Using Research to Influence Public Policy

What Works and How

ERIC C. EBOH

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Dedication

To the Board of Directors, Associate Fellows and Staff of
African Institute for Applied Economics (AIAE) now renamed
African Heritage Institution (AfriHeritage)
who toiled with me in doing and
disseminating policy research from 2003-2012

Foreword

The pertinence for policymakers in Africa, as in the rest of the world, to hinge their decisions and policies on information from reliable and verifiable sources cannot be overstated. Similarly, the strategic role research plays in unearthing and fashioning enduring and sustainable people-centred policies can never be relegated to the cocoons of obscurity. Hence, any society that ignores the monumental role of research in policymaking is gradually, but surely, plotting its demise. The marriage between research and sound policymaking need not only be encouraged but also heralded by individuals or groups keenly interested in the holistic development of their society.

Like many other developing countries, Nigeria is today faced with a myriad of economic and human development challenges. These include growing the economy sustainably, creating jobs, reducing poverty and ensuring security. These challenges underscore the need for right and sound policies and programmes by which government can deliver results to the people in an effective, efficient and timely manner.

Right and sound policies are largely founded on evidence from research, just as feedback from policymakers and policy implementers are essential inputs for policy research. In practice, however, these desirable symbiotic links between research and policymaking are mainly missing.

A significant merit of Professor Eric C. Eboh's book, *"Using Research to Influence Public Policy: What Works and How,"* lies in providing pivotal

tools and techniques which can be used to make this connection.

In keeping with the title, Professor Eboh has put together in a succinct form, valuable insights spanning over ten years of experience in managing research.

This book, a rich menu of issues centred on the interface of research and policy, should be of relevance and interest to a wide spectrum of policy stakeholders including policy researchers, policy think tanks, policymakers, the academia and development practitioners. These are topics which, because of their non-traditional nature, are hardly treated in conventional research texts.

Pertinently, I find very educative and helpful the presentation style of complementing the guides and principles for research influence on policy with illuminative case studies.

Given its rich and novel content and the simple, precise and clear manner in which the information has been given, this book will resonate well with a wide range of readers across the policy research community, social science professions, development organisations and government.

Indeed, this book is an excellent educational and informational resource with a great prospect of promoting meeting points between research and policymaking. It is a useful practical guide for policy researchers and think tanks who desire to maximise their influence on society, government policymakers who need to enhance their use of research evidence in policymaking, and development practitioners who advocate for policy change.

Senator (Dr.) David A. B. Mark, GCON, fnim
President of the Senate
Federal Republic of Nigeria

Preface

Policy research is now at the centre-stage in the evolving imperative of promoting evidence-based policymaking in Sub-Saharan Africa. Policy researchers are increasingly challenged to make their research more relevant and effective in informing and influencing development policies. The challenge calls for deliberative and innovative policy influence principles, methodologies and tools, which are not usually within the purview of the policy researcher or policy research organisations.

Traditional policy research lacks deliberate mechanisms for bringing about policy influence. So, to make policy research more relevant to society, a new orientation has emerged over the past decade. Policy researchers need to seek, learn and imbibe new ways and methods of planning, managing and communicating research in order to make the most impact.

During the over ten years of my practice in planning and implementing policy research as evidence basis for policymaking, I accumulated ideas, experiences and lessons that are not readily found in published texts. My motivation therefore is to share these insights and lessons with policy researchers, development practitioners, policymakers and the general public, towards helping to promote research influence on policymaking.

Overall, this text distils how policy research can maximise impact on society and economy. It covers vital topics, ranging broadly from how to

plan, how to manage, how to communicate and how to evaluate policy research. This book is a blend of theoretical literature with practical experience including case scenarios.

It is my hope that the ideas and insights given in this book will be of great value to academics, policy researchers, think tanks and policymakers and the society at large.

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I am ever indebted to my dear loving wife, Ogugua and our children – Oluchukwu, Heritage, Mmachukwu and Virtue, for providing me the right congenial family and home environment to read, think and write.

Great thanks go to Professor Edwin Igbokwe for his painstaking reviews of successive drafts of this book. Also, I am grateful to Mr. Olusola Oluwadare, Dr. Friday Ohuche, Mr. Chidiebere Ibe and Mr. Stanley Ukeje for providing useful reviews and comments.

In the course of my tenure as Executive Director of the African Institute for Applied Economics (AIAE), now renamed African Heritage Institution (AfriHeritage), I anchored partnership and collaboration with civil society and private sector organisations in policy analysis, research dissemination, policy dialogue and advocacy. In this regard, I specially recognise our close work with Nigeria Economic Summit Group (NESG), Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), National Association of Small Scale Industrialists (NASSI), National Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (NASME) and Human Rights Law Services (HURILAWS).

Many persons provided individual and collective assistance in the proof-reading, formatting and processing of the manuscript for publication. In particular, I thankfully acknowledge the individual

contributions of Mr. Favour Inyere, Mr. Basil Obasi, Mrs. Gloria Favour, Mrs. Beatrice Ndibe and Mr. Emmanuel Okafor. I am also grateful to Mr. Michael Igweobi for doing the cover design and page layout of this book.

In the course of writing this book, I shared my thoughts with many colleagues, professionals, technocrats, practitioners and friends who in turn offered constructive ideas and suggestions for improving the book content, tone and style. To you all, I express my profound gratitude.

Professor Eric C. Eboh

Acronyms & Abbreviations

AAR	After Action Review
AfriHeritage	African Heritage Institution
AIAE	African Institute for Applied Economics
APRNet	Agricultural Policy Research Network
BBI	Better Business Initiative
BECANS	Business Environment and Competitiveness Across Nigerian States
BEIONS	Business Environment Index of Nigerian States
BTSA	Bottleneck-To-Solution Analysis
CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria
COC	Committee of Chairs
COS	Committee of Sponsors
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DFID	Department for International Development
EIPA	European Institute of Public Administration
EU	European Union
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FMARD	Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
FOBEANS	Forum on Business Environment Across Nigerian States
HURILAWS	Human Rights Law Services
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
INTRAC	International NGO Training and Research Centre
IPRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
JPB	Joint Planning Board

KII	Key Informant Interview
MAF	MDGs Acceleration Framework
MAN	Manufacturers Association of Nigeria
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSC	Most Significant Change
NACCIMA	Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture
NAPEP	National Poverty Eradication Programme
NASME	National Association of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises
NASSI	National Association of Small Scale Industries
NCDP	National Council for Development Planning
NEEDS	National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
NESG	Nigerian Economic Summit Group
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NLC	Nigerian Labour Congress
NSAs	Non-State Actors
NPC	National Planning Commission
PDIA	Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation
POET	Participatory Organisational Evaluation Tool
PPPPC	Process and Partnership for Pro-poor Policy Change
PROs	Policy Research Organisations
PSOs	Private Sector Organisations
PTG	Policy Think Group
RAPID	Research and Policy in Development Group
ROA	RAPID Outcome Assessment
SEEDS	States Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
SENEC	South-East Nigeria Economic Commission
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
ToC	Theory of Change
TQM	Total Quality Management
TTs	Think Tanks
UN	United Nations
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

1

The Research-Policy Nexus

Framing the Issues and Questions

Issues about the research-policy nexus include the role of social and economic research in policymaking, factors that promote or hinder the interface of research and policymaking and ways and methods for creating conducive environment for maximising the relevance and impact of research in the policymaking process. The key questions that are at the heart of the global discussions about research-policy nexus include:

- Does economic and social research play any role in policy formulation and implementation process?
- To what extent do policymakers and government institutions take research findings into account when they consider policy options and formulate policies?
- What is the evidence of the links between research and policymaking?
- What are the opportunities and challenges for enhancing the links between research and policy-making?

Potential Role of Research in Policymaking

Policy research generates intermediate informational or knowledge input for decision-making. In other words, research can influence the policy arena by availing new ideas and concepts (Weiss, 1977). Policy research can improve decision-makers' understanding of many policy issues, especially complex ones. Policy research can contribute to and improve public decision processes (Haas and Springer, 1998). For example, proven economic model can reduce uncertainty about the potential effects of policy options by helping to unveil risks and opportunities associated with the competing policy alternatives. Another instance is where policy research contributes to improving the content and quality of public policy debate.

...Policy research contributes to improving the content and quality of public policy debate.

The over arching objective of development research is to improve the lives of the people. When research is well designed, well implemented and well communicated – it can inform policy that is more effective, more efficient and more equitable.

Policy research institutions by virtue of their programmes and activities can enhance policymaking in any country through expanding policy capacities, broadening policy horizons of stakeholders and affecting policy regimes. Research may not have direct influence on specific policies; nevertheless, the production of knowledge and evidence exerts a powerful indirect influence through introducing new perspectives and shaping the policy discourse (Carden, 2004). Research impact should not be seen as *one-shot* research uptake by policymakers, but in terms of broadening policymakers' understanding, enlightening stakeholder perspectives and clarifying policy options.

Nuances of the Research-Policy Nexus

The interface of research and policymaking is fraught with several practical challenges with multiple implications. Though, ideally, policy

research and policymaking should complement and reinforce each other, the reality is not always so. The relationship could be mired by unique circumstances on both sides of the divide.

Economic policy decisions are often formulated and implemented without the benefit of being informed by relevant research. The challenge for research, in this context, is to bring to the forefront of the policy debate sets of facts and figures necessary to evaluate competing policy options. Through this process, research helps reduce transaction costs related to policy bargaining, because it reduces the number of options worthy of consideration. The obvious implication of this definition of the role of economic research is that its outcome need not necessarily be the identification of the best possible option; it can also identify the worst options. The need for efficacy and equity in specific country contexts demands applied or empirical research informed by theory and based on data analysis and observation. While researchers have skills and time, to investigate in great depth, issues behind policies, policy officials have multiple work-mandates and time constraints. Policymakers select only the ideas that are compatible with their policy discourse (Nudey, Walter and Davies, 2002), in line with political expediency.

Research may not have direct influence on specific policies; nonetheless, the production of knowledge and evidence exerts a powerful indirect influence...

Notwithstanding the desirability of the researcher-policymaker interface, there are some practical risks for both communities (Rein, 1983). Researchers who spend a significant amount of their time on policy research and policy-influencing activities risk lower performances in academic research, and could mean less peer recognition and rating. Policymakers who rely solely on research evidence could face political risks. Researchers may have different motives in policy-oriented research. It

could be financial, better access to data, the prestige associated with proximity to the reins of political power, the preparation of a future political career, or just the desire to have a greater impact on the main decisions concerning a country or a region. If the motive is wrong, there are risks to the sanctity of the research process and outputs. In order to retain their respect, credibility and reputation, policy research organisations and policy researchers should be independent in intellectual, material and financing spheres. Sustainable financing schemes can guarantee greater independence for economic research organisations, which would allow them to produce research characterized by greater objectivity. Besides, research reputation is built on the quality and credibility of the research itself (IFPRI, 2002).

Researchers can face lukewarm attitude from policymakers and excessively high expectations from others. Access to data is not always easy, even when researchers work for the government. Research findings can be controlled by policy-makers or censored by the authors themselves to avoid embarrassing decision-makers. In this regard, the nature of the financial arrangements plays a crucial role as consultancies or short-term focused grants tend to be more constraining than long-term financing.

...There is asymmetry of timeframes between policymakers and researchers.

Another main challenge in the research-policy nexus is that there is asymmetry of timeframes between policymakers and researchers. While governments need quick evaluation of the policies that they want to implement, research often requires long-term investigations. According to Phillips and Seck (2004), for research to influence policy requires some correspondence in time-frame. It is crucial for research to precede or anticipate policy. But, also, policy implementation can be enhanced by research-based monitoring studies and assessments. Think tanks (TTs), therefore need the capacity to anticipate issues that will be central in the policy-makers' agenda and achieve timeliness in producing knowledge for policy influence.

Models of the Research-Policy Nexus

Traditional stereotypes of research-policy nexus take various forms. One, research influences policy in a straightforward one-way fashion - the linear model. Two, researchers and policymakers are dichotomous communities - the dual community model. Three, production of knowledge is confined to a set of specific findings - the positivistic model (Nielson, 2001; Crewe and Young, 2002). Over time, the literature on the research-policy link has shifted away from these paradigms in favour of multi-directional relations of research and policy (Young, 2004). This perspective is reinforced by growing evidence that research uptake by policymakers is influenced by the political context, the credibility of the evidence and the links between policy and research communities (Court and Young, 2003).

Another perspective is the framework of research-policy links developed by ODI's Research and Policy in Development (RAPID). The framework is mirrored by extensive literature review (de Vibe, Hovland and Young, 2002) and conceptual discourse (Crewe and Young, 2002). Based on the framework, there are four broad clusters of issues, as follows: context, represented by politics and institutions; evidence in terms of approach and credibility; links, given by influence and legitimacy; and external influences (Young, 2004).

Furthermore, there are alternative theoretical postulates of the link between economic research and policymaking (Marouani and Ayuk, 2007). On one hand, the classic, purist and knowledge-driven model suggests that research generates knowledge, which leads to a policy decision in a linear sequence (Hanney *et al* 2003). This positivist or "technicist" approach assumes that researchers find solutions for developmental problems and policymakers simply implement them. However, such knowledge-driven research faces many challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa, due to limited research capacity and research funding.

On the other hand, the problem-solving, engineering or policy-driven model assumes that the process begins with the identification of a problem by the client, which could be the government, and the researcher's role is to identify and assess alternative solutions (Hanney *et al* 2003; Gewirtz, 2003). Although this model also follows a linear sequence, it takes into account the interaction between supply of and demand for policy research (Caplan, 1979). The mutual flow of information ensures that the research community undertakes research that is relevant and responsive to public policy.

Researchers and policymakers do not always speak the same "language," but they can find common grounds in the pursuit of shared development goals.

Some perspectives are anchored on the functional significance of research in policymaking. For example, one viewpoint focuses on the enlightenment function of research (Weiss, 1977; Hanney *et al*, 2003). It posits that research is more likely to be useful through the gradual "sedimentation" of insight and theories as well as concepts and perspectives. Systematic access to evidence-based research advice can significantly increase the chances of deciding and implementing policies that achieve intended results and enjoy sustained public support (Carden, 2009). A related viewpoint (Hanney *et al*., 2003) conceives a 'contingent' role of research, whereby research is undertaken in response to pressure to inquire about specific policy question.

2

The Bridging Role of Think Tanks

Think tanks (Tts), also called policy research organisations (PROs), occupy a unique place in the research-policy nexus. According to the Global Go To Think Tanks report, a think tank (policy research organisation) is a corporate entity that generates policy-oriented research, analysis, and advice on domestic and international issues in an effort to enable policymakers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy issues (McGann, 2011). These organisations act as a bridge between the academic/research and policymaking communities, serving the public interest as an independent voice that translates applied and basic research in language and form that is understandable, reliable, and accessible and useable for policymakers and the public.

Why Think Tanks?

Think tanks conduct and facilitate research for the purpose of informing and influencing public policy. So, think tanks do not just produce research in terms of information, ideas and knowledge, like academic-oriented traditional research organisations. Other fundamental bases of their existence are getting research into policy

and practice and finding out how the research is impacting on the policy process.

Renewed interest in the think tank concept is linked with concerns about the impact of social science research and its relevance for policy making. Since the 1960s, the question of research influence on policy has become a paramount concern for development agencies, funders and researchers alike. Also, against the background of researchers' traditional indifference about the impact of their research, funders of research and development agencies are now giving greater consideration to explicit questions about the potential impact of research in their grant criteria (ESRC 2012). Moreover, unlike in the past, researchers are showing more explicit interest in policy makers' attitudes to their work and now seek better ways to convey their messages and be heard (Demers 2011; Weiss 1992).

Think tanks conduct and facilitate research for the purpose of informing and influencing public policy.

Characterising Think Tanks

Not all TTs do the same things to the same extent (McGann, 2011). The role of TTs varies from one society to another. Role variations depend on the peculiarities of the political and civil society environment in which TTs operate, and on the academic/research environment.

A TT can exist as a policy research institute located in or affiliated with a university; an independent policy research institute operating as non-profit organisation with private funding; a governmentally created or state sponsored TT; a

corporate created or business affiliated TT or a political party TT, legacy or personal Tts.

Besides, a typology of TTs can be based on a wide range of criteria which include:

- Governance and organisational structure;
- Size of employment – small, medium and large;
- Focus or scope - diversified, specialised;
- Stage of development - start-up stage, initial (survival) stage, middle-age (growth) stage, old (consolidation) stage and reputation (high influence) stage;
- Funding strategy and resource mobilisation – individuals, corporations, foundations, donors/governments, endowments, sales/events;
- Business model (value proposition) – independent research, contract work/consultancy, advocacy, this refers to the balance between research, consultancy, and advocacy;
- Source of their arguments – ideology, values or interests; applied, empirical or synthesis research; or theoretical or academic research;
- The manner in which the research agenda is developed – as collective product of the think tank or by individual researchers, or by funders;
- Policy influencing approaches and tactics – proactive or *lassez faire;*
- Time horizon of strategies – long term and short term mobilization; and
- Level of audience – local, sub-national, national, regional and/or global.

In characterising TTs, it is important to appreciate the fact that think tanks operate in different political, social, economic and academic (scientific) contexts around the world. There is therefore wide variability in governance, structure and mission, funding sources, research scope, stakeholder engagement and policy influence.

Think Tanks Perform Mixed Roles

A typical perspective on TTs pertains to their roles in knowledge production and diffusion and how they perform the critical objective of bridging research and policy. The more common characterisations of TTs focus on 'research brokerage' or 'policy entrepreneurship' (Stone, 2000), which connotes the manner and extent to which TTs produce and disseminate knowledge in relation to policymaking. In some cases, TTs are portrayed as intermediaries between theoretical and academic knowledge and policy communities, and they are viewed as those who aggregate, disaggregate or re-package knowledge from research for clients and other actors in the private sector, government, and civil society.

As producers and transmitters of knowledge, TTs seek to influence policy through a mix of strategies and functions which include:

1) clearing house for critical information: producing, or digesting and diffusing relevant research for wider public assimilation;

2) policy advocate: promoting particular ideas, policy options and positions;

3) network facilitator: actively creating, facilitating or participating in networks connecting policy actors 'political parties, bureaucracy, media and academia, as well as other civil society organisations;'

4) agent of learning: provide expertise on specialized policy issues and provide public education through information dissemination.

However, the specific role or set of roles played by individual TTs largely depend on its overall orientation, that is, on how it conceives itself and the work it does. In practice, TTs perform these functions in varying combinations; some may be prominent as producers of knowledge or information agents while others may have more orientation to policy advocacy. The academic depth of TT also differs from one organisation to the other. In fact, the exact configuration of these different functions hinges on the organisation's make-up, character and mission statement.

Making research count is the powerful logic that propels and justifies policy research organisations.

Notwithstanding their mixed missions, TTs share common challenges in the generation of impact through the transfer of intellectual matter underpinning policies. This knowledge transfer role is the basis for seeing TTs from the viewpoint of 'research brokerage' or 'policy entrepreneurship.' In this sense, TTs act as intermediaries between theoretical/academic realm and practical policy actors in the private sector, government, and civil society (Alcázar, Balarín, Weerakoon & Eboh, 2012).

Desirable Qualities of Policy Research Organisations

Having a clear perspective of successful policy research organisation is crucial for defining and measuring impacts. A policy research institution is said to be successful if it has a 'think tank' value for society and economy. Having a think-tank value means that a policy research organisation possesses the ability and orientation to

inform and influence public policy. Think tanks are essentially in the business of using research and analyses to inform and influence public opinions, policymaking and development practice. They provide a crucial intellectual resource for society. Policy research organisations can be benchmarked on several success criteria built around the capability and practice in informing and influencing public policy, in an efficient and sustainable manner. Some of the critical success benchmarks for policy research organisations are given as follows:

Change Agent and Public Respectability: Successful policy research organisations are those that have the aspiration, orientation and potential to serve as agents of change based on credible research. They are perceived and felt by policy actors, researchers and development practitioners as active in supplying good quality research useful for making policy choices..

Organisational Culture and Institutional Development: To ensure sustainability, a policy research organisation needs to institutionalise structures by establishing standard guidelines, procedures and systems. This makes internal administration and work organisation predictable and transparent. The organisational environment (work place) should support, motivate and enable staff productivity. An essential dimension of institutional development is strategic planning. A successful policy research organisation is that which thinks ahead and carries out planning and programming for the medium to long term in relation to the dynamics of its external environment. The strategic planning process lays the foundation for monitoring and evaluation and learning, and these constitute the indispensable ingredients towards organisational self-actualisation.

Governance and Leadership: Sound leadership and oversight of policy research organisations help to reduce arbitrariness and increase

credibility of outputs. Governance and leadership should be accountable, efficient and responsive. It is essential to have well-functioning and supportive governing board and there should be synergy between the board and management.

Research Capability: Sound research capability is reflected in the quality and adequacy of research and professional staff, and by extension quality of research and programme outputs. A successful policy research organisation is able to maintain supply of good quality research staff and research resources through mentoring, training, networking/partnerships, professional development and adequate incentives.

Policy Engagement and Public Influence: To be successful, a policy research organisation should constructively engage with policy stakeholders through timely and effective communication, advocacy, training and mentoring. Public influence is realised through timely, ordered and influential contributions to public debate.

Public influence is realised through timely, ordered and influential contributions to public debate.

Financial sustainability: Sound financial health is a hallmark of a successful policy research organisation. Financial sustainability is a prerequisite for good quality research and engagement with policy stakeholders. Those that can mobilise and access financial and material resources such as endowments, trust funds and institutional (core) support funding from a diverse sources have greater financial stability. Think tanks with wider funding scope can define their research agenda in premeditated manner, but those with weak financial base often follow research strategies and agendas that fit available funding. Correa Aste (2009) stresses

the point that external financial dependency has a constraining influence on the ability of TTs to establish and maintain long-term research agenda.

3

Understanding Policy Research

Research as Developmental Tool

Research is a systematic (logical) process of producing and accumulating knowledge, based on the scientific method. Knowledge produced through research may be basic or applied. Where the knowledge produced is basic, it is academic or pure research. But, applied research produces knowledge that is policy-oriented or policy relevant – that is designed to solve identified practical or development questions. By implication, policy or development research is research that informs better policies, that engages citizen participation in accountable government, that unleashes a country's economic energies, that fosters the capacity for people. communities and societies to discover new choices for growth and change (Carden, 2009).

Despite the distinction, academic research and applied research are mutually interacting and reinforcing (Eboh, 1998). Pure research can provide general principles for solving many policy/practical problems and development questions. On the other hand, applied research gives insights for pure research to rediscover theoretical relationships and conceptual understandings.

From the perspective of policy influence, research is broadly characterised to include critical investigation/evaluation and theory building as well as other less rigorous processes such as data collection, analysis, monitoring and evaluation and codification related to development policy and practice.

Defining Policy Research

Policy-oriented or policy-relevant research is an example of applied research. Policy research refers to scientific inquiry into a phenomenon or subject in order to provide policy advice based on facts emanating from the inquiry (Ajakaiye, 2004). Policy research simply means research and studies undertaken in order to inform and influence public policy. Policy advice emanating from policy research, otherwise called evidence-based policy advice is distinct from advice based on tradition, convention, intuition, hunch or rule-of-thumb.

Policy research ideally provides critical analysis, valuable information and empirical knowledge that illuminate policy options. By assessing the costs and benefits of policy options, research presents a valid guide and sound bases for decision-making by policymakers. It interrogates policies based on the context of local institutions and political economy in order to find appropriate solutions to policy questions and development needs. There are different forms of policy research.

Distinction between Academic Research and Policy Research

Practitioners should be clear about the distinction between 'academic research' and 'policy research' in order to avoid wrong use of the concepts. Academic research looks for relationships among the broad range of variables describing behaviour. In academic

research, the preoccupation is to construct theories for understanding society and economy based on truths as defined by the disciplines and proven literature. It uses rigorous scientific methods and procedures, that is empirical proofs, for testing theoretical relationships and for describing and explaining reality. The results and findings are often of no direct and immediate relevance to the information needs of policymakers and development practitioners.

But, policy research seeks to predict the impacts of changes in variables that can be altered through public policy. It applies formal methodologies to policy-relevant questions and to predict consequences for society and economy. The results and findings still need to be translated into implications and recommendations to become useable by policymakers. The desired product of policy research is a more or less verified hypothesis of the form: if the government does X, then Y will result (Weimer and Vining, 2011).

The distinctive factors between applied and academic research include the practical applicability of research, the theoretical sophistication of the research framing, interpretations and the degree of criticality of the research produced. While academic research is defined by greater theoretical sophistication and criticality of thought, methodological rigour is an underlying trait of all research, whether academic or policy research (Nafstad, 1982; Miller and Salkind, 2002). Practical applicability of research need not be achieved at the expense of theoretical sophistication or methodological rigour (Bengs, 2004), hence, many think tanks strive to produce research that is methodologically rigorous, critical, and theoretically robust.

On the other hand, policy analysis involves the systematic comparison and evaluation of alternatives available to public actors for

solving social problems. The methodological approach is the synthesis of existing research and theory to predict the consequences of alternative policies and actions of government or concerned policy agents. Policy analysis is mostly focused on specific policy matters and produces rapid and timely results and findings that are of direct and immediate relevance to the information needs of policymakers.

A good policy analysis should be systematic and appropriately sequenced to generate clear insights and recommendations on the policy question. The common approach in policy analysis involves the following steps and responsibilities:

- *Establishing the context:* What is the underlying problem that must be dealt with? What specific objectives are to be pursued in confronting this problem?
- *Laying out the alternatives:* What are the alternative courses of action? What are the possibilities for gathering further information?
- *Predicting the consequences:* What are the consequences of each of the alternative actions? What techniques are relevant for predicting these consequences? If outcomes are uncertain, what is the estimated likelihood of each?
- *Valuing the outcomes:* By what criteria should we measure success in pursuing each objective? Recognizing that inevitably some alternatives will be superior with respect to certain objectives and inferior with respect to others, how should different combinations of valued objectives be compared with one another?
- *Making a choice:* Drawing upon all aspects of the analysis together, what is the preferred course of action?

Typology of Policy Research

There are different typologies of policy research, each with its characteristics, challenges and opportunities. The common typologies are based on (i) nature of the research (ii) depth of the research and (iii) timing of the research.

With respect to time character of the research, policy research can be *ex ante* or *ex post*. *Ex ante* policy research precedes policy decision-making as it provides guideposts to inform policy changes. *Ex post* policy research analyzes and measures the impact of policies during implementation and proposes appropriate amendments as needed.

Ajakaiye (2004) distinguishes between four forms of policy research: surveillance/monitoring research; evaluative research; prognostic research and prospective research.

Surveillance/monitoring research is designed to systematically and constantly track developments in the economy and society with a view to identifying potential opportunities and challenges well in advance of their emergence to allow for the design of appropriate policies and programmes to effectively deal with the situation.

Evaluative research is designed to analyse and evaluate the impact of specific policies and programmes against the background of the intended effects and identify the unintended but desirable effects which should be consolidated, while also identifying the unintended and undesirable effects that must be ameliorated. Evaluative research may be *ex-post* or *ex-ante*.

Prognostic research is designed to analyse the developments in

the relevant aspects of the economy and society at regular intervals with a view to predicting the future direction the system may take under alternative policy regimes and/or evolving circumstances. Prognostic research is invariably carried out by a research outfit owned by a parent organization or within a research department of an organization.

Prospective research is designed to analyse developments in relevant aspects of the economy at regular intervals with a view to predicting the future direction the system may take under plausible circumstances that are largely outside the control of policymakers.

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Elements of Good Policy Research

The Need for Credible Policy Research

An overarching feature of policy research is that it is research for policy sake. Research-based and other forms of evidence have greater chances to contribute to public policies if certain conditions are met. Research and evidence must fit well into the political and institutional purview and be mindful of the pressures of policymakers. The evidence must be credible and convincing in providing practical workable solutions to current policy problems, and should be packaged to elicit interest of policymakers. Achieving evidence-based policies depends, crucially on the existence and availability of reliable research. Without trust in the research produced by a policy research organisation, the research faces the risk of irrelevance and redundancy. Researchers and policymakers must share common networks, trust each other and represent the interests of all stakeholders and communicate effectively (Phillips and Seck, 2004). In order to influence policies, researchers require great skills, motivation, diligence and thoroughness for contributing to solving policy questions. A good policy research incorporates dissemination and communication activities into project design.

Qualities of Good Policy Research

For policy research to feed effectively into policymaking, it must have rigour, credibility, relevance, timeliness, completeness, digestibility and legitimacy (Phillips and Seck, 2004). Policy research must be sufficiently rigorous (good design, well implemented) to support development of good policy options. Research evidence must be credible in order to be taken seriously by policymakers. While some research may inform and engender policy reform and should necessarily precede reforms, others can inform the process of reforms by measuring impacts of policies during implementation and proposing appropriate modifications. Relevance differs by context and has varying degrees as it may involve simply shedding light on a policy issue. Policy influence is affected by topical relevance and also by the operational usefulness of an idea. A critical issue affecting policy uptake of research is whether research has provided a solution to a problem. In many instances, combining rigour and timeliness can be difficult. In the pressure of politics, policymakers often require quick answers to policy questions, some of which would not adequately be generated by researchers within the politically convenient timeframe.

For policy research to feed effectively into policymaking, it must have rigour, credibility, relevance, timeliness, completeness, digestibility and legitimacy.

To be complete, policy research must explore all potential options and take into account all relevant facts and figures on policy options. It should consider all the policy contestations by various stakeholders and bring all relevant factors and considerations to bear on the outcome of the decision-making process. Policy research must be digestible by policymakers, so that they can be useable in the

policy process. To be useable, research must be distilled in plain language, avoiding technical language but using simple amenable illustrations. Policy research will have a varying impact depending on the degree policymakers perceive it to be legitimate. It must be pointed out that in reality the research output that goes into the policy debate is often politically determined and the status and bargaining position of the group endorsing the research does influence the degree of legitimacy (Meier, 1991; Phillips and Seck, 2004). However, policy research need not necessarily bear the assumptions of the policymaker, but should seek to improve the relevance and quality of public policy from independent objective viewpoints.

Key Steps to Making Research Policy-Relevant

Effective policy research should manifest three key requirements: scientific quality, policy relevance and stakeholder buy-in.

Experience has shown that these three qualities - scientific quality, policy relevance and stakeholder buy-in can be simultaneously achieved through systematized process of research preparation, research implementation and research dissemination.

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Research preparation

Research preparation involves (a) drafting of concept note (b) development of draft research proposal and (c) review of the draft research proposal leading to a revised research proposal.

Draft a concept note: A concept note aptly defines the research problem, its justification, the proposed

methodology and relevance to policy. The concept note is about 3-5 pages long. It is a scoping paper which articulates the motivation, scope, approach and expected impacts of the policy research. Following the circulation of the concept note, comments and observations are obtained and utilised towards developing a research proposal. An important use of the concept note is to elicit interest of funding agencies for sponsorship of the research.

Develop a draft research proposal: Based on the review of the concept note, the next step is to develop a full research proposal. The full proposal describes and explains the research as follows: introduction, research objectives, justification, literature review, hypotheses, expected policy impact, methodology, implementation management, work-plan and budget (costing).

Hold a research methodology seminar: The full proposal is subjected to scientific scrutiny and peer review in a research proposal seminar. The seminar examines the soundness of the research methodology and the scientific validity of the research problem. A lead reviewer is appointed to carry out more detailed examination and scrutiny of the proposal, ahead of the seminar. Both the comments of the lead reviewer and other participants at the seminar are collated and used to revise and improve the proposal.

Engage and consult with policy stakeholders: The research methodology seminar is complemented with engagement and consultation with policy stakeholders and prospective consumers of the research – stakeholders from government, private sector and civil society. The consultation can take the form of seminar involving a targeted audience, with the objective of obtaining the stakeholders' perspectives on policy questions addressed by the research. Moreover, the consultation seminar helps to raise policy stakeholders' awareness

and appreciation of the research objectives and assure the policy usefulness of the research.

Organise scientific review: The research proposal is sent to anonymous reviewer(s) to elicit feedback on scientific soundness and feasibility of the research. The assessment questions and criteria include:

- Is the policy problem (gaps, weaknesses, malfunctioning) well-defined?
- Is the rationale for research clearly and adequately articulated?
- Is the context of the study sufficiently discussed?
- Is the research question or hypothesis clearly stated?
- Is the case for the policy import of the research issue effectively canvassed?
- Does the policy research issue address new or emerging national, regional or international development challenges?
- Are all the relevant aspects of the policy research problem well-articulated and integrated in the analytical framework?
- Are the relevant previous studies sufficiently considered and appreciated in constructing the research problem and methodology?
- Has the right type of information and data been identified for exploration?
- Where sampling is necessary, is the sample correctly drawn to be representative and adequate for the population?
- Does the methodology contain a discussion of alternative methods for analysing the issue and is there sufficient justification of the chosen methodological approach?

- Is the research proposal well-structured and written in clear and precise language?

Revise the research proposal: The comments and recommendations from the research methodology seminar, policy consultation seminar and the scientific reviewers are collated and used to revise the research proposal. A revised proposal is produced, which becomes the working document and benchmark for research implementation.

Research implementation

Execute the research. The implementation of the research involves (a) team formation and work planning (b) mobilisation of research resources (personnel, materials, etc. (c) execution of the work plan (tasks and actions) (d) drafting of research report and (e) review of research report.

Validate the research report: The draft research report is subjected to scientific reviews. One form of review is the research findings seminar involving technical validation of the research by peers and experts. In addition, the draft research report is reverted to the scientific reviewers of the research proposal to ensure that the research has been implemented based on acceptable scientific standards and in compliance with reviews at the proposal stage. In addition, the review assesses to what extent the research:

- Answers the research questions and hypotheses already stated;
- Has sufficient internal consistency between research objectives, data used, research methodology and research results and findings;
- Is self-explanatory, innately complete and exhaustive, not missing out any essential elements;
- Is coherent, logically sequenced and well-written;

- Contains findings, conclusions and policy implications are traceable to the data and research results; and
- Gives clear statement of policy options based on the analysis conducted.

Revise the research report: The comments, observations and suggestions from the research findings seminar and the reviews are used to revise the draft research report. A revised research report is produced, which becomes the basis for dissemination.

Research dissemination

On completing policy research, the findings, conclusions and recommendations are transmitted to the policy stakeholders through a variety of dissemination channels and activities. There should be a post-research policy seminar whereby the results, findings and policy implications of the research are transmitted to and discussed with policy stakeholders. In addition, there are other forms, tools and channels of research dissemination - policy briefs, media briefs, research briefs, seminars, conferences, workshops symposia and roundtables – which will be treated in detail later in this text.

5

Understanding Policymaking

Public policy is an indispensable tool for converting new knowledge into better lives and better futures (Carden, 2009). Understanding policymaking is crucial for maximising the development impact of policy research as well as defining and measuring the impact. The policy process needs to be put in clear perspectives of content, context and actors. The researcher cannot meaningfully influence the outcome of a process that he/she does not understand. Stone (2000) emphasises the need to place the agenda-setting strategies of policy research institutions (or think tanks) and their efforts in diffusing ideas within a policy model. Adequate grasp of the policy process helps the researcher to design and execute the 'what,' 'how' and 'when' to target and influence policy.

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Defining 'Policy' and 'Policymaking'

Public policy is the framework of principles, regulations or decisions adopted by government or its institutions which are designed to influence and determine future conditions or realise stated objectives. The aim of public policy is to achieve the common good, from the immediate period through the longer term. The 'common good' objective of public policy can be realised through instruments, strategies and programmes that shape, influence and properly align the actions, practices and behaviour of private social and economic agents.

Policymaking is both 'art' and 'science.' It involves the process by which governments translate their political vision and intents into programmes and actions to deliver outcomes and desired change. It embodies both declaration and implementation of intent. Countries face different policy challenges at different times. The policy challenge could be a minor fine-tuning of the national economic strategies or it may require major wide-ranging changes in the economic environment and by implication significant policy reforms. The quality of the public policy process (including policy formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and feedback) is a key measure of the quality of governance in any society.

Policymaking is both 'art' and 'science.'

Public policy is a tool for altering economic incentives, rewards and sanctions. It lays the basis for resource allocation by government, just as it influences resource allocation by private agents/actors. Using public policy, the government defines the agenda, direction and programme thrusts for its institutions and agencies. To the public, public policy plays an essential role in communicating government intentions, decisions and standpoints. In addition, it sets the 'rules of

the game' for the market and defines the agenda for private enterprise. Public policy is useful for reducing uncertainty, increasing predictability of government and managing public expectations.

The Policy Process as a Cycle

Public policy is a process involving successive stages that interact in a cyclical pattern. While varying models of the policy life cycle exist in the literature, there is a common notion that public policy process occurs in a logical sequence:

a. problem definition and agenda setting – through policy scoping;

b. policy formulation and design – through consultation and dialogue;

c. policy adoption and approval for implementation;

d. policy implementation;

e. policy monitoring, evaluation and feedback; and

f. policy revisions - refinements and modifications (Birkland, 2010).

The progression from one stage to the next stage may not be straightforward, just as it involves variable time lags. Hence, the policy life-cycle is a long-drawn phenomenon underpinned by an interlocking of stages. This is a hard reality that policy researchers and policy research organisations should consider in designing and implementing research and advocacy strategies to inform and influence the process.

Policymaking as an Interplay of Interests

Policymaking is necessarily a mix of political, technical and bureaucratic processes. The policy process is a market for ideas as it is a

competition for space, interests and control (Phillips and Seck, 2004). The 'policy market' is fuelled by actions, behaviours and pronouncements reflecting the preferences of distinct groups of actors who seek to maximize their welfare, a concept that may include altruistic motives, that is, group rather than individual benefits. Consequently, the policy process can be likened to a continuum that ranges from collaboration to competition. While research is essential for evidence-based policymaking, in reality policymakers make decisions based on wide range of information including beliefs and practical experience of what works and what does not (Young, 2004).

Policymaking is necessarily a mix of political, technical and bureaucratic processes.

Political contestations, institutional pressures and vested interests shape the nature, theatre and dynamics of the policy process. One major challenge facing policy makers is to reconcile the conflicting interests of 'winners' and 'losers'. In practice, the policy process tends to be more iterative than linear, not a strict rational model whereby policy makers utilise the knowledge from research in a straightforward manner.

There are formal and informal agents in the policymaking process. Formal agents include constitutional organs of the executive and legislature and the institutional systems of governance. Informal agents include membership-based professional and business organisations, non-governmental organisations, pressure groups, political organisations, the research community and the media. Depending on vested stakes and policy issues, the policy process can be subject to negotiation, confrontation and acute rivalry between competing groups.

Policy implementation is greatly affected by attitudes and incentives among officials, manoeuvre spaces, local history and power relations. Hence, economic policy can have any of three outcomes: intended and desired effects; unintended but desired effects; unintended and undesired effects. The policymaking process seeks to arrive at the most efficient policy or range of measures that will maximise the first two categories of effects and minimise the last one (Ajakaiye, 2004).

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Models of Policymaking

How a policy research organisation (think tank) conceptualizes policymaking shapes its design of policy influence strategies. The literature on policymaking defines two broad models of the policy process – the 'stages' or 'linear' model and the 'iterative' model.

The *linear* model characterises the policy process into successive stages, namely, identification of a problem phenomenon; articulating plausible alternative measures and analysing the effects of the alternative policies; selecting the most efficient one for implementation; implementation of the chosen policy and evaluation of the impact of outcome of intervention (Ajakaiye, 2004). In other literature, it is referred to as the *stages model* of the policy-making process. The model has been variously referred to as rational, comprehensive or linear (Porter and Hicks, 1995; Grindle and Thomas, 1991). A variant of this model is "incrementalist" or the "muddling-through" model. According to Ajakaiye (1992), the basic premise of the model is that policies for drugs, for example, have three types of effects: intended and desired; unintended but desired and unintended and undesired.

Therefore, the primary goal of the policy formulation is to arrive at the most efficient set of decisions that will maximize the first two effects and minimize the last one. Thus, decisions are made sequentially as follows:

i. identifying a problem, issue or phenomenon;

ii. articulating plausible alternative policies;

iii. identifying, assessing and comparing the significance or otherwise of each of the three possible effects of the alternative policies;

iv. selecting the most efficient one for implementation (Stone et al., 2001; Sutton, 1999; Porter and Hicks, 1995);

v. implementing the chosen policy; and

vi. evaluating the effect, impact or outcome of the intervention.

Deriving from the linear model, Knott and Wildavsky (1980) identify six different stages at which research can impact on policy: transmission of research; cognition of findings; reference made to significant studies; efforts made to operationalise findings; influence seen on decisions; and application of research to policy and/or practice. But, the linear model is criticised as too simplistic depiction of the policy process which does not take into adequate account the political and institutional nature of the policy process. By implication, the linear model views policy-influencing work of think tanks from a simple framework of research-input/policy-output. Hence, the concept of the policy process unnecessarily ring-fences the possibilities for research influence on policy.

On the other hand, the *iterative* model assumes that as policy options pass through the stages of the linear model, several actors get involved and their actions determine the outcomes at any stage of the policy process. Encapsulating the iterative model, Carden (2009)

cautions research-to-policy strategies not to assume any linear logic in the ordinary course of policymaking. Rather, policy decisions over time generally display a complicated pattern of advances and reversals tied together in feedback loops of decision, implementation, second thoughts and course corrections.

There are two dominant variants of the iterative model: political-institutional and post-positivist models of the policy process. The political-institutional model emphasises the political nature of the policy process and the institutional frame within which policymakers operate. On the other hand, the post-positivist model indicates the role of theoretical and normative considerations in decision-making processes.

Policy actors that impact on the policy include government policymakers, policy implementers (bureaucrats) and special interest groups outside government such as labour unions, politicians, business groups and sundry interest groups. Other literature refers to this as *iterative interaction* model of policy-making. For the purposes of elucidating this model, the stages of the linear model can be grouped into three: problem identification or the agenda-setting stage; articulation and analysis of alternative policy options or the solution stage; and the implementation and evaluation stages.

At successive stages of the policy process, there is interplay among many actors: government policy-makers and implementers (politicians, bureaucrats); special interest groups outside government (politicians not in power, business interest organizations, NGOs, professional societies, labour unions and sundry interest groups); and concerned international bodies.

The iterative model of policy process gives space for interpretation of the policy-influencing work of policy research organisations from a

'research brokerage' perspective. As knowledge brokers, policy research organisations are involved in educating fairly diverse range of policy actors, in order to shape and re-shape policy agenda. Policy research organisations are not just concerned with producing information but also convincing policy makers, civil society or other actors to use the information and ideas. According to Stone (2000), policy research organisations act as agents of learning within policy networks of politicians, bureaucrats, the media and other nongovernmental actors.

Related to the knowledge brokerage role of policy research organisations is the promotion of social learning and understanding of new ideas, programmes and policies. In the same vein, Fischer (1993) asserts that policy research organisations seeking to advance their policy influence should give attention to policy arguments as necessitated by the decentralized character of power in the political system and the technical complexity of modern policy issues. By offering critical intellectual information, think thanks respond to the inevitability of normative arguments and empirical evidence as tools for modern policy struggles.

Benchmarking Policy Decisions

The policy process in any country can be measured by the overall quality of policy decisions. Elements of this measure are three-fold – efficacy, exhaustiveness and consensuality (Phillips and Seck, 2004). Efficacy refers to how effectively the policy accomplishes its stated development goal. Exhaustiveness defines the entirety of policy options and inputs considered. Consensuality measures the degree to which the policy attains legitimacy, as measured by extent of voluntary compliance and eventual costs of policy administration. However, the competitive nature of the policy formulation process may lead to outcomes that do not align with intrinsically superior options as determined by research (Phillips and Seck, 2004). Sometimes,

political expediency may override objective analysis of competing policy positions. Nevertheless, research is crucial in helping good policy options emerge.

Though the conventional framework for assessing policy decisions is the "rational behaviour approach," it is widely acknowledged that policy is rarely made in accordance with the rational-choice model. In his theory of bounded rationality, Herbert Simon (1957) points out that most decision-makers are "satisficers" rather than "optimizers." In other words, because exhaustive research of all viable options for each decision would be prohibitively costly, the search is usually interrupted early with the selection of the first option that is good enough. Also, it entails finding an acceptable combination of desired levels of achievement of competing objectives amidst constraints and factors outside the decision-maker's control. In practice, 'maximising' a single objective is very challenging. In hierarchical organizations, those at the top have the privilege of putting forth their options first, and then forge alliances to ensure their adoption. In this regard, claims about the rationality of a policy option are made in the implementation course, despite the fact that it is usually arrived at in the context of a limited search for alternatives.

Charles Lindblom (1959, 1965) depicts the deliberative process as even less systematic, characterizing it as "muddling through," a process in which the selection of values and goals is indistinct from the search for options aimed at reaching them. In this characterization, there is no clear separation of ends and means and little analysis of the quality of a given policy option, because preference is given to the option on which there is the broadest agreement among players. In short, a good policy decision is that on which consensus can be achieved, not necessarily the one that best responds to a specific policy challenge. The consequence is that valid policy alternatives may be ignored and important policy outcomes are not achieved.

From the viewpoint of some organisational theories (see Wildavsky, 1964), decisions are in fact reached in a process of disjointed incrementalism, which works by bringing about changes "at the margin." The high level of uncertainty caused by implemented wholesale change often triggers fierce resistance as the interests and values of various groups of stakeholders are threatened. Moreover, complex problems may be partitioned into smaller policy issues that are handled by decision units that are not necessarily coordinating their work, or who disagree on the overall policy goal.

Ensuring Policy Participation

Participation is the process whereby non-state stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources affecting them (Thomas, 1995; Diamond and Plattner, 1995). On the other hand, advocacy involves influencing policymakers – the government; it is essentially a political process. It entails identifying and championing issues to push them into the policy agenda, educating citizens and government officials about the issues, mobilising support and creating coalitions or networks (Scribner, 1997; Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002). Important skills for advocacy include articulating objectives, identifying and understanding who and what needs to be influenced, the policy windows/opportunities and timing to do so, packaging the policy message to be communicated and devising a set of activities (lobby, persuasive argumentations, interactive mechanisms, communication, outreach) to carry out the strategy.

Citizen participation is most effective in democratic settings because democracy can lead to higher levels of transparency and accountability (wide sharing of information, open decision-making processes, holding public officials to account for the use of resources

and policy outcomes). It opens a wide scope for different views of a range of societal groups in the formulation of policies (policy pluralism) and equitable delivery of public services. It provides the enabling institutional and legal framework that recognises and respects human rights and the rule of law.

In theory and practice, policy participation has 'who,' 'what' and 'how' dimensions. The 'who' refers to the various stakeholders, that is, the constituencies/actors that are affected by a policy and have the power to facilitate or obstruct it. Public sector stakeholders include political authorities, ministries, departments, legislatures and government officials spanning national and sub-national levels. Beyond the public sector, the stakeholders include private sector actors, media, academics, and various organisations at the national and local levels (professional associations, think tanks, trade unions, religious organisations, youth groups, political parties and citizens - including the poor and marginalized).

Another category of stakeholders is international donors that provide development funding and technical assistance. Central to policy participation is stakeholder analysis to identify interests of each category of stakeholders, the resources they bring to the policy process, the motivations to use those resources and their likely impacts (Lamb, 1987; Frischtak and Atiyas, 1996). The 'what' question refers to the kind of participation while the how question addresses the qualitative aspects of participation ranging from the most basic level - information sharing, consultation, collaboration and joint decision-making to more advanced levels, such as empowerment. Economic reforms necessitate governments to explore mechanisms to achieve policy participation via policy legitimisation, constituency building, resource mobilisation and organisational design.

Policy Participation: Demand and Supply Sides

Policy participation is a phenomenon with demand and supply sides. The supply side consists of government institutions while the demand side consists of private sector and civil society. Effective and sustained policy participation depends on both supply and demand conditions.

Supply-Side Dimension

Government institutions and public officials who lead in developing and implementing policies, providing public goods and allocating public resources should create opportunities for participation. For participation to be effective, government institutions and public officials must be willing and able to accommodate external involvement aimed at affecting policy decisions and service delivery. Supply-side aspect of policy participation entails transparency, openness and access to policy process and content. It is crucial that public officials and political authorities have the capacity to process and digest research results and use same to evaluate policy options and make policy choices. The existence of flexible *rules of the game* for participation or legislation allowing for private sector organisations (PSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), advocacy groups or other associations is key to creating an enabling environment. Sometimes, the political and institutional framework can constrain the participation behaviour of organisations and individuals.

It is crucial that public officials and political authorities have the capacity to process and digest research results and use same to evaluate policy options and make policy choices.

Citizen participation is most effective where decision-making system is open and there is multiplicity of decision-making centres

and significant decentralisation that reduce the chances of state capture by dominant interest groups. The ability and effectiveness of civil society in policy advocacy, social mobilisation and expression of demand depend on the prevailing political and bureaucratic environment (Bratton, 1990; Brinkerhoff, 1999).

Demand-Side Dimension

The demand-side of the policy participation is largely made up of private sector and civil society individuals and organisations (formal, organised and informal, unorganised) including think tanks (policy research organisations). The effectiveness of the demand-side depends on the enabling environment for participation, the political economy of government-interest group relations, history of participation and the capability of civil society to organise and articulate demands and aggregate interests in a credible fashion (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002). A tradition or history of participation contributes to social capital formation, which in turn is a vital ingredient of empowerment and socio-economic development. A tradition of participation engenders civil society groups to better organise and coalesce independent of the state, articulate their demands, manoeuvre successfully in various policy arenas and interact with government (Cernea, 1992; Coston, 1999). It also potentially leads to more sustained patterns of mutual trust, ability to mobilise around policy issues, engage in collective action and secure an enduring policy space. Strengthening and widening the demand side would ensure that government-interest group relations do not work in favour of cronyism and the most powerful and influential societal groups which attract government patronage in form of favourable policy regimes that guarantee continued power base. Where there is sufficient diversification of competitive interest groups, a balance of interests emerges to combat state capture by a narrow set of competitive privileged interests.

Building coalitions can be essential to effective demand-making capacity of civil society groups. Also, citizens and civil society groups should build skills and competencies for effective participation in the policy process. Necessary advocacy skills include ability to galvanise, collect and process views, aggregate those views into a credible policy position by applying analytical and presentation skills and strategically engage the right government people. Advocacy and lobby groups should be able to identify the priorities and issues, understand the policy issues – this requires technical expertise (in-house or contracted policy analysis) so as to earn credibility and gain direct influence in setting policy agenda. They should be able to understand the policy decision-making process, identify the decision-makers and stakeholders, comprehend the political environment, appreciate the group's strengths and limitations, develop and exploit a comparative advantage (for example in distinctive capabilities for policy analysis, packaging/communication of policy message) and identify allies and the support they can provide as well as develop communication strategies and capacities.

Given the complexity and often amorphous character of policymaking, researchers should be alert to the difficult context in which they and policymakers work. In fact, researchers may find themselves positing a rational model of decision-making, which may be at variance with the less rational political context that ultimately midwifes the policy process (Phillips and Seck, 2004).

6

Perspectives on Policy Reform

Rationale for Economic Policy Reform

Policy and institutional reforms are necessitated by social, economic and political dynamics in relation to the development objectives. Economic imbalances arising from internal and external shocks call for changes to current policies in order to uphold the right conditions for economic progress. Besides, policy implementation generates lessons and experiences that often make policy change imperative. At different times, countries make economic policy in either a steady state, which calls for minor fine-tuning of the national economic regime, or by instituting a major change in the national economic environment, which calls for significant policy reforms.

Conceptualising Policy Change

Policy researchers and policy research organisations need adequate understanding of how policy change happens. Such understanding is essential for designing policy-influencing strategies and techniques. Literature on policy reform is replete with several

perspectives about how to promote policy change successfully, how and why policy change may or may not occur. These perspectives cut across social science disciplines including political science, psychology, sociology and social psychology.

As an example, Stachowiak (2009) identifies six theories of policy change, as follows:

a. "large leaps" or "punctuated equilibrium theory";

b. "coalition" theory or "advocacy coalition framework";

c. "policy windows" or "agenda setting";

d. "messaging and frameworks" or "prospect theory";

e. "power politics" or "power elites theory"; and

f. "grassroots" or "community organising theory."

The 'large leaps' or 'punctuated equilibrium theory' derives from political science frameworks. It conceives policy change as analogous to seismic evolutionary shifts, inferring that significant changes in policy and institutions can occur when the right conditions are in place. This theory is more applicable where large-scale change in policy is necessary and is enhanced by strong capacity for sustained media advocacy.

Another political science angle is 'coalition theory' or 'advocacy coalition framework'. It explains policy change as a process occurring through coordinated activities among a range of individuals with the same core policy beliefs. The theory underscores the power of strong alliances rallying together for common goals.

From the realm of political science, there is also 'policy windows' or 'agenda setting' concept of policy change. It describes policy change from the perspective of seizing opportunity, whereby policy advocates

successfully connect two or more components of the policy process such as the way a development problem is defined and the policy solution to the problem. The requirement, however, is that policy change actors must have the capacity to identify and act on policy windows created within the political environment.

From psychology viewpoint, 'messaging and frameworks' or 'prospect theory' posits that policymakers' preferences or receptivity will vary, depending on how options are framed or presented. This theory gives much credence to inventive alignment and redefinition of 'change' messages/options to policymakers and other relevant audiences.

The 'power politics' or 'power elites theory' derives from sociology perspective. The theory postulates policy change as a function of direct and effective collaboration with powerful individuals or groups who make public policy decisions or influence public policy decision making. The prospect of this theory improves when only incremental policy change is the goal, such as changes in administrative rules and procedures.

Based on social psychology, 'grassroots' or 'community organising theory' mirrors policy change as the outcome of collective action by members of the community who work to change the problems affecting their lives. This model of policy change is premised on a distinct group of individuals who are directly affected by a policy problem. Moreover, there should be an advocacy organisation which can and is willing to play the role of "convener" or "capacity-builder."

Dimensions of Policy Reform

Policy reform has both content (technical), process (political) and ethical (credibility) dimensions (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002).

Policymakers tend to ignore the process and ethical questions and focus primarily on the technical aspects, hence policies that appear technically sound are often not adopted, resisted or unable to achieve desired results. Political credibility is regarded as a key to successful reform. A reform's credibility can be judged by past actions of government and the consequences of those actions. There is political credibility when policymakers who can make and keep promises actually do so. Reliable judgments about the political credibility of a regime and its readiness to carry out reform is based on the perception of the capability of policymakers to formulate and implement reform and whether the reform attempt is thought to be sustainable (an aspect of judgment that depends on institutional structure). Institutional structures that make policy change difficult increase credibility of reform policies, unless the policies themselves are inherently unsustainable (Scully, 1988; Douglas, 1990).

Let us take the case of the reoccurring controversial issue of deregulation of the downstream petroleum industry in Nigeria, often cast as "the removal of government subsidy from petroleum products." While the technical or economic rationale of this policy may be plausible, the discourse is historically beclouded with legitimate questions about governance and accountability. These questions concern people's 'lack of trust' in government and political leadership, morality questions arising from the perceived "unjust" and "disproportionate" transfer of the costs and pains of subsidy removal to poor people. Besides, over the years, there have been concerns about low effectiveness of public spending and poor fiscal management across the three layers of government and the inadequate political will to fight corruption. The labour strikes and civil protests that usually attend government's removal of petroleum subsidy clearly underscore how underlying 'political,' 'process' and 'credibility/morality' deficits

can negatively affect policy reform measures. Beyond the economic merit of market deregulation and subsidy removal, it is very crucial for policymakers to ensure proper communication, strategic sequencing, confidence-building and adequate mobilisation.

Some Theoretical Underpinnings

Traditional theoretic approaches to economic policy are hinged on first-best free market solutions – presuming a benevolent (welfare-maximising) state with sufficient administrative capacity. With this model, wide gaps were experienced between economic prescriptions and applications and between theorised and actual outcomes. Hence, successive policy models shifted focus to the role and capacity of the state (Bates and Krueger, 1993). The models include politics and institutions within the framework of interplay of markets, state and civil society, and prescribe reducing the role of government in the direct provision of goods and services and increasing the role of the private sector and civil society (Lamb, 1987; Grindle, 1999).

Success in implementing policy reforms requires appreciation that reform is about process and people – who 'wins' and 'loses' from policy change

Success in implementing policy reforms requires appreciation that reform is about process and people – who 'wins' and 'loses' from policy change – as well as about the 'technical soundness' of the policy change (Sabbateir and Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Sabbateir, 1999). Recognising the process dimension of policy change resonates with strategic stakeholder engagement to promote legitimacy, ownership and sustainability of policy reforms. This derives from political economy perspective, which regards impacts of political variables as central in

explaining policy outcomes and in addition emphasizes the role of incentive patterns and underlying political objectives and interest-group interactions. It views policies as dynamic combinations of purposes, rules, actions, resources, incentives and behaviours leading to outcomes that can only be imperfectly predicted or controlled (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002).

Policy Reform as Contract Re-Negotiation

Economic policy entails a set of 'contracts' between government and various socio-economic groups; while macroeconomic and trade reform can be interpreted as a re-negotiation of contracts, away from government involvement in the economy toward more efficient market-oriented systems. Also, because governments "sign" social contracts with various socio-economic groups, political support (without which governments fall) is often obtained and retained in part through *quid pro quo* arrangements involving exchange of income/benefit transfers (direct or indirect) for support. In order to accept policy reform, various interest groups must know what they will gain from the reform, how the gains will be distributed and whether the distribution of rewards will in fact be honoured by government.

In bidding for political and economic space, the more influential and better organized groups such as firms' or producers' associations, labour unions, urban groups, landlords, ethnic groups, etc. are more capable of providing support for or withdrawing support from the incumbent regime. As a result, governments are tempted to reflect their concerns; nonetheless the potential for spontaneous riots by unorganised and marginal groups means that governments channel benefits to them also (Alesina and Drazel, 1991; Campos and Esfahani, 1996). The larger the expected efficiency gains in relation to the political and economic costs of undertaking the changes in existing

rent and resource allocative arrangements, the more likely government will carry out the reform (Douglas, 1990; Alesina and Drazen, 1991; Campos and Esfahani, 1996).

Forces That Drive or Hinder Economic Reforms

Economic reforms, regardless of their aggregate effects, have distributive consequences, creating benefits for some while imposing hardship and loss on others. For most policy reforms, the interests of different groups are easy to recognize: the non-tradable goods sector opposes devaluation, firms producing import substitutes oppose trade liberalization, farmers object to cutting agricultural subsidies (Alesina and Drazen, 1991). Because political leaders rely on interest groups for political support, they are sensitive to such pressures and interest groups.

Notwithstanding the popularity of 'vested interests' module, it is faulted on many grounds. Individuals, households, and firms occupy multiple niches in the economic structure simultaneously - as producers, consumers and recipients of transfers - with interests that do not coincide. This means that individuals, households and firms may benefit and lose from economic reform at the same time. People may not know in advance whether they will benefit or lose from a reform, thereby creating uncertainties that can lead to biases either in favour of the status quo or in favour of the reform. In this sense, the conventional notion that "vested interests" exert obstructionist influence on reform may not be sustained (Krueger, 1974; Buchanan, 1980).

Illustrating with Wealth Redistribution

The concept of 'redistribution' in this context should not be construed as a one-way transfer of wealth from the rich to the poor, but the flow of wealth and resources among the various socio-

economic groups. Based on the premise that political leaders and governments strive to maximize tenure in power, government interventions cannot be divorced from issues of redistribution because it is partly through redistribution that a regime sustains itself. In a bid to win new support or retain old support, regimes tend to attend to the demands and agitations of at least a subset of interest groups, and such attention often implies some form of transfer or redistribution. However, there is no guarantee that state intervention in the economy will always be in the direction of benefiting society. Because of the state's command of instruments of coercion, it can intervene constructively or use its power to act arbitrarily. For example, incumbent regimes and public officials may promote their own interests or those of their friends, allies or constituencies at the cost of the general interest (Srinivasan, 1983).

Governments accomplish redistribution by direct and/or indirect means. State-owned public enterprises constitute a direct vehicle for redistributing wealth towards cultivating political support. Also, state ownership and control over employment, wages, input purchases, etc. give regimes access to resources with which to reward supporters and punish opponents (Haggard and Webb, 1993; Campos and Esfahani. 1996). The establishment of subsidies targeted at certain socio-economic groups is another direct means of redistributing wealth for the purpose of cultivating and sustaining political support.

Drawing insights from the analysis of distributional coalitions (Oslon, 1965), current views on the role of interest groups in economic change and resource allocation collectively posit that coalitions in society are overwhelmingly oriented towards struggles over the distribution of income and wealth rather than to the production of additional output. The free-rider argument implies that a typical lobby in a society is more likely to be a narrow special interest group or

distributional coalition since the benefits of any resources spent by the group to increase the society's output is shared with the rest of society; while the benefits of the same resources spent on redistributing society's output in its favour go entirely to the group. In a similar vein, there is the tendency of groups who are affected beneficially by policy change to engage in lobbying efforts to promote it, while those adversely affected would lobby to repeal it. Hence, interest groups, depending on their vested interests engage in politics, lobby and advocacy to secure access to decision-making power and switch of public resources into or out of different production and consumption streams (Buchanan, 1980; Colander, 1984; Meier, 1995).

Information problems aggravate the costs of rent and incentive-protection mechanisms which, by extension affect the prospects of policy change. The reason is that when such rents come into existence, the recipients take political or other measures to protect those rents and try to condition further political support on the continued flow of such rent. The literature on rent seeking makes the point that this feature is inherent in any arrangement for creating incentives (whether for production or for political support) and that incentives or rent do not take effect without some form of institutional mechanism for ensuring that the arrangement is difficult to change unilaterally and that promises of future rewards will be honoured.

...Anytime the government carries out policy reform, rent distribution conflicts are awakened, together with how to deal with the conflicts.

So, anytime the government carries out policy reform, rent distribution conflicts are awakened, together with how to deal with the conflicts. For example, exchange rate reforms leading to the depreciations in the real exchange rate erode the rents which past

policy regimes of import quotas and exchange controls confer on few privileged individuals/groups. Consequently, governments face limited options in balancing efficiency and equity with political sustainability in designing macroeconomic adjustment. So, removing distortions that impede efficiency and equity can lead to losses by politically powerful groups. Moreover, information asymmetry increases the costs of policy re-negotiation and gives rise to war of attrition among interest groups (Buchanan, 1980; Nelson, 1984; Scully, 1988; Nelson, 1990; Campos and Esfahani, 1996; Jean-Jacques, 1998).

Structural and Institutional Factors are Influential

A number of structural and institutional factors, such as the structure of the economy and trade orientation interact to influence a government's probability to undertake macroeconomic reform. These factors operate through impacting on either the potential efficiency gains or the transaction costs associated with the policy change. A significant factor that impacts on the potential net benefits of reform (that is, the expected efficiency gains in relation to redistribution or re-negotiation costs) is the structure of the economy defined by the relative size of the public sector vis-à-vis the private sector (Callaghy, 1990; Douglas, 1990; Campos and Esfahani, 1996). As the range of activities covered by public enterprises increases (that is, the larger the size of the public sector), the marginal efficiency gains from reform increase relative to the costs of redistribution necessary to achieve those efficiency gains. And so, the higher the relative size of the public sector in the economy, the greater the potential net benefits of reform. Although many producers and consumers may receive rents from public enterprises, their inefficiencies eventually raise the cost of

production for the economy as a whole, and increase the likelihood that groups would support reform. But, there is the negative (cost) side: a larger public sector implies greater re-negotiation costs because more information is needed to design and implement reform policies. Information imperfections are bigger when most economic activity is carried out in the public sector and when there competition is stifled (Alesina and Drazen, 1991; Haggard and Webb, 1993). If the size of the public sector is larger relative to the whole economy, such that a wide range of sectors are dominated by public enterprises, the information asymmetry burden of a policy reform is greater and the more costly it is for political leaders to undertake a reform (Campos and Esfahani, 1993).

Economic Shocks Provide Some Opportunistic Context

The literature on macroeconomic and trade reform identifies the relationship between economic crises and policy change. One theoretical framework posits that economic shocks create conditions that make regimes more probable to carry out reforms, since given a regime's desire to maintain power and maximize tenure; it would not wait until things deteriorate so badly before acting. An economic downturn or strong adverse shock raises the ratio of potential gains to redistribution costs from reform and thus induces reform. The mechanics of how economic downturn increases potential efficiency gains and reduces the redistribution costs associated with reform is the subject of thought in modern-day political economy analysis. Because economic downturn is associated with high rates and levels of inefficiencies, incumbent regimes are likely to be induced to undertake reform in view of the potential for efficiency gains (Stem, 1991; Perkins, 1991; Campos and Esfahani, 1996).

One explanation of why reform may be politically difficult in normal times but easier in times of economic downturn is given by the war-of-attrition model, in the sense that reform is accepted if an economic downturn increases the costs of the *status quo* relative to the post-reform situation. It is also conceptualized that another factor that restrains groups from blocking reforms during a downturn is the free-rider problem. Under this framework, the reasoning is that maintaining the *status quo* is a public good for those groups who benefit from it; and since during a downturn the benefits that go to each group diminishes, no single group has the incentive to bear the cost of lobbying. As a result, each group will concentrate on striking individual deals with the regime in order to minimize losses and hence do nothing to preclude reforms (Perkins and Roemer, 1991; Haggard and Webb, 1993).

Even though the costs of re-negotiating the implicit or explicit contracts that characterize the existing policies negatively affect the probability to reform, adverse shocks to domestic production tend to reduce the rents available through the existing arrangements and thus diminish the amount of redistribution required to achieve market-oriented reform. The lower the amounts of rent that will be taken away from the beneficiaries in the event of reform, the less loss the current beneficiaries will suffer and the more the balance swings towards a regime's reform probability. Economic downturn also facilitates reform probability by reducing information asymmetries arising from underlying uncertainties about the distribution of gains and losses between bidding socio-economic groups. When economic conditions are normal (that is, before they deteriorate), interest groups are likely to be uncertain about who will lose if no action is taken to avert economic recession, which policy would prevail during the reform period and what the outcome of the reform programme will be. Hence,

political leaders may be discouraged from carrying out reform, since expected costs may outweigh gains for decisive groups. But in the event of economic recession, these uncertainties reduce and certain groups find themselves on the losing side: groups will become more knowledgeable of their fate under the reform programme; so, the implicit social contracts become easier to re-negotiate (Nelson, 1984 and 1990).

Harnessing Stakeholder Roles in Policy Reform

Despite mounting challenges, the outlook for policy partnerships between government, private sector and civil society has been improving. Policy spaces are emerging in desired ways that create potential avenues for policy participation by civil society and private sector. New arenas are being found in which government at all levels can be held accountable on what it is doing or not doing. Many government policies and development strategies have drawn upon civil society and private sector inputs and participation. Government has elicited varying forms of civic participation in the formulation and implementation of development plans, economic policies and sector strategies. Some examples are the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Nigeria Vision 2020, First National Implementation Plan for Nigeria Vision 2020, Economic Transformation Agenda, Nigeria Millennium Development Goals Reports and State-level Economic and Development Plans. The return to democratic rule has seen

Policy spaces are emerging in desired ways that create potential avenues for policy participation by civil society and private sector.

government becoming more receptive to technical inputs that improve the quality and impact of policies. Capacity and/or appreciation for policy research and expert subject-matter analyses of issues are growing in the public and private sectors. Public (open) hearings in the National Assembly have become a major effective tool for mobilising stakeholder feedback and inputs into policies, budgets and legislations.

Non-state actors have recorded some successes in influencing public policies and government attitudes in recent times. Many civil society groups continue to re-build and re-position towards effective engagement with government. Many pre-existing groups have become more orientated towards economic policy while new ones have sprung up to harness the widened policy space. But, many civil society organisations are still deep inside the web of patronage that permeates the political economy. Some successes have been achieved by leading groups such as Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN), National Association of Small and Medium Size Enterprises (NASME), National Association of Small Scale Industries (NASSI), Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), among others, having been very visible and active in the economic policy arena. These and other leading policy think-tanks constitute potential hub around which to foster stakeholder engagement with government. Civil society has also been

It is important to establish legal and institutional framework for civil society and private sector associations to engage in policy partnerships with the public sector.

networking around policy issues and development reform agenda of the government. Some networking and coalitions have variously been built around a variety of issues including poverty reduction, good governance, budget monitoring, petroleum products pricing, election monitoring/observance, privatisation, etc.

Policy Champions are Critical

The Nigerian experience in economic policymaking underscores the need for policy champions (or drivers of change) within and outside the government and for policy partnerships between government, the private sector and civil society. Government can do more to enhance the opportunities for engaging in effective and successful policy partnerships with private sector and civil society. It is important to establish legal and institutional framework for civil society and private sector associations to engage in policy partnerships with the public sector. There is need for administrative structures and mechanisms that will facilitate the establishment and operation of partnership arrangements and enhance the institutional capacity (through training, orientation and incentives) for public sector agencies and officials to work effectively with civil society and the private sector. It is essential that government deploys effective communication strategies for informing non-state actors regarding government intentions for policy partnerships and assuring stakeholder participation.

Policy reforms inevitably give rise to a new array of winners and losers and competitive bidding by interest groups.

Non-State Actors (NSAs) as Drivers of Change

Actors outside government can be stimulus for positive policy change. Other sources can be new political leaders assuming power on winning an election, external global actors such as international development agencies, powerful domestic interest groups with a change agenda or technocrats moving from the private sector, academics or civil society to government decision-making positions. Whichever the source, policy change is highly political and controversial as it addresses fundamental questions on distribution of wins and losses, benefits and costs. Policy reforms inevitably give rise to a new array of winners and losers and competitive bidding by interest groups. Civil society needs re-positioning to be a stimulus for policy change in Nigeria. Such repositioning is made more compelling to respond to the growing challenges to hold the governments accountable.

...Information dissemination can be enhanced by wide distribution of government policy documents.

Non-state actors need the right environment to influence policy reform. It is important for the government to improve the nature of state-civil society relations and increase the space available to civil society. This requires adequate information flow and communication between government and non-state actors. It is helpful for government ministries and agencies to have functional and constantly updated websites. However, since internet access is still limited, information dissemination can be enhanced by wide distribution of government policy documents. Timely and transparent information about government policies and programmes is indispensable for civil society to hold government accountable. Government should develop institutional and administrative

mechanisms to process stakeholder inputs in a timely and effective manner. Government should have a sound public information strategy to properly enlighten and sensitize stakeholders, ease communication with diverse interests and obtain feedback and inputs into policies. Development of constituencies to support reforms requires that government markets the reform in a language that makes the change both understandable and appealing to stakeholders.

Networking and Coalition –Building are Vital

Networking and coalition-building are essential for stronger and more enduring policy influence (Bardach, 1998; Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002). The value of networking lies in the potential to spread debate, widen understanding of policy issues and cross-exchange policy positions. It hinges on pooling of intellectual and organisational resources to advance policy ideas and pushing for their adoption and implementation based on concordant rather than discordant voices. For this to happen, there should be information sharing, pooling of resources and mutual complementation by respective groups or organisations.

...The Nigerian civil society can translate its diversity into pluralist strength for policy advocacy towards social and economic change.

By working through networks and coalitions, civil society or non-state actors are able to increase credibility and visibility of the policy positions and improve political clout. The underlying inter-group coordination confers broader legitimacy, ownership and sustainability of impacts. A precondition for success however is that groups and networks possess internal mechanisms to effectively process, aggregate and reconcile alternative/divergent policy perspectives.

Another critical challenge is to manage power and information asymmetries among diverse organisations and groups. Groups must build capacity to work together, collaborate and cooperate. There is a large scope for national research-based advocacy networks to engage at the policy level, and therefore move public debate towards development issues, away from patrimonial, ethnic, religious and sectional angles. By this approach, the Nigerian civil society can translate its diversity into pluralist strength for policy advocacy towards social and economic change.

7

Understanding Research Influence on Policy

Research Affects Policy in Mixed and Diverse Ways

The ultimate goal of policy research is to provide evidence that informs and influences policy towards improving socioeconomic well-being. Though research alone cannot solve a country's social and economic problems, it can help policymakers understand those problems more clearly and develop better strategies for dealing with them. Hence research is hugely valuable to the policymaking community. In the absence of timely scientific evidence to assess their decision options, policymakers rely upon precedence, ideology, presumptions or simply populist views to guide them. But, research on its own cannot bring about change.

...Researchers need to make scientific evidence available and accessible as well as promote its utilisation.

For new knowledge to bring about policy changes, factors must be in place to catalyse the process. The research has to be useful to people. The information has to be accessible to its intended audience. Therefore, researchers need to make scientific evidence available and accessible as well as promote its utilisation. An enabling

environment is one in which all the factors are in place to enable us understand information, filter and adapt it to suit our own environments. However, it is important to point out that influencing public policy is only a means to an end. The ultimate goal of development research is to improve lives and advance the course of a country's development. Informing better policy and better governmental action is a necessary means to that compelling end.

The impact of research on policy is subject of increasing conceptual analyses. According to Davies, Nutley and Walter (2005), "the non-academic aspect of research impact is about identifying the influences of research findings on policy, managerial and professional practices, social behaviour or public debate". Such impact may be *instrumental*, influencing changes in policy, policymaking practices and behaviour of public policymakers, or *conceptual*, changing people's knowledge, understanding and attitudes towards social issues.

Both instrumental and conceptual impacts of research are difficult to measure and verify. When research has an *instrumental* impact on policy or practice, this often occurs in conjunction with series of other events and relationships, and thus the relative contribution of the research to the outcome is not easily determined. This is the attribution question. This difficulty is enhanced even further when it comes to *conceptual* impacts, where research may have been transformed into an anecdote, a catch phrase, or received wisdom. In these cases the research may have 'filtered' through various policymaking and practitioner networks to great effect, but with no explicit print of research on them (Weiss, 1977).

Jones and Villar (2008), for example, draw on the 1998 study by Keck and Sikkink on transnational advocacy and the policy process to highlight five key dimensions of possible policy impact. They are as follows:

- attitudinal change through framing debates and getting issues on to the political agenda, drawing attention to new issues and affecting the awareness, attitudes or perceptions of key stakeholders;
- enlightenment effects among policy actors by affecting language and rhetoric and provoking new perspectives;
- promoting procedural change by opening new spaces and discussion frontiers, dialogue mechanisms and processes;
- impact on policy content and outcomes through legislative and institutional reforms; and
- enhancing behavioural change among key policy actors through effects on policy processes and policy implementation.

Another perspective (Knott and Wildavsky, 1980) identifies six different stages at which policy impact can occur: transmission of research; cognition of findings; reference made to significant studies; efforts made to operationalise findings; influence seen on decisions; and application of research to policy and/or practice.

A three-dimensional typology of policy influence is reported by Carden (2009), as follows:

- Expanding policy capacities – this includes improving the knowledge base of policymakers and their capacity and orientation to new knowledge.
- Expanding policy horizons – this refers to the enlightenment outcomes (new concepts, fresh ideas on agenda, broader understanding and new positions).
- Affecting policy regimes – this includes redesign, modification or change of policies or programmes, mostly in the long-term.

Other typologies of policy influence include the viewpoint that research impact comprises academic impacts (within the research world) and external impacts (those outside higher education). It defines impact as an "occasion of influence" not as a change in outputs or activities as a result of that influence or a social outcome.

The nature of research influence on the policy process is to a large extent shaped by the political and institutional context.

Influencing Policy Requires Contextual Approach

The nature of research influence on the policy process is to a large extent shaped by the political and institutional context. Unlike in developed countries where there exist institutional mechanisms for knowledge transfer from research, policy research institutions in developing countries often operate in more unstable economic and political contexts, where the use of research evidence for policy making is less frequent and there are fewer institutionalised channels to help the knowledge transfer process.

The extant role of political, policymaking and bureaucratic contexts in promoting or hindering policy change is espoused by the theoretical paradigm - Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (Andrews, 2012; Andrews, Pritchett and Woolcock, 2013).

The problem-driven iterative adaptation (PDIA) approach is based on the notion that reforms are most successful if they are triggered by issues or problems with clear legitimacy – which both government and the people cannot ignore. There is strong desire of the political and bureaucratic elites for solutions as well as high public interest and demand for change by the people, represented by non-state actors.

In practical terms, the PDIA model of promoting policy reforms involves working with coalitions for change to address the legitimate problems in an iterative process of experimentation, learning and adaptation. The process allows reformers to learn how to solve their issue or problem, build political support for the change and establish appropriate capacities required to implement this change. PDIA is operationalised on four principles: local solutions for local problems; pushing problem driven positive deviance; try, learn, iterate, adapt; scale learning through diffusion (Andrews, 2012; Andrews, Pritchett and Woolcock, 2013).

The PDIA is a departure from the prototype technocratic approach that is largely predicated upon singular change champions that commit to implement pre-designed externally-generated 'best-practice' templates in the local context. As an example, the Federal Public Administration Reform (FEPAR) programme in Nigeria, supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) uses the PDIA as the mechanism to deliver change (FEPAR, 2014).

Bottleneck-to-Solution Analysis Works Well

The 'bottleneck-to-solution' analysis (BTSA) of policies and programmes is a powerful tool for achieving research influence. Like the PDIA, it exemplifies the contextual approach to research influence on policy.

A classic case is the methodology, known as the MDGs Acceleration Framework (MAF) developed and used by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) to promote acceleration of the achievement of the MDGs at the country level (United Nations, 2011).

The MAF is a methodological framework by which policymakers can systematically identify and prioritize bottlenecks to progress on MDG targets as well as develop 'acceleration' solutions to these bottlenecks. The procedure involve: (i) identification of bottlenecks to the effective implementation of policies, programmes or service delivery

initiatives; (ii) prioritization of the bottlenecks based on potential impact and availability of potential solutions; (iii) identification of the solutions to remove/mitigate bottlenecks and (iv) prioritization and sequencing of the solutions to maximize magnitude and speed of impact on the removal/mitigation of the bottleneck (United Nations, 2011).

In general terms, bottlenecks are gaps, weaknesses and constraints that hinder policies, programmes and interventions from producing their desired results.

Drawing from the MAF methodology (United Nations, 2011), bottlenecks can take the form of proximate/direct-cause blockages or systemic/underlying obstacles to achieving policy and programme objectives. Also, depending on the nature of policy/ programme initiative, bottlenecks can belong to one of four categories: policy and planning; budget and financing; supply-side (provisioning perspective); and demand-side (including social, economic and cultural issues).

Policy and planning bottlenecks relate to gaps, weaknesses or inadequacies of plans, policies and strategies, regulations, legal framework and guidelines which constrain the achievement of goals and targets. Areas of budget and financing bottlenecks include fiscal frameworks, budgeting, resource allocation, resource mobilisation, linkage between budgeting and planning public financial management, quantity, quality, timeliness of funding and value for money, that is, efficiency of spending.

With respect to the supply side, bottlenecks can occur in areas such as human resources availability and development, supplies and logistics, lack of decentralized capacity, technical and organizational quality, procurement systems, value chain analysis, sector management and institutions, and the absence of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems. On the other hand, demand-side bottlenecks might occur in terms of access to services (physical and economic), the use of resources, information and education as well as social and cultural factors.

Bottlenecks are assessed for potential impact on the achievement of policy and programme goals/targets and feasibility of or amenability to solution under different timeframes. The assessment is followed with identification and profiling of potential solutions and prioritization and sequencing of solutions to maximize impact on the removal/mitigation of the bottleneck. The results of this analysis constitute ready-to-use resource for research influence on policy. An example of the use of BTSA is Nigeria MDGs Acceleration Framework (Federal Republic of Nigeria & UNDP, 2013).

Some Typology of Policy-Influencing Activities

Activities to influence policy can be categorised into two approaches: "inside track" involving working closely with decision-makers and "outside track" approaches that seek to influence change through pressure and confrontation. There is also a distinction between approaches that are anchored on evidence and research versus those that involve, primarily, values and interests. This marks out four possible axes of research influence on policymaking, as set out in Figure 1.

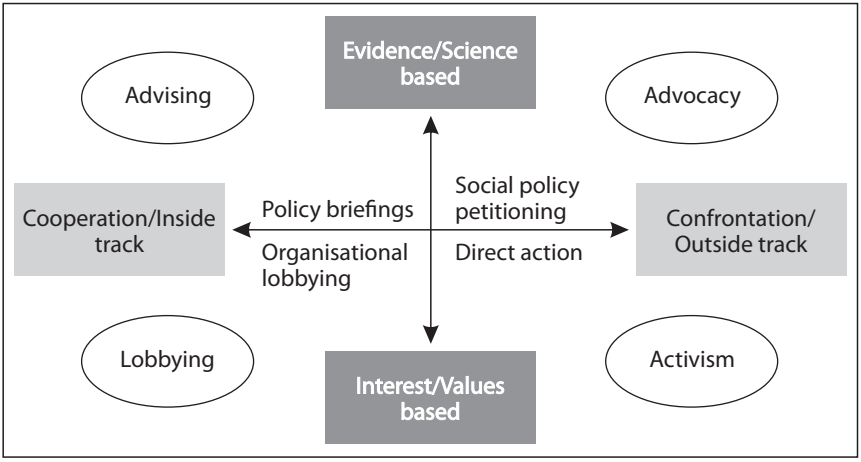

Figure 1: Policy-influencing techniques
Source: Start and Hovland (2004).

The approaches and tools used to manage and measure 'outside track' influencing activities can be further simplified into three: evidence and advice; public campaigns and advocacy; and lobbying and negotiation, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Policy influencing activities, mechanisms and instruments

Types of Influencing	Where? Through what channels?	How? By what means?
Evidence and advice	National and international policy discourses/debate Formal and informal meetings	Research and analysis, 'good practice' Evidence-based argument Providing advisory support Developing and piloting new policy approaches
Public campaigns and advocacy	Public and political debate in developing countries Public meetings, speeches, presentations Television, newspapers, radio, and other media	Public communications and campaigns 'Public education' Messaging Advocacy
Lobbying and negotiation	Formal meetings Semi-formal and informal channels Membership and participation in boards and committees	Face-to-face meetings and discussions Relationships and trust Direct incentives and diplomacy

Source: Adapted from Start and Hovland (2004); Jones (2011).

Influencing policy is not just about altering a particular decision. Maximum influence occurs when research helps the policy community grow its own capabilities to assess evidence and analyze

options; when research enlarges the array of choices for policymakers; or when research improves the procedures of policymaking. In sum, research influence can take the form of expanding policy capacities, broadening policy horizons and affecting decision regimes.

Mapping the Institutional Context of Policy Influence

There are no universal one-size-fits all best practices for using research to influence policies and development. What is important is to have underlying principles that are adapted to the respective research-policy nexuses. Every circumstance is different. Every situation presents its own complications of need and choice, danger and advantage for researchers and policymakers. For researchers, influencing policy begins by forming some understanding of these complications, and understanding how they interact. More specifically, development researchers seeking policy influence will have to see their own work as one part of the policy process. When research influences policy, it is always in the turbulent confluence of factors that shape policy decisions and policy outcomes.

There are no universal one-size-fits all best practices for using research to influence policies and development. What is important is to have underlying principles that are adapted to the respective research-policy nexuses.

The structures, procedures and personalities engaged in political decision and governmental actions define the setting in which research can influence policy (Carden, 2009).

An instructive model of policy influence actors is given by Gladwell (2000). The model posits that the spread of influence

revolves around three types of actors who may be persons, groups, or organisations: (1) *connectors* - networkers who know who to pass information to and who are respected enough to influence key players; (2) *mavens* – information specialists, who acquire information and educate others; and (3) *salespeople* – powerful, charismatic and persuasive individuals who are trusted, believed and listened to (Gladwell, 2000).

8

Laying Out the Policy Influence Plan

Defining the Policy Issues

One of the first tasks for researchers is to ensure that the policy-relevant issues addressed by their research project have been clearly defined with careful reference to specific policies in place or under consideration. It is of paramount importance that policy dimensions be identified in the initial design of the proposal and further refined throughout the research process. The more clearly defined the policy issues are, the easier it will be to identify potential beneficiaries of the research and establish communication links with concerned parties.

The more clearly the policy issues are defined, the easier it will be to identify and establish communication links with potential users of the research.

Policymakers play a crucial role in ensuring that research results are as useful as possible and must be involved from the outset to better take into account their perspectives

and the valuable inputs they can provide. All members of the research team should be familiar with the policy context and keep it in focus continuously. The more clearly the policy issues are defined, the easier it will be to identify and establish communication links with potential users of the research. The necessity for a policy influence plan is real and cogent. A policy influence plan describes the objectives, expected milestones, key methodologies and activities as well as resources required for engaging with policy stakeholders in an effective and sustainable manner.

Understanding the policy problem as the policymaker sees it, then crafting a research-based solution in like manner, eases communication and influence.

Identifying the Policy Stakeholders

Many actors and players in the public policy space benefit from and are interested in the findings of policy research. The benefits arising from policy research are likely to go beyond those actors who you have identified as the most direct beneficiaries. Policy stakeholders or constituencies are defined as those individuals, groups, and organisations that have a "stake" or "interest" in the research findings. These actors and players could impact upon or be impacted upon by the implementation of the research findings and recommendations. Knowing who the stakeholders are helps to identify possible linkages and partnerships beyond those that seem most obvious.

Stakeholders could consist of government policymakers, government ministries and agencies, members of the legislature or parliament, technocrats, researchers, development practitioners, NGOs, community-based associations, professional organisations, labour unions, private sector organisations and the media. For the

purpose of developing an effective and realistic policy influence strategy, it is important to identify the policy stakeholders. Efforts must be directed to the people with decision-making power and also, to the people who can influence these decision-makers, by virtue of their positions or roles in society and economy.

Why Know the Policy Stakeholders?

It pays more to do a deliberate identification of policy stakeholders, rather than merely assuming a prototype list of stakeholders. In developing the research strategy, dissemination and policy influence plan, adequate consideration should be given to the interests of different stakeholders. Stakeholder enlistment will enable different stakeholders to play an active role in the dialogue and discussions around the research findings. Through this, the policy influence objectives are more likely to be achieved with higher levels of sustainability.

Knowing the stakeholders is crucially important. It helps to explore and understand better not only the different types of interest held by stakeholders but also those stakeholder power relationships that can have a major impact on the organization's ability to achieve its policy influence goal. In the same vein, proper identification of stakeholders will help in deciding how best to engage with different stakeholders in the most appropriate ways and also help to avoid possible conflicts of interest.

Doing stakeholder analysis provides important framework to transform actors from mere passive holders of stakes to active role players.

Doing Stakeholder Analysis

After identifying the policy stakeholders, the next step is to carry out stakeholder analysis. Stakeholder analysis is a system of examining the role, importance

and influence of the different players and actors in the policy process with a view to understanding the nature and interaction of interests and anticipating the possible reactions or attitudes of different role players. Doing stakeholder analysis provides important framework to transform actors from mere passive holders of stakes to active role players. It is a critical step in activating the policy engagement and communication process. Doing stakeholder analysis involves developing a stakeholder chart, that is, stakeholder inventory; analysing the importance and influence of different stakeholders (otherwise known as power mapping) and identifying how you want to engage with your different stakeholders.

Developing a Stakeholder Map

A stakeholder chart is a tool for visualising the policy actors' landscape. The chart is a simple diagram made up of series of concentric hexagons representing the actors (organisations, groups and agencies) most related to the policy matter (see Figure 2).

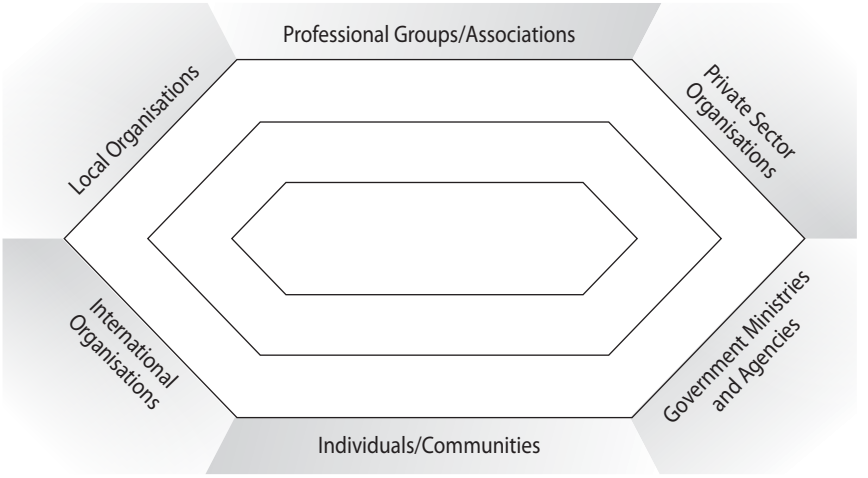

Figure 2: Stakeholder inventory guide

Each level indicates the intensity of relations or connection with the policy issue. Stakeholders are plotted on the chart according to how they rate on three criteria: connection, capability and concern (CCC) – with respect to the policy matter. The higher a stakeholder's CCC, the closer it should be to the centre of the map. If a stakeholder has strong rating on the 3C's, it should be placed in the core of the map. Stakeholders highly rated on 2Cs are plotted in the outer layer next to the core of the map while those with just 1C are plotted in the next outer layer.

The exercise of developing the chart is itself instructive, as it instils in the policy researcher the orientation and discipline to identify those that matter for the utilisation of the research findings. It also helps the policy researcher to create a working picture of actors that matter most to the policy engagement process and the nature and degree of interest they hold on the policy matter. Moreover, the chart provides baseline information from which the policy researcher can benchmark future engagement mechanisms and to measure the impact of research communication and policy dialogue. Furthermore, the stakeholder chart helps the policy researcher to delineate tasks and roles across policy actors and to develop teaming mechanisms for facilitating the policy uptake of research findings and recommendations. It provides working frame for preventing resource wastage while ensuring realistic ambitions and for engagement with the policy process.

Analysing Stakeholder Importance cum Influence (Power Mapping)

After the listing and charting of stakeholders, the next step is to carry out an analysis of the importance and influence of different actors on the policy matter. This exercise is called power mapping.

Importance indicates the extent to which the needs and interests of a particular stakeholder could be affected by the uptake (or non-uptake) of the research findings or recommendations. A highly important stakeholder is one whose interests could be critically affected (negatively or positively) by the utilization (or non-utilization) of the research findings in policymaking. Influence is the power which a particular stakeholder possesses for enabling or preventing the utilization of the research findings in the policymaking process. A highly influential stakeholder is one who has the power to promote or hinder the use of the research findings in the policymaking process.

The stakeholder chart is useful in preparing a stakeholder "importance and influence" matrix, by listing the stakeholders in the appropriate boxes as shown in Figure 3.

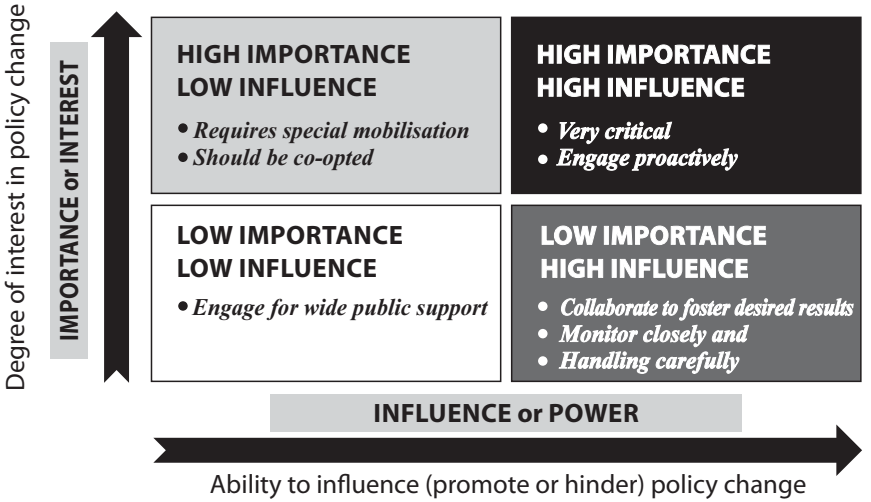

Figure 3: Stakeholder Importance and Influence Matrix

Understanding the interaction between importance and influence helps to decide how best to engage with respective stakeholders. Stakeholders whose interests are highly important but have relatively

little influence may require special initiatives to protect their interests. It is critically beneficial to co-opt this category of stakeholders into the policy advocacy process. For example, informal sector operators may be critically affected by policy uptake of the research, but have little capacity to influence the policymaking processes. On the other hand, those stakeholders who wield high influence, but are relatively less interested in or affected by the research findings could constitute some risks to policy uptake. This category of stakeholders requires close monitoring and careful handling, for example, the media. Stakeholders whose interests are highly important and who are also highly influential will require the most congenial relationship and engagement. They are the ones that are likely to be most actively involved in either promoting or hindering the policy uptake because the research findings affect them most. But, those adjudged to be less important and less influential can be engaged in more limited fashion, perhaps through enlightenment and sensitisation, towards building wider public coalition.

Getting research into policy entails targeting research knowledge specifically to those in the policy process who are best placed to use that knowledge

Within the framework of stakeholders analysis, there is a typology of stakeholders that distinguishes policy actors into: primary audiences and secondary audiences. The primary audience includes decision-makers with the authority to modify or introduce the policies that the policy research addresses. These are the primary targets of an advocacy strategy – government officials, policymakers, technocrats and members of legislature or parliament. The secondary audiences are individuals and groups that can influence the decision-makers (or primary audience). The opinions and actions of these "influential actors" could affect the opinions and actions of the decision-makers.

These could be policy advisors, non-governmental organizations, human rights groups, trade unions, environment organizations, industry associations, development partners and the media. In practice, a single stakeholder may bear the characteristics of both primary audience and also secondary audience, if they can influence other decision-makers.

Identify How You Want to Engage with Different Stakeholders

Having developed a stakeholder importance and influence matrix, the stage is set for the choice of techniques and methods for engaging with the respective stakeholders. The methods and techniques will depend upon the position of the stakeholder on the map of concentric circles, the degree of importance and influence and the disposition, resources and capabilities of the policy research institution or policy research programme. Possible mechanisms for engaging with policy stakeholders include seminars, workshops, bilateral meetings, dialogue sessions, media reportage, public forums, policy debates, information sharing, technical committees. Also, tools such as policy memos, policy papers and policy briefs can be used. The policy researcher or research institution could also publish opinion pieces in print media, take part in television discussion programmes, make presentations at legislative committee hearings and deliver papers at public events and professional conferences.

9

Communicating Policy Research

Evidence-based policymaking requires that researchers and policymakers communicate and dialogue with each other effectively. Tackling socio-economic challenges is definitely a cooperative enterprise. But, cooperation between policymakers and researchers, however, does not always come naturally. It comes through deliberate effort. It is sometimes assumed that we need more communication of evidence within the international development field. This is not necessarily true. More communication can simply end up as a form of pushing knowledge down to stakeholders in the hope that at least some of it will be put into use.

But, in real sense, what is needed could be better communication of evidence. Such communication can take the form of dissemination, guidelines, prescriptions, recommendations, advocacy, promotion, persuasion, education, conversation, roundtables, consultations, dialogue, counselling or entertainment. Often times, the mere fact of providing timely and useful information can be the most powerful strategy. Communication means more than providing information. It connotes fostering social awareness and facilitating public

democratic dialogue. Also, it entails contributing to evidence-based policy, and about building a shared understanding which can lead to social change (Hovland, 2005).

Communication Should Not Be One-Off Affair

To be effective in communicating policy research, the research project design should incorporate communication throughout the project implementation. The policy research project should approach communication as a systemic issue, not as ad hoc matter. There should be deliberate efforts to facilitate different levels of user engagement in communication of research. In fact, end-user consultation and engagement are key to taking research communication beyond simply dissemination of research findings/recommendations. Information needs to flow both ways, between the researcher and end-user (e.g. policymaker). It is important for researchers to listen to policymakers, as it is for researchers to speak to policymakers. Communication of research to end-users (including policymakers) tends to be more effective if the research process mainstreams information flow and feedback to end-users throughout the research process, from research inception to research completion. The interest and confidence of policymakers are enhanced if they contribute to shaping the research problem/objectives as well as reviewing the research findings/recommendations. This is achieved by making sure that communication starts early in the research, designed into the research plan and carried out as the research unfolds.

...End-user consultation and engagement are key to taking research communication beyond simply dissemination of research findings/ recommendations.

Networking With Public Sector, Private Sector and Civil Society

In order to bring about policy change, policy research organisations should build alliances or networks with themselves and the public sector, private sector and civil society. With regards to policy research and advocacy, a "network" refers to a deliberate association or alliance of individual persons or organisations connected by some unifying relationship based on shared ideals/values, mutual complementation, common interest, commitment and actions for the production of collective impacts, for example, policy reform, capacity building and institutional change (Eboh, 2011).

In order to bring about policy change, policy research organisations should build alliances or networks with the public sector, private sector and civil society.

Networks are characterised by "nodes" and "links". The nodes represent the various actors or players in the network while the 'links' refer to the relationships that bring together the nodes. Networks are difficult to develop, requiring time and energy, because they involve relationships of trust. Building a network requires knowing individuals and organizations that are working towards the same objective or on similar topics/questions. It is also important to seek out and build relationship with people who can influence decision-makers as well as include decision-makers in the network. Ingredients to develop lasting partnerships, networks and alliances with policymakers and stakeholders include collaborating on projects of mutual interest, joint programming and information sharing and exchanges.

Influencing policy is almost always a collaborative effort, requiring partnerships and networks.

Partnerships and networks help to organise researcher collaborations as well as researcher-policymaker collaborations in shared undertakings of discovery and change (Carden, 2009). These networking principles worked well for the AIAE's Better Business Initiative and the Business Environment and Competitiveness across Nigerian States (BECANS). Once built, relationships and networks can be leveraged to influence policy spaces and disseminate research findings. For instance, AIAE has used the "Enugu Forum" network as an avenue to promote public debate and policy advocacy, research dissemination and alliance building between researchers, policymakers, private sector and civil society. Another example is the Agricultural Policy Research Network (APRNet). APRNet brings together researchers, policymakers and entrepreneurs/practitioners on a common platform for information sharing, joint actions, social interaction for confidence building, collective thinking and programming for maximising the interface of research, policy and enterprise for sustainable agricultural development in Nigeria.

Selecting the Right Dissemination Event

How research is disseminated matters for its uptake by consumers of research (policymakers, NGOs, private sector agencies and the public). The success of dissemination forum depends on the appropriateness of design (that is, whether the design is fit-for-purpose), the accuracy of targeting and the effectiveness of execution. With regard to design and targeting, there are variants of dissemination/dialogue events that can be carried out by policy research organisations. They include conference, workshop, seminar, symposium and roundtable. With the aid of information and communication

How research is disseminated matters for its uptake by consumers of research (policymakers, NGOs, private sector agencies and the public).

technologies, the menu of options has expanded to include teleconference, video-conference and webinar.

In choosing the right dissemination or dialogue forum, several considerations and factors come into play. They are as follows:

- purpose(s) of convening the dissemination forum;
- breadth/scope of subject, topic or issue under consideration;
- target audience or participants;
- optimal (desired) size of audience or participants;
- depth of interaction and discussions expected from the participants;
- expected or desired outcomes from the deliberation;
- access to information and communication technologies; and
- available amount of resources (money, materials and personnel).

Based on a careful consideration of above-mentioned factors, a policy research organisation may opt for one or a combination of dissemination events. It is therefore important to have good knowledge of the underlying principles, merits and limitations of the alternative dissemination events against the objectives, contexts and expected outcomes of the dissemination activity. The difference between one type of dissemination event and the other is not just nominal (in terms of label or nomenclature). In effect, the alternative kinds of dissemination activity vary in function and content. Getting

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A typical conference event involves a formal meeting of large number of participants, either as individuals or delegates/ representatives of groups and organisations convened to deliberate and proffer views about a theme/topic over a number of days. A common feature of conferences is keynote speeches/presentations which set the issues for discussions in subsequent sessions. In some cases, a conference may be a periodic (e.g. annual or biennial) gathering or meeting of academic groups, professional societies or research networks.

A workshop is a task-oriented meeting or series of sessions dedicated to in-depth treatment or examination of specific topics, questions or issues with definitive outcomes for the organisers and participants. A workshop can be used by policy research organisations for the purposes of training on skills and competencies, learning new methodologies and techniques, consensus-building on key thematic and topical questions and demonstration of new technologies. Examples are research methodology workshop to upgrade research skills and policy stakeholders' workshop to consider and agree solutions to policy questions.

A seminar is, generally, a form of short-duration meeting that involves a limited range and relatively small group of targeted participants. It is usually designed to share ideas, exchange information and discuss specific topics/issues of limited scope lasting a number of hours through a day. Seminars are commonly used for educational, instructional and enlightenment purposes, whereby a presenter or speaker delivers presentation on a topic or issue. While research seminars are useful for scrutinising interim and final results and conclusions of research, policy seminars can be

important tools for disseminating the policy implications of research and sensitising policy makers towards policy change.

A symposium format is also an important research dissemination and policy dialogue activity. In a symposium setting, a handful of select of experts are convened to speak on a particular academic, research or developmental subject/topic to an audience constituted based on specific pre-determined criteria. A symposium is distinguished by the scholarly, academic and intellectual content of the presentations, deliberations and listening audience. Usually, it lasts over some hours and does not typically address a wide range of audience, as in a conference setting.

A roundtable is an information exchange, brainstorming and discussion forum whereby few experts are invited to speak and answer questions on a burning public-interest issue or topic. The speakers make presentations or speeches based on their training and practical insights, followed by dialogue with the audience. In principle, discussants are accorded equal status and allowed equal speaking time. Policy researchers can use a roundtable format in presenting and receiving feedback on their respective research on a given policy problem.

The variants of a dissemination event are not mutually exclusive, but can be combined with each other, in a systematic manner.

The variants of a dissemination event are not mutually exclusive, but can be combined with each other, in a systematic manner. For example, there can be parallel workshops within a conference setting, that is, a conference can split into two or more concurrent sessions to take on in-depth exploration of the issues. Likewise, a seminar can break into a workshop format for more detailed treatment of certain questions and issues.

Connecting With 'Traditional' Mass Media

The traditional mass media refers to the conventional print and electronic (broadcast) media – newspapers, magazines, radio and television. These public communication avenues are critical to effective and widespread dissemination of research information and for contribution to public debate. They provide the relevant channels to reach stakeholders including civil society, private sector and the general public. It is important to have a clear and deliberate strategy for relating and connecting with the mass media and their operators – journalists, reporters, correspondents and editorial committees. The mass media should not just be seen and treated as mere 'channels' for dissemination of information to stakeholders and the public. Rather, policy researchers and think tanks should develop systematic engagement and partnership with the mass media to build effective and sustainable relationships. The underlying principle is to conceive and relate with the mass media as 'partners' not just 'channels' in public information and research dissemination.

Experience teaches a number of success principles and approaches for sustainable partnership with the mass media in research communication and public information. It works well for the policy research organisation to negotiate and sign memorandum of understanding (MoU) with media organisations. The MoU commits both organisations to mutual cooperation, collaboration in programming and activities, sharing and exchange of information, reciprocal capacity building, pooling of resources and complementation of capacities. By the MoU, the relationship between the policy research organisation and the media organisation is institutionalised, which is preferable to *ad hoc* opportunistic relations. An institutionalised relationship bears a number of possibilities and advantages, including:

- policy researchers can get regular access to the media and thereby contribute well-informed op-eds, articles on topical policy issues in public discourse;

- media organisations can have easier access to information resources that improve the content and quality of their publications;
- media operators can take part in research seminars and policy dialogue organised by policy research organisations;
- the policy research organisation and media organisation can develop and run joint programmes connecting research to consumers of research;
- the policy research organisation can jointly mobilise and access resources;
- the policy research organisation and media organisation can embark upon joint capacity building (for example, training) to enhance the effectiveness of researchers in communicating research on the one hand and the effectiveness of media practitioners in effectively utilising research information on the other hand; and
- the transaction costs of research communication for both organisations will be reduced, just as the efficiency of resource use will be improved.

Making Effective Use of Modern "Social Media"

The ICT revolution has expanded possibilities for research communication and exchange of public information across the globe. The social media is one of the greatest tools on the Internet, today. There are about 3 billion people on the Internet daily, with social media accounting for about half of the traffic. A post in the social media is likely to get over hundred times views more than any other means of publication. Radio and television appearance/programmes are often one-off, soon overtaken by

events and are time-bound, but the social media is time neutral and allows flexibility to users regarding when to utilise them.

Hence, the social media can be a powerful medium for the dissemination of research, public communication and engagement on topical issues. The topmost social media are Facebook, Linkedln, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, etc., which are avenues of communicating research. However, in using social media, it has to be ensured that the right audience is captured. To be relevant and effective in informing and influencing the policy process, the target policy actors and stakeholders should be looped in the social media.

The Uses of Research Papers

Research papers are vital means of reporting and disseminating the methodology, results and findings of research. Different kinds of research papers can be packaged for different audiences. The more technical research papers are suitable for mostly academic and scientific audiences. But the less technical research papers are more convenient for non-specialist readers and users, such as policy makers, development practitioners and the public.

The World Bank policy research working papers are one form of research papers. The series disseminates the findings of work in progress to encourage the exchange of ideas about development issues. It is intended to communicate research findings quickly, even in less polished version. On the other hand, research papers could be based on completed research, whereby what is reported is not work-in-progress.

A typical research paper series presents technical research results from work done by a policy research organisation and/or its affiliate scientists and researchers. The purpose is to disseminate research and analysis that informs policy debate and choices. It is directed to a

professional audience and readership among economists, social scientists in government, business, universities, research institutes and international development agencies. Before acceptance for publication, the papers are subjected to rigorous independent technical reviews to assure scientific quality. A research paper series seeks to engender high quality scientific and intellectual discourse on key development questions, and hence, enhance strategic understanding of policy and programmatic options. By emphasizing policy-relevant and evidence-based research, the series promotes scientific and intellectual discourse on crucial developmental questions and enhances understanding of policy issues.

Policy Briefs Are Highly Effective

Communicating research findings in a manner that inform and influence policy is one of the greatest challenges facing policy researchers. One rapid means of communicating policy research is policy brief. From the perspective of policy research, a policy brief is non-technical synopsis of research findings, conclusions and recommendations designed to inform and sensitise policy-makers and policy stakeholders towards policy change. Moreover, policy brief is useful to NGOs, professional groups and private sector organisations for informing advocacy and contributing to public debate.

Communicating research findings in a manner that inform and influence policy is one of the greatest challenges facing policy researchers.

A policy brief provides the opportunity to communicate the results of their research in an easy-to-understand, concise and persuasive manner. It gives sharp and simple policy-relevant storyline that will engage and interest policymakers. Of all the publications from a research, policy

brief is the one that is most likely to be read in policymaking circles. This is because of its brevity, simplicity and lack of technical jargons.

Policy brief can only be as good as the research results upon which it is based and the manner of presentation.

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Different variants of policy briefs are suitable for different purposes, audiences and contexts. In about 1-5 pages, a policy brief gives precise and concise statements of:

- the core policy problem addressed by the research;
- a glance of the science employed in researching the problem;
- critical policy-relevant findings and evidence;
- policy implications (deductions about the revealed opportunities, objects and merits for policy change in mitigating the policy problem); and
- recommendations for implementing either a preferred policy option or a range of options.

Policy brief can be as short as 1 page of clear, concise and convincing take-home messages for skimming or time-pressed decision-makers. It could be up to 3-5 pages of compelling more informative executive summary for decision-makers and development practitioners. In addition, it is equally important that a policy brief uses fitting tone and language which appeal to the interests and story needs of the target audience.

Regardless of the size of a policy brief or audience in mind, the logic of the message is unchanged. It takes the reader through a clear and coherent argument starting with the problem and persuasively conveying the evidence and possibilities and ending with actionable remedies such as policy adjustments, gap-filling and new policies.

Books Can Make Lasting Impacts

Books and monographs provide an important tool for communicating policy research, achieving wider outreach and more lasting impacts. AIAE has used the book option in three major instances.

The first is the book, published in 2005, which encapsulates the research findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Private Sector Competitiveness Working Groups otherwise known as the Better Business Initiative. The second is the book published in 2010, which formally reports and communicates the benchmarking analysis of the Business Environment and Competitiveness across Nigerian States (BECANS) – 2007 & 2010.

The other is the book published in 2009, which dwells on the global economic crisis and its lessons and challenges for Nigeria. Given the auspicious national significance of the policy symposium on *Global Financial and Economic Crisis*, it became necessary to transform the symposium papers into a book in order to achieve wider audience in government, private sector and civil society. The ideas and lessons canvassed at the symposium needed to be more widely disseminated in an enduring manner. This is particularly necessary since the participants at the symposium represent only a handful of policy officials, technocrats and practitioners from the public and private sectors of the economy. The book has achieved considerably in enlightening government and private sector managers, civil society actors and development practitioners. It has helped in sensitising stakeholders towards advocating for analysis-based responses to the global economic crisis. Up till date, the book passes as one of the few organised analyses or compendiums on the global economic crisis and Nigeria. Through the evidence and analysis contained in the book, AIAE has enhanced the quality of public discourse on the appropriate

policy responses to the global economic crisis. The book has served and continues to serve as a valuable tool of policy advocacy and a useful reference material for diverse set of readers and users.

The Efficacy of "Key Messages" Mode

The policy relevance of research findings must be expressed in terms that stakeholders can understand. Otherwise, those findings – no matter how significant – will be ignored in policymaking circles. If policymakers cannot comprehend the implications of your work, it will have no policy impact, regardless of its merit. Very often, the key messages of research writings are lost in the mass of data and analysis that they carry. Busy policymakers and practitioners do not usually have the time to read and digest long technical papers or scientific writings with elegant abstractions and extensive histories or details. Therefore, researchers must learn to communicate through the 'key messages' approach, that is, develop mechanisms by which their research findings and recommendations can be distilled into key messages.

While scholars, researchers and policymakers may share some terminology, the language of researchers and academics are often alien to those involved in policymaking. The researcher should therefore bear in mind that he/she is dealing with divergent spread of professional discourse. The potential audience of policy research includes political and administrative at the local, sub-national, regional and national levels as well as officials of non-governmental organisations, private sector organisations, trade unions and community-based organisations. A technical text, laden with

...Researchers must learn to communicate through the 'key messages' approach

jargons and professional terms can leave such an audience perplexed and disinterested thereby bringing about a counterproductive situation.

Overcoming this linguistic-cum-cultural idiosyncrasy and translating research findings into terms that non-academics/non-researchers can appreciate requires training, re-orientation and conscious effort. Making research results comprehensible for policymakers entails adaptation of content and style to accommodate that particular audience. It demands a simple, precise and straightforward approach and an understanding of the policymaker's unique frame of mind. The key principle is to use key messages, presentation tools and delivery style that will leave a lasting impact on the audience or reader. For the purpose, there is no room for excessive details and technical jargons that can distract the reader from the core messages. Let the message be sharp, simple and smart.

Between 'Research Findings' and 'Knowledge Input' into Policy

Policy researchers usually take it for granted that their research findings and recommendations will be taken up and adopted by policymakers or other users, on the grounds of scientific soundness, merits and desirability. But, in practice, there exists a wide gap between research findings/recommendations and the kinds of knowledge that can be directly used by consumers of policy research, such as, policymakers and civil society. The scientific merit of policy research is not enough to make policymakers use the research. Hence, additional efforts are required to develop the

The scientific merit of policy research is not enough to make policymakers use the research.

findings and recommendations of policy research into amenable and handy knowledge inputs that can directly feed into the policy process or public debate. In addition, policy research should be distilled and attuned to the relevant policy context and transmitted in such a manner that enhances its attractiveness and usability. For this purpose, partnering and forming alliances with civil society is an effective approach for converting research findings/recommendations into usable policy input. Between 'research findings' and 'knowledge input' into policies, there is a crucial role for continuos communication and interaction, rather than one-shot briefs or workshops.

Timeliness Is Crucial

The objective of communicating policy research to policymakers and stakeholders is to promote its uptake and utilisation for the good of society and economy. For this objective to be realised, the communication must be timely and relevant. Policy research organisations should have the capacity and readiness to intervene in 'hot' public debates on the basis of hard analysis and facts. The essence is to inform, enlighten and sway the discourse with objective non-partisan perspectives. For example, during the global economic and financial crisis, AIAE convened stakeholders to examine and discuss the challenges, lessons and implications for the Nigerian economy. Against this backdrop of global, regional and national scenarios, the AIAE in collaboration with the Policy Analysis and Research Project (PARP) of the National Assembly organized the National Policy Symposium - *Global Financial and Economic Crisis: Taking the Right Lessons and Avoiding the Wrong*

Policy research organisations should have the capacity and readiness to intervene in 'hot' public debates on the basis of hard analysis and facts.

Lessons, on 18th June 2009, at Transcorp Hilton, Abuja. The national symposium was an effort to give conceptual form and evidence-based perspective to the national public discourse on the global economic crisis and its implications for Nigeria's economic planning and management. The national policy dialogue is at the heart of AIAE strategy for promoting evidence-based policies in Nigeria and Africa. The symposium was attended by more than 250 persons including top officials of federal and state governments, top leaders, experts and managers from the private sector, as well as professionals from civil society.

The symposium provided an independent stakeholders' platform for informed and organized discussion of the implications, lessons and challenges of the global economic recession for Nigeria. It brought together different stakeholders on the Nigerian economy for the purpose of sharing views and reaching understanding of the lessons from the global economic crisis. The symposium identified what the right lessons are, what the wrong lessons are and the options for applying the right lessons in policy and institutional reforms across federal, state and local governments.

It is easier to influence policy if the research problem is rightly timed with the interests and readiness of stakeholders (government and non-state actors).

Intermingling is a potent factor

Research communication to influence policy can take place as researchers and policymakers intermingle through formal and informal meetings and the organised switching of jobs. A very potent but largely unsung example is the interchange of people between

research and policy assignments. Interchange of people between research and policy jobs is exemplified when researchers in government share and promote research knowledge in government circles, thereby causing the use of research knowledge in policy decision and programme planning. The impact is even greater when researchers in government form their own alliances inside the government to get research into policy and action. On the other hand, the intermingling can come in the form of a government official who becomes involved in research and uses the knowledge gained to improve policy.

In some contexts, researchers and policymakers do not constitute two separate communities, as they may just be occupying different roles at different times. This happens where research and policy communities must share the same limited number of highly qualified professionals, such that cooperation between research and policy communities reaches its full potential.

The Techniques Are Interdependent

Overall, the methods and techniques described here should be seen as integral components of a policy research organisation's broader strategy of research communication, knowledge translation and policy engagement. Rather than use one in isolation from the other, they should be used in a mutually-reinforcing manner. Therefore, getting the right blend of communication techniques amidst resource constraints is critical for achieving policy influence. For instance, media briefs are useful in promoting public uptake of the agenda and conclusions of research. In the same vein, a policy brief can serve as discussion tool to shape policy dialogue in a policy seminar.

10

Determining Whether Policy Research Is Achieving Its Objectives

Policy research, like other development programmes, is gauged through monitoring and evaluation. 'Monitoring and Evaluation' (M&E) encompasses the entire gamut of how the progress and achievements of policy research are defined, tracked, measured and documented for decision making by the policy research organisation. Typically, the monitoring and evaluation of policy research is underpinned by the context of the policy research and the policy research organisation's mission and objectives.

Monitoring and Evaluation in Perspective

In principle, there are three basic elements of the monitoring and evaluation system. They are:

(i) the project logframe (results chain), a flow chart that shows hypothesized cause-and-effect relationships, action and feedback loops, desired changes and intervening factors;

(ii) the monitoring and evaluation framework, which based on the log frame, derives the measurable variables and operational indicators of outputs, outcomes and impacts and against which project implementation and objectives are benchmarked; and

(iii) the monitoring and evaluation plan, which sets out the definite implementation arrangements including key activities, processes, roles and responsibilities, modalities and timelines for data collection, reporting and feedback.

Monitoring refers to a continuous management function that aims primarily at providing policy research organisations and key stakeholders with regular feedback and early indications of progress or lack thereof in the achievement of intended results of policy research. Monitoring tracks the actual performance against what is planned or expected according to pre-determined standards. Monitoring continuously tracks performance against what is planned by collecting and analysing data on the predefined indicators. It provides continuous information on whether progress is being made towards achieving results (outputs, outcomes and goals). Performance information generated from monitoring enhances learning from experience and improves decision-making.

Evaluation refers to a time-bound exercise that attempts to assess systematically and objectively the relevance, performance and success, or the lack thereof, of ongoing and completed policy research programme. Evaluation is undertaken selectively to answer specific questions to guide policy research organisations and to provide information on whether underlying theories and assumptions used in developing the policy research programme are valid, what works and what does not work and why. Evaluation commonly aims to determine the relevance, validity of design, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of a research programme. ***Ex-ante evaluation*** could be undertaken, that is, before implementation of a policy research programme. On the other hand, ***ex-post evaluation*** is undertaken after the policy research programme has been completed. Its purpose is to understand the

factors of success or failure, to assess the outcome, impact and sustainability of results, and to draw conclusions that may inform similar programmes in the future.

Objectives and Benefits of Gauging Policy Research

Policy research is assessed through monitoring and evaluation (M&E) aimed at a variety of objectives and benefits. The objectives and benefits include to inform decisions on operations, policy and strategy in an ongoing or future policy research, promote accountability and compliance, promote learning and enrich knowledge of what works and what does not work and why. Furthermore, M&E helps to identify implementation and technical problems for corrective actions and realignments as well as successful strategies for upscaling or replication. In the same vein, the M&E process gives policy research stakeholders the opportunity to have a say in the research programme and in addition boosts the confidence of the funders, partners and other constituencies in the policy research.

Challenges of Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are crucial elements of managing and implementing policy research. M&E information is vital for reporting and accountability, performance measurement, cumulative learning and advancement of future work. Monitoring and evaluating policy influencing work, however, presents some particular challenges and complexities. Policy influence of research can be direct or indirect, implicit or explicit, short-term or long-term, local or global. Capturing the variety of possible influences in a monitoring and evaluation framework is a very complicated and challenging exercise.

The monitoring and evaluation of the impact of policy research is associated with conceptual, technical and empirical challenges. The heart of the matter is the difficulty in finding evidence and being able to use it to measure the success of policy research and policy research organisations and their activities. There are instances whereby policy research organisations can show they played a role; perhaps it has convened a series of meetings with policymakers, or the media have picked up and used the policy research report pushing an issue to the top of the policy agenda. However, given the complexity of policy cycles, examples of one particular action making a difference are often disappointingly rare and very difficult to verify.

The Challenge of Time Lag Factor

The public policy process is a typical cycle of successive stages interlinked with one another. The time span between respective stages is variable, depending on the policy process and context. Therefore, frameworks for monitoring and assessing research influence on policy should be designed in such a manner that recognises and internalises this reality. Policy research organisations should be realistic to set practicable policy-influence goals and benchmarks against which they can be adjudged. It is important to ensure correspondence between the monitoring parameters and the time dimension of the influences under consideration.

Policy research organisations should be realistic to set practicable policy-influence goals and benchmarks against which they can be adjudged.

There is also the challenge to properly delineate the boundaries of research influence on policy. Since research can influence a single stage or a combination of the stages of the policy cycle, it is essential to design the monitoring model to identify potential scope of influence that should be assessed.

The Attribution Question and How to Tackle It

The question of attribution is often crucial, considering the potential ambiguity, complexity and non-linearity of cause-effect links between research outputs and policy changes. Ambiguity refers to the situation whereby a particular policy decision or policy change may not be traced to a particular research process. It can be very difficult to determine the links between policy influencing activities and outputs, and any change in policy. Policy change is highly complex and proceeds in anything but a 'linear' or 'rational' fashion, with policy processes shaped by a multitude of interacting forces and actors. This makes it almost impossible to predict with confidence the likely consequences of a set of activities on policy, and extremely difficult to pin down the full effect of actions even after the event.

There are conceptual, technical and empirical difficulties in establishing causality. This is known as the 'attribution problem.' **Attribution** refers to causal link of one event with another, in other words, the extent to which observed effects can be ascribed to a specific intervention. Methodologies such as experimental and quasi-experimental impact evaluation that can function to analyse attribution in other circumstances are unsuitable for policy influencing work because it is difficult to establish a plausible counter-factual. Some have argued that there are additional problems in measuring both inputs and outputs of many influencing activities, such as research communication, public enlightenment and stakeholder dialogue. For example, causal links from one author or piece of work to output changes or to social outcomes cannot realistically be made or measured under the current knowledge complex.

...It is essential to design the monitoring model to identify potential scope of influence that should be assessed.

The nature of policy influencing activities presents challenges to traditional M&E approaches. 'Outright success' in terms of achieving the

specific changes that were sought is rare, with some objectives modified along the way. In other words, the policy context is likely to change of its own accord, and influencing objectives may need to be altered on account of this or other external forces. This means that objectives formulated at the outset of influencing work may not be the best yardstick for monitoring and evaluation. Policy changes tend to occur over long timeframes that may not be suitable to measurement in the usual rhythms of projects and evaluations in aid agencies. In addition, much influencing work and advocacy are most effective when carried out in alliances, coalitions and networks, which presents difficulties in judging the specific contribution of one organisation to a change. Also, the policy process is never simple enough to be amenable to conventional statistical and analytical methods. Policy influencing involves political and sometimes highly conflicting processes, leading to difficulties in determining how best to solicit or interpret the accounts of different actors. Also, policy-makers are unlikely to be happy with claims that their decisions can be attributed to the influence of another actor, whether within or outside government.

Given the complexity and somewhat diffuse nature of policy influence, it is necessary to identify the measurable objects of research influence, for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation. Identifying the focus and spheres of research influence will help to focus the monitoring and evaluation process.

'Contribution' Rather Than 'Attribution'

In order to deal with the challenges of M&E of policy influence, it might be more expedient to apply conceptual approaches based on measuring or assessing "contribution" rather than "attribution" or "causality" processes. Therefore, policy research organisations and policy research programmes need innovative M&E approaches that are contextual and go beyond academic peer review and conventional citation counting, in order to know whether they are reaching their goals not only in the academic world but also in the world outside academia.

Policy researchers and associated stakeholders would like to know whether policy research makes a difference in policies and decisions towards achieving development goals. In short, they would like to know about the impacts of policy research. In order to measure the impact of policy research (as well as its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability), we need processes and methods that adequately capture the complexities of research-policy linkages.

There are a number of frameworks and approaches for tackling the conceptual and technical challenges of M&E of policy research. Most of the frameworks revolve, explicitly or implicitly on developing a 'theory of change' (ToC), such as 'logical model', 'programme theory' or 'roadmap' which depicts how and by what means policy influence is envisaged and the desired policy changes and development outcomes (Whelan, 2008). As a tool for the M&E of policy influence, ToC is not only valuable for aligning policy influencing activities but also for enhancing decision-making and accountability.

In framing a ToC, the starting point should be to have a picture of what drives change in the 'target'. This requires a realistic understanding of what forces tend to affect the desired target audience or outcome. In doing this, it is important to incorporate social science theory into the planning and M&E of policy influencing and to establish realistic expectations about what can be achieved and to what degree of influence a particular programme could exert. Thereafter, it is crucial to link the picture of the drivers of change to the way(s) and avenues by which policy influence is anticipated. A causal chain or 'pathway' can then be linked into the model of what affects the target audience or outcome, to specify how the project or programme would influence it. This model will entail a flow from the project outputs, to a chain of intermediate outcomes, to the wider and longer-term outcomes. In the case of ex-post situations, the model should trace the key chains of events that lead towards final policy decisions or outcomes. One example of 'theory of change' paradigm of how

research/evidence influences policy uses a 'causal chain' perspective. Within this framework, research activities lead to outputs (goods and services, e.g. research paper, policy briefs, stakeholder dialogue events), which lead to 'uptake', that is direct responses to the research (such as using it or quoting it). The ToC runs progressively downstream towards outcomes and impact, in terms of, for example, changes in knowledge, perspectives and practices of policymakers. In some cases, the outcomes envisaged by policy research may be outside the direct control of the project, programme or organisation. Under such circumstance, the M&E focus on data collection, measurement and accountability domains within the scope of influence of the policy research project/programme.

Monitoring Vis-à-vis Evaluation

Monitoring takes place during the research programme while evaluation is *ex post*, that is, at end of the programme implementation. Monitoring keeps track, oversees, analyses and documents progress while evaluation involves in-depth analysis and compares planned with actual achievements. Monitoring focuses on inputs, activities, outputs, implementation processes and likely results at outcome level. Evaluation focuses on outputs in relation to inputs; results in relation to cost; processes used to achieve results; overall relevance; impact and sustainability. Monitoring answers what activities were implemented and the results achieved, while evaluation answers why and how results were achieved and contributes to building theories and models for change. Monitoring alerts managers to problems and provides options for corrective actions while evaluation provides managers with strategy and policy options. Monitoring involves self-assessment by programme managers, supervisors, community stakeholders, and donors, while evaluation involves internal and/or external analysis by programme managers, supervisors, community stakeholders, donors, and/or external evaluators (UNICEF, 1991; WFP, 2000).

Measuring Impact Based on 'Counterfactual'

Finding the counterfactual is the surest way to establish attribution in policy influence. The counterfactual is a comparison between what actually happened and what would have happened in the absence of the intervention. Data can be collected on the factual. But we cannot observe what would have happened to those affected by the intervention if the intervention had not happened. One solution to this problem has been the 'before' and 'after' approach. The mean outcomes for the treatment group are compared before and after the intervention and any change attributed to the intervention. Whilst data on treatment group trends are useful information to have, they tell us what has happened to the treatment group and nothing more. It is not possible to attribute the observed changes to the intervention since other external factors may have been partly or wholly responsible for the change, or may even act to offset the positive impacts of the intervention. So, before-versus-after approach yields either an overestimate or an underestimate, but we will not know which it is. The better solution to the problem of the counterfactual is to select a comparison group, i.e. a set of individuals, households, firms or whatever, who are like the treatment group in every way, except that they are not subject to the intervention. There are, however, two problems: contamination and sample selection bias.

Contamination (or contagion) comes from two possible sources. The first is own contamination from the intervention itself as a result of spill-over effects. To ensure similarity of treatment and comparison groups, a common approach is to draw these groups from the same geographical area as the project. Indeed neighbouring communities, or at least sub-districts, are often used. But the closer the comparison group to the project area the more likely it is to be indirectly affected in some way by the intervention. An agricultural intervention can increase labour demand beyond the confines of the immediate community. There is thus a tension between the desire to be geographically close to ensure similarity of characteristics and the need to be distant enough to avoid

spill-over effects. But distance will not reduce the possibility of external contamination by other interventions. The desired counterfactual is usually a comparison between the intervention and no intervention. But the selected comparison group may be subject to similar interventions implemented by different agencies, or even somewhat dissimilar interventions but which affect the same outcomes. Such a comparison group thus gives a counterfactual of a different type of intervention.

Sample selection bias is another problem. It is usually the case that project beneficiaries have been selected in some way, including self-selection. This selection process means that beneficiaries are not a random sample of the population, so that the comparison group should also not be a random sample of the population as a whole, but rather drawn from a population with the same characteristics as those chosen for the intervention. If project selection is based on observable characteristics then this problem can be handled in a straightforward manner. But, un-observables often play a role, and if these un-observables are correlated with project outcomes then obtaining unbiased estimates of project impact becomes more problematic (White, 2006).

11

Conceptual Frameworks for Monitoring and Evaluating Policy Research

Policy research programmes are peculiar in nature, compared with development intervention programmes which are usually designed to produce tangible and directly observable results and outcomes such as improved access to and use of safe drinking water, improved access to and use of health facilities, and so on. The influence of research on policy occurs in intangible, indirect and mixed patterns that cannot fit into the simple metrics applied in monitoring the success of development interventions.

The conceptual framework (CF) or theory of change (ToC) for measuring the success of policy research therefore will not be the same as that suitable for development intervention projects. There is a range of possible M&E conceptual approaches based on the experiences of policy research programmes and institutions. Clearly, most of these approaches can be used across several of the key performance areas, but for the sake of simplicity, they are presented in the following order:

- Evaluating strategy and direction of the policy research organisation: The approaches include log frames; social network analysis; impact pathways; and modular matrices.

- Evaluating management and institutional-level performance: The approaches include 'fit-for-purpose' reviews; 'lighter touch' quality audits; horizontal evaluation and appreciative inquiry.

- Evaluating outputs of policy research programmes/organisations: Peer reviews of academic articles and research reports; reviews of policy and briefing papers; reviewing websites, networks and after action reviews.

- Evaluating uptake of research results and recommendations: The methods include impact logs; citation analysis; and user surveys.

- Evaluating outcomes and impacts of policy research: The methods include outcome mapping; RAPID outcome assessment; most significant change; innovation histories; and episode studies.

The use and applicability of alternative M&E approaches at the project, programme and organisational levels are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Applicability of M&E approaches

	Projects	Programmes	Policy Research Organisations
Logframes	X	X	X
Social Network Analysis	X	X	X
Impact Pathways	X	Rarely used	Not applicable
Quality of Research Reports	X	X	X
Quality of Policy and Briefing Papers	X	X	X
Quality of Websites	Not applicable	Not applicable	X
Networks	X	X	X
After Action Reviews	X	X	Not applicable
Impact Logs	X	X	Rarely used
Citation Analysis	X	X	X
End - User Surveys	X	X	X
Outcome Mapping	X	X	Not applicable
Research and Policy in Development Group (RAPID) Outcome Assessment	X	Rarely used	Not applicable
Most Significant Change	X	X	X
Episode Studies	X	X	Not applicable
Institutional evaluation	Not applicable	Not applicable	X

X denotes "applicable"

The Logical Framework (logframe)

The 'logical framework approach' provides the most widely used conceptual archetype for the monitoring and evaluation of development interventions including policy research programmes. In its generic sense, the programme logic model is useful as a tool for programme planning and performance measurement. Programme logic models are visual representations that show how a programme is intended to work, that is, how resources that are available to deliver the programme are converted into programme activities and how those activities in turn produce intended results (MacDavid and Hawthorn, 2006). In our context, logic models frame policy research in terms of means-ends relationships or causal models, by making explicit connections between policy research activities, outputs and outcomes.

The programme logic model is commonly represented by the logframe or results chain. 'Logframe' and 'results chain' are two variants of the programme logic model. In effect, both the logframe and the results chain mirror in a precise and concise manner, the storyline of the theory (logic) of change underlying the programme.

Comparative expressions of the logframe and results chain are given in Figure 4.

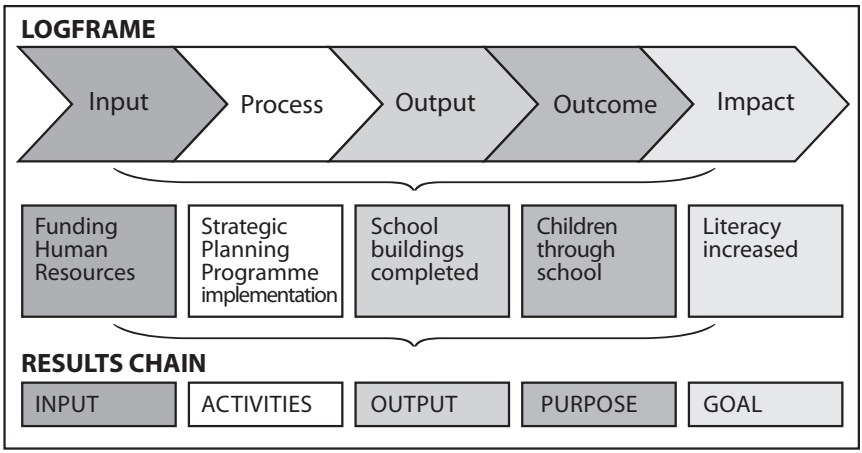

Figure 4: Comparison of logframe and results chain technoques

On the other hand, the results chain approach can be illustrated as shown in Figures 5 and 6.

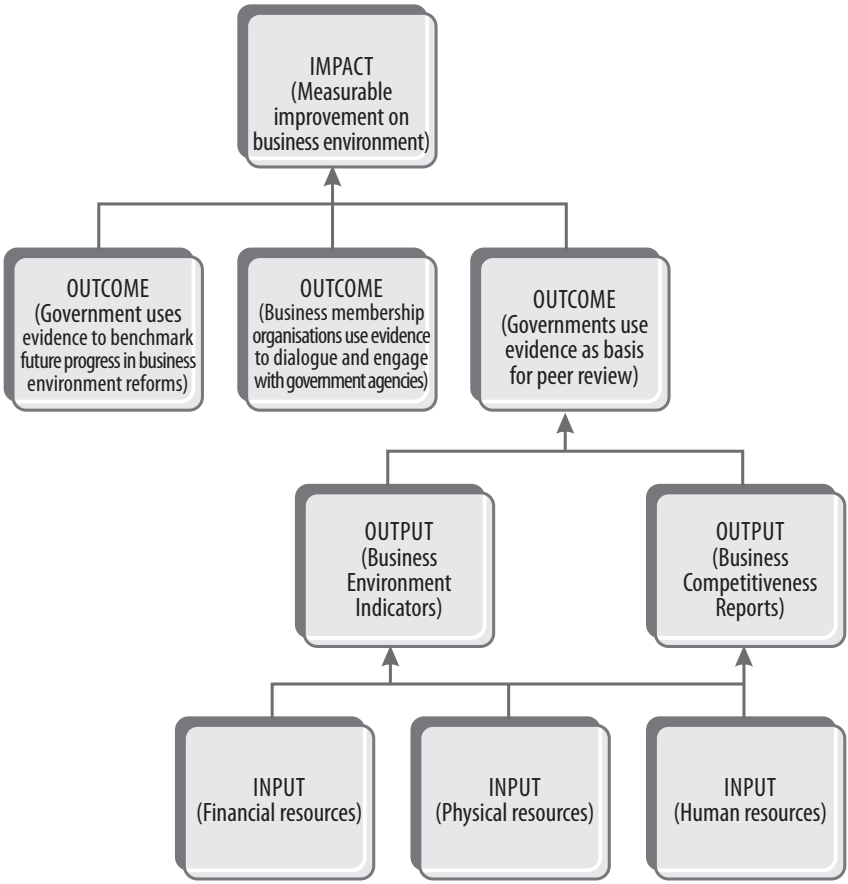

Figure 5: Exemplary results chain in business environment research and dialogue project

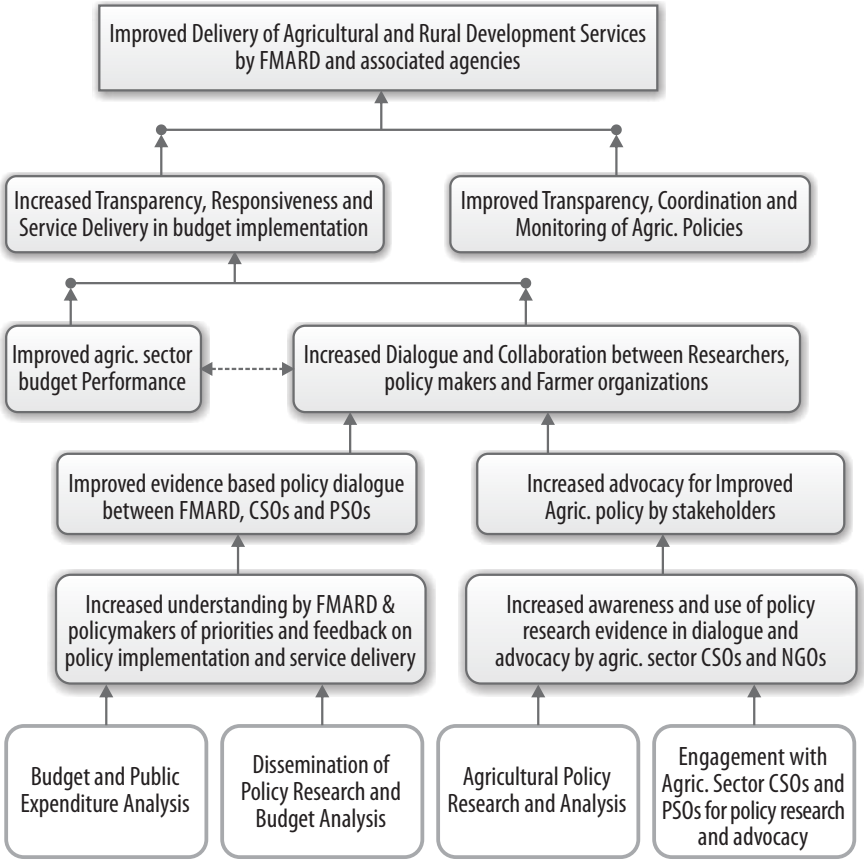

Figure 6: Exemplary results chain in budget research and dialogue project

The terminologies of logframe and results chain are similar and often interchangeable. While the purpose level in the logframe is equivalent to the outcome level in the results chain, the goal level in the logframe is equivalent to impact level in the results chain. Both the logframe and the results chain make similar reference to output level. While the logframe refers to activities, the results chain refers to

process. Both the logframe and the results chain have identical references to inputs.

The Theory of Change is the Underlying Logic

The underlying logic of the logical framework approach is the theory of change (ToC). The theory of change defines the hypothesized links and flows between programme outputs, outcomes and impacts, usually in a flow chart. A programme's significance is underpinned by the anticipated achievements, that is, expected results and impacts, as encapsulated in the theory of change.

The logic of intervention (whether development programme or policy research) is woven around a set of assumptions and propositions regarding how the programme activities would lead in a sequential manner, to the desired effects. An example is given as follows:

IF the project undertakes the activities **AND** the assumptions hold true, **THEN**, the project will create the outputs.

IF the project delivers the outputs **AND** the assumptions hold true, **THEN**, the project will achieve the purpose.

IF the project achieves the purpose **AND** the assumptions hold true, **THEN**, the project will contribute to the goal.

With regard to policy research, the theory of change depicts the conceptual format of the chain of processes, transmission mechanisms and milestones by which the research knowledge will translate into policy influence.

This illustrative sequence of propositions is usually arrayed in a format known as logframe. The logframe summarises what the project, programme or institution intends to do and how, what the key assumptions are and how outputs and outcomes will be monitored and evaluated. In other words, logframe is a conceptual layout that

shows how the stages or causal links of a programme chain can be tracked and monitored based on a set of indicators calibrated into baseline conditions, periodic milestones and overall targets, together with means of verification.

Applying the Logframe

The logframe is the operational tool of the logical framework approach to programme design, monitoring and evaluation. To apply the logical framework approach requires the steps and measures given as follows: undertake a thorough analysis of the context in which the project will operate; ensure that the experience and opinions of all stakeholders are taken into account; encourage a harmonised approach with other partners and collaborators and acknowledge, identify and review risks and assumptions, and develop robust mitigating actions. In doing so, it is necessary to conduct analyses using problem trees, strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats (SWOT), stakeholder mapping and risk matrix techniques.

One way of illustrating logframe is the multilayer format that mirrors a bottom-up progression of programme deliverables from inputs through outcomes and impacts. By this multilayer format, the rows represent successive stages of the programme input-output-outcome chain while the columns represent the indicators, that is, the specific measures by which the respective stages of the input-output-outcome path can be measured, and segregated as baseline, intermediate milestones and end-term target.

Goal: This is the overall aim that the policy research programme is making a contribution to achieving. The goal is not intended to be achieved solely by the programme. This is a higher-level situation that the programme will contribute towards achieving. It is important to be aware of other efforts and programmes being made to achieve the goal, in order to identify where and how the programme can make the

Table 3: The Logical framework (logframe) in multilayer format

PROJECT DESIGN ELEMENTS	Objectively Verifiable Indicator(s)	Baseline (2014)	Milestone 1 (2015)	Milestone 2 (2016)	Target (end of project)	Means/ Sources of Verification	Assumptions and Risks
OVERALL GOAL/IMPACT							
GENERAL OBJECTIVES							
1.							
2.							
PURPOSE/ SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES							
1.							
2.							
OUTCOMES/ RESULTS							
1.							
2.							
OUTPUTS							
1.							
2.							
ACTIVITIES							
1.							
2.							
INPUTS							
1.							
2.							

greatest contribution. Goal is the highest in the hierarchy of programme objectives and it is usually nested within a broader or larger undertaking. The goal provides the final link in the chain from inputs and activities up through outputs to the ultimate achievements that a number of stakeholders are striving for. By defining the goal we are acknowledging that we are participating in a multi-stakeholder effort to achieve impact in a defined area. If it is well defined, we can see how many of our projects are contributing to this goal, and assess whether or not more should be done if it is off track. In defining the goal, it should be asked: Is there a clear logic leading from the purpose to the goal?

Purpose: Observable changes in the behaviour of real people or institutions. There can only be one purpose for the project. For policy research, the purpose should identify what policy or legislation will change, and which policy actor will benefit. Indicators at the purpose level should be outcome measures. The purpose provides clarity about the specific results that we aim to achieve by virtue of the particular project. The purpose should be clear, concise and directly linked to the outputs. It should identify what will change, who will benefit and how it will contribute to policy reforms or institutional change.

Outputs: Tangible goods and services that the programme will produce and that others can see, feel and or use (e.g. toolkit, working paper, network website) in order to achieve the purpose. The policy research programme or organisation is directly responsible for the outputs and can be held accountable for these. Outputs are the specific, direct deliverables of the policy research programme or organisation. These will provide the conditions necessary to achieve the purpose. The logic of the chain from output to purpose therefore needs to be clear. Well-defined outputs tell us exactly what we expect to see as a result of our project. If the individual desired situations (outputs) have not materialised by the end of the project, we are unlikely to achieve our purpose. In designing the logframe, it is important to ask: Would the

outputs be easily understood by a member of the public? Is the sum of the outputs likely to achieve the purpose?

In some cases, there is impact weighting of the outputs. This means assigning a percentage for the contribution each output is likely to make towards the achievement of the overall purpose. The impact weights of all the outputs must total 100% and each should be rounded to the nearest 5%. Impact weightings for outputs are intended to promote a more considered approach to the choice of outputs at project design stage; and provide a clearer link to how output performance relates to project purpose performance.

Activities: What the project or programme is doing in order to produce the outputs (e.g. training, research, studies, resource mobilisation, documentation, promotional measures, advocacy, public enlightenment, dialogue, technical assistance, capacity building, institutional development, skills accumulation).

Inputs: The financial, technical and human resources required to be expended in order to do the activities.

Indicators: Impacts, outcomes, outputs and inputs are measured by defining indicators which specify what is to be measured in order to assess changes from time to time. Indicators are performance measures, which tell us what we are going to measure not what is to be achieved. Indicators are used to operationalise the variables that define the conditions/objects for capturing progress towards the goals. Indicators should be specific, usable and clearly measurable. The basic principle is that "if you can measure it, you can manage it". Indicators should describe what is to be measured, and are needed to assess progress against objectives. Good practice suggests that in defining indicators, the guiding principle should be to respond to the question: what is to be measured, not what is to be achieved? The rule is that each indicator chosen as a measure must be verifiable by some means. If it is not, it should be replaced with another that is clearly measurable.

Some examples of well-stated and wrongly stated indicators are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Wrong and correct statement of indicators

Commonly found wrongful statement of indicators	Why it is a wrongful statement of indicator	Correct statement of indicator
Increased primary enrolment	The indicator should not include any element of the target (so 'increased' should be removed).	Net primary enrolment rate
Improved efficiency of agricultural extension services	Vague. It is not clear how 'efficiency' will be measured. Also, the indicator should not include any element of the target ('improved')	Level of client satisfaction with district agricultural extension services
Strengthened ability of legislature	Vague. 'Ability' needs to be more clearly defined in order to be measurable.	Published records of votes and position of parliamentarians Number of parliamentary inquiries conducted Public perception of parliamentary effectiveness
By 2015, 55,000 children in target communities vaccinated against measles	The indicator should not include the target (there should be no target date, or target number included)	Number of one year olds vaccinated against measles
Court systems providing effective access to citizens	Vague. It is not clear what 'effective' means? How will it be measured?	Percentage of citizens who say that they have access to court systems to resolve disputes
Access to improved sanitation increases to 45%. Or access to improved drinking water rises to 90%	The indicator should not include the target (there should be no %)	Proportion of population with access to sanitation. Proportion of population with access to improved drinking water

Adapted from DFID, 2009.

Milestones should be set at appropriate intervals, which will be determined by the individual characteristics of the project. A milestone is a distinct or spectacular landmark envisaged to be achieved against a specified timeline towards the final target. They are akin to intermediate targets along the way or leading to the final target. Milestones are intended to help you track progress, and therefore you should consider the specific trajectory of your project, taking into account all relevant factors, including the sequencing of activities and the release of data from the source of monitoring information.

Targets refer to changes that are expected to come with the project. Targets should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) specifications of desired achievements at the various levels - output, purpose and goal. Targets are measurable changes that are anticipated by the project, that is, anticipated achievements of the project defined in terms of quantity (volume), quality and timing. Targets may however relate to process, output and impact.

Means/Sources of Verification (MOV)

These are the M&E tools that are used to find out whether the measurable changes have taken place or not. They may include formal or information interviews, after action reviews, surveys, peer reviews, outcome mapping, and so on. They provide a list of the information or information collection methods by which the programme demonstrates what has been accomplished.

Assumptions: Other events, circumstances or conditions that are outside the control of the programme but which are necessary for activities to lead to output, outputs to lead to purpose, and purpose to lead to goal. It is important at the design stage to define the important assumptions, which should be linked to the realisation of the goal, purpose and respective outputs. The assumptions at different levels of

the logframe hierarchy will not necessarily be the same. Conditions which can be realised by or within the control of the programme should be incorporated into the design and not listed as assumptions. Assumptions are listed so that they can be monitored on a regular basis, with provisions for this monitoring incorporated into the design.

Revising the logframe: Logframes are living documents. They are dynamic and subject to change throughout the active life of the project to which they refer. Necessary changes to a logframe are normally made during a formal review or in response to circumstances.

Benefits of the Logframe

The logframe helps to achieve organise thinking, link the key aspects and anticipated impact of your project, communicate information concisely and unambiguously, identify measurable performance indicators and the means of verifying progress. It helps bring together in one place a statement of all key aspects of the project in a systematic, concise and coherent way. It provides a framework for monitoring and evaluation where planned and actual results can be compared.

The logframe provides a distillation of the key information needed by programme managers to ensure that projects are being implemented efficiently and results measured against clear targets. By referring back to the logframe, project managers can keep an eye on progress, benchmarking feedback and taking action where required.

The logframe is helpful for assessing impact, that is, evaluation. It provides an instrument for carrying out annual reviews and project completion reports with a strong framework for measuring what the project has delivered. It is also used in evaluating projects for the purpose of identifying lessons about what has worked and not

worked; assessing the direct and indirect benefits of a project; and ensuring greater accountability.

The logframe can also be presented in a lateral format, as in Table 5.

Table 5: The logical framework (logframe) in lateral format

Project Objectives	Activities & Outputs	Outcomes	Verifiable Output/Outcome Indicators	Sources/Means of Verification	Assumptions
Objective 1:	A.				
.....	B.				
.....	C.				
Objective 2:	A.				
.....	B.				
.....	C.				
Objective 3:	A.				
.....	B.				
.....	C.				

In the lateral format, the input-output-outcome chain is defined horizontally in terms of respective project objectives. Accordingly, the columns represent the sequential project input-output-outcome chain, supplemented with sources/means of verification and underlying assumptions. On the other hand, project objectives are arranged in vertical form, whereby each row represents individual project objective.

Social Network Analysis

Social network analysis is a method of learning about and understanding the formal and informal networks (connections) that characterize interactions in a given policy or development issue. A range of operational methods can be used, including ethnography, participant observation, key informant interviews, semi-structured interviews, 'snowball' sampling, focus groups, and content analysis of the media (Schelhas and Cerveny, 2002). The aim is to construct mapping of the linkages that exist between people in this field. The map is constructed to show existing and potential stakeholder linkages in a programme. For policy researchers, social network analysis is an efficient way to track collaboration and/or explore potential web of existing and potential linkages between actors. Software can also be used to analyse and map the networks or interactions that operate.

Some important questions in social network analysis (adapted from Schelhas and Cerveny, 2002) are:

- Who are the relevant groups and individuals involved in or affected by issues in the policy research?
- Are there identifiable groups or sub-groups (e.g. based on location, profession, interests, values, race, ethnicity, class or gender)?
- What are the past and present relationships between them?
- Who trusts whom?
- Who and what groups have power, and what is the source of their power?
- Who are the formal and informal leaders in the field?
- How do people exchange information?
- Do networks change (e.g. are they seasonal, or do they vary around issues)?
- What else is important in this particular field?

Impact Pathways

The impact pathways model draws on social network analysis. Impact pathway models specify how networks of actors develop and use project or programme outputs to help generate chains of intermediate outcomes and eventual impact (Douthwaite et al., 2006). They do this through combining two core elements:

- a logical model, such as a logframe, which defines the causal chains from activities and outputs to outcomes and goals; and
- a network model, such as social network analysis, which shows the evolving relationships between programme organisations and other partners and stakeholders that are necessary to achieve impacts.

Modular Matrices

Modular matrices draw upon the perspective of social network analysis. It was developed by Rick Davies (2005). It is designed to help describe the internal linkages of a project or programme. While the approach may be easier to carry out for a defined research project, it can also be used for policy research programmes. The approach focuses on exploring how the components of a project or programme relate to one another – e.g. how the project's outputs relate to its desired impacts, how its outputs relate to its stakeholders, or how its outputs relate to key future events. The matrix approach is primarily descriptive and can be useful for mid-term review, when a research project wishes to describe and assess its current status, and consider how to move forward.

The *outputs x impacts* matrix gives the desired contribution of each project output to one or more of the project's intended impacts. The *outputs x stakeholders* matrix assesses to what degree each of the project's outputs is reaching one or more of the project's stakeholders or target audiences.

Table 6: Example of output-impact matrix

Examples of an outputs x impact matrix

Impacts / Outputs	Strengthen local research capacity on topic	Increase awareness about topic among policymakers and in media	Build relationships between research partners and civil society organisations	Influence chance towards more pro-poor policy
Project launch		XXX		X
Website	X	X		X
One-on-one with policymakers		XXX		XX
Public meeting	X	X	XXX	X
Network Building	XX	X	XXX	X
Research reports	XXX		X	
Policy briefs	XX	XXX	X	XX

Source: Davies (2005).

Table 7: Example of output-stakeholder matrix

Stakeholders / Outputs	Research Partners	National Policymakers	Bilateral and Multilateral donors	Civil society organisation	Media
Project launch	X	XX	X	XX	XXX
Website	XX	X	XX	XX	XX
One-on-one with policymakers	X	XXX			
Public meeting	XX	X	X	XX	X
Network Building	XXX		X	XXX	
Research reports	XX		X	X	
Policy briefs	X	XXX	XX	X	XX

Source: Davies (2005).

12

Tracking the Output-Outcome-Impact Pathway

Understanding What to Track

There is a wide acknowledgement that linear-technicist models do not give a sufficiently practicable depiction of research influence on policy. Hence, in recent times, there has been a shift of emphasis to more flexible models that reflect non-linear interactive mechanisms by which policy research influences public policy. The use of non-linear models entails adequate accounting of research influence on policy throughout the output-outcome-impact pathway. A good understanding of what constitutes 'output', 'outcome' and 'impact' is therefore necessary for policy research organisations to measure and evaluate their effectiveness.

The use of non-linear models entails adequate accounting of research influence on policy throughout the output-outcome-impact pathway.

Within the M&E context, the outputs of policy research programme or organisation will include:

- Publications – electronic and printed: it is important to distinguish between publication types, especially whether they are peer-reviewed or

not; nature of technical or research reports, whether they are intended for specialised audiences, citations of research produced by the organization, etc.

- Internet traffic: web-based activities and information published by the organization in its own website, downloads of papers and other documents produced by the organization.
- Media appearances: members' contributions to or appearances in traditional media including newspapers, magazines, radio, television.
- Advisory roles of members of the organization to domestic or international policy makers, and other relevant institutions.
- Networking activity of members of the organization or by the organization as an entity.
- Conferences, workshops and seminar presentations: both those organized by the organisation and those where the organization's members played an active role.

With regard to measurement of research impact on policy, 'case-based approach' could be combined with 'forward tracking' from the generation and dissemination to the use of research. In the literature, there are diverse strategies ranging from simple surveys of research end-users (policy makers and other relevant stakeholders) which inquire about their use of research to more detailed and sophisticated studies based on surveying 'user panels' or individuals 'who might be expected to draw upon the results of the research' (Davies, Nutley and Walter, 2005). Some more qualitative approaches based on the notion of 'unpredictable, non-linear and contingent' nature of research impact use community-of-practice strategies such as flexible interviews, discussion forum and focus groups to examine knowledge diffusion, use and impact within particular communities.

It is important that evaluation of impact goes beyond focus on output and visibility, to cover the contribution of research to the

development of arguments and enhancement of the quality of public debates (Weidenbaum, 2009; Ricci, 1994). A related aspect of measurable impact is the direct use of research recommendations or immediately traceable impacts of research results on decisions, legislation, regulations, policies and programmes (McGann, 2011). A related paradigm of research impact measurement is the 'research payback' principle, which identifies several spheres where impacts might be expected from research: knowledge production, research capacity building, policy development, sector development and wider social and economic benefits (Davies, Nutley and Walter, 2005).

As overall principle, the measurement of impact should be placed in the context of the policy research organisation and the social, political and institutional environment in which it operates. Since many developing countries including Nigeria are characterised by weak connection between research and policymaking, the conception and measurement of impact will entail considerable amounts of non-linear scaling and more flexible definition of research influence, much more than incorporating evidence into policy decisions.

What Can Be Tracked and How

In line with the foregoing, there is a wide variety of techniques and tools for tracking outputs, outcomes and impacts of policy research. Every M&E exercise determines for itself fit-for-purpose choices among the many options. Some of these choices are discussed in the following sections.

Quality of Research Reports

In order to assess the quality of the social science research, evaluation draws heavily on traditional academic means of assessment. Aspects of science quality include aspects related to the correct formulation of hypotheses, the appropriateness of scientific inputs, research methodologies and processes, and research outputs

and outcomes. The most objective, and most commonly used measure of quality of science is the quality of publications in peer-reviewed journals (LTS, Noragric and OPM, 2005). Though policy research programmes may not always wish to adopt too heavy academic frameworks or modes of assessment, they may choose to incorporate certain academic criteria in order to evaluate certain outputs – such as journal articles or research reports. The criteria that are commonly used are given below.

- To what extent the programme contributes to new knowledge;
- To what extent the programme uses existing knowledge creatively in new contexts;
- Rating of the programme in relation to its innovation and scientific risk-taking with comment on projects that are innovative and projects that are not;
- Demonstrate awareness of all current knowledge (journals, books, web-based information);
- Extent to which the expected science achievements outlined in the logframe have been met (key projects, outputs at programme level);
- Extent to which projects and the programmes have contributed to science capacity building in the scientific communities in developing countries; and
- Development of long-term institutional relationship.

Rating of the overall result knowledge dissemination from programme:

- To science community (referred, non-referred, web-based, other media);
- To policy audiences (policymakers, civil society and private sector);
- To outreach services;
- To end users (farmers, foresters, fisher folk); and
- To the international donor community.

Quality of Policy and Briefing Papers

Policy briefing papers should be assessed against different criteria than academic journal articles. Policy papers are written specifically for the purpose of using evidence to shed light on a policy area. Briefing papers are produced with the same purpose, but may be much shorter (perhaps 1-6 pages). According to Young and Quinn (2002), good-quality policy and briefing papers have three core components: they say what the problem is; what the possible solutions are; and what policy recommendations follow from this.

When evaluating policy and briefing papers, these three components can be assessed in turn: whether the policy or briefing paper has made it clear from the beginning what the (policy) problem is; whether the policy or briefing paper has made it clear what the possible solutions are by stating and briefly comparing the policy options and whether it outlines final conclusion and recommendations.

Quality of Websites

Some website evaluation guidelines have been developed by the International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC), Oxford. The guidelines show how to assess websites that aim to communicate research to an international audience (Taylor, 2001). The evaluation covers website qualities as follows (Taylor, 2001):

- Architecture refers to the structure of the website and the logic by which the pages interconnect. This component is examined in order to assess the site's navigability.
- Technology refers to issues around the quality of the code and the appropriateness of any technologies used. This component is assessed in relation to how accessible and available the site will be to an international audience with different software and hardware capabilities.

- Style refers to the appearance of the website and issues around the layout and display of text and images.
- Content refers to the quality, authority, readability, relevance and timeliness of text and images and the degree to which user interaction is supported.
- Strategy refers to the degree to which the site has met stated objectives concerning its target audience or market.
- Management relates to the human and financial resources that the site has at its disposal.

Automated tests: Website evaluation can involve a series of automated tests (see Taylor, 2001).

Other possible tests include:

- *Usability Tests:* Testing of users undertaking specified tasks is considered to be one of the best methods for evaluating websites.
- *A User Survey:* An online survey is carried out in order to gather information about the profile and experiences of users located internationally.
- *A Webmaster Survey:* The webmasters of the sites are asked to complete a short questionnaire for their website concerning log-file data (e.g. number of hits, page requests, unique visitors, etc), and a number of internal organisational issues.
- *Telephone Interviews:* A semi-structured interview is carried out with a member of each website team in order to develop an understanding of the organisational processes by which website content is selected and edited.

Policy Research Networks

International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) has developed guidelines for evaluating policy research networks (Creech, 2001). Whether a policy research network consists of policy researchers only or extends to policymakers and development practitioners, there are standard principles and criteria for evaluating its functioning and effectiveness. A policy research network is assessed for its stated purpose and objectives as well as connecting mechanisms and impact. The objectives that might form the evaluation criteria include information sharing, exchange of knowledge and ideas, co-learning and innovation, capacity building, advocacy and policy influence. Similarly, an evaluation of policy research network covers operating mechanisms including collaboration, cooperation, joint programming, social and professional interaction.

Using components from several planning and M&E tools, including SWOT (strengths-weaknesses opportunities-threats) analysis, logical framework analysis, and outcome mapping, IISD has created three stages for network evaluation:

Planning: Used at the beginning of network activities, to record the work plan, the beneficiaries of the work (partners and stakeholders), and the indicators of change desired for major projects or programmes of work within the network, and for the network as a whole. In sum, some of its key questions are:

- What can members contribute to, as well as receive from the network?
- What will success look like for the network as a whole?
- For each activity, who is going to benefit, be changed or influenced by the work?
- What will be the indicators of success for each activity?

Monitoring (Progress journals): The use of progress journals is the good way to keep track of ongoing network activities and developments. Each network member keeps a journal where main activities are recorded, as well as any feedback received or any interesting or unusual events. The activities recorded do not need to be assessed. The journal can be shared e.g. quarterly with the network coordinator.

Evaluation: An annual evaluation gives the network a chance to assess whether the network's component programmes are on track, whether anticipated outcomes are being achieved, and whether adjustments need to be made to activities, objectives, work plans, and expected outcomes. The evaluation builds on the progress journals, paying special attention to the activities that are successful and those that are not, and to any interesting stories or unexpected opportunities that have come up. The annual evaluation should then be used to assess whether the network as a whole is realizing its potential.

Creech (2001) suggests examining the following questions:

- Is the network linking effectively into relevant policy processes?
- Is the level of recognition and influence of the network and its members increasing within these circles?
- Are members adding value to each other's work, and creating new work together that might not have happened otherwise?
- Is there an exchange and building of capacity across the network membership?

After-Action Reviews (AARs)

The after action review (AAR) is a simple tool to facilitate assessment of a task or activity that has been carried out (Ramalingam, 2006). In a policy research project, it could be used to

evaluate events or activities such as seminars, workshops, conferences, roundtables, symposiums and dialogue sessions. The procedure is to bring together a team to discuss the event or activity in an open and honest fashion. The systematic application of properly conducted AARs across a programme or institution can help drive organisational change. The technique helps to turn unconscious learning into tacit knowledge and build trust among team members and to overcome fear of mistakes. When applied correctly, AARs can become a key aspect of the internal system of learning and motivation.

There are many different ways to conduct AARs. The whole process should be kept simple and easy. The essence of the AAR is, however, to bring together the relevant group to think about a project, activity, event or task, and pose the following simple questions.

- What did we set out to achieve?
- What was our plan to achieve this?
- How did this change as we progressed?
- What went well and why?
- What could have gone better?
- What advice would we give ourselves if we were to go back to where we were at the start of the project?
- What were the two or three key lessons we would share with others?
- What is next for us in terms of this project?
- Can we think of a story that summarises our experience of work on this project?
- What should we have learned from this project a year from now?
- Are there any lessons for you personally?

Table 8: After-action review question set

Question	Purpose
What was supposed to happen? What actually happened? Why were there differences?	These questions establish a common understanding of the work item under review. The facilitator should encourage and promote discussion around these questions. In particular, divergences from the plan should be explored.
What worked? What didn't? Why?	These questions generate reflection about the successes and failures during the course of the project, activity, event or task. The question "why?" generates understanding of the root causes of these successes and failures.
What would you do differently next time?	This question is intended to help identify specific actionable recommendations. The facilitator asks the team members for crisp and clear, achievable and future-oriented recommendations.

Source: Drawn largely from Ramalingam, 2006.

After-action reviews used by AIAE involved gathering of feedback assessments of participants in training activities, policy dialogues and research dissemination seminars. This is usually done through the use of questionnaires (either by email or completed at the event), telephone calls or interactive feedback on the website. The feedback information is collated and synthesized to form coherent assessments of the critical lessons, impacts and matters arising from the activity.

13

Evaluating Use of Research Results

Use of Research Results Is Motivation for Policy Research

The use of research results is the intended outcome of policy research. Conceptually, there are varying typologies of policy research outcomes – one refers to direct and indirect outcomes and another refers to initial, intermediate and longer-term outcomes.

Evaluating use of research results is an important means of validating the logic model underlying a policy research programme. It is also a tool for justifying research resources and expanding the constituency for evidence-based research in decision-making.

Use of research results, that is, the outcome of policy research, varies depending on the type of policy research, the type of user and the purpose for which it is deployed. Accordingly, results of policy research may be used by way of citation in academic and research papers, newspaper articles, radio and television programmes and web-based social networking media. In the same vein, civil society groups and private sector organisations such as labour unions, chambers of

commerce and professional associations may adopt the results of research for their public enlightenment, civic mobilisation and policy advocacy programmes. Also, government agencies/departments may cite research results in policy documents, legislative reports and policy memoranda as well as more explicit use of research results as evidence-base for initiating and/or supporting policy decisions.

Evaluation Principles and Procedures

In evaluating the use of research, a critical first step is to define the kind(s) of use and user(s) that are relevant to the policy research. Most often, outcomes of policy research are multidimensional in nature, that is, they have various facets or components that need to be taken into account. Care should be taken therefore to consider outcomes of policy research as comprehensively as possible so that no relevant dimensions are omitted. But, not every outcome identified will be of equal relevance or importance and it is not necessarily the rule that all possible outcomes should be measured in order to conduct an evaluation. It suffices that an evaluation should have prior definition in scope and depth. A hard-and-fast rule however is for the outcome measures to be 'reliable', 'valid' and relevant to the policy research context under consideration. By definition, reliability of a measure refers to the degree to which the measure produces identical results when used repeatedly to measure the same thing, while validity of a measure is the extent to which a measure actually measures what it is intended to measure (Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, 2004).

Once the relevant outcomes of policy research have been chosen together with adequate description of each one of them, the next challenge is how to measure them. Measurement of outcomes of policy research involves mirroring the included outcomes by means of observable indicators of policy research. Finding suitable measures of outcomes often poses a major challenge. If poorly defined, an outcome measure may misrepresent the effects of and use of policy research,

and thereby undermine validity of the measure. Equally critical is the need to ensure the 'reliability' of measures.

On establishing the indicators for measuring outcomes of policy research, there arises the question of fitting the indicators with empirical data or observations. This is the stage of data collection which entails the application of suitable data collection procedures and techniques.

Evaluating Outcomes of Policy Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

A range of data collection approaches and techniques are available for meeting the purposes of evaluating outcomes of policy research. They include focus groups, interviews, questionnaires, observations, records and physical measurement. The variety of options can be summarised into two broad categories of survey and data collection approaches: qualitative and quantitative surveys. Qualitative and quantitative differ in terms of nature of data that will be collected, type of design and form of conclusions that can be reached. Qualitative evaluation of policy research outcomes trails the research process to the participant's or end-user's context.

Though qualitative method of evaluating outcomes of policy research takes varying forms, they are commonly underlined by flexibility of inquiry, relevance of context and simplicity of instruments. Information is typically obtained from small samples using flexible techniques including interviews, focus groups, case studies, narrative data, field notes from observation and written documentation. The questions are mostly open-ended, oriented towards elaborate understanding of, rather than precise measurement of events. With respect to design features, qualitative techniques do not emphasize making statistical comparison between users and non-users of policy research. Rather, they rely on detailed knowledge of

how research influences policy and the benefits to stakeholders. In analysis of data collected, qualitative method identifies recurrent themes and patterns in the data to gain more insights on how policy research is interfacing with policymaking.

On the other hand, quantitative methods involve various data collection techniques including questionnaire, observations and interviews. But, the underlying feature is that the same information is collected on every case in the same manner and transformed into a series of numerical values. From the design perspective, quantitative methods usually include at least one comparison group, against which influence of policy research will be matched, using data collected before and after the policy research activities. Statistical methods are used to analyse data, with results presented in the form of tables, graphs and models together with verbal text that explains the results.

Combining qualitative and quantitative methods in the monitoring and evaluation process is essential to getting the complete picture of research influence on policy.

The key factors in deciding which basic category to use for any outcome monitoring and evaluation are (1) the focus of the inquiry or evaluation (2) the context of the situation and (3) the monitoring/evaluation questions that need to be addressed. Hence, if the central question bears on programme process, then qualitative methods have the edge. But, a programme that is clearly defined with well-specified activities is more amenable to quantitative methods (Weiss, 1998).

Sometimes, the decision may not, after all, entail choosing either qualitative or quantitative methods, but about how to combine the two in optimal fashion. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods in the monitoring and evaluation process is essential to getting the complete picture of research influence on policy.

Quantitative techniques have merits in the sense that they lead to conclusions with known degree of confidence about the extent and distribution of the outcome. By design and data types, quantitative methods tend to give more objective, more specific results and relationships whereas qualitative methods emphasize relativity answers on policy research outcomes in narratives of 'how,' 'why' and 'what.' Qualitative measures are however fraught with reliability or subjectivity risk.

Qualitative methods rely on participants' views and responses to written or oral questions about whether and how they use research results. Quantitative measures of physical characteristics are standardised (for example, height, weight, etc.) and tend to be more reliable. But, the results of qualitative measures may vary depending on differences between interviewers in the administration of the measure, even differences in respondent's mood or differences in the environment/circumstance of the interview (Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, 2004). Low reliability in measures dilutes and obscures real differences, hence, giving misleading conclusions about outcomes of policy research.

In evaluating the outcomes of policy research, qualitative and quantitative methods can be combined inventively to overcome each other's weaknesses and tap each other's merits.

Qualitative method can complement quantitative method when used in various stages of evaluating the outcomes of policy research. It can be used in exploratory manner to shape the focus of outcome evaluation and identifying relevant outcomes *ab initio*. Midway into a policy research programme, qualitative methods can be used in appraising progress of implementation and monitoring of outcomes. Equally, it is useful in providing relevant context and explanations that could lead to improvements/changes to a policy research programme already subjected to quantitative evaluation (McDavid and Hawthorn, 2006). Quantitative methods are useful for finding specific and precise

relationships or associations between policy research activities, outputs and outcomes, particularly *ex post*. Also, qualitative method is useful for generating holistic insights relating to the intended and unintended outcomes of policy research, combined with quantitative method for answering research hypotheses about the outcomes of policy research and providing numerical estimates of indicators of outcomes.

Qualitative Techniques of Outcome Evaluation

By virtue of the nature of outcomes expected from policy research, qualitative evaluation approaches tend to be more fitting. Therefore, we will discuss some of more commonly used qualitative methods of evaluating the outcomes of policy research.

Citation Analysis

Citation analysis is a systematic way of seeking out direct responses to research outputs. Since policy research programmes will not usually use conventional academic citations in peer-reviewed journals as a primary monitoring and evaluation tool, the citation analysis should be expanded to cover other more policy-relevant media such as websites, newspapers, training manuals, policy documents and operational guidelines.

Drawing on Lewison (2005), the following list of six types of documents/texts can be used to analyse and trace the impact of policy research outputs:

- *International standards*, such as those published by the EU. Most of these can be found on the Internet.
- *Government policy documents*.
- *Operational guidelines* issued by government bodies or professional associations.

- *Training manuals* and, in some cases, textbooks.
- *Newspaper articles.*
- *Websites.* Use a search engine to pick up references to policy research outputs on other websites, including mention of the research, link to the research programme website, or link to downloadable document.

When carrying out citation analysis, several steps can be taken, depending on how comprehensive the analysis needs to be:

- The first step is to search the documents and texts listed above, gather and count citations to one's own research programme and its outputs, and assemble these into a table.
- A second step might be to also gather citations to key competitors or other major players in the field, in order to compare and assess one's own level of citations with them.
- A third step might be to combine the citation counting with some more qualitative assessment. For example, Lewison (2005) suggests that mention of policy research in newspaper articles can be further analysed and evaluated using the following criteria: the amount of attention given to the research in the article; the size and prominence of the news article; the tone used (optimistic, neutral, critical); and the newspaper's circulation and the socioeconomic profile of its readership.

Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

A focus group is a group of persons (6-12 in number) selected purposively for their relevance in supplying answers to a particular set of questions around a given topic of inquiry. Focus group discussion is facilitated by the researcher, evaluator or inquirer, who guides the proceedings around a checklist of topics and issues, relating to the overall

question addressed by the evaluation. In this case, the topic may be the relevance of, access to and use of research results by the selected group of stakeholders. Focus groups can be constituted among academics/researchers, policymakers, development practitioners and civil society practitioners, gender, social class, separately or in combination. With careful selection and inclusion of individuals, focus group can provide a wealth of descriptive information about the nature and nuances of a policy research issue of interest. To be included in the focus group, a person should be knowledgeable about or have direct experience with the policy research outcome issue under consideration. The merit of focus group is not just in eliciting collective response but in observing the discussion process and the varying perspectives (divergent views) leading to a common position of the group.

Key Informant Interviews (KII)

Key informants are persons whose personal or professional position gives them a knowledgeable perspective on the nature, magnitude and scope of a policy research outcome issue being addressed by a monitoring and evaluation study. Key informants often provide valuable information about the characteristics and dynamics of a policy research outcome. They are selected based on impressions that they have vantage positions in knowledge and experience about the issue under consideration. But, care should be taken in the selection process to ensure that the key informants are those with the required expertise and that they give the information most objectively. For the purpose of monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of policy research, the key informant may be a key government official, a researcher, officer of advocacy organisation or a mass communicator.

Impact (Uptake) Logs

Impact logs are used to keep track of some of the direct responses that the research outputs trigger, and this in turn informs programme evaluation. An impact log is a list of the informal feedback, comments

and anecdotes that a programme receives from people who have encountered or used its research outputs. It is not a systematic way of assessing user perceptions; rather, it is a way of capturing the qualitative and non-systematic feedback on research outputs that would otherwise get lost. As the impact log grows longer, the cumulative effect can be valuable in assessing where and how the project or programme is triggering the most direct responses, and in informing future project/programme choices.

End-User (Stakeholder) Surveys

User survey is used to gather information about responses to or actual uses of research outputs. It is a long-standing M&E tool which ranges from large-scale questionnaire-based data gathering exercises to small focus groups. User surveys in the form of large-scale questionnaires can be used to ascertain how much, and in what way, target audiences use and value the outputs provided. Surveys can be used to gauge attitudes of particular audiences, and to make judgements about how these change over time and the influence of a project over them. Quasi-experimental methods can sometimes be used, given the large number of people targeted by campaigns. This would include, for example, cases where the same people are targeted a number of times, where a campaign has a staged implementation or roll-out, or where there is a clear way to determine the exposure of segments of the population (e.g. the number of people who have television, in the case of a television broadcast). Rolling sample surveys, where a random selection of people in the target audience are surveyed at regular intervals, are another way to keep track of changes over time (although less useful for determining attribution).

Baseline surveys are carried out at the beginning of the programme to describe the situation prior to a development intervention in order to assess progress. *Mid-term surveys* are conducted at the mid-point of the cycle to provide management and decision makers with the information

necessary to assess and if necessary, adjust implementation procedures, strategies and institutional arrangements for the attainment of results. In addition, the results of midline surveys can also be used to inform and guide the formulation of a new country's programme. *End-term surveys* are conducted towards the end of the cycle to provide decision makers and planners with information with which to review the achievements of the programme and generate lessons to guide the formulation and/or implementation of a new programme or project.

Outcome Mapping Method

Outcome mapping is an M&E tool developed by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). IDRC has been one of the pioneers in the field of evaluating policy research, mainly through their development of the outcome mapping approach (Earl, Carden and Smytulo, 2001). Outcome mapping focuses on relationships between actors, and how changes occur in these relationships and in the behaviour of the actors involved. It introduces M&E considerations at the planning stage of a project or programme, and, if followed through, it can serve as a valuable evaluation mechanism. The approach moves away from the notion that M&E are 'done to' a project or programme, and instead, actively engages the team in the design of a monitoring framework and evaluation plan and promotes self-assessment throughout. The method focuses on issues as follows:

- Behavioural change: The 'outcomes' of a research programme are defined as changes in the behaviour, relationships, activities, or actions of the people, groups, and organisations with whom the programme works directly. These outcomes can be logically linked to a programme's activities, even though they are not necessarily directly caused by them.
- Boundary partners: Those individuals, groups, and organisations with whom the programme interacts directly and with whom the programme anticipates opportunities for influence.

- Contributions: By using outcome mapping, a programme is not taking full credit for observed development impacts. Rather, the focus is on contributions to outcomes. These outcomes, in turn, enhance the possibility of development impacts – but the relationship is not necessarily a direct one of cause and effect.

Variants of outcome mapping methodology shift away from assessing the changes in state (for example, policy relevance, poverty alleviation, or reduced conflict) and toward changes in the behaviours, relationships, actions or activities of the people, groups, and organisations with whom a policy research programme works directly. Outcome mapping is done in three stages, as illustrated below (Figure 7).

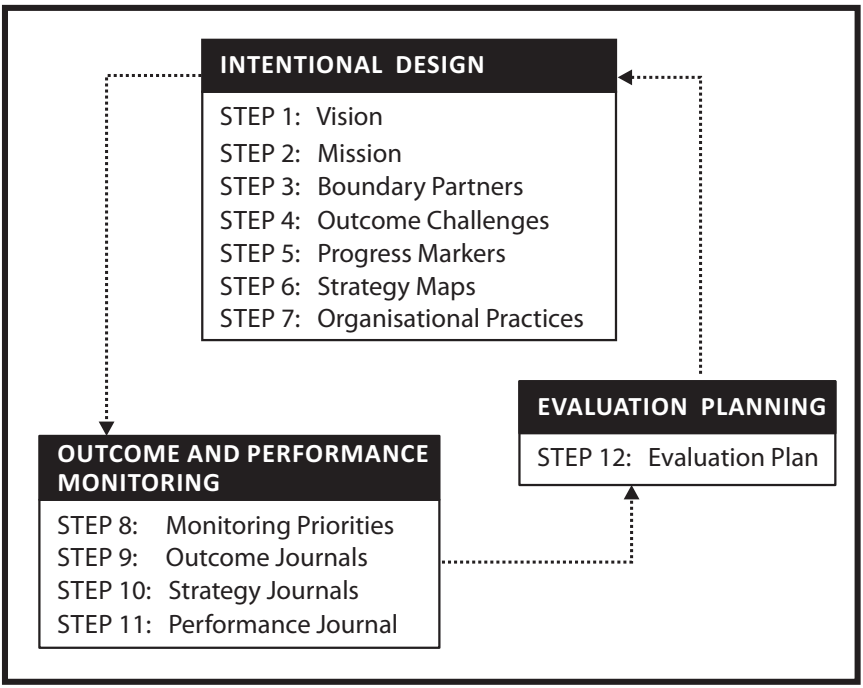

Figure 7: Three stages of outcome mapping
Adapted from Earl, Carden and Smytulo, 2001.

RAPID Outcome Assessment

RAPID outcome assessment (ROA) was developed as part of the Process and Partnership for Pro-poor Policy Change (PPPPC) project carried out by the CGIAR-affiliated International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the Research and Policy in Development Group (RAPID) at ODI (Leksmono et al., 2006). The PPPPC project seeks to identify and institutionalize innovative research and development mechanisms and approaches that lead to pro-poor policy. The project is a response to the need to better understand the processes and mechanisms that lead to pro-poor decisions at the policy level, and aims to provide recommendations to improve the impact of work by ILRI and its partners.

ROA draws on elements from outcome mapping and was designed as a learning methodology to assess the contribution of a project's actions and research on a particular change in policy or the policy environment. It is a flexible, visual tool that can be used to map changes in the project and its environment, and it can be used in conjunction with other evaluation tools and methods to evaluate a particular project or programme.

The key steps of the ROA are as follows:

- Describe the policy environment at the end of the project;
- Describe the policy environment at the beginning of the project;
- Identify the key policy actors or agents of change;
- Within the agents of change, identify the boundary partners that are conducive to the change or that influence the policy environment;
- Describe the behaviours of the boundary partners that are conducive to a change in the policy environment or policy;

- Describe the behaviours of the boundary partners at the beginning of the project;
- Map the key changes in behaviour for each boundary partner from the start of the project;
- Map the key changes in the internal environment of the project including organisational changes, outputs and changes in behaviour during the same period;
- Map the external influences including the actions of strategic partners and other exogenous factors during the same period;
- Determine the level of impact/influence of the project on the changes in behaviour of the boundary partners;
- Determine the level of impact/influence of external influences on the changes in behaviour of the boundary partners and the project;
- Refine the conclusions with in-depth interviews and assess the real contribution of the project to the policy environment; and
- Write report.

Most-Significant-Change

The most-significant-change (MSC) approach involves the collection of significant change (SC) stories and the systematic selection of the most significant of these stories by panels of designated stakeholders or staff. By recording, collecting, reviewing and choosing between SC stories, staff at all levels gain greater awareness of the kinds of impacts that the project, programme or institution is working towards. The method gives a project, programme or institution a better understanding of whether and how it is achieving its purposes. In addition it provides the project, programme or institution with a set of valuable public relations materials.

Episode Studies

The Research and Policy in Development Group (RAPID) at ODI uses the methodology known as 'episode studies' to map the direct and indirect contributions of policy research to policy changes. Episode studies are a special kind of case studies usually applied to inquire in-depth into specific questions or topical issues, using only a few units of analysis. In some case study designs, cases represent units of analysis. Such units can be compared across the geographic areas covered by the policy research programme or over time (covering the life span of the policy research programme), depending on the design of the evaluation study.

The episode studies approach takes into account the fact that an enormous range of different factors influence most policy processes, waxing and waning and in different combinations over time. Looking for the impact of only one factor (such as research) is therefore quite difficult. Episode studies address this difficulty by 'tracking back' from policy changes to identify a range of key actors and decisions and assessing the relative importance of different factors, including but not limited to policy research. The approach is carried out as follows: constructing a narrative; assessing the relative role of research analysis and lessons.

Institutional Evaluation

When conducting institutional evaluation of policy research organisations compared to evaluation of development programme, there are peculiar questions that need to be addressed. These include: organisation's governance structure and accountability; leadership (including overall management structure, management capacity, and quality of management); administration (including administrative systems, capacity, IT systems and use of physical resources and space). Others are: human resources (including

recruitment procedures, appraisals, staff development, etc); finance systems; and the institutional environment (including the political economy, the history, the cultural spheres, and the field of relationships that the institution is operating within).

Institutional evaluation methods and approaches are many and varied. One is the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) model developed by the European Institute for Public Administration (EIPA) in 2000 and revised in 2002, 2006 and 2013 (EIPA, 2013). The CAF is an organisational self-assessment tool based on Total Quality Management (TQM). Even though it is especially designed for public-sector organisations, it is useful for policy research organisations.

The CAF Model

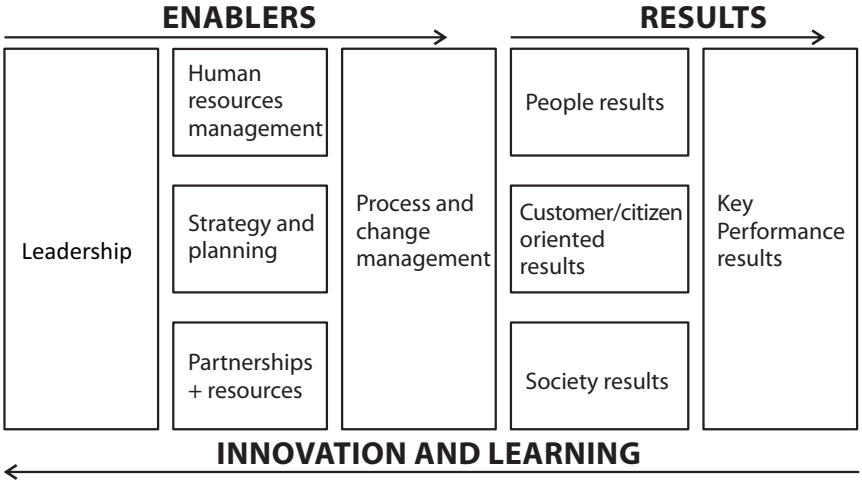

Figure 8: The common assessment framework (CAF) model
Source: EIPA (2013).

Another model is the participatory organisational evaluation tool (POET) developed and used by UNDP and its partners. It is

commonly used to assess CSOs (including research institutes). It measures capacity in seven institutional areas, as follows:

Table 9: The participatory organisational evaluation (POET) tool

Capacity Area	Focus
Management of human resources	Staff development, recruitment, compensation (salary and benefits), personnel evaluation, and grievance and conflict resolution
Management of finance	Budgeting, forecasting, fundraising, and cash management
Equitable participation	Field-based programme practices related to project access and project benefit
Sustainability considerations	The impact of environmental, economic, political, institutional, and cultural factors
Partnering	Collaboration with other CSOs, donors policy makers, and private sector entities
Intra-organisation synergy	Teamwork, information-sharing and capacity for generating information that leads to improvement and current practice
Governance and corporate strategy	Board practices; planning practices; and, commitment to goals, mission and philosophy

Source: Developed in 1998 by Beryl Levinger and Evan Bloom with assistance from UNDP.

14

Examples in Using Research to Influence Public Policy

Case 1: The Better Business Initiative (BBI)

Background

The Better Business Initiative (BBI) project was a network of Nigerian private sector and civil society groups. Its mission was to carry out evidence-based advocacy for policy and institutional reforms to remove bottlenecks to business in Nigeria. The essence was to partner with government in improving the economic environment for enhanced competitiveness and growth of the non-oil private sector.

The BBI came into being, following an Inter-Agency Forum on Competitiveness and Private Sector Growth which was held from July 1-2, 2002 at Abuja. The forum was organised by the African Institute for Applied Economics (AIAE), under the leadership of Prof. Chukwuma Soludo, in collaboration with key government agencies, private sector stakeholders with support from international development partners including the DFID, USAID, World Bank. The forum brought together key economic stakeholders in public and private sectors within and outside Nigeria to review evidence on the

competitiveness of the non-oil private sector and consider appropriate responses.

BBI was aimed at specific objectives as follows: develop economic policy reform agenda through research and systematic evidence; galvanise key constituencies for policy change by networking and collaboration; institutionalise informed policy dialogue between policy makers, private sector and civil society; strengthen private sector and civil society capabilities to undertake high quality policy research and advocacy.

BBI Structure and Methodology: The uniqueness of the BBI lies in its methodology of integrating scientific evidence, consultation and stakeholder dialogue as instruments for achieving policy and institutional reforms. The structure included: steering committee comprising the chairs of the thematic working groups and the funders/sponsors; coordinating secretariat (AIAE); and five thematic working groups made up of private sector experts and government officials from relevant ministries, departments and agencies.

The thematic groups were: trade and macroeconomic policy working group coordinated by AIAE; infrastructure working group coordinated by Manufacturers Association of Nigeria, Lagos; agriculture working group coordinated by Nigerian Economic Summit Group Ltd/Gte, Lagos; institutional and regulatory framework working group coordinated by Human Rights Law Services, Lagos and small and medium scale enterprises working group coordinated by Lagos Business School/Enterprise Development Services.

The working groups operated a unified programme that integrates policy research, stakeholder consultations, feedback, dialogue and advocacy. Every work group prepared competitiveness roadmaps and business bottlenecks removal plan for adoption in support of the

implementation of the government's current economic reform agenda – the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). The public-private dialogue was concertized in strategic stakeholder engagement through stakeholder conference on policy and institutional reforms for improved business environment in Nigeria.

The BBI Forum: To climax the strategic engagement of key stakeholders in government and private sector, the BBI held an apex National Stakeholder Conference on Removing Bottlenecks to Business in Nigeria otherwise called the 2nd National Forum on Competitiveness and Private Sector Growth from April 19-20, 2005. As the apex machinery for delivering the results and findings of the BBI research, the stakeholder conference on 'Removing Bottlenecks to Business in Nigeria' was convened to consider BBI Policy Agenda for removing bottlenecks to business in Nigeria and improving the economic environment for business and investments. At the forum, business executives, corporate managers, private sector organisations, business associations, NGOs, researchers engaged in dialogue with policymakers and government to fine-tune and finalise the BBI policy agenda. The high-level government and private sector representation underscored public-private sector partnerships for policy change in the country.

The BBI Book: In addition to public forums and stakeholder dialogue, the BBI produced a policy-relevant reading text as advocacy tool for evidence-based policymaking. The book *"Promoting Nigeria's Non-Oil Private Sector - Evidence and Recommendations"* brings together analyses, results and findings from the research conducted during the 2003-2005 period. This consolidation is aimed at a more amenable, wider dissemination and enduring transmission of the research evidence and policy recommendations in order to inform

stakeholders, promote public debate and facilitate policy advocacy for improved economic environment. The book contains literature, empirical evidence and analytical insights that can be utilised for stakeholder dialogue on economic policy reforms in Nigeria.

Policy Uptake of BBI Inputs: BBI made considerable impact on the economic reform process in Nigeria. For example, the NEEDS document states on p.57 *"that government would conduct a regular dialogue with private sector operators... and continue to promote periodic public-private sector dialogue under the auspices of the Better Business Initiative, Annual Competitiveness Forum… and other forums."* This formal statement of acceptance of BBI is vivid testament of government uptake of this research-based policy advocacy initiative. It arose from constructive and proactive stance taken by BBI in making inputs into the NEEDS preparation process.

CASE 2: Business Environment and Competitiveness across Nigerian States (BECANS)

Rationale and objectives: Business Environment and Competitiveness across Nigerian States (BECANS) was implemented in collaboration with the National Planning Commission, Central Bank of Nigeria, private sector organizations and state governments. It sought to produce and disseminate knowledge to support business environment reforms in Nigerian states. The overall goal of the BECANS was to promote evidence-based reforms of the business environment in Nigeria, with focus on the sub-national level. The initiative was designed to supply independent research-based evidence on the business environment across Nigerian states, in an ongoing or recurring manner. Such evidence is essential to improve the quality of dialogue and advocacy.

BECANS was designed to perform critical research, dissemination and advocacy tasks, as follows: develop framework benchmarks and indicators for evaluating and monitoring business environment and competitiveness across the states; gather empirical data for evaluating the benchmark and indicators; fit the data on the benchmarks and indicators to gauge states' performance; prepare business environment reports and ratings; facilitate the use of business environment reports for private sector advocacy; promote the use of the business environment reports/ratings as bases for reforms; and provide feedback on business environment conditions at the state level.

Structure and methodology: BECANS was supervised and guided by an advisory committee comprising key partners including AIAE, National Planning Commission, Central Bank of Nigeria, private sector and civil society organisations. Research and technical analysis were done by the technical working group, with membership

drawn from experts and practitioners from across the country. The group was charged with the preparation of background reviews/analyses, design and application of methodological framework, implementation of business environment surveys, evaluation of business environment indicators and preparation of reports. Dialogue and advocacy in the States were done by state-level advocacy committees, which consisted of state-level private sector and civil society organisations. The committee brought together government, private sector and civil society in an open and frank dialogue based on the BECANS reports

Dialogue, advocacy and impact: The BECANS research results and findings are the source materials for the flagship publication series – Business Environment across Nigerian States. The first in the series was the Business Environment across Nigerian States 2007, which was launched at the National Stakeholders Forum on Business Environment across Nigerian States, held on 16th August 2007 at Abuja. The second in the series of BECANS Business Environment Reports was produced in 2010. This was done in tandem with the convening of the 2nd National Forum on Business Environment across Nigerian States (FOBEANS 2010) and the public presentation of the Business Environment Report on Nigerian States on 23rd September 2010 at Abuja.

Before BECANS was initiated, there had not been a comprehensive benchmarking assessment of the business environment at the sub-national level in Nigeria. The first two cycles of BECANS impacted the business environment as follows: (1) informed and stimulated reforms for better business environment in the States, (2) engendered mutual learning, peer review and dissemination of best practices among Nigeria's state governments, and (3) provided systematic framework for regular self-monitoring and benchmarking of policy and institutional reforms by state governments.

CASE 3: The Enugu Forum

Enugu Forum is an AIAE-led civil society response to the yawning need to improve public policy debates and make them more organised, proactive and evidence-based.

The Enugu Forum functions as a civic platform for the cross-fertilisation of ideas and policy debates on the social, economic and political development of the country. It was founded by AIAE in 2001, under the leadership of Prof. Chukwuma Soludo. The motivation was to contribute to the policy process through high quality debate, independent analysis and scrutiny of alternative perspectives on contemporary development questions.

The Forum operates through periodic (for example quarterly) policy seminars hosted by AIAE. Subject-matter experts are asked to prepare and deliver lead papers on identified topics, followed by open plenary discussion. The participants come from the universities, research institutes, non-governmental organisations, professional associations, government agencies, private sector and business community in and around Enugu.

The proceedings of the Forum is summarised in communiqué that outlines main observations, conclusions and recommendations. The discourse are further developed into occasional papers, working papers or policy briefs which are widely circulated to inform, sensitise and enlighten stakeholders. Partnership with print and electronic media ensures wide publicity of the messages of the Forum.

CASE 4: The South-East Nigeria Economic Commission (SENEC) Initiative

Origin and Context: The South-East Nigeria Economic Commission (SENEC) is a vivid example of how a policy research organisation can translate research findings/conclusions into policy and practice. The concept of South-East Nigeria Economic Commission emanated from a stakeholders' forum on "The State of Industrial Clusters in South-Eastern Nigeria," organized by the African Institute for Applied Economics (AIAE), on 26th September 2006 in Enugu. The policy forum concluded that holistic and systematic approach is required to harness the full economic potentials of the south-east states, rather than piecemeal disparate measures by individual states.

It was reasoned that there is compelling need to explore sustainable 'regional' institutional framework to generate and deliver common projects and services in order to reap economies of scale for the accelerated development of the entire zone. The 'pooled' institutional framework will have its critical economic targets as: development of key cross-border infrastructure; generation and diffusion of innovations and technologies; upgrading human capacity and social infrastructure; creation of strategic common-interest investments for agricultural and industrial development. At the forum, stakeholders resolved that AIAE should lead the process of exploring and developing an institutional framework to match the development aspirations of the south-east states.

The SENEC document: Following background research, stakeholder reviews and consultations, AIAE produced the base document for the establishment of South-East Nigeria Economic Commission (SENEC), in collaboration with the coalition of private sector organisations in the five states of south-eastern Nigeria. The

private sector coalition was led by Engr. (Sir) Chris Okoye. The base document proposed key objectives, strategy, governance and management of SENEC.

The SENEC strategy and expected impacts: The envisaged organizational structure includes board of trustees, economic advisory council board of directors and management. It is planned that funding will come from state governments, private sector and civil society, under financing arrangements agreed by stakeholders.

The idea is to have a regional development (common-purpose) vehicle based on partnership between the governments of the five south-east states, the private sector and civil communities. It is envisioned that SENEC will be the platform for tackling shared 'regional' development interests, facilitating development cooperation, coordination and synergy among the five south-east states; fostering resource pooling for joint huge-impact infrastructural investments and strategic regional social and economic policies and programmes. It is reasoned that SENEC will anchor the development of South-East Nigeria Development Fund (SENDEF), a key tool for mobilising and deploying investment finance and development resources from government, private sector and international development partners.

Over the years, intensive dialogue and advocacy have yielded consensus on SENEC. To date, achievements recorded on the formative organs of SENEC include:

1. Signing of memorandum of understanding by four states in the South-East zone (including Abia, Imo, Anambra and Enugu);
2. Constitution of Interim Board of Trustees, chaired by the Governor of Abia State, in his position as Chairman, South-East Governors Forum;

3. Approval for the constitution of Interim Steering Board, chaired by Engr. (Sir) Chris Okoye, with representatives to be nominated by the various states;
4. Approval for the constitution of Interim Board of South-East Nigeria Development Fund (SENDEF);
5. Passing of motions for the establishment of SENEC by some of the state houses of assembly; and
6. Ongoing drafting of the bill on SENEC for consideration by the houses of assembly of the various states.

Overall, the current accelerated momentum of the key government and private sector actors brightens the outlook for the take-off of SENEC.

CASE 5: The Policy Think Group (PTG)

African Institute for Applied Economics (AIAE) inaugurated the Policy Think Group on 29th January, 2010. The group was conceived as an independent responsive brainstorming session devoted to the rapid critical real-time analysis of "hat" economic policy questions. The objective was to offer quick, timely and sound analytic insights for informing and influencing live economic policy debates in the country.

PTG was constituted among economists, scholars, development experts and allied professionals. It served as a think-pot facility for scholarly reflection and deliberation of contemporary policy and development questions of national significance.

Working sessions of the group were convened case-by-case on topical live policy debates. The sessions were usually preceded by a concept note outlining the critical policy decision questions, their dimensional contexts and possible alternative courses of action. The concept note sets the tone and raises the discussion points for the brainstorming session. The discussions are thereafter processed into policy briefs and memos to the relevant government ministries, departments and agencies, private sector and civil society organisations and widely disseminated to stakeholders through the mass media.

As example, PTG runs a flagship series on the federal government annual budget. In order to contribute to improving the quality of the budget, the PTG holds working sessions to scrutinize the federal government budget proposals, presented by the President to the National Assembly. The analysis, observations and recommendations from the working sessions are developed into Budget Advisory Memorandum to the Appropriation Committees of the Senate and House of Representatives, as independent expert inputs into their deliberations.

CASE 6: Agricultural Policy Research Network (APRNet)

Background: The Agricultural Policy Research Network (APRNet) was mooted at a workshop of agricultural research and policy stakeholders on 22 April 2009 in Abuja. The workshop was held under the Nigeria Agricultural Policy Support Facility (APSF) implemented by International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) -Nigeria. Following consultations, APRNet was formed on 23 November 2009 and registered as incorporation by guarantee on 24 June 2011.

Objectives: APRNet is stakeholders' response to poor linkages and lack of proper alignment between research and policymaking in the agricultural sector. The goal of APRNet is to promote evidence-based policies for agricultural and rural development by bridging research, policy and practice. APRNet facilitates the conduct of research and as well as the communication and utilization of research results to end-users including agricultural policymakers, entrepreneurs and practitioners. APRNet's value proposition is getting research into policy and practice and thereby make research work for end-users.

By strategy, APRNet has five key functionalities which define its products/services and anticipated impacts. These are:

- facilitator and doer of policy research and policy analysis – providing rapid and timely topical analysis to improve the information available to policymakers and practitioners.
- promoter of stakeholder dialogue and policy advocacy – offering opportunities and platforms for joint discussions and shared understanding among policymakers, researchers and practitioners.

- network loop - connecting and linking researchers, policymakers and practitioners to increase collaboration and shared understanding, build mutual confidence and promote better interface synergy of research, policy and practice.
- agent of information sharing and learning - transmitting and diffusing research and evidence-based information for broader public consumption.
- provider (technical assistance and capacity building) - client-oriented expert and technical services for human resources capacity building and institutional strengthening in support of Nigeria's agricultural policies, institutions and programmes.

Programmes: APRNet programmes are structured along four thematic areas: policy research and policy analysis; research communication and policy dialogue; capacity building for linkages between research, policy and practice; public enlightenment and stakeholder engagement.

Under policy research and policy analysis, APRNet carries out research and analysis on agricultural and rural development policies and programmes. Examples include the budget analysis and public spending reviews, benchmarking of agricultural progress and agribusiness research.

Under research communications and policy dialogue, APRNet carries out the annual policy dialogue series - national stakeholders forum on "making agricultural research work for end-users." The programme scope includes sharing of research information, research-based publications such as policy research journal, research methodology seminars, presentations at legislative hearings, policy seminars and roundtables and policy briefs/memos to government agencies and legislative committees.

Programmes and activities under capacity building for linkages of research, policy and practice include training of government policymakers and technocrats in accessing and using research for policymaking and programme design and training of researchers in communicating research for policy influence. Others are training of civil society (media, farmers' organisations, and agribusiness associations, value chain operators) to promote the use of research in public discourse and advocacy and training of researchers and technocrats in policy analysis methodologies and tools.

The public enlightenment and stakeholder engagement thematic area involves press conferences, media briefs, op-eds, radio and television appearances, media roundtables and public debate sessions.

The consumers and beneficiaries of APRNet programme products and services include the federal government of Nigeria, through the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, state governments through the states' ministries of agriculture and agricultural development programmes, National Assembly Committees on Agriculture, Rural Development, National Planning, Water Resources and Environment, farmers' organisations, agriculture-based NGOs, agricultural investors, international development agencies, national agricultural research institutes, Agricultural Research Council of Nigeria and faculties of agriculture in Nigerian universities.

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Using Research to Influence Public Policy is a blending of theoretical postulations and practical experience to unravel what is often referred to as the "black-box" between policy research and policymaking. It elucidates what works and how. Those doing or wishing to do policy research are provided simple and proven principles, tools and procedures to make the most impact on public policy. Development practitioners, non-state actors and policymakers are shown best -practices by which they can benefit most from policy research. Overall, this book is a significant practical advancement of the evolving tenet that 'policy research' and 'policymaking' are interlinked processes for making public policy achieve its developmental objectives.

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