



# Communicating Research; Influencing Change

Edited by  
Fiona Remnant

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# **Communicating Research; Influencing Change**

**Experiences from Sri Lanka and beyond**

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**8<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on Poverty Research in Sri Lanka**



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A publication of the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA)

8<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on Poverty Research in Sri Lanka

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**The Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA)** was established in 2001 as an independent institute providing professional services on poverty related development issues. CEPA provides services in the areas of applied research, advisory services, training and dialogue and exchange to development organisations and professionals. These services are concentrated within the core programme areas that currently include: Poverty Impact Monitoring, Poverty and Conflict, and Poverty Assessment & Knowledge Management.

**Overseas Development Institute (ODI)** is an independent think tank on international development and humanitarian issues. ODI's mission is to inspire and inform policy and practice which lead to the reduction of poverty, the alleviation of suffering and the achievement of sustainable livelihoods in developing countries.

**German Technical Corporation (GTZ)** is an international cooperation enterprise for sustainable development with operations in over 130 partner countries. The GTZ implements programmes chiefly under commission by the German Federal Government.

**International Alert (IA)** is an independent peace building organisation working in over 20 countries and territories around the world. IA's dual approach involves working directly with people affected by violent conflict as well as at government, EU and UN levels to shape both policy and practice in building sustainable peace.

**International Development Research Centre (IDRC)** is a Canadian Crown corporation that works in close collaboration with researchers from the developing world in their search for the means to build healthier, more equitable, and more prosperous societies.



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## Foreword

Common sense tells us that sound decisions should be based on solid evidence. This is obviously valid even in the development regime and in State policy making. The risk of failure must, of necessity be minimized if scarce resources are to be used efficiently and effectively. The efforts of CEPA in examining the several issues that contribute to add value to research studies is not only timely but necessary.

This publication focuses on the necessary relationship that must be established between researchers and policy makers, the need to ensure that research studies focus on areas of relevance to policy makers, the need for researchers collaborate with each other, and a variety of other key concerns. It deals also with the extremely topical issue of the need to inspire a greater respect for evidence-based decision making by policy makers. This is indeed the need of the moment particularly considering that the State is engaged in an extremely ambitious development programme in which a significant amount of State resources has been invested. Evidence based decision making certainly adds value to the legitimacy of the development process.

We live in an era which is characterized by a demand that Governments perform effectively. Being efficient is not enough. Hence the dependence on evidence in the decision making process is all the more real. For research that produces evidence to be of value, it must be relevant, easily accessible, reliable, meaningful and credible. Inculcating a reliance on evidence will be easier, if the research findings can fulfill these requirements.

This publication also discusses knowledge management in the communication discourse. Technological advances in the field of information technology have seen amazing changes that have created an environment that can be exploited to enhance knowledge management with ease.

Among initiatives that are designed to encourage evidenced based decision making within Government, is the Evaluation Information System (EIS) established by the Ministry of Plan Implementation (MPI). It seeks to fulfill a basic gap currently faced by decision makers. The EIS will contain a synthesis of evaluation reports conducted in relation to development

projects. The objective is to provide these reports in an easily accessible form and to encourage or insist on these being referenced where relevant.

The discussion on communicating research effectively to encourage evidence based decision making is one which the MPI welcomes in the hope that researchers will, on their part, enhance the quality of their research so as to make it valuable to decision makers.

Dhara Wijayatilake  
Secretary,  
Ministry of Plan Implementation.  
April 2009.

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## Executive Summary

Communicating research effectively to encourage more evidence-based policymaking is a topical issue in the development sector. This paper is based on the experiences of diverse organisations and individuals who CEPA has interacted with on this subject, including those who attended CEPA's 2007 Symposium on Poverty Research, entitled *Communicating Research and Influencing Change*. Bringing together some of these stories and experiences and highlighting the similarities and the 'successes' will hopefully provide food for thought for others seeking to build on their own communication and influencing strategies.

This paper considers the communication dynamic, highlighting the difference between researchers whose aim is simply to inform, using limited circulation of publications or reports for example, and those who choose to convey their messages on a larger scale, engaging the public and using large scale campaigning and mobilisation. Whilst not all researchers will wish to communicate in the same way, it is important for all to realise that evidence doesn't always speak for itself. If research is not taken up and actively communicated, there is a risk that it will simply gather dust on a bookshelf and in people's minds. Even if the research is communicated, we cannot assume that decision makers will listen, understand, or *act* on the evidence in making their decision. In order for research to have an impact researchers need to devise communication strategies which consider the most appropriate approach to reach their identified target audiences.

Key to devising an appropriate communication strategy is a good understanding of the research-policy context; the changing policy context, the levels of interest that different stakeholders have in the issue, the changing nature of relationships with key stakeholders and the potential social and political implications of emerging main messages. The policy context in Sri Lanka can be unclear at times, and provides few opportunities for public engagement and dialogue. While there are some good examples of research being used in formulation and evaluation of policy, much policy still appears to be devised based on the political need of the day, often based on little or no evidence – or evidence used out of context to justify a simplistic solution to a problem. Policy is still largely driven from the centre and there is little room for provincial and district levels or civil society to influence policy. The restricted space available for public dissent and demonstration also makes it harder for campaigning or advocacy activities to have much impact.



However, this is not to take away from the responsibility on the side of researchers. They have a responsibility to produce relevant and accurate information and to disseminate the findings to those who must act upon them. Researchers need to tailor their messages more effectively to decision-makers and involve them in their research where possible. Researchers also need to reflect upon the subject of their research; is it filling an identified 'gap' in knowledge rather than adding to an existing bank of information, and can the research actually contribute meaningfully to policy? Are researchers producing studies relevant to government priorities? Researchers in Sri Lanka need to communicate with each other and work together more effectively despite, and perhaps even more because of, the challenging context; and government departments and other important decision makers (in the private and development sectors) need to develop a decision-making culture that values research and evidence rather than relying on 'gut feeling' or politically expedient conclusions. There are no easy solutions to either of these aspirations, but the responsibility to improve the situation lies with both sides.

The paper goes on to draw upon a number of examples where researchers have attempted to influence change at many different levels, highlighting common strategies and tools which can be useful.

**Selecting appropriate research:** If researchers wish to make an impact with their research it is important to select relevant and topical research projects which have the potential to influence decision makers at some level (not necessarily policy). Taking on research in areas similar to prior projects undertaken also enables the creation of a bank of research and helps to build up stronger messages. However, maintaining independence and credibility are also key criteria for selection.

**Defining and communicating with stakeholders at different levels:** It is common for communication strategies which are trying to influence policy or large decisions to aim to communicate with stakeholders at the highest level. However there are usually other, less ambitious, ways to have an impact using stakeholders at grassroots and institutional levels as well as at the national level. Successful communication may require engagement with the public, private and civil society sectors as well as with policymakers. Tools such as influence mapping and force-field analysis can help analyse stakeholders and identify the most effective way to communicate with them.

**Maintaining a continuous dialogue and seeking out windows of opportunity:**

Most research projects plan communication as a final stage, giving consideration to how the messages will be conveyed once the project or report has been completed. However, having any significant impact often depends on long-term and persistent engagement with an issue. If the communication strategy builds in opportunities to communicate from early in the life-cycle of a project then the window of opportunity is significantly increased. Having access to information all the way through rather than only through a final report also gives stakeholders the opportunity to raise any issues and disagreements about methodology or approach, and makes it less likely that the final report is dismissed or ignored due to misunderstandings or an unexpected message taking stakeholders by surprise.

**Build alliances:** Many research organisations struggle to decide the extent to which they wish to engage with others, but not making alliances runs the risk of perpetuating knowledge elitism and not making the most of other people's research and knowledge. Networks are often more successful than organisations working alone.

Influencing policy is particularly difficult in an environment where discussion and civil society involvement are restricted and different strategies are required to try and manage these challenges. Organisations working in such environments cite strategies such as communicating 'positively'; focusing on the positive points, and constructively suggesting elements which can be improved rather than criticising policy; cultivating direct contact with key individual politicians and policymakers who are more sympathetic, or bureaucrats in cases where they are more likely to have more power than politicians; and exerting pressure from outside the country through the global media, the diaspora and international organisations.

Finally, the paper considers the importance of knowledge management in the communication discourse. Ensuring that knowledge is made available to as many people as possible is the most important first step in communicating research. Networks, online forums and databases which bring practitioners together and make it easier to search in one place are increasingly used by researchers, such as CEPA's initiative to try to bring together Sri Lankan poverty related research ([www.povertydatabase.lk](http://www.povertydatabase.lk)). There are also examples of initiatives to try to connect communities with research and policymakers – from online forums to actual forums where children and adults meet to discuss pressing issues. While these sorts of

initiatives may aim to break down hierarchies within societies, there is also a need to create horizontal networks between countries to overcome the issue of 'knowledge hierarchies'. Local knowledge is often undermined by donors and by international NGOs, knowingly or not. This reiterates the need for governments in 'Southern' countries to place more importance on research and knowledge, and to invest money in institutions that prioritise the production and sharing of indigenous knowledge. This is important to ensure that a body of knowledge and experience is built up outside the 'North'.

This paper pulls together key ideas and strategies employed by researchers to communicate their ideas more effectively. However, this is not a toolkit, more a call to reflection and action. In an environment where communicating research can sometimes be difficult and fraught with hierarchies researchers need to continue to discuss and debate these challenges with each other and share information and ideas about how to overcome and challenge the status quo. Sharing information and pooling knowledge can increase the strength of an argument and ultimately play a critical role in influencing decision makers, whether they be donors or government policymakers, but a sense of collaboration and networking is still somewhat lacking amongst the research community in Sri Lanka. This paper calls on researchers to change the way they communicate and collaborate, and through their actions inspire more respect for and better use of research by decision-makers.

## ක්‍රියාත්මක සාරාංශය

පර්යේෂණවලින් සොයා ගන්නා ලද තොරතුරු වලදායි ලෙස සන්නිවේදනය කිරීම තුළින් සාක්ෂි මත පදනම් වූ ප්‍රතිපත්ති තීරණ ගැනීම සංවර්ධන ක්ෂේත්‍රයෙහි කාලීන මාතෘකාවකි. විමෝචන නිවැරදි පර්යේෂණ සහ ඇගයීම් මත පදනම්ව යහපාලනය සහ සාර්ථක ප්‍රතිපත්ති ක්‍රියාවට නැංවීම සඳහා පර්යේෂකයින් සහ ප්‍රතිපත්ති තීරකයින් අතර ධනාත්මක සම්බන්ධතාවයක් තිබිය යුතු බවද පැහැදිලිය. මෙම පත්‍රිකාව පදනම්ව ඇත්තේ දර්ශන විශ්ලේෂණ කේන්ද්‍රය විසින් විවිධාකාර වූ ආයතන හා පුද්ගලයින් සමඟ මෙම විෂයට අදාලව පැවති සම්බන්ධතාව හා අත්දැකීම් පදනම් කරගෙනය. තවද ඒ සඳහා දර්ශන විශ්ලේෂණ කේන්ද්‍රය විසින් වසර 2007 දී පවත්වන්නට යෙදුණු "පර්යේෂණ සන්නිවේදනය සහ වෙනසක් සඳහා බලපෑම් කිරීම" යන සම්මන්ත්‍රණයට සහභාගී වූ ආරාධිතයින්ගේ අදහස් හා අත්දැකීම් ද එකතු කර ඇත. ඉහත සඳහන් සිද්ධීන් සහ අත්දැකීම් සමහරක් භාවිත කරමින් ඒවායේ ඇති සමානතාවයන් මෙන්ම "සාර්ථක අත්දැකීම්" උලුප්පා දැක්වීම තුළින්, පර්යේෂණ හා සන්නිවේදන ක්ෂේත්‍රයෙහි නියැලී සිටින අයට ඔවුන්ගේ සන්නිවේදන කුසලතා වර්ධනය කර ගනිමින් ප්‍රතිපත්ති සඳහා බලපෑම් කිරීමේ හැකියාව වර්ධනය කර ගැනීම අපේක්ෂා කෙරේ.

මෙම පත්‍රිකාව තුළින් සන්නිවේදනයේ ගතික ලක්ෂණ සලකා බලන අතරම සීමිත මුද්‍රිත මාධ්‍ය හරහා සරලව තම පර්යේෂණ ඉදිරිපත් කරන පර්යේෂකයින්ගේ සහ ඉතා පුළුල් ප්‍රජාවක් සමඟ විවිධ වූ ප්‍රචාරක මාධ්‍යයන් භාවිතකර තම පර්යේෂණ අත්දැකීම් බෙදාහරින පර්යේෂකයින් අතර වෙනස ද සාකච්ඡා කරයි. සෑම පර්යේෂකයකුම ඒකාකාර ලෙස තම සොයා ගැනීම් සන්නිවේදනය නොකරනවා සේම සාක්ෂි ස්වයංකල්ප ඉදිරිපත් වීමක් ද නොවන්නේය. යම් පර්යේෂකයක සොයා ගැනීම් වඩාත් සවල ලෙස සන්නිවේදනය නොකළහොත් එකී වාර්තා පොත් රාක්කවල සහ පර්යේෂකයින්ගේ මනස තුළ පමණක් රැඳී පවතිනු ඇත. පර්යේෂණ සොයාගැනීම් පිළිබඳව සන්නිවේදනය කළත් ප්‍රතිපත්ති තීරකයින් විසින් ඒවාට ඇනුම්කන් දේවිද, තේරුම් ගනිවිද සහ ඒවා පදනම් කරගෙන තීරණ ගනිවිද යන්න අපට අනුමාන කළ නොහැකිය. ඒනිසා පර්යේෂණ තුළින් නිසි බලපෑමක් ඇති කිරීමට අපේක්ෂා කරන්නේ නම් පර්යේෂකයින් විසින් විවිධ වූ සන්නිවේදන උපායමාර්ග සහ ක්‍රමවේදයන් හඳුනාගෙන එමඟින් ඔවුන් විසින් හඳුනාගනු ලබන ඉලක්ක කණ්ඩායම් ඇමතීම කළ යුතුය.

වඩාත් ගැලපෙන සන්නිවේදන උපාය මාර්ගයක් සකසා ගැනීමේ ප්‍රමුඛ සාධකය වන්නේ පර්යේෂණ ප්‍රතිපත්ති සංදර්භය හොඳින් අවබෝධ කර ගැනීමයි. මේ යටතේ, ප්‍රතිපත්ති සංදර්භයේ වෙනස්වීම, විවිධ පාර්ශවකරුවන් විසින් අදාල ප්‍රශ්නය කෙරෙහි දක්වන උනන්දුව, ප්‍රධාන පාර්ශවකරුවන් අතර පවත්නා සම්බන්ධතාවයන්ගේ ස්වභාවය, අපේක්ෂිත ප්‍රධාන සන්නිවේදන පණිවුඩ හරහා ජනිතවිය හැකි සමාජයීය හා දේශපාලනික බලපෑම් දැක්විය හැකිය. ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ ප්‍රතිපත්ති සංදර්භය බොහෝවිට අපැහැදිලි තත්ත්වයක් පෙන්නුම් කරන අතර මහජනතාවගේ සහභාගීත්වය සහ ඔවුන්ගේ මැදිහත්වීමට ඇති ඉඩප්‍රස්ථා ඉතා සීමිත බව පෙනේ. ශ්‍රී ලංකාව තුළ ප්‍රතිපත්ති සම්පාදනය සහ ඇගයීම සඳහා පර්යේෂණ සොයා ගැනීම් පාදක කර ගැනීම පිළිබඳව සතුටුවිය හැකි සමහර අවස්ථා දැක්විය හැකි නමුදු බොහෝ ප්‍රතිපත්තිමය

තීරණ ගනු ලබන්නේ චදිනෙදා පැන නගින දේශපාලනික අවශ්‍යතාවයන් පදනම් කරගෙනය. එවැනි ප්‍රතිපත්ති තීරණ සඳහා පර්යේෂණවලින් සොයා ගනු ලබන සාක්ෂි යොදා නොගන්නා අතර, සමහරවිට යොදාගනු ලැබුවත් ඒවා අදාල සංදර්භයෙන් පරිබාහිර කරුණු මත පදනම් වූ ප්‍රශ්න සඳහා වූ සරල විසඳුම් වේ. ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ ප්‍රතිපත්ති තීරණ බොහෝවිට ගනු ලබන්නේ මධ්‍යම රජයෙන් වන අතර, පළාත්, දිස්ත්‍රික් හෝ ප්‍රජා මට්ටමින් ඒවා සඳහා බලපෑම් කළ හැකි අවකාශ ඉතාම අල්පවේ. මහජනතාව එවැනි ප්‍රතිපත්තිවලට විරුද්ධව මත ප්‍රකාශ කිරීම සහ උද්ඝෝෂණ ව්‍යාපාර දියත්කර බලපෑම් කිරීමට ඇති ඉඩකඩ සීමිත බැවින් ප්‍රතිපත්ති වෙනුවෙන් කළ හැකි ජනතා බලපෑම අවම මට්ටමක පවතී.

කෙසේ නමුත් මෙම තත්ත්වය පර්යේෂකයින්ගේ වගකීමෙන් බැහැර වීමට හේතුවක් නොවේ. පර්යේෂකයින් විසින් වඩාත් ගැලපෙන සහ නිවැරදි තොරතුරු එක්රැස්කර ඔවුන් විසින් ලබාදිය යුතු පණිවුඩය තීරණ ගන්නන් වෙත ලබාදීමේ වගකීම ඔවුන් සතුවේ. පර්යේෂකයින් විසින් ඔවුන්ගේ පණිවුඩය වඩාත් ඵලදායී ලෙස ප්‍රතිපත්ති තීරකයින් වෙත යොමු කිරීම සහ හැකි සෑමවිට එකී වූ පර්යේෂණ කාර්යයන් සඳහා ඔවුන් සහභාගී කරවා ගත යුතුය. ප්‍රතිපත්ති තීරකයින්හට අවශ්‍ය වන්නා වූ පර්යේෂණ විෂය පථයන් හඳුනා ගැනීම ද පර්යේෂකයින් සතු වගකීමකි. එලෙස ගත්විට එය තොරතුරු/දත්ත බැංකුවට තවත් එකතු කිරීමක් නොවිය යුතුය. තවද, පර්යේෂණ කාර්යයන් වඩාත් සාධනීය ලෙස ප්‍රතිපත්ති සම්පාදනය සඳහා දායකවිය හැකිද? පර්යේෂකයින් විසින් රජයේ ප්‍රමුඛතාවයන්ට අදාල අධ්‍යයනයන් සිදුකරන්නේ ද? ශ්‍රී ලංකාව තුළ කටයුතු කරන පර්යේෂකයින් එකිනෙකා අතර අදහස් හුවමාරු කරගනිමින් වඩාත් ඵලදායී ලෙස පර්යේෂණ අධ්‍යයනයන් සිදුකළ යුතුව ඇත. එයට ප්‍රධාන හේතුව වන්නේ ඔවුන් හමුවේ ඇති සංදර්භය අභියෝගාත්මක බැවින් ද, රාජ්‍ය දෙපාර්තමේන්තු සහ අනෙකුත් වැදගත් තීරණ ගන්නන් (පෞද්ගලික හා සංවර්ධන අංශයන්හි) විසින් පර්යේෂණයන් තුළින් සොයාගනු ලබන සාක්ෂි මත පදනම් වූ තීරණ ගැනීමේ නව සංස්කෘතියක් ගොඩනගා ගත යුතුය. එය හුදෙක් තම පෞද්ගලික විශ්වාසය මත හෝ දේශපාලනමය අවශ්‍යතාවය මත පදනම්ව තීරණ ගැනීම් ක්‍රියාවලියට වඩා වෙනස්වූ ක්‍රියාවලියකි. එනමුත් පර්යේෂකයින් විසින් ගත හැකි ප්‍රතිපත්ති තීරකයන්ගේ අපේක්ෂාවන් සපුරාලන පහසු විසඳුම් නොමැති. කෙසේ නමුත් වඩාත් ඵලදායී මාවතක් එළිපෙනෙළි කර ගැනීමේ වගකීම මෙම දෙපාර්ශවයම සතුව පවතී.

මෙම පත්‍රිකාව මඟින් පර්යේෂකයින් විසින් ප්‍රතිපත්ති තීරණ ගැනීමේ ක්‍රියාවලියෙහි විවිධ මට්ටම්වලදී වෙනස් කිරීමට බලපෑම් කරන ලද උදාහරණ කිහිපයක් හුවාදැක්වීමට අදහස් කරයි. එමඟින් ඒ සඳහා උපකාරීවන පොදු උපාය මාර්ග සහ මෙවලම් කිහිපයක් මෙහි දැක්වා ඇත.

**වඩාත් සුදුසු පර්යේෂණයන් තෝරා ගැනීම**

පර්යේෂකයින් විසින් සිදුකරනු ලබන පර්යේෂණයන් මඟින් බලපෑමක් කිරීමට අදහස් කරන්නේ නම් ඒ සඳහා කාලිනව වැදගත්වන මාතෘකාවක් තෝරා ගත යුතු අතර එමඟින් කුමන හෝ මට්ටමක දී බලපෑමක් කළහැකි විය යුතුය. එය ප්‍රතිපත්ති සඳහා

බලපෑමක්ම විය යුතු නැත. මීට පෙර සිදු කරන ලද ව්‍යාපෘතීන්ට සම්බන්ධකම් ඇති විෂයක් යටතේ අධ්‍යයනයක් සිදුකිරීම තුළින් විවැනි පර්යේෂණ ගොනුවක් හරහා ප්‍රතිපත්ති සඳහා යොමුකළ යුතු පණිවුඩය වඩාත් ශක්තිමත්ව ඉදිරිපත් කළ හැකිය. කෙසේ නමුත් ස්වාධීනත්වය හා වලංගුභාවය තහවුරු කර ගැනීම ද පර්යේෂණයන් සඳහා විෂයන් තෝරා ගැනීමේ මූලික නිර්ණායකයන් ලෙස යොදාගත හැකිය.

**විවිධ මට්ටම්වල පාර්ශවකරුවන් හඳුනා ගැනීම සහ ඔවුන් සමඟ සන්නිවේදනය**

ප්‍රතිපත්ති සඳහා බලපෑම් කිරීම් හෝ ප්‍රධාන පෙලේ තීරණවලට බලපෑම් කිරීම සඳහා භාවිත කරනු ලබන සන්නිවේදන උපාය මාර්ග පිළිබඳව ඉහළ මට්ටමේ පාර්ශවකරුවන් සමඟ සන්නිවේදනය කිරීම පොදුවේ පිළිගත් ප්‍රවේශයකි. එමෙන්ම එතරම් විශාල බලාපොරොත්තු නොමැති, බිම් මට්ටමේ, ආයතනික මට්ටමේ සහ ජාතික මට්ටමේ පාර්ශවකරුවන්ට බලපෑම් කළ හැකි සන්නිවේදන උපාය මාර්ග ද තිබේ. වඩාත් සාර්ථක සන්නිවේදනයක් සඳහා රාජ්‍ය අංශය, පෞද්ගලික අංශය සහ සිවිල් සමාජ ක්‍රියාකාරීන් සහ ප්‍රතිපත්ති තීරකයින් යන සැමදෙනාම ආමන්ත්‍රණය කළ යුතුය. බලපෑම් සිතියම් ක්‍රමවේදය සහ අනිවාර්ය ක්ෂේත්‍ර විශ්ලේෂණය වැනි මෙවලම් භාවිත කරමින් පාර්ශවකරුවන් හඳුනා ගැනීම සහ සන්නිවේදනය කළ හැකිය.

**නිරන්තර සන්නිවේදනයක් පවත්වා ගෙනයාම සහ නිරාවරණය වන අවස්ථාවන් හඳුනා ගැනීම**

බොහෝ පර්යේෂණ අධ්‍යයනයන් යටතේ සන්නිවේදනය යන්න ව්‍යාපෘතියේ අවසානය හා කඩිනම් ලෙස සැලසුම් කරමින්, ව්‍යාපෘතිය/පර්යේෂණය නිම වූ පසු ප්‍රතිඵල කෙසේ සන්නිවේදනය කළ යුතුද යන්න කෙරෙහි යොමු වී ඇත. කෙසේ නමුත්, ව්‍යාපෘතියකින වඩාත් හිඟිච්ච බලපෑමක් ඇති වුවාද යන්න විමසීම කළ හැක්කේ ඒ හා ඒකාබද්ධ දීර්ඝ කාලයක් ගත කිරීමෙනි. එමනිසා ව්‍යාපෘතියක් තුළ සන්නිවේදන උපාය මාර්ගය එහි ආරම්භයේ සිටම අන්තර්ගත කර තිබේ නම්, ඒ පිළිබඳව සොයා බැලීමේ සහ කරුණු සන්නිවේදනය කිරීමේ අවස්ථාවන් වඩාත් වැදගත් ලෙස දෘෂ්‍යමාන වේ. එමනිසා යම් ව්‍යාපෘතියක ආරම්භයේ සිටම අදාල තොරතුරු සඳහා පාර්ශවකරුවන්හට ප්‍රවේශකත්වය තිබේ නම්, එය කෙරීගෙන යන අතරතුර ඔවුන්ගේ අදහස් ඉදිරිපත් කිරීමට සහ විරුද්ධ මත ප්‍රකාශ කිරීමට හැකියාව ලැබේ. එසේ නොවන විට යම් ව්‍යාපෘතියක් අවසානයේදී ආගන්තුක ලෙස එහි හිමවුම දෙස බලා ඒවා කෙරෙහි වැරදි වැරදි සහිතව හෝ පාර්ශවකරුවන් විසින් අනපේක්ෂිතව විවැනි වාර්තා ප්‍රතික්ෂේප කිරීමට ඇති ඉඩ ප්‍රස්ථා අවම වේ.

**හවුල්කාරීත්වය ගොඩනගා ගැනීම**

බොහෝ පර්යේෂණ ආයතන විසින් අනෙකුත් පර්යේෂණ ආයතන සමඟ කොතෙක් දුරට සම්බන්ධ වී කටයුතු කළ යුතුද යන්න තීරණය කර ගැනීමට නොහැකිව කටයුතු කරන බව පෙනේ. එමනිසා පර්යේෂණ පිළිබඳව දැනුම ඒකරාශී කර ගැනීමේ ආධිපත්‍ය ගොඩනැගීම වැනි අවදානම් තත්ත්වයන්ට පත්වේ. එමනිසා ආයතන විසින් තනි තනිව කටයුතු කරනවාට වඩා හවුල්කාරීත්වය ගොඩනගා ගැනීම සාර්ථක බව පෙනේ.

ප්‍රජා සහභාගීත්වය සඳහා සීමා පනවා ඇති සහ මහජනතාව අතර සාකච්ඡාමය අවකාශ අවම පවතින විට ප්‍රතිපත්ති සඳහා බලපෑම් කිරීමට ඇති අවකාශ අඩුය. විවැනි තත්වයන් තුළ කටයුතු කිරීම සඳහා සහ කළමනාකරණය කර ගැනීම සඳහා වෙනස් ආකාරයක උපාය මාර්ග අවශ්‍ය වේ. විවැනි පරිසරයක් තුළ කටයුතු කරන ආයතන විසින් පහත සඳහන් සන්නිවේදන උපාය මාර්ග භාවිත කරනු ලැබේ. එනම්, සුභද්‍රායි ලෙස සන්නිවේදනය හැසිරවීම, බොහෝවිට සුභද්‍රායි කරුණු ඉස්මතු කර පෙන්වීම, ප්‍රතිපත්ති විවේචනය කරනු වෙනුවට සුභවාදී ලෙස ඒවායේ අඩුපාඩු පෙන්වාදී යෝජනා ඉදිරිපත් කිරීම, ප්‍රධාන පෙලේ දේශපාලනඥයින් සහ ප්‍රතිපත්ති සම්ප්‍රදායිකයින් සමඟ සෘජු සම්බන්ධතා ගොඩනගා ගැනීම, එසේත් නොමැතිනම් දේශපාලනඥයින්ට වඩා බලපෑම් කළ හැකි පරිපාලන බලධාරීන් සමඟ සම්බන්ධතා පැවැත්වීම, විදේශීය ජනමාධ්‍ය, මව්බිම අතහැර විදේශ ගතවී සිටින ජනකාය සහ ජාත්‍යන්තර සංවිධාන හරහා බලපෑම් ඇති කිරීම.

අවසාන වශයෙන් මෙම පත්‍රිකාව මඟින් සන්නිවේදනයේ දී දැනුම කළමනාකරණය කිරීමේ වැදගත්කම සලකා බලනු ලැබේ. පර්යේෂණ සොයා ගැනීම් සන්නිවේදනය කිරීමේ ප්‍රථම පියවර වන්නේ එකී දැනුම හැකි පමණ පුළුල් ප්‍රජාවක් වෙත ලබා දීමට කටයුතු කිරීමයි. තොරතුරු ජාලයන්, අන්තර්ජාලය හරහා සිදුකරන සංවාද සහ දත්ත බැංකු මඟින් පර්යේෂකයින් එකිනෙකාට සම්බන්ධ කළ හැකි අතර එමඟින් එක ස්ථානයක සිට තොරතුරු සෙවීම පහසු වී ඇත. දරිද්‍රතා විශ්ලේෂණ කේන්ද්‍රය විසින් ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ දරිද්‍රතාවයට අදාළ පර්යේෂණ තොරතුරු එක්රැස් කිරීමේ උත්සාහය වී සඳහා නිදසුනකි ([www.povertydatabase.lk](http://www.povertydatabase.lk)) එමෙන්ම ප්‍රජාව සහ ප්‍රතිපත්ති තීරකයින් අතර සම්බන්ධතාවයක් ඇති කිරීමේ උත්සාහයන්ද ආරම්භ කර ඇත. විවැනි හමු වීම් අන්තර්ජාලය හරහා සිදුකරන සාකච්ඡාවන්ගේ සිට ළමුන් හා වැඩිහිටියන් මුහුණට මුහුණ ලා ඔවුන්ගේ ප්‍රධාන ගැටලු සාකච්ඡා කිරීම දක්වා වර්ධනය වී ඇත. මෙවැනි අන්තර්ජාල බැලීම් හරහා සමාජය තුළ පවතින ධුරාවලිය පරයමින් සන්නිවේදනය පතුරුවාලිය හැකි අතර ලොව අනෙකුත් රටවල් සමඟ තිරස් අතට කරනු ලබන සන්නිවේදනය තුළින් දැනුම පිළිබඳව ඇති ධුරාවලියෙහි අභියෝග ජයගත හැකිවනු ඇත. සාමාන්‍යයෙන් ආධාරක ආයතන සහ ජාත්‍යන්තර රාජ්‍ය නොවන සංවිධාන විසින් දැනුවත්ව හෝ නොදැනුවත්ව දේශීය දැනුම අවතක්සේරුවට ලක්කරනු ලැබේ. මෙම තත්වය තුළ ලොව දකුණු කලාපීය රාජ්‍යයන් විසින් පර්යේෂණ හා දැනුම වර්ධනය කිරීම සඳහා වැඩි අවධානයක් යොමුකර, ආයතන ශක්තිමත් කරමින් අවශ්‍ය මූල්‍ය ප්‍රතිපාදන සපයා දේශීය දැනුම හා නිෂ්පාදනය ප්‍රවර්ධනය කිරීමට කටයුතු කළ යුතුයි. එමඟින් දියුණු යැයි සම්මත ලොව උතුරු කලාපීය රටවලට බැහැරව දැනුම් සම්භාරයක් සමඟ අත්දැකීම් ඒකරාශී කළ හැකිවනු ඇත.

පර්යේෂකයින් විසින් ඔවුන්ගේ සොයා ගැනීම් සහ දැනුම වඩාත් සාර්ථක ලෙස සන්නිවේදනය කිරීම සඳහා භාවිත කළ හැකි ප්‍රමුඛ උපාය මාර්ග හා ක්‍රමවේදයන් රාශියක් මෙම පත්‍රිකාව තුළ ගොනු කර ඇත. කෙසේ නමුත් මෙය සෘජුව භාවිත කළ හැකි මෙවලම් කට්ටලයක් නොවන අතර සන්නිවේදනය ප්‍රවර්ධනය සඳහා ඒ මත සිට ක්‍රියාත්මක විය හැකි මඟ පෙන්වීමක් වනු ඇත. පර්යේෂණ සොයා ගැනීම් සන්නිවේදනය කිරීම අපහසු තත්වයක පවතින පරිසරයක් සහ ධුරාවලීන්

විසින් අභියෝගයන් අත්කර ඇති විට පර්යේෂකයින් විසින් නිරතුරුව ඒවා ගැන සාකච්ඡාවක් කරමින් එක් අභියෝගයන් ජයගන්නා ආකාරය පිළිබඳ ක්‍රියා කළ යුතුව ඇත. තොරතුරු හුවමාරු කර ගැනීම තුළින් ඔවුන්ගේ ශක්තිය වර්ධනය කරගනිමින් එමගින් ආධාර සපයන්නන්, දේශපාලකයින් හෝ ප්‍රතිපත්ති තීරකයින්හට බලපෑම් කළ හැකි තත්ත්වයට ශක්තිමත් විය හැකිය. කෙසේ නමුත් එකමුතුව කටයුතු කිරීම සහ හවුල්කාරීත්වය යන අංශ ශ්‍රී ලාංකීය පර්යේෂණ ප්‍රජාව අතර තවමත් වර්ධනය වී නොමැත. මෙම පත්‍රිකාව මඟින්, පර්යේෂකයින්හට ඔවුන් විසින් සන්නිවේදනය භාවිතා කරන ආකාරය සහ හවුල්කාරීත්වය යොදාගන්නා ආකාරය දෙස වෙනස් ආකාරයකින් බැලීමට ආමන්ත්‍රණය කරයි. එවැනි ඵලදායී ක්‍රියාමාර්ග තුළින් ප්‍රතිපත්ති තීරකයින් විසින් පර්යේෂණ ප්‍රතිඵල වඩාත් සැලකිල්ලකින් යුතුව භාවිත කිරීමට පෙළඹිය හැකිය.





## நிறைவேற்றுச் சுருக்கம்

சான்றுகளின் அடிப்படையிலான கொள்கைகள் உருவாக்கப்படுவதை தூண்டும் விதத்தில் ஆய்வுகள் வினைத்திறனாகத் தொடர்பாடப்படலானது அபிவிருத்தித் துறையில் ஒரு விவாதத்திற்குரிய விடையமாக இருக்கின்றது. ஒரு சிறந்த ஆட்சிக்கும் மற்றும் ஆழமான ஆய்வுகள், மதிப்பீடுகள் அடிப்படையில் உருவாக்கப்படும் ஆரோக்கியமான கொள்கைகள் ஏற்றுக்கொள்ளப்படுவதற்கும் ஆய்வாளர்கள், கொள்கை உருவாக்குபவர்களிடையில் ஓர் உடன்பாடான உறவு இருப்பதும் அவசியமாகும். இப்பதிப்பானது வறுமை ஆராய்ச்சி நிலையத்தின் 2007 இன் 'ஆய்வுகள் தொடர்பாடப்படல் மற்றும் மாற்றங்களில் செல்வாக்குச் செலுத்தல்' எனும் தலைப்பிலான வறுமை ஆராய்ச்சிகளிலான தொகுப்பு நிகழ்ச்சியில் பங்குபற்றியவர்கள் உட்பட இத்தலைப்புடனான தொடர்புகளைக் கொண்டுள்ள பல்வேறுபட்ட நிறுவனங்கள் மற்றும் வறுமை ஆராய்ச்சி நிலையத்துடன் (CEPA) இத்தலைப்பு தொடர்பாக இணைந்து செயற்படுகின்ற தனிப்பட்ட ஆய்வாளர்களின் அனுபவங்கள் பலதின் அடிப்படையில் அமைந்துள்ளது. இவ்வாறான கதைகளை, அனுபவங்களை ஒன்று சேர்த்தல் மற்றும் ஒற்றுமைகள், 'வெற்றிகளை' வெளிச்சத்திற்கு கொண்டு வருதல் என்பன தமது சொந்த தொடர்பாடல் மற்றும் செல்வாக்குச் செலுத்தும் யுக்திகளைக் கட்டியெழுப்ப முயன்று கொண்டிருப்பவர்களுக்கு சிந்திப்பதற்கான வழி வகைகளைக் காட்டி நிற்கும்.

இப்பதிப்பானது தொடர்பாடலின் இயக்கப்பாட்டிணைக் கருதுகிறது. அதாவது உதாரணமாக மட்டுப்படுத்தப்பட்ட பிரசுரங்கள் அல்லது அறிக்கைகளைப் பயன்படுத்தி தகவல்களை வழங்குவதை நோக்கமாகக் கொண்டுள்ள ஆய்வாளர்களுக்கும், பொது மக்களின் ஈடுபாட்டுடன் பெரிய அளவிலான பிரசுரங்கள் மற்றும் இயக்கங்களினூடு பெரிய அளவில் தமது செய்திகளைத் தெரிவிக்க முயற்சிக்கும் ஆய்வாளர்களுக்கும் இடையிலான வேறுபாடுகளை வெளிச்சமிட்டுக் காட்டுகிறது. எல்லா ஆய்வாளர்களும் ஒரே விதத்தில் தொடர்பாடல்களை மேற்கொள்வதற்கு விரும்பாவிடினும் சான்றுகள் தாமாக ஒரு நாளும் பேசப் போவதில்லை என்பதை ஒவ்வொருவரும் விளங்கிக் கொள்ள வேண்டியது அவசியமாகும். ஓர் ஆய்வானது சரியான, உயிர்ப்பான முறையில் பரப்பப்படாவிடின் அது புத்தக தட்டுகளிலும், ஏன் மக்களின் மனதுகளிலுமே தூசு படிந்த ஒரு மறந்து போன செய்தியாக மாறிவிடும் அபாயமுள்ளது. ஆய்வு சரியாக அறிவிக்கப்பட்ட போதிலும் தீர்மானம் எடுப்பவர்கள் அதற்கு காது கொடுப்பார்கள் என்றோ புரிந்து கொள்வார்கள் என்றோ அல்லது தீர்மானங்கள் எடுக்கும் போது அச்சான்றுகளுக்கேற்ப நடந்து கொள்வார்கள் என்றோ எம்மால் அனுமானித்துக் கொள்ள முடியாது. ஆய்வுகள் உரிய பயனை அடைந்து கொள்வதற்காக தமது அடையாளப்படுத்தப்பட்ட இலக்குக்குரிய சபையை அடைவதற்கு மிகப் பொருத்தமான தொடர்பாடல் உபாயங்களை வகுத்துக் கொள்வது ஆய்வாளர்களின் தேவையாகும்.

பொருத்தமான தொடர்பாடல் வழி வகைகளை வகுத்துக் கொள்வதற்கு மாறும் கொள்கை சம்பந்தமான விடயங்கள், ஒரு விடயத்தில் வித்தியாசமான

பங்குதாரர்களின் பல்வேறுபட்ட இரசனை மட்டங்கள், முக்கியமான பங்குதாரர்களுடனான மாறும் உறவுகளின் தன்மை மற்றும் உருவாகும் பிரதானமான செய்திகளில் ஏற்படக் கூடிய சமூக மற்றும் அரசியல் விளைவுகள் போன்ற ஆய்வு, கொள்கை தொடர்பான விடயங்கள் பற்றிய சிறந்த புரிந்துணர்வை வைத்திருத்தல் முக்கியமானதாகும். இலங்கையில் கொள்கை அமைப்புக்கள் சில வேளைகளில் தெளிவற்றதாக இருப்பதுடன் பொது மக்களின் ஈடுபாடு மற்றும் சந்திப்புகளுக்கு மிகவும் குறைவான வாய்ப்புகளே வழங்கப்படுகின்றன. கொள்கைகள் உருவாக்கம் மற்றும் மதிப்பிடலில் சிறந்த ஆராய்ச்சிகள் பயன்படுத்தப்பட்டமைக்கான உதாரணங்கள் இருந்த போதிலும் பெரும்பாலான கொள்கைகள் சான்றுகளையின்றி அல்லது சிறியளவிலான சான்றுகளுடன் அல்லது அப்பிரச்சினைக்குரிய சிறிய ஒரு தீர்வை நியாயப்படுத்தும் சான்றுகளின் அடிப்படையில் அரசியல் நோக்கங்களை முன்னிலைப்படுத்தியே வகுக்கப்படுகின்றன. கொள்கைகள் பெருமளவில் மத்தியிலிருந்தே உருவாக்கப்படுவதுடன் மாகாண மற்றும் மாவட்ட அல்லது பொது மக்கள் சமூகத்திற்கு கொள்கைகளில் செல்வாக்குச் செலுத்துவதற்கான வாய்ப்பு மிகக் குறைவாகும். பொதுமக்களின் அபிப்பிராய பேதங்களுக்கு ஆர்ப்பாட்டங்களிற்கு மிகவும் மட்டுப்படுத்தப்பட்ட இடமே காணப்படுதலானது பிரச்சாரங்கள் அல்லது பரிந்து பேசும் செயற்பாடுகள் போன்றவை சிறந்த பயனைத் தருவதையும் கடினமாக்குகின்றன.

இருந்தாலும் இது ஆய்வாளர்களின் மேலுள்ள பொறுப்பிலிருந்து அவர்களை விலக்கி விடுவதற்காகவல்ல. அவர்கள் மீது பொருத்தமான, மிகச் சரியான தகவல்களைப் பிறப்பிப்பதற்கும் அதனை அதன் முடிவுகளிலிருந்து நடவடிக்கை எடுக்க வேண்டியவர்களுக்கு பரப்புல்துமான பாரிய பொறுப்பு உண்டு. ஆய்வாளர்கள் தீர்மானம் எடுப்பவர்களை கவரக் கூடியதாக தமது ஆய்வுகளை சக்தியுள்ளதாக பயனுள்ள விதத்தில் அனுப்புபவதுடன் அவர்களை தமது ஆய்வில் முடியுமான இடங்களில் ஈடுபடுத்தவும் வேண்டும். ஆய்வாளர்கள் தமது ஆய்வின் விடயத்திலும் கவனமெடுக்க வேண்டும். அதாவது தமது ஆய்வு வெறும் தகவல் ஒன்றை சேர்க்காது அறிவின் ஏதாவது ஓர் இடைவெளியை நிரப்புகின்றதா என்பதை கருத்தில் எடுக்க வேண்டும். இவ்வாய்வு உண்மையாக அர்த்தமுள்ள விதத்தில் கொள்கை உருவாக்கத்திற்கு பங்களிக்குமா என்பது பற்றி கவனத்தில் கொள்ள வேண்டும். ஆய்வாளர்கள் அரசாங்கத்தின் முன்னுரிமைகளிற்கு பொருத்தமானதாக ஆய்வுகளை உற்பத்தி செய்கிறார்களா? இலங்கையின் சவாலான சந்தர்ப்பங்களினால் ஆய்வாளர்கள் தமக்குள் தொடர்புகளை ஏற்படுத்தி ஒன்றாக உழைக்க வேண்டியது அவசியமாகும். அரசாங்க அலுவலர்களும் மற்றும் ஏனைய முக்கியமான தனியார் மற்றும் அபிவிருத்தித் துறைகளில் உள்ள தீர்மானம் எடுப்பவர்களும் தமது வயிற்றை நிரப்புகின்ற அல்லது அரசியல் நோக்கங்களுக்குத் தகுந்த முடிவுகளில் மாத்திரம் தங்கியிருக்காது ஆராய்ச்சிகளினை மதிக்கத் தெரிந்த தீர்மானம் எடுக்கும் கலாச்சாரங்களை விருத்தி செய்து கொள்ள வேண்டும். இந்நோக்கங்கள் எதற்கும் ஓர் இலகுவான முடிவு இல்லையெனினும் இரு தரப்பின் மீதும் இந்நிலைமையை முன்னேற்றுவதற்கான பொறுப்பு உள்ளது.

இச்சுருக்கமானது பல்வேறு மட்டங்களில் மாற்றங்களில் செல்வாக்குச் செலுத்துவதற்காக ஆராய்ச்சியாளர்கள் முயற்சி எடுத்துள்ள பல உதாரணங்களை முன்வைப்பதுடன் பயன்தரக்கூடிய பொதுவான யுக்திகள் முறைகளையும் தெளிவாக காட்டுகிறது.

**பொருத்தமான ஆராய்ச்சிகளைத் தெரிவு செய்தல்.**

ஆராய்ச்சியாளர்கள் தமது ஆராய்ச்சிகளைப் பயனுள்ளதாக ஆக்கிக் கொள்வதற்கு கொள்கை மட்டத்தில் என்று கட்டாயமல்லாது ஏதோ ஒரு மட்டத்தில் தீர்மானம் எடுப்பவர்களை செல்வாக்குச் செலுத்தக் கூடிய பொருத்தமான மிகவும் தேவையான ஆய்வுச் செயற்திட்டங்களைத் தெரிவு செய்ய வேண்டியது முக்கியமாகும். முன்னர் மேற்கொள்ளப்பட்ட செயற்திட்டங்களிற்கொத்த விடயப் பரப்புகளில் ஆய்வுகளைச் செய்வதும் ஆய்வுகளின் திரட்டுக்களை உருவாக்க உதவுவதுடன் பலமான செய்திகளைக் கட்டியெழுப்புவதற்கும் உதவுகின்றது. இருந்தாலும் சுயாதீனத் தன்மையையும் நம்பகத் தன்மையையும் பேணிக் கொள்வதும் தெரிவு செய்வதில் முக்கியமான பங்கு வகிக்கின்றது.

**பல்வேறு மட்டங்களிலான பங்குதாரர்களை வரைப்படுத்தலும் தொடர்புபடுத்தலும்.**

கொள்கைகளை அல்லது தீர்மானங்களை செல்வாக்குச் செலுத்துவதற்காக முயற்சிக்கும் தொடர்பாடல் உபாயங்கள், உயர் மட்டத்திலான பங்குதாரர்களுடனான தொடர்புகளை நோக்காகக் கொள்வது பொதுவான ஓர் இயல்பாகும். இருந்தாலும் ஏனைய பொது நிறுவன மட்டங்களிலான அதே போல் தேசிய மட்டத்திலான பங்குதாரர்களைப் பயன்படுத்தி பயனைப் பெற்றுக் கொள்ளக் கூடிய அதிக இலக்கற்ற வழிகளும் உள்ளன. வெற்றிகரமான தொடர்பாடல்களிற்கு பொதுமக்கள், தனியார் மற்றும் பொதுச் சமூகத்துறை அதே போல் கொள்கைகள் உருவாக்குபவர்களுடனான சந்திப்புக்கள் தேவையாகும். செல்வாக்குகளைக் கண்டறிதல் (Influence – Mapping) மற்றும் Force Field போன்ற சாதனங்களும் பங்குதாரர்களை பகுத்தறிந்து அவர்களுடன் தொடர்பாடல்களை மேற்கொள்வதற்கான மிகப் பயனுள்ள வழிகளை அடையாளம் கண்டு கொள்வதற்கு உதவ முடியும்.

**தொடர்ச்சியான சந்திப்புக்களைப் பேணுதலும் வாய்ப்புகளிற்கான வழிகளை தேடுதலும்.**

பெரும்பாலான ஆய்வுத் திட்டங்கள் தமது திட்டங்கள் அல்லது அறிக்கை முடிவடைந்த பின்னர் செய்திகள் எவ்வாறு தெரிவிக்கப்பட வேண்டும் என்பதனை கருத்திற் கொண்டு தொடர்பாடலை தமது இறுதி நடவடிக்கையாகவே திட்டமிடுகின்றன. இருந்தாலும் முக்கியமான தாக்கங்கள் வழமையாக ஒரு விடயத்துடனான தொடர்ச்சியான நீண்ட கால சந்திப்புக்களில் தங்கியுள்ளன. தொடர்பாடல் வழிகளானவை ஒரு செயற்திட்ட வாழ்க்கை வட்டத்தில் ஆரம்பத்திலிருந்தே தொடர்புகளிற்கு சந்தர்ப்பம் அளிக்கின்றதெனின் வாய்ப்புகளிற்கான கதவுகள் தெளிவாக திறக்கப்படுகின்றன எனலாம். இறுதி அறிக்கையினூடு மட்டுமன்றி தொடர்ந்தும் தகவல்களுடன் தொடர்புகளை

ஏற்படுத்திக் கொள்வதானது பங்குதாரர்கள் செயற்திட்ட முறைகள் அல்லது அணுகு முறைகள் பற்றிய தமது உடன்பாடற்ற கருத்துக்களை, பிரச்சினைகளை முன்வைக்க வாய்ப்பு அளிப்பதுடன் பிழையான புரிந்துணர்வுகளால் அல்லது பங்குதாரர்களை ஆச்சரியப்பட வைக்கும் எதிர்பார்க்காத செய்திகளால் இறுதி அறிக்கை கலைக்கப்படுவதற்கு அல்லது புறக்கணிக்கப்படுவதற்கான வாய்ப்புக்களையும் குறைக்கிறது.

### உறவுகளைக் கட்டியெழுப்பதல்.

பல ஆய்வுத் தாபனங்கள் மற்றவர்களின் ஈடுபாடு எவ்வளவு தூரம் அமைய வேண்டும் என்பதை தீர்மானித்துக் கொள்ள முடியாமல் தடுமாறுகின்றன. ஆனால் உறவுகளை ஏற்படுத்திக் கொள்ளாமல் இருப்பதானது ஏனைய மக்களின் ஆய்வு மற்று அறிவுகளை பயன்படுத்தாது உயர் அறிவு மட்டத்தை அப்படியே நிலை நிறுத்திக் கொள்ளும் ஆபத்தைக் கொண்டுள்ளது. எப்போதும் தனியே வேலை செய்யும் ஸ்தாபனங்களை விட வலையமைப்புகளே வெற்றிகரமாக உள்ளன.

குறிப்பாக கலந்துரையாடல்கள் மற்றும் பொதுச் சமூக ஈடுபாடுகள் மட்டுப்படுத்தப்பட்டுள்ள ஒரு சூழலில் கொள்கைகளில் செல்வாக்குச் செலுத்துவது கடினமாகும். இவ்வாறான சவால்களை முயன்று முகாமைத்துவம் செய்வதற்கு பல உபாயங்கள் தேவைப்படுகின்றன. இவ்வாறான சூழல்களில் இயங்கும் நிறுவனங்கள் பல யுக்திகளை முன்வைக்கின்றன. அதாவது 'நேரான' தாக்கத்தை காட்டுகின்ற கருத்துக்களை ஒன்று திரட்டுதல், கொள்கைகளை விமர்சிப்பதைத் தவிர்த்து முன்னேற்றப்படக் கூடிய விடயங்களை ஆக்கபூர்வமாக தெரிவித்தல், அரசியல் வாதிகளிலும் கூடிய சக்தியைக் காட்டுகின்ற அதே நேரம் கூடுதலாக இணங்கி நடக்கக் கூடிய அனுசரித்துப் போகக் கூடிய சில முக்கியமான கொள்கை உருவாக்குபவர்கள் மற்றும் தனிப்பட்ட அரசியல் வாதிகளுடன் நேரடியான தொடர்புகளை விருத்தி செய்து கொள்ளல், நாட்டுக்கு வெளியிலிருந்து உலகளாவிய ஊடகம், Diaspora (புலம்பெயர்ந்தோர்) மற்றும் சர்வதேச நிறுவனங்களினூடாக அழுத்தம் கொடுத்தல் போன்றன 'நேரான' தொடர்பாடல் உத்திகள் சிலவாகும்.

இறுதியாக இச்சுருக்கம் தொடர்பாடல் பேச்சுகளில் அறிவு முகாமைத்துவத்தின் முக்கியத்துவத்தையும் கருதுகின்றது. ஆய்வுகள் தொடர்பாடல்படலில் அறிவானது மக்களுக்கு முடியுமானவரை கிடைக்கப்பெறுவதை உறுதிப்படுத்துவதே மிகவும் முக்கியமான முதலாவது படியாகும். வலையமைப்புகள், கணனித் தொடர்பாடல் வலையமைப்புகளினூடான பொது மன்றங்கள் (online forums) இணையத்தளத் திரட்டுக்கள் (databases) போன்றன இத்துறைகளில் ஈடுபட்டுள்ளோரை ஒரே இடத்திற்கு ஒன்று சேர்த்து ஒரே இடத்தில் தேடல்களை இலகுவாக்குவதால் ஆய்வாளர்கள் இவற்றை அதிகமாக பயன்படுத்துகின்றனர். இலங்கையின் வறுமை சம்பந்தமான ஆய்வுகளை ஒன்று திரட்டும் முயற்சியான வறுமை ஆராச்சி நிலையத்தின் (CEPA), www.povertydatabase.lk எனும் இணைய தகவல் தளம் ஒரு சிறந்த உதாரணமாகும். இன்னும் இணைய வலையமைப்பு பொது மாற்றங்களிலிருந்து சில விடயங்களை அழுத்திக் கலந்துரையாடுவதற்காக சிறுவர்கள், வயது வந்தோரை சந்திக்க வைக்கின்ற உண்மையான நேரடியான

ஒன்று கூடல்கள் வரை சமூகங்களை ஆய்வாளர்கள் மற்றும் கொள்கைகள் உருவாக்குவோருடன் தொடர்புபடுத்துவதற்கான முயற்சிகளுக்கு பல உதாரணங்களுள்ளன. இவ்வாறான ஆரம்ப முயற்சிகள் சமுதாயத்தினுள் உள்ள படித்தரங்களை உடைத்தெறிவதை நோக்காகக் கொண்டுள்ள அதே வேளை நாடுகளிடையேயான 'அறிவின் படித்தரங்களை' கலைவதற்கான நாடுகளிடையான (கிடையான) வலையமைப்புகள் ஏற்படுத்தப்பட வேண்டிய தேவை உள்ளது. தெரிந்தோ தெரியாமலோ உள்ளூர் அறிவானது நன்கொடை வழங்குநர்களாலும் சர்வதேச அரசு சார்பற்ற நிறுவனங்களாலும் (NGO) சுரண்டப்படுகின்றது. இது 'தென்பகுதி' நாடுகளின் அரசுகளிற்கு ஆராய்ச்சி மற்றும் அறிவிற்கு கூடிய முக்கியத்துவம் கொடுக்கப்பட வேண்டியதன் மற்றும் உள்ளூர் அறிவினை உற்பத்தி செய்து பகிர்ந்து கொள்வதற்கு முன்னுரிமை அளிக்கும் நிறுவனங்களிற்கு முதலீடு செய்ய வேண்டியதன் தேவையை மீண்டும் எடுத்துக் காட்டுகிறது. அறிவு மற்றும் அனுபவத்திற்கான ஒரு அமைப்பு 'வடக்கிற்கு' வெளியே உருவாக்கப்படுவதை உறுதி செய்வதற்கு இது மிக முக்கியமாகும்.

இச்சுருக்கப் பத்திரிகையானது ஆய்வாளர்களால் உபயோகப்படுத்தப்படுகின்ற பிரதானமான யுக்திகளையும் கருத்துக்களையும் அவை சிறப்பாக பரப்பப்படுவதற்காக ஒன்றிணைக்கிறது. இருந்தாலும் இது ஒரு வெறும் சாதனங்களின் தொகுப்பல்ல. மாறாக இது சிந்தனைகளுக்கும் செயற்பாடுகளிற்குமான ஓர் அழைப்பாகும். ஆய்வுகள் பரிமாறப்படல் சில வேளைகளில் கடினமாகவுள்ள மற்றும் பல்வேறு படித்தரங்களிலுள்ளவர்களுடனான பிரச்சினைகள் தோன்றலாம் என்பது போன்ற சூழல்களில் ஆய்வாளர்கள் இவ்வாறான சவால்களை ஒருவரோடு ஒருவர் விவாதித்து கலந்துரையாடுவதுடன் இம்மாறா நிலைமைக்கு சவால் விடுத்து மீட்சி பெறுவது எவ்வாறு என்பது பற்றிய கருத்துக்கள், தகவல்களை பரிமாறிக் கொள்ளவும் வேண்டும். தகவல்களை பரிமாறிக் கொள்ளல் மற்றும் அறிவினை ஒன்று திரட்டுதலால் ஒரு விவாதத்தின் உறுதித் தன்மையினை அதிகரிக்க முடியும் என்பதுடன் இறுதியாக இது தீர்மானம் எடுப்பவர்களை அவர்கள் நன்கொடை வழங்குபவர்களாக இருந்தாலோ அல்லது அரசாங்க கொள்கை உருவாக்குபவர்களாக இருந்தாலோ, செல்வாக்குச் செலுத்துவதில் மிகவும் தேவையான ஒரு பங்களிப்பினையும் வழங்குகின்றது. ஆனாலும் இலங்கையின் ஆராய்ச்சியாளர் சமுதாயத்தில் இவ்வாறான வலையமைப்பு, கூட்டுறவு செயற்பாடுகளுக்கான உணர்வு குறைவாகவே உள்ளது. இப்பத்திரிகையானது ஆய்வாளர்களை அவர்கள் தொடர்பாடும் விதத்தை மாற்றுவதற்கும் கூட்டுறவுச் செயற்பாடுகளை மேற்கொள்வதற்கும் அவர்களது ஆய்வுகள் கூடுதலாக தீர்மானம் எடுப்பவர்களால் பயன்படுத்தப்படவும் ஒன்றுபடுமாறு அழைக்கிறது.



# Communicating Research and Influencing Change

## 1 Introduction

Good governance and the adoption of sound policies based on rigorous research and evaluation requires a positive relationship between researchers and policymakers. In an age when information and knowledge management is becoming a critical issue in all sectors it is vital that researchers working in development engage with the discourse on evidence-based policy making and maximise the opportunities available to share research more widely and bring about change at all levels. In Sri Lanka we risk suffering from a hidden surplus of unused knowledge. There is a significant amount of research being undertaken into poverty reduction that could be shared more widely and effectively with organisations and decision makers who can translate the findings into action.

This paper is based on the experiences of diverse organisations and individuals who CEPA has interacted with on this subject, including those who attended CEPA's 2007 Symposium on Poverty Research which was entitled *Communicating Research and Influencing Change*. There is value for organisations in documenting such experiences internally and reflecting on what works well as well as analysing less successful strategies.

However, it is important to understand that there is no one formula for successfully influencing policy and behaviour. The circumstances differ in almost every case, and the process is neither linear nor simple enough to be distilled into a number of steps or instructions. Indeed the anecdotal evidence of the success of some alliances and networks in influencing change demonstrates that often there is a need for a multitude of different actors and strategies for influencing to be successful. Influencing change is most likely to be the result of a complex path involving a number of different interactions and relationships. Predicting how different stakeholders and interests will interact is not an exact science and organisations need to be prepared to react flexibly to the circumstances as they change. This is summed up well by Diane Stone *et al.*:

“Determining influence is as varied as the meanings that can be given to the concept of influence. Anecdotal evidence of policy impact or ‘rich description’ of the influence of policy research in case studies can be more accurate. Such ‘stories’ can also be important

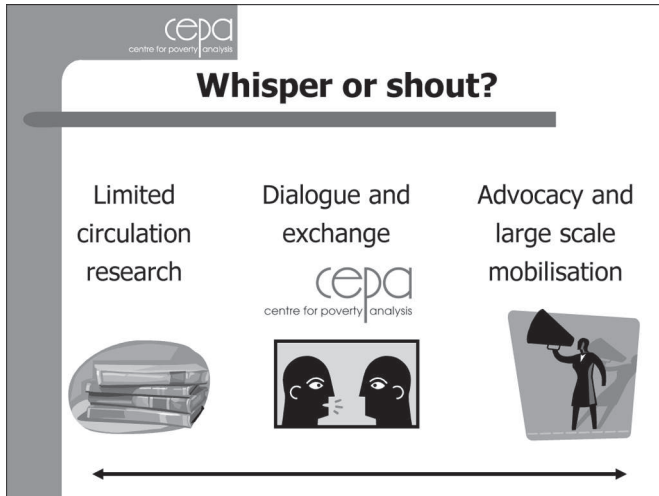


to the internal culture of research organisations. Consequently, the methodologies for evaluating influence need to take into consideration that the meanings and interpretations of 'influence' vary considerably." (Stone, Maxwell & Keating 2001: 30)

Two recurring themes stood out at CEPA's 2007 symposium; researchers in Sri Lanka need to communicate with each other and work together more effectively despite, and perhaps even more because of, the challenging context; and government departments and other important decision makers (in the private and development sectors) need to develop a decision-making culture that values research and evidence rather than relying on 'gut feeling' or politically expedient conclusions. There are no easy solutions to either of these aspirations, but the responsibility to improve the situation lies with both sides.

## **2 From Communicating Information to Influencing Change**

This paper starts from the premise that as researchers we should be communicating more, and communicating more effectively in order to give evidence a voice. This assumes that the authors of poverty related research will wish to communicate the results of their research in some form, however not all researchers will have influencing behaviour or policy as their aim. Much research is still carried out and published purely with the aim of informing and raising awareness of an issue amongst a larger audience – and for some organisations this is the limit of their remit, leaving advocacy activities to others. Some may choose to communicate at the quieter end of the spectrum, using limited circulation of publications or reports for example, while others may choose to convey their messages on a larger scale, engaging the public and using large scale campaigning and mobilisation.



Presentation by Fiona Remnant, CEPA at 2007 Poverty Symposium

Whilst not all organisations will wish to (or should) move up towards the advocacy end of the spectrum of communication, there is a danger in researchers assuming that publishing and publicising research is enough to ensure that people will listen to the recommendations and make decisions based on the evidence. Evidence doesn't always speak for itself and many other factors intervene, distract and detract from evidence in decision making. If the research is not taken up and actively communicated by others, there is a risk that it will simply gather dust on a bookshelf and in people's minds. Even if the research is communicated, we cannot assume that decision makers will listen, understand, or *act* on the evidence in making their decision.

"the aims of policy-makers are often limited to satisfying immediate public demands, not to maximising long-term social gains. Rather than searching out all policy alternatives, research often stops as soon as a workable option is identified." (Stone, Maxwell & Keating 2001: 5)

Communication strategies need to consider how to reach specific target audiences, how they will respond to the messages (including asking what reasons they have *not* to listen to the research messages), and the most appropriate communication medium.

Communicating research effectively is not just about a two way relationship between the researcher and the decision-maker. Other stakeholders can also impact the way the messages are carried and acted upon. Effective knowledge management means giving civil society access to more information, inspiring and informing discussion and debate amongst different organisations within and between countries, and making it easier for governments, NGOs, donors and businesses to find and use existing research. This reduces unnecessary duplication of work and helps to strengthen messages by pooling research. Knowledge management is now high on the agenda of many development organisations, including the UK Department for International Development (DfID) who have launched a portal for research funded by them ([www.research4development.info](http://www.research4development.info)).

Even with a comprehensive knowledge management framework in place, the reality is that many researchers are still not experienced enough at presenting their findings and struggle to make their voices heard at the level where it counts. How can we bridge that gap and understand better how to go from evidence on the page to tangible change on the ground? There is no one answer to this question, but researchers and campaigners can learn from other people's experiences and tools to ensure that the way they communicate their messages is suited to their target audience and the context within which they work.

The Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) programme run by the Overseas Development Institute, UK has been researching this communication gap for more than six years, looking at research practices, policy processes and decision making contexts in different countries. Their findings so far have been summarised into six main lessons:

- 1) Policy processes are fantastically complicated.
- 2) Research-based evidence usually plays a very minor role, but
- 3) It is possible, and there are some good examples.
- 4) You need a holistic understanding of the context you are working in
- 5) Successful policy entrepreneurs need a wide range of complementary skills, and most importantly...
- 6) Intent - you need to really, really want to do it. It's not easy, but it's not impossible, and it can make a huge difference.

(Presentation by John Young, ODI at 2007 Poverty Symposium)

The 'intent' is a vital part of this process. Researchers who have understood the difference between simply communicating and influencing and who wish their findings to have a lasting impact, need to make a conscious commitment to engage in the sometimes lengthy process of turning research into policy. Some researchers who are less inclined to engage with this process suggest that it would be more appropriate for a separate department or individual experienced in communications to work on getting the messages out, rather than relying on researchers to do this aspect of the work. While it may be desirable to have extra experience available researchers may not always have this luxury, and even if they do, experience suggests (some case studies are included in this volume) that it is vital for researchers themselves to be involved in analysing the context, audience and messages for their work from the *beginning* of a project to ensure maximum potential impact. Communicating and influencing are most effective when they are ongoing and integral to the research, rather than a final action or an afterthought (the World University Service of Canada's study, *Workers' Perceptions Study* which is highlighted in Box 4.2 illustrates this point well).

Researchers who are really 'intent' on making a difference with their research need to be constantly aware of the context they are working in; the changing policy context, the levels of interest that different stakeholders have in the issue, the changing nature of relationships with key stakeholders and the potential social and political implications of emerging main messages. The next section explores this context in more detail.

### **3 The Research-Policy Context**

The decision-making/policy context plays an important role in determining how and the extent to which researchers are able to influence their intended target, and sometimes this environment can be very challenging. What prevents a freer flow of communication and stronger links between researchers and decision makers? Why does this communication gap persist? Stone, Maxwell and Keating's conception of the research-poverty dynamic pulls together many of the issues which are at play here (see Box 3.1). Most, if not all, the factors are relevant to Sri Lanka, illustrating the extent of the challenge which faces researchers and policy makers if they are to bridge the gap more effectively.

### **Box 3.1: Ten Ways of Conceiving the Research-Policy Dynamic**

1. The problem can be defined as a *public goods problem*, where there is an inadequate supply of policy relevant research.
2. The problem can be defined as one of a *lack of access* to research, data and analysis for both researchers and policy makers.
3. The problem can be defined as the *poor policy comprehension of researchers* towards both the policy process and how research might be relevant to this process. Overcoming this lack of understanding requires researchers to study the policy process, to demonstrate the relevance of research, and to build methodologies for evaluating research relevance.
4. The problem can be represented as *ineffective communication by researchers* of their work. Improved communications strategies are consequently encouraged.
5. The problem can be defined as *societal disconnection* of both researchers and decision-makers from those who the research is about or intended for, to the extent that effective implementation is undermined. The appropriate focus is on (for example) 'participatory rural analysis', 'street-level bureaucracy' and encouraging 'public understanding of science'.
6. The problem can be defined as the *ignorance of politicians* about the existence of policy relevant research, or the incapacity of overstretched bureaucrats to absorb research. The solution – 'building bridges' or constructing 'conveyor belts' – takes the form, for example, of conferences and workshops, or the appointment of specialists to government committees
7. The problem can be conceived in terms of policy makers and leaders being dismissive, unresponsive or incapable of using research. This problem requires improvement in *governmental capacity* to recognise and absorb research, as well as in the capacities, personnel and resources of the state structure more generally.
8. The problem can be conceived of as not simply a question of research having a direct policy impact, but one of broader patterns of socio-political, economic and cultural influence. This leads to questioning of the *domains of research relevance*, impact and influence, and requires the adoption of a longer-term perspective where research may take a generation to exert real influence.
9. The problem can be defined as one of *power relations*. This generates concerns about the contested validity of knowledge(s), issues of censorship and control, and the question of ideology.
10. The problem can be viewed as one of the *validity of research*, and problems relating to the question: what is knowable? Attention is then focused on different epistemologies and 'ways of knowing'.

Source: Stone, Maxwell & Keating 2001: 3

Sri Lanka, like many countries, is characterised by an unclear policy process which provides few opportunities for public engagement and dialogue. Policy often tends to happen on the hoof and can be hastily passed in parliament based on the will of the executive presidency, or the political need of the day. This has led to a tendency for snap policy judgments to be made, often based on little or no evidence – or evidence used out of context to justify a simplistic solution to a problem. Participants at a roundtable on the policy process in Sri Lanka (organised by CEPA in 2007) expressed scepticism about the use of research in policy, one participant going so far as to say that white papers and commissions are “dead”, with politicians reluctant to undertake much research and consultation to build up a case for fear of losing credibility if the policy fails to get through or threatens to derail their career development.

Policy is still largely driven from the centre and there is little room for provincial and district levels or civil society to influence policy. The restricted space available for public dissent and demonstration also makes it harder for campaigning or advocacy activities to have much impact (working within this type of challenging environment is discussed further later in this paper). However, Professor Savitri Goonesekere (Professor Emeritus of Law, University of Colombo and Board Member, CENWOR and CEPA) who spoke at the 2007 Poverty Symposium, warns against sacrificing or compromising the high standards of good research when faced with difficulties in communicating. Researchers should remain wary of their messages becoming diluted or misrepresented in an effort to circumvent obstacles or avoid criticism.

From a supply perspective Sri Lanka boasts numerous research institutions which come entirely or partly under the purview of government (e.g. the Law Commission, various agriculture and irrigation sector institutions, the Department of Census & Statistics, the Central Bank, the Institute of Policy Studies, and of course universities), reflecting a structure set up to provide the government with good quality research to inform policies and programmes. There are some good examples of cases where government departments are using research and baseline studies when designing interventions. In 2002 the Department of Export Agriculture (DEA) commissioned a study to look into how to improve the rate of technology transfer and adoption in the export agriculture crop sector. The study came about as a response to various formal and informal discussions that the department had had with the growers, and was designed to provide more substantial and evidence-based research. The policy recommendations made by the technical report were taken up by the DEA; a good

example of evidence-based policymaking initiated by government<sup>1</sup>. More recently the Samurdhi Authority used the poorest 119 divisions report issued by the DCS in re-designing their beneficiary targeting system. Encouragingly the National Operation Centre (initiated by the Ministry of Plan Implementation) has plans to introduce an Evaluation Information System within its National Operations Room – a virtual one stop centre that will contain information regarding all evaluation reports. The plan is to inspire policymakers to use this material before taking decisions and to instil a culture of results based monitoring and evidence based decision making. This initiative is at an implementation rather than policy level, but is still a positive step forward.

This latest initiative by the Ministry of Plan Implementation is laudable, and there are some other good examples to be found, but they stand in the context of a policy environment that discourages research into controversial areas and places little store by reflective discussion and debate on new legislation. Examples of research being sought out and used by policymakers are rare – despite the existence of good quality research institutes set up and sponsored by government. Some laws and policies are seemingly formulated in secrecy behind closed doors with little regard for knowledge generated through research. Professor Goonesekere's speech at CEPA's Poverty Symposium drew attention to the fact that despite Sri Lanka's high standards of literacy and scholarship, the state does not *actively* promote research - even at university level. Although there are post-graduate departments in medicine, there are no such departments for humanities or sociology. Goonesekere stressed the importance of encouraging a culture of reading and questioning which would in turn place a higher value on rigorous research.

There are many examples of far reaching policy decisions which have not been based on rigorous discussion or research, including years of politically expedient education policies which have retarded the much needed modernisation of the education system to reflect the requirements of today's employers, and most recently the introduction of a dramatically revised Broadcasting Authority Bill which was introduced without public consultation or review by an expert committee, and indeed without even being brought before parliament.

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<sup>1</sup> Case study presented by Dr. Anura Herath at a workshop jointly organised by CEPA and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in July 2005: '*Civil Society Organizations, Evidence and Policy Influence: National Consultations in Sri Lanka*'.

There are also examples of successful influence such as Sri Lanka's language policy which was influenced by the research of the International Centre for Ethnic Studies. Their work was successful in that it led to a change in the constitution, the establishment of an Official Languages Commission in order to promote bilingual policies, and changes in curriculum policy; but many of the changes originally hoped for still have not been fully and more widely implemented. It is worth noting that the success of the campaign was facilitated by the financial and political support of an international donor (CIDA), and by the support of the incumbent Education Minister – factors which are difficult to control but which could be significant in efforts to influence policy. Cultivating key contacts to generate or capitalise on 'political will' is vital to any attempt to influence policy, but some researchers may shy away from involvement of this sort if it could be construed as political.

The success stories which rely on such intervention and sustained campaigning only serve to further underline the need to improve the *culture* of using evidence based research in the usual government decision making process. Dhara Wijayatilake, Secretary, Ministry of Plan Implementation (who spoke at the symposium) drew attention to the fact that feasibility and impact assessment studies are a mandatory part of the process for foreign funded projects, and that a similarly rigorous approach to domestically funded development projects could avoid the current situation where decisions are made based on "gut feelings, intuition, personal opinions and perceptions, personal preferences and beliefs".

However, this is not to take away from the responsibility that researchers have to produce relevant and accurate information. How much effort is made to disseminate the findings to those who must act upon them? Researchers need to tailor their messages more effectively to decision-makers and involve them in their research where possible. Researchers also need to reflect upon the subject of their research; is it filling an identified 'gap' in knowledge rather than adding to an existing bank of information, and can the research actually contribute meaningfully to policy? Are researchers producing studies relevant to government priorities? A recent seminar held in South Africa to look into exactly this issue in Southern African countries expressed sentiments which could equally apply to Sri Lanka. Professor Peter Katjavivi, a guest speaker commented;

"There is a need to investigate the skills among government planners to absorb and make sense of research reports and findings. Equally important is the need to investigate the way social science researchers



carry out research and, indeed, the relevance of their research, with specific reference to policy making, but also with reference to its relevance to the national development agenda of Southern African countries... We therefore need an ongoing dialogue... between social science researchers and policymakers in order to develop a common understanding of the priority areas and develop strategies for social science research production which is mutually beneficial. Such a dialogue or forum would address several issues that hamper the exchange of ideas and knowledge among social scientists and policymakers and prevent cooperation between these two players in the national development process." (Katjavivi as quoted in Philander, 2008)

Such dialogue between researchers and policymakers would be equally beneficial in Sri Lanka, but is this a naïve vision or a realistic goal? The current research-policy context in Sri Lanka cannot be discussed without reference to the climate of mutual distrust and restriction of debate which has arisen due to the ongoing civil conflict. While official restrictions may be primarily related to defence issues, the culture of closed door discussions and defensiveness about research that may criticise the status quo has permeated all areas. This poses a significant barrier to attempts to improve the dialogue between civil society and policymakers. The research-policy context in any country is heavily influenced by the strength of civil society, the credibility of research being produced, the extent of openness of debate and discussion on government policy in the country and the strength of other external influences which may have an impact on policymaking, e.g. donors.

In Sri Lanka civil society organisations have been going through a legitimacy crisis for many years, exacerbated following the tsunami in 2004. Both local and international non-governmental organisations have been badly characterised in the local press, some for good reason, but this has led to a culture of suspicion in the general consciousness that NGOs benefiting from international funds must be representing international rather than national interests in their agendas. Involvement in any work related to the conflict further leads to divisions between 'us and them', and organisations who are working on more controversial areas such as human rights may well find their research challenged and access to decision makers limited even when they work on less controversial issues which are not related to the conflict. All this combines to research being viewed as biased and tainted by international agendas, whatever the subject.

In such an environment applying the theories of effective communications strategies becomes more difficult. Researchers trying to stimulate wider discussion on issues fear losing control of the information since it can easily be manipulated by the media and other interest groups, taken in a different direction and ultimately used against you. Researchers in this environment tend to prioritise the need to minimise the risk of hijacking, which inevitably leads to reduced circulation of messages in an attempt to keep it within their control.

Understanding the research-policy context is a vital first step in planning a communications strategy. The next section looks at some of the techniques that have been used by CEPA and other organisations to try and influence change in different challenging contexts.

## **4 Making Your Voice Heard: Experiences and Examples**

This section draws upon some examples of attempts to use research to influence change at many different levels in Sri Lanka and abroad. It is not intended to provide readers with a 'toolkit' for success, but researchers and practitioners can always learn from others' experiences – both successes and failures – and it is in this spirit that we share these stories. The exact circumstances are different in every case and these examples demonstrate that communication and influencing strategies need to be tailored to suit the type of research, the policy environment and the range of stakeholders to be influenced.

### **4.1 Selecting appropriate research**

This goes back to the initial question – what is the ultimate aim of the research? Is it simply to address a specific question posed by whoever has commissioned the research (and pay the bills), or could the research have a wider impact? If researchers wish to move away from the 'whispering' end of the spectrum, and if they have the luxury of choice, it is important to select relevant and topical research projects which have the potential to influence decision makers at some level (not necessarily policy). Taking on research in areas similar to prior projects undertaken also enables the creation of a bank of research and helps to build up stronger messages. However, maintaining independence and credibility are also key criteria for selection. If the findings are likely to be compromised in any way by the agenda of those who commissioned the research this will dilute the strength of the messages and risks compromising the reputation and

position of the research institution, jeopardising future attempts to build alliances and influence decision makers.

CEPA's work on a World Bank study on Moving out of Poverty in the Estate, or plantation, sector offered a good opportunity to influence decision makers. Workers in the Estate sector are among the most impoverished in Sri Lanka and the research presented an opportunity to understand more about a persistent poverty pocket. CEPA knew that the findings would feed into the World Bank Sri Lanka Poverty Assessment which is a very influential document in terms of setting the context for future government and donor development policy. The work presented an opportunity to influence decision makers in the donor community and government as contributors were asked to comment on the drafts of the whole Poverty Assessment. CEPA did not initially foresee the additional scope for influencing policies directly related to the Estate sector, but the findings of the research led to this becoming an equally significant outcome of the project. The researchers used a variety of different strategies to ensure that the findings were taken to relevant stakeholders, including the plantation management. The strategies ranged from summary papers as well as a publication, meetings with key persons, presentations, discussion workshops and a DVD documentary.

The importance of selecting projects is also demonstrated in those assignments CEPA has decided not to take on, such as an assignment linked to the Land Titling project which was planned under a previous government, with the support of the World Bank. The aim of the policy was to give title deeds to tenant farmers, with the rationale that it would increase productivity. Critics of the project argued that giving these farmers title deeds would not help increase productivity as they already had sufficient user rights, and that it was more likely to give smallholders an incentive to sell small plots of land to large commercial farms – ultimately leading to impoverishment. The World Bank asked CEPA to do some research for the project, but CEPA declined. It seemed to CEPA that doing research for a client that was so closely associated with the project (in this case the World Bank) on an issue that was so ideologically divided could make it very difficult for CEPA to maintain an independent or credible stance on the debate, especially if the findings of the research did not resonate with the agenda of the client. CEPA could have considered undertaking the research and using the findings to drive forward a more balanced and informed debate, but the findings of commissioned research

is often considered to be 'owned' by the client and there was the risk of the messages being either buried or used out of context.

While this is a difficult decision for any organisation to make, particularly when funds are thin on the ground and if they don't want to jeopardise a relationship with a donor or partner, maintaining credibility and independence is key to building a good reputation and being taken seriously. To influence key decision-makers organisations need to be seen to consistently deliver rigorous, unbiased analysis.

#### **4.2 Defining and communicating with stakeholders at different levels**

It is common for communication strategies which are trying to influence policy or large decisions to aim to communicate with stakeholders at the highest level. However, having a direct influence on policymakers is incredibly difficult and there are usually other, less ambitious, ways to have an impact using stakeholders at grassroots and institutional levels as well as at the national level. Fajemirokun (2008) makes this point in her paper in this volume, emphasising the importance of using community networks and events as communication platforms wherever possible, "this helps to engender local interest and acceptance and the effective delivery of the research or information." It is important to establish broad-based political and community support for the messages being communicated since this will ultimately support and motivate change at higher levels. In order to have a strong impact this requires engagement with the public, private and civil society sectors.

It is also sometimes a more realistic and achievable way for researchers to have a more immediate impact. Changing legislation is not only difficult, it may not have the required impact on day-to-day implementation and practice. Influencing the way things happen means changing *practice* as well as policy, and this means targeting civil servants and practitioners, those who make decisions at lower and decentralised levels and those who execute those decisions. Duggan, Barkley and Jeganathan's plantation study undertaken for WUSC is a good example of this (see Box 4.2). The findings suggested that certain improved working practices would make a significant difference to the living conditions of workers on the estates. While the researchers did address their findings at a policy level by working with government on the National Plan of Action for Social Development in the Estate Sector, they also took the findings to plantation company managers in order to precipitate more immediate

and ground level changes. This communication was very successful with some companies, leading to changes in working practices which may well have taken years to filter down from a policy level had WUSC decided to only target legislative change. Policy often reflects changes on the ground rather than precipitating change, and research can effectively inform those ground-level changes.

CEPA's work on monitoring the resettlement of those affected and displaced by the construction of the Southern Highway is another project which has engaged stakeholders at a number of different levels. The communication strategy for the project has regularly used tools such as influence mapping and force-field analysis to help analyse stakeholders and identify the most effective way to communicate with them. The most important point to start at is identifying all those who have a stake or interest in the issue which the research addresses, the other tools then work on breaking down that list of stakeholders into different groups who can then be targeted in different ways.

Stakeholder analysis<sup>2</sup>, or influence mapping, is a tool which encourages researchers to consider the stakeholders who are relevant to their project and classify them depending on their level of interest in the messages you are conveying (e.g. how likely are they to engage with the issue) and their level of power (e.g. how much power do they have to either influence or resist the change you are attempting to influence). This gives researchers a good visual representation of the stakeholders who they should put most effort into targeting – those who have the most power and interest in the issue. Stakeholders who have less power and interest should still be kept informed and engaged where possible, but are less likely to influence change. Force-field analysis<sup>3</sup> is another tool to help analyse those stakeholders who will help *support* attempts to influence change and those who may represent a significant force *against* that change. Understanding the level of resistance helps to understand and prioritise where efforts to communicate the findings of research need to be focused. If the level of resistance is very high it also forces the researcher to consider why this is, and whether the research on its own is strong enough to counter such resistance.

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<sup>2</sup> See: [http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Tools/Toolkits/Mapping Political Context/Stakeholder\\_analysis.html](http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Tools/Toolkits/Mapping%20Political%20Context/Stakeholder_analysis.html)

<sup>3</sup> See: [http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/Events/SMWPoLEgypt/docs/forcefield\\_analysis.pdf](http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/Events/SMWPoLEgypt/docs/forcefield_analysis.pdf). (For original literature of force-field analysis see: Lewin (1951))

Using this type of analysis in CEPA's research on the Southern Highway has focused communication work at two levels; day-to-day decision makers at implementation officer level in government departments, and higher level civil servants within the Road Development Authority. The work at the implementation officer level enables CEPA to communicate messages to those who have an immediate impact on the ground in an attempt to change perceptions, attitudes and habits about the way work is carried out. Working with these civil servants is considered to be more likely to have an impact than targeting policymakers at the ministerial level of government who are harder to access and where more resistance is perceived to exist. However, changing people's ideas at the medium and grassroots levels may not be enough to have a long lasting impact. This requires changing policies which will impact on future infrastructure projects as well as this one, and this means targeting higher level decision makers. This is much more of a challenge, and requires a different approach; making and cultivating key contacts, preparing brief but specific policy recommendations on different issues, spotting windows of opportunity for influencing policy changes – such as the re-drafting of the Land Acquisition Act, and above all committing to persistent and gradual communication over a long period.

Working with stakeholders at different levels makes it even more important to choose the right method of communication. CEPA has used workshops and as much face to face interaction as possible for communication with implementation-level officers, but for those in more senior positions, policy briefs and short notes are more succinct ways of communicating key messages. Sending policy briefs to implementation level officers, for example, is not going to be as effective as workshops or even just face to face meetings. It is also vital to consider the style of the language used, as Fajemirokun notes in her account of the project in Nigeria to communicate with both the intended beneficiaries of a new policy on microfinance and the policymakers who were responsible for the policy (see Box 4.1). The lessons she draws from this project reiterate the importance of selecting research and of communicating at different levels in an appropriate style.

**Box 4.1: Lessons from the Financial Literacy Project (FinLit), Nigeria**

How can communities better benefit from access to research and information? The starting point is to ensure that the research or information itself is relevant and addresses community needs and concerns. In the case of the FinLit Project, its conception and implementation plan was determined by the results of evidence-based work on realising economic rights.

Secondly, community networks, structures or events, should be used, wherever possible as communications platforms; this helps to engender local interest and acceptance and the effective delivery of the research or information.

Thirdly, it is necessary to take into account the skill level of intended beneficiaries whether in terms of literacy, numeracy, IT capability or languages. In other words, the choice of communications platform must be fit for purpose as this will help to maximise impact.

Lastly, it is important to establish broad-based political and community support for the communications actions. This can be achieved through engagements with the public (governmental), private and civil society sectors whether at informal meetings or consultations or within the context of public hearings and other policy consultation processes.

*Source: Fajemirokun 2008 (Full paper contained in this volume)*

**4.3 Maintaining a continuous dialogue and seeking out windows of opportunity**

Most research projects plan communication as a final stage, giving consideration to how the messages will be conveyed once the project or report has been completed. However, having any significant impact often depends on long-term and persistent engagement with an issue which is best achieved by planning communication activities from the outset of a project. Influencing people's attitudes and perceptions is key to ensuring that change will occur at all levels and will be sustainable, but attitudinal and behavioural changes are gradual and implicit. This type of gradual impact requires maintaining an open and continuous dialogue with key stakeholders over a long period of time. This is a luxury which researchers cannot always permit themselves if the funding linked to the research is not long-term, but if the communication strategy builds in opportunities to communicate from early in the life-cycle of a project then the window of opportunity is significantly increased. For projects engaging with the public there is time to garner support at a local level, build a constituency and capitalise on a groundswell effect.

Holding regular workshops with stakeholders throughout the lifetime of a project, and feeding back findings at regular intervals rather than waiting until the end means that stakeholders have an opportunity to engage with the issue more closely and influencing can happen incrementally. Having access to information all the way through rather than only through a final report gives stakeholders the opportunity to raise any issues and disagreements about methodology or approach which can be addressed by the researchers at an earlier stage. This also enables researchers to build a relationship with their key stakeholders making it less likely that the final report is dismissed or ignored due to misunderstandings or an unexpected message taking stakeholders by surprise.

**Box 4.2: Engaging with stakeholders from beginning to end: Experiences from WUSC's Workers' Perceptions Study**

The World University Service of Canada (WUSC), a Canadian non-governmental organisation which implements the CIDA-funded Plantation Communities Project, undertook a study of plantation workers' attitudes to gain information on how future development investments should be planned and prioritised. The findings from the study were packaged into tailored recommendations which could be easily understood and acted upon, and were shared extensively at workshops with the stakeholders who were identified as being key to effecting change - from plantation company management teams to the government. Recommendations which had the greatest benefits for relatively low costs were obviously prioritised by plantation management, but while these may appear to be basic changes, the impacts could be significant for employees.

In terms of ensuring that the findings would be widely communicated and more likely to be acted upon, WUSC clearly communicated the representativeness of the sample from the outset which significantly improved the acceptability of the study. WUSC maintained an open dialogue with various stakeholder groups throughout the project and disseminated the findings and recommendations using major presentation workshops, small-group discussions and a research synopsis in English and Tamil.

The biggest achievement of the project was conveying the importance of improved communication between managers and workers on issues such as company production and sales, daily plucking norms, workers' health issues (particularly for women), and quality of work and home life. The adoption of a more participatory approach to estate management improved workers' perceptions of management in the plantations studied. The impacts of the changes to come out of the recommendations will be assessed by WUSC over the longer term as the relationship with key stakeholders continues.



In June 2006, WUSC shared a copy of the draft version of the *Workers' Perceptions Study Findings and Recommendations* with the steering committee for the GoSL's National Plan of Action (NPA) for Social Development in the Estate Sector. The NPA, which is still being finalised, aims to provide Rs.104 billion of funding to support eight major programmes in the estate sector. A number of the WPS recommendations were subsequently included in the NPA draft.

This example highlights the advantages of thinking about the way the research will be used at the *beginning* of a study, so that the research is designed to provide rapid and reliable information which meets the needs of the stakeholders. The WUSC team involved the Regional Plantation Companies, the Plantation Human Development Trust and estates participating in the study from the design stage onward, ensuring that questionnaires were developed according to the key issues and themes identified in focus groups. Duggan *et al.*'s paper, however, highlights that more could have been done to engage decision makers during the study design phase had the interest and potential impacts of the study been foreseen – a lesson perhaps not to underestimate the potential of your research!

*See Duggan, Barkley and Jeganathan's paper (2008) in this volume for more details*

If the context means that the message is sensitive or controversial a more gradual and targeted approach appears to be particularly important to build up trust and personal relationships. If an organisation has a good, credible reputation and has built up pre-existing networks within decision-making circles then this will obviously help with any research that is taken on. The Institute of Policy Studies based in Colombo is a good example of an organisation which has built up a solid reputation in certain research areas including trade policy, which positions it well to exert influence whenever a window of opportunity arises (see Box 4.3) and Practical Action's reputation and credibility in the area of renewable energy have also helped it to play a significant role in the development of alternative energy options in rural areas (see Box 4.4). Experience would suggest that no amount of strategising can make up for being able to be heard by the right people at the right time, and fostering good connections over time significantly increases the chance of this happening.

### **Box 4.3: Influencing trade policy - Institute of Policy Studies (IPS)**

The Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS) is a Sri Lankan think tank set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 with ex-officio members from the Government of Sri Lanka forming part of its Board of Governors. IPS has been researching trade related issues since 1994 and is now recognised by the government as an expert on trade policy and trade agreements, making it an influential body. In 1998 IPS was commissioned by the Government to provide a background report on the SAARC Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA). It was also invited to play a direct role in the government's trade negotiations, chairing several technical committees. This led to it being invited to participate in more committees such as the Macro and Trade Policy Steering Committee in 2002-04. Some policy recommendations made by IPS have been taken on by the Government and are reflected in policy/practice changes, for example the prior assessment of trade agreements, increased internal consistency between agreements, deepened liberalisation and moves to include investment and services in negotiations. What are the factors that have contributed to IPS' success in influencing trade policy?

- IPS enjoys a level of **legitimacy and recognition** at government level that is due in some part to its formal links to government (without being associated to a specific political party), as well as to its reputation as a producer of high quality research. This enables senior members of the organisation to network at higher levels and build personal relationships with government representatives involved in trade policy.
- **Timing** is also a significant factor since IPS' research interest in trade coincided with the government's initial requirement for support in conducting trade negotiations at the newly formed WTO and on SAPTA. This gave IPS a window of opportunity to access government and provide much needed research.
- IPS also made sure to use **appropriate communication strategies** when dealing with decision makers at high levels, using short reports (executive summaries), 'closed door' meetings, representation in committees, seminars, lobbying and networking. Focusing on these more 'serious' approaches IPS consciously avoided being associated with the more controversial popular debates on trade issues.

*Based on a case study presented by Dr. Dushni Weerakoon, Deputy Director, IPS at an ODI/CEPA workshop in Colombo, July 2005*

The FinLit Project in Nigeria in Fajemirokun's paper in this volume demonstrates the potential for finding opportunities for influence even where there may not appear to be any. FinLit is a communications-led intervention by the Development Initiatives Network (DIN) aimed at closing demand-side knowledge gaps primarily through the provision of financial literacy education. The project extends to policy influencing through actions that sensitise policy makers to demand-side priorities about access to finance for micro and small businesses. Because the policy was relatively new formal review mechanisms had not yet come up. However, the absence of a formal review process does not preclude arranging informal meetings with key policy bodies, a tool DIN used to give feedback. Fajemirokun advocates using this form of engagement to place evidence-based work originating from the non-governmental sector in public policy circles since government officials will not normally initiate or look out for this type of output. DIN also made sure to participate in the consultation processes on relevant draft government policies, using the opportunity to make submissions relating to access to financial literacy programmes.

**Box 4.4: How evidence influenced micro-hydro power generation policies in Sri Lanka**

Practical Action (formerly known as the Intermediate Technology Development Group, ITDG) is an international non-governmental organisation which has been working on the promotion of people-centred, micro level technology options for over thirty years – including micro hydro power generation as an energy option for poor people. The history of power generation in Sri Lanka shows an initial oversupply of grid electricity in the mid 1950s and 1960s that led to the disuse of renewable micro hydro systems in the plantations. Despite major generation schemes conducted under the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Project in the 1980s, escalating demand (from 500MW in 1985 to 1000 MW in 1996) led to severe power cuts in 1992 and 1996. The target for household grid connections is to reach 80% by 2015 (from 30% in 1985). However, the transmission and distribution costs to remote villages in low density areas can be prohibitive, thereby precluding them from access to power.

It was in this context that Practical Action introduced its village micro hydro programme, and by 1995 the organisation had convinced the World Bank to support village hydro promotion in its Energy Services Delivery project (ESD) by encouraging officials to visit the sites and demonstrating that community managed village level schemes were viable. Subsequently, the World Bank commissioned Practical Action to carry out an assessment of the

potential of village micro hydro schemes, and they also provided inputs into the design of the subsidy/loan repayment schemes that became the core of the ESD renewable energy credit line. The programme has now matured into what is the Renewable Energy for Rural Economic Development Project managed by the DFCC (<http://www.energyservices.lk>).

The ESD project helped Practical Action gain better recognition for micro hydro projects which they used to continue working on developing an enabling environment for micro hydro electricity generation in particular, and renewable energy programmes in general. This has included working on capacity building and assisting Provincial Councils to formulate renewable energy policies. They also facilitated the formation of the Energy Forum which has taken on the task of popularising renewable energy concepts. There were several factors that contributed to Practical Action's success in influencing renewable energy policy and practice, particularly at the decentralised, provincial level.

- The project responded to a clear, recognised demand. At the national level this was evident in terms of statistics relating to lack of access to grid electricity and projected demands for power. In the villages, local communities articulated this need through demands from local political institutions. The fact that the need for rural electrification was clear and not controversial or contested made this a significantly easier issue to influence.
- Practical Action was recognised as a credible development organisation with technical expertise. Staff members had strong social networks that reached into the decentralised administration and Practical Action's long engagement at the community level enhanced its reputation. The organisation also focused on providing practical evidence of success and encouraging visits to projects.
- The lack of any existing energy policy at the provincial level meant that Practical Action was able to target and fill a gap in the policy framework rather than tackling existing legislation.
- The success stories received publicity through word of mouth and through the print media at regional and national level. This facilitated the creation of a constituency for micro hydro village electrification and put pressure on local government.

*Based on a case study presented by Namiz Musafer of Practical Action at an ODI/CEPA workshop in Colombo, July 2005*

#### **4.4 Build alliances**

Many research organisations struggle to decide the extent to which they wish to engage with other organisations, the public and even sometimes government when trying to communicate a message. Some fear that engagement with more populist campaigns could damage an organisation's independence and integrity with the organisation becoming attached to a 'cause' and losing ground as an independent and credible organisation. However, not making alliances with others runs the risk of perpetuating knowledge elitism and not making the most of other people's knowledge. Even without engaging at a populous level it can be useful to maintain some sort of engagement with other individuals or organisations who have similar interests. However, the adage 'power in numbers' does not always apply. Objectives have to be complementary if networks and partnerships are to succeed; alliances could be counter-productive if organisations within a network have varying agendas and are not working closely together.

The Mission 2007 project (paper by Shipra Sharma included in this volume) mobilised the positive power of multi-stakeholder partnership to influence policy changes and bring about regulatory reforms in relation to information communication technology (ICT) connectivity in rural areas. Bringing together numerous ICT projects in different parts of the country, civil society bodies, the private sector, the media and academia the project provided space for consultation and discussions between the stakeholders to resolve critical issues. Mission 2007 also sought the cooperation and endorsement of key ministers, government officials and flagship government projects such as the Indian Space Research Organisation. This helped to raise the profile of the project and extend the influence of their key messages. The project sought out appropriate opportunities to integrate its objectives into policy, such as in the Bharat Nirman Document, which is seen as a 'new deal' for rural India. Similarly, the National e-Governance Plan and the Common Service Centre (CSC) programme of the Department of Information Technology were also targeted. Sharma claims that through active participation in CSC's strategic planning the Mission 2007 project has changed the government's perspective on partnerships, and encouraged it to forge partnerships beyond the traditional Public Private Partnerships and think in terms of the newly emerging model of multi-stakeholder partnerships. This greater openness to knowledge partnerships and technical collaboration with civil society organisations resulted in CSOs such as TERI and the Alternative Forum for

Indian Development winning contracts to set up Common Service Centres in Rajasthan and Jharkhand.

#### **4.5 From representation to litigation**

One area which arouses heated debate and strong opposition in any context is a policy or project which threatens the environment. The Environmental Justice Foundation has fought and won many cases in Sri Lanka, and a veteran campaigner, Jagath Gunewardene, presented some strategies used by environmental campaigners for influencing policy at a CEPA/ODI workshop in 2005. He presented three different methods which can be used as part of a larger process to influence change:

- Representation
- Participation
- Litigation

The first two methods are considered to be 'low intensity' mechanisms of influence where evidence is put before policymakers and discussed. Representations to policymakers are usually made by volunteer groups when it is known or suspected that a policy is being drafted or under discussion. These types of interventions may not be solicited by policymakers, whereas the second method, participation, is where civil society representatives are requested by officials to contribute to policymaking committees or working groups.

A good example of the use of representation is the case of Sri Lanka's position on Section 27 of the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) negotiations - regarding patenting of indigenous plants and micro-organisms. Civil society organisations concerned about Section 27 collected a substantial body of evidence about Sri Lanka's indigenous plants and their uses, and the potential implications of this agreement. This evidence was analysed and presented within an international rights framework to the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Trade which were all engaged in representing Sri Lanka at the TRIPs negotiations. The Ministry of Environment was the most receptive and special efforts were made to provide all available information to them. The Ministry of Environment took up the issue through the Ministries of Trade and Commerce at the TRIPs negotiations, and Sri Lanka was the first country to take the position that the sub-section should be deleted from the TRIPs agreement. This was a clear case of evidence provided by civil society informing a policy position, and emphasises the importance of

having access to the right information when a window of opportunity arises. It also highlights the need to collect a comprehensive body of evidence to enable a sustained campaign of influence at the highest levels.

The final method, litigation, is a 'high intensity' method. Influencing policy is carried out by directly seeking action through the judicial system. Litigation is seen as a tool of last resort, but is always an option within the larger package of tools used to influence policy. Litigation can be used with two ends in mind:

- Tactical litigation: which seeks to defeat or promote a particular issue or policy.
- Strategic litigation: which uses a particular issue to bring into focus a broader issue and related policies.

Of the two, the strategic litigation is particularly interesting. A policy that has not yet been drafted cannot be taken to court, but strategic action can create a situation where the court issues an order which sets a precedent that will influence future policy. Two examples are:

- Sri Lanka lacked a comprehensive policy in relation to wetlands. In order to influence the formation on such a policy the EJV took up the issue of squatters being evicted from the Mutturajawela marsh. As a result the lack of a national wetlands policy was identified by the courts and a committee was appointed to look into the formation of such a policy.
- A gem mining case relating to a single individual was used to show the need for a policy regulating sand mining and alternatives to sand.

The integration of the different methods was highlighted by the fact that while *litigation* identified the need for a wetland policy, EJV was later requested to *participate* in the working committee on the formulation of the policy. In the case of the sand mining policy too, the draft policy was open to public representations prior to finalising.

#### **4.6 Influencing in a restricted environment**

As discussed earlier in this paper, influencing policy is a particular challenge in an environment where discussion and civil society involvement are restricted. Testimony from organisations in Cambodia, Nepal and Sri Lanka at CEPA's 2007 Poverty Symposium highlighted some of the strategies they have used to make their voices heard.

In Sri Lanka the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) stressed that a good relationship with the media is important; the media can be very critical of civil society organisations, but can also be an ally and is itself a part of civil society. The fact that some sections of the media have themselves experienced restrictions in recent years make some newspapers and magazines natural allies, particularly in human rights issues. CPA's overall strategy is to communicate 'positively', putting forward the good points of a particular policy, as well as laying out what could be changed to make it more effective, e.g. in the context of international law or what makes sense for local communities. Sin Somuny from MEDiCAM described a similar approach used in the Cambodian context where CSOs have also been characterised negatively in the media. They focus on the positive points, and constructively suggest elements which can be improved rather than criticising policy.

CPA in Sri Lanka does also engage directly with policymakers, for example by participating in advisory councils and cultivating some contacts which can be approached directly over a specific issue. Interestingly, CPA saw its role as sometimes informing politicians as well as trying to influence them; in the complex chaos of policymaking politicians do not always know what is happening on all issues, even legislation coming out of their line ministries, and can come to rely on organisations such as CPA to keep them informed. This is a good way of cultivating contacts and windows of opportunity, strategies which are particularly important in a challenging environment. However, this also highlights the limitations of relying on individuals working within a larger structure. Some individuals may be very interested and willing to listen, but the fact that they are not always informed means that they are also sometimes cut out of the process and their own influence may be limited.

While politicians may have limited influence, bureaucrats often retain or even increase their influence in cases where government is unstable or ineffective. Nepal is just such a case with over 15 governments since 1990, leading to a serious lack of clear control by politicians and institutional memory. Naya Paudel from Forest Action Nepal described how this vacuum led to senior bureaucrats becoming the key actors in terms of deciding policy. Since the end of the conflict space has increased for policy dialogue and multi-stakeholder processes are now increasing, but bureaucrats retain much of their power and even members of parliament are sometimes unable to influence them. Targeting bureaucrats rather than politicians can sometimes be a quicker route to success – particularly when the message



is technical and requires a 'champion' who has knowledge of the subject. However, since bureaucrats are not elected they have no accountability to their citizens, making it more difficult to exert pressure.

Nepal is heavily reliant on foreign aid so the bureaucrats are more willing to listen to evidence and recommendations from the donors rather than from grassroots groups or researchers. CSOs therefore often use international organisations as a channel through which to communicate their messages. The situation in Cambodia is similar since the country is very dependent upon external aid, and MEDiCAM also tries to provide updated and correct information to international partners and work closely with them as allies.

Using pressure from outside the country through the global media, the diaspora and international organisations is a strategy sometimes used to embarrass a government and raise an issue up the agenda. Government is accountable not only to the public but also to the international community, providing a window of opportunity to help broaden a coalition on certain issues. However engaging with different levels of power and influence at international levels can be frustrating and disempowering for researchers, and ultimately can backfire if a government turns its back on the international community to assert its own authority.

## **5 Managing and Using Knowledge and Evidence**

So far this paper has focused on communicating evidence, but knowledge management – or finding and sharing evidence – is a key element of the communication discourse. If evidence is not documented and shared effectively with all stakeholders – from community level to government, there is little chance that it can have much influence. Sharing knowledge can also help to ensure that research isn't duplicated and encourage alliances between organisations working on similar research.

Ensuring that the knowledge is made available to as many people as possible is the most important first step in communicating research. Some organisations in Sri Lanka now make their work available online through their own websites, but the proliferation of online information can mean that researchers are overwhelmed by places to look. Online databases which pull together existing information on development related research make it easier to search in one place and these are increasingly used by researchers. However, the quality of such databases is determined by

the content provided by researchers and development organisations, and this continues to be an issue in Sri Lanka as there is some reticence about providing open access to all information. It is essential that research organisations and NGOs overcome the counter-productive mindset which tends towards guarding information rather than sharing it. The benefits of sharing information and pooling resources far outweigh any misconceived possessiveness about information, and ultimately should save time and resources and encourage more collaborative work at a project level if similar goals and aims are identified.

CEPA has created an online Poverty Database ([www.povertydatabase.lk](http://www.povertydatabase.lk)) which attempts to make Sri Lanka's substantial volume of resources on poverty and related issues more accessible. The resources available include published reports (studies, working papers, conference papers etc.) and unpublished material, in particular grey literature, by both researchers and practitioners. The database fills an identified gap for a portal which brings together information on poverty specific to Sri Lanka, largely unrepresented on worldwide information databases. It aims to disseminate information which would otherwise remain in libraries or on internal servers, and which would quickly become outdated and unusable. However, while an internet based database is a convenient way of storing information, there is still limited usage of the internet within government departments, particularly at decentralised levels due to resource and skill constraints, as well as the lack of resources available in Sinhala and Tamil. CEPA is making every effort to track down and include resources in different languages and is exploring offline alternatives of the database to try and address these issues. However, these constraints will always limit the extent to which such a database can reach wider audiences, particularly at grassroots level.

Researchers are increasingly looking to networks as a means to share knowledge effectively between themselves, making the most of existing evidence and looking for opportunities to forge alliances that can strengthen their position. Most networks now use virtual forums and communities of practice as a platform through which researchers and campaigners can engage with each other and share knowledge in a simple and very cost effective manner. Inevitably, those who are engaged with the issue of knowledge management are using the technology themselves to discuss experiences of communicating and sharing knowledge; the global forum the Evidence Based Policy in Development Network ([www.ebpdn.org](http://www.ebpdn.org)) is a good example of this.

EBPDN is a worldwide community of practice for think tanks, policy research institutes and similar organisations working in international development who are interested in promoting more evidence-based policymaking. The network aims to foster collaboration between countries and across the boundary between North and South through joint project work, training, exchange visits, and information sharing. CEPA has recently launched the South Asia EBPDN which brings together organisations in South Asia to share information and better understand the specific research-policy context in each country.<sup>4</sup>

The success of a network such as this lies in its ability to bring together diverse organisations that would not otherwise have been able to share experiences, but it requires a critical mass of participation to ensure a dynamic exchange. This remains the perennial issue with online networks and forums which require active participation and contributions from members. Participation requires a commitment to take time out of day-to-day project work, a luxury which many researchers struggle to enjoy! The most successful knowledge sharing forums are those which are focused on a specific topic or issue; this ensures that most communication is relevant to all on the forum and that a question or comment is likely to resonate with a significant proportion of users.

## **5.1 Bridging the knowledge gap between communities and researchers**

Finding and sharing evidence should always involve a reciprocal flow between communities and researchers, with information coming from the grassroots level as well as flowing back in order to empower communities to access and use evidence for their own purposes. The communities from which information is collected also have a right to 'own' the knowledge created and should be given the rights to use it. S.P. Jayasooriya's 'zig-zag' model (presented in his paper in this volume) emphasises that researchers should regard community members not only as beneficiaries but as stakeholders in the process of policymaking. For the zig-zag model to be effective researchers should aim to facilitate communication and act as mediators between disadvantaged groups and policymakers. Jayasooriya says,

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<sup>4</sup> If you would like to join this network please visit [www.ebpdn.org](http://www.ebpdn.org) and follow the link to the Forums where you will find the South Asia EBPDN forum.

“Policy decisions should be taken on the basis of a participatory approach involving all stakeholders and affected parties. In order to reach a solution, a sustained and strong relationship between parties affected by the research, the researchers, and policy-makers is essential to build up credibility. The policy process should be initiated at the community level and the demand should be captured at the policymaking level while working towards a sustainable solution.”

The global network, International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD), uses the tried and tested method of Networked Research to ensure that their research is relevant to and used by poor people and/or the organisations working with them. Networked Research focuses on the research *process* as much as the outputs and this begins with the setting of the research agenda. As such IFRTD actively encourages its Southern constituency to use the IFRTD network as a means to gather a critical mass of stakeholders around a particular issue in order to advocate for its inclusion on the international research agenda. Once the agenda for research is set IFRTD seeks to build ownership of the research programme and its communication into the research design itself. The Networked Research Methodology brings together people from different countries or contexts that are, at some level, engaged with the particular research issue. This participative formulation of the research framework encourages ownership of research and findings and stimulates debate at local and national level. It also establishes a small international community of practice that strengthens the research capacity within countries by unearthing local knowledge and experience and building upon latent research skills.

The synthesis and communication of research is viewed by IFRTD as an opportunity to widen the community of practice interested in and taking ownership of an issue. Face to face workshops are a good way of helping to build a larger community of practice committed to the resolution of a particular issue and to focus upon concrete commitments to take the issues forward either through advocacy or practical projects. Practitioners are able to interact with policy makers and/or decision makers with a view to effecting change. IFRTD does not place any institutional ownership on research findings and researchers are encouraged to use the new knowledge in their own work or to look for alternative means of disseminating it (over and above those used by the network as a whole).

The Networked Research model helps to ensure that researchers are well connected and that different countries have a more equal voice in the direction of research. The network encourages wide dissemination and does not claim ownership of findings, but it does not provide a specific solution to ensure that the evidence generated can be used more effectively by communities at a grassroots level. One initiative which is attempting to do this is the *Janathakshan* web portal introduced by the non-governmental organisation Practical Action. This aims to help communities become more engaged with the research process by sharing practical information about communities' problems so that they are better equipped and empowered with technical know-how or information that has a direct bearing on their day-to-day lives and livelihoods. The portal provides an 'infomediary' space, sitting in between the researchers and the community. Research and information is made available to communities, but the community is also encouraged to feed back their own research and knowledge based on their experiences. Using the portal the project aims to bring researchers and communities onto one platform so that they gain from each other's knowledge. The project has been piloted in the South of Sri Lanka where it was used to assist a public campaign to save the Rekawa Lagoon. The portal helped to share scientific evidence with the local community which demonstrated damage caused to the lagoon by a new road construction. While the pilot did not generate the level of interaction hoped for between researchers and members of the community, the community was still able to use the evidence to mount a media and political campaign which successfully gained the attention of local government officials.

The use of technology such as web portals for knowledge sharing is becoming more and more common, but not everybody in a community will be able to use such solutions. Those who have the skills and the access could be empowered over those who don't, and there is a risk that they could hijack the flow of knowledge and not represent the voices of the community in an equitable manner. A combination of more low-tech representative committees and discussions alongside more high-tech solutions such as web portals may be required to overcome the technology barrier, but is unlikely to be a panacea.

A very interesting example of a more low-tech participatory model which empowers a voice not usually heard is the system of child parliaments described by Chowdhury in his paper (in this volume). The *Bal Panchayats* give young people the opportunity to engage with decision makers in a forum which gives them a privileged voice. The model is based on the

principle of seeking the public's participation in the decision-making process, integrating the general public's knowledge with that of policymakers. This aims to ensure that the law becomes a more participatory process, both in its creation and enforcement. Those who are involved in policymaking as partners are more likely to be partners in its enactment and enforcement. Chowdhury highlights that the *Bal Panchayats* succeeded because of co-operation with local people and the local administration. *Bal Panchayats* gave children the capacity to deal with problems and created a platform for them to work together. By winning the support of their elders they made them colleagues in helping to enforce the law. The children created a mechanism to ensure that information flowed between groups and that the local administration delivered services on time.

## 5.2 Knowledge hierarchies

Knowledge management tools which aim to improve the flow of information about poverty and development can also play a vital role in challenging knowledge hierarchies which are pervasive in the development sector. Any form of communication is characterised by power inequalities between the providers and the recipients of knowledge; between children and adults, the researcher and the community, civil society and government, and importantly between the North and the South<sup>5</sup> [*sic*]. While this paper has predominantly focused on communicating evidence to governments, communication between local research organisations and international or donor organisations can be equally if not more problematic. The financial, human and technical capacity of institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF has enabled them to dominate the development agenda for many years, and provide a good example of the hierarchy of knowledge which privileges the flow of knowledge from the most powerful and inhibits it from the least.

'Locally' produced knowledge is often considered inferior to that produced by international 'experts', even by locals working within the country who have been conditioned to believe that knowledge from donors and Northern research institutions is more credible and valid. Priyanthi Fernando of CEPA speaking at the 2007 Poverty Symposium described the process

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<sup>5</sup> The terms 'North' and 'South' are used here in their traditional context of differentiating between developed and developing countries, donor and recipient countries. However, these terms are problematic and the term 'South' can convey a false impression of homogeneity between developing countries, and disguise the very different interests and hierarchies which exists between them.

as similar to that of exporting rubber to re-import it as tyres; knowledge coming out of developing countries is treated as a raw commodity which is then 'polished' by developed country professionals who export it back to developing countries as a finished product of higher value. One of the ways that local knowledge is undermined, whether knowingly or unknowingly, is that information is often requested within the donor's own parameters and frameworks even if this logic may contradict or oversimplify the message; e.g. what are the three main causes of poverty? These parameters can also make it difficult to communicate information about issues which are not already on the agenda; e.g. asking for input into a transport strategy that doesn't include the railways as an option. Such parameters only allow for the consideration of local knowledge that fits into pre-determined spaces, rather than giving local researchers the opportunity to communicate the messages from their evidence in their entirety and to set the agenda themselves.

This makes the creation of *horizontal* networks to share information within and between countries particularly important. However, the perennial obstacle to this is funding which often also flows from North to South, giving donors the ability to control knowledge management initiatives. This reiterates the need for governments in 'Southern' countries to place more importance on research and knowledge, and to invest money in institutions that prioritise the production and sharing of indigenous knowledge. Positively, many knowledge sharing initiatives are now focusing on building up strong alliances and horizontal networks between countries which are traditionally lower down the knowledge hierarchy pecking order. This is important to ensure that a body of knowledge and experience is built up outside the 'North'.

## **6 Conclusion**

The ideas and experiences raised in this paper should be familiar to all researchers who have grappled with the question of how to make their work more effective. Bringing together the examples and stories that CEPA has come across, and some of the papers presented at the Symposium helps to highlight the strategies employed by others and hopefully inspire researchers to think differently. Many stories are examples of small and gradual triumphs from the grassroots level upwards; few are the significant and high profile overturning of major policy decisions that many associate with lobbying and influencing. This more gradual and persistent change is often more attainable and longer lasting.

However, this paper also focused on the difficulties that researchers face in communicating their research; in political contexts where policymakers and other decision makers are not open to legitimate attempts to inform and influence, and between institutions and countries where a perceived or real hierarchy of knowledge may put researchers at a disadvantage. While it is true that targeting lower-level decision making and building alliances at the grassroots level is a very effective way to overcome these challenges, it should not paper over the fact that such limitations exist. Difficulties in communicating that start off as the silent 'elephant in the room' can eventually become accepted as the norm and not even recognised as an issue. Researchers need to continue to discuss and debate these challenges with each other, taking forward the conversations started at events such as the Poverty Symposium, and sharing information and ideas. Sharing experiences and discussing the research-policy context will ensure that the issues are high on researchers' agendas and not taken for granted or accepted as the status-quo.

The adage 'knowledge is power' may be a cliché, but researchers should not dismiss the sentiments behind it. Many of the examples in this paper demonstrate how powerful ideas and knowledge can be when they are communicated effectively. Sharing information and pooling ideas can increase the strength of an argument and ultimately play a critical role in influencing decision makers, whether they be donors or government policymakers, but a sense of collaboration and networking is still somewhat lacking amongst the research community in Sri Lanka. Initiatives such as the South Asia Evidence Based Policy in Development Network (accessible via [www.ebpdn.org](http://www.ebpdn.org)) may well encourage organisations to work together on capacity building and information sharing.

The introduction to this paper highlighted the two main issues which hinder the effective use of research in Sri Lanka; 'researchers need to communicate with each other and work together more effectively despite, and perhaps even more because of, the challenging context; and government departments and other important decision makers need to develop a decision-making culture that values research and evidence rather than relying on 'gut feeling' or politically expedient conclusions'. This paper is unlikely to be able to have much impact on the latter issue, but researchers can heed a clarion call for change in the way they communicate and collaborate, and through their actions may well be able to inspire more respect for and better use of research by decision-makers.



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# **The Multi- Stakeholder Approach to Policy Influence for Inclusive Growth**

**Basheerhamad Shadrach<sup>1</sup> and Shipra Sharma<sup>2</sup>**

## **Abstract**

This paper presents a case for a multi-stakeholder approach to policy influence for promoting inclusive growth in India by citing the example of the National Alliance for Mission 2007: Every village a knowledge centre or the Mission 2007, a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) led movement<sup>3</sup>. This movement aimed to facilitate the establishment of telecentre or Village Knowledge Centre (VKC) in each and every village of India. VKCs are public telecentres where people from local communities can use Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), such as computers, and access the internet to seek information and accumulate knowledge without being discriminated against.

It builds the argument around scaling up the telecentres on the premise that uninhibited access to knowledge is critical for holistic community development. Knowledge is accessible through older media such as print, radio and television as well as the more recently-emerging technologies. Technology has tremendous potential to overcome the barriers of time and space; its denial to some sectors of society has further widened the existing divide between the poor and the rich.

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<sup>1</sup> Basheerhamad Shadrach, a Senior Program Officer with the telecentre.org program, implemented by International Development Research Centre (IDRC); and funded by Microsoft Corporation, IDRC and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), is also the Secretary of the Mission 2007 initiative advising the Secretariat.

<sup>2</sup> Shipra Sharma, formerly a research officer with telecentre.org, is currently engaged in researching the efficacies of telecentres as an alternative development paradigm.

<sup>3</sup> The National Alliance for Mission 2007, now rechristened as the Grameen Gyan Abhiyan (GGA) that translates into English as Rural Knowledge Movement, was formally launched in July 2004 to converge and synergise all the ongoing telecentre and ICT4D initiatives in India, so that collectively, they can create a favourable policy environment, curtail the duplication of efforts and replicate telecentre success stories at the national level ([www.gga.org.in](http://www.gga.org.in)).

A number of telecentre pilots were launched in different parts of the world to establish empirical proof to support assumptions about knowledge for development and knowledge societies. The Information Village Research Project, supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and implemented by the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) was one of the earliest telecentre pilots.

Lessons learnt from this project paved the way for a national programme in India to scale up telecentres under the Mission 2007 programme. The uniqueness of Mission 2007 lies in:

- an unchanging focus on its objectives
- a dynamic approach towards multi-sectoral partnership building
- using this partnership base for policy influence and regulatory reforms
- making grassroots communities stakeholders in their own development rather than treating them as beneficiaries.

The authors have concentrated upon the increased recognition by the CSO sector of IT and ICTs as enablers of social development. The challenge of making ICT available to all has established a need for multi-stakeholder partnerships and an increased emphasis on policy influence. They have critically analysed the strategies adopted by Mission 2007 to engage various stakeholders and collectively influence public and private-sector policies and practices to make them more centred on people. It also necessitated, among other things, a fundamental change in the approach or assumptions of the government, the sector with the most resources and influence in India, to support 'IT for the masses'.

# 1 Introduction

*"Information is critical to development, thus ICTs as a means of sharing information are not simply a connection between people but a link in the chain of the development process itself."*

**(Hudson 1999)**

## 1.1 Context

The approach of South Asian civil society organisations to influence policy and socio-economic challenges has always been unique. They have played a key role in addressing through policy advocacy the challenges of child labour, unorganised sector workers and peace and conflict, and have motivated the government to take cognisance of it. Among many examples are:

- the role of Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and related organisations in protecting the rights of workers in the unorganised sector (Narayanan 2002, Hindu Business Line 2005);
- M. V. Foundation<sup>4</sup> and a number of Non Government Organisations (NGOs) that have worked to protect the rights of children;
- Janani, which promoted a new model for the delivery of health services to the poor<sup>5</sup>;
- the role of Transparency International<sup>6</sup> in introducing several anti-corruption measures in the sub-continent.
- In Sri Lanka, there has been constant advocacy by CSOs to address the issues of conflict and peace.

<sup>4</sup> MV Foundation works for the abolition of child labour and compulsory school education for children in the age group of 5-14 years. It recognises the inextricable link between universalisation of education and abolition of all forms of child labour. It follows an 'area-based approach' as against a target based approach. It seeks to address the rights of the entire universe of children - both in school and out of school- in its area of operation. For more details, visit <http://www.mvfindia.in./index.asp>.

<sup>5</sup> Janani, a not-for-profit Indian Society, is among the largest public-private networks delivering family planning and reproductive health care in India. The programme covers Bihar, Jharkhand — two of India's poorest states and 10 districts of Madhya Pradesh in central India. For more details visit <http://www.janani.org/home.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> Transparency International, founded by Peter Eigen, is a global CSO leading the fight against corruption. It brings people together in a powerful worldwide coalition to end the devastating impact of corruption on men, women and children around the world. TI's mission is to create change towards a world free of corruption. For more details visit <http://www.transparency.org>.

Despite the above examples, the role of CSOs in influencing technology-related policies and practices has been less visible until recently. This is, in part, because of their initial scepticism about the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in development and in transforming the lives of the poor at grassroots level (Kumar 1999). They have now and again questioned the investment in IT and ICTs when poverty, illiteracy and basic health care-related problems are rampant in the rural areas and urban slums (Times of India 2000).

In this respect, governments have traditionally made specific efforts to frame policies that are market-friendly, focusing heavily on the private sector for their investment and enabling fast-paced growth of the IT industry. For example, the Indian National Task Force on Information Technology and Software Development was set up in May 1998. The government implemented a number of regulatory and promotional measures to remove impediments and enable the growth of IT industry in the country on the basis of the Task Force's recommendations (Working Group on IT for Masses 2000). While on the policy side, efforts were biased towards encouraging private-sector investment; on the operational side, public-sector efforts were limited to the digitisation of public administration and service-delivery that began when Rajeev Gandhi was Prime Minister (1984-89) (Bajwa 2003).

Even during this period, possible linkages between ICTs and poverty-alleviation were mostly ignored. As the debate about the knowledge economy and the information society (Reich 1992; Castells 1996, 2001) gained strength, especially since the 1990s, the very definitions of poverty and deprivation have changed drastically. In addition to denial of access to material and financial resources and to livelihood opportunities, the concept now also encompasses denial of access to information and knowledge. This debate led to the development of an alternative development paradigm, ICT4D or Information and Communication Technologies for Development.

This debate reinforces the hypothesis that information and knowledge are critical to development; ICTs play a major role in generating, aggregating, disseminating and managing these by transcending the barriers of time, space and distance (World Bank 1998). Consequently, there have been phenomenal investments in ICTs over the last two decades. During this period of growth and innovation, there has been constant exploratory research. Up until 1996 this was around the Internet; between 1997 and

1999, it was largely about e-commerce and e-business; and since 2000, the ICT world has been exploring e-government (Yong 2003).

Around the same time, especially since 1998, some CSOs and the Indian government also started experimenting with ICTs as enablers of development in grassroots communities. It was increasingly recognised and accepted that ICTs facilitated community development and citizens' empowerment. Several pilot projects were launched:

- the Information Village Research Project (IVRP)<sup>7</sup> by MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF);
- the Bhumi project by the government of Karnataka;
- the launch of the Warana Wired Village project by Central and state government agencies and the milk cooperatives of Warana district in Maharashtra (Harris and Rajora 2006).

Encouraged by evidence provided since 2003 by these and a number of other projects, CSOs in South Asia have paid considerable attention to providing ICT-enabled services to poor people. There is now a realisation that policy changes and regulatory reforms are needed to deal with the challenges of providing ICT to everyone. In India, it manifested itself as the *National Alliance for Mission 2007: every village a knowledge centre* (hereafter referred to as Mission 2007), the world's largest ICT4D up-scaling program, which was a consolidated effort aimed at developing the Village Knowledge Centre (VKC)<sup>8</sup> initiative at national level.

Mission 2007 is a particularly good example because it sought to influence not only the policies and practices of government, but also those of the private sector, especially in the IT and ICT sectors, to bring about inclusive

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<sup>7</sup> This project, implemented in 1998, has attained an iconic status among the ICT4D and telecentre initiatives across the world. It sought to test the hypothesis that access to information (later conceptualised as value added information or 'knowledge') is 'the key to holistic rural development'. Despite the initial challenges, the project reinforced the critical role of ICTs in appropriating relevant knowledge and thus aiding to development in rural India. Starting with three VKCs, it was successfully scaled up in other villages of the Pondicherry region. Thereafter, the period between 1998-2003 witnessed the emergence of a number of such experiments by the CSOs, Corporate Sector and the Government, such as e-Chaupal, TaraHaat, Community Information Centres (CIC), etc. in India. A case study giving an overview of the IVRP is available online at: [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEMPowerment/Resources/14654\\_MSSRF-web.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEMPowerment/Resources/14654_MSSRF-web.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> VKCs or telecentres are public ICT access centres, especially set up in rural and remote areas to enable digital inclusion for all. See the definition of telecentres at: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telecentre>

growth. In other words, it allowed equality of opportunity to all to access information that will enable them to take part in economic growth. It sought to do this by demonstrating the critical importance of knowledge and value-added information in rural development and the indispensable role of ICT-empowered public access centres or VKCs in enabling it. On the basis of evidence from the initial research carried out under the IVRP, VKCs are being increasingly recognised as public spaces with enormous capacity to transform society.

Mission 2007 was initiated with a dual purpose. First, we must recognise each village as knowledge centre in its own right because there is knowledge and wisdom to be found in the people and practices of the villages. Secondly, the scientific and technical knowledge gap that exists in society, especially in rural society, must be bridged by a knowledge centre that enables both forward linkages to markets and backward linkages to finance and knowledge systems.

The Urban India and Rural Bharat divide, or in other words, the Shining India and the Suffering Bharat debate could be addressed through recognising this two-way connectivity in rural societies (MSSRF 2007). Mission 2007, therefore, became a rural knowledge movement that recognised the need for a knowledge-based revolution in rural India.

The programme's expansion was guided by the principles of convergence and synergy among various ongoing government, public and private sector and CSO initiatives. Mission 2007 stakeholders have, since its inception, realised the importance of government engagement in the scale-up. Also government commitment is essential for influencing changes in existing telecom and IT policies to make them more orientated towards the idea of 'IT (and ICT) for the masses'. The aim of this paper is to show how Mission 2007 adopted a unique blend of strategies to realise these principles.

## **1.2 Objectives of the research paper and methodology**

This research paper discusses the approach and methods employed by Mission 2007 to influence policy, and how it was able to catalyse changes and shifts in government as well as private sector policies and practices. In doing so, this paper focuses on:

- The governing principles of Mission 2007 and its VKC scale-up strategy.
- The Mission 2007 MSP (multi-stakeholder partnerships) approach, whereby it sought support from the government as well as the

private sector, and projected the VKCs as channels to route a number of ongoing and future government rural development and social welfare programmes.

- The Mission 2007 policy advocacy approach that sought to use appropriate channels, whether in the public or the private sector, to bring its agenda into the mainstream.

The methodology used in this study is a combination of exploratory and explanatory research to understand the Mission 2007 approach to policy advocacy and the convergence of various initiatives. Accordingly, the data and information were collected through both *secondary* and *primary sources*. The secondary sources included online as well as offline resources on Mission 2007 and telecentres, such as books, issue papers, brochures, policymakers' workshops and Mission 2007 Steering Committee Meeting reports, monographs and other printed sources.

Data and information collection from primary sources included participation and observation in workshops, Mission 2007 Steering Committee meetings and other relevant national and state-level meetings. These helped to understand the decision-making process of Mission 2007. These were complemented through face-to-face informal interviews with selected stakeholders; and focus-group discussions (FGDs) with telecentre operators and the user community. These FGDs helped to understand the needs and demands of the community and their perceptions and experience of development through ICT. Since the data and information collected was primarily qualitative in nature, the analysis was also qualitative, involving some comparative analysis.

### **1.3 Limitations of the research**

The researchers have tried to be as objective as possible in interpreting and analysing the data and information collected. All the observations made in this research paper are substantiated with appropriate references. We have to admit the possibility of some bias since both authors have served with the Mission 2007 secretariat in different capacities. We take responsibility for any influence on our interpretation of facts caused by our past and present engagement in Mission 2007 activities.



## 2 Scaling up Village Knowledge Centres the Mission 2007 Way

*"Every Village a Knowledge Centre is an initiative appropriately timed because of its emphasis on overall development of all the villages as proposed in the new government's Common Minimum Programme (CMP). The reports of the six Task Forces will provide inputs for policymaking...the cost of taking connectivity to the villages is an area that the Ministry has been focusing on including the price of devices and networking equipment..."*

**Mr. K K Jaswal, Secretary, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Government of India (MSSRF 2004a: 5)**

### 2.1 Overcoming the 'forever pilot syndrome'<sup>9</sup>

The scale-up under the Mission 2007 programme was planned on the basis of lessons learnt from the IDRC-MSSRF's IVRP project launched in 1998. This pioneering project was followed by several other projects (often referred to as 'info-kiosk' projects) designed to deliver information through ICT in different parts of India. The IVRP project was unique at a time when development initiatives were very much imposed from the top down. By establishing the correlation between knowledge, ICTs and development, the project presented an alternative model for community development. VKCs were projected not merely as ICT access and training centres, but as knowledge centres where the community could access value-added information to enhance their livelihood opportunities.

The launch of the IVRP was not very smooth, and the team learnt a lot of lessons in the course of its implementation. For example, a few of the earliest VKCs housed in private homes had to be closed down because they were not accessible to the *dalit* community. Therefore, the experience gained from this IDRC-MSSRF ICT programme inspired them to use 'social inclusion', 'reaching the unreached' and 'voicing the voiceless' as the guiding principles for replicating this model in other regions.

They also realised that people's information needs vary in terms of a) geographical area, b) gender and c) physical disabilities. Furthermore, the information has to be in the local language, specific to the location, authentic and relevant to the immediate context. There was also an

<sup>9</sup> The 'forever pilot syndrome' refers to the inability to move from the pilot study to programme expansion at the regional or the national level. This is constrained because of the challenges of the scale-up (Mathison 2003).

opportunity to experiment with a variety of communication technologies for transferring (and disseminating) information (voice, data, image, etc.) between the knowledge centres; and connectivity options. Above all, it taught the necessity of mobilising the 'power of partnership' at various levels to achieve the goal of setting up the VKCs (Subhash, Dewan, Torres and Kanungo 2003).

## **2.2 The paradigm shift engineered by IVRP**

Through its advocacy of the participatory, bottom-up approach to rural development, the IVRP tried to place the 'voiceless majority' at the helm of all development activities and discourses, whether public, private or CSO. The foundation-stone of Mission 2007's vision and mission was a people-centred approach based on lessons from the IVRP. These include:

***Projecting telecentres as knowledge centres:*** Among all the contemporary projects, the IVRP was a trend setter in several ways. This project also brought about a paradigm shift in the prevailing Western thinking on telecentres as ICT access and training centres, helping the poor and the marginalised living in remote and underserved areas to access information and equip themselves with the skills required to compete in the emerging job market, which had become very IT skills intensive (Bill, Murray and Brooks 2001). In addition to corroborating this thinking, the Indian experiment also projected the telecentres as 'knowledge centres' providing the village communities value added information and knowledge, which is location specific, need and demand based, timely and relevant for the community.

***Recognising and respecting traditional knowledge:*** Another important breakthrough made by the IVRP was reclaiming due respect for the local/traditional knowledge available within the village communities, which was gradually dying out when pitted against stiff competition from knowledge from the scientific community. Even scientific knowledge was not readily available to them when they needed it the most due to lack of efficient transfer/delivery mechanisms. Thus, in addition to providing access to and training in the use of ICTs, the knowledge centres have another agenda: taking the scientific and modern knowledge to the rural people and at the same time, aggregating and archiving the local wisdom or the 'dying wisdom' residing with the villagers (MSSRF 2004a).

***Ensuring vertical and horizontal accumulation and transfer of knowledge:*** This way, the knowledge centre facilitates not only vertical

transfer of knowledge, but also its horizontal accumulation for future transfer and use. This is based on the premise of bridging not only the 'digital divide' but also the gap between the 'lab' and the 'land'. Through the years, the communication between the lab and the land was mutually exclusive, although between themselves, they had enough opportunities. Wherever such linkages were present, they were predominantly one sided with the scientific community providing top down solutions without taking into account the local conditions. To fill in this gap, the knowledge centres seek to create two way linkages between the lab and the land (MSSRF 2004a).

***Infusing a participatory and bottom up approach to local development:*** At the same time, they infused a 'bottom up approach' to development at the grassroots level to make it more responsive to the local necessities and demands of the village communities. They involved the community as a stakeholder in their own development and promoted the participatory approach to address local challenges. This included needs assessment at the community level and aggregating services and information based on these findings, and entrusting the management of the telecentre in the hands of the community (Subhash, Dewan, Torres and Kanungo 2003).

***'Collaboration' as the key to making the telecentre sustainable and relevant:*** Moreover, the implementation of the IVRP also led the implementers to believe that such a resource intensive initiative cannot be conceived in isolation and requires the collaboration of all sectors of the society including the government. It taught the necessity of mobilising the 'power of partnership' at various levels to realise the goal of setting up the VKCs (MSSRF 2004a). Thus, the implementers forged a number of crucial partnerships with the local people, hospitals, veterinary college and hospital, local administration, local service providers, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) units of the IT sector etc. to enhance the relevance of the knowledge centres and ensure its success.

***Identifying and empowering local champions (grassroots academicians) to manage the telecentres:*** Another point emphasised by this project was the development of human capital to take up the challenge of converting every village into a knowledge centre. The

Jamshetji Tata National Virtual Academy for Rural Prosperity (NVA)<sup>10</sup> was set up to realise this objective. It aims to select one woman and one man from each Indian village and train them to take forward the knowledge revolution in rural India (MSSRF 2005a). They are people with extraordinary skills and leadership qualities who strive to change their own and their community's life. In the words of Prof. Swaminathan, they are the 'grassroots academicians'. On their selection, they are conferred with the title of NVA fellows, the torch bearers of the knowledge revolution in rural India. The President of India has also felicitated them as "the celebration of our rural core competence" (President of India 2005).

### **2.3 The multi-stakeholder partnership approach**

Very early on, during the implementation of the IVRP, the Mission 2007 stakeholders realised the 'power of partnership', that of a multi-stakeholder partnership (MSP) to address the challenges in the way of taking ICTs to the rural poor and deprived communities. The Mission 2007 alliance has reengineered the MSP approach to suit its objectives. Its multi-stakeholder composition has helped to overcome the 'forever pilot syndrome' from which most of the ICT4D and telecentre initiatives suffer worldwide.

The uniqueness of the Mission 2007 MSP approach lies in envisaging an alliance of not only mutually opposing sectors of society, but also creating sub-alliances at different inter-sector or intra-sector levels, such as policymakers, planners, social investors and practitioners and grassroots champions. It is more like an assorted combination of MSPs at different levels, going down the ladder to the states, districts and villages. This movement also enjoys the mandate of an International Support Group (ISG), created for strengthening and generating awareness about it at the international level.

Mission 2007's most important achievement was winning government support. Government is the most resource-rich and influential sector of society, having considerable control over finances, infrastructure and

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<sup>10</sup> The Jamshetji Tata National Virtual Academy for Rural Prosperity (NVA) was formed in August 2003 through the collaborative efforts of MSSRF and the Tata Trust. Its fellows are local champions, who, regardless of their educational status (some of them having education up to the primary level only!), have shown leadership qualities and have dared to do something different to empower themselves and the community around them. They have also motivated development practitioners to look at grassroots realities from their point of view and make such information more objective and unbiased. They are the repositories of traditional knowledge; therefore, they are recognized as the 'grassroots academicians' and honoured with NVA fellowship ([www.mssrf-nva.org](http://www.mssrf-nva.org))

connectivity. The project has mobilised the power of partnership for seeking government support for influencing policy changes and bringing about regulatory reforms. The distinguishing features of Mission 2007 as an MSP are:

**CSO led MSP platform:** The lead in envisioning this alliance was taken by a CSO, the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF).

**Leadership driven alliance:** This alliance is formed around the charisma of a leader/visionary, Prof. M. S. Swaminathan, who played a crucial role in envisioning the alliance and bringing in all the partners, particularly the Indian government.

**MSP with an all inclusive agenda:** Unlike other MSPs functioning in different parts of the world, it has an all inclusive agenda that spans policy advocacy, resource mobilisation (development of innovative and appropriate technology, creation of knowledge database, capacity building of the telecentre workers, etc.), overseeing the implementation of the program and finally, working towards making it sustainable.

**Alliances at various levels and for various purposes:** In addition to developing a multi-stakeholder alliance at the national level, Mission 2007 has also promoted collaborations at various levels to address the challenges of ICT4D. These include creating institutional mechanisms at the state level to coordinate the implementation and synergy of various programs, for example, constituting the Rajasthan State Steering Committee. It has also advocated the creation of multi-sectoral content consortiums and capacity building programs in partnership with academic institutions, like the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and telecentre.org<sup>11</sup>.

**Flexible and dynamic organisational structure:** The organisational structure of Mission 2007 is modeled after the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). So, this partnership is not institutionalised, except the Secretariat, which acts as the facilitator for Mission 2007 alliance. This is a deliberate arrangement to allow flexibility to this MSP. It also allows enough scope to mould itself to address emerging needs.

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<sup>11</sup> telecentre.org is a social investment initiative implemented by IDRC and funded by Microsoft, Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) and IDRC.

***Flexible and dynamic approach towards partnership building:***

Mission 2007 is an evolutionary MSP with an ever expanding partnership base. Any organisation which can identify with the broad objectives of Mission 2007, can join it through an informal procedure without being bound by any formal legal partnership agreements. But, in spite of having no formal, written agreement, all the partners are expected to contribute from their core competencies. Its huge partnership base is responsible for the hierarchical arrangement of stakeholders into a core of key stakeholders, surrounded by secondary and tertiary ones. This informal MSP is in the process of creating similar stakeholder engagements at various levels, with policymakers, planners, social investors, practitioners and grassroots academicians, to address issues related with 'overcoming the forever pilot syndrome'.

***Community as one of the main stakeholders, not beneficiary:*** Most of the partnership models tend to see the community as a beneficiary. They don't foresee any role for them except this. But Mission 2007 considers them as one of the main stakeholders, since they are going to be influenced by the end results of the partnership. Therefore, it has always advocated for the participatory and bottom up approach, which helped in transforming the status of the community from 'beneficiary' (without any control over or stake in their own development) to that of one of the stakeholders (with equal stake in decision making concerning them and their development). This is reflected through all the Mission 2007 conventions as well, which have served as interfaces between the policymakers and the knowledge workers. It has also influenced the government and private sectors to adopt this approach.

## **2.4 Influencing stakeholders' practices**

Mission 2007 has also brought about changes in the practices of its stakeholders, especially the private-sector. These include:

***Engaging academia for content-generation and expert advice***

Mission 2007 has highlighted the importance of academia because of its capacity to produce research results that support the role of village knowledge centres in the empowerment of people. This is especially important in the development of knowledge-based decision-taking capacities, and in providing economic freedom as protection against the kind of resource-intensive practices that have failed rural people. Academics can create locally relevant content and offer expert advice to address emergent issues in the areas of agriculture and livestock-management and

health. To capitalise on the strengths of academia, Mission 2007 partnered State-level Agricultural Universities and Veterinary Colleges and Hospitals and persuaded them to develop ICT-based applications, such as touch-screen devices and to provide online expert advice in real-time through teleconferencing and telephones.

### ***Attracting the media to highlight grassroots development challenges***

To some extent, Mission 2007 can be credited with drawing the attention of the mainstream media, which had been somewhat apathetic to the challenges of ICT4D in rural areas. The experimental telecentres established in Pondicherry and later on, involvement of the media in a proactive way through MSSRF's Hindu Media Centre, were crucial steps in achieving a fundamental change by persuading the media to highlight development activities at the grassroots level.

### ***Influencing private-sector practices***

As well as influencing government policies and practices, Mission 2007 has engineered a paradigm shift in IT-sector information kiosk initiatives, making them development-orientated rather than being mere business entities in rural areas (Shadrach 2006). This is well reflected by ITC's decision to convert all *e-Chaupals*<sup>12</sup> into *gyan chaupals* by integrating a number of health, education and other locally-relevant services. Influenced by Mission 2007, Microsoft India has come up with the *Saksham* (*saksham* is a Sanskrit word that means self-reliant) programme. This is a scalable and self-sustaining information kiosk initiative aimed at taking the benefits of IT to rural India. Under this programme, Microsoft will additionally develop a rural portal powered with content and applications aimed specifically at the rural segment by working with regional and local independent software vendors to accelerate the adoption of these services. At the same time, it also encouraged them to see the Bottom of the Pyramid as an emerging IT market, and to design affordable and durable access devices that can function effectively in the challenging rural environment.

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<sup>12</sup> These were set up primarily to procure agricultural produce directly from the cultivators. It also sought to provide relevant information about market and agricultural inputs to them to improve the quality and quantity of their agricultural produce. More information available at: <http://www.echoupal.com/>

### 3 The MSP Approach to Policy Influence

*"...Government intends to use IT as a major instrument to provide new opportunities to those segments of society who do not see opportunities to improve their quality of life and tend to reconcile to their fate. It is a firm view of the government that if any technology can create new opportunities to bridge the gap between haves and have-nots in society in the present times, it is IT."*

**(Working Group on IT for Masses 2000)**

#### 3.1 The policy influence strategy

The Mission 2007 MSP, an alliance of stakeholders drawn from various sectors of society has also helped strengthen advocacy of appropriate policy changes and regulatory reforms to enable scaling-up to take place. The Policymakers' Workshop held in October 2003 that originally helped the formation of a national alliance for Mission 2007 produced several general recommendations for policymakers and other stakeholders, especially about how virtual knowledge centres can become more relevant in the Indian as well as the global context (MSSRF 2003). Advocacy by Mission 2007 partners has resulted in policy changes not only in the field of ICT4D, but it has also effected a paradigm shift in other streams of public and private services rendered to communities in the fields of education, healthcare, agriculture, agro-business, micro-enterprise and rural livelihoods. Its policy influence and advocacy strategy is driven by:

***A non-antagonistic approach to achieve systemic changes:*** Mission 2007 has tried to bring about systemic changes without antagonising any sector of society. It has been guided by synergy between various ongoing programmes. One Mission 2007 document notes, 'There are numerous ongoing ICT projects in different parts of the country. The time has come to promote synergy and convergence among all on-going efforts. The strengths of the individual partners of the National Alliance may vary, but their collective strength is considerable. It is this collective strength that Mission 2007: Every Village a Knowledge Centre strives to mobilise' (MSSRF 2004a). Eventually the community is the winner because an environment of mutual benefit rather than competition has been created.

***Causing a paradigm shift in government approach towards IT and ICT:*** All ICT4D initiatives are very resource and policy-intensive. Mission 2007 sought to enlist the indispensable support of the government and its relevant agencies. The main issue of concern was the prevailing approach of



the government towards ICTs, more specifically towards IT. This happened to be more conducive to 'I(C)T as a development sector' than 'I(C)T as an enabler of socio-economic development' (Accenture, Markle Foundation and UNDP, 2001). Deriving strength from the aggregated efforts of all the partners involved, Mission 2007 inspired (directly or indirectly) the Indian Government to take some major decisions such as changing from pro-IT sector policies to promoting 'IT for the masses'.

### **3.2 The techniques employed to achieve policy influence**

Mission 2007 has employed a number of techniques to seek the support of the government and influence policy changes and regulatory reforms. At the same time, it has tried to engage key government officials and ministers in all Mission 2007 dialogue and discourse right from the beginning. Besides international donors, CSOs, and the private sector, the presence of senior government officials from Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT), National Informatics Centre (NIC), Media Lab Asia (MLA) in all Mission 2007 workshops and conventions was a great achievement for Mission 2007.

***Seeking endorsement by key central government officials and ministers:*** Mission 2007 was able to seek the endorsement of the President of India, who participated in the second convention of Mission 2007 and also presided over the first convocation of grassroots champions (MSSRF 2005a)<sup>13</sup>. In his inaugural speech, Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam called for a nationwide movement to make India a superpower by using ICTs in both rural and urban areas. Mission's partnership with Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) helped them to use satellite technology to extend various services to remote and rural areas. Mission 2007 has also lobbied a number of ministries responsible for rolling out development programmes.

***Seeking endorsement by state government officials:*** Similarly, the Mission has been endorsed by various chief ministers and government officials responsible for IT, rural development, agriculture, *panchayati raj*, women and child development, and the health and education departments.

#### ***Leveraging appropriate opportunities to channel its objectives***

- Mainstreaming mission objectives through various government documents: The Planning Commission agreed to overlay knowledge connectivity on physical connectivity in the Bharat Nirman Document,

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<sup>13</sup> To know more, also visit the site [www.mssrf-nva.org](http://www.mssrf-nva.org)

which is cited as a new deal for rural India. The Farmers' Commission's Report was yet another vehicle to promote Mission 2007 views since Prof. Swaminathan was the chairman of this Commission. In these reports, time and again, he has stressed the importance of knowledge connectivity in rural areas as a means of dealing with the problem of farmers' suicides.

- National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) and the Common Service Centre (CSC) program: To a large extent, Mission 2007 was able to persuade the government to invest not only in 'e-government', but also in people centred 'e-governance'. Even the CSC programme of the Department of Information Technology (DIT), Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, is inspired by Mission 2007 and this has been, time and again, acknowledged by all the senior officials associated with the implementation of this programme. The CSC document acknowledges "... initiatives like Mission 2007 have also been propagating the establishment of Village Knowledge Centres (VKCs) with largely similar objectives. A special budget allocation (2005-06) to be utilised by the States through NABARD, was made by the Finance Minister, for the setting up of VKCs - the first significant step in making the CSC concept a reality" (DIT 2005). Through Mission's intervention, the government of India has enlarged the scope of CSCs to include the delivery of private services in addition to being the front-end delivery points for e-government services (Shadrach 2005b).
- Through its active participation in CSC's strategic planning, it has also triggered a paradigm shift in the government perspective on partnerships, and encouraged it to forge partnerships beyond the traditional Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) and think in terms of the newly emerging model of MSPs. It has resulted in CSOs like TERI and Alternative Forum for Indian Development winning contracts to set up CSCs in Rajasthan and Jharkhand, respectively. In other areas related to the CSC programme also, such as those dealing with the capacity-building of the CSC operators, the government has become more open to knowledge partnerships and technical collaborations with the CSOs<sup>14</sup>.
- Ensuring financial commitment from the government: Besides policy changes, Mission 2007 has also ensured financial commitments from

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<sup>14</sup> The Global Telecentre Academy, a telecentre.org initiative, was supported by DIT, SDC and Microsoft (Sharma 2006b).

the government. For example, Shri P Chidambaram, the Union Finance Minister, made the following announcement concerning Mission 2007 in his budget speech on February 28, 2005, "The National Commission on Farmers has recommended the establishment of Rural Knowledge Centres all over the country using modern information and communication technology (ICT). I am glad to announce that Government has decided to join the alliance and route its support through NABARD. I propose to allow NABARD to provide Rs.100 crore out of RIDF" (Chidambaran 2005, Shadrach 2005a). This announcement, made almost within a year of Mission 2007 launch (July 2004), was a great morale boost for the alliance.

### **3.3 Important milestones of Mission 2007 policy influence**

Following are some of the direct or indirect achievements of the policy advocacy and influence strategy adopted by Mission 2007. The Indian government has made the following announcements since the formation of the Mission 2007 alliance. These will go a long way towards promoting inclusive growth in India (Shadrach 2007b):

***Infusing a partnership based approach to the National e-Governance Plan:*** The major announcements in this regard were:

- announcement on firming-up of the National e-Governance plan (NeGP) in October 2004;
- the notification on technical and financial support for the establishment of a State Wide Area Network (SWAN) suggesting either a suitable Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) model or designating the National Informatics Centre (NIC) as the prime implementation agency;
- the guidelines for capacity-building and institutional framework for e-Governance under NeGP;
- and the announcement in February 2005 on budgetary support from the Planning Commission as Additional Central Assistance to all the states for initiating the NeGP.

***CSCs as front-end delivery channels for e-government and private services:*** Soon after the launch of Mission 2007, the Indian government committed itself to setting up 100,000 CSCs in India facilitated by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. This project received cabinet approval in September 2006. The NeGP envisions a three-pillar model for the delivery of 'web-enabled anytime, anywhere

access' to information and services across the country, especially in rural and remote parts of India. These are:

- Connectivity through SWANs/NICNET;
- National Data Bank/State Data Centres (SDCs);
- CSCs, which are front-end delivery centres for public and private services.

**Broadband policy:** The major announcement in this regard was a well-articulated Broadband Policy in December 2004 (MCIT 2004). VKCs are spaces that transact education, health, livelihood, agriculture and micro-enterprise services and content using a multimedia format that is suitable for neo-literate and semi-literate poor people in rural areas. Making enough bandwidth available for the purposes of VKCs was advocated right from the beginning by Mission 2007 alliance and the decision of the government to introduce broadband in rural areas was influenced by it.

**Government acceptance of Farmer's Commission recommendations:** The government's decision to accept the recommendations of the National Commission on Farmers and its subsequent decision to join the National Alliance for Mission 2007 in February 2005 was largely the result of Mission 2007 advocacy. The government declared an initial commitment of Rs. 100 crore, to be made available through NABARD under the RIDF scheme for setting up the VKCs (Chidambaram 2005: Item 56).

**Inclusion of knowledge connectivity in the Bharat Nirman document:** The new deal for rural India enshrined in the Bharat Nirman programme as the highest-ever investment made by the government in rural infrastructure now includes knowledge connectivity as fundamental to achieving inclusive growth through infrastructure investments. The current five-year plan of India sees an inclusive and faster growth aided by knowledge connectivity as fundamental for alleviating poverty in India (Planning Commission 2004).

**The Right to Information Act 2005:** The Right to Information Act, passed by the Indian Parliament in May 2005, sets out a practical regime for people to secure access to information which is held by public authorities, consistent with public interest, in order to promote openness, transparency and accountability (Ministry of Law and Justice 2005). This was heralded as a major breakthrough for the VKC initiative.

**The Community Radio Policy 2006:** On 16 November 2006, the Union Cabinet allowed registered non-profit organisations to apply for broadcasting licences. The government says that 'civil society and voluntary organisations, State Agriculture Universities (SAUs) institutions, *Krishi Vigyan Kendras*, Registered Societies and Autonomous Bodies and Public Trusts registered under the Societies Act or any other such act relevant for the purpose' (India Together 2006) will be able to apply. The Cabinet decision is only a policy proposal, not fully-fledged legislation, and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) will be taking it forward. 'The MIB is expected to frame the detailed terms and conditions for NGOs to apply for and receive licences'. This policy will go a long way towards making the technology of community radio available to the VKCs for empowering the community and making their voices heard.

**Private and CSO Sector Initiatives to Strengthen Mission 2007:** telecentre.org and Microsoft India Pvt. Ltd. have set up the Rural Innovation Fund (RIF) (Telecentre.org and Microsoft 2007) for Mission 2007 that seeks to:

- Help communities with limited access to technology to realise their potential;
- Promote local IT-based social entrepreneurial ventures;
- Foster ICT-based entrepreneurship in rural areas among young people;
- Encourage organisational, individual and local software entrepreneurial endeavours that will develop cost-effective, practical and innovative applications and solutions that benefit communities;
- Support organisations specialising in service-development which have services to offer, but lack distribution channels to reach rural or poor communities.

#### 4 Conclusion

*'The task of taking the benefits of the Internet and the space age to the country's 600,000 villages can be achieved by bringing about synergy between technology and public policy.'*

Swaminathan 2004

Very early on Mission 2007 recognised that scaling up the VKC programme would require policy changes and regulatory reforms. At the same time, they also acknowledged the need to seek the support of influential senior bureaucrats and ministers to take the movement forward. To achieve these, they adopted a unique blend of strategies and approaches. The Mission 2007 alliance was helped to pursue its goals by the inclusion of stakeholders and eminent leaders from within and outside government.

Mission 2007 is a good example of how a coalition of civil society bodies, private sector, media and academia could influence policy, thus addressing poverty alleviation issues through the MSP approach. This is entirely supported through evidence derived from the IVRP and other similar projects. The Mission 2007 approach to MSP is flexible and dynamic and the plan can be adapted to changing circumstances. The Mission 2007 experience teaches that to be effective, MSPs should have enough resilience to be adapted to suit situational and contextual demands. The MSP mantra works best when all actors are willing to recognise not only each others' strengths, but also the indispensability of such partnerships to address the challenges of ICT-enabled development. This requires not only lobbying, but firm evidence to convince all the stakeholders, especially the government, of its feasibility.

MSP is a new concept and it is still evolving. Therefore, it is understood and interpreted differently by different people. Forming and maintaining the MSPs until the objectives of the partnerships are achieved is the most challenging part of it. The CSOs are still learning to be effective in building and maintaining partnerships, especially cross-sectoral ones.

The power of partnership enables CSO-led MSP initiatives to be effective in alleviating poverty. The Mission 2007 example demonstrates that it is very effective in influencing government policies, making those more people-centred and pro-poor. Since the MSP model envisages the government as one of the stakeholders, seeking its support and achieving targets becomes even easier.

The success achieved by Mission 2007 has encouraged telecentre movements in South Asian countries, such as Bangladesh, Philippines and Nepal to replicate this vision. They have also adopted the MSP model to implement telecentre programmes in their countries and are also envisioning strong partnerships with relevant government departments and agencies in their respective countries to make it a reality.

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# **Ask the Primary Stakeholders – Research for Change and the Estate Workers’ Perceptions:**

*A paper based on the research work of  
Rathna Jeganathan, Sarah Barkley and Praba  
Balakumar<sup>1</sup>*

**William Duggan, Sarah Barkley and  
Rathna Jeganathan**

## **1 Introduction**

‘Make Poverty History’<sup>2</sup>. It’s a laudable goal and one that countless governments, organisations and concerned individuals are working to make a reality. Elimination of poverty, or even the lesser, but perhaps more realistic goal of significantly *reducing* poverty is the focus of most development assistance efforts around the world. But poverty and the conditions that often lead to or exacerbate poverty are usually complicated and almost always interwoven.

All over the world ‘the poor’ are challenged by sets of unique and generally interlinked obstacles – environmental, political, historical, location and gender-related. While the exact mix and severity of these challenges varies among locations and population groups, certain common themes and syndromes can be identified among the spectrum of the poor and disadvantaged.

Robert Chambers of the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, has noted that many of the world’s poor are trapped in what he describes as a ‘poverty ratchet’, that is “the loss of assets or rights which it is difficult to reverse – exacerbated by a gradual, or sometimes sudden build-up of pressures which seriously challenge the economic health of families” (Chambers 1983:114-118). Among others, these pressures can

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the Plantation Communities Project – World University Service of Canada, Sri Lanka, October 2007. The Plantation Communities Project (PCP) is undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada provided through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and implemented by the World University Service of Canada (WUSC). The PCP is supervised by the Government of Sri Lanka’s Ministry of Nation Building and Estate Infrastructure Development.

<sup>2</sup> The “Make Poverty History” coalition consists of hundreds of organisations working to eliminate poverty around the world. <http://www.makepovertyhistory.org/whatwewant/index.shtml>

include limited access to productive resources, seasonal fluctuations, extreme weather, poor access to quality education, unfavourable terms of trade, political upheaval, war and insecurity, poor health and weak or uncommitted representatives. Not surprisingly, when a number of these pressures coincide the poor can find themselves in a downward spiral from which it is difficult to escape.

Given the complexities of poverty alleviation efforts then it is not surprising that many well-intentioned and well-managed development interventions fail – or at least fail to achieve the level of change desired. Every community, and indeed household, is characterised by a unique set of circumstances – of assets and challenges. And thus to a certain extent, every development intervention is an experiment of sorts, but an experiment in which the stakes are high, where the price of failure or under-achievement can mean the difference between climbing out of or tumbling further down the poverty spiral.

In an effort to respond to and to mitigate the complex array of challenges facing disadvantaged populations governments, NGOs and development practitioners typically embrace a certain set of acknowledged 'best practices'. Chief among these are the promotion of participatory practices, multi-stakeholder engagement, do-no-harm approaches, results-based programming, iterative planning and learning by doing.

This paper focuses on learning by doing. Specifically, it describes the positive synergy that can be harnessed when research is designed to provide rapid and reliable information to guide development activities which aim to reduce economic and social poverty<sup>3</sup>. The paper describes how the World University Service of Canada (WUSC), a Canadian non-governmental organisation which implements the CIDA-funded Plantation Communities Project, undertook an ambitious study of plantation workers' attitudes to gain information for prioritising future development investments and supporting the design of more relevant, demand-driven programming. It

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<sup>3</sup> By social poverty, we mean a disadvantaged social circumstance which may be characterised by poor civil-society development, low levels of education, limited ability to access rights, and poor self-esteem.

<sup>4</sup> The Workers' Perceptions Study focused on estates operated by regional plantation companies (RPCs) only, and did not include workers from "small holder estates". WUSC's contract with the GoSL stipulates that the Plantation Communities Project will focus on RPC-managed estates. However, as outlined in the *Lessons Learned* section of the paper, the inclusion of some workers from small holder and/or JEDB/SLSPC estates might have been a useful addition to the study design.

explains how WUSC approached plantation workers living and working on tea and rubber estates operated by regional plantation companies<sup>4</sup> in the Low, Mid and Up-country to identify their priorities for development efforts aimed at improving their work and non-work environments.

The paper begins with a short description of the plantation communities of Sri Lanka. The World University Service of Canada (WUSC) is then briefly introduced, and there follows a short summary of the WUSC-Plantation Communities Project under which the Workers' Perception Study (WPS) research was conducted. Next, the design and research methods used for the WPS are presented, followed by a quick overview of the types of recommendations generated by the study. The strategy used to disseminate WPS findings and recommendations is presented. This is followed by a discussion of the influence and preliminary impact that the study has had on the work and non-work environments on estates. The paper concludes with a brief reflection on the WPS initiative summarising the perceived strengths of the study, weaknesses and lessons learned, and potential next steps to magnify the impact of the research.

## **2 The Plantation Communities**

The vast majority of plantation workers in Sri Lanka are Tamil-speaking and are known as Indian Tamils, or Hill Country Tamils. Of Indian origin, their ancestors were brought to Sri Lanka by the British in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as indentured workers to provide cheap and manageable labour for the growing plantation sector. While sharing a language and religion with the indigenous Tamil minority in Sri Lanka, they are a distinct ethnic group. Since their arrival and until recent decades, a combination of physical isolation, cultural dislocation, language barriers and a high degree of dependence on plantation companies left estate residents socially disempowered with most opportunities for civil society development stifled. Workers' were housed on estates and provisions (as deemed necessary by the Management) were provided. Those interested and able were provided with 'a job for life' with British-owned plantation companies, then

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<sup>5</sup> Many observers have commented that health services and most forms of basic community infrastructure (water and sanitation systems, roads, telecommunications, access to quality education, etc.) remain substandard. In response, plantation companies and the Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT) point out that most quality of life indicators have improved significantly over the last 15 years. Rajadurai (2007) has pointed out that when all economic benefits are factored in, Sri Lankan tea plantation workers are better looked after than their counterparts in most parts of the world.

state-owned entities, and more recently regional plantation companies (RPCs), providing steady employment, housing, basic health services, basic community infrastructure and various other amenities<sup>5</sup>.

Estates employ about 6% of Sri Lanka's workforce, some 65% of which are women (Rajadurai 2007: Slide 4). Ninety percent of the female workforce comprises tea pluckers who have low job status, low wages, and difficult working conditions. Existing economic and social barriers (often imposed by prevailing industry norms and society) impede the female estate workers' ability to advance professionally and in the community. These barriers also affect a woman's ability to address her interests, needs and priorities.

While RPC-based estate workers do not represent the 'poorest of the poor' in Sri Lanka (World Bank 2007a), it may be argued that they are in the most disempowered and fractionated group in the country. They suffer from a number of significant structural and social disadvantages, among them:

- Language and location-specific obstacles which hinder access to government, banking and private-sector services and other amenities;
- Weak penetration of government services;
- Low levels of representation in mainstream local governance (Grama Niladhari, Divisional Secretariat and Pradeshiya Sabha levels);
- Factionalised political representation which is synonymous with trade union representation;
- High levels of dependence on estate management and estate staff for social services and approvals required for day-to-day administrative requirements;
- Little or no input into estate management and economic development of estate communities;
- Inability to legally own the estate-based homes in which they live;
- Limited or no access to land for cultivation or housing expansion;
- Shortage of qualified teachers, and relatively poorly equipped schools;
- Poor postal services; and
- High incidence of illicit alcohol vendors with proportionately high household expenditure on alcohol and many of the social ills associated with alcohol abuse.

While some studies from the PHDT, Rajadurai and others, indicate that overall quality of life on estates is improving, a recent World Bank study indicates that poverty in the estate sector remains significantly higher than the national average and increased substantially between 1990 and 2002 – this while national poverty has decreased marginally (CEPA 2007)<sup>6</sup>. The study showed a high and increased concentration of estate populations near the poverty line, likely due to small shifts in consumption patterns due to a significant reduction in average number of earners per household<sup>7</sup>. In addition, over the past few decades there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of workers employed on estates and the percentage of estate residents actually employed on estates. While many estate-born residents have chosen to continue to live on their “ancestral estates”, an increasingly large proportion of RPC estate residents are migrating off the estate in search of work each day. Particularly on Low-Country estates, but also on Mid- and Up-Country estates, this outflow of labour has caused labour shortages and reduced productivity and ultimately estate profitability (Rajadurai 2007: Slide 5). Simultaneously, and of great importance to the long-term economic prospects for estate workers and residents and plantation companies, Sri Lanka’s overall share of the global tea market has plummeted over the past few decades – this while cost of production has increased faster than anywhere else in the world (Rajadurai 2007).

Even so, life is changing rapidly on the estates. Health indicators have improved significantly in the past five years because of the work of the Plantation Human Development Trust (PHDT) and other concerned parties in the estate communities. Average education levels are improving on the estates and as a result, expectations are changing. As technologies such as electricity, cell-phones and computers slowly migrate into the estates, the dynamics of the communities will continue to change at a rapid pace. Increasingly, through technology and improvements in communications, the physical and psychological isolation of estate residents is beginning to subside. Workers are gaining more access to information and opportunities through these technological advances. However, new technology needs to

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted however, that the World Bank poverty study did not separate data collected from RPC-managed and small holder estates, and thus some statistical differences could exist for social and economic indicators for these two distinct production entities.

<sup>7</sup> World Bank (2007b) notes that for the period 1996/97 to 2003/04, the average number of income earners per household fell from 2.3 to 1.7, regular estate employment dropped from 68% to 49%, and casual labour increased from 29% to 41%.

be integrated into these communities in an equitable and sustainable fashion if benefits are to be equally accrued. Investments in the coming years will have to accommodate and support incoming appropriate technology. The tea industry is also changing rapidly. Increasing international competition will continue to put more stress on companies and management to increase profitability. At the same time, increasing demand for HACCP<sup>8</sup> and fair trade standards will necessitate more investments in the social development of the work and non-work environments of plantation communities.

These trends are clearly of great importance. Approximately 1,000,000 Sri Lankans live on RPC-managed estates, with about 200,000 residents employed on these estates<sup>9</sup>. Estate households depend on the plantation company for at least a proportion of their family income. In addition, water and sanitation services, basic health care and housing are provided by the plantation company in collaboration with the PHDT on the basis of levy that each company pays to the Government of Sri Lanka. In principle, if the plantation companies prosper, the workers and residents should benefit as well. Conversely, if the companies fail to earn profits the negative social, economic and political impacts of such an implosion could be felt far and wide. When all tea producers (RPCs and smallholders) and industries associated with the production-supply-sales chains are factored in, it is apparent that one in eight working Sri Lankans depends on the tea industry for economic benefits. Then too, the plantation industries have typically played a stabilising role in a nation where serious ethnic-based conflicts have erupted in the north, east and south over the last few decades. The maintenance of a productive, peaceful estate sector is thus of critical importance to the overall social and economic stability of Sri Lanka as a whole.

The Government of Sri Lanka, some major donors and numerous international and local NGOs have recognised the strategic, economic and social importance of the plantation sector<sup>10</sup>. Over the past few decades,

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<sup>8</sup> HACCP is a systematic preventative approach to food safety that addresses physical, chemical and biological hazards as a means of prevention rather than finished product inspection. HACCP is used in the food industry to identify potential food safety hazards, so that key actions, known as Critical Control Points can be taken to reduce or eliminate the risk of the hazards being realised. The system is used at all stages of food production and preparation processes.

<sup>9</sup> Rajadurai (2007) claims that the total number of workers on RPC-managed estates is 249,000 (2006), but other observers put the figure at around 190,000.

<sup>10</sup> For example, CIDA and the GoSL launched the PCP to "promote economic and social development among those whose unfulfilled aspirations might otherwise fuel conflict".



they have invested significant funds and energy to improve the quality of work and community environments, and overall profitability on estates. Yet surprisingly, with only a few exceptions, no major donor or service-provider has ever systematically collected the opinion of the principal stakeholders – that is the estate workforce - about their priorities for development interventions in their work and non-work environments. The Plantation Communities Project, led by WUSC, designed and conducted the Workers’ Perceptions Study in an attempt to bridge this research gap and to provide useful information to guide future investments to improve quality of work and community life on estates. A brief introduction to WUSC and a summary of the study design, findings and recommendations is presented below.

### **3 About WUSC and the PCP**

#### ***What is WUSC?***

The Plantation Communities Project (PCP) is funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and implemented by the World University Service of Canada (WUSC). WUSC is a leading Canadian international development agency comprising a network of individuals and post-secondary institutions. WUSC’s mission is to foster human development and global understanding through education and training. WUSC implements projects in the Asia, Africa, the Americas, Central Europe and Canada with thematic focus on:

- *Education and health* - including basic and higher education, water and sanitation, and HIV/AIDS.
- *Sustainable livelihoods* - including vocational training and agriculture/rural development.
- *Governance* - including strengthening civil society, promoting human rights and peace- building.

WUSC has worked in Sri Lanka since 1989 and has provided employment orientated training to over 21,000 Sri Lankans. WUSC operates in 15 districts and carefully balances its project portfolio to provide benefits to all regions and major ethnic groups. WUSC presently implements five major projects across the island.

## **What is the PCP?**

WUSC began implementing the Plantation Communities Project in early 2001. The PCP works with multiple stakeholders, using participatory approaches to enhance the capacity of plantation resident communities to improve the quality of their work and domestic environments. With a strong focus on results-based programming, the project embraces a learning-by-doing approach, constantly fine-tuning strategies and approaches to empower estate residents and to improve the economic health of plantation industries. The over-arching goal of the project is to strengthen the plantation communities and to support programmes which promote economic activity, create jobs and provide basic social services for those whose unfulfilled aspirations might otherwise fuel conflict.

The PCP aims to reduce dependency by:

- building the capacity of the community to participate in socio-economic development
- increasing awareness of rights and opportunities
- improving labour relations
- supporting livelihood alternatives
- promoting inter-community cooperation and
- enhancing the economic prospects of plantation stakeholders.

The PCP promotes win-win solutions which address the needs of both the plantation companies and the plantation residents. Emphasis is placed on collaborative approaches which consider both rights and responsibilities of key stakeholders. Thus, for instance, when working in the area of Industrial Relations, WUSC encourages plantation companies to embrace more modern, participatory management styles and to invest in developing their workforce. WUSC also emphasises the need for workers to co-operate with management to identify solutions which will enhance productivity and profitability so that the company can, in turn, continue to improve work and home environments. Gender- equality is a cross-cutting theme in all PCP programming.

The Ministry of Nation Building and Estate Infrastructure Development has oversight of the PCP and works in partnership with various government departments supporting *Gama Negume* and other key government development initiatives.

## 4 Methodology

The Workers Perception Study (WPS) was conducted to determine worker's perceptions about their work and social environment and to identify their priorities for social development interventions that, in their view<sup>11</sup>, would most increase levels of satisfaction.

### 4.1 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Determine workers' level of satisfaction with their work and non-work environments on the estates.
- Determine workers' level of satisfaction with past interventions in their work and non-work environments on the estates.
- Determine workers' priorities for future interventions in their work and non-work environments on the estates that would increase their level of satisfaction in their daily lives.
- Use findings to generate specific recommendations to inform future investments in estate communities by the Government of Sri Lanka, plantation companies, Plantation Human Development Trust, donors, and other concerned organisations.

### 4.2 Methods and key activities

#### ***Definition of 'Work Environment' versus 'Non-Work Environment':***

In order to organise the components for the Workers' Perceptions Study, issues and solutions concerning workers' daily lives were divided into 'Work Environment' and 'Non-Work Environment'. For the purpose of the study, work environment was defined as the time from which the participant/respondent enters the field/factory/nursery to the time they leave the field/factory/nursery at the end of the day. In order to facilitate this, workers were asked to determine their working hours on the basis of this definition and these definitions were used during the focus group discussions and in the first section of the questionnaire.

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<sup>11</sup> It is important to stress that the WPS aimed at identifying workers' perceptions of development interventions, and thus study findings represent workers' opinions and priorities, which may or may not be tally with the views of other plantation stakeholders. In essence, the objective of the WPS was to identify "what matters most to workers" in order to provide investors, policy makers and other key stakeholders with clear information regarding estate workers' preferences and what they value most.

The study was conducted in three phases. Phase I consisted of collecting a base of qualitative information through focus group discussions. Phase II involved collecting quantitative data using a structured questionnaire. Phase III comprised analysis, reporting, and dissemination of findings. A brief description of each phase follows.

### ***Phase I – Focus Group Discussions***

Preliminary focus groups were held to determine the key questions and variables that needed to be evaluated to address the study objectives. Thus, all the principal questions and issues of the study were identified by estate workers themselves during the focus group discussions. The focus group discussions were facilitated by a WUSC staff member and a local consultant. Discussions were held on 6 of the 8 estates selected for the study. Four focus groups were held in each region; Up-Country, Mid-Country, and Low-Country. One male group and one female group discussion was held on each estate selected. A total of 118 workers participated in the 12 focus group discussions. Out of this number, 62 (52.5%) were men and 56 (47.5 %) were women. Focus group participants were selected randomly from respective work registers and logistics were coordinated with the assistance of estate staff. Table 1 summarises the breakdown of focus group discussion participants.

**Table 1: Number of Focus Group Participants by Region & Gender**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Up-Country	17	15	32
Mid-Country	19	17	36
Low-Country	26	24	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>118</b>

### ***Phase II – Profile of Survey Participants***

Phase Two of the study was conducted using a questionnaire administered by six trained research assistants under the supervision of a local consultant. The content of the questionnaire was developed on the basis of the results of Phase I of the study. The survey was piloted in March 2006 on one estate then carefully reviewed before it was used on a larger scale.

The research team consciously avoided the inclusion of questions which could be deemed 'union issues or prerogatives'. Labour relations on estates can be highly sensitive and political. It was vital to maintain

WUSC's apolitical stance. This strategic decision was taken to maximise the likelihood of all RPCs and unions approving the study, and to increase the likelihood that study findings and recommendations might be accepted, and ideally implemented by these key stakeholder groups. The logic of this decision appears to have been sound with strong interest shown in the WPS findings and recommendations by many RPCs and most major unions. One year on, WUSC has not received a single complaint or negative comment regarding the WPS from any of the many plantation unions.

Efforts were made to obtain a reasonable sample size of male and female workers across the Low, Mid and Up Country. The aim was to survey a significant number of workers to obtain a reliable and representative picture of workers' perceptions in all three strata.

Overall, 48.1% of respondents were male, and 51.9% of respondents were female. Efforts were also made to obtain an equal number of respondents from Up-Country, Mid-Country, and Low-Country. A total of 198 (34.4%) of respondents were from the Up-Country, 197 (34.2%) from the Mid-Country, and 181 (31.4%) were from the Low-Country.

Only full-time workers were interviewed. Welfare Staff, Health Staff, Office Staff, Managers and Field Officers were not eligible to participate as their perceptions and needs would vary greatly. Out of 576 respondents, 281 (48.8%) respondents were tea pluckers. The second most frequent type of work undertaken by respondents was rubber-tapping (17.7%). Sundry workers were the third most numerous type of respondent at 13.9%. Among those identified as 'other' type of workers were *Kanganies*, gardeners, night watchmen and sweepers.

Respondents were asked how many years they had been working on the estate. Study results showed that 41.4% of respondents had over 20 years of experience working on the estate. The average number of years worked on the estate by respondents was 16.7 years.

The average age of respondents was 38 years. The largest group of respondents (27.8%) were aged 30-39 years. The next most common age-bracket (26.4%) was for those 40-49 years old. Five respondents were aged 60 years and older and 8 respondents 19 years old or younger. The majority of respondents (80.6%) were married.

Some 57.9% of respondents came from households consisting of 3-5 members, with 34.8% coming from households with 6-9 members. The average household size of respondents was 6 people.

Sixty-six respondents (11.5%) reported that they had received no formal education whatsoever, whereas 47.4% of respondents had completed one to five years of schooling and 28.6% of respondents had completed between grades six and ten. Only 22 (or 3.8%) of respondents had completed 'O' levels.

Surveying began in late March 2006 and was completed in early May 2006. In total, research assistants spent 18 days researching on the estates and surveyed 576 workers.

**Table 2: List of estates surveyed**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Estate</b>	<b>Plantations</b>
Low-Country:	Ambadeniya	Kegalle
	Hunuwela	Kahawatte
Mid-Country:	Ferham	Maskeliya
	Barcaple	Kahawatte
	Imboolpittia	Kahawatte
Up-Country:	Sheen	Elpitiya
	Uda Radella	Kelani Valley
	Pedro	Kelani Valley

### ***Phase III – Analysis and Reporting***

The final phase of the study involved analysing and summarising the information collected and compiling it into a report for distribution. All information contained in the completed questionnaires was entered into a database and translated into English. A large final report and another shorter synopsis were prepared for distribution to interested stakeholders.<sup>12</sup>

#### **4.3 Dissemination of research findings & recommendations** ***Series of Presentation Workshops***

Between September 2006 and October 2007, a series of workshops was held to present and discuss the findings of the WPS. To facilitate better quality discussions, copies of the Workers' Perceptions Study Synopsis document were sent to all workshop participants a couple of weeks before each workshop. A PowerPoint presentation summarising the key

<sup>12</sup> The synopsis was later translated into Tamil language and several hundred copies were distributed among plantation stakeholders.

facets of the WPS approach, findings and recommendations was prepared and presented at most workshops. This was followed by a discussion of findings and recommendations, clarification of findings, and occasionally, correction of minor errors in the reports. The following workshops and discussions were held:

**Table 3: Workshops and Presentations of WPS Findings & Recommendations**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Participants</b>
1	Sept 2006	Colombo	GoSL reps, union leaders, RPC CEOs, PHDT, I/NGO reps
2	Sept 2006	Nuwara Eliya	Estate Managers, union leaders, PHDT, I/NGO reps
3	Oct 2006	Nawalapitiya	Kahawatte Plantations (KWPL) executives, KWPL Up-Country Managers and Assistant Managers
4	Nov 2006	Ratnapura	Kahawatte Plantations (KWPL) executives, all KWPL Up- and Low-Country Managers and Assistant Managers, PHDT, MJF Foundation Coordinator
5	Early 2007	Dunsinane Estate, Pundaluoya	DGM Elpitiya Plantations, estate staff, workers, union leaders
6	Early 2007 (3 events)	Barcaple Estate, Kataboola	Estate Manager, estate staff, workers, union leaders
7	July 2007	EFC, Colombo	Director General of Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC), select group of RPC CEOs
8	Aug 2007	Hatton	Up-Country NGOs
9	Aug 2007	EFC, Colombo	Director General of EFC, CEOs from 21 RPCs
10	Sep-Oct 2007	Participating PCP estates	Main and Divisional Committees of Estate Workers Housing Cooperative Societies (EWHCSs) on 9 up-Country estates

In addition to these formal presentations, the WPS Synopsis was also shared with the:

- Steering Committee of the National Plan of Action (NPA) or Social Development of the Estate Sector (under the Ministry of Nation Building & Estate Infrastructure Development);
- Chairman of the PHDT; and
- 54 Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) groups active on nine Up-Country estates participating in the PCP.

## **5 Study Findings and Impacts**

The Workers' Perceptions Study generated a number of very interesting and sometimes surprising findings. The recommendations were developed on the basis of careful examination of the findings yielded by the questionnaire, but also were informed by information gleaned during focus group discussions and WUSC's best professional judgment on the issues. This paper concentrates on how research effectively employed can influence policy-makers and development practitioners, and ultimately effect positive change. Therefore, only a brief overview of the WPS recommendations will be provided here. A total of 16 recommendations were identified to help improve the Work Environment on estates, with a further 20 recommendations generated to help enhance the Non-Work Environment on estates.

The recommendations concerning the estate Work Environment addressed the following broad topics:

- Profitability
- Worker Dignity & Professionalism
- Progressive Management Practices
- Worker Wages

Recommendations related to the estate Non-Work Environment fell under the following broad topics:

- Housing
- Community Infrastructure & Services
- Community Health
- Education
- Income Supplementation



A complete presentation of WPS findings may be found in the **Workers' Perceptions Study Findings and Recommendations** report (WUSC 2006a) available from WUSC upon request. Alternatively, a brief summary of WPS findings and recommendations may be found in the **Workers' Perceptions Study Synopsis** (WUSC 2006b), which is also available upon request. The Synopsis is also available in a version in the Tamil language.

## **5.1 Influence and preliminary impact of the research**

### ***Broad impact with Kahawatte Plantations***

Kahawatte Plantations Pvt. Limited (KWPL) is one of 10 RPCs participating in the Plantation Communities Project. Kahawatte's Directors provided useful advice on how to improve the design of the WPS and also reviewed and commented on the WPS findings and recommendations before the WPS report was finalised. As a company committed to improving levels of profitability while simultaneously improving the quality of life of its employees, KWPL seized the opportunity to carefully study the WPS recommendations. KWPL executives requested WUSC to conduct two workshops to present and discuss WPS findings with KWPL's management team from all 17 Low- and Up-Country estates. During the workshop held in Ratnapura in November 2006, KWPL executives and estate management teams analysed the 36 WPS recommendations to identify which recommendations could yield significant economic and social benefits over a short period of time and with only a low or moderate level of investment – that is, which recommendations, if implemented, could provide the greatest joint benefits for the least cost.

In response to the recommendations, during the meeting, KWPL adopted the following practices company-wide with immediate effect:

1. Estate Managers will meet and discuss with Medical/Welfare teams every two months and get them more actively involved in improving relationships to enhance Quality of Life and Quality of Work Life.
2. Monthly "Allowance Tea" will be labelled as such and packed in an attractive polythene bag with a notation that it is "not for sale". It will never be referred to as "Labour Dust"<sup>13</sup>. As a sign of respect

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<sup>13</sup> KWPL executives and managers claim that their company has never referred to 'Allowance Tea' as 'Labour Dust', nor distributed 'refused tea' to workers. Despite this fact, the term 'Labour Dust' is commonly heard in the plantation sector, with many workers (perhaps erroneously) believing that their monthly tea allowance consists of refused tea dust.

for the workers, and to ensure that they are familiar with a good quality final product, the quality of tea provided will improved.

3. Estate Management will clearly inform workers of the daily plucking norms (which vary from field to field and are dependent on weather conditions) and pay for extra kilos harvested on the basis of the norm adopted.
4. Estate and company-level production, sales and other financial information will be publicly shared with workers.
5. WUSC will work with KWPL to find practical solutions for short-term leave for women workers who sometimes have health and hygiene-related concerns to look after.
6. WUSC will work with KWPL to provide gender sensitivity training for workers, *kanganies*, field staff and Assistant Managers.
7. All Assistant Managers will be required to pass a NIPM (Tamil) language proficiency examination within two years of assuming duty.

In addition to the recommendations and related measures adopted company-wide, each of KWPL's 17 estate management teams prioritised and adopted 2-3 WPS recommendations to improve "work environment" and 2-3 recommendations to improve the "non-work environment" for immediate implementation. A sample of some of the WPS recommendations adopted by Low- and Up-Country Estate Management Teams includes the following:

**Work Environment:**

- Industry-related skills training for workers
- Participation of workers in estate-management
- Improving the condition of tea & rubber fields
- Staff performance and achievement awards
- OH&S training and equipment/first aid training
- Sharing information on tea/rubber processing and profitability to workers
- Provision of ambulance services

**Non-Work Environment:**

- Construction of individual houses for families
- Construction of a multi-purpose community centre
- Improvements to estate roads & paths
- Upgrading existing water & sanitation facilities
- Improving quality of postal services
- Increased worker access to Estate Medical Staff
- Industry-related job training & work opportunities for estate youth
- Transportation to school for children

Implementation progress and the impact of these measures is being formally evaluated by KWPL Management. KWPL's Executive Deputy Chairman, Director of Plantations and Estate Managers have confirmed that these measures have brought about 'a paradigm shift in the workers' way of thinking – a highly visible impact in a surprisingly short amount of time'<sup>14</sup> on many KWPL estates – particularly Up-Country estates. Specifically, the following positive changes in labour and gender relations (both key aspects of WUSC's poverty-reduction strategies) have been noted by KWPL managers:

**Improved Labour Relations:**

- Workers now understand that their economic and social welfare is directly linked to the estate's profitability and that they need to be part of the solutions.
- 'Labour Day' discussions have become less confrontational
- The Partners in Progress approach is taking hold with communication between Managers and Workers significantly improved
- Evidence of strengthened participatory management practices, e.g. Managers are holding formal meetings with pluckers and submitting meeting minutes to head office
- A Participatory Management Team (PMT) has been formed and is meeting regularly on each estate. Managers preside over the monthly meetings. Proper records are maintained with minutes sent to Colombo each month. The PMT comprises representatives

<sup>14</sup> Comments made by KWPL Executive Deputy Chairman following a monitoring visit to KWPL Up-Country estates in September 2007.

from each division (3 females, 2 males). Staff members do not attend the PMT meetings – only workers.

- Female workers report that treatment of women workers by male supervisors has improved (less workplace harassment, less use of offensive language, better rapport).

### ***Impact with Elpitiya Plantations***

In response to the WPS findings and recommendations, Elpitiya Plantations Pvt. Ltd. (EPL), requested WUSC-PCP to facilitate a Partners in Progress Workshop to promote a more participatory style of estate management. Though less dramatic than the impacts noted on Kahawatte Plantation estates, a number of immediate positive impacts have been noted by estate workers and management, among them:

- workers feel that management has listened to their opinions and noted their priorities for improving the quality of the work and non-work environments
- cooperation between trade union leaders has improved
- Management-Worker rapport has improved with a more cooperative, solutions-oriented approach to labour relations seen.

### ***Impact on other plantation stakeholders:***

#### ***Employers Federation of Ceylon Collective Agreement Task Group***

To facilitate a smoother and collective bargaining process, the Employers Federation of Ceylon's Collective Agreement Task Group, which comprises 21 regional plantation company chief executive officers, requested WUSC-PCP to present the findings and recommendations of the Workers' Perceptions Study. This allowed WUSC to orientate the heads of all 21 RPCs, who manage a workforce of some 200,000 workers, to the perceptions and priorities of plantation workers.

### ***GoSL – National Plan of Action for Social Development in Estate Sector:***

In June 2006, WUSC shared a copy of the draft version of the ***Workers' Perceptions Study Findings and Recommendations*** with the steering committee for the GoSL's National Plan of Action (NPA) for Social Development in the Estate Sector. The NPA, which is currently being finalised with related administrative systems being put into place, will

provide 104 billion rupees of funding to support eight major programmes between 2007–2015. A number of the WPS recommendations were subsequently included in the NPA draft. This included:

- inclusion of occupational health & safety equipment and provision of safety equipment to improve worker welfare
- emphasis on the importance of vocational training to help families develop more diversified, resilient livelihood portfolios
- the importance of providing reliable, modern postal services to estate communities.

Should the NPA be rolled-out as planned implementation of these initiatives could have significant impact across 430 RPC-managed estates and their 1,000,000 residents.

## 6 Lessons Learned

### 6.1 What did we get right? Strengths of the WPS efforts

The Workers' Perceptions Study was intended to provide useful information on workers' perceptions to guide future social development investments in the plantation sector. To a great extent, the Study objectives were achieved with a body of useful, accessible findings generated. What the WPS design team never imagined however, was that the Study would generate as much interest and short-term impact as it has. This has been an unanticipated, but most welcome and constructive impact of the Study. While no research undertaking is ever flawless, the WPS design team did get a number of things right. Some of the principal strengths underpinning the WPS included the following:

1. **Multi-stakeholder Approach:** the WUSC team involved the RPCs, PHDT and estates participating in the Study from the design stage onward, with transparency and professionalism emphasised at all stages. This significantly improved both the quality and ultimately, the acceptability of the study.
2. **Non-inclusion of issues which could be viewed as "union concerns or prerogatives":** although some of these issues ultimately surfaced during focus group discussions, the decision not to target such issues directly avoided unwanted controversies or resistance from unions and RPCs and allowed the Study to move forward.

3. **Definition of key issues based on focus group concerns:** the development of the questionnaire on the basis of key issues and themes identified by the focus groups ensured that the questionnaire was relevant and minimised investigator bias and influence on the study design.
4. **Careful selection, training and monitoring of Research Field Assistants:** as with any study, efforts to maximise the quality, reliability and consistency of the field survey team was a critical aspect of the Study.
5. **Sufficient sample size and stratification:** the inclusion of male and female workers from 8 estates, coming from three distinct agro-ecological zones, and the large survey sample of 576 workers, heightened the relevance and perceived reliability of the WPS findings and recommendations among key stakeholders. Study findings were also viewed as fairly 'generalisable'.
6. **Broad dissemination of findings to multiple stakeholders:** WUSC employed a multi-pronged approach to disseminate the WPS findings and recommendations to various stakeholder groups. The use of major presentation workshops, small-group discussions and the availability of the WPS Synopsis in English and Tamil have all helped to communicate WPS findings widely.

## 6.2 What could we have done better?

Naturally, there are a number of things that we would change if we were designing the WPS today, this includes:

1. **Inclusion of more rubber estates:** the majority of WPS respondents were tea-sector workers. Given their distinct issues and priorities, it would have been useful to have surveyed a larger number of rubber workers.
2. **Inclusion of some JEDB and SLSPC estates:** a number of observers have stated that JEDB and SLSPC face some of the most difficult economic and social challenges among the RPCs. In light of this assertion, it would have been interesting and likely very useful to have included respondents from JEDB and SLSPC estates.
3. **Inclusion of a larger proportion of young workers and youth:** since estate youth and those under 30 will play a major role in defining the economic and social future of the estates, it might have been useful to have included a larger proportion of

young workers, or alternatively, to have held youth-only focus group discussions to obtain more insight into their views and priorities.

- 4. *Involvement of Plantation Ministries and a few more company executives:*** Had the research team foreseen the strong interest and impact that the WPS would garner, we would have invested a bit more time in engaging decision-makers during the study design phase which might have further enhanced the focus, and ultimately, the impact of the study.

## **7 Conclusions and Next Steps**

While the WPS has already had considerable impact in the plantation sector, scope remains to promote more positive change based on the WPS findings and recommendations. WUSC will continue efforts to extend and magnify the benefits yielded by the Study to-date. Specifically, this will include:

- ***Continued efforts to promote attention to WPS recommendations among all interested regional plantation companies:*** to this end, WUSC will conduct presentation/discussion workshops with any interested companies and their estate management teams.
- ***Continue to work with the PHDT to encourage programming which addresses relevant recommendations:*** the PHDT is constantly updating itself and striving to make its services more relevant and effective. WUSC will continue to encourage the PHDT to consider and integrate WPS recommendations when designing their far-reaching set of programmes.
- ***Assist KWPL in designing a 'Managers' Perceptions Study' (MPS):*** Kahawatte Plantations has requested WUSC-PCP to provide advice on how to design and conduct a study of Managers' Perceptions. KWPL wishes to use the findings from the proposed MPS to develop their corporate work plan for 2008. WUSC-PCP will provide preliminary technical advice and guidance to enable KWPL to conduct an accurate and reliable study. THE MPS results should generate additional useful information from this important stakeholder group in the plantation sector.

## **Acronyms**

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CEPA	Centre for Poverty Analysis
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
EFC	Employers' Federation of Ceylon
EPL	Elpitiya Plantations Ltd. Pvt.
EWHCS	Estate Workers Housing Cooperative Society
GoSL	Government of Sri Lanka
HACCP	Hazards Analysis and Critical Control Point
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunovirus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
JEDB	Janatha Estate Development Board
KWPL	Kahawatte Plantations Ltd. Pvt.
MJF	Merrill J. Fernando (Foundation)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIPM	National Institute of Plantation Management
NPA	National Plan of Action
NWG	Neighbourhood Women's Group
OHS	Occupational Health & Safety
PHDT	Plantation Human Development Trust
PMT	Participatory Management Teams
RPC	Regional Plantation Company
SLSPC	Sri Lanka State Plantations Corporation
WPS	Workers' Perception Study
WUSC	World University Service of Canada

## **Explanation of Terms**

Kangani	field supervisor on an estate
Grama Niladhari	GoSL village officer
Gama Negume	GoSL's village development strategy



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# Financial Literacy as a Tool for Poverty Reduction in Nigeria

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## 1 Background and Context

This paper documents the experiences and insights gained from the implementation of the Financial Literacy for Small and Micro Enterprises Project ("the FinLit Project")<sup>1</sup>.

Although there has been an increasing interest in financial literacy education in many countries, the main policy focus in Nigeria relating to microfinancing has been on its formalisation. Formal microfinancing is the establishment of financial institutions for individuals or groups who would have traditionally met their financial needs through informal, self-help arrangements.

This drive for the market at the bottom of the financial pyramid mirrors a global trend, which began in 1976 with the pioneering model of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh. Initially, the providers of formal micro-finance were entirely government-owned and funded as in the case of the People's Bank of Nigeria (PBN) and the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP), which began operations in 1989 and 1997 respectively<sup>2</sup>.

With the introduction of community banks in 1990, formal microfinance provision began its shift from the public to the private sector. It is estimated by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) that 65% of the economically active poor are un-served or under-served by the mainstream commercial banks<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> This 18-month Project, which is being implemented by Development Initiatives Network (DIN) with financial support from the Ford Foundation, commenced in September 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Both the PBN and FEAP co-existed without any streamlining of their operations until 2000 when they were merged with the Nigerian Agricultural Credit Bank to form the Nigerian Agricultural Cooperative and Rural Development Bank.

<sup>3</sup> The expression "economically active poor" is commonly used in policy reports and instruments in Nigeria without being defined. It can be taken to mean "underprivileged Nigerians who are involved in legitimate economic activities in both urban and rural areas and who cannot normally benefit from the services of the orthodox banking system due to their inability to provide collateral security" (see for example, People's Bank Act, Cap. P7, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria)

Nevertheless, two decades after the segmentation of financial services, the Nigerian population of 140 million has only one financial institution for every 32,700 inhabitants (CBN 2005:6). In the rural areas, it is 1:57,000 with the result that less than 2% of rural households have access to financial services.

It is against this background that the Federal Government introduced a National Microfinance Policy (NMP) in December 2005. The NMP signposts a radical departure from the localised unit-bank approach pioneered under community banking. Emphasising the need for adequately capitalised, private-sector institutions that can either operate as unit banks serving specific communities or State-wide banks serving a cluster of communities, the NMP aims to bring quickly to full maturity the provision of formal microfinance through the new microfinance banks (MFBs)<sup>4</sup>. These are regulated, shareholder-owned corporatised entities offering a diversified range of financial services including microcredits, savings, deposits and money transfers (Fajemirokun 2007). The Federal Government's expectation is that with the full implementation of the NMP, microfinance transactions will be mainly channelled through the MFBs and not through informal arrangements as is the current practice. The government also expects that the share of microcredit as a percentage of total credit in the national economy will rise to at least 20% by 2010. In 2005, it was 0.9%.

In the light of a policy and regulatory environment that is essentially focused on supply-side operational challenges and issues, the FinLit Project is a communications-led intervention aimed at closing demand-side knowledge gaps primarily through the provision of financial literacy education. The Project extends to policy, influencing through actions that sensitise policy makers to demand-side priorities about access to finance for micro and small businesses (see Table 1). Therefore, this paper includes a brief account of the policy engagements that have been embarked upon as the Project has evolved.

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<sup>4</sup> The CBN has estimated that the few specialised, credit-only, membership-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have only been able to serve less than one million. In contrast, Bangladesh with the same population of 140 million as Nigeria has at least 18 million microfinance borrowers.

**Table 1: Classification of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**

Agency	Employment-Based Classification			Assets-Based Classification (excluding real estate) Nigerian Naira (N) <sup>5</sup>		
	Micro	Small	Medium	Micro	Small	Medium
Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN)	Less than 10 employees	10-49 employees	50-199 employees	Less than N5 million	N5-49 million	N50-499 million

Source: SMEDAN 2007: 12

## 2 Implementation Plan

The term financial literacy education describes any communications activity that will enable the target group to make informed decisions that can improve financial well being and security. The Development Initiatives Network's (DIN) interest in this field is linked to the Poverty to Economic Justice Research Project, which analysed the extent to which there have been country-level policies, laws and actions to secure economic rights in Nigeria<sup>6</sup>. In the most fundamental sense, economic rights are legal entitlements, which promote and protect participation in economic activities. They are the foundation for economic empowerment and by reference to international treaties such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, they include but are not limited to the right to:

- education;
- work;
- promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service;
- equal remuneration and equal treatment for work of equal value;
- social security;
- protection of health and safety in working conditions;
- bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;
- conclude contracts and administer property;
- adequate standard of living including adequate food, clothing and housing

<sup>5</sup> As at 1 November 2007, N1 exchanged for USD\$120.88, see further <http://www.cenbank.org>.

<sup>6</sup> This research was carried out by DIN from 2004-2005 with the financial support of the Ford Foundation.

- the continuous improvement of living conditions.

DIN's report concluded that some of these economic rights are not expressly guaranteed or enforceable in Nigeria and there is no social security system, which mandates the State to protect vulnerable groups such as the poor. Therefore, governmental and non-governmental actions aimed at reducing poverty are of crucial importance and these must necessarily extend to widening access to financial services.

However, the results of the Lagos Metro Survey<sup>7</sup>, which was carried out as part of the Poverty to Economic Justice Research Project, indicated that access to financial services is constrained by the limited availability of or physical accessibility to formal financial institutions and the affordability of their products. Other constraints are poor financial planning and money-management skills and a general lack of understanding of the structure and operations of financial institutions. Typically, many poverty-reduction programmes in Nigeria concentrate on the health, agriculture, education and housing sectors; target beneficiaries are provided with new or upgraded infrastructure, affordable housing, subsidised healthcare, vocational training or access to land or farming inputs such as fertilisers.

Improving financial literacy has not been a priority either in relation to the general population or the poor in particular. The overall tenor and express terms of NMP make it clear that it is an instrument mainly intended to ensure that the MFBs are run by competent management with good corporate governance, adequate capitalisation and strong internal as well as operational controls. For this reason, its treatment of demand-side issues is of a peripheral nature and relates to the protection of customers' deposits and public disclosure and reporting requirements for the MFBs. This is also a strong pointer to the weakness of the consumer protection movement in Nigeria.

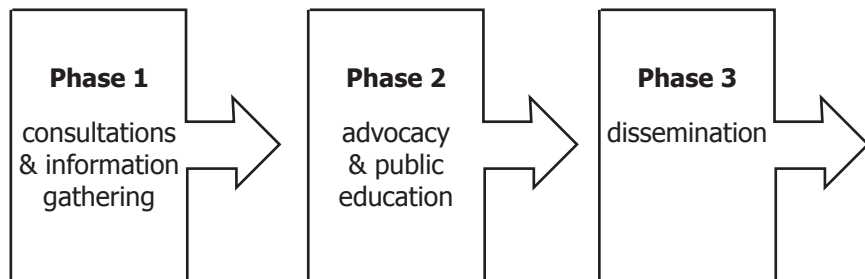
The ultimate success of the NMP will depend on the extent to which there is a strong uptake of the products and services of the MFBs. This requires sustained efforts to deliver practical information about their operations and services to the promoters and owners of micro and small businesses who are more familiar with informal financing arrangements. Therefore, the FinLit Project has been conceived to improve their capacities so

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<sup>7</sup> This was a gender-focused random survey that was carried out in 24 districts in the Lagos metro area between March and June 2004. It involved 150 respondents and it sampled opinion about poverty reduction policies and programmes and financial planning practices. 81.3% (122) of the respondents were female and 18.7% (28) were male. Age categories reflected economically active groups with a ceiling of 60 years.

that they can benefit from the opportunities presented by MFBs and in this way promote efficiencies in business planning and practices. In its implementation, the Project has adopted a phased approach of consultations and information gathering (phase 1); advocacy and public education (phase 2); and dissemination (phase 3) (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: FinLit Project Implementation Plan**



**Phase 1 (consultations & information gathering):**

Purpose: To evaluate awareness especially among micro and small entrepreneurs of the emergence of MFBs and their expectations on formal microfinance provision. Also, harvest ideas for the development of information toolkits and training resources, from these classes of entrepreneurs in the major commercial hubs.

**Phase 2 (advocacy & public education):**

Purpose: To provide informal, interactive learning programmes for micro and small entrepreneurs with the involvement of MFBs and produce information and training resources, for example, action sheets (checklists), helpful tips and information guidelines. Also, to carry out advocacy work so as to bring demand-side priorities relating to access to finance to the attention of policy makers.

**Phase 3 (dissemination):**

Purpose: To organize meetings including media briefings and to report findings and distribute information resources.

## ***Communicating with Communities***

The communications actions of the FinLit Project have been shaped by various factors:

- its national scope;
- its focus on entrepreneurs with poor literacy and IT skills, specifically, artisans, market traders and small-scale agricultural producers;
- and the need to avoid or minimize disruptions to income generation activities.

A major concern was that because the Project emphasised the informal sector, there would be a dearth of accurate and up-to-date directories or databases about sector entrepreneurs and their unregistered trade groups and professional associations. This was addressed by exploring other means of obtaining useful information.

For example, since the municipalities, which are known as Local Governments, have exclusive responsibility for the establishment and supervision of markets, liaising with municipal officers who are in charge of local markets was an obvious starting point. This proved to be highly productive on two fronts. First, in creating goodwill and municipal support for the Project and secondly, in tapping into local networks and gaining introductions to key actors responsible for governing the markets.

This strategy was repeated with State Ministries such as those responsible for agriculture, cooperatives, rural development or poverty alleviation. In this way, it was possible to:

- identify credible individuals and groups to partner;
- ensure adequate political and community support for the Project;
- and utilise the most suitable communications platform depending on the needs and skills of the target group<sup>8</sup>.

### **3 Zonal Consultations<sup>9</sup>**

The zonal consultations were carried out in the following zonal centres:

- Lagos (the nation's commercial capital);
- Abuja, (the federal capital);

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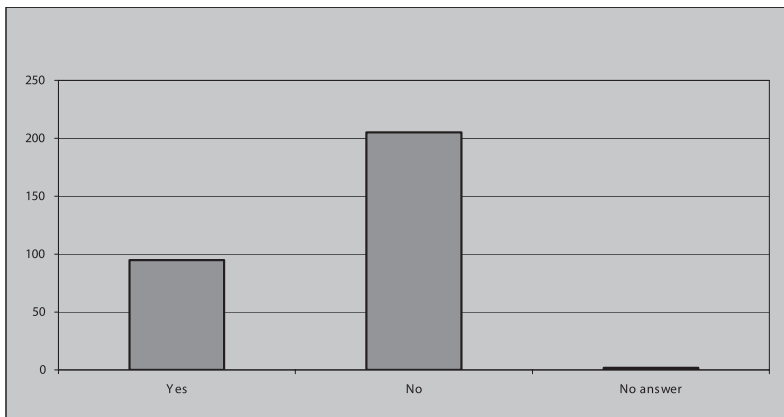
<sup>8</sup> The communications platforms utilized were zonal consultations; participation in MSME trade fairs and exhibitions; active learning programmes (ALPs); training materials production and distribution; and policy engagements.

<sup>9</sup> This was carried by DIN out between November 2006 and March 2007.

- Ibadan (South West Zone);
- Aba (South East Zone);
- Calabar (South South Zone);
- Makurdi (North Central Zone);
- Ilorin (North Central Zone);
- Kano (North West Zone).

These are commercial hubs serving more than one state. Through the random administration of survey questionnaires and the use of one-to-one interviews and enquiry forms, the Project was introduced to various

**Figure 2: Awareness of NMP**

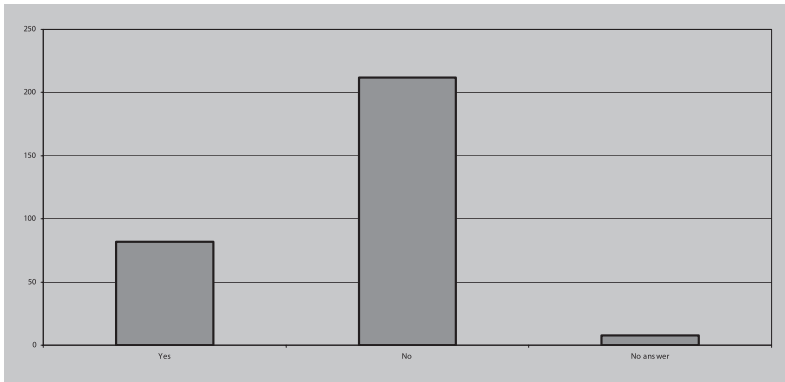


The survey responses similarly confirmed the low awareness of the emergence of MFBS; 212 respondents (70%) were unaware of their emergence, 82 (27%) were aware and with 8 (3%) did not respond (see Figure 3). However, there was a strong interest in using the MFBS; 235 respondents (78%) said they were willing to do so<sup>10</sup>. This was highly encouraging in the light of the fact that when they were asked about their current practices in raising finance for their businesses, 58 respondents (27%) stated that they relied on borrowings from friends or family, 120 (52%) used their savings and only 20 (7%) had approached formal financial institutions.

<sup>10</sup> 37 respondents (12%) were not interested in opening accounts with MFBS and 30 respondents (10%) did not answer the question.



**Figure 3: Awareness of MFBs**



In addition to the survey, 53 one-to-one interviews with key informants in the government sector, community banks and NGO-microfinance institutions (NGO-MFIs)<sup>11</sup> were carried out and 288 enquiry forms were completed and returned to DIN.

### ***Participation in MSME Trade Fairs and Exhibitions***

Trade fairs and exhibitions for micro and small entrepreneurs formed another communications platform. These events tend to have high entrepreneur participation rates because they do not usually require the payment of entry fees and are heavily advertised in both the press and electronic media. They presented a captive market for the Project's information-gathering through the use of surveys, interviews, enquiry forms and informal discussions<sup>12</sup>. It was extremely useful to have a presence, by way of a fully-staffed exhibition stand, and to further raise the public profile of the Project, by organising a public lecture entitled "Financial Literacy for MSMEs" in the wings of one of the major MSME Trade Fairs<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Under the NMP, NGO-MFIs can continue in business provided they remain membership-based, credit-only institutions and they do not mobilize deposits from the general public.

<sup>12</sup> These were SMEDAN's SME Opportunities Fair at Ikeja, Lagos State, in October-November 2006 and the Odua Chamber of Commerce Fair on Agriculture, Agro-Industries and Food Products at Ibadan, Oyo State in December 2006.

<sup>13</sup> This was at the SME Opportunities Fair and the lecture was presented by Mrs Toki Mabogunje, Zonal Vice President South West, Nigerian Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (NASME). The presentation can be downloaded from the "download section" at <http://www.smedan.gov.ng>.

## **Active Learning Programmes (ALPs)**

The Active Learning Programmes (ALPs) are informal and interactive events organised in community spaces such as markets and local halls. To reduce disruption of business to the barest minimum and to encourage high levels of participation the events take place during periods set aside for regular meetings of trade groups or professional associations. The ALPs basically provide a supportive environment in which exchanges and discussions are peer-led. For this reason, the participants are responsible for agenda-setting.

The subjects that have been covered so far have included:

- affordability of MFB products and services;
- investment opportunities;
- lending practices and criteria particularly the calculation of interest rate on borrowings; disclosures on interest rates and bank charges;
- complaints procedures.

The ALPs are anchored in the high levels of organisations by recruiting micro and small entrepreneurs who are members of trade groups and other professional associations. These are influential at the grassroots level and include Market Associations and Artisans Associations. With each of the ALPs, formal requests were submitted to Association executives and it was only after approval had been given that they could take place<sup>14</sup>. A total of 252 micro and small entrepreneurs participated in the ALPs.

An emerging issue in the financial services sector in Nigeria is the legal protection of those who engage in electronic or cashless forms of payments. This is a sector that has witnessed explosive growth and according to CBN, in 2006, electronic payments in terms of volume and value amounted to 13 million and N86.2 billion respectively. This is a significant increase from the 12.1 million and N63.2 billion of 2005 (CBN 2007: 33-34). Automatic teller machines (ATMs) had the largest share of electronic payments at 93% in volume and 73.4% in value in 2006<sup>15</sup>. This corresponded to 12.1 million in volume and N63.2 billion in value. This was followed by internet banking at 222,210 in volume and N3 billion in value and mobile banking at 40,733 in volume and 97.5 million in value. For many MFBs, embracing electronic banking will be vital to scaling up their operations and remaining competitive in a financial services sector that is now fully deregulated.

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<sup>14</sup> Three leading MFBs, MIC MFB, Wizetrade MFB and Susu MFB, collaborated with DIN in the facilitation of the ALPs.

<sup>15</sup> In 2005, there were 425 ATMs nationwide but by 2006, the figure had risen to 776.

Therefore, as electronic banking products are introduced, MFB customers will need to have a clear understanding of their legal entitlements and scope of legal protections, for example, in relation to unauthorised use of electronic cards or mistakes in statements of accounts. These are issues, which the ALPs can highlight and raise awareness of with a view to strengthening advocacy for reforms in banking practice or voluntary codes of conduct for MFBs.

### ***Training Materials Development and Production***

While the ALPs cater for entrepreneurs who do not have strong literacy skills, the FinLit toolkit and training guidelines are meant to address the information needs of entrepreneurs who do not have such handicaps and who have basic computer and IT skills<sup>16</sup>. The toolkit and training guidelines will be regularly updated and made available as web resources.

#### **Summary of ALPs**

##### **December 2006 – June 2007**

December 2006:

National Association of Traders and Market Leaders of Nigeria (NATMALC), Ikorodu Chapter, at Ikorodu Central Mosque Hall

**Partner MFB: MIC MFB.**

No. of registered participants: **73**

February 2007:

Ijede Community Traders Association at Ijede Town Hall

**Partner MFB: Wizetrade MFB**

No. of registered participants: **54**

May 2007:

Small and Medium Enterprises (SME)/Wizetrade Interactive Forum at DIN's Seminar Room

**Partner MFB: Wizetrade MFB**

No. of registered participants: **24**

Mile 12 Market Traders Association at the largest food produce market in Lagos, Mile 12 Market Hall

**Partner MFB: Susu MFB**

No. of registered participants: **47**

June 2007:

Badagry Market Traders Association and the All National Traders and Artisans Association (ANTATA) at Badagry Town Hall

**Partner MFB: Wizetrade MFB**

No. of registered participants: **54**

<sup>16</sup> See the suggested financial literacy training guidelines, Appendix 1.

## 4 Policy Engagements and Influencing

The FinLit Project initially focused on targeting the potential customers of the MFBs. But as the Project has evolved, it has become clear that policy engagements to complement the Project's public education and training components are equally needed. At the national level, two key institutions have been targeted. These are the CBN, which supervises the implementation of the NMP and SMEDAN, which was established in 2003 and is the government institution responsible for the promotion and development of MSMEs.

Although, the NMP does not set a timetable for carrying out reviews, it provides that its provisions shall be "subject to review from time to time at the discretion of the regulatory authorities"<sup>17</sup>. Because the NMP was only recently introduced it has yet to come up for review. Nonetheless, the absence of a formal review process has not precluded informal meetings with key policy bodies. In fact, this form of engagement should be used to place evidence-based work originating from the non-governmental sector in public policy circles since government officials will not normally look for this type of output<sup>18</sup>. Another effective method of policy engagement is participation in the consultation processes on draft government policies. In the case of the FinLit Project, this happened with the draft National Policy on MSMEs. The Policy was finally adopted on 9 May 2007 by the Federal Government. Zonal conferences had previously taken place in various locations, one of which was Ikeja, Lagos, in February 2007. DIN used this opportunity to make submissions relating to access to financial literacy programmes. Significantly, by the express terms of the National Policy on MSMEs, SMEDAN is required to conduct seminars, conferences, workshops and interactive sessions for the capacity-building of MSMEs and to undertake training programmes for improving the financial management skills of MSMEs.

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<sup>17</sup> In contrast, the National Policy on MSMEs specifies that it should be reviewed within five years of its implementation.

<sup>18</sup> DIN held two informal meetings with officials in the CBN's Other Financial Institutions Department (OFID) for the purposes of introducing the FinLit Project, discussing actions undertaken and recommendations for widening access to financial literacy education.

## 5 Challenges Experienced

The major challenges experienced were:

- (i) Some of the entrepreneurs were suspicious because they believed that the zonal consultations had been initiated by Government or fiscal agencies. As a result, they refused to participate in the surveys.
- (ii) Some Government officials were reluctant or refused to take part in the interviews. The main reason given was the lack of authorisation from superiors.
- (iii) Because of limited resources and time, the surveys had to be concentrated on the densely populated central districts in the selected zonal centres rather than the peri-urban or outlying districts.
- (iv) Some of the entrepreneurs could not read or write in English, which is Nigeria's official language and the language of business. This necessitated the use of translators if the field researcher was not fluent in the local language.
- (v) Sampled entrepreneurs showed a lack of awareness of the introduction of the NMP and the conversion of community banks to MFBs. Only 31% were aware of the Policy compared to 68% who were not aware. This meant that field researchers had to explain the NMP's goals and strategies before the survey questionnaires could be administered. This was time-consuming.
- (vi) CBN had, at the time of the survey, only granted approval to less than 20 institutions to operate as MFBs and most of these were situated in Lagos (CBN 2007: 31)<sup>19</sup>. For this reason, organising ALPs in the zonal centres outside the Lagos area was not feasible.
- (vii) Many of the community bank staff interviewed could only describe in vague terms their banks' transitional arrangements. These community banks appeared ill-prepared for conversion to MFBs as they lacked any information guides or brochures, whether in English or in any of the local languages, to guide their customers or other members of the public.

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<sup>19</sup> In 2006, although the CBN received 185 applications for MFB licenses and 81 community banks submitted their conversion plans, only seven final MFB licenses and nine approvals-in-principle to operate as MFBs were granted. In addition, four provisional approvals to convert to MFBs were issued.

## **6 Lessons**

How can communities better benefit from access to research and information? The starting point is to ensure that the research or information itself is relevant and addresses community needs and concerns. In the case of the FinLit Project, its conception and implementation plan was determined by the results of evidence-based work on realising economic rights.

Secondly, community networks, structures or events, should be used, wherever possible as communications platforms; this helps to engender local interest and acceptance and the effective delivery of the research or information.

Thirdly, it is necessary to take into account the skill level of intended beneficiaries whether in terms of literacy, numeracy, IT capability or languages. In other words, the choice of communications platform must be fit for purpose as this will help to maximise impact.

Lastly, it is important to establish broad-based political and community support for the communications actions. This can be achieved through engagements with the public (governmental), private and civil society sectors whether at informal meetings or consultations or within the context of public hearings and other policy consultation processes.

## **7 Concluding Remarks**

It is clear that a significant number of Nigerian community banks will not be able to convert to MFBs because they are unable to satisfy the new capital requirements. In addition, new investors are not likely to be able to take the place of all the community banks that will formally exit from the sector. At present, mainstream commercial banks can offer microfinance products and services without having to establish separate MFB subsidiaries. The upshot is that competition among the MFBs will intensify as well as competition across financial segments.

With the anticipated explosive growth of electronic or cashless banking, MFBs are likely to embrace electronic platforms in order to cut operating costs and bridge the physical divide from their customers.

All of these developments present opportunities to initiate and support financial literacy education projects and programmes. Consequently,

the CBN, MFIs, SMEDAN, business development organizations including NASME and the National Association for Small Scale Industries (NASSI), NGO-MFIs and NGOs, need to prioritize financial literacy education. It should be regarded as an integral element of economic empowerment and poverty reduction and as other countries have realised in recent times, a holistic approach requires the launch of a national policy or training programmes nationwide with the focus on all consumers of financial services. This is an issue for the CBN to lead on and coordinate given the limits of SMEDAN's operational mission and mandate.

## **Acronyms**

ALPs	Active Learning Programmes
CBN	Central Bank of Nigeria
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
DIN	Development Initiatives Network
FEAP	Family Economic Advancement Programme
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
MFBs	Microfinance banks
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NGO-MFIs	NGO-microfinance institutions
NMP	National Microfinance Policy
PBN	People's Bank of Nigeria
SME	Small and /medium enterprises
SMEDA	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria



## **Appendix 1**

### **Suggested Financial Literacy Training Guidelines**

#### **I. Introduction**

- The facilitators
- Participants
- Training aims and objectives
- What we hope to accomplish

#### **II. Managing Your Business**

- Opening
- Allow the participants to share their own views
- Leading questions:
  - a) How do you cut down unnecessary business expenses?
  - b) What do you do when you have extra money?
  - c) What do you do when you are short of money?
  - d) How do you think you can improve money management?
- Conclude by summarizing discussions on the best approach to managing a business

#### **III. Borrowing and Loans**

- What is a loan?
- Why do people take loans?
- Leading questions:
  - a) How and from where do you borrow?
  - b) How do you pay back?
  - c) Has it been worthwhile?
  - d) How can you improve the way you use loans to make it less costly and easier to repay?
- Conclude by summarizing group discussions on how to make effective use of loans

#### **IV. Saving and Investments**

- What are savings?
- Different ways of savings
- Leading questions:
  - a) Do you save? Daily, weekly or yearly?
  - b) How and where do you save?
  - c) How long have you been saving?
  - d) What do you think you can do to improve your savings?
  - e) What problems have you faced in saving?
  - f) What is the best form of savings? Why?
- What are investments?
- Considering the state of the economy, what do you think you can invest in to yield good returns? Land or property, shares, bonds etc

#### **V. Risks and Insurance**

- What is insurance?
- Leading questions:
  - a) Have you experienced any disaster before?
  - b) If yes, how did you handle it?
  - c) What is the biggest risk in your business now and in the future?
  - d) What is the best way you think you can protect yourself against these risks?
- Useful insurance policies

#### **VI. Nature of Microfinance Banks**

- What is microfinance?
- The microfinance policy environment
- How to obtain microfinance
- Differences between MFBs and commercial banks
- Operations and services of MFBs

#### **VII. Conclusion**

- Training evaluations
- Close

## Appendix 2

### Success Stories

#### Success Story 1

Ijede is one of the six major towns in the Ikorodu Administrative Division of Lagos State. It is located at about 9 km south-east of Ikorodu town on the northern shores of the Lagos Lagoon. It is also the headquarters of the Ijede Local Council Development Centre, one of the 57 municipalities in Lagos State. Although, the town is located close to the site of the largest thermal power plant in Nigeria at Egbin, the majority of its male population are engaged in either fishing or farming and most women engage in fish smoking, cassava processing or petty trading.

In February 2007, Ijede Market Traders Association participated in one of the ALPs, which took place at Ijede Town Hall with the support of the municipal authorities. The partner MFB was Wizetrade MFB. The traders recounted their fears about placing their hard-earned funds in banks given the banking crashes of the late 80s and early 90s. They also pointed out that with the only commercial bank in the town, getting loans was extremely difficult and involved a lot of paperwork. One of the proposals was that MFBs should not only provide loans but should support their trading activities, for example, by bulk-buying essential goods such as foodstuffs and provisions on behalf of the market traders, and selling these to the traders on credit. They will in turn repay the MFB through instalmental payments.

During the ALP, the Ijede traders were enlightened about the range of products and services, which the NMP authorizes MFBs to provide, particularly collateral-free loans and the safety net provided by the deposit insurance scheme for customers' deposits in MFBs. As a direct result of the ALP, Wizetrade MFB agreed to open a branch office at Ijede and to implement the proposal to provide credit for the bulk-buying of essential goods and commodities for traders at Ijede Market.

## **Success Story 2**

The Mile 12 Market is the largest food market in Lagos State and it is located on Ikorodu Road between Ketu and Owode. The ALP for the Mile 12 Registered Market Traders Association took place at the Mile 12 Market Hall on 24 May 2007 and the partner MFB was Susu MFB. As with other trade groups, the Mile 12 traders had expressed their scepticism about banks and the levels of services that they offer to micro and small entrepreneurs. After discussions and exchanges on the emergence of the NMP and the services that MFBs are expected to provide, the Association's executives had a separate meeting on the same day with the officials of Susu MFB who had also participated in the programme. At its conclusion, Susu MFB agreed to open a Cash Centre at Mile 12 Market so as to spare the traders the inconvenience of travelling long distances to Susu MFB's main corporate office. The Cash Centre has since been opened and over 30 of the traders who participated in the ALP have opened accounts with Susu MFB.

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# **Policy Change and Community Participation: The case of *Bal Panchayats* (Child Parliaments)**

## **Abstract**

Government policies are supposed to have a positive impact on society but too often, we fail to analyse the quality of this impact. Who benefits and to what extent have been the matter of concern. In order to understand problems at a local level, government needs to have a more effective dialogue with local actors. The politics of individuality and accumulation of power mean that this connection is often lost, and community interests are not adequately represented. Continuous dialogue with people creates a web of trust among communities which helps them to organise themselves and encourages the system to work for the benefit of society. This paper explores how children proved themselves to be effective agents of change by lobbying to have their rights recognised. The paper demonstrates that continuous dialogue between various actors in society is required to bring about change. The paper examines a CUTS initiative, '*Bal Panchayats*' (Child Parliaments) which was set up in response to state government and local administrative failure to protect children from abuse and exploitation. The *Bal Panchayats* aimed to enable children, particularly girls, to meet regularly to discuss children's issues and receive legal advice regarding their rights. In establishing a network between local actors, which translated government policies into local reality, the *Bal Panchayats* illustrate the effectiveness of local institutions in bringing about changes that the state and district governments had been unable to.

## **1 Introduction**

Any development policy requires the integration and analysis of relevant data from several sources in order to achieve the best outcome from its implementation. Effective communication between government and different stakeholders strengthens government's relations with citizens and thereby enhances their participation in policymaking to the benefit of the nation as a whole.

This paper aims to identify the role of communication in the social policy-making process in India, especially policies related to child poverty. Policies relating to children generally suffer from a lack of prior consultation with the stakeholders about the policy framework. Even after 60 years of independence, India is still struggling to understand the pressing problems that have confined people behind what Tagore called the 'narrow domestic walls' of inequality. The socio-cultural process should involve dialogue, information-sharing, building of mutual understanding, agreement on collective action and allowing a say to people who will be affected by policies.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that, 'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media, and regardless of frontiers'. In practice, this has not always included children. This paper shows how children fought for their rights by lobbying policymakers and acted as agents of change in development. Children are exerting an increasing influence in world politics and setting an example to the rest of civil society (UNICEF 2000; Mills 2002). This paper examines the situation of children in India.

## **2 Communication and Politics: Setting the context**

Differentiation between politicians and policymakers is contested. Politicians manoeuvre within a political unit or group in order to gain control or power and provide an authoritative voice and leadership. Policymakers purportedly set a plan to be pursued by a government. However, the flow of dialogue between the two has always been a matter of concern. Politicians' individual political interest may mean they have less incentive to compromise to reach a possible acceptable solution and sometimes personal interest is put over national interest. Equally, policymakers may be intent on maintaining administrative supremacy in their role, as a result, both actors often work independently of each other instead of together to find a meaningful solution to a problem.

Changes for the good in Indian society tend not to arise solely because of efforts made by politicians and policy-makers. Communication has always been an important factor in the outcome of any implementation of policy. Social institutions and government agencies must work together to ensure the smooth functioning of society; a collective effort of civil

society and the political system is essential. The result depends on the type of communication mechanism followed. In social formations, individuals work collectively and develop trust to create an environment in which proper dialogue is possible among actors. Successful dialogue between participants helps to achieve feedback on which to base effective decisions. Participatory dialogue enables the framing of norms and rules based on consensus. A free flow of information among participants allows responsibilities to be shared. Members of social formations have a tendency to confine themselves to the group and ignore the role of the state. The group develops its own norms and fails to devise mechanisms for passing on its requirements to the institutions of the state machinery. Hence, feedback from members of other institutions and representative of the state is missing (Rojas 2007).

Neo-institutionalism advocates a dialogue between civil society and policy-makers in order to achieve change in society. The aim is to develop a relationship between civil society and the state where the flow of information is not restricted on the basis of individual interest. Peter Evans (Rojas 2007) argues that the most important ingredient is the 'state-society' synergy where both community and government enhance each other's behaviour. In this scenario, local officials work with the community and as a result, there is more pressure for change. The state also has the capacity to enhance the scale of projects and, therefore, local projects can have a national impact.

Governance Institutionalism builds on Neo-Institutionalism and adds a concept of autonomous dynamics, i.e. a web of relationships between civil society and policy developers. It advocates a self-governing network and restrains authoritarian behaviour by governments. The concept supports the participatory method in which information flows in a multidirectional way. Stoker (Rojas 2007) states that essence of governance is not restricted to the authority and sanction of politicians. It focuses on a governing mechanism in which various stakeholders play an equal role in framing policies. Governance Institutionalism advocates continuous dialogue and exchange of information between representatives of all constituencies in society (Prasad 2001). In addition, it promotes discipline and self restraint. Individuals have a relationship with one another; there is mutual regulation through discipline which encourages loyalty, industriousness and friendly cooperation and monitors and counters the actions of individuals. This model promotes the smooth flow of information among various actors in society and presents a concept of how social change could be achieved



through community dialogue and collective work. The concept of *Bal Panchayat* presents an example of Governance Institutionalism at the local level creating a synergy between local actors and policy-makers to bring about changes in society.

### **3 Politics, Policy Actors and Child Problems in India**

India has the largest proportion of children per total population of any country in the world; a third of the total Indian population is under the age of 18. Children below six years comprise 157.8 million, i.e. 15.42 % of the country's total population. According to the Census of 1991 11.28 million children are working. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates the number involved in child labour as 23.2 million and according to an unofficial estimate, the number of child labourers in India is about 100 million (Thukral, Ali and Mathur 2007).

The Indian government has made some significant commitments towards ensuring the basic rights of children. There has been progress on overall indicators: infant mortality rates are down, child survival is up, literacy rates have improved and school dropout rates have fallen. However, the issue of child rights in India is still caught between legal and policy commitments on the one hand, and the fallout of the process of globalisation, on the other.

Child sexual abuse cuts across class, caste, cultural and economic backgrounds. A landmark study by the Indian government said that two-thirds of children in India are physically abused while more than half have faced some form of sexual abuse. But there is no specific law to make it an offence. At the time of writing the Offences against Children Bill, 2005 has still not become law.

The prevalence of child labour in India is the result of a combination of factors. According to the latest Census results released in August 2005, out of 226 million children aged 6-14 years, 65.3 million children (29%) were not attending any educational institutes. The proportion of boys not attending school was 25%, was and 33% of girls were not attending.

According to the 1991 census, the total number of child workers in Rajasthan was 774,199 which increased to 1,262,570 in the 2001 Census. Girls suffer the most as they are subjected to sexual abuse. A huge number of girls are trafficked and traditionally forced into commercial sex at a very tender age. There is no government strategy to bring the victims,

their families and vulnerable population effectively under the protection of existing schemes and policies. Under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)<sup>1</sup>, Rajasthan has employed *Aanganwaris*<sup>2</sup> (frontline local social workers) but available data on girls' health, child mortality, child nutrition, the prevalence of child marriages, post-partum mortality rates and literacy casts doubt upon their effectiveness.

Without proper health, education, food, shelter and security facilities, children are vulnerable to physical and sexual exploitation (Bhatt 2000). The Government of India has banned child labour but there is no plan for rehabilitation of child labourers and their families who are dependent on their incomes. Sometimes good policies lack support from local administration. In such cases, transferring the power for planning and implementation of policies should be handed over to local people. The example of *Bal Panchayat* has proved that young people can also act as a change agents.

#### **4 The Case of *Bal Panchayat***

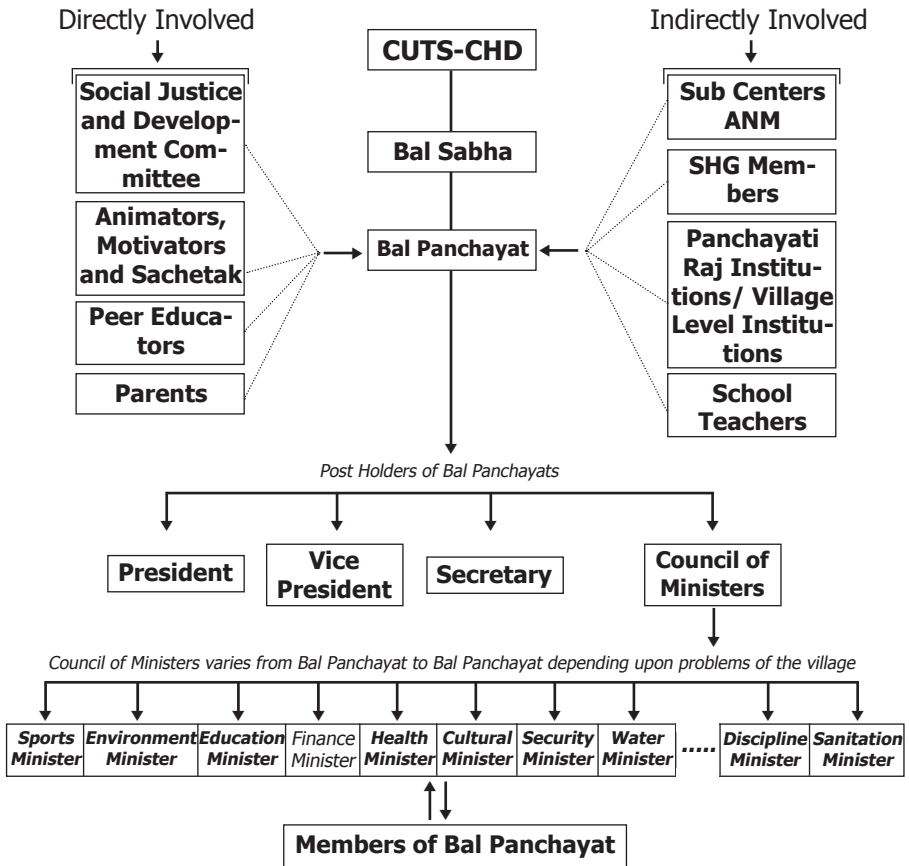
Although children do not have the right to vote until they reach the age of eighteen, they have rights at any age. Exploitation of children is not limited to any specific caste, class, creed, section, gender or nationality (Bhatt 2000; Bellamy 2004; Boyden and Levison 2000). The state is directly involved in framing policies to eradicate child abuse and child poverty but failures in communication and coordination have reduced the possibilities of change. Projects and programmes have stalled, reversed or even failed for want of simple communication with the recipients. The clientele have been excluded from the design, planning, and outcome-setting process (Chambers 1997; Rogers and Kincaid 1981).

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<sup>1</sup> The programme of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) was launched in 1975 seeking to provide an integrated package of services in a convergent manner for the holistic development of the child ([www.wcd.nic.in](http://www.wcd.nic.in)).

<sup>2</sup> All ICDS services are delivered through a center called 'Anganwadi'. Anganwadi Worker, a lady selected from the local community, is a community based frontline voluntary worker of the ICDS Programme ([www.wcd.nic.in](http://www.wcd.nic.in)).

**Figure 1 (Organisation of Bal Panchayat)**



Disappointed with the system, Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS), a NGO based in Jaipur took the initiative to fight against child poverty with the help of the children in 45 villages of Chittorgarh and Bhilwara, districts of Rajasthan.

Through its project, Rural Girls Empowerment Programme (RGEP), CUTS built the constituencies and the capacities of rural girls and boys with the purpose of building a questioning society. The intention was to reduce the incidence of violence against girls. This can be expressed as discrimination in food, low enrolment in schools, heavy workload at home, dowry and early marriage and foeticide/infanticide.

*Bal Panchayats* (Child Parliaments) were formed at village level (Figure 2) and created a peer pressure on government officials to address their problems. As a result, child marriages in some places have been reduced and local administration has taken action on other child-related problems. Through *Bal Panchayats*, CUTS International advocated education in the local community as it believes that if children are educated, poverty and abuse can be eradicated. The initiative taken by the *Bal Panchayat* succeeded in resolving some problems of children which local administration had failed to resolve for decades.

#### **4.1 Emerging realisation**

Abuse of female children has been prevalent for a long time in the orthodox society of the state of Rajasthan. Before CUTS intervened in 45 villages facilities like education, health and recreational were lacking. Nutrition for children was poor. Girls were not allowed to attend school. Child marriage was a big problem. Girls had huge responsibilities for household and livelihood activities.

As the state government and local administration failed to solve the problems of children, CUTS intervened and decided to fight for the children. At that time, CUTS was implementing a project on the empowerment of women and building women's capacity to fight for their rights. With the success of the women empowerment project, the organisation began to work on building the capacity of young people to fight for their rights. The aim was to build a platform for young people and children where they could share their problems and fight for their cause together.

The *Bal Panchayat* was envisaged as a network that would meet regularly to discuss children's issues. The role of the *Bal Panchayats* was to disseminate information about legal matters to children. Girls were encouraged to learn about their rights and discuss matters that might otherwise have remained suppressed.

The concept of *Bal Panchayat* was based on the concept of *Panchayati Raj* System of India. *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (PRIs) were formed at the local level to decentralise the decision-making process and evolve enforceable solutions within the community. Similar forums for children were created at local level with the objective of making young people partners in decision-making processes on issues related to children. The aim of *Bal Panchayat* was to empower girls take counter gender discrimination and fight for their rights. Village children came together and decided to punish culprits.

With the help of CUTS representatives, they formed the *Bal Panchayat* to fight for their rights (Figure 1).

## **4.2 The beginning**

Orthodox religious practices had to be challenged. Women were not allowed to talk in public and had to cover their faces in front of males. Girls were not allowed to attend school. Promoting good governance meant talking about corruption and challenging politicians, policy-makers and local administrators about their failure to eradicate child poverty. Local people and administrators were reluctant to involve young people and children in government. They did not consider young people as part of the democratic system and did not want to share their power with them. It was a big challenge for the organisation to fight against the reluctance of village elders to give up their orthodox beliefs and men to surrender their dominance over women.

The organisation initially did a study to identify children's problems. Save the Children-UK supported the pilot project. The project mainly targeted female children. Information was assembled and issues specifically pertaining to female children were addressed. Some interested and educated people from the villages were identified and series of meetings were held with them. Some school teachers were involved from the beginning and mobilised like-minded people. After about ten meetings, villagers agreed to support the effort. We visited local schools and discussed problems with children their problems and talked with parents, local leaders and district officials.

Local problems were discussed with village youths. Initially we identified young people in high school who were interested in volunteering to help us to fight child poverty. We started our discussion with boys, as girls were not allowed to mingle with boys. By adopting non-confrontational and constitutional means, we created partnerships with villagers, schools and government institutions. We formed a Social Justice and Development Committee (SJDC) at village level and recruited parents, teachers, local leaders, health workers and Self Help Groups as members.

The committee acted as a facilitator in mobilising children. We started our initiative with a mass campaign in villages. The media played a pivotal role during the campaign and in helping us to network with the local administration. After gaining the confidence of local people, we started raising issues of sex discrimination and the need to educate female

children. Motivators spoke with parents to sensitise them about the problems of female children. Trust was built among local people because motivators were recruited from villages. Some parents agreed to send their daughters to school but others were still reluctant because of poor financial condition or orthodox beliefs.

*Bal Panchayat* and *Bal Sabhas* were set up in all our project villages in Chittorgarh and Bhilwara districts of Rajasthan. Rules and regulations were framed (see Box 1). As one of the aims of *Bal Panchayat* was to empower female children, the organisation decided to give girls more opportunity for holding executive posts in *Bal Panchayat*. Executive posts in *Bal Panchayats* depended on local problems and would not necessarily be similar for all *Bal Panchayats*. All posts of *Bal Panchayats* were filled through democratic election processes. The contestants were asked to fill up a form and were given 10-15 days to canvass votes. Members of *Bal Sabha* voted for all posts created and selected their representatives. The media covered the entire election process at district and state level. The interaction of children with the media also helped to raise their confidence. The media coverage also helped to encourage girls to join the group.

The main problem the organisation faced in the beginning was mobilising the girls. More than 90% of parents of female children in our working areas were illiterate. One problem was convincing parents to send their girls to meetings and another problem was convincing girls to sit beside boys in the meetings. The motivators and animators played the leading role in convincing them. Girls were counselled at the individual level and encouraged to participate in the meetings.

## **Box 1: Bal Panchayat Mechanism at a Glance**

### **Objectives of *Bal Panchayats* (Child Parliament)**

- Ensuring child development, specially girl child
- Enhancing child participation in development projects and use their talents
- Developing a platform where children can groom their talents

#### **Bal Sabha**

- *Bal Sabha* is the apex body of children group in a village.
- Its members are between the ages of 5–18 years.
- The members sit at least once in a month, but they can call for other meetings in special case.

#### **Bal Panchayat**

- *Bal Panchayat* is the representative organ of *Bal Sabha*.
- Its members are the elected/selected members of the *Bal Sabha*.
- The age of members are in between 10 – 15 years
- *Bal Panchayat* is accountable to *Bal Sabha*
- Generally the total member of the Bal Panchayat is 10 percent of the total children of the village but it has been advised to keep the maximum number to 25.
- Posts of *Bal Panchayat* are created depending upon the problems in the village.
- The ratio of girls and boys in *Bal Panchayat* is generally 6:4 but children decide whether to maintain the ratio or relax the norm depending upon the existing situation.
- Generally, post holders are elected / selected for one year only.

### **Roles of *Bal-Panchayat***

- Sensitise villagers about the rights of children
- Raise awareness among children about their rights
- Eradicate gender discrimination practices
- Sensitize civil society about violence against girl child
- Awareness generation on environment conservation and protection
- Ensure quality education, improved health facilities and nutritional food for children specially girl child
- Active participation in development work
- Effort to ensure availability of basic amenities for villagers such as water, electricity, etc.

Source: CUTS 2000-2004

High school girls were mobilised first and the organisation built on their capacity to act as peer educators in mobilising other girls. Boys were encouraged to bring their sisters to meetings. Schoolteachers encouraged girls to join the group. SJDC also counselled parents to send their girls

to group meetings. It took more than six months to mobilise girls to join the group. Once *Bal Sabha* and *Bal Panchayats* were formed, the capacity-building phase started. Members were given training on various issues and were taken on exposure visits to different places. Boys were sensitised about gender issues and the problems girls experience. They were encouraged to support girls in fighting for their rights. Children's fairs were organised at village and district level. During these fairs, young people were encouraged to speak publicly on youth issues. It was a big achievement for young people, especially girls, speak to outsiders.

The system developed by *Bal Panchayat* members is unique. It is based on the principle of winning public support through awareness-generation, sensitising people to the problem and seeking their advice in the decision-making process. The *Bal Panchayat* members developed a congenial relationship with their elders and local actors and involved them in the fight against social ills and achieving change. Members of *Bal Panchayat* met the girls' parents and convinced them that long-term returns would be worth any temporary hardship. Parents have been told of the importance of sending girls to school. In some families, the household workload of girls has been shifted to other members of the family. The nutritional discrimination problems of girls have been raised with their parents. Most girls are now aware of the fact that discrimination is a form of violence against them. The boys have begun to realise the extent and the injustice of such discrimination. They have begun intervening with their parents in cases of blatant discrimination.

Members have lobbied government officials and forced them to deliver services to children. By punishing the culprits and supporters of bad practices, they presented an example of good governance. They established a network between local actors and implemented government policies at local level through peer pressure. Consequently, they succeeded in reducing cases of bad social practices such as child marriage, dowry, and sex discrimination which policy-makers and government administrators failed for decades to address. Table 1 shows the effort of *Bal Panchayat* in resolving some problems in their villages.



**Table 1: Cases resolved by Bal Panchayats**

<b>Village/ Block/ District</b>	<b>Particulars about the case</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Result</b>
1 Ramthali/ Kapasani/ Chittorgarh	Udai Lal, son of Kanhaiya Lal Gayri was engaged in labour work in a near by hotel. Udai was the member of the Bal Panchayat.	After hearing of the case, Bal Panchayat members met Udai's parents and convince them that child labour is a big crime and counsel them not to send their son for child labour.	Parents were convinced and Udai started going to school
2 Mata Ji Ka Kheda/ Banera/ Bhilwara	Mamta Mali is an illiterate village girl. She was married when she was 12. Her parents asked her to stay at her husband's house. She joined Bal Panchayat.	Bal Panchayat trained her on issues related to reproductive child health. After getting information on complication on early child birth, she refused to stay with her husband till she is 18.	Bal Panchayat members convinced her mother and in-laws and she stayed back with her mother. She started working for Bal Panchayat delivering lectures on reproductive child health issues. Bal Panchayat gave her confidence and she became an active member despite being illiterate.
3 Motha/ Nimbahera/ Chittorgarh	Deforestation was a big problem in the village. Females have to walk far in search of wood.	Bal Panchayat discussed the matter and discussed planting trees with the village.	Afforestation was discussed with authorities regarding and trees were planted.
4 Upreda/ Bhadesar/ Chittorgarh	Poor sanitation was discussed in the Bal Panchayat meeting. Villagers agreed to clean the village. They did not agree to clean lower caste areas.	Bal Panchayat decided to clean the entire village.	Bal Panchayat went against the wish of some villagers and cleaned lower caste areas.

5	Kachlodiya/ Banera/ Bhilwara	Villagers were facing problems of water borne disease and potable water.	A map water of resources was drawn. Members brought Potassium permanganate to disinfect the open well.	The drinking water problem has been solved.
6	All 45 villages/6 blocks/2 district	Boys coped with the lack of a school toilet by using the fields but girls were unable to go out in open.	Each Bal Panchayat member sent a post card to the Rajasthan education minister, asking him to provide school toilets.	The government made toilets in schools compulsory.
7	Motha/ Nimbaheda/ Chittorgarh	Bal Panchayat found that the Sikhsha Darpan Survey was incorrect. 27 children were not attending school but the survey said only 3.	A letter was send to the authorities informing them of the mistake and requesting the opening of a school in the hamlet.	A school has been started at the hamlet.
8	Bhimgarh/ Rashmi/ Chittorgarh	A disabled girl was unable to go to school as she could not walk.	The Social Welfare Department was notified.	The girl was given a tri-cycle.
9	Kanpura/ Nimbahed/ Chittorgarh	The school teacher closed the school without notice for 6 days.	A complaint was filed with the authorities.	Action was taken against the teacher and he was transferred.

Source: CUTS, 2000-2006

The *Bal Panchayats* have made girls aware of the collective strength they gain from acting together to solve problems. Through campaigns and meetings, *Bal Panchayat* members created awareness of child poverty and compelled parents to think about child marriage and gender discrimination. The number of girls going to school has increased. Because of the efforts of the *Bal Panchayat*, health facilities in the village have improved and government has started health centres in all villages of Chittorgarh district. Monitoring of schools by the *Bal Panchayats* has ensured that the teachers are on time, and that the school buildings are properly maintained and that the correct infrastructure has been installed. The

*Bal Panchayats* have helped the district authorities to keep villages clean and environmentally friendly. CUTS set up a Legal Aid Cell, which works in coordination with SJDC to assist the *Bal Panchayat* to resolve problems. It assists the *Bal Panchayat* in raising children's problems with the district and state administration through its *Sachetaks* (local net-workers), who act as facilitators between children and policy-makers.

As no proper survey has been carried out to assess the changes, it is hard to quantify outcomes. However, the change that took place because of the intervention of the *Bal Panchayat* can be noticed in the villages. The village people have internalised the initiatives taken by the village children and appreciate their work. They have started playing a positive role in building their confidence and looking at them as future leaders of their village.

### **4.3 Planning from the grassroots**

India is a signatory of the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child, 1959 and adopted the National Policy on Children in 1974. It endorsed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992. Article 39 of the Constitution of India and the Directive Principles of State Policy support Children's Rights and aim to protect children from exploitation. India declared its first National Child Labour policy in 1987 and may be the first country among developing nations to have such policy. On December 2, 1992, India ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which came into force in 1990. The Constitution of India also seeks to protect children against exploitation and there are innumerable laws and acts relating to the empowerment of children. In 2005, the *Lok Sabha* passed the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act 2005 which allows setting up an independent statutory body for children who are being exploited. Aligning with the Government of India, Government of Rajasthan also affirmed a declaration of the state's policy on children.

## **Box 2: Impacts and Achievements of Project**

- A common platform and consensus for social awareness and sensitisation on violence on girls, health and development.
- Arrangement of schools and improvement in drinking water with the help of *Bal Panchayat*. Constitution and operation of self-help groups by children.
- Initiated community awareness on gender discrimination and child rights.
- Gathered information on social condition and status of children, especially girls.
- Building confidence of community including children.
- Increased freedom and dynamism of girls to get exposure to outer world.
- Girls have developed comprehension of violence and they have begun to fight it.
- Children have started questioning the quality of education and health services.
- Increase in admission and retention of girls in school.
- *Bal Sabhas* and *Bal Panchayats* have increased sense of responsibility.
- Children are aware of their rights and have begun opposing violence against them.
- Increased awareness of community especially boys about gender discrimination.
- Boys have developed respect for their sisters.
- Community has started discussion about preventing child marriage

Source: CUTS, 2000-2006

Several statutory bodies have been established over the years with a view to ending the exploitation of children. The exploitation of children continues, nonetheless. There has been a failure to create a partnership between those affected by policies, their advocates and the politicians and civil servants who develop and implement policy (Freire 1970; Hyden 1996; Hallerod 2003). Policies have been imposed from the top down without any input to policy design from local actors who understand the various aspects of children's issues and different geographical and cultural conditions.

Local institutions, such as *Bal Panchayats*, are more effective in effecting change (Reddy 1992) than solutions imposed from the top. In a short time, the *Bal Panchayats* achieved many things that the state government and district administration had failed to carry out. The Indian government professed to be opposed to violence against girls but had not succeeded in reducing it. Policy-makers struggled to solve problems related to child poverty for decades to no avail. In a short time children succeeded in addressing these problems to some extent in their villages through their collective efforts.

These children's groups succeeded because of co-operation with local people and local administration. *Bal Panchayats* gave children the capacity to deal with problems and created a platform for them to work together. They showed their confidence to their elders and won their support. These children grouped together and exerted peer pressure on the people who were supporting incorrect practices. They educated villagers and raised their awareness on social issues. Once villagers were with them, it was easier for children to ensure that the local administration delivered services on time. They created a mechanism for a flow of information and always consulted their elders and fellow colleagues. Members started monitoring the work of government officials and maintained a strict surveillance of their work. Lethargic or corrupt officials were reported to their village seniors and pressure was put on higher authorities to take action against the juniors (Table 1). The positive dialogue that took place between various actors at the village level gained the support of villagers and helped them to enforce the law.

**Table 2: Relationship of policymakers and stakeholders with commitment indicators**

<b>Policy Makers</b>	<b>Commitment Indicators</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>
Indirectly involved (Away from the ground reality)	← Problem Identification	→ Directly involved
Non-sensitive as they are unaware of the real problem	← Sensitivity towards the problem	→ Sensitive
Average	← Eagerness to gain knowledge about the issue/problem of the area	→ High
Low	← Connection with the local community	→ High
Centralised	← Decision making process	→ Decentralised
Solution based on speculation	← Degree and equity of participation in finding solution	→ High degree of participation
No direct involvement	← Supervision	→ High involvement
Low/No involvement	← Monitoring	→ Close monitoring
Medium to low (sometimes none)	← Creating peer pressure	→ High
Medium to low	← Sense of responsibility towards the commitment	→ High
Once in a while (There are cases when policy makers never visited the problem area)	← Visit to problem area	→ Live in the problem area
Low or None	← Trustworthiness and popularity in problem area	→ High

When villagers saw that the initiatives of the *Bal Panchayat* were serious and could have a positive impact on the village development, they started to acknowledge their efforts and decision-making capacity. They started inviting its members to village meetings and asked them to share their problems with the larger community. The *Bal Panchayat* also assisted the senior government officials in their village development projects and built up a congenial relationship with them. They did not necessarily consider the members as co-partners in their planning process but started listening to their concerns.

The *Bal Panchayat* approach was successful because of its sensitiveness towards problems and its sincere effort to resolve them. The approach was based on developing trust with local people and involving them in all decision-making processes. The approach created peer pressure on people who were allowing incorrect practices. The mechanism supported participatory decision-making processes and encouraged a dialogue between different actors which helped to get decisions implemented. It gave equal importance to the local administration and assisted them in their work. As a result, local administration also considered their input as supportive in their effort to execute development programs at the local level. Where policy-makers are not sensitive to local problems, decision-making is centralised and decisions are unpopular among the local people (See Table 2).

CUTS conducted regular meetings of *Bal Panchayat* and minutes were taken. All problems and initiatives were discussed in details. Parents, teachers, government representatives and village elders were invited to share children's initiatives for addressing local problems. The *Bal Panchayats'* work was closely monitored by CUTS's workers, animators, volunteers, peer educators, villagers, parents and village elders. CUTS conducted regular meeting with animators, volunteers, peer educators, villagers, parents and village elders and sought their feedback on the *Bal Panchayat* members. The local media also closely monitored the activities of the *Bal Panchayat*. The SJDC members were also following up with the *Bal Panchayat* members and acted as mentor in all their initiatives.

## **5 Conclusion**

Society is composed of different actors playing different roles. The change process does not rely on the effort of any single person. It is the result of continuous effort by actors from different backgrounds and on the flow

of information between them. If the effort has been limited, or the flow of information is disturbed the consequences will be bad. For any change process, there should be a continuous flow of information between the various actors and a process of consultation through dialogue (Sacks 2002; Walton 1986; Zeitin and Philippe 2005). The resulting feedback will contribute to successful outcomes. Decisions made through a participatory process will be respected by the people and will be more likely to achieve the desired result. When decisions are made without consultation and without incorporating feedback they are less likely to be abided by (Wisner, Toumlin and Chitiga 2005).

Changes do not automatically come as a result of devising policies and passing laws. The support of those affected by the law is necessary. If the implementation mechanism is weak, the change will never occur. We must gain the trust of those affected by the changes and must accept them as partners.

Communication theory on social change stresses the interaction between theory and practice. It emphasises the need for proper dialogue between practitioners, policy makers and stakeholders. When we talk about empowerment phenomena, we need to be sensitive about the capacity and capability of local actors (Tenner and DeToro 1992).

We need to appreciate the knowledge of local people, endorse their capacity to take decisions and promote social equality. We need to create a mechanism through which a flow of knowledge could be transmitted from local level to policy level and policy level to local level (Sen 1989). There should be proper understanding between policymakers and local actors. There must be a clearer understanding of the role that civil actors will be playing or should be playing in order to avoid unproductive tensions and to use stakeholders to the full. Civil society has been the backbone of all development projects and youth has started playing a crucial role in the change process. They have been given responsibility at local level in the implementation of development projects and monitoring of development outcomes. Youth groups and youth forums have been recognised by the elders of the civil society because of their capacity to identify problems, their negotiation skills their capability to fight against all odds at the same time as respecting the knowledge of others. Local people have accepted these youth groups as a 'civilised political community' participating within a legal framework.



We need to create similar pools of resources, which will help policy makers to frame their policies on the basis of ground realities (Scholtes 1998). We need to redefine those information systems, which have been used up to now to reach local people. New information systems should incorporate all aspects of social resources, which will benefit the civil society and help in developing a global knowledge infrastructure.

Governance institutionalism was practised through the *Bal Panchayats* at a local level. The *Bal Panchayats* acted as a catalyst and created a network with local actors. Members worked on individual change which was automatically reflected in social change. *Bal Panchayat* members stressed the importance of fruitful dialogue between the actors, developing a mutual trust and respecting the ideas of each others. The members worked on equal partnership between policymakers, politicians and local people for successful implementation of a policy framework. They practised governance institutionalism at a local level and succeeded in reducing undesirable social practices. The mechanism brought changes at an individual level as well as at a social level. The practice brought changes in attitude of boys and elders towards girls and made them sensitive to gender discrimination. On the one hand, the mechanism encouraged young people to accept leadership; on the other hand, it helped to bring young people and elders closer together to fight against child poverty.

The *Bal Panchayat* mechanism has some drawbacks. The main problem is for it to gain general recognition as a formal institution. Sometimes local administrations and local leaders consider *Bal Panchayat* as a parallel body and are reluctant to share power with them. As a result, members do not get sufficient support and guidance to fight for their cause. Girls who are trained to act as peer educators have to leave the group if they marry, which is a big loss for the group.

There are two big problems. First, there is a lack of continuous flow of funding for group activities. The organisation can't support the group for ever. Once the organisation is phased out of the area, the frequency of group meetings and exposure visits will reduce if the group does not get support from local institutions. Secondly, some youths may misuse the platform and power. They may consider themselves as big leaders and start disrespecting their elders.

The financial problems of the group can be resolved if local administrations support the mechanism and apportion some funds for running its activities. SJDC, school teachers, peer educators and village elders have been given

responsibility to monitor those youths who disrespect their elders and break the rules.

The mechanism has started spreading to other areas where CUTS has not intervened yet. It is being replicated in other villages by local agencies, which endorse the initiatives of the children and their mechanism as the change agent. *Bal Panchayat* members are supporting the local administration in bringing drop-outs back to school and encouraging girls to be admitted to school. Every year, *Bal Panchayat* members celebrate Girl Child Admission Week during the first week of July.

The mechanism has operated as a pilot scheme to effect change at a local level. To operate in a larger arena it requires support from policy-makers and politicians. The government is the biggest institution capable of effecting change at any level because of its financial capacity, infrastructure and staff. The government needs to start dialogue with the local community and act as a catalyst. The government needs to integrate the knowledge of policy-makers and local actors and develop its policies based on the feedback of both.

If we are to harness projects as policy experiments then we need to work more on systematic reflection mechanisms to challenge technicians, communicators, administrators, and policymakers to identify the relevant methodologies and the required policies to ensure the future evolution of the approaches adapted to the local context. We need to work on strategies to promote policy and institutional reforms for effective communication between policymakers and different players of the society similar to the *Bal Panchayats*. Then only can we think about framing of good policies and their implementation through good governance.

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# **Poverty Reduction and Environmental Management:**

## **A paradigm for an effective use of research by policymakers and development practitioners**

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### **Abstract**

The management and conservation of environmental resources as well as characteristics of certain living environments can have significant impacts on poverty. In Sri Lanka, the 'Human/Elephant Conflict' (HEC) is one example of the sometimes challenging relationship between social and conservation issues. The Poverty Reduction and Environmental Management (PREM) project aimed to find solutions to this issue through the effective use of research and communications. The *Hashti Uwaduru Rekawaranaya* insurance scheme provides compensation for damage caused by elephants. This paper aims to demonstrate a communication model which can develop better links between policy-makers, researchers and communities in order to design effective solutions that enhance poverty-reduction programmes.

### **1 Introduction**

Poverty in Sri Lanka is mainly a rural phenomenon. In most parts of the dry zone, frequent crop depredations by elephants cause huge economic

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losses which can push farmers into ruin. Human-elephant conflict (HEC) disrupts the lives of both humans and elephants, damaging property and crops. Most policy actions taken by the authorities to mitigate HEC have been transient measures (Bulte and Rondeau 2000). Fernando (1993) believes that these actions have failed to address the fundamental issues involved in the conservation of elephants and the reduction of HEC.

PREM has conducted a study of the various interrelationships between rural poverty and HEC in Sri Lanka and sought to identify appropriate solutions. Conservation cannot be promoted without improving the situation of the rural community.

Compensation schemes for HEC suffer from a number of deficiencies such as:

- administrative inefficiencies leading to abuse;
- fraud (bogus claims or inflated claims);
- insufficient funds;
- inability to address the social opportunity costs.

Because of the inefficiencies and failures of formal government interventions, communities have to mobilise themselves to engage in a dialogue with parties promoting the conservation of elephants in Sri Lanka. A financial mechanism against elephant-related losses must be devised without relying on the government. Such a financial support scheme will need several important components including microfinance to replace losses and social capital (i.e., community and institutional links) and a capability for tackling issues related to moral hazard, adverse selection and information. Establishing better schemes for providing financial compensation for damage caused by elephants is essential to protect elephants in Sri Lanka and to alleviate rural poverty in the areas where HEC is a problem.

A substantial amount of research has been conducted to understand different poverty alleviation strategies. However, work on the gap between research findings and policy implementation is minimal in Sri Lanka. The aim of this paper is to use the PREM project to bridge the gap between research findings and their application to the anti-poverty policies devised by different bodies. This paper emphasises the importance of the researcher, in the roles of communicator and facilitator, for the effective and efficient achievement of policy objectives through a development communication model.

## **2 Study Context**

### ***Communication research in poverty reduction and policy development***

Communication can play a major role in alleviating poverty. Poor people are marginalised, not only in relation to economic processes, but also in relation to information and communication processes (RAPID<sup>2</sup> 2006). The situation of the poor is frequently misconstrued or ignored in societal communication. Poor people are not able to make their voices heard because they are not able to communicate accurate descriptions of their situation or to participate in the decision-making processes that affect their lives (ODI 2007).

Current development initiatives recognise the complex interplay between communication and poverty (Hovland 2005). While previous communication activities often concentrated on providing increased and more effective flows of development information downwards to the poor, there is now far more emphasis on discussion, user-engagement, and links to decision-making processes (RAPID 2005).

Development communication is the integration of strategic communication in development projects (World Bank 2007). Dissemination of information, education, and awareness-raising are essential ingredients of communication (ODI 2007). They are not sufficient to get people to change long-established practices or behaviours. All development requires some kind of behavioural change on the part of stakeholders. Development communication is a powerful tool that can improve the chances of success of development projects. Research shows that changing knowledge and attitudes does not necessarily translate into behaviour change. In order to effect behaviour change, it is necessary to understand why people do what they do and understand the barriers to adopting new practices (World Bank 2007). A communication model was developed with the objective of reducing poverty, preserving elephants and creating a strong integrity between the stakeholders groups including more critical features.

## **3 Objectives**

The aim of the PREM extension study was to design a practical financial scheme through introducing *Hashti Uwaduru Rekawaranaya* insurance to compensate for the damage caused by wild elephants. This was seen as an alternative method of conserving elephants and alleviating rural



poverty in the areas of Sri Lanka where HEC is a problem. This paper advocates a strategic approach to the alleviation of poverty through effective communication and policy implementation. PREM is presented as a paradigm for developing an innovative model, which could be used in future research.

## 4 Methodology

The data were gathered from numerous workshops at village level. Personal interviews at national level were conducted to evaluate the financial scheme developed to find a solution for HEC in rural areas of Sri Lanka. The key feature adopted in the procedure was that each workshop should play a key role in forming a holistic picture of the model. Different workshops performed different roles in the PREM extension study. The workshops were conducted several times in a month, building a relationship and strong trust among the rural poor in HEC-affected villages.

The following figure 1 provides the framework for the sequence of the workshops.

**Figure 1: Schematic representation of sequential procedure in developing financial scheme**

**Stage 1:** *Gathering information to develop insurance scheme*



**Stage 2:** *Evaluation of financial scheme and dissemination*



### **The Zig- Zag Model**

The PREM extension study can be used to develop a development communication model as communication is a vital tool both for reducing poverty and protecting elephants. The Zig-Zag Communication Model (ZCM) was developed in order to ensure effective use of research to help poor farmers affected by HEC. The ZCM model contains different

communication patterns in terms of vertical and horizontal communication. The Zig-Zag model was built by the researcher for this particular study to avoid some general drawbacks of communication models. Even though this approach is costly, it enables more informative and participatory development communication. The practical benefit of this model is that researchers can act as mediators between disadvantaged groups and policy-makers.

The approach was very successful in poverty-reduction and environmental-management research because it combined those two aspects. Researchers and policymakers assumed that the best way to put into practice the poverty-reduction research in this particular context was to enhance the communication patterns of the community. There were both successes and shortcomings since this model is an innovative paradigm. The successes of the model included:

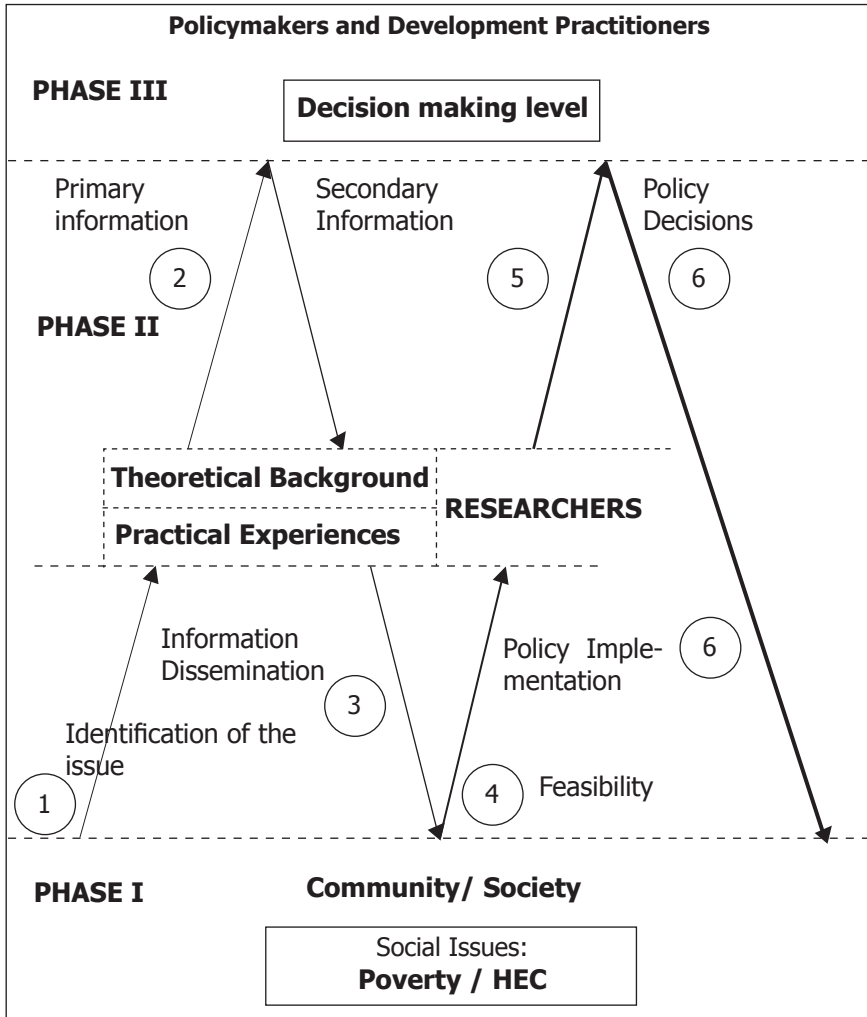
- the opportunity to encompass policy options of different policymakers at one forum
- sound background about poverty and environmental issues
- availability of information for an analysis of the situation
- a better relationship between insurance companies and farmers was achieved. Trust was built through improving awareness of each other's position; attitudes were changed and willingness to compensate was increased

On the other hand, there were drawbacks:

- in order to get a strong and deep understanding of how the model could be implemented in future it was necessary to continue several times through the processes to get more success
- the process required great attention to the feasibility and promotion of the insurance scheme at local level
- although the basic model should work in many settings, it needs more testing in practice to understand how it could be further developed to address different poverty issues in different contexts.

The model demonstrates that researchers have an important part to play in enhancing policy development, implementation and evaluation through facilitating improved communication (see *Figure 2*).

**Figure 2: Identified Zig-Zag Communication Model (ZCM) for effective use of research**



(Note: the above numbers in the methodology represent the different stages of the method [Figure 1] combined with the model)

### ***Research achievements through the model***

The communication model explains three major phases and each phase plays a role in developing an insurance scheme while facilitating communication. Based on the ZCM, there are three different stages that can be identified, representing three parties: community level, researcher and policymaker.

#### **PHASE I: Community level**

The community group in the model represents rural farmers who suffer from HEC. Elephant attacks on paddy and other crops and other income generation activities, can have an adverse effect on their income and cast them into a vicious cycle of debt and poverty. Income-reduction of this kind affects education, health, food, and general quality of life. Prompt and substantial substitute funds are needed to maintain their income level. Effective compensation would change their attitude to killing elephants by meeting their immediate financial needs.

#### **PHASE II: Intermediation of the researcher**

This phase began with the identification of the research problem at the lowest level. Then, the research problem was communicated at different policy-making levels and numerous village levels to ensure that everyone understood the scope of the research. HEC and poverty levels were captured by accumulating and disseminating information at different levels through workshops and forums. The key to facilitating the model was discussing problems and feasible solutions with rural leaders, villagers, policymaking government officers, political leaders, private institutes, NGOs and other stakeholders.

The basic data were collected and collated. An attempt was made to bridge the knowledge gap between the communities and policy-making group. This process allowed researchers to gain credibility by winning the confidence of farmers in order to change their attitudes at the same time as preparing a mechanism for achieving insurance payments. An attempt was also made to change policy-makers views by examining policy alternatives and initiating policy development through 'affected-party participation' and raising a compensation fund. The researcher had to play a dual role to achieve these objectives.

### ***The researcher as communicator and facilitator in the model***

Strategic communication is an integral part of participatory research in development communication. A feature of the model is that the researcher works with a community or as a development practitioner; the researcher is a communication actor. The success of the researcher's communication with the rural poor will depend on the way he or she interacts with the community, understands and discusses issues, collects and shares information. The way communication is established and nurtured will affect the quality of the rural poor's participation in research or poverty reduction initiatives and their attitude to HEC issues.

The iterative nature of the model achieves a two-way dissemination of information. People will be motivated to participate if they are given an active role to play. This model commits the researcher or development practitioner to interact with a community by establishing a dialogue with community members on HEC and poverty issues, and to facilitate dialogue between community groups and policymakers.

The researcher or the development practitioner uses communication as a tool to facilitate participation. The model used vertical and horizontal approaches to identify problems in rural areas and try out solutions with the collaboration of policy developers or development practitioners. On the communication side, the aim is to inform people of the many aspects of HEC problems and to present possible solutions to mobilise them into action. This two-way approach helps develop a strong rapport, in which the researcher applies his knowledge to the resolution of a problem, with the collaboration of a local community, and discusses the results with policy developers. The researcher or development practitioner's facilitation brings together rural communities and policy-makers in the resolution of problems relating to HEC or poverty-reduction.

This interaction point provides a means of attitude change. The researcher's attitude should be to regard community members not as beneficiaries but as stakeholders. For the model to be effective researchers must assist in building a consensus for action and provide direction to help community members express their views. For many researchers and development practitioners, this is a new role for which they may not have been prepared, a new way of doing research through development communication. Consequently, the model can be effectively used to extend the researchers' contribution as communication actors and facilitators.

### **PHASE III: Policymaking level**

Policy-makers try to find a sustainable solution for HEC, while providing immediate financial compensation for the damage suffered. The income-transfer mechanism should be a sustainable one which reduces poverty in the long term. In the past, requirements at community level have been met by decisions dependent on different objectives in the government and private sectors. A new insurance scheme following a different approach was devised to counter the inefficiencies of the existing arrangements and to deal with the issues of HEC and poverty-reduction.

## **5 Results and Discussion**

### ***Changes in attitude of the rural farmers and policymakers***

Changing the attitudes of all parties is essential to the development of the financial scheme. This study considered the communities and the policy-making level. Close collaboration between researchers and policy-makers helps to change the attitude of the groups.

On the demand side, the attitudes of farmers towards protecting elephants were modified by mitigating the effects of poverty through ensuring financial compensation for damage suffered.

On the supply side, attitudes of policy-makers and insurance companies were modified by creating collaborative networks, offering tax concessions and the satisfaction of assisting in national development by helping the alleviation of poverty.

The model achieves research objectives at the same time as helping the system to work at an optimal level. Researchers have to play two important roles for the model to work. The attitudes of the community and policy-makers were monitored at field level and also in public forums to investigate the best options. Researchers play a vital role in the implementation of the model. This approach places greater responsibility on researchers and requires additional effort to make the model run effectively and efficiently. Many researchers were highly satisfied with the outcome of the participatory approach to research.

### **Poverty reduction outcomes of the ZCM**

The model was extended to develop systematic communication between community and policy-making levels in order to create credibility among the rural poor. The model succeeds in developing a good rapport between rural villagers and policy developers by bringing together different options for solving the problem.

The best solution suggested was the *Hashti Uwaduru Rekawaranaya* Insurance scheme, in which farmers pay a premium of Rs.150 rather than the usual premium of Rs.750. The balance of Rs.600 was paid by Vehicle Insurance Policy (VIP) subscribers as their contribution to a solution to the HEC problem. The latent money-transfer mechanism included in the model supported the sustainability of the system because transfer of income from the high-income group to the low-income group was the principle mechanism of the model.

This also provides a background for the model's success in fostering trust in the villagers. The main research outcome of the project was to address the poverty issue while minimising environmental impacts and protecting elephants. The model not only fosters better communication, but also addresses the issue of social inequality. The latent income-transfer mechanism embedded in the communication model acts as a supplementary branch of the model. Meanwhile it addresses the issue of poverty and inequality.

In summary, the basic outcome of the PREM project was to achieve a sustainable solution for HEC and poverty in Sri Lanka. The Insurance scheme, *Hashti Uwaduru Rekawaranaya*, achieves these objectives. This paper provides an appropriate solution for communication development, reducing poverty levels and preserving elephants in rural areas. This model can be further employed in different poverty contexts and a new strategic model, elaborating on this model, can be developed on the basis of the Zig-Zag communication model. As an innovative model this can be used in different areas of poverty research in future. It can help to develop a holistic scenario with a sound background for qualitative studies supplementary to quantitative studies. It can also make a contribution to the theoretical development of communication as a poverty reduction tool.

## **6 Recommendations and Policy Development**

### ***Placement of the communication model***

The communication model can be implemented after the design stage of any community development research that requires a participatory approach to the identification of needs, and solutions requiring community involvement. Policy decisions should be taken on the basis of a participatory approach involving all stakeholders and affected parties. In order to reach a solution, a sustained and strong relationship between parties affected by the research and researchers and policymakers is essential to build up credibility. The model can be further developed by improving lines of communication between communities and policymakers, facilitating more options while maintaining sustainability. Finally, and most importantly, the policy process should be initiated at the community level and, the demand should be captured at the policymaking level while working towards a sustainable solution. The model is going to be adopted in future research in Sri Lanka, integrating poverty and participatory rural approaches and it is flexible enough to be adapted to fit the needs of different research frameworks.



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## **8<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on Poverty Research in Sri Lanka Proceedings and Contributors**

### **Keynote Addresses**

Prof. Savitri Goonesekere, Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR)  
Megan Lloyd-Laney, Department for International Development, UK

### **Making your voice heard: The challenge of communicating research to decision makers**

#### **Giving evidence a voice: Lessons from engaging with decision makers**

Fiona Remnant, Senior Professional, Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA)

#### **Working with policymakers in different countries**

John Young, Director of Programmes, Research and Policy in Development,  
Overseas Development Institute (ODI)

#### **Using evidence-based research in government**

Dhara Wijayatilake, Secretary, Ministry of Plan Implementation

#### **Ask the primary stakeholders: Research for change and the Estate Workers Perceptions study**

William Duggan and Rathna Jeganathan, WUSC Plantation Communities  
Project

### **Bridging the gap: How can communities benefit from better access to research and information?**

#### **Poverty reduction and environmental management: A paradigm for effective use of research**

S.P. Jayasooriya, Department of Agricultural Economics and Business  
Management, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya

#### **Policy influence for inclusive growth: Scaling up ICT for development through the Village Knowledge Centre Programme**

Shipra Sharma, Research Officer with the telecentre.org program, India

### **Financial literacy as a tool for poverty reduction in Nigeria**

Bola Fajemirokun, Executive Director, Development Initiatives Network, Nigeria

### **Policy change and community participation: The case of Bal Panchayats (Child Parliaments)**

Amit Chowdhury, Centre Head/Coordinator, Consumer Unity Trust Society (CUTS) - Centre for Human Development

## **The added value of networks and knowledge sharing**

### **The Evidence Based Policy in Development Network (EBPDN)**

Naved Chowdhury, Research and Policy in Development Programme, Overseas Development Institute

### **Knowledge management initiatives in Sri Lanka**

Azra Abdul Cader, Co-ordinator Poverty Assessment and Knowledge Management Programme, CEPA

### **A networked research approach**

Kate Czuczman, Editor & Communications Coordinator, International Forum for Rural Transport and Development (IFRTD)

## **Panel Discussion: Challenging knowledge hierarchies**

- Priyanthi Fernando, CEPA, Sri Lanka
- Vishaka Hidellage, Practical Action, Sri Lanka
- Andrew Kumbatira, Malawi Economic Justice Network, Malawi
- Sam Kasiriye, Southern and Eastern African Trade Information and Negotiations Institute, Uganda
- Tomas Mugica, CIPPEC, Argentina

## **Taking it off the page: Alternative mediums of communication to influence change**

### **Providing practical answers: The Janathakshan system as a bridge between communities, researchers and policymakers**

Suvira Srivastav, Web Portal Coordinator, Practical Action Sri Lanka

### **Using electronic media to communicate messages**

Nalaka Gunewardene, Director and CEO, Television for Education - Asia Pacific (TVE Asia Pacific)

### **Community radio**

Eric Fernando, Communications Consultant and Sunil Wijesinghe, Station Manager Kothmale Community Radio

### **Panel Discussion: Influencing government within a restricted environment**

- Prashan Thalayasingam
- Mirak Raheem, Centre for Policy Alternatives, Sri Lanka
- Dr Sin Somuny, MEDiCAM, Cambodia
- Naya Paudel, Forest Action Nepal

### **Valedictory speech**

Michael Walton, Centre for Policy Research, Delhi. Former Director of the 2006 World Development Report on 'Equity and Development'

Communicating Research; Influencing Change explores how knowledge generated through research can be effectively communicated to influence change. Based on the discussions and presentations from CEPA's 8th Annual Symposium on Poverty Research held in 2007, this book addresses the current context and key issues around evidence-based policymaking in Sri Lanka.

Researchers and campaigners in Sri Lanka need to be particularly adept at communicating their messages, working in the context of an often confrontational and suspicious relationship between civil society and decision makers, and strong pressure from donor interests and knowledge from the North which can sometimes supersede local evidence and knowledge. A challenging and sometimes restricted environment for debate may make it harder to influence policy, but it should not dissuade or exonerate researchers from continuing to produce high quality and relevant research. The responsibility for good evidence-based policymaking lies with both sides; researchers need to work together more effectively to ensure better access to good quality information, and government and other important decision makers need to value and use research more rigorously in decision-making.

There is clearly no one formula for successfully influencing policy and behaviour; the circumstances differ in almost every case, and the process is not linear or simple enough to be able to be distilled into a number of steps or instructions. However, CEPA's own experience as well as those of the different individuals and organisations that participated in the symposium provide some examples of strategies that worked with varying levels of success in challenging circumstances in Sri Lanka and elsewhere - food for thought for researchers planning their own communication strategies.

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