

Dissemination Strategy

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Why is research ignored?

- Inadequate supply of relevant information
- Researcher's poor understanding of policy processes
- Ineffective communication of research
- Ignorance/ anti-intellectualism of policymakers
- Research is deemed unimportant, censored or controlled
- Politicization of research – selective use to legitimise political decisions
- Some ways of 'knowing' are seen as more valid than others

- NB Time lag between dissemination of research and impact on policy
- 'Percolation'

The link between research and policy

Research → Policy

- **assumes**
 - Research influences policy in a one-way process
 - There is a clear divide between researchers and policymakers – the ‘two communities model’

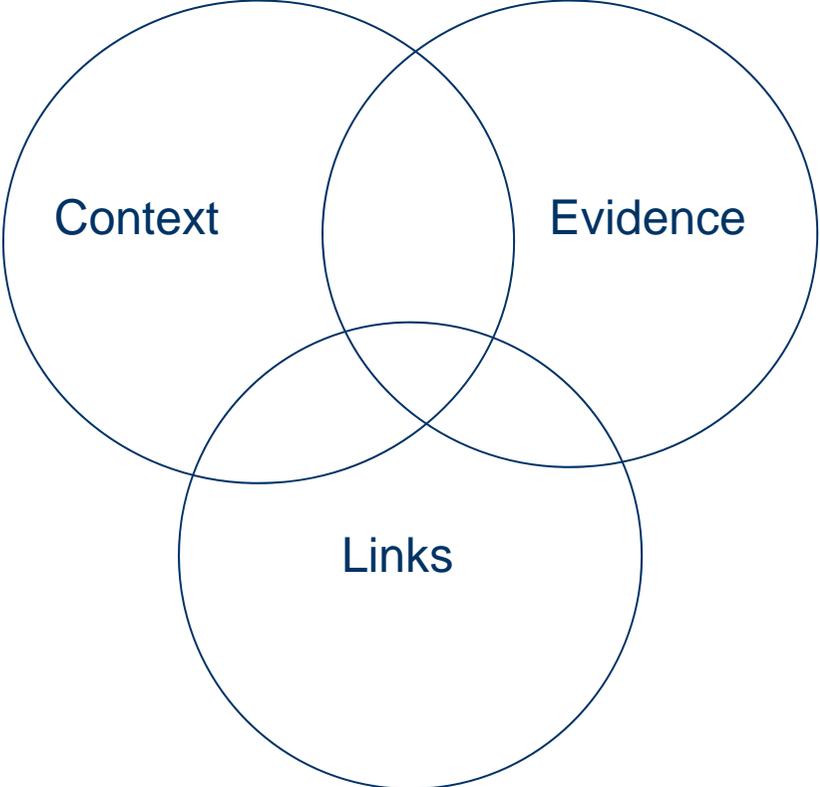
But....

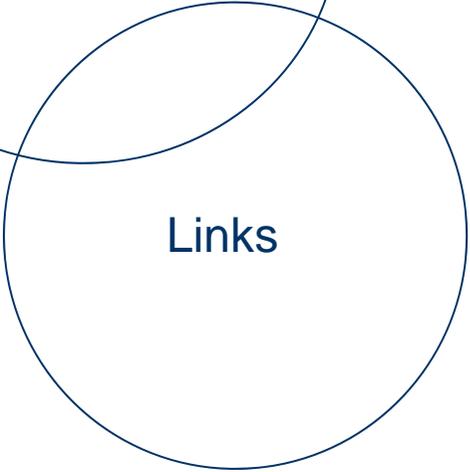
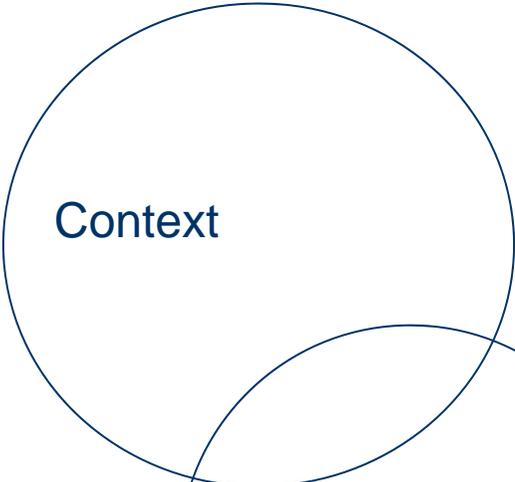
- Dissemination is about learning, not telling
- Policymakers need to feel ownership
 - generate ideas as well as use results
 - two way process
- understanding of political context and actors
 - International policymakers
 - National policymakers
 - Professional (advisers and opinion formers)
 - Policy champions
 - Donors

The RAPID framework

- Context
 - The political structures/ processes, institutional pressures
 - Prevailing concepts, policy streams and windows
 - NB political contestation and vested interests
- Links
 - Between policymakers and other key stakeholders
 - NB institutionalised and informal networks
 - NB role of media, advocacy and campaigning groups
- Evidence
 - Relevance
 - Methods/ Validity/ Generalisability > Credibility
 - Simplicity of the message
 - Degree it challenges received wisdom
 - How it is packaged and communicated

Crewe and Young, ODI, 2002





Context

Links

Evidence

Types of dissemination

- Academic papers
- Working papers
 - peer reviewed
- Policy briefing notes
 - local, national, international
- Project newsletter
- Special reports

Young Lives

An International Study of Childhood Poverty



Childrens' experience

- “My classmate Biruk insulted me saying ‘Your family is poor, your mother is a kitchen maid working in somebody else's house. That is where she brings you leftover food from. Your father earns money by digging dry latrines and things like that.’ Other students in the school also insult me, because of what Biruk told them about our family being poor.

Fighting poverty – Tigist Challa

Evidence based policy?

- the impact of research
 - may occur neither at the time of the research, nor in ways that are predictable
 - is not necessarily in the direction in which researchers intend and is mediated by the options available to policy makers at a particular time.
- research needs to be both radical and to relate to its time and place.... research and its influence will vary with the political complexion of the country and ideological and religious factors

The Relationship Between Research and Policy in Britain 1800-1950, Platt,L.

Context

- Who are the policymakers?
- Is there demand for new ideas
- Resistance?
- Opportunities and timing for input into process
- Work with policymakers
- Accept commissions
- Line up research with high profile policy events
- React to policy windows

Evidence

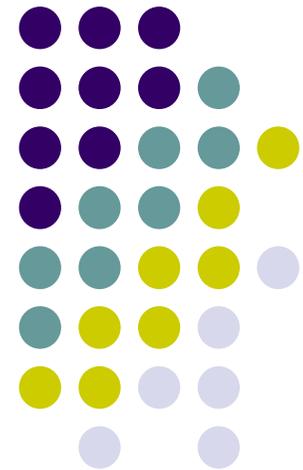
- What is current theory
- What are the prevailing narratives
- How divergent is the new evidence?
- What sort of evidence will convince policymakers?
- Respected programmes – high quality work
- Action research to demonstrate benefits
- Participatory approaches to build legitimacy
- Clear strategy and resources for communication, **from the start**

Links

- Who are the key stakeholders?
- What links and networks exist between them?
- Who are the intermediaries and what influence do they have?
- Whose side are they on!
- Partnerships between researchers, policymakers and communities
- Identify key networks and champions/salesmen
- Use informal contacts

Specific issues in Media engagement

With thanks to Ania Lichtarowicz
(BBC), ODI and Panos London



1. Why use the media to disseminate research?



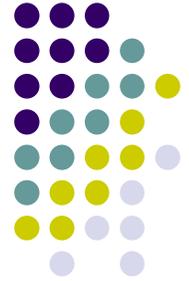
- Informs general public and specific audiences
- Promotes links and alliances between interested parties
- Provides a forum for sharing and debating research
- Makes research/ researchers accountable to participants and their communities
- Gives civil society an opportunity to hold policymakers to account
- Builds credibility for research groups
- Links research to policy processes
 - ‘getting you into the kitchen – being part of the soup making’

2. The timing of your media releases



- Will you only want to talk to journalists when the research is finished.....or will interesting information be produced earlier in the project?
- Journalists like to have a reason to tell a story – a ‘news hook’
 - a campaign,
 - a UN day,
 - a government policy initiative,
 - an intergovernmental conference,
 - a human interest story
- Be as opportunistic and creative as possible

3. What is the story?



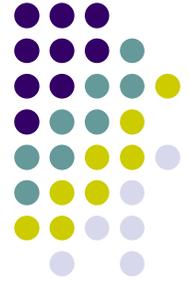
- Identify the main points that you want to communicate, and why
 - Plan in advance - develop a communications strategy...
 -but also be flexible and quick to react
- “... a good story hits you in the heart or the pocket ... nothing else matters, nothing else can change your life...”
- new or little known facts – something they haven’t heard before (news!)
- local colour
 - real people/ back stories
 - photos/ interviews
 - ‘print and radio media have a huge appetite for research-based stories, *particularly where a local issue is put into a global context, or vice versa*’. Panos evaluation

4. Summarise the main points in a press release



- 'NEWS RELEASE' date and contact details
- Embargo: not for publication or broadcast before xx hours, xx date
- Begin with a headline
- One or two sentences that sum up the main findings and are backed up with striking facts and figures e.g. 'one new case every seven seconds'
- Three or four main points (who, why, what, were, when)
- A conclusion and main policy implications
- Type 'ENDS' in bold
- Contact details
- Word count, short description of your institution, relevant background and statistics (e.g. on dementia)

5. Press Conferences



- Prepare an advance press release 10 days before and a press release 2 days before
- Follow up to make sure they are received
- Ask if they will be covering the story
- Give an embargo date/ time
- Invite all of the relevant media
- Be available
 - give journalists contacts
 - make sure you can be reached
 - have someone credible/ authoritative to answer questions
 - provide private interview opportunities

6. Be a little careful



- Every story can be told in many ways – try to set the agenda, keep on message, and control the story
- There are always two sides to every argument – be prepared to counter the other side
- Stick to your subject – don't be drawn into areas you don't know much about
- Remember that not all publicity is good publicity
 - Negative public or political responses (doom and gloom, exaggeration)
 - Knee jerk policymaking
 - Ethics (e.g. confidentiality)

Resources

- RAPID framework (Overseas Development Institute
 - http://www.odi.org.uk/RAPID/Tools/Toolkits/RAPID_Framework.html
- PANOS London (Working with the media – guide for researchers)
 - <http://www.panos.org.uk/global/Rprojectdetails.asp?ProjectID=1059&ID=1022&RProjectID=1090>