

The ODI Research and Policy in Development Programme

Better utilization of research and evidence in development policy and practice can help save lives, reduce poverty and improve the quality of life. For example, the results of household disease surveys in rural Tanzania informed a process of health service reforms which contributed to over 40% reductions in infant mortality between 2000 and 2003 in two districts. On the other hand the HIV/AIDS crisis has deepened in some countries because of the reluctance of governments to implement effective control programmes, despite clear evidence of what causes the disease and how to prevent it spreading. Donors spend around US\$3 billion on development research annually, but there has been very limited systematic understanding of when, how and why evidence informs policy. A better understanding of how research can contribute to pro-poor policies is urgently needed. In particular we need to know more about:

- how **policy-makers can best use research**, for evidence-based policy-making;
- how **researchers can best use their findings** in order to influence policy;
- how to improve the **interaction between researchers and policy-makers**.

ODI's Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) programme is working on these issues and aims to improve the use of research and evidence in development policy and practice through research, advice and debate. The programme works on four main themes:

- The role of **evidence in policy processes**;
- Improved **communication and information systems** for policy and practice;
- Better **knowledge management and learning** for development agencies;
- Approaches to **institutional development** for evidence-based policy.

RAPID team members have extensive development experience in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe; working at community, national and international level, with national and international NGOs, Northern and Southern Governments and Intergovernmental Agencies. The team has practical experience in rural development, rural services and governance, as well as research-policy linkages. Located within ODI, the RAPID Programme can access expertise across the whole spectrum of development issues. RAPID staff can help with:

- **Research** – on policy, the role of research, knowledge management and communications;
- **Advice** – on maximising policy impact;
- **Programme design** – for research, action-research and operations for policy impact;
- **Training** – in policy processes, research communications and organisational development;
- **Communications** – internal and external using traditional, electronic and mass media;
- **Knowledge Management** – within projects, programmes and organisations;
- **Evaluations** – of practical and research projects, and policy processes within organisations;
- **Promotion** – through public policy debate with policy-makers and civil society.

RAPID's donors and clients include: the UK Department for International Development; the Global Development Network; the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation; the Food and Agriculture Agency of the UN; the World Bank; Intermediate Technology Development Group; the Open Society Institute; the Daiwa Foundation; the Merck Foundation; and the Knowledge Transfer Partnership.

For more information contact:

John Young (j.young@odi.org.uk) or Julius Court (j.court@odi.org.uk), at the Overseas Development Institute, 111 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JD, UK, Tel: +44 (0)20 7922 0300, or visit www.odi.org.uk/rapid.



Recent and future work in each of the main themes

1. The use of **evidence in policy processes**: Recent work includes:
 - Support and synthesis of lessons from the US\$3 million GDN Bridging Research and Policy Project (see www.gdnet.org/rapnet or ODI WP 213).
 - Detailed case-study research on four recent development policy changes (see ODI WPs 214–217 or www.odi.org.uk/rapid/projects/R0040a/Summary.html).
 - The development of a new framework for understanding research-policy links (see ODI WP 173 or www.odi.org.uk/rapid/lessons/framework.html).
 - A project to improve understanding about the key determinants of policy change regarding HIV/AIDS (see www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Projects/R0166/index.html).
 - Studies on how Civil Society Organisations use research-based evidence, and the role of networks in policy processes (see www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Projects/PPA_index.html).
 2. How improved **communication and information** can help development researchers, practitioners and advocates communicate more effectively. Recent work includes:
 - A literature review and advice on communications for DFID's research strategy (ODI WP 227 or www.odi.org.uk/rapid/Bibliographies/Communications/Comms_review_intro.html).
 - A study of information and communications for rural livelihoods for FAO, the World Bank and DFID (see <http://www.fao.org/waicent/portal/outreach/livelihoods/en/index-en.html>).
 - Development of a communication strategy for the DFID Multi-Stakeholder Forestry Project (see <http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/projects/R0102/index.html>).
 - Developing a web site and managing e-conferences for the Forum for Food Security in Southern Africa (see <http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Projects/R0134/index.html>).
 - A survey of information needs of Civil Society Organisations involved in promoting pro-poor policy in developing countries (see www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Projects/PPA_index.html).
 3. How improved **knowledge management and learning** can enhance the impact of Northern and Southern development agencies. Recent work includes:
 - A literature review on Knowledge Management for development organisations (see WP 224 or www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Bibliographies/KM/Background_Review/KM_Review_00.html).
 - A review of Knowledge Management systems in other development research organisations and development agencies.
 - The development and implementation of a Knowledge Management Strategy within ODI.
 - The development of a set of KM tools specifically designed for development organisations.
 - Advisory work for other development research organisations.
 4. **Institutional Development** for evidence-based policy among researchers, practitioners, advocates and policy-makers. Work in this theme includes:
 - Workshops and seminars with researchers, practitioners and policy-makers in the UK, Morocco, India, Hungary and Kenya (see www.odi.org.uk/rapid/meetings).
 - Evaluating the impact of policy guidance documents and recommendations for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and partner agencies (see www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Projects/P0166/index.html).
 - Mapping the Policy Process in Eastern Europe through mentoring the LGI Policy Fellowship Programme (see www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Projects/R0158).
 - A partnership programme to collaborate with, learn from and build capacity among southern policy research institutes (see www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Projects/PPA_index.html).
 - A literature review on Strengthening Southern Research Capacity (see <http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/projects/R0008/Index.html>).
-