

# Research proposal and grant writing for development impact

Session 1: Understanding research & knowledge systems and how to maximise the usefulness and use of research

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www.inasp.info / www.authoraid.info

#### **Our vision**

Research and knowledge at the heart of development

### **Our mission**

To support individuals and institutions to produce, share and use research and knowledge to transform lives

• Sharmin has already introduced us, and you may have looked us up, but in case not, here's our vision and mission



John Young Executive Director



Andy Nobes Programme Specialist

Today's agenda

15.35: Ice-breaker

15.45: Introduction to research impact

16.30: Tea break

16.45: Tools for policy impact

17.20: Final Q&A 17.30: Session ends

- And here's the agenda for today
- Each of the main sessions: Introduction to research impact and tools for policy impact have a presentation and opportunities to try out some of the ideas and tools in group work
- There's a lot to cover, but we'll try to stick to time.



- Please mute your mic
- You might want to have your phone handy or can use a separate browser window



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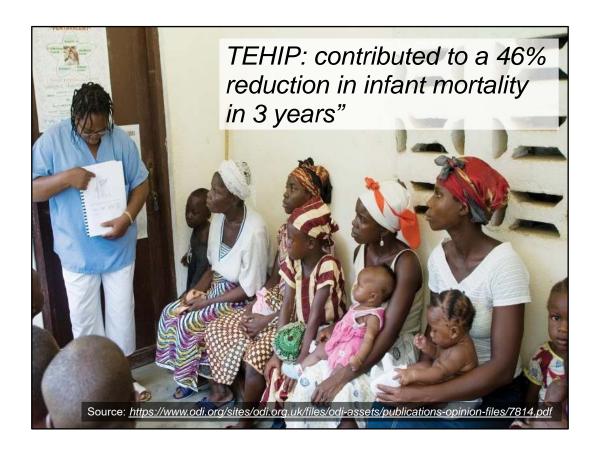


# Introduction to research impact

- I'm going to give some examples of where research has had impact, and about different types of impact, then explain why it's difficult and often takes a long time.
- But there are approaches which seem to work better than others, and to achieve impact researchers or research teams need to be able to do other things as well as the research itself.
- Then I'll talk a bit about what we call the knowledge ecosystem, why that's important, and how inequities, especially in developing countries can undermine it.
- Then finally suggest some things you can do to maximise the likely impact of your research and strengthen the knowledge ecosyste,.



• This is a trial plot of IR36 - It took the International Rice Research Institute 15 years to develop it but it is now the most widely grown variety of any food crop worldwide.... 11m hectares are grown worldwide, constitutes 65% of the rice grown in Asia and has enabled Asian farmers to harvest an additional 5 million tonnes of rice each year and earn an additional \$1bn annually.



- And there are impressive results from other kinds of research too.
- The very much smaller scale Tanzania Essential Health Interventions
   Project simply did disease prevalence surveys in two districts in
   Tanzania and then modified the national health programme to align
   more closely with the disease prevalence identified by these surveys
   and achieved a 46% reduction in infant mortality in just 3 years.





- Contribution to society & economy
  - Academic impact
  - Economic and societal impact
- · Can include:
  - Instrumental
  - Conceptual
  - Capacity building

https://esrc.ukri.org/research/impact-toolkit/what-is-impact/

### What is Impact?

#### Fast Track Impact

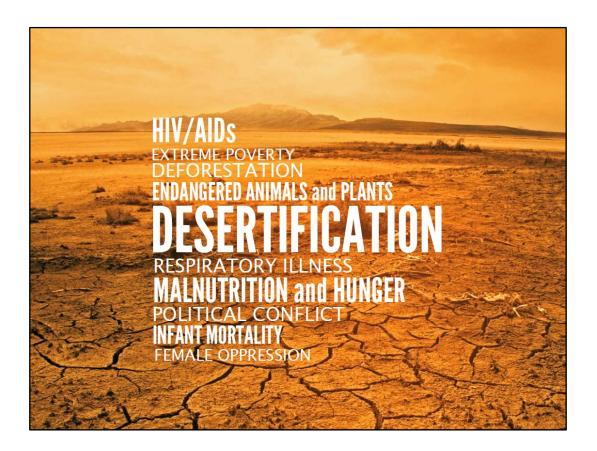
Get more impact | Get your time back | Get inspired



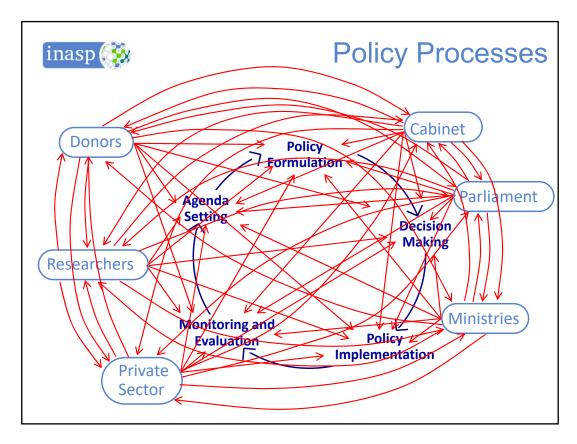
- Understanding and awareness
- 2. Attitudes
- 3. Economy
- 4. Environment
- 5. Health and wellbeing
- 6. Policy
- Other forms of decisionmaking / behaviour change
- 8. Culture
- 9. Other social
- 10. Capacity or preparedness

https://www.fasttrackimpact.com/what-is-impact

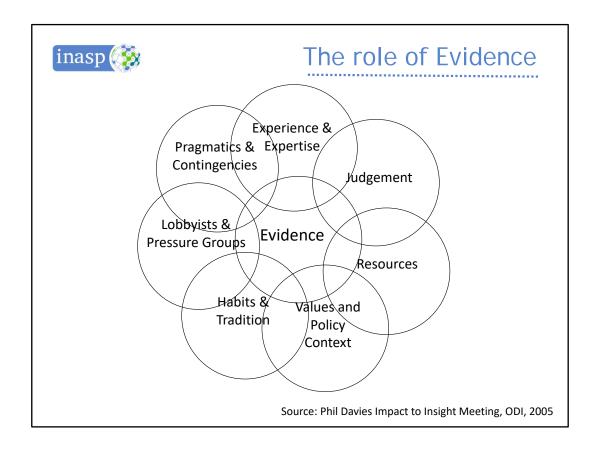
- The ESRC defines research impact as 'the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy'. This can involve academic impact, economic and societal impact or both.
- The ESRC recognises 3 broad types of impact: Instrumental: influencing the development of policy, practice or service provision, shaping legislation, altering behaviour; Conceptual: contributing to the understanding of policy issues, reframing debates; and Capacity building: through technical and personal skill development.
- Others have more nuanced lists. This is the list from a really good website on how to ensure your research has impact, maintained by Professor Mark Reed at the University of Newcastle. You can find a huge range of information and guidance there, and he runs lots of courses on how to do research with impact – especially on how to write good REF Impact Case Studies.



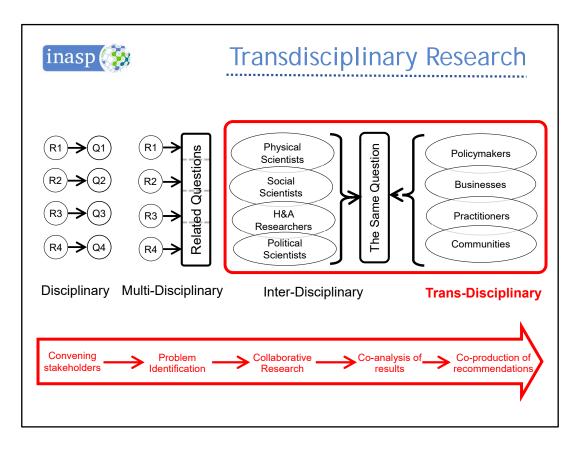
- But many development challenges are complex
- · Here are some of them.
- These sorts of problems are often called wicked problems because they are:
  - Complex many factors contribute to them.
  - Difficult to solve simple solutions to one element of each of them often exacerbates others.
  - Long term solutions nearly always involve social and political change.
- And that is always difficult.
- · Difficult when looking to make impact, looking to affect policy



- Achieving sustainable change to scale usually required changes in policy.
- Policy processes are certainly not linear and logical, the commonest representation of them is cyclical, though they are usually not as neat as this.
- There are very many actors are involved and they are have legitimate roles in many of the processes, especially governments.
- There are an increasing number of external actors also all busily seeking to engage in the process directly, though some will be more legitimate than others
- Development donors are increasingly trying to influence all stages of the policy process, and governments are trying to get them back.
- And very soon everybody is trying to influence everybody else.
- So it gets very complicated!
- Some people have described it as chaotic, but we have found that policy makers don't like that term so we tend to say complex, multifactorial and non linear.
- But if you want to try to influence policy you need to understand all of this before you can even figure out where to start



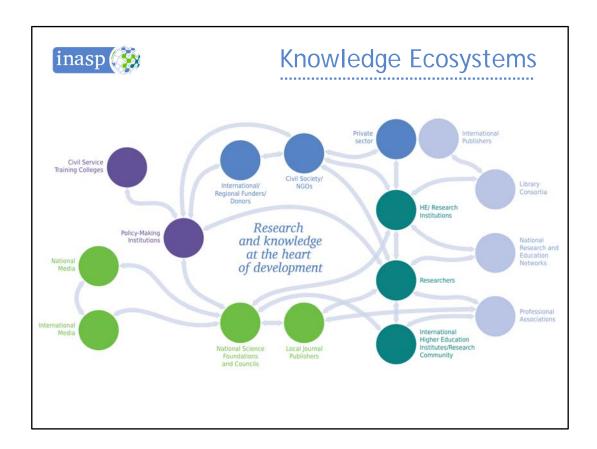
- And the other thing to remember is that evidence, and especially research-based evidence is just one of a whole raft of factors policymakers need to take into account when they are making decisions....
- This is a picture that Phil Davies, one of the architects of evidencebased policy in the late 90s and early 2000s when he was in the Cabinet Office.
- So if you want to do research which is likely to have some impact you need to understand the politics.



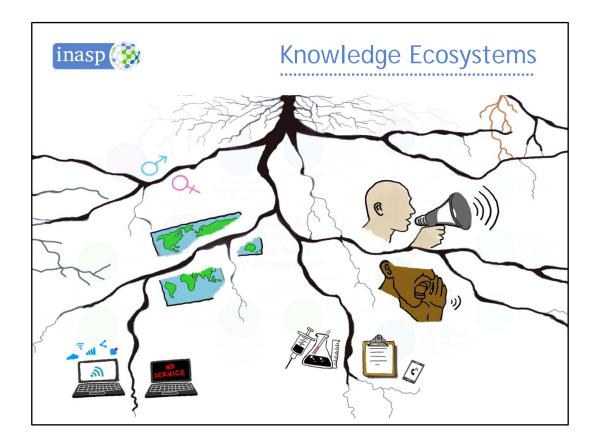
- One way to increase the likelihood of research having impact is called transdisciplinary research.
- In disciplinary research, researchers and scientists in each discipline use their own disciplinary methods to answer their own specific, often very academic, research questions.
- In multidisciplinary research, researchers from different disciplines work alongside each other using disciplinary approaches to address related questions.
- In interdisciplinary research, scientists from different disciplined work together on the same research question.
- They use a combined approach derived from specific disciplinary approaches.
- In transdisciplinary research the starting point is usually a rea-world problem rather than an academic question.
- And researchers work collaboratively on-the-ground with other stakeholders including policymakers, businesses, practitioners and communities.
- Through a participatory process starting with bringing all stakeholders together to identify the problem, collaborative research, then co-analysis of the results and co-production of the recommendations.
- In this way it is much more likely that the research will address the problem, will be useful and will be used.



- Doing impactful research in this kind of context involves a much wide range of skills than those necessary jut to do high quality research
- When Simon Maxwell was Director of ODI he came up with a nice way of describing researchers or research teams doing this which he called policy entrepreneurs.
- As well as doing high quality research illustrated here by Amrtya Sen, researchers or research teams also need to be able to:
  - Distil their results into succinct attractive stories that busy policymakers can easily understand, illustrated here by Scheherazade.
  - Network widely with other stakeholders involved in the policy process.
  - Build research programmes that deliver rigorous evidence on development challenges when there is a possibility to influence policy – illustrated here by Isembard Kingdom Brunel, one of the UK's greatest engineers.
  - Understand and engage with the political process, which he described as "fixers" illustrated here by Rasputin.



- But of course researchers are only part of the story, and a whole load of other stakeholders are involved in the process of research communication and research uptake. We call this a knowledge ecosystem.
- Here's a representation of one from our 1996-2020 strategy, which also has our vision in the middle.... and we believe that sustainable knowledge ecosystems are essential to realise that vision.
- The recent covid crisis has illustrated that it is vital to have effective knowledge ecosystems everywhere if we are to be able to deal with the challenges facing humanity..
- And that is even more the case for the challenges people face in developing countries.
- They need their own sustainable knowledge ecosystem so they can find solutions to their own challenges.

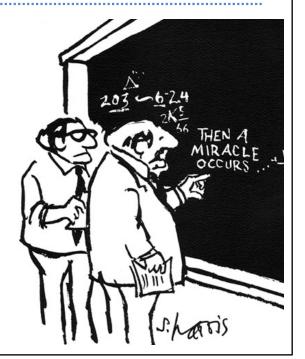


- The problem is that knowledge ecosystems, especially in developing countries are undermined and fragmented by a whole raft of inequalities:
- Most of the research funding for development issues goes to universities in the Global North, and that which does go to the south tends to go to the elite universities in capital cities.
- Women find it very hard to pursue scientific careers in the south.
   Societal norms keep them at home looking after children, and if they do get into university, the teaching schedules are very inflexible, and don't allow time for childcare. They have less time to write papers, so often miss out in publication-driven promotion processes.
- Most well known development researchers are outsiders, and the voices of local researchers are not heard.
- This has been made much worse by the Covid crisis. While
  northern and elite universities have been able to switch to online
  learning, many especially early career researchers in developing
  countries don't even have access to the internet except through
  their university accounts.



### How to maximise your impact

- Do the right research
  - o Challenge-driven
  - o Developmental
- Do it in the right way
  - Transdisciplinary
  - o Politically aware
  - o Be patient
- Promote equity
  - Choice of partners
  - Equitable partnerships
  - Build capacity



• So if you want to do useful research that is likely to be used and will contribute to international development you need to.....



## Any Questions?



# Exercise: Understanding the context



### In groups of 4:

- 1. Review and refine the impact statement and list of stakeholders identified by *your group volunteer*
- 2. Identify the most important 5 stakeholders.
- 3. Why are they important?
- 4. What kind of evidence do they need to persuade them to change?

#### Here's an example



#### Nomadic Pastoralism in Sub-Saharan Africa

Establishing nomadic pastoralism as the only viable approach to sustainable land use in Sub-Saharan Africa.

#### Group 1: High importance / low influence

#### Pastoralist communities - because they are the people who are affected by the policies and programmes of others but can provide living proof of the concept - living testimony.

#### Group 2: High importance / high influence

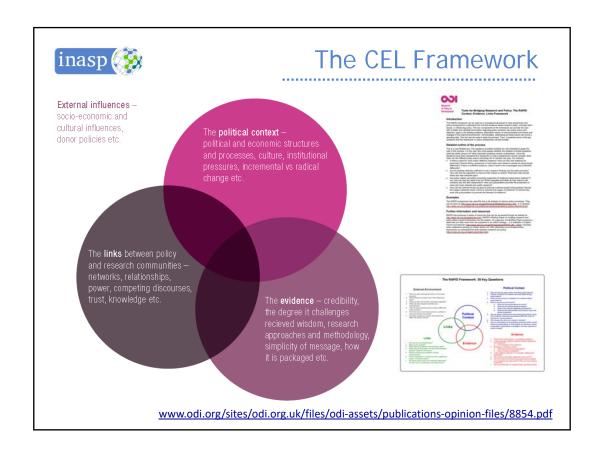
- Operational projects in the region because they can provide evidence of benefit of appropriate interventions and influence others - evaluation evidence.
- The International Livestock Research Institute because they are well respected and have national and regional reach - high quality research.
- Intermediate Technology Development Group.

#### Group 3: Low importance / low influence

(Didn't identify any).

#### Group 4: Low importance / high influence

- UN Agencies
- World Bank because they fund many bad programmes but have huge influence on government programmes - economic figures.
- Private Sector Organisations
- · National Government Agencies
- Ministry of Budgeting and Planning because they control national resources - cost-benefit information.



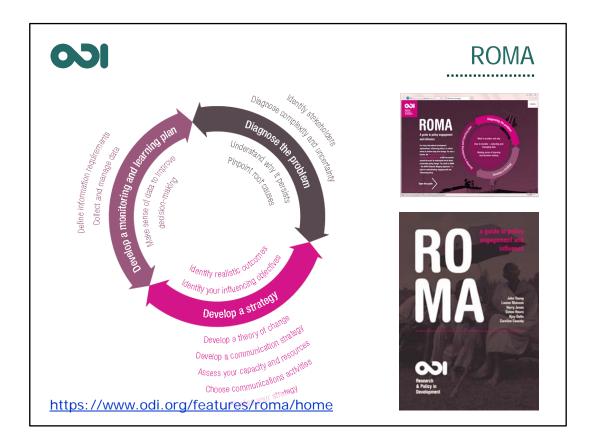
- Here's an example of a more complex tool to understand the context you are working in.
- It's called the Context, Evidence and Links framework which encourages you to look at a wide range of different factors in the research context.
- It's essentially a 28 question checklist with 7 questions for each of the dimensions.
- We will send a handout with the presentation after the workshop
   or you can download it from this link.





## Tools for policy impact

In this presentation I'm going to describe an overall approach and a few other tools that you can use to maximise the impact of your research.



- The RAPID Outcome Mapping Approach developed by ODI draws on the principles of complexity and outcome mapping, and is informed by 15 years of research and advisory work between 2001 and 2016.
- It describes a research process in 3 stages and includes tools that can be used at each stage of the process: 1) diagnosing the problem and setting reasonable objectives; 2) developing a plan to achieve those objectives; and 3) setting up systems to monitor and learn from the progress and change the plan accordingly.
- I will describe some of them, then there'll be time for any question and then and you'll have a chance to try one of them out in groupwork after my presentation.



- The first step is diagnosing the problem and setting clear objectives. It is surprising how often this is not done properly so that projects head off in the wrong direction, or don't have a clear idea of how to get there.
- In this section we present a range of tools and approaches that can help to define the root causes of the problem and understand the context in which policies to address it are being made.
- You've already seen one of them the CEL framework.



### The 5-why's

#### Essential services are BAD!

- Most are delivered by private companies.
- They are expensive and fail to deliver what they promise.
- Most contracts are issued without competition (to friends).
- There are no incentives for competitive tendering.
- There is no legal or regulatory framework for gov. procurement.

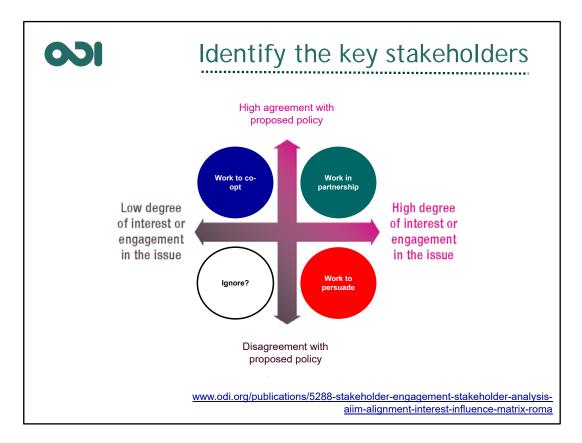




www.pefa.org

www.adb.org/sites/default/files/pub/2009/the-five-whys-technique.pdf

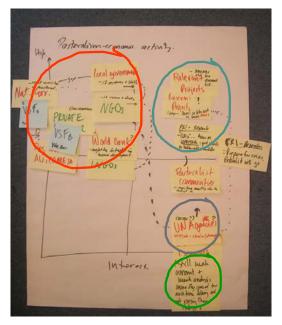
- One tool that's useful to really drill down to the very heart of the problem you are trying to address is the 'five whys' technique
- It was invented by Sakichi Toyoda who is described as the father
  of the Japanese industrial revolution and was widely used within
  the Toyota Motor Corporation during the evolution of its
  manufacturing methodologies.
- It asks you to identify the initial problem and then answer why it
  is a problem five times. After the fifth 'why' you will have
  reached a real depth of understanding about the issue.
- This helps go beyond the initial issues or those that are immediately apparent, to work out what is causing the problem and where the most effective entry points are.
- This is an example from a project on public expenditure and financial accountability (PEFA).
- There is an excellent guidance note on how to use the 5 whys on the ADB Knowledge Base.
- And you can find out more about PFM on the pefa website.



- Another really useful tool is stakeholder analysis. There are lost of different types – and you've already been introduced to one of them.
- ROMA takes this a couple of stages further to identify who are the key people you should try to work with, and what to do with them.
- Once you have listed all the stakeholders, you can then map them onto a simple 2 x 2 matrix according to how much they are likely to support or oppose an attempt to change things, and their degree of interest in it.
- Those who agree and are interested are your obvious partners. Those who disagree but have high influence could possibly obstruct you, so you need to persuade them that your ideas are right. Those who agree with you, but are not interested can be encouraged to be interested. You probably don't need to worry too much about those who disagree with you but have little interest or power.
- The third step is to identify those who have power, and fourth step is to identify those which you might be able to influence.
- Those are the people you really need to focus your efforts on.



#### Sustainable Pastoralism



Develop a
Community of
Practice

Media, dissemination, information

Tough!

Pilots and evaluations of projects

- This is an example of an AAIM exercise we did with a group of NGOs seeking to promote an alternative view of pastoralism – as the only possible sustainable economic activity in the arid and semi-arid areas they live in.
- The participants identified all of the stakeholders and mapped them onto the matrix, then identified those with power that they could engage with, and the approach they might use to engage with them.
- They decided to develop a community of practice with those broadly supportive and interested to develop some pilot projects and develop and test evidence to support the change. Then to develop a communications campaign to attract the interest of potential supporters, and to use the results of evaluations of the pilot projects to try to change the attitudes of those that didn't.
- They identified one group of actors the UN agencies who are particularly difficult to influence.



- Step 2 is to develop an engagement strategy to influence policy.
- I will describe a couple of the concepts and tools we have found helpful to do this.



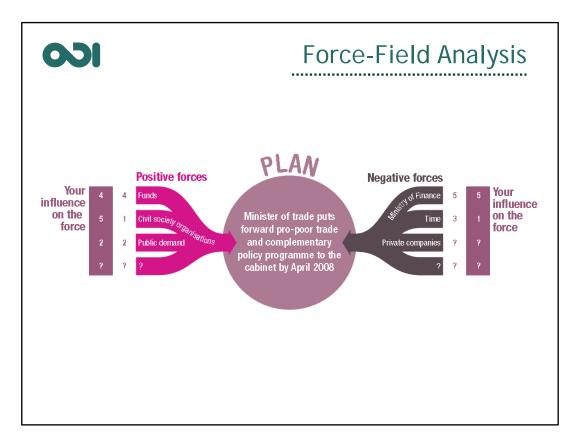
### Levels of policy

- Discursive: Clientfocused services
- Attitudinal: Farmers have good ideas
- Procedural: Participatory approaches to service development
- Content: UU20, UU25. New guidelines
- Behavioural: Approach being applied in practice



- First I'd like to clarify what we think of as policy.
- Many people have a very narrow definition of policy essentially focusing only on legislation, regulations, policies and strategies.
- But these are only the explicit descriptions of policy.
- We often describe 5 levels of policy:
  - 1. Discursive this is about ideas and how they evolve
  - 2. Attitudinal before behavior can change the attitudes of the different stakeholders needs to change
  - 3. Procedural that can lead to different ways in which issues are discussed and decisions are taken about policy solutions
  - 4. Content- this is the actual legislation etc
  - 5. Behaviour but it is only if the behaviour of the people who are supposed to be affected by the policy change that there will in fact be any change in policy.
- Here are some examples of what that looks like in practice from a livestock service reform project I was working on the eastern regions of Indonesia.
- Projects seeking to use research-based evidence to influence policy can, and probably need to work at all of these levels.
- When you are developing your strategy it is very important to be clear which you are aiming at.
- You can find out more about that project at this website.





- There are very many strategic planning tools. One we like and have used a lot is Force Field Analysis.
- FFA was developed by the psychologist Kurt Lewin in the USA in the 1930s when he was working on child welfare, as a way of understanding how they could be improved.
- He identified recognized that in most change situations there are forces that are either driving movement toward a goal (helping forces) or blocking movement toward a goal (hindering forces).
- Force Field Analysis is a tool that has been used for strategic planning in a wide range of contexts.
- It is simply a way of visualizing the forces supporting and opposing your objectives.
- The forces can be ranked first according to their degree of influence over the change,
- and then according to the degree of control it is possible for the project team to exert over them.
- Activities can then be identified to reduce the high negative forces and to increase low positive forces.
- You'll get a chance to try this out in the groupwork.

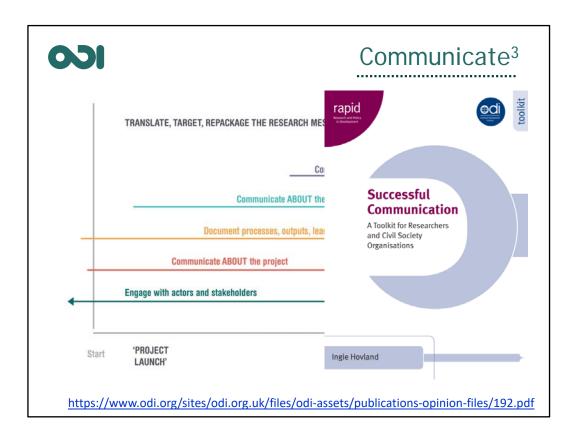
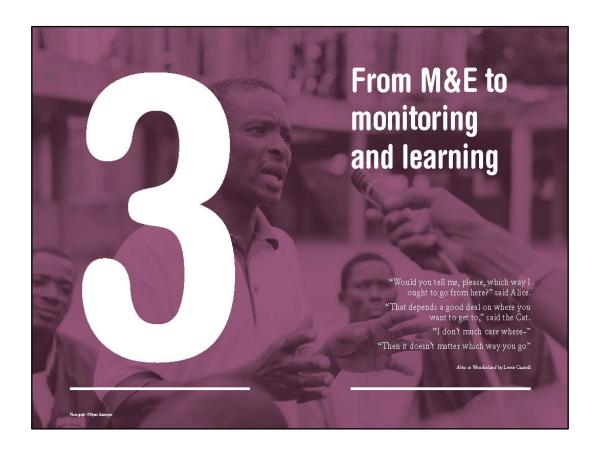


Image devised by Peter Ballantyne, Head of Communications and Knowledge Management, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)

- Good communication is also vital.
- Communication doesn't just happen at the end of a project when you have a nice report and a bunch of results. At the outset you are meeting people, getting your name out there- so communication is something you're already doing.
- But, often communication planning is left until the end. You should be thinking about comms throughout the life of your project and establish some basic communication planning from the outset:
  - 1. encourages ownership and understanding of research findings among key stakeholders.
  - 2. Helps to identify and mitigate challenges inherent in engaging with a range of stakeholders with competing and conflicting priorities and associated with null and negative findings. Think: How will this help ensure the project goes smoothly it could be a way to get early buy-in to your results, an opportunity to establish your credibility
  - Strengthens the demand for information about study progress and increase the likelihood that findings will be known, understood and used appropriately to improve policy and programming

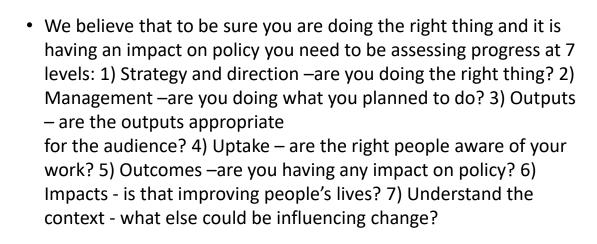


- The third section of the guide is about how to make sure you are going in the right direction and achieving the impacts you would like to achieve.
- The purpose is to provide a practical monitoring approach that builds reflective and evaluative practice into the work of influencing policy, to support decision-making and demonstrate progress.
- I am just going to mention a few of the tools we have found most helpful.



### A systematic approach

- 1. Strategy and direction —are you doing the right thing?
- 2. Management —are you doing what you planned to do?
- 3. Outputs are the outputs appropriate for the audience?
- 4. Uptake are the right people aware of your work?
- 5. Outcomes are you having any impact on policy?
- 6. Impacts is that improving people's lives?
- 7. Understand the context what else could be influencing change?



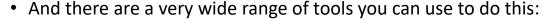




### A systematic approach

- 1. Strategy and direction Log frames, Theories of Change, Impact Pathways.
- 2. Management Quality Audits, Appreciative Enquiry. AARs, PRINCE2.
- 3. Outputs Peer Review, Workshop Evaluation, Surveys.
- 4. Uptake Webstats, Logs, Altmetrics, User Surveys.
- 5. Outcomes Stories of change, MSC, COR.
- 6. Impacts RCT, Realist Evaluation, Performance Stories.
- 7. Understand the context PEA, CEL Framework, KPP Framework, Bellwether surveys.

https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/10259.pdf



- Strategy and direction Log frames, Theories of Change, Impact Pathways.
- Management Quality Audits, Appreciative Enquiry. AARs, PRINCE2.
- Outputs Peer Review, Workshop, Evaluation, Surveys.
- Uptake Webstats, Logs, Altmetrics, User Surveys.
- Outcomes –are you having any impact on policy?
- Impacts RCT, Realist Evaluation, Performance Stories.
- Understand the context PEA, CEL Framework, KPP Framework, Bellwether surveys.
- I don't have time to talk about these today, but you can read all about them in this guidebook which you can download from the ODI website.





#### After Action Review

- What was supposed to happen?
- What actually happened?
- Why was there a difference?
- What can we learn from it?



15 minute team debrief, in a "rank-free" space.

https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/6431.pdf

- One tool which we use a lot is the After Action Review (AAR). It
  was actually developed by the US army as a way of reviewing
  missions and exercises which involved bringing together people
  from all ranks to answer 4 questions: What was supposed to
  happen? What actually happened? Why was there a difference@
  How could it be done better next time?
- We often use this to evaluate meetings and events, and even whole small projects.



## Any Questions?



Exercise: Using Force-Field Analysis to (start to) develop an engagement strategy.



### In groups of 4:

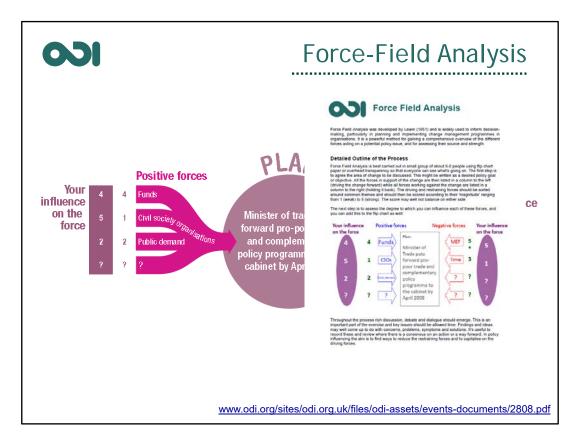
- 1. Review and refine the impact statement produced by *your group volunteer*
- 2. Identify the most important 5 forces likely to support the required outcome.
- 3. Identify the 5 most important forces which might hinder progress.
- 4. Which are likely to be the easiest to influence?

### Here's an example



### Force Field Analysis – Mine Waste

Priority to address	Forces for change	What are your research impact goals?	Forces against change	Priority to address
3	Environmentalists	Local government requires mine owners to adjust	Mining companies	3
2	Local communities		Shareholders	4
4	Local government	waste management policy to incorporate	National government	2
1	NGOs	indigenous landowner concerns	Mining employees	1



• We will include a simple guide to doing FFA as a handout after the workshop – or you can download it here.



## Any final questions?



Next week's session:

# Designing for impact and writing successful grant applications

- 1. Theories of change and Impact Pathways
- 2. Understanding the requirements of a funding call
- 3. Key components of a successful proposal



### Pre-workshop tasks for session 2

- Q1: Find a funding opportunity that you would like to apply for (alternatively, imagine you are applying for a grant with a deadline in 3 months).
   Think about how you can plan for the application in advance. What are the most important things to plan and allow time for?
- Q2: Think about how you can 'sell' your research project to a potential funder. In one sentence explain why you research is innovative or significant.
- Q3: What are the things you struggle with the most in grant writing?



#### **Further information**



Research proposal and grant writing for development impact: Further Reading

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Needs Six Elements: Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How. The Rest is Mere

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Don't forget to record your learning in your learning portfolio