

International Development Research Centre

Science for humanity



Overview of Presentation

- ▶ Brief introduction: IDRC
- ▶ Why does evidence-based policy matter?
- ▶ What are the challenges in linking research to policy to practice (R2P3)
- ▶ What are the practical tools for linking research to policy



The Institution

- ▶ A Crown corporation created by the Parliament of Canada in 1970
- ▶ Supports Southern researchers to enable them to find practical, long-term solutions to social, economic, and environmental problems

Unique organization and mandate



IDRC's Mandate

- ▶ The *IDRC Act* (1970) mandates the Centre
“ ... to initiate, encourage, support, and conduct research into the problems of the developing regions of the world and into the means for applying and adapting scientific, technical, and other knowledge to the economic and social advancement of those regions ... ”



Our Mission

Empowerment through Knowledge



Guiding Principles

- ▶ Peoples of developing regions must be able to control their own knowledge-based development
- ▶ IDRC takes its lead from Southern researchers
- ▶ Development research grant-making is the core of our activities



Strategic Goals 2005–2010

- ▶ Strengthen and help to mobilize the local research capacity of developing countries
- ▶ Foster and support the production, dissemination, and application of research results that lead to changed practices, technologies, and laws that promote sustainable and equitable development and poverty reduction
- ▶ Partnerships
- ▶ Leverage additional resources for research for development

Why does Evidence-Based Policy Matter?

- ▶ Research for Development: Research as a Public Good
- ▶ Knowledge dissemination
- ▶ Potential to shape good policy and best practice

Why Research for Development?

Capacity to generate and use knowledge

- ▶ What works and what doesn't
- ▶ Inform people to help themselves
- ▶ Hold governments accountable
- ▶ Open and informed policymaking



Brendan Baker 2006, discarded plastic to repair water pumps in Senegal

Knowledge Generation and Dissemination

- ▶ Research Context: identifying the right policy research questions.
- ▶ Research Methods: choosing the right method and analytical framework
- ▶ Stakeholders: who are they and how are they involved in the research agenda?
- ▶ Policy areas: identification of the public interest
- ▶ Practice and implementation: institutional; regulatory; political economy aspects

Potential to shape policy and practice

- ▶ Research must be credible and clear in terms of what kinds of evidence is being presented
- ▶ Context specific and meaningful
- ▶ Clearly demonstrate impacts
- ▶ Timely and appropriate for stakeholders
- ▶ Policy options: concerns; instruments; recommendations



Some examples

- ▶ TEHIP: Evidence-based health in Tanzania (role of research in reducing child mortality)
- ▶ CBMS: Role of research in effective targeting of public resources for poverty reduction
- ▶ VERN: Effectively linking policy makers to the project
- ▶ Public Budget Program in China: building knowledge on public finance for increasing accountability and effectiveness in spending; use of media; engaging NPP
- ▶ ARTNeT: capacity-building for trade policy analysis; bridging researchers and policy makers

Challenges in Research to Policy

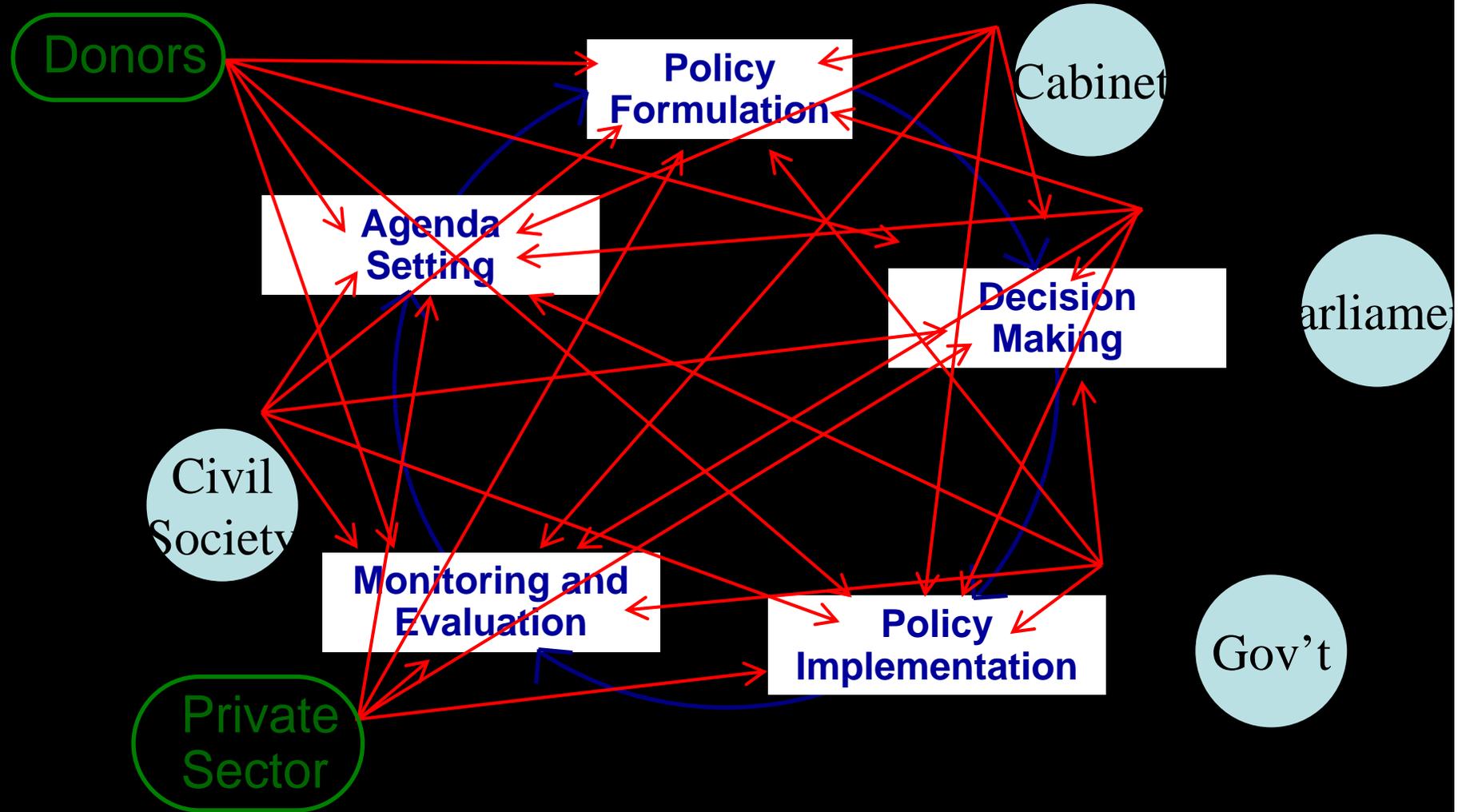
- ▶ Complexity in the policy processes
- ▶ Differences between researchers and policy maker communities
- ▶ Context specific policy environments



Research Relevance

- ▶ “The whole life of policy is a chaos of purposes and accidents. It is not at all a matter of the rational implementation of the so-called decisions through selected strategies” (Clay and Shaffer, 1984)
- ▶ “Most policy research on African agriculture is irrelevant to agricultural and overall economic policy in Africa” (Omamo, 2003)
- ▶ “Policy-makers are generally knowledge-proof” (Mukhopadyay, 2003)
- ▶ “Research is more often regarded as the opposite of action rather than a response to ignorance”
(Surr Report, 2003)
 - ▶ “Policy makers are practically incapable of using research-based evidence because of the 5 Ss: speed, superficiality, spin, secrecy and scientific ignorance” (Vincent Cable, 2004).

Policy Processes (ODI RAPID)



Factors influencing policy making

Experience and expertise

Pragmatics and contingencies

Lobbyists and pressure groups

Social structure and organisation

Values and policy context

Resources

EVIDENCE

Researchers and policy makers: distinct communities

Different professional incentive structures

Different notions of evidence

Researchers preferences: theoretically driven;
context free; empirical; caveats and
qualifications.

Policy makers preferences: contextual; time
sensitive; policy relevant & understandable;
application is clear and without qualification

Some Obstacles to Uptake of Research (ODI survey)

- ▶ Scientific understanding of policy makers is low
- ▶ Lack of documentation of research findings
- ▶ Lack of incentives
- ▶ Lack of institutional channels for incorporation
- ▶ Data not perceived as relevant
- ▶ Scientific terminology does not correspond with policy environment
- ▶ Too little or too much information



Tools for linking policy and research

- ▶ Mapping the interrelationships between the political context, external influences, relationships between research and policy, and the packaging of credible research results.
- ▶ Contextual issues – domestic and international.
- ▶ Specific Policy Issues (i.e. the policy cycle)
- ▶ Stakeholder analysis
 - ▶ Arena: government, parliament, civil society, judiciary, private sector.
 - ▶ Level: local, national, international
- ▶ What is their Interest and Influence?
- ▶ Political and administrative feasibility assessment

Factors which affect policy

- ▶ Situational: change of leadership, focusing events, new evidence, balance of power and resources among key stakeholders based on interests and commitments etc.
- ▶ Structural: resource allocation to intervention, organization of service delivery.
- ▶ Cultural: prevailing attitudes/ political palatability of a reforms, values, formal & informal processes through which decisions are made etc.
- ▶ International: place of intervention on international agenda, modalities, migration of staff, ideas and paradigms, etc.

Embedding policy in research design

- ▶ Linking research and policy also needs to be in researchers' minds from the outset and should inform the research questions and methodologies
- ▶ Identifying what policy questions need to be addressed in your research field and design the research accordingly. What types of information backed by what types of evidence will be compelling to policy decision-makers? If measurable indicators are what policy-makers are looking for, only providing rich ethnographic narratives will be of limited value.
- ▶ Involve policy makers and other stakeholders in the research process



Summary

- ▶ Evidence-informed policy is challenging and requires *intent*
- ▶ Policy is about ideas but also interests, institutions & power
- ▶ Variety of tools to understand these factors - range in complexity and ease of use
- ▶ Tools to use the understanding to engage in policy processes - less well developed
- ▶ Extent to which the tools are helpful depends on creativity, tenacity, inside knowledge - advocacy coalitions useful. It is more than just policy briefs