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Linking evidence with user voice for pro-poor policy: lessons from East Africa
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Linking evidence with user voice for pro-poor policy: lessons from East Africa

Nicholas A. Hooton

Many agricultural research and development projects seek to achieve pro-poor outcomes through policy change. However, policy processes are complex, and a strategic approach to enhancing impact at policy level is often not applied. This article describes two case studies of actual policy change – on dairy marketing in Kenya, and on urban agriculture in Kampala – with analysis of the policy-change processes. It draws lessons which could be applied to enhance policy-level outcomes from other projects, and highlights two key matters: the role of 'user voice', through links with civil society and user groups; and the value of strong links with 'formal' policy-process actors.

Relier les données et la voix des utilisateurs pour les politiques pro-pauvres : enseignements d'Afrique de l'Est
De nombreux projets de recherche et de développement cherchent à obtenir des résultats pro-pauvres en modifiant les politiques générales. Cependant, les processus de politique générale sont complexes et une approche stratégique de l'amélioration de l'impact au niveau des politiques n'est souvent pas appliquée. Cet article décrit deux études de cas de changements réels des politiques générales – sur la commercialisation des produits laitiers au Kenya et sur l'agriculture urbaine à Kampala – avec des analyses des processus de changement des politiques générales. Il fait ressortir des enseignements qui pourraient être appliqués pour améliorer les résultats au niveau des politiques générales émanant d'autres projets et met deux aspects clés en relief : le rôle de la « voix des utilisateurs », en établissant des liens avec la société civile et les groupes d'utilisateurs, et la valeur de liens solides avec des acteurs « formels » du processus des politiques générales.

Conectando evidência com a voz do usuário para política em favor dos pobres: lições do leste da África
Muitos projetos de pesquisa e desenvolvimento agrícola buscam alcançar resultados favoráveis aos pobres por meio de mudança de política. Porém, os processos de políticas são complexos, e uma abordagem estratégica para aumentar o impacto no âmbito de política frequentemente não se aplica. Este artigo descreve dois estudos de caso de mudança de política real – sobre comercialização de laticínios no Quênia e sobre agricultura urbana em Kampala – com análise dos processos de mudança de políticas. Ele extrai lições que poderiam ser aplicadas para intensificar os resultados no âmbito de políticas de outros projetos, e destaca duas áreas-chave: o papel da 'voz do usuário', através de ligações com a sociedade civil e grupos de usuário e o valor de vínculos fortes com agentes de processo de políticas formais.

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Nicholas A. Hooton

Vinculando la realidad con la opinión de los beneficiarios en las políticas contra la pobreza: lecciones de África Oriental

Los proyectos de investigación de desarrollo agrícola a menudo intentan luchar contra la pobreza incidiendo en políticas públicas. Sin embargo, los procesos políticos son complejos y, aún así, no es común que se aplique una visión estratégica para incidir en ellos. Este ensayo examina dos estudios de caso que lograron este tipo de cambios – en el comercio de lácteos en Kenya y en agricultura urbana en Kampala – y analiza los procesos que condujeron a ellos. Las conclusiones del ensayo pueden utilizarse como insumos para que otros proyectos los apliquen en incidencia política. Señala dos puntos clave: incorporar la 'voz de los beneficiarios' vinculando a la sociedad civil con los grupos de beneficiarios, y consolidar vínculos con los actores 'formales' del proceso político.

Introduction

Agricultural research and development projects are increasingly seeking to achieve pro-poor outcomes through policy-level changes. It is recognised not only that higher-level policy and institutional changes have the potential to lift many out of poverty, but also that many promising technological innovations have failed to achieve pro-poor impact because of previously unconsidered constraints in the policy and institutional environment. Thus, consideration of policy and institutional routes for achieving outcomes is important for bio-technical research projects, as well as for higher-level sector policy and economic research projects.

However, policy processes are usually complex, and the role of research evidence in such processes is poorly understood. And while many research projects produce communication materials such as 'policy briefs' and hold 'policy forums', these are often merely activities at the end of the project. It is less often that any effort is made at the design and early stages of a project to identify the strategies and approaches that may increase the likelihood of achieving policy or institutional change in that particular context. The result is often a disappointing lack of policy-change outcomes, from what may be highly policy-relevant findings.

Improving the impact of research evidence in pro-poor policy processes

A collaborative project between the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) sought to understand and draw lessons from examples of evidence-based policy change. The Process and Partnership for Pro-Poor Policy Change (PPPPPC) project was established in response to the need to improve understanding of the processes and mechanisms that lead to pro-poor decisions at policy level. Its aim was to provide recommendations to improve the policy impact of the work of ILRI, its partners, and the wider research and development community. The project involved activities to document and analyse the environment, information, communication, partnerships, processes, and other factors that influenced the decisions of policymakers through a small number of case studies in East Africa, and to identify the key elements leading to success and failure of specific research projects in influencing policy. The focus was on the role of research evidence in the process; but to best understand this role, a holistic approach to understanding the policy process was used, with no assumption that such evidence necessarily played any role at all.

A broad definition of 'policy' was used – 'a purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors' – in order to include the hugely important area of interpretation and implementation of policy, rather than just written policy.

Understanding the role of evidence in policy processes

Evaluating the impact of research on policy and practice is difficult. An enormous range of different factors – waxing and waning and in different combinations over time – influences most policy processes. Attributing causality to specific factors is problematic, as different approaches tend to emphasise different sets of factors. Numerous approaches have attempted to understand and explain policy processes, and in particular the role of evidence. These range from 'linear' to more complex models, attempting to capture the more irrational elements in what was previously considered to be a rational self-interest-based process. A comprehensive review of these models and approaches can be found in de Vibe *et al.* (2002) and Crewe and Young (2002).

The involvement of ODI meant that the project could draw on the experience of its Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) programme, which has been working to improve the use of research and evidence in development policy and practice for a number of years (ODI 2004). From this work, RAPID developed an analytical framework to aid understanding of the role that evidence-based research plays, among other issues, in influencing policy. The Context–Evidence–Links (CEL) framework (outlined in Figure 1) emphasises three overlapping domains:

● *Political context:* people, institutions, and processes involved in policy making. For example, political and economic structures and processes, culture, institutional pressures, rate of change.
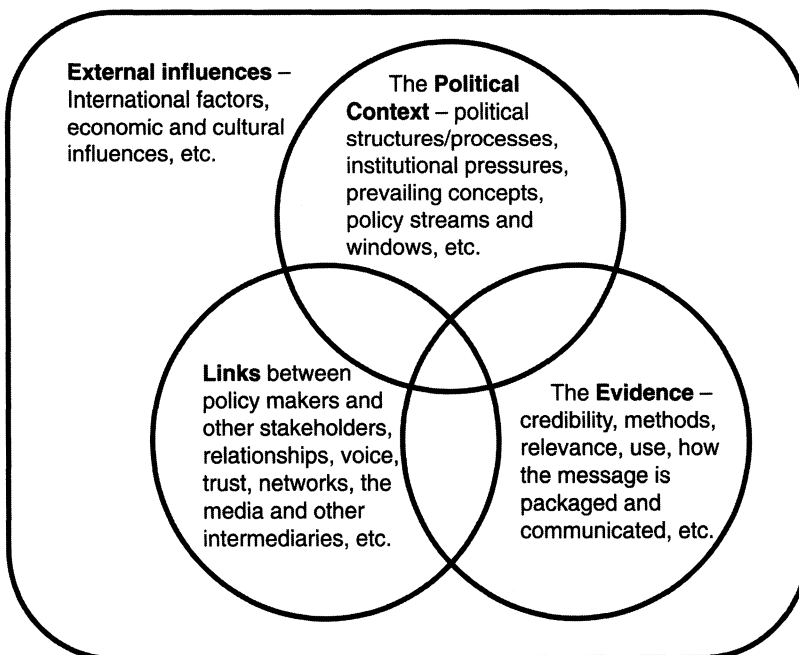
Figure 1: The RAPID 'Context–Evidence–Links' Framework

- *Evidence:* type and quality of evidence, including research – its credibility, whether it is contested, methodology, and how it is packaged and communicated.
- *Links:* mechanisms affecting whether and how evidence gets into the policy process – the links between policy, research, and other actors – networks, relationships and trust, power.

As these processes do not take place in a vacuum, *external influences* are also considered – that is, factors outside the 'unit' of study (for example, a sector or country) that affect policy processes – for example, socio-economic or cultural influences, donor policies.

The RAPID Outcome Assessment

The case-study methodology developed for the PPPPPC project combined elements from three well-established methodologies.

- *Episode studies* of specific policy changes track back from specific policy changes to identify key actors and decisions leading to these changes, and assess the relative importance of different factors, which may or may not have included research-based evidence. This approach had been used by ODI in a series of policy-process case studies (see www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Publications). While often producing a rich picture of the range of factors that influenced a process, it can tend to overemphasise political factors and may often underemphasise the role of research.
- Classic *case-study analyses* of specific research projects track forwards from specific research, development, and related activities implemented by specific projects or organisations, in order to assess their impact. This approach has been used extensively by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) (see Smith 1998). This approach can give a comprehensive description of the activities and linkages of a project, and canvasses opinions concerning the role played by the project, and the evidence. However, if not done very objectively, and ideally by somebody not related to the project or organisation, it risks overemphasising the importance of the research and may fail to pick up on other key issues in the wider environment and change process.
- Mapping changes in the behaviour of key actors is another established approach for understanding change processes. It has been developed in the International Development Research Centre's (IDRC) Outcome Mapping approach (see Earl *et al.* 2001). Developed as a prospective planning tool (identifying desired changes in behaviour of key actors that would lead to desired outcomes), elements of the approach can be applied retrospectively to analyse key behaviour change that did occur in a process, and what happened to bring about that behaviour change.

For the project, ODI and ILRI combined elements of these three methodologies to develop an approach called RAPID Outcome Assessment (ROA) for the first of the case studies, focusing on changes in policy in Kenya's smallholder dairy sector (Leksmono *et al.* 2006). Following the experiences of this initial application of ROA, the approach was adapted slightly for the second case study – the development of new City Ordinances on urban agriculture in Kampala – strengthening in particular the episode-study component and using a workshop to enhance and verify the episode-study and case-study components (Hooton *et al.* 2007).

The ROA approach triangulates information collected, using the combination of approaches, to obtain a more balanced assessment of the relative contribution of a project or programme's activities to changes in policy.

Whereas the episode-study component can be essential for understanding the process leading to changes in the written policy law, the simultaneous application of behaviour-change and

case-study elements could capture the wider issues of attitudes and behaviour (very important in terms of policy *implementation*), together with events more distant from the formal process of the development of new policies.

Box 1 outlines what is actually done in applying ROA. A full description of the approach, and the way in which it leads to a visual representation of the policy process and influences, can be found in ILRI and ODI (2007). The specific applications of ROA in the reported case studies are described in the full case-study reports.

Box 1: The RAPID Outcome Assessment (ROA): what is actually done?

1. Background assessment
Gathering information on targeted policy change, actors, and events, based on literature review and key-actor interviews, guided by the 'Context–Evidence–Links' (CEL) framework. This includes 'case study' or project-based information and 'episode study' or policy-change-focused information, based on input from a range of interviewed actors and literature sources.

2. Workshops with key policy actors
To map behavioural changes in key actors related to the policy change and build a map of influences.
   The stages are as follows.
   (i)   Defining policy environment at start and end of project or period.
   (ii)   Identifying key actors – including 'boundary partners' of project, if appropriate.
   (iii) Characterising actors' behaviour (1) now and (2) at given start point in the policy process.
   (iv)   Mapping key behaviour changes along the timeline.
   (v)   Mapping (1) key project activities and changes, and (2) external influences along the same timeline.
   (vi)   Determining influence on actor behaviour change caused by identified events or changes, including project activities, external influences, and other actors' behaviour change.

3. Triangulate and refine conclusions
   (i)   Key-informant interviews and further literature review.
   (ii)   Analyse findings using the 'CEL' framework.
   (iii) Report writing.

Case-study findings: lessons from two successful policy-change outcomes

Two case studies are briefly discussed in this article: one on new urban agriculture policy in Kampala, and the other on changes in dairy-marketing policy in Kenya. These case studies highlight the important roles played by different partners in achieving policy change, both being examples of successful collaborations between researchers, civil society organisations (CSOs), and government. Some key elements of the policy processes and case-study findings are described for each case, followed by a discussion of the way in which the evidence was

used by key stakeholders in the change processes. While the case studies identified many factors leading to this successful influence, two key areas are highlighted in this article: the role of 'user voice', and the value of strong links with 'formal' policy-process actors.

For a full description and analysis of these policy-change processes, as well as a broader range of lessons and conclusions, the reader is referred to the full case-study reports and associated literature in the references.

Case study 1: new City Ordinances on urban agriculture in Kampala[1]

Background – urban agriculture in Kampala. Urban agriculture has always been part of Kampala's economy, playing a key food-security role in the turbulent past few decades. By the mid-2000s, almost half of Kampala's land was used for agriculture, involving some 30 per cent of households. Growing crops and keeping livestock are important as sources of food and income for the poor (especially women), for employment, for using otherwise unproductive land, and for recycling of waste, among other benefits. However, in Kampala, as elsewhere, there have long been concerns about perceived public-health risks, nuisance, traffic, and crime risks from urban agriculture, and planners have not considered agriculture to be consistent with an urban environment.

Against this background, the policy environment affecting urban agriculture in Kampala had for many years been very unsupportive. The practice was simply not recognised in written policy. Laws, mostly dating from colonial times, were interpreted as prohibiting urban agriculture, even though there was little or no actual mention of the practice. Overall there was a state of confusion: agriculture was seen as a marginal activity, with crops being repeatedly slashed and livestock confiscated by officials.

The policy change – new City Ordinances on urban agriculture. In May 2005, the Mayor of Kampala gave his final assent to a set of five Ordinances, acknowledging the legal right of residents to grow food and raise livestock within the city limits for individual or commercial purposes. This was a significant achievement, as urban agriculture is at best only tacitly accepted across sub-Saharan Africa and is often banned. This case study analysed the process that led to the new Ordinances in Kampala, and the associated changes in attitude and behaviour of key actors.

Case-study findings

Key events and influences on policy change. Urban farmers themselves have been key drivers of the policy-change process, in continuing to farm despite the negative environment. However, despite the importance of urban agriculture, detailed information about its practice and role was lacking before seminal research carried out by Daniel Maxwell in the early 1990s. Throughout the 1990s, agricultural-extension officers continued to support activities of urban farmers, despite the negative attitudes towards them, and a general lack of support from Kampala City Council (KCC). In doing this, they started linking with CSOs working in the city, supporting urban agriculture as part of their food-security activities.

Decentralisation in 1993 brought the elected politicians closer to their voters, including the large numbers of urban farmers, of whose needs they became more aware. And in 1997, the Local Government Act gave local authorities, including KCC, law-making powers, making them responsible for formulating and implementing legislation in line with overarching national legislation. A review of outdated Ordinances in 1999 led to the drafting of new ordinances,
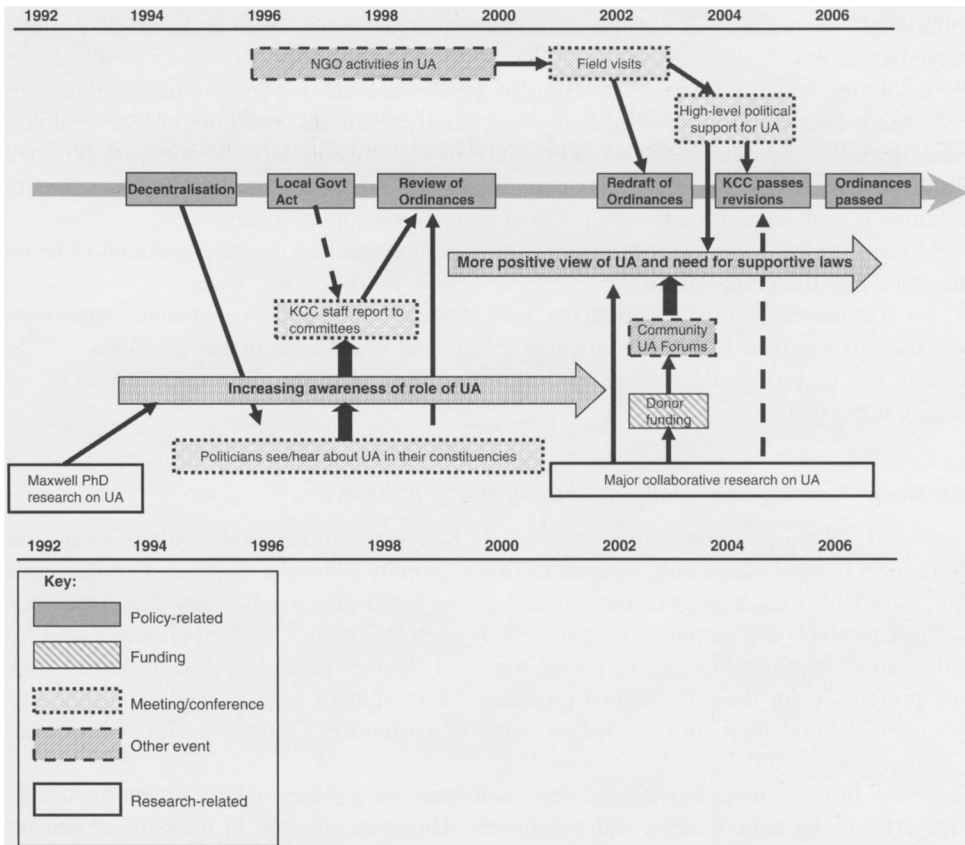
Figure 2: Simplified representation of the Kampala urban-agriculture policy process, 1990–2006
Note: UA = urban agriculture.

which included some mention of urban agriculture. However, this process stagnated, and the draft ordinances made no further progress.

Meanwhile, international research into urban agriculture progressed steadily in the 1990s, and these international initiatives linked increasingly with the key actors in Kampala, leading eventually to the formation of a formal coalition of local government, CSOs, and national and international research actors – the Kampala Food Security Agriculture and Livestock Coordination Committee (KUFSALCC) – which continued the research and development activities that had developed informally during the 1990s. KUFSALCC's activities culminated in a widespread community-consultation process, linking this community input with the research evidence on the role of urban agriculture and risk management. With KCC as a key player in this process, this led to a complete redrafting of the 1999 draft ordinances, based on the wide-ranging research evidence. Further financial and technical support – channelled through KUFSALCC – facilitated the formal process of harmonising and passing these Ordinances. Figure 2 represents the overall policy-change process leading to the new ordinances.

Key lessons from the case study

● Decentralisation and devolved decision making provided an effective context for stakeholders to take advantage of and use evidence to influence policy changes.

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- Individual 'champions' in key positions within organisations, and in political positions, played key roles.
- Collaboration between actors – government, CSOs, and national and international researchers – made effective coalitions for change, especially when trust was built over several years.
- Participation and consultation linked evidence to real stakeholders and was very powerful.
- Research that asked relevant policy questions from the outset became highly influential, although it took some time for the political context to support change.
- Field visits for key actors were highly effective, complementing the other methods of feeding evidence into the policy process.
- A mix of evidence – answering both the 'why change?' and the 'how to change?' questions – was used to win over both the political and technical individuals in key positions.
- Timely use of financial resources to deal with technical policy-process 'bottlenecks' was hugely important.

Case study 2: changes in dairy-marketing policy in Kenya[2]

Background – Kenya's informal dairy market. In Kenya, traditional milk markets, from small-scale farmers to small-scale milk vendors (SSMVs), supply well over 85 per cent of the market, selling affordable milk to poor consumers and giving better prices to farmers. These traditional 'raw' milk products are supplied to consumers through 'Milk Bars' at fixed premises, and from mobile traders who use bicycles or public transport (Omore *et al.* 1999). Consumers show a strong preference for these traditional products, for reasons of taste as well as cost. And, as they invariably boil their milk[3] (whether 'raw' or pasteurised), public-health risks are very low (Omore *et al.* 2005).

However, prior to the policy change described here, dairy policy did not reflect the needs of the majority of farmers, traders, and consumers. This was reflected in harassment and rent-seeking as the larger, powerful formal-sector players, linked to those in authority, sought to increase their small market share. The Kenya Dairy Board (KDB) relied exclusively on a Western model of processing and packaging of milk, actively discouraging SSMVs and acting as 'police' trying to stamp them out (Muriuki *et al.* 2003). Despite this, demand for affordable raw milk maintained the dominant level of these markets.

The policy change – new Dairy Policy and changed practice. Since 2004, there has been a major change in policy and practice towards the informal milk market. A newly drafted Dairy Policy clearly acknowledged the role of SSMVs and targeted them with specific measures, including development of low-cost appropriate technologies, training in safe milk handling, provision of incentives for improved milk handling, and establishment of a supportive certification system. While written policy change is still in progress,[4] the changed attitude and behaviour of policy implementers has been noticeable for some time and has been reflected in changes in the market. There is proactive engagement by the KDB in training and certification of SSMVs, in order to safeguard public health and assure quality, rather than trying to stamp them out. Significant economic benefits for both producers and consumers resulting from this change in practice have been demonstrated in an impact-assessment study (Kaitibie *et al.* 2008).

Case-study findings

The Smallholder Dairy Project (SDP). SDP was a research and development project, collaboratively implemented by the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development (MoLFD), Kenya Agricultural Research Institute, and ILRI, from 1997 to 2004. SDP conducted extensive parti-

cipatory socio-economic, technical, and policy research on the constraints affecting Kenya's milk market.

Having identified the important role of SSMVs, quantified health risks, and tested alternative approaches to improving quality and standards among SSMVs, SDP and its partners implemented a strategy to influence policy change to achieve a more conducive system for small-scale farmers and traders. A range of stakeholders was brought together, facilitated by the project, representing public and private sectors, and CSOs. SDP drew on its comprehensive research outputs to demonstrate novel institutional approaches and appropriate technology for quality assurance to safeguard both public health and the livelihoods of the poor who depend on the market.

Key events and influences on policy change. While the overall policy-change process was long and complex, the case study highlighted a 'tipping point' in changes in attitudes, leading to the behaviour change and ultimately the policy change (see Figure 3). This occurred in early 2004, following a campaign for 'Safe Milk' led by large-scale processors and the KDB. Reaction to this campaign by SDP and its CSO partners, using SDP evidence in support of the SSMVs and livelihoods of farmers and consumers, led to what became known as the 'Milk War', largely conducted in the media. This opened the way for the key evidence to be taken on board by policymakers, under pressure from grassroots organisations arguing for the same changes. However, the environment for this change was enabled by several years of communication of relevant evidence by SDP, challenging attitudes with evidence that had previously been absent.

During the case study of this policy change, it was widely acknowledged that SDP's activities had been a major influence. Key reasons for this influence included the following:

- Highly effective long-term *collaboration*, producing robust, relevant *evidence* to make a credible story.
- Consistent *communication* of this evidence to a wide range of stakeholders, using a *range of different materials and means.*
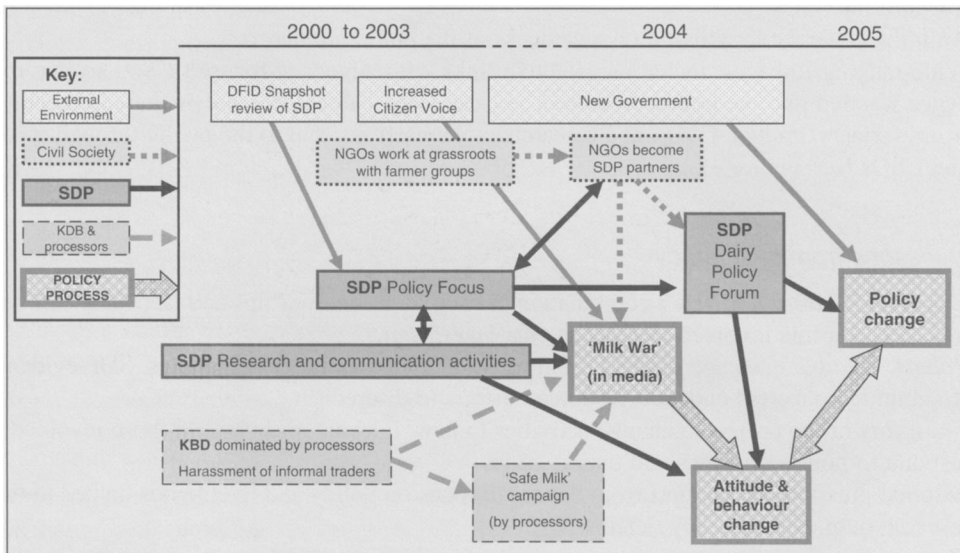

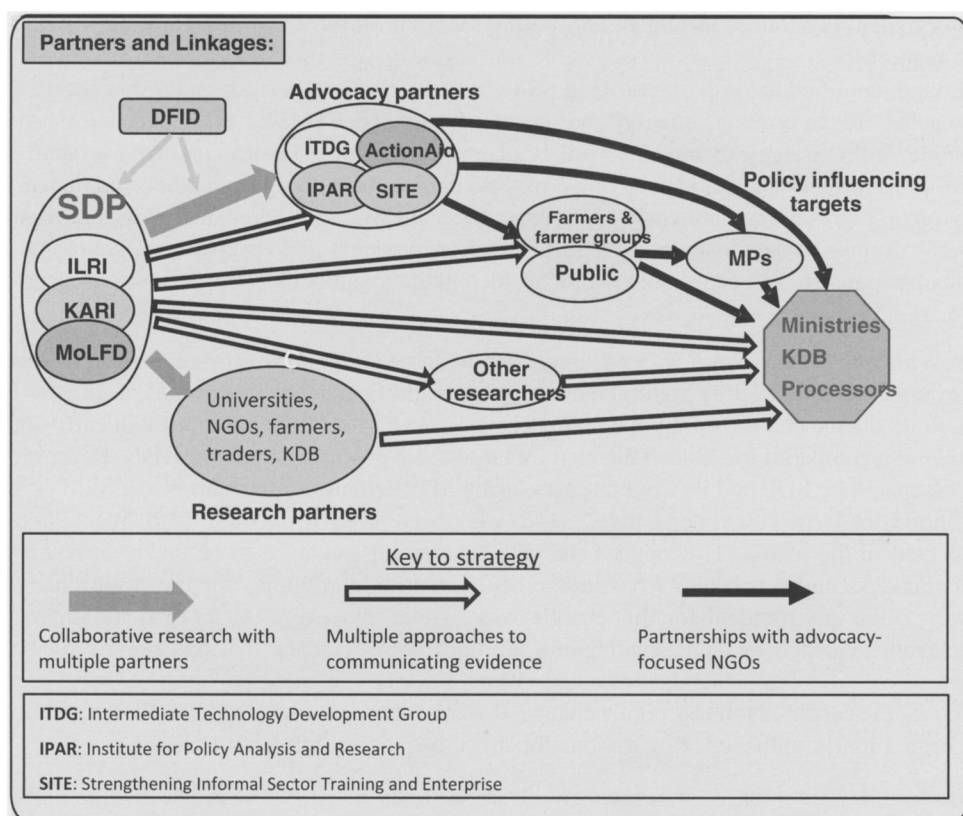**Figure 3:** Simplified representation of Kenya dairy-policy change process and influences

Figure 4: Representation of SDP strategy for influencing policy

- A *political environment* providing opportunities for change – government strategies and freedom for CSOs.
- An influencing strategy based on awareness of the *political context*.
- Wide-ranging linkages, including effective links with advocacy-focused *CSOs* so that evidence was fed into the policy process in several ways – direct to policymakers in meetings (from farmers/traders, CSOs, and researchers themselves); and to the public through media and CSOs (see Figure 4).

Key lessons from case study

- *Effective collaboration* was a combination of long-term relationships and tactical use of new linkages. But this involved *significant time investment*.
- *Robust, credible evidence* is hugely important in controversial environments. SDP evidence stood up to concerted and well-resourced efforts to discredit it.
- *Flexibility* of the project to change activities to new, relevant areas helped those involved to respond to policy priorities and opportunities.
- External pressure and support from donors to focus on policy and livelihoods helped to turn research outputs into policy outcomes.
- The use of *multiple approaches to communicate evidence* and influence key people was very important.

● Approaches and messages that appealed to the *personal incentives* of key policy makers also increased the likelihood of influence. The evidence is only one pressure on such people.

Analysis: using the right voices for policy influence

In both cases described, research evidence was found to have played a key role in bringing about a change in written and practised policy. This is by no means a common outcome of policy-oriented research. The case studies identify several factors contributing to the success of the respective efforts.

In both cases, the evidence was challenging the 'received wisdom' of appropriate development policies for the agricultural sector. For example, most efforts towards developing dairy production and marketing focus almost entirely on a move towards larger-scale production and marketing of processed milk products. Even when informal markets predominate, they are either ignored or actively suppressed, seen as holding back 'development' and posing health risks. Having shown the importance of the informal sector for the livelihoods of millions of poor Kenyans, and demonstrated practical ways of engaging with the informal sector to make safe, affordable milk available, SDP and its partners still had to convince key sector actors and policymakers that an alternative approach to dairy development in Kenya was appropriate, and would not inhibit more formal development of the sector. Likewise in Kampala, the KUF-SALCC partners had to convince a wide range of government and city officials and politicians to accept that promoting and engaging with small-scale agriculture was not inconsistent with the wider aims of urban development and public health.

While such challenging evidence could be communicated directly from researchers to policy makers, through meetings and appropriate communication materials (such as policy briefs), this article highlights one key element in the success of these cases: the way in which evidence was taken and fed into the policy process through the voices of the 'users' of the policy outcomes – small-scale farmers and traders. It also highlights the importance, in both cases, of long-term links with officials within the policy process.

The right environment for change

It can be argued that without a 'political window' – an opportunity that arises in an environment supportive of change – projects with policy-relevant evidence may do better to wait, rather than spending resources on advocating for change. In both these cases, it is clear that there was an appropriate environment for change. In Kampala, decentralisation and subsequent local-government legislative power had increased the degree to which policymakers responded to the needs and concerns of their voters, and the national Poverty Eradication Action Plan also helped to focus politicians' attention on the needs of the poor. In Kenya, the new government was making efforts to link more closely with CSOs and grassroots organisations. The government's 'Strategy for Revitalising Agriculture' (SRA), part of its economic recovery strategy, highlighted the need for stakeholder involvement in policy making, and a lengthy Constitutional Review process had also significantly strengthened links between national-level CSOs and the grassroots.

Linking evidence with the right people: the role of CSOs

Even in supportive environments, the policymaker is often more likely to respond to the citizen – the voter – than to evidence presented directly by researchers. However, farmers and traders,

even when well organised, may not themselves have robust and relevant evidence to support their calls for change. These cases show clearly the benefit of linking this 'user voice', armed with good evidence, into the policy-making process. In both cases, this was achieved through effective links between researchers, CSOs (at national and grassroots levels), and policymakers. Importantly, in both cases, this engagement involved not only the higher-level decision makers, but also the implementing officers and 'technocrats'. The potential for controversy was very considerable, in view of technical and public-health arguments against change (and, in the Kenya dairy case, given the powerful and politically connected private interests actively campaigning against change).

The characteristics and initiation of these CSO linkages were very different in the two cases. For SDP, while the relationship with government was built into the project from the outset (as described below), the CSO linkage started as a strategic link with advocacy-focused organisations relatively late in the project, specifically aimed at the co-hosting of a high-profile Policy Forum. This developed into a closer relationship in response to a campaign by opponents of SDP's message, and eventually into more structured linkages for pilot-testing of new approaches. But once these links were established, SDP's CSO partners, and the farmer and trader groups that they supported, continued to actively use SDP evidence in their direct lobbying of policymakers, and in their efforts to equip the farmer and trader groups with evidence to support their calls for change.

In the Kampala case, the links developed more organically. Initial links between CSOs supporting urban agriculture and KCC's Agricultural Extension Officers (AEOs) developed into close working relationships, to the benefit of both parties. The AEOs themselves also had links with researchers, in that the researchers worked with the AEOs to conduct the research, and the AEOs themselves were completing degrees at Makerere University. The link with the international research community – notably the Urban Harvest programme of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) – developed both through partnered research conducted in Kampala and through contacts at regional and international meetings. Eventually this developed into a formal coalition, KUFSALCC, and the end result was a robust coalition of diverse actors, united in their vision and mission for policy-level changes in support of urban agriculture.

The CSOs played a particularly important role in both cases. Researchers had relatively poor direct links with farmers and traders: their main contacts were with those involved in the research. Neither did they have any capacity for supporting such groups. It is important to point out that the CSOs themselves often already had their own evidence to support their advocacy activities, based on their field experiences as well as some structured research. And they had long been involved in communicating this evidence to policymakers, often through supporting field visits. But, by feeding a wider range of research evidence into their established collaborations with farmer and trader groups, the links with researchers undoubtedly enhanced the impact of the CSOs' advocacy activities. In both case studies, the CSOs involved emphasised the value of being able to complement their own (often anecdotal) evidence with robust empirical research evidence, both socio-economic (such as employment generation and number of dependent livelihoods) and technical (for example, addressing public-health arguments against change).

The CSOs also had different routes of influence from the often more formal linkages between research and policymakers. CSOs could engage in outright advocacy for change through various channels, including participation in meetings, use of the media, and direct meetings with policymakers. Researchers, from publicly funded, non-political institutions, and wanting to maintain a reputation for objectivity, could present and explain the implications of their research evidence, and feed this evidence into formal policy processes, but they were under-

standably reluctant to advocate openly for change. However, by having close links with CSOs, the researchers were able to help CSO and other advocates for change to present the evidence extremely effectively and powerfully.

CSOs also played a key role in both cases in helping to pilot interventions based on research findings. In Kenya, one CSO has been working closely with ILRI and the KDB to pilot new approaches for the training of SSMVs by private business-services providers, linked with a scheme for official certification. In Kampala, CSOs have been involved throughout the policy-change process in piloting different approaches demonstrating the importance and effectiveness of supporting urban agriculture, as well as activities testing the effectiveness of registration and licensing schemes. The experiences from these pilot approaches also feed into the ongoing policy-change process, and may continue to help convince those whose opposition to change is based on technical concerns.

Linkages into the policy process: the right government links

Critically, both cases had effective links over a number of years between researchers and middle/senior-level government officers in the departments responsible for developing and implementing policy. This meant that evidence had a direct line into at least one component of the formal policy-change process. In SDP's case, this was designed into the project, with the project manager being a senior official within MoLFD (one of the three implementing organisations). The development of the KUFSALCC links with government has been described above.

One reason why these links into government were so effective in these cases was the presence of key individuals throughout the process. In Kampala, this was the District AEO who initiated the links with the CSOs, had excellent relationships with senior City Council officers and with the council Minister responsible for agriculture, and remained in this post throughout the decade-long process. And in Kenya, this was the project manager for SDP throughout its life – not only a senior official in the MoLFD with considerable knowledge of the sector, but a person who knew how to operate in a politically sensitive field and kept feeding the project's evidence into the Ministry's activities, even when it was consistently overruled by his superiors.

But the linkages with government also extended into links with technical departments, including the KDB, Kenya Bureau of Standards, and Ministry of Health for SDP, and KCC Departments of Public Health and Planning, among others. In both cases, the technical officers from these departments included the people involved in implementing policy for the respective sectors, and they had often been opposed to change, citing public-health concerns, albeit with a lack of appreciation of the 'bigger picture' of the benefits of change. However, such concerns were very important, and in both case studies the inclusion of these officers in the research and influencing work was also pivotal to the successful outcomes. Research was carried out into the public-health concerns, technical solutions were piloted, and these key technical people in the process of policy making and implementation not only became less concerned about perceived public-health risks, but also became much more aware of the socio-economic benefits of alternative approaches.

Multiple channels for communication and influence

Communication approaches were also crucial in both cases. Mechanisms are needed to enable the voices of users to be heard by decision makers. In the Kampala case, these included a series of consultation meetings linking farmers, local politicians, field officers, and researchers for the production of policy briefs, and the organisation of field visits for local politicians.

The KUFSALCC partners had good links right to the top decision makers, the Mayor and city Ministers, supporting their attendance at key regional meetings as well as keeping them well informed of activities in Kampala.

SDP also implemented a communication/influencing strategy that had multiple channels – using a range of mechanisms to reach a variety of targets and intermediaries. This meant that the arguments for change, supported by robust research findings, were continually aired through multiple forums and throughout the years of the project. It was clear from the case study that the various partners – CSO partners and other research partners, as well as the direct links to government – all played important roles in this strategy. Figure 4 is a representation of SDP's strategy.

Conclusions – and guiding principles for improving policy-level impact

While the context, specific partners, and mechanisms for linkages were very different in the two case studies, lessons can still be drawn and formulated as guiding principles. These principles, covering a range of issues, have been outlined in the initial outputs of the PPPPPC project – 'Guiding Principles for Achieving Impact Through Policy Change: A Resource for Researchers' (ILRI and ODI, forthcoming). But one lesson, as highlighted in this article, is that the voices of farmers, traders, and consumers, conveyed directly or indirectly through representatives or even via video, can provide powerful pressure for change. Some key lessons are suggested:

- CSOs can play a particularly effective role in enabling (through representation or capacity building) the voices of poor beneficiaries to be heard in policy dialogues.
- Close links between researchers and CSOs can bring an 'advocacy' element to supplement the more formal communication routes that researchers are often constrained to follow.
- CSOs can also play a key role in piloting new approaches, based on the researchers' evidence, and in partnership with government.
- How effective these links are, and the appropriate mechanism for them, will of course depend on the particular context, the environment for change, and the particular organisations that are active.
- Effective collaboration between CSOs and research organisations is not necessarily easy; they are often significantly different types of organisation, with different goals and mechanisms of working. The effectiveness of collaboration may depend to a large extent on the particular individuals in the respective organisations. But sharing a common vision is an important starting point and can be a valuable point to come back to when tensions occur.
- Building and maintaining links with CSOs, and supporting their activities, is very expensive, in terms of both time and money. Building in and budgeting for such activities at the beginning of a project means that they are more likely to be successful.
- Building effective coalitions of a range of actors can also lead to a more sensitive understanding of the overall policy-making context, so that appropriate strategies can be developed and modified throughout the lengthy process of policy change.
- The involvement of different actors can result in the same evidence working through a number of different channels.

The complexity of policy processes means that activities could follow all these principles – communicate good, relevant evidence well, using many channels, and target the real decision makers – and yet change may ultimately not occur, or even may occur in a way not supported by the evidence. That is unfortunately the nature of policy processes. But real stakeholders' voices, supported by good evidence, can produce a powerful pressure for change in any

context. By being innovative about linkages between researchers and CSOs, and providing good, robust, and relevant evidence to them, the desired outcomes of livelihood improvements through pro-poor, evidence-based policy changes are more likely to be achieved.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. For a full description of this case study, see Hooton *et al.* (2007).
2. For a full description of this case study, see Leksmono *et al.* (2006).
3. The vast majority of milk consumed in Kenya is taken as tea, made by boiling up a mix of water and milk with tea leaves. Boiling is also done to facilitate storage, as electrical cold storage is either unavailable or unreliable.
4. As of 2009, the new Dairy Act, along with many other pieces of legislation, was held up in the very slow Kenyan parliamentary process. However, the key elements relating to engagement with the raw-milk markets have been implemented in practice since 2004–05.

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