

# Lessons Learned: Research & Policy in International Development

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## Outline

- Role of research in policy-making
- Perspectives of researchers & policy-makers ... implications
- Reforming agricultural policy: some lessons

## Role of research in policy-making

### The linear logical model...

Identify problem



## ...in reality...

- *'The whole life of policy is a chaos of purposes and accidents. It is not at all a matter of the rational implementation of the so-called decisions through selected strategies'*<sup>1</sup>
- *'Most policy research on African agriculture is irrelevant to agricultural and overall economic policy in Africa'*<sup>2</sup>
- *'Research is more often regarded as the opposite of action rather than a response to ignorance'*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Clay & Schaffer (1984), *Room for Manoeuvre: An Exploration of Public Policy in Agricultural and Rural Development*, Heineman Educational Books, London

<sup>2</sup> Omamo (2003), *Policy Research on African Agriculture: Trends, Gaps, and Challenges*, International Service for National Agricultural Research (ISNAR) Research Report No 21

<sup>3</sup> Surr (2003), *DFID Research Review*

# Theory: a short list

- Disjointed Incrementalism, Lindblom
- Policy narratives, Roe
- 'Room for manoeuvre', Clay & Schaffer
- Systems of Innovation Model, (NSI)
- 'Street level bureaucrats', Lipsky
- Policy as social experiments, Rondene
- Policy streams and policy windows, Kingdon
- Social Epidemics, Gladwell
- The RAPID Framework ...

# RAPID Framework

## External Influences

Socio-economic & cultural influences, donor policies etc

## The **political context** –

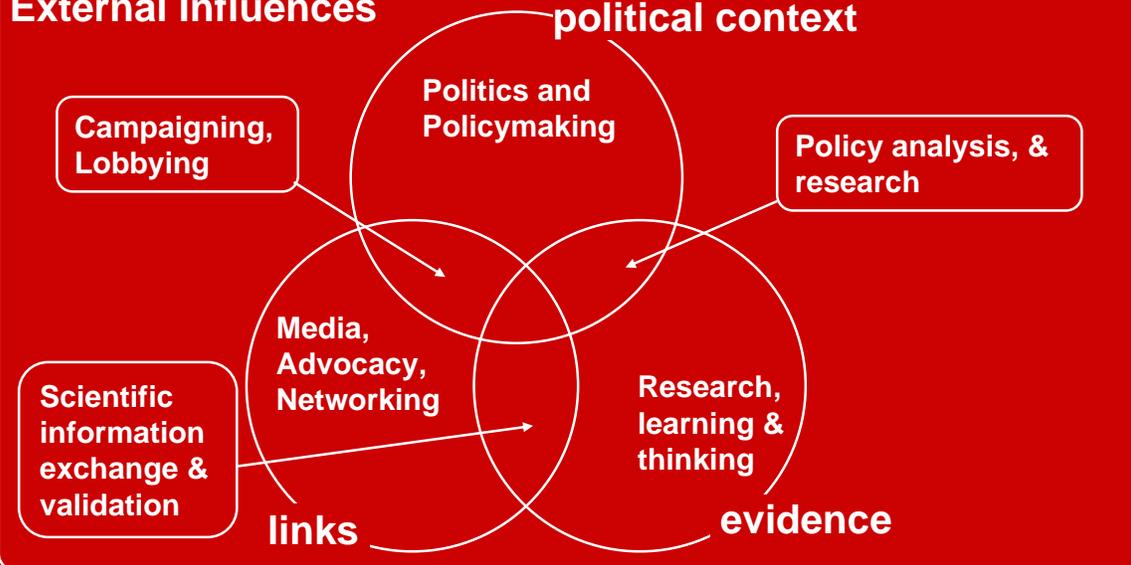
political & economic structures & processes, culture, institutional pressures, incremental vs radical change, etc.

The **links** between policy and research communities – networks, relationships, power, competing discourses, trust, knowledge, etc.

The **evidence** – credibility, degree it challenges received wisdom, research methods, simplicity of message, presentation & communication, etc.

# A Practical Framework

## External Influences



## Differing Perspectives ... Differing Notions of Evidence

### Researchers' Evidence

- 'Scientific' (Context free)
- Proven empirically
- Theoretically driven
- As long as it takes
- Caveats & qualifications

### Policy Makers' Evidence

- Colloquial (Contextual)
- Anything that seems reasonable
- Policy relevant
- Timely
- Clear Message

## Policy makers are...

...practically incapable of using research-based evidence because of the 5 Ss...



- Speed
- Superficiality
- Spin
- Secrecy
- Scientific Ignorance

Vincent Cable – Lib. Democrat MP & Shadow Chancellor  
More at: [www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Meetings/Evidence](http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Meetings/Evidence)

## Maximising Influence

- Be strategic, focus on key issues, understand policy agenda
- Be practical & helpful
- Communicate better: dare to simplify
- Work in teams & networks

## Lessons from Agricultural Reform

Binswanger & Deininger 1997 JEL

- Fiscal crises restrain elites & force reform
- Multiple sins of inequality ... social & economic, political & institutional ... path dependency

Birner & Resnick 2005 — framework combining

- Advocacy Coalitions
- Political Resource Theory
- Policy Windows

## Reforms in Bangladesh, Chile, China & New Zealand

- Reforms to farm policy undertaken as part of overall reforms ...
- ... response to perceived national crisis
- & implemented by new governments with mandate for change.
  - **Political will** is, not surprisingly, a necessary condition.

# Bangladesh, Chile, China & New Zealand

- Design of reforms and implementation:
  - Much depends on **context**, including **external conditions** such as world market prices.
  - Scope for change, esp. **sequence & pace**, may be as much a matter of administrative feasibility as choice...

So much depends on **what we do** and the **context**

## Changing Public Roles

Policy	Challenges	Conditions
Opening economy to international market	Fate of domestic sectors producing uncompetitive tradables Linking potentially competitive sectors to internat market	Competitiveness of economy Prices in internat markets for products & inputs
Retreat of state, advance of markets	Overcoming vested interests: business with state support & entrenched ideas in public agencies	Political will
State agencies to regulate markets	Building competence of civil servants with little experience	Competence & experience of public service

## ...& Changing Private Roles

Policy	Challenges	Conditions
Private sector supply of inputs, marketing & financial services	Enabling environment Overcome co-ordination failures Ensure institutions set standards	Experience & ability of established businesses Dev of economic institutions
Farmers learning about markets & demand	Stiff challenge when the info available to players markets are international	Farmers' experience in exporting, literacy, numeracy, access to info & capital
Producer organisation	Building competent and accountable associations	Experience of farmer organisation

## Bangladesh, Chile, China & New Zealand

- Design of reforms and implementation (con'd):
  - Where outcomes are uncertain & state capacity limited, ...
  - ... **gradual** approaches that allow for learning better than **swift & comprehensive** — ‘big bang’ — packages