

Civil Society Organisations Partnership Programme

Short Case Studies Needed

Summary

As part of a new programme, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is looking for short case studies on the topic of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Evidence and Policy Influence. The case studies should be simple stories, based on existing knowledge, which describe episodes where CSOs have engaged with policy processes, the nature of the impact they have had (if any), the reasons why and the relative role of research-based evidence in the process. The cases should be 1500 words long and ODI would provide US\$1500 for successful cases. Proposals should be 500 words long. The priority is for cases from authors in developing countries.

Full Information

Background

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) has recently launched a six-year partnership programme on Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Evidence and Policy Influence. Supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the programme is intended to promote improved contribution by CSOs to pro-poor national and international development policies. The programme will focus on four outcomes:

1. CSOs understand better how evidence can contribute to pro-poor policy processes;
2. Regional capacity to support Southern CSOs is established;
3. Useful information on current development policy issues, and how this knowledge can contribute to pro-poor policy, is easily accessible to CSOs;
4. CSOs participate actively in Southern and Northern policy networks to promote pro-poor policies.

The programme will develop partnerships with southern organisations which share ODI's commitment to the MDGs; to the importance of evidence-based policy-making; and to the value of civil society participation in the policy process. The partnership programme will build on and develop the research findings, and techniques of knowledge management, policy advocacy, capacity-building and training materials already developed by ODI. It will provide funding for Southern CSOs to develop their own independent capacity in this area, and it will strengthen existing relationships between CSOs engaged in the policy process. For more information, see: www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Projects/PPA_index.html

TOR for Proposals

Over the next few months, ODI would like to collect case-studies illustrating the ways that CSOs engage with policy processes and the ways they use (or distort or ignore) evidence in the process. The case studies should be simple narratives (i.e. stories), based on existing knowledge, which describe cases where CSOs have engaged with policy processes, the nature of the impact they have had (if any), the reasons why and the relative role of research-based evidence in the process. The priority is for cases from authors in developing countries. We are looking for cases:

- at different levels (local, national, regional and global)
- on different types of policy change (new agendas; new legislation; new actions on the ground)
- in any development sectors (e.g. Energy, Health, Education, Agriculture, etc)



Each proposal should be not more than 500 words and include the following information:

- title and author
- introduction to the case (issue, location, date, organisations involved, prevailing policies and policy climate)
- the type and extent of policy change (legislation, policy documents, practice; period over which change took place; etc)
- some thoughts on the explanation of the policy change (see RAPID framework)
 - the political context
 - the ways CSOs tried to affect policy change (strategy and activities)
 - the nature of research-based evidence, if relevant (content, source, reliability)
 - the mechanisms they used to get the evidence into the policy process
 - any international factors
- conclusions on what the case might tell us
- sources of documentation to support the case (and written permission to use and publish the material if it is not the work of the author of the case study)
- basic information on the author

The final cases should also follow this basic format.

Ideally, the case studies will be based on previously documented evidence, although this can be in any media – research reports, books, journals, newspaper articles, radio programmes (or transcripts), television or video, or web-based material – but it must be available in full in electronic form (which can be submitted to the project) or it must be accessible via the internet. Although we will give preference to cases with documentation, we would also welcome proposals from contributors with first hand experience, where there may be little documented evidence. Case studies may be written or produced specially for the programme, or may have been produced earlier for other purposes.

Contributors may submit case-study material generated by others provided it is fully referenced to the original author and the original author has given their permission for the material to be used and, possibly, published. The challenge is to write a simple, clear, 1500 word story (in English) describing the critical factors influencing how CSOs influenced, or failed to influence, policy.

If approved, authors will be invited to submit a full case study, which must include:

- A 1500-word case study covering the information mentioned above; and
- The original source documentation (or web address if it is already accessible on the internet).

For an example of what we are after, please see:

http://www.gdnet.org/rapnet/research/studies/case_studies/Case_Studies_Index.html

Payment and Submission Information

ODI will pay \$1500 for each case study, \$500 on acceptance of a summary, and a further \$1000 on receipt of the case study materials. There is no deadline. A review committee will assess proposals as they come in. We would expect that the first round of cases would be complete by the end of 2005.

Proposals must be submitted using the online application form on the RAPID website:

http://www.odi.org.uk/Rapid/Projects/PPA0104/cs_form/form.asp

For enquiries, please contact Enrique Mendizabal at Overseas Development Institute, via csocasestudy@odi.org.uk

CSO Partnership Programme: Key Terms and Definitions

The ODI partnerships programme aims to better enable Southern Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to use evidence to contribute to pro-poor policy processes. This Note clarifies some of the key terms and ideas relevant to the programme.

Civil Society Organisations:

For the PPA, CSOs are considered to be any “*organisations that work in an arena between the household, the private sector and the state to negotiate matters of public concern*”.¹ CSOs include a very wide range of institutions, including non-governmental organisations, faith-based institutions, professional associations, trade unions, networks, research institutes and think tanks. CSOs operate at many different levels, including: global, regional, national, local.

It is possible to differentiate CSOs according to the following five functions:

- *representation* (organisations which aggregate citizen voice);
- *advocacy and technical inputs* (organisations which provide information and advice, and lobby on particular issues);
- *capacity-building* (organisations that provide support to other CSOs, including funding);
- *service-delivery* (organisations that implement development projects or provide services);
- *social functions* (organisations that foster collective recreational activities).

Policy and Policy Processes:

We suggest that policy is defined as a “purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors”.² This goes beyond documents or legislation to include activities on the ground. Policies are not restricted to government policies but could include those of international organisations, bilateral agencies or NGOs.

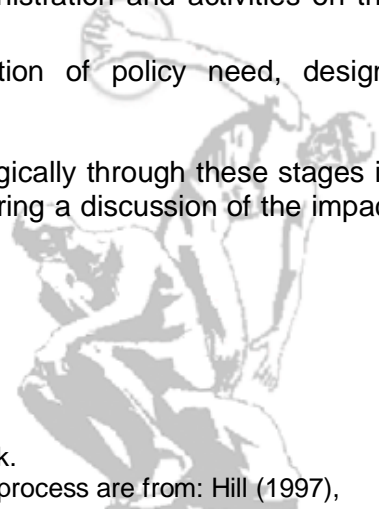
Policy processes are usually considered to include the following components:

- *Agenda Setting*: awareness of and priority given to an issue or problem;
- *Policy Formulation*: the ways (analytical and political) options and strategies are constructed;
- *Decision-making*: the points and ways decisions are made about alternatives;
- *Policy Implementation*: the forms and nature of policy administration and activities on the ground;
- *Policy Evaluation*: the nature of monitoring and evaluation of policy need, design, implementation and impact.

We stress that policymaking is not linear and does not work logically through these stages in real life. Rather, this conceptualisation provides a way of structuring a discussion of the impact of CSOs and evidence on different parts of the policy process.

¹ This is from the DFID definition. The functions are from the World Bank.

² The definition is from Anderson (1975). The components of the policy process are from: Hill (1997), Lindblom (1980), Sabatier (1999).



Research / Evidence:

We use a general definition of research as “*any systematic effort to increase the stock of knowledge*”.³ This may include any systematic process of critical investigation and evaluation, theory building, data collection, analysis and codification related to development policy and practice. It also includes action research, i.e. self-reflection by practitioners oriented toward the enhancement of direct practice.

In terms of the nature of evidence and policy influence, key issues are:

- Quantity of evidence;
- Quality of evidence;
- Relevance of evidence for policy: (i) timely; (ii) topical; (iii) operational;
- Credibility of evidence – including considerations of (i) Objectivity of sources; (ii) Extent of Contestation; (iii) Generalisability: is there extensive information or just selective cases or pilots.

Capacity Building:

The main emphasis in the PPA is on capacity building; the programme aims to empower southern CSOs to promote pro-poor policies. We define capacity building as: strengthening institutional capacity of CSOs to build coherent and sustainable programmes to promote evidence-based, pro-poor development policies.

Our preliminary focus is on:

- Southern CSOs;
- who share a commitment to the PPA principles;
- in the function of generating or using evidence to influence policy – this means think tanks, policy research institutes, NGOs and networks, etc;
- and who can have a multiplier effect – we may work with intermediary and other capacity building organisations.

Pro-poor Policy:

The aim of pro-poor policies is to improve the assets and capabilities of the poor. These may include, for example, policies that lead to broad-based economic growth, safety nets to ensure the poor are not harmed by economic reforms and shifts in budget allocations so that publicly provided services are specifically targeted to the needs of the poor. Promoting an enabling political and policy environment as well as the ensuring the voices of the poor are heard in policy discussions are also key aspects of this agenda.

³ The definition is from the OECD. These key elements of evidence are based on RAPID work and a paper by Louise Shaxson.