

# Partnerships for Pro-Poor Policy Change in Africa

Lessons from the Southern Africa Trust Initiative "Creating Linkages between Research, Advocacy and the Media for Pro-Poor Policy Change in Africa"

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# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Advocacy:** The enterprise of collaborative, well-planned and intended series of actions to influence policy. It consists of efforts undertaken by an organisation or group of organisations which supports and enables people to express their views and interests or to defend their rights. Advocacy groupings can take the form of issue-based organisations, civil society umbrella organisations, social movements, unions and lobby groups, among others.

**Research:** The process of generating, compiling and analysing data through quantitative and qualitative means to discover unknown or unproven information. Research groupings can take the form of academic or university based units, government-funded research institutes, consultancies and think tanks, among others.

**Media:** In the context of this report, media refers to communications media and the services associated with the collection, processing and dissemination of information for public use. Media groupings can take the form of mainstream media (newspapers, magazines, radio, television), online media (online news) and social media (social networking sites, blogs).

**Policy Maker:** Elected and unelected officials within government with responsibility for formulating, determining and implementing public policy.

**People Directly Affected by a Policy Issue:** The individuals or groups within the jurisdiction of the impact of a public policy.

**Pro-Poor Policy:** Decisions by government that protect and advance the interests of marginalised, excluded and low-net worth citizens. Pro-poor policy processes are those that enable such citizens to directly influence government decisions which affect them.

# SYNOPSIS OF REPORT

The Southern Africa Trust launched the initiative Creating Linkages Between Research, Advocacy and the Media for Pro-Poor Policy Change in Africa (“Linkages”) in October 2010 to explore whether more effective civil society collaboration (particularly between research, advocacy and media organisations) could further advance pro-poor policy change in Africa. The Trust has since worked with these actors across six countries- Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, Malawi and Ghana – to support their partnership on innovative policy oriented campaigns. Driven by a lead organisation in each country, the campaigns have addressed issues in the areas of food security, local resource mobilisation and delivery of basic and social services, with the aim of encouraging inclusive, participatory, and transparent governance and evidence-informed policy making. The specific policy advocacy issues addressed have been as follows:

Country	Lead Organisation	Policy Advocacy Issue
Ghana	Social Enterprise Development Foundation (SEND) - Ghana	The enforcement of environmental laws to prevent cyanide contamination from mining processes; and The provision of better extension services, fertilisers, and tools by government to prevent aflatoxin in maize.
Kenya	Kenya Community Development Foundation (KCDF)	Creation of an enabling environment for indigenous philanthropy through tax incentives and other changes to the current tax regime in Kenya.
Malawi	Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN)	Increased support to the cotton sub-sector by improving the production and marketing chain, by among other things, provision of reliable inputs and extension services, and better marketing arrangements.
South Africa	Southern Africa Food Lab (SAFL)	A national extension policy which better serves smallholder farmers through ensuring improved collaboration between government, NGOs and the private sector.
Tanzania	Foundation for Civil Society (FCS)	Increase in national budgetary allocation for agriculture to 10% in the 2013/2014 national budget; Address challenges related to marketing systems of agricultural products faced by smallholder farmers; and Improved governance of Agriculture Development Plans in Local Government Authorities.
Uganda	Uganda National NGO Forum (UNNGOF)	A national food and nutrition policy that incorporates proven strategies for improving nutrition in Uganda, as well as increased financing for nutrition programming.

The Learning Resource Report provides reflections from the “Linkages” initiative on partnering successfully with multiple organisations (particularly research, advocacy and media) to influence public policy. The report also references supplementary partnerships developed through the initiative, particularly the experiences of lead organisations in involving people directly affected (policy beneficiaries), policy makers and the private sector.

The “Linkages” model was conceptualised as a strategic approach for informing policy through more nuanced evidence-based advocacy. This involved a collaborative “linked” process of identifying where the need for policy change is greatest and where its potential impact is highest, followed by the collection of data and evidence on best practices to maximize outcomes. The evidence was then used to inform both the policy advocacy intervention and by extension policy decision-making at the national level as well as to influence civil society policy advocacy initiatives and priorities at the regional level.

The Southern Africa Trust has consistently recognised the potential of all non-state actors to play a role in more effective policy advocacy initiatives – advocacy groupings, researchers, the media, private sector, policy makers, beneficiaries and

programme implementers- and has facilitated the implementation of the “Linkages” approach through the harnessing of these diverse voices, experiences, and expertise to inform regional policy advocacy efforts. Emerging from the implementation process there was a growing understanding that government and the private sector have to be seen as key partners in the “Linkages” process.

- **Advocacy:** The “Linkages” model understands policy advocacy as the enterprise of collaborative, well-planned and intended series of actions to influence pro-poor policy change. This approach has been premised on the understanding that in more mature democracies, advocacy is also a formal form of voicing a need for policy change and/or enforcing rights through legal mechanisms.
- **Research:** From the outset the selected policy advocacy issues set the parameters for the kind of research required. The research required was generally quite specialised – for example tax law, heavy metal contamination of water sources, nutrition and agricultural extension services – which narrowed down the search for research institutions to those with expertise in these specialist areas.
- **Media:** The rationale for including the media as one of the components of the three sector “Linkages” model was its potential for disseminating policy advocacy “messages” through a range of different communication channels. All types of advocacy require campaigning and mobilising support and hence communication becomes important, but in general the mainstream media have not been traditional partners for civil society. In most cases media houses are for-profit organisations, and are often part of large corporate conglomerations.
- **Private Sector:** When the “Linkages” project was conceptualised the private sector was not considered as a key partner in the process of “joined up” policy advocacy. However, as the project has matured the partners involved have come to realise the value-add of working with different types of private sector entities. This also includes media houses, which are in themselves for-profit organisations. More than any other element of the “Linkages” project this area of engagement has demonstrated both the blurring of lines between traditionally understood sectors as well as the inter-linked interests that the different sectors have in achieving policy change.
- **Government:** The purpose of the “Linkages” model has been, in essence, to use “joined up” advocacy to influence, inform and shape new policy positions that will have the effect of improving the lives of poor people. Government or the state, however, was not initially included as one of the legs of the model – but seen rather as the sector through which policy change could be effected. Once policy advocacy issues were identified at the country level it became much clearer which spheres of government needed to be engaged and who within that sphere was likely to be open and receptive to dialogue around the policy advocacy issue. Some countries took a formalised approach to mapping key government stakeholders, whilst other took a more “networked” approach that built on existing informal relationships with policy makers.

The emerging view is that effective advocacy and policy change work needs to be situated within a broader framework of change that could potentially be undertaken by one organisation alone but is more likely to see multiple organisations sharing the work across different levels and locations to provide a joined-up approach to achieving change. The “Linkages” approach of inter-connected advocacy, research and media has in various different ways demonstrated how policy advocacy interventions can be situated within such broader frameworks and how their achievements can contribute towards effective outcomes in other key policy related areas so that sustainable and real change is experienced by people in poor or marginalised communities. The Trust understands that the piloting of the “Linkages” approach in six countries was a way of testing out a model of collaborative engagement within civil society, in partnership with state and private sector actors. The successes and challenges arising out of implementation have surfaced a range of important learnings that will help guide and inform future similar initiatives.

# Lessons from Relationship Building

Key Areas of Implementation				
Selecting / identifying a lead organisation	Stakeholder mapping	Identifying strategic partners	Building collaborative relationships	Developing a joint policy advocacy strategy
<b>Significant Lessons</b>				
Static versus fluid, dynamic and responsive model	Using the model as a rigid application fails to take into account the fluid, multidimensional and multi-stakeholder nature of the policy environment as well as the context specificity of any policy advocacy approach. Policy advocacy partners must consider what works, in what context, through which modalities and with which stakeholders. The “real world” of CSO-led policy advocacy, needs to be flexible, adaptive and open to change where necessary.			
Dynamic Partnerships	The recursive nature of the advocacy process has meant that some partners may have committed to providing a specific and quite defined short-term set of inputs, and therefore enter and exit the ‘policy advocacy value chain’ at specific points in time. Some partner organisations have stayed the course throughout, while others have either not been active or have withdrawn from the process. Lead organisations have had to develop the capacity to be flexible and the understanding that the ability to adapt planning is the key to successful implementation of the “Linkages” initiatives.			
Strategic Selection of Partners	Partners should be selected and aligned to the requirements of the policy advocacy issue. This may involve the lead organisations meeting potential partners individually to interest them in the project and understand their ‘value-add’ and capacity before engaging them in the larger group of stakeholders. Needing to change direction or reconstitute partnerships at any point is not necessarily a failure, but rather a strategic response to changing policy advocacy needs.			
Strong Lead Organisation	The lead organisation plays an important role in ensuring that the policy advocacy intervention stays on track and retains its momentum. The lead organisations have played a critical role in mediating the policy issue and related policy dynamics to the research, media and advocacy partners; creating and sustaining a sense of common purpose around the policy advocacy issues; and identifying research, media and advocacy partners most likely to add key competencies to the policy advocacy value chain.			
Understanding the Limitations and Strengths of Partners	Well-planned and successful advocacy is built around the combined strength of many different sector organisations undertaking different roles and approaching the key policy issue from different perspectives. Likewise, each partner should understand the limitations and constraints of working with advocacy, research and media groups, and what each can realistically contribute to the policy advocacy process. Each partner should understand what is defined as a result for each (media – a story with an interesting angle; advocacy – change; researchers – publication).			
Balancing Speed and Democracy	Achieving a good balance between democratic and inclusive decision making structures and the requirement for agile and speedy processes that can react quickly to changing circumstances is the most ideal approach			
Mutual Accountability	From the outset, there should be clear definition of roles and articulation of expectations by the partner organisations. Purpose and principles of partnership should be explicit and negotiated upfront, and expectations, rights and responsibilities clearly defined and agreed. Where information systems, resources and tasks have been shared openly and voluntarily, and with an interest in engaging other sectors beyond research, advocacy or the media, then the policy advocacy has been better planned, more focused and ultimately more effective.			

No Quick Fixes	Uncertainty is part of the reality of working to address complex policy problems. Successfully tackling complex policy problems requires a broad acceptance and understanding, including from governments, that there are no quick fixes and that levels of uncertainty around the solutions to these problems need to be recognised, accepted and tolerated. Addressing such problems takes time and resources and adopting innovative approaches may result in the occasional failure or need for change or strategic readjustment.
Value for Money	The 'Linkages' model brought together partners who under normal circumstances would not work together. By working in such partnerships, advocacy costs were shared and therefore cost less up front and reduced duplication of effort. Most of the policy advocacy campaigns used existing research to develop awareness materials and policy briefs. Likewise, media partners utilised their existing platforms to publicise the issue.

## Lessons from Working with Advocacy Groups

Key Areas of Implementation				
Identifying and engaging with relevant advocacy groups	Identifying key role players within affected communities	Understanding the critical policy advocacy issues from the community perspective	Working with affected communities to refine the policy advocacy approach	Enabling "voice" at the grassroots level
Significant Lessons				
From contestational to transformative advocacy	Advocacy can be transformed from its more conventional approach to one that is collaborative, deliberative, planned, informed and targeted strategically at policy change. Working from a platform of a credible, strategically constituted and professional partnership of civil society and other non-state organisations creates a level of policy access, influence and leverage that has in some cases been quite significant			
Advocacy as an incubator for new understanding	Policy advocacy work can be positioned as an incubator for new or improved policy understandings – the "joined up" approach allows for different policy constituencies to meet on common ground to dialogue around issues, share experiences and expertise, debate challenging policy considerations and collaboratively construct more appropriate and politically acceptable policy positions.			
Holistic versus linear thinking	Traditional linear approaches to policy formulation are an inadequate way to work with policy problems as linear thinking is inadequate in encompassing their complexity, interconnections and uncertainty. There is an ever present danger in handling issues in such a way that they end up being addressed in an overly narrow manner. A true understanding of the problem and the development and implementation of its 'solution' generally requires the perspective of multiple organisations and stakeholders.			
Constituency	The advocacy partner should have already defined constituency (constituents) with clear engagement strategies, ie. membership organisations, citizen groups, associations, local community for a or women's organisations. It is important also to ensure that the issue selected is one that is embedded within a clear constituency mandate and represents a real challenge being faced by communities.			
Potential for creating a "multiplier effect"	A number of the projects have demonstrated that the initial intervention may create a "multiplier effect", whereby other linked initiatives grow out of the first one and thereby become both wider in scope and more likely to ensure some form of longer term sustainability			

# Lessons from Working with Research Organisations

Key Areas of Implementation					
Identifying research institutions with the relevant skills, capacity and remit	Strategies for engaging with government linked institutions or independent think tanks / research institutions	Setting a joint research agenda	Understanding the political / resource dynamics of research institutions.	Shaping the research products for popular consumption and dissemination.	Leveraging the comparative advantage of researchers
Significant Lessons					
Research as political	The research terrain is broad, complex, multi-dimensional and often contested. Research itself can often be driven by political and economic agendas. The take-up and utilisation of research is often a political decision, rather than a purely academic one.				
Understanding the drivers of research	The project has clearly demonstrated that national and regional research agendas are not “value free”, but informed, influenced and funded by political or private interests. For a “linkages” approach to work effectively partners should understand the drivers of particular research initiatives. They should also be fully informed as to the state of research on particular issues and how these can contribute relevant evidence to the policy advocacy process.				
Importance of messenger and process	The nature of the engagement strategy undertaken with policy makers is key to the effective take-up of research information and data. People are more likely to act on and use information if they trust the source of that information, and this requires relationship-building which positions the researcher or their representative as a person of influence for the policy maker. The most effective engagement of decision-makers has seen them actively involved in the research process or as part of the research network				
Combining and using mixed methodologies	Formal research-oriented knowledge can be used in conjunction with informal local knowledge and expertise to provide a more nuanced understanding of policy issues.				
Strengthening links between research and the media	A concern for many research institutions is that their research often fails to reach a wider, more popular audience. The initiative has shown that media can support research findings by disseminating it more widely and in a format that is accessible to the broader public. Research can often be quite isolated, so the initiative has provided an excellent opportunity to get findings out in a very tangible and meaningful way.				
Research Praxis	In some cases the initiative has enabled research institutions to follow up their academic research by applying it in the field through direct engagement with beneficiary communities. Given their resource constraints and weak linkages with communities that are the subject of their research, the project has provided valuable opportunities for a kind of research praxis that directly benefits target communities through awareness raising and education around research topics.				

# Lessons from Working with the Media

Key Areas of Implementation				
Mapping and engaging relevant media partners	Understanding the role, mandate and intent of media houses	Developing strategic working relationships with the media	Understanding the advantages and constraints of working with media	Leveraging the comparative advantage of the media
Significant Lessons				
Mainstream media vs new media	Using the mainstream media is a powerful way for any policy advocacy issue to reach the greatest number of people in the fastest way. However, using a media strategy only and excluding other communications platforms can have significant drawbacks. The advent of new communications technology that uses the Internet as a distribution platform has added a new dimension to policy advocacy by highlighting how influence can be exerted through the power of both mainstream and “informal” media commentators (for example bloggers and tweeters) to impact on decision-making.			
Understanding the way in which the media works	Engaging the media strategically, based on an informed understanding of what media outlets can and cannot offer, is the most effective approach as it allows the media to retain its identity and independence, whilst at the same time optimising its “influencing” power to shape and strengthen policy advocacy interventions.			
Understanding the way in which politics can capture the media	Mapping players in the media also requires a thorough understanding of ownership patterns and elite capture of the medium. Many community radio stations, local newspapers and TV stations are owned by politicians or by people well connected to political elites, and this will shape the kind of information that is broadcast. In many countries FM radio stations are owned by politicians, churches and cultural groups that may broadcast biased news and information.			
From elite to grounded reporting	The mainstream media are generally driven by “elite” interests and communications products are by and large targeted to urban middle class interests and consumers with disposable income. The “Linkages” model has demonstrated an ability to connect the media to policy research and civil society policy advocacy, which then facilitates media engagement with the issues and concerns of the rural poor from a policy perspective. A common theme that has emerged from partner reporting on the media component is the extent to which media coverage of beneficiary stories and experiences empowers and motivates people through the mere fact of their stories and endeavours receiving attention, and how this in turn exposes policy makers to the “human” face of particular policy issues. Equally relevant is the way in which media coverage of a pro-poor issue can promote certain individuals who are working to uplift communities into “pro-poor policy champions”.			
Applying pressure for policy change	Media advocacy provides a framework for moving policy discussion from a primary focus on beneficiaries to the agendas of policy makers whose decisions structure the environment in which people live and act. Media coverage of policy advocacy issues can address the power gap (political agendas shaping or delaying policy) at the same time that it addresses the information gap (what are the critical policy issues).			
Collaboration for substantive communications	Communicating policy advocacy issues to policy makers and to policy beneficiaries requires a diversified communications model, and it is in this area that advocacy and research partners can work most productively with the media in developing appropriate messaging and communications modalities. A synergistic working model maximises sector specific capacities and facilitates skills transfer across the sectors.			

Timing of media involvement	It is important for the media to be involved in any “Linkages” strategy from the outset so that media partners can inform the conceptualisation of the policy advocacy initiative and take on their role from an informed and knowledgeable base. It is also important for media partners to be linked with the research and advocacy partners working on the issue so that communications strategies are developed from a common understanding of the policy issues and the most appropriate media channels to use. Timing of media involvement, however, must also be weighed against the political strategy (when is it most politically expedient to involve media). When discussions involve policy makers, they may be less open if the media is present.
Specialisation in the newsroom	Where reporters have specialised in a particular subject area they are more likely to produce good quality and informed reporting rather than generic articles. Where feasible the media partner should consider training more journalists in specialised subject areas and dedicating specific staff to report on project interventions.
Media grants	Partnerships with the media are most effective when the relationship is “seeded” and “managed”. The provision of supplementary grants from the Trust to a number of the media partners have assisted in developing “popularised” thematic narratives. Management oversight by the Trust, in collaboration with the lead organisations, has assisted in maintaining the partnerships and ensuring that the grants augment the targeted policy advocacy work in each country.
Resource constraints in the media	Through the initiative, partners have come to understand that media houses operate under severe resource constraints and journalists in particular are often unable to follow up on stories by going into the field to report on issues at their root. This means that policy advocacy work in collaboration with the media may require more innovative approaches, for example by utilising social media platforms such as blogs, in order to get messages out into the public domain.

## Lessons from Working with the Private Sector

Key Learning Areas			
Understanding where key private sector partners intersect with the policy advocacy issues	Establishing strategic linkages with private sector institutions	Understanding the advantages and limitations of working with the private sector – managing expectations	Leveraging the comparative advantage of private sector institutions
Significant Lessons			
Private sector as advocacy partners	From a civil society perspective the private sector has traditionally been viewed in an adversarial light but this perspective is changing. It is often insufficient for the private sector to be engaged only in understanding the problem and in identifying possible solutions. Rather, civil society should consider involving the private sector in initiating and co-leading collaborative change processes, in co-creating and co-designing solutions		
Increased credibility	The private sector brings a different dimension to engagement on an issue and can give credibility to the issues through their own specific expertise and experience. In Kenya, for example, government perceives civil society as a sector focused on ‘regime change’, but when the private sector engages then the government is inclined to give the issue greater seriousness and credibility.		

Identifying private sector partner	When designing a particular project careful thought needs to go into identifying the relevant private sector partners (organisations and individuals within the organisations). This may be private sector agribusiness and food companies in the food and nutrition security space, or mining companies in the environmental and water pollution space. It is often difficult to engage at the right level and with the right personalities, and substantive engagement with the private sector requires that civil society organisations strengthen their skills, capacities and understanding to engage effectively. If multi-stakeholder forums are used, however, these issues will surface and demonstrate whether the right players are around the table.
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## Lessons from Working with Government

Key Areas of Implementation				
Mapping key entry points into government policy making forums	Understanding government positions on policy advocacy, and receptiveness to interventions	Establishing relationships with key policy makers	Identifying strategies for engaging with policy makers	Leveraging the value-add of government policy advocacy “champions”
Significant Lessons				
Policy-maker receptiveness to policy advocacy messages	Willingness of the public sector to listen to the policy advocacy messaging and to act accordingly is often affected by political leadership, by the salience and contentiousness of the issue, by the effectiveness of existing partnerships between civil society, private and public sectors and by the credibility of the coalition of partners motivating for the policy change. Raising issues through the media, for example, has in some cases sparked policy and stakeholder interest, and provided policy makers with space for comment.			
Opening policy “windows of opportunity”	Successful policy advocacy requires the ability to identify the timing of critical policy components (agenda setting, policy formulation and implementation, monitoring and evaluation) and to understand the different engagement mechanisms and evidence needs required to maximise the chances of policy influence. Civil society should utilise decisive moments (or “windows of opportunity”) in the policy process, recognise the character of the policy process on an issue, calculate the predictability of the policy process, recognise the existence of policy windows, and sharpen the sense of crisis regarding a particular policy issue.			
Understanding policy thinking	Initiatives should demonstrate awareness about the way policy-makers think, the extent to which policy objectives and cause-effect relationships are clear, the openness of policy makers to new evidence and their capacity to process information, as well as being able to judge the level of motivation that policy makers have about the issue and the types of evidence that they find convincing.			
Engaging with “wicked” policy issues	The challenge for the six countries working with the Southern Africa Trust on the “Linkages” initiative is that in most cases the focus of their interventions has been on solving quite complex policy problems. Some of these policy issues are so complex they could be termed “wicked” problems in that they are highly resistant to resolution. From a civil society perspective this requires a reassessment of some of the traditional ways of working and solving policy problems			
Breaking the constraints of “bounded rationality”	Policy-makers are subject to “bounded rationality” in that the decision making and rationality of individual policy makers is limited by the information that they have access to, the cognitive limitations of their own understanding, and the finite amount of time they have to make decisions. Through the “Linkages” approach policy makers can be exposed to a much wider range of issues, information and perspectives and as a result the possibilities for optimal policy choices can be enhanced.			

Adaptive engagement with policy contingency	The initiative has clearly demonstrated that the policy making process is both complex and unpredictable, so policy advocacy has to respond effectively to this reality. Policy processes are dynamic and the policy terrain is constantly evolving and shifting – and at the same time it is also cut across by political agendas and changes in the locus of policy making power. In conceptualising policy advocacy approaches partners need to continuously analyse and re-assess the prevailing policy terrain and be ready to make the necessary advocacy adaptations as circumstances change.
Flexible engagement	Policy makers can be engaged with and influenced from multiple points of reference, whether this is via the media, private sector, research-driven evidence or direct advocacy. However, effectiveness is linked to the strategic use of collaborative tools and a joint understanding of how better to engage policy makers both formally and informally in cooperative policy change. Multi-stakeholder engagements involving government can also offer opportunities to build trust and confidence between government and civil society.

## Lessons from Monitoring and Evaluation

Key Areas of Implementation			
Developing an M&E approach that links with the implementation plan	Identifying core indicators for measuring progress and outcomes	Producing reports that are focused both on process and outcomes	Linking implementation to desired policy advocacy impacts
<b>Significant Lessons</b>			
Learning oriented reflection	“Learning-oriented” reflection allows for assessment of an approach’s effectiveness to be continually deepened and its application better understood – in essence this represents a “theory-in-action” approach.		
Value of triple-loop learning	Learning has taken place at the incremental level (new policy advocacy skills and capabilities), at the level of reframing (reshaping patterns of thinking about policy), and at the transformational level (new policy shifts bring positive benefits to beneficiary communities). This kind of project learning has been heuristic (ie. ‘learning by doing’), with many country initiatives taking time to adjust to using the model, forming effective partnerships and developing strategic approaches.		
Incremental successes	Defining success is difficult since policy advocacy is not a zero sum game, although failure is usually more obvious than success. It is unusual for an advocacy initiative to achieve all of its aims but if, for example, a proposal for a new policy framework is modified or watered down but still passed into law then all participating sectors can claim a degree of “advocacy” success.		
Impact on the ground	Policy advocacy interventions are often premised on an understanding that they will make an impact in terms of changes for people in poor communities in developing countries. Actually measuring that “downstream” effect is difficult however. There is a need to consider deeper and longer term cooperation between the partners to measure broader scale impact and any sustainable change people have experienced as a result of the multiple interventions undertaken with them or for them.		

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Southern Africa Trust launched the initiative Creating Linkages Between Research, Advocacy and the Media for Pro-Poor Policy Change in Africa (“Linkages”) in October 2010 to explore whether more effective civil society collaboration (particularly between research, advocacy and media organisations) could further advance pro-poor policy change in Africa. In collaboration with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Trust selected six countries- Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, Malawi and Ghana – in which to support innovative partnerships on policy oriented campaigns.

The rationale informing the conceptualisation of the “Linkages” project was the perception by the Trust and many of its civil society partners that there was little evidence that effective, collaborative and strategic policy advocacy initiatives amongst civil society formations were materialising in the southern Africa context. This strategic lacuna had resulted in a fragmented and diluted civil society policy advocacy environment in the region. It was also noted that although media outlets, advocacy organisations and research institutions, in particular, have made significant progress in their work, there remains a challenge that the three constituencies are not coordinated and lessons learnt in their respective work are not sufficiently shared amongst each other. The concept of the “Linkages” model therefore emerged in response to this challenge, and was geared to developing and successfully demonstrating an innovative approach to strengthening policy advocacy relationships among civil society formations within and across different sectors.

The specific objectives formulated for the “Linkages” project were:

- Increased quality and coherence in the policy advocacy work of different types of civil society formations that are working on the thematic issues (as below) in six countries and at a regional level, through increased knowledge of each other’s work, increased knowledge about specific policy development processes, and more evidence-based research that includes the voices of people affected by the advocacy issue;
- Increased coordination of the policy advocacy interventions of different types of civil society formations mentioned above by creating new platforms and opportunities for linking, shared learning, development of shared advocacy positions, and joint planning of policy advocacy interventions;
- Increased effectiveness of policy advocacy initiatives by the civil society formations mentioned above through the creation of a value chain between their unique policy advocacy resources amongst the different types of organisations;
- More ownership of the policy advocacy interventions of the civil society formations mentioned above by people who are directly affected by the advocacy issues being addressed resulting in longer-term sustainability of the policy changes;
- Increased access to appropriate policy making people and forums as a result of increased credibility of the policy advocacy interventions of the civil society formations mentioned above through more evidence/research-based advocacy interventions that include the voices of the people affected by the advocacy issue;
- Greater public visibility of the policy advocacy work of the civil society formations mentioned above in the mass media through increased mass media partnerships that optimize the impact of their advocacy work; and
- A stronger intermediary facilitation, sub-granting, and policy dialogue brokering agency in the region to support the development of such value-adding civil society policy advocacy linkages and alliances in Africa.

Four primary thematic areas of work and policy focus were selected, situated within the scope of the Millennium Development Goals:

- Agriculture and food security (agricultural productivity for household-level food security)
- Financing for development (resource mobilisation and better allocation and distribution of resources)
- Delivery of basic social services
- Governance for development (inclusive, participatory, and transparent governance for better development results)

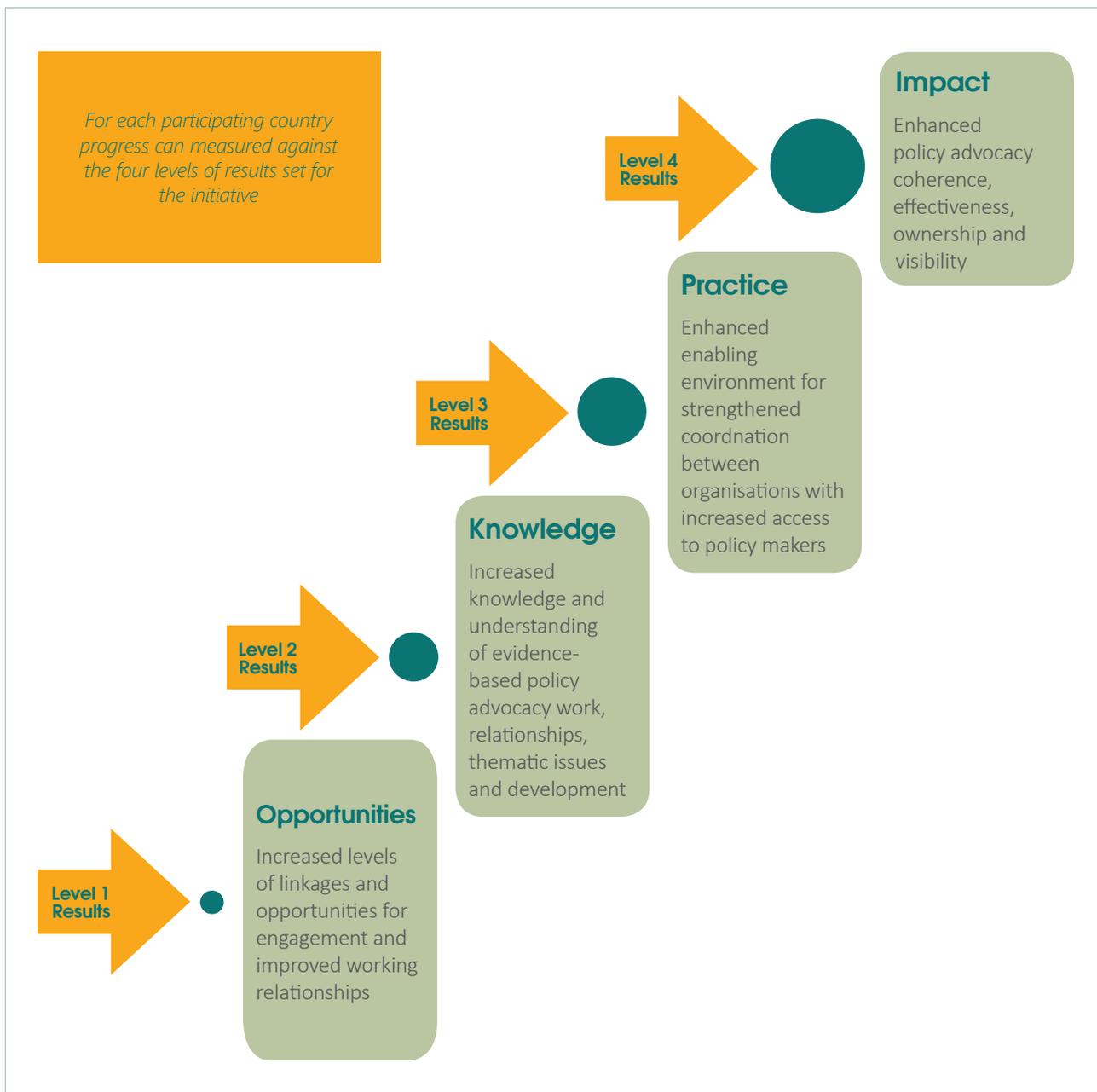
A key outcome of the project has been to document the experiences, insights and learning that are generated through the process of project implementation.

## PURPOSE, GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE LEARNING REPORT

One of the main outputs of the “Linkages” initiative is the production, publication and dissemination of this learning resource on linking voice and accountability that draws on learning from the various project activities, relationships, quality of work, and effectiveness of the research, advocacy and media partners in relation to pro-poor policy change. With the dissemination of this report, the Trust aims to enhance the knowledge of partner organisations and other stakeholders doing similar work with a view to improve the working relations between research, advocacy and media in pro-poor policy advocacy.

The primary purpose of the learning report is to document implementation experiences, knowledge acquisition, good practice and areas of implementation that have proved challenging. The learning report explores methodologies that can most effectively document and present the processes and approaches which emerged from project implementation in the six countries. Some of the key questions that guided the documentation process were:

- What was supposed to happen (vision, goals, objectives, intentions)?
- What has actually happened (implementation)?
- Have the grant-making processes been effective and supportive of partnership development?
- Has the enabling environment (operational processes, logistics, disbursements, reporting etc.) been adequate?
- Has the approach to partnership formation with the media been optimal?
- Have the characteristics of the lead organisations (as either a grant maker or network/coalition) materially affected the direction of the project?



The learning resource has extracted lessons from the initiative’s implementation processes and experiences. The report presents key lessons learned, both intentional and unintentional, from the initiative, (including inception arrangements, institutional arrangements, and approach to convenings) through reflection and observation and how this learning informed adjustments in strategies and issues for further exploration.

# INITIATIVE CONCEPTUALISATION AND MODELLING

Through its extensive work with civil society in the southern Africa region the Trust identified a need for a targeted initiative to create the opportunities and platforms to build innovative, scaled-up, more coherent and value-adding working relationships between different types of civil society formations doing policy advocacy work, including researchers and think tanks, civil society campaigning and advocacy groups, platforms of affected people, the media, and non-governmental organisations. This would be done in conjunction with strategies that link them with access to appropriate policy and other decision makers.

Traditional Relations	“Linked” Relations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy, research and media each operating primarily within their own sphere;</li> <li>• Some degree of interaction, but limited – each sector acting independently and pursuing own agendas;</li> <li>• Independently defined roles of each sector;</li> <li>• Limited understanding of each other’s roles and potential value-add</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater degree of activity to address developmental policy challenges within each sector and more integration across a shared space;</li> <li>• New frameworks for collaboration, partnership and innovation resulting from increased intersections;</li> <li>• Increased blurring of traditional roles and approaches;</li> <li>• Evidence of hybrid formations emerging and the creation of working synergies.</li> </ul>

A core component of this model is the concept of value chains between the different types of civil society formations that can leverage more effective policy advocacy outcomes. However, such an innovation in policy advocacy relationships amongst civil society formations requires additional partners. The Trust understands that in many cases there are significant gaps in the civil society policy advocacy value chain amongst advocacy, research and media partners to be able to deliver effective advocacy outcomes along the lines of the Trust’s civil society advocacy value chain model:



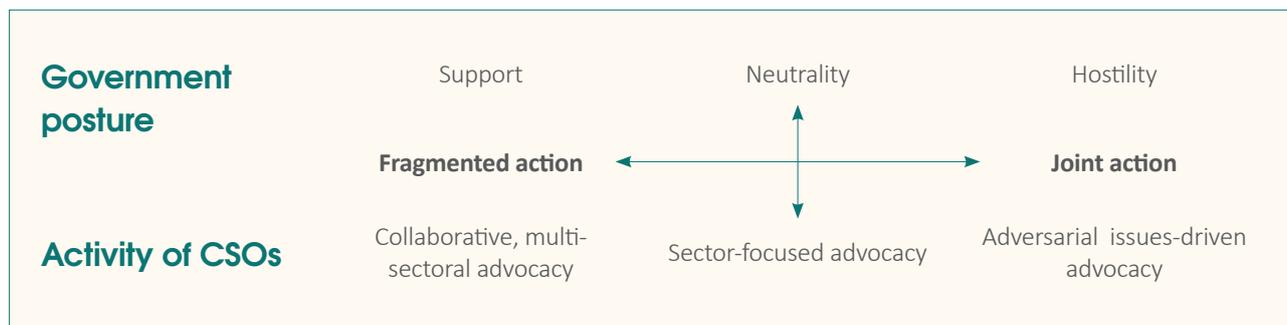
Each of the arrows in the diagram above represents a function of a different type of core organisational competence that is required for more effective civil society policy advocacy: the development of research-based evidence on specific poverty issues; the translation of research into policy-relevant advocacy materials for use by a broad range of groups; broad-based information dissemination, mobilisation, and active engagement with governments; and the convening of policy dialogue platforms involving diverse state and non-state actors.

All too often, however, there is the expectation that one civil society partner organisation may be able to adequately perform the full spectrum of functions in the policy advocacy chain. This is rarely, if ever, possible. It results in weak policy advocacy initiatives by civil society organisations that focus more on one dimension of the advocacy process than the others and very often fails to deliver the expected policy change and government accountability outcomes. It also generally weakens the development of the civil society sector as a whole by pitting different types of organisations against each other in a competition to perform the same functions rather than drawing on the unique strengths of each different type of organisation in a coherent whole. These issues were clearly identified by participants during a “Linkages” colloquium in Dar es Salaam in

October 2010 where it was pointed out that policy advocacy outcomes can be more effective by creating a chain of value adding linkages between different types of partner organisations whose unique strengths in a particular dimension of the policy advocacy chain can be harnessed for more effective policy change outcomes. The following diagramme summarises key concerns raised by participants at the Colloquium:

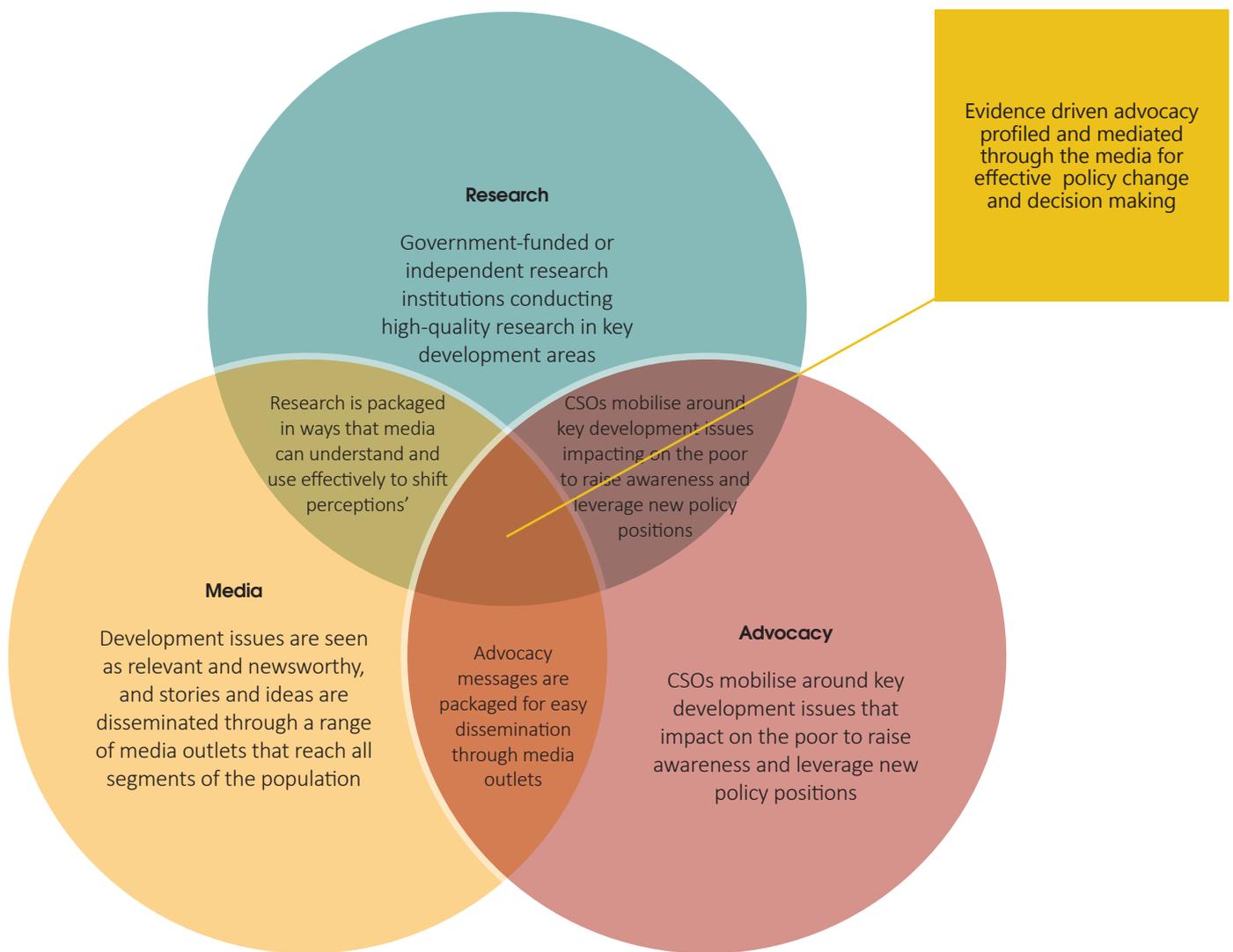


If approached in the right way, the political environment in Africa is ready for stronger engagement of voices of the poor through their organisations. But formal and informal opportunities and institutional mechanisms have not been sufficiently developed for engagement between non-state actors and policy makers in the region, both as a result of and exacerbating levels of suspicion and mistrust between state and non-state actors.



In this context, meaningful policy advocacy engagement will not happen of its own agency or simply because the need is there. For such engagement to happen effectively, it requires:

- New knowledge that is developed on a strong evidence base;
- Stronger institutional capability amongst key role-players;
- New linkages and alliances amongst different types of role-players;
- New opportunities for engagement between stakeholders;
- Greater credibility of stakeholders (including new platforms for voices of the poor) and greater receptiveness by policy makers;
- New forms of social accountability and social cohesion (between sectors and within institutions), based on the development of strong relationships between the social partners;
- More and better financing to role players to do this work more effectively; and
- A shared vision of development in the region.



## MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

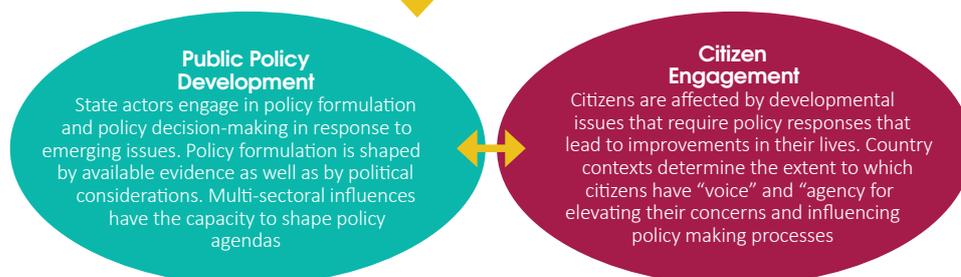
Over the past five years, the Trust has worked to align its programmes with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and now increasingly with the post-2015 development agenda. The MDG agenda, in its totality, is in essence a poverty reduction strategy focused on concrete and measurable improvements in essential components of the quality of life.

In order to think about poverty reduction in a more systematic way, the Trust has used the “Linkages” project as a vehicle for engaging with various poverty-related policies and interventions at different levels and through these supporting the achievement of MDG 1 targets in the sub-region. At the most immediate level the relevant poverty concept is income poverty, as used for measuring progress with respect to MDG 1, and its reduction is associated with policy and programmatic actions that seek to increase incomes. MDG 1A, which focuses on a rise of household income/ consumption, is therefore appropriately complemented by MDG 1B, which focuses on employment, and MDG 1C, which focuses on food consumption. Most of the policy advocacy issues targeted through the “Linkages” initiative have a focus on addressing the needs of small-scale farmers and typically involve improving the access of the poor to finance, technical assistance programmes to poor farmers, to improving production technology and employment generation programmes. An important element of the Southern Africa Trust’s approach is to support civil society initiatives that support country progress on the MDGs.

From a learning perspective it is important to surface the synergies that have emerged between the policy advocacy initiatives being undertaken in the six countries and the way in which they align with specific MDGs. While these links have not necessarily been made explicit in the various projects, they function as core assumptions in terms of achieving national development outcomes.

## Implementation Context for the Linkages Initiative

**Advocacy Work** Civil society organisations representing specific constituencies mobilize around particular development issues that are not being adequately addressed at the policy level. Advocacy strategies are developed based on available information and utilized to undertake campaigns. CSOs may conduct advocacy as individual organizations, in alliance with other CSOs or as networks of member organizations. CSO advocacy may be constrained by a range of factors, including disabling political environment, lack of resources, lack of access and weak capacity



**Research Work:** A range of government-funded research agencies, academic research institutes, independent think tanks and civil society research agencies undertake quantitative and qualitative research across different sectors. Research produces data, knowledge and evidence-bases that can be used to inform policy formulation and government decision-making. Research institutions may be constrained by a number of factors, including affiliation to government or corporates, contract research and lack of resources

**Media Work:** State run and independent media organizations manage a range of outlets including the press, radio, TV and web-based portals. The media disseminate information in diverse ways to a wide spectrum of the population. The media depend on information from outside sources to stimulate, shape and produce their messages. Media reporting may be constrained by a range of factors, including political pressure, corporate agenda and weak capacity. Media institutions may have their own ideological position and political preference

## METHODOLOGY OF THE LEARNING REPORT

The “Linkages” initiative has had a clear rationale and a defined set of activities that have unfolded through the project implementation process itself. While the process of implementation has been of interest to everyone involved in the project, the Trust has been especially interested in showcasing the kinds of learning that have emerged from that process. This report has effectively used a longitudinal learning analytics to surface what has been going on in the process and to reflect on the kinds of learning scenarios and innovations that have characterised the various country level interventions.

The primary methodology for this report has been qualitative, with detailed iterative reflection on what participants have worked on, how they have interacted, what they have produced, what tools/techniques they have used, and in which physical and virtual location have they interacted. It has utilised the following approaches to collect and distil information emerging from the project:

- Review of routine project reports from the lead organisations;
- Engagement with the lead organisations and other partners at the regular Steering Committee meetings;
- Field visits to project countries to engage with the lead organisations, project partners and other stakeholders;
- Site visits to places where it has been possible to engage with the policy beneficiaries;
- Participation in formal presentations of research findings by the research partners;
- Key informant interviews in country with advocacy, research and media partners;
- Informal “one on one” interactions with a range of “Linkages” partners;
- Integration of inputs and feedback from the Trust, lead organisations and partners at various stages of report preparation;
- Ongoing and substantive dialogue with the “Linkages” project manager and other Trust staff on substantive issues related to the implementation of the initiative.

This learning analytics approach has been used to generate some predictive models of collaborative partnerships and

policy advocacy processes that are intended to stimulate ongoing dialogue about policy advocacy good practice. It is also anticipated that different kinds of learning and experience – both positive and negative – will serve to inform similar future initiatives and possibly enhance other pro-poor policy advocacy designs. The approach has not been aimed at identifying solutions to different problems, but has rather been focused on improving project-oriented partnership-centred designs, i.e. designs that include issues linked to knowledge-building, project-based learning, inquiry learning, problem-based learning and policy advocacy learning. In many instances learning has also emerged from purely operational processes and pointed to good practice areas in the management of collaborative policy advocacy processes.

Reflection has been a crucial part of the experiential learning process, and like experiential learning itself, it has been both facilitated (for example during Steering Committee meetings) and independent (for example during one on one discussions with participants in the project). Successive iterations of reflective thought and learning have emerged from the three year process of engagement with all “Linkages” role-players, and it has been very evident that this interaction has created a platform for further learning, and allowed for further experience-sharing and reflection. This approach has reinforced the fact that experiential learning and reflective learning are iterative processes, and that the learning builds and develops with continuous reflection and experience over the project life cycle. Asking the critical questions and guiding reflective conversation before, during, and after key “Linkages” milestones has undoubtedly unlocked the capacity of partners for innovative thinking and learning about policy advocacy.

The project has been built on the premise that three very distinct spheres of civil society – the media, advocacy and research – can work collaboratively to achieve effective pro-poor policy advocacy outcomes. The Trust anticipated that the project would generate different kinds of process and substantive learning that could facilitate enhanced understanding of policy advocacy and strengthen the capacities of these diverse civil society organisations to work in a joined up way to achieve a common policy advocacy purpose. Through the methodologies used to explore emerging learning the report has focused on the following key areas of the initiative:

- The genesis and maturation of partnerships, focusing on the critical elements that facilitate joint engagement and constructive working relationships;
- Understanding the extent to which the characteristics of the lead organisation (whether a grant making or networked organisation) has had a material influence on the direction of the project.
- Understanding the kinds of organisational and inter-personal relationships that characterise each sector, and how these dynamics impact on partnership building and collaboration;
- Reflection on prevailing socio-political factors, and how these determine the kinds of spaces available for collaborative citizen action around policy advocacy;
- A focus on seeking to understand some of the underlying principles and practices that can improve the level and the quality of the participation of the citizens in the pro-poor policy development processes;
- Understanding if new partnership formations and collaborative actions have been different to previous partnerships and if so, what are the factors that make these partnerships different and more (or less) effective;
- Examining the nature and quality of collaboration, and attempting to understand the effectiveness of the different models used to build such partnerships.
- The methodologies used by the project for engaging with the media, and examining which approaches (for example direct grants or grants through lead organisations) have been the most effective at country level;
- The way in which the “Linkages” (or “three legged”) model has been used and adapted to suit specific country contexts.

The Trust and the Gates Foundation have, from the outset, been particularly interested in the extent to which the investment in this initiative pays dividend in terms of “changes in state” – in other words the impact that the intervention is having in relation to effective approaches to pro-poor policy advocacy work. While this report is not intended to be an evaluation of the initiative as a whole, it is expected that much of the material contained in the report will inform the final evaluation.

The issue of policy influence has been a key factor in the thinking of all the project partners, and this report has attempted to understand how CSOs in the six countries have interacted with government and private sector institutions, what channels they have utilised to elicit policy makers’ attention and which strategies they have adopted to influence policy. The analysis has also focused on four key factors: political context, policy advocacy linkages, evidence and external influences. This learning report has attempted to analyse the importance of these factors and the extent to which the political context and the prevailing “enabling environment” in each country affects partner contributions to policy-making and to what extent research-based evidence and media-driven external influences can be exploited to improve the pro-poor policy impact of civil society. The report has also reflected on the correlation between the nature of the lead organisation (local grant-maker, national network, issue-based coalition, etc.) and the level of effectiveness and impact of the various country level policy advocacy interventions.

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## CHAPTER TWO: OVERVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION

The Southern Africa Trust first introduced the idea of the “Linkages” initiative during a colloquium in Dar es Salaam in October 2010, held collaboratively with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The participants, representing media outlets, advocacy organisations and research institutions gathered to debate how they could improve their collaboration to better influence pro-poor policy in Africa. The discussion asserted that generally weak relationships between the three groups is a constraint for policy development and social accountability work. The deliberations recommended the Trust consider investing in national level convenings and strategic support towards encouraging stronger partnerships.

In order to confirm the perceptions put forward by the colloquium and the receptiveness of civil society organisations to improved collaboration, the Trust commissioned a baseline survey and scoping study across the six focus countries. The scoping study confirmed that there is a ‘big gap to be bridged between research organisations and both advocacy groups and the media. Relationships are frustrated by different worldviews, cultures and constraints of these organisations, and a failure to engage and understand each other. Nevertheless, great opportunities exist to move beyond stereotypes and entrenched views to optimise the use of research and evidence in support of pro-poor policy formation.’ The study emphasised the importance of a flexible model of implementation, and cautioned against a ‘one size fits all’ approach.

Together with national partner organisations, the Trust held a national convening in each of the six countries to gain buy-in to the concept of the initiative, and generate interest among the three groups and potential national lead organisations. Lead organisations were then selected, through an informal process of peer nomination and formal submission of proposals to the Trust.

The lead organisation generally proceeded to identify possible collaborators from research, advocacy and media, and held meetings of national stakeholders. In some cases, such as South Africa and Kenya, the focus policy issue was selected by the lead organisation based on previous and ongoing work, while in the other countries this was identified during meetings with potential partners. In Uganda, this was supplemented by a scoping study.

As is described in the proceeding section, in the summaries of country experiences in the implementation of the initiative, the manner in which the lead organisations collaborated with local partners differed between countries, with most lead organisations establishing country level task teams made up of local advocacy, research and media partners. In Ghana and Kenya, relationships were outlined through formal contracts; in Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania partners were contracted for specific pieces of work; and in South Africa, the partner worked through a loose, voluntary coalition.

The characteristics of lead organisations also differ, with those in Kenya and Tanzania acting as local grant makers, those in Uganda, Malawi and Ghana working as networks, whereas in South Africa the organisation views itself as a ‘boundary organisation’. The organisations also took on varying roles in the implementation of the initiative, with some operating as coordinators, while others were directly involved in the advocacy work.

Research partners were involved in varying ways in each of the projects. In Ghana, Uganda and Tanzania, the projects used existing research and repackaged it through policy briefs. In Uganda and Malawi, partners developed mappings of existing information on the policy issue, which were supplemented by focus group consultations. In South Africa and Kenya, new research was undertaken by research partners to build upon existing knowledge. In Tanzania, agricultural expenditure audits already conducted at the local government level were compiled to form a national report. The involvement of research partners in Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania tapered off following the provision of research, while those in South Africa, Kenya and Ghana actively participated in dialogues involving policy makers.

As they have expertise in the selected policy area, the lead organisations in South Africa and Kenya led the advocacy campaigns, with minor support from local advocacy partners. In Malawi, the lead organisation also led the campaign although it does not have specific expertise in the focus area. In Uganda, Tanzania and Ghana, local advocacy partners already engaged in the issues took the lead, particularly in engaging policy makers, to ensure consistency and sustainability, and also reduce the risk of competition.

Initiating partnerships with media was one of the most challenging aspects of the project, but one which ultimately had the most systematic impact on lead organisations. Inviting media to become partners, as opposed to mere recipients of press releases and participants in press conferences, required a transformation in the way media is perceived by civil society. Once partnerships with media were initiated, however, they played an essential role in advocacy. In Ghana, for example, SEND-Ghana signed an MOU and provided a small sub-grant to the Ghana News Agency which enthusiastically reported on the issues and campaign events. Learning from Ghana, the South African lead organisation adopted a similar approach and

signed MOUs with community radio. Lead organisations in Uganda, Ghana, Tanzania all report the initiative has led them to develop deeper relationships with media in other projects.

Through the initiative, the Trust offered grants to media outlets as an incentive to partner on the advocacy campaigns and cover development more generally. Media, in this context, was viewed practically by the Trust as a business that could initially be enticed through a small grant but would, ideally, recognise the potential of the approach and institutionalise it beyond the life of the grant. Grants were provided to New Vision in Uganda, Nation Media Group in Kenya, and South Africa's Mail and Guardian and eNews Channel Africa.

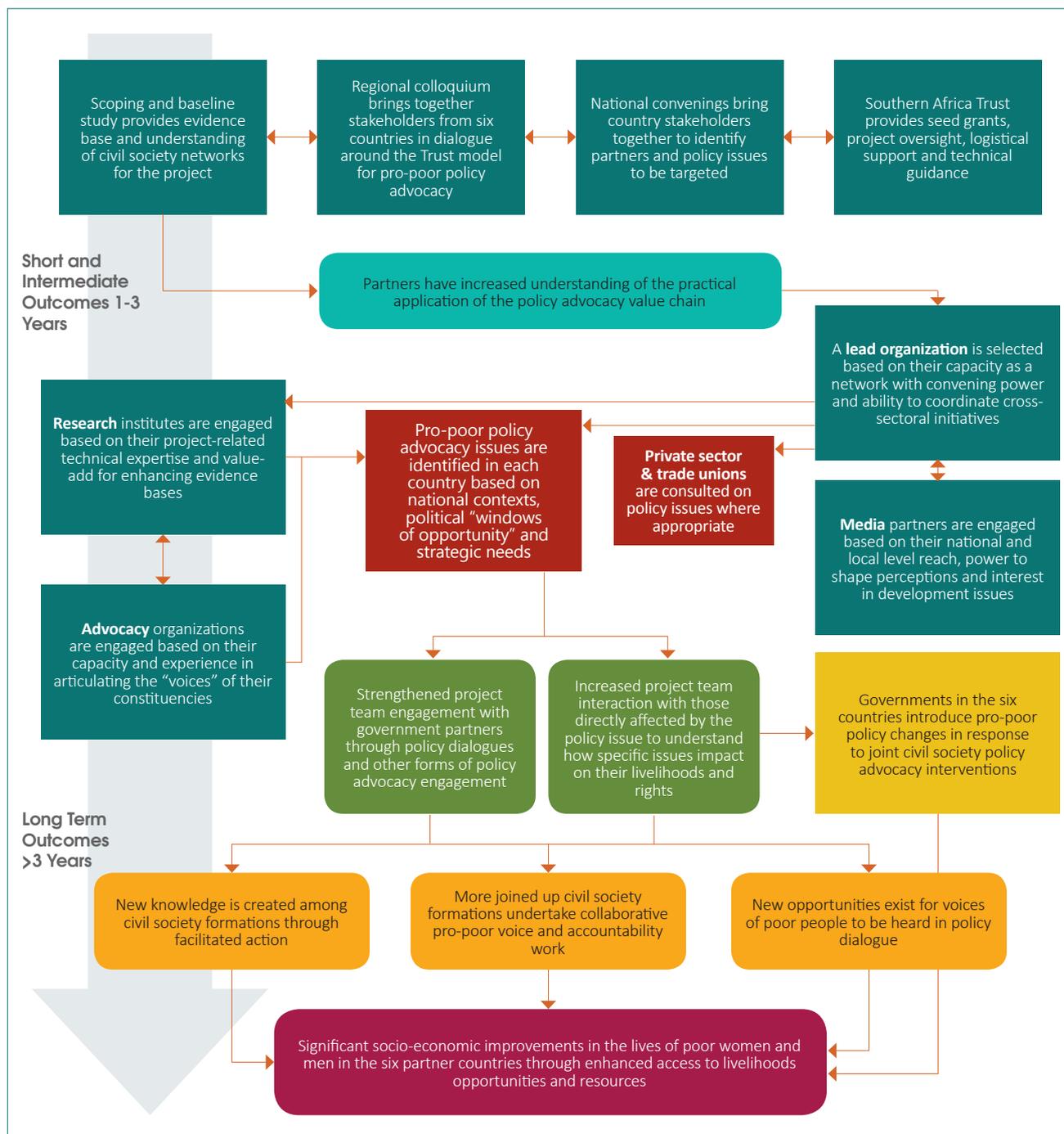
In all target countries, people directly affected by the selected policy issues were consulted by lead organisations and their local partners based on the findings of the research or as part of the mapping exercises. In South Africa, Ghana and Tanzania, however, they also played an integral role in advocacy.

How policy makers were engaged was, in part, dependent on the political dynamics of the countries, their openness to civil society, and their perceptions of the participating organisations. In Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda, they were the recipients of mapping studies and related policy briefs, and participated in dialogue meetings. In Ghana and Kenya, policy makers at the district and national levels were approached for their buy into the project even prior to its inception. In South Africa, however, government was an active participant in the actual advocacy process.

While the "Linkages" model envisions collaboration between media, research and advocacy, some of the partners built upon this to integrate other players. In South Africa and Tanzania, representatives of the private sector participated in policy dialogue as they play an integral role in determining and, inevitably, implementing the policies in question. Religious leaders were also targeted during a specific dialogue on nutrition in Uganda, because of their influence over the practices of their congregations. In Ghana and Uganda, United Nations agencies such as the World Food Programme and the Food and Agricultural Organisation participated in dialogues due to their role in providing national finance and technical support in the policy areas.

This section of the report has provided an overview of the across the various the six focus countries. The next section details the specific strategies undertaken by each of the lead organisations and their local partners, as well as articulates the learning opportunities for the overall initiative.

# Theory of Change for the Linkages Initiative in Six African Countries



# CHAPTER THREE: IMPLEMENTATION EXPERIENCES BY COUNTRY

## UGANDA

<p><b>ADVOCACY GOAL:</b> A national food and nutrition policy that incorporates proven strategies for improving nutrition in Uganda, as well as increased financing for nutrition programming.</p>	
<p><b>Project Thematic Area:</b> Delivery of basic and social services</p>	<p><b>MDG GOAL 1:</b> End extreme poverty and hunger</p>
<p><b>LEAD ORGANISATION:</b> Uganda National NGO Forum</p> <p><b>RESEACH PARTNER(S):</b> National Crop Resources Research Institute</p> <p><b>ADVOCACY PARTNER(S):</b> Volunteer Efforts for Development Concern, Food Rights Alliance and the Uganda Civil Society Coalition on Scaling Up Nutrition</p> <p><b>MEDIA PARTNER(S):</b> Farmers Media Link, New Vision Newspaper</p>	
<h3>Collaboration Model</h3> <p>The Uganda National NGO Forum was selected as the lead organisation during the initiative’s national convening co-hosted by the Southern Africa Trust. A detailed mapping exercise provided a stakeholder analysis that facilitated partnership building for the project. The project successfully brought together critical players on nutrition to address the issue collectively through a project task team.</p>	
<p>Learning</p>	<p>At the start, the project was affected by limited ownership by the partners which led to slow progress in implementation. This was partly due to the lack of separate funding streams for the different partners.</p> <p>Some of the initial partnerships were only tenable for a period and as the project gained momentum new partners were brought on board.</p>
<h3>Role of Research</h3> <p>A mapping of nutrition actors and their respective models, areas of implementation, target population, best practices and lessons learnt in Uganda was commissioned and the completed report assisted in the development of an advocacy strategy for the project. The findings of the mapping were synthesised into a policy brief which was widely disseminated to key stakeholders, and in particular to relevant ministries, members of parliament, religious leaders and civil society organisations.</p> <p>The National Crop Resources Research Institute (NaCRRRI) engaged in sharing relevant crop research and research findings and this directly informed advocacy around new and more nutritious crop varieties. This effectively tapped into research the institute was already undertaking around nutrition, and specifically research related to the promotion of food-based nutrition interventions such as the orange fleshed sweet potato.</p>	
<p>Learning</p>	<p>The research provided evidence that reinforced the nutrition advocacy messages and assisted in creating evidence-informed messaging that provided clear answers on the subject matter of nutrition. The research provided a legitimate evidence-base to engage policy makers and to secure their buy-in to the issues at stake.</p>
<h3>Role of Advocacy</h3> <p>The advocacy component has been critical in raising political interest through activities such as policy dialogues and engagements with members of parliament. The results of the mapping study were developed into a policy brief which was shared with government, academia and parliamentarians during policy dialogues. The policy brief profiled different nutrition intervention models in Uganda and their potential for addressing food security and nutrition issues.</p>	

Learning	<p>Initially, Volunteer Efforts for Development Concern had been identified as the lead advocacy partner, but as the project gained traction and focus the Food Rights Alliance and the Uganda Civil Society Coalition on Scaling Up Nutrition took on the lead advocacy role.</p> <p>Generally the advocacy component has been the strongest element of the model by virtue of the activities that were being undertaken. Nevertheless all components have played an important role and mutually reinforced each other (ie. research contributed the evidence base for advocacy).</p>
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### Role of Media

The nutrition policy brief provided a set of key issues that was made available to the media to explore. In partnership with New Vision Newspaper, a nutrition campaign was run profiling nutrition champions and the plight of affected communities as part of their “Ugandans Making a Difference” series. New Vision also ran a training workshop on nutrition issues for their reporters. To further increase participation and public awareness on nutritional issues in Uganda, a discussion on nutrition issues was held on a televised TV Program called “MiniBuzz”.

Learning	<p>The media in Uganda played an important role in packaging information on nutrition that ordinary citizens could understand and appreciate. It also provided the broader public with information that enabled them to engage with the issue more proactively and thereby increasing public debate on the issue by making it a trending topic. The series of articles on nutrition and nutrition policy in the New Vision and TV discussions provided unprecedented coverage of nutrition issues in Uganda. The coverage led to some significant government responses around food and nutrition issues. This is a testament to the power of the media for building public support, shaping public opinion and creating a receptive environment for influencing policy.</p>
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### Role of People Directly Affected

The project used farmer advocacy and training partners, such as Volunteer Efforts for Development Concern to access small scale farmers engaged in implementing and managing new and more nutritious crop varieties. As part of the project some of the partners visited the Bushenyi District which produces a lot of food, yet also has above the national average for incidence of stunting amongst children. This project work highlighted the issue that food sufficiency does not necessarily equate with good nutrition. The mapping study also involved focus group discussions with communities in three districts of Uganda which explored opportunities and challenges for nutrition programming.

Learning	<p>Direct engagement with and technical support for local small scale farmers facilitated their “buy-in” to the nutrition policy advocacy process. The use of participatory research gave the project partners an opportunity to interact with and capture the voices of small scale farmers and rural communities and it was also critical in providing evidence for the key policy advocacy messages. By providing deeper insights into people’s experiences, the project team found that testimonies can increase understanding of poverty issues and when promoted by the media can help to shape public attitudes and inform decision making at different levels.</p>
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### Engagement with Policy Makers

The nutrition mapping study was presented during a meeting to an audience which included senior government officials. A policy brief was widely disseminated to key stakeholders particularly the relevant ministries, members of parliament and religious leaders. Partners held a high level meeting to galvanise members of parliament and representatives from the key ministries. Direct partner engagement with policy makers stimulated a higher degree of interest in nutrition issues and led to more serious attention being given to the Food and Nutrition Bill.

Learning	<p>Identifying strategies for mobilising political understanding led to a greater prioritisation of food and nutrition issues by Ugandan members of parliament. The project also highlighted the importance of analysing the pull and push factors for any policy process to understand and take advantage of critical entry points.</p> <p>The “Linkages” model was effective in accessing the policy making process and could be scalable in other policy advocacy areas. However, it is also evident that the opaque policy process in Uganda does present a challenge for the “Linkages” approach.</p>
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### Reported Influence on Policy

Various engagements with policy makers and other government decision makers raised political awareness and interest in the policy issue, particularly concerning the Food and Nutrition Bill that has effectively been stalled since 2009. During a high level dialogue organised by project partners on 10 October 2013, members of parliament committed to exploring links between agricultural sector development and food and nutrition, prioritising support for research on indigenous nutritious foods, and supporting a multi-stakeholder approach in addressing nutritional challenges. The Prime Minister’s Office held a Nutrition Development Partners Meeting on 21 November 2013, and a National Nutrition Forum was held on 3 December 2013 followed by a stakeholders meeting with the Prime Minister in which he announced government will be monitoring progress on nutrition indicators. Complementing this, the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development also organised a marathon on nutrition, and authored an op-ed published in New Vision on 26 November 2013 in which she emphasised the importance of the pending Food and Nutrition Bill.

## MALAWI

**ADVOCACY GOAL:** Increased support to the cotton sub-sector by improving the production and marketing chain, by among other things, provision of reliable inputs and extension services, and better marketing arrangements.

**Project Thematic Area:** Delivery of basic and social services

**MDG GOAL 1:** End extreme poverty and hunger

**LEAD ORGANISATION:** Malawi Economic Justice Network

**RESEACH PARTNER(S):** Centre for Agricultural Research and Development at the Bunda College of Agriculture

**ADVOCACY PARTNER(S):** Civil Society Agriculture Network, Cotton Development Trust

**MEDIA PARTNER(S):** Nation Newspapers

### Collaboration model

The Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN) was nominated as the lead organisation during a national convening co-hosted by the Southern Africa Trust. Participants also selected an interim committee comprised of two organisations each from media, research and advocacy. The committee was later consolidated and agreement was reached that it should have an advisory and joint convening role.

Learning	<p>Despite a strong start, the project faced challenges of coordination among the partner CSOs. The lead organisation recognises that a clearer definition of roles and responsibilities could have been developed between MEJN as the lead partner, and the advocacy, media and research partners. Additionally, some partners were not as involved once they realised they would not receive direct funding.</p>
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### Role of Research

MEJN commissioned a study to consolidate existing literature on cotton growing in Malawi and the effects of farm gate prices on the life of the farmers and their household level food security. The report provided a starting point for further dialogue platforms and other collaborative meetings with key stakeholders to stimulate debate for advocacy, and to provide recommendations that will be used for campaigning for reforms in policies and interventions for the cotton sub-sector in Malawi. The researchers also produced a policy brief to be used by civil society to advocate for reforms in the cotton sector.

Learning	The research component of the project was the weakest element. At the outset researchers from the Centre for Agricultural Research and Development (CARD) from Bunda College of Agriculture were identified as the research partners. Unfortunately they did not sustain interest in the policy advocacy issues as the project progressed. The project consequently ended up having to identify an independent researcher from the Cotton Development Trust to finalise the process.
<h3>Role of Advocacy</h3> <p>MEJN worked closely with the Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) and the Cotton Development Trust (CDT) as advocacy partner CSOs to facilitate the core policy advocacy initiatives. This grouping based its work on the research findings and used these to engage the policy and law makers, especially those who sit on the agriculture and trade committees.</p>	
Learning	Despite a positive start, the advocacy leg was weak, mainly as a result of challenges of coordination among the partner CSOs.
<h3>Role of Media</h3> <p>Initially, the coalition worked with media associations rather than individual media houses. This resulted in delays as there was no direct access to mainstream mass media. The partnership with The Nation Newspaper, however, allowed the project to generate good coverage of the advocacy issues. Supplementing this, MEJN produced a documentary on the challenges facing cotton farmers in the country. The documentary was aired a number of times on the national broadcaster, and the Nation Newspaper followed up with articles.</p>	
Learning	<p>The media played a strong role in the “Linkages” project. The Nation Newspaper in particular provided extensive coverage to the policy advocacy issues. The media campaign highlighted the issues faced by cotton farmers, and more importantly, packaged them as a policy issue that could be addressed by government and other role players through systematic actions aimed at improving the production and marketing chain.</p> <p>It worked extremely well to involve media from the inception of the project and allow them to accompany CSOs and researchers into the field. It resulted in buy-in from the media and improved the quality of reporting on agriculture and livelihood issues. Having the media as part of the team was one of the keys to success in this project</p>
<h3>Role of People Directly Affected</h3> <p>Small-scale cotton farmers were interviewed in the development of the cotton mapping study, to supplement and validate the existing research. The documentary produced by MEJN also featured cotton farmers speaking directly about the challenges related to cotton growing and the low farm gate price.</p>	
Learning	It was assumed that the people directly affected by the issue could be ‘represented’ by one of the partner organisations. But this turned out not to be the case. Representatively should be regularly interrogated by the project team.
<h3>Engagement with Policy Makers</h3> <p>Policy makers attended the validation workshop for the cotton mapping study. However, due to delays related to internal staff changes at the lead organisation and challenges of collaboration among partners, policy advocacy is still ongoing.</p>	
Learning	There is a concern that the political climate and broad conservatism of Malawian society creates challenges for innovative policy changes. The partners all understood, however, that the policy advocacy work would face challenges, but that consistent, evidence-based initiatives have a good chance of influencing policy thinking on small-scale agriculture issues.

## Engagement with Private Sector

One prominent partner was the Cotton Development Trust (CDT), housed by the African Institute of Corporate Citizenship. The CDT works to ensure that there is a fair deal between farmers and buyers on the Malawi market, and it has members from all key cotton players in Malawi including cotton growers, cotton buyers, and cotton ginners.

Learning

## Reported Influence on Policy

In March 2013, the Cotton Development Act was signed into law, legislating the formation of a Cotton Council. While MEJN cannot be said to have contributed to the development of the Act, the establishment of the Cotton Council is one of the recommendations of the mapping study. There is an expectation that policy outcomes will include the establishment of a credible supply chain of inputs, an increased number of extension workers in cotton growing areas, and the establishment of proper marketing channels.

# GHANA

**ADVOCACY GOAL:** (1) The enforcement of environmental laws to prevent cyanide contamination from mining processes; (2) The provision of better extension services, fertilisers, and tools by government to prevent aflatoxin in maize.

**Project Thematic Area:** Delivery of basic and social services / Agricultural productivity for household-level food security

**MDG GOAL 7:** Ensure environmental sustainability/ **MDG GOAL 1:** Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty

**LEAD ORGANISATION:** SEND - Ghana

**RESEACH PARTNER(S):** Food Research Institute, Water Research Institute

**ADVOCACY PARTNER(S):** Ecumenical Association for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (ECASARD), Coalition Of NGO's in the Water and Sanitation Sector (CONIWAS)

**MEDIA PARTNER(S):** Ghana News Agency, Public Agenda

## Collaboration Model

SEND-Ghana was selected by Southern Africa Trust as the lead organisation for the initiative in Ghana following the initial national convening. SEND-Ghana established a local project steering committee with two representatives from each partner institution (representing research, advocacy and media). All the partners were involved in selecting the common policy advocacy issues. In order to regularise the relationship between SEND-GHANA and the project partners and to promote transparency, ownership and mutual accountability in the use of project resources, SEND- GHANA signed memorandum of understanding with each project partner including the provision small sub-grants.

The partnership operated on the basis that no single partner has adequate knowledge or sufficient expertise to execute all the functions (assessment, planning, and implementation) associated with the project activities. While each event was led by a single partner, all were involved in planning, implementing and monitoring the various advocacy activities and allocating roles and responsibilities.

Learning

The project steering committee served as a platform for reflection, learning, knowledge sharing and for reviewing project progress. SEND Ghana found that the project's innovative model of engaging research, advocacy and media organisations simultaneously made policy advocacy more effective through working along an "advocacy value chain". Providing sub-grants to the research, advocacy, and research partners proved to be an effective strategy in that it motivated partners to be committed and to work collaboratively to achieve the overall project objectives.

## Role of Research

The government run research agencies Food Research Institute and the Water Research Institute were the key research partners. The research partners built upon their existing studies by conducting market-oriented applied research, including focus group discussions in target communities. Each partner then developed educational materials for dissemination to the communities during sensitisation workshops, as well as policy briefs which were presented to district and national level policy makers. Representatives of the research partners presented their findings during each of the workshops and meetings undertaken by the project partners.

### Learning

Although the partners utilised existing research, it required modification to effectively address the policy issues and accurately articulate the needs of the communities. It was not simply a question of using ‘existing research’. The project operated from the view that research drives progress in society and improvements in quality of life. However, to realise these benefits, the quality of research alone is not enough. The project continually took into account and balanced the needs of a diverse set of stakeholders: from the intended research and advocacy beneficiaries, to their clients and donors and the affected communities. Responsiveness to all of these is crucial to ensure advocacy is legitimate and effective. The accountability of the processes was as important as the results and outcomes of the advocacy.

## Role of Advocacy

Both advocacy partners used their networked advocacy strengths to influence policy makers; being able to work across the policy cycle phases when laws and regulations are being formulated and resources are being allocated. The advocacy partners led the process of mobilising affected beneficiaries through sensitisation workshops to educate them on the issues (including techniques to prevent aflatoxin, and prevent water poisoning), and then facilitating their engagement with government officials at all levels during district and national level policy dialogues. The project used the strategy of utilising research findings from a specific municipality (Tarkwa and Techiman), to provide an evidence base for awareness raising and advocacy at the district level which then also informed national level advocacy.

### Learning

Collective agreement on the advocacy issue among the partners ensured that all the partners had a common interest, knowledge, capabilities in the policy issue. Sensitisation trainings for the affected beneficiaries increased their knowledge and capacity, while also ensured they could be informed participants in the advocacy at all levels.

Media personnel from the print and electronic media as well as officials from the Techiman Municipal Directorate of Agriculture and the Techiman Traditional Council were fully involved in all advocacy activities. As a result, project activities promoted better understanding of the issues, disseminated critical information to the public and highlighted the need for adequate policy responses from government.

## Role of Media

Media partners were involved actively in the project steering committee and participated in each of the advocacy activities. The media partners provided widespread exposure in print/digital outlets conveying the advocacy messages and responses of public office bearers on the advocacy issues. Increased media exposure of aflatoxin problem in the media channels and outlets was focused on promoting decision makers’ attendance and responsiveness. The Ghana News Agency reported extensively on high cyanide and arsenic concentration in water for domestic use in the Tarkwa Municipality. Advocacy messages and other project information have been disseminated through SMS and the Citizens Watch Newsletter.

### Learning

The partnership with the media created synergies in terms of the improvement in accessibility and coverage that the media partners are providing directly to the activities of research and advocacy partners. The project led to improved media coverage and public awareness on the issues of aflatoxin and water contamination in affected communities. These advocacy initiatives have served to maintain a high level of interest from the media on the issue of aflatoxin and how it impacts on the income of affected farmers.

## Role of People Directly Affected

Advocacy partners identified and mobilised farmer based organisations, traditional leaders, citizens groups and women associations in the project communities (Tarkwa and Techiman). The project beneficiaries and other stakeholders were sensitised on the project and awareness was raised, increasing the knowledge among the project beneficiaries about the specific problems and the economic and health benefits of prevention. Consultative processes have promoted voice and accountability through direct involvement of people directly affected by the policy issues. Community members and smallholder farmers have defined the policy demands put forward by the project, and they have been extensively involved in advocacy events. On the issue of aflatoxin, farmers associations in the region actively used the education materials produced by the project (ie. video in local language and information sheets) to educate their members. Farmers associations and their members continue to have meetings with local level officials to follow up on their commitments.

Learning

The policy issues identified for coordinated advocacy are based on the experiences, perspectives and needs of people directly affected by the issues. This has ensured a high level of ownership, sustainability and credibility of the policy advocacy issue being promoted by the project. At the same time, in the case of the aflatoxin project, the capacity of smallholder farmers and community leaders to directly engage with public office holders has been strengthened and they now have better capacity to participate in the advocacy processes at the district level to demand improved market access and better prices for their maize.

## Engagement with Policy Makers

Through the development of policy briefs and follow-up dialogues the project engaged with district level government officials, national ministries, and with the Parliamentary Select Committee on Local Government and the Select Committee on Agriculture. Officials from the Techiman Municipal Directorate of Agriculture and the Techiman Traditional Council were fully involved in all advocacy activities.

Learning

The district and national level dialogues significantly raised awareness around the issues for all stakeholders, and created a level of policy advocacy that is gaining traction among key policy makers. A range of project partnerships with research, advocacy and media, and through ongoing engagement with community members and people directly affected by the policy issues have served to build strong policy advocacy networks. At the same time, institutional mechanisms for the participation of citizens in public policy advocacy were created.

## Reported Influence on Policy

### Aflatoxin

During policy dialogues, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture officials committed to improving extension services delivery through increasing the budget and recruiting additional extension officers. SEND-Ghana's partners were invited to inform a national parliamentary review of extension services. At the local level, following commitments during a local level dialogue, the Techiman Municipality repaired an existing mechanical drier and provided a new additional one to assist small scale farmers in the area to prevent the formation of aflatoxin in their maize, as recommended by the SEND-Ghana policy brief. Additionally, smallholder farmers reported that additional agricultural extension officers visited the area in August/September and November/December 2013 to supervise the harvesting and shelling processes.

### Water Pollution

The project contributed to raising nationwide attention on the impact of illegal mining, leading to the formation of a national level inter-ministerial task team. As a direct result of the project's engagement with national officials, the government also initiated a programme of educating citizens in mining areas through television and newspapers on the effect of water pollution. At the local level, the District Security Committee of the Amenfi East District Assembly intensified monitoring of the activities of illegal miners who pollute the water bodies. The Assembly is collaborating with the traditional authorities in the district to control the activities of the illegal miners. Community members also reported, during project monitoring visits, an anecdotal decrease in the pollution water bodies in the area.

# TANZANIA

**ADVOCACY GOAL:** (1) Increase in national budgetary allocation for agriculture to 10% in the 2013/2014 national budget; (2) Address challenges related to the marketing systems of agricultural products faced by smallholder farmers; and (3) Improved governance of Agriculture Development Plans in Local Government Authorities.

**Project Thematic Area:** Agricultural productivity for household-level food security; Resource mobilisation and better allocation and distribution of resources (optimising financing for development)

**MDG GOAL 1:** End extreme poverty and hunger

**LEAD ORGANISATION:** Foundation for Civil Society

**RESEACH PARTNER(S):** Sokoine University of Agriculture

**ADVOCACY PARTNER(S):** Agricultural Non-State Actors Forum (ANSAF)

**MEDIA PARTNER(S):** Mwananchi Communications

## Collaboration Model

The Foundation for Civil Society (FCS) was selected as the lead organisation by the Southern Africa Trust, following the national level convening in June 2011. FCS held an initial national stakeholder’s convention in September 2012 during which a task team was formed made up of five members representing research, advocacy and media organisations. The convention also selected the advocacy issues, and provided direction to the task team on advocacy activities. Over the project lifecycle regular meetings were held between research, advocacy and media partners, which were not the case prior to the project. The FCS has facilitated regular reflective meetings with partners to further cement working relationships and harmonise the comparative advantage of different partners for the attainment of a common advocacy goal.

Learning

The initial phase of the “Linkages” project proved to be challenging for FCS as the lead organisation and for the partners. There was a lack of understanding of the model at the beginning of the project. It took time to convene potential stakeholders around the table, and to identify and select key advocacy, research and media actors and agree on the agenda.

The main challenge was for the partners to step out of their comfort zone and embrace the model. Advocacy and media seemed to be more active partners than research. This might have been due to the fact that the agenda was related to their daily activities whereas research partners had many other tasks to accomplish.

## Role of Research

Two research institutes were initially nominated to be members of the task force, however they were not active participants in the project. As a result, the advocacy partner Agricultural Non-State Actors Forum took the lead on developing policy briefs based on existing research. Two policy briefs were produced: “10% National Budget Allocation to Agriculture: Could it Transform Rural Tanzania” and “The Effectiveness of Cash Crops Regulatory Bodies: The Case of Cashew Nuts”. The budget policy brief was informed by the consolidated report of extensive research implemented in six districts (Tandahimba, Singida, Korogwe, Iringa, Ulanga and Karagwe) that provided an analysis of findings of Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys/Systems (PETS) and Social Accountability Monitoring (SAM) in the agriculture sector. Detailed analysis of the Tanzanian cashew sub-sector was done by a consultant utilising an innovative approach which involved a review of existing studies as well as a series of face to face interviews with a wide range of national and international stakeholders including growers, coops, warehouse keepers, traders, exporters, processors, public servants, politicians, input suppliers and processors.

Learning

The initiative has highlighted the importance of not just the supply but also the demand for research, and the need to strengthen the demand side through giving greater voice to knowledge users – including agriculture sector policy makers, local government officials, marketers and small holder farmers.

## Role of Advocacy

Advocacy was geared towards affecting policy change at the national level while also raising the level of awareness of farmers around actions that could be taken to influence pro-poor policy. ANSAF took the lead in developing policy briefs based on existing research. The findings of the reports were presented during breakfast debates and during a policy dialogue with the Parliamentary Committee responsible for Agriculture and the Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives. Building on the research, over one hundred district and regional CSO networks mobilised for a nationwide petition campaign, collecting 803,000 signatures to call for the portion of the budget dedicated to agriculture to be raised to 10%. The partners also held a multi-stakeholder discussion on the issue of the budget, rekindling the demand for oversight bodies to push for improved governance in the agricultural sector.

### Learning

The policy briefs were influential in informing policy debates through credible research evidence. Joint advocacy engagements involving research, advocacy and media partners resulted in increased opportunities for regular dialogue with government, and media partners, parliamentarians and ordinary citizens. There is a strong indication that this is laying the groundwork for more effective policy change.

## Role of Media

Media and advocacy strategies were commissioned which provided a framework for the lead organisation and task force members to address agriculture sector policy and governance related issues. The lead organisation arranged for the media to visit and engage directly with smallholder farmers. Media partners ensured that smallholder farmers' concerns were aired and that they were informed of discussions (on issues affecting their lives) happening at the Executive and Parliamentary levels. In a way the media partners provided a space for people affected by policy to air their voices.

### Learning

The project recognised from the outset that the media constituted a special group that required a specific approach and coherent strategy. Media needed to be a partner that was integrally involved in the programming to ensure ownership of the issues, not just a recipient or conveyer of information. As a result of the FCS's involvement in the "Linkages" project the FCS has changed its approach to working with the media. The relationships with media are now more strategic, and all FCS grantees are taken through training on how to engage with the media. FCS is also regularly monitoring the extent to which the print and electronic media promote pro-poor policy issues.

## Role of People Directly Affected

For the project there were two major concerns related to the 2013/14 agriculture sector budget. The first was the attainment of at least a 10% agriculture budget, and the second was to ensure that the interests, priorities and concerns of smallholder farmers were strategically inserted into the budget vote debates. The project mobilised over one hundred district and regional CSO networks to participate in a campaign that obtained over 803,000 signatures from smallholder farmers and ordinary citizens to support a petition calling for an increased budget allocation to the agriculture sector. Public dialogues served to mobilise and equip farmers to actively participate in legislative review processes. The project saw strong engagement with small scale cashew nut farmer's associations.

### Learning

Joined-up partner collaboration has enhanced grassroots participation and facilitated the involvement of smallholder farmers in policy issues and other development processes. The project has brought together key players who jointly have the capacity to enhance levels of empowerment amongst smallholder farmers by providing platforms where they can actively voice their concerns.

## Engagement with Policy Makers

The project partners sought to engage with the executive wing of government in the early stages of advocacy since they play a crucial role in influencing and shaping what is tabled in parliament, as well as the implementation of policy decisions thereafter. Meetings and dialogues to present research findings through policy briefs were held involving members of parliament and the Parliamentary Committee responsible for Agriculture and the Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives. The petition was presented to members of parliament from the areas in which signatures were obtained.

Learning	Joint advocacy initiatives by research, advocacy and media partners resulted in increased opportunities for regular dialogue with government, parliamentarians and citizens. The acceptability of the lead organisation and partners by the government and legislative body also assisted in facilitating access to policy makers.
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### Reported Influence on Policy

The research findings stimulated discussion around improved governance and prioritisation of small-scale farming in the agriculture sector. It also rekindled the need of oversight bodies to push for improved governance in the agriculture sector, especially on budget allocation and expenditure management at Local Government Authority (LGA) levels. Although the 10% budget allocation was not achieved, the budgetary debate in Parliament was more intense than previous years with the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture actively pushing for an increase to agriculture and rural development. The debate continued on social media with activists pushing government to prioritise funding to small agriculture, and support for smallholder farmers is now on the election agenda for 2015. The government is also considering drafting a bill aimed at reviewing current laws governing cooperatives, the warehouse receipt system and marketing boards which are currently undermining farm gate prices for the produce of smallholder farmers.

## SOUTH AFRICA

**ADVOCACY GOAL:** A national extension policy which better serves smallholder farmers through ensuring improved collaboration between government, NGOs and the private sector.

**Project Thematic Area:** Delivery of basic and social services

**MDG GOAL 1:** End extreme poverty and hunger

**LEAD ORGANISATION:** Southern Africa Food Lab

**RESEARCH PARTNER(S):** Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS)

**ADVOCACY PARTNER(S):** LIMA Rural Development Foundation

**MEDIA PARTNER(S):** e News Channel Africa (eNCA), community radio stations

### Collaboration Model

Following discussions with the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS) and the Southern Africa Food Lab (SAFL), Southern Africa Trust decided to provide a grant to SAFL in early 2013 to be the lead organisation in South Africa. A major component of SAFL's work was already to facilitate collaboration and dialogue between stakeholder groups to raise awareness and foster innovations and experimental action towards an equitable and sustainable food system. The "Linkages" model fit into the methodology already being utilised by SAFL, which involved using existing and ongoing research provided by PLAAS, and bringing together advocacy organisations, government officials and private sector to discuss the challenges related to smallholder farmers and extension services. Incorporating the Linkages model, however, also required SAFL to establish innovative new partnerships with media organisations such as eNCA.

Learning	<p>The project relied on the use of multi-stakeholder platforms to ensure strong linkages between academic research and processes of social dialogue, policy debate, media dissemination and institutional learning among stakeholders involved in the development of smallholder agriculture. The project produced foundational knowledge, identified the key stakeholders and access points to enter and affect the smallholder farmer system, and formulated a number of innovations defined to shift the small-scale farming system. Using this approach, solutions are expected to come from iterative loops of dialogical interactions among all affected stakeholders, and innovations have to be tested on a small scale before being scaled as they may represent a radical departure from the present modalities of doing "policy business"</p> <p>One of the key aspects that set the South Africa project apart – when compared to the other country initiatives- is the diversity of participants. The project engaged with a wide range of stakeholders from civil society, government and private sector organisations across the food value chain (from farming inputs to retailers).</p>
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## Role of Research

SAFL worked with PLAAS and other research institutions to consolidate research on extension services to form briefing papers to be shared with policy makers, the private sector and the media. SAFL's purpose was to ensure that research data and findings inform coordinated policy dialogues that encourage discussion on the issues arising from both the "learning journeys" and how these can be addressed by the emerging policy.

Learning

The multi-stakeholder "learning journeys" approach utilised by the project complemented more academic forms of research and had the added benefit of generating collaborative action for change.

## Role of Advocacy

SAFL, in consultation with the Southern Africa Trust, theorised "advocacy" in a different way to that of the other partner countries. Shifting away from the more conventional models of policy advocacy SAFL opted to build a partnership with a social innovation consultancy – Reos Partners – to facilitate stakeholder engagement, mobilise multi-sectoral dialogue and incubate new, joint policy perspectives that address the complex, high-stakes challenges of food security in South Africa. This involved bringing civil society, private sector and government representatives to engage directly with smallholder farmers during "learning journeys," followed by "innovation labs" in which the same participants employed the knowledge acquired from the learning journeys to develop joint solutions to the challenges identified. As the responsible policy makers participated in the process, the experiences and deliberations which took place directly informed the development of the draft policy on extension services.

Learning

The project's approach to research and advocacy using intensive multi-stakeholder policy dialogue responded directly to the draft policy's new conceptualisation of extension services that reflects a reduced operational role for the state and instead focuses on setting policy directions and coordinating extension and advisory services to smallholder farmers.

## Role of Media

During the first phase of the project, the research and advocacy legs played stronger roles. It was seen as more strategic to have media come in at a later stage of the project, as it was felt that media involvement at an earlier stage would have undermined the openness of policy makers to involving civil society in the process of drafting the policy. As the policy process matured, the project increasingly engaged with a range of media outlets, including the South African magazine Farmers Weekly, television news broadcaster e News Channel Africa (eNCA) and community radio stations. The project also facilitated a "learning journey" for journalists in which they visited smallholder farmers and support providers in Mopani District. The project also engaged with community radio stations in the Mopani District who will communicate on the policy implementation amongst the farming communities in the areas of operation of the radio station.

Learning

Policy influence is a complex process that often defies linear approaches of directly communicating good evidence to policy makers. The three legged approach brings in a very useful dimension of connecting "evidence" with "communication" through the media – to raise public knowledge about an issue and to directly and indirectly influence policy making – through better understanding of an issue, public pressure to create change or raising support from an individual champion with influence/ power, amongst other feedback loops.

Through their involvement in the project, the news outlets developed a more informed understanding of the issues around agricultural extension. This allowed them to profile the complexity of issues facing smallholder farmers in the country in a more nuanced way. Adopting this approach highlighted the power of the media, in particular television and the print media, to communicate policy advocacy issues.

## Role of People Directly Affected

Building on research conducted by PLAAS, the project conducted an initial scoping study involving extensive consultations with smallholder farmer associations and representative bodies. The research and scoping study provided the content for a series of “learning journeys”, which brought representatives from the private sector, government and civil society together to engage directly with smallholder farmers in Limpopo province. The project then convened key agriculture sector actors, including farmers associations and officials directly involved in the drafting of the policy. The purpose was to discuss through multiple iterative “innovation labs” how best the group could collaboratively address the key challenges that need to be overcome to enable progress toward creating a thriving smallholder farming sector, and ultimately contributing to job creation and food security.

Learning

The “innovation lab” approach is a multi-stakeholder platform for addressing a particular complex social challenge, building on active participation of diverse stakeholders and generating experimental and systemic approaches to designing potential solutions.

## Engagement with Policy Makers

The project adopted a strategic and collaborative approach in a much broader strategy of working closely with the policy makers themselves as brokers and facilitators, helping facilitate actual piloting or experimentation with policy suggestions and building support for the policy making process.

Learning

The project’s approach informed developments around extension and farmer support services through innovative dialogues that aim to generate knowledge that will influence and enable the national policy on extension and advisory services currently being developed by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. This process enabled policy makers to engage with a much broader range of stakeholders than might ordinarily have been the case.

## Reported Influence on Policy

The National Extension and Advisory Service policy was approved by the Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), and the policy has been presented to the Ministerial Technical Committee. DAFF have prepared terms of reference for the establishment of a provincial extension coordinating forum. This forum will have responsibility for the implementation of the policy in the provinces. The project team met with key stakeholders in Kwa-Zulu Natal Province to prepare for the establishment of a collaborative coordinating forum in Umkhanyakude District.

## KENYA

**ADVOCACY GOAL:** Creation of an enabling environment for philanthropy through tax incentives.

**Project Thematic Area:** Delivery of basic and social services

**MDG GOAL 1:** End extreme poverty and hunger

**LEAD ORGANISATION:** Kenya Community Development Foundation

**RESEARCH PARTNER(S):** Strathmore University Tax Research Centre

**ADVOCACY PARTNER(S):** Kenya Community Development Foundation; Philanthropy Working Group members

**MEDIA PARTNER(S):** People Newspaper, Nation Media

## Collaboration Model

The Kenya Community Development Foundation (KCDF) was selected as the lead organisation during a national convening workshop co-hosted by the Southern Africa Trust in June 2011. The participants also selected the project’s thematic area. KCDF then convened research, media and advocacy groups in a joint stakeholder working group – the Philanthropy Working Group. Three smaller sub-committees were established- the tax governance and advocacy on the law, research and public awareness committees

Learning	<p>Having a range of stakeholders on board from the beginning created ownership of the issue and the policy dimensions were tackled from different perspectives. The information obtained from the research informed the actions taken by the entire group. The model was applied in a fluid rather than rigid manner and stakeholders were encouraged to engage with the discussion at whatever point they felt their interests could best be integrated. The adoption of thematic groups was also an advantage as this allowed conceptual ideas discussed by the larger group to be actualised.</p> <p>KCDF noted that it would more strategic to implement the model over a longer period of time and to have the members in each sector strengthen their capacity around how best to interact and effectively apply the model in influencing and shaping policy. A key learning was that the process is just as important as the end result.</p>
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## Role of Research

KCDF approached the Strathmore Tax Research Centre, based at the Strathmore Law School, to undertake research into the promotion of philanthropy through the introduction of a more enabling tax environment. KCDF and STRC collaborated on a research initiative that aimed to promote sustainable local philanthropy. A concept paper on tax incentives and a brief to the Ministry of Finance on the creation of an enabling environment for philanthropy in Kenya were developed. The findings and recommendations emerging from the research pointed to practical interventions which could provide feasible opportunities for both the state and the private sector to invest more robustly in indigenous philanthropy. The research carried out as a result of the collaboration proved to be a significant enabler to proactively engage government in discussions around issues of local philanthropy.

Learning	<p>Evidence-based research is crucial in establishing a platform from which to engage with policy makers and implementers since it provides a basis for formulation and change of policy. Government was much more willing to engage with the process where credible research formed the basis of the discussion.</p>
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## Role of Advocacy

The main focus of the advocacy campaign was to identify and work with relevant stakeholders to interrogate the opportunities and gaps that exist in the tax regime in Kenya. The specific focus was in relation to philanthropy, especially in issues around organised giving and giving among the middle and high income earners in Kenya. Actors were brought together to agree on the importance of the policy issue and prioritise policy advocacy strategies that could influence policy change. Following this, the tax incentives for philanthropy rules and regulations were evaluated and new strategies developed to further influence implementation of revised regulations. Advocacy groups worked closely with organisations in the area of philanthropy to establish an appropriate policy and legal framework for local philanthropy. These partners also actively engaged in the CSO Reference Group working on advocating for an enabling environment for civil society organisations in Kenya.

Learning	<p>Any period of political transition – as has recently occurred in Kenya – presents challenges as well as “windows of opportunity” for engaging proactively with policy making processes. KCDF and its project partners understood that the policy making process is fluid and unpredictable, and that joined-up action needs to be responsive to these circumstances and adapt strategies to meet changing contexts.</p>
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## Role of Media

The legs that emerged stronger were the research and advocacy legs, whilst the media leg was weak. The reason for this could be that there was a shared interest between the research and advocacy legs to understand the philanthropy and tax incentive context in Kenya. The media although engaged at different levels of the project seemed to have more of an interest in the outcome of the research rather than the initial stages that involved technical aspects of developing the research.

Learning	<p>KCDF found it challenging to engage the media during the project period as it felt the media generally has a very different agenda which is driven by commercial interests.</p>
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## Role of People Directly Affected

The project did not engage directly with beneficiaries, as these could potentially be any Kenyan who benefits from philanthropy. Rather, intermediary stakeholders, with an interest in promoting indigenous philanthropy were engaged. These actors guided the process in such a way that it will have a direct benefit in promoting pro-poor development through increased levels of local philanthropic giving.

### Learning

In the context of tax reform the knowledge and experience required to fully understand complex issues is a relatively rare commodity, and where available needs to be strategically accessed. In this project, KCDF accessed the expertise of a tax and auditing firm RSM Ashvir, which provided guidance and advice to the process.

## Engagement with Policy Makers

A memorandum was presented to the parliamentary committee that outlined views and positions on the Public Benefits Organisations Bill (now Act). There have also been direct engagements with the National Treasury on the Rules and Regulations for the Unclaimed Financial Assets Act and the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) on the philanthropy and tax incentives issue.

### Learning

Learnings that can be used to enhance or inform a new or existing policy lies predominantly in observing and documenting the processes involved in bringing about significant policy change. It is important to not only focus on the technical aspects of the project but also to take into consideration the political context and strategies (ie. how to actualise the technical component in view of the political shifts).

KCDF has suggested it would also have been ideal to engage the government throughout the implementation of the project as opposed to engaging them at the beginning and the end.

## Reported Influence on Policy

KCDF is in the process of formalising a National Philanthropy Forum which will engage strategically with Kenya Revenue Authority on the issues identified by the research.

The research has been instrumental in informing conversation in the country, particularly considering the government's attempts to push through amendments to the Public Benefit Organisations Act which would cap foreign funding for CSOs to 15%. The operating environment for civil society has made local fundraising increasingly more relevant. Illustrating this, KCDF was approached by a donor in October 2014 to run sustainability workshops for human rights and governance organisations.

## BUILDING COLLABORATIVE STRUCTURES

A key concern for the project has been the rationale for collaboration, and understanding the potential value-add of relationships between civil society groupings, between civil society and citizens and between civil society and the state as crucial partners in social interdependency. A major project assumption is that a collaborative approach – through establishing and strengthening linkages between social domains and sectors – can support the redefinition of the traditional roles of civil society organisations, the private sector and government and can offer innovative solutions to developmental challenges. Working separately on policy advocacy initiatives has often resulted in activities being developed in isolation, often competing with each other and leading to duplication of efforts and wastage of scarce resources. The project perspective is that collaboration and joined up action are mechanisms designed to deliver effective, integrated and sustainable solutions to social, economic and environmental challenges.

In terms of project learning it is important to understand how groupings within each country were able to establish collaborative platforms with active participation by local research, advocacy and media partners, as well as consensus on a focus policy advocacy issue. Creating civil society linkages is a social partnership idea that emerges from an understanding that traditional sector solutions cannot address certain policy challenges and therefore must be enhanced by learning and borrowing from organisations in other sectors. In the process of dialogue around progress during the initiative’s Joint Steering Committee meetings a number of learning opportunities emerged.

Issue	Experiences	Learning Opportunities
Setting the normative ground rules	The establishment of collaborative initiatives in the six countries exposes distinctive features of the participating societal sectors such as values, motivations, and modes of operation, as well as their changing and blurred roles and functions. It also emphasises the central role of organisational learning as an absorptive process.	Learning transforms sectoral actors such that even when a partnership ends, participating organisations retain a new way of thinking about their mission, activities, and sectoral identity. In other words collaboration is, ideally, a mutually reinforcing process that can potentially enrich and empower the various partners.
Characteristics/ role of the lead organisations	Some of the lead organisations are local grant makers (ie. KCDF, FCS), others are networks (NGO Forum, MEJN, SEND-Ghana), while SAFL sees itself as a boundary organisation. The Trust asked whether this has affected their relationships with local partners. MEJN, for example, sees itself as an advocacy organisation and has been directly involved in the project. KCDF has also led the advocacy around its policy issues. FCS, NGO Forum, SEND-Ghana, on the other hand, see themselves as coordinators bringing together research, advocacy and the media, rather than playing a role directly.	The most important learning opportunity is for organisations to be able to define their roles, their strengths and value-add to the project. Lead organisations have to understand where their strengths lie and to also understand how they are perceived by the other partners. When roles are poorly defined then there are likely to problems around “mission creep” and “territoriality” – ultimately such challenges will weaken partnerships, create divisions and foster mistrust.
Building common understanding of roles and responsibilities	Experience suggests that the convening process and establishment of project teams at country level has been uneven. Where implementation has been slow it is clear that this has partly been due to unclear role assignment and limited understanding of individual roles and responsibilities.	Agenda setting, and especially the definition of / agreement on key pro-poor policy issues, is the stage of the policy process where knowledge and evidence play the most important role. This requires strong agreement up front about who takes a leadership role, how this is defined, and what roles and responsibilities are assigned to other partners.

<p>Selection of the focus issue</p>	<p>For most lead organisations how the focus issue was selected was critical in building consensus, and ensuring collective ownership over the project among local partners. The issue was often chosen based on shared agendas, possibility for demonstrable policy change within a short time period, as well as the availability of existing research and interest. Because of the need for such flexibility, the issue might have changed from what was originally conceptualised by the lead organisation.</p>	<p>Policy issues and processes around them are often fluid and unpredictable, and may be captive to prevailing agendas and political interests. Policy advocacy work therefore needs to be responsive to these contexts, and retain flexibility and adaptability in its approach</p>
<p>Linkages “Champions” as drivers of project implementation</p>	<p>A characteristic of the project has been the fact that “Linkages” champions have emerged informally within lead organizations during the process of implementation. It has been very evident that they passionately identified with new ideas embedded in the “Linkages” policy advocacy approach and they consistently expressed enthusiasm and confidence about the success of this advocacy innovation. They also persisted under adversity, and mobilised the right people to move the process of joined up policy advocacy through critical stages.</p>	<p>While it is important to have technically competent people leading on the coordination, management and implementation of “Linkages” interventions other factors also come into play. Long-standing professional and personal relationships with key people in advocacy, media or research areas have clearly facilitated more active and committed engagement from these sectors. At the same time the ability of “champions” to build and sustain networks of like-minded policy advocates has been a critical component of most of the country experiences.</p>
<p>Contestation and fracture within civil society formations</p>	<p>In selecting the issue, lead organisations reported they had to be sensitive to issues of competition and sectoral interests where other organisations were already leading campaigns around particular issues. The project had to fit into processes and themes already being undertaken.</p>	<p>Civil society is not a homogenous formation, but like any other social formation is fractured by different political, class, religious and gender agendas. Understanding these differences and working within constraints and limited expectations while at the same time searching for common ground constitute a critical set of skills for effective, joined up policy advocacy</p>
<p>Selection of local partners/task team</p>	<p>Lead organisations selected their local partners/task teams in various ways. In Tanzania, for example, 60 organisations (and media) working in the area of agriculture were brought together to select an issue, and the task team was nominated from within this group, although they remain accountable to the larger group as well.</p>	<p>There is evidence that the selection of local partners has been comprehensive, but a key learning has been the importance of ensuring that stakeholder mapping and analysis exercises are inclusive and transparent. It is important that key stakeholders in any policy advocacy process are not excluded or overlooked.</p>

<p>Expectations from local partners/task team</p>	<p>Some lead organisations mentioned that they had to manage the expectations of the local partners/task team members, particularly in regards to available funding they might receive, or research projects they might undertake. In Malawi, for example, some partners were not as involved once they realised their organisations wouldn't be receiving funding. In Ghana, they noted a reluctance of groups to work together – advocacy groups were reluctant to work with research and vice versa.</p>	<p>An important learning opportunity is to examine in more detail the issue of expectations. It is evident that a civil society policy advocacy process will generate expectations – especially where possible funding is involved – but these need to be managed so as to avoid unrealistic expectations and/or entitlements. To achieve this requires strong leadership both from the Trust and the lead organisation, as well as open dialogue and transparent actions.</p>
<p>Linkages between NGOs and beneficiaries / local communities</p>	<p>Some lead organisations found they had to adjust their expectations of the local members selected. In Malawi, for example, they had assumed a certain network would be in regular contact with people on the ground (ie. affected by the issue), but this has turned out not to be the case. Also, some organisations had assumed research already existed, but additional work was required to supplement this</p>	<p>Citizen's "voice" is often articulated through intermediary organisations or networks that have a mandate to represent particular groups of people. An important learning is that assumptions around "representivity" need to be regularly interrogated by the project team to ensure that claims made on behalf of beneficiaries are in fact valid.</p>
<p>Formation of task teams</p>	<p>Some organisations have developed formalised relationships with their task team members at an institutional level. SEND-Ghana, for example, has developed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with their task team members, clearly specifying their roles and budget. While others have had more informal relationships with their local partners, or perhaps just individuals within those organisations/media outlets. There has been debate about what works best, and some determination that formalised institutional relationships seem to be more sustainable, and less dependent on individuals within organisations.</p>	<p>An interesting learning opportunity that has arisen through the process is the degree to which project relationships should be formalised or remain as loose unbound associations. This clearly depends on the specific country context, and what works best for the local partners. Experience suggests, however, that such partnerships will work more effectively where some level of formalised agreement exists and where purpose, roles and responsibilities are clearly defined in some form of agreement such as an MoU or partnership agreement. The value of such a document is that it can eliminate "grey areas" and clarify processes and obligations.</p>
<p>Building on current initiatives</p>	<p>Many of the projects have built on existing work in their countries. In Tanzania, the task team used the local public expenditure tracking exercise research, and linked with agricultural media training already happening. In Ghana, existing research was used and is being converted into policy briefs. In Uganda and Malawi, local research was supplemented by mapping studies.</p>	<p>The value of the "linkages" project is that it has not imposed an approach on countries, but rather leveraged existing processes to strengthen collaborative action. Various forms of interaction have been happening at country level – but what the "linkages" project has done is to bring a structure and a "working hypothesis" to these country-level experiences in an attempt to build more effective, coherent, focused and results-oriented forms of collaboration.</p>

<p>The rationale of the “Model” and achievement of policy outcomes</p>	<p>The Trust has repeatedly emphasised that using the model and achieving policy change are both equally important for the overall success of the project. If there is policy change without using the model, the project has not been successful. The Trust has clearly articulated the principles of the tripartite model, and stressed the importance of having research, advocacy and media agencies all involved as equal partners from the start of the project.</p>	<p>A key project learning is that any model is simply a means to an end – successful models serve as modalities for achieving desired outcomes. The “linkages” model has been theorised, and the value of the country level processes is to apply the model in reality, test its usefulness, and assess the level of outcomes achieved. Where desired policy level shifts are achieved it would be important to reflect on the extent to which these changes can be attributed to the application of the model.</p>
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# CHAPTER FOUR: MAINSTREAM APPROACHES AND THE VALUE-ADDED OF THE “LINKAGES” MODEL

After implementation of the initiative, the Southern Africa Trust and its “Linkages” partners want to understand the overall effectiveness of the three pronged model, and whether the experiences of collaborative policy advocacy work have surfaced learning that can shape a more nuanced approach. There is great interest in knowing whether the various interventions in each of the six partner countries have resulted in more comprehensive and well-coordinated policy advocacy responses, and whether these have led to the emergence of relational practices, institutional arrangements, technical and strategic knowledge and windows of opportunity for more innovative, scaled-up, coherent and value adding working partnerships between different types of civil society formations doing policy advocacy work. At the same time, there is interest in knowing whether this “joined up” action has afforded access to and leverage with key policy makers.

## FACILITATING DEMAND DRIVEN POLICY CHANGE

This learning report has explored how the Trust’s “Linkages” model and approach has been able to shape targeted aspects of the policy landscape in six African countries in a way that produces more equitable pro-poor development outcomes. What has emerged are a range of key elements that can contribute to “demand driven” policy change.

More mainstream approaches to policy change have generally emphasised the following:	Learning from the “Linkages” approach indicates that need to place more emphasis on the following:
<p><b>The Role of Context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply “one-size fits all” approach across different contexts and focus more heavily on best practice or standardised models / templates</li> <li>• Western-derived ideas of accountability and good governance may be the starting point</li> <li>• Introducing policy accountability from an external perspective – often in a “top-down” manner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use contextual realities in countries as a starting point and facilitate local policy dialogues and problem solving around best fit for the policy advocacy issue identified</li> <li>• Regional and local narratives of equity, accountability and access are used as a starting point</li> <li>• Building an organic policy advocacy and accountability process from the “bottom up”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Modalities of Change</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More linear understanding of change, with clear start and end point</li> <li>• Shorter-term project life cycles</li> <li>• Fixed planning approaches with clear phases and activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complex, less linear understanding of policy influence and change</li> <li>• Longer-term processes</li> <li>• Learning by doing – modification and adaptation through feedback loops</li> </ul>
<p><b>Using the Model</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus more on technical aspects</li> <li>• Social / political influences largely separate and compartmentalised</li> <li>• Self-contained operational tools and processes for influence (lobbying etc.)</li> <li>• Pressure on policymakers / bureaucrats / service providers to take politically expedient policy short cuts at the expense of the poor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More emphasis on political power aspects and political economy dynamics</li> <li>• Social, economic and political dimensions intertwined and inter-dependent</li> <li>• Broader social / political capabilities of actors and multiple drivers of policy change</li> <li>• Increased pressure on the political elite to adapt to the need for pro-poor / developmental policy shifts</li> </ul>

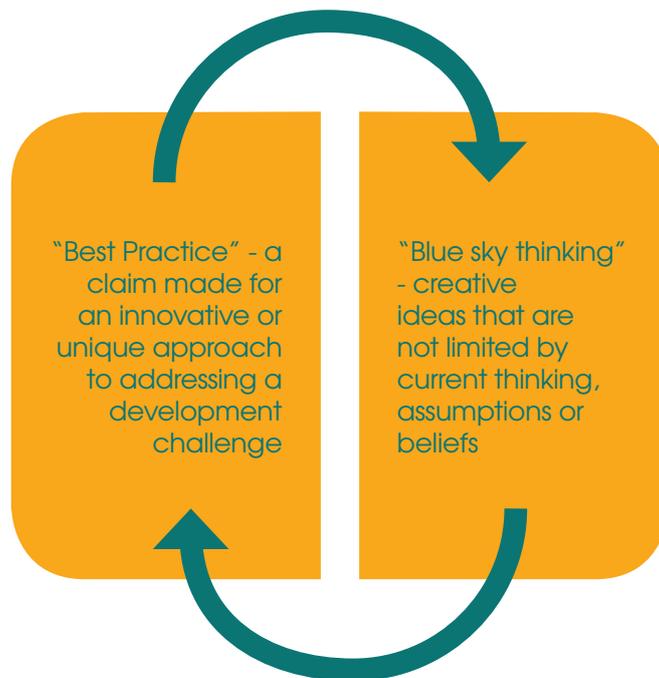
<p><b>Areas of Policy Advocacy Focus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand (with different attention given to supply issues)</li> <li>• Individual actors / spheres – working in policy advocacy silos</li> <li>• State – citizen dichotomy</li> <li>• “State” or “citizens” often treated as homogenous categories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply / demand synergies – clear recognition of the push-pull factors at play in any policy advocacy process</li> <li>• Linkages / networks between actors geared to collaborative action on policy advocacy</li> <li>• State – society mutually constituted</li> <li>• State and society is heterogenous – contains both progressive and regressive elements</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Role of Civil Society and the Poor</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger belief in civil society as an “unquestioned” force for good</li> <li>• More optimistic regarding the agency of the poor – with a focus on direction participation of the poor in policy processes</li> <li>• Variable focus on policy links with poverty and inequality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil society role can be mixed, and there is a need to be selective in engaging civil society organisations in policy advocacy processes</li> <li>• More circumspect, realistic and pragmatic about the agency and capacities of the poor – with a focus on articulating “citizen voice” through representation of the poor</li> <li>• Inequality and socio-economic exclusion are central to policy advocacy initiatives</li> </ul>
<p><b>How to Strengthen Pro-Poor Policy Advocacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work primarily through formal institutional frameworks and structures</li> <li>• Use expert knowledge</li> <li>• Work at the local / micro level</li> <li>• Using “single stream” approaches to raise awareness on policy issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work flexibly with a range of stakeholders through formal / informal institutions and dynamics, as well as through networks and alliances</li> <li>• Use formal research-oriented knowledge in conjunction with informal local knowledge and expertise</li> <li>• Work at the local level in the context of macro and global dimensions</li> <li>• Use multiple entry points for raising awareness on policy issues</li> </ul>

While systems models for policy advocacy interventions provide an important conceptual framework the self-contained symmetry of “black box” models stand in contrast to the contingent and unpredictable reality of political process. The implicit and value-laden efficiency of policy models such as the policy advocacy value chain used by the Trust can easily frame what appears to be an orderly system while concealing the messy and often contested nature of policy making processes. The “Linkages” approach has opened up the possibility of a greater level of critical thinking about the public policy terrain and how best to engage with it in a way that brings about the desired pro-poor policy shifts. The model provides a framework within which to undertake an analysis of public policy from the multiple perspectives of different sectors, thereby balancing the idealisation inherent in models of process, system, cycle, dynamics, and feedback. The “Linkages” approach has evolved over the implementation period in such a way towards a more “systems” type approach, while continuing to provide a conceptual model for understanding how advocacy can shape the public policy process. This is overlaid by context-responsive collaborative interventions designed to meet the contingencies of a specific country level policy making processes.

## CO-CREATING EFFECTIVE POLICY ADVOCACY LEADERSHIP AND “BEST PRACTICE”

### “LINKAGES”, LEARNING AND “BEST PRACTICE”

Together with its partners the Southern Africa Trust is continually looking for ways to co-create development practice that brings about pro-poor policy changes in the region. In development language this is the generation of “best practice” or innovation that is evidence based, field tested and able to produce measurable outcomes for beneficiaries.



But on what basis can the Trust claim that the “Linkages” model qualifies as “best practice” in the area of policy advocacy? The concept of “best practice” is quite liberally used in the design of development programmes, with numerous claims made for specific approaches, tools or intervention designs. But what is a “best practice” really? In theory, a best practice is the best or most effective way (policy and/or programme) that has been identified for achieving a particular developmental end. The implication is that such a practice, if implemented in another place, can be replicated to achieve the same or a similar end. The problem with such an approach to “models of development” is that they tend to posit a template or “one sizes fits all” practice that can be easily implemented and monitored. This approach, however, provides little room for adaptation to context. The experiences that have been generated through the implementation of the “Linkages” project clearly demonstrate that different countries really are different and that the model itself requires adaptation and adjustment to specific local contexts. From the Trust’s experience of such policy-oriented interventions there is no inherent reason to believe that a particular practice in one environment will work in another. Results come from a complex mix of human resources, existing and competing formal and informal institutions, legal framework, culture, politics, financing, incentives, and history. A small deviation in one of these elements has the potential to radically change outcomes.

From the inception of the “Linkages” project – and using the contextual information gathered during the scoping and baseline study – the Trust has been well aware of the fact that the wholesale transference of practices or intervention models across different national and sectoral contexts can be wastefully ineffective at least, and dangerous at worst. The Trust has taken a more structured approach to the field deployment of the “Linkages” model by making sure that the following components have been addressed:

- Promoting the approach based on an understanding that it constitutes a “strategic stance” to policy advocacy work, not an answer to the fluid uncertainties, inconsistencies and shifting policy agendas within the policy making environment;
- The way in which the “Linkages” model is applied in each country should be driven by a process of national ownership, with sector partners working collaboratively to adapt the model to their specific context and policy advocacy requirements;
- The process of implementing the “Linkages” model should not be viewed as a rigidly linear and time bound process, but rather one that is responsive to changing circumstances and sufficiently open to absorbing new elements into the original three sector model.

These components recognise that context matters, but equally recognise that the manner in which the programme is carried out as well as its constituent parts is just as significant to the overall success of the policy advocacy intervention. A key learning for the six countries has been that the details of implementation are more often than not incompletely known to the Trust, the lead organisation and the partners. Running with an approach based on partial knowledge has not, however, proven to be a major obstacle to implementation as it has allowed for what could be seen as a “modular” or “build as you go” process. This heuristic approach in each country has opened up space for experience-based problem solving, learning, and discovery techniques that have generated solutions which while not always guaranteed to be optimal, have been good to achieve a given set of policy advocacy objectives.

It is evident that the “Linkages” approach has achieved varying degrees of success as a “best practice”, recognising at the same time that a myriad of other related factors and variables, both within and outside of the programme itself – including

the catalysing role of the Trust as an external intermediary grant-making agency – have shaped and informed the degree of success within each country. The learning has been that at each country level the programme succeeds or fails based on the numerous individual practices and implementation steps overall and as adapted to the particular environment. For future policy advocacy work these implementation experiences demonstrate that there are advantages of utilising a “best practice” model – in part because it offers the possibility of avoiding a “reinventing the wheel” approach to policy advocacy work. But the components of the model – including the three sector conceptualisation- should be basic menu items and data points to filter through as part of the process of building up the best programme for a particular country or policy advocacy situation. It is in this sense that the “Linkages” approach has been informative in that it has evolved from the ground up through a combination of local knowledge, experimentation, careful monitoring and evaluation, and adaptation.

Adding to the complexity of the learning process has been the fact that in some partner countries risk aversion has been one of the main filters through which a “safe” policy advocacy issue was selected. There is evidence to suggest that this “risk averse” approach to piloting the model was rational as it ensured that the process of building partnerships around a policy advocacy issue was not fraught with too many contested ideological positions or impinged in any significant way on prevailing political power dynamics. From a learning perspective this begs the question of whether undertaking advocacy around more politically charged policy issues – would result in similar kinds of success to those that have been achieved thus far. Real “best practice” should not, however, rely on short cuts or easy options. Given this understanding it would be informative to see whether the “Linkages” model could be successfully utilised for policy advocacy work that addresses contested human rights issues or policy positions that are rooted in vested political and economic interests.

## **LEARNING ON EFFECTIVE POLICY ADVOCACY LEADERSHIP**

A core feature of the “Linkages” approach has been the role played by the lead organisations in convening, managing, guiding and supporting the various policy advocacy processes, as well as ensuring that there is an ongoing sense of purpose and relevance to the joined-up activities. It is evident from experiences in each of the six countries that each country context has been different, but that common learning threads have emerged which taken together could constitute the elements of a “best practice” approach to policy advocacy. If an assessment is made of the claim that the “Linkages” approach constitutes a “best practice” model then it could be measured against the overall effectiveness of the lead organisations using the following criteria:

Criteria	Core Competencies	Learning Experiences
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The purpose and policy advocacy goal of the “Linkages” partnership is clearly stated and understood by all members;</li> <li>The lead organisations facilitate partners to articulate why the “Linkages” approach is the appropriate vehicle for addressing a policy advocacy goal;</li> <li>The lead organisation plays an “honest broker” role in ensuring the coherence and cohesiveness of the partnership.</li> </ul>	<p>It is evident that a component for effective leadership of a “Linkages” approach is that the lead organisation is seen by all partners as having a credible reputation for accountable and non-partisan leadership. In the “Linkages” project lead organisations have been selected for their track record in working across civil sectors, where they play either a grant-making role or a coordination / membership role</p>
Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The importance of inter-personal relationships in project learning both within and between partner organisations emerged as one of the most important lessons from the “Linkages” activities;</li> <li>The quality of these relationships depends on mutual respect and trust. Trust influences both individual and collective learning and is one of the main factors that guides who individuals choose to talk to or even whether they will admit to having a problem they can’t solve themselves;</li> <li>Developing trusting relationships between organisations creates particular challenges, especially between civil society organisations that also share a funding relationship or may be competing for the same sources of funding.</li> </ul>	<p>Experiences from the “Linkages” process has surfaced how trust-based principles for developing effective partnership relationships supported mutual learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The purpose and principles of the partnership were explicit and negotiated from the outset, and expectations, rights and responsibilities were clearly negotiated, defined and agreed;</li> <li>Accountability demands were generally clear, particularly where funding arrangements were involved;</li> <li>The longer-term processes involved in the “Linkages” project were more conducive for trust to develop, especially as partnerships were broader than project funding arrangements;</li> <li>Working together towards common goals required partners to think in new ways about planning their work together. It also required open communication and the exchange of experience and learning;</li> <li>The process built strong networks of relationships that have created potential for innovative ways of collaboration beyond the “Linkages” project funding.</li> </ul>
Adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The lead organisation encourages the partners to continuously monitor the policy environment in order to make strategic advocacy decisions and possible shifts in emphasis;</li> <li>The lead organisation works with its “Linkages” partners to develop and implement a strategic plan that is action oriented and geared to leveraging policy change.</li> </ul>	<p>Experience on the ground demonstrated that initial partnership formation built on insufficient knowledge and information gaps resulted in weak coalitions. The ability to respond flexibly based on new and emerging knowledge allowed lead organisations and partners to re-structure partnerships so that they were better aligned with particular policy advocacy needs.</p>

Management capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lead organisation has strong and credible convening and coordination capacity;</li> <li>• The lead organisation ensures that it has frequent and productive communication with all coalition members;</li> <li>• The lead organisation encourages members to actively participate in coalition activities and share experiences and processes.</li> </ul>	<p>Implementation experience across the six countries has highlighted the importance of the lead organisation in ensuring that the policy advocacy intervention stays on track and retains its momentum. In cases where the role of the lead organisation has been sub-optimal the “Linkages” partnership has been less coherent and effective and the policy advocacy process itself has been weakened.</p>
Technical expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lead organisation oversees a comprehensive stakeholder mapping and analysis process;</li> <li>• The lead organisation works closely with other potential partners to ensure that the coalition has a membership that meshes closely with the identified policy advocacy objective;</li> <li>• The lead organisation ensures that monitoring and evaluation of policy influence and advocacy takes place and is incorporated into both internal and external communication with partners and the Trust;</li> <li>• The lead organisation has identified a “Linkages” focal point with sufficient skills to communicate effectively and transparently with coalition members.</li> </ul>	<p>Country experience has highlighted the importance of the “overview” role of the lead organisation- particularly its ability to see and understand the broader policy advocacy terrain. Working with specialist partners that may not have a strong grasp of policy work, the lead organisations have played a critical role in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mediating the policy issue and related policy dynamics to the research, media and advocacy partners;</li> <li>• Creating and sustaining a sense of common purpose around the policy advocacy issues;</li> <li>• Identifying research, media and advocacy partners most likely to add key competencies to the policy advocacy value chain</li> </ul>
Partnership Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lead organisation creates and sustains a partnership environment within which partners in the coalition are able to interact constructively and work collaboratively;</li> <li>• The lead organisation creates and sustains a partnership environment within which partners in the coalition respect each other’s sector specific expertise and capacity.</li> </ul>	<p>In each country the lead organisations have developed unique partnerships in ways that have aligned most appropriately with the selected policy advocacy issue. What has been evident is that there have been significant differences in emphasis, as well as different input contributions between respective media, research and advocacy partners. There have also been varying degrees of involvement by policy makers themselves, private sector agencies and beneficiary groups.</p>
Outreach to other stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The lead organisation ensures that the beneficiaries of the policy advocacy initiative are directly represented in project activities and decision-making processes;</li> <li>• Where there is a clear value add to the policy advocacy initiative the lead organisation links with private sector agencies for specific types of expertise;</li> <li>• The lead organisation identifies key entry points for engagement with relevant policy makers, and leverages such contacts to strengthen opportunities for successful advocacy interventions and policy dialogue.</li> </ul>	<p>As the project has unfolded over time the reporting has shown very clearly that the different country projects have learnt the value of working with sectors outside of the three sector model, and have also developed strategies and approaches for working with these sectors in ways that promote the policy advocacy process.</p>

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# CHAPTER FIVE: PROBLEMATISING “JOINED UP” POLICY ADVOCACY

## USING THE LINKAGES MODEL FOR ADDRESSING “WICKED” POLICY CHALLENGES

Engagement in policy advocacy and its potential impacts is not a straightforward kind of development intervention. Working on development challenges from within the policy system is significantly more difficult than simply addressing the developmental issue directly through project based initiatives. Policy challenges and dilemmas generally have many different facets – from the human to the cultural to the ideological – and cut across and depend on a range of other political and socio-economic factors. They also change and evolve over time, depending on the policy beneficiaries being served and their developmental needs. At the same time the existing policy system may be resistant to change or risk averse and often “pushes back” against policy advocacy interventions.

The challenge for the Southern Africa Trust and its partners on the “Linkages” initiative was that in most cases the focus of their interventions was on solving quite complex policy problems. Some of these policy issues were so complex they could be termed “wicked” problems, not in the sense of being evil, but rather that they are trying to address issues that are highly resistant to resolution. Successfully solving or at least managing these wicked policy problems from a civil society perspective requires a reassessment of some of the traditional ways of working and solving policy problems. This is especially the case when the complexities of particular policy issues challenge the governance structures, skills bases and organisational capacities of single civil society organisations.

Through the “Linkages” approach country-level projects were to varying degrees successful in recognising wicked policy problems as such. Interventions into agricultural policy making in South Africa and Tanzania, for example, have also meant operating within areas of contested policy agendas and vested interests. Successfully tackling wicked problems requires a broad recognition and understanding, including from civil society partners, governments and the private sector, that there are no quick fixes and simple solutions. Tackling wicked policy problems is an evolving process, and this is where the “Linkages” approach has gained some traction. This has been achieved through building collaborative policy advocacy partnerships that enable the kind of integrated multi-perspective thinking that is capable of grasping the big picture, including the interrelationships among the full range of causal factors underlying them. The kinds of policy problems addressed by the “Linkages” partners and the “joined up” initiatives that have been undertaken have highlighted the fundamental importance of collaborative policy advocacy models and working across organisational boundaries both within and outside civil society. In this sense applying the “Linkages” model means that partners need to continue to focus on effectively engaging stakeholders and citizens in understanding the relevant issues and in involving them in identifying possible solutions.

Throughout the implementation of the “Linkages” model there was a recognition that tackling policy problems, and in particular those that can be understood as wicked problems, is an evolving policy advocacy art that requires a combination of knowledge, understandings and competencies. The experiences of collaborative policy advocacy work and the understanding that was gained from the often “trial and error” process is reflected in the following learning:

- **Holistic rather than partial or linear thinking.** This is thinking capable of grasping the big picture, including the interrelationships between the full range of causal factors underlying the policy problem. Traditional linear approaches to policy formulation are an inadequate way to work with wicked policy problems as linear thinking is inadequate in encompassing their complexity, interconnections and uncertainty. There is an ever present danger in handling wicked issues in such a way that they end up being addressed in an overly narrow manner. The shortcomings of traditional approaches to policy making are also due to the socio-economic complexity of wicked policy problems—the fact that a true understanding of the problem generally requires the perspective of multiple organisations and stakeholders and that any package of measures identified as a possible solution usually requires the involvement, commitment and coordination of multiple organisations and stakeholders to be delivered effectively.
- **Innovative and flexible approaches.** The Southern Africa Trust has consistently argued that the civil society sector needs more systematic approaches to social innovation and needs to become more adaptive and flexible in dealing with policy advocacy work in the context of challenging regional development problems. The “Linkages” model is one such approach to achieving these ends by investing resources in a policy advocacy innovation that blurs the traditional distinction between policy development and programme implementation as one way of making it easier to modify policies in the light of collaborative experience about what works and what doesn’t, and focusing on creating learning organisations.
- **The ability to work across sector boundaries.** Difficult and challenging policy problems go beyond the capacity of any one organisation to understand and respond, and tackling them collaboratively is one of the key imperatives that makes

being successful at working across sector boundaries increasingly important. This includes working in a devolved way with the communities that are the potential beneficiaries of any kind of policy change.

- **Increasing understanding and stimulating a debate on the application of the “Linkages” model.** It is important that partners do not have a fixed notion of the “Linkages” approach and that this does not constrain resolution of challenging policy problems. The framework needs to be applied in a way that can meet the goal of maintaining acceptable levels of partnership accountability while minimising as much as possible any barriers to innovation and collaboration. Internal governance arrangements also need to support this goal.
- **Effectively engaging stakeholders and citizens in understanding the policy problem and in identifying possible solutions.** Because wicked policy problems are often imperfectly understood it is important that they are widely discussed by all relevant stakeholders in order to ensure a full understanding of their complexity and inter-connectedness. If the resolution of a wicked issue requires changes or adaptations in the way people act, operate and behave, these changes cannot be imposed on people in a top-down manner. Behaviours are more conducive to change if issues are widely understood, discussed and owned by the people whose issues and concerns are being targeted for change.
- **A better understanding of how policy makers think and act.** Through the process of implementing the “Linkages” initiative it has become evident that policy makers and their constituencies are often at the heart of many wicked policy problems. Finding effective ways to influence human behaviour can, however, be very complex. The “Linkages” approach has demonstrated the possibility of engaging with and influencing policy makers from multiple points of reference – whether that be via the media, private sector interests, through research-driven evidence or direct advocacy. However, effectiveness is linked to the strategic use of collaborative tools and a joint understanding of how better to engage policy makers both formally and informally in cooperative policy change.
- **A comprehensive focus and/or strategy.** The “Linkages” approach has demonstrated that successfully addressing wicked policy problems usually involves a range of coordinated and interrelated responses given their multi-causal nature and that they generally require sustained effort and/or resources over time to make progress.
- **Tolerating uncertainty and accepting the need for a long-term focus.** Through implementing the “Linkages” model partners learnt that uncertainty is part of the reality of working to address complex policy problems. Successfully tackling complex policy problems requires a broad acceptance and understanding, including from governments, that there are no quick fixes and that levels of uncertainty around the solutions to these problems need to be recognised, accepted and tolerated. Successfully addressing such problems takes time and resources and adopting innovative approaches may result in the occasional failure or need for policy change or strategic readjustment.
- **Additional core skills.** The need to work across organisational boundaries and engage with stakeholders highlights some of the core skills that were required by “Linkages” partners in tackling challenging policy problems—communication, big picture thinking, influencing skills and the ability to work cooperatively. Traditionally, policy advocacy work has placed more emphasis on single-issue constituency-driven mobilisation, communication and campaigning rather than on high-level analytical, conceptual and research skills and strategic understanding of policy processes and agendas. The “Linkages” project – as an iterative work in progress – has shown that all these skills are fundamental components of an effective policy advocacy toolkit, and that a multi-disciplinary partnership approach is a very practical way to pool all the required skills and knowledge for tackling difficult policy challenges.
- **Engaging the private sector:** In all of these policy advocacy areas the private sector has a significant stake in the desired change. In a number of countries the “Linkages” project has shown that is insufficient for the private sector to be engaged only in understanding the problem and in identifying possible solutions. Rather, the private sector must be involved in initiating and co-leading collaborative change processes, in co-creating and co-designing solutions, and in being key partners in the process of policy change.

## DELIVERING STRATEGIC EVIDENCE BASED POLICY ADVOCACY

The conceptual underpinning of the “Linkages” approach is that advocacy research has the specific purpose of influencing the formal and informal policies established by policymakers and those that have the power to shape and make key legislative and policy decisions. The model stresses the importance of generating evidence-based information linked to challenging and often contentious policy issues and disseminating this information in a targeted and compelling manner.

The ideal for the “Linkages” approach is that the research undertaken clearly demonstrates that the needs or problems that the partners want to address are real, necessary and linked to pro-poor development agendas. At the same time the evidence must clearly underpin the policy options that are being recommended and show a clear causal link with the identified problems. Research undertaken through the “Linkages” initiative – for example in Ghana and Tanzania – clearly indicated a country specific “problem-solution” nexus that has not necessarily been palatable to policy makers for a range of reasons, but by reframing the issue through media channels, for instance by highlighting the testimony or stories of individuals affected. Whatever the approach taken at country level, the goal has been to make the research as compelling as possible so that it resonates with policy makers and has the capacity to shift attitudes and mind sets. Having solid research

behind policy advocacy initiatives has, in most cases, both established a level of credibility and given substantive reasons for policy makers to engage with the issues raised in a constructive way. Research undertaken through the “Linkages” project has helped to counter opposition arguments, and to address concerns and emotion-driven objections. Furthermore, it has assured policy makers that the partners know what they are talking about, and can articulate clear, evidence informed responses when opponents or doubters have asked them to explain their arguments and policy rationale.

Each country-level project undertook research in very specific ways, and at varying points within the policy advocacy process. A question that has been raised, therefore, has been “when is the best time to conduct research that is aimed at influencing policy?” What has emerged quite clearly from country policy advocacy initiatives is that there are some specific points in any policy making process when research can be particularly useful.

- **When there is no policy, and there is a need for one.** Partners may already be working with policy makers to develop a policy, and need new or more focused research results to provide the evidence impetus that will facilitate action in the appropriate direction. In Ghana, for example, activists and researchers conducted targeted research to bring about public awareness and to stimulate policy making on research on both aflatoxins and water pollution, both in government and in the private sector.
- **When there’s a critical situation, but no one seems - or wants - to notice.** In countries such as Tanzania and Malawi small scale farmers have been increasingly impoverished by policies and practices that have a profoundly negative impact on rural livelihoods. This has been a problem that few in government or the private sector want to acknowledge. Focused pro-poor research has had the effect of opening the inequities of agricultural value chains to a wider public and, through media exposure, policy makers have been forced to engage with the issues in a more proactive way.
- **When current policy (or funding on the issue) is up for review by legislators or other policy makers.** Through the “Linkages” initiative appropriate research has been able to shift the opinion of policy makers in support of key policy advocacy issues. In Uganda both research and evidence from the field secured the attention of policy makers, and has resulted in a complete re-examination of the Food and Nutrition Bill and a recognition that action is required to address food security issues.
- **When policy is under discussion, and partners want to make sure that important issues don’t get lost or shelved.** In many instances the best policy in a particular situation involves doing something difficult, or admitting facts that policy makers or the public would rather not face. In Ghana the challenge of illegal mining and the pollution of water sources presents a “wicked” policy challenge for the government, and critical difficulties and admissions have had to be acknowledged and addressed. Research carried out by the government’s own Water Research Institute helped to demonstrate the need for taking action doing the right thing in the interests of public health.
- **When policy has been established, but its effects are still unclear.** In South Africa the Department of Agriculture’s policy on extension services failed to deliver its intended results for small scale farmers. Research-led engagement by SAFL with the key stakeholders in the agriculture sector led to in-depth examination of whether the current policy was appropriate or not and has resulted in new and innovative policy options being put on the policy table.
- **When partners feel that current policy exists in a dead end or is creating a bottleneck for pro-poor development.** In certain cases policy may have the effect of creating a dead end for progress or new developments. In Kenya the issue of indigenous philanthropy has highlighted the way in which existing tax policy can constrain the potential for developmental gains. Through in-depth research KCDF and its partners were able to engage proactively with the Ministry of Finance and other key role players and to demonstrate on the basis of evidence that a more incentivised tax regime for non-profit organisations can promote local philanthropic activity over the long term, in addition to improving the prospects for beneficiaries of such philanthropy.
- **When research is tabled by policy makers as expert input, or research has a window of opportunity to influence the formulation of policy.** Lawmakers considering new legislation, finance committees, study commissions, portfolio commissions, special panels- these and other policy makers often hold hearings and/or call in experts in a field before formulating for policy advice relating to that field. In addition, they may ask for public comment on a bill or potential policy while they’re considering it. In Tanzania partners used the budget process to advocate for a 10% agriculture budget, while in Ghana the partners utilised stakeholder consultation meetings with the Agricultural Extension and the Women in Agricultural Directorate of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture on how to control Aflatoxin through integrated extension service delivery to smallholder maize farmers.

Based on the challenges, insights and learning experienced by “Linkages” partners via multiple instances of research achieving influence in their countries, the following are some of the basic principles that have framed and guided an effective “joined up” approach to policy advocacy:

- It requires a collaborative process by research, advocacy and media of negotiation and mediation towards the transfer of ownership of the findings and options / recommendations developed in the research to key target audiences;
- It is a messy process and normally takes time, commitment, and persistence;
- The most likely target is policy influence, rather than impact;
- It involves the “opening up” of specialist expert audiences and also more interest-based coalition building and bargaining with more political audiences;

- Country contexts are critical, as advocacy-driven policy research processes are always specific, evolving, and unpredictable.

A significant element in the policy research initiatives is that all six countries are in various stages of moving towards inclusive, open, functioning democracies and the policy making processes are embedded in complex transitional forces. This has highlighted the fact that in terms of civil society-driven policy advocacy there are particularly difficult obstacles to overcome in terms of engaging effectively and productively with national level policy making processes. One of the current challenges relates directly to the current domination of political power over knowledge or, to put it another way, vested interests over pro-poor policy solutions. This tends to result in a public and political dialogue that is based on ideological contestation and where policy decisions are seen as a win for those in power and a loss for the opposition. At the same time the fact that politicians do not necessarily view such practices as an ethical problem but rather as a normal part of the game tends to compound the problem for those seeking to influence policy in a pro-poor direction.

This reinforces the value of the “Linkages” approach in transition contexts in terms of promoting an evidence-based decision-making culture and further, the need to stay the distance for those involved in producing and advocating for policy research and analysis. However, it is also a clear illustration of a further challenge for policy advocates: in some cases, it has not been enough to try to promote the ideas developed through the research, but partners also have to sell the idea and ethics of research evidence in the policy making process, especially to those who may see it as an unnecessary obstacle for them to retain power and control over resources. In the short term the advocacy-linked research conducted through the “Linkages” initiative has had some effect in demonstrating the policy significance of improving the lives of poorer citizens, and showing that without the expertise and evidence to support complicated policy decisions, there is little chance that they will survive. In the longer term, the “Linkages” initiative anticipates that such instrumental motivation will not need to be part of the equation any longer and that all actors will see the centrality of this interdependence between evidence and effective policy making.

Country level experiences of research-driven policy advocacy have highlighted important learning linked to effective strategies for ensuring that research is able to influence policy processes:

What partners have come to understand	What partners have had to do	Strategies partners have used to implement research agendas
<p><b>Political Context</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who the key policymakers are (mapping)</li> <li>• The level of policymaker demand for new ideas?</li> <li>• The sources / strengths of policymaker resistance</li> <li>• The elements of the policymaking process</li> <li>• The opportunities and optimal timing for input into formal policy making processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get to know the policymakers, their agendas and the political constraints that they operate under</li> <li>• Identify potential supporters and opponents.</li> <li>• Keep an eye on the horizon and prepare for opportunities in regular policy processes.</li> <li>• Look out for and respond to unexpected policy windows.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work collaboratively with policymakers</li> <li>• Identify research commissions</li> <li>• Line up research programmes with high-profile policy events</li> <li>• Reserve resources to be able to move quickly to respond to policy windows</li> <li>• Allow sufficient time and resources</li> </ul>
<p><b>Evidence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The nature of current policy theory within the prevailing political context</li> <li>• The prevailing policy narratives</li> <li>• The divergence of the new evidence from existing knowledge frameworks</li> <li>• The packing of evidence in order to convince policy makers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish credibility over the long term</li> <li>• Provide practical solutions to problems</li> <li>• Establish legitimacy</li> <li>• Build a convincing case and present clear policy options</li> <li>• Package new ideas within familiar theory or narratives</li> <li>• Communicate consistently and effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build up portfolios of high quality research work</li> <li>• Undertake action-research and pilot projects to demonstrate the benefits of new approaches</li> <li>• Use participatory research approaches to help with legitimacy and implementation</li> <li>• Develop a clear strategy for communication with media / advocacy partners from the start</li> <li>• Utilise face-to-face communication with policymakers</li> </ul>

<p><b>Linkages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly understanding who the key stakeholders are</li> <li>Understanding the links and networks that exist between them</li> <li>Understanding who the policy intermediaries are, and the ways in which they influence policy</li> <li>Understanding the political allegiances of key stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get to know the other stakeholders within the identified policy terrain</li> <li>Establish a presence in existing networks, coalitions and alliances</li> <li>Build coalitions with like-minded stakeholders</li> <li>Build new policy networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and sustain partnerships between researchers, advocacy groups, the media, policymakers and policy end-users</li> <li>Identify key networkers and policy champions</li> <li>Leverage informal policy networks and contacts</li> </ul>
<p><b>External Influences</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand who the main regional / international actors are in the policy process</li> <li>Understand the degree of policy influence that they have</li> <li>Identify their policy level priorities</li> <li>Map out and plug into their research priorities and mechanisms</li> <li>Understand the policies / vested interests of external players who fund research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get to know the external stakeholders, their priorities and constraints</li> <li>Identify potential supporters, key individuals and networks</li> <li>Establish policy research credibility</li> <li>Track donor policy on policy research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop extensive background knowledge on the research policies of external stakeholders within identified policy terrain</li> <li>Orient communications of research to suit the priorities and language of influential external stakeholders</li> <li>Where strategically useful work with donors and leverage opportunities for further policy research in the policy area</li> <li>Establish regular communication channels with key individuals</li> </ul>

## PROBLEMATISING THE “LINKAGES” APPROACH

The six country case studies described in this report clearly show that the “Linkages” model is a predetermined and strategic intervention into the national policy making process. In essence it is an insertion into the regular, ongoing policy making process conducted by every national government as part of its legislative and policy mandate. The policy process in any country is dynamic and multifaceted, with a range of sectoral policy interventions being conducted at any given time, and at various stages along the policy cycle. This means that the “Linkages” approach in essence has engaged with the policy cycle, which itself constitutes a sequential flow of critical steps leading to the production of an agreed and ratified policy. According to Charles O. Jones:

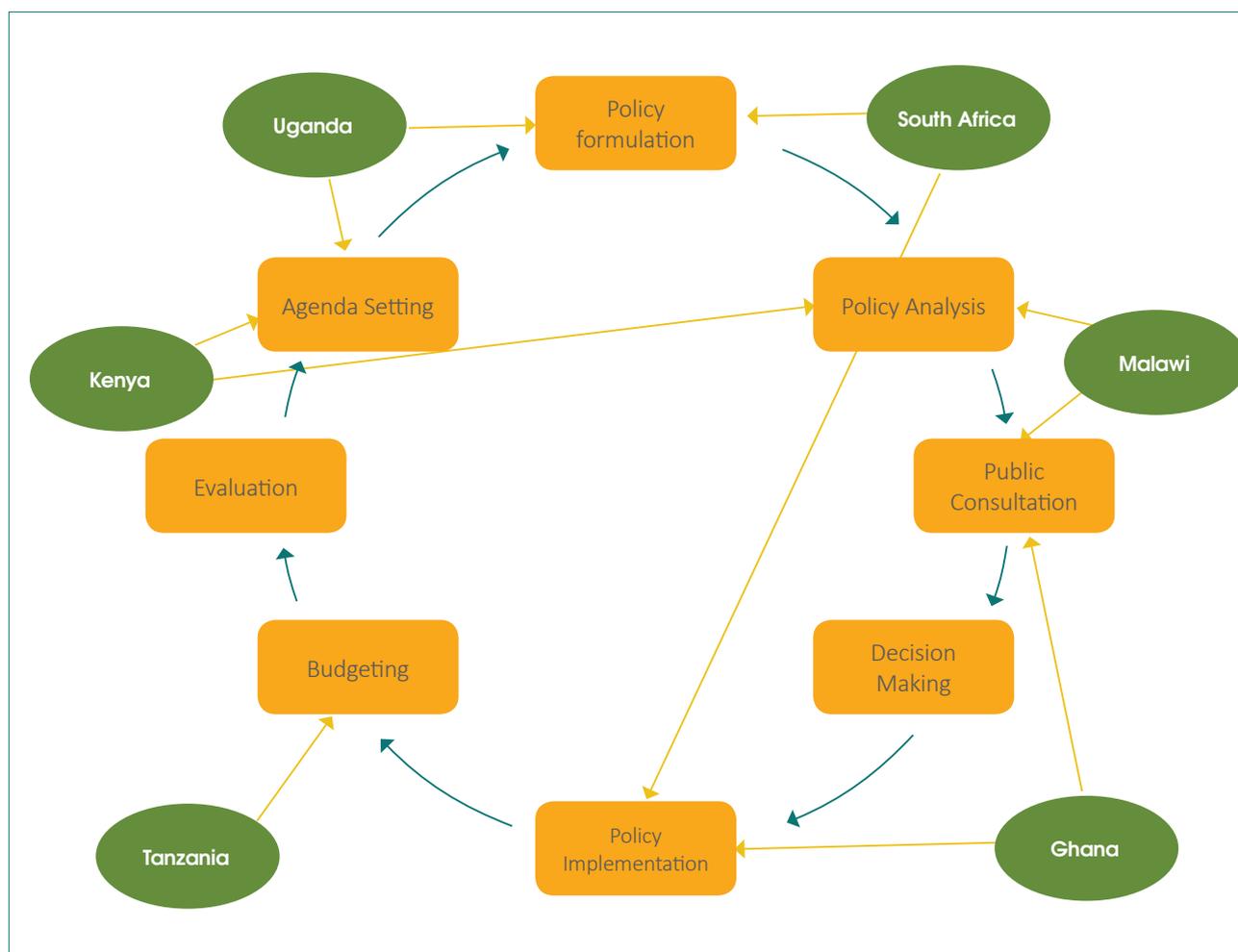
- **Agenda setting:** Problems are defined and issues are raised. Gatekeepers filter out those which will be given attention by either the executive or the legislative branches;
- **Formulation:** Analysis and politics determines how the agenda item is translated into an authoritative decision: a law, rule or regulation, administrative order, or resolution;
- **Policy Analysis:** Alternative policy proposals are put forth, claiming to inject rationality and technical analysis within the process. Policy analysts bring these alternatives to the attention of political decision makers with their recommendations;
- **Public Consultation:** The policy prescription is chosen among the alternatives, including the no-action option. This is usually accomplished by building the support of a majority. What is produced here is a binding decision or series of decisions by elected or appointed officials who are not necessarily experts but who are presumably accountable to the public;
- **Decision-Making:** Through the legislative process decisions are made – either through a democratic process or as a result of an executive decision – that then formalises the policy and translates it into action that is binding and enforceable;
- **Implementation:** The authorised policy must be administered and enforced by an agency of government. The agency must take instructions as stated in the policy, but will probably be called upon to provide missing pieces and to make judgments as to intent, goals, timetables, program design, and reporting methods. The agency’s mission may be well defined or poorly understood, but the field of action has shifted;
- **Budgeting:** Financial resources must be brought to bear within an ongoing annual stream of budget cycles. Budget decisions are generally made with partial information and by changes from year to year which are only slightly different

from the year before, a process called incrementalism. In recent years, budget constraints have significantly elevated budget considerations in importance within the policy cycle. Budget items are highly competitive but essential for policy delivery;

- **Evaluation:** The impacts of the policy may be assessed. If goals exist, the effectiveness of the policy and its components can be determined. Side-effects must also be discovered and reckoned. The output of evaluation may be no change, minor modification, overhaul, or even (but rarely) termination. The feedback provided by evaluation is injected back into the agenda-setting stage, thus closing the loop of the cycle. (From Jones, Charles O. An Introduction to the Study of Public Policy. Brooks, Cole Publishing Company, 1984)

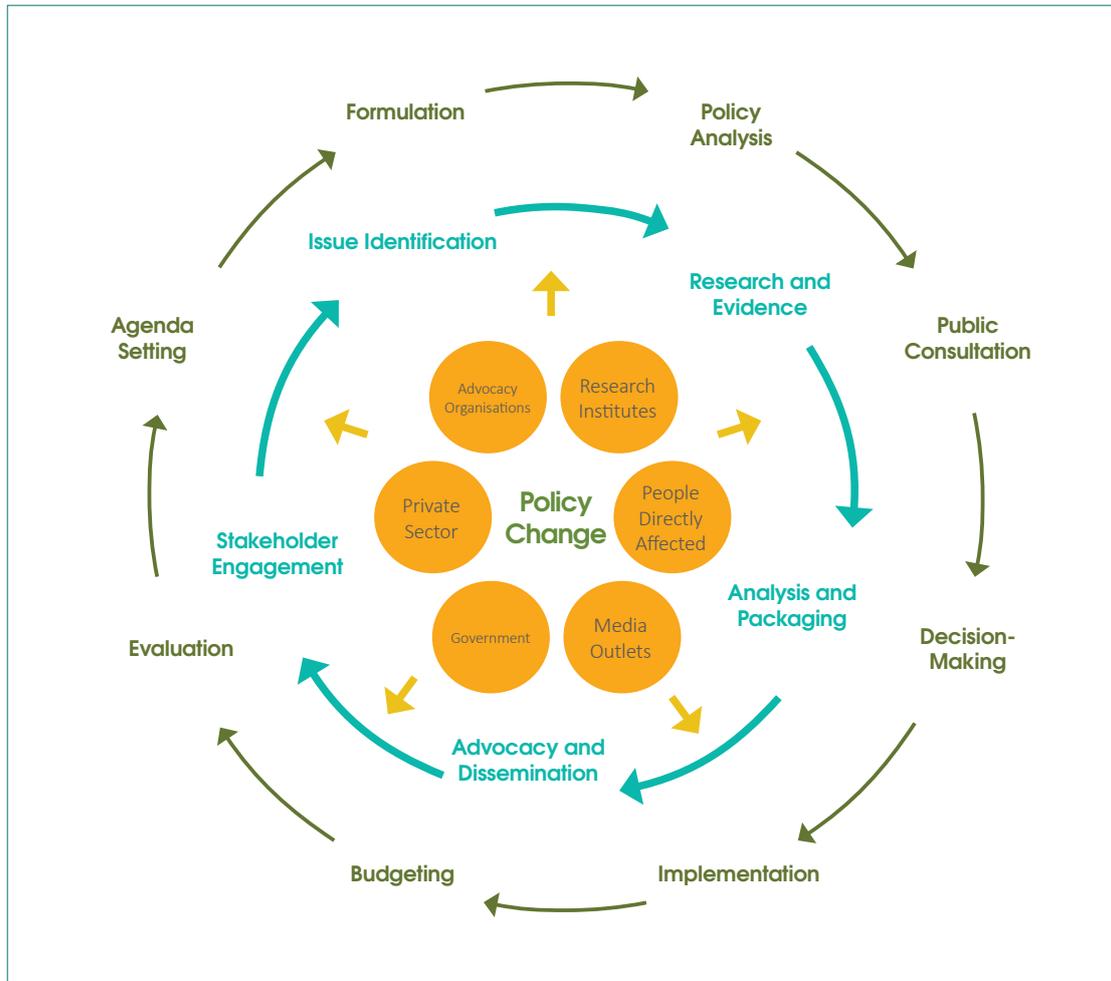
The policy cycle framework is a model that serves to comprehensively and coherently organise facts and concepts that support an understanding of public policy and how it unfolds. As a methodological approach, the policy cycle deconstructs the policy process in a manner that is conducive to understanding how private issues evolve into public and political concerns, how stakeholder engagement shapes policy agendas, how the legislative process structures political concerns into legislative concerns, how the laws are formulated and put into effect, as well as how such policies are evaluated and may eventually change or end. What it may not overtly do is to position the policy cycle within a broader set of political, social and economic contestations that inform the agendas of civil society organisations that seek to engage in policy advocacy work.

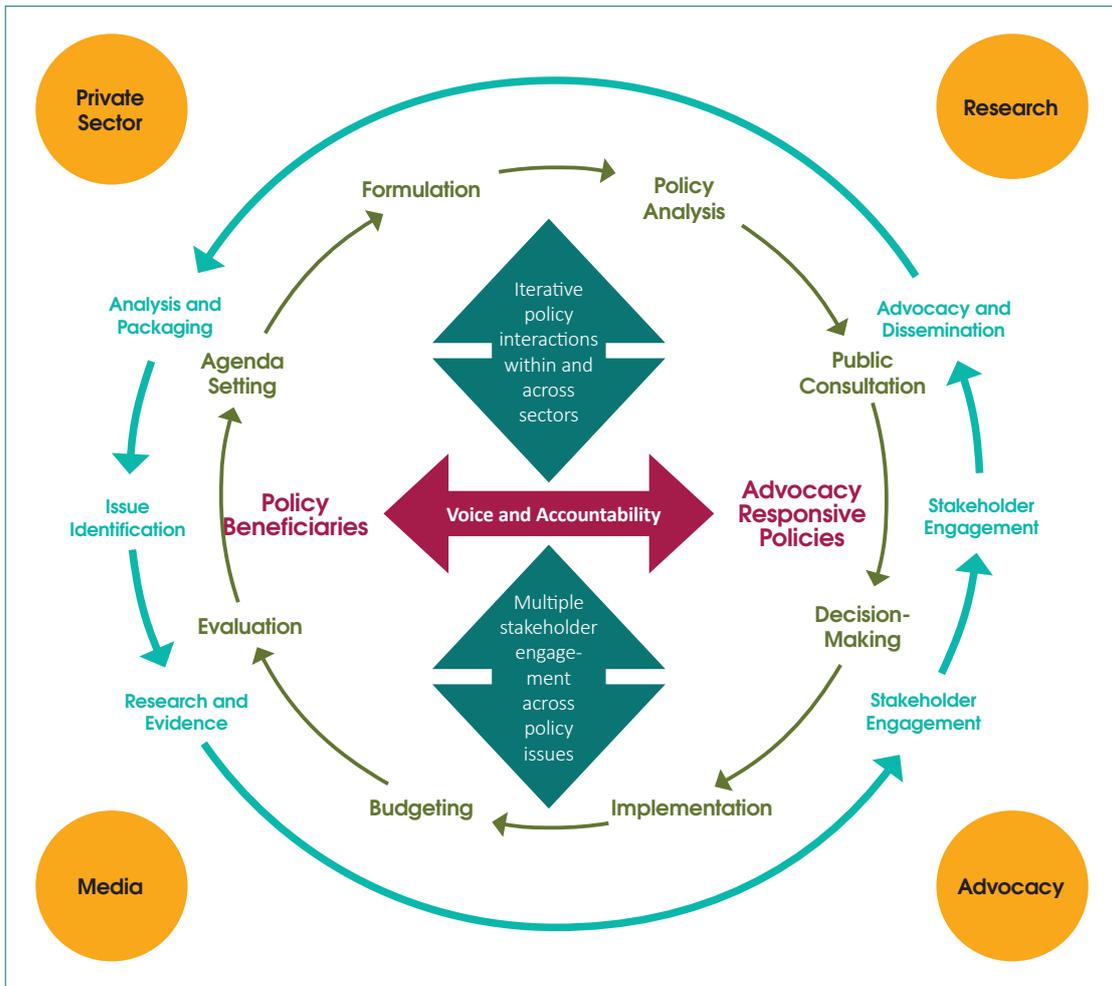
If we view the “Linkages” initiative through the policy cycle, it is evident that over the course of its implementation partners have exerted influence at multiple points. The diagram below illustrates the points at which each country-level partner has directed advocacy on selected policy issues:



The deployment of the “Linkages” model as a considered intervention into the policy cycle using the three-sector value chain approach (as illustrated in the earlier section of this report: Initiative Conceptualisation and Modelling) is an attempt to shift policy dynamics at particular or targeted points within the cycle. On its own the “policy value chain” model tends to represent the “Linkages” model as teleological, with a clear policy advocacy end point in mind. The model, as articulated with the partners in the six countries, suggested an unproblematic linear approach to advocating for a particular policy change. Experience from the six countries has clearly demonstrated that the process has been far more complex, and that there is a need to take into account broader policy dynamics at both national and regional level. The problem with a linear model such as the value chain is that it doesn’t capture the cyclical, dynamic and iterative nature of national policy making

processes. In reality the “policy value chain” does not stand outside of or disengaged from multiple and overlapping policy making processes at any given point in time, but is rather undertaken across and within these processes. Within the model the linkages between research, advocacy and the media are internal to the selected policy advocacy issue, but at the same time the dynamic nature of policy making means that there are also multiple linkages external to the policy advocacy issues as well. These ideas have formed the basis of many discussions over the project life cycle between partners around the policy advocacy value chain model links with the conventional public sector policy making cycle. The following two diagrammes theorise this imbrication by overlaying the policy making cycle with the policy advocacy value chain model to show how the two are mutually inter-dependent and referential. The inputs and thoughts of all the partners have gone into the development of these diagrammes – and it should be noted that they represent an estimation of the discussions and reflect both agreements and disagreements on how best to represent such a complex process in a two dimensional model.





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## CHAPTER SIX: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The Southern Africa Trust – working collaboratively with a range of civil society partners – has gained considerable experience and accumulated a significant body of evidence related to the application of the “Linkages” model in six countries in southern (South Africa, Malawi), east (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda) and west (Ghana) Africa. The process has been carefully documented, and currently a review of the programme is being undertaken to assess the degree to which the objectives and outcomes of the programme have been achieved. The work of compiling this learning report has been an iterative process of collecting experiences and learning as they have emerged from the implementation of activities. As a developmental intervention the “Linkages” initiative has clearly achieved significant pro-poor policy outcomes through the process of applying a theoretical model to real life, complex and challenging policy situations in different countries. At the same time the challenges of engineering policy advocacy collaboration across sectors have emerged very clearly as well. As this particular programme reaches its final phase this is an appropriate time for all stakeholders involved in the “Linkages” initiative – the Gates Foundation, the Southern Africa Trust, lead organisations, partner organisations and other key role players such as policy makers and the private sector – to reflect on the rich experiences that have characterised the process and to dialogue around the overall value of the approach and the possibilities for re-conceptualising or improving the model so that in any future applications it may work even more effectively.

This report suggests that it would be useful to explore the following areas more critically and to give consideration to how they may add value to an already successful approach:

- 1. Quality of linkages with beneficiaries of policy change:** The degree of engagement with beneficiaries has varied from country to country. A critical focus of the “Linkages” approach is to ensure that the “voice” of beneficiaries is central to the policy advocacy initiative. The challenge has been to ensure consistent beneficiary engagement over time, rather than intermittent inclusion. There needs to be more reflection on how best to engage with beneficiaries more directly, more consistently and more substantively. Evaluation and reporting feedback from the lead organisations should help guide and shape an improved “Linkages” practice.
- 2. Working with the media:** Over the project life cycle there has been a growing awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of working with the media. In the early phase of the “Linkages” initiative there was to some extent an unrealistic and in some cases simplistic understanding of the media as a sector, and what it could offer to any policy advocacy process. As the initiative has unfolded, partners have gained a more realistic and nuanced understanding of how to partner with the media, and leverage their comparative advantage in a strategic manner. Further exploration of how best to leverage this comparative advantage should be undertaken.
- 3. Engaging with government:** The policy advocacy process is intimately linked to government policy making processes, yet the model for civil society advocacy itself is traditionally viewed as one that is adversarial. The demands of the “Linkages” initiative, however, mean that the capacity for identifying critical entry points and building constructive relationships with policy makers and policy influencers becomes a critical enabler for effective policy advocacy. The initiative demonstrated that it is possible for civil society policy advocacy groupings to work constructively with key government partners. The challenge going forward is to look at ways of ensuring that these engagements with government are not ad hoc, but become an integral part of conducting joined-up policy advocacy.
- 4. Engaging with private sector:** In the initial conceptualisation of the model the private sector was not considered as a key role player in the policy advocacy process. This was despite the fact that most media institutions operate as companies. Implementation experience has suggested that private sector organisations could be very constructive partners in the “Linkages” approach in a number of ways including advisory, intermediary, brokering and counterpart roles. Further consideration is required with regard to how best to integrate the private sector component into a model that is clearly defined as an approach for civil society policy advocacy. The blurring of traditional sector boundaries, as well as the private sector’s growing interest both in social investment and in market friendly policy making, means that there are multiple windows of opportunity for constructive inter-action with the private sector. This also brings into consideration the issue of compromise, and how apparently disparate policy stakeholders can find common ground in order to achieve clearly defined policy advocacy objectives.
- 5. Working with research agencies:** At the outset there was a fairly narrow understanding of what was meant by “research” organisations. As the initiative gained momentum it became evident that the research terrain itself is complex, dynamic and multi-dimensional and that research is driven by different economic and political agendas. This has made the task of identifying research institutions as “good fits” for the particular policy advocacy issues selected in each country. There is a need to problematise the research component of the “Linkages” model so that it somehow takes into account disparate research affiliations and agendas. For example, how does the model reflect the validity and independence of policy advocacy research that emanates from state funded or private sector funded research institutes, or that coming out of think tanks resourced by funders with particular social agendas.
- 6. Testing the limits of the model:** In general the policy advocacy issues that were selected by country partners were within

the bounds of what country governments found acceptable and were willing to engage with. As a pilot programme these decisions reflected a “testing of the water” approach, and as such worked relatively effectively. Many of the policy issues that civil society engages in in sub-Saharan Africa are, however, far more contentious and are often actively opposed by ruling elites. The real test of the “Linkages” model would be to see how it works in more contested policy terrains, for example in sensitive areas of good governance (corruption, transparency, electoral processes), poverty and marginalisation (land grabbing, cross-border issues, inequitable resource allocation) and human rights (freedom of speech, arbitrary detention, criminalisation of sex work).

- 7. Strengthening support for the “Linkages” approach:** The funding for the current “Linkages” model has been extremely successful in terms of “seeding” a pro-poor policy advocacy methodology in six quite diverse sub-Saharan Africa countries. The challenge going forward will be how the initiative can be sustained and scaled-up – both in the six participating countries as well as in other countries across the region. It is clear that a precedent has been set for the delivery of a policy advocacy intervention that can be effective, but at the same time such an approach requires resources to implement. It will be important to use the initial Gates Foundation grant as a leverage point for further resource mobilisation to fund new initiatives and to take the “Linkages” model into new and challenging policy advocacy terrains.



