

FINAL REPORT

LINKING RESEARCH AND PUBLIC POLICY IN LATIN AMERICA

REGIONAL CONFERENCE IN
BUENOS AIRES
25 & 26 JUNE 2009

ORGANISED BY GDN, CIPPEC, CIES, GRUPO
FARO & ODI

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CIPPEC (Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento) is an independent non-profit organisation that works for a fair, democratic and efficient State that seeks to improve the life of its population. To do so it concentrates its efforts on analysing and promoting public policy to foster equity and growth in Argentina. Our challenge is to translate into concrete actions the best ideas that emerge from the areas of Social Development, Economic Development, Institutional Strengthening, and Public Administration, through programmes of Education, Health, Social Protection, Fiscal Policy, International Insertion, Justice, Transparency, Local Development, and Government Policy and Administration.

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INTRODUCTION

This report is a summary of the main outcomes of the workshop “Linking Research and Public Policy in Latin America”, held in Buenos Aires on 25 and 26 June 2009. It was organised jointly by CIPPEC (Centro de Implementación de Políticas Públicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento - Centre for the Implementation of Public Policy for Equity and Growth, Argentina), CIES (Consortio de Investigación Económica y Social - The Economic and Social Research Consortium, Peru) and Grupo FARO (Ecuador) with the support of GDN (Global Development Network) and ODI (Overseas Development Institute).

Aims of the Conference

The main objective of the conference was to help build and strengthen bridges between research and public policy in the region. It was held to complement the various activities carried out in 2008 and 2009 in the programme “Spaces for Commitment: using knowledge to improve public policy in favour of the poor” with various instances of debate, reflection and generation of practical knowledge.

This meeting sought to make a contribution to capacity building among researchers and policy-makers so as to improve links between them and, in consequence, to foster a better use of evidence in public decision-making. To do so, over 40 representatives from policy research institutes (PRIs) from the region met with policy-makers. In the space thus created, they sought to strengthen a community of practice genuinely committed to using knowledge to improve public policy in favour of development, with growth and equity.

Areas of Interest

The conference focused on the following areas of interest for the discussion:

- Reflections on the impact of knowledge production in public policy.
- Exchange on the identity and roles of PRIs in the region, including questions such as their funding model, the origin and type of relations with state agencies, etc.
- Debate on the relationship between research institutes and political parties in the region.
- Reflections on the place of research institutes and the mass media in constructing public policy.
- Knowing the demands made by public policy decision-makers on research institutes.
- Training for research institutes designed to strengthen the areas of impact assessment, relations with public policy decision-makers, communication and alliance strategies with the mass media.

Agenda for the Workshop

A full agenda is attached as Annex 1.

The expected results of the conference were:

- Reflection on the actors with whom the PRIs work, or should work, in order to impact public policy in the region.
- The opportunity for various actors such as representatives from research institutes, State officials and journalists from different countries in the region to meet and discuss potential associations.

- Use the workshops to strengthen the capacities of research institutes to impact public policy.
- To reflect on the role of PRIs as providers of evidence through research for the diffusion of proposals and promotion of public policy.

Participants¹

The participants were chosen to represent the region in a balanced form, with at least one representative per PRI per country and political officials from strategic countries. One of the conditions for selecting the guests was that all participants should occupy a position of responsibility and decision-making, affording the conference a high level of debate and exchange of ideas. The intention behind the representation of an Executive Director from an African research institute was to exchange interregional experiences and learning. In all, the event was attended by 31 persons from abroad, representing 15 countries in the region. There were also representatives from local organisations, with a total of 47 participants on the first day of the Conference, and 43 on the second. The diversity of origins, specialisations and fields of work of each participant significantly enriched the debate and exchange of experiences.



Top row (left to right): Martín Lardone, Javier Portocarrero, Francisca Browne, Orazio Bellettini, Fernando Masi, Martín Benavides, Francisco Pérez, Vanesa Weyrauch, Agustina Malvido, Ricardo Martner, Jorge Mora, Roberto Arias de la Mora, Marvin Valverde, Viviana Martínez, Mauricio Cortéz Avelar, Carlos Aramburu, Jorge Papadopulos, Marina Orman, María Rosa Gamarra, Carlos Barriga.

Bottom row (left to right): Dr. Lunogelo, Iliana Carrasco, Roberto Liz, Enrique Mendizábal, Norma Correa, Shahira Emar.

The Virtual Platform

One month before the conference saw the launch of the Virtual Platform for the conference: www.vippAL.org (the initials correspond to the Spanish name of the conference: **V**inculando **l**a **I**nvestigación y **P**olíticas **P**úblicas en **A**mérica **L**atina). Its aim was to provide information on the conference, including background, objectives and work agenda.

Likewise, the idea behind this virtual space was to encourage exchange between participants before the

¹ The full list of participants is attached as Annex 2.

conference and to introduce the topics to be dealt with during the event. Thus, in the month prior to the conference, any news emerging was published in the platform and comments could be made. Participants at the event could also register and take part in weekly debates, access the case studies to be presented at the conference and any other documents that the participants wished to share with the group. The post-conference platform will remain active after the conference, so that those who were unable to attend can have access to it, and those who did attend can gain easy access to the materials to share and expand on them in their places of origin. So all presentations made were posted on the site (those of greatest interest in English too) and it is hoped to publish the interviews with certain participants, a summary of the final report, the evaluations and the photos. The space for debate is

still open for exchange and any doubts that may have arisen after the event.



The Design of the Report

The first and second sections of this report contain a brief description of the presentations made on the first and second day of the conference, respectively. In the third section we describe the topics that emerged after the debates as the most significant for possible future activity. The same section attempts to reflect all those conclusions reached in the debates and in group work on the topics that are a priority in strengthening of the link between research and public policy in Latin America.

1. PRESENTATIONS AT THE CONFERENCE – DAY 1

OPENING BY THE ORGANISERS

The conference was opened by **Miguel Braun** (Executive Director of CIPPEC, Argentina); Vanesa Weyrauch (Co-director of CIPPEC's Social Protection Programme, Argentina); **Shahira Emara** (head of GDN's Capacity Building in Knowledge Management programme in Africa, Latin America, and South Asia, Cairo); **Javier Portocarrero** (Executive Director of CIES, Peru); **Orazio Bellettini** (Executive Director of FARO, Ecuador) and **Enrique Mendizabal** (Principal Researcher at ODI, United Kingdom).

The opening highlighted the importance of promoting links based on the creation of solid spaces for interaction. To this end, discussion took place on the importance of translating ideas into actions in order to foster the creation of networks for joint work and learning. At the same time it was stressed that the dialogic methodology of the event would allow for the introduction of questions as to the direction of the research required in Latin America in promoting public policy in favour of the most vulnerable sectors of society. It was claimed that evidence and knowledge are vital in producing greater development and equity in Latin America, so it is hoped that the outcomes of the conference will lead to the production of better public policy and better political systems in favour of the population in general.

COMPARISON OF CASE STUDIES AND REFLECTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN PUBLIC POLICY².

The framework presentation was made by the author of the comparative analysis of the studies, **Carlos Acuña** (Director of the Master's Degree in Administration and Public Policy, Universidad de San Andrés). With him at the table were the authors of the various case studies: **María Rosa Gamarra** (Researcher at *DSE Learning Center*), **Viviana Martínez** (CLAEH Researcher), **Roberto Arias de la Mora** (Research Professor from the Colegio de Jalisco) and **Orazio Belletini**.

Notable aspects of the presentation:

The general objective of the case study “What impacts has the participatory budget process of Paysandú had on relations between the departmental government and local society?”³, by Viviana Martínez, was to identify the main contributions of the CLAEH-IMP Project in the process of strengthening citizen participation in the framework of the Participatory Budget of the Departmental Government of Paysandú, Uruguay, in 2007. It describes and systematises the participatory budget process, identifies the principal progress made between local society and the departmental government and contributes to generating knowledge that will enable the Uruguayan departmental government to strengthen the participatory budget process currently under way.

The purpose of the case study “Impact of the scientific production of the DIEESE in implementing specific public policy for the protection of the quality of employment by Brazil's Ministry of Labour” by María Rosa Gamarra was to identify, describe and analyse specific joint experiences between the DIEESE and Brazil's Ministry of Labour, in the use of research and/or evidence in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the protection of the quality of employment in that country. The report analyses the

² The full presentation may be seen in Annex 3.

³ The case studies described here and the comparative study are available at www.ebpdn.org

history of the joint initiative between the DIEESE and the Ministry of Labour, and assesses how the type of relationship affects the ability to incorporate research into public policy.

In the case study “External Assessment of the Government of Jalisco’s Development Programme of Community Centres by El Colegio de Jalisco” authors Roberto Arias de la Mora and Alberto Arellano Ríos document and analyse the joint experience between El Colegio de Jalisco and the Secretariat of Human Development of the Government of the State of Jalisco in assessing the Community Centres Development Programme, as a specific case to illustrate the multiple factors that impact in the practice of analysing public policy in western Mexico. The report analyses the institutional factors that were present as well as the discourse and practice of government based on an institutional and organisational explanation.

The case study “Neither gifts nor blackmail in exchange for your vote: realising social, economic and cultural rights by attacking political clientelism in social programmes in Ecuador” by Orazio Bellettini analyses the experience “Neither gifts nor blackmail in exchange for your vote,” a successful initiative of work undertaken by civil society (Grupo FARO) and public administration to combat clientelism in social programmes in Ecuador. With this purpose in mind, it explores the background, objectives, phases, strategies, outcomes and general characteristics of the experience in an attempt to promote changes in public administration in Ecuador.

The comparative analysis of the four studies mentioned discussed the differences and similarities in those aspects that could affect the experience, such as:

- Type of origin of the experiences
- Stage of public policy analysed
- Organisational characteristics of the intervening actors
- Evidence and methodology used in the studies
- Objectives or goals of the joint work between policy institutes and the State

As regards the outcomes of the interaction, there was found to be heterogeneity between two subsets:

- Research institutes that represent interests of social groups as in the case of DIEESE-MTB.
- Research institutes which are objective or neutral on the issue of social interests, as in the cases of CLAEH, Colegio de Jalisco or FARO.

The study detected that the creation of capacities to incorporate research into public policy is conditioned by the degree and type of outcomes achieved. Several functional factors emerged to facilitate this type of interaction such as:

- Political–government interest in legitimisation, as in the case of DIEESE – MTB.
- The formal institutionalisation of this type of interactions, as in the cases of SEDESOL, SDH and Colegio de Jalisco.

Conclusions and general recommendations:

Due to the diversity of the case studies, replicating so-called “good practices” from one society to another is not particularly advisable, and so resorting to “universal recipes” is avoided. On the contrary, it is more appropriate to think of middle-range theories or explanations as well as incorporating failed practices into this type of studies so as to understand the reasons why an experience was unsuccessful. Highlighting research in cases that fail, error research, is one of the possible unexplored areas of development research. All this will help improve impact on public policy and afford it a chance of greater learning. Some of the points to be taken into account to increase impact capacities are to:

- Consider the origin of the experience investigated, since each type of origin has a differential influence (with a range of strengths/weaknesses, opportunities/threats). The actors and dynamics of this impact will vary and will adapt to the diversity of historical processes that shape this impact in different societies. Each society will provide different answers for the function of think tanks.
- Abandon PRIs as the entry point for comprehension and improvement of the impact of systematic knowledge on public policy. There is agreement on the need to disaggregate the analysis, recognise the various levels of action, which involve very different playing logics.
- Enquire into the social impact on public policy based on the social capacity to generate knowledge which is functional to governments and State.

Some of the questions and contributions made by participants at the conference:

- The policy space is frequently seen as a black box (that one can neither enter nor leave), but certain researchers do enter it to form part of the government and then leave the box to return to academia. Those who enter and leave have greater knowledge of what happens inside the “box”. Good use should be made of the circulation between civil society, think tanks and the State.
- The definition of think tanks and their classification should be borne in mind since they are not the same as SCOs or universities in terms of strategies of impact, funding, organisation, participation, linkage with the State. It is important to define them as this marks the different strategies that can be designed.

- The endogenous–exogenous factors discussion is the construction of a category used to perform an analysis. Which of the two will be more important will depend on the specific conditions of each case. Excellent exogenous conditions do not necessarily imply the presence of endogenous conditions to make the most of the opportunity, so progress would appear to be impossible.
- The construction of a sphere of debate and ideas is a contribution that think tanks can make, however they are defined. Dialogue with the state counterpart must appear. It should not be forgotten that communication in the impact process is not bilateral (between a think tank and the State), but it is a question of multilateral communication. The media have a fundamental role considering that public officials always tend to read the newspapers and listen to the radio rather than pay attention to academic publications.
- There was discussion on a possible conflict between the interest of the think tank, if considered to be necessary and useful in knowledge production, and the fact that the State should demand for itself what is produced. Experience in developed countries shows that the State itself performs the task of preparing evidence. That should be the ultimate goal of think tanks: that in future the State itself should generate its own knowledge, and thus accumulate its own experience. As the State understands the need to use empirical evidence in decision-making then its concern to obtain and compile evidence to contribute to the design of high quality public policy will also grow.
- In contexts of institutional instability, think tanks can act as the lead between policy implemented by one administration and the one that succeeds it.

PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY: THINK TANKS AND POLITICAL PARTIES IN LATIN AMERICA.

Sitting on the panel were **Norma Correa** (Project Officer, CIES) who moderated the discussion, **Enrique Mendizabal** who was responsible for the general study framework⁴, **Adolfo Garcé**⁵ (teacher and Researcher at the Institute of Political Science, Universidad de la República de Uruguay), **Sergio Toro**⁶ (Researcher, CIEPLAN, Chile), and **Orazio Belletini**⁷.

⁴ *The full presentation may be seen in Annexes 4 & 5.*

⁵ *The full presentation may be seen in Annex 6.*

⁶ *The full presentation may be seen in Annex 7.*

⁷ *The full presentation may be seen in Annex 8.*

The study comprises a framework analysis by Adolfo Garcé and five case studies (from Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru). The work was partly financed by IDEA International, an international NGO working on the question of political parties in Latin America, and by ODI.

The axis of the study was the origin and evolution of research institutes from a historical perspective. The case studies reveal a very long-term, and very rich, relationship, with many ruptures, and factions within the political parties which are sometimes used by research institutes.

The presentation made by Adolfo Garcé is based on an idea of think tanks that includes from political foundations (internal think tanks) to university centres. The first of the research objectives was to pass beyond the framework of analysis on the use of social research focusing on a relationship between a researcher who collects evidence and a policy-maker who tries to solve a problem. The second of the objectives, of an empirical nature, was to assess the contribution that political party participation can make.

The study brought together 46 organisations called internal think tanks, many of which are organisations created by political parties. These institutions rarely engage in social research, although when they do politics their importance focuses on them being the entry door into political parties for experts. Internal think tanks were created during the third wave of democratisation, when political parties began to operate once more.

This type of think tank promotes theoretical debate and forms party leaders. Party-based foundations often make contributions to party programmes, although this does not overlook the fact that in different circumstances, either from the government or from the opposition, political parties resort to the universities and NGOs since ideological affinities carry weight.

The study presented by Orazio Belletini analysed three case studies of links between political parties and think tanks in Ecuador. The political context in which the study was set includes the accession of seven presidents in 10 years (1996–2006), and numerous weak and fragmented political parties. Society too is fragmented and public institutions have low credibility among citizens.

The three case studies reveal the reluctance of think tanks to collaborate with political parties. There is clear distrust and a deep disconnection between think tanks and political parties, although both have obviously collaborated on different functions. For instance, there was a phenomenon of migration of groups between political parties and think tanks, and vice versa.

As a reflection, it is thought fundamental to improve the response capacity of think tanks to the times of the political parties.

Sergio Toro revealed that most research centres in Chile were born in the period of authoritarian rule when political parties were outlawed and the universities were intervened. Think tanks played a key role in re-establishing democracy in the authoritarian period, which then meant that centres of thought in Chile were weakened.

In Chile, there is a phenomenon whereby parties exclude anything “political” due to their previous dependence on centres of thought which were responsible for making policy. For instance, opposition legislators took the opinion of think tanks in Congress into account.

The main conclusions of the studies and the contributions made by the participants at the conference are the following:

- Research institutes are political actors, both in origin and in evolution. They are not actors created neutrally.
- Research institutes are a heterogeneous group. Their structure, form and focus depend on the context in which they were created and developed.
- The relationship between research institutes and political parties is very diverse and depends on many factors. There is no absolute independence, but a relative dependence. What is most important is the sustainability of the link based on maintaining knowledge centred on experts who have managed to generate trust over the years.
- Research institutes carry out functions involving not only the generation of new evidence-based policy but also the legitimisation of policy. They act as a space for debate.
- Research institutes may be funding channels for political parties.
- Research institutes have a role in the preparation of political groupings and as *policy-makers*.
- It is not easy to speak of independent think tanks, so they should be defined as political actors.
- Bringing public assets produced by research centres to political parties seems to be possible but has little chance of making an impact if the logic of the political parties is taken into account. If the work is financed by a party, that political party may want the outcome of the work to be exclusive and thus lose its attribution as a public asset.
- Think tanks in Latin America are very personality-based, they have a “*caudillo*” (leader) who is usually its founder and who is the “face” of the organisation. Institutional development may thus suffer as a result of the importance of the individual.
- When they appeared in Latin America, think tanks became part of the system, unlike in Asia where these organisations were planned by the Asian development system that granted them a key role in the interrelation as well as the legitimisation of the development narrative in those countries. In Africa they were set up by the donors of funds.

One of the recommendations of this study is that since parliaments in Latin America are very weak, one of the forms in which opposition parties can help strengthen them is by resorting to research institutes in search of technical inputs to enrich their proposals and draft laws.

THE PLACE OF THINK TANKS AND THE MEDIA IN CONSTRUCTING PUBLIC POLICY.

The proposal consisted in fostering conversation in a small group that would allow the remaining participants to be questioned on different perspectives regarding the articulation between think tanks and public policy. To do so, a third social actor, the mass

media, was included. In contemporary societies, the media is seen to be a powerful opinion-former and, therefore, one with the capacity to exert influence to drive political questions. It was based on the assumption that the three sectors (public officials, members of PRIs and journalists) have different points of view and representations on the other actors and concerning the forms in which articulation between them can be encouraged.

So a conversation in a “fishbowl⁸” of representatives from these sectors was started, and then opened up to the remaining participants, thus offering new and better instances of understanding of the situation.

The following were present in the “fishbowl” **Carlos Casas - Public Official** (was Head of the Cabinet of Advisors of the MEF), **Jorge Papadopulos - Public Official** (current Director of the Banco de Previsión Social of Uruguay), **Gerardo Young - Journalist** (Editor on the Research Team of the Clarín newspaper, Argentina), **Santiago O’Donnel - Journalist** (Editor of International News of the Pagina 12 newspaper, Argentina), **Claudio Jackelin - Journalist** (Editorial Secretary of the La Nación newspaper, Argentina), **Jorge Lavarreda - Member of research institute** (CIEN, Guatemala City, Guatemala), **Francisco Pérez - Member of research institute** (Nitlapan, Managua, Nicaragua), and **Martín Lardone - Member of research institute** (Dean of the Faculty of Political Science and International Relations of the Universidad Católica of Córdoba).

Some of the topics that produced the most heated debate were:

- The question of making evidence arising out of the investigations of research institutes communicable
- The difficulty that research institutes occasionally have in translating their conclusions on research into terms that will be understood by non-specialists. And the importance of relating their findings to an improvement in the quality of life of individuals, and citizenry in general.
- The importance of learning the “other’s game”.
- The possibility of standing in a future scenario and thinking of the new information and new media that are starting to construct common



⁸ For a description of the fishbowl method see Annex 9

challenges to think about how to impact in fairer public policy.

PRESENTATION OF THE METHODOLOGY: RAPID OUTCOME MAPPING APPROACH (ROMA) USED IN DEVELOPING IMPACT STRATEGIES⁹.

This presentation was made by **Enrique Mendizábal**. Bearing in mind that donors require PRIs to provide more systematised impact processes, since they are interested in knowing the return on the work they are supporting, the presenter claimed that it is advisable to draw up an action plan to be implemented as of the design of the project, and make it clear that there is a reason for the activities they wish to undertake and a content to bring to the debate. On the basis of the methodology developed by RAPID it was proposed that participants in the workshop define what is to be identified and the steps to follow in designing an impact strategy.

Some of the responses to the first question were:

- Study the weaknesses existing in the topic and in the actors on whom impact is to be made.
- Identify who to influence and define the form in which the message will be communicated.
- Involve the actors involved in decision-making during the research process, and not only when results are obtained.
- Consider the timing of decision-making of the actor to be influenced to produce the contents as needed.
- The impact process may be accumulative and it may be a long time before concrete results are seen. It is therefore advisable to set progress markers to help visualise the progress made, however small.

Regarding the steps to follow in designing the impact strategy, a brief mention should be made of the following:

- Define the object or field of the research. Identify the topic on which influence is sought.
- Diagnose the context of the problem to be addressed. Formulate key questions to be answered by the research. Identify those key factors that affect the topic area on which influence is sought.
- Choose the most appropriate methodology to carry out the research. Assess the feasible alternatives to reach the proposed goal. Implement an internal monitoring and learning mechanism to make the changes needed to reach the objectives.

⁹ The full presentation may be seen in Annex 10.

- Identify interest groups and their interests. Analyse the actors to understand how each one of them may be influenced, for which it is necessary to build key messages in accordance with each group of actors. It is also advisable to analyse relations of power in the process of change and know which forces promote or obstruct the proposed policy.
- Understand the background to the subject, draw up a base line and decide when exactly to intervene.
- Socialise the results of the research with the aim of contributing to public policy. To do so it is necessary to formulate concrete public policy proposals that clearly indicate what needs to be changed.

CONVERSATION BETWEEN OFFICIALS.

Simultaneously with the workshop to present the ROMA methodology, a conversation took place between the public officials participating in the conference. On the basis of the exchange between the officials, the following reflections were made and then presented in the closing plenary of the event:

Regarding the channels that researchers should use to communicate their research more effectively:

- Bear in mind their presence in the press to publicise the evidence of an investigation.
- Run awareness-raising campaigns on the issue on which impact is sought.
- Show the results of research in user-friendly formats of only a few pages.
- Release the results of an investigation by means of an interpersonal relationship. A suggested format was that of the workshop, with a panel to then encourage discussion. Electronic mail and electronic newsletters are not thought to be effective communication instruments.
- It is important that the advisors to decision-makers be identified.

Attributes required of research institutes to ensure that officials hire their services:

- Show technical competence and reliability.
- Be independent and autonomous, unrelated to a political party.
- Prove data validation.
- Use information technologies.

2. PRESENTATIONS AT THE CONFERENCE – DAY 2

SESSION ON IMPACT IN POLICY: “RESEARCHERS AND POLITICIANS: A MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE¹⁰”

This session was chaired by Carlos Aramburu (Chief Professor, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú) and Norma Correa.

This workshop sought to reflect on the complexity of impact processes through an understanding of the dynamics of communication and exchange between researchers and politicians. It explored the existence of barriers to communication, agendas, myths and imaginary situations from both sides that limit the effectiveness of the impact processes.

Notable aspects of the presentation:

- Map the complexity and the type of actor intervening by level of work.
 - At which level does the evidence and the key actors involved wish to function.
- Impact research is a process, not a product.
 - It requires continuity, sustainability and has different phases. The first step, i.e. to have a clear idea of the political, legal and normative context of the topic to be investigated, must be systematised from the outset of the research. It is too late to think of how to make an impact when the public document is already available. Few funding agencies are interested in financing phase 1, that of contacts, which requires time and resources. It is therefore advisable to identify the levels of decision and pressure one hopes to reach.
- Defining the actors involved by type and level of power.
 - Know their interests and priorities and determine the most suitable mechanisms for participation and use of outcomes.
- Defining the agenda:
 - The research topics must respond to interests of the actors, especially the so-called policy-makers. Organising an agreed agenda is fundamental for “hot” topics, which could mean that the outcomes could be appropriated by the actors involved. They are very specific topics that are important in orienting the research and making the outcome useful.

¹⁰ The full presentation may be seen in Annex 11.

- Creating relations of trust and dialogue allows a suitable agenda to be agreed and enhances the relevance of the outcomes.
- Dissemination and diffusion of results to those directly involved:
 - Easier if those involved have participated.
 - Important to present it first to the user at the decision-making level.
 - The outcomes of an investigation are public assets, so must be publicised and appropriated by the population.
 - To impact public policy work must be done with the media to stimulate debate on the issues.
- Assessing results and impacts.
 - Problem of appropriation, how to demonstrate that the research has had an effect or impact on policy. There are indirect measuring methods: appearance in the media, publication on Web pages or a direct survey of policy-makers. Another form is to incorporate evidence in internal training elements.

Impact is a complex, costly and uncertain but vital process. One figure that may be important is an articulator or broker who can link research institutes with others that disseminate the evidence.

PRESENTATION AND LESSONS OF THE THINK TANK INITIATIVE, IDRC¹¹.

This session was chaired by Antonio Cicioni (Senior Program Officer, Think Tank Initiative, IDRC).

The Think Tank Initiative is a long-term programme¹², planned to last at least ten years, which combines institutional support for think tanks (TTs) with specific actions of organisational development. The objectives are to:



¹¹ The full presentation may be seen in Annex 12.

¹² For further information go to www.idrc.ca/thinktank

- Select promising TTs and help them to identify their strengths, weaknesses and areas for potential improvement.
- Support candidate organisations in improving the quality of their research, their impact strategies and other aspects of institutional performance.
- Share the lessons that arise out of the project, so as to make more effective future actions by donors, TTs and other actors promoting development.

Other initiative activities are:

- Programme Development Activities (Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy; Annual Report; Research)
- Diagnostic studies in Latin America and Asia
- First meeting with African partners (May 2009)
- First Learning Forum (scheduled for October 2010)

STRATEGY AND TIPS TO TURN THE MEDIA INTO STRATEGIC ALLIES OF THINK TANKS¹³.

This session was chaired by Laura Zommer (Communications Director, Fundación CIPPEC).

Based on the case of CIPPEC, work was done on the tools to improve the link between think tanks and the media, opinion leaders and journalists. Some of the characteristic tensions of this relationship were addressed, such as: the depth and precision of think tanks and the simplicity, brevity and haste of the media. There was also discussion on an ideal held by journalists when they resort to think tanks in search of information or opinions, the dream of think tanks to occupy the public agenda and win debates, and the dangers of not foreseeing the effects of the media on political actors, donors and other important audiences.

Notable aspects of the presentation:

- For consideration in communicating from a think tank:

¹³ The full presentation may be seen in Annex 13.

- Journalists, the media and public opinion tend to trust its members and its information.
 - Think tanks should have well-defined key messages to communicate.
 - They should have communication plans with press objectives.
 - Before contacting the press, one should be very clear as to what to say, to whom, why and for which purpose.
 - Prior to contacting a journalist or medium the risks that the information given will not be accurately reflected must be evaluated.
- To optimise communication think tanks must:
 - Invest in communication as a strategic decision.
 - Give considerable power to the communications director so that all members of the organisation can observe the strategies defined and day-to-day decisions.
 - Have a communication team that is well acquainted with the functioning of the media and is perceived as being professional and efficient by journalists and members of the think tank.
 - Be well aware that not all research produced by think tanks *is* communicable or of interest for the media.
 - Make journalists' work easier with clear, concise documents and ideas for insets to illustrate and humanise difficult topics with stories.
 - Bear in mind that journalists expect think tanks to help them explain complex problems in simple terms.
 - Understand that journalists accept information originating in think tanks if they are perceived as being serious and if the research offered has a newsworthy aspect (it reflects an unusual or novel aspect of reality, affects a great number of persons or reveals something that authority seeks to conceal).



- Work within think tanks so that researchers understand that the media can be their allies -and not enemies- in impacting public policy.
- Know that appearing in the media implies acceptance of certain rules and logics different to those of think tanks: when appearing in the media complexity, length and precision must be renounced.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE¹⁴

This session was chaired by Vanesa Weyrauch who, in an open plenary, presented various reflections on the steps to follow in strengthening and enhancing the links between research and public policy in the region.

Special emphasis was placed on the significance of the questions that emerged and that may be addressed in the future, by way of investigations, socialisation of experiences, new workshops, etc.:

- Is it worth while continuing to think in terms of organisation of the think tank? Or should we concentrate on all organisations that concentrate, specifically or implicitly, on generating information for public policy?
- Is it better to think how to strengthen the linkage processes between research and public policy, or think about the function of the link between research and public policy?
- Which objectives might research centres have in common with public officials, the media, enterprises, civil society organisations, political parties? Is it possible to detect them and work on them jointly?
- Which are the interests shared with different actors that policy institutes can capitalise on?
- Bearing these challenges in mind, what should the network concentrate on?
- Is it more worth while to choose regional topics (such as the shortcomings of democracy) and work on those policies?

Another possibility was to focus on the organisational development of think tanks, addressing questions such as knowledge management or relations with the media. There is a field of knowledge that institutions in the network can collaborate on and systematise so that all have the chance to use it. The purpose would be to strengthen the organisations that sustain this link.

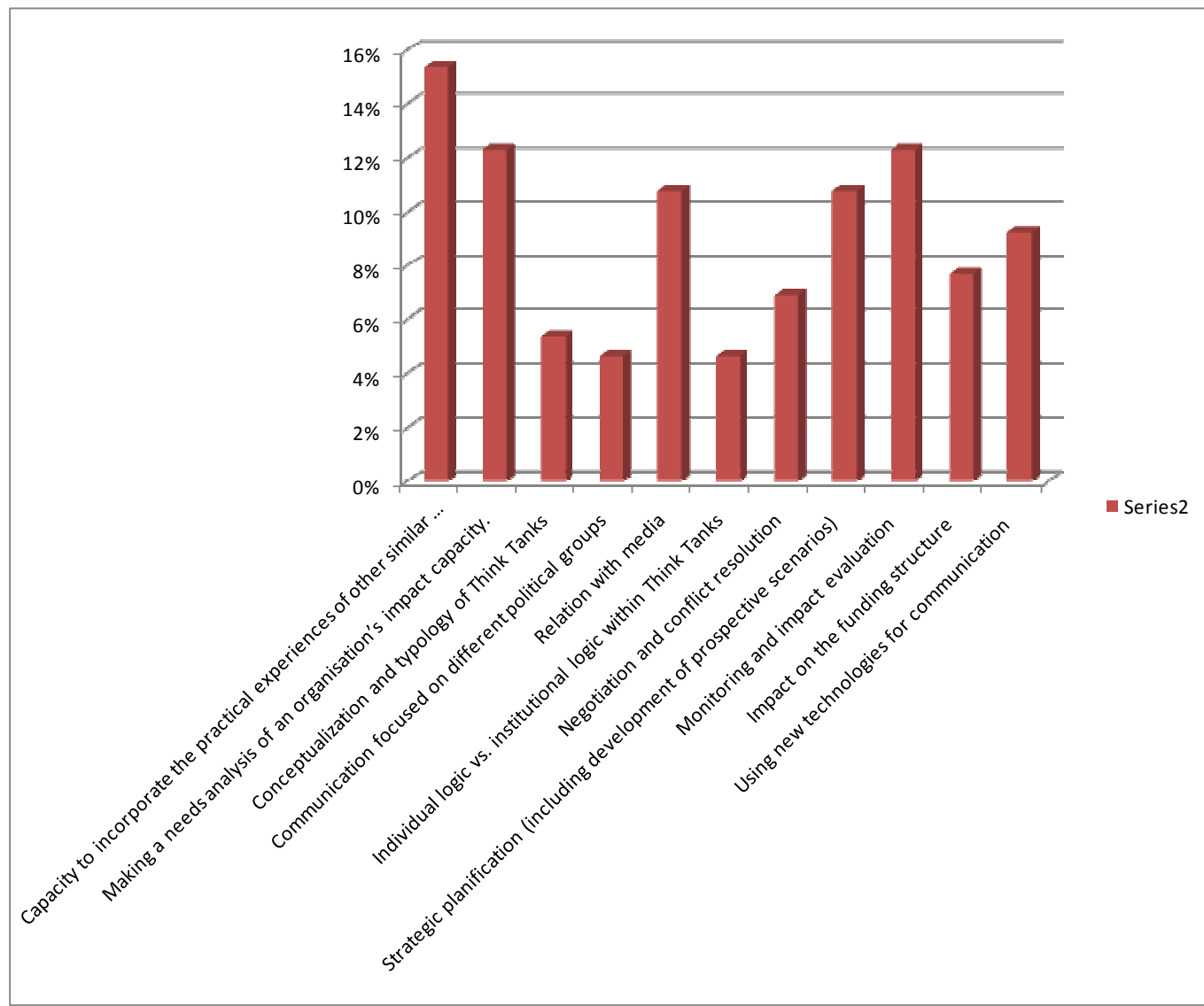
¹⁴ *The full presentation may be seen in Annex 14.*

Lastly, it was stressed that other interesting topics had emerged, such as urging that interactions between think tanks and States be more formally institutionalised, taking practices from one country to another, and creating rules of interaction. They could also contribute in producing brokers between research and policy to facilitate and strengthen the link.

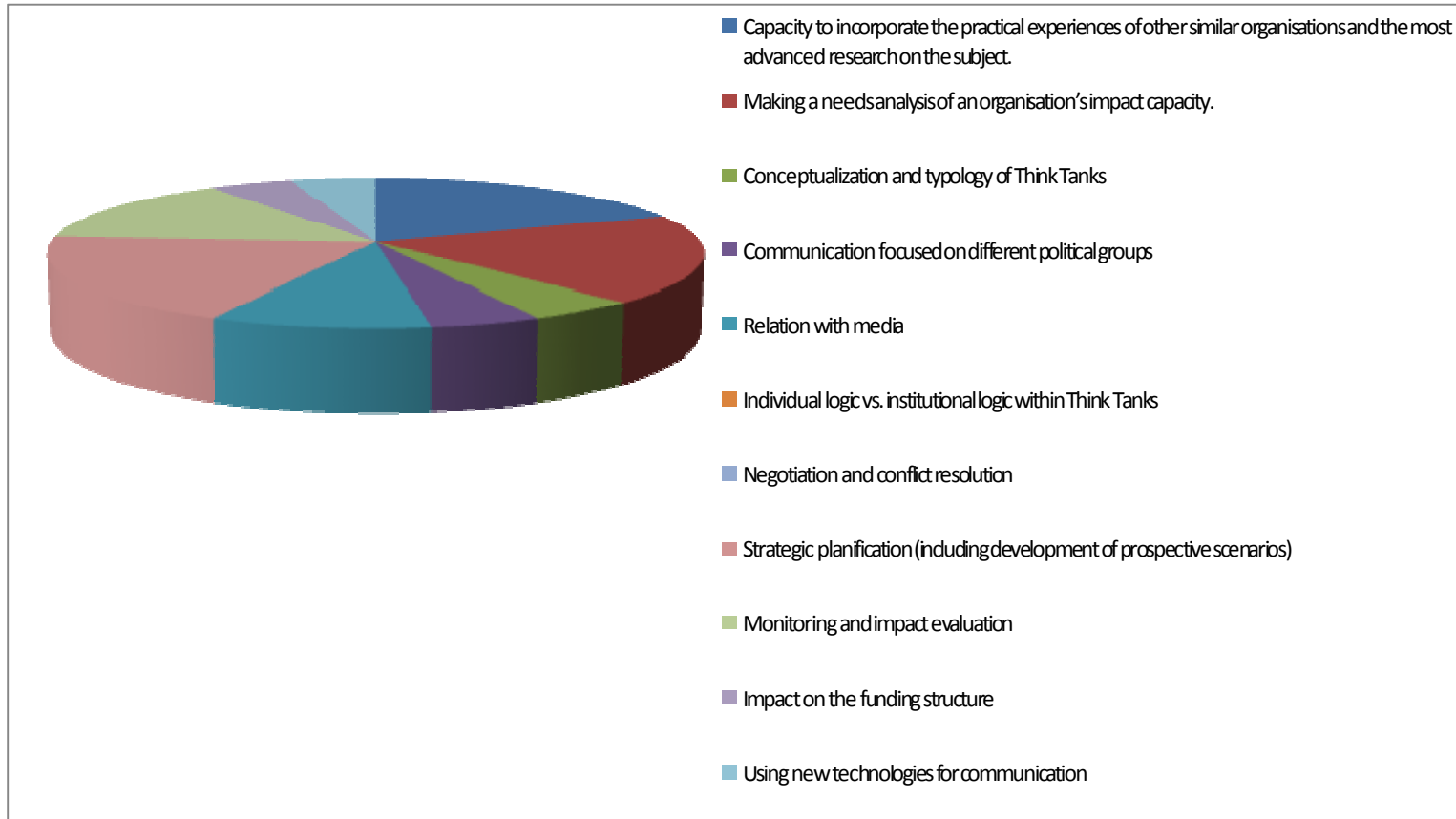
In addition, and looking at possible paths to travel under the initiative, participants at the conference were asked to select from a list of topics those which they believed were sufficiently important to be addressed in the future from the point of view of the development of impact and research capacities. The five topics of greatest importance were those listed below in order of priority as given by the participants:

1. Capacity to incorporate the practical experiences of other similar organisations and the most advanced research on the subject.
2. Making a needs analysis of an organisation's impact capacity.
3. Monitoring and impact assessment.
4. Strategic planning (including formulation of prospective scenarios).
5. Relations with the media.

Graphic 1: Voting on the most important topics



Graphic 2: Ranking of the most important topics



3. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The generation of meeting spaces, such as this regional conference among diverse actors that form part of the impact process in public policy, is necessary to know of and learn in greater depth of the different logics applied by each of these actors in his/her links with the other, and how they affect the possibilities of incorporating evidence and research into public decision-making.

The dilemmas, challenges and tensions that were revealed over these two days indicate a great field of work going forward, which may be sown both from the ebpdn network in Latin America and by initiatives and projects linked with the issue. The synergy of efforts in this direction is vitally important, given the dimension of the challenges to the strengthening of the use of research in public policy compared with the resources available to tackle them.

It is clear that a great deal of work remains to be done on the institutional strengthening of PRIs in areas such as communication, knowledge management, diagnosis, capacity-building, monitoring and impact assessment, funding models, etc. This led to discussion of the need to combine traditional instances of training, such as workshops, with mechanisms to socialise knowledge among the organisations that are part of the network. The involvement of participants revealed the high degree of experience and knowledge generated within the organisations. Nevertheless, there is little systematisation and few opportunities to share this knowledge with peer institutions in the region.

The socialisation of research and knowledge in this area should also include a review of certain practices and models of functioning, through a greater awareness of the influence of factors that are not addressed in the traditional literature on these questions, such as: the opposition between individual versus collective logic within PRIs, or the impact of funding models (especially those based on a healthy opportunism that makes full use of very diverse and changing sources in honour of sustainability) in its form of operating and linking with public policy.

However, despite recognising the importance of the organisational approach, consensus also emerged very strongly on the need not to restrict the exchange that could occur within a network like ebpdn in Latin America simply to cross-cutting knowledge on the use and impact of research. There is also great potential for joint work on three topic areas cut transversally by the axis of inequality:

- 1- Employment: poverty, inequality in income distribution, informal work sector and type of social protection desired.
- 2- Regional integration: migration problems, drug trafficking, environmental quality and climate change, and demographic structure.
- 3- Political system: corruption, preservation of democracies, and defence of democratic institutions.

Similarly, there is an excellent opportunity for a community of practice focused on the links between research and public policy in generating more comparative research, with the aim of detecting and fostering more collectively common solutions to shared

problems, and with this strategy, increase the possibilities of impact in regional spaces. Along these lines there is also a possibility of socialising the knowledge already generated by the various institutes in areas of shared research.

Looking to the future, it might be time to promote and create a greater number of formal and informal spaces for interaction among the participants and other organisations that are members of the network, especially by using to advantage the great experience accumulated by PRIs of recognised experience in different countries in the region. In the framework of such work, incorporating and looking in greater depth at the visions, interests and power games of the actors with whom these organisations usually link in the changing, chaotic and complex processes of public policy is very much unfinished business.