Policy Community Survey
Follow-up Qualitative Interviews

June 11, 2012
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May 30, 2012
Executive Summary
Executive Summary

The policy-making process

- Stakeholders have different opinions when it comes to how the policy-making process has changed over the past five years. Some say things have improved, largely due to better public consultation, increased stakeholder involvement, and greater transparency throughout the process. However, some stakeholders indicate the process has worsened or remained unchanged, for some very similar reasons, including; little stakeholder involvement, little or no public participation in the process, failure of implementation, a lack of process for evaluating policy, and more generally, political instability or corruption. The differences in opinion are likely the result of the different national political contexts in which the stakeholders work.

- According to nearly all stakeholders, changes to policy-making processes are expected in the near future. Anticipated positive changes include better government facilitation, better budgeting, increased funding, the consolidation of civil society, as well as better consultation with various stakeholders involved in policy making. Uncertainty exists among some stakeholders around emerging and future political challenges as well as a reluctance to be transparent. Some stakeholders also indicate that there is doubt about the amount of public consultation that will actually occur moving forward.

- Quality in the context of the policy-making process is not simple to define. Stakeholders illustrate this by mentioning a wide array of thematic areas when asked about the definition including stakeholder inclusion in the process, the ability of the policy to be translated into action, clear outline of goals of the policy, the ability of a policy to respond to citizens’ needs, and the existence of an effective evaluation process for the policy.

Implication for the Policy Community Survey (PCS):

- Because quality in the context of policy-making processes is difficult to define, the definition used in the Latin America / South Asia wave of the PCS should continue to be included in future waves of the PCS to ensure all participating stakeholders are answering from a similar perspective.
Executive Summary

Types of information

• Similar to the results of the quantitative survey, stakeholders involved in the qualitative phase tend to work in the areas of agriculture/food, economic issues, poverty, trade/industry, education, and human rights.

• Many stakeholders want information on more than one topic. Agriculture, economic issues, environment, human rights, and poverty tend to be types of information that are needed congruently, suggesting that much of the stakeholders’ work related to policy making is interdisciplinary, and it is difficult to classify areas of work into a single area.

Implication for the PCS:

• Questions included in the PCS about the types of information relevant to stakeholders’ work related to policy making should be re-visited to take into account the interdisciplinary nature of their work.
Executive Summary

Ease of obtaining information

• Stakeholders indicate that obtaining information needed for their work related to policy making tends to be difficult. The reasons for this largely relate to lack of infrastructure at the local level, controlled access to information, and poor dissemination of information.

Implication for the PCS:

• Future PCS could explore the issues related to lack of infrastructure and poor dissemination of information. These are areas in which stakeholders could provide insight and advice for think tanks in their respective regions.
Executive Summary

Quality of research

- Government – Echoing the findings of the quantitative survey, stakeholders concur that they have concerns about the quality of government sources of information. The cause of the dissatisfaction with government sources relates to access, inconsistencies in the information, reservations about methodology, and concern that the research is driven or affected by political interests.

- Independent policy research institutes – Overall, stakeholders from all regions and stakeholder groups agree that research outputs from independent policy research institutes are good. The only concerns that are voiced relate to the independence of these types of organizations, as some stakeholders suggest the organizations may have biased interests, or that their funders may have specific interests that compromise their independence.

Implication for the PCS:

- These findings echo the results of the quantitative survey and could be explored further in future waves of the survey. Questions such as – why are there quality concerns related to government sources? And if the quality of independent policy research institutes is considered high, how can this be leveraged to increase use?
Executive Summary

Research Formats

• Many stakeholders indicate that they prefer using multiple research formats for their work related to policy making. Many mention databases / statistical databases, which are considered a preferred format by many as they allow them to work with raw data. However, others mention they prefer published reports and policy documents, which summarize and include analysis on a specific topic.

• The policy brief gets mixed reviews as a medium to receive information. In part it seems that stakeholders like reviewing briefs in conjunction with other more detailed formats of information, however, there also seems to be lack of understanding about what a policy brief actually is, and what form it should take.

Implication for the PCS:

• Given the uncertainty surrounding the term policy brief, future waves of the PCS should provide a clear definition of what is meant by a policy brief. Stakeholders could also be asked when they find policy briefs most useful and when then prefer more detailed information.
Executive Summary

Future challenges facing think tanks

- Stakeholders report a wide range of future challenges for think tanks. Some of these concerns can be classified as functional, internal concerns, such as securing funding, producing quality research, awareness raising, as well as effective dissemination of their research. Other challenges are external to the institution, such as the political/social context in which they operate, infrastructure, and external partnerships with other organizations.

Implication for the PCS:

- The PCS is a useful tool for monitoring the challenges think tanks face. Tracking the performance ratings grantees institutions receive over time, will give useful insight into how think tanks are addressing challenges. The attributes on which grantees institutions are rated should be reviewed to ensure they cover the many challenges faced by think tanks, and be adapted to include new challenges, particular related to infrastructure and methods of information dissemination, as think tanks adapt to evolving technology.
Introduction
Introduction and objectives

As part of the Think Tank Initiative, a program implemented by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and designed to support independent policy research organizations in three global regions, GlobeScan was retained to design and conduct a primary research study, with the main objective to develop an understanding of the policy community in specific countries. Specifically, IDRC wanted the research to help identify strengths and weaknesses of particular think tanks; what activities are associated with the success of think tanks in order to help prioritize support strategies (funding, training, and technical assistance); and to create a benchmark against which future surveys can be compared to indicate broad changes in the policy community and the perceptions of think tanks.

The quantitative benchmarking research was completed over the course of 2009-2010 in 11 African countries, 7 Latin American countries, and 5 South Asian countries. Following the quantitative study IDRC then wished to conduct a qualitative research exercise in order to better understand underlying perceptions and issues in more depth.

The specific objectives of this qualitative phase of research are to:

• Delve deeper into key findings identified in the three regional reports, including understanding underlying perceptions;
• Learn how respondents defined and interpreted key terms and themes; and
• Add context to the quantitative findings.
Stakeholders were recruited based on their response to the final question in the quantitative study, asking if they were willing to participate in future research related to the policy community survey. Respondents answering yes to this question were selected at random to participate, ensuring distribution across all countries in each of the three regions (South Asia, Latin America, and Africa), as well as distribution across the seven targeted stakeholder groups.

- Government
- Non-government organizations
- Media
- Multilateral/bilateral organizations
- Private sector
- Research/Academia
- Trade unions (in Latin America only)

The following slide outlines how each of these stakeholder groups is defined for the purpose of the Policy Community Survey, and this qualitative follow-up study.
Methodology

In total 29 qualitative interviews were conducted over the phone. All stakeholders participating in this qualitative study participated in the quantitative phase of the research as well. As such, it is worth noting that the quantitative study was not designed with the intention to gather perceptions of a statistically significant sample of the policy community. Instead stakeholders were selected to participate in the quantitative study, realizing the limitations of the sample, but acknowledging the value of understanding perceptions of individuals in senior positions within each national policy community. As a result, the same limitations apply to this qualitative follow-up, in which the respondents were selected with the intention of representing the sample of the quantitative study.

Stakeholders interviewed are active members of the national policy community, meaning that they develop or influence national government policy. Respondents are from the following sectors:

- **Government**: Senior officials (both elected and non-elected) who are directly involved in or influence policy making.
- **Non-governmental organization**: Senior staff (local or international) whose mission is related to economic development, environmental issues, and/or poverty alleviation.
- **Media**: Editors or journalists who report on public policy, finance, economics, international affairs, and/or development, who are knowledgeable about national policy issues.
- **Multilateral/bilateral organization**: Senior staff from organizations run by foreign governments either individually (bilateral e.g., DFID, USAID, etc.), or as a group (multilateral e.g., UN agencies, World Bank, etc.).
- **Private sector**: Senior staff working at large well-known national and multinational companies.
- **Research/Academia**: Senior staff at universities, colleges, research institutes, and/or think tanks.
- **Trade Unions***: Senior representatives of national trade unions.

*Trade union only included in Latin America*
## Sample Summary—number of respondents per country and stakeholder group

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The policy-making process
Quality in the context of the policy-making process

Stakeholders give varying responses when asked about the definition of quality in the context of policy-making processes. Some stakeholders mention a clear definition, while others mention multiple aspects of quality. Themes emerging from the responses include:

1. Stakeholder inclusion
2. Translation into action
3. Clear goals at the outset
4. Responds to needs of citizens / those affected are satisfied with policies
5. Financial and capacity realities
6. Effective evaluation process
1. Stakeholder inclusion

The concept of including all stakeholders in the policy-making process is frequently mentioned by all stakeholder types from all three regions, as a key indicator of quality policy making. Many stakeholders mention specific stakeholder groups, such as academic, government, community stakeholders, while others simply refer to general stakeholders of the process.

“A good public policy starts from how it was proposed, with the involvement of stakeholders. This is a key point, the amount of people participating, politician participation, public policies shouldn’t only be about high quality bureaucratic process, it must be well formulated politically and publicly.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Honduras

“Look at the consultative process, i.e. whether it takes into account the views of those who are going to be affected; the calibre of the people involved in the decision and whether it is evidence-based.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Ghana

“This is in terms of participation and you want to ensure the academia, local government and the community are all involved.” – NGO stakeholder, Uganda

“Also whether the process involves the stakeholders not just public officials but also those from the private sector too.” – Media stakeholder, Kenya

“It has to be party-signatory, i.e. major stakeholders should be consulted, and should be evidence-based.” – Private sector stakeholder, Ethiopia

“When the policy affects many people, with many different levels of the population, then every stakeholder should have a say. In other words, when we are making the policies come to be implemented they reflect the will of the people involved.” – Government stakeholder, Rwanda
2. Translation into action

A number of stakeholders mention that the concept of quality should include taking into account the effectiveness and feasibility of implementation of a given policy. Responses suggest that policies may not always translate into action, and when they do it is likely the result of quality policy making.

“The element of evaluation of the policy is the implementation, the access for target group of the policy and the policy should meet the target for which it is being designed. If the frame work of the policy is saying something then that should be implemented also.” – Media stakeholder, Nepal

“In India policies are made but there is disconnect in what is expected from the policy and what actually happens in terms of implementation of that policy e.g. policy was made to provide credit facility to the farmers but only 19% reaches to the farmer despite the government pumping in crores* of rupees.” – Academic stakeholder, India

“Quality is in the context to the policy translated into action as worked out in implementing to achieve objective data in a timely manner reaching out to communities and whatever it is supposed to do is able to deliver that. Policy translated into practice reflect the quality of the policy.” – NGO stakeholder, India

“Quality means the feasibility of implementation.” – Academic stakeholder, Sri Lanka

*South Asian numbering system equal to ten million
3. Clear goals at the outset

Clear goals are also mentioned as an element of quality policy making. Stakeholders suggest that clear goals lead to outcomes that can be evaluated against the original objectives.

“In the first place, you need to have goals as any well-defined indicator has. It is a little strict at this, it also needs to consider the development of policy process, their technical features have to meet the political ones, they must be well balanced.” – NGO stakeholder, Peru

“First you need to know your aim. If you have a strategy for the country as Panamá or Costa Rica does, in what the enlargement of the Panama canal is about, I’m going to do some coordination, some investments dedicate some time.” – Academic stakeholder, El Salvador

“It should be thoroughly researched and the information be factual and addressing the concerns engendered; should also have to have terms of reference and at least indicating the outcomes of the policy, and that has to be very clear right from the beginning.” – NGO stakeholder, Tanzania

“There should be a clear mandate.” – Government stakeholder, Rwanda
Quality in the context of the policy-making process

4. Responds to needs of citizens / those affected are satisfied with policies

Another frequently mentioned element of quality is whether or not the policy addresses the needs of its target group, who in many cases, are the general population of a country. The frequency at which this element is mentioned suggests it is a key element of quality.

“The major consideration would be whether it responds to the needs of citizens.”
– Multilateral stakeholder, Ghana

“That it addresses pertinent issues that affect the population; look at the problems, address them and look for solutions.” – Media stakeholder, Kenya

“My opinion regarding the quality is the delivery and the reach, I mean is the policy reach to the end user or the people for whom the policy is designed.” – Media stakeholder, Nepal

“The policies made at the national level have relevance at the grass root level.”
– Academic stakeholder, India

“Policy-making quality can be defined twofold; on the one hand it depends on the policy-maker’s magnitude, and on the other, the people for whom the policy has been established. The quality refers to the satisfaction these two parties find versus their interests, as they are no necessarily the same for both parties. Satisfaction is a measure of quality.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Burkina Faso
Quality in the context of the policy-making process

5. Financial and capacity realities

Financial viability of a proposed policy although a repeated mention of quality, is mentioned less often than other elements. Comments related to financial realities are made largely by stakeholders in Latin America.

“You must go from point A to B, how to set up the policy, what resources to use, but the public institutions aren’t very good, it is needed a reorganization of the institutes. In the second place, you must know how to finance it.” – NGO stakeholder, El Salvador

“To have very strict control of fund investments, where to use it, their management, get the objectives of what they were intended to. For example, an amount of the budget has to be used to fight hunger.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Guatemala

“Another key is the financial viability of its set up: if you don’t have enough budget, it won’t work. This is crucial.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Honduras
Quality in the context of the policy-making process

6. Effective evaluation process

Another, less frequently mentioned, element of quality is the evaluation and monitoring process of a given policy. Two stakeholders explicitly mention effective monitoring and evaluation as an element of quality.

“Monitoring and all the aspects related to policy should be in a perfect condition to maintain in good quality.” – Academic/Research stakeholder, Sri Lanka

“I turn to statistics from before the policy was set up, and the ones [obtained] after [the policy was implemented]. This allows me to look at how the change was [handled]/ Then, the bank frequently [creates] economic models, and I compare [these] to the proposed [policy], and I finally evaluate the policy.” – Government stakeholder, Bolivia
Changes to the policy-making process over the past five years

When asked how the policy-making process has changed in their respective countries over the past five years, stakeholders give a mix of responses. Some indicate there are elements related to the policy-making process that have improved, such as public consultation, stakeholder involvement, and greater transparency. Others indicate that elements of the process have worsened or stayed the same. These include failure of effective implementation, challenges related to political instability and corruption, a lack of a systematic process of evaluating policies, as well as little or no public and stakeholder involvement in the process. Examples of comments on these issues are listed on the following slides.

Elements that have improved

1. Better public consultation
2. Better involvement of relevant stakeholders
3. Greater transparency

Elements that have declined/stayed the same

1. Failure of implementation or impact for target group
2. Political instability / corruption
3. Lack of systematic process of evaluating policy
4. Little or no public participation
5. Little stakeholder involvement
Improved

1. **Better public consultation**

Some stakeholders in Africa indicate policy-making processes have improved over the past five years, because of improved public consultation.

“It has been gradually changing, owing to the new constitution which behoves the government to ensure full public participation.” — Media stakeholder, Kenya

“I think it has improved a lot and allows rural populations to organize in groups and also to know where they can really get information to improve different activities through any information system.” — Private sector stakeholder, Burkina Faso

“We see a lot of policies being formulated and people are very much participating in making those policies, that is one of the areas [in which] the country has been doing a lot.” — NGO stakeholder, Tanzania
Improvement in quality of policy-making processes over past five years

Improved

2. Better involvement of relevant stakeholders

Some of the respondents across regions indicate more stakeholders have been involved in policy-making processes over the past five years. Government and civil society are named explicitly, while many of the interviewees, mention stakeholders of policy making more generally as a collective.

“I would say it has opened, there’s more room for [involvement], not only from the centre, properly self-generated by the government, but by local government, and people organizations. There’s also something about the information which flows better than 30 years ago.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Honduras

“Originally, only policy makers had their say, but since then there have been many dramatic changes.” – Government stakeholder, Rwanda

“Involving stakeholders in [the] policy-making process has improved.” – Private sector stakeholder, Bangladesh

“…there have been some improvements within the last five years, as civil society involvement is now recognized, and its contribution is taken seriously so there is a growing participation of the community in the process of consultation.” – NGO stakeholder, Uganda

“…certainly a positive change over the last few years where stakeholder opinion is taken into account during the policy-making process.” – NGO stakeholder, Sri Lanka
Improvement in quality of policy-making processes over past five years

Improved

3. Greater transparency

Greater transparency throughout the policy-making process is frequently mentioned by stakeholders as an improved area. However, it is likely that this finding is specific to the country level, and may vary from country to country.

“An area in which we have seen improvement is in transparency. In the last five years, we have seen the approval of a ‘public access to information act’.” – Media stakeholder, Honduras

“…there has been an improvement in the last 5 years, there has been refinement in governance, transparency, and value for money.” – Academia stakeholder, Nigeria

“I think there is more transparency in terms of whatever documents [are] available, like the working group reports and background papers. This is much better access to [the] information that went into policy making. So transparency has improved definitely, but in terms of [the] functional level of the policy, I don’t see any significant change.” – NGO stakeholder, India

“In last five years there was very much less transparency in the policy making process and when people ask about the policy process the government always gave the excuse of war as the government says that because of war they have to keep the policy making process confidential. From last two years there is a slight improvement as government has started taking opinions from public. That has certainly been a positive change over last few years where stakeholders opinion is taken in to account during policy making process.” – NGO stakeholder, Sri Lanka
Decline in quality of policy-making processes over past five years

Declined/Stayed the same

1. Failure of implementation or impact for target group

Lack of impact or implementation is mentioned as a reason for a decline in the quality of policy-making processes.

“In the last five years the government fails to implement policy to the target group.”
– Media stakeholder, Nepal

“I think the government has been blamed by people for being very good at making policy but not at implementation” – NGO stakeholder, Tanzania

“Things were a bit down because we didn’t feel there were any policy decisions regarding the country’s development, and there have been many promises that had not been kept, especially promises about the quality of life of the population and [about] health issues. [None] of this changed much. Expectations were not met.” – Media stakeholder, Senegal
Decline in quality of policy-making processes over past five years

Declined/Stayed the same

2. Political instability / corruption

Disruption of the policy-making process is attributed to a variety of stability issues including poverty, lack of respect for the rule of law, or simply the climate of uncertainty generated by a period of political transition, a relatively short-term destabilising influence as opposed to endemic corruption or poverty which require more long-term systematic solutions.

“The country is poorer than before, children are dying of hunger…. In a country like ours it is very difficult to read this.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Guatemala

“The overall policy-making process [has] deteriorated because of the political instability going on in Nepal.” – Media stakeholder, Nepal

“There are laws created with unknown interests, without any discussion or planning, only because of corrupt action.” – NGO stakeholder, El Salvador

“Senegal has had elections recently— the 1st round was on 25 February and the 2nd was on 25 March- and up to then, whether it was on an economic or social standpoint, everything was suspended till the results of the elections; a lot of sectors were no longer functioning properly while people were waiting for the outcome and now they can sigh in relief and hope that everything will be better” – Media Stakeholder, Senegal
Decline in quality of policy-making processes over past five years

Declined/Stayed the same

3. Lack of systematic process of evaluating policy

One stakeholder mentions the challenges associated with policy evaluation.

“To be honest, I can’t find any elements which [have] had an improvement, but it is clear to me that has gone worse, for example, a disdain for statistics, a voluntary work over a technical job, and in the public service, a profound disdain for knowledge. In conclusion, policies evaluation is not an important issue.”
– Government stakeholder, Bolivia
4. Little or no public participation

While some stakeholders mention public participation as an area of improvement, other stakeholders mention it as a challenge that has become increasingly difficult to overcome over the past five years.

“Some has improved, but others have been at a standstill or declined... there is increasing politicisation of almost everything in the country, politicians have to control almost every aspect; political interference on appointments in state institutions has increased, so you have people making decisions that owe their allegiance to a political party and are not qualified for their position.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Ghana

“In last five years or so the military government was replaced by [a] democratically elected parliament, but here again the mind set of even policymakers in democratically elected parliament has remained unchanged, so there has not been much change in the policy-making process in the interest of common man in the country.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Pakistan

“For more than two decades national policies [have] been dictated by backers, therefore the population has not had much involvement.” – Academia stakeholder, Mali
Decline in quality of policy-making processes over past five years

Declined/Stayed the same

5. Little stakeholder involvement

While some stakeholders mention increased stakeholder involvement as an area of improvement, a stakeholder in Ethiopia mentions it as a challenge that has become increasingly difficult to overcome.

“It has got worse because the government used to previously consult before making policy, and now they make policy without consultation and then just inform us.” – Private sector stakeholder, Ethiopia

“On [being] evidence based, there are now a lot of institutions in Ethiopia doing this type of research, they are increasing, but more policy-making is driven by political interest and made on ideological grounds. The government doesn’t consult these institutions.” – Private sector stakeholder, Ethiopia
Expected changes to policy making process in the near future

When asked if they expect to see significant changes (positive or negative) in the policy-making process in the near future, stakeholders give a wide variety of responses. The lists below group these responses by thematic area:

Positive future change
- Better government facilitation
- Better budgeting
- Increased funding / foreign support
- Consolidation of civil society
- Consultation across sectors/stakeholders

Uncertainty around future changes due to
- Political challenges
- Reluctance to be transparent
- Lack of public consultation

When asked what types of agencies are likely to contribute to changes that will enhance the quality of policy making process, a wide range of organizations are repeatedly named (see list below). Think tanks are named (although not explicitly named as think tanks nor independent policy research institutes) by three multilateral stakeholders, one in Ghana and in Burkina Faso, the other in Pakistan. An academic in Mali and an NGO stakeholder from Peru also point to think thanks as a contributor to change.

Civil society
- Reserve Banks / Chambers of Commerce

Multilateral organizations
- Universities / academia / students

Government (local and national)
- Private sector

Media
Types of information
Types of Information

When asked under which categories their work fits, respondents tended to mention more than one interrelated area rather than one in isolation. The most frequently cited are Agriculture/food and Economic issues. Mentioned slightly less frequently are issues such as Poverty, Trade/Industry, Education, and Human Rights. Foreign Affairs is barely mentioned as a category indicating a domestic focus for most stakeholders.

There is a strong association between the two most frequently mentioned areas (Agriculture and Economics), as many stakeholder mentioned that their work relates to both of the categories. This likely reflects the strong reliance many of the countries involved in the study have on the agricultural sector.

Environment, Human Rights, and Poverty issues also tend to be mentioned by respondents as topics that are all related, particularly among Government, NGO, and Multilateral stakeholders.
Types of Information—Summary

Agriculture/Food  
Poverty  
Economic  
Trade/Industry  
Education  
Human Rights  
Environment  
Health  
Foreign Affairs

Circle size indicates number of mentions

Large circles = more mentions
Small circles = less mentions
Ease of obtaining information
Ease of obtaining information

When asked how difficult or easy it is to obtain the information needed for their work related to policy making, stakeholders tend to indicate this is a difficult task, very few say the information they need for their work is readily available. The main reasons causing the difficulties related to access are mentioned across regions and stakeholder types. They include:

- Lack of infrastructure at the local level—noting that global information is easier to access
- Controlled access to information
- Poor dissemination of information

Lack of infrastructure

“At the national level it is impossible. There are no updated statistics, and the government institutions behind these issues, even though they have improved, depend on the interests of the government party. There is a good technocrat team of professionals gathering information, but they don’t publish it. There is no information policy.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Guatemala

“It is not easy to find the information on these topics because it is not computerized, organized, or socialized, because everyone individually works the way they think is better.” – Private sector stakeholder, Peru

“It can be difficult in this part of the world, but because we have global infrastructure that sort of information is easy to get. Localized information is more difficult.” – Academic stakeholder, Nigeria

“Administrative records are very poor and they often don’t use computers, the information is not organized. It is easy to get the information, but you must pay someone to type it and process it.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Paraguay
Ease of obtaining information

Controlled access to information

“…in Sri Lanka the public has no access to information, rather the information is closely guarded. There is no free flow of information to the public, but to sustain ourselves, we have to be extra cautious in getting information. Moreover, whatever information we get is far less than a satisfactory level of information.” – NGO stakeholder, Sri Lanka

“It can be difficult. We may be looking for something, we’ve had a tip, and need a response from the government, and the person in charge within the government may not be forthcoming.”
– Media stakeholder, Kenya

Poor dissemination

“It is often difficult because the information is not always circulated very well; sometimes the information exists but we do not know where to get it, and in other cases people do not want to give it for free.”
– Media stakeholder, Senegal

“Information systems are poor, and we don’t get information very easily.” – NGO stakeholder, India

“It’s difficult because there are no ready sources were we go [for information]. We ask people, and through personal contact [get information]. I usually develop good contacts, otherwise there is no way.”
– Academic stakeholder, Sri Lanka
Sources of information
Sources of information

Stakeholders were asked in both the previous quantitative Policy Community Survey, and in the qualitative follow up, which kinds of organizations they turn to. Below (and on the following slides) is a comparison of the results. It is noteworthy that the stakeholders participating in the qualitative study named a wide range of organizations from which they gather information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AFRICA Quantitative finding: Type of organizations most mentioned</th>
<th>Qualitative finding: Types of organizations mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government agencies</td>
<td>Ghanaian government institutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Various government ministries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International agencies</td>
<td>Civil society organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research institutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General Internet search (no specific sites used)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NGOs (national or international) (ENDA Tiers Monde, Oxfam, Tostan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Universities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private sector organizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sources of information

Stakeholders in Latin America name similar kinds of organizations to those named in the quantitative study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LATIN AMERICA</th>
<th>Quantitative finding: Type of organizations most mentioned</th>
<th>Qualitative finding: Types of organizations mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International agencies</td>
<td>World Bank, BIF, World Monetary Fund International organizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent policy research institutes</td>
<td>Research centres, Public organizations, GRADE, CIE, PNP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government agencies</td>
<td>National Statistics Institute, Various government ministries, Central Bank</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research institutes</td>
<td>Health institutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non profit organizations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private companies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sources of information

In South Asia, while a number of different types of organizations were named in the qualitative study, it is noteworthy that no independent policy research institutes were named.

| SOUTH ASIA |
| Quantitative finding: Type of organizations most mentioned |
| Qualitative finding: Types of organizations mentioned |
| International agencies | UNICEF |
| | International societies |
| | IMF, World Bank |
| Independent policy research institutes | |
| Government agencies | Bureau of Statistics |
| | Central Bank |
| | Various government ministries |
| NGOs | |
| Chambers of Commerce | |
| Universities | |
| Media | |
| Trade unions | |
Quality of Research—Government
Quality of Research—Government

All stakeholders were asked about the quality of research provided by government sources in their respective countries. Generally responses are similar to the findings reported in the quantitative Policy Community Survey—quality is considered an issue when using government sources. Generally, stakeholder responses can be classified into four categories:

- Difficult to access what you need
- Inconsistent
- Reservations about methodology
- Driven by political interests

Stakeholders also reiterate the PCS finding that although government sources tend to be relatively easier to access, there are quality concerns. One stakeholder mentions explicitly that government sources tend to be inferior to other sources of information such as universities and NGOs.

Difficult to access what you need

“It is good when it is there, [government sources] do not always have all [the information] I need.”  
– Government sector stakeholder, Rwanda

“I think the information coming from these sources is good quality, but it is sometimes difficult to get hold of it.” – Private sector stakeholder, Burkina Faso

“The quality is a secondary issue. First of all, getting adequate information is a problem.”  
– NGO stakeholder, India
Quality of Research – Government

Inconsistent

“It is not 100% because you find inconsistencies in the information.” – NGO stakeholder, Tanzania

“Average. Sometimes the [results of] investigations about a public project are actually different from what is really happening. Sometimes the same institution involved releases a document, but in reality something different is happening.” – Media stakeholder, Honduras

Reservations about methodology

“Ministries and other public institutions don’t [meet] my expectations, including the Central Bank which needs more accuracy in its [work].” – Government stakeholder, Bolivia

“Looking at research, I think it is the methodology that needs to be looked at; the questions to be asked about it are whether the methodology used gives cause for concern about the results, but apart from that the quality if research is the same whether talking about a government related institute or a university one.” – Government stakeholder, Benin

Driven by political interests

“It depends on the interest and the political party. It is not available, [and] is very malleable.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Guatemala

“Sometimes it is a bad source, or a bad methodology, or political interests.” – NGO stakeholder, El Salvador

“I’d say it is 50/50 because sometimes they want to cover topics but it doesn't always work out for them, but when they produce something the quality is fair.” – NGO stakeholder, Uganda

“Usually when it comes from the government, I tend not to trust it that much. If the information is strategic, fine. But if it is political, I do not believe much.” – Media stakeholder, Senegal
Quality of Research—Independent Policy Research Institutes
Quality of Research—Independent Policy Research Institutes

All stakeholders were asked about the quality of research provided by independent policy research institutes in their respective countries. Generally responses are similar to the findings reported in the quantitative Policy Community Survey—quality of research outputs from independent policy research institutes is considered good.

Overall, the only concerns voiced about the quality of outputs of independent policy research institutes are related to questions about vested interests of the organizations and their funders.

“I think the quality of the information coming from these institutes is good, but it also depends on the origin of the budget, because even if the sponsor finances a research protocol to get the information it conditions the financing through a certain type of methodology which eventually affects the end results. The information is good, but it could be improved.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Burkina Faso

“Their quality is ok. They work on national issues, but unfortunately they become politically minded. The government feels that they are not pro-government, as government never picks any ideas from them. One or two are pro-government, they make the end result [of the research] aligned with the government thinking.” – Private sector stakeholder, Bangladesh
Regional-specific sources of information
Sources of information—Latin America

The results of the quantitative survey showed that in Latin America international agencies, independent policy research institutes (also known as think tanks), and government agencies and research institutes are turned to most often as a source of research-based evidence.

Stakeholders based in Latin America were asked if they think this statement is accurate, and whether they themselves use these types of organizations as sources of information. Most of the stakeholders interviewed agree with the finding.

“It is helpful to compare information [from these sources], complement it, check some data, and verify if they are closer to reality, even if they aren’t so reliable.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Guatemala

“Yes. Those are the primary sources of information and producing [information] is their main role.” – NGO stakeholder, El Salvador

“Yes. There is little public information, but you can find information from the think tanks.” – NGO stakeholder, Peru
Sources of information—Africa

The results of the quantitative survey showed that in Africa government agencies, as well as international agencies, are turned to most often as a source of research-based evidence.

Stakeholders based in Africa were asked if they think this statement is accurate, and whether they themselves use these types of organizations as sources of information. Most stakeholders agree with the quantitative finding.

“Yes. Occasionally we need research-based information. We try to get it from the government, unless they are not up to speed in that area.” – Media stakeholder, Kenya

“Yes. I turn to government agencies for information, but the problem is that sometimes they lose information in the process of moving from one building to another, and this [adds] another layer of difficulty to getting the information. But the international organizations, and the national ones as well as the public and private institutions are sources of information,” – Multilateral stakeholder, Rwanda

“It depends in which sector you work and regarding the one I work in, the government hasn’t done much research so you cannot get much information there; but international agencies have done, and mostly universities too, so you can get information there.” – NGO stakeholder, Uganda

“This is true in some way, because you may know as well as I do that information can be quite expensive. Therefore national agencies who do not have enough tools or enough budget to gather information, find themselves quite limited. Therefore sometimes it is international agencies who provide the budget to get the information. But I use both types of organizations.”
– Multilateral stakeholder, Burkina Faso
Sources of information—South Asia

The results of the quantitative survey showed that in South Asia international agencies, independent policy research institutes (also known as think tanks), and government agencies are turned to most often as a source of research-based evidence.

Stakeholders based in South Asia were asked if they think this statement is accurate, and whether they themselves use these types of organizations as sources of information. Most stakeholders agree with findings of the PCS.

“I agree. If I want to prove my argument, my viewpoint, or my story, I have to go with a side document, or the research briefing paper from these organizations.” – Media stakeholder, Nepal

“Definitely, yes. As when these organizations share their data it is well trusted because their data is not [from] desk studies. They take a whole lot of effort in gathering data by actually going to the masses at the grass root level, so that data is trustworthy.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Pakistan

“Yes, you are correct that the published reports from private, civil society movement groups and international agencies are trustworthy. We do use information by local and international agencies and we also use web-based information sources in our work.” – NGO stakeholder, Sri Lanka
Research formats
Research formats most often used

When asked what formats of research they prefer to use for their work, stakeholders give mixed answers. Many mention databases and statistical databases which allow stakeholders to work with raw data. However, at the same time, there is also mention of published reports and policy documents, which allow stakeholders to review already completed analysis on the data. A consistent message throughout the responses is that stakeholders prefer to access multiple formats.

“I think that when producing information, a research institute should be able to produce the information in several formats in order to give the same person the [opportunity] to use either one format or the other according to the use he wants to make of it. Therefore, all formats are necessary.”
– Multilateral stakeholder, Burkina Faso

“First I choose online reports because they also include analysis and not only pure numbers. Secondly, [I use] the database to sustain that information.” – Private sector stakeholder, Peru

“First I choose the reports to find the topics, debates, and tendencies, and then it is necessary to return to the [data]base.” – Academic stakeholder, Ecuador

“Talking to the actors/those involved in the agenda…also [use] documented information: published reports, depending on funding and topic; also databanks—we produce policy briefs from them, then put them on the website.” – Academic stakeholder, Nigeria

“Reports are useful, but on the whole I find statistical databases more useful for what I do.”
– Academic stakeholder, Mali

“There are databases, as well as the reports published and reports coming from various agencies. If you compare a couple of those things, then you will have an idea of what is more [accurate].”
– Academic stakeholder, India
Use of the policy brief

When asked if they use policy briefs to support their work, it is clear that many stakeholders do but to varying extents. Across the interviewed stakeholders, there are diverse views on format, length, intent, and government involvement. There is consensus, however, that a policy brief should be clear, concise and to the point.

Use policy briefs

“Yes, we use policy briefs. I use policy briefs prepared by ministries for my information and use it for discussing with government.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Pakistan

“Yes, I do use these. They are sometimes needed to approve a policy. When the policy is [ready to be implemented] you can use the policy brief to get final approval.” – Government stakeholder, Ghana

“Yes, I have used so many times.” – Media stakeholder, Nepal

“Yes, I use them when I do research on a given domain, and where I actually expect there will be briefing note for that situation.” – Private sector stakeholder, Burkina Faso
Use of the policy brief

Very few of the interviewed stakeholders indicate that they do not use policy briefs regularly. Below is a listing of the four stakeholders who explicitly indicate they do not use policy briefs. It is worth noting, these stakeholders work in varying sectors, across the three regions included in this study.

Don’t use policy briefs

“I do not really use them. In my view they are not as comprehensive as a report, or a database when we are looking to offer or help to draw strategies. I can’t see how policy briefings could come in handy.”
– Academic stakeholder, Mali

“We do not have many policy briefs.” – Academic stakeholder, Sri Lanka

“Yes, but rarely.” – Government stakeholder, Bolivia

“[Policy briefs] are something we develop, so we never use policy briefs from elsewhere because we do not have an organization that produces any.” – NGO stakeholder, Uganda
Databases and policy briefs

When asked to define the terms databases and policy brief, stakeholders seem to have a clear understanding of what a database is, as indicated in the verbatim response below. Understanding of a policy brief, however, seems to vary among stakeholders.

**Databases**

“A database is the compilation of all the information, which is inserted in a frame which enables the comparison of various information to each other. The presentation format is the same [no matter] the information.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Burkina Faso

**Policy briefs**

*Books of 100 to 200 pages which mention certain issues, explaining some issues [such as] food, economic policies, or a political overview of Latin America, etc.”* – Academic stakeholder, Ecuador

“A document based on research, analysis of the behavior of political and social factors over a certain process.” – NGO stakeholder, Peru

 “[A policy brief] should analyse the policy in the context of the politics and background, goes direct to strategy, what should be done, and recommendations.” – Academic stakeholder, Nigeria

“It is a report summarizing the objectives and instruments of a policy, and, if its possible, it evaluates its assessments in impact, tracking, etc.” – Government stakeholder, Bolivia

“A policy brief is a report from the government and a quality one is when the notes contain sufficient information that allows you to make decisions.” – Government stakeholder, Rwanda

“It is a diagnosis of the public policies in Peru, which tells me that a certain policy did this, and this is the data obtained, this is the scenario. [It is] something very descriptive, with an interpretation of the reasons of a scenario.” – NGO stakeholder, Peru
A closer look at perceptions of think tanks
Use of terms “think tank” and “independent policy research institute”

Generally, with a few exceptions, stakeholder view the terms “think tank” and “independent policy research institute” as interchangeable terms.

The few stakeholders who indicate a hesitancy to use the two terms interchangeably tend to be from Africa. Two even say they are not at all familiar with the term “think tank.”

“As far as I’m concerned, think tanks and independent policy research institutes are two totally distinct entities.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Burkina Faso

“I am not sure if they can be used interchangeably. I think these are two different things. As far as think tanks are concerned, I think they mainly give official trends which are the results of research. As far as independent policy research institutes [are concerned], I am not sure that all their research is published.” – Private sector stakeholder, Burkina Faso

“I don’t think they are interchangeable. Think tanks could be a group of people or a forum or individuals that are assembled to brainstorm on a particular issues… while an independent policy research institute is dedicated to policy research and is quite independent.” – NGO stakeholder, Tanzania

“Think tank’ is not a term I am familiar with.” – Media stakeholder, Senegal

“I am not familiar with the word ‘think tank’.” – Government stakeholder, Benin
Usage of think tanks

Overall, think tanks are used to some extent by all stakeholders participating in the qualitative study. Although some note that their use depends on subject matter, and if the information provided is relevant to their work. Generally, think tanks are valued for their independence, and their use of respected methodologies that result in high quality research outputs.

“Yes, I have used them, when there is a new emerging topic and when I do not know which shape to give a topic [that needs] to be developed. [In such a case] a think tank may be able to explore the question within quite a short time and give quite clear and coherent answers.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Burkina Faso

“Yes, we do use think tanks because the information you get from them give you the whole picture and you start thinking in a new direction and perspective. You get information on the gaps which need to be bridged. It is important to know views from different organizations working in the same field and knowing varied views is also very important.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Pakistan

“Yes, of course. You expect good analysis on the topic. They are works which are deemed essential and when you get information from them, it enables you to see a new angle, casts a new light on the topic. There are geographical differences and they force you to see issues across geo-political environments.” – Academic stakeholder, Nigeria

“[Think tanks] have processed information. I use a lot of databases, but I also need the impartial vision from other people.” – Government stakeholder, Paraguay

“Because they create reports on topics we are interested in, we are willing to hear opinions from an independent institution—how they see the development of policies, they have a lot of information which complements the public [information available].” – Media stakeholder, Honduras
Many of the interviewed stakeholders tend to believe that think tanks play the role of filling in information gaps within policy-making processes, providing informed, impartial information on crucial issues. However, there are a number of stakeholders who indicate that think tanks do not play an influential role in the policy-making process. Their near non-existence, and, in one case, their impartial approach are mentioned as reasons for their lack of influence.

**Positive role**

“In Ghana they are crucial, they play a leading role in areas where governments are for political reasons afraid to do so, [they] highlight issues, and have gone ahead to implement findings.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Ghana

“Think tanks have a big role to play within policy-making processes in Pakistan in terms of identifying the gaps which need to be bridged. They have a role in helping government to understand the problem with an open mind, and to formulate policy in the interests of the masses.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Pakistan

“They are thought provoking and have strong impact on society because they can change perceptions and concepts with actual facts and figures which is helpful in making the decisions, and implementation is easier.” – Government stakeholder, Nepal

**Non-existent role**

“[Think tanks] don’t have a role. We did have civil society legislation which gave them a role, but not now.” – Private sector stakeholder, Ethiopia

“Very limited. Think tanks don’t have important participation in the process of policy development, and very low possibilities of placing a topic in debate. This may be because many think tanks have been associated with a political party or a certain government. This made them defend a position and attack other models.” – Government stakeholder, Bolivia

“I think they are still too weak. They aren’t publicized [enough]. It is hard for them to create debate which is useful.” – Government stakeholder Paraguay

“Currently, they do not play any role.” – NGO stakeholder, Sri Lanka
What the role of think tanks should be in the policy-making process

Independent, impartial, critical, open, bold, objective, active, and advisory are the types of adjectives used when stakeholders describe what the role of think tanks should be within the policy-making process. Some stakeholders indicate they don’t think there is much need to change the role of think tanks from what it is at present, while others suggest there is need for an improved role, or a shift in the current role.

“The same keep on critiquing, with evidence, based on something and trying to propose something.”
– Multilateral stakeholder, Honduras

“As a third force, independent and impartial, raising the issues that are on people’s minds, should be facilitating and acting as an enabler. The government does listen to them.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Ghana

“Their role is to assist or support the ruling party in decision making; they have to assist and give advice.”
– Academic stakeholder, Mali

“They should act like watch dog in terms of maintaining the objectivity and policy making process, in terms of providing professionalism, to look at the data with longer vision to bring out better policy than what the government is trying to do. They are already doing the same thing. They are very conscious and it is known that their role is to be very objective in policy making.” – Academic stakeholder, India

“I think they could do more; independent policy research institutes should give evidence and give more alternatives; but think tanks could do more in terms of providing what is the likely impact of the policy so the country can make an informed decision.” – NGO stakeholder, Uganda
Current challenges facing think tanks
Current challenges facing think tanks

When asked about the challenges currently facing think tanks, respondents tended to focus on two broad areas; challenges in the process of conducting their work, or the reputation/credibility of the research and organisation (e.g. as impacted by political affiliations, reliability of sources etc.)

Procedural Factors:
1. Engaging government to influence policy
2. Collecting accurate up-to-date data
3. Securing/effectively deploying sufficient funding

Credibility Factors
1. Political affiliation
2. Authority to change/influence policy
Current challenges facing think tanks

The procedural challenge of engaging government is inextricably linked with the credibility challenge of gaining authority. The division between these factors reflects whether the respondent is referring to the engagement itself or in the process of gaining the authority to facilitate engagement.

Procedural Factors:

1. Engaging government to influence policy

“Make the government consider their job, their research tools or their technical support. This is a big challenge that can contribute to the democratization.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Guatemala

“Many times private bills are put up in parliament but due to vested interests of political parties they don’t support the bill for the fear to losing power and thus such private bills gets knocked down completely and change is resisted at the parliament, this is real challenge before the think tank.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Pakistan

“There are difficulties because the government doesn’t readily accept guidelines from these institutes and it makes it complicated to bring the results of their research to the government’s attention. This is the biggest challenge.” – Private Sector stakeholder, Burkina Faso

“On the governance side the biggest challenge is openness of government, not only to transparency but also openness to fresh ideas.” – Academic/Research stakeholder, Nigeria

“They role depends on the goodwill of the particular regime.” – Media stakeholder, Kenya
Current challenges facing think tanks

Procedural Factors:

2. Collecting accurate up-to-date data

“In order to develop a policy which is suited to the environment and/or the population, one has to go and find out what the population’s concerns are before sitting down to analyse and make any offers.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Burkina Faso

“Obviously the gathering of solid information.” – Academic/Research stakeholder, El Salvador

“India being a large country, it is not easy collecting representing quality data across the country and come out with a solid policy. That is one challenge and second challenge is quality of data and quality of research compiled across the country.” – Academic/Research stakeholder, India
Current challenges facing think tanks

Procedural Factors:

3. Securing/effectively deploying sufficient funding

“In this part of the world it is funding.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Ghana

“One has to be aware of the budget limitations related to the consultation frameworks; this is a predicament and the reason they sometimes limit the scope of their work to some populations close by and with a reduced number of staff; this limits their contribution as they are unable to take on board all the concerns of all the population.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Burkina Faso

“A way to fund their process and not only their projects, those are the important things.” – Academic/Research stakeholder, El Salvador

“If there is a lack of human capacity and financial resources, they won’t be able to produce the type of research needed.” – Government stakeholder, Rwanda

“I think that funding, in my country, has been curbed down, so they do not have the opportunity to do their work adequately and to report their work; so right now this is a challenge to find funding to do nationwide research to provide credible results”. – NGO stakeholder, Uganda
Current challenges facing think tanks

Credibility Factors

1. Political affiliation

“The second challenge is that of independence; all independence is relative because even a so called independent structure may not be that independent; because up to what point are they independent to think, to make offers without any pressure from the parties who set up the think tank.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Burkina Faso

“The challenges are leaving the political ideologies behind, the way lefts/rights are being tagged is the major challenge.” – Private sector stakeholder, Peru

“Credibility, mainly because they used to be involved with a political sector, this makes their job not credible because people think they are defending a position or attacking another because of an ideology, not objectively.” – Government stakeholder, Bolivia
Current challenges facing think tanks

Credibility Factors

2. Authority to change/influence policy

“Governance is the major problem of think tanks. Think tanks need to improve their own governance and pass that standard.” – Private sector stakeholder, Ethiopia

“We are aware of them in the Education sector but do others, like the Assembly for instance, realise the weight, the benefit that think tanks can bring in, this is the question.” – Academic/Research stakeholder, Mali

“The challenge is that they should associate themselves with the actual policy making process. But they are not doing this.” – Academic/Research stakeholder, Sri Lanka

“Creating debates and a higher profile” – Government stakeholder, Paraguay

“It is quite possible that these independent policy research institutes are not qualified enough to approach in detail all possible aspects from a number of things, I cannot really say, but they ought to be.” – Government stakeholder, Benin

“The political will to take their advice; this is a very, very big issue: the issue is not that there are no policies, but it is implementation that is the challenge. After the research the government says “Well, we have paid you” and files it in the cabinet, and then when they want to do something else, they just call a consultant, commission more research and the same thing happens.” – NGO stakeholder, Tanzania

“They need to go beyond just debate and discussion and move into the area of more monitoring of whatever they have been able to influence actually translate into reality so I think they need to take that step forward.” – NGO stakeholder, India
Future challenges for think tanks
When asked about likely future challenges facing think tanks, respondents saw multiple and mutually reinforcing challenges manifesting, particularly in the “developing country” context (politically, economically, and socially). While basic procedural and functional issues like securing funding and producing quality research are central to a think tank’s success year on year, overcoming these challenges is contingent on other issues including the relevance of their research in a changing and possibly volatile socio-political climate, the proliferation of adequate communications infrastructure (and their ability to capitalise on it) and cooperation (and sometimes assistance) of government and other institutions.

1. Awareness/marketing
2. Infrastructure
3. Communication/dissemination of research
4. Quality of research
5. Securing funding/relevance of study
6. Political/social context
7. Partnership with other institutions/bodies
Future challenges facing think tanks

1. Awareness/marketing

“They will have to fight to have any visibility in terms of reputation, in terms of knowing whether their members have adequate qualifications, are they really qualified, a doctorate or something else.” – Government stakeholder, Benin

“There are two levels of awareness, people like me may be aware they exist, we know about the existence of the Conseil Economique et Social or other think tanks but it is difficult to say whether other members of the population know about them; they may have seen the name without knowing they are involved in policy research.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Burkina Faso

“It may not be the same challenge in the future, rather, things could improve because if the population becomes aware of their role, then the government will have to pay attention to them. Their challenge then, will be that they will have to communicate more in order for them to be better known.” – Private Sector stakeholder, Burkina Faso
Future challenges facing think tanks

Respondents interpreted the issue of infrastructure in different ways with some referring to the physical and communications infrastructure of the country (roads, phone lines etc.) and others focusing on the organisational structure of the think tanks themselves.

2. Infrastructure

National Infrastructure

“Everybody is aware of the infrastructure’s shortfalls in the country. If the think tanks start working for the infrastructure development then everybody will welcome.” – Private Sector stakeholder, Bangladesh

“Yes because the challenge can be in term of research at community level, at the lowest level in order to get accurate information from that particular area and how changes need to happen.” – NGO stakeholder, Uganda

Internal Infrastructure

“It is relative because we have think tanks with very good infrastructure, others [have] poor [infrastructure]. This gives them more opportunity to organize events, but not only for them is important. Any good institution should have good infrastructure.” – Government stakeholder, Bolivia
3. Communication/dissemination of research

“The first issue is one of information, communication; because when people are informed they can find the appropriate channels to convey the information.” – Academic/Research stakeholder, Mali

“They must find channels, their publications shouldn’t just remain in libraries but from time to time they should organise conferences and find opportunities to make their publications within universities, their websites should be accessible.” – Government stakeholder, Benin

“For any institution, communicating is a challenge, and more for think tanks who need to disseminate their job. Now, the think tanks with young people, have a better use of technology, some others which have a lot of data have problems uploading theirs.” – Government stakeholder, Bolivia

“Trying to make these instruments reachable for all kinds of people, social economic and political groups.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Guatemala
4. Perceptions of Quality

“This can be a problem because we don’t know whether it is of quality or not so if you have to apply their research you don’t know where you can end up.” – Media stakeholder, Senegal

“Yes, can be a challenge because when the results come out, it is often the case, the government discredits it and they are constantly challenged to make sure they can produce something else and this creates a big problem because they compromise their quality as opposed to coming up with solutions.” – NGO stakeholder, Uganda

“There’s a quality issue…Combining quality and autonomy is a main issue.” – NGO stakeholder, Peru

“The quality of think tanks has deteriorated and the government does not believe much in think tanks.” – Private Sector stakeholder, Bangladesh
Future challenges facing think tanks

5. Securing funding/relevance of study

“This goes hand and hand with the rest because if they have qualified people then their specialisation will be in relevant domains; but it shouldn’t be a frantic race for getting money; also not simply jumping on the bandwagon when a topic is becoming fashionable.” – Government stakeholder, Benin

“Yes, donors may be funding projects which are not necessarily those of most help.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Ghana

“If they find out now what the nation needs, do the proper study on that and the government should approve their findings and people should know that they are conducting such studies.” – Private Sector stakeholder, Bangladesh

“Funding would remain a biggest challenge.” – NGO stakeholder, Sri Lanka

“As I told you some funding is done with the government and some with the agencies. Normally they are funded by donor agencies. Funding is always challenge everywhere.” – Private Sector stakeholder, Bangladesh
Future challenges facing think tanks

Like infrastructure, this was interpreted in different ways, some respondents saw the principal challenge as stemming from the political establishment, others from the grassroots or local political context.

6. Political/social context

“The future challenges may be social, political, environmental conditions are very quickly changing. They have to adjust policies accordingly.” – Academic/Research stakeholder, Sri Lanka

“if they have to work on a particular political aspect which doesn’t meet with local feelings they may disregard the point of view of the local players; this is where the problem could lie.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Burkina Faso

“The biggest challenge is with our parliament, you see the same faces, and some change the parties [they] are supporting. They change [their] stance in the context of their political affiliations at the state or local level.” – Multilateral Stakeholder, Pakistan

“Sometimes decision makers keep the information they receive. They are afraid, they need to trust and be more democratic in how the information is used. The model [of transparency] should be seen as an opportunity, not a menace.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Guatemala
Future challenges facing think tanks

Networking is seen as an important direction for think tanks to move in across stakeholder groups, and respondents show high levels of advocacy for think tanks to meet this challenge.

7. Partnership with other institutions/bodies

“It is all in their interest to forge relations with other institutions because this is what I had in mind when I was talking about visibility because this is the way to get a proven track record and each time any institution will need any of these independent institutes there will be someone who will be able to say they have worked with them and can recommend them.” – Government stakeholder, Benin

“I think they should expand their network in order to expand their job and quality, exchanging information, working along with other institutions in researching because this could empower them to have influence in the public agenda.” – Government stakeholder, Bolivia

“There is very little collaboration between different institutions and it would be extremely helpful if they did so. Sometimes there is competition between them. I encourage sharing.” – Multilateral stakeholder, Ghana

“They need to involve others working on the same issue I mean as I said people working in the grass roots level, state level or district level.” – NGO stakeholder, India
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