

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 Organizations:

For the PPA, CSOs are considered to be any “*organizations 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)

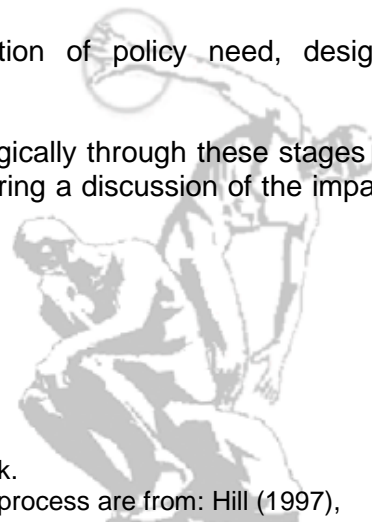
Policy and Policy Processes:

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.