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Research for development?

The role of Southern research
organisations in promoting
democratic ownership

A Literature review

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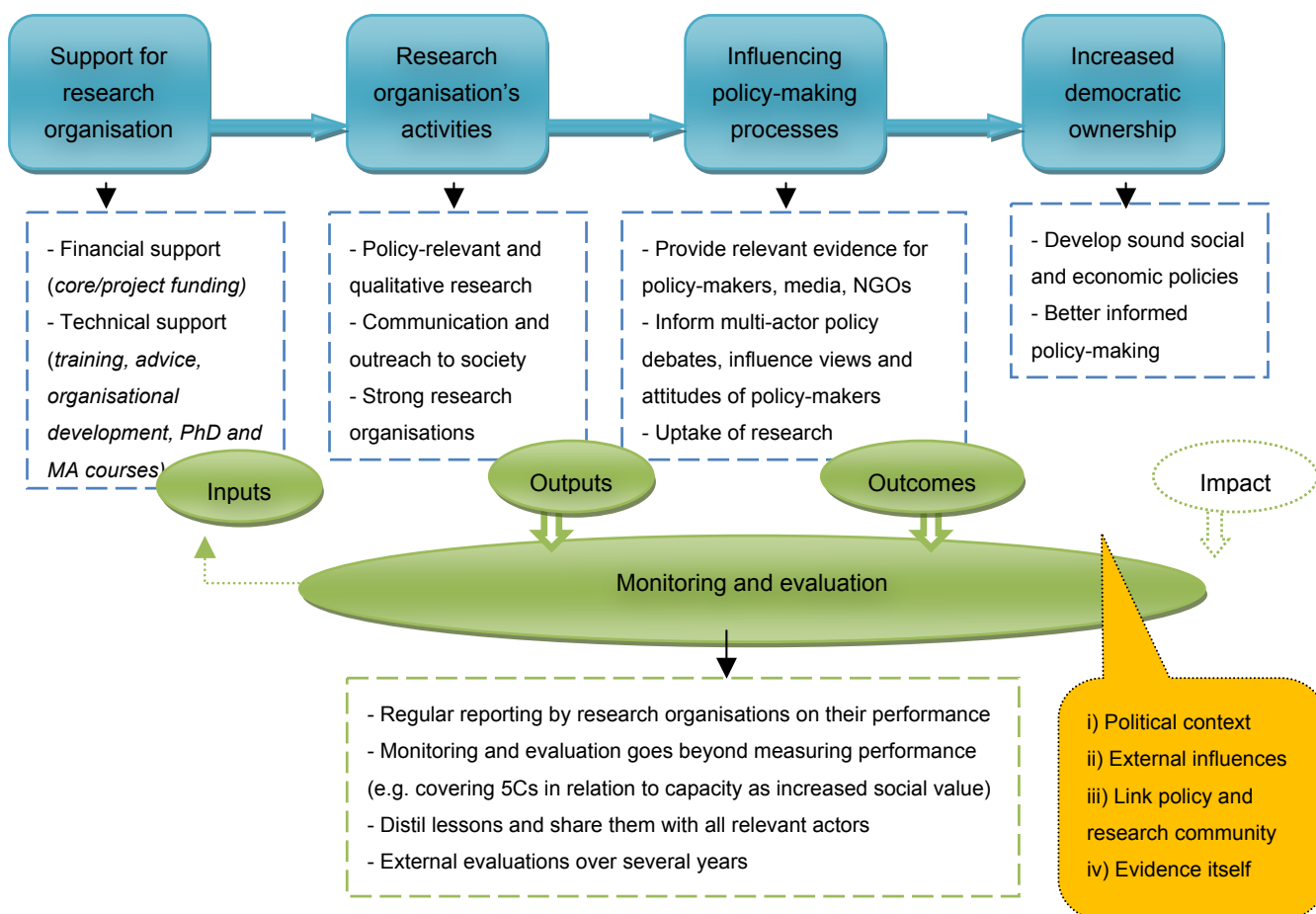
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Executive summary and policy recommendations

1. This paper has been drafted in support of the Work Stream on ‘Democratic ownership, Capacity Development for country leadership’, which is part of Cluster A of the OECD/DAC Working Party on Aid Effectiveness. Based on an analysis of the available literature, the paper looks at the way in which research organisations could potentially support **democratic ownership** in developing countries, and at how donors can effectively assist these organisations. The paper aims to explore how key commitments in the Accra Agenda for Action can be translated into practical action. These commitments suggest that strengthening and deepening the dialogue on development policy in developing countries is not only a key requirement for effective aid, but is also a **legitimate development outcome** in its own right.
2. Chapter 1 explores public policy and decision-making processes, and highlights the **importance of understanding the context** in which policy decisions are made. The nature and influence of a research organisation’s work depend to a large extent on the **political context and governance system** in which it operates. Further investments in **political economy analysis** can be a useful means of improving understanding of policy processes in developing countries, as well as the prospects for strengthening democratic ownership and the actors’ ‘scope of influence’.
3. Policy research organisations are defined as those organisations involved in the production of policy-relevant research for supporting governance and policy decisions. Policy research organisations vary in terms of both sector focus (e.g. healthcare, education, agriculture and security) and function (e.g. policy process evaluation, impact evaluations and needs assessments). They are unified by their production of policy-relevant information. The main actors involved in policy research are:
 - a. **organisations with a primary policy research orientation**, including non-profit think-tanks and the private sector
 - b. **economic and social partners**, including trade union organisations; and
 - c. **civil society** in all its diversity.
4. Following an exploration of four developing countries (i.e. Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, and Namibia), Chapter 1 concludes by identifying four key factors that determine whether support for Southern research organisations can strengthen democratic ownership:
 - a. **Policy-making processes** must be both **transparent and open**, in order to systematically incorporate policy research. The monopolisation of any stage of the policy process may separate the supply of policy research from the demand for it.
 - b. If the supply of research is to increase national ownership, then research must be supported in a manner that preserves the **research organisation’s legitimacy** in the eyes of policy-makers and constituencies.
 - c. **Policy research must be adapted** to the political realities, governance challenges and capacities, and complex institutional relationships that shape policy-making processes. Effective relationships between policy-makers and research organisations can be developed only if the research is context-appropriate.
 - d. Those policy research organisations that foster the democratic ownership of policies would appear to be ones that help to **link broader constituencies to the policy-making process**. Although organisations which exclusively represent the agenda of the ruling (national or international) elite may benefit the performance of governments in a technocratic sense, they do not necessarily promote democratic ownership.

5. Chapter 2 builds on the overview of country experiences and research organisations, and looks at how donors can support research organisations and contribute to democratic ownership, as well as how this support and the effectiveness of research organisations can be monitored and evaluated. **Donor support for Southern research** organisations as provided by multilateral, bilateral and civilateral (i.e. CSO) donors is **more fragmented compared with other sectors**. However, it is also a dynamic field in which a wide variety of donors are trying out innovative approaches. Donor support, and particularly **core funding**, can strengthen **demand articulation** by research organisations and can be an important step in securing their assistance in the process of strengthening democratic ownership. Partnerships and other forms of collaborative arrangements are means of exploring ‘economies of scale’ and improving access to international funding.

6. Monitoring and evaluating the contributions of research organisations to democratic ownership is a challenging task. Depending on the parameters (e.g. the nature and mandate of the research organisation, the available resources, and the specific political and institutional context), a range of approaches and tools are available. Current **investments in monitoring and evaluation are inadequate** in terms of frequency and quality.



7. The above diagram reflects an assumed chain of influence and describes the type of information that is needed at various levels to monitor results in relation to democratic ownership. Further **learning** is needed about how **research organisations influence policy processes** and how successful they are in doing so. In order to bring this about, existing approaches to monitoring and evaluation need to go beyond the level of outputs. At the same time, a **careful balance** has to be struck between innovative

and adequate monitoring and evaluation techniques on the one hand, and the need to avoid overburdening relatively small organisations on the other.

8. On the basis of the analysis in this paper, we make the following recommendations for further discussion in the Work Stream. Most importantly, this paper highlights the ***need to develop a better understanding of how research organisations can promote democratic ownership*** as a basis for better informed policies both in partner countries and among international donors. The following recommendations could thus inform **specific commitments in the outcome document of the 2011 High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness**:
 - a. Further investments are needed to improve ***our understanding of how information is produced and used*** in policy processes in developing countries. Understanding these dynamics will help us to understand what donor support can achieve, and may help to provide it in a more targeted manner.
 - b. Promoting democratic ownership also requires ***strengthening the capacity of all key actors in society*** (such as trade unions and religious institutions) ***to produce and use policy-relevant information***.
 - c. ***South-South learning*** should be encouraged among developing countries that have created ***enabling environments*** for endogenous policy research on the one hand, and those that depend more on external inputs on the other.
 - d. ***Current practices insufficiently reflect the lessons that have been learned*** about effective support for research organisations. Further ***donor-donor learning*** is essential in the following areas:
 - i. encourage ***support aligned*** to research organisations' own agendas, as opposed to promoting external agendas;
 - ii. encourage the ***diversification of funding*** sources for research organisations and ensure that funding is provided in a way that encourages, rather than restricts, independence and legitimacy;
 - iii. explore appropriate means of ***further harmonising donor support*** (i.e. do not use general code of conducts and principles for donor coordination which may not be relevant);
 - iv. create a basis for ***aligning support*** for partner country governments. Donors should encourage and support partner country governments to put in place or strengthen (i) regularly updated research priorities, (ii) a research management directorate, (iii) a mechanism for dialogue with donors, and (iv) facilities for communicating priorities and policies to wider audiences;
 - v. build on ***local initiatives*** as a means of supporting the ***sustainable development*** of research sectors in which there is already some capacity;
 - vi. move away from a ***piecemeal approach*** emphasising commissioning individual research products from specialist organisations, towards the provision of ***more holistic support covering all stages of knowledge production, interrogation and use*** by multiple actors.
 - e. Methodologically, there is no single method of measuring the impact of research organisations. Depending on the nature of the research, the purpose of the evaluation and the types of impact, a combination of approaches needs to be used, adapted to the specific needs of the research organisation. Donors should avoid making excessive M&E demands that may restrict the capacity of research organisations. Instead, they should encourage monitoring and evaluation practices that enable organisations to perform.

About this paper

This paper examines factors that affect the supply of and the demand for policy-relevant research in partner countries, and the ways in which donors can help Southern research organisations to strengthen broad-based democratic policy ownership. This study was conducted in response to a request from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and aims to contribute to the Work-Stream on 'Democratic ownership, Capacity Development for country leadership' for Cluster A of the OECD/DAC Working Party on Aid Effectiveness.

The two main objectives of the Work-Stream, which is co-chaired by Switzerland and Tanzania, are to:

1. *'Raise political commitment to, and support in-country good practice by both donors and partner countries, towards broadening ownership beyond the government executive to encompass all national stakeholders.'*
2. *'Support capacity development for democratic ownership; increase the capacity of all development actors in order to overcome systemic constraints that hamper country leadership.'*¹

These two objectives reflect the overall vision represented in the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), which acknowledges an unintended 'democratic deficit' in the approach to development cooperation promoted by the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. The AAA calls for the stronger engagement of non-state actors to deepen the dialogue on national policies, strengthen domestic accountability, and make ownership more inclusive.

Stocktaking and policy discussions are part of the process leading up to the 2011 Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. The Work-Stream's dialogue ties in with the political commitments made in the AAA, which include:

- Paragraph 8: *'Developing country governments will take stronger leadership of their own development policies, and will engage with their parliaments and citizens in shaping those policies.'*
- Paragraph 13(b): *'Donors will support efforts to increase the capacity of all development actors (...) to take an active role in dialogue on development policy and on the role of aid in contributing to countries' development objectives.'*
- Paragraph 14 (selected): *'Developing countries will systematically identify areas where there is a need to strengthen the capacity to perform and deliver services at all levels (...) and design strategies to address them. Donors will strengthen their own capacity and skills to be more responsive to developing countries' needs.'*

These commitments show that strengthening and deepening the dialogue on development policy in developing countries is not only a key requirement for effective aid, but is also a legitimate development outcome in its own right.

This paper contributes to two of the Work-Stream activities that were included in the Cluster A consolidated work programme of November last year:

¹ Source: November 2009 Work Plan of Cluster A.

- *'Support the emergence of innovative alternative approaches towards strengthening development ownership;'*
- *'Promote and provide guidance for donor support of Southern think-tanks, and best use by donors of local knowledge.'*

In accordance with these objectives and commitments, this paper:

1. presents an analysis of the role that research organisations² and other relevant non-state actors play in strengthening the dialogue on development, by exploring both the demand side and the supply side of policy-relevant research, **[Chapter 1]**
2. explores good practices and the potential for donors to support the production and use of policy-relevant research in partner countries **[Chapter 2]**; and
3. makes suggestions for operational guidance that can feed into the preparations for and discussions at the High Level Forum. **[Recommendations]**

This paper is based on an analysis of policy papers, academic literature and other research documents. The authors have made grateful use of the outcome of discussions with Work-Stream participants in Paris in February and October 2010. We would also like to acknowledge the financial support of the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation in the production of this paper.

² While the Work-Stream programme refers to 'think-tanks', we prefer the term 'research organisation' in view of its use in the Accra Agenda for Action and its suitability for translation into other languages.

1. Policy research and research organisations

The AAA recognises that different actors influence the definition of political agendas and policy options in both donor and partner countries. It identifies the roles that partner country actors and international donors can play in broadening and deepening the dialogue on development. However, identifying which organisations to support is complicated by the plurality of the organisations involved in policy research and also by the wide range of research that may be relevant to policy-making.

This chapter looks at the factors affecting the ability of Southern research organisations to support policy-making in developing countries and the variety of research organisations in existence. It also provides an overview of country experiences around the world. The chapter concludes by enumerating the factors that determine whether or not support for Southern policy research organisations can help to achieve the objectives of the AAA.

1.1. Policy-relevant research and democratic ownership

The vast range of information required to formulate, implement and evaluate policies makes the definition of research that may be considered as being ‘policy-relevant’ highly inclusive. Health, education, agriculture and all other sector-specific policies cannot be developed effectively without extensive natural and social scientific research. However, whether or not the research is actually deemed relevant and useful in practice is a matter for those involved in the decision-making processes to whom the research findings are made available (Rich, 2004).

What constitutes policy-relevant research is thus influenced by country-specific conditions in terms of governance, policy processes and policy sector challenges. The variation of policy-making processes around the world has led to the development of many models that explain aspects of how and why certain information is (or is not) used to make government decisions at various policy stages (Sabatier, 1999). Most models can be fit into either ‘linear’³ or ‘iterative’⁴ categories, both of which recognise that policy-making involves a continuous process of:

- identifying a problem;
- setting an agenda;
- evaluating alternative policy options;
- formulating a policy;
- implementing the policy formulated;
- evaluating outcomes.

Given the AAA’s commitment to increasing broad-based democratic ownership, it is important to examine what is meant by ‘democratic ownership’ and the type of policy research that is needed to support it. Under the terms of the Paris Declaration, ownership is the process by which ‘*partner countries exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies, and coordinate development actions*’. Consequently, democratic ownership can be taken to mean ‘*a broad and democratically legitimised*

³ *Linear* policy process models assume that policy-makers work through the process stages in a linear manner and base their decisions on evidence provided during each stage.

⁴ *Iterative* policy process models do not assume that process stages occur in a pre-defined order, and focus on the actors and institutions involved in defining each stage as it occurs within a governance system.

consensus among the recipient country's relevant actors from state and society about the content and implementation of development-enhancing policies' (Faust, 2010: 516).⁵

Following from this definition, the ability of policy research actors to enhance democratic ownership is based on their ability to understand actors' needs and interests, and to gain access to policy-making domains. In nearly all countries, the process of formulating government policies is characterised by many competing political actors and institutions seeking to gain support from an often narrow majority, or a powerful minority, of the country's constituents. Thus, ownership is more frequently based on the support of political parties and institutions, and not on individual policy choices. Policy research organisations face the challenge of promoting an informed understanding of policy options that is also acknowledged by policy-makers.

In order to maintain political support, policy-makers rely on research organisations to help them understand the interests of their constituents and the various policy options. In countries with a centralised authority, policy research is often commissioned by state organisations to meet their technocratic needs in a patron-client type relationship, and may therefore not reflect the interests of non-state actors (Stone, 2005). More 'open' democratic systems are characterised by a market for competing research organisations and policy ideas, from which political actors select evidence to inform their decisions (Rich, 2004). In both contexts, the result is often 'policy-based evidence' rather than 'evidence-based policy', as policy-makers shop around to find research that legitimises pre-established positions (Garce and Una, 2010). This is in itself not problematic provided that policy-makers' positions and subsequent decisions result in their using research to effectively address the needs of their constituents.

The bulk of the available research on policy-making in developing countries tends to be of a conceptual or theoretical nature, and makes general 'predictions' about the future functioning of policy processes in developing countries. The empirical and descriptive literature on policy processes in developing countries tends to be focused more on developing countries that have achieved middle-income status or that may be expected to do so within the next two decades. Not much information is available on policy-making in the group of least developed countries. In most donor administrations, information on the functioning of policy processes in specific countries is therefore often anecdotal, intuitive or (the most common alternative) absent (Vanheukelom, 2010).

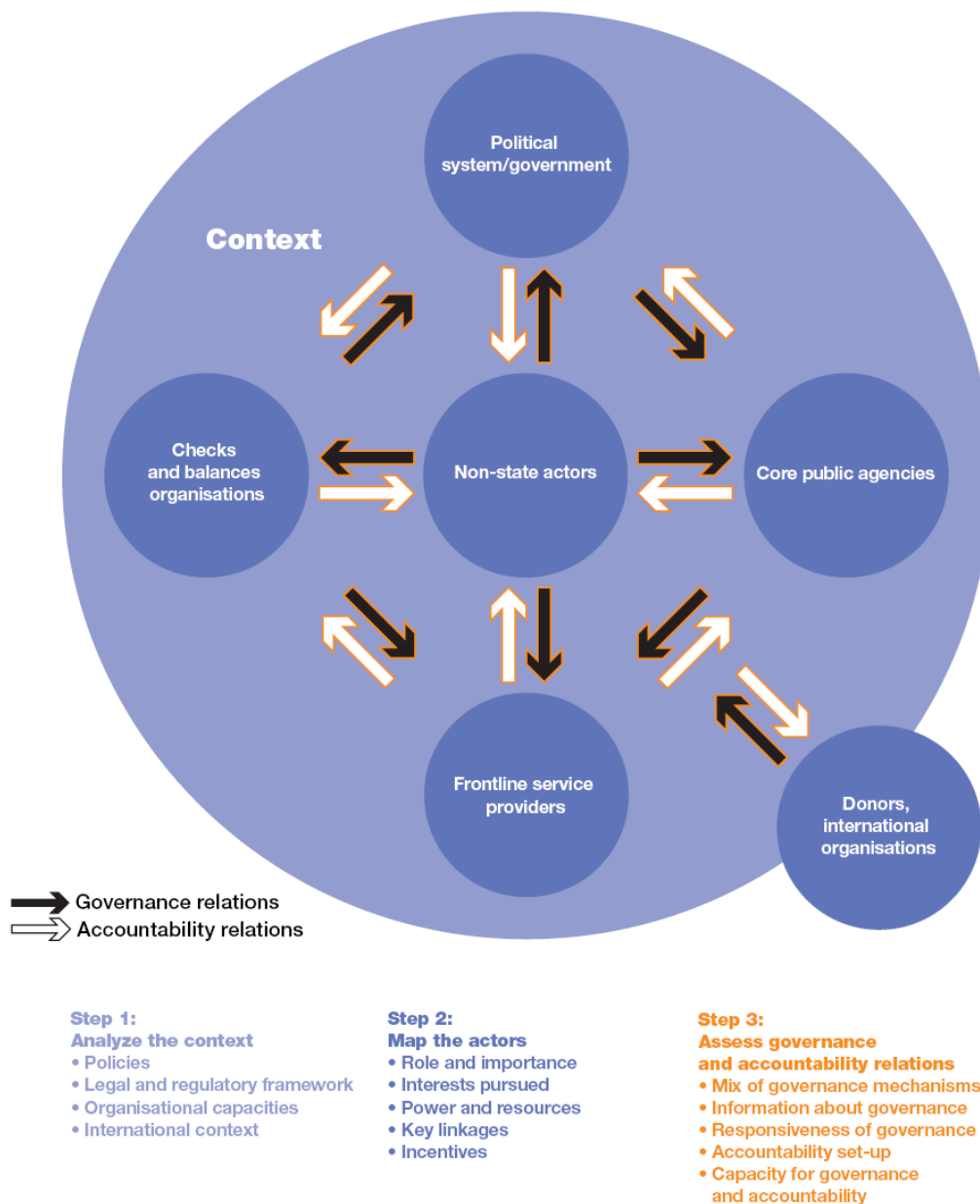
A number of donors have recently adopted political economic tools to help them understand the feasibility of policy change and institutional reforms. They hope that this will help them to improve their understanding of the type of support that is likely to foster realistic change and longer-term development. These donors include Sweden, the Netherlands, and the UK,⁶ who have used these tools mainly for assessing the situation in relation to specific countries. Other donors, such as the European Commission (EC), are experimenting with their application at sector and sub-sector levels (Vanheukelom, 2010). The claims made in international statements such as the AAA thus presuppose that much more is known about policy processes in developing countries than the literature actually suggests. The following figure summarises the analytical approach developed by the EC. It might also be usefully applied in order to learn more about

⁵ Some participants in the DAC Working Party prefer the term 'broad-based ownership' over 'democratic ownership'. Given that there is no conceptual difference between the two, as they both describe a desired trend towards more representative ownership, the use of the two terms is generally a question of linguistic preference. The authors of this paper consider 'broad-based ownership' as being synonymous with 'democratic ownership', and have decided to use the latter term for the sake of consistency.

⁶ The tools in question are: Power Analysis (Sida, Sweden), Drivers of Change (DfID, UK) and Strategic Governance and Corruption Analysis (DGIS, the Netherlands). More information on these may be found at: www.gsdr.org/go/topic-guides/political-economy-analysis/tools-for-political-economy-analysis.

the operation of policy processes, as well as the enabling factors (or lack of them) for improving democratic ownership.

Figure 1: European Commission Governance Analysis Framework



(Figure reproduced from ECDPM and Boesen 2008.)

Governance systems require research that can inform their understanding of the often competing interests of the state, the private sector and civil society. As depicted by Van Waarden (1992) and Heilmann (2008), responsive policy experimentation has played an important role in both democratic governance systems within the EU and centralised governance systems such as China (see Box 1.1). Developing countries are faced with a wide array of policy challenges and political influences. In this context, the policy process is often characterised by high levels of uncertainty regarding the outcome of policy decisions. Because change occurs simultaneously in governance institutions and policies, policy processes are *experimental*,

iterative, and competitive' (Faust, 2010: 519). This compels Southern policy research organisations to strengthen their capacity to provide high-quality, responsive research that can assist policy experimentation.

Box 1.1: Policy experimentation in China (Heilmann, 2008)

China is a particularly interesting case for understanding the benefits associated with policy experimentation. Successful policy experimentation has been credited with enabling the country to develop innovative policies while sustaining economic development. By permitting local authorities to differ in their policy approaches, the central government has been able to overcome issues of uncertainty and the ambiguity of national policy agendas. Chinese policy innovation relies on the ability of the central government to identify successful local policy innovations and scale-up these processes into national policy. China's approach has been made possible by its strong central authority and its freedom to implement and change policies without contestation. These powers were constrained when the country joined the WTO in 1997. China's approach to policy experimentation cannot be fully replicated by rule-of-law countries, as it requires altering policy at will and with the differential treatment of constituents.

The following important lessons may be drawn from China's experience:

- 1) the ability of local policy knowledge to supply lessons for national policy processes;
- 2) the importance of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of national and local policies;
- 3) the importance of allowing for flexibility and experimentation in development contexts characterised by high levels of uncertainty regarding policy effectiveness.

All three of these processes require effective, high-quality policy research.

Based on the above overview, policy-relevant research that supports effective policy and broad-based democratic ownership may be understood as research which:

1. provides evidence-based understanding of policy contexts and agendas, alternative policy options, policy implementation, and intended and unintended policy impacts;
2. is deemed credible by policy-makers and/or stakeholders (both public-sector and private-sector) representing or otherwise involved in national governance systems;
3. increases the responsiveness of development policies to rapidly evolving policy challenges and political realities;
4. increases the representation of interests held by stakeholders impacted by policies;
5. increases the inclusion and diversity of recipient country research used in international, national, and local development policy processes.

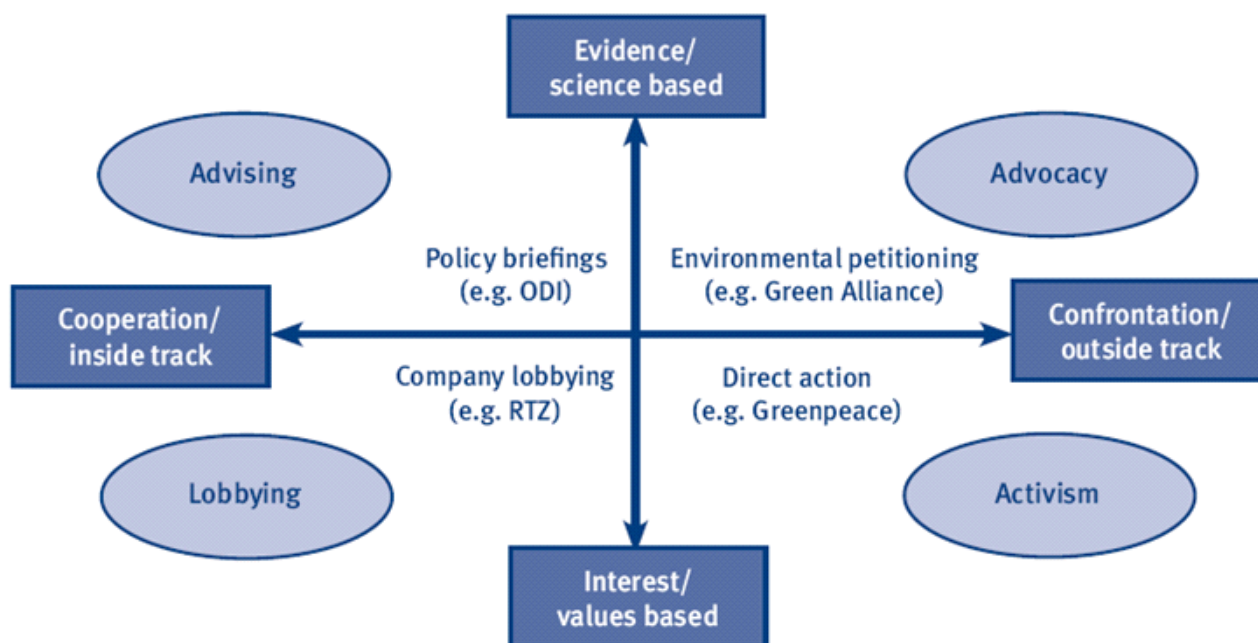
Given the political reality of policy processes, it is unlikely that any single research organisation can accurately represent a country's broader public interests. The availability of alternative policy options has been shown to encourage greater political debates and the inclusion of previously excluded interests in policy decisions (Stone et al, 1998).

1.2. Policy research organisations and networking: diversity in approaches and regions

Researchers and actors engaged in policy communities commonly use the term ‘think-tank’ to denote a variety of policy research organisations (Stone et al, 1998). The UNDP defines ‘think-tanks’ as ‘organizations engaged on a regular basis in research and advocacy on any matter related to public policy’ (UNDP, 2003). Think-tanks have also been defined as ‘aggressive institutions that actively seek to maximize public credibility and political access to make their expertise and ideas influential in policy-making’ (Rich, 2004: 11). The characteristics commonly associated with the designation ‘think-tank’ are: an organisations that seeks to bridge the gap between science and policy, serve public interests and conduct research (Stone, 2007). The number of ‘think-tanks’ around the world was found to have reached almost 6,500 in 2009 on the basis of one particular definition (McGann, 2011). However, it is difficult to identify unifying characteristics that separate ‘think-tanks’ from many other policy research organisations such as NGOs and universities (Stone et al, 1998).

As these definitions demonstrate, there are important differences in the way in which research organisations seek to influence policy-makers. A recent paper by Jones (2008) on monitoring and evaluating policy influence presents a useful typology that distinguishes organisations on the basis of their preference for using inside or outside tracks for accessing policy-makers, and whether their preference is based on evidence and research or values and interests. This typology is reproduced in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Policy-influencing approaches



Reproduced from Start and Hovland (2004) in Jones (2008).

Besides these differences in approaches, there are also important regional differences in the roles, functions and relative importance of think-tanks.

In Africa, the democratic reforms implemented throughout the 1990s increased the demand for policy research organisations. A variety of factors resulted in the formation of African research organisations which either:

- a) undertake research studies in accordance with existing policy agendas,
- b) focus on the evaluation of policy implementation, or, if they do not meet these demands,
- c) are largely ignored and underfunded (Ayuk and Marouani, 2007: 32).

Many studies examine the apparent monopolisation of the agenda-setting and policy-formation stages in Africa. These generally fall into either of two categories:

1. studies implicating international actors;
2. studies levelling accusations at policy-makers (Conteh and Ohemeng, 2009).

Whether or not international actors monopolise policy agendas, donors should be aware that the international funding of 'think-tanks' in countries like Ghana has *'created the impression that these institutions are dancing to the tune of the international organisations that support them'* (Ohemeng, 2005: 458). To promote democratic ownership, donors and partners should ensure transparency in funding arrangements and the policy processes themselves, an issue explored in more detail in Chapter 2.

Many countries in Latin America have well-established traditions of research connected to policy processes (see Box 1.2). Policy-making processes are often characterised by the importance of personal relationships in creating institutional linkages between research organisations and policy-makers. In middle-income Latin American countries, organisations connected to policy-makers are often those funded by national interest groups, while least-developed countries are more often dependent on donor-funded research. The apparent preference of Latin American policy-makers for locally funded research organisations could be due to the fact that these organisations are considered more legitimate (Garce and Una, 2010).

Box 1.2: Evolution of policy research organisation in Argentina (Una, 2010)

Gerardo Una distinguishes four types of 'think-tanks' in Argentina:

1. private research centres,
2. academic centres,
3. political foundations,
4. advocacy groups.

Una links the diversity of organisations to the country's changing need for policy research, which resulted in the use of different forms of governance in the past. During the period of authoritarian rule (from the 1960s to 1983), the majority of think-tanks were engaged in economic research and attempted to maintain differing levels of political independence. Despite their desire for independence, these organisations had a strong influence on economic policy decisions. During the period from 1983 to the 1990s, democratisation was accompanied by the establishment of think-tanks in support of specific political parties. Finally, after the liberal economic reforms in the 1990s, think-tanks were set up that actively engaged with the process of policy implementation. Argentina's development experience provides a compelling picture of the importance that think-tanks can play in all governance circumstances, and how circumstances and organisations evolve over time.

Asia is a region with a wide diversity of experiences. India is now home to over 292 ‘think-tanks’, more than in either Germany (191) or France (176) (McGann, 2011). Indian think-tanks originally supported political parties, but have since diversified and now supply research to private and international interest groups (Garce and Una, 2010). Central Asian countries have witnessed dramatic changes in policy research as state-run institutions were privatised and began competing to supply information. Finally, China provides an enduring example of a country in which the existing policy research organisations are closely linked to, and funded by, the government (Stone, 2005: 3). The importance of policy research in China is evidenced by the presence of more than 425 ‘think-tanks’, second in number only to the United States (1816) (McGann, 2011).

The factors that would appear to determine the supply of and demand for policy-relevant research include:

1. the ability of public and private actors to access specific stages of the policy-making process;
2. the personal and institutional relationships between policy-makers and research organisations;
3. the perceived financial and political independence, or connections, between research organisations;
4. the capacities of governments and research organisations to supply or use the research data supplied to them.

In line with the differences between the countries and regions discussed above, one would expect approaches to policy-influencing adopted by research organisations to vary correspondingly from one country and region to another. Although all four types of policy-influencing should foster ownership, this paper looks specifically at the effectiveness of and the provision of donor support to those organisations that focus predominantly on advice as the main mode of influence.

What appears to be a unifying characteristic across global think-tanks is that they actively seek close relationships with policy-makers in order to influence public or private policy (Garce and Una, 2010). While some ‘think-tanks’ are strictly non-partisan, others only support political parties (Datta, Jones and Mendizabal, 2010). Policy research organisations may be donor-supported consultancies, government-created or government-funded technocratic research organisations (e.g. in China), organisations tied closely to political parties (as in Germany) or corporations (as in Japan), or organisations that function primarily to support international institutions (e.g. the IMF, the OECD, the World Bank, and the WTO) (Stone et al, 1998; and Stone, 2007). Table 1 compares a selection of African policy research organisations (more detailed descriptions are given in Appendix 1).

Table 1 : African policy research organisations⁷					
	SAIIA	AGI	REPOA	AERC	CEPA
Created in:	1934	2005	1995	1988	1994
Type of organisation:	NGO	African international organisation	NGO	Network, secretariat with NGO status	NGO
Geographic focus:	National International	International	National	International	National
Issue focus:	Multiple	(governance)	Multiple	(economy)	(economy)
Languages:	English	English/French	English/Swahili	English	English
Funders:	International	International, but	International	International and	International

⁷ Abbreviations used: South-African Institute for International Affairs (SAIIA), African Governance Institute (AGI), Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA), African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), Centre for Policy Analysis (CEPA).

	and national	prefer African		African ⁸	and African ⁹
Intervention strategies:					
Training/ capacity development:	X	X	X	X	X
Publishing information:	Reports/ Papers/ Opinion Pieces	Reports/ Papers	Reports/ Papers	Reports/ Papers	Reports/ Papers Opinion
Knowledge centre/ library:	X	X (online)	X		X
Conferencing:	X	X	X	X	X
Other:		Mapping organisations and experts	Focus on strengthening research skills	Networking approach	

As Appendix 1 describes, SAIIA, REPOA and CEPA started with a national focus, which they later expanded into a more regional or international focus. The two other research organisations began with a continental focus. All organisations are involved in activities associated with research organisations in general and ‘think-tanks’ in particular, but only two of them specifically try to reach out to policy-makers and the media. Thus, some organisations seek to directly inform and feed into key policies, while others concentrate on providing informed analysis and publications that can be used by third parties to engage in meta-analyses and/or policy advocacy.

While this comparison may tell us something about the nature of the organisations and the types of impact they attempt to achieve, it does not say much about their success or otherwise in attaining their objectives.

While the organisations described in Table 1 may be regarded as ‘specialising in research’, research in developing countries is conducted by a much broader group of organisations, including:¹⁰

- non-profit-making think-tanks and private-sector research organisations;
- economic and social partners, including trade unions;
- civil society in all its diversity.

Research networks are also increasingly important. In the past two decades, global communications have linked policy research institutions across geographic and sector boundaries to form expanding networks of influential research communities (UNDP, 2003; Rich, 2004; Stone, 2007; and Conteh and Ohemeng, 2009). The flow of analytical approaches, expertise and ideas between countries and continents is driven by economic globalisation, the spread of democratisation and the increasingly global nature of governance challenges (i.e. climate change, security and trade) (Garce and Una, 2010; Stone et al, 1998; and Stone, 2007). Networks can assist researchers in identifying common or complementary research agendas, and can forge strong North-South partnerships. By making more informed, strategic choices, researchers can maximise the likelihood that their findings will have an impact on policy and practice (Pellini and Serrat, 2010).

⁸ African Capacity Building Foundation and African Development Bank.

⁹ African Capacity Building Foundation.

¹⁰ Adapted from: ECDPM (2003) *The Cotonou Agreement. A User's Guide for Non-State Actors*. Brussels: ACP Secretariat.

National networks are often based on common interests, and enable the formation of more effective advocacy coalitions by exploiting 'economies of scale' and the increased visibility of public campaigns. In countries where informal relations are important for policy processes, policy-makers may rely on multiple research organisations for support and subsequently institutionalise these networks once they are in government (Garce and Una, 2010).

At regional (i.e. supranational) levels, issues such as security and economic development encourage networking among organisations in countries impacted by their neighbours' policies. This has led to the creation of networks such as ASEAN-ISIS, which have been recognised as '*influential informal arrangements connecting institutes, university centres and official actors*' (Garce and Una, 2010: 61). Large international networks, such as CGIAR and CODESRIA, which support policy research organisations such as IFPRI, have a wider impact. The 2010 African Economic Outlook, produced by the OECD, the African Development Bank and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (to which 20 African research organisations contributed), is a good example of network output.¹¹ International fora (e.g. Global ThinkNet, Tokyo Club and Global Development Network) help establish international policy dialogues (Stone, 2005; see Box 1.3).

It is clear that, irrespective of their geographic location, Southern research organisations are forging closer links with national, regional, and global communities of research practices and political ideologies. These interlinkages are driven by the global nature of economic, social, and environmental governance challenges. However, this trend does not diminish the importance of policy research organisations acting at national or sub-national level by supplying country-specific, policy-relevant research on an independent and individual basis.

Box 1.3: The Global Development Network (GDN)

The GDN was established in 1999 and is headquartered in New Delhi, with offices in Cairo and Washington D.C. GDN is a global network of research organisations, linking more than 8,000 individual researchers. The GDN's objective is to 'build research excellence, promote networking, expand outreach and shape global policy debates in developing and transition countries'. To accomplish this objective, the GDN performs five core activities:

- 1) it undertakes global research projects;
- 2) it awards prizes and medals;
- 3) it organises annual conferences;
- 4) it organises regional research competitions;
- 5) it hosts a platform called GNet.

In addition to these five core activities, GDN contributes to projects aimed at improving the understanding of the links between research and policy, and promoting evidence-based policy-making in low- and middle-income countries. These initiatives include efforts to bridge the gap between research and policy, and piloting a sector-specific research policy initiative on themes such as trade and agriculture in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

Clearly, international networks such as GDN are quickly evolving into active policy knowledge brokers with a global influence.

¹¹ For more information, see: www.africaneconomicoutlook.org.

1.3. Policy research organisations: country experiences

In order to gain a better understanding of how factors and organisations translate into country experiences, we conducted a more detailed examination of policy research organisations in developing countries. An overview of the situation in four countries (i.e. Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia and Namibia) is given below. The countries in question are characterised by differing levels of donor engagement and needs for international support. More detailed descriptions of the four countries are given in Appendix 2.

	Ethiopia	Ghana	Indonesia	Namibia
General environment for policy-making and use of research	Government hostile to independent research; turbulent political climate	Increasing openness to policy alternatives; growing variety of organisations engaged	Organisations dependent on the government's funding agenda; limited market	High demand for research, often commissioned internationally; low government capacity to use research
No. of think-tanks (McGann 2011)	25	36	20	14
Common problems experienced by policy research organisations	(1) gaining access to policy processes, (2) finding funding, (3) 'brain drain'	High dependence on external funding, adversely affecting political credibility	Low levels of available funding; low effectiveness of donor interventions	Low levels of international funding; lack of capacity for strong national research organisations
Sources used	Rahmato, 2008	Ohemeng, 2005	Garce and Una, 2010	Hansohm in Ayuk and Marouani, 2007

As is clear from the descriptions in Appendix 2, in countries where the central government is not open to third-party research, it is unlikely both that independent research organisations will receive sufficient support and that there will be enough demand for their research. In such settings, the authorities are more likely to support technocratic organisations that supply research on demand. However, as is seen in Ethiopia, the provision of high-quality research by independent organisations in countries with non-democratic processes can help to alter public perceptions and the overall policy environment. Thus, even where the environment is not conducive to democratic governance, the support of policy research organisations can still help to develop more democratic processes over time. Cases such as Ethiopia highlight the importance of including non-state actors in the selection of policy research organisations.

In countries which already have more inclusive, democratic governance systems, such as Ghana and Namibia, policy research organisations can take many different forms and may continue to need financial and technical support (either domestic or international) to develop their capacities. If the research organisations thus supported help to establish effective development policies, they may be able to diversify their funding sources once the national economies and political institutions grow more stable (as has happened in India). The case of Ghana also indicates the importance of ensuring that international support for policy research is provided in a transparent manner, safeguarding the research organisations' credibility in the eyes of the government and public.

Finally, in all four cases, the level of political support, the sources and amount of funding, and the capacities of the research organisations are all important factors affecting the creation of an environment that is conducive to policy research, and the ability of such support to increase broad-based democratic ownership.

1.4. Factors that enable democracy-enhancing policy research

Understanding policy processes in recipient and donor countries is essential in order to determine whether policy research is relevant and capable of increasing democratic ownership, and whether the current state of understanding is sufficient. Research organisations in developing countries face major challenges arising from their need to address complex policy challenges while at the same time adapting to rapidly changing political environments. Likewise, donor agendas are continuously evolving to satisfy their constituents' interests.

Given that the credibility of Southern policy research may be undermined by perceptions of dependency on donor agendas (as in the case of Ghana), it is important to ensure that support is completely transparent. The perceptions of partner country constituencies play an important role in determining whether donor support also increases the broad-based democratic ownership of the associated policy processes.

Three main factors determine the ability of policy research organisations to strengthen democratic ownership:

- a) the adequacy of its budget and staff;
- b) the field or fields of research;
- c) the manner in which research findings are disseminated.

The extent of the terrain covered by an organisation in relation to its capacity also plays a role in the scale of its influence,¹² and affects the quality of the work it produces. Evidence needs to be credible and convincing, to be presented in a transparent manner, and to provide practical solutions to pressing problems in the policy process, i.e. policy selection, implementation and evaluation.

The choice of operational approaches (e.g. tailor-made policy inputs and scientific studies), the degree of access to policy-making actors and institutions, and the way in which research findings are presented (e.g. as concise, well-structured notes, books, or articles) all play a role in determining whether a research organisation's work meets the needs of a country's political and institutional arrangements. Networks can also be important channels through which organisations can systematically connect with and complement partner organisations. They can help ensure that researchers and policy-makers share common understandings, develop trust and communicate effectively.

Based on this overview of processes, organisations and country experiences, we have identified four basic factors that appear to determine whether support for Southern policy-relevant research can enhance broad-based democracy. These are:

¹² Effective spanning a limited number of fields would still require an interdisciplinary approach embracing the perspectives of a wide range of actors, and would thus be quite demanding in itself.

1. ***The policy-making process must be both transparent and open, so that policy research can be incorporated into each stage of the process.*** The monopolisation of any stage of the policy process by individual actors and institutions has the effect of separating the supply of and demand for policy research. This separation can be accelerated by unequal donor-partner relationships, historical institutional dependencies, individual policy-maker relationships, among other influences (Ayuk and Marouani, 2007; Bradley, 2007; Garce and Una, 2010; and Stone, 2005). Irrespective of the cause, if research organisations cannot access research demand, increasing the supply of policy research will simply result in *under-utilised* capacities.
2. ***The supply of policy research must correspond with perceptions of political credibility in a given country.*** In countries where donor involvement reduces the public credibility of research findings (e.g. Ghana), research organisations must be guaranteed political independence from funding sources, i.e. through core funding (Ohemeng, 2005). If the supply of research is to increase national ownership, research must be supported in a manner that preserves the legitimacy of research organisations in the eyes of policy-makers and their constituencies.
3. ***The supply of research must be adapted to the complex and unique problems encountered in individual countries.*** Governments are struggling with complex and unique governance challenges, and many of the policy-making processes encountered do not fit existing models or archetypes (Ayuk and Marouani, 2007; Bradley, 2007; Garce and Una, 2010; and Stone, 2005). In countries such as Namibia, even the appearance of good formal governance institutions does not guarantee that policy-making processes are sufficiently informed by relevant research. Policy research must reflect the political realities, governance challenges and capacities, and the complex institutional relationships that shape policy-making processes. Strong relationships between policy-makers and research organisations can be developed only if the research is context-appropriate.
4. ***Policy research organisations that increase the broad-based democratic ownership of policies would appear to be those which help to link broader constituencies to the policy-making process.*** Active policy research organisations can increase the acceptability of constituent-based policy options within both oppressive political environments (e.g. in Ethiopia until 1998) and democracies (e.g. Ghana since 1992). Even policy research organisations which function in a *patron-client* relationship can conceivably increase citizens' representation by feeding constituent-supported policy information into policy processes. However, organisations which exclusively represent the agenda of the ruling (national or international) elite may help governments to function in a technocratic sense, but will not necessarily promote democratic ownership.

This chapter has highlighted the vast complexity and diversity of policy processes, policy research organisations and country experiences. Research organisations can attract donor funding by emphasising their ability to enhance policy effectiveness and democratic ownership. A clear lesson emerging is that effective support for democratic ownership through research organisations does not benefit from a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. The level of existing knowledge actually means that much more research is still needed to understand how policies are made and influenced in developing countries. The next chapter will look at how international donor support might take such lessons into account.

2. International support for policy research organisations

International donors have supported research in developing countries for many decades. Given the diversity of the research organisations described in Chapter 1, as well as the disparate interests of donors (e.g. informing public policies and researching academic excellence), support for research in developing countries tends to be fragmented, both in an absolute sense and compared with other ‘sectors’.¹³ As a consequence of operating in a complex policy environment, developing country governments often lack defined national research priorities (both overall and sector-specific). The lack of priorities makes it even more difficult to explore avenues for further donor harmonisation and alignment. Finally, even where domestic research agendas have been put in place, many donors prefer not to work through the partner government for non-technical reasons.

2.1. Supporting research organisations

As domestic sources of support for independent policy research organisations in developing countries are usually scarce, international donors are the main source of funding. A recent mapping conducted by Jones, Baily and Lyytikäinen (2007) shows that donors support a wide range of research capacity-building initiatives in Africa, covering a broad range of disciplines and themes. The authors conclude that, although it is difficult to estimate the amounts invested, the overall proportion of development assistance spent on research capacity-building is relatively low. They also note that donors have different preferences for supporting research organisations:

- Bilateral donors tend to invest in individual training (particularly postgraduate programmes and PhD courses), institutional support for universities and partnerships and networks. The leading donors are Sweden, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC, Canada) and the Institut de recherche pour le développement (IRD, France) and the Netherlands.
- Multilateral donors provide institutional support for independent research organisations and networks. They invest mainly in supporting thematic-focused networks. The WHO is the biggest donor.
- To date, private foundations have focused on supporting sector-specific, multi-donor research networks, some of which include individual-level support through research fellowships.

As described in Chapter 1, partnerships are becoming increasingly common practice among research organisations (Horton, Prain and Thiele, 2009). North-South partnerships are widely used by bilateral donors, as well as research and academic organisations in developed countries, to support innovation and capacity development in the South. Partnerships are driven by both an individual organisation’s interest in linking with Southern partners and external pressure from donors (ILAC, 2010).

By examining donor support for research organisations (see Appendix 3 for a number of case studies), we can identify a number of ‘support typologies’. According to Jones, Baily and Lyytikäinen (2007), donors have traditionally limited their research capacity-building efforts to individuals, institutions or enabling environments. Now, however, they are making more and more use of flexible approaches that link and

¹³ The European Union’s Code of Conduct on Complementarity and Division of Labour explicitly refers to support for research as an exception to the agreements made on reducing the number of sectors in which EU bilateral donors and the European Commission are involved. The Code of Conduct is available at www.dev-practitioners.eu/fileadmin/Redaktion/Documents/Reference_Documents/EU_Code_of_Conduct.pdf

combine these three aspects. Modes of donor support are manifold and include varying funding modalities (e.g. research grants and individual scholarships), training (e.g. short courses and MA and PhD courses), the production of training materials, technical assistance, capacity-building for end users, research partnerships, mentoring, peer learning, and network and infrastructural support, e.g. for libraries and laboratories. The sectors and academic disciplines most often supported appear to be health, agriculture, the natural sciences and economics. Donors predominantly focus on knowledge generation and less on other stages of the knowledge cycle. Some are moving towards addressing aspects such as developing research agendas, communication and the uptake of research findings.

2.2. Strengthening democratic ownership with the aid of research organisations

As we saw in Chapter 1, policy-makers in developing countries require credible, objective information to address increasingly complex social and economic policy issues. Independent research organisations can play a crucial role in supplying this information and thus raise the standard of the national debate on policy options. Supporting research organisations is a means of gaining a critical mass of trained and experienced researchers, leading to better policies with greater democratic ownership. Effective, democratically owned policies are better able to promote sustainable and equitable development.

Among the achievements of existing initiatives are the wider dissemination of research findings and papers, higher enrolments in local MA and PhD programmes, better research administration and management capacities, and improved research quality and researcher skills (Jones, Baily and Lyytikäinen, 2007). Networks are a useful means of linking researchers, facilitating the identification of common or complementary research agendas, and forging strong North-South partnerships. By making more informed, strategic choices thanks to networking, researchers can increase the likelihood that evidence will have an impact on policy and practice (Pellini and Serrat, 2010).

As we saw in Chapter 1, many factors determine the ability of research organisations to contribute to democratic ownership. The following is an overview of the six main, interrelated lessons we have learned about donor support for the endogenous capacity development of policy research organisations, and their ability to strengthen democratic ownership. It is based on a number of studies.

Lesson 1: Secure local ownership of research

Research is more likely to increase national ownership if it is supported in a manner that preserves the legitimacy of research organisations in the eyes of local policy-makers and constituencies. Two factors have a big influence on credibility: the political independence of research organisations and local ownership of research (Ohemeng, 2005).

Although donors recognise the importance of local ownership, they often fail to invest in the local institutions that carry out the research and analysis policy-makers need (IDRC, 2009). The globalisation of research has generally strengthened the attractiveness of research centres in the North. Even if it does not actually foster brain drain, it still pulls scholars worldwide towards international research agendas that are not necessarily geared to local development priorities.

Research should supply the knowledge that enables partner countries to analyse, formulate, negotiate, implement and evaluate their own development agendas (Akuffo, 2008). The COHRED (2008) study also concludes that developing country governments want to have more direct control over research conducted

within their borders. Since public policies work best if they are informed by robust research and analysis grounded in the local realities of local researchers, and designed and implemented by local actors, donor commitment to local ownership is vital for implementing the AAA. Without locally generated information and analysis, well-intentioned programmes cannot be fully aligned with the reality on the ground.

But who sets and owns the local research agenda? The formulation of a research agenda is often complicated by a lack of consensus among developing countries about research priorities. Partner countries need to be clear about where they want to go. Governments need input from researchers to prioritise their research needs and make corresponding budgetary provisions to which funders can contribute in support of the national research agenda. To this end, the members of the research community need to make their views clear to high-level government actors (Akuffo, 2008 & Tropika, 2008). Mozambique is an interesting example: it sets its own research agenda and has a ministry of science and technology that coordinates research projects (see also Chapter 4: Aligning research funding).¹⁴

Lesson 2: Guarantee financial independence and transparency

In order to promote democratic ownership, donors and partners should ensure that their funding arrangements are transparent and that they are intellectually and financially independent. Research organisations often lack the independence they need in order effectively to monitor government performance. Without (core) financial support, there is a risk that research organisations may undermine their credibility and independence by trying to satisfy funders. Some donors have specific requirements for which support is provided. This means the donor agency often designs and leads the project, resulting in policy research organisations primarily doing 'responsive research' rather than demand-led, quality research. Donor requirements may sometimes be excessively cumbersome, especially in cases where institutions receive funding from a range of sources (OECD, 2008; and Jones, Baily and Lytikäinen, 2007).

Although the OECD supports the idea of increasing democratic ownership by funding research organisations, it sees certain challenges in both the funding volume and the way it is provided. Donor contributions to research organisations' budgets and operations are often irregular and project-specific, preventing such organisations from conducting long-term, focused research (OECD, 2008). In cases where there is more open funding, research organisations can set forward-looking research agendas, respond to locally-determined needs, and build stronger research institutions (IDRC, 2009; and Jones, Baily and Lytikäinen, 2007). One example of more flexible donor funding is given in Box 2.1. The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' research policy goes a step further by stating that creating open knowledge systems is more effective than imparting knowledge to individuals or building research centres (see also 'stages in knowledge' below).

¹⁴ See: <http://sida.orbelon.com/research-cooperation/what-we-support/bilateral-cooperation.aspx>.

Box 2.1: The Think-tank Initiative

The Think-tank Initiative (TTI) is an IDRC multi-donor initiative co-funded by The Netherlands Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. TTI helps Southern policy research organisations to perform sound research that informs and influences national policy. TTI gives core funding through non-earmarked, multi-year grants, to help fund research programmes and operating costs. Grants cover up to 30 percent of an institution's overall budget over the funding period. Core grants are four-year renewable grants, or two-year renewable grants combined with dedicated capacity development to address key weaknesses. TTI also conducts institution-strengthening activities, providing access to training and technical support in the areas of research quality, policy linkages and organisational performance. TTI assists participating organisations by identifying and mobilising appropriate sources of technical support in three broad areas: research methods and skills; communication and outreach; and general organisational development (IDRC, 2009).

Stable, non-earmarked funding is a prerequisite for flexible and proactive policy research that is adaptive to changing circumstances, and also for developing independent research priorities and setting up research programmes that have a constructive influence on public policy. However, many research organisations still lack access to predictable (core) funding. Predictability therefore needs to play a bigger role in funding decisions. The OECD promotes investments in permanent endowments for research organisations in developing countries that have a proven record of research quality and political relevance. This approach provides long-term stability and sustained financial certainty for research organisations, allowing them to conduct research and maintain their independence. Research organisations can then complement this 'budget support' by generating income from their products and services (OECD, 2008).

Lesson 3: Harmonise research funding

Weak international coordination in the funding of research is another challenge. Although donors have been found to be sympathetic to the concept of trying to reduce administration costs by collaborating, they have yet to agree on a harmonised agenda for research funding (COHRED, 2008).

For example, the global health research landscape has become crowded with initiatives. This has created concerns that internationally funded research projects may not match national priorities and that they may even inadvertently work against them. At the same time, multiple donors often fund the same project, with each setting different criteria for its evaluation process. The result is excessive paperwork and conflicting priorities (TDR, 2010).

The Paris Declaration calls for donor actions to be '*more harmonised, transparent and collectively effective*'. This requires donors to go beyond their own interests and engage with other donors, working together to harmonise their operations to support and fund research, by developing an easily accessible and transparent funding system. Effective harmonisation by donor countries can substantially reduce the recipient's transaction costs for research. Harmonisation can also promote mutual complementarity and deliver more comprehensive research support.

In order to better channel research funds, donors are advised to:

- establish a system with complementary grants that builds research systems, instead of funding individual projects;
- set up an efficient mechanisms for managing external research funds;

- channel funds through partner countries' systems;
- produce uniform reporting formats and mechanisms to be used by all donors, to support mutual accountability;
- adhere to the Paris Declaration to set and achieve goals and priorities (Akuffo, 2008 & COHRED, 2008 & TropIKA, 2008).

At the same time, merely harmonising funding agendas could reduce a partner country's ability to exercise governance and provide leadership in research if developed without individualised country approaches. Such harmonisation without alignment (e.g. through global research initiatives) could leave the national funding environment fragmented and inefficient (COHRED, 2008). ESSENCE is an interesting example of a group of funders who have come together to provide concerted support to low-income countries in the area of health research (see Box 2.2).

Box 2.2: ESSENCE

ESSENCE (Enhancing Support for Strengthening the Effectiveness of National Capacity Efforts) is a collaborative framework established in 2008 and hosted by the TDR (Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases). It aims to improve the impact of investments in institutions and enabling mechanisms that address the needs and priorities identified in national strategies for research into health-related issues, in the spirit of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. It focuses on how the funders can best harmonise their work, be coherent and learn from each other in their quest for supporting research capacity in Africa. The group includes development cooperation agencies like DFID, IDRC, the Netherlands Foreign Ministry, Norad, Sida, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Wellcome Trust (TDR 2010, see also <http://apps.who.int/tdr/svc/partnerships/initiatives/essence>).

Lesson 4: Align research funding

In order to promote the broad-based democratic ownership of development, donors should align their support for national research priorities and policies where these are in place, and otherwise state explicitly that they are not planning to align their support. Donors should review and adjust their approaches, moving away from traditional methods and criteria for funding, and align their overall support to partner countries' national development frameworks (TropIKA, 2008).

If local research capacities, priorities and policies are not sufficiently developed, building such components should become a priority in itself. Helping partner countries to strengthen their national research systems would allow donors to align and harmonise their support with national research agendas. Donors involved in research cooperation with a country or a regional or international organisation should:

- develop the partner country's capacity to negotiate collaborative research activities;
- urge the partner country to apply for research grants in line with its domestic strategy;
- respect the rules and regulations on research, including research permits, research ethics, staff remuneration and institutional contracts.

Partner countries receiving research support can enhance their influence over donor alignment if they 'harmonise internally', i.e. secure a consensus on their 'national' research priorities. All countries should seek to put in place the minimum conditions needed to enable alignment and harmonisation and, where necessary, get help in order to do this. The COHRED study recommends that every country should have at least:

- a credible set of regularly updated research priorities;
- a research management directorate (in government or in a research council) to provide a mechanism for interaction with donors and research sponsors;
- methods of clearly communicating national priorities – both inside and outside the country (COHRED, 2008).

Lesson 5: Strengthen research capacity

Good local research requires strong local institutions (OECD, 2008). Southern universities and graduate programmes need to be strengthened if capacity development is to be sustained. However, this is a long-term and time-consuming pursuit (Jones, Baily and Lyytikäinen, 2007). There appears to be a lack of quality assurance for research supported by capacity-strengthening programmes (Jones, Baily and Lyytikäinen, 2007). For capacity development efforts to be effective, donors need to focus on those sectors and institutions that have the greatest potential to contribute to a country's development in the long run. The starting point for an effective research capacity-building strategy should be the identification of areas of comparative advantage and niche sectors, to be performed in conjunction with governments, universities and local research institutions. Box 2.3 gives an example of a form of donor support that includes capacity development.

Box 2.3: The Open Society's Think-tank Fund

The Think-tank Fund, managed by the Open Society Institute, supports independent policy organisations that strengthen democratic processes in their countries by identifying and analysing policy options, consulting with the government and putting forward recommendations, involving stakeholders outside government circles in policy debates, and making their findings widely available to the public. The Think-tank Fund pursues this mission through two distinct grant-making programmes in support of independent, multi-thematic policy centres in various social and political areas: one for 'core and institutional support to multi-thematic think-tanks' and another called 'open society new response projects'. The Fund complements its grant-making with a series of activities aimed at building the capacity of grantees. The Think-tank Fund is planning to place greater emphasis on the development of institutions, capacity-building for policy research and analysis, and the exchange of experiences and practices (Open Society Institute, 2008).

Supporting capacity development in relation to existing research processes, particularly those driven by local initiatives, is a key aspect of achieving the Accra objectives. However, donors often fail to recognise existing capacities or omit to use needs assessments as the starting point for capacity-strengthening work. Understanding the local context is a prerequisite for successful capacity-building, a point which many donors still overlook. Needs assessments must be based on an understanding of the history and context, especially given the large number of cases in which existing capacity has subsequently been scaled down (Jones, Baily and Lyytikäinen, 2007).

Lesson 6: Support research networks and the use of research findings

Research capacity development should focus on all the stages of the research process, including research synthesis and communicating research findings to policy-makers and practitioners. Investing in capacity-building and training is a burden for a developing country's research organisations, given their limited human resources and other resource constraints. Reduced budgets also prevent these institutions from connecting with other international research organisations and networks that could provide useful technical support and assistance (OECD, 2008)

In 2008, the Netherlands Ministry for Development Cooperation adopted a new policy on knowledge and innovation. This policy is guided by the following three interrelated aims:

1. **the knowledge base:** creating a critical mass of skilled people, including researchers, by investing in access to higher education in developing countries;
2. **knowledge circulation:** facilitating linkages between science, practice and policy;
3. **knowledge policies:** strengthening the wider enabling environment.

Taking these aims forward requires the Netherlands and other donors to move beyond supporting organisations and individuals in relative isolation, and instead provide their support in the form of 'innovation systems'. The latter are defined as 'networks of organisations, enterprises and individuals focused on introducing new products, processes and arrangements, together with the institutions and policies that affect their behaviour and performance' (DGIS 2008). Making such a shift to more joined-up form of support requires donors to learn more about how research and policy-making processes operate in developing countries, and provide targeted and flexible funding and/or technical assistance on this basis. It would be easier to take this forward in more concrete terms if developing countries were able to formulate their own research and innovation systems.

2.3. Monitoring and evaluating support for research organisations

Research that is undertaken to inform and influence public policy can have broad aims such as influencing policies, changing behaviour and building relationships. Its outputs include policy briefing papers, websites, public meetings, one-on-one meetings, coalitions and networks. Research outputs are designed to reach specific groups of stakeholders, such as policy-makers, bureaucrats, donors, businesses, civil-society organisations, the media and the general public (Hovland, 2007). This means that specific monitoring and evaluation approaches are needed in order to ascertain whether research organisations are indeed having the desired influence. These approaches require a lot of time and investment.

Various problems arise when assessing donor support for research organisations and its results in terms of democratic ownership. First, the impact of research organisations is influenced by existing actors, events and the politics of policy-making processes. In other words, the impact of research organisations does not depend solely on the quality of their research. Research organisations need to take into account and balance the needs of a diverse set of stakeholders, including the intended research users, clients and donors, the research community and research participants. Responsiveness to all of these is crucial if the research findings are to be legitimate and effective. As a result, establishing a causal relationship between knowledge and policy is a huge challenge.

A second issue in assessing the impact of research on policy-making processes is how to define the concept of 'influence'. It is in the interests of research organisations to gather evidence for their influence in this process. However, policy-making processes involve different actors wanting to achieve desirable outcomes, and each actor has its own specific vision of national interests. This makes understanding the nature of influence, how it is exercised, and the role of research organisations a complicated business. Because of the complex and often *ad-hoc* nature of the policy-making process, it is not always possible to determine whether a research organisation has or has not had any influence. In certain cases, even where it is possible, the trust invested in networking with policy-makers might even make it undesirable to claim such influence. Clear goals need to be set regarding the degree of influence research organisations wish to

exert over policy-making processes, and also regarding the extent to which they wish to become entrenched in policy-making processes.

Despite the difficulties involved in evaluating the nature and extent of research organisations' contributions to public policy, such organisations still need to address the demands of donors and wider society regarding their role and influence. Also, donors who fund research want to know whether the research they fund makes a difference, and how and where to allocate funds in order to contribute to overarching development goals. Accountable processes are as important as high-quality research products (One World Trust, 2010). To meet these demands, various approaches for monitoring and evaluating the influence, or policy impact, of support for research organisations have been developed.

Measuring outputs

It is relatively easy to monitor outputs, i.e. the tangible goods and services produced by a research project, programme or organisation, for example in terms of the number of books, working papers, journal articles and policy briefs published, the number of website hits, meetings held, events organised, conference held, networks formed, media appearances made, and so forth. However, it is much more difficult to assess the influence or impact of research organisations in terms of changes in behaviour, knowledge, policies, capacities and/or practices to which the research has contributed, either directly or indirectly. This type of outcome or impact may be defined as: '(...) *the influences of research findings on policy, managerial and professional practices, social behaviour or public discourse. Such impact may be instrumental, influencing changes in policy, practices and behaviour, or conceptual, changing people's knowledge, understanding and attitudes towards social issues*' (Davies, Nutley and Walter, 2005: 11).

Outcome-mapping

Outcome mapping is one way of assessing the influence of research organisations.¹⁵ This approach examines changes in the behaviour, relationships, activities, or actions of a research organisation and can lead to different outcomes. Although not necessarily directly caused by them, these outcomes can be logically linked to a programme's activities. The focus is on the contributions to outcomes, but the relationships are not necessarily ones of cause and effect (Hovland, 2007).¹⁶

Uptake

Another system of measurement used by Hovland is the uptake of an organisation's outputs, i.e. '*the extent to which its research and recommendations have been 'picked up' by others. Uptake is here defined as direct responses to the research project, programme or institution (e.g. the research is mentioned in a government policy paper, on a range of websites, referred to in a newspaper article, etc)*' (Hovland, 2007: 26). Uptake can be monitored and evaluated by impact logs that track responses triggered by research outputs such as informal feedback, comments and anecdotes. Impact logs are a way of capturing the qualitative and non-systematic feedback that would otherwise be lost. They can provide information on where and how research triggers responses and informs policy. Citation analysis can also be used to assess an organisation's impact on policy documents, operational guidelines, training manuals, newspaper articles, websites and other documents. User surveys (questionnaires, focus groups, etc.) are also useful tools for assessing uptake.

¹⁵ More information about Outcome Mapping can be found here: www.outcomemapping.ca/

¹⁶ Hovland (2007) lists many other examples of ways of monitoring and evaluating the outcomes and impact of a policy organisation, including RAPID outcome assessment (29), see also ODI (2009), Most Significant Change (32), Innovation histories (33) and Episode Studies (34).

Qualitative assessment

McGann (2009) has developed an assessment tool for evaluating a research organisation's impact. A positive impact is defined as that which 'changes the behaviour, relationships, activities or actions of the people, groups, and organisations with whom a programme works directly.' McGann performs a quantitative assessment of a list of indicators. However, this list is focused more on assessing the organisation as an institution than on measuring the impact of its research. McGann proposes a qualitative assessment for examining policy impact, as there is often an impact even if policy prescriptions are not translated directly into policies. To ascertain the degree to which a research organisation's outputs have been used, NGOs, members of the government, and policy-makers should be questioned with the aid of interviews, surveys, questionnaires and focus group meetings.

Qualitative methods

Quantitative methods are useful for evaluating policy influence, by documenting patterns and trends in a research organisation's behaviour and providing an indication of their influence. Qualitative methods, such as archival research and interviews, are useful for capturing intangibles that reveal the inner workings of the policy-making process. Nonetheless, methodological barriers remain. Assessing policy influence is inherently difficult.

Combining different approaches

Abelson (2010) emphasises the value of combining different methodological approaches. Abelson sees the policy-making process as a series of conversations (often concurrent) between multiple actors. He claims that influence is not tied directly to specific policy outcomes. Rather, differing degrees of influence are achieved through interactions and exchanges between participants involved either directly or indirectly in the policy-making process. This process identifies organisations which, by virtue of their expertise and connections, are well equipped and positioned to influence policy-making.

Monitoring can also take account of 'contextual factors' that affect the influence exerted by organisations. An ODI working paper posits that the kind of evidence that is likely to be used by policy-makers is determined by the following overlapping areas:

- (i) the political context;
- (ii) the evidence;
- (iii) the links between policy and research communities, within a fourth set of factors;
- (iv) external influences (Pellini and Serrat, 2010: 2).¹⁷

Other challenges affecting M&E

Monitoring and evaluating donor support for research capacity development brings additional challenges. Capacity-building is often embedded in other programmes and difficult to separate out, monitor and evaluate. Outcomes and long-term results are difficult to attribute to specific interventions. This kind of support often lacks a clear conceptualisation of capacity-strengthening and a theory of cause and effect (Jones, Baily and Lyytikäinen, 2007).

¹⁷ See Overseas Development Institute (2004) Bridging Research and Policy in International Development. Briefing Paper. Available at: www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/159.pdf.

Evaluation capacity development: 2008 ECDPM study

In 2008, the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) completed an extensive multi-sectoral and multi-regional study of capacity, performance and change. The study used 16 case studies to identify five core *capabilities*¹⁸ which, to the degree that they are developed and integrated successfully, contribute to the overall capacity or ability of an organisation or system to create value for others. The cases confirmed that all five capabilities are necessary, yet none is sufficient by itself:

1. the capability to survive and act;
2. the capability to generate development results;
3. the capability to relate;
4. the capability to adapt and self-renew;
5. the capability to achieve and maintain coherence.

These five core capabilities may be seen as criteria for monitoring changes in capacity and performance. They provide a basis for assessing a situation at a given point and then tracking it over time. For this purpose, the framework provides certain pointers (i.e. qualitative indicators) that may not be equally pertinent to each case, so that stakeholders will need to define each of them more precisely for their own specific contexts. The pointers should focus on the process, opportunities and key moments rather than on precise types of change that are not predictable in advance. This framework for evaluating capacity development was recently used in a multi-donor study under the leadership of the Netherlands Foreign Ministry and Operations Evaluation Department. The synthesis report for this evaluation is due to be completed in early 2011 and may include useful methodological reflections for evaluating research organisations and their contributions to democratic ownership.

Registration system needed

The monitoring and evaluation of research organisations is currently inadequate, in terms of both regularity and quality. The creation of a registration system with data on support for research in individual countries could be a step forward. Such a system is currently more or less non-existent. Data from donors, both web-based and paper-based, is neither easily accessible nor clear about research funding. Also, partner countries do not register contributions to research. By bringing information together, such a system could strengthen research, and monitoring and reporting. In addition, 'platforms' for harmonising debate, learning, and monitoring and evaluation need to be created, both in individual countries and within institutions. Lessons need to be documented and published (COHRED, 2008).

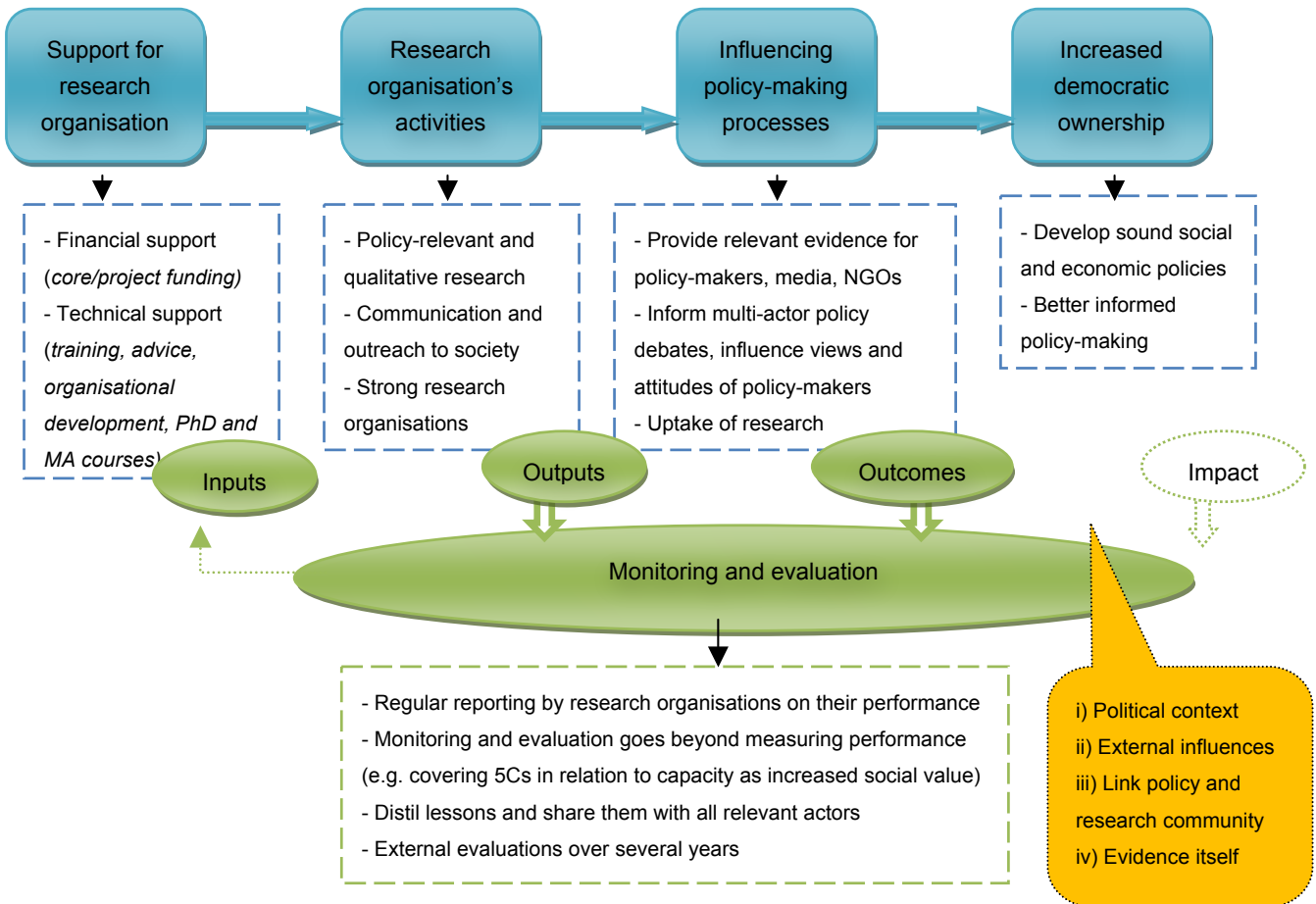
In short

As we have explained, no single approach to monitoring and evaluation can measure the full impact of research organisations. Monitoring and evaluation depends on the nature of the research, the goals of the research organisation in question, the purpose of the assessment, the time and resources available, the institutional and political setting, and the type of impact. Generally, best practices combine different elements and approaches for different goals, and need to be adapted to the specific situation and aims of the research organisation at hand. At the same time, a careful balance needs to be sought between promoting innovative monitoring and learning approaches on the one hand, and the need not to

¹⁸ **Competencies:** the energies, skills and abilities of individuals; **capabilities:** the collective ability of a group or a system to do something either inside or outside the system. The collective skills involved may be technical, logistic, managerial or generative (i.e. the ability to earn legitimacy, to adapt, to create meaning, etc); **capacity:** the overall ability of an organisation or system to create value for others (Engel, Keijzer and Land, 2007).

overburden research organisations receiving donor support on the other.

Figure 2: Evaluating how support for research organisations helps to foster democratic ownership through



3. Recommendations for helping research organisations to contribute more to democratic ownership

This paper analyses the potential contribution of research organisations to democratic ownership in developing countries, and how donors can effectively support these organisations. It does so on the understanding that strengthening and deepening the dialogue on development policy in developing countries is not only a key requirement for effective aid, but is also a legitimate development outcome in its own right.

The literature highlights the importance of understanding the context in which policy decisions are made, in order to find out what difference research organisations might make. The nature and influence of a research organisation's work depends to a large extent on the political context and governance system in which it operates. Further investments in political economic analysis could be a useful means of improving understanding of policy processes in developing countries, the prospects for increasing democratic ownership, and the actors' 'scope of influence'.

Our case studies (i.e. of Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, and Namibia) have highlighted four key factors that could play a role in determining whether support for Southern research organisations can foster democratic ownership:

1. Policy-making processes must be both transparent and open to systematically incorporating policy research. The monopolisation of any stage of the policy process can produce a divide between the supply of and the demand for policy research.
2. If the supply of research is to foster national ownership, research must be supported in a manner that preserves the research organisation's legitimacy in the eyes of policy-makers and constituencies.
3. Policy research must be adapted to the political realities, governance challenges and capacities, and complex institutional relationships that shape policy-making processes. Effective relationships between policy-makers and research organisations can be developed only if the research is context-appropriate.
4. Policy research organisations that increase the democratic ownership of policies would appear to be those which help to link broader constituencies to the policy-making process. Although organisations that exclusively represent the agenda of the ruling (national or international) elite may help governments to operate in a technocratic sense, they do not necessarily promote democratic ownership.

Support for Southern research organisations provided by multilateral, bilateral and civilateral donors is more fragmented compared with other sectors. However, it is also a dynamic field in which donors are trying out innovative approaches. Donor support, and particularly core funding, can strengthen demand articulation by research organisations and can be an important step to ensure that they help strengthen democratic ownership. Partnerships and other forms of collaborative arrangements are means of exploring 'economies of scale' and improving access to international funding.

Monitoring and evaluating the contributions of research organisations to democratic ownership is a challenging task. Depending on the parameters (e.g. the nature and mandate of the research organisation, the available resources and the particular political and institutional context), a range of approaches and tools are available. Current investments in monitoring and evaluation are inadequate in terms of both their frequency and their quality.

Based on the analysis contained in this paper, we wish to make the following recommendations for further discussion in the Work-Stream. Most importantly, this paper highlights the need to develop a better understanding of how research organisations can promote broad-based ownership as a basis for better informed policies, both in partner countries and among international donors. The following recommendations could thus inform **specific commitments in the outcome document of the 2011 High Level Forum** on Aid Effectiveness:

1. Further investments are needed to improve our **understanding of how information is produced and used** in policy processes in developing countries. Understanding these dynamics will help us understand what donor support can achieve, and may help donors to target their support more effectively.
2. Support for research for democratic ownership should not be restricted to specialist organisations. Instead, research should be supported by **strengthening the capacity of all key actors in society** (such as trade unions and religious institutions) **to produce and use policy-relevant information**. Long-term investments can foster a 'culture of learning' and promote evidence-based policy processes.
3. **South-South learning** should be promoted among those developing countries that have created **enabling environments** for endogenous policy research on the one hand and those that depend more intensively on external knowledge inputs on the other. Such an exchange would provide a basis for developing national development plans, and subsequently inform action by both partner country governments and international donors.
4. Emerging experiences gained from **pooled funding approaches and core funding** are important positive trends that should inform further donor practice. Flexible funding can promote **capacity development** processes in research organisations, result in the more effective articulation of demand for support on the part of the research organisations, and facilitate income diversification in a manner that strengthens their external legitimacy.
5. Important lessons have been learned about supporting democratic ownership through research organisations. However, current practices insufficiently reflect these lessons and could be more effective than they are now. Further **donor** learning is essential in the following areas:
 - a. encourage research organisations to set priorities in their agendas, instead of forcing them to manage multiple research areas and topics;
 - b. encourage research organisations to diversify their funding sources and ensure that funding is provided in a way that fosters rather than restricts their independence and legitimacy;
 - c. explore appropriate means of harmonising donor support, i.e. do not use general codes of conduct and principles for donor coordination that are not fully relevant;
 - d. as a means of achieving greater alignment, donors should help partner country governments to put in place or strengthen: (i) regularly updated research priorities, (ii) a research management directorate, (iii) a mechanism for dialogue with donors, and (iv) means of communicating their priorities and policies to wider audiences;
 - e. build on local initiatives as a means of supporting the sustainable development of those research sectors in which some capacity is already available;

- f. move away from commissioning research products from specialist organisations towards providing more holistic support covering all stages of knowledge production, interrogation and use by a range of actors.
6. Finally, based on the public documents examined for this study, current evaluations pay little attention to how research organisations in general, and those supported by donors in particular, help produce better informed policy processes and ultimately promote democratic ownership. Methodologically, there is no single method of measuring the influence of research organisations. Depending on the nature of the research performed, the purpose of the evaluation, and the types of impact, a combination of approaches needs to be used, adapted to the specific situation and aims of the research organisation in question.

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Appendix 1: Research organisations examined (Section 1.2)

Table 1: African research organisations, information and analysis

Given the many definitions in use, and the several thousands of organisations in developing countries producing and/or communicating research findings, describing a handful of case studies is a highly selective exercise. Cases could be selected, for instance, on the basis of their relative independence (from fully autonomous to quasi-governmental), their funding structure and size of outputs, thematic focus, number of years in operation, etc.

In the light of the aims of this paper, this chapter includes brief descriptions of five research organisations which:

- (1) are all based in Africa;
- (2) receive a substantial proportion of their funding from external (i.e. non-African) donors;
- (3) commonly engage in research brokering that is relevant at national, continental and international levels.

The descriptions focus on:

- the organisation's mission and mandate;
- the main areas of activity;
- certain aspects of the organisation's structure;
- its sources of funding.

The descriptions provide a basis for comparison and contain information that is important for understanding how donors can support research organisations in their endeavours to promote democratic ownership. Readers who are interested more in the differences and similarities between the organisations rather than their individual characteristics are therefore advised to skip this section.

1) The South-African Institute for International Affairs¹⁹

The South-African Institute for International Affairs (SAIIA) was founded in Cape Town in 1934. Since 1960, it has been located on the campus of the University of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg) with which it has strong links. In 2008, it opened offices in Cape Town, with Pretoria following suit in 2009. The institute is registered as a not-for-profit organisation with the Department of Social Development, and as a 'public benefit organisation' with the South African Revenue Services.

The institute's objects are to:

- (1) provide constructive policy input;
- (2) foster informed public debate;
- (3) build leadership and research excellence in Africa.

Its activities include:

¹⁹ Information adapted from <http://saiia.org.za/>.

- providing inputs for policy development both locally and internationally;
- performing research into topical issues that are relevant to Africa generally and South Africa specifically, with a special focus on governance and accountability; trade, investment (i.e. economic diplomacy) and development; South African foreign policy; existing and emerging powers and their role in Africa; and lastly, global challenges such as climate change and energy security;
- developing linkages and joint programmes with international organisations and agencies throughout the world;
- maintaining a resource centre and reference library (i.e. a United Nations depository as well as a World Bank Development Information Centre) for students and scholars of international relations;
- organising conferences, seminars and speakers' meetings on a wide range of topics, addressed by prominent South Africans and distinguished international guests;
- encouraging young people to take an interest in international relations, thanks to its leadership programme for postgraduate interns and its various outreach programmes for university students and high-school learners.

SAIIA's project funding derives from grants from international governments, multilateral organisations and private foundations. Some core institutional funding comes from local corporate, diplomatic and institutional members.

2) The African Governance Institute²⁰

In 2003, the Regional Bureau for Africa asked the UNDP's Oslo Governance Centre to organise a consultation on the creation of an institute that would examine the overall role of governance in the context of African development. The ensuing process resulted in the production of a draft paper that was examined and approved in June 2005 during the last consultation in Dakar, and led ultimately to the creation of the African Governance Institute.

The main idea was to create an AU-recognised centre of excellence that was responsible for conducting research on all forms of governance and contributing to the advancement of developmental governance in Africa. The Institute has its headquarters at Dakar in Senegal. Its status is that of an African international organisation. The Institute engages in three domains of activities:

- (1) undertake advocacy for democratic and developmental governance in Africa;
- (2) develop research and training methods designed to find solutions to the most pressing governance issues identified in political dialogue sessions;
- (3) disseminate and diffuse information on governance in Africa.

The institute strives to use an 'inductive' approach by allowing its activities to be guided by the endogenous demand of African states, the African Union, regional and sub-regional organisations, African civil society, the private sector, diaspora, and partners interested in developmental governance in Africa.

3) Research on Poverty Alleviation²¹

²⁰ Information adapted from www.iag-agi.org.

Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA) is a non-profit, Tanzanian non-governmental organisation (NGO) that began operating in 1995. REPOA undertakes and facilitates research, conducts and coordinates training, and promotes dialogue and the development of policy for pro-poor growth and poverty reduction. The organisation recognises that *'research is central to economic growth and the eradication of poverty, as it establishes an insightful basis for taking decisions and designing interventions.'* Against this background, REPOA seeks to support capacity development and to mobilise key stakeholders in order to facilitate the use of information for policy dialogue and development.

In previous years, REPOA performed its research in mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, with research projects for every district. Its current strategic plan for 2010-2014 expands its research grants programme to neighbouring East African countries.

The topics of REPOA's research projects include:

- (1) growth and poverty;
- (2) gender;
- (3) the environment and agriculture;
- (4) technology;
- (5) social, political and cultural issues;
- (6) governance;
- (7) vulnerability and social protection.

The organisation's primary sources of funding are the governments of the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Finland, and Tanzania. It also receives funding for collaborative and/or commissioned work from international organisations such as UNICEF, the World Bank and the ILO.

4) The African Economic Research Consortium²²

The African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) was established in 1988 as a public not-for-profit organization for advancing economic policy research and training. Its mission is to 'strengthen local capacity for conducting independent, rigorous inquiry into the problems facing the management of economies in sub-Saharan Africa'. The AERC's mission rests on two basic premises:

1. that development is more likely to occur under the sound and sustained management of the economy;
2. that such management is more likely in the presence of support from active and well-informed locally based professional economists who conduct policy-relevant research.

In order to advance its mission, the AERC seeks specifically to:

- (1) enhance the capacity of locally based researchers;
- (2) promote the retention of such capacity;
- (3) encourage its application in the policy context.

²¹ Information adapted from www.repoa.or.tz

²² Information adapted from www.aercafrica.org/home/index.asp

In addition to its own publications, contributions to external publications, and research and training programmes, the AERC has started to build an electronic network among the universities participating in the collaborative PhD and MA programmes.

5) The Centre for Policy Analysis²³

The Centre for Policy Analysis (CEPA or the 'Centre') was created in Accra, Ghana, in 1994 as an independent, non-profit-making, non-governmental think-tank. Its mission is to facilitate and promote an open and pro-active debate on policy issues which will impact positively on poverty reduction and generate growth in Ghana. Its mission encompasses three key intervention strategies:

- a. economic research and policy analysis, with the aim of generating evidence-based research findings to be used as input for advocacy on alternative policy options;
- b. capacity development in order to build bridges among different actors (including government, the private sector, academia and civil-society organisations);
- c. dissemination and outreach by means of workshops, seminars and conferences, in order to communicate research findings to a wider community and generate a greater awareness of policy issues.

The organisation also houses a research library and an information resource centre which caters for specialist research needs on CEPA's subject areas. CEPA promotes non-partisan, informed debate on key policy issues in relation to Ghana's economy, with an emphasis on macroeconomics, growth and poverty alleviation. CEPA's own research focuses on fiscal and monetary policy, debt management, trade policy, industrial policy, the social sectors, agricultural policy. The aim is to enable feasible policy alternatives to be proposed in these areas.

CEPA is partially funded by the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) in Harare, Zimbabwe, and the Ghana Research and Advocacy Program (G-RAP).²⁴

²³ Information adapted from www.cepa.org.gh/about_cepa.php

²⁴ The Ghana Research and Advocacy Programme (G-RAP) is financed jointly by the United Kingdom, Canada, Denmark and the Netherlands and provides grants to Ghana-based institutions engaged in pro-poor public policy research and advocacy. G-RAP provides core grant support (as opposed to project support) for strengthening the capacity and funding base of these institutions. For further information, see: www.g-rap.org/.

Appendix 2: Country cases examined (Section 1.3)

1. Ethiopia

The importance of policy research organisations in Ethiopia increased during the democratisation process following the collapse of the Derg, the ruling authoritarian regime, and the first elections in 1995. From the 1990s onward, Ethiopia witnessed the emergence of a variety of policy research organisations, including civil-society organisations (women's groups, etc.), NGOs, and policy advocacy groups (human rights organisations, etc.). However, the context in which policy research organisations operated in the 1990s was not conducive to an effective relationship with policy-making processes. There was a wide divide between ruling government actors and newly developing policy research organisations, such that non-state policy advocates were often subjected to government oppression (Rahmato, 2008: 6).

Until 1998, policy research organisations that were able to establish linkages with policy processes were those with a well-established institutional connection with the government (*ibid*). In the period since 1998, independent policy research organisations, such as the Forum for Social Studies (FSS), have developed a stronger foothold in Ethiopia and now actively provide alternative policy options (Rahmato, 2008; and Garce and Una, 2010).

The success of policy research organisations in Ethiopia has been linked to the following factors (Rahmato, 2008):

1. Despite a history of state rejection, policy research organisations have actively engaged the government and, by doing so, have raised their ability to function over time.
2. The ability to organise and support citizenry. For instance, FSS began as a small group of independent citizens who were keen to spark off a public debate and influence policy processes. They grew by actively engaging civil society and promoting discussion on relevant issues.
3. An ability to diversify funding and support. The Poverty Action Network in Ethiopia (PANE) was established in 2004 and is involved in monitoring PRSP implementation. It has developed a network of support which includes 18 international organisations (including Action Aid, Oxfam, Save the Children and the World Bank).

2. Ghana

Policy research organisations have had a significant impact on the development of governance institutions in Ghana and its democratisation. The development of an enabling environment for policy research organisations came as a result of significant and long-term changes in the relationship between government and society, and national research capacities. The authoritarian regimes that predated Ghana's democratisation in 1992 had largely excluded independent research organisations, civil society, and private interest groups from the policy-making process. Starting in 1992, the transition from authoritarian to democratic rule fostered new relationships between policy-makers and research organisations (Ohemeng, 2005).

The opening up of the market for policy information encouraged policy entrepreneurs with research capabilities to provide inputs to meet the growing government demand. The greater demand for policy research was also driven by the needs of politicians contesting for political offices and alternative policy options (Ohemeng, 2005). Other research organisations were sustained by the demand from international and local NGOs wishing to influence policy decisions.

The success of Ghana's research organisations has been linked to the following factors (Ohemeng, 2005: 456-458):

1. The highly skilled nature of the researchers engaging with the policy process. This has had a significant impact on the political credibility of their research in the eyes of policy-makers and constituencies. Research organisations are staffed by highly skilled personnel. Approximately 90 percent of research organisations in Ghana are led by researchers with graduate degrees.
2. An image of non-partisanship. Organisations have achieved this by promoting the cause of national development above any particular ideology. However, their genuine independence is contested by political parties and interest groups.
3. Adequate funding. Large amounts of international funding have been instrumental in building the capacity of research organisations. However, a reliance on international funding has also fostered an image of research organisations as 'mere implementers of the policy agendas of these international organisations'.

3. Indonesia

The first generation of policy research organisations in Indonesia was founded by the national government for the purpose of supporting its policy agenda. These organisations were a 'sounding board' for the government. Research organisations were used to develop policy responses that met the country's technocratic needs and social development. For example, Indonesia's Islamic revival created a demand for ideologically appropriate policies; research organisations aided the government in this process. In this manner, political regimes and elites used research organisations for the purpose of maintaining power. Furthermore, the monopoly of individuals and regimes largely prevented the development of organisations representing the interests of minorities such as the Chinese population (Stone, 2005). Although the environment for policy research organisations has begun to improve following Indonesia's first direct democratic elections in 2004, huge challenges still remain.

Policy research organisations in Indonesia face many political hurdles, both from the domestic environment and from donor interests. An example of a donor-driven complication was when Germany ceased providing core funding to the Institute for Economic Studies, Research and Development, forcing the latter to end its academic research and adopt an advocacy role (Garce and Una, 2010). This is only one example of the dependency that can exist between research organisations and funding sources in a context where there is a very limited market for policy-relevant information and funding options are equally scarce.

The success of Indonesian research organisations has been linked to the following factors (Garce and Una, 2010; Stone, 2005):

1. Their ability to supply research that meets the technocratic and political needs of policy-makers.
2. Their flexibility to alter their research agendas in accordance with changes in the political agendas of national funders and international donors.

4. Namibia

Namibia has a formal economic and governance institutional arrangement that is viewed as favourable for national development. Despite having a seemingly conducive political environment for development, the country has not experienced substantial economic growth, however. Namibia's stalled development has been linked to a lack of well-funded policy research organisations, sound evidence-based policies and the low capacity of governance institutions. Furthermore, the appearance of 'good' formal institutions has

largely secluded Namibia from externally imposed reform programmes (SAPs, etc.), which ignore the generally low capacity of the government and research organisations. Neither the World Bank, which works from Botswana, nor the IMF has a permanent presence in the country (Hansohm in Ayuk and Marouani, 2007; and worldbank.org).

In Namibia, *'policy is not based on a consistent set of economic information, analysis and policy choices'* (Hansohm in Ayuk and Marouani, 2007: 222). Universities and state-funded research organisations cannot offer salaries that permanently retain experts. International experts have not been engaged in skill transfer activities. The education system is not capable of meeting the demand for skilled researchers. Public-sector organisations cannot compete with the private sector.

Despite this long list of constraints, policy research organisations nonetheless support government planning, form networks, represent trade unions, deliver independent analyses, and assist in social and economic policy-making.

The fourteen or more policy research organisations that have been created have been successful thanks to their ability (McGann, J. 2011):

1. to take on workloads that are often beyond the capacity of individual research organisations;
2. to create linkages between private-sector and public-sector interest groups;
3. to supply policy research to other countries in the region, so as to diversify financial support and access greater demand.

Appendix 3: Donor policies examined (Section 2.1)

Bilateral donors (COHRED, 2008: 30-39):

- 1) IDRC (Canada) initiates, encourages, supports and conducts research into the problems of the developing regions of the world, and into the means for applying and adapting scientific, technical and other knowledge to their economic and social development. IDRC distinguishes three types of support:

- (i) funding researchers that carry out their work in their own institutions,
- (ii) providing expert advice to those researchers and
- (iii) funding regional research networks and institutions in those countries.

The primary recipients of project financing are usually research teams or research organisations in the South.

- 2) Danida (Denmark) supports research in developing countries to advance science and foster development. Danida has a three-pronged approach:

- (i) supplying support to research centres and knowledge networks in Denmark;
- (ii) building and maintaining capacity for research relevant to development assistance in the partner countries (to be performed mainly by the developing countries' own researchers);
- (iii) funding certain international institutions and research networks that foster the dissemination, communication and use of research by providers of development assistance.

- 3) Irish Aid's (Ireland) research strategy promotes evidence-based policy-making at international and national levels. It funds research into development issues by higher education institutions in Ireland, and has a scheme for generating high-quality evidence directly related to the policy areas of the Irish Aid programme and for building research capacity in developing countries. The primary recipients are government institutions and national and international research institutions.

- 4) The research policy of DGIS (the Netherlands) is to promote demand-driven approaches. Its aim is to improve the capacity of developing countries to carry out research in response to their own needs and to make use of existing research findings. Support is provided with the aid of sector-wide approaches (SWAp). Funding and bilateral programmes are used to:

- o help partner countries establish or implement a national knowledge and research policy;
- o support research and local research capacity using the principles of a system approach;
- o carry out or commission strategic research to improve or assess the country's poverty reduction strategy or the effectiveness of development efforts in the partner country;
- o invest in links between policy-makers and researchers, with a view to joint agenda-setting.

DGIS also participates in theme-based and regional programmes, in public-private partnerships and in partnerships with various multilateral agencies. The Dutch organisation for scientific research (NWO) also has funds to finance joint research programmes between Dutch institutions and institutions in developing countries.

- 5) Norad (Norway) has a fellowship programme for students from the South. The Norwegian Programme for Development, Research and Education (NUFU) is a programme for academic research and educational cooperation based on equal partnerships between institutions in the South and in Norway. The NUFU supports institutional cooperation and projects for building sustainable capacity and competence in research in Southern universities. The project activities include joint research projects, Master's and PhD degree programmes, and the publication and dissemination of research findings. The NUFU supports bilateral projects and regional network projects that foster the development of institutions in the South.
- 6) SIDA/SAREC (Sweden) seeks to strengthen national universities through the transfer of research management and financial responsibility to partner universities. As strengthening local ownership is one of its overriding principles, support is designed to allow partner countries to identify research topics; plan, implement and report on the research; and take administrative responsibility for the associated financial resources. SIDA/SAREC supports capacity development through training, i.e. training PhD students in research projects and in the production and dissemination of scientific data. Sweden also funds regional organisations and international networks.
- 7) DFID (UK) funding for research always includes capacity development elements. Research programmes are based on open calls. Proposals can come from the North and the South. In the most recent period, most of the lead institutions were UK-based, with partners in the South. Each DFID office has its own priorities, depending on those of the partner country's government.

The European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) aims to improve international cooperation between Europe and countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific.

Created in 1986 as an independent foundation, the **Centre's objectives** are:

- to enhance the capacity of public and private actors in ACP and other low-income countries; and
- to improve cooperation between development partners in Europe and the ACP Region.

The Centre focuses on **three** interconnected thematic programmes:

- Development Policy and International Relations
- Economic and Trade Cooperation
- Governance

The Centre collaborates with other organisations and has a network of contributors in the European and the ACP countries. Knowledge, insight and experience gained from process facilitation, dialogue, networking, infield research and consultations are widely shared with targeted ACP and EU audiences through international conferences, focussed briefing sessions, electronic media and key publications.

ECDPM Discussion Papers

ECDPM Discussion Papers present initial findings of work-in-progress at the Centre to facilitate meaningful and substantive exchange on key policy questions. The aim is to stimulate broader reflection and informed debate on EU external action, with a focus on relations with countries in the South.

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