they may have robust experience and understanding of the context and are the most in need of financial backing.

Clear examples of this were seen in the aftermath of the South-East Asian Tsunami of December 2004. Dr Vishaka Hidellage of ITDG Sri Lanka and Dr Vinya Ariyaratni of Sarvodaya, the largest national NGO in Sri Lanka, both commented that ‘INGOs arrived at the scene of the disaster in such large numbers that they sometimes pushed aside (even if unintentionally) local CSOs, undermining their capacity and forcing them to close down’ (quoted in Menocal and Rogerson 2006).

*‘INGOs arrived at the scene of the disaster in such large numbers that they sometimes pushed aside (even if unintentionally) local CSOs, undermining their capacity and forcing them to close down.’*

Dr Hidellage (ITDG) and Dr Ariyaratni (Sarvodaya), Sri Lanka, on the effects of the Tsunami

### 5.2 Conflicting agendas

In addition, researchers in the South are often contracted for a specific donor-funded study without knowing the overall context of the research programme or its intended impact on policy. There is growing discernment among donors, recipient governments and many Northern CSOs that a profusion of agencies, compounded by a profusion of agendas and purposes, is leading to a profusion of inefficiencies (Menocal and Rogerson 2006).

In the consultations it was highlighted that both donors and recipients should be mutually accountable for research agenda setting, and agendas should be mutually beneficial for all parties involved. Confirming this, the Paris Declaration on Alignment (OECD DAC, 2005) declared donors to be obligated to base their aid programmes on country-owned strategies, while the World Bank published the Global

Monitoring Report 2005, including its five-point agenda, ‘of accelerated and concerted actions by developing and developed countries – based on the Monterrey framework of mutual accountability.’<sup>4</sup> The report stated:

*For coherence and effectiveness, the scaling up of development efforts at the country level must be guided by country-owned and -led poverty reduction strategies (PRSs) or equivalent national development strategies. Framed against a long-term development vision, these strategies should set medium-term targets – tailored to country circumstances – for progress toward the MDGs and related development outcomes. And they should define clear national plans and priorities for achieving those targets, linking policy agendas to medium-term fiscal frameworks. Donors should use these strategies as the basis for aligning and harmonising assistance.*<sup>5</sup>

As Monica Blagescu and John Young (2005) note in *Partnerships and Accountability: Current thinking and approaches among agencies supporting Civil Society Organisations*, ‘mutual accountability’ must not only include donors and recipients if policy is to be ‘pro-poor’. It must be a three-way process, to also incorporate those who will be affected by the policy – the local community or ‘target groups’.

In the consultations, policymaking was often perceived to be ‘top down’: Policy implementation is hierarchical and bureaucrats at the higher levels of administration have more status than those at the lower end. As noted in Cambodia, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, bureaucrats are risk-averse and frequently policy options are geared towards fulfilling the political agendas of the party in power. In order that they may accurately reflect the actual social need and help those they are targeted to help, there should simultaneously be a process of voicing policy concerns ‘from the bottom up’ – in other words local communities and their representatives should play a significant role in all levels of policymaking, as demonstrated with the MEDICAM case study in the ‘Capacity and Links’ Section above, and in the DIN case study below.

#### **Case Study 20: The role of civil society in influencing policy in Cross River State, Nigeria**

This case study by Development in Nigeria (DIN) illustrated how CSOs working on environmental issues have used research and advocacy to influence policy at both the state and community level in Cross River State, Nigeria. The issues that the CSOs have been working on include illegal logging, conflicts resulting from shifting cultivation involving Fulani pastoralists and local people, and concessions to private companies to construct roads and other infrastructure in the rainforest. Various networks, NGOs (CRS Forum for Development, Forest Monitoring Network, RRDC, One Sky, SPACE and Pastoral Resolve) and programmes (the DFID-funded Community forestry project, and programmes and projects funded by IUCN and CIDA) also lent their support in making environmental policies in the state more pro-poor. Consequently, through campaigns and environmental education programmes, the level of awareness about the impact of high risk programmes has increased significantly, community royalties for logging have risen, and a logging concession to a private company by the state government was cancelled—all of which have led to increased trust between communities and local CSOs. The successes are due to working through networks, coalitions and through using advocacy and lobbying to instigate policy change. Attention can be drawn to several lessons from this exercise: research has greater impact when it is topically relevant; members of networks working together are more effective than if they work separately; and, most importantly, communication between policymakers, CSOs and communities should be participatory, open and continuous. All of these activities together have advanced a more conducive environmental policy under the present government of Cross River State.

This should be seen within the wider context of changes in donor funding mechanisms. As Priya Deshingkar (2005) notes in her Country Policy Paper from India:

*The policy and funding context within which NGOs operate has changed in the last decade. Donors have now shifted their attention to reforming governments with the spread of democratic decentralisation and away from NGOs and other CSOs in many countries... Funding through direct budgetary support has gained in popularity.*

This could have serious consequences for policymaking, as the case study from her paper points out.

<sup>4</sup> <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/GLOBALMONITORINGEXT/0,,contentMDK:20445926~pagePK:64022011~piPK:292245~theSitePK:278515,00.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/GLOBALMONITORINGEXT/Resources/execsum.pdf>

### Case Study 21: The new context of donor funding and its potential impact on CSOs in India

The donor funding context has certainly changed in India with changes in policy announced by the previous central government, which aim to phase out all donor funding over time. While funding to CSOs has not been affected in the short term by this policy change, bureaucratic procedures for acquiring government clearance for donor-funded projects are becoming increasingly complex and stringent and this can impose difficulties and delays. There is a distinct possibility that the new guidelines may make it more difficult for NGOs to access donor funds in the following ways. First, smaller NGOs that receive UN funds will now have to seek Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) clearance. This would immediately restrict funding to the older and usually larger NGOs because the NGO should have been in existence for at least three years to be eligible. Second, many non-FCRA groups that were receiving bilateral funds via Ministries would also have to seek FCRA. Third, although certain bilaterals (such as DFID) are exempt from the new guidelines, their priorities are shifting away from funding civil society organisations to direct budgetary support. Fourth, the new guidelines require that proposals are first scrutinised by DEA, then by MEA for political clearance and finally the line Ministry for technical clearance, all of which will inevitably result in delays. A further problem is that Ministries are not likely to have information on each applicant so they may refer such cases to State Governments. This could be a major obstacle to civil society advocacy activities, which often take positions against government. The result would be that both government and donors could be reluctant to pass applications that are seen as critical of government and thus squash one of the main functions of CSOs. Donor funds that were earmarked for Ministries could be diverted to other countries rather than to NGOs or multilaterals in India, and it is very likely that the new policy will reduce the total quantum of aid to India. Added to this is the image that India has created through the new policy, namely of a country that does not want or need aid, and this will put off potential donors who may view the country as a monolith without distinguishing between government and civil society.

## 5.3 Conditionality

Indeed, a specific lesson that came out of the Zambian conferences was that the CSOs present did not support either donor conditionality, or donors giving substantial budgetary support to governments, as evidence shows that this promotes a lack of transparency on the government's part. They found that schemes with fixed conditions have hampered effective research by preventing flexible use of funding. This creates difficulties if research is to be adaptable to ever-changing conditions, and contingency funds need to be included in the planning and budgeting stages.

On the other hand, they found that direct budgetary support did not necessarily lead to the changes that CSOs would wish for. Many CSOs considered continued financial support to poor governance a means of not only promoting but even rewarding corruption. The situation has been described as 'Ventriloquism', whereby 'donors make clear what their policy expectations are and governments understand what they need to say and do in order to get the foreign assistance' (Van de Walle 2005:67, quoted in Menocal and Rogerson 2006:12).

Policymakers at the consultations also highlighted their problems with donor funding schemes. They raised the issue that often donor funding pushes them in too many directions. For example, in Cambodia the Deputy Foreign Minister pointed out the Government's struggle to develop a cohesive development strategy with so many donors trying to bring attention to issues they consider to be crucial for Cambodia's development. Conversely though, the Tanzania Multi-Annual, Multi-Disciplinary Research Programme, supported by the Dutch Government, was successfully introduced by REPOA, helping to link research with the national policy agenda for Tanzania.

In sum, questions raised throughout the consultations concerned the way in which funding is allocated – to whom, by whom, and in what way. Participants noted that perhaps another role of CSOs therefore involves influencing donor policies as well as government policies. This requires a certain amount of capacity and skill on the part of the CSO, as well as on the part of donors.

## 6 Lessons, Recommendations and Next Steps

Throughout this paper as problems and criticisms with policy processes have been mentioned, suggestions for how to overcome them have subsequently been noted by consultation participants. In this concluding chapter we will summarise the lessons and recommendations that have emerged concerning CSO policy engagement, as well as the specific recommendations that were made by participants to the CSPP.

### 6.1 Lessons learned on CSO policy engagement

#### *On policy processes and political context:*

- Most crucially, participants at the consultations stressed the importance of CSOs understanding the political context of the country, both currently and historically. In many cases CSO efforts are severely hampered by the low-level functioning of political institutions, particularly at lower levels, and it should not always be assumed that state, civil society and markets share common interests.
- CSOs repeatedly mentioned the need for policymakers to work at being more open and accommodating in their attitudes towards CSO involvement in policy processes. In this regard access to information was a contentious point. As information is regarded as the key to power, access to data is very limited in certain countries. It was also noted that CSOs should be more proactive in data-gathering and compel policymakers to deal with the issue. Involvement should also be a two-way process, with governments getting involved in CSO work through means such as ‘Peer Reviews’.
- It helps in enhancing credibility of the CSO data-gathering if a methodology which involves a diverse group of stakeholders, including the end consumer, e.g. the policymakers and bureaucrats, is used.
- One of the most significant lessons that was repeatedly given in all the discussions was the importance of CSOs’ sustained ‘engagement’ with policymakers. There was a repeated call for CSOs to get more involved in governmental structures and governmental discussion forums.
- CSOs need to listen to governments and realise when they are asking too much. They need to understand the pressures that policymakers face. The ‘degree of compromise’ CSOs are prepared to make must be carefully considered in each situation.
- The need to acknowledge political changes as opportunities was emphasised.

#### *On evidence:*

- One of the clearest outcomes from the consultations was the importance of robust evidence. CSOs regard it as important to build their own capacity to generate and use evidence in the most constructive and compelling manner. It was noted that CSOs must have access to solid, appropriate research that produces accurate, usable evidence, as much to affirm their credibility to policymakers, and help form good relationships, as to actually use in the policymaking process itself.
- Great importance was attached to long-term evidence gathering and the current lack of it.
- All too often different CSOs perform their own research on the same issues, which is not only a waste of resources but provides policymakers with confusing, contrasting evidence.
- Getting local communities involved in research is essential in ensuring that the social issues that are considered their highest priority is addressed by the research.
- The evidence must also be communicated in effectively. In some cases it was noted that policymakers were simply unaware of the existence of quality research.
- Language can be a deciding issue, especially where evidence is presented in a foreign language.

- Information needs to be explained and communicated to policymakers in such a way that real solutions and benefits are obvious, and the right advocate must be selected to present the findings. In some cases short reports (along with informal meetings and networking) had proven more effective than major publications.
- Some CSOs had found that rather than provoking negative reactions in policymakers by constantly raising controversial issues, tackling a ‘subsidiary’ issue where the government feels less threatened could be a more successful way to raise key questions.
- When trying to assess impact, it was noted that successful policy influence is not always a tangible quantity. There can be a serious delay between policy formulation and implementation, which must be taken into account.

### *On capacity and links:*

- It was emphasised that in order to improve their interaction with policymakers, CSOs need to improve their own capacity.
- Even having decided to follow the policy-influence path, CSOs’ functions can still vary greatly, from an intermediary role or a research role, to educator and mobiliser. It is vital that CSOs have clear aims, methods and beliefs, as much for their own understanding as for their credibility in others’ eyes.
- CSOs must work harder at understanding how the whole policy process works in their respective countries. It is not sufficient merely to present the evidence to the policymakers and assume that the rest will take care of itself. In some cases it was noted that CSOs feel they are too busy with other (e.g. direct service delivery) work to get involved in policy processes, and in this way several opportunities for policy engagement are missed.
- The lack of technical or expert knowledge and skills among CSOs was cited as being one of the biggest impediments to their effective policy-influencing. CSOs themselves pointed out the problem of retaining quality staff in an increasingly competitive job market.
- In some cases it was pointed out that it was important for CSOs in one country to work together, to form a ‘united voice’ on policy, rather than compete for resources and ‘entry points’. Collaboration enables CSOs to pool resources, cut costs, combine knowledge with resources (and funding), learn from successes and failures, and prevent duplicated, contradictory or misinterpreted research. Uniting CSOs that are working towards the same goals also has the added bonuses of giving them strength in numbers when engaging with policymakers. At the same time it was noted that competition between CSOs has become a serious issue, especially for smaller local CSOs.
- Inviting policymakers to be involved right from the start of the planning process and evidence-gathering improves the interaction between them, the CSOs and the local community.
- Many comments were made about CSOs rushing through affairs without thorough planning, and thus they are weak when facing hurdles and regularly lose sight of goals in their desperation to ‘do something’.
- The very nature of civil society work means that funding and allocation of money is another clearly contentious issue, and the importance of sound budgeting cannot be stressed enough.
- In reality, CSOs may need to learn not to depend so much on money and learn how to make their voices heard in other ways, for example by improving their networking skills and credibility.
- One recommendation was reinforced throughout the consultations more than any other, namely the role of networks. The value of creating successful networks between all actors involved in policy processes right from the initial stages – including local communities, CSOs, policymakers, researchers, international governments and donors (or other external influences) – could not be more highly stressed. Networks are more effective than individuals at producing, sharing and strengthening evidence.
- Different networks require different structures for maximum effectiveness and specific networks will need to carefully consider how many and which functions they can carry out successfully.

- Using the media could be a useful means of reporting findings back to grassroots level. It is undeniable that politicians are forced to take more interest in issues when they come to public attention, in either a positive or negative way.
- Popular arts should not be overlooked as a means of generating public interest and understanding, such as plays, musical concerts or competitions.

*On external influences:*

- The main external factor that was frequently mentioned was the power of money and access to financial resources in policymaking, specifically in the research arena.
- Donor organisations will naturally aim to work with research institutions that fit their criteria and understand their reference points and ideas. However, both donors and recipients should be mutually accountable for research agenda setting, and agendas should be mutually beneficial for all parties involved.
- Stress should be put on the process of voicing policy concerns ‘from the bottom up’, also as part of the research agenda.
- Questions raised throughout the consultations concerned the way in which funding is allocated – to whom, by whom, and in what way.

## 6.2 Recommendations and next steps for the CSPP at ODI

In addition to the suggestions made above, consultation participants also suggested certain recommendations specifically for the CSPP at ODI, but which could also be of interest to others wishing to promote CSO policy engagement. These are listed below:

- Several participants suggested that the CSPP could run practical capacity development workshops on policy advocacy skills, research skills, methodology, strategy development, policy analysis, use of ODI Toolkits, communication, and monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation. Capacity development workshops should especially focus on improving the involvement of indigenous communities and organisations in research and policy processes (therefore promoting ‘ownership’ of policies). In the Indonesian conferences it was suggested that similar workshops could be run specifically for government officials and staff. The need for practical workshops run by the CSPP (especially with regards to the monitoring and evaluation stages of policymaking) was also emphasised by Northern NGOs at the Civil Society Partnerships Programme: Process and Plans Meeting, held at ODI on 16th March 2006.
- In Ghana, it was suggested that the CSPP should have an annual review of their toolkits, to ensure they are up to date, relevant and effective.
- The CSPP should provide support for institutional development, including human resources, financial management, research capacities, partnership, negotiation skills, technical assistance and fundraising. While Tanzanian and Indonesian participants emphasised the need to strengthen the credibility of CSOs in the eyes of policymakers, participants in Uganda, Bangladesh and Nigeria also identified the need to strengthen the capacity of civil society in general to participate in national policy development.
- The CSPP should consider other approaches to training, including staff exchanges or secondments (Malawi and Bangladesh), study tours to foreign countries to build up the capacity of networks (Cambodia), training and internships in-country or to ODI for selected CSO staff (Indonesia and Bolivia), collaboration on a journal on bridging research and policy (Tanzania), collaborative training with local Think Tanks (the Legal Resource Centre in Ghana, Centre for Poverty Analysis in Sri Lanka, CDRI in Cambodia, SMERU in Indonesia) and looking for opportunities to work with existing projects to avoid replication of efforts (Nigeria, Ghana and Bangladesh).
- It was suggested that looking into the possibility of funding collaborative projects and programmes in the field of evidence-based policy should be a priority for the CSPP. The Zambian, Ugandan, Mozambique, Bangladesh participants, for example, suggested that funds should be made available over a longer period of time because the opportunities for CSOs to access funds in-

country is becoming increasingly limited, with more and more funds being channelled through governments by donors.

- The CSPP should conduct its research in collaboration with local CSOs, especially those supporting initiatives that evaluate compliance with government policies in critical sectors such as health, education and environment. Researchers need to be encouraged to be more open to using different methodologies, integrate universities and other research agencies more (Ghana), and produce more case studies or pilot projects using the RAPID Framework (Indonesia and Bolivia) to be used as evidence. In the case of Latin America it was felt that a strong research community with the capacity to produce high quality research products already exists. But all CSOs, regardless of their success rate, need to systematise what they know, and the CSPP could methodically support this systematisation of experiences and the improvement of methodological designs.
- The CSPP could help set up ‘influence networks’ or generate a ‘knowledge action bank’ to systematise local experiences and allow CSOs throughout the world to access relevant information and tools that can help them further their impact. They could provide access to local knowledge and experiences from other countries through local partnerships, workshops, website, mailing lists, e-learning (again Northern CSOs also suggested this), newsletters (Ghana), publications, or a ‘sharing information handbook’ (Cambodia). It was thought to be important for the CSPP to provide materials relating to external context and influences; for example, concerning the latest developments regarding donors and the G8. In Bolivia, it was suggested that the CSPP should develop research on the possible influence of governmental change on the next generation of government policies.
- Crucially, all relevant materials must be translated into local languages for wider dissemination. The Cambodian, Indonesian, Bolivian, Argentinean and Peruvian CSOs were of the opinion that in order to have a wider circle of CSOs involved in the debate and to have an non-biased strategy of capacity development activities, materials should be translated into Khmer, Bahasa, Indonesian and Spanish, and that the cost of this translation should be included in the total budget of the programme.
- One of the CSPP’s roles was thought to be to connect CSOs with other CSOs in the world that work in the same field, so that they may work together to generate evidence and help strengthen the capacity of existing networks in the South to share information and analysis. The CSPP should promote training and information exchange events between the identified experts of the countries. Some specific national and regional networks were mentioned: Southern Africa Forum for Disability and Development; Malawi Economic Justice Network (Malawi); Rural Media Network and Association of African Universities (Ghana); Community Development Resource Network (Uganda); Nature Conservation Foundation (Nigeria), Campaign for Popular Education (Bangladesh), South Asia Policy Network (Sri Lanka) Coalition for Participatory Policy (KKP), MEDICAM (Cambodia), and IDLS (Bolivia) amongst others.
- While national consultations gave rise to very lively and interesting discussions on linking evidence and policy, in Sri Lanka it was felt that the discussion about linking research with policy engagement is carried on amongst those who already believe that policies should be based on evidence. These people are not the obstacles. What is needed is a strategy to involve policymakers, bureaucrats and the media in this dialogue. The CSPP could set up periodic meetings between CSOs, policymakers, businesses and mass media to share knowledge and information, and provide support through simple and uniform presentation tools for exchanging experiences in the network. The importance of creating a responsible media was also noted, through for example training journalists and supporting journalism courses.
- The final point made for the CSPP was that the discussions in the consultations brought up many other important issues, but did not provide enough time to go into detail. The overall feeling of the participants in Sri Lanka and Indonesia was that the dialogue that began with these consultations needs to be continued, and that a global network could be created, which can be led by local organisations and supported through the CSPP. This will help to establish a network of organisations where regular debates on evidence-policy issue will take place.



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## Appendix: CSPP Partners in the Regional Consultations

### Malawi Economic Justice Network, Malawi

*Website:* [www.mejn.org.mw](http://www.mejn.org.mw)

*Type:* Network

*Profile:* Established in 1999, the network has 101 members in different chapters across Malawi. MEJN works in conjunction with other networks, civil society organisations and research institutes in Malawi to advocate for policy change on economics and equity issues as well as issues around governance and accountability. In the last years MEJN has undertaken substantial research on monitoring and evaluating the Poverty Reduction Strategy of Malawi, Preferential Public Expenditures (PPE) monitoring, surveys on satisfaction of public services in Malawi, etc.

*Activities:* Policy analysis; monitoring and evaluation of development programmes; participatory research; and advocacy.

*CSPP Activities:* MEJN organised and hosted the CSPP consultation in Malawi in Lilongwe, on 9th and 10th February 2005 (for the full report see: [www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Malawi/Workshop.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Malawi/Workshop.html)).

### Cruzeiro do Sul, Mozambique

*Website:* [www.iid.org.mz](http://www.iid.org.mz)

*Type:* Think tank

*Profile:* Cruzeiro do Sul is the premier research organisation of Mozambique working on various development issues including research policy linkage through undertaking its own research work and ensuring this has policy influence. Cruzeiro do Sul is keen to maintain their independence and hence does not accept large grants from any single donor. The members are all employed in research activities and works for the institute when ever needed.

*Activities:* Research interest include rural development and poverty; land issues; social development: education, anthropology, participation; governance and accountability.

*CSPP Activities:* Cruzeiro do Sul organised and hosted the CSPP consultation in Mozambique in Maputo, on 14th February 2005 (for the full report see: [www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Mozambique/Seminar.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Mozambique/Seminar.html)).

### Institute of Economic and Social Research (INESOR), University of Zambia

*Type:* Think tank/Research Institute

*Profile:* INESOR is the multi-disciplinary research wing of the University of Zambia (UNZA). Incorporated into the university in 1965, INESOR has six main research programmes: Economics and Business; Agriculture and Rural development; Health; Urban development; Governance; Constitutional Reform. The Documentation and Information Unit of INESOR provides technical service and facilitates data, information system and publication activities.

*Activities:* Teaching; capacity building; research; consultancy; workshop/seminar facilitation; and information dissemination to the various stakeholders of INESOR.

*CSPP Activities:* INESOR organised and hosted the CSPP consultation in Zambia in Lusaka, on 17th February 2005 (for the full report see: [www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Zambia/Seminar.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Zambia/Seminar.html)).

## **Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF), Tanzania**

*Website:* [www.esrftz.org](http://www.esrftz.org)

*Type:* Think tank

*Profile:* Established in 1994 by the World Bank as the research wing of Ministry of Finance, Government of Tanzania (GOT) the aim of ESRF is to assist and build the capacity of GOT in formulating development policies. A registered NGO with strong links with the government ESRF also works on capacity building of CSOs as it has been found that the CSOs in Tanzania lack all the necessary skills and capacity to assist the government in making policies. The objective of ESRF is to engage in research on various development issues, explore the linkage between research and its impact on policy and fulfil the research needs of Tanzanian CSOs so that they can be effective advocates for change.

*Activities:* Research areas include economics and social science; governance and transparency; macroeconomic policies; budget analysis.

*CSPP Activities:* ESRF organised and hosted the CSPP consultation in Tanzania in Lusaka, on 17th February 2005 (for the full report see: [www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Tanzania/Workshop.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Tanzania/Workshop.html)). ESRF's Director is a member of the CSPP Steering Committee.

## **FARM-Africa, Uganda**

*Website:* [www.farm africa.org.uk](http://www.farm africa.org.uk)

*Type:* International Development Organisation

*Profile:* FARM-Africa (Food and Agricultural Research Management) is an international non-governmental organisation that aims to reduce poverty through developing innovative approaches to natural resource management in Africa. Through its projects in Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda FARM-Africa works in partnership with marginal small-scale farmers, herders and a wide range of rural communities to improve the ways in which they farm their land and ensure sustainable development.

*Activities:* Pastoral Development; Community Forest Management Smallholder Development; and Land Reform.

*CSPP Activities:* FARM Africa organised and hosted the CSPP consultation in Uganda in Kampala on 25th February 2005 (for the full report see: [www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Uganda/Seminar.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Uganda/Seminar.html)). FARM Africa is collaborating with the CSPP to publish some of its own experience of using action research to influence rural policy in Africa.

## **Participatory Development Associates, Ghana**

*Website:* [www.pdaghana.com](http://www.pdaghana.com)

*Type:* Consultancy, Development Adviser

*Profile:* PDA provides facilitation, training and research services for both government, non-government and private organisations, multilateral and bilateral organisations in Ghana in reproductive health, HIV/AIDS; gender issues; governance; organisation development; and monitoring and evaluation of development projects and programmes.

*Activities:* Decentralisation; Policy analysis and advocacy; Social assessments and evaluation of projects and programmes in reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS; Gender issues; Governance in education, health and forestry.

*CSPP Activities:* PDA organised and hosted the CSPP consultation in Ghana in Accra on 14th and 15th March 2005 (for the full report see: [www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Ghana/Workshop.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Ghana/Workshop.html)).

## **Development in Nigeria (DIN), Nigeria**

*Website:* [www.aradin.org](http://www.aradin.org)

*Type:* NGO

*Profile:* Development in Nigeria (DIN) is the rural based community action project of African Research Association (ARA). ARA has been working on forest degradation and environmental degradation in the tropical forests and savannah grassland areas of Cross River State, Nigeria since 1996. ARA works to strengthen community-based organisations for improved natural resources management. In this context research by DIN in rural communities over the years has been instrumental in showing a strong correlation between poverty and forest degradation having serious impact on forest-dependent livelihoods in Nigeria.

*Activities:* Research; community action programme.

*CSPP Activities:* DIN organised and hosted the CSPP consultation in Nigeria in Lagos on 18th March 2005 (for the full report see: [www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Nigeria/Seminar.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Nigeria/Seminar.html)).

## **YAPPIKA (Indonesian Foundation to Strengthen Civil Society Participation, Initiatives and Partnership), Indonesia**

*Website:* [www.yappika.org](http://www.yappika.org)

*Type:* Network

*Profile:* Established in 1991, YAPPIKA is a leading network engaged in strengthening civil society alliance for democracy in Indonesia. YAPPIKA seeks to uphold human rights and achieve people led social and economic development in Indonesia and thereby eliminating all forms of discrimination on the basis of religion, ideology, race, ethnicity or gender. YAPPIKA also channels funding from the Canadian International Development Assistance (CIDA) to other NGOs in Indonesia for strengthening the local NGO capacity to support democratic local governance in Indonesia.

*Activities:* Policy advocacy; strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations and public campaign. YAPPIKA's civil society programme is implemented in partnership with 18 local NGOs in Indonesia.

*CSPP Activities:* YAPPIKA organised and hosted the CSPP consultation in Indonesia in Jakarta, on 14th and 15th June 2005 (for the full report see: [www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Indonesia/Workshop.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Indonesia/Workshop.html)).

## **MEDICAM, Cambodia**

*Website:* [www.bigpond.com.kh/users/medicam/](http://www.bigpond.com.kh/users/medicam/)

*Type:* Network

*Profile:* Established in 1989 MEDICAM is the main network of organisations working on health issues in Cambodia. The main objective of MEDICAM is to act as an advocacy think tank for issues related to health in Cambodia. This entails facilitating communication of health-related information between NGOs, the Cambodian Government, and bilateral and multilateral development partners, representing NGOs at the official committees and consulting members on specific health issues to identify common issues for advocacy. MEDICAM has 111 members, consisting of NGOs, bilateral and multilateral agencies and other stakeholders.

*Activities:* Policy advocacy; Networking; Capacity building; and Publication of monthly newsletter Medinews.

*CSPP Activities:* MEDICAM organised and hosted the CSPP consultation in Cambodia in Phnom Penh, on 21st and 22nd June 2005 (for the full report see: [www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Cambodia/Workshop.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Cambodia/Workshop.html)).

## **Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA), Sri Lanka**

*Website:* [www.cepa.lk](http://www.cepa.lk)

*Type:* Think tank

*Profile:* The Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) was established in May 2001, as an independent institute providing services on poverty related development issues in Sri Lanka with the following objectives: providing independent analysis on the causes of poverty in Sri Lanka, characteristics and impacts of poverty in Sri Lanka, engaging in capacity building of development organisations and professionals to monitor poverty related impacts and work towards improvement of know-how transfer and policy dialogue on poverty.

*Activities:* CEPA adopts a market-oriented approach and offers services to clients in advisory services, training on Poverty and Conflict Poverty Assessment and Knowledge Management, Poverty Impact Monitoring.

*CSPP Activities:* CEPA organised and hosted the CSPP consultation in Sri Lanka in Colombo, on 5th and 6th July 2005 (for the full report see: [www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Sri\\_Lanka/Workshop.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Sri_Lanka/Workshop.html)). CEPA's Director is a member of the CSPP Steering Committee. CEPA is also involved in the Southern Voices on Aid Architecture Project.

## **Unnayan Onneshan/The Innovators, Bangladesh**

*Website:* [www.unnayan.org](http://www.unnayan.org)

*Type:* Think tank

*Profile:* Unnayan Onneshan/The Innovators is an independent not-for-profit registered trust which aims to contribute to innovation in development through research, advocacy, partnership and action. The Innovators works in the search for solutions to endemic poverty, injustice, gender inequality and environmental degradation at the local, national and global levels. The philosophy and models of the Innovators focus on pluralistic, participatory and sustainable development and seek to challenge the narrow theoretical and policy approaches derived from unitary models of development.

*Activities:* International Financial Institution governance and policies; Trade, Aid and Finance; Macro Economic Policies.

*CSPP Activities:* Unnayan Onneshan organised and hosted the CSPP consultation in Bangladesh in Dhaka, on 24th and 25th July (for the full report see: [www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Bangladesh/Workshop.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Bangladesh/Workshop.html)). Unnayan Onneshan is involved in the Southern Voices on Aid Architecture Project.

## **El Instituto Latinoamericano de Investigaciones Sociales (ILDIS), Bolivia**

*Website:* [www.fes-bol.org](http://www.fes-bol.org)

*Type:* Think Tank

*Profile:* ILDIS aims to provide an open space for political, social and institutional actors to reflect on the problems that challenge Bolivia with the objective to generate relevant recommendations and support the country's democratic process. It is Bolivia's representative to the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

*Activities:* ILDIS elaborates and communicates policy proposals; creates spaces for discussion and debate; and offers expert advice particularly on political and institutional reform processes in Bolivia. Its work is focused on the following areas: Strengthening of the institutions of the country (constitutional Assembly, the decentralisation process, public audiences, etc.); Identifying key issues around development with equity and sustainability; Political debate; and Labour relations.

*CSPP Activities:* ILDIS organised and hosted the CSPP consultation in Bolivia in La Paz, on 29th and 30th August (for the full report see: [www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Bolivia/Workshop.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Bolivia/Workshop.html)).

## **CIPPEC – Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento, Argentina**

*Website:* [www.cippec.org](http://www.cippec.org)

*Type:* Think tank

*Profile:* Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth (CIPPEC) is a private, non-profit organisation that strives to create a more just, democratic, and efficient State in Argentina in order to improve the quality of life for all Argentine citizens. CIPPEC was formed in September 2000 and is dedicated to improving the quality of public policies in Argentina and Latin America. CIPPEC is focused on helping to solve some of the greatest challenges facing Argentina and Latin America as whole: deteriorating quality of education and public health in the region; scarce access to justice; weak political institutions and corruption among others. CIPPEC believes that only an active civil society and a more just, responsible, effective, and transparent state will be able to address the needs of its citizens, enabling everyone to develop to their full potential.

*Activities:* Study and analyse the current education, health, fiscal, political, judicial and public management systems, in order to determine needs, opportunities, and obstacles when implementing effective public policies in Argentina; provide advice to officials at the local, provincial, and federal government levels to promote the best practices for governing; and facilitate citizens' access to public information.

*CSPP Activities:* CIPPEC organised and hosted the CSPP consultation in Argentina in Buenos Aires on 7th and 8th September 2005 (for the full report see: [www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Argentina/Workshop.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/CSPP/Activities/Consultations/Argentina/Workshop.html)). CIPPEC's Director is a member of the CSPP Steering Committee.



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