

## **CSOs, Evidence and Policy Influence: Lessons Learnt from the Africa, Asia and Latin America Consultations February – September 2005**

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) play a vital role in poverty eradication by working as innovators in service provision; as advocates with and for the poor; and as builders of capacity. The African CSO sector is diverse in nature: from organisations closely involved with the policy process and able to adapt to existing policy regimes, to NGOs with strong sectoral expertise but very little influence over policy, and further to a larger group of CSOs who feel they have been unsuccessful in linking with the policy process, due to a lack of knowledge regarding the policy arena and lack of skills that are needed to successfully feed evidence into development policies at national, regional or global levels.

ODI's Civil Society Partnership Programme (CSPP) is designed to strengthen the capacity of CSOs to use research-based and other forms of evidence to promote pro-poor national and international development policies and practice. In line with this objective, consultations with CSOs have taken place in Africa to present the aims and objectives of the CSPP, to discuss and learn from CSO experience around the issue in Africa and to share ODI's knowledge and experience gathered through its work on bridging research and policy.

Workshops and seminars were held in Southern Africa (Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique), Eastern Africa (Tanzania and Uganda), and West Africa (Ghana and Nigeria), South Asia (Bangladesh and Sri Lanka) South East Asia (Indonesia, Cambodia and Thailand) and Latin America (Peru, Bolivia and Argentina). Participants at these events were mainly from research institutes, national NGOs and networks, along with a wide spectrum of stakeholders interested in the issue of bridging research and policy – including government officials, international NGOs and bilateral and multilateral donors. In total, approximately 800 members of civil society were in attendance.

The events were organised in partnership with: Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN) (Malawi); Institute of Economic and Social Research (INESOR), University of Zambia, (Zambia); Cruzeiro do Sul (Mozambique); Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF) (Tanzania); FARM Africa (Uganda); Participatory Development Associates (PDA), the Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP) and Ghana Network for Participatory Development (gNETPAD) (Ghana); Development in Nigeria (DIN) (Nigeria); Centre for Poverty Analysis (Sri Lanka); Unnayan Onneshan: Centre for Research and Action on Development (Bangladesh); Yappika: Civil Society Alliance for Democracy (Indonesia); Medicam (Cambodia); ILDIS – Latin American Institute of Social Research (Bolivia); and CIPPEC – Centre for the Implementation of Public policies promoting Equity and Growth (Argentina).

The presented case studies (see Annex for summaries) and the discussions covered a wide range issues highlighting CSO experience in research and policy, including: Budget Monitoring (Malawi); Transparency and Public Participation in National Budgets (Zambia); Poverty Monitoring (Mozambique); Agricultural Extension Services by NGOs (Uganda); NGO Policy and Poverty Reduction Action Plan (Tanzania); Government and Community Collaboration in a Waste Management Programme (Ghana); Participation of CSOs in Environmental Policy of Cross River State (Nigeria); Link between Evidence and Policy in Trade, Energy, Agriculture and Environment (Sri Lanka); Poverty and Unemployment (Bangladesh); Evidence and Policy: Lessons Learnt, Opportunities and Constraints (Cambodia); Experience of Public Participation in Policy making (Indonesia); Role of Institutions in the Reform the Electoral System in Santa Fe (Argentina); and Application of Environmental law resulting from Petroleum Contamination (Bolivia).

The key lessons from the workshops and subsequent discussions were:

- Although civil society (CS) is becoming an increasingly active player in developing and analysing policy processes in Africa and Asia, there is strong diversity among civil society organisations both in the degree to which they try to engage in policy processes and their capacity to do so. It also needs to be understood that (as expressed during the Sri Lanka consultation) for effective and sustained engagement with policy makers; rather than concentrating on research itself it is important to establish and reinforce sustainable institutions in the South to develop trained professionals who are able to contribute to policy making – as was highlighted by the case study from Argentina. A case study presented at the Bolivia workshop by Noel Orozco from PIEB (Bolivian Strategic Research Programme) makes it clear that policy oriented research needs to go hand in hand with capacity building of young researchers to manage research programmes.
- Policy processes in most African and Asian countries are driven by internal politics and the policies and programmes of bilateral and multilateral aid regimes and therefore unfortunately evidence from local research often have limited influence. But there are some success stories. Through continuous engagement with policymakers and advocacy from the donors, CSOs in Malawi and Zambia are now actively involved in national budget monitoring processes. This shows that credible research which is accepted by civil society and donors can be used successfully in advocacy for policy change. Medicam is actively involved in policy making in reproductive health sector in Cambodia and advocacy efforts by a coalition of CSOs resulted in ensuring public participation in policy formation in Indonesia. But it is also equally true that social processes generate demand for investigation and research. In case studies analyzing the Bolivian experience it was shown that many government policies in Bolivia are not based on prior investigations but that the social processes demanded the need to generate evidence and consequently research was undertaken. This occurred with the elaboration of the Quota Law in favour of female representation in the Bolivian Parliament and also in the application of the environmental legislation in relation to oil spills.
- Legitimacy and credibility of civil society is constantly challenged, and their extensive knowledge on development is rarely given due recognition by policymakers. In Bangladesh for example the general feeling is that frequently the government treat CSOs as subcontractors instead of partners in shaping policies and therefore the policymakers are not keen in using research and information provided by the CSOs. The CSOs in Bangladesh also felt that they need to be more transparent and accountable to people not only to donors. The shifting focus of their work linked to donor agendas lessens their credibility. A project testing the Bwalo process in Malawi – a widely used community consultation process – faced enormous opposition by the Food Security National Consultative Forum and is yet to be accepted by the wider development community. On the other hand the Ghana Forestry Commission case study shows that evidence gathered directly through the active involvement of the community can be considered to be credible and legitimate by the policymakers. The case study by ITDG Sri Lanka illustrate that the evidence provided by ITDG was able to fill in a gap in the policy framework on renewable energy and this low level of contestation facilitated its uptake to the policy process.
- Policymakers also frequently doubt the feasibility and practicality of proposals made by CSOs. Not only do CSOs need to be transparent, accountable and have good evidence, they also need to package the evidence so that it is convincing for policymakers. The National Juvenile Forum of Malawi, an outcome of a research project by the Centre for Youth and Children Affairs, was successful in influencing policymakers when packaged in such a way that the benefits were easily recognised by the policymakers. The experience of a poverty monitoring programme in Mozambique shows that indicators for poverty reduction are more acceptable to policymakers when they are developed in collaboration between government and civil society. While it may be termed as ‘elitist’ and ‘exclusionary’, the experience of Institute of Policy Studies in Sri Lanka with Trade Policy issues show that

policy influence were done not necessarily through major publications only but rather through short reports, closed door meetings, participation in committees and informal discussions with the policy makers and relevant bureaucrats. The case study on reforming the electoral process in Santa Fe, Argentina, makes it clear that credibility and acceptability of any proposal is greatly enhanced if it reflects a social demand and is articulated in short and concise documents for the policymakers.

- CSOs, so long used to being in opposition to government, often find it hard to trust government to play a more collaborative role. More effort is needed to overcome this lack of trust on both sides. Collaborations involving CSOs and government working together seem to work well. The Malawi Economic Justice Network, Cruzeiro do Sul in Mozambique, Forest Watch in Ghana, Medicam in Cambodia, Institute of Policy Studies and Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) in Sri Lanka, CIPPEC in Argentina, and ILDIS in Bolivia have all successfully influenced policies through collaboration with government on debt reduction, fair trade, sustainable forest management, Health and HIV/AIDS, Trade Policy, Poverty reduction, electoral reforms and environmental pollution respectively. The case study by FARM Africa in Uganda shows that even a sensitive issue such as commercialisation of agricultural extension services can become acceptable to the farmers if they are allowed to be actively involved in the decision making. The privatisation of a Ghana commercial bank, on the other hand, did not go ahead when the proposal was rejected by the civil society in Ghana. In Cambodia Medicam is working with Royal Government of Cambodia through the technical working groups organized by the government. In Bangladesh, where there has been a long history of collaboration between CSOs and the government, the mistrust is deepened by the allegation of political leanings of certain CSOs. The case of policy for women's empowerment was recently modified without any consultation with the stakeholders. The government of Bangladesh adopted the policy in 1997 with substantial contributions from different women's groups, and therefore the recent shift in position only aggravated the general feeling of suspicion and mistrust between CSO community and the government.
- CSOs need a thorough understanding of the policy processes, who they should seek to influence, and the capacity of government to respond. Although several NGOs have identified gaps in the National Agriculture Advisory Services (NAADS) of Uganda, there is no evidence to show that this has led to a change in policy, while in Ghana the government simply didn't have the skilled staff to be able to adopt the results of the Community Composting project. It was felt that in Sri Lanka discussion on linking research with policy influence takes place among those who already believe that policies should be based on evidence. What is needed, on the other hand, is to develop a strategy to involve policymakers, bureaucrats and the media in this dialogue. It was also felt that in order to involve the wider Civil society community in the discussion in South Asia, South East Asia and Latin America there is a urgent need to conduct discussions in the local language (i.e. Sinhalese, Tamil, Bengali, Bahasa Indonesia, Khmer or Spanish).
- Authentic and up-to-date of information is crucial for policy advocacy, but it is frequently insufficient on its own. Evidence is often conflicting. CSOs need to be able to compare and contrast evidence from different sources and explain the differences as well as the similarities. While the case study by ESRF concludes that development policies in Tanzania are frequently formulated and implemented without the support of requisite research, the Nigerian study shows how evidence on illegal logging in Cross River State, collected by a network of different civil society organisations, was accepted by policymakers. The development experience in Bangladesh demonstrate that unless policy changes originate from domestic discourse with stakeholder participation it is hardly possible to ensure its successful implementation. The role of the media, in this context, in building trust between CSOs and policymakers, was also highlighted by many of the participants, especially in Argentina, Bangladesh, Tanzania, Bolivia, Argentina and Ghana.
- The issue of external influences was also raised. In Bangladesh, in particular the role of financial institutions and the WTO in shaping not only the macro-economic policy of the

country but also the sectoral policies was mentioned. Almost the same feeling was echoed in Cambodia, Malawi and Mozambique where it was mentioned that the donors have huge influence over policies in every sector because of excessive dependence on funding from bilateral and multilateral donor agencies.

Participants at the workshops and seminars expressed demand for more help to improve the capacity of CSOs to influence policy in Africa and Asia. Suggestions included:

- Practical workshops on policy advocacy skills including research methodology, strategy development, policy analysis, advocacy, and communication.
- Other approaches to training including staff exchanges or secondments (Malawi), collaboration on a journal on bridging research and policy (Tanzania), collaborative training with local Think Tanks (the Legal Resource Centre in Ghana, Centre for Poverty Analysis in Sri Lanka, CDRI in Cambodia, SMERU in Indonesia) and looking for opportunities to work with existing projects to avoid replication of efforts (Nigeria, Ghana and Bangladesh).
- While national consultations gave rise to very lively and interesting discussion on linking evidence with policy, the discussions also highlighted many other issues that were not dealt with in depth. The overall feeling of the participants in Sri Lanka and Indonesia was that there needs to be continued dialogue that began with these consultations and a global network or if that is not possible then national forums could be created which can be led by local organizations and supported through the CSPP. This will help to establish a network of organizations where regular debates on evidence-policy issue will take place.
- Support with institutional development including human resources, financial management, partnership, negotiation skills and fundraising. While Tanzanian and Indonesian participants emphasised the need to strengthen the credibility of CSOs in the eyes of policymakers, participants in Uganda, Bangladesh and Nigeria also identified the need to strengthen the capacity of civil society generally to participate in national policy development.
- Efforts to build the capacity of existing networks in the South to share information and analysis. Some specific national and regional networks were mentioned: Southern Africa Forum for Disability and Development (SAFOD); Malawi Economic Justice Network (Malawi); Rural Media Network and Association of African Universities (Ghana); Community Development Resource Network (Uganda); Nature Conservation Foundation (Nigeria), Campaign for Popular Education (Bangladesh), South Asia Policy Network (Sri Lanka) Coalition for Participatory Policy (KKP) and Medicam (Cambodia), amongst others.
- Funds for collaborative projects and programmes in evidence based policy should be a priority of ODI. The Zambian, Ugandan, Mozambique, Bangladesh participants, for example, suggested that funds should be made available over a longer period of time because the opportunities for CSOs to access funds internally is becoming increasingly limited with more and more funds channelled to governments by donors.
- Translation of relevant materials is considered to be crucial for its wider dissemination. The Cambodian, Indonesian, Bolivian, Argentinean and Peruvian CSOs were of the opinion that in order to have a wider circle of CSOs involved in the debate and to have a non-biased strategy of capacity building activities, the materials should be translated in Khmer, Bahasa Indonesian and Spanish and that this cost of translation should be included in the total budget of the programme.
- In the case of Latin America it was felt that a strong research community with the capacity to produce high quality research products already exists. What all the CSOs need, regardless of their success rate, is to systematize what they know. It was felt that it would be of immense benefit if ODI could facilitate the exchange of knowledge and information between Latin American CSOs, as well as between them and organisations in other parts of the world.

## **Annex: Case Study Summaries**

### **Civil Society Participation in the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy**

Taking the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy (MRPS) as an example, the Malawi Economic Justice Network case study discusses key issues of participation in the policy process by CSOs in Malawi. Although PRSPs called for an extensive broad-based participatory process that not only involved the government, but also members of civil society, especially the poor, in the design of policies that will affect their lives, this was not an easy challenge to overcome in Malawi. The participation of CSOs in MRPS was ensured through consistent advocacy by the civil society, while external development partners also put considerable pressure on the government to include them. The Malawian CSOs have been engaged in the budget monitoring process by analysing expenditures in different sectors under PPE (Priority Poverty Expenditure). The contribution of civil society consisted of the submission of sectoral networks to the parliament on PPEs and monitoring citizens' satisfaction with the quality of the public services using the service delivery satisfaction survey (SDSS). The study highlighted several important issues: the diverse agenda of the civil society community makes it difficult to have a common voice on policy issues; the lack of financial resources and skilled staff frequently exacerbates their limited capacity to analyse complex quantitative data; and most important of all, it is difficult to harmonise the grassroots evidence from different areas of the country in order for it to be effectively linked to the policy debate.

### **Evidence and Policy: Budget Transparency and Participation in Zambia**

The Institute of Economic and Social Research (INESOR) case study in Zambia was part of a bigger piece of research in which researchers from 10 African countries came together to undertake a cross country analysis to identify major weaknesses in the budget process, explore how research by civil society can assist in overcoming these weaknesses, and suggest how a platform for the involvement of civil society in the budgetary process and decisions can be developed. The major findings of the study are: i) while the legal framework that guides the budgetary process in Zambia exists, it is particularly weak in the area of procuring and managing domestic and external debt; ii) a substantial number of financial transactions take place outside the established financial system in Zambia, contributing to under-reporting of national economic activity; iii) the total resource envelope of the government is unknown because of weak accounting and information management systems; iv) government officials' lack of skills in budget management has brought the watchdog role of various ministries and institutions under question; and v) pre-budget consultations between civil society, parliament and government are particularly weak. The study findings are expected to be a factor in designing the Parliamentary Reforms programme (PRP) which seeks to improve the role and accountability of the parliament and other national institutions in budget formulation in Zambia.

### **Evidence and Policy: A case study on Land Reform in Mozambique**

Cruzeiro de Sul's case study illustrated how advocacy by civil society led to equitable land distribution in Mozambique. Motivated by the proposal that no rural dweller should be without land, 200 NGOs, churches and academics got together and launched a Mozambican civil society campaign – the Land Campaign. The Land Campaign proclaimed that in all villages in Mozambique all male and female rural dwellers have rights to land through occupation. The Land Campaign also maintained that in order to avoid conflicts over land, partnerships should be established between rural dwellers and businessmen. In 1997 the new Land Law was approved after a big struggle between civil society and the private sector which, to the delight of the civil society, did not call for privatisation of land. At the same time, the following suggestions were integrated into the Law: acknowledgement of the rights of poor people even in the absence of any title in their name; acceptance of land as security for investment; and a single system for land owned by families or private sector, putting an end to dualism. The impact of this relatively more equitable distribution of land has been evident, with the most notable changes in agricultural productivity – which has risen 9% per year, an increase of domestic and international investment, and a dramatic decrease in the number of landless people in Mozambique. It is easy to realise that

the new land law is a mix of modern and customary (traditional) law which has helped to minimise the incidence of conflicts over land. Not surprisingly, the study has also unearthed some interesting findings: access to credible information is still a challenge for civil society, with the majority of public sector employees not willing to share it with the public; there is a communication gap between different levels of government and, more importantly, between government and civil society; and the little information which is available often does not get to the population outside Maputo City due to the lack of means of communication. Finally, communities need to be proactive so that they do not become dependent on the policymakers for change. The study showed that proactive policy engagement helps to institutionalise a culture of collaboration with the government which is dynamic, equitable and participative.

### **Use of Evidence in Informing Policy Process in Tanzania: The case of ESRF**

Economic and Social Research Foundation is a Tanzanian think tank which is assisting the Government of Tanzania in developing various policies for the country. ESRF gathers evidence through its wide portfolio of work such as research, commissioned studies, policy dialogue and capacity building. In this context, it was asserted that studies and research undertaken by ESRF have impacted on policy in Tanzania. Examples include: social and economic impact of HIV/AIDs in Tanzania; Trade and Poverty issues in Tanzania; the Participatory Poverty Assessment; and public expenditure reviews. In order to strengthen its credibility with the policymakers ESRF puts emphasis on extensive consultation with the government institutions, while developing appropriate research methodologies, publishing research papers regularly (i.e. quota expenditure review), organising public seminars, workshops and policy dialogues and capacity building through training for other CSOs in Tanzania. The challenges faced by ESRF, quite appropriately, resonated with the comments made by CSOs elsewhere. These were limited financial resources, low demand from the private sector, retention of quality staff and an overall development environment where the agenda is set by different stakeholders making the policy process complex and varied. The presentation was concluded with remarks that ESRF has contributed substantially in making development research in Tanzania credible, so that in the future policies in Tanzania will have substantial research built into them; policymakers in Tanzania are now more accommodating to civil society involvement and therefore to sustain this involvement there is a urgent need to explore effective ways of financing policy research.

### **National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), Uganda**

National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) of Uganda is part of an Africa-wide network for Agricultural Advisory Services (AAS) which was formed in an effort to foster and enhance experience sharing and lesson-learning on AAS in the Sub-Saharan African region. The rationale behind NAADS is the failure of the traditional extension approach to bring about greater productivity and expansion of agriculture in Uganda, despite costly government interventions. A key feature of this problem is the lack of effective approaches to empower farmers, hence the emphasis in NAADS' approach is to empower farmers to demand and control agricultural advisory services. Coupled with this, is the need to have efficient and sustainable service delivery. While NAADS provides the biggest source of financing for advisory services, through a budget support arrangement involving government and development partners, there is no clear effort by the government to enhance the capacity of CSOs in agricultural advisory services and policy research. While there are several networks in the country lobbying and advocating with NAADS, i.e. Coalition for Effective Extensions Delivery (CEED) and Gender Alliance on NAADS (GAN), there is no evidence to suggest that this has had any impact on policy. Therefore, although the trend towards private service delivery is positive in Uganda, there are still important gaps that need to be tackled. The main reasons for inadequate performance of service providers revolve around issues of technical competency, use of participatory and practical extension approaches, and application of knowledge and skills acquired. Not surprisingly, therefore, progress on development of private sector oriented service provider networks is quite slow. This has left service provider firms working in an isolated way, and not having a common voice to negotiate with local governments, as well as ensuring farmers obtain value for money.

### **Community Composting Project in Ghana**

The case study from Ghana detailed a composting project which was facilitated by a CSO called Legal Resource Centre (LRC), with two communities in Accra, namely Nima and Mamobi. The project had the twin objectives of providing employable skills to the unemployed youths in the community and managing the composting activities through active collaboration between the people and the authorities. Analyses of the policy environment revealed that although the necessary laws and regulations exist on making sanitation accessible to all Ghanaians, it was the lack of implementation which hindered their effectiveness. Composting was not considered to be an acceptable way of using the waste generated and therefore in rural Ghana this was hardly practiced. The study drew attention to various factors which influenced the decision of government on whether composting should be encouraged through supportive policies including: advocacy and lobbying by LRC for efficient and affordable sanitation services; cooperation of the community in generating evidence regarding their needs for sanitation services; and collaboration between various government ministries and institutions. The approach of gathering evidence over a long period of time increased the authenticity of the data, while the resultant qualitative and quantitative analysis also made it more credible. The experience also showed that documentation of data is crucial in making sure there is a better chance of a successful impact of research on policy.

### **The Role of Civil Society in Influencing Policy in Cross River State, Nigeria**

This case study by Development in Nigeria (DIN) illustrated how CSOs working on environmental issues have used research and advocacy to influence policy at both the state and community level in Cross River State. The issues in which the CSOs have been working include illegal logging, conflicts resulting from shifting cultivation involving Fulani pastoralists and local people, and concessions to private companies to construct roads and other infrastructures in the rainforest. Various networks, NGOs (CRS Forum for Development, Forest Monitoring Network, RRDC, One Sky, SPACE and Pastoral Resolve) and programmes (DFID funded Community forestry project, and programme and projects funded by IUCN and CIDA) also lent their support in making environmental policies in the state more pro-poor. Consequently through campaigns and environmental education programmes, the level of awareness about the impact of high risk programmes has increased significantly, community royalties for logging have risen, a logging concession to a private company by the state government was cancelled – all of which have led to increased trust between communities and local CSOs. The successes are due to working through networks, coalitions and through using advocacy and lobbying to instigate policy change. Attention can be drawn to several lessons from this exercise: research has much greater impact when it is topically relevant; members of networks working together are more effective than if they work separately; and, most importantly, communication between policymakers, CSOs and communities should be participatory, open and continuous. All of these activities together have advanced a more conducive environmental policy under the present government of Cross River state.

### **Public Participation in Policy Formulation in Indonesia**

The case study by Yappika (Civil Society Alliance for Democracy) describes the experiences of Coalition of Participatory Policy (KKP-Koalisi Kebijakan Partisipative) in using evidence for advocating participatory policy development. Advocacy efforts by KKP on the draft legislation on Procedures for law formulation (RUU-Tentang Tata Cara Pembentukan Peraturan Perundang-Undangan) culminated into the first united effort in establishing a foundation for public participation in policy formulation in Indonesia. Despite the plethora of recent institutions working for democratization of policy process in Indonesia, the shadow of authoritarian way of governance is still strongly entrenched. As a consequence, its dominant characteristics and main actors strongly reflect and sustain a process that distances people from the process of policy formulation. In order to change this situation through its continuous and advocacy work KKP has been able to achieve the following: increased public support and awareness regarding policy development and support from the members of the parliament, particularly from the five largest factions in the House of Representatives for adopting its recommendation on people's right to participate in policy formulation process. KKP has realised that while the methods and techniques used to make policy more evidence based can be varied and innovative, the impact of evidence, however, largely

depends on its robustness vis a vis the dominant discourses, the nature and objectives of the political parties and the openness of the legislative procedures.

### **Evidence and Policy in Cambodia: Lessons Learnt, Opportunities and Constraints**

This case study from Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) draws cross cutting issues around evidence and policy drawn from a development project currently being implemented in the Tonal sap region in Cambodia. The main issues presented are: 1) it is important to develop a reputation among the stakeholders through research activities that is considered to be credible by the clients; 2) Good research creates better informed researchers; 3) the trend in Cambodia is to produce qualitative rather than quantitative analyses by the CSO community, which is often considered to be 'soft' by the policy makers; 4) Policy advocacy and analysis is about providing opportunities for public debate with and among different stakeholders and people have different ideas about objectives that can compete with and complement each other and this discussion enriches the process and assist in exploring the best option; 5) Donors have a disproportionate amount of influence over policy process in Cambodia and therefore research needs to be aware of donor considerations; 6) While lots of work goes into policy development and ensuring that policy process is participative, the implementation of these policies clearly takes a backseat to political considerations in Cambodia.

### **Medicam Cambodia: Research, Advocacy and Policy Influence**

The Medicam Case study provides a brief overview of the work the organization has done regarding evidence and policy over the last few years. Established in 1998 Medicam is a network of organizations working on health issues in Cambodia. Medicam's activities include information sharing, advocacy, capacity building and representing the voice and concerns of CSOs working in the health sector in Cambodia. Medicam uses various forums to present its opinion; apart from the national assembly and government ministries Medicam is also a member of various technical groups (TG) which are linked to the Consultative Group (CG) where the donor community, CSO representatives, the private sector and policymakers meet annually to make decisions regarding the development agenda of Cambodia. To further consolidate its input Medicam has also formed its own NGO working groups: the NGO Reproductive Health partnership Working Group (NGO-RHPWG) and the NGO Child Survival Working group (NGO-CSEG). This study also shows how the development process in Cambodia is very much influenced by the donors. The challenges identified by Medicam regarding the general policy development in Cambodia are: the questions around the quality of research-based information produced by the CSOs, weak networking among the CSOs in Cambodia, lack of harmonization of research and advocacy efforts by the CSOs, and the general environment of mistrust, and 'finger pointing' between CSO community and the government. The significant lessons learned by Medicam through its policy advocacy work include: the realization that empirical evidence is the best way to influence policy makers in Cambodia, the inputs by CSOs need to be well documented, CSOs should engage with the government by providing constructive criticism rather than being confrontational and last but not least informal agreement with the government and the donors before the official event assists in reaching the required change in policy.

### **Trade Policy in Sri Lanka**

The case study from the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) in Sri Lanka will focus on the area of linkages between research and policy influence in the area of trade policy formulation. Trade policy is formulated at 3 levels, namely: national level; bilateral/regional level; and at the multilateral level under the World Trade Organization (WTO). The study focuses primarily on research related to the bilateral/regional level agreements on trade policy, drawing where necessary examples of broader research impacts in areas of policy as well. The IPS began to actively concentrate on the implications of trade agreements on Sri Lanka's economy from its inception in 1995. IPS has only produced one off reports, but has undertaken a continuous assessment of the various agreements as they were negotiated. The key issues examined were to assess whether such agreements are likely to result in a net welfare gain or loss to the Sri Lankan economy and making policy recommendations to adopt a more coherent framework in formulating future agreements; in terms

of countries selected, scope of liberalization, etc. Dissemination of the research output has included published reports and articles, presentation of papers at conferences, etc. both locally and internationally. Recent examples of IPS representation include that of the Macro and Trade Policy Framework Steering Committee and the Task Force on Trade set up to drive the policy programme of the government; involvement in the Trade and Tariff Cluster under the National Council for Economic Development (NCED) etc. In policy terms, it is difficult to attribute whether a particular research output has led to any policy *change* per se. Nevertheless, this system of consistent engagement has opened a certain degree of space for the IPS to influence the policymaking process on trade issues in Sri Lanka.

### **Evidence-Policy Link in the Alternative Energy Development Policies in Sri Lanka**

This Case study from the Intermediate Technology Development Group, Sri Lanka describes how small scale energy projects implemented in several villages and lessons learned from these endeavours helped to promote the use of micro hydro schemes as a low cost alternative source of energy in Sri Lanka. While demonstrating viability of micro hydro option for electricity generation in Sri Lanka a few interesting aspects were identified: the functioning of electricity consumers' society is an effective model for ensuring community participation and ownership of the programme. Political affiliations are a major factor in extending the grid and therefore the projects staff need to be aware of this factor. A significant consideration for providing energy to remote communities is the cost of grid extension. The state and politicians see access to energy as a good source of political gain. On the issue of policy implication of any small scale project, the leaders and the officials were impressed by the success stories from the field level. Through consistent and sustained advocacy by the communities and the dissemination of information on benefits to the local population, the Sri Lankan government, particularly the various provincial councils have started to allocate funds for micro hydro power generation in their provinces. Over the last 4 years, the allocation for decentralised alternate sources of energy which includes micro hydro has increased to about 25% of the amount allocated for overall power sector. For the period between 2006-2010, the provincial councils have budgeted significant amounts of money to develop alternative energy sources including micro hydro.

### **Evidence-Policy link in Agriculture Policy in Sri Lanka**

The case study from Department of Export Agriculture (DEA) of the Government of Sri Lanka examines how findings of a technology adoption research programmes have successfully influenced agricultural extension policy of Sri Lanka. Extension is one of the important government interventions in the promotion of the export agriculture crops (EAC) in Sri Lanka, which comprises spices and coffee, cocoa and essential oils. A new research undertaken in the DEA as a response to various formal and informal discussions with the growers at different areas showed that there were low rate of technology transfer and willingness to adopt newer technologies in the EAC sector. The survey findings resulted in the change in strategy of extension which included: collectivizing farmers to form village clusters, organizing them into CBOs, and linking every cluster with an extension officer. The assertion was that this strategy is cost effective, has a higher extension reach with better demonstrative effect. The Sri Lankan Ministry of agriculture has accepted the concept of cluster village approach as a basis for its future extension work commencing from 2005. There will be separate budget allocation to facilitate clustering, CBO formation, and associated training for both the farmers and extension officers.

### **Influencing Policies in Sri Lanka: the Experience of Environment Foundation Limited (EFL)**

This case study presents the experience of Environment Foundation Limited (EFL), a CSO comprising mainly of lawyers working on environmental policy issues in Sri Lanka. EFL uses three types of methods to influence policy through their work and activities. These are representation, participation and most important of them all, litigation. The first two methods are considered to be 'low intensity' mechanisms of influence where evidence is presented to the policy makers and discussed. Representations are made by volunteer groups when it is known that a policy is being drafted or under discussion. While interventions / representations may not be solicited by the policy makers, participation is where the voluntary groups are requested to contribute to policy making

committees or working groups. The final method – litigation – is what is termed as a ‘high intensity’ method. In this case policy change is demanded by seeking action through the judiciary process. While litigation is seen as the tool of last resort, it is always included in the larger package of tools used to influence policy. Since a policy cannot be taken to courts prior to its draft being prepared, and indeed, if there is no policy, litigation can create a situation where the court issues an order which influences a future policy. The specific case of how the above model was used can be seen in the case where evidence was being brought to bear on the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) negotiations and its implication for Sri Lanka. The study particularly explains section 27 of the TRIPs Agreement regarding patenting of indigenous plants and micro organisms.

### **Evidence and Policy in Bangladesh: Lessons Learnt, Opportunities and Constraints**

This study by the Unnayan Onneshan analyses the evidence behind the increasing price of rice in Bangladesh and provides insights into the rice trading system. The case study shows that middlemen plays a key role in deciding the price of rice in the country and that the high cost of inputs, fertiliser, irrigation compounded by the poor access of farmers to formal credit system are the main reasons behind the high price of rice. In this regard the study asserts that the government could take appropriate measures to maintain the stability of the market price of essentials by declaring a fixed rate for procurement of rice. In order to bring changes in the policy based on the evidence of price hikes and farmers’ share of the price, Unnayan Onneshan is advocating for a comprehensive rice pricing agreement between farmers and the government which will offer farmers opportunity to sell their harvest to licensed mills at a fixed price. The study also draws attention to the issue of subsidy to agricultural produce in Bangladesh, which is less than two percent of the total output in agriculture, although the permissible amount is 10 percent under WTO rules. This is creating a difference between importing (Bangladesh) and exporting countries’ (i.e. USA, Australia) terms of trade, with exporting countries enjoying a bigger advantage. Based on this evidence, it proposes an alternative policy option to fund the Net Food Importing LDCs which will allow them to provide financial support to the farmers, at least to the level under permitted by the WTO. Unnayan Onneshan is advocating for the establishment of a compensatory fund for food importing least developed countries.

### **Lost in the Queue: Poverty and Employment in Bangladesh**

This study also from Unnayan Onneshan asserts that while there had been a modest decline in poverty in Bangladesh, there had also been incremental increase in inequality. The study shows that while the poverty reduction rate has been one percentage point a year since the early 1990s, the overall Gini index of inequality increased from 0.259 to 0.306 during the same period. The rate of unemployment and under-employment has therefore increased due to insufficient job creation in both the formal and the informal sectors. The case study shows that existing government policies are not adequate to address the issue of unemployment in Bangladesh, and some alternative directions are therefore needed which should include the provision of employment guarantee act. Unnayan Onneshan is engaged in influencing for policy uptake in favour of an employment guarantee act in Bangladesh for establishing workers’ rights and ensuring their economic security through: (a) constituency building with trade union movements; (b) providing input to specialised agencies in the form of advise and research (c) networking with the international organisations for changes in the meta narratives; and (d) working with the media through dissemination of information and monthly meetings.

### **Role of Research in Reforming the Electoral System in Santa Fe, Argentina**

This case study from CIPPEC – Center for the Implementation of Public Policies Promoting Equity and Growth (Argentina), explains the leading role played by CSOs and other institutions in the reform of an electoral system in the province of Santa Fe, called ‘ley de lemas’. It details the process that led to the abolition of an electoral system which was not supported by the majority of the Argentinean people 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 participatory diagnosis, the promotion of public debate, and specific advocacy strategies such as achieving the signature of commitment letters by main

candidates for governorship. While upcoming elections worked as a window of opportunity for the process of influence, the relevance of the proposals was increased by academic support for the research, as well as the institutional presence of CSOs at legislative committees. Participation of various stakeholders and media exposure throughout the project were key to maintaining interest in the debate. The credibility of the recommendations was enhanced because the proposals reflected a social demand and were articulated in short and concise documents. It was agreed that the reform could only be made by the Legislature and therefore politicians were included in the process from the beginning.

### **Environmental Law in Bolivia**

This case study presented and discussed during the group work at the Bolivian consultation emphasises the application of environmental law and explains how social mobilisation can be based on evidence to strengthen its impact on policy. This specific case was an oil spill that contaminated 190km caused by a rupture in the Sica Sica–Arica oil pipeline, controlled and managed by the Transredes – an international company. The oil pipeline was fractured due to flooding at Rio Desaguadero but Transredes, the company responsible, did not promptly manage the rupture. The CSOs from Oruro, with the support of some NGOs, generated international support for subsequent research to analyse the impact of oil spill. These CSOs wanted the implementation of the Environmental Law – a law that had never been applied, and a strong communication campaign was launched to publicise the spill and its impact. The mobilisation of civil society, united in relation to the complaints, was a central element in this case. Eventually, the Bolivian Ministry of Sustainable Development authorised environmental audits and Transredes was found responsible and was forced to pay the indemnities.