



CSOs, Evidence and Policy Influence National Workshop and Seminar

**Sheraton Hotel Libertador, Buenos Aires, Argentina
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Executive Summary

The UK Overseas Development Institute's (ODI) Research and Policy in Development Programme (RAPID) has been working on the interface between research and policy for the last five years. It has developed a framework to help researchers and practitioners understand the policy context they are working in and make strategic choices about what they should do to maximise the impact of their work on policy and practice. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) also have an important role to play in influencing policies and practices to make them pro-poor. More and more CSOs are recognising the need to understand policy processes better and use evidence to engage with them more effectively.

ODI has recently launched a new programme to help CSOs do this better. Through this new Civil Society Partnerships Programme (CSPP), ODI has organised regional workshops and national seminars aimed at providing a forum for CSOs to discuss the opportunities and challenges they face when trying to inform policy and share experiences about what works and does not work, learn about the latest worldwide research and practice in this area, and identify gaps for future work. The third of these consultations in Latin America was held Buenos Aires, Argentina, in collaboration with CIPPEC (Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth), a non-profit organization that strives to create a more just, democratic, and efficient State in Argentina to improve the quality of life for all Argentine citizens.. It was facilitated by Fundación Cambio Democrático, a non-governmental and non-profit organization whose vision is to promote changes into a more peaceful and participative society.

Introduction

The National Consultation Process in Argentina, coordinated by ODI with collaboration of CIPPEC, was composed of three phases:

1. **One to one interviews** with representatives of leaders from CSOs, governmental agencies and international organisms (see Annex 1, page 15)
2. **1/2 day seminar** to discuss about the current and potential role of CSOs that use research to influence policymaking: to allow a multi-sectorial perspective on the issue we invited representatives of national and international civil society organizations including policy research institutes, academia, governmental agencies, and international donors to participate in the discussions (see page 3)
3. **1 ½ day workshop** with the participation of CSOs to discuss and explore how research and evidence can be better used for influencing public policies (see page 5)

Seminar Report

The seminar was held on September 7th, in Buenos Aires, in collaboration with CIPPEC, and with the following objectives:

1. Discuss about opportunities and challenges faced by CSOs in Argentina to influence policymaking
2. Learn about latest worldwide research and practices in this field
3. Share experiences on activities and strategies that are currently working well to promote the use of evidence and research in public decision making processes
4. Identify gaps for future work to strengthen impact of CSOs on the policy agenda for poverty reduction in Argentina

29 representatives from national and international civil society organizations including policy research institutes, academia, governmental agencies, and international donors participated in the seminar.

Mr. Nicolás Ducoté, Executive Director of CIPPEC, opened the seminar by explaining the different phases of the national consultation process for the Civil Society Partnership Programme: personal interviews with leaders from CSOs, governmental agencies and international organisms, the seminar itself with the participation of diverse sectors, and a special workshop with CSOs. He proposed participants to help turn the seminar and workshop into an active forum and debate where questions about the potential role of CSOs that use research to influence policymaking could be further discussed. He also encouraged attendants to discuss about issues like what type of information policymakers need, how the political context affects CSOs that try to influence policymaking and how could these organizations build stronger alliances and partnerships.

He then introduced Mr. Alberto Dalla Via, Vice-president of the National Electoral Chamber, who spoke about the potential for NGOs to build capacity for citizenship participation through the promotion of democratic institutions and the participation at the critical debates on public issues. Besides demonstrating how research could be incorporated in diverse governmental fields, Dalla Via also encouraged CSOs to take a better advantage of the existing opportunities. He mentioned that even though the National Electoral Chamber had posted relevant information about the election process which could help CSOs finetune their advocacy work, they had received so far no consultations nor contacts from CSOs that work on these topics.

Following his dissertation, Ms. Vanesa Weyrauch, Director of Institutional Development at CIPPEC, introduced ODI's representatives, Mr. John Young, Head of Partnerships and Communications, and Mr. Enrique Mendizábal, Research Officer. After a brief description of ODI, they explained the objectives and partnership principles of the Civil Society Partnership Programme. Next, they introduced and explained the CEL framework. The main points highlighted by ODI included:

- The framework is an approach that can help systematize and understand which factors play an important role in facilitating influence of research on policymaking
- Sometimes the capacity to influence exists at the CSO but it does not know how to use it
- Evidence is the product of a research
- There is a need to focus on how to communicate the evidence and on generating the credibility to do it
- The framework works like a photo to initiate the process

ODI invited participants to make questions and suggestions about this approach. One of the main concerns shown by participants was related to the dynamic nature of the approach and whether the same factors apply when CSOs work in the implementation phase of public policies with government. Also, participants were interested in learning how a CSO can establish a new issue in the public agenda.

Finally, Mrs. Ma. Inés Tula, Director of Political Institutions at CIPPEC, presented a case study on the role of this institution in the reform of an electoral system in the province of Santa Fe, called "ley de lemas". The presentation clearly detailed the process of incidence that led to the abolition of an electoral system and its replacement by an alternative one, based on a consensus that emerged from research produced and disseminated by academics and CSOs, facilitated by CIPPEC. The strategy included a participatory diagnosis, the promotion of public debate, and specific advocacy strategies such as achieving the signature of commitment letters by main candidates to governor.

Some key conclusions were presented:

- Issue at the public debate: upcoming elections worked as a window of opportunity for the process of influence
- Relevance of proposals was increased by academic support and institutional presence at legislative committees
- Continuous meetings and media exposure throughout the project were key to maintain debate
- Credibility was enhanced because proposals reflected a social demand and were articulated in short and concise documents presented to the Executive Power
- There was some innovation and originality in the way candidates to governor were engaged in the reform
- Importance of awareness that the reform could only be made by the Legislature and of the need to include politicians in the process.

After the presentation, there was an active discussion with participants who raised the following comments and issues, among others:

- Sometimes the evidence is intoxicated by who presents it and thus loses credibility
- It is very important to build consensus and trust, for example with the local media.
- Credibility is the key issue, and it depends on how we present the message and who is the messenger.
- It is important to discuss the ethical principles of political influence: who participates (is it an elitist reform?), which is the source of legitimacy, etc. Also questions around the level of representation of CSOs were posed.
- Lack of participation may be due to diverse causes: low awareness of the problem; no links with what CSOs are already doing or concerned about; heterogeneous interests.
- It would be helpful to analyze why many issues fostered by social mobilization never get into the public agenda.
- To be effective participation needs to be binding.
- It would be worth to consider the potential of linking social movements and grassroots organizations with more technical and research-oriented CSOs.
- After a process of influence has finished, there is a need to evaluate stakeholders' perceptions about the processes and results of CSOs' actions.

Workshop Report

The workshop took place during the afternoon of September 7th and the entire day of September 8th in Buenos Aires, in collaboration with CIPPEC, and with the following objectives:

1. Generate a critical debate on the opportunities and challenges faced by Argentina's CSOs to influence on public policies.
2. Share experiences on different activities and strategies in this area.
3. Strengthen CSOs impact on public policy influence work by identifying key needs and gaps they have to overcome to achieve their goals.

26 participants from diverse CSOs participated in the workshop (see list on Annex 6)

Agenda

Day 1

14.00 – 14.30	Opening session. Welcome by CIPPEC and ODI. Presentation of workplan and rules for participation. Introduction/ Expectations from participants (Fundación Cambio Democrático).
14.30 – 15.00	Introduction to ODI, the RAPID Context, Evidence and Links Framework .Tools for Policy Influence, Implications for CSOs, The Civil Society Partnerships Programme, Lessons Learnt from the Africa Consultations and Ethical Principles of Partnership.
15.00 – 15.15	Discussion
15.15 – 15.45	<i>Coffee Break</i>
15.45 – 16.15	Presentation of a local case study: Consejo Consultivo Nacional de Políticas Sociales (National Consultative Council for Social Policies).
16.15 – 17.00	Discussion of case study. Identification of successful strategies implemented. Leading question: Which were the main challenges and opportunities?
17.00 – 17.30	Conclusions of Day 1 and Introduction of Group Work for day 2

Day 2

09.00 – 09.15	Recap of day 1. Introduction of working agenda.
09.15 – 10.15	Group work <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Selection of a specific case of influence on a public policy 2. .Identification of key success factors: obstacles and opportunities that either helped or hindered the implementation of the strategy
10.15 – 10.45	Feedback and discussion: detection of key common factors among groups
10.45 – 11.15	<i>Coffee</i>
10.15 – 11.30	How to use the CEL Framework & examples:1) The Kenya Animal Health Study, 2) The PRSP story.
11.30 – 12.30	Group work <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Utilizing CEL framework, identify those factors that affect the potential for influence on policymaking in our country, taking into account: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Factors deriving from political and institutional contexts (formulation, implementation and key decision moments throughout the process) ▪ External factors (international/regional policies, donors) ▪ Research characteristics (relevance and credibility, communications) ▪ Networks and alliances
12.30 – 13.00	Plenary and Discussion. Group presentation 3 ' per group. Discussion of methodology. Has this methodology been useful?
13.00 – 14.00	<i>Lunch</i>

14.00 – 14.30	Presentation of tools for incidence on public policies
14.30 – 15.20	Group work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Forced Field Analysis ▪ Stakeholders Analysis
15.20 – 15.45	<i>Coffee</i>
15.45 – 16.15	How can ODI help us? Review of suggestions and outline of next steps in the CSPP
16.15 – 16.45	Review of initial expectations about workshop. Workshop evaluation.
16.45 – 17.00	Closing words
17.00 – 17.30	Toast

Opening session

After a brief presentation of ODI and CIPPEC, the facilitators from Fundación Cambio Democrático invited participants to introduce themselves and share their expectations for the workshop.

Participants expectations

- More knowledge of how CSOs work to influence policymaking in Argentina
- Exchange experiences and lessons learned
- Take concrete experiences of how young people can influence on public issues
- Enrich ourselves from different experiences
- Share experiences
- Get tools from systematized information for local incidence
- Strengthen partnerships for social change
- Strategies and methodologies for network incidence
- Incidence in structural policies. How to set an issue in the public agenda?
- Tools for public influence
- Understand the communications circuit for influence on public issues
- Look for the complementation of legal strategies and other tools
- Promote tools and disseminate them in our country
- Public incidence that includes visions of policymakers
- To open my mind with new ideas

Introduction to ODI, the RAPID Context, Evidence and Links Framework

John Young began the presentation by sharing some concepts, definitions and findings from latest theory. He then explained ODI's 'RAPID Context, Evidence and Links Framework'.

Enrique Mendizábal followed by sharing a case study of Perú, which was based on an environmental contamination conflict.

Participants provided some feedback on the framework presentation:

- It is important to include the issue of financial resources available when analyzing which variables play a crucial role in either hindering or facilitating influence. CSOs need time and human resources to promote incidence.
- There is a need to educate the donors about the importance of supporting CSOs efforts to conduct research to influence policymakers.
- Think about structural changes, macro political influence, which is more relevant but difficult.
- International organisms usually set the local public agenda.
- Credibility is essential.
- It is crucial to address what is the legitimacy of CSOs to influence public policies.

Presentation of a local case study: Consejo Consultivo Nacional de Políticas Sociales (National Consultative Council for Social Policies)

Cristina Resano, from Cáritas and Maximiliano Luft, from the Consultative Council presented this local case study: the CCNPS was created as a specific mechanism proposed by the Diálogo Argentino (process conducted by the Argentine government, the UNDP and the Catholic Church in the midst of the 2001 crisis to forge consensus building discussions in order to find new solutions for shared problems). It is composed by public officials, business chambers, labor unions, CSOs and confessional groups.

It has two main objectives:

- Help to enhance the “Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogar” (social plans provided to the unemployed as a response to the deep social and economic crisis)
- Institutionalize the Consultative Councils at the provincial and local levels

They have been successful in several initiatives such as:

- Monitoring the education and training component of the social plan along with the Ministry of Work and the provincial Consultative Councils (2004 y 2005).
- Generated information to guide decision making about how to distribute plans: they compared sources of information like the list of beneficiaries with the diverse social plans.
- Proposed the use of a magnetic card to enhance the process of cashing the payment and ensure the direct transfer of benefits.
- Collaborated in the design of the Decree N° 15/05 and its reglamentation (regarding institutionalization of the CCNPS) Launched a media campaign (TV and radio) to strengthen provincial and local CCs

Finally, participants shared the upcoming challenges for the Council which include incidence on the formulation of the new social plans and to make progress on the institutionalization of smaller councils.

Participants expressed several interests and concerns:

- How are members of the Council selected?
- How can other CSOs participate?
- It would be enriching to include other groups and to further disseminate the unique experience of an institutionalized space of interaction between civil society and policymakers.
- Which type of policies recommended by the Council seem to have more chances of being taken by government?
- What has been the role of the information they have gathered? Was it useful to convince policymakers about reforms?

Day 2

Group Work I

In the first group session participants were divided in two groups to work according to the following guidelines:

- Select a specific case of influence on a public policy
- Identify key success factors: Challenges and opportunities that either helped or hindered the implementation of the strategy.
- Use the framework

1. Group 1

Public policy Case: **Freedom public information Law**

Expected Change: the enactment of a national freedom public information law

1.1 Opportunities

- Political context
- Promote events with new legislative candidates
- Send commitment letters to new candidates
- Attract celebrities to the process
- Promote meetings with key actors (Ex. M. Alvarez)
- Promote popular demand

1.2 Challenges

- Promote the original law vs. the president's wife law
- Weakness of CSOs coalition
- Compromise the candidates
- Expansion and diversification of the CSOs coalition

1.3 Using the Framework

1.3.1 LINKS

Interest groups:

- Public Officers
- Politics
- Business man
- Academics
- Journalists
- Donors
- CSOs

Experts: G7, Bertoni, (OEA), O.A., SS de MO.

1.3.2 EVIDENCE

Prevailing Narratives

- bureaucratic and political barriers
- investment is better in an atmosphere of transformation

1.3.3 POLITICAL CONTEXT

- Election period: Renewal of legislative power
- The law could be sanctioned
- Local and regional level interest

2. Group 2

Public policy Case: **Freedom public information Law**

Expected Change: the enactment of a national freedom public information law

2.1 Opportunities

- Electoral calendar
- Anticorruption Office promoted a participative process for the drafting of the law
- Executive decree #1172 that mandates access to public information at the Executive level fostered by Martha Oyhanarte

- Interesting legal case that set a precedent and could work as evidence: environmental freedom public information law #25831

2.2 Challenges

- Low involvement of mass media
- Difficult to transmit how this issue could impact on people's quality of life
- Lack of social punishment
- Promote risk analysis research

2.3 Using the Framework

2.3.1 EVIDENCE

What we have?

- environmental freedom public information law #25831
- A failed attempt (a video)

What evidence we need?

- How would this law impact on people's life?

One of the NGOs (CELS) had a publication on the topic, a strategy could be to expand these particular cases.

Prevailing Narratives

- Nationalism [Kirchner project] vs International influence and pressure [international organisms agenda]

NGO → Promote a narrative about the minimal standards that a good law would need

2.3.2 LINKS

Interest Groups

- Congress
- Executive Power
- Mass media companies
- NGO's
- Judicial Power

NGO'S:

- Lack of common strategy
- There is a common action line for campaign

Strategy → involve other actors (piqueteros groups, women groups)

Mass media companies

- National State threats to investigate them/ take out official publicity
- Journalists and experts: Santoro, Laura Zommer, Bertoni, Loretti, Di Natale

Judicial Power

- Magistrate Association opposition

Narrative: 'Public information can become threatening in a context of lack of safety (robberies, kidnappings)'

2.3.3. EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

Executive Power : OAS (Freedom expression secretary)

- Strategy
 - └─→ Generate political cost
 - └─→ Generate evidence through the decree

NGOs: International Donors
Narrative: "International organisms imposed the local agenda"

2.3.4 POLITICAL CONTEXT

Congress

- Deputies fragmentation
- Take advantage of electoral opportunity window

Strategy:

- Send commitment letters
- Change the messenger

Presentation of tools for incidence on public policies

ODI presented and explained a set of tools that are useful for policy influence based on the 'Tools for Policy Impact: A Handbook for Researchers'.

Group Work II

In the afternoon participants worked in groups using the same case to address two tools:

- Force Field Analysis Tool
- Stakeholder Analysis Tool

1. Forced Field Analysis

What specific change we want to achieve?

INVOLVE MASS MEDIA

Force for change

- 1 Associations engaged (FOPEA)
- 2 Discomfort if the senate law is approved
- 2 Journalists and some mass media have access information problems too
- 2 Private sector lobby
- 1.5 Alternative small mass media who have tendency to publish

8.5 TOTAL

Forces Against Change

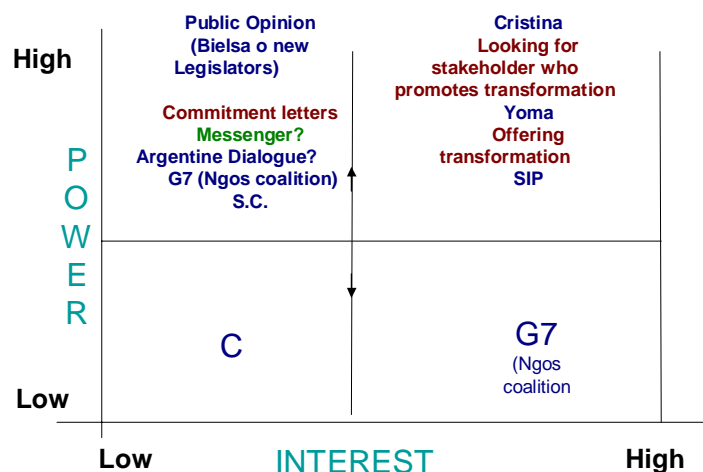
- 5 Political pression on official publicity and subsidies
- 3 UTPA (Association of argentines journalist workers)
- 5 Lack of social punishment (ignorance of the issue and the access mechanisms)
- 3 Afraid of public visibility
- 4 Low appearance in public agenda

20 TOTAL

Possible Strategies:

- Start all over
- Focus on involving a strategic actor like UTBA

2. Stakeholder Analysis



Recommendations for the tool

- Difficulty to answer all the framework questions, reduce the number of questions to maximum 10 key questions
- The model requires a lot of previous information which sometimes is unavailable or not at hand within the organizations
- Need of better communication
- Requires to reconsider our prejudices and assumptions
- It raises awareness of the importance of the evidence for political influence
- Forced field analysis(FFA) is key to understand in a short time the big picture and to identify the key elements to be worked on
- FFA is excellent to know where to prioritize and how to focus our resources
- These tools are not in the culture of our CSOs but we could try them out in our organizations in specific situations or meetings

Last, participants were invited to make suggestions about how ODI might help them enhance their capacity to influence public policies.

How can ODI help?

- Help CSOs work together to generate evidence
- Technical assistance and advice on strategies to influence policy
- Availability of ODI handbooks and papers in Spanish
- Provide access to local experiences of other countries
- Connect NGOs with other NGOs that work in the same field in the world
- Joint contacts: generate e-learning strategies
- Help create "influence networks": generate a knowledge action bank to systematize local experiences and to allow CSOs throughout the country to access relevant information and tools that can help them further their impact
- Generate periodic meetings among CSOs to share knowledge and information
- Include policymakers, businessmen and mass media in incidence issues and meetings

Annexes

List of interviewees

1. World Bank, Carter Brandon, Sectorial Leader for Rural, Environmental and Social Development
2. Inter American Development Bank, Juan Carlos Sanguinetti, Consultant
3. Ministry of Social Policies, Daniel Arroyo, Subsecretary
4. Subsecretariat of Economic Planning, Sebastián Katz, Subsecretary
5. FLACSO, Mercedes Botto, Coordinator of the International Relationships Area
6. Fundesur, Nidia Povedano, President and founder
7. CELS, Andrea Pochak, Vice-Director
8. Fundación Compromiso, Luz Santamarina, Director of Institutional Development
9. CEDES, Daniel Maceira and Inés González Bombal, Associate Researchers
10. GADIS, Elida Cecconi, Executive Director

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