From Evidence to Action

A Newsletter of the Policy Action Network (PAN)

In this issue of **From Evidence to Action**, we focus on the issue of the politics of policy, highlighted by an international symposium which took place in November 2012, entitled *The politics of poverty research and pro-poor policy-making: Learning from the practice of policy dialogue.* The event identified and discussed key conceptual and contextual issues around the politics of poverty research and pro-poor policy-making, with a particular focus on evidence-based policy-making (EBPM). Going beyond a simple understanding of EBPM, participants were asked to problematise concepts such as research 'uptake' and policy 'impact' and share insights of practice from the 'real world' of policy engagement. Our *case study* on the Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development (PSPPD) demonstrates a concrete example of how this has been put into practice, while our *Spotlight on* looks at another programme, DRUSSA (Development Research Uptake in Southern Africa), which also aims to improve researchers' capacity to manage the uptake of research by their key stakeholders. We examine a general approach for participatory policy-making and finally, we provide our usual variety of useful resources, including reports, web links, training opportunities and events.

From Evidence to Action aims to stimulate debate around evidence-based policy-making. If you have anything to contribute towards getting research into policy, and policy into action, whether successful or unsuccessful, please send your submissions to **pan@hsrc.ac.za**.

The politics of policy

That the policy-making process is a complex one is not generally contested; but it is often the subject of debate as there is no 'right' approach to dealing with it.

Presenting two different, but not necessarily opposing, views on this issue at a recent international symposium were two highly respected experts in the field of policy: Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) Director, Andries du Toit, and the Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development (PSPPD) Programme Manager, Mastoera Sadan.

The symposium, entitled *The politics of poverty research and pro-poor policy-making: Learning from the practice of policy dialogue*, was held in November 2012 and was hosted by PLAAS, the PSPPD, which is funded by the European Union (EU), the Southern Africa Trust (SAT), the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and the Economic Development Department

(EDD). It aimed to explore the research and policy-making nexus by asking: what are the processes by which research agendas are defined which may shape the interpretation of findings; what are the kinds of poverty research that is being conducted; and how is this knowledge used in the development and application of policies addressing poverty? Going beyond a simple understanding of evidence-based policy-making (EBPM), participants were asked to problematise concepts such as research 'uptake' and policy 'impact' and share insights of practice from the 'real world' of policy engagement.

Du Toit presented his recent working paper, *Making Sense of 'Evidence': Notes on the discursive politics of research and pro-poor*

Page 2

In this issue

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policy making, in which he interrogates what the assumptions underlying 'evidence-based' approaches to poverty reduction are. His paper, which has elicited a number of responses from people in the policy field around the world, argues that the discourse of evidence-based policy (EBP) relies too heavily on a technocratic, linear understanding of the policy-making process and on a naïve empiricist understanding of the role of evidence, that is, that research, once completed directly influences policy. This approach may work well where very specific, narrowly defined outcomes to be achieved can be identified and then evidence that can allow clear and unambiguous attribution of these outcomes to distinct and clearly identifiable interventions found: this scenario would mean that many or most of the variables that experimenters' control can be controlled, the systems involved are closed or relatively simple, or the processes at stake are simple and susceptible to input/output-outcome analysis. But, says du Toit, unfortunately, poverty reduction does not conform to any of these preconditions. Pro-poor policy interventions take place in complex, dynamic, open social systems. Relationships and dynamics are non-linear, dynamic and unpredictable, and this makes it a 'messy' process.

Furthermore, the current EPB discourse misunderstands the importance of politically and ideologically loaded 'policy narratives' in policy change, even in situations where these policy debates do involve appeals to 'evidence' and research findings, and this renders it unable to engage with the role of the underlying discursive frameworks and paradigms that help make evidence meaningful. Du Toit believes that rather than simply focusing on evidence, approaches to policy change need to focus on how evidence is used. He points out that EBP is a normative discourse and that, for the most part, it is about what *should be*: about the desirable relationships between evidence and policy and about what constitutes appropriate conduct for researchers and for policy-makers. As such, it has its own politics,

seeking to define how policy should be made, who should make it, whose authority shall count, what shall count as 'evidence', how it is to be interpreted, and how these conclusions should be communicated. However, this depends on three notable assumptions that du Toit outlines:

- Firstly, policy-makers are expected to avoid value-laden or ideological adjudication between ends; instead, it is assumed that given an agreed upon and non-contentious set of ends, it is their job to find the most practical or efficient way of achieving them. This in essence assumes that in relation to any policy question, there is a right answer: that 'best practices' exist or can be found that are incontrovertibly or measurably preferable to the alternatives.

- Secondly, it is assumed that adjudication between policy alternatives can and should be based on an impartial, objective, and rational assessment of 'evidence' about their impacts and their results – which in turn

assumes that decision-makers have access to the 'best' or 'right' evidence, assessed and interpreted in a rigorous way.

- Thirdly, it is assumed that 'experts' – including but not limited to professional scientists and university-based researchers – can and should play a central role in the process of 'getting the evidence,' analysing it and communicating its implications to policy-makers.

However, three key objections (among others) du Toit raises in his paper to the EBP discourse and these assumptions are that:

- The question of what 'works' well (or less well) may not have a clear, decisive, unequivocal or useful answer. And even if 'outcomes' are clear, the implications often are not: we may know that an intervention worked (or did not work), but working out why it did or did not is usually a complex and contested issue.

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- The most important weakness of pro-poor policy-making in South Africa is not so much the lack of evidence, but the lack of adequate analysis.

- The EBP discourse can be anti-democratic in its implications, particularly if it is used in ways that make key matters of social significance the prerogative of unaccountable elites, unelected experts and technocratic managers.

Finally, du Toit concludes that it is important to recognise that designing 'good' pro-poor policy is not something that can be guaranteed by focusing on generic, technical 'best practice' skills: rather, it requires a clear focus on the substantive issues at hand, and the concrete institutional, fragile and contested political nature of the South African state.

Sadan, rather than contesting du Toit's argument, largely agrees and acknowledges that policy-making is not a linear process, and that the EBP approach, while it may have limitations, is a way of trying to make sense of the complexity of the policy-making process. Using the EBP is an attempt to introduce rationality into a political process which is essentially about choices and is not always rational because there are so many different factors at play. The underlying assumption about EBPM is that it improves the nature of policy-making by encouraging a more systematic approach and tries to make sure that evidence is used in a systematic manner, fully knowing that research evidence is but one source of information.

Although Sadan agrees to some extent with du Toit's point that EBPM can potentially narrow the democratic space, because it could be reduced to a process in which policy elites and experts talk to each other, in the context of the PSPPD's work, EBPM is actually about opening up the policy space by creating platforms for much wider engagement, albeit largely with experts. Addressing du Toit's argument on the political nature of the policy-making process, Sadan emphasises that there is Politics with a big 'P', which is about the wider political context in which policies are made, and politics with a small 'p', which is about relationships and networks. Reflecting on a study undertaken by the PSPPD on the views of policy-makers on EBPM in South Africa, Sadan points out that while there was a general consensus that research evidence should be used in policy-making, two main groups emerged: one group felt that evidence and empirical work is objective and scientific, and that if only we had the right evidence and the right people to do the work, we'd be able to sort out all the challenges we face; another group felt that evidence is not value-free and objective and is often in fact emergent, contested and shaped by individuals' mindsets and values – and that findings are about probability, rather than definitive answers to very complex social phenomena. Sadan straddles both points of view and feels that both have a role to play.

However, she believes that notwithstanding the politics, EBPM is a necessary technocratic response: someone needs to be able to analyse the research and make sense of it and therefore we need to have technocratic capacity to deal with research and engage with it; we have to understand the social phenomena we are confronted with and must always be mindful of values and ideology. Ultimately, policy is not about simple, clear-cut decisions on what is best to do – it will always be about contestation, power and interest and the policy terrain will constantly shift. Furthermore says Sadan, taking a pragmatic approach, some policies are aspirational, but what we need to come to terms with is what is possible in the short- to medium-term. That in itself is contentious because it's not only about resources, but also about the choices we make.

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CASE STUDY:
The Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development (PSPPD)
A technocratic response to a political challenge?

The Programme to Support Pro-poor Policy Development II (PSPPD II)

The Programme to Support Pro-poor Policy Development is a research and capacity building programme. The PSPPD promotes the use of research and other evidence in policy interventions which address poverty and inequality. The PPSPPD, Phase II focuses on consolidating an approach to policy-making that is more evidence-based, i.e. assisting policy-makers and researchers in systematically harnessing the best available evidence to inform the policy-making process.

Policy makers need evidence to inform their decisions so that they can make informed policy choices and improve the implementation of those policies. Good quality research can help to illustrate the extent of problems and the underlying causes. This is important in deciding where to focus, as well as which interventions are needed to address problems. 'Evidence' refers to the body of knowledge that is being drawn on and used to inform policy decisions. This approach of using scientific research and other evidence to formulate policies is known as evidence-based policy making (EBPM).

The second phase of the PSPPD (2012 – 2017) will leverage its knowledge and experience gained in Phase I to further strengthen the use of research and other evidence

in policy-making and implementation. The second Phase will be implemented in the social and economic sectors of government and be aligned to support the National Development Policy Support Programme (NDPSP), the overarching Programme between the South African government and the European Union. The first phase of the PSPPD ran from 2007- 2012 and focused primarily on supporting the social sector. It used the evidence-based policy-making approach to generate new knowledge through its grant-making process by funding thirteen research projects. In addition to this the Programme undertook a number of capacity building activities. Among these were training, study tours and exchange programmes. These activities included both policy-makers and academics and the aim was to contribute to their skills, attain new skills and gain exposure to good practice in other countries, and to learn from challenges within the policy-making arena.

The PSPPD II has three components one, research, two, capacity building and three stakeholder engagements. In the research component a Call for Proposals process will be launched shortly. The theme is 'Working towards Eliminating Poverty and Reducing Inequality: Addressing the Implementation Challenge'. With regard to the capacity building component the PSPPD is currently managing an International Tender process which will set up the Learning Facility which is a management and

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logistics facility. The Learning Facility will undertake the capacity building activities of the Programme. The third component of

the programme is largely about managing stakeholder relationships.

The PSPPD is situated within the National Planning Commission. The NPC has finalised the National Development Plan and Cabinet has mandated it to develop an Implementation Framework. The PSPPD will provide support to this critical area of work and further complement the body of evidence through its research and partnerships with academia, think tanks and the public sector. During the first Phase of the Programme, it worked closely with and contributed significantly to the evaluation component of the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPM&E) within the Presidency. These two Ministries within the Presidency will continue to be the strategic and institutional partners to the PSPPD II.

A key function of the PSPPD Phase II is to build on the support it provided in enhancing the capacity of these two Departments. In particular the Phase II will build on the evaluation policy, systems and the use of evaluation to improve policy implementation and providing support for the implementation of the National Development Plan. Through continued support in embedding new practices across government with

regards to evidence-based policy-making, these departments will be exemplars to the rest of government. The Presidency is taking the lead and showing how a learning institution improves what it does. This will be done through enhancing the analytical capacity of policy-makers in South Africa through professional development, so that they are able to use better methods for making use of different kinds of knowledge, improve systems for ensuring that the right knowledge is available to decision-makers timeously and that better systems are de

and Rural Development. In the Economic Cluster, the focus will be on the Departments of Economic Development, Trade and Industry and the National Treasury. The number of Provinces will be increased and will include the following, Limpopo, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. The level of engagement with the four provinces will vary.

PSPPD Phase II will continue with the building of strategic partnerships. This includes the close collaboration with the

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veloped for continuous learning. Through building the institutions of government and a body of scholarship on poverty and inequality, the ability of the government to address these challenges will be improved. The over-arching theme, therefore, for Phase II is the reduction of poverty and inequality.

The following departments in the Social Cluster will be focused on, Departments of Social Development, Health, Education

National Income Dynamics Survey (NIDS) Project which is currently implemented by the Southern African Labour Research Unit (SALDRU) at the University of Cape Town (UCT). The PSPPD has also worked in partnership with the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), in particular with the Research Use and Impact Assessment Unit and its Policy Action Network, this collaboration will continue in the second phase.

SPOTLIGHT ON:
DRUSSA

DRUSSA (Development Research Uptake in Southern Africa) is a programme funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID).

With the vision of promoting the uptake of research by key stakeholders so as to impact on policy and practice, the programme provides direct support to 24 sub-Saharan Africa universities to enhance their existing capacity, change and align their structures, processes and work routines, and train their staff in Research Uptake Management (RUM). The programme has been designed so that RUM capabilities can be sustained in the long term by the universities' themselves. In support of this, DRUSSA Digital provides multiple digital platforms with appropriately packaged interactive resources focusing on research and research uptake for its community and network audiences, principally located in sub-Saharan Africa, but also internationally.

The five-year programme was established in October 2011 following a two-year design and development phase. The DRUSSA partnership consists of three entities:

- UK-based Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), an organisation with 110 African member universities;
- The Centre for Research into Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) at the University of Stellenbosch; and
- Organisation Systems Design (OSD), a South African-based consultancy specialising in facilitating change in the research management and capacity-building sectors in Africa.

WHAT IS RESEARCH UPTAKE MANAGEMENT?

RUM is an emerging university management field with a practical, cost-effective and sustainable approach to getting research into use. It requires specialist individual capacity, aligned organisational structures and strategic management processes to optimise conditions for the dissemination, uptake and application of scientific evidence. Policies underpinned by sound research evaluation, impact assessment and demonstrable Research Uptake can lead to higher impact interventions and programmes for poverty reduction and improved quality of life for Africa's children, women and men.

DRUSSA DIGITAL – 'BEING THERE' TO BUILD A RUM DISCOURSE

The goal of DRUSSA Digital is to enrich the overall programme purpose by providing the means to engage with all the segments of the DRUSSA audience. DRUSSA's digital presence includes a website, a range of social media, and the cutting-edge DRUSSA App, designed in 2012 with inclusive community building and interaction top of mind. Now in use, the DRUSSA App has on- and offline capabilities and is geared to provide as equitable access as possible to an African-context audience – where internet access is not always as reliable or readily available – as it does to its global high-bandwidth audience. The App features built in 'Being There' features so that it can be where users already are – namely on their own desktops, laptops, mobiles, tablets and websites – to facilitate ease of access and uptake, while extending the reach of the programme's RUM discourse.

Curated content publishing and interactive discussions (prompted and spontaneous)on DRUSSA's suite of digital resources create the possibilities of capacity growth among the programme's interlinked primary audience (the Group of 24 universities) and knowledge enrichment among its secondary audiences, through learning about Research Uptake and by becoming proficient in RUM within a digitally networked environment. The DRUSSA App was developed cost effectively with a broader vision of potential replication of the app by other projects that may benefit from its unique offering. After the first six months in operation, user uptake and interaction has exceeded expectations and feedback is positive.

For more about DRUSSA, visit:
www.drussa.mobi
www.drussa.net
LinkedIn
Twitter: DRUSSAfrica
Facebook: Drussa | Development Research Uptake in Sub-Saharan Africa

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TOOLS:
Participatory policy-making

Author: Jennifer Rietbergen-McCracken, Independent international researcher and expert on environment and development

Participatory policy-making is more of a general approach than a specific 'tool', as the overall goals, no matter which method is followed, are to facilitate the inclusion, via consultative or participative means, of individuals or groups in the design of policies and to achieve accountability, transparency and active citizenship. The push for this participatory process can be top-down (i.e. by the government/organisation initiating participatory approaches to policy-making) or bottom-up (i.e. by particular stakeholder groups advocating a participatory approach or seeking to influence a specific policy). There are also cases where external bodies (notably donors) are responsible for proposing such an approach. In this respect, it should be stressed that while governments (and international development organisations) have a large part to play in opening political space, creating the right conditions, and setting up the necessary structures and processes to enable participatory policy-making, civil society organisations (CSOs) also have an important role to play in raising awareness about the issues at stake, helping citizens and communities organise themselves, and advocating for more participatory policy-making.

The extent to which participatory policy-making involves real, meaningful participation varies considerably from case to case, and a continuum can be drawn up to illustrate the levels of participation achieved. One such continuum, outlined in an FAO document (Karl, M., 2002), suggests seven different levels:

1. Contribution: voluntary or other forms of input to predetermined programmes and projects.
2. Information sharing: stakeholders are informed about their rights, responsibilities and options.
3. Consultation: stakeholders are given the opportunity to interact and provide feedback, and may express suggestions and concerns. However, analysis and decisions are usually made by outsiders, and stakeholders have no assurance that their input will be used.
4. Cooperation and consensus building: stakeholders negotiate positions and help determine priorities, but the process is directed by outsiders.
5. Decision-making: stakeholders have a role in making decisions on policy, project design and implementation.
6. Partnership: stakeholders work together as equals towards mutual goals.
7. Empowerment: transfer of control over decision-making and resources to stakeholders.

Similarly, participatory policy-making can be limited to a one-off exercise for a particular policy process, or can be part of a systemic participatory governance approach by the organisation/government in question, including in some cases permanent structures such as committees that include citizens' groups, community members, etc. The policy itself can be a local, national or international and the participatory element can relate to the design, monitoring, evaluation or reform of the policy.

To read the full write-up by Jennifer Rietbergen-McCracken, which focuses mainly on those approaches which have a stronger participatory component, i.e. levels four to seven of the above continuum, and includes both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' cases, go to

http://www.pgexchange.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=140&Itemid=132.

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Resources
Reports and papers

Applications of Complexity Science for Public Policy: New tools for finding unanticipated consequences and unrealized opportunities (OECD Global Science Forum)
http://www.oecd.org/science/sci-tech/43891980.pdf
Government officials and other decision-makers increasingly encounter a daunting class of problems that involve systems composed of very large numbers of diverse interacting parts. These systems are prone to surprising, large-scale, seemingly uncontrollable, behaviours. These traits are the hallmarks of what scientists call complex systems. This report is devoted to the proposition that the insights and results achieved through scientific analysis can be used to design and implement better governmental policies, programmes, regulations, treaties and infrastructures for dealing with complex systems.

Citizen voice and state accountability: Towards theories of change that embrace contextual dynamics
http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/7557.pdf
This paper puts forward a model for developing theories of change (ToCs) that are better grounded in dynamic socioeconomic and political contexts. In order to do so, it suggests an analytical approach which might be useful for understanding contextual dynamics and inform the mapping of citizen voice and accountability (CV&A) outcomes. It is envisaged that the ongoing mapping of the contexts in which interventions are taking place will improve ToCs, which will in turn result in better results.

International symposium: The politics of poverty research and pro-poor policy making - Learning from the practice of policy dialogue
http://www.pan.org.za/node/9141
This report outlines thetwo-day event which saw lively discussion on the nature and role of evidence, dominant methodologies in social science research, and ways to make sense and meaning of data. Through the exchanges of experience and research, some fresh and innovative frameworks were brought forward which enabled a more critical, realistic approach to the policy-making nexus, with a specific focus on the politics of poverty research and pro-poor policy development.

Making sense of "evidence": Notes on the discursive politics of research and pro-poor policy making
http://www.plaas.org.za/sites/default/files/publications-pdf/PLAAS_WorkingPaper21dutoit_0.pdf
This paper explores some of the assumptions underlying 'evidence-based' approaches to poverty reduction impact assessment. It argues that the discourse of Evidence-Based Policy (EBP) offers poor guidance to those who seek to ensure that social policy-making is informed by the findings of social science. The paper considers an example from the South African context – the shift to the 'two economies' framework and the policy interventions associated with Accelerated and Shared Growth-South Africa (ASGISA) – and explores the implications for approaches to research more attuned to the realities of the policy-making process. It concludes with a discussion of the implications for social researchers and policy-makers. This paper generated several discussions and which follow on *The politics of the evidence based policy mantra*, a response by Enrique Mendizabal.

Politics of research-based evidence in African policy debates: Synthesis of case study findings
http://www.mwananchi-africa.org/storage/ebpdn%20synthesis_websiteeditjuly.pdf
This paper presents the findings of a year-long research project, *The Politics of Research Uptake*, which contributes to the evolving discussion regarding the relationship between research and policy by considering the role of research-based evidence in African policy debates. The notion of a 'policy debate' in developed countries is directly associated with debates over evidence and its role in advancing political purposes, as a number of recent examples demonstrate. Applying this consideration to the African context, this paper takes a wider view of the policy process – in which policy debates are understood to be an integral part of policy-making – by examining the role of research-based evidence in four case studies on diverse policy debates in sub-Saharan Africa in Ghana, Uganda, Zambia and Sierra Leone.

Think tanks in sub-Saharan Africa: How the political landscape has influenced their origins
http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/6209-think-tanks-africa-political-context
This paper explores the relationship between think tanks and politics in sub-Saharan Africa. It tests the hypothesis that different types of think tanks existed in the region before so-called 'independent' US-style think tanks emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, and that the character and activities of these, as well as the types of knowledge they produce, have been influenced primarily by the prevailing political environment. The paper tries to capture the broad political context across sub-Saharan Africa over the past five decades and assess what impact, if any, this has had on the origin and development of think tanks.

What shapes the influence evidence has on policy? The role of politics in research utilisation
http://www.younglives.org.uk/files/working-papers/yl-wp62-porter-evidence-and-policy
The key lesson that emerges from this paper is the primacy of politics in shaping how evidence is used. In order to influence the policy process, the research community must understand both the technocratic and the political aspects of policy-making, and how these shape the choices and incentives of policy elites. The paper proposes guidelines for integrating political economy analysis into different stages of the research and communication process.

Web links

Africa Power and Politics
http://www.institutions-africa.org/
Africa Power and Politics (APPP) is a five-year programme of research and policy engagement that aims to identify ways of ordering politics and regulating power and authority that might work better than those now in place on the basis of a careful and critical look at what has worked well in Africa itself in the recent and not-so-recent past.

Collaboration for Evidence Based Healthcare in Africa
http://www.cebha.org/
The main objectives of this project are to support African health systems to build health policies, practice and public health strategies on informed and evidence-based decisions; strengthen the African healthcare workforce; promote the use of the best available evidence in clinical healthcare and individual patient care; foster South-South cooperation with a view to strengthening the scientific capacity for health systems/health policy research; and to promote local ownership of the entire process from priority setting to implementation.

Evidence-based Policy in Development Network (ebpdn)
http://www.ebpdn.org/
This programme aims to establish a worldwide community of practice for think tanks, policy research institutes and similar organisations working in international development, to promote more evidence-based, pro-poor development policies. Specifically, this website is designed as a community website which provides knowledge on bridging research and policy; details of members of the network; a directory of training and advisory expertise; discussion forums; project areas; and a partnership brokering area.

Innovations for Poverty Action
http://poverty-action.org/about
Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) is a non-profit organisation which designs and evaluates programmes in real contexts with real people, and provides hands-on assistance to bring successful programmes to scale. IPA evaluates what works in fighting poverty using the most rigorous methodology available, the randomised controlled trial, and its research spans a variety of fields, including microfinance, education, health, agriculture, charitable giving, political participation and social capital. The organisation strives to bridge the gap between cutting-edge academic research and action by non-profits, governments and firms and shares the evidence it generates with development practitioners, policy-makers and donors.

Mwananchi: Strengthening citizen engagement
http://www.mwananchi-africa.org/
The Mwananchi Programme works to strengthen ordinary citizens voices and improve state accountability and responsiveness to citizens' interests in Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia. It creates change by maximising the ability of civil society organisations, the media, elected representatives and traditional leaders to enable citizens to effectively hold their governments to account. It does this by supporting over 60 innovative projects which work closely with communities to trial new ways of amplifying citizens' voices, increase access to public services and enable them to interact with the state to further good development outcomes.

Training

Public policy course 2013
Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa
10-23 June 2013 – Johannesburg, South Africa
This course in public policy, governance and civil society is designed to provide basic fundamentals of public policy analysis to practitioners working in civil society organisations, public service and the private sector. Recognising that public policy is best formed and implemented by informed leaders, the course seeks to enhance the required leadership skills. The emphasis of the course is on how public policy may be viewed as a governance tool essential for political and institutional development. The deadline for applications is 15 March 2013.

Developing effective policy: Analysis and use of evidence
RIPA International
24-28 June 2013 – London, United Kingdom
This one-week course is intended to support better decision-making in the policy process, from formulation to implementation, by placing the best available evidence from research and evaluation at the heart of it. This workshop systematically considers what constitutes evidence for policy-making purposes, and how robust research evidence can be used to improve policy-making. It appraises different types, notions and sources of evidence to determine their value and contribution to policy-making and participants will learn about different types of research and evaluation and how to integrate them with other key factors that influence the policy process.

Impact evaluation for evidence-based policy in development
University of East Anglia
8-19 July 2013 – Norwich, United Kingdom
Given the need for policy-makers and programme implementing and funding organisations to justify their choice of social and economic interventions, it has become increasingly important to use 'evidence-based' criteria to decide what kind of programmes work, how, for whom, in what circumstances and at what cost. Much evidence is quantitative in nature and this course aims to equip those working in governments, funding agencies, research organisations and non-government organisations to understand, critique and make effective use of such evidence.

Events

The politics of evidence: Values, choices and practices for evaluating transformative development
23-24 April 2013 – Brighton, United Kingdom
A conference for those concerned with transformative development and the political challenges of assessing what works. The aim of the conference is making participants more conscious of how power plays out in evaluation processes; strengthen their capacity to deal with it; and gain the courage and confidence to navigate political space, maintaining or increasing options and putting pressure on the system to shift demands.

African Cochrane Indaba: Global evidence local application
6-8 May 2013 – Cape Town, South Africa
The African Cochrane Indaba provides a unique opportunity for Africans to come together to celebrate what has been achieved, to reflect on what has worked and what hasn't (and why) and to discuss how collaboration can be further strengthened in the years to come. Opportunities will be provided for updating methodological knowledge and skills, sharing best practice regarding dissemination and translation of evidence and networking.